

3rd International Conference on

3D Printing Technology and Innovations

March 25-26, 2019 | Rome, Italy

Additive manufacturing technologies as a reshoring enabler

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The presentation aims to investigate the hypothesis that additive manufacturing technologies (AMTs) may enable manufacturing reshoring, i.e. the repatriation of manufacturing activities earlier off-shored to foreign countries. Since the paper has an explorative nature, a two-steps, desk research strategy was adopted. In the first, a comparison between the extant literature regarding the two investigated phenomena (AMTs and manufacturing reshoring) is implemented according to a “2W & 1H” (“Who”, “Why”, and “How”) perspective. In the second step, 11 cases of relocation of production activities supported by AMTs are deeply analyzed and discussed. Collected evidence seems to confirm that AMTs may enable manufacturing reshoring decisions since their benefits are consistent with motivations (“Why” perspective) inducing companies to repatriate production activity. At the same time, the two phenomena are diffused in the same industries (“Who” perspective). In contrast, the effects in terms of governance modes (i.e. in-sourcing vs. out-sourcing – the “How” perspective) are still not completely clear. Implications regarding policy makers seem to be particularly relevant. More specifically, an effort should be implemented to integrate policies supporting the diffusion of AMTs and those supporting the reshoring initiatives. With respect to managerial implications, it must be pointed out that the decision making and implementation phases are extremely critical for both the investigated strategic decisions.

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