



Kicking Off the Bootstraps: Environment, Development, and Community Power in Puerto Rico (Society, Environment, and Place)

Deborah Berman Santana

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While small communities in Third World countries usually seem at the mercy of central governments and foreign capitalists, local activists can help exploited peoples correct environmental abuses and social injustices and seize control of their own destinies.

Kicking Off the Bootstraps is a powerful case history of such an effort. It describes a grassroots activist movement that emerged in the Puerto Rican community of Salinas to counter the poverty and economic dependence experienced by its citizens in the wake of "Operation Bootstrap," a post-World War II industrial development program. Déborah Berman Santana examines the efforts of the community to develop its own economic strategy based primarily on environmentally and socially responsible uses of local natural and human resources.

Berman Santana shows how local activists are seeking to empower the Salinas community to make decisions concerning economic development. She evaluates present-day efforts to develop positive alternatives, examining the motivations of the activists, the nature of their projects, their efforts to mobilize the community, their dealings with government and other organizations, and the obstacles they face. In a closing chapter, she addresses the potential roles of community leaders, outside activists, local businesses, and government in actualizing these alternatives.

A testimony to one community's efforts to determine its own future, *Kicking Off the Bootstraps* deals with real issues such as control over productive resources, quality of life, and environmental health. It also extends an examination of community-directed activism to an exploration of policy implications for sustainable development. While this concept is often too vague to be applied to real strategies, the Salinas experience provides a clear idea of what sustainable development can—and should—mean in actual practice.

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