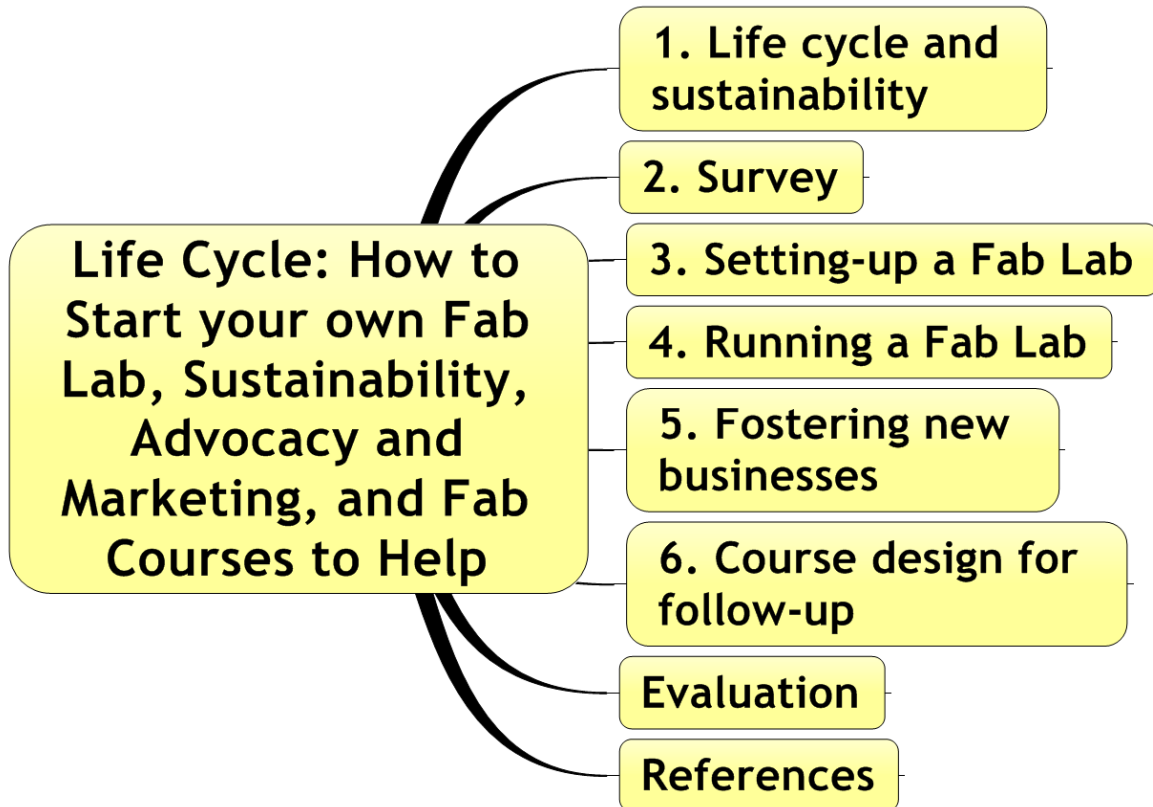


Fab8 International Conference; Wellington, New Zealand, 22-28 August 2012

Life Cycle: How to Start your own Fab Lab, Sustainability, Advocacy and Marketing, and Fab Courses to Help



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Summary of a 3-hour Workshop during Fab8 International Conference; Wellington, New Zealand, 22-28 August 2012; 25 participants, facilitated by Beno Juarez (beno@fablablima.org), Lindi Mophuti (lindi.mphuthi@gmail.com), Victor Freundt (victor@fablablima.org) and Pieter van der Hijden (pvdh@sofos.nl).

1. Life cycle and sustainability

Introducing earlier research on sustainable Fab Labs and underlying business models as well as the Fab Lab life cycle.

The workshop started with a short review of the Fab7 presentation "Sustainable Fab Labs" by John Boeck & Peter Troxler (Lima, Peru, 2011). The authors interviewed about 8 Fab Labs on sustainability issues. They found out 5 types of underlying business models:

- Access, production - hourly access, personal production, local production
- Education - workshops, training, degree certification
- Enabler - Products & services to enable Fab Labs: software, installation and support, supply chain, curriculum
- Incubator - Invention / business creation, individual entrepreneurs, joint ventures
- Network - Leveraging the power of the Fab Lab network: multi-site invention, production, distribution.

