The Expendables: Community organisations and governance dynamics in the Canadian settlement sector

by

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Abstract

An emerging pattern of governance in contemporary liberal democratic welfare states is a move away from interest group representation and a public sphere organised around demands for extensions of rights to something much more constrained. This paper is concerned with the impacts of this shift in governance on the role and place of community based organisations as a critical vehicle for the acquisition and expression of citizenship. It asks how such a profound shift in representation has occurred through governance spaces that are co-constructed by community organisations with roots in interest group representation in changes that have deeply compromised their rights to participate and their missions. It examines the case of Canadian immigrant settlement where beliefs about citizen representation, the role of the state and the nature of the public sphere have undergone profound change, leaving immigrant organisations as either marginal players or fully incorporated in state sanctioned immigrant service provision. Drawing on documentary evidence and interviews with immigrant organisations and public officials in Ottawa, it shows how immigrant organizations have actively interpreted their interests in the light of this changing web of beliefs to co-construct a new policy regime that favours organisational interests over citizen participation.
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Over the past decades, we have witnessed a profound change in the system of representation in Canada. The system has shifted from community organisations in civil society being given credibility and legitimacy based on their voice and who they represent, to a new system based on what they do. This shift has altered the nature of claims being made in the political arena and ultimately, has constrained the space for citizenship building. It has focused community groups away from a "state of being" to a "state of doing". What makes this new paradigm a significant departure from earlier forms of politics articulated around the politics of recognition or the politics of identity is that organisational dynamics have now become the defining feature of the relationship between civil society and the state. It follows that when one strips groups from their deep-seated identity base, it is easier to supplant them and treat them as tools that are expendables in policy dynamics. Their expendability has rendered them more vulnerable to the pressures of governance. What is surprising about this trend, however, is the extent to which community organisations themselves serve to buttress and underpin the governance narratives that sustain their expendability through the exercise of their own organisational agency.

The emerging pattern in contemporary liberal democracies is a move away from interest group representation and a public sphere organised around demands for
extensions of rights, for example, to something much more constrained. This dynamic has been highly visible in the field of immigrant settlement in Canada where identity issues intersect with service delivery. This paper is concerned with the impacts of this shift in governance on the role and place of community based organisations as a critical vehicle for the acquisition and expression of citizenship. It argues that the reallocation of authority and responsibilities for services have dislodged spaces of democracy and representation in Canada. In order to address these issues we have to examine the discourses through which competing claims define actions to be considered and responsibilities for different players. Analyzing discourses in this way makes it possible to ask how patterns of representation evolve through organisational practice.

This paper draws on an investigation and analysis of nine voluntary organisations working in the field of immigrant settlement in Ottawa. In addition to a review of the literature and relevant documentary sources, interviews were conducted with the CEOs of five of these organisations and with seven federal, provincial and municipal officials working in immigrant settlement. Taken together, these data provide us with a scan of the policy landscape and how it has evolved as a result of governance pressures.

**Governance theory and citizenship**

Governance can be viewed as a narrative to which is ascribed a particular form of interaction between state and civil society (Daly 2003, Newman 2007). These
discursive practices give rise to a particular vision of representation, access, and belonging thereby affecting the expressions of citizenship. New institutionalists have long argued that policy fields are comprised of networks, which are self-sustaining rule governed entities (Rhodes 2007). Their identity, or internal coherence, is cemented through adherence to a set of norms and values that determine the terms of participation in the network, who does what and when within it, and determine the ends to which the efforts of the network are directed. These institutional policy fields, it is argued, are sustained by “a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices...that prescribe appropriate behavior for specific actors in specific situations” (March and Olsen 2006, 4). Rules are followed, it is argued because they seem appropriate, natural, expected and legitimate (March and Olsen 1989, 2006).

Once established the narratives that underpin or account for these rules become fixed in the structures within which the networks operate. Over time, this interaction is embedded into institutional arrangements and practices that lead to a particular articulation of social forces, known as the structure of interest representation (Mahon 1977). This structure is sustained by adherence to the narratives that define the purposes of the field and the appropriate roles of the various actors. By examining the conditions under which organised interests come together around broader systems of meaning that define their role and place in the policy field, our understanding of group politics in polity can be enriched.

The rise of networked governance has been associated with a narrative of change from government to governance in a process that has hollowed out the state as power has moved
down and sideways to a plethora of quasi-government institutions and arrangements comprised of non-government as well as government actors (Rhodes 2007). The orthodox view that there has been a diffusion of power in networks has come under attack from two directions (Bevir and Rhodes 2010).

