



Governing the Poor: Exercises of Poverty Reduction, Practices of Global Aid

Suzan Ilcan, Anita Lacey

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Every day, we are barraged by statistics, images, and emotional messages that present poverty as a problem to be quantified, managed, and solved. The poor are presented as a heterogeneous group and globalized solutions are suggested to the problem of poverty. *Governing the Poor* exposes the ways in which such generalized descriptions and quantifications marginalize the poor and their experiences. Drawing on field research in Namibia and the Solomon Islands and case studies of international organizations such as USAID and Oxfam, Suzan Ilcan and Anita Lacey argue that aid programs have forged new understandings of poverty that are more about governing the poor through neo-liberal reforms than providing just solutions to poverty. By analyzing these programs they reveal that concepts of privatization, empowerment, and partnership are tools that treat the poor as a governed entity within a system of actors - governments, international organizations, and private businesses - that make up the global aid regime. An illuminating work of critiques and solutions for the current global aid regime, *Governing the Poor* shows the consequences of championing market-based solutions to poverty while neglecting to provide social infrastructure.

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