MAKERSPACES AND FACILITY SHARING: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND UNIVERSITIES TO INITIATE AND SUPPORT THE NEW MAKER MOVEMENT IN TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic

Start-ups are often lacking specific equipment to carry out tests to validate research results. They do not have the financial resources to rent or lease advanced research and laboratory facilities and investors are reluctant to provide the means to invest in such equipment, especially, when large risks are involved and little collateral is available. Traditionally, seed capital funds, venture capital and business angels are considered important sources of financing innovative start-up firms. However, these funds are not always able to solve the financial constraints of innovative start-ups and they also come with significant changes in the governance and ownership of the new venture. Recent literature draws attention to developments such as makerspaces and facility sharing to provide entrepreneurs access to specific equipment and overcome their limitations. The maker movement and facility sharing are recent developments that have emerged and bring entrepreneurs the opportunity to increase access to tools and allow governments and universities to support innovation speed. We focus on the characteristics of these arrangements, the reasons they can exist, the conditions when it is more attractive for both governments, universities and start-ups to be involved and make use of these arrangements. Furthermore, we investigate the role of governments and universities to initiate and support these arrangements.

Method

We investigate three types of arrangements initiated by government or universities in the Netherlands. For each we develop a case study that includes interviews among both entrepreneurs and the university or government as initiator. We discuss the various forms in which these arrangements can manifest, the reasons why universities and governments have an interest to develop these arrangements, and discuss what the benefits and limitations of these arrangements are for entrepreneurs.

Results and Implications

The findings provide clear insights in the variety of support functions that each arrangement of makerspaces provide and the social processes of inclusion and knowledge sharing that are central to relocating and reconfiguration of organizational capabilities of start-ups. In particular, we found value creating activities and development of innovative capabilities between start-ups and established larger organizations which positively influence the speed of innovation.

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