First, it is argued that it under-estimates the residual power of the state. Empirical studies have consistently shown that state agencies retain the power to determine the rules that govern networks in policy fields, and the narratives that sustain their legitimacy (Davies 2011). Governments continue to steer the ship of state through a process of metagovernance (Newman 2005) whereby they define the context in which network actors negotiate with one another, who should be included and the terms of inclusion in a process that has proved to be “less a hollowing out of the state than a complex and variegated shift in the pattern of rule” (Bevir 2010, 89). Metagovernance occurs through the use of regulatory instruments such as charity law (Phillips and Smith 2011) and the imposition of contract based funding regimes including judgments about capacity to be a fit provider of public services (Carmel and Harlock 2008), but also and more insidiously perhaps, sustaining the fiction that the meaning of social problems is beyond contestation and is a matter for technical expertise alone. All of this might imply merely that while power structures within policy field networks may be unbalanced they nevertheless can continue to operate so long as the rules are properly understood and applied.

But second, and more fundamentally, the framing of new forms of governance as rule-bound networks not only tends to hide underlying power structures, but it also misunderstands agency. The treatment of networks as empirical objects of study freezes their
components in time and cannot account for agency as a source of change (Bevir and Rhodes 2010). Instead, in decentring analysis by focusing on the social construction of institutions “through the ability of individuals to create and act on meanings” (Bevir 2010, 85), attention shifts to practices as the products of situated agency. Critical of new institutionalists for not taking agency seriously enough, Bevir and Rhodes (2010) elaborate the concept of situated agency as the capacity of individuals to exercise agency and adopt beliefs and practices, but always in the context of existing webs of belief. Based on an interpretivist epistemology, they understand institutions, not as the fixed embodiment of rules and norms, but as “sites of contingent, open-ended struggles over meaning” (Bevir 2010, 59), conducted by situated agents through actions that, when they coalesce into an identifiable pattern, constitute a practice (Bevir and Rhodes 2010, 75). Practices can only be understood with reference to the webs of meaning and belief that inform the interpretations of the agents situated within them, including the ways in which they understand their interests. While real, power in this view is exercised and becomes visible through the way it constrains, or shapes agents’ interpretation of their interests (Bevir and Rhodes 2010, 76).

In this account, governance narratives are contested in that although governments as holders of both financial and legitimacy resources have significant influence, they cannot determine their primacy without the active co-construction, or agency, of other actors through, at the very least, implicit assent. Community groups have their own strategic interests in mind. The credibility that can come with funding and the legitimacy that comes with being a trusted deliverer of a public service can buy influence in the given policy field itself, or in adjoining fields or in other layers of government. Not surprisingly then, groups may
choose to adjust their modus operandi to gain credibility and legitimacy; or new players can emerge dislodging those that are not willing to adapt to the new context. These dynamics of ebb and flow are pivotal to understanding how the politics of governance are conducted and are at the centre of the analysis proposed in this paper.

A shift in web of beliefs can be vividly illustrated in the field of immigrant settlement in Canada. In the 1970s and 1980s, the narrative of social citizenship was a driving force behind how interests were organised. Now, organisational dynamics and the instrumentality of organised interests to the process of governance drive the nature of the relationship between state and civil society. What has happened, we argue is that this new narrative has recast the structure of representation among new immigrants in ways that have not only left community organisations more expendable, but have recast citizenship as a personal responsibility rather than through recognition and membership of a community by means of the enjoyment of social and political rights (Lister 2010). What needs some explanation is how such a profound shift in representation has occurred through governance spaces that rely on the active participation of community organisations as co-constructors of those spaces with the continuing assent of those organisations in changes that have deeply compromised their rights to participate and, it might be added, their missions. Our argument is that whilst hard state power was necessary to collapse the old policy narrative and active metagoverance techniques are required to underpin its replacement, it is the active exercise of situated agency of the community organisations in the policy field that sustains it.
A state of being: Who and Why?

In Canada, as in many liberal countries, the late 1940s were marked by the rise of a post-war social policy agenda that became the blueprint for the welfare state as we know it -- one that embraces values of inclusion, participation, social protection, and rights protection. Recognizing the need for a pan-Canadian approach to social policy that would enable Canadians, regardless of their provincial ties, to the same rights and benefits, social welfare efforts quickly tied into nation building goals. The welfare state was to provide a safety net and security for all citizens in times of need. In that sense, citizenship found expression in an enjoyment of these rights gained through membership in a national community. This vision of social security extended to the establishment and protection of political and civil rights. It recognized that the federal government had a role in regulating social relations. What is more, political participation was envisioned as an additional social protection against risks.

