

From consumer innovation to firm creation: Are fab labs effective in supporting end-user entrepreneurship?

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Abstract

This exploratory research aims to shed light on what extent fab labs (“non-commercial” makerspaces) are valuable and effective vehicles both for consumer innovation and commercial diffusion, encouraging the emergence of an end-user entrepreneurship phenomenon (entrepreneurship by consumers). To do so, using an in-depth qualitative approach, we interviewed fab managers from French fab labs and consumer-innovators, members of Artilect fab lab (first French fab lab certified by the MIT) who starting-up or expressed the intention to do so. Based on our findings, we propose three essential theoretical contributions: (1) fab labs do not foster user-entrepreneurship, (2) fab labs tend to act as “accidental” pre-incubators and (3) fab labs can reduce innovation shortfalls.

Keywords: *Consumer Innovation; End-user Entrepreneurship; Fab Labs*

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