

Vancouver Centre of Excellence



Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

Working Paper Series

No. 04-12

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Experience of Integration in Toronto and Vancouver**

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May 2004

RIIM

Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

The Vancouver Centre is funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Citizenship & Immigration Canada, Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. We also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Metropolis partner agencies:

- Health Canada
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Department of the Solicitor General of Canada
- Status of Women Canada
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
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**The Quest for an Inclusive City: An Exploration of Sri Lankan Tamil
Experience of Integration in Toronto and Vancouver**

by

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¹ Leslie Dickout and Tanja Winkler were research assistants on this project. Leslie conducted and transcribed 30 interviews with Tamil individuals and organisations in Toronto. Tanja conducted 10 interviews with Tamil individuals and organizations in Vancouver. Leslie Dickout also provided photos and maps, and the historical background in Section 2 is drawn from her Masters thesis (Dickout 2004).

Abstract: This paper is the third in a series of four, which covers (1) a rethinking of the philosophy of multiculturalism for the 21st century, (2) an exploration of the policy challenges that a multicultural society poses to urban planning and policy, urban governance and citizenship, with examples of successful responses in Frankfurt, Rotterdam, Sydney, Vancouver and Chicago, (3) an analysis of the barriers to integration in Canada, as experienced by one specific group, Sri Lankan Tamils, with specific attention to citizenship, participation, social policy, and uses of space, and (4) an examination of the role of one community-based organisation, the Canadian Tamil Congress, in working to overcome barriers to integration and participation in Canadian society.

Keywords: Inclusion, participation, multiculturalism, the right to the city, identity, difference, space.

Outline

This paper draws on individual stories of migration as well as on the work of ten Tamil community organizations, most of them providing settlement services, to develop a portrait of the workings of multiculturalism from an/Other perspective. The theoretical framework is based on a normative ideal of multicultural citizenship that involves two concepts, the right to the city, and the right to participation. From our interviews, we first develop a narrative of Sri Lankan Tamil migration to Toronto (and, by comparison, Vancouver), describing the social geography of settlement and then some of the actual experiences of starting a new life after leaving a war-torn country. Based on these interviews, we discuss the challenges of and barriers to integration faced by this predominantly refugee group.

We then look at the role of organized civil society within the Tamil community, an exploration that reveals a story of self-reliance, of fear, of isolationist tendencies, but also of efforts to work with city officials, police, granting agencies, and other community organizations, to further the social integration of Tamils in Toronto. (The story of Tamil settlement in Vancouver is, however, quite different).

Finally the paper draws on a focus group discussion with members of the Canadian Tamil Congress to go deeper into the lived experience of multiculturalism. From everyday experiences of public space, to access to (and the level and delivery of) services, the experience of our interviewees is that multiculturalism in action falls far short of the espoused public philosophy. In this section, we return to our notion of the inclusive city, and ask whether Tamils settling in Toronto in the past twenty years have acquired a sense of their right to participation, and their right to the city.

Introduction

‘The reason I left my country was to stay alive. Basically. That was the only thing. My mother cried in front of me and said leave. We want you to live somewhere where you are safe and sound. Don’t matter where it is... So we chose Canada because people were telling us, Canada is one country that is accepting Tamils... allowing us to live in a free world. We came. When we came we didn’t have dreams. The dream was just to stay away from the trouble. That was the only dream...’
(Org9)

Canada sees itself, and is seen by others, as one of the most open and accessible multicultural democracies in the world. A series of by now well-known changes to immigration law in the past three decades have encouraged migration from hitherto ‘non-traditional’ countries and this, together with a generous refugee policy, have produced an increasingly heterogeneous cultural and social landscape. Further, an official federally sponsored multicultural philosophy and policy has evolved since 1971, encouraging the recognition of and respect for all cultures and acknowledging the right of newcomers to retain their native languages and cultural practices. Officially, landed immigrants and refugees have political, economic and cultural rights; and are expected to integrate into and participate fully in Canadian society. This is, however, easier said than done, and easier for some immigrant groups than for others, depending on some obvious factors like language fluency, economic and educational assets, family support, and personal experiences prior to migration.

This research set out to explore the lived experiences of settlement and integration of one immigrant group, the Tamils from Sri Lanka, in two cities, Toronto and Vancouver. The intent was to develop a concept of citizenship that reflects espoused multicultural philosophy at the level of the city (rather than the nation state), and then to probe to what extent that normative ideal is being realized, by focusing on the experience of one newcomer group. Further, we were interested in working with a group that was hitherto invisible in this research field, yet demographically significant. (Tamils are the second largest refugee group in the past two decades, after Somalis. And, Tamil is the fifth most spoken language in Greater Toronto). And, since we were aware of the increasing numbers of refugee groups from war-torn countries in the past two decades, we also wanted to explore the ways in which that particular history might affect a group’s capacity to integrate into Canadian society. We were also interested in the institutions of urban governance and planning and the extent to which they are adapting to the presence of non-traditional immigrants in their services, policies, and processes.

So, in early 2002, we decided to study the Sri Lankan Tamil migration experience² in Toronto and Vancouver. We knew that there had been a dramatic increase in the Tamil population in Toronto

² Henceforth when we refer to Tamils we are referring to Sri Lankan Tamils, unless otherwise specified.

between 1981 and 2001, with Tamil organizations estimating as many as 150,000 Tamils presently in Toronto, and 20,000 in Vancouver (Org4, Org6). According to Census data, 307 Tamils arrived in Canada in 1981, but this number climbed steadily for the next two decades; reaching a highpoint of 12,433 arrivals in 1992, for a total population of 95,672 by 2001.³

We also knew, impressionistically, that the Tamil population in Toronto was concentrated in two parts of the metropolitan area: one concentration adjacent to the downtown in the highrise St. Jamestown neighborhood, the other in the more distant suburban areas of Scarborough and North York. By contrast, the Vancouver population seemed totally dispersed. So we wondered whether these geographies of settlement might be producing, or be reflective of, a different immigrant experience and different levels of integration. Finally, we wondered about the extent and importance of Tamil community-based organizations in assisting the settlement and integration experience within the Tamil community.⁴

To get at some of these questions, we decided on a qualitative approach using, primarily, in-depth interviews with members of the Sri Lankan Tamil communities in the two cities, and interviews with members of Tamil community organizations, and secondarily, reviewing policy documents and other city as well as community-based publications. These interviews introduced us to a Tamil perspective on settlement, but the limitations of such a methodology mean that we cannot speak of *'the Tamil experience.'*⁵ We also interviewed city officials, including a local politician and three social planners in the City of Toronto, to help us understand the institutions of urban governance that were affecting migrant integration and the extent to which (and how) city institutions are responding to immigrant needs. These Toronto interviews were mostly done during the Summer of 2002. Leslie Dickout, a Masters student at UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning, conducted all of the interviews in Toronto, and Tanja Winkler, a PhD student in the same School, conducted all

³ The breakdown between Toronto and Vancouver, according to the Census, was 102 Tamils arriving in Toronto in 1981, rising to 10,220 in 1992, for a total of 71,799 by 2001: and for Vancouver, only 19 in 1981, rising to 174 in 1995, for a total of 2079 in 2001. There is a vast and irreconcilable discrepancy between Tamil estimates and Census data.

⁴ One of the limitations of this research is that we did not track the work of non-ethnospecific immigrant and refugee organizations, so our comments later in this paper about the inadequacies of integration cannot claim to be comprehensive.

⁵ It is not only a methodological limitation that prevents us from speaking of *'the Tamil experience'* but also a recognition that Tamils (like any other ethno-culturally defined group) are very divided politically and socially, despite sharing common fronts of marginalisation and discrimination.

interviews in Vancouver. (Due to funding limitations we could not employ Tamil interviewers.) Each interview was taped, and fully transcribed.⁶

In early 2003, reflecting both on what we had learned, and what we perceived as gaps in our material, Leslie Dickout returned to Toronto for further interviews and a focus group session with eight members of the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) in April 2003. In all, we interviewed ten individuals in Toronto, plus one family group (a father and daughter), and two eighteen-year-old friends (male and female); eleven community organizations; three planners, and one local politician. In Vancouver we interviewed five individuals and five members of Tamil organizations. Our intent was to conduct a small, intimate, relational study, in which our interviewees would be recommended to us in a snowballing technique, starting initially with people who came forward through the community organizations. Spending time developing relationships with members of the Tamil community was important in our approach, and the greater openness of our interviewees in the 2003 interviews indicated to us (all non-Tamil researchers) that the intervening year of building these relationships in Toronto had made a difference to the willingness of interviewees to share their stories and issues with us. The eight individuals who agreed to participate in the focus group run by Leslie Dickout in April 2003 were particularly helpful in deepening our understanding of the experience of Tamil community members.

This paper, and a subsequent one,⁷ report our findings. We present these findings as tentative rather than definitive, as providing insights into the experience of members of one immigrant/refugee group rather than painting the whole picture, which by definition can never be completed, (since we could not talk with every Tamil in Toronto), and is any case an *always evolving* story.

The paper proceeds as follows: In the *first* section we outline the normative ideal of multicultural citizenship that was the basis of our study. In the *second* section, we provide a brief historical background to the Sri Lankan Tamil community, (since we conclude that this background is relevant to understanding the Tamil settlement experience); and an overview of the settlement

⁶ Each interview is coded to preserve anonymity. When we cite interviewees, we will refer to them by number (based on the order in which they were interviewed) either as Ind1 (referring to Individuals 1-10) or as Org1 (referring to the individual interviewed as spokesperson for the ten organizations), or as Fam1 (referring to the family interview) or Group1. Focus Group participants will be cited as Focus Group Ind1 through Ind8. The politician will be cited as City Official 1, and the three planners as Planners 1-3.

⁷ In the next paper (Dickout 2004a) we describe how one new Tamil organization, the Canadian Tamil Congress, is attempting to move beyond the familiar model of a settlement services organization, into a role of advocacy for, and participation by, Tamils in the wider society. That paper also probes urban governance structures in Toronto and the responsibilities of planners engaged in social development in assisting the integration of immigrant communities.

geography and history of Tamils in Toronto and Vancouver. The *third* section then draws on our interviews to develop an account of the challenges faced by Tamil community members, the barriers to integration, and some of the policy issues regarding settlement. These include the specific problems facing seniors, women, and youth; and other challenges around identity, cultural differences, and the urban landscape. In the *fourth* section we shift from individual stories to an account of the role of Tamil community-based organizations in assisting the settlement process. Here we find an astonishing story of self-reliance, of fear (of government, neighbors, police, and so on), and of isolationist tendencies, but also an evolving story of efforts to work with city officials, police, service providers, granting agencies, and other community organizations, to further the integration of Tamils in Toronto. It is here that the Vancouver story diverges dramatically from that of the Toronto Tamil community, and we speculate as to why that is the case. In this section we also discuss one of the (many) paradoxes of a multicultural society: the possibility that the very policies that acknowledge and encourage cultural diversity may also discourage efforts by ethno-cultural groups to integrate. However, that observation must be balanced with another. A powerful dimension of newcomer experience is that of not feeling welcome, of not belonging, of not feeling comfortable in the public sphere; and the understandable response is to put even more emphasis on the importance of ethno-cultural community. The *fifth* section draws on the focus group discussion with members of the CTC to go deeper into the lived experience of multiculturalism. In this section we return to our notion of the inclusive city and multicultural citizenship, asking whether, over the past twenty years, Tamils settling in Toronto have begun to acquire a sense of their right to participation, and their right to the city. *In conclusion*, we tease out from our focus group session a Tamil notion of a ‘rich multiculturalism’ that corresponds closely to the normative ideal of multicultural citizenship that we articulated in section one. From the perspective and experience of the focus group participants, that ideal has not yet been realized. Thus we spell out what would be involved in moving towards this ‘rich multiculturalism,’ in a policy sense, for federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and for NGOs.

