

Foreword

The importance of innovation hardly needs to be argued in these turbulent times. Any opportunity to shed light on good practices pertaining to it is worth our attention. This dissertation offers one such an opportunity.

Its main argument is that innovation is a process that can be managed for performance. Its managerial proposal takes the form of fair process. Procedural justice is part of the mainstream organizational literature, including through writings such as those of Kim and Mauborgne who identified major fair process failings in the interactions between corporate headquarters and affiliate divisions. Van der Heyden and colleagues have provided a more operational definition of fair process that combines Kaizen continuous improvement concepts with classic decision theoretic frameworks. Their resulting fair process framework had so far not been submitted to serious empirical testing. This dissertation fills this gap, by examining 15 German manufacturing locations on their performance in two critical innovation sub-processes: strategic product planning and serial development.

The empirical results are remarkable: not only do these plants present quite a variety of fair process practices, the quality of the linear regression fits exceed our initial expectations. The dissertation thus presents an encompassing and empirically validated framework for innovation management. The review of the literature is thorough, as is the empirical analysis – both in terms of the qualitative case analysis as in terms of the statistical analysis. There is nothing easy in this thesis, nor anything that is not thoroughly worked out.

Louis Pasteur said 'luck favors the prepared mind'. Through detailed and painstaking work, Thomas Limberg prepared the 'luck' that befell upon him in the form of good empirics. For scholars and practitioners interested in innovation management, reading this dissertation is a way of sharing this luck.

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