This paradigm for citizenship shaped policy discussions and dynamics well into the 1980s. It opened the policy door to identity based social actors like women and visible minorities, seeking recognition in the political arena. Indeed, some vital segments of the Canadian population at the time, such as women's groups, visible minorities, and linguistic minorities, did not have access to sufficient resources in order to secure or defend their social rights. The federal government therefore encouraged the development of intermediation structures and processes that would incorporate these marginalised actors in the national policy process. As Jenson notes, "part of the post-
war story, albeit quite a controversial one, involved a new role for the federal government as an active representative of all Canadians, constructing tighter social bonds among individual Canadians [...] the federal government's financial clout and willingness to spend, especially through conditional grants, meant that this vision could take shape (Jenson 2004, 3).

Not surprisingly by the late 1980s, a key feature of the post war system of representation in Canada was the development of a plethora of community groups that gravitated around the federal government and the national scene began to serve as a pole of attraction for collective action. Community groups were regarded as spaces where citizens could attain and practice skills of citizenship. From the 1970s to the 1980s, the political climate was therefore favourable to actors of civil society, particularly those involved in advocacy and public education. The Secretary of State, under the Citizenship Branch, specifically provided operational funding to national organisations engaged in representational activities (Pal 1993; Jenson and Phillips 1996). Three programs were key: the Official Language Minority Groups (OLMGs), Multiculturalism, and the Women’s Program. Not only was core funding made available to support organisations that advocated on behalf of these marginal groups, but access to the federal government was also institutionalised for these organisations through a number of programs (Pal 1993; Jenson and Phillips 1996).³

³ The Women’s Program of Status Women of Canada had a budget of $9 million for 1984-85, and $12.8 million for 1985-86, from which mainstream women’s groups could secure operational and project funding. The budget for the multiculturalism directorate at the time was $2.6 million and its allocation was for all immigrants.
In the field of immigration, this new approach to citizenship found expression in multiculturalism adopted as an official policy in 1971. This multicultural policy consisted of four policy goals: to assist all Canadian cultural groups to grow and contribute to Canada; to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society; to promote interchange amongst all Canadian cultural groups; and to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of the Canada's official languages (Banting and Kymlicka 2010; Pal 1993; Day 2000). The multicultural program distributed more than $20 million in grants with almost $6.5 million directed at citizen and community participation (Pal 1993, 200). Developing the capacity of new citizens to participate individually or collectively in Canadian society was a key priority. The federal government recognized ethnic identities and of the need for public institutions to accommodate these identities to ensure that they would not be excluded from the policy dialogue. The federal government adopted an integrative governance approach in dealing with various segments of the population. The underlying process included recognising representatives, integrating them into state discourse and structures, thereby legitimising state policies and practices.

Throughout the 1970s, the Multiculturalism Directorate promoted many cultural retention programs aimed at helping ethnic groups to preserve their traditions, customs, folklore, and languages to reinforce the multicultural image of Canadian society (Bloemraad 2006). As a result, immigrants started to organize themselves and have an impact within mainstream institutions (Leah 1989, 166). Many of these organisations were mono-ethnic and focused their activities on representing the
interests of their constituency. By the late seventies, multicultural organisations had become powerful lobby groups with access to the highest levels of government. Among other things, they called for greater access to services, more equitable allocation of funding and representation in the decision-making process.

It follows from the surge of these citizenship-building programs that most of the demands made in the political arena in the 1970s and 1980s were identity-based claims; claims based on shared experiences of injustice articulated around specific constituencies. ‘Who’ and ‘Why’ claims centre on identity, purpose and vision. They require organisations to articulate their needs and to give meaning to the situation. Identity-based claims seek out the recognition of the particular character that distinguishes a group from others, in a way that highlights their unique design and life circumstances. In that sense groups representing particular constituents cannot easily be replaced in the political arena. Each group has a fair crack at the whip to make the case for their presence at the policy table.

