

Emergent and growing entrepreneurial ecosystems: how do institutional logics shape fields of entrepreneurship?

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Abstract

This article explores two different types of entrepreneurial ecosystem, emergent and growing, using the institutional logics perspective. Fields of entrepreneurship within entrepreneurial ecosystems are analysed empirically in two UK cities, and the institutional orders that inform the dominant entrepreneurial institutional logic in each ecosystem are uncovered. It was found that in an emergent ecosystem, entrepreneurs notice institutional voids and take part in institutional entrepreneurship to strengthen the Profession and Community institutional orders. In a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem the strength of the Community institutional order and overlapping activity based fields are helping to strengthen the entrepreneurial institutional logic. This perspective develops and enriches our understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems as localised contexts in which embedded fields of entrepreneurship are sensitive to local institutional conditions. This represents a novel approach to analysing entrepreneurial ecosystems from the lens of the institutional logics perspective, by utilising a framework to understand the interinstitutional system based institutional orders as shapers of the dominant institutional logic in a field of entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial ecosystems, Field of entrepreneurship, Institutional logics, Context and entrepreneurship, Institutions

Introduction

The literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE) is wide and diverse (Hruskova, 2024), and the concept is of great interest due the part that ecosystems play in facilitating entrepreneurial activity (Spigel, 2020a, 2020b; Audretsch and Belitski, 2021). However, due to the myriad of research techniques and lenses with which entrepreneurial ecosystems have been studied (Spigel, 2017; Stam and Van De Ven, 2021; Leendertse, Schrijvers & Stam, 2022; Hong and Spigel, 2024; Theodoraki et al., 2022), there are still questions regarding how entrepreneurship elements and attributes in an ecosystem are inter-connected (Brown and Mason; Klofsten et al., 2024). Thus, there are calls for future research in understanding EE utilising novel perspectives, and in ways that uncover findings around their context and structure (Stam and Welter, 2020; Wurth et al., 2022).

This study applies an institutional logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) perspective and theoretical approach to develop understanding of different EEs (Roundy, 2017). We respond to calls to broaden research into EEs utilising a range of approaches (Theodoraki et al., 2022; Wurth et al., 2022), and to use novel insights when investigating entrepreneurship and context (Welter and Baker, 2021). In our study the institutional orders (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008) that influence the institutional logic in a field of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023), have been analysed empirically in two locations, Kingston Upon Hull (Hull) which is an emergent EE (Spigel and Harrison, 2018), and Liverpool which is a growing EE (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Pustovrh et al., 2020) in the United Kingdom (UK). This approach is useful because it helps develop understanding of the influence of the institutions on the context and structure (Wurth et al., 2022) of EEs. This approach allows us to uncover the institutional influence on entrepreneurial activity in an EE, and also understand how macro institutional influences are influenced by micro institutional agent-based action (Thornton et al., 2012), in a recursive relationship. Indeed, the structural

logic of the field of entrepreneurship in an EE can be uncovered using this approach. We posit that there is a field of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023) present within an EE in which agents and institutional actors are taking part in entrepreneurial activity, whilst being influenced by, and shaping, embedded institutional influences. This results in a certain type of institutional logic, with a particular flavour made up of a unique combination of the institutional orders (Greenman, 2013; Gümüşay, 2018), serving to influence entrepreneurial activity in the field of entrepreneurship in the ecosystem.

A field of entrepreneurship is a meso level analytical lens, positioned between macro and micro perspectives, that enables developed understanding of institutional processes, and the interplay between agency and structure that shape an entrepreneurial context (Alterskye et al., 2023). An institutional logic is the socially constructed patterns of practices, assumptions, values and beliefs, through which individuals and organisations provide meaning to their daily activity and reproduce their lives and experiences. A field of entrepreneurship has a connected institutional logic (Alterskye et al., 2023; Thornton et al, 2012; Watson, 2013). Entrepreneurial activity and behaviour can be located within societal sectors and comprise of institutional foundations of categories of knowledge made of a certain configuration of the institutional orders, this is referred to as the interinstitutional system (Thornton et al, 2012; Greenwood, 2008; Jennings et al., 2013). Institutional orders are the societal level building blocks, or cornerstone institutions of the interinstitutional system comprising of Family, Community, Religion, State, Market, Profession, and Corporation that, combined, compose the key institutions of society. The influence of these orders combine in a certain way to shape the institutional logic in a field of activity (Thornton et al, 2012; Friedland and Alford, 1991), in this case entrepreneurship.

Responding to calls for a broadening of research in EEs (Wurth et al., 2022) and introducing novel insights into investigating entrepreneurship and context (Welter and Baker, 2021) we ask the following research question: How do field based institutional logics influence different types of entrepreneurial ecosystem? To answer this question, our study uncovers combinations of institutional influences that form logics within different EEs, whilst also illustrating the relational influence the entrepreneurs have on institutional logics.

Agency/structure relationships are uncovered from macro to meso to micro influence and vice-versa (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008), in which the institutional logic does not only shape the contextual setting but shapes agent motivation and action linked to the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities (Gümüşay, 2018). To explore this further, a sample of 60 entrepreneurs were interviewed, 30 from Hull which represents an emergent EE and 30 from Liverpool which represents a growing EE.

