



Bargaining for Brooklyn: Community Organizations in the Entrepreneurial City

Nicole P. Marwell

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When middle-class residents fled American cities in the 1960s and 1970s, government services and investment capital left too. Countless urban neighborhoods thus entered phases of precipitous decline, prompting the creation of community-based organizations that sought to bring direly needed resources back to the inner city. Today there are tens of thousands of these CBOs—private nonprofit groups that work diligently within tight budgets to give assistance and opportunity to our most vulnerable citizens by providing services such as housing, child care, and legal aid.

Through ethnographic fieldwork at eight CBOs in the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Bushwick, Nicole P. Marwell discovered that the complex and contentious relationships these groups form with larger economic and political institutions outside the neighborhood have a huge and unexamined impact on the lives of the poor. Most studies of urban poverty focus on individuals or families, but *Bargaining for Brooklyn* widens the lens, examining the organizations whose actions and decisions collectively drive urban life.

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