Dismantling the citizenship regime

By the early 1980s, the political climate began to turn and multiculturalism programs came under question and received some criticisms from the main right-wing political parties. The rise of populism in the early 1990s, which first became obvious with the electoral surge of the Reform Party in 1993, was a reflection of a broader
neoliberal discourse that challenged the structure of representation, particularly the position of interest groups and social movement organisations. The newly created Reform Party was calling for the end of funding for the multiculturalism program on the grounds that cultural preservation was a matter of personal choice, and that the federal government should be promoting national culture instead (Reform Party of Canada 1990). As the Reform Party gained ground in the polls, and in an effort to narrow the gap, the Progressive Conservative Party, adopted a similar policy position at its 1991 convention (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992, 374). Abu-Laban and Stasiulis argue that "the combined effect of partisan debates on issues of multiculturalism and immigration has been to challenge the state/political elite consensus on the merits of pluralism that has existed over the past two decades." They go on to argue that, "At best, what is left is a discourse emphasizing individual as opposed to group rights through the subsumption of the pluralist notion of multiculturalism under the individualist notion of citizenship" (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992, 372). In Canada, this discourse was particularly salient in the fallout of discussions surrounding the 1987 Meech Lake Accord and the spectre of Quebec's possible separation, which both reinforced the fragile state of 'national unity' in Canada.

By the mid 1990s, the multiculturalism program had effectively disappeared and with it the main source of money for culturally specific grassroots associations in immigrant communities. A respondent noted: "We used to have a very vibrant and known community of ethnic or sort of cultural associations that were funded significantly by the then Ministry of Multiculturalism and what’s happened is that there
was a big public outcry against, you know, funding ethnic dances and... it wasn’t seen to be sufficiently useful, and it was more divisive as opposed to productive (emphasis added)."

Although multiculturalism remains formally a Canadian government policy, it has become relegated to a minor function within the Department of Heritage with a small budget. A double shift in funding of community organisations in the immigration field thus took place. The funds both shifted decisively from multiculturalism to settlement services and from a grant to a tightly specified contract culture, subject to close audit oversight. This changed both the political and discursive opportunity structure. Claims making on the basis of cultural recognition became more tenuous as policymaking on the basis of multiculturalism retreated, both politically and discursively.

At the same time in Canada, as in many other countries, tensions arose from the pressures to reduce government expenditure, while simultaneously reforming state bureaucracy. Declining confidence among the population in politicians and political institutions also increased pressure for the restructuring of state. In Canada, the rise of neo-liberalism was driving the dismantling, the devolution of responsibility for social programs onto other levels of government, and a shift in the process of governance. In response to these pressures, the federal government began a process of modernizing the political and administrative system and embarked on a major review of the machinery of government. The Government Renewal program had three objectives: reducing federal expenditures; clarifying the core responsibilities of the federal government and rebalancing the division of labour amongst the different levels of
government and the private and voluntary sectors in the Canadian governance system; and equipping the federal public service with the tools necessary to improve the efficiency of public sector management (Paquet and Shepherd 1996).

The 1995 Federal budget slashed funding for the Provinces and reduced federal support for advocacy to a shadow of its former levels (Phillips 2012). In Ontario, the Provincial government under Mike Harris successfully faced down massive protests against new policies that had sought to restructure and reduce public services (White 2012); community groups having played a leading role in the protests were subsequently recruited into new forms of service delivery in a process that foreshadowed what was to befall immigrant associations.

The neo-liberal shift in governance narratives outlined here, shows how both the Federal and Provincial governments used hard power to establish the new regime by destroying the funding relationship on which the old regime had rested and by ignoring the furious protests of organized interests in civil society, able to do so as a result of electoral support for a new underpinning narrative that pit ‘the people’ against powerful interests’ (Laforest 2012). The process of delegitimating the representation of group interests through civil society set the scene for the construction of new forms of relationship built around organizational capacity to deliver services.

A state of doing: What and How?
In the field of immigration, the 1990s fiscal retrenchment exercise originally reduced federal and provincial funding for settlement programs. In addition, there was a philosophical shift regarding the government’s role in providing direct services. The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration decided to withdraw completely from direct administration and delivery of federal settlement programs by the end of the decade. Under the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) settlement renewal project, service provision increasingly devolved to local community groups or lower levels of government through grant-making and cost-sharing arrangements. According to one official, "there were a number of efforts to use agreements as tool of modernized approach to governance with an emphasis on multiple actors, greater reporting, performance measurement related to push to greater reporting." These efforts resulted in devolution agreements between the federal government and British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec that granted these provinces the power to design, fund and administer settlement services within their jurisdiction.

