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Local Governments in a Globalizing World: A Comparative Perspective on Recent Reforms in Canada and Australia

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Abstract: Federal states in both the developed and the developing world are now increasingly looking to their systems of local government to play a central role in the economic and social development of metropolitan and rural communities. Such development is a partnership between higher levels of government and these communities.¹ Striking the balance is no easy task.

This paper forms the introduction to a forthcoming book on local government in Canada and Australia to be published by the University of Ottawa Press in 2007. The book aims at providing a comparative assessment of the trends and challenges facing municipal governance in these nations, so that policy makers and administrators at all levels of government in Canada, Australia and around the world can develop an informed view about the most effective way to develop and manage a system of local government that both leads and contributes to the sustainable development of communities throughout the world.

The introduction starts with a discussion of globalisation and its impact on local government, followed by an analysis of the contemporary literature as it relates to the four thematic pairs of chapters that make up the core of this publication: participation and governance, restructuring and reform, performance management, and intergovernmental relations. In their conclusion, the authors revisit this literature in order to challenge prevailing paradigms about the nature and role of local government in the federal state.

¹ Adams, D. and M. Hess (2006)

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