

THE REALM OF INNOVATION IN ROME.

In-between institutional support and grassroots.



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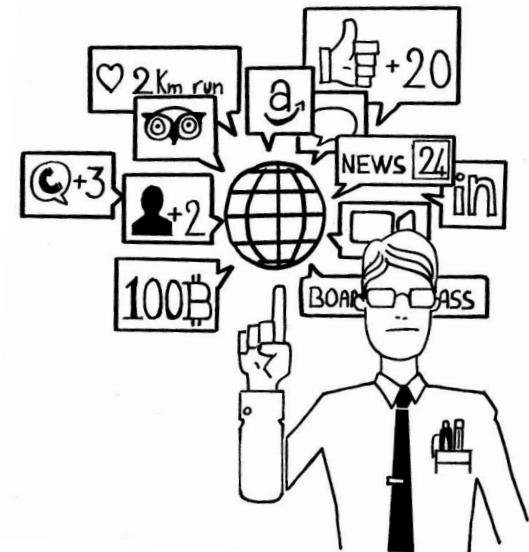
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Research Context

Mass production has largely disappeared from the major capitalist countries. Globalization and new digital technologies brought about changes in:

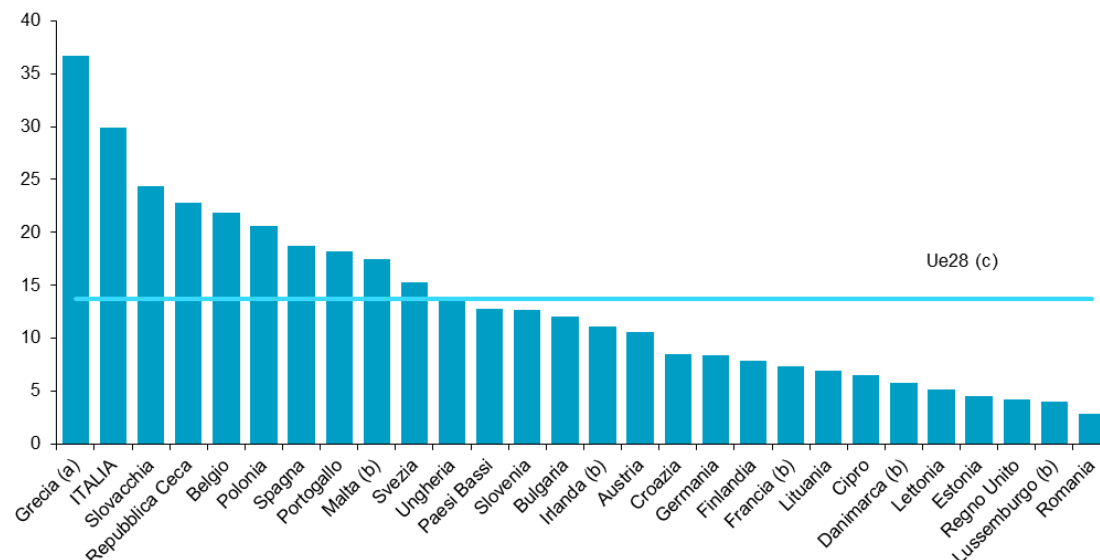
- Markets, forms of productions and labour force.
- People's mobility and local/global dynamics.
- The commodification of culture and its location.
- The world economic geography.



Research Context

Welfare Capitalism is struggling in many countries of the developed world that are now facing new economic and social challenges. The result is an increasing rate of unemployment and casual employments.

Freelancing and low capitals are shaping the current economy causing deep changes in the labour market and its habits, **as well as in the working spaces.**



Source: Istat 2013 – Freelancing rate in the EU countries.

