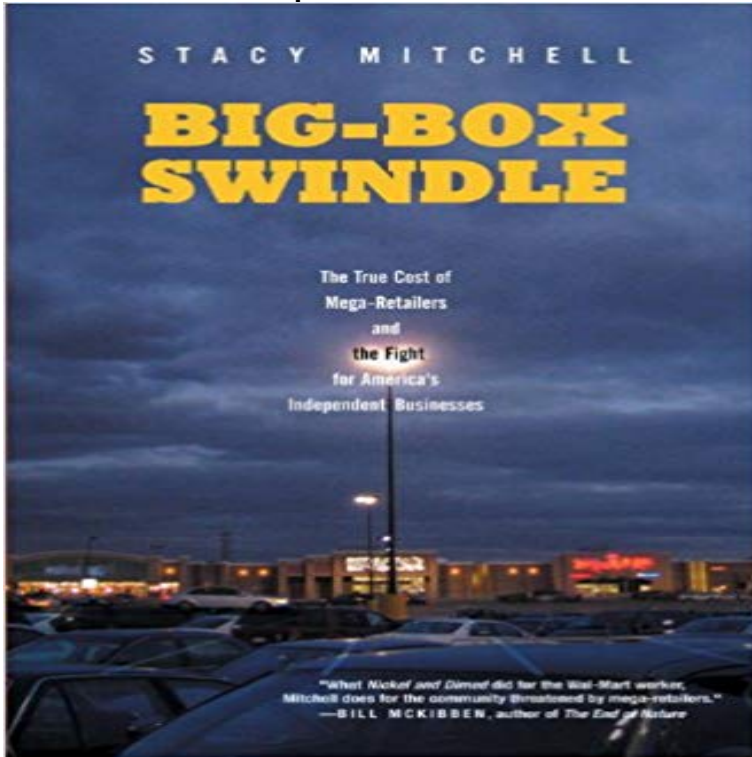


# Big-Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-Retailers and the Fight for Americas Independent Businesses



A Book Sense Pick and Annual HighlightWith a New AfterwordIn less than two decades, large retail chains have become the most powerful corporations in America. In this deft and revealing book, Stacy Mitchell illustrates how mega-retailers are fueling many of our most pressing problems, from the shrinking middle class to rising pollution and diminished civic engagementand she shows how a growing number of communities and independent businesses are effectively fighting back. Mitchell traces the dramatic growth of mega-retailersfrom big boxes like Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Costco, and Staples to chains like Starbucks, Olive Garden, Blockbuster, and Old Navyand the precipitous decline of independent businesses. Drawing on examples from virtually every state in the country, she unearths the extraordinary impact of these companies and the big-box mentality on everything from soaring gasoline consumption to rising poverty rates, failing family farms, and declining voting levels. Along the way, Mitchell exposes the shocking role government policy has played in the expansion of mega-retailers and builds a compelling case that communities composed of many small, locally owned businesses are healthier and more prosperous than those dominated by a few large chains. More than a critique, Big-Box Swindle provides an invigorating account of how some communities have successfully countered the spread of big boxes and rebuilt their local economies. Since 2000, more than two hundred big-box development projects have been halted by groups of ordinary citizens, and scores of towns and cities have adopted laws that favor small-scale, local business development and limit the proliferation of chains. From cutting-edge land-use policies to innovative cooperative small-business initiatives, Mitchell offers communities concrete strategies that can stave off

mega-retailers and create a more prosperous and sustainable future.

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