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"Do-It-Together": towards the Factories of the Future (FoF)

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Faced with the environmental and socio-economic limitations of the current production model, that has persisted for several years, the accelerated development of information and communication technologies has made it possible to explore new innovative fields in the productive sectors. New reflections are emerging on the transition towards a more sustainable and innovative production models. In this context, the emerging "Design Global, Manufacture Local" model (DGML), aims at transforming the global manufacturing industry so that the vast majority of products can be manufactured locally by globally exchanging the information flows on how to manufacture the product (information, knowledge, design, codes, models, drawings, etc.) over the physical flows.⁴ This model is based on the principles of commons-based peer production⁵ in which resources are shared with equal interest for all the involved stakeholder.⁶ It represents a form of democratization of the industrialization through processes in which the design is developed as a global common, while the manufacture of products takes place locally, considering the specificities of local ecosystems.

The mode of commons-based peer production, particularly digital commons, has mainly developed within the so-called Makers' movement, also known as the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement. The emergence and multiplication of spaces and networks of makers, hackerspaces, micro-factories, fab labs or other spaces equipped with digital manufacturing tools and technologies (3D printers, sensors...) has favoured the development of a more agile, democratized and distributed production.⁷ Such environments are conducive to distributed collective creativity,

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⁴ Kostakis, V., Latoufis, K., Liarokapis, M., & Bauwens, M. (2018). The Convergence of Digital Commons with Local Manufacturing from A Degrowth Perspective: Two Illustrative Cases. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 197, 1684-1693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.09.077>

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which plays an important role in the emergence of new forms of innovation and entrepreneurial activities.⁸ Based on the customization, integration and involvement of users in the production processes and local production in small series, the DIY practices represent a source of the development of:

*"prosumption (local production with local materials by local people), innovation, and entrepreneurship by local populations in regions without industrial manufacturing infrastructure."*⁹

The confluence of ideas and technologies and the interconnection between digital and physical environments offer the potential for a transition to a new form of hybrid production that combines the scale and efficiency of high-volume manufacturing with the benefits that small local producers (SMEs and SMIs) bring to local economies.¹⁰ Nevertheless, supporting this hybrid production approach and disseminating the DIY principles among local producers requires the development of new production modes and strategies in a context where processes:

*"are less open, less distributed and less minimal than the new Do-It-Yourself processes."*¹¹

As a result, many actors, especially small producers, miss the opportunities of development and innovation offered by the DIY.

The new "Do-It-Together" (DIT) approach attempts to address these limitations. It is a participatory design and collaborative production strategy that allows "global design and local manufacturing" involving "prosumers" (consumers/producers)¹² in the manufacturing process. It

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⁸ Boutillier, S., Capdevila, I., Dupont, L., & Morel, L. (2020). Collaborative Spaces Promoting Creativity and Innovation. *Journal of Innovation Economics Management*, n° 31(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3917/jie.031.0001>.

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⁹ Fox, S. (2014). Third Wave Do-It-Yourself (DIY): Potential for Prosumption, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship by Local Populations in Regions without Industrial Manufacturing Infrastructure. *Technology in Society*, 39, 18-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2014.07.001>.

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has recently been developed in the context of social manufacturing, which is a more open and democratic approach to traditional manufacturing, involving different levels of user participation in the production process.¹³ The social manufacturing approach aims to:

"seamlessly link the social manufacturing network consisting of the Internet, the Internet of Things, and the 3D printer, thus enabling social people to participate fully in the entire manufacturing process through outsourcing, facilitating personalized, real-time, and socialized modes of production and consumption".¹⁴

It integrates consumers in all the processes of customized product development, such as ideation, design and production, engaging them more actively in local production in a commons-based peer production context, inspired by the agile and distributed functioning of the DIY.¹⁵

The first studies on the collaborative creativity practices of the Do-It-Together have examined its impact on the creation of value in the fashion industry. Social, economic, environmental, knowledge, emotional and experiential values associated with the DIT were identified, generating positive externalities for all the involved stakeholders (customers, professionals and local producers).¹⁶ The DIT strategies are indeed adapted to small-scale production on local sites offering significant potential for new business opportunities and new innovative activities especially for SMEs that face many challenges to engage open innovation processes. The potential for open creativity generated by the DIT can provide competitive advantages for companies while limiting the costs and risks associated with the development of innovative products.¹⁷

Building on social manufacturing paradigms such as cyber-physical-social space that:

"involves human intelligences and social organizations (e.g. communities) to enable social interactions and organic connections between prosumers and socialized resources (e.g. machine tools,

¹³ Hirscher, A.-L., Niinimäki, K., & Joyner Armstrong, C. M. (2018). Social Manufacturing in the Fashion Sector: New Value Creation through Alternative Design Strategies? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 172, 4544-4554. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.11.020>.

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¹⁵ Hirscher, A.-L., Niinimäki, K., & Joyner Armstrong, C. M. (2018). Social Manufacturing in the Fashion Sector: New Value Creation through Alternative Design Strategies? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 172, 4544-4554. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.11.020>.

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design software, measurement equipment and sensors) to co-create individualized products and services"¹⁸,

the DIT strategies would enable the development of connected open innovation networks coordinated by multi-sided digital platforms. These platforms support co-creative communities in the form of distributed value networks in a collaborative economy context.¹⁹ The DIT networks link consumers, makers, micro-factories and small local producers, making their production capacities available to the local ecosystem and forming regional poles of industrial innovation that could disrupt the functioning of the current production systems.

The emergence of the Do-It-Together approach could be integrated within the EU's Factories of the Future (FoF) strategy that aims at a transition of the European manufacturing industry towards a more flexible, digital and demand-oriented industry. It is in this context that the INEDIT²⁰ H2020 research project seeks to set the conceptual and experimental basis for the understanding of the DIT concept and to explore its potential for the transition of the industrial systems towards a disruptive change inducing radical innovations.²¹ To this purpose, a special issue of the Journal of Innovation Economics & Management calls for interdisciplinary research to deepen the analysis of this novel approach and will be published at the end of 2021.

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²⁰ open INnovation Ecosystems for Do It Together process, European Union's H2020 research program - Agreement N 869952, <http://www.inedit-project.eu/>

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