



Reason's Neglect: Rationality and Organizing

By Barbara Townley

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Reason, and the need to Be Rational, are essential dimensions of society and the organizations we live and work in. Yet the "rationalization" of working and administrative processes, or the "rationality" studied in social sciences, is all too often, used, understood, and interpreted in an extremely narrow sense. Reason's Neglect does three things. Firstly, it argues that rationality is a leitmotif of organization studies, but one that has often been neglected. Secondly, it deploys Foucault's work to recover the neglected dimensions of rationality. In doing this, it allows for a revisionary exploration of key subjects in organization studies: organization theory, bureaucracy, technology, culture, practice, etc. Finally, the book presents the case of new rational management techniques being introduced in an organization, allowing individuals to 'speak for themselves', and examining how they respond to these innovations, and how they make sense of them. Arguing that rationality should be seen as disembedded, embedded, or embodied, each chapter goes on to explore a different aspect of reason, such as economic, bureaucratic, technocratic, institutional, or contextual. Clearly written and structured, yet an engaged and challenging approach to the study of organizations in society, Reason's Neglect is an iconoclastic book.

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Review

The book is as intriguing as its title Stuart R. Clegg, Organization Studies

About the Author

Professor Barbara Townley was awarded her PhD from the London School of Economics. She taught at Lancaster, Warwick, and Edinburgh universities in the UK, and at the University of Alberta, Canada, before taking up her present position at the University of St. Andrews. Her work has been published in leading North American and European journals including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies*, *Human Relations*, *Organization*, and *Accounting, Organization, and Society*. She is the author of the widely cited *Reframing Human Resource Management* (Sage, 1994) which offered a Foucauldian critique of HRM. She has been Associate Editor of *Human Relations*, and serves on the editorial boards of *Human Relations*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization*, and *Strategic Organization*.

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