



# The Mechanisms of Governance

By Oliver E. Williamson

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## The Mechanisms of Governance By Oliver E. Williamson

This book brings together in one place the work of one of our most respected economic theorists, on a field in which he has played a large part in originating: the New Institutional Economics. Transaction cost economics, which studies the governance of contractual relations, is the branch of the New Institutional Economics with which Oliver Williamson is especially associated.

Transaction cost economics takes issue with one of the fundamental building blocks in microeconomics: the theory of the firm. Whereas orthodox economics describes the firm in technological terms, as a production function, transaction cost economics describes the firm in organizational terms, as a governance structure. Alternative feasible forms of organization--firms, markets, hybrids, bureaus--are examined comparatively. The analytical action resides in the details of transactions and the mechanisms of governance.

Transaction cost economics has had a pervasive influence on current economic thought about how and why institutions function as they do, and it has become a practical framework for research in organizations by representatives of a variety of disciplines. Through a transaction cost analysis, *The Mechanisms of Governance* shows how and why simple contracts give way to complex contracts and internal organization as the hazards of contracting build up. That complicates the study of economic organization, but a richer and more relevant theory of organization is the result. Many testable implications and lessons for public policy accrue to this framework. Applications of both kinds are numerous and growing.

Written by one of the leading economic theorists of our time, *The Mechanisms of Governance* is sure to be an important work for years to come. It will be of interest to scholars and students of economics, organization, management, and law.

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## The Mechanisms of Governance By Oliver E. Williamson Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #769180 in Books
- Published on: 1999-03-18
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.00" h x 1.30" w x 9.00" l, 1.40 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"[The book] is a work of scholarship written for posterity by one of the leading social scientists of our time. [It] should achieve the status of a classic text quickly...[The author] provides a conceptual framework simple enough to be used and yet exact and complex enough to accommodate continuing insights into the workings of organizations."--*The Academy of Management*

### **From the Back Cover**

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### **About the Author**

Oliver E. Williamson is the Edgar F. Kaiser Professor of Business, Professor of Economics, and Professor of Law at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of numerous works in which law, economics, and organization are joined.

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