Uncertainties and Urban Reinassance

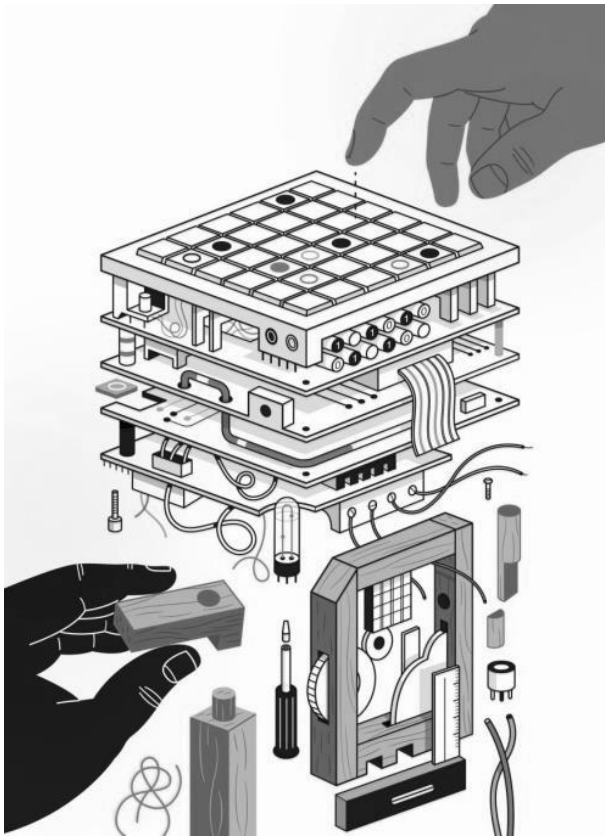
Revival of the Urban environment as an incubator for innovation.

- Cities foster encounters and ideas' circulations, so especially while talking about innovation they act as “nursery” for new activities. (Duranton & Puga 2001 *cf.* Hoover & Vernon 1959).
- There is a growing literature of city's enthusiasts (Glaeser 2011; Katz & Bradley 2013; Storper et al. 2015).
- This involves talking about collaborative economies, new working spaces and micro clustering in (Capdevila 2015) as co-working spaces (**CWS**) are the result of a growing diffusion of both labour uncertainties and the cultural industry affirmation.

New professionals & craft revival

«WE ARE ALL MAKERS!»

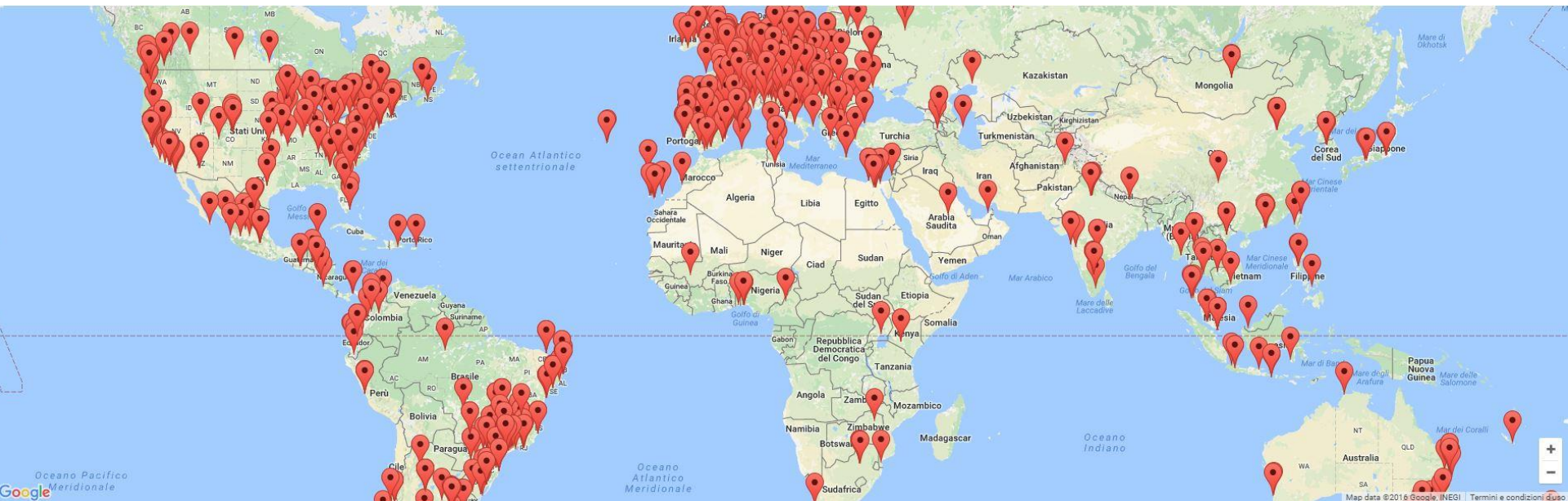
D. Dougherty, founder of the Maker Faire



