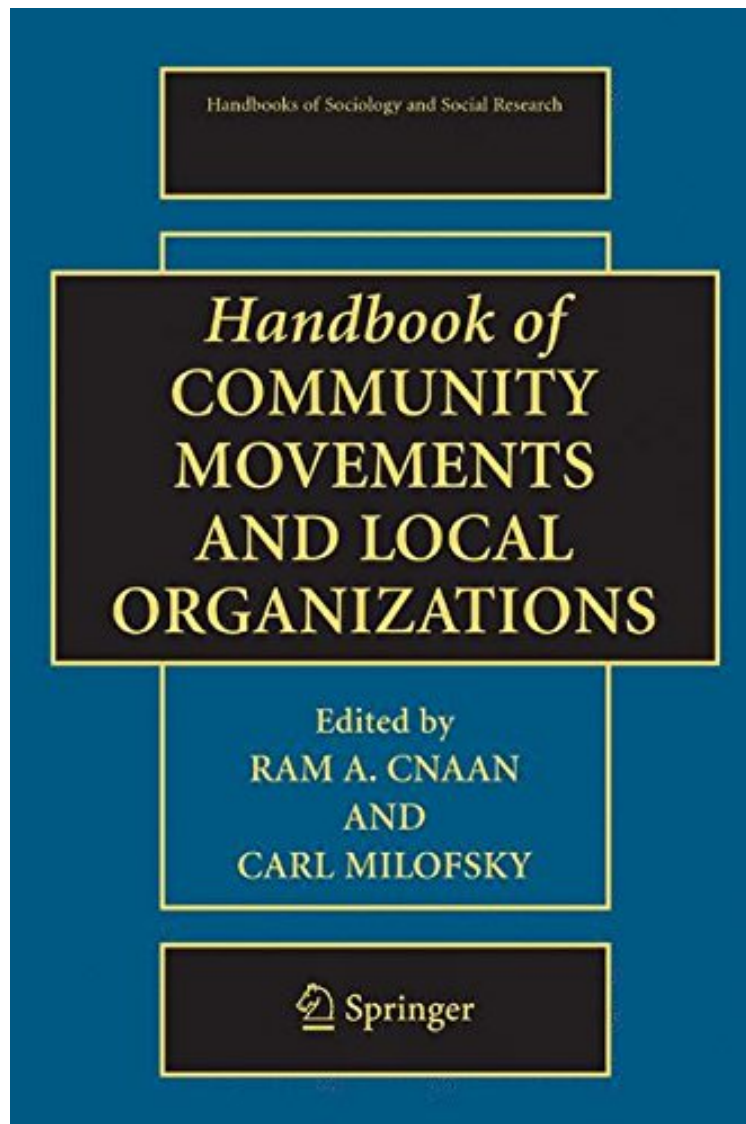


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Although the way associations and the organization of local social life are intertwined is one of the oldest approaches to community study, the way citizens and residents come together informally to act and solve problems has rarely been a primary focus. Associations are central to important and developing areas of social theory and social action. This handbook takes voluntary associations as the starting point for making sense of communities. It offers a new perspective on voluntary organizations and gives an integrated, yet diverse, theoretical understanding of this important aspect of community life.

From the Back CoverHow citizens and residents come together informally to act and solve problems has rarely been addressed. Little direct research or theory dealing with this subject exists, and correcting that deficit is the task of this book. The book builds a theory of local organizations by presenting contributions from experts in the field of community life - groups such as PTAs, block associations, fraternal organizations, self-help groups (AA), congregations, and even Internet chat clubs. The goal of this book is to form the foundation for a "discipline" in social science study, and be a sophisticated resource that will be useful to practitioners around the world.