1. Multiculturalism and Citizenship: An evolving discourse

‘The right to the city is like a cry and a demand ... a transformed and renewed right to urban life (Lefebvre 1996: 158)

In the second paper in this series, Sandercock (2003b) brought to the foreground the importance of debates about the meaning of citizenship as part of an *urban policy response* to the increasing presence of foreign migrants in global cities. Here we want to further tease out an evolving

relationship between multiculturalism, citizenship, and cities. Prominent immigration scholars Stephen Castles and Mark Miller (1998: 252) have argued that ‘multicultural citizenship appears to be the most viable solution to the problem of defining membership of a nation-state in an increasingly mobile world’. Their multicultural model is a combination of a set of policies to respond to the needs of new settlers – language policies and culturally sensitive social service provision, for example – *and* a statement about the openness of the nation to cultural diversity. This multicultural model already exists in Australia and Canada, but there is perhaps more that needs to be said about multicultural citizenship. Castles and Miller’s work, like most of the debates on citizenship, takes for granted that this is a right conferred by and related to the nation-state. But, as scholars of immigration and integration are increasingly arguing, the lived complexities of migrant integration occur in cities and neighborhoods, and usually in the largest and most economically dynamic cities of any nation. Thus there is an emerging discourse around the notion of urban or local citizenship (Siemiatycki and Isin 1997; Holston and Appadurai 1999; Isin 1999; Isin 2000; Brodie 2000; Purcell 2003; Sandercock 2003b), understood as the practices through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to maintain and expand existing rights to the city, on the basis of their difference. This involves a more substantive notion of citizenship that goes beyond the formal, legal notion of *becoming a citizen* (that is, being granted citizenship by the nation-state), and extends to the lived, everyday, sociological experience of *being a citizen*. This in turn involves attempts by immigrant groups to establish collective cultural expressions of their identity in the form of places of worship, commercial environments, recreational facilities, community centers, as well as claims on and the use of public space in everyday life, the ability to transform the built environment in ways that reflect cultural diversity, and a subjective sense of belonging (Sandercock 2003b).

This is a *normative ideal of multicultural citizenship* that has political implications and urban policy consequences. The political implications include the encouragement of the political participation of migrants and the openness of the society to being redefined in the process, to new notions of an emerging common identity. This involves at the very least an expansion of the spaces of democracy, through participation at the local level, and a model of agonistic democracy (Sandercock 2003a) in which there is no closure to the multicultural political project of inclusion: that is, no permanent state of integration and harmony towards which society is moving, but an always contested engagement with and continually redefined notion of the common good and shared destiny of the citizens of any city.

The normative project here is to imagine a citizenship that gives flesh to the *philosophy* of a multicultural nation, *and* acknowledges the everyday lived reality of multiculturalism, in the streets and neighborhoods, pubs and shopping centers, places of everyday encounter and exchange in our *cities*. Using a broad definition of citizenship, detached from the nation-state, as ‘rights and responsibilities associated with membership in a political community’ (Purcell 2003:566), we might draw on Henri Lefebvre’s notion of ‘the right to the city’ as a way of rethinking citizenship at the level of the urban. For Lefebvre (1996), the ‘right to the city’ entails two main rights: the right to appropriate urban space, and the right to participate in the production of urban space. The first of these describes the right to full and complete usage of urban space in everyday life, (which had a specific meaning for Lefebvre, thinking about the isolation of immigrants in housing estates on the periphery, deprived of access to the historic center.) It means the right to live, play, work in, represent, characterize, and occupy urban space and make one’s mark on it, including the mark of difference. The second describes the right to participate in decisions that shape and create urban space. For our purposes of an enriched definition of citizenship, this latter point would need to be expanded to include the right not only to participate in decisions concerning the production of urban space, but also the broader right to participation in the *political community* of the city.

This then is the theoretical framework for this study, an explicitly normative framework that seeks to match an existing multicultural philosophy at the level of the nation-state with a more grounded, everyday notion of citizenship that acknowledges the *lived spatiality of immigration* and the attendant struggles of integration. Our research explores the extent to which such a notion of citizenship is being experienced and/or struggled for.

2. Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto and Vancouver: historical background⁸ and immigrant settlement geography

Our research suggests that the political and cultural history of the Sri Lankan Tamil community, particularly their struggle for equality in their homeland, has directly influenced their process of settlement and level of civic participation in Canada, and specifically in Toronto. Their story reflects the challenges and complexities associated with attaining full, democratic, multicultural citizenship for newcomers of a visible minority, and especially for those who have arrived as refugees from a war-torn country. In this section, we provide a brief historical context of Sri Lankan Tamil immigration to Canada, with particular emphasis on the postcolonial climate in Sri Lanka. We then

⁸ The historical background draws directly from Dickout (2004).

offer an overview of the social geography of the Sri Lankan Tamil community as it has established itself in migrations to Toronto and Vancouver.

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (known as Ceylon until 1972) is located 29 kilometres off the southeastern tip of the Indian subcontinent. Twenty percent of the island's 19-20 million inhabitants live in urban centers, while the other 80% live in small towns, village and rural agricultural communities (CIA, 2001). The three largest ethnic groups are the Sinhalese (74%), Tamils (17%) and the Moors, often referred to as Muslims (7%). The majority of Sinhalese are Buddhists. Most Tamils are Hindu, but a small number identify as Christian or other religions. Since 1983, the country has been engaged in a violent internal ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority, one that has resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives, mostly in the northern and eastern provinces, traditionally home to the Tamil people (see Maps 1 and 2). The northern-most region of the country, known as the Jaffna Peninsula, has been since the early 13th century the ancestral base of Sri Lankan Tamils, who refer to it as Eelam, or homeland. The strong connection to this region has provided the basis for Tamil nationalist claims led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) militant group, for a distinct national identity and the right to full political, economic and social control over the area (Wilson, 2000). The LTTE's battle for secession has been unremitting since 1983, except for the ceasefires of 1989-1990, 1994 and 2001 to present (Dickout 2004).

The history of this conflict goes back many centuries, and is traced through the existence of the distinct languages, religions, and cultures of the Sinhalese and Tamil peoples. Early settlement patterns established a strong relationship with a defined territory. Both ethnic groups are defined by their religious affiliation and through caste, and were threatened throughout European colonization with missions to subvert and convert these beliefs and traditions into Christianity. The period of British colonisation inflamed differences and created rivalries between Sinhalese and Tamils for positions of political and economic power within colonial circles. Tamils were often privileged in education through British missionary schools, which better prepared them to take up positions as civil servants. In the lead-up to independence in 1948, each group had its own vision for the future of Sri Lanka, based on the power of their ethnic identity (Dickout 2004).

The first Independent Constitution was written in 1948 under a Sinhalese majority who took power over independent Ceylon through a landslide victory. In 1956 the Sinhalese government replaced English with Sinhala as the country's official language. This action ousted many Tamils from civil service positions where they had been well represented for decades and further inflamed the antagonism between the two groups. The 'Sinhala only' policy pointedly removed the possibility

of fashioning an integrated, multiethnic Sri Lanka based on equality and tolerance (Little 1994). In subsequent decades, Tamils were denied equal access to education, health care, employment, and land ownership; and were unsuccessful in their attempt to gain regional autonomy for Tamil-majority areas. Economic restructuring that included neo-liberal policy implementation, pushing those already at the fringes of Sri Lankan society further to the margins, particularly Tamil and a number of Sinhalese youth, marked the 1970s. By 1980, Sri Lankan society was hopelessly polarized. Ethnically inspired violence killed many thousands, while 100,000 Tamils were made homeless in the capital city of Colombo, and another 175,000 in other regions, particularly in the Jaffna Peninsula. These events foreshadowed the escalation of conflict that eventually led to full-scale civil war in 1983 (Dickout 2004).

Even before the civil war, some Tamils began to emigrate. But once the war began, hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils fled their country, the majority to the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, with significant numbers going to Australia, Norway, and other European countries (Fuglerud 1999). But the largest migration outside of India has come to Canada (Org6). Before 1983, the small Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Canada were mostly educated, professional, and English speaking, and many of them had lived or worked in Africa or Europe before arriving in Canada (Kandasamy 1995). Since 1983, the number of Tamil refugees arriving in Canada has increased dramatically. ‘You have a community that has grown from close to 2500 to 200,000 in a span of twenty years. That is a tremendous growth, and that basically takes you back to issues and problems’ (Org4). Convention Refugees and refugee claimants are now the largest immigrant class of Tamils in Canada (Statistics Canada 2001a). Some families migrated together, often spending time in other European countries (Norway, for example) as they awaited acceptance into Canada, as was noted by a number of interview participants in this study (Ind8, Ind9). More often, families joined other members who were already admitted into the country at an earlier time (the second largest immigrant class) (Statistics Canada 2001a).

Toronto’s Sri Lankan Tamil community began to establish itself in the 1960s, but grew dramatically after 1983. Though it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants through statistical data, Statistics Canada 2001 cites immigration from Sri Lanka to Toronto peaking in 1992 with the acceptance of 10,478 newcomers (2001b). The same year, 10,220 immigrants who arrived in Toronto registered Tamil as their native language (Statistics Canada 2001c). Between 1991 and 1995, newcomers from Sri Lanka were second only to Somalis as a percentage of total immigrants arriving in Toronto. This pattern has not been evident in Vancouver. In 2001, Statistics Canada reported 95,762 Tamils living in Canada, 71,799 of whom were living in

Toronto and 2079 in Vancouver (2001c). But conversations with members of the Tamil community in Toronto (Org3, Org4) push these numbers upwards of 200,000 nation-wide, 90% of whom are said to live in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Map 3). In 2003, the City of Toronto reported Tamil as the fifth main language spoken at home, after English, French, Chinese, and Italian (City of Toronto 2003).

Based on our interviews, a brief history of Tamil migration to Toronto might be summarized in *four stages*. Those arriving in the two decades before the outbreak of civil war in 1983 were predominantly professionals with high education levels, often having lived and worked in the UK or Africa before being accepted in Canada. These Tamils had a strong assimilationist desire, in wanting to fit into Canadian society, be accepted, and make a new life. While they were relatively invisible in the public sphere, they were quietly preserving their cultural and religious traditions in the domain of their private life. The temple, as the central cultural and religious symbol (Ind8), held this small community together. The temple started in people's homes, then moved into a trailer (Org9), but as the population grew and acquired assets, work began on a large temple.

‘When I came in 1985, only one temple was there, it’s in Richmond Hill. It’s the largest temple. At the time it was set in a small trailer. In a very small trailer. Today there is a massive building, I think it is the largest building in North America’ (Org 9).