As a result of lobbying from the Ontario government an agreement was finally reached with the federal government in 2005 on the settlement of new migrants supported by a substantially increased budget for settlement services. The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) changed the focus and nature of the relationship between the federal government and community organisations. For one, under this new governance approach, the basic parameters of the relationship between the government and community organisations became increasingly tied to specific results and outcomes. The contracts offered to the immigrant serving organisations,
However, are highly specific allowing very little flexibility and giving very little scope to the individual organisations involved to influence immigration policies and wider debates on the developing role of immigrants in Canadian cities in Ontario where typically between 30 and 50 per cent of the population is foreign born.

Another important shift that we observed is that newly resourced immigrant serving organisations have been constrained by the new funding regime that does not recognise the legitimacy of advocacy activities, tightly specifying how they should spend federal money, in a process one of the interviewees in the study described as a “pretty pernicious takeover.” This is most notable in their capacity to exercise their advocacy function in the aftermath of the widespread opposition to "special interest groups" in the early 1990s. Many of the organisations that we interviewed were keenly aware of examples of groups that had seen their funding rescinded because they engaged in advocacy or criticized government. Two respondents mentioned the Canadian Arab Federation that had recently lost $2m in funding “because the chairperson has said something derogatory about the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration”, and added: “we have all started to be afraid”. Another noted: "in the 80s people were very comfortable talking about advocacy and engaging with it – there was the anti-racist movement, the anti-racist secretariat and so on. Since the 90s the Ontarian government slapped the anti-racist secretariat. The federal government employment equity has deteriorated. So, we have all started to be afraid."

These two governance shifts are significant because they have changed the mindset of organisations. Together, they have redirected the nature of the exchanges
between the federal government and organisations toward a greater focus on the micro
level of delivery and implementation. Resources are bound to formalised accountability
and monitoring procedures. These procedures were meant to enable a systematic
comparison of settlement services based on an analysis of their achievements. Yet for
community organisations, it means that they have to embrace a very different kind of
thinking in the new governance arrangement, one that emphasises process and
implementation issues. One respondent noted "a lot of things that government used to
do it has now downloaded to the charitable sector to do. It’s buying services from the
charitable sector to do – but, in a sense, government regards the charitable sector as
kind of a supermarket on which it places things on its shelves. You know, and in a sense,
doesn’t really regard that supermarket operator as anything more than a supermarket
operator – as a delivery vehicle, a delivery tool – it’s not, from a government point of
view, you know, a vibrant constituency." In that sense, the federal government is not
interested in the organisation itself, but in what the organisation is delivering. This shift
is profound.

Under this governance narrative, community groups are viewed as
"instruments". They obtain their legitimacy because they fulfill a certain function in
service provision. If a group is a mere instrument, it can be easily cast aside. The federal
government will support groups that guide its efforts in practical ways that achieve
results, in ever-shortening time frames. The organisation has become a rational,
dispensable instrument in the production of public services.
The new paradigm focusing on a "state of doing" evokes a very different relationship between the federal government and the community sector; one where the government relates to an organisation based on what it does and how, not based on who it represents and why. Perhaps more importantly, organisations have found themselves more vulnerable in this relationship for they can easily be replaced by another organisation. An organisation that gains its legitimacy from its identity base, on the other hand, is a product of social needs and pressures -- it is responsive and adaptive to the broader system of social relations. When the 'identity' of the group is threatened, there is more likely to be resistance to change and administrative measures that would submerge that identity.

Now, the questions and answers that this new governance relationship elicits are focused, specific, and concrete. This in turn influences the nature of claims that are seen as legitimate in the political arena. The basis of collaborative exchanges in this policy field is now mostly instrumental and functional. Not surprisingly, community organisations in the field of immigrant settlement find it difficult to engage in identity politics that generally implies longer-term solidarities and collective projects.

**Resistance and situated agency**

On the surface, this new governance approach has not been met with resistance. For community organisations, the new in-flow of money for settlement services has been welcome given the significant cutbacks the sector had experienced in the 1990s.
The agreement also created enormous opportunity for the sector bringing legitimacy to the work organisations were doing on the ground, particularly at a time when many organisations were struggling to survive. The threat of losing government funding is very real for organisations working in immigrant settlement because there are very few other sources on funding on which they can rely. These organisations generally do not do fundraising, they have very little infrastructure to do that. In fact, under the current charity laws, many of their activities would not enable them to qualify and obtain charitable status.

