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**Title**

Book Reviews

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6zb5b1kj>

**Journal**

Administrative Science Quarterly, 47(3)

**ISSN**

0001-8392

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**Publication Date**

2002-09-01

**DOI**

10.2307/3094853

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Peer reviewed

## REFERENCE

March, J. G., and J. P. Olsen:  
1989 Rediscovering Institutions:  
The Organizational Basis of  
Politics. New York: Free  
Press.

### **Managing Organizational Change in Transition Economies.**

Daniel R. Denison, ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001. 563 pp. \$45.00, paper.

This book, like so many other edited volumes, is a hors d'oeuvre sampler rather than a coherent intellectual contribution. Yet, given the topic this work undertakes, it is hard to imagine it being done in any other way. After all, the transition from communism is one of the most complex phenomena of our age, and a wide range of voices and perspectives such as is represented in these eighteen chapters is useful to any attempt at explanation. And as is the case here, this sampler has something to delight almost everyone, as well as a few morsels best pushed under the decorative cabbage leaf.

This volume contains works from sociology, organization theory, organizational behavior, samples of erudite scholarly works, extended anecdotes based on personal experience, and whirlwind tours of history and politics. The papers came from a conference, and, no doubt, this mix of viewpoints made for an invigorating and stimulating conference. Unfortunately, any conference interaction and cross-fertilization does not appear in the papers, where references to the work of fellow chapter authors, even when the topics are identical, are virtually nonexistent.

The editor states that his book is intended to contribute to an understanding of the transition process at the firm level, to complement existing political and economic policy works. He asserts that organizations, the seat of what he calls "the most dynamic changes of the transition" remain unexamined. So, how well has this book achieved its objectives? As regards its usefulness to policy makers, it is hard for me to judge. It does not contain the bullet points and policy recommendations they seem to favor, but I am not a policy maker and, so, cannot speak for what they may or may not find useful. But as regards the lack of examination of organizations and the organizational behavior of their participants under the transition, this is patently not the case. Many others, as well as several of this volume's own chapter authors, have written important works describing transitional organizational change. Yet, while this volume as a whole may not quite reach its own ambitions, there are several excellent papers here that deserve a wider general readership.

The editor has tried to organize these diverse chapters by grouping them into three general categories. Unfortunately, these categories provide only the loosest possible organizing system for such varied delights. Most of the chapters could have appeared in any one of the three categories, with no

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one noticing the difference. For example, in "Part I: Rethinking the Organizational Environment," Candeia and Candeia focus on their recommendations for managing change in their client organizations' systems and structures, as does Fehér and Szigeti's chapter (13) in "Part II: Creating New Organizational Systems and Structures" and Perlaki's chapter (18) in "Part III: Integrating Organizational Cultures." Further, each of these groupings contains sociological analyses, humanistic-style essays, and empirical organizational behavior studies. So, to the extent that one expects an edited book to provide a coherent treatment of its subject, this one will disappoint.

The great advantage of ordering a sampler, however, is that you are sure to find something everyone will enjoy. The editor suggests that this work was intended to address what lessons can be learned from the transition from communism, and there are plenty of these. What is more important, several chapters provide fresh insights useful to those with more general interests. For example, Keister's chapter (1) is an excellent empirical study of the role of business groups in the financial markets of China. King's chapter (6) proposes an insightful linking of the resources available to different firms (e.g., personal networks, foreign capital, or domestic finance) and the strategies these firms pursue. Both of these chapters would be invaluable to anyone interested in strategy, international business, finance, or development economics. To cite a few other examples, Weinstein's chapter (11) develops insights from his studies of Polish companies to produce a new contribution to the compensation literature. Kennedy's analysis of the synthesis of "transition culture" was painfully insightful and accomplishes that rarest of feats: a Westerner has written something about the transition that would be novel and interesting to Central and Eastern Europeans. Finally, numerous chapters contain case studies that many will find useful in teaching.

So, this volume is a sampler with some real treats, and the editor and his center are to be commended for compiling them here. Whether for sociologists, organizational theorists, organizational behavior empiricists, organizational development consultants, or teachers looking for some contemporary cases on the transition from communism, there is something enjoyable here for every palette.

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