The only community organization that existed before 1983 was the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada (TESC), established in 1976. The TESC functioned at that time mainly ‘as an organization where Eelam Tamils get together for various occasions, and have some kind of celebration’ (Org6).

With the onset of civil war, a refugee crisis soon ensued, and Canada became a focal point for those fleeing the violence but who did not want to go to India. For the past two decades, Tamils arriving in Toronto have been predominantly convention refugees and refugee claimants (Statistics Canada 2001a). The first refugee arrivals were mostly unaccompanied young men, with limited education and English language skills (various interviewees). They left their homeland to save their own lives as well as the lives of their families, whom they hoped to sponsor once they were established in Canada (Org9). For the next decade, the main issue was survival. Once landed in Toronto, a group of young men would often share an apartment, usually in St. Jamestown, and work at multiple jobs.

‘Well, at that time a lot of people laugh at us because we were probably six or seven guys living in a one-bedroom apartment at the beginning. I remember that. And our food budget, when we split it comes to about \$60 a month or \$100 a month, that’s all. Because six guys, and two of these guys take the evening shift, and some guys work night shift or day shift so the beds are available to all the others. Maybe we all sleep

on the floor, or go out to the bars, you know, somewhere outside... That is how we lived in the early stages. Very hard.’ (Org9)

A ‘refugee system’ of self-help emerged. Through organizations like TESC, a newcomer was put in touch with another recent arrival:

‘The community organisation would say they would take care of them, so they wouldn’t have to be detained in custody: then a recent arrival would undertake to help one person, feed and cloth, get metro pass, etc, until the guy’s got a job... then he does it for the next person’ (Ind7).

Recalling campaigning for the 1985 municipal election, the City Councilor for the area recalls:

‘In the period of time knocking on doors, suddenly we would have – Sherbourne Street – in the Sherbourne Street apartments we had a new set of faces behind the door that we had never seen before. And what I observed was, knock on the door, open the door - by a man- generally in a sarong with a whole bunch of other men, no women, kind of looking at me. And this was repeated apartment after apartment after apartment. And so after a while I started to put the pattern together. These must be refugees’ (City Official 1).

The same City Councilor told us how quickly this pattern of young men sharing apartments changed.

‘In the late 80s we had in our school in Rose Avenue, a really serious issue that began to happen. We didn’t have sufficient schoolchildren for the school and it was up for closure, it was starting to get below 350 children... And then literally overnight there was a change. We went to the doors. Those men were no longer there. In fact quite the contrary. They were now throughout the neighborhood, mostly at 650 Parliament, ... at 280 (Parliament), those were the first two buildings. ... And suddenly behind the door, knock, knock, open the door – families! Woman, man, baby or toddler, and suddenly you had an influx of the community beginning to settle. The women had been brought over, they were having children or they already had children in Sri Lanka, which they were bringing with them and they were settling into a bigger accommodation. ... At the same time, Parliament Street at the north end started to get a couple of Sri Lankan grocery stores. There was a reading room that was set up. A couple of those things sort of started to bubble along. And I started to realize as some of the leaders came forward that there was actually a structure and a community behind it. But the real indication to me was that suddenly the 350 children we had at Rose Avenue jumped almost overnight to 650’ (City Official 1).

Through the City Councilor’s eyes we see and experience the rapid transition, towards the end of the first decade of refugee arrivals, of a new community emerging, geographically concentrated in St. Jamestown. As this Tamil migration shifts from young men to the formation of families, so too does a tightly-knit neighborhood emerge as small businesses open by and for this community and the area that is now known as ‘Little Jaffna’ (within St. Jamestown) begins to take

shape (see Photos 1-4). From its beginnings in isolation and strangeness, Toronto Tamils begin to 'feel homely' (Ind3), colonizing a small part of the inner city, surrounded now by familiar sights and smells, stores and saris.

The conversion of St. Jamestown into an immigrant community was rapid. Originating in the 1870s as an upper middle class neighborhood filled with prestigious Victorian homes, the land was bought by a consortium of private developers in 1950 after the City of Toronto announced major zoning amendments that increased the allowable building coverage (Dunkelman 2002). By the end of the 1950s the consortium had demolished the entire housing stock of the area and built Toronto's first highrise apartments. Although designed as a neighborhood for upwardly mobile singles and professionals, the developers' dream was never realized. (It was a decade too early for the gentrifying baby boomers.) Almost from the start, St. Jamestown was populated by low to moderate income immigrant families.

Today the St. Jamestown area is part of the most dense census tract in Canada, with 18 highrise apartments housing around 15,000 people in 32.1 acres. Many Tamils have now, a decade later, moved out of the downtown core, but they are still the second largest group of recent immigrants in St. Jamestown, and Tamil is the most common language spoken in the area (City of Toronto, 2001). 'Little Jaffna' includes a dense variety of Sri Lankan grocery stores, restaurants, services and community organizations located in and around the junction of Wellesley and Parliament Streets (see Photos 1-4). The area also includes a hospital, school, and space for a new community center, slated for construction in the near future.

Recently there has been a move of Tamil families from St. Jamestown, to a community a number of blocks south within the same ward boundary. According to the City Councilor for the area:

'As they have settled in Canada for a more lengthy time they have become eligible for public housing, and as such they have now been able to move into a larger public housing project just south of St. Jamestown, which is Regent Park. So there is a huge influx of Tamil-speaking people and Tamil families into Regent Park, and they have made quite a contribution to Regent Park... So it is a bit like one family went and they liked it and it was sort of in the neighborhood... not too far away from the community that existed and that they had settled into. SO that's the big new community in terms of settlement' (City Official 1).

Tamil communities living within the downtown core are also located in the areas known as Parkdale, and Wallace Emerson, where a Tamil Housing Coop was built in 1988 by the Society for the Aid of Sri Lankan Minorities (SACEM). (see Map 4).

During this phase of refugee settlement, as single young men became husbands with families, and 'Little Jaffna' emerged as a home away from home, new community organizations were founded throughout the city specifically to address urgent settlement issues. SACEM was one; others included the Toronto Tamils Seniors Association (1997), Tamil Seniors Wellness Centre (1997), Academy of Tamil Arts and Technology (1990), Canada-Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (1991), South Asian Women's Centre (1982), and the Canadian Tamil Youth Development (CanTYD), established in 1998. These organizations and their activities will be discussed in Section 4. The point here is how quickly the new Tamil community organized itself for self-help purposes. And while these organizations were getting started, there was another migration, this time within metropolitan Toronto, as families in St. Jamestown seeking more space and status moved to the eastern and northern suburbs, providing another beachhead within the city, to which some of the continuing stream of new arrivals could move directly, and find help from fellow countrymen, avoiding the inner city altogether.

By 2003, the largest overall population of Tamils lived in these eastern and northern suburbs of Scarborough and North York, as well as other outlying suburbs (see Map 3). During the 1990s this out-migration of Tamils occurred as they became more familiar with Toronto's landscape and culture, accessed education, secured better employment, and were reunited with family members. Tamil families arriving in Toronto with financial resources, or with recognized professional qualifications, tended to settle in these suburban areas (City Official 1). This movement to Scarborough might be considered a third phase in the Tamil settlement in Toronto. According to one interviewee:

'Movement to Scarborough started probably in the 80s and really accelerated in the 90s. ...a lot of families were sponsored, and definitely in the 90s that doubled or tripled. You have individuals now becoming families and sponsoring either wife or husband or their parents here. With that there was a need for space, and definitely Scarborough offered the cheapest I guess' (Ind2).

While there are a growing number of Tamil homeowners in suburbs like Scarborough, apartment buildings occupied by Tamil immigrants and refugees are also part of this suburban landscape. The living conditions in these apartments are poor, as more newcomers struggle to find their footing. During a tour of Scarborough's Tamil enclaves, one Tamil interviewee (who also worked as a real estate agent) described one such mixed area:

'We are surrounded by apartment buildings here, run by slumlords who don't maintain and continue to increase the rent. This is probably the first point of contact for people who come here for their first years and then move on. We are on the southwest corner of Kennedy and Eglinton where it is probably 50% Tamil. We are traveling by a travel agency, jewelry store, new shops, a gift shop owned by a Tamil family, a CD store, this one, Imagine Tech, is an amazing institution. It is a computer

training facility, probably considered a slum in Toronto, but it has produced some incredible people over the years and a lot of people have benefited from it. It is Tamil run. On the second floor there is a photographer studio... This is a professional building, lawyer's offices, doctors etc... Computech is another training store... On top, you have lots of businesses that just started up. It is a good place to start up because rent is really cheap. And they do very well. They start off here and then they franchise out... Tamils actually love to be capitalists, wanting to have that American dream... not the Canadian dream, but the American dream. Yes, it is about that. It is about who you are and success is measured by money and title' (Ind2).

As the above quote demonstrates, there is already a thriving entrepreneurial section of the neighborhood colonized by Tamils, everything from jewelry and CD stores to professional offices and high-tech startups and training facilities. But the traditional side of this community is evident in this same (416) postcode area (Scarborough), in which there are no less than eight [one website quotes at least 14] temples, some of which are in former warehouses in an industrial part of the suburb.

Thus far we have described three stages of settlement in Toronto. The first, pre-1983, comprised mostly individuals with professional or business skills, who kept a low public profile but worked to perpetuate Tamil culture in private life. The second phase, beginning in 1983 with the refugee influx, was a period of struggling for survival, during which a Tamil enclave was established in St. Jamestown ("Little Jaffna") and community organizations emerged to deal with urgent settlement issues. A third phase was the move out to the suburbs by a more confident generation, and the establishing of another Tamil enclave that includes significant entrepreneurial activity, but also a significant struggling low income community still trying to establish itself.

The fourth phase has less to do with the social geography of settlement and more to do with an emerging political face of the Tamil community. In October of 2000 the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) was established. Unlike the previous community organizations already noted, the CTC was formed as an advocacy organization for addressing the concerns of the Tamil community in the wider political arena, lobbying all levels of government on a range of issues, and also reaching out to other ethno-cultural organizations in an attempt to begin building coalitions. This entirely new development is the subject of our next paper (Dickout 2004a). In the next section, we turn back to stages two and three of this settlement narrative, and outline the range of challenges that Tamil newcomers have faced in establishing a life for themselves in Toronto. But before we get there, we must briefly describe the pattern of Tamil settlement in Vancouver, for it is an entirely different story to that of Toronto.

Vancouver

There is no parallel in Vancouver to this four-stage settlement story. Firstly, the number of Tamils who have come to Vancouver is microscopic compared to Toronto. Tamils with professional qualifications began arriving in very small numbers from the 1950s to the 1980s. Until 1984, there were less than 20 Tamils arriving each year. In 1984, this increased to 55, in 1989 to 107, and since the mid-1990s, almost 200 Tamil arrivals per year. (Statistics Canada 2001). These individual and family immigrants did not gravitate to any one part of the city, and they did not form Tamil community organizations. After the outbreak of civil war, there was an increase in Tamil immigrants, (Statistics Canada 2001b), but nothing like the influx that Toronto has experienced. And the settlement pattern continued to be scattered throughout the metropolitan area rather than concentrated in one or two neighborhoods. Based on our interviews with Tamils in Vancouver, the community here is fragmented: both scattered in space, and pursuing individual goals rather than shared community aspirations.