Our key findings demonstrate that in Hull (emergent EE), entrepreneurs have noticed an institutional void (Puffer et al., 2010; Fiedler et al., 2017) in the field of entrepreneurship with a lack of market and corporation based interinstitutional influence, and so they are taking part in institutional entrepreneurship (Leca et al., 2008) to help professionalise the activity of entrepreneurship, which in turn develops a professional and community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) focused institutional logic. In Liverpool (growing EE), market and community institutional orders are influencing the institutional logic in the field of entrepreneurship. Agents feel connected to a field in which there are other agents taking part in, and supporting, entrepreneurial activity, and are connected to a community (Ratten and Welp, 2011) of other similar agents. A market and community focused institutional logic is causing the field of entrepreneurship in the Liverpool EE to strengthen. Across the two EEs, there were notable differences but important similarities, in particular, evidence of the community institutional order was found in both contexts, which shows a coalescence around the topic and activity of entrepreneurship, with agents taking part in entrepreneurial community based initiatives to help strengthen the field of entrepreneurship.

We contribute to the EE literature and the context and entrepreneurship literature

(Stam and Welter, 2020; Welter and Baker, 2021), firstly by developing understanding of the context and structure (Wurth et al., 2022) of ecosystems through the deployment of the institutional logics perspective, which uncovers different EE configurations in fields of entrepreneurship linked to the particular institutional logic present.

The institutional logics perspective adopted in this study responds to research calls (Wurth et al., 2022) and develops understanding of EEs as localised contexts in which embedded fields of entrepreneurship are sensitive to local institutional conditions. This study represents a novel approach to analysing EEs from the lens of the institutional logics perspective (Korber et al., 2022; Kromidha et al., 2024; Roundy, 2019) by utilising this framework to understand the interinstitutional system as a shaper of the institutional logic in a field of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023).

Secondly, this study provides clear comparative analysis across different regions in which we can further understand the role of historical (Fritsch et al., 2021; Fritsch and Wyrwich, 2014), cultural, and contextual factors in shaping EEs enriching research on varieties of entrepreneurship in different institutional contexts (Spigel, 2017; Stam and Welter, 2020; Kapturkiewicz, 2022). By comparing these two EEs across two contexts, this enriches our understanding of how institutional logics shape and are influenced by EEs in a recursive manner. It emphasises the importance of agent-based actions, professionalisation, community support, and the need for tailored policy interventions.

Finally, from a practitioner perspective we argue that the community (Korber et al., 2022) institutional order is an important influence in fields of entrepreneurship in ecosystems, as this has an influence on whether, and how, entrepreneurs coalesce around the activity of entrepreneurship.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Investigating entrepreneurial ecosystems using the institutional logics perspective.

The use of the institutional perspective to understand EEs (Audretsch et al., 2021), within entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial context-based research (Welter, 2011; Welter and Baker, 2021; Welter and Gartner, 2016; Zahra and Wright, 2011), allows the influence and reciprocal influence of social forces to be considered. Institutions set boundaries by allowing, confirming or restricting opportunities and alternatives for agents taking part in entrepreneurial activities and behaviour (Barley and Tolbert, 1997). Equally, entrepreneurial action and linked social action is guided by patterns of interaction related to conventions of everyday life (Bathelt and Gluckler, 2014). Thus, the institutional logics perspective as a “metatheoretical framework for analyzing the interrelationships among institutions, individuals, and organizations in social systems” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2) serves as an efficient concept to understand the structure, connectivity and dynamics of EEs. Institutional logics develop at the level of the institutional field, hence the utilisation of the field of entrepreneurship construct (Alterskye et al., 2023), and are shaped by the logics of the interinstitutional system, including the institutional orders of Family, Community, Religion, State, Market, Profession, and Corporation (Thornton et al., 2012). An example of this approach was adopted by Greenman (2013), to further understand the connection between everyday entrepreneurial practice and the interinstitutional system.

2.2 The field of entrepreneurship and institutional logic within an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The field level construct refers to “key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 148). The field level construct is often thought of in relation to an organisational setting (Reay et al., 2015) however, a field does not need to be bounded by organisational or industry-based classifications (Wooten and Hoffman, 2016; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). An organisational field that contains a number of organisations all operating in the same industry or market, and within a certain geographic boundary, can be

