

Startup selection, performance, and impact of business incubators

Business incubators are often seen as essential tools for fostering startup success and driving regional economic development. But how much of that impact is real, and how much is assumed? In this plenary session, I will share a reflection grounded in empirical data and hands-on experience on how incubation programs can—or sometimes cannot—make a meaningful difference for startups.

We will explore key issues around startup selection criteria, performance metrics, and the real challenges of evaluating the territorial impact of incubation initiatives. Combining practical insights with quantitative analysis, this talk aims to question some common assumptions about incubation ecosystems and the way we measure their effectiveness. Using real-world examples and comparative data, we will discuss when and how incubation adds value. The goal is to contribute to a more rigorous and realistic understanding of what works, what doesn't, and how to design better support systems for entrepreneurship.

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