

## Exploring Open Innovation Practice in Start-Ups within an Innovation Ecosystem

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**Abstract :** Innovation has long been considered the key to the survival, development, and growth of companies. It is a process in which start-ups play a key role, but they suffer from a structural lack of resources, which hinders the development of new innovations and their commercialization. The use of alternative channels to access resources is therefore becoming a necessity to overcome this constraint and identify opportunities. This is why they can be part of large communities of interdependent actors, namely innovation ecosystems that are part of a logic of sharing and open innovation. This research aims to explore and better understand OI in start-ups within an innovation ecosystem. We offer an exploratory qualitative study with start-ups and other actors in the Saint-Étienne innovation ecosystem. Our paper explored the characteristics and main actors of the Saint-Étienne innovation ecosystem, focusing on start-ups. We have identified the motivations of start-up's adopting OI, its difficulties, its risks, and its impact on their growth. Also, our results show the existence of strong links between the different actors in the ecosystem. In addition, a strong trust has been established between these actors thanks to the geographical proximity; the start-ups manage to get in touch with the different actors of their innovation ecosystem by practicing OI. The actors collaborate on projects involving companies and, in particular, start-ups.

**Keywords :** open innovation, start-ups, Innovation ecosystem, actors

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