



Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal

Carmen Sirianni, Lewis Friedland

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In this book, two leading experts on community action provide the first scholarly examination of the civic renewal movement that has emerged in the United States in recent decades. Sirianni and Friedland examine civic innovation since the 1960s as social learning in four arenas (community organizing/development, civic environmentalism, community health, and public journalism), and they link local efforts to broader networks and to the development of "public policy for democracy." They also explore the emergence of a movement for civic renewal that builds upon the civic movements in these four arenas.

In contrast to some recent studies that stress broad indicators of civic decline, this study analyzes innovation as a long process of social learning within specific institutional and policy domains with complex challenges and cross-currents. It draws upon analytical frameworks of social capital, policy learning, organizational learning, regulatory culture, democratic theory, and social movement theory. The study is based upon interviews with more than 400 innovative practitioners, as well as extensive field observation, case study, action research, and historical analysis.

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