conceived of relatively easily (Wooten and Hoffman, 2016). Linking this to the research of EEs, within a region or entrepreneurial context there may be, at any time, a number of actors, agents and organisations taking part in entrepreneurial activities. This could be within industry organisational field boundaries or, across them. Within organisational field boundaries the presence of entrepreneurial clusters linked to certain industries has been well documented (Minniti, 2005; Saxenian, 1991; Uzzi, 1996), and so within an industry based organisational field, institutional influences may affect innovation, competitiveness and market development either positively or negatively. Equally start-up propensity and success will also be influenced within that organisational field (Audretsch et al., 2012). When referring to the organisational field, Scott (1995) suggests that the field is comprised of the totality of any actor that imposes a coercive, normative, or cognitive influence on that field. Powell and DiMaggio (1991, p. 65) asserted that “the virtue of this unit of analysis is that it directs our attention not simply to competing firms..., or to networks of organizations that actually interact..., but to the totality of relevant actors”. Of particular interest within this statement is the “totality of relevant actors” within a field, as the ‘field of entrepreneurship’ in an EE encompasses a complex mix of actors and organisations that are taking part in entrepreneurial activity in different industries (Alterskye et al., 2023), and can also include actors (Hong and Spigel, 2024; Spigel, 2020a) that are not directly taking part in entrepreneurial activity but have an effect on that activity, such as organisations offering ancillary services to new organisations (Patton and Kenney, 2005), or the linked availability of infrastructure (Audretsch et al., 2012). Institutional logics are frameworks that shape the behaviour and practices of individuals by providing rules, norms, and beliefs that guide their actions (Garrow and Grusky, 2013). Linking to classic institutional theory, institutional pillars are regulative/structural, normative and cultural/cognitive/symbolic systems or processes (Scott, 1995). The institutional logics approach views the structural, cognitive/symbolic and normative dimensions of institutions as “complementary dimensions of institutions, rather than separable structural (coercive), normative, and symbolic (cognitive) carriers” (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008, p. 101). According to this view the institutional orders, such as family or the market (Klyver et al., 2020), for example, are composed of these dimensions of institutions in various forms. The institutional pillars are carried through material practices and routines, symbolic systems, relational systems and artifacts, that cause institutionalisation in relation to an activity, such as entrepreneurship (Alvarez et al., 2015), to occur, and thus affect entrepreneurial outcomes within the context that is subject to those same institutional conditions (Scott, 2013).

The extant literature has applied the institutional logics perspective across a number of different field-based settings. For example, Lounsbury (2007, p. 290) investigated the professional money management industry in two locations, Boston and New York, here “field” is a particular industry, and Reay et al. (2015), used the institutional logics perspective to investigate how certain institutional orders such as family, business (replaces ‘market’ in this study), and community that make up part of the interinstitutional system influence, and are in turn influenced by, different types of winemakers in Canada. Competing institutional logics were investigated by Hayes and Robinson (2011) in the ‘Black Church’ movement, and the enabling effects that the Church has on entrepreneurship in the congregation; thus, the field level institutional logic being investigated was the ‘Black Church’ movement. Heinen and Weisenfeld (2015), used an institutional logics approach to investigate the orchestral field, identifying four logics that helped shape the way that orchestras operate. The institutional logics field construct was applied by Quattrone (2015), analysing the institutional influences on Jesuit accounting practices from an historical perspective. Thus, it could be suggested that the ‘orchestral field’ and the ‘field of Jesuit accounting’ are subject to institutional framing and influence. Rao et al (2003, p. 803) investigated the field of nouvelle-cuisine which represents a professional field. Thus, entrepreneurship is not an industry in

itself, but entrepreneurship can be conceived of as a career (Nyock Ilouga et al., 2014; St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015), which could be interchanged with the term ‘profession’. Thus, logically entrepreneurship can be analysed at the field based level using the institutional logics perspective, and as such the ‘field of entrepreneurship’ (Alterskye et al., 2023) is influenced by, and influences, an attached institutional logic situated within an EE. The extant literature provides valuable insights into how these different logics coexist however, some areas warrant further exploration such as the interplay and conflicts between logics. Further work can be done to fully explore the potential conflicts and synergies between institutional logics, or investigate the evolution of logics over time as current research (Hayes and Robinson, 2011; Quattrone, 2015) often offers a snapshot of the identified logics. The impact of external to EE factors also remains under-researched, in particular how factors, such as technology, regulation and policy changes may impact the institutional logic. Finally, comparative analysis of institutional logics as applied to different EEs (Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Guerrero, Liñán and Cáceres-Carrasco, 2021; Kapturkiewicz, 2022) is missing from the extant literature, for example understanding varieties of EEs and combinations of ecosystem inputs. Conducting comparative studies across different types of ecosystems (e.g., regional vs. international, large vs. small) and different institutional contexts could uncover variations in the application and influence of institutional logics.