Source: Campbell H., the New Yorker,
January 2014

- Innovation, creativity and cultural industry are intertwined
 - High software knowledge and design skills shared through online communities and platforms
 - Use of technological tools
(e.g. 3D printers, laser cutters etc.)
 - Low initial capitals
 - Entrepreneurialism
 - Attitude towards the sharing (of facilities, knowledge, fundings).
- (Anderson 2012)

Collaborative Economy at the world scale



Source: the global co-working map; retrieved from www.coworkingmap.org the 26/08/2016

Research Problem

HOW IS THE LAZIO REGION COPING AND SUPPORTING THESE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES?

The measures that are **in place** at the moment to foster innovation and smart specialization in the Lazio region **does not** really **match with the expectations and the necessities** of the professionals working in the sector.

S3 strategy Lazio region

FOCUS POINTS AND PRIORITIES:

- 5 main themes of technologies' value capture: health, natural resources, energy, security, sustainability
- **Regional economic relocation towards KIBS, innovative services, quality manufacturing with high technological potential.**
- **Support for new activities**
- Smart regulation of exports
- **Encouraging R&D investments among the firms to become competitive in the innovation field at the regional scale**
- Enhancing linkages among research centres

Who are the actors of the Roman innovation?

Three main initiatives in place to support:

NATIONAL LEVEL:

creation of the “innovative start-ups” (and PMI) register with taxation benefits for innovative new activities, creation of certified incubators

REGIONAL LEVEL:

support toward dedicated events and the **MakerFaire**; funding for lifelong learning, trainings and educational program; regional managed shared service accommodations; FabCity program for fab-labs into schools

LOCAL LEVEL:

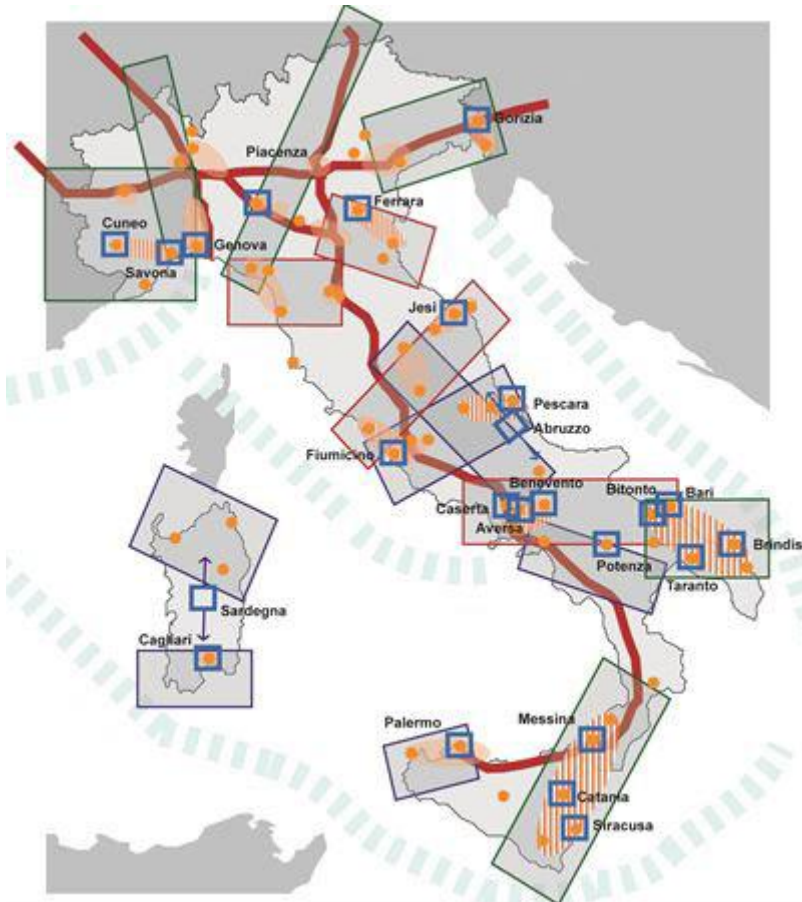
shared service accommodation, educational programs, social inclusion programs

