



Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development

John Friedmann

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Two-thirds of the population of the world are poor, and their number is growing in the first as well as in the third world, despite billions of dollars of aid. The economic development policies of the last two decades, and the theory which gave rise to them, have been discredited. The rich are disillusioned, apprehensive or uninterested, while the poor are embittered and without hope, the victims and agents of ignorance, instability and environmental degradation. The need for radical rethinking is urgent: this book makes an important contribution towards that end.

John Friedmann argues that poverty should be seen not merely in material terms, but as social, political and psychological powerlessness. He presents the case for an alternative development committed to empowering the poor in their own communities, and to mobilizing them for political participation on a wider scale. In contrast to centralized development policies devised and implemented at the national and international level, alternative development restores the initiative to those in need, on the grounds that unless people have an active role in directing their own destinies long-term progress will not be achieved.

The author takes the household as the strategic starting-point - stressing its moral, political and economic potential - as a source of continuity and as a location for production. From this basis he propounds a politics of emancipation that would enable the disempowered poor to assert their rights.

Empowerment provides a morally-informed theoretical framework for a development policy that meets the needs of its recipients rather than of its makers.

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