2.3. The interinstitutional system as shaper of institutional logics in a field of entrepreneurship.

The institutional logics perspective conceives of society as an interinstitutional system (Friedland and Alford, 1991). This perspective helps the researcher trying to understand a certain set of behaviours in an EE, as an institutional logic includes institutional orders that are organised around areas of social life for example family, market or religion (Vu et al., 2023), so developing understanding of this system “provides researchers with an understanding of the institutional foundations of categories of knowledge” (Jennings et al., 2013, p. 4). The interinstitutional system, is comprised of a number of institutional orders or building blocks of Family, Community, Religion, State, Market, Profession, and Corporation that, combined, “compose the key cornerstone institutions of society” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 53). An institutional order helps to condition the sense making choices of entrepreneurial agents by providing a frame of reference through which they perceive, organise and conduct entrepreneurial activity; this can also influence the founding logic (Ciuchta et al., 2018) of the entrepreneur, or the logic of entrepreneurial action (Watson, 2013). The influence of an institutional order acts as a kind of governance system linked to the field of entrepreneurship that it resides within. In turn, the individual institutional orders are composed of building blocks, or elemental categories (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 53), which contain material practices and cultural symbols. The institutional logics perspective takes a non-functionalist view of society in that the institutional orders within the interinstitutional system may be acting in a contradictory (Yiu et al., 2014) manner in relation to each other, and in relation to the institutional effects that are propagated from them (Friedland and Alford, 1991, p. 240). It is suggested that this non-functionalist lens is useful for examining entrepreneurial activity in an EE or context, as contradictions between institutional orders may also help explain negative outcomes linked to entrepreneurial activity in a context or region. Observing the concretisation (Friedland and Alford, 1991, p. 249) of social relations (Korsgaard and Anderson, 2011) and material practices linked to an activity, such as entrepreneurship, that is taking place in a particular EE, will help to develop understanding of the societal level institutional influence on that activity. When an agent is carrying out entrepreneurial activity in a particular context, the institutional orders will have a particular influence, and this influence will combine in a particular way forming a particular institutional logic, or hybrid based logic (Drakopoulou Dodd et al., 2018). In turn, entrepreneurs may adhere to the institutional setting based institutional logic to help give legitimacy to their venture

(Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2021). The institutional orders that make up the interinstitutional system, are composed of institutional building blocks, within which institutional structures, norms and symbols are enclosed, but they also cause and act as carriers for institutionalisation. For example, these could be found within agent-based activities, market structure and economy, bureaucracy, status, identity and reputation, politics and culture – this list is not exhaustive (Friedland and Alford, 1991). When trying to understand field level institutional logics (Alterskye et al., 2023) linked to entrepreneurship, the researcher must try to capture the observable or concretised activity that is being displayed by agents and which corresponds to the different institutional orders which are, in turn, affecting the entrepreneurial activity. An activity that is taking place within a certain context, will be subject to the influence of a particular set of factors, such as socio-cultural factors or institutional dimensions (Urbano et al., 2011; Urbano and Alvarez, 2014) related to the combination of institutional orders and attached elemental categories present within that context. Research into the composition of the interinstitutional system related to entrepreneurial activity, that is taking place within a particular EE (Audretsch and Belitski, 2021), will help to increase understanding of how institutional influence has affected that activity, either positively or negatively, as human action and activity is determined by the institutional environment in which they reside (North, 1990). Indeed, it could be suggested that, due to agent based strategic responses to institutional forces, entrepreneurial activity in a region reflects the institutional environment of that region (Oliver, 1991).

2.4. Fields of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems

Fields of entrepreneurship are embedded within an EE (Alterskye et al., 2023), in which agents are carrying out entrepreneurial activities whilst influencing and being influenced by the overarching institutional logic attached to the field. The institutional logics perspective allows analysis of logics, or the common frames of reference (Gümüşay, 2018) that are influencing entrepreneurial actors within an EE. Additionally, the combination or multiplicity (Greenwood et al., 2010) of institutional order influences on this logic can be uncovered, or the navigation of multiple logics (Worakantak et al., 2024) can be further understood, equally duelling or conflicting (Gopakumar, 2022) institutional logics and influences can be uncovered (Yiu et al., 2014). Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of our theoretical position.

Different EE configurations as influenced by a particular field based institutional logics can help uncover context-based outputs and outcomes in the ecosystems (Welter and Gartner, 2016; Leendertse et al., 2022). The institutional logics perspective is also useful as a framework to analyse structures and interrelationships among institutions, individuals, and organisations (Dufays and Huybrechts, 2016) in social systems (Thornton et al., 2012), thus the way that entrepreneurs navigate or shape the EE, or the impact of social or network structures can be uncovered. For example, a response to a weak market-based logic may result in institutional entrepreneurship (Leca et al., 2008). In relation to the extant research, institutional logics have been applied linked to entrepreneurship in a number of ways at the regional, firm, teams and individual levels, which are summarised in Table 1.

3. Method

3.1 Sample selection and unit of analysis

Building on prior research which used the institutional logics perspective to understand the behaviour of entrepreneurs and organisations (Worakantak et al. 2024; Yiu et al., 2014; Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016), we adopted this perspective in our study as a theoretical background. We respond to the calls in the literature for understanding varieties of EEs and what shapes them (Belitski and Büyükbalkci, 2021; Kapturkiewicz, 2022). We focused on uncovering institutional order influences that combine to form institutional logics in two EE contexts : emergent (Hull) and growing (Liverpool). In terms of entrepreneurial activity taking place in

the two cities over the time that the data was collected, there are different outcomes, with Hull having a business birth rate of 1 business for every 291 people, and Liverpool having a business birth rate of 1 business for every 131 people (“Business demography, UK Statistical bulletins - Office for National Statistics,” n.d.).