3. Integration challenges and barriers: the Tamils in Toronto

‘People just don’t recognize our situation, or don’t want to hear it... as a whole, our voices are not heard’ (Org2).

Given that the majority of Tamil settlers since 1983 have been refugees from a war-torn society, we may expect significant settlement difficulties. Indeed, in one of the few studies of these issues in Canada, *Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis of the 1996 Census*, Michael Ornstein (2000) identifies Tamils as two of the five severely disadvantaged groups relative to the larger Toronto community in terms of levels of poverty, unemployment, over-representation in low-skill jobs, low education, and high high-school dropout rates. Thanks to the willingness of our Tamil interviewees to share their settlement stories, we can translate this statistical analysis into actual human experiences; we can expand on the list of issues identified by Ornstein; we can add balance to his grim statistics by drawing attention to some of the strengths of the Tamil community; and we can provide complexity beyond raw statistical data by teasing out some of the paradoxes of the Tamil story.

When we asked our interviewees about their hopes and dreams when they arrived, we heard the same response many times. They had no dreams: their only hope was for safety. Faced with the struggle for survival, that thought remained paramount.

‘We are not very happy with what we have. But we have satisfaction that we are safe. Our life is not in danger... our life is insecure back home. When we came here, we knew we would have a place that nobody would put you down, or no one would try to kill you, or overrule you, or to look down upon you. We were so happy when we came here. But after coming here, we face other problems like racism, unemployment, underemployment, challenges, financial difficulties. A lot of challenges...’ (Org2).

While the challenges of unemployment and underemployment are easily grasped, and have been well-documented in studies of other immigrant groups whose professional qualifications and skills are not recognized in this country, there is an array of other issues, perhaps less tangible, that have been less well-documented. These include specific social and cultural issues affecting seniors, youth, and women; various issues relating to the built environment, including a perception of not feeling welcome in many parts of the city; issues of service provision, where hostility is experienced; and issues around sociability, identity, insecurity, and fear.

Seniors

For seniors, housing is a big issue. Many immigrants had lived in spacious but inexpensive homes before migrating:

‘Recent immigrants can’t afford big houses and are confined to... I would say these apartments are like prison cells. Because back home, though we are from a third world country, we had, they had, big spacious houses with back and front yards. They were doing their own gardening and they grew their own vegetables. It was peaceful and happy... they are forced to come to Canada for their survival ... and they have to be confined to these small spaces like prison cells. A lot of isolation and psychological trauma and emotional upset’ (Org2).

A number of interviewees stressed the need for a Seniors Home for Tamil Seniors (Org2, Org5). A young Tamil doctor talked of a different kind of ‘prison’. She told us that ‘elders don’t get the same respect here as they do back home, there’s loss of status, and people feel like they’re in prison’ (Ind6). Life is difficult for any older person who is not mobile. Meals on Wheels exists to make life easier for such folks, but there are cultural differences over food preferences that make this a less than satisfactory solution. A volunteer Tamil social worker told us that ‘they get Meals on Wheels, but our Tamils want our type of food’ (Ind1). With the change of lifestyle in a new country, including different levels of physical activity and different food, come health problems like diabetes (Ind6).

There are frustrations for seniors who come to join families here, only to find themselves thrust into a very different way of life than back home.

‘A lot of older people who have been sponsored by relatives have come here. And then they come here and they are like unpaid servants... They have to cook, clean, look after the kids, that’s why our people have sponsored us and brought us here... it is frustrating’ (Org1).

These frustrations are increased when elders are looking after Tamil children, who sometimes refuse to speak Tamil, and treat the elders with less respect than they are accustomed to back home. The elders are used to giving children and youth advice, but here they find this advice is not welcome. Children are taught at school to make up their own minds, and they don’t want to listen to the stricter and more traditional ways of the elders (Org1). These kinds of conflicts are accentuated when ‘some older people are scared to go outside and don’t know how to use public transport and don’t speak English, so the bus drivers are rude to them. ... So they like to stay among Tamils, out of fear’ (Ind6).

We repeatedly heard Tamils lament that there is no gathering place for Tamil seniors, other than the temples. In Scarborough this has resulted in seniors using the malls as a place to get together (Org3, Org11, Fam1). One Tamil teenager told us that her grandfather hangs out in the Bridlewood mall. ‘Like they have their little club ... they go play cards in Bridlewood Mall just to have a space to be together because they don’t have one’ (Fam1). Another interviewee argued that the Tamil community needs its own senior’s center. ‘Here the seniors don’t have any space to share their feelings. You can look at some of the malls in Scarborough, all the seniors sit down there talking. Big malls and small malls too’ (Org11). We were also told that one group of seniors who gathered regularly at a suburban mall was continually harassed by security guards and told to move on, which they eventually did.

Women

As for seniors, so too Tamil women have suffered from isolation, lack of support, and depression.

‘Like at home, just walking in the village, everyone knows you. A woman who is having some problems, when she is at home, even the vegetable woman in the village would ask, “How are you feeling today?” Here she would just walk by. ... That is what is lacking here. There the whole community knows exactly what is going on in this house. ... They don’t have to go through grief counseling because the entire community is there to support them. But here you are in a cooped up apartment, like all locked up by yourself ... it is very difficult to have been displaced, uprooted from loved ones ... that is why we have a lot of depression, rate of suicide has increased in our community too...’ (Org1).

For women who work, there is a different kind of friction within the family, when she brings home money ‘and the man feels a little bit, like he is, whatever, he suffers. Like he feels she has to provide money for me to live on, and he feels really bad about it’ (Org1).

There are of course generational differences in this respect. Women in their thirties and forties who don’t have a job ‘are still very dependent on their husbands, very traditional. Depression is a major issue’ (Ind9). According to one interviewee, a 59 year old male who has been in Toronto for 28 years, ‘the males still like to run the show. The men still play their own games’ (Ind7). Whether working or staying at home, women are expected to instill traditional values in the children. But in situations when women speak little English, and their children are in school and fluent in English, then parents often depend on the children for even simple transactions like making phone calls. ‘So it is like reverse – children become parents and parents are at the mercy of children. That gives power to the children’ (Org1). The children are being taught at school to think for themselves, and the parents see this as undermining their authority (Org1).

The story is different for younger women. One of our female participants talked about how she had changed, through education and being here, from initially picturing herself with husband and kids to now seeing herself as more career-oriented, interested in money, and in doing things differently (Ind9). And while older women talked about their favorite places in the city as being either the temple, or their home, younger women talked of hanging out in bookshops and coffee shops, and were not so interested in the temple.

Clearly these younger women are part of a transitional generation, living between worlds, identifying themselves as ‘Tamil Canadian’ and no longer feeling at home when they revisit Sri Lanka. The same young woman who talked about becoming more career-oriented described a trip back to Sri Lanka. ‘I felt like I was a stranger. I was treated as a stranger. I speak the language, but still I was an outsider. That’s how I felt’ (Ind9).

Youth

This experience of being ‘in between,’ or living in ‘two worlds’ (Org1) is perhaps experienced most powerfully by Tamil youth. In talking of Tamil youth we need to distinguish between those who were born here (or came at a very young age), and those who arrived (either with parents, or unattached), in their teens: as well as between those who are studying for university and those who drop out of high school.

‘Unattached youth who come and live with relatives are a problem. They discipline them too much so they rebel and go out on the streets and become homeless. So the

City is doing a homelessness project, which is important for our youth. They don't indulge in a lot of recreational activities. That is something new to them, so they don't do that, so there is a group of young men that get together and binge' (Org1).

One of our interviewees, who works in education, talked about the need for shelters for abused women and children, and foster homes for kids having difficulties (those who came without parents). He argued that mainstream foster homes were not appropriate, calling them 'alien environments' where the food 'isn't what they want to eat,' and so on (Ind3).

Young men who never attended or finished high school before coming to Canada and who have poor command of English find it extremely difficult to get jobs (Ind9). Some of these low-income youth get involved in drug abuse and a cycle of self-destruction. One Tamil counselor who works with youth commented on the growing anger of this generation. 'The kids, the terminology they use! The anger I see! And it's growing' (Ind10). This same counselor noted that the Tamil community is really two communities. One is well educated, wealthy, with happy families and 'great lives'. The rest, by far the larger number, 'live in low-income housing in not great environments: you see drug abuse, violence, abuse'.

Intergenerational conflict is perhaps inevitable in the migration saga, especially among immigrant groups from more traditional and patriarchal cultures⁹. Youth live in two worlds, wanting to dress and behave like their peers, and getting into trouble for it.

'You are not supposed to be dressing like that. OK mom, I won't... but I packed my other kind of clothes in my bag. Go in locker room. Change. And then I'm caught. What happens? I get beaten. And when I get beaten, what happens. The Children's Aid Society comes and apprehends. In the past year, the most apprehended children have been Tamils' (Org1).

Not surprisingly, Tamil youth are not nearly so involved in the life of the temple. They like clubs, parties and malls (Ind3, Fam1). In the suburbs, they do not use the parks for sports or other recreational purposes (although some do 'hang out' in certain parks) or the Community Centre, because they don't feel welcome (Ind8). But in St. Jamestown there is a recreation center with a Tamil worker. 'It's like, it's their own community centre. You don't have that apprehension thinking that you are not wanted or that you are not welcome enough' (Ind8). This interviewee, a downtown social worker who came to Toronto in 1992, talked about the importance of service providers and recreation centers being culturally sensitive, having some idea of preferred recreations (cricket, rather than baseball, for example), and understanding how to create an alternate environment which is welcoming, through its signs, through the cultural items on display, and by having Tamil speaking

⁹ Such traditions and patriarchies of course vary enormously, based on class.

staff (Ind8). An older Tamil man talked of how ‘this city needs a hundred more community centers and recreation facilities ... to keep youth busy and serious about picking up some skill, or sport, or whatever. That is what municipalities should be doing’ (Ind7). This same man, in his late 50s, also commented there was a problem within the Tamil community of ‘elders still trying to tell young people what profession they should be going into,’ and ‘of holding onto positions in our organizations rather than grooming young people. It is one of the reasons why young people are doing their own thing’ (Ind7).

Socio-spatial issues

Having discussed some of the settlement issues that are age and gender-specific, we’ll now turn to some of our more general research questions on citizenship and the city. One of our critical foci in framing this study was to explore ways in which Tamils use the city, the extent to which they feel ‘at home’ in it, the ways in which they have appropriated urban spaces and made them their own, imprinting them with their cultural identity and social practices. Obviously these questions are central to exploring the normative ideal of multicultural citizenship as involving the ‘right to the city’. These were the hardest questions to get direct answers to, but we can infer a lot from the directions in which conversations went, and the kinds of information that came out indirectly.

For example, most people over the age of 30, when asked about their favorite places in the city, answered either the temple, or home, or both. This is not strange if we listen to one interviewee who told us that in the north and east of Sri Lanka (which Tamils identify as their ‘homeland’) there are temples

‘in each and every street. So there is a saying in Tamil [which he recites, in Tamil], it means that, don’t live in a place there is no temple ... see the temple is identified as the center of the village. So here also there are lots of temples, and that’s why the temples are thriving’ (Ind8).

So we could infer that for most Tamils over the age of thirty, the urban environment fulfils their needs, in that they have housing, and they have an abundance of temples. We should also note that building these temples has been a high priority for the community, and they have done this to a great extent with their own resources.

