

From governance to innovation in family firms: a knowledge management perspective

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Abstract

A knowledge management perspective is proposed to fill the conceptual and theoretical gap between governance and innovation in studying family firms. Family governance has a paradoxical effect on innovation; so, a need for new models and categories to address family firms innovation has recently emerged. Indeed, knowledge is a valuable resource that stays at the crossroads of governance and innovation. Knowledge management is a layer of governance, while innovation is a process of search and recombination of knowledge.

Taking cue from this intuition, in this dissertation I present a knowledge management approach to explore how family firms can interiorize past knowledge to innovate, starting from the “Innovation Through Tradition” framework. The concepts of *participation* and *reification* are introduced as key practices. The case study of Cantine Nicosia – a five generations family business based in Sicily and operating in the wine industry – will be used as an illustrative example of how knowledge, governance and innovation operate in an interactive mode.