Hull as an emergent or nascent (Spigel and Harrison, 2018) EE is reflected in the coordination that can be seen from stakeholders and actors to help enable productive entrepreneurship (Pustovrh et al. 2020) and increase connectivity between new ventures and other ecosystem actors. It can also be seen as an embryonic entrepreneurial ecosystem (Brown and Mason, 2017) due to the low comparative number of start-ups. Liverpool is defined by its start-up scene and increasing support for entrepreneurship, higher levels of connectivity and attraction of resources to the EE. These traits are compatible with the description of a growing or strengthening (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Pustovrh et al., 2020) EE. Table 2 shows an overview of the macroeconomic indicators of the studied ecosystems during the studied period when data was collected, between 2016 and 2019. These indicators reflect the growing nature of the Liverpool EE given the significant increase in population, self-employment rates increasing faster than the global English statistics, and the increase of micro firms also growing faster. The emergent nature of the Hull EE is mainly evidenced on the increase of micro firms at a similar rate compared to Liverpool, but at the same time that large firms are increasing their presence in the city, thus enhancing the EE through potential collaborations and available resources. In Hull, the average self-employment rate is still low and is increasing at a smaller rate compared to Liverpool. Similarly, salaries are significantly smaller and growing slower than in Liverpool. Table 2 provides key statistical indicators comparing socioeconomic development of the Hull and Liverpool ecosystems between 2016 and 2019.

Data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews in which case material was collected from 30 entrepreneurs from Liverpool, and 30 entrepreneurs from Hull. The respondents were asked to discuss their business start-up story, and asked to discuss influences derived from the EE that they are embedded in.

The criterion for participant selection in this study is based purposeful sampling (Merriam and Merriam, 2009; Patton and Patton, 2015) which was used in specific cases. This criterion being that the participant has started a business and is from or has lived or self identifies as having a connection with either Hull or Liverpool, these representing the two EEs being investigated.

3.2. Research design

Discovering particular institutional logics and their influences in fields of entrepreneurship embedded in EEs is a complex endeavour, due to the interconnectedness of the analysed concepts and the different dynamics at play. Thus, we utilised an abductive process, in which collected data is reviewed in combination with a theoretical and conceptual framework, the institutional logics perspective, to develop understanding of the phenomenon (Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Timmermans and Tavory, 2022; Van Burg et al., 2022). There were a number of stages involved in our abductive analysis. Firstly, using the institutional logics perspective as a compass theory (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022, p. 43) the general categories of the institutional environment that were known, combined with context based surprises found in each ecosystem were discovered. Within this analysis method we drew inference from surprise (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022, p. 1). Open coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) in which the theoretical compass, including elements of the interinstitutional system and institutional orders, was used to understand the institutional logic linked to the corresponding field of entrepreneurship in each city. Secondly, the analysis then continued through illustrating the field of entrepreneurship and linked institutional logic when reviewing multiple participants’ data in each context in combination, along with the compass theory as mentioned previously. This is when surprises

linked to the data and the unit of observation started to be uncovered regarding differences in the institutional logic linked to the field of entrepreneurship in the corresponding EE, deductive analysis (Bazeley, 2013) was then used to link this back to the literature. For example, we found a difference in the influence of the key institutional orders on the institutional logic in each city, profession in Hull and Market in Liverpool.

Findings

Analysis of the data supported the development of 8 theoretical dimensions, 17 second order themes, and relevant codes that identified the presence of fields of entrepreneurship, and inter institutional influence related to the institutional logics in these fields of entrepreneurship situated in EEs (See Appendix A). Figure 2 summarises the data structure for each EE, encompassing both the emerging (Hull) and the growing (Liverpool) entrepreneurial ecosystems. Codes are integrated as references to the analysed data based on Appendix A.

4.1 Presence of a field of entrepreneurship

Evidence from the participants in Hull suggests that agents and actors are involving themselves with each other in a relational way linked to entrepreneurial activity, and that a field has formed (Hoffman, 1999, p. 351) around the central issue of entrepreneurship. Thus, field level institutional logics linked to entrepreneurship are emanating from this field of activity. Agents within the field are taking part in entrepreneurial activity and supporting new businesses (FLD-LSF-UOE7, FLD-LSF-EHE 1-2), or business start-up. Such a process influences entrepreneurial activity, where the presence of incumbents and local businesses promotes mentorship and the development of new businesses (FLD-ECA-LLB1, FLD-ECA-DE1-2). The evidence suggests that the presence of local businesses does provide motivational and moral support for new entrepreneurs to develop a company (FLD-PF-SOE1, FLD-PF-TIF1, FLD-PF-PFE1).

“you know, there’s lots of small independent businesses here and you sort of get that, I guess moral support of companies, being surrounded by people doing their own thing” ParticipantHull21. (FLD-PF-SOE1).

However, as an emerging ecosystem, there is also the perception of lack of support and access to funds (FLD-LSF-UOE1-7, FLD-LSF-UES1, FLD-IE1-2).

It can be seen from the data in Liverpool actors and agents are involving themselves with each other in a relational way linked to entrepreneurship, so it can be said that a field has formed around a common topic or activity, or central issue (Hoffman, 1999, p. 351). As such, entrepreneurs are the main influence for new economic agents to develop new ventures based upon the working spaces and resources available (FLD-ECA-PFE1, FLD, ECA-PICS2, FLD-ECA-MOE1). This presence leads to opportunities for start-ups and individuals to be exposed to a variety of industries, and causes entrepreneurial practices to be spread across the field (FLD-PF-TIF1, FLD-PF-PFE1-3). This includes the pre-existing heritage of industries that have operated in the area for a sustained amount of time, where entrepreneurs are open to share knowledge (MA-IN-H11, MA-IN-NMO2), equally, activity is often taking place principally connected to specific industrial, cause based, or professional fields (MA-IN-NMO1-s. MA-IN-NMO2-s).

