



The Rise of the Public Authority: Statebuilding and Economic Development in Twentieth-Century America

Gail Radford

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In the late nineteenth century, public officials throughout the United States began to experiment with new methods of managing their local economies and meeting the infrastructure needs of a newly urban, industrial nation. Stymied by legal and financial barriers, they created a new class of quasi-public agencies called public authorities. Today these entities operate at all levels of government, and range from tiny operations like the Springfield Parking Authority in Massachusetts, which runs thirteen parking lots and garages, to mammoth enterprises like the Tennessee Valley Authority, with nearly twelve billion dollars in revenues each year.

In *The Rise of the Public Authority*, Gail Radford recounts the history of these inscrutable agencies, examining how and why they were established, the varied forms they have taken, and how these pervasive but elusive mechanisms have molded our economy and politics over the past hundred years.

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