



Claiming Neighborhood: New Ways of Understanding Urban Change

By John Betancur, Janet Smith

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Based on historical case studies in Chicago, John J. Betancur and Janet L. Smith focus both the theoretical and practical explanations for why neighborhoods change today. As the authors show, a diverse collection of people including urban policy experts, elected officials, investors, resident leaders, institutions, community-based organizations, and many others compete to control how neighborhoods change and are characterized. Betancur and Smith argue that neighborhoods have become sites of consumption and spaces to be consumed. Discourse is used to add and subtract value from them. The romanticized image of "the neighborhood" exaggerates or obscures race and class struggles while celebrating diversity and income mixing. Scholars and policy makers must reexamine what sustains this image and the power effects produced in order to explain and govern urban space more equitably.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #1412530 in Books
- Brand: Janet Smith John Betancur
- Published on: 2016-09-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .80" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 270 pages



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Review

"This book takes a fresh look behind the numerous social science representations of Chicago to reveal how they actively shape neighborhoods as they are taken up by the public and private sectors . A definite must read for urban scholars."

--Susan Saegert, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York

About the Author

John J. Betancur is a professor of urban planning and policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Janet L. Smith is an associate professor of urban planning and policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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