

Organizing Locally: How the New Decentralists Improve Education, Health Care, and Trade

Bruce Fuller

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We love the local. From the cherries we buy, to the grocer who sells them, to the school where our child unpacks them for lunch, we express resurgent faith in decentralizing the institutions and businesses that arrange our daily lives. But the fact is that huge, bureaucratic organizations often still shape the character of our jobs, schools, the groceries where we shop, and even the hospitals we entrust with our lives. So how, exactly, can we work small, when everything around us is so big, so global and standardized? In *Organizing Locally*, Bruce Fuller shows us, taking stock of America's rekindled commitment to localism across an illuminating range of sectors, unearthing the crucial values and practices of decentralized firms that work.

Fuller first untangles the economic and cultural currents that have eroded the efficacy of—and our trust in—large institutions over the past half century. From there we meet intrepid leaders who have been doing things differently. Traveling from a charter school in San Francisco to a veterans service network in Iowa, from a Pennsylvania health-care firm to the Manhattan branch of a Swedish bank, he explores how creative managers have turned local staff loose to craft inventive practices, untethered from central rules and plain-vanilla routines. By holding their successes and failures up to the same analytical light, he vividly reveals the key cornerstones of social organization on which motivating and effective decentralization depends. Ultimately, he brings order and evidence to the often strident debates about who has the power—and on what scale—to structure how we work and live locally.

Written for managers, policy makers, and reform activists, *Organizing Locally* details the profound decentering of work and life inside firms, unfolding across postindustrial societies. Its fresh theoretical framework explains resurging faith in decentralized organizations and the ingredients that deliver vibrant meaning and efficacy for residents inside. Ultimately, it is a synthesizing study, a courageous and radical new way of conceiving of American vitality, creativity, and ambition.



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