

Abstract

Ever since the seventies Silicon Valley have been the point of reference when it comes to creating tech innovation and tech entrepreneurs. Cities like London, Berlin and New York wants to copy their success and create 'the next Silicon Valley'. One part of making 'the next Silicon Valley' is creating incubators such as Y Combinator, who is behind startups such as Airbnb, Dropbox and Twitch. The incubators are a common part of 'the next Silicon Valley' package, but even though there have been a lot of research on the effects of incubators, the positive sides of incubators are still at question. The traditional way to measure incubators are by growth, survival rate and the number of successful graduates from the incubator. But all of these parameters measures the success of the output of the incubator and not the success of the incubation process in itself. This study seeks to make up for this, not by focusing on what makes a good incubator, but what makes a good incubation process in an incubator. By focusing on the process, this study not only concerns incubators but also the subject for the incubation process, the incubatee and entrepreneur. More specifically the entrepreneur's identity creation and legitimation of his entrepreneur identity. Because a strong entrepreneurial identity is by Hoang & Gimeno (2010) shown to give stronger resilience and therefore a stronger survival rate for the startup. This study combines literature on incubators and entrepreneur identity to examine how the incubator affects the creation of an entrepreneurial identity in their tenants. Through a multicase study of four entrepreneurs in INCUBA Navitas in Denmark, it will examine how the incubation process helps the entrepreneur legitimate and facilitate the entrepreneur identity creation process. The study findings show that the incubator supports the identity creation process by facilitating networking events, consulting and informal spaces where the entrepreneurs can inspire and learn from and about each other. With the exception that it only supports the entrepreneurs, who not already have a strong identification with the entrepreneur identity, and are willing to use the environment and the services associated with it. The environment creates and shares narratives across the different entrepreneurs, narratives which helps the entrepreneur define what an entrepreneur is and can be.

The study concludes that the incubation environment can support facilitating and legitimate the identity of its tenants, and set the stage for further research in entrepreneur's identity creation in incubators.