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Negotiating Social Participation: Cultural Citizenship, CALD Communities, and Arts Practice

This two-part paper presents a summary of findings from a research project on the capacity of locally initiated Arts and Cultural development activities to promote cultural citizenship among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the City of Whittlesea, in Melbourne, Australia. The first part of the paper explores the opportunities that recent refinements of the key concept of cultural citizenship offer for both the examination of whether access to culture contributes to closer social inclusion and greater participation, as well as for the evaluation of specific arts and community development policies. If, as has been argued, citizenship in liberal democracies includes effective and creative participation in national culture, how do the production and consumption of art and culture enable such participation? In what ways do claims to culture contribute to the capacity to negotiate and contest the state's hegemonic forms? The second part of the paper presents the initial analysis of data from a pilot study at the City of Whittlesea aimed at examining the conceptual and practical relationship between local arts policies and their contribution to citizens' social inclusion and wellbeing. Focussing on a diverse range of arts and cultural activities, this study also facilitated the refinement of cultural indicators with which to evaluate the efficacy of specific policies and the practices informed by them.