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Back to the Future

Tor Vergata University, Rome, ITALY

TRACK 26: Innovation in Chinese Firms

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Abstract:

Innovation is rarely a product of the internal resources of the firm alone; much is dependent on the firm's access to external resources and its use of these external resources for fostering information and knowledge networks underpinning increasingly 'distributed' innovation activities, such as research and development. So, relations with other organisations are likely to be crucial to success in innovation. For example, it has long been accepted that customers and suppliers are crucial sources of the knowledge required for a firm's innovation. While this is established wisdom in the West, it is not necessarily the case for Chinese firms. Their political and social circumstances, for example strong and weak ties with local and central government, and their stage of economic development, seem likely to make relationships with other organisations very different indeed. This difference may have profound consequences for how innovation is organised in Chinese firms and what are the implications for European and other Western firms that want to build relationships with China. Our track aims exploring how is the innovation of Chinese firms influenced by their relations with other organisations?

Topics to be covered in the track will include:

- details of the Chinese firm's innovation
- attitudes towards innovation in different industries (software, automotive, etc.)
- relationships with other organisations (customers, suppliers, government, etc.)
- purpose of relationships with these organisations
- the contribution of these relationships to the firm's innovation
- innovative performance of the firm measured against that of major competitors

- sorts of information and knowledge most important for firm's innovation (tacit, technical, etc)
- sources of knowledge and information (literature, universities, personal contacts, etc)
- means by which this information is acquired (formal, personal networking, Internet etc)

We will seek papers that focus on:

- Chinese firms
- foreign firms operating in China
- foreign firms with interests in China, but no operations there
- local and national government departments
- organisations of other sorts (industry associations, community groups, etc)