Yet, it has come at a price. This new governance approach has brought about significant shifts in the practices and structures of community organisations. We found that those organisations which had benefited from this new influx of resources were those that were willing to position themselves as multi-purpose organisations performing a wide range of functions and willing to scale up their activities to cater to a wide range of constituencies. For example, one respondent notes, "The other family services – they’re more parochial – I might be a bit pejorative by saying that, but their budgets have not grown as quickly [...] because the other agencies are much more traditional and have not sort of jumped on this diversity bandwagon because of the way they’re structured." In another case, an identity-based organization, founded to provide mutual support in a highly marginalised new immigrant group, made a conscious decision to reconfigure as a mainstream service provider – “You have to be open with yourself. You have to be serving everybody. ...an ethnic organization... being only for (name of ethnic group) is not going to go nowhere (sic)”. Still another respondent notes,
"it certainly has reduced the sort of ambit of these organisations and it certainly has reduced their independence significantly."

Out of the nine high profile immigrant settlement organisations in the area of Ottawa that we examined, five of them have a long history in the field of immigrant settlement, yet four attained their current status in the last five years. The rise for some has been dazzling. One respondent notes in reference to COIA that, "We’ve got a building boom because of that. So – maybe five years ago our settlement budget was $50,000 – it’s now $900,000."

These examples illustrate that the successful organisations in this new field of immigrant settlement services are those that have exercised agency to willingly adapt to the new governance requirements, but that does not mean that they have also wholeheartedly uncritically adopted the underpinning narratives of this policy field. Indeed, community organisations in the field of immigrant settlement are conscious of the constraints they face and have come together to coordinate their activities in relation to the instrumental means and ends of dictated by the state. Because organisations were increasingly tied to government control through governance, they felt it was important to create a structure through which they could voice their interests and concerns without fear of repercussions. They created a separate organisational body called Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI), under the auspice of which they could lobby federal ministers and officials.

LASI is a relatively young organisation comprised of the executive directors of settlement agencies: Immigrant Women's Services of Ottawa, Ottawa Chinese
Community Service Centre, Jewish Family Services, Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), and the Catholic Immigration Centre. The nine chief executive officers volunteer their time. Each month, there is a rotating chairperson and the responsibility for this is shared equally among the agencies. The organisation has no formal structure or resources. Rather, it is a forum to share information between agencies. Its effectiveness is derived from the long-term commitment of the chief executives of the nine member organisations to sustaining it and using it as the vehicle to facilitate public claims making on immigration issues and it has taken time for it to achieve the weight it carries in public debate. It also depends on a shared belief in the Canadian approach to immigration and citizenship that are not in themselves being questioned.

LASI's main activities are in the following areas: public awareness, advocacy, relationship-building, outreach and project development. One interviewee states, "It’s good to have it, it’s a good voice but it feels that a lot of work needs to be done on advocating on behalf of the community that we need to serve." Another notes "In Ottawa, we actually have an excellent model of working together as EDs – we don’t compete, we strategise together, we exchange news, we sit together and so on and so forth. So, we’re creative that way. We are away ahead of the game." Finally, a third respondent emphasized the success of LASI noting, "I think we’ve been quite impactful. We’re often brought in for consultation by the city on different things because of that too. We don’t have, maybe, that formal thing but informally, because we’re funded by them and they know us, we meet with them regularly."
It is interesting to note is that these collaborations have been mostly driven by an instrumental logic. LASI brings together a very different type of constituency than we were accustomed to in the post-war system of representation. Values such as inclusion, participation, social protection, rights protection, are no longer driving the articulation of interests. Rather, the axis of representation is organisational and functional. The concerns they share, and the claims that flow from these concerns, all center on organisational processes. The encompassing narrative is one of governance in the service delivery realm because they are all broadly interested in these themes. Yet, they are purposely refraining from assigning any broader meaning to their claims or making them part of a sustained series of collective actions. Not surprisingly, organisational processes and issues have prevailed.

Nevertheless, the creation of LASI has been important because it has offered a layer of protection to the organisations in a context where advocacy has become a taboo activity in Canada (Laforest 2012). One CEO noted, “When I want to say something critical of government I never say it in (my organisation’s) name. I say it as (network name). It is a coalition – you would cut the funding of nine organisations? Then there would be uproar.” One important effect has been to amplify the voice of immigrant communities in an environment where their own associations get little political recognition. This structure has enabled these organisations, enmeshed as they are in the delivery of settlement services, to engage with the municipal government in particular in discussion of downstream issues such as education, youth crime and race
equality that are strictly speaking outside their government ordained remit, but that nevertheless affords them some opportunity to express their wider missions.

