Metropolitan Governance in the Federalist Americas

Strategies for Equitable and Integrated Development

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International collaborative research projects can be productive, intellectually stimulating, and rewarding, despite the challenges brought by unique institutional and governmental contexts across countries as well as cultural and disciplinary perspectives. Such projects tend to have long gestation periods. This book takes its point of departure from a question arising in our earlier “companion” volume, Governance in the Americas: Decentralization, Democracy, and Subnational Government in Brazil, Mexico, and the USA (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008). In that work, we found that despite substantial, though uneven, progress in the effectiveness of state and local governments resulting from decentralization processes in each of the three countries, governance of the metropolitan areas in these countries had largely been bypassed. Given high rates of urbanization and the emergence of large metropolitan areas, we identified an apparent lacuna in efforts to improve the performance of the public sector. Three members of the Governance in the Americas project, Peter K. Spink, Peter M. Ward, and Robert H. Wilson, decided to pursue this question and initiated an assessment of metropolitan governance in all six federalist countries in the Americas, for reasons discussed in chapter 1. This book is the result.

We organized the effort through the institutional framework of our home institutions, the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs and the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Escola de Administração de Empresas (EAESP) of the Fundação Getulio Vargas in São Paulo (FGV/SP). We were joined by additional colleagues, Andrew Sancton (University of Western Ontario), David Myers (Pennsylvania State University), and Pedro Pírez (Centro de Estudios Avanzados, Buenos Aires), each with expertise in metropolitan governance in specific countries. Papers on each of the six countries were originally commissioned for a workshop held at the LBJ School of Public Affairs in April 2005 to explore the viability of and potential for the comparative project. Outside experts Tim Campbell (World Bank) and Alan Gilbert (University College London) provided commentary on the papers and on the proposed project. Sufficient promise was found to justify...
the elaboration of more formal research questions and a common methodology for the six country case studies that later formed the basis for comparative analysis by lead authors Spink, Ward, and Wilson.

We are grateful to the University of Notre Dame Press for their interest in the new project and for their support in undertaking a companion study to the earlier publication Governance in the Americas. Stephen Little at the University of Notre Dame Press joined the enterprise midway, and we wish to acknowledge his support in bringing the project to fruition. In addition, we are very appreciative of the three external reviews of earlier drafts of the manuscript solicited by the Press. These reviews led to a substantially stronger book.

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Finally, we are grateful to the large number of scholars for their collective enthusiasm and willingness to debate how policy makers and citizens might best address the challenges of good government and democratic governance in large metropolitan areas in the Americas. Their interest greatly helped us to maintain our own commitment in completing this study.

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