But what else might this answer mean? If people only mention the temple and their home as favorite places, does this mean that the rest of the city is alien to them, alien in the sense of unwelcoming, strange, frightening for some segments of the community. There is quite a bit of evidence from our interviews that this is indeed the case. For example, we have already noted that young Tamils in the suburbs do not use the parks and recreation centers, ‘the reason being, there is a

perceived... they must be thinking they are not welcome' (Ind 8). On the other hand, Tamil youth in St. Jamestown do use the recreation center there, apparently because there is a Tamil worker, and more of a sense of welcome, and of appropriate programs.

We also learned of different perceptions of friendliness or neighborliness in the suburbs compared with St. Jamestown. 'A white person here [in St. Jamestown] will say Hi, but not in Scarborough. They live far away from each other [other cultures] so people don't mix with each other' (Org2). It is tempting, but risky, to speculate that the urban form of the suburbs, with their detached houses and single use zoning, discourages any kind of intercultural encounter let alone exchange. What might equally be true is that those folks who are not eager for intercultural encounters seek out the suburbs precisely for their greater privacy and lack of spontaneous encounters with people unlike oneself. Further research is needed here to detect (or not) patterns of 'white flight' from these suburban areas, to others further away, once Tamils (or any other visible minority) become a significant presence in certain suburbs; or to detect other forms of unfriendly behavior.

We learned that, 15 years ago, Tamil women were afraid to venture out in public wearing their saris, but now this is totally accepted (Org9). We also learned that young people, while not feeling welcome in the parks or community centers of Scarborough and North York, do hang out in the Bridlewood Mall, in Scarborough Town Centre, and in coffee shops, which suggests a growing confidence about their right to occupy public and semi-public spaces. 'Coffee shops like Coffee Time and Tim Horton's are the big ones. I think every Coffee Time has Tamil people in it' (Fam1). This may also tell us something about the inappropriate design and/or management of parks and recreation centers, if young Tamils don't find them welcoming or 'user-friendly'.

Perhaps most significantly, we have already described 'Little Jaffna' in St. Jamestown and the area around Kennedy and Eglinton in Scarborough as spaces of predominantly Tamil businesses, professions, and entertainments, as well as residences. In these small enclaves within the larger metropolitan area, Tamils feel not so much a sense of belonging, but rather, a sense that they are 'back home'. 'You feel at home now. I don't feel I'm in Canada. I feel as though I'm in Jaffna or Colombo ... the concentration of Tamils in Scarborough, everywhere you go you meet them, and so you feel homely' (Ind3). On the one hand, the existence of such enclaves indicates a capacity to colonize certain spaces in the new city and make them homely and familiar. On the other hand, the very existence of such spaces signals a lack of integration. What is unclear (and never will be clear) is cause and effect. Do enclaves signify exclusion on the part of the host/dominant culture, or simply an evolutionary stage in a settlement process in which first arrivals need such an enclave to feel physically and psychologically safe, to draw on their homeland network, to earn a living, and

gradually become accustomed to a strange city? Perhaps only time can answer such a question. If enclaves persist beyond the first couple of generations of settlers, it may signify a lack of willingness to integrate. Then again, this could still be related to new settlers' perceptions of hostility in the wider society.

One interviewee told us that Tamils are 'very clan-ish ... they like to be together. Even an outdoor activity, it is four or five Tamil families get together and go. For example, you want to go to a cottage for the weekend, all the families would go, and their family friends are also Sri Lankan' (Org1). But this same person talked about fear, too. 'They don't venture out into unfamiliar places for the fear of not being accepted'. There is no doubt that fear has played a part in the establishing of Tamil enclaves in Scarborough and St. Jamestown, and in some Tamils' reluctance to venture beyond these enclaves. This fear in part reflects the immediate past experience of Tamils in Sri Lanka, but it also reflects their experiences of racism in Toronto, something that interviewees acknowledged, but were reluctant to talk about in detail. Nevertheless, this was a recurring theme, and was stated very strongly in the Focus Group interview, which we will discuss in section five.

This fear of the unknown spaces of the physical city is perhaps reinforced by other fears stemming from the Tamils experience as an oppressed minority in Sri Lanka. They brought with them fears of the army, of police, and even of neighbors. 'Community insecurities are really high among people who've come since 1983' (Ind6). One of the most natural responses to this fear has been that the Tamil community has made extraordinary efforts to take care of itself rather than depend on government services. 'I feel families should look after each other. We should not depend on government' (Ind1). 'The rule in the community is that if you identify an issue, you deal with it' (Ind2). 'The Tamil community takes huge responsibility for itself, especially for bringing families here' (Ind6). 'The history in Canada is of helping themselves' (Org9). This extraordinary mobilisation of the community for self-help and advancement is reflected in the number of the community organizations that came into being in a very short space of time, post-1983. These organisations are the subject of the next section. But first a brief word on the ways in which settlement in Vancouver in this same period has mirrored the stories we have just told.

Vancouver

We had considerable difficulty recruiting participants for our study in Vancouver. We first approached community organizations, and through them, called for willing interviewees. Many people told us they were too busy with work to be able to meet with us. Many women referred us to their husbands, apparently too shy to answer questions themselves. Those with whom we did spend

time were students and young professionals, middle aged male professionals, and elders involved in the Tamil Cultural Society. The younger participants were the most forthcoming, describing to us similar social and cultural issues to the ones we heard in Toronto: the isolation of seniors; the dependence of women on their husbands; and the conflict between youth and their parents. This latter was the most common theme, and was particularly expressed by young women who resented what they regarded as a much-too-strict parental control, which included arranged marriages and parents dictating to children what careers they ought to pursue. Our overall impression was of inward-looking families, oriented on the one hand to individual advancement, and on the other to the maintenance of cultural and religious tradition, rather than to the advancement of ‘the Tamil community’ in Vancouver or Canada. This will be more evident in the next section, on community-based organisations.

4. Community responses: the emergence of Tamil community-based settlement services in Toronto

‘We are a unified community because of the struggle (for freedom and equality in Sri Lanka)’ (Focus Group Ind3).

In 1990 the Academy of Tamil Arts and Sciences was founded. This was not, although it may sound like it, an organization to promote and perpetuate Tamil culture. Rather, the intent was to teach each other computer and other skills for survival in their new home, especially when many of their professional qualifications were not recognized and they were working as dishwashers, and in factory laboring jobs (Org11). The Academy started with thirteen individual donations of \$250, and five computers. It now runs regular training classes for Tamil adults and also a homework club for schoolchildren, to try to overcome the difficulties children are having in ‘settling’ in their classrooms.

In 1991 the Canada-Ceylon Chamber of Commerce was established by four or five individuals who wanted to help fellow Tamils to acquire business skills. Their ‘targets’ were Tamils trained in the professions but unable to find jobs in those professions in Toronto. The idea was that they could be given business skills, and start their own business. The Chamber also promotes businesses that are already established and gives awards for successful businesses. It runs business-related seminars, on time management, computer skills, networking, and the like; and it runs an annual trade show that showcases Tamil businesses and seeks to ‘promote them to the next level in the mainstream of the larger communities’ (Org9).

In 1996 one individual started the Toronto Tamil’s Guide. At first, this was a small organization that ran a hotline for Tamils, giving them various kinds of information, phone numbers

of welfare offices, social assistance, community events, Tamil cinemas, and daily news of what is happening in Sri Lanka. When demand grew, the founder realized that a booklet would be useful, a directory of the Tamil community. The first booklet produced had 174 pages. That was in 1996. Now, in 2003, 'the booklet' is the world's largest Tamil Directory at 1136 pages. It lists 2000 Tamil businesses in North America, 1800 of which are in Toronto (Org10).

There are now nine Tamil-language newspapers, one English-language newspaper focused on Tamil diaspora issues, four 24-hour radio stations, three 24-hour television stations, and upwards of fifteen organizations working to serve the community (Canadian Tamil Congress 2002). What these vignettes reveal is an immigrant community that is fiercely, proudly self-reliant, and cohesive. In the very short space of two decades, these organizations have sprung up to address most of the urgent needs of a rapid influx of settlers, most of whom, as refugees, come with few or no material assets, and in many cases, with little education or English-language facility. There are several explanations for this self-reliant approach to survival. One is fear. As we discussed above, bad experiences as a minority population, with authorities, with government, with police, in Sri Lanka have left Tamils suspicious and afraid of government. Another factor in this cohesiveness is an ongoing concern with issues back home. Our focus group participants stressed that this concern is the 'glue' that keeps the community working actively towards prosperity here, and also peace back home. As one focus group participant explained, 'I think that is one of the reasons Tamils have such good unity here, because we had a common cause' (Focus Group Ind.1).

A number of interviewees talked about this self-reliant approach, and said it is particularly valued among the elders, many of whom worked hard in the early days of settlement to build unity and developed the first of the community organizations. Each organization has emerged to address a specific settlement need or issue. For example, one cluster of organizations addresses housing, employment, language instruction and immigration issues. The Tamil Eelam Society of Canada, one of the first, started as a cultural organization but now concentrates on human rights and refugee issues. The Society for the Aid of Ceylon (Sri Lankan) Minorities (SACEM), worked in the mid-80s to get the Housing Coops established in St. Jamestown and Mississauga. The Tamil Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Ceylon-Canada Chamber of Commerce, and the Toronto Tamil Guide all address employment and networking issues.

In addition, an array of organisations has developed around specific social needs. The Toronto Tamils Seniors Association (TTSA) was established to address the isolation of seniors. They do some outreach, to seniors who are ill. They help seniors who need legal assistance for welfare or immigration issues, and they have a women's group that meets fortnightly. The Tamil Seniors

Wellness Centre, founded in 1997, started on a volunteer basis. Its mandate is to offer counseling for those affected by war and trauma. (This emerged as a result of research done at Mt. Sinai hospital, the Ethno-Racial Seniors Project.) There is a coordinator who is a medical doctor, and an outreach worker (who, in 2002, was found to be only funded for 3.5 hours a week). ‘The seniors and the middle-aged group who have spent most of their lifetime back home, they need a little bit of support and community support and neighbors who can speak their own language so that psychologically the healing is there’ (Org2).

The South Asian Women’s Centre, founded in the early 1980s, while not a specifically Tamil organization, says that 65% of their clients are Tamil, and so too is the coordinator. As a settlement organization, its mandate is helping people to ‘adapt to the process of living in another environment’ (Org1). Their office is in St. Jamestown but they also have a storefront in Scarborough. They help people with a variety of everyday challenges, from how to do the shopping to getting around on public transport, to accessing social services. They also address domestic violence; corporal punishment and issues around the rights of children; and have support groups for women.

A more recent community initiative was the forming of the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD), in 1998. ‘The community took the initiative of forming the organization, funding the organization, and putting manpower and the resources that is required to run an organization, to deal with the issues the community was facing. There was not actually a lot of assistance in the beginning from anybody else’ (Org3). Like all the other organizations, CanTYD began on a shoestring, with volunteer workers, but did eventually receive support from the City’s Community Development Officer for the region, who helped the new organization with their first funding proposal. This entirely youth-run organization has now been successful in getting three grants from the City. The first, from the Community Services Grant program, provided funds for school outreach programs and for setting up drop-in centers in St. Jamestown and Scarborough. A second grant, from the former Access and Equity Division (now the office of Diversity Management and Community Engagement), enabled CanTYD to do a cultural sensitivity training workshop with Emergency Medical Services professionals, and with teachers. They had earlier run such a workshop for police from the 41st and 42nd divisions.

