

# *Resilience and the Canadian Non-profit Migrant Settlement System: Challenges and Opportunities for Newcomer Integration*

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# Introduction

- Riley Bushell and John Shields, *Immigrant Settlement Agencies in Canada: A Critical Review of the Literature through the Lens of Resilience*. A Paper of the *Building Migrant Resilience in Cities (BMRC) Project*. Toronto: York University, October 9, 2018 pg. 70: <https://bmrc-irmu.info.yorku.ca/files/2018/10/ISAs-A-Critical-Review-2018-JSRB-edits-Oct-9-2018.pdf>
- the role and challenges faced by nonprofit settlement agencies in promoting migrant integration but set within broader institutional, political and societal context and viewed through the lens of resilience.

# Resilience (Neoliberal and Social Resilience)

- Resilience has been defined as “the capacity of individuals, communities and systems to survive in the face of stress and shocks, and even transform when conditions require” (Akbar 2017, ii)
- Focus on immigrants with neoliberal value sets of a ‘strong work ethic,’ high human capital skills, risk takers, and entrepreneurial, are thought to be more resilient fostering independence (Root et al. 2019)

# Resilience continued ...

- An approach that channels understandings of resilience to individualism, self-reliance, and minimizing the value of government support and nonprofit roles in the settlement process
- Ignores the idea of social resilience and the value of more collective social structures, most importantly from the state and civil society, in producing support structures that enable resilience to be fostered by immigrant populations and for strong systems of interdependence to be created.

# Social Inclusion and the Migrant Settlement Process

- Dense networks of agencies providing settlement services in some urban areas constitute ‘service hubs’ (a non-profit common) (Deverteuil 2016, 241-244) that rests beyond purely commercial space offering anchors of support & solidarity for newcomer populations
- “[I]t is essential to recognize that for newcomers to Canada, the settlement process is a lifelong journey,” often continuing into the second or third generation (Richmond and Shields 2005, 515).
- 3 stages to the continuum of settlement: 1) adjustment; 2) adaption and 3) integration.

# Social Inclusion and ...

- “settlement funding ... focussed on the initial stages of **adjustment** and to some extent **adaption**, in spite of the fact that the process of settlement continues throughout the life of the newcomer” (Richmond and Omidvar 2003, 7)
- also, some migrants to Canada are largely excluded from most supports, including most refugee claimants, international students, ‘illegalized’ migrants, etc.
- This short-term focus and exclusions, add pressure on cities, non-profit agencies and newcomer communities, who primarily shoulder “the longer-term effects of the lack of crucial medium-term integration processes” (Papillion 2002, 21).

# Some Key Findings

- 1) settlement increasingly shaped by the federalization of immigration and settlement policy and programming as provinces and territories have gained an increasing stake in this area
  - Cities have become major immigrant hubs and are increasingly relied upon to foster resilience among newcomer residents but restricted in their role by constitutional, operational and financial limitations.
  
- 2) Key place of non-profit community organizations in offering comprehensive, long-term and culturally and/or linguistically compatible settlement services to settlement
  - Their close connectedness to newcomer communities enable them to be key advocates for migrants

# Some Key Findings continued ...

- 3) Since the late 1980s, neoliberal public policy has negatively impacted the capacity of newcomer-serving organizations to foster resilience among their client communities (austerity, New Public Management).
- 4) This dampens capacity-building, problematizes collaboration and worsens non-profit-government working relationships. In particular, smaller ethno-specific organizations with less collective resources are negatively affected by NPM.
- It has also created the conditions for advocacy chill muting the voice of settlement agencies and immigrant communities.



# Key Findings continued ...

- 5) Immigration and settlement is a global process and there is much to be learned from other experiences (other governments engage non-profit organizations in partnerships to bolster newcomer resilience).
- the rise of right-wing populism, anti-immigrant rhetoric and more restrictive legislation in the United States and Europe (forces that are more muted but still evident in Canada).
  - Canadian settlement policy is influenced by this global context as well as the sharing of best practices between newcomer-receiving countries.

# Some Key Findings continued ...

- 6) In the short-term, the Canadian government and non-profit organizations can strengthen newcomer communities by expanding eligibility for settlement programming, offering pre-arrival services and ensuring that programming is appropriately targeted as well as geographically, culturally and linguistically accessible.
- cities must also be specifically developed as sites of resilience for newcomer residents. In the long-term, meeting the needs of Canada's growing immigrant and refugee populations requires a large, diverse and comprehensively funded settlement sector.

# Some Key Findings continued ...

- engrained structures of Canadian federalism and neoliberal public policy have limited the capacity of communities, non-profit organizations and municipalities to effectively engage with newcomers to Canada. Newcomer resilience would be strengthened by more horizontal, reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between the upper-tiers of Canadian government responsible for coordinating and funding settlement services and the non-profit organizations tasked with their delivery.

# Concluding Remarks

- If settlement in Canada is truly a “two-way street” where both government and non-government stakeholders help to facilitate social inclusion in fostering newcomer resilience (IRCC 2016), then state investments in settlement support and progressive migrant legislation and programming must continue. However, “just as immigrants face many systemic challenges during settlement and integration, so do service providers and policymakers” (Simich et al. 2005, 265). Where these critical support lines are weakened and made less resilient, vulnerability is passed directly into newcomer communities.
- Also See: Jessica Praznik and John Shields, *An Anatomy of Settlement Services in Canada: A Guide*. A Paper of the Building Migrant Resilience in Cities (BMRC) Project. Toronto: York University July 3\*: [http://bmrc-irmu.info.yorku.ca/files/2018/07/An-Anatomy-of-Settlement-Services-in-Canada\\_BMRCIRMU.pdf](http://bmrc-irmu.info.yorku.ca/files/2018/07/An-Anatomy-of-Settlement-Services-in-Canada_BMRCIRMU.pdf)