During the Fab7 discussions in 2011 two more types were identified:

- Attraction - The Fab Lab as a "touristic" attraction.
- Human resources - The Fab Lab as source of consultants etc.

The authors stressed that these models are not mutually exclusive. In fact all Fab Labs studied had more than one underlying business model at the same time.

In general, all Fab labs follow a life cycle consisting of the following stages: setting-up, running, migration to next cycle of life, e.g. fostering new businesses.

2. Survey

Surveying: Fab Labs life cycle stage, underlying business models, and key activities.

The participants of the workshop made a short assessment of their own Fab Lab:

- The stage of the life cycle, the Fab Lab is in.
- The most relevant activities (services) the Fab Labs are offering and their underlying business model.
- Any burning questions the Fab Lab have and where tips and advice from their peers is welcomed.

The results of this assessment are presented in the following paragraphs.

3. Setting-up a Fab Lab

Life cycle stage 1: setting-up a Fab Lab.

The workshop continued with a presentation on setting-up a Fab Lab. As a case Fab Lab Lima (Peru) was used. There a workgroup first investigated the potentials and restrictions for setting-up a Fab Lab in Lima. They studied conceptual models, digital models and hardware models, over and over again. They planned partially overlapping stages of implementing, operating and self-sustaining. Two group members went to Barcelona for a year to learn the ins and outs of managing a Fab Lab and to make almost anything (Fab Academy). Once back in Lima, they started to build their Fab Lab, organization, software and hardware.

The inventory showed that the participants represented 10 Fab Labs in set-up stage, 3 in running stage (not in picture) and 0 in the "fostering new businesses" stage.

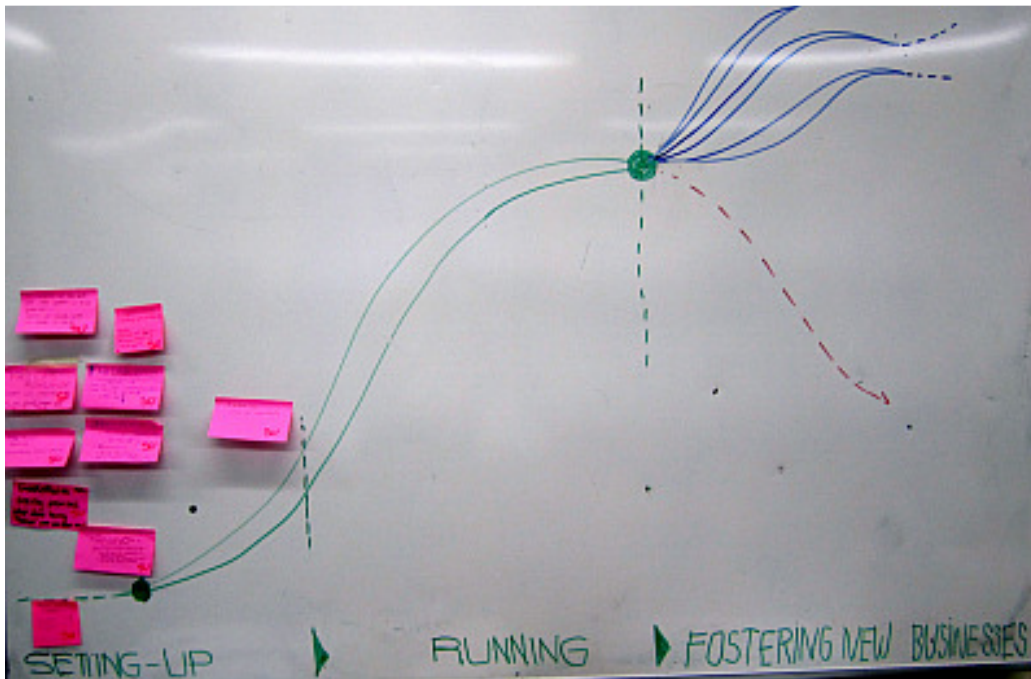


Figure - Fab Lab life cycle, stickers for Fab Labs represented

The following "burning questions" were formulated by the Fab Labs in set-up stage:

- Are we just asking the question only because we have to?
- Can we directly compete with shapeways, Ponoko, Hackerspace, etc.?
- Does sustainability & being open to public really compatible?
- How do you communicate the value of your FabLab?
- Is a corporately sponsored FabLab a Good idea?
- Sustainable business models

- What are the typical facilities needed for start-up?
- What does having "FabLab" over our door mean?
- What would be a sustainable business model for a corporately sponsored Fablab?