‘I think high-level police administration is not making, taking the initiative to do some of these things. Unfortunately we have to take that step and kind of start to say that we want to do this with your police groups. And they were receptive. At least they let us do. But those kind of things need to start to happen’ (Org3).

The third grant was Breaking the Cycle of Violence, and was for the purpose of addressing gangs and gang violence. According to its Executive Director, CanTYD’s strength continues to be the

high level of volunteer activity. For every one paid staff worker, there are at least 20 volunteers helping that person (Org3). Another interesting initiative has been the running of ‘parents workshops’ for Tamil youth, to develop more understanding by youth of their parents’ stresses, and to encourage more communication.

While CanTYD emerged as a typical Tamil self-help organization, there are some interesting ways in which it has broken out of the mold of other Tamil organizations, most of which are inwardly focused. By contrast, CanTYD has reached out to other organizations, across the ethno-cultural divide, such as the Black youth-serving agencies, Chinese community agencies, and the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA). It has also actively lobbied City Hall and politicians on behalf of youth issues, joined the City’s Youth Gang Work Group, and the Youth Cabinet, and is in regular contact with the City’s community development workers. It has good relationships with the Toronto District School Board, Police Services, and the United Way (one of their major funders). While part of what CanTYD does in terms of service provision might be considered a kind of social work approach, similar to other Tamil service agencies, there is also the beginnings of an advocacy role, and some of the youth active in CanTYD have been central to the formation of the advocacy-oriented CTC (the subject of our next paper).

But there are real limits to what organizations like these can achieve with primarily volunteer staff and minimal resources. As one interviewee commented, there are 32,000 youth in Toronto, and two or three drop-in centers is a drop in the ocean compared with the need (Org4). There are also problems of burnout. Another participant told us that he had been working as a volunteer in CanTYD, but the level of need was so great that he couldn’t take it anymore.

So far, we have been describing an admirable story of self-reliance, an apparently quite cohesive community that has mobilized to help its members through all of the immediate needs of newcomers. There is, however, another interpretation of this self-reliance, expressed to us by a number of Tamil interviewees. ‘The biggest challenge is that this community is living in isolation. We have built this barrier... we have a humungous barrier. We have four 24-hour radio stations, three 24-hour TV stations, a Tamil school... We shop Tamil, we buy Tamil, all of this. That is where the problem is. We are living based on a value system that is frozen twenty years ago’ (Ind2). These are the words of a young, politically involved Tamil man. A much older member of the community put an entirely positive spin on this. ‘I don’t feel I’m in Canada. I feel as though I’m in Jaffna, or Colombo... the concentration of Tamils in Scarborough, everywhere you go, you meet them, and you feel homely’ (Ind3). This gentleman also talked of how, when he moved to Scarborough in the late 80s, there was no organization there to help Tamils. ‘Now there are many’ (Ind3). This leads us to

reflect on a paradox of multiculturalism. One Tamil social worker who has been a member of TESC and of SACEM discussed this with us.

‘It’s good in a way that you really feel you are regaining your lost past in your own country. But at the same time I don’t know whether that will be good for the integration... But part of it is, the government is promoting that by giving funds for various ethnic programs. It’s a paradox actually. You have to help them by ethnic programs, but the more that you help, the more that they have their own identity, and then how do they integrate? Some of our people feel very at home because they say, we don’t even have to learn another language... We can go to our Tamil shop, get a movie, get groceries, go work in a Tamil restaurant... So you can go on like that. Unless your children are growing here and then you get a conflict because the children think in a different way and that contributes to some of the conflicts at home’ (Ind8).

Herein lies the dilemma for a multicultural society: the possibility that the very policies that acknowledge and encourage cultural diversity may also discourage efforts by ethno-cultural groups to integrate. However, that observation must be balanced with another. One dimension of newcomer experience that we have already discussed is that of not feeling welcome, of not belonging, of not feeling comfortable in the public sphere. And the logical response to that is to return to the fold of the community of origin, or to not stray from it. In the next section, we delve deeper into this aspect of the lived experience of Canadian multiculturalism, drawing on our focus group discussion with eight members of the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC). But first, we must again note how the Vancouver story of Tamil community organization diverges significantly from that of Toronto.

Vancouver

The contrast between Toronto and Vancouver Tamil ‘communities’ is at its most stark regarding the emergence of community organizations. We were only able to find two such organizations in Vancouver. One is the Hindu Temple Society, which takes care of the Tamil Hindu temple in Burnaby and has 150 paid-up members and 900 devotees. The other is the Tamil Cultural Society (TCS), which was formed in 1994 as a breakaway from the Sri Lankan Friendship Association of BC (formed in 1984). While the Temple Society obviously revolves around religious life, the TCS focuses on language and cultural issues, and has founded two Tamil-language schools (one in Vancouver, one in Surrey). There are informal networks among individuals that help sponsor and look out for newcomers, but there is nothing like the range of settlement services organizations that have sprung up in Toronto. The overwhelming impression is of a conservative, and family (rather than community) focused group of settlers seeking to blend in with their surroundings rather than to

stand out as a distinctive ethno-cultural community¹⁰. Symbolically this is evident in the nature of the Tamil temple in Burnaby, a building that is so unobtrusive that, from the outside, it is not even obviously a temple. By contrast, the various Toronto temples are brightly colored and announce themselves in their environment.

When we asked where and how people liked to spend their time, most interviewees mentioned ‘outdoors,’ the seawall, and Vancouver’s beauty. The younger generation seems not to be interested in getting involved in or identifying with the Tamil community, in stark contrast with Tamil youth in Toronto. One university student told us that ‘the Tamil community is not important’ to her generation, and ‘there isn’t much of a Tamil voice in Vancouver’. These young people were preoccupied with their careers and with overcoming their parents’ strictness and adherence to tradition.

5. Canadian multiculturalism: an/Other perspective

‘You can’t expect a newcomer to automatically assert their rights’ (Focus Group Ind.8).

Throughout our study we noticed that participants were extremely reluctant to say anything critical about Canada or the Canadian system. Four interviewees stressed to us how much better Canada is as a place to live than the various European countries where they had spent several years before being accepted into Canada. A social worker told us: ‘A lot of our people come here from France, from Germany, and they say that there you will live like an outcast’ (Ind8). Another participant, a well-educated woman, reminisced:

‘I was in Norway, which is very, you know, like Norwegian, and we were foreigners, very few colored people there. You could always feel the racism there ... we never felt we were part of that culture or that country. But when I came here, all different kinds of people, I was like, whoa! Even when I went to school it was like all different kinds of people ... after a while I get used to this is what Canada is about’ (Ind9).

Another talked of conflicting emotions about being in Canada.

‘Because this kind of education, you could never, never as a Tamil get. And the equality of communities. You could never get it. Like the way we talk about racism here, it is mild compared to what they were doing there in Sri Lanka.’ (Org1).

And a fourth participant noted that the unique thing about Canadian culture:

¹⁰ This perception of a more family (and less community)-oriented group is perhaps attributable to the much smaller Tamil population in Vancouver, and therefore fewer socially shared networks and spaces.

‘What we like as Tamils ... they recognize each one (culture) and give them respect and rights. ... It is not enough, but at least we have it. They are broadminded, not like other countries or their policies. So we are lucky actually, to be here’ (Org2).

What all of these participants were telling us was that they were grateful to be here, that they knew anecdotally that Canada is a better place to be than, for example, most European countries, and that it didn’t feel appropriate to be critical. Fear, too, may have been a factor in this reluctance. But, as one older man reflected, the fear is relative. ‘The fear we had when we came here, compared to the fear we had there – is nothing. There you lived in 24 hours without knowing in the next minute whether you will live or not’ (Org9). Nevertheless this same man went on to talk about everyday experiences of racism in Toronto. ‘You know, we had incidents of these people coming after us and telling us something, you know. Or police stop, will ask you questions. Or your employer will tell you something. Those are small incidents that comes and goes. ... When you go to a bar, sometimes they joke with you. I was working at the Silver Dollar. ... I face a lot of difficulties there too. People come to me, shout at me, fight with me, what are you doing here and all those things. But... it didn’t stop me’ (Org9).

In this section we explore the experience of being a citizen, from a Tamil perspective, asking whether their experience corresponds at all to the normative ideal of multicultural citizenship. To answer these probing questions we draw primarily on the focus group interviews because it was in this session that we felt participants in our study were at their most open and frank. This may have been because we had by the time of the focus group been getting acquainted with this community for over a year. It may also have been because it’s more comfortable to speak when surrounded by familiarity when among people who understand your cultural perspective. Finally, the eight participants in the focus group, as members of the CTC, are politicized individuals who have been working together on Tamil issues for a few years and spend a lot of time discussing among themselves the kinds of questions we posed.

We specifically plumb the focus group session for the ways it illuminates the experience of belonging, of citizenship, as an ability to occupy space, to retain a strong sense of cultural identity, and to participate in the life and decisions of the city. In addition, we will draw on focus group references to service provision and resource allocation, and to the perceived role of civil society in creating an environment to foster multiculturalism.

In section 2 we described the social geography of Tamil settlement in the past two decades, and the creation of two distinct enclaves, one urban, the other suburban, in which Tamils have made their mark on the landscape through residential concentration, the building of temples, and the

creation of Tamil retail, commercial, professional, and entertainment venues, thereby creating a whole Tamil world within Toronto, in which they feel safe and 'homely'. If this is the positive aspect of Tamil urban citizenship, our focus group participants divulge an/Other story, one of exclusion.

'I think multiculturalism has different levels. Like, power, political, space, culture, people, that are aspects in which we are able to access things, and there are aspects within which we can't really access things. We are made to participate in particular aspects... so we feel empowered, but there are other aspects which we can't access' (FG Ind7).

When this participant was encouraged to explain the sense of exclusion he expresses here, we hear the following.

'I live in the Parliament Street area. If you go to Rosedale, a rich area in Toronto, as opposed to Scarborough, they would stop and ask you where you are going. It is as simple as that. So, there are spaces in which we cannot be... but then we have our temples, we have our spaces, you know what I mean, but there are stores we can't even go in. ... And then, when we talk about Toronto as a space, and then if you take the suburbs... I mean, there is quite a contrast. ... You go to Niagara Falls. If I just went there and go in a shop, even a coffee shop, people will look at you. You will be served later. If you go to Montreal, same thing. If you stop at a side road, same thing. It is not only racism I'm saying, it is how much the acceptance actually, *because they can accept on the TV but they are not able to accept in a space closer to them.*' (FG Ind7). [our emphasis]

Through the words of this young man, we begin to understand that the positive spaces and experiences of residential enclaves and temples are also perceived as spaces 'allotted' to the community, and outside of which they are not welcome. 'We are given the spaces and within which we are happy and we don't know what's going on in other spaces, so thereby that multicultural system receives a motion, so the system is actually maintaining for the way it is actually designed' (ibid).