The LASI structure has also offered a layer of protection for mono-ethnic organisations which continue to strive for greater social inclusion and integration. In fact, many of the people interviewed for this research mentioned that these organisations continue to be a vibrant instrument to foster social cohesion, yet they perform their work in the shadows of large multi-purpose organisations. For example, one respondent noted that "the whole Multiculturalism Ministry has gone from being a ministry to a tiny little department now. So all of that funding kind of dried up, so you won’t see a lot of official evidence of these organisations – but they exist. They exist, and they are doing lots of things and, you know, there are a whole raft of sort of ethnic oriented institutions – there are sort of friendly societies, there are social justice type things, there are religious groupings – you know there’s a wealth of... there are groupings that all they do is organize, kind of, money. So, there’s a wealth of organisations or comings together in these ethnic groupings – communities of interest, you know, and they don’t necessarily, in the Canadian context, live in the same space but they certainly come together and do things a lot."

Large multi-service organisations now funnel resources to mono-ethnic organisations in an ad hoc, informal manner. In fact, most of the inter-organisational relationships in the field of immigrant settlement are structured by this new governance context. Large multi-service organisations now relate to smaller organisations to help them develop capacity and provide infrastructure support such as leadership training
and book keeping skills. Again, the relational dimension is purely instrumental; rather than grounded in bonds and shared identities. This means that organisations involved in these processes identify with each other mainly as providers of services, not as representatives of immigrant communities. Only two of the larger network member organisations have a community development function that they fund from their own resources that enables them to act as a bridge to public debate and to politicians, helping new communities articulate their needs “in a manner that’s going to be understood and accepted here” and taking these issues into LASI’s agenda when appropriate.

As a result, a significant feature of the structure of the immigrant settlement community sector is the relative invisibility in the public sphere of most groups embedded in various immigrant communities. In Ottawa, a city of about 800,000, none of the interviewees in the study, either in voluntary organisations or in the city government were able to give a clear account of the identity or numbers of these associations, although some were willing to suggest that there were “a lot”. Recent research mapping the extent of voluntary and community organisations in Canada suggest that about 6% of the 45,460 voluntary organisations in Ontario have as their principal beneficiary group, “specific ethnicity, culture or immigrants”, or about 2,720 organisations (Scott et al. 2006, 8). The category includes immigrants with first nation and minority ethnic groups among people born in Canada, but it nevertheless suggests a substantial level of organising among recent immigrants.
Discussion and Conclusion

The way that citizens represent themselves to the state is an important component in the construction of its citizenship regime. Understanding shifting forms of representation is important in light of the far-reaching policy changes that have developed since the 1980s. Initially, community groups were involved in governance to the extent that they promoted/encouraged the rights of citizens to full participation in Canadian society. But, as waves of neo-liberalism and new public management practices shrunk the size of the state, the state turned to community groups to restructure social provision. What we are observing is a move away from identity and interest based politics and a public sphere organised around demands for extensions of rights; to a more constrained governance regime where there is only space for the expression of claims made on organisational terms. This has significantly reshaped the nature of the relationship between citizens and the state.

Governance practices for managing immigrant settlement in Canada sharply illustrate this pattern. They have profoundly reconstructed the meaning of citizenship and the representation of group interests in a process that has required the active co-construction of all the agents it has involved. In our account of this process we have shown how at each crucial stage community organisations have acted on interpretations of their interests that have sustained these evolving practices and have driven a wedge between their role in these practices and the representation of their constituencies. Our interviews suggest that webs of belief about immigrants’ needs for services, the
appropriateness of their agencies’ responses, the lack of alternative sources of funding, and their understanding of the potential for influence as a policy ‘insider’ have formed these interpretations. Through their presence in these delivery fields, they both reinforce underlying assumptions about the expression of citizenship, and through their operational decisions affect the ways in which their beneficiaries experience their citizenship and the terms on which it is accessed. Perhaps because they are the ones that have emerged on top of the heap in this newly constituted immigrant policy regime, the construction of these beliefs has served to sideline their beliefs about group interest representation. Better to sup with the devil than to shout impotently from the sidelines.

REFERENCES