As time was scarce only few of them could be discussed.

4. Running a Fab Lab

Life cycle stage 2: Running a Fab Lab.

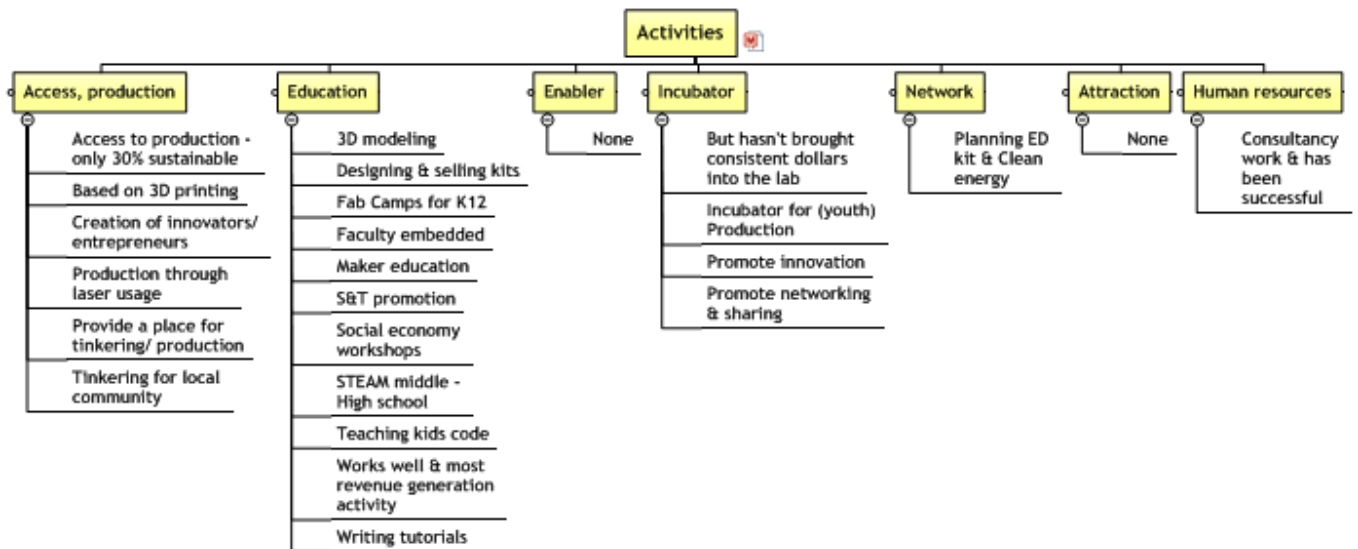
One out of three Fab Labs in their running stage formulated as "burning question":

- What is the best way to get non specialized Community members into the lab?



Figure - Business models and activities

Although most Fab Labs were in their setting-up stage, they nevertheless could list their activities and relate them to the business models presented.



5. Fostering new businesses

Life cycle stage 3 - Fostering new businesses.

A presentation followed with a series of examples of business opportunities originating from Fab Lab prototypes. It continued with a series of websites to support new businesses, like:

- FaceMe! - design, make, play
- Goteo - open projects - <http://www.goteo.org>
- idea-me - <http://idea.me>
- Kickstarter - for financial support - <http://www.kickstarter.com>
- Loftwork
- MIT 100k \$ - where MENS meets MANUS - <http://mit100k.org>
- Nxtplabs.com - helps starters grow faster - <http://www.nextplabs.com>
- Startup Chile - <http://www.startupchili.org>
- WAYRA - We Accelerate Your Ideas - <http://wayra.org>

The discussion that followed concentrated on Fab Lab "competitors" like Maker Space (mainly hardware) and Hacker Space (mainly software)? The available time only permitted a quick treatment. Anyway, it became clear that main advantages of Fab Labs are:

