

Unequal Partnerships



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著者:Silver, Ira

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Through an examination of the Chicago Initiative, a local collaboration created by foundations and corporate funders following the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, Ira Silver analyzes how elite philanthropists exercise social control over community organizations that do work in poor neighbourhoods. Silver's book investigates how community-based organizations strategically attempt to assert influence over foundation funding priorities. The book draws upon several years of qualitative research about "comprehensive community initiatives" undertaken by philanthropic foundations during the eighties and nineties; initiatives that aimed to give community based organizations unprecedented access to foundation's purse strings. A chief dilemma built into these initiatives, was that despite their novelty, foundations still maintained a vested interest in retaining control over the kinds of neighbourhood revitalization reforms that community-based organizations would receive funding to undertake. These research findings are of timely significance given how extensively policymaking responsibility for mitigating poverty has shifted over the past two decades from the public to the philanthropic sectors. Moreover, the book's central findings have appeal to a broad audience since they began to uncover the vast terrain of hidden processes through which elite entities can simultaneously negotiate and reproduce their power.

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