“[Local company] they are a community interest company, so they had all have the catalyst for the areas so [Local company] bought a building off the Council and so they are landlords effectively specifically for creative and digital businesses, so they have been kind of quietly kind of buying up plots of land for their community interest company to house creative and digital businesses.... So their kind of mission was to kind of protect the Baltic Triangle as a creative and digital, an area for kind of creating visual businesses and a bar through to kind of a tech company” Participant Liverpool2. (CO-EH-CIC2)

In effect entrepreneurial activity is emanating from fields that are linked to market based, such as technology, or societal based central issues (Hoffman, 1999, p. 351), such as helping the local community or gender-based empowerment institutional drivers (CO-EH-FEC1-

HULL). The data suggests that the topic of entrepreneurship is not always the principal field-based driver for entrepreneurial activity, but activity is also emanating from adjacent fields, or fields that encompass or are nested within (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015, p. 59) each other. Thus, it can be suggested that a field of entrepreneurship can be formed from common institutional drivers forming central issues in an EE (CO-COM-ECM1-7, CO-COM-LC1-2). Conversely, in Hull, the lack of a strong presence of overlapping fields, such as an industrial field for example, results in the field of entrepreneurship not being as influential on agents' start-up or entrepreneurial activity intentions.

“I started speaking to [local company], yeah in Liverpool, so they predominantly look after women who are thinking about stepping out into consultancy, into freelance so I started attending some of the meetings and training classes for them to help me look at, you know, do I want to be a sole trader, do I want to be an independent business”

ParticipantLiverpool10. (CO-COM-LC2)

4.2 Institutional order influences on the entrepreneurial institutional logic in an emergent EE

In Hull, the institutional logic connected to the field of entrepreneurship is formed from a combination of institutional orders, the two most influential institutional orders are the Profession and Community orders. The instantiations of these orders are quite often connected in the data from participants, as a community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) of agents in the field are coalescing around the activity of entrepreneurship and acting to try to professionalise this activity (PR-PE-ELE1-2). Linked to this, there are a number of agents in the field that are enacting institutional entrepreneurship (Leca et al., 2008) in order to further strengthen institutional support for the activity of entrepreneurship (PR-PE-SPE1, PR-PE-ELE3, PR-PE-BEE1-4).

“it’s how much you can offer to people, advice, you can go to the likes of [local entrepreneur 1], the likes of [local entrepreneur 2], [local entrepreneur 3], you can listen to their experiences and you can – they won’t laugh at you, do you know what I mean, if you went up and asked them and say look I’m really fucking struggling with this, what do you think? I always remember [local entrepreneur 2], saying to me it’s only the zeros at the end that is different, whether you are talking with [local entrepreneur 1], or [local entrepreneur 3], or myself, we ain’t got as many zero’s as them though, that’s for sure” ParticipantHul12. (PR-PE-BEE2)

This could suggest collective action or shared goals by agents in the field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015, p. 53) to build entrepreneurial activity. This is positive, as agents with large amounts of institutional influence are actively trying to strengthen the entrepreneurial institutional logic in Hull with their actions, but this activity could also suggest a lack of institutional influence from other parts of the interinstitutional system (FLD-IE-EHE 1-2). Participants feel influence from Market and State institutional orders, but this is much less pronounced than the aforementioned Profession and Community orders. The absence of strong institutional influence from the Market suggests that the field of entrepreneurship in Hull and its accompanying logic is missing key direction which may fail to prompt nascent entrepreneurs to start businesses, as a market logic can be very influential in directing entrepreneurial activity (Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016) (FLD-IE-EHE 1-2). Although, it must be noted that there is some evidence of a market logic becoming stronger, particularly in the technology sector around a co-working space and business incubator/start-up centre (CO-ME-ECMM1, CO-ME-ECMM2, MA-IN-NMO1-HULL). The State institutional order has some influence on the institutional logic of the field, particularly linked to cognitively based institutionalisation of influences linked to participants' understanding of the redistribution of wealth and welfare capitalism. However, participants seemed to perceive regulative barriers linked to the usage of state-based entrepreneurship help, or support from banks (CO-NCI-NCI1), and this perception had pervaded participants normative institutional practices, with

many suggesting that trying to obtain state help was the exception to the rule (ST-SU-SIN 1-2, ST-SU-USH 1-2, ST-SU-STU1).