- Democratise Access
- Diversity
- Global Community

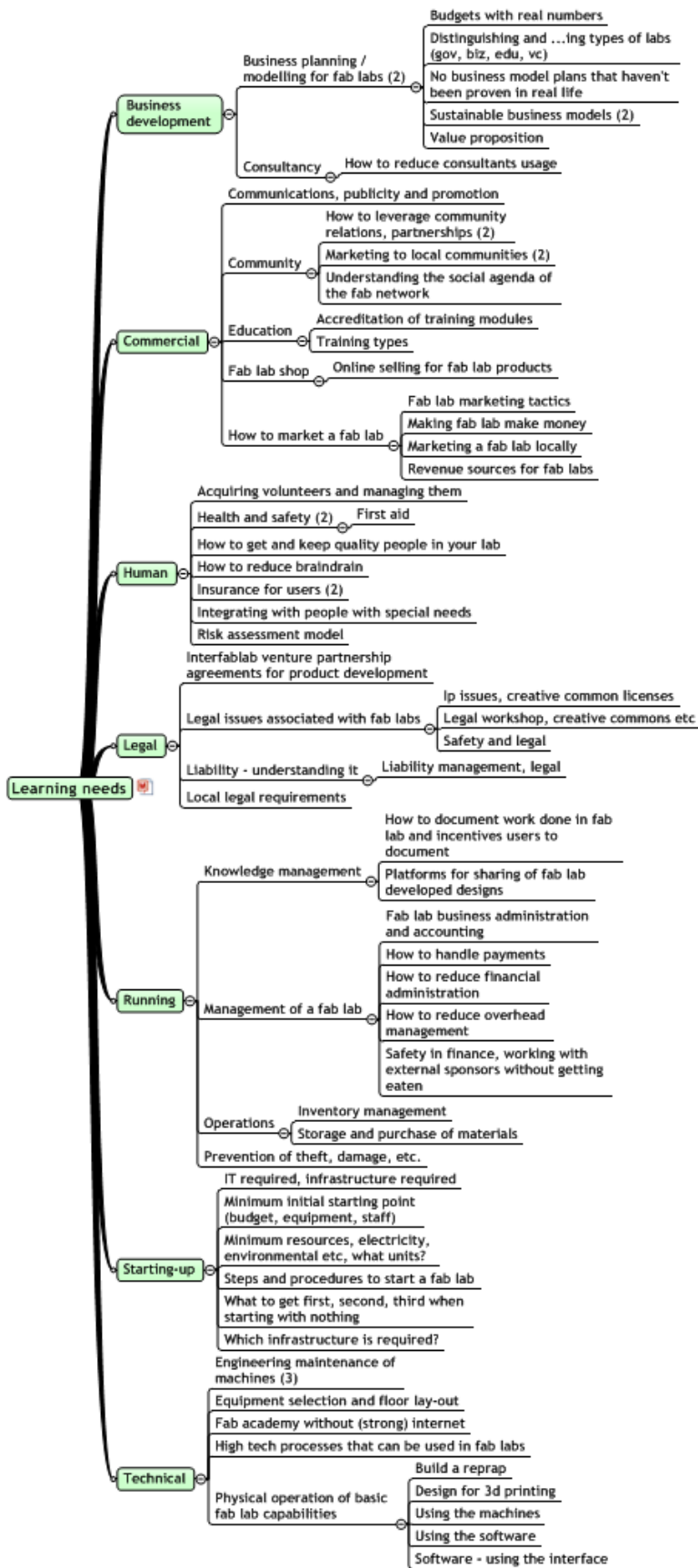
- Global Conference
- Loosely standardised
- No legal brand
- Social agenda

6. Course design for follow-up

Inventorying the learning needs of the participants, in other words which one day courses would be appreciated for follow-up?

To conclude the participants formulated their learning needs. Suppose you receive seven free vouchers for seven one day training programs. For which training programs would you like to use your vouchers?

The participants generated 72 learning needs. To keep the list manageable, we combined the doubles and clustered them into categories. The figure below shows the result.



Evaluation



References

- Business model generation; Alexander Osterwalder et al.; self published; 2009; available in various languages; [www.businessmodelgeneration.com](http://businessmodelgeneration.com); free preview 72 pages: http://businessmodelgeneration.com/downloads/businessmodelgeneration_preview.pdf.
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- Fostering new businesses; FabLab, Lima, 2012
- Sustainable Fab Labs; presentation at Fab7 International Conference; John Boeck & Peter Troxler; Lima, Peru, 2011.

All materials can be found via <http://www.fablabinternational.org>, page “Resources”.