Average Users and recipients of educational programs in place

- Startuppers
- People that has recently lost their jobs
- Students, graduates or doctors not employed in Academia
- Young professionals starting their business life



EU directions and Italian economic strategies

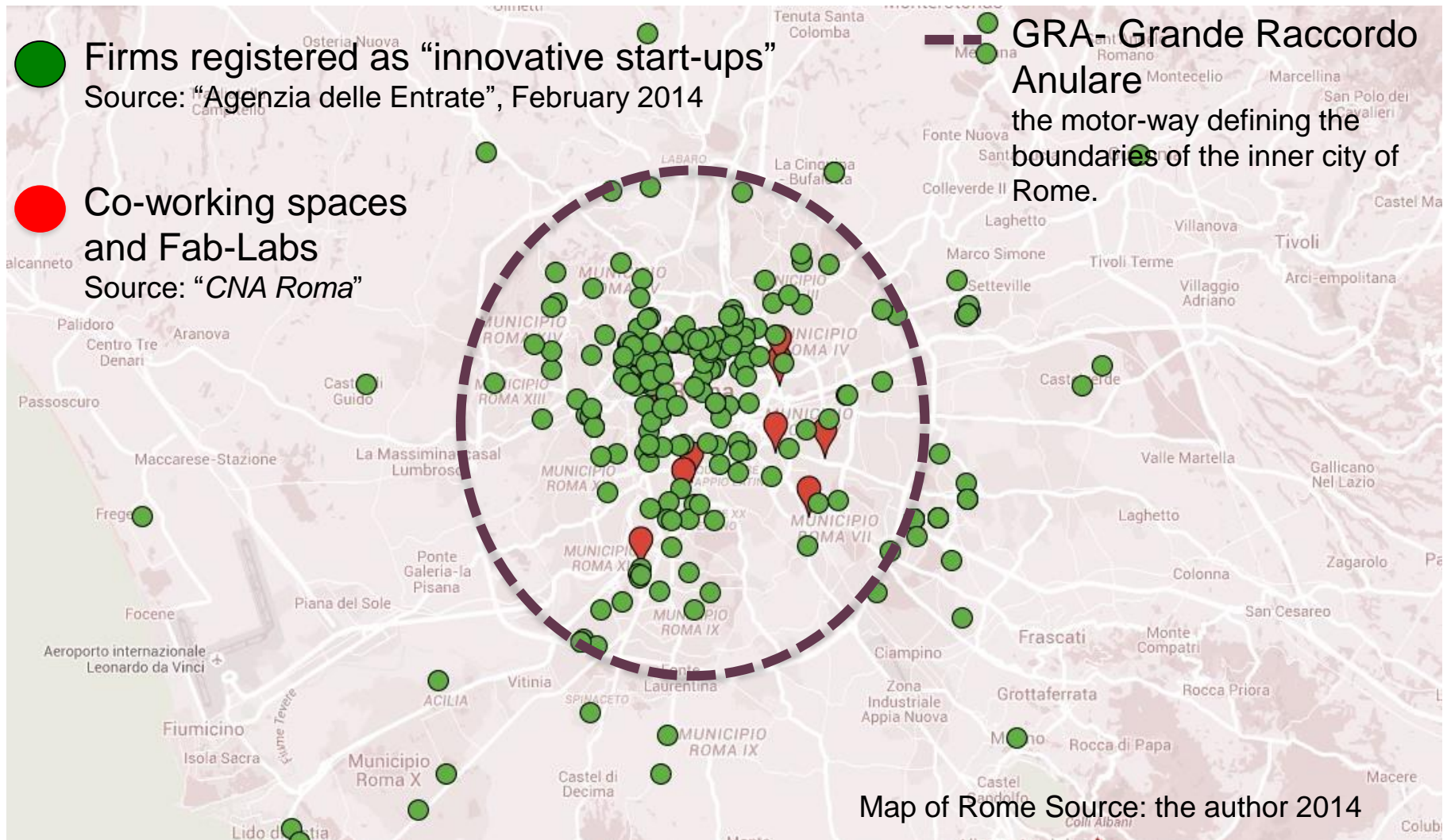


INFRASTRUCTURAL LEVEL:

