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KNOWLEDGE GOVERNANCE IN REGIONAL INNOVATION SYSTEMS: THE CASE OF ZONA DA MATA MINEIRA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ITS INSTITUTIONS

Practical case

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Abstract text:

Purpose: The study sought to identify how the concept of Knowledge Governance is and can be better used in the context of the Regional Innovation System (SRI) of Minas Gerais, and more specifically in the territory of Zona da Mata.

Originality and **Value:**
The importance of knowledge assets and their use in the development of innovations is widely recognized in the literature. At the same time, there is growing interest in the influence of territorial factors on national and regional innovation regimes. The concept of knowledge governance has to date received limited attention in the study of the innovation economy. Knowledge governance entails coordination between research, support and intermediary institutions acting in the generation, dissemination, and protection of these assets. For this reason, the study is structured on a groundbreaking theoretical model that assesses state (government actors and support, promotion and intermediary institutions), dynamic (research institutions), and cognitive (researchers) capabilities present in an innovation system.

Design and **Methodology**

The methodological approach of the study consisted of three research stages. The first, which was of an exploratory nature, sought to clarify the related themes and organize them in the model developed by the authors. The second, which was of a descriptive nature, delineated the particularities of the Minas Gerais SRI, focusing on its public innovation policies and formalized institutional structure. Finally, the third, which was of an explanatory nature, used the proposed model to identify, through 27 strategic interviews and administration of 103 questionnaires, the factors that contribute to the economic development of Zona da Mata, from the perspective of strategic actors.

Results and **Findings**

The comparison of how knowledge governance and innovation systems are supposed to work with how they actually work brings up the subjectivity and complexity inherent in the personal relationships and institutional interaction that underlie them. Continuity in knowledge governance and innovative practices is significantly influenced by the human factor and its historicity. In addition, the results confirm the relevance of a clear and long-term mission and strategy, shared by institutions at all levels, which seek to minimize conflicts between competing interests and guarantee that they continue to move forward regardless of changes in management and government.

As for state capabilities, dividing them into the domains of the technical-administrative and the

political-relational for the purpose of analysis proved to be useful. Issues related to competing interests, lack of clarity in institutional roles, low propensity for cooperation, and misalignment of strategies were less prevalent among institutions that operate exclusively in the Zona da Mata, as opposed to the state of Minas Gerais as a whole. On the other hand, the duplication of effort and the lack of the necessary structure came up again and again in conversations with the interviewees in the mesoregion. An additional theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of knowledge brokers: the integration between people within and between institutions can depend on factors such as historical credibility and capacity for articulation, in addition to formal appointments.

With regard to dynamic capabilities, the decision was made to consult the innovation directorates and technological innovation departments of the research institutions, which had been identified as the most suitable channels for the promotion of linkage between the government, such institutions, and researchers. Common points that came up were the difficulty in ensuring sufficient autonomy for the departments to operate, which was expected; a lack of sufficiently trained personnel; a lack of strategic guidelines and performance metrics; internal communication failures; and cultural and ideological differences among the actors and entities involved.

Finally, the analysis of cognitive abilities sought to understand the view of researchers, the real producers of knowledge. In addition to the specific results, it is evident that the governance strategy advocated by the literature neglects the values, interests and career trajectories of these individuals. For this reason, this study suggests that in order to make these practices more effective, a bottom-up approach should be adopted, that is, input from the researchers should be solicited and incorporated in implementation. In the relations that generate positive economic outcomes for the territory itself, the researcher is a remarkably articulator of the other actors in the system and can be traced over a long work trajectory that is only minimally impacted by changes in management and competing interests.

Impact

The results of this research (1) support the formulation and evaluation of public innovation policies in Minas Gerais and consequently the homogeneous development of the state, and (2) suggest that the replication of this study in different contexts will contribute to sustainable growth of other regions around the world.

Transferability

The theoretical model used in the case presented is fully replicable in the context of other regions and countries, since all innovation systems have research, support, promotion, and intermediary institutions in their structures, organized to a lesser or greater degree by governments.

Owner:

National Institute of Industrial Property
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References (Harvard style):

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