What this individual is suggesting is that multicultural policy somehow allocates 'strangers' to 'their' part of the city, but also sends out signals elsewhere that they are not welcome. He also observes that the public or symbolic face of multiculturalism, as in seeing different cultures reflected on TV and in the media, does not reflect the actual level of acceptance, the ability of the host society members to be in close encounter with the newcomer. 'They are not able to accept in a space closer to them' (ibid). Once this analysis was voiced, it encouraged others to talk more profoundly about the perceived meanings and actual experiences of multiculturalism.

'You get a false sense of empowerment when we celebrate a cultural thing without much problem. The false sense of empowerment is that we've been accepted, we've been given that space... But when you come down to regular activities, like how we get educated, how we access health care, how we do business and all things, there is a

set norm which has been dictated to us, and we are trying to fit into that norm, right? So that's the problem we see' (FG Ind3).

Now we are hearing an analysis that deconstructs the invisible (to 'insiders') workings of the dominant culture.

'We don't understand that that norm has already been in place and we are trying to get into that, and we don't have any access even to influence that. [agreement around the room]... Like, that already set norm... because even the teachers who are white do not know that they are saying it is the norm. They've accepted it and they can't disassociate from that and see this is different. So that is a problem. You see that throughout' (ibid).

The speaker then asks how they (Tamils) can influence this norm.

'How can we have our perspective heard... and how can a newcomer population which may be 80% of the classroom, make sure their teacher understands how they have been learning at least trying to accommodate some other ways? Otherwise, you know, it's just that 80% of the class is not going to be successful because of the norm which is at a different style...' (ibid).

And he then says something very interesting.

'It is a barrier, it's a big barrier – but we don't see it as a barrier. We think, that's the level of adjustment we have to do' (ibid).

And another participant interjects:

'Because we are in their space, right? Because that's how it's been given to us. Because it has been told as that, we are giving you refugee status, we are giving you immigrant status, you know what I mean. ... So that's how it's been sold' (FG Ind7).

And he goes on to give an example.

'Last week was actually our New Year, and in the school they are actually selling Easter candies, but they don't know anything about, they didn't even announce the Tamil New Year. You know, 60% of the population is actually Tamil. So I mean, it's that, you know' (ibid).

In this exchange we hear the frustration of the newcomer at having to do all of the 'accommodating' to the norms of the host society, and at the blindness and/or lack of interest of that society in the life ways of immigrant groups. Another participant expands on this theme:

'...in terms of the multiculturalism... we experience and share certain aspects of different cultures... you know, the colorful ones, the food, the dance, the music, sometimes even the language is given priority over more in-depth experiences ... So it is true that we are a multicultural country but not in the complete sense of it' (FG Ind8).

What we hear in this instance is an implicit multicultural ideal of an equality of sharing, of mutual adapting, of genuine interest between host and newcomer cultures that goes beyond the superficial ‘gourmet multiculturalism’ to a real interest in the history and culture of the Other. We also hear an implicit spatial ideal, linked to a notion of full participation in Canadian society, a spatial ideal that expresses an inclusive rather than exclusive city, where notions and experiences of ‘our’ space and ‘their’ space would no longer exist. This socio-spatial formulation of an/Other multiculturalism does seem to parallel the normative ideal of multicultural citizenship as we expressed it in section one. There we talked about dual meanings of the ‘right to the city’: the right to occupy space, and the right to participate in decisions about the life of the city, including the production of space. Clearly, from our participants’ perspective, the first right is significantly circumscribed. What about the second, the right to participate?

The focus group discussion of this issue began with the remark by one participant that even though rights are granted to immigrants by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, ‘each and every one has to assert their rights’ (FG Ind1). And then another jumps in, agitated. ‘But for a newcomer community... you can’t expect a newcomer to automatically assert their rights’ (FG Ind8). And another jumps in to explain the lack of participation.

‘Like why is it – that is a very key question. One, is definitely access to the system, accessing the system in the sense that the system be open to the community participation ... I think in terms of resources, the community’s resources to participate, that is another thing that definitely prevents them. I mean we can sit here and talk about participation at different levels of government, but while the community is struggling... I mean you can’t expect a person who is just trying to get food and shelter and money for that to come and participate. ... they have immediate problems that they are trying to deal with, right? In that sense, there need to be more programs. They could upgrade their skills and that would help them eventually work on those problems and at the same time connect to the system’ (FG Ind7).

But there are also other problems, he continues, on a roll.

‘How is it going to help me... my participation, how is it going to impact...? If I don’t believe in the system, if I don’t understand the whole system, then you know you have problems. You won’t be able to engage them, you won’t be able to empower them and thereby you won’t be able to make any changes... so we should look at those factors. Why is it that they are not engaged? It could be language, it could be resources, it could be that the system’s indifferent to their participation, it could be barriers of the system...?’ (ibid)

This gets everyone excited, and a young woman interjects:

‘Is it the community’s responsibility, or is it the system? Because I wonder why there is a need for an organization like CTC, right? Why some community members get together to form an organization to work with their community without, without any

kind of support from the government or from the system here. Why do we have to do that?' (FG Ind5).

This is a poignant plea, and when we ask her to elaborate on how she thinks it should be, she replies:

'An organisation like the CTC should be funded or encouraged by the government here. It shouldn't be like, ok, it's your problem, it's your community's problem, and it's your community's responsibility to do something. We also like, buy into that. We are like, ya, it's our problem, oh gang violence, oh it's our community's problem so as a community let us do something, and then we have to prove to the government that we are a legitimate organisation... Why does it have to be as, you know, the Tamil community. Why doesn't it have to be, you know, the Canadian, you know, larger community? How come they don't see that it is a Canadian problem?' (ibid)

Now this provokes even more reflection among the group about the way that immigrants are viewed, perhaps rather instrumentally, as good for the economy, but nevertheless not really part of the body politic, or political community.

'Are we citizens of this country or are we visitors...? It is in the interests of this country to make us a part of the political process. It should be seen that way. Because it is an investment in the people, right? (FG Ind7)

Someone else has another way of thinking about this issue of participation, and the role/responsibility of an organisation like the CTC.

'I think partially the problem we are discussing is the way the funding models are in place is basically the government funding would be available to organizations that are at the front end of actually delivering a tangible service, as opposed to an organisation like this which is basically creating awareness among the community and also representing the community's interests. I guess this role is not recognized as an important role... There is no mechanism to support (us), and there is actually a negative incentive, I would say [loud agreement]' (FG Ind1).

This comment raises a critical issue for our understanding of citizenship as active participation in the political community. It challenges the host society to take some responsibility, financially, for assisting in overcoming the barriers to participation that have been identified thus far. But now another participant wants to dig deeper into this issue of barriers, into the heart of the newcomer experience with mainstream institutions.

'You know, it is a whole different ball game. So this is how – if you go to welfare, for example, the way that they treat you. You have no (pause), of course, the welfare worker has lots of cases, which I understand on another level, right? But the way the client is being treated... So this is how, these are the experiences a newcomer has within the country, right? And that actually would make them don't want to be participating in it. They just want to look after themselves only and get on with it... So this is where that participation has to be developed and sensitized so that the

newcomers actually feel that it is their right and their country and ... Because eventually they are going to become citizens one way or another. So the country has to look at it from that angle and treat them as such, and I don't think policy-wise they have actually changed to that' (FG Ind7).

And this thought leads logically to another: the matter of government cuts to programs.

'Basically, the programs that suffer are the programs that support multiculturalism communities. Be it education, or integration' (FG Ind1).

And further elaboration on this:

'A lot of it has to do with the current political climate in which the government is being looked on as, like a business... government looks at trying to get out of really governing... So if they have a cash crunch at City Hall or in the Province, the first one that gets on the chopping block is, you know, language, education, and things that would enhance multiculturalism' (ibid).

And now another layer of multicultural democracy is deconstructed:

'It's not only government that has a responsibility too, it is the community out there. Like I mean non-profit organisations. I am not aware of any things being done by the non-profit organisations... Educating... creating an environment to foster multiculturalism' (ibid).

And a final exchange on this subject of how deep or shallow is the actual practice, as opposed to the espoused ideal of multiculturalism:

'They talk about multiculturalism ... to sell the country but they don't say multiculturalism to us. You know what I mean?... They sell it to the world, and they sell it to the white people and try to make Canada some... But if you look at it service-wise, then multiculturalism doesn't actually provide enough services to look as if it is rich... So it's a lot of blue on the paper, so to say. On the documents, and they don't put enough resources to it so that people really... ' (FG Ind7).

While he is trying to finish this thought, a colleague interrupts:

'...there is resource allocation for certain aspects... there are certain cultural aspects that get funding... But there are certain aspects that, you know, culture is not just about dancing and music and the food and whatever... I think that they are moving towards more of an assimilation kind of model' (FG Ind8).

This last exchange leads us to reflect on what a 'rich' multiculturalism would feel like, from an/Other perspective. And that is our segue into the final section of this paper.

Conclusions: The lineaments of a rich multiculturalism

‘The older people will tend to accept discrimination more because this is much less discrimination compared to what they would have – every possible discrimination in their lifetime – and when they come here they see opportunity and they see a lot of places where they can go. That is really pleasing to them. But at the same time younger people ... are becoming more and more aware of being able to ask for equal opportunity in the true sense of the word...’ (FG Ind3)

This paper has captured what is expressed so pithily in the above quote from one of the ‘younger people’: that is, the tension between different generations (of one newcomer group) in their perceptions of the relative freedoms within and accomplishments of Canadian multicultural democracy. In the spirit of striving to realise the full potential of this democracy, we offer the following conclusions, cognizant of the fact that they are based on research into only one newcomer group, and that this group also has many positive things to say about their life here, which we have also tried to convey.

The whole focus group dialogue outlined in the previous section has conveyed implicit ideals of a multicultural citizenship that seem to bear a strong resemblance to the normative ideal we outlined in Section 1. We derived that ideal from what we understand to be the philosophical principles of Canadian multiculturalism, as expressed in legislation and in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and by connecting those principles to the everyday urban realities of life in a multicultural society. We borrowed from Henri Lefebvre (1996) to express this ideal at the level of the city as the right to occupy space, and the right to participation in the wider political community. Through our focus group dialogue we have heard young members of the Tamil community implicitly expressing these same ideals, and confirming their absence in their own lived experience in Toronto. They have outlined a ‘rich’ (in the sense of deep, as opposed to shallow)¹¹ multiculturalism that in part consists of the obvious need for more spending on a wide range of multicultural programs – not only settlement services. A rich multiculturalism would support or rather enhance educational opportunities, (by reinstating multicultural counselors in schools, for example, and increasing spending on ESL). It would support organisations like the CTC that are working to encourage and expand Tamil participation in Canadian society.

But, more radically, a rich multiculturalism would have to revisit the very foundations of multicultural philosophy and engage in a fundamental review of the definition and implementation of multiculturalism. Specifically, this might entail the following:

¹¹ Hiebert (2003:47), reporting on the Vancouver Community Studies Survey (n=2000), which asked ‘are immigrants welcome?’ uses the term ‘shallow multiculturalism’ to summarise what this survey reveals about attitudes in Vancouver.