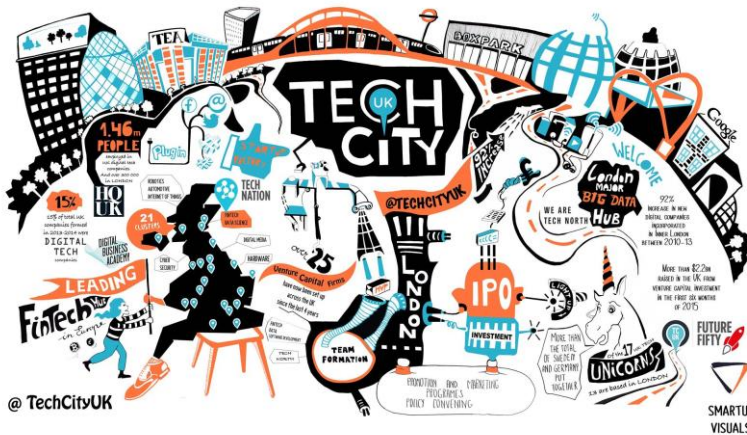
The central Government direction for infrastructure planning confirm **cities as the new economic junctions.**

Source: Giacobone, F. - Ministero delle infrastrutture e dei trasporti.

A Urban Phenomenon



Two different approaches in competition



TOP-DOWN > policy makers

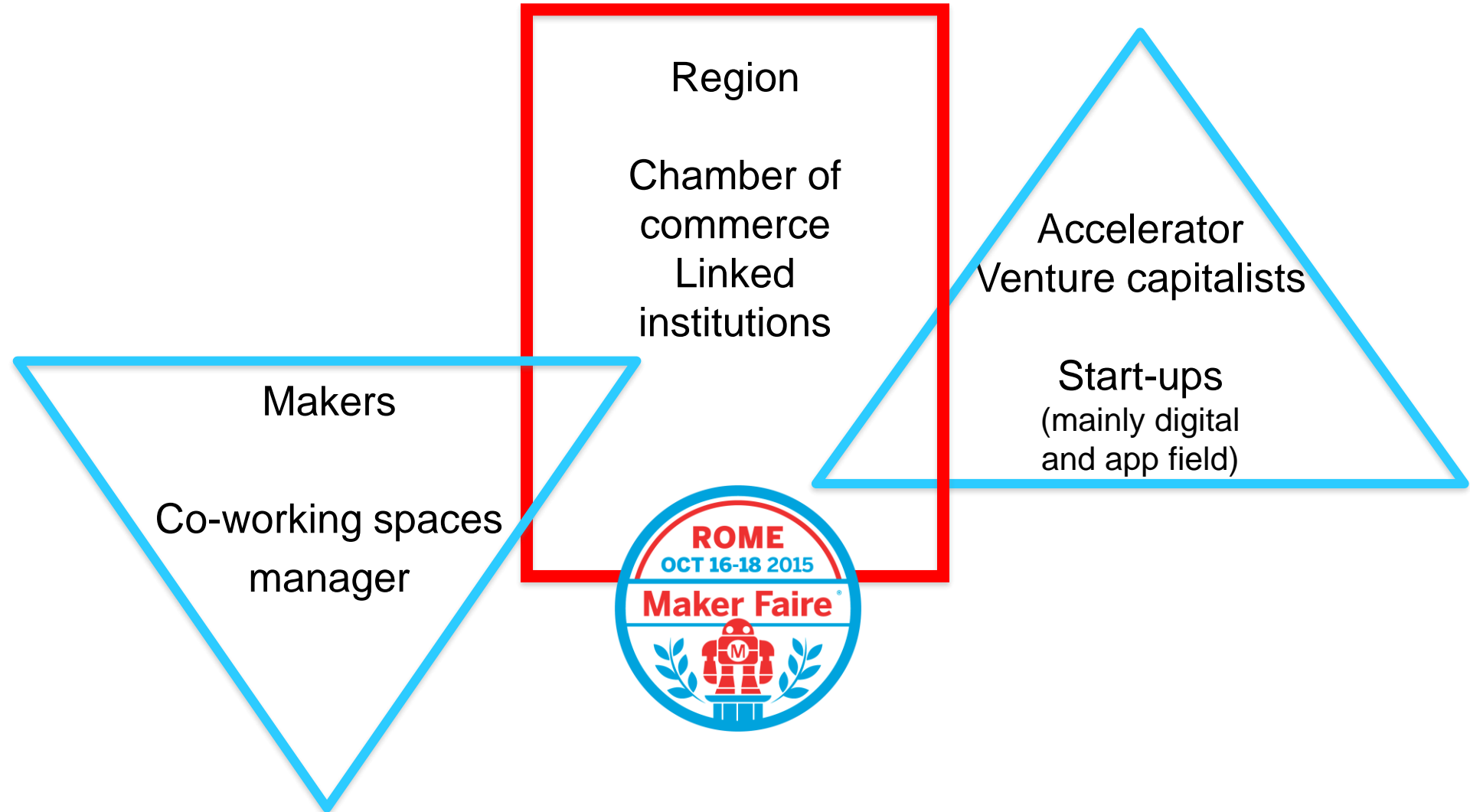
shared service accommodation have started populating all the “creative cities” and “tech cities” initiatives all over the world as a way to urban regeneration development (Moriset 2014).



