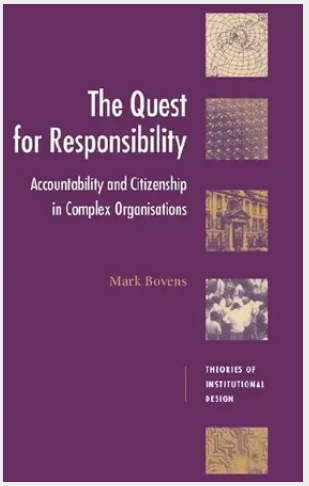
Bovens

The Quest for Responsibility

Accountability and Citizenship in Complex Organisations



The search for responsibility in complex organisations often seems an impossible undertaking. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach combining law, social science, ethics and organisational design, Mark Bovens analyses the reasons for this, and offers possible solutions. He begins by examining the problem of 'many hands' - because so many people contribute in so many different ways, it is very difficult to determine who is accountable for organisational behaviour. Four possible solutions - corporate, hierarchical, collective and individual accountability - are analysed from normative, empirical and practical perspectives. Bovens argues that individual accountability is the most promising solution, but only if individuals have the chance to behave responsibly. The book then explores the implications of this approach. What does it mean to be a 'responsible' employee or official? When is it legitimate to disobey the orders of superiors? What institutional designs might be most appropriate?

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