“[Regarding the local Chamber of commerce] I actually went in, spoke to somebody, there’s no funding available at the moment, oh, I asked them for advice about a bank loan, with the business that I had and that wasn’t helpful”. Participant Hull13. (ST-SU-SIN2)

In Hull, there are active groups of agents trying to strengthen the entrepreneurial institutional logic in the field, but the potential issue is that the institutionalisation of entrepreneurial activities in the field in Hull is not occurring as much through other institutional orders, such as the Market or State. This lack of market influence means that institutional entrepreneurs have to work particularly hard to strengthen the logic in the field. Equally, the lack of a strong State based institutional order influence, means that nascent entrepreneurs may decide not to take part in entrepreneurial activities, as there may be a perception that there is a lack of help available from the State (Smallbone and Welter, 2012), indeed it could be suggested that the institutionalisation of cognitive beliefs linked to this has constrained entrepreneurship in the region (Bruton and Ahlstrom, 2003). Key elements of influence linked to the Market and State institutional orders are perceived to be partially absent by agents, so this causes the institutional logic linked to the field of entrepreneurship to be weakened. The weakened entrepreneurial institutional logic present is noticed by agents and actors in the field, and so they enact activities to try to strengthen the logic of the field which influences new entrepreneurs (CO-LBI-LBP1-HULL 1-3). In some instances, influence comes from members of the family, or potential religious belief (FA-FI-CFE1-HULL, FA-EL-FNE1, RE-RI-PI1-HULL). In effect, actors operating at the micro and meso levels are trying to strengthen institutional influence linked to entrepreneurial activities, which in turn serves to strengthen overarching macro based institutional influence, most notably the Profession institutional order through the professionalisation of entrepreneurship as an activity.

“I joined [local entrepreneurship help group and networking group] and I think within the space of eight months I was then leading so I was leading ten entrepreneurs”. Participant Hull10. (PR-PE-LE1)

4.3 Institutional order influences on the field based institutional logic of entrepreneurship in a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Through the analysis of the data, the institutional logic connected to the field of entrepreneurship in Liverpool is influenced principally through the Market, Community and Profession social orders. Cognitive, normative and regulative institutional influences embodied within the elemental categories, have combined to form a strongly influential institutional logic that helps to facilitate entrepreneurial activity. There is a question, however, as to whether this institutional logic is specifically linked with a field of entrepreneurship, or is emanating from adjacent fields within which entrepreneurial activity may be a by-product that supports collaboration through incubator programmes (CO-EH-FEC1-LIV, CO-EH-CIC 1-2). Influence from the Market based institutional order is mentioned multiple times by a number of participants. There are many acknowledgements that positive market forces linked to industries such as technology, creative, leisure and property, result in entrepreneurial activity from agents that are part of these industry based fields (Greenwood et al., 2013) (MA-IN-NMO 1-3s). The relative strength of multiple industry based fields in Liverpool such as the tech industry (FLD-PF-TIF1), and the associated institutional influencing effects of these fields, has created an entrepreneurship based sub-field, as agents are influenced by an entrepreneurial institutional logic in order to be a part of these industry based fields, indeed, an “external logic” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 151) emanating from other fields is in effect (CO-ME-ECMI 1-2, FLD-PF-PFE1-3). Equally, agents in Liverpool are perceiving multiple industry-based fields becoming stronger, and this strengthens cognitive and normative institutional influence linked to the Market institutional

order (MA-IN-NMO 1-3-s). This positive institutional influence linked to the Market (Gumpert, 2000), derived from industrial fields, may be forming some kind of spillover (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018) effect in either helping to form a field of entrepreneurship, or by creating an institutional logic linked to entrepreneurship in other fields, which results in agents enacting entrepreneurial activity (MA-IN-AM1).

“So, the city is full of them, and it’s full of great stories. I’m lucky enough, I’ve got up to half a dozen mates who have been successful. If you met them, you wouldn’t think, but they own really good companies and are doing well. So, people like them as well, when you look at them and obviously because I was lucky... I mean four to six of them, are in my close circle, holiday together and stuff. I also had people around me I think, they’ve done it, so again it’s a bit of motivation”. Participant Liverpool22. (MA-PO-ESS1)

Uncertainty in markets can act as a barrier to entrepreneurship (Tracey and Phillips, 2011), conversely if Market based institutional influence gives the perception of robust market conditions this may result in positive outcomes linked to entrepreneurial activity, and this appears to be the case, this can help facilitate entrepreneurial activity as it can counter competing logics that may detract from an entrepreneurial logic (Miller et al., 2017). Equally, this strong market logic may be facilitating capital flows and micro finance in the local economy (Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016).

Influence linked to the Community institutional order is represented strongly in the data, with the institutional logic having connections with a collaborative community linked to entrepreneurial activity (PR-CO-ESH 1-3), and a perceived community spirit in the city. Indeed, it could be suggested that participants have interest in a common goal and have a common identity by overcoming adversity (Marquis et al., 2011a) (CO-COM-ESD 1-2), linked to making the city a better place despite their background (PR-CO-ESH5). There are multiple examples of agents reporting institutional influence linked to instances of cooperative capitalism (Thornton et al., 2011) across industrial fields, but also in relation to entrepreneurial activities in general linked to shared context in start-up centres, shared co-working spaces, or attached to start-up help schemes (PR-CO-ESH4, PR-CO-ESH 6-7, PR-CO-LC2).