BOTTOM-UP > workers

shared service accommodation responds to availability and affordability criteria (cf. Ferm 2014).

Who are the actors of the Roman innovation?



The interviewed Roman CWS

There are in Rome mainly two different types of CWS:

- 1 They host mainly startups. They are the one sponsored by state owned agencies (i.e. Talent Garden by Poste Italiane) or associated with accelerators, therefore provided with huge capitals. These users prefer traditional office spaces once the business is settled.
THEY BENEFIT FROM PRIVILEGED LOCATIONS.



The interviewed Roman CWS

There are in Rome mainly two different types of CWS:

2

Those CWS are more politically involved who mainly work as hubs for lifelong learning or labour inclusion programs.

THESE SEE THE INSTITUTIONS AS COMPETITORS MORE THAN SUPPORTERS.



CWS: A social innovation manifesto of a hidden workforce.

In Italy, CWS and the makers movement could still be considered as a **grass-roots movement**.

- More than 70% of the interviewees have extreme left political orientation and rather than a business opportunities consider CWS as a social innovation statement.
- At 2016: Rome counts around 40 CWS but there is no policy regulation for them.

The institutional point of view

- **NONE** of the interviewed authorities had clues about the life and performances of these activities after the start-up phase.
- **NONE** of the interviewed in fab-labs or co-working spaces had established an innovative start-up. Those were found only in the accelerators or co-working supported by the State owned corporations and companies.

Events organization



Some **figures from a survey** undertaken at the Maker Faire 2014:

- 46% of the surveyed declared to have their premises in the city centre even if when asked about the criteria of their choices most of them declared that it was affordable
- On a scale from 1 to 5
 - 48% gave a rated of 5 to the establishment of new professional linkages
 - 42% gave a rate of 5 to the possibility of increasing sales
 - 58% gave a rate of 1 to recruiting
- 80% of the attendees were professionals in the sector (of which 34% free-lances and the remaining mainly micro firms)

Interviewees from the institutions declared that the fairs aims to give exposure to this new sector, however the event is a stand alone with no further connections in wider urban economy of the city.

Conclusions

- There is a higher pressure on the city of Rome than in the rest of the region but the measures on place are not enough acknowledge it and to launch a new tech hub in Rome.
- The Establishment of regional spaces for CWS shouldn't be the only measure in place. There should be a regulation for CWS and some further fiscal benefits for free-lances.
- The MakerFaire is a good experiment but it should be systematized on a bigger scale.
- The Roman reality is still quite fragmented and the various initiatives are not connected.
- There should be further support also for the post acceleration phases of the various start-ups.

Open questions:

- How could the Region put in place a real planning initiative to promote smart specialization?
- Could it be correct to give more power on a regional scale to the city of Rome letting it emerge as a new incubator for the Italian innovation?
- Could CWS management really become a solution to social inclusion and unemployment problems? Which regional regulation for those spaces?

*"Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."
Henry Ford*

Any questions?

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