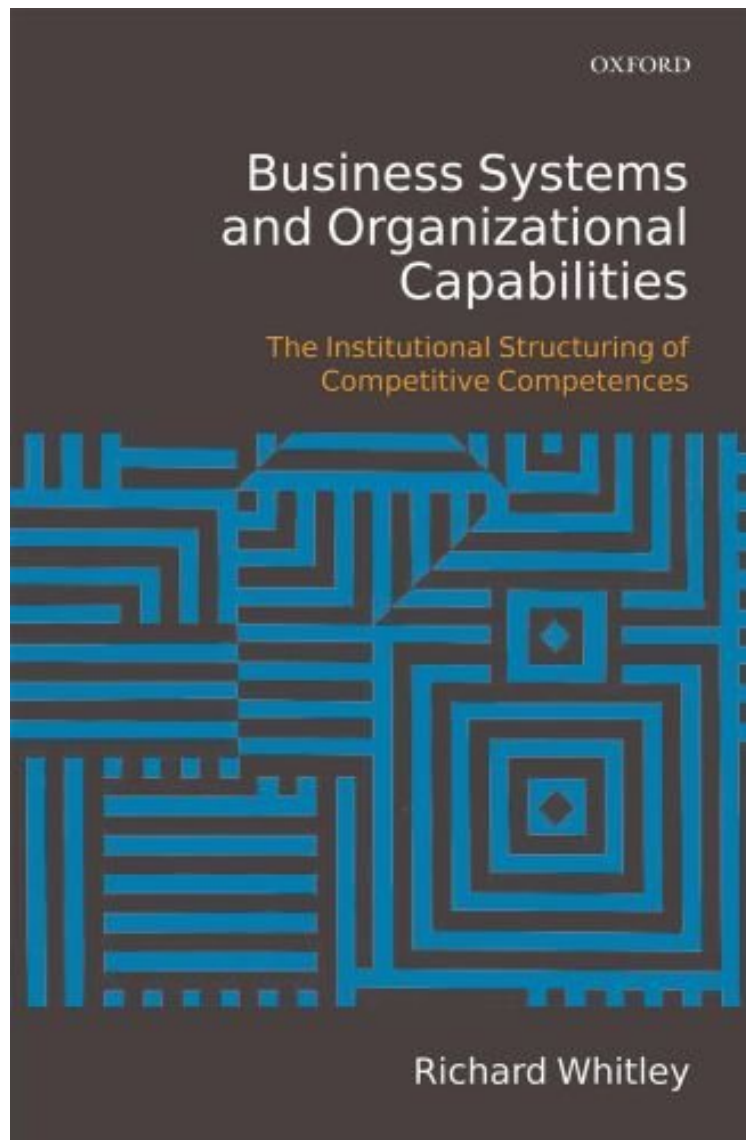


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Business Systems and Organizational Capabilities: The Institutional Structuring of Competitive Competences

Richard Whitley

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Twenty-first century capitalism has been marked by an increasing international economic independence, and considerable differences between dominant economic systems of coordination and control. In this context, national competition and coordination within industries has increased, but the governance of leading firms, and the kinds of competences they develop, remain quite diverse. This book shows how different kinds of firms become established and develop different capabilities in different societies, and as a result are effective in particular kinds of industries and markets. By integrating institutionalist approaches to organizations with the capabilities theory of the firm, Richard Whitley suggests how we can understand this combination of diversity and integration by developing the comparative business systems framework in three major ways. First, by identifying the particular circumstances in which distinctive business systems and innovation systems become nationally established and reproduced, as well as how changing endogenous and exogenous pressures have affected the major kinds of business systems that developed in many OECD states during the postwar period. Second, by showing how variations in authority sharing with employees and business partners and in the provision of organizational careers lead institutional regimes to affect the nature of organizational capabilities that dominant firms develop and enable them to deal with different kinds of risks and opportunities in particular technologies and markets. Third, by identifying the circumstances in which multinational firms are likely to develop distinctive transnational organizational capabilities through such authority sharing and careers, and so become different kinds of companies from their more domestically focused competitors. In many, if not most, cases of cross national managerial coordination, these conditions rarely exist, and so the extent to which multinational firms do indeed constitute distinct organizational forms and strategic actors is much less than is sometimes claimed.

About the Author Richard Whitley is Professor of Organisational Sociology at Manchester Business School, University of Manchester and has recently held visiting appointments at Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo. Recent books include: *Changing Capitalisms? Internationalisation, Institutional Change and Systems of Economic Organisation*; *The Multinational Firm: Organizing Across Institutional and National Divides*; *Divergent Capitalisms: The Social Structuring and Change of Business Systems*; and the second edition of *The Intellectual and Social Organisation of the Sciences* (all published by Oxford University Press), and *Competing Capitalisms* (Edward Elgar). Current research interests include the institutional structuring of innovation patterns, changing institutional regimes and business systems, and competence development.