- placing more emphasis on the role of the host society in adapting to the presence of newcomers, and building cross-cultural understanding;
- imposing more responsibility on the part of mainstream civil society/non-profits in ‘creating an environment to foster multiculturalism’;

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In greater detail, this would involve rethinking the roles of federal, provincial, and municipal governments and NGOs in this major citizenship project. We draw in part on the work of four UBC graduate students in sketching what this might entail.¹²

Federal Government

The federal government needs to enter into discussions with all Canadians about the definition of multiculturalism and the goals of a multicultural policy. Sandercock (2003a) has argued this in terms of a shift from a 20th to a 21st century multiculturalism: a shift from an essentialist, ethno-culturally grounded political philosophy to one based less on ethnicity and more on shared notions of political community. Another premise of 21st century multiculturalism entails a belief that ‘belonging’ can no longer be defined by the host culture on their terms only, and in a manner that exempts them from engaging actively. We are suggesting nothing less than a renewed national debate over the potential meanings of multiculturalism. Dialogue should be carried out at community level, with a range of focus groups, some ethno-culturally specific, others a cultural mix of participants, to ensure maximum opportunities and comfort levels for different individuals.

A nation-wide public education program could be initiated, providing information about immigrants and refugees and their social, economic, and cultural contributions to Canada. This would need to be done creatively, rather than in the shape of a bureaucratic missive from Ottawa. Artists would need to be involved: all sorts of artists, from cartoonists to theater groups to musicians.

Financial and human resources have to be committed to support multicultural policy, as was made clear by our focus group participants. In the absence of such resources, multicultural policy will continue to be seen, and experienced, by newcomers as rhetoric rather than reality. These resources should fund local initiatives and programs that encourage inter-cultural dialogues that help integrate

¹² Michael Anhorn, Samara Brock, Andrea Gillman and Andrea Tang were students in PLAN 548e, ‘Multicultural Planning’ taught by Leonie Sandercock in the Fall, 2003. These recommendations draw in part on their final class paper ‘Lots of Little Things’.

both newcomers and members of the host society into today's realities.¹³ One possibility is a funding model similar to the Supporting Community Partnership Initiative (SCPI), which allows federal funding to be directed to community-identified priorities (National Homelessness Initiative, 2003).

Provincial Government

Building on the recommendations for the federal government, provincial governments should participate in the rethinking of multiculturalism, and formulate new policies in response. This would mean commitment of funds for local and province-wide educational initiatives. It is also symbolically important to ensure that the responsibility for multicultural affairs occupies an influential location within provincial government, such as the Premier's Office, as happened in the state of Victoria, Australia, in the early 1990s. From this strategic location, the multicultural bureau could then oversee all provincial ministries in integrating the ideals of multiculturalism. Several key policies could be mandated by provincial governments. One would be to require municipal governments to develop and implement programs consistent with the new multiculturalism. Another would be to support universities and colleges in offering programs to prepare people to work cross-culturally and to facilitate diversity training and intercultural communication (see LeBaron 2003). A third would be to require all civil servants to undergo diversity training. Finally, this Multicultural Bureau would work with the Education Ministry to implement new school curricula that explicitly, but entertainingly, addresses multiculturalism and the roles that both the host culture and newcomers play.

Municipal Government

As a growing number of researchers have noted (Sandercock and Kliger 1998a, 1998b; Edgington, Hanna, Hutton & Thompson 2001; Edgington and Hutton 2001; Wallace and Milroy 1999; Sandercock 2003a), there seems to be a radical disconnection between the existence/endorsement of multicultural philosophy at the national level and the absence of policies at the local level that give substance to this philosophy. In Canada, there are constitutional reasons for this discrepancy. According to the Constitution, responsibility for immigration is shared between the federal government and the provinces. The Immigration Act allows the federal minister to enter into agreements with the provinces to facilitate the coordination and implementation of immigration policies and programs. But, according to the principle of subsidiarity, now embraced in the European Union's approach to governance, responsibility for policy formulation and implementation should be

¹³ See Sandercock 2003a, and Anhorn, Brock, Gillman and Tang (2003) for detailed discussions of how this might be done.

devolved to the level of government where the issue has greatest impact. In the case of multicultural policy, that impact is most clearly felt at the level of city and neighborhood (Sandercock 2003a).

Because municipalities are the closest to the everyday life of the multicultural city, we join other researchers noted above in recommending both the mandating of multicultural policy development at municipal level, and the federal and provincial allocation of resources appropriate to that new role. The urban and social policy issues that arise at municipal level as a result of the increasing cultural diversity of localities, have been elaborated by various scholars (Sandercock and Kliger 1998a, 1998b; Sandercock 2000, 2003a; Dunn, Hanna and Thompson 2001). There have been interesting experiments by some municipalities in addressing these new local realities and conflicts, but nothing very sustained.¹⁴ Drawing from these studies, we can suggest various possibilities for municipalities.

Municipalities can help their citizens to lobby for resources for community-based programs by appointing migrant resource workers/community development officers with the brief of assisting such organizations to find their way around various levels of bureaucracy. Municipalities can partner with non-profits in engaging citizens in dialogues about intercultural co-existence. Municipalities can fund Neighborhood houses (such as Collingwood Neighborhood House in Vancouver), with a specific diversity brief, to bring together under one roof people from different ethno-cultural communities in a range of practical programs (see Dang 2002). Municipalities could support a new civics curriculum (coupled with more teacher-training) that demonstrates the obsolescence of racist ways of thinking.¹⁵

Municipalities need to reform their own hiring practices in all divisions to reflect the diversity of their populations, and to work harder at developing genuinely multicultural participation processes around the workings of local government. Social Planning divisions of City Planning Departments need to be elevated in status (in some instances, simply to be brought into existence, especially in outer-suburban municipalities) and given coordinating roles in municipal policy-making.

As indicated in the pioneering study of the Greater Vancouver metro-region by Edgington and Hutton (2001), there is at present a vast discrepancy between municipalities (within this one metropolitan area) with regard to (what Ley has called) 'multicultural readiness' (Ley 1999). Similar research in Toronto by Milroy and Wallace (2001) came to the same conclusions. Yet, in a special

¹⁴ For example, for Frankfurt, see Friedmann and Lehrer (1996); for Vancouver, see Edgington and Hutton 2001, Dang 2002, Sandercock 2003a; for Sydney, see Dunn, Hanna and Thomson 2001, Thompson 2003; for Rotterdam, see Sandercock 2003a; for Montreal, see Germain 2001.

¹⁵ The City of Vancouver is currently working with the School Board on such a project.

workshop hosted by the federal Privy Council and Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in 2000, the challenge of accommodating new immigrant populations was identified as the leading policy challenge for Canada's largest cities (Edgington and Hutton 2001:). One has to wonder how long it will take for this growing research and institutional awareness to be translated into new policies, new resource allocations, and reforms of urban governance structures.

NGOs

From our focus group participants we heard the lament that *mainstream* non-profit organizations are not doing enough to create 'an environment fostering multiculturalism'. NGOs and community-based organizations can have a profound impact on the well-being of specific groups in any community (providing shelters for the homeless, for battered women, abused children, and so on). Our study of the Tamil community demonstrates the vitally important role of Tamil community-based organizations in assisting with the everyday (economic, social, legal) struggles of settlement, as well as with developing an interest in political participation in the wider society. But what of mainstream NGOs? These, too, could have a key role in multicultural education for the host culture. (As our focus group participants noted, why should it always be the Tamil organizations that have to take responsibility for all of the settlement and integration issues).

We recommend new funding for NGOs prepared to develop innovative intercultural agendas, as well as for those seeking to increase the participation of hitherto marginalized ethno-specific groups (such as the current work of the CTC: see Dickout 2004). There are excellent models in existence, such as S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in Vancouver.¹⁶ These organizations need to learn from each other's successes, and to engage in even more transformative learning models. Programs and projects that encourage more spontaneous interaction in the community should be encouraged, as in the practices of the Collingwood Neighborhood House (Dang 2002). This can be done through block grants, neighborhood grants, and small grants. The success of experimental programs depends on continuity of funding and is jeopardised by rigid annual performance criteria (see Healey 2003).

Community-based artists and arts-based organizations should also be seen as an invaluable resource for expanding the cultural horizons of local citizenry (see Sandercock 2003a, 2004a). For example, The Welfare State International (WSI) is a company of artists formed in the UK in 1968, now internationally acclaimed for its work with and in communities in processes of change and transformation. Initially oriented to popular and political theater, WSI subsequently became interested

¹⁶ The United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) was founded in 1973. It began as an agency for dealing with a single ethnic community, but has now diversified its services and has an interpreting bank of more than a dozen languages (Edgington and Hutton 2001).

in myth, ritual, carnival, festival, street parades, puppetry, feasts, and more. Emblazoned on the side of the company's touring truck is the 'logo,' 'Engineers of the Imagination,' reflecting their belief that recovery of imagination is a vital partner and precondition of change through more analytical and rational methods. In a world where local and diverse cultures are increasingly threatened by a largely imposed electronic culture, WSI's mission is to rediscover, and invent new hybrid myths and archetypes, new celebrations, and new forms of protest. Working for political and social change in and with communities, these 'civic magicians' (Kershaw 1990) understand empowerment, teaching people the skills necessary to make their own celebrations and protests as part of the company's 'process'. They have survived on grants from arts agencies, local and national governments, and increasingly find themselves in international demand from local planning departments not only to organize public celebrations and transform public space, but also to train local communities in these diverse skills.

Vancouver has its own version of WSI, in the Public Dreams Society (PDS), founded by Dolly Hopkins who, like the artists in WSI, has a background in theater performance. The PDS brings together artists and the public (at the instigation either of local communities or the City of Vancouver, or both), incorporating art, music, theater, dance, puppetry, pyrotechnics, street and circus performance in the creation of interactive community events like the mid-summer Lantern Parade around Trout Lake in East Vancouver, the cross-cultural celebrations associated with the Day of All Souls, or the First Night (New Year's) celebrations on Granville Island. The mandate of the PDS is to 'revive and redefine community arts and the role of the artist in the community' (Brock 2002; Hii 2002). PDS events encourage people of diverse backgrounds to celebrate difference in public arenas; ignored public spaces are re-born; creative impulses are released; fears are confronted and embraced. Communities reclaim the streets and public spaces through these events, and the skills and experiences of individuals are broadened. With a little bit of imagination on the part of municipalities, groups like the PDS, and Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, can be even more proactively engaged in working in communities to create events, spaces, and projects that help to bridge cultural divides, encourage intercultural exchanges, and actively engage members of the host society in rethinking notions of national identity and citizenship.

The effort of transformation at the heart of the multicultural project is, as this closing section has suggested, a necessarily combined effort on the part of host society and newcomers, politicians and policy analysts, multiple levels of government as well as NGOs. We have suggested both a radical rethinking of the content of multiculturalism as a political philosophy, and a shift of emphasis and responsibility away from newcomers, to the host society itself. The challenges posed by

multicultural cities require us (members of the host society) to see ourselves 'from outside,' to realize that there is 'an/Other perspective,' to realize that what we thought was 'natural' are in fact highly particular modes of thought and behavior that have accumulated over time. New modes of thought and new practices are needed to shift what was once considered as 'natural': in this case, some of the outmoded assumptions about identity and citizenship embedded in racialised western democracies (Sandercock 2003a).

We offer this modest multicultural proposal for further discussion.

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