“You know what? If I could work with unemployed women, and use the skills that I’ve learned over the years to encourage them to gain confidence, and to research in a positive way...” Participant Liverpool19. (PR-CO-ESH7)

This link between community and entrepreneurship is strengthening the propensity for agents to carry out entrepreneurial activities linked to the collective worth (Marti et al., 2013, p. 25) that being part of the community enables. Many participants reported an institutional influence linked to the importance of being part of the community in helping Liverpool become a better place for all people that live there (CO-COM-LC 1-2), and this influence even formed the background to the entrepreneurial activities of some participants. They discussed the businesses that they had set up linked to helping the local area and social causes, or when dealing with gender-based issues linked to facilitating female entrepreneurship (Marlow, 2020; Marlow and McAdam, 2013; Welter et al., 2014); this also links to discussions around gender and entrepreneurial embeddedness (Roos, 2018) (CO-COM-ESH 1-2). Thus, fields of activity have formed around important community-based issues (Hoffman, 1999) which have resulted in entrepreneurial activity taking place. It is suggested that the history of Liverpool being an economically depleted city (Clouston, 1991; “Devastation stalks Merseyside economy,” 1991; Jenkins, 2003) in the past has fostered “a unique form of enterprise that combines good business practices with community goals” (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004, p. 217), which enables agents to overcome adversities (CO-COM-ESD 1-2).

“I’d come back from London [to Liverpool] and a friend I really respect sort of filled me in what was happening in the City whilst I’d been away and I was just like, no, not having it,

can't we do something, can't we align ourselves and that was it, yeah". Participant Liverpool20. (PR-CO-ESH2)

The Profession institutional order is represented quite strongly in the data, linked to the institutional influence derived from being exposed to industrial fields and the professionalisation of these fields, as discussed earlier linked to the Market institutional order e.g. technology, creative, leisure and property (CO-LBI-LBP 1-2 -LIV). There were also some links to the professionalisation of entrepreneurship as an activity (Burton et al., 2016), and this influence had connections with the Corporation institutional order e.g. incubator centres and co-working spaces. The State can also be seen as an important agent of institutional change linked to entrepreneurship (Smallbone and Welter, 2012). Influence from the Religion institutional order was very rarely mentioned by participants.

There are strong institutional indicators in the logic of the field of entrepreneurship in Liverpool that markets are robust, and businesses in these markets are successful, and that there is cooperation linked to being part of the societal and entrepreneurial community in the city. Added to the strong institutional order influence on the logic connected to the field of entrepreneurship of Community and Market, broadly positive influences from the Profession, State and Corporation institutional orders means that nascent entrepreneurs may be drawn to join the field of entrepreneurship, as the institutional logic attached to the field suggests likely successful outcomes linked to activity in the field.

5. Discussion

We asked : How do field based institutional logics influence different types of entrepreneurial ecosystem? The analysis developed insights on what can be learned from a comparison of the composition of the institutional logics present in alternative fields of entrepreneurship in emergent and growing entrepreneurial ecosystems, extending prior research on the application of institutional logics in entrepreneurship (Korber et al., 2022; Kromidha et al., 2024; Roundy, 2019; Roundy, 2017), and entrepreneurial ecosystem (Spigel, 2020b) research. In Hull and Liverpool there is an institutional logic linked to the field of entrepreneurship in each EE (Smets et al., 2012), within which "cognitivist" (Wang, 2016, p. 349) institutionalisation processes are taking place linked to entrepreneurial practice.

Through analysis of the data, the main influences from the institutional orders in the interinstitutional system are quite different in Hull and Liverpool, but there are some important similarities. Figure 3 (panel A and panel B) is a graphical representation of the composition of the influence of the institutional orders on the institutional logics in fields of entrepreneurship in Hull and Liverpool.

Figure 3. Influence of the institutional orders on the Field of entrepreneurship in Emerging and Growing Ecosystems

----- Figure 3 about here -----

The findings from our study of Hull and Liverpool provide several new insights for entrepreneurial ecosystem research. Firstly, diverse institutional logics in growing and emergent ecosystems have been uncovered, by comparison of how different institutional orders (Market, Community, Profession, State, Corporation) shape entrepreneurial ecosystems uniquely in varying EEs types. Emergent ecosystems focus on professionalizing entrepreneurial activities and fostering a sense of community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) around entrepreneurship. In growing ecosystems institutional logic based influence has been uncovered to include more market-driven factors alongside community and professional influences. This is important because considering multiple institutional logics when analysing and developing entrepreneurial ecosystems enriches our understanding of structure of EE and entrepreneurial decision-making.

Secondly, we use the institutional logics perspective to uncover historical processes and social aspects of EEs that together shape EE outputs. For example in Liverpool, historical poverty and community improvement efforts significantly influence the EE. Historical

context and persistence of entrepreneurship are important (Fritsch et al., 2021b; Fritsch and Storey, 2014; Fritsch and Wyrwich, 2014) as they shape the current institutional logic, emphasising different forms of entrepreneurial logic. This contrasts with EEs where entrepreneurial activity might be a by-product of other fields, indicating the importance of historical and contextual factors in shaping EEs.

Thirdly, institutional change and the role of micro and meso-level agents is important in shaping the institutional logic in a field of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023) in an EE. This shows the importance of proactive and committed ecosystem actors and agents in developing and sustaining EEs (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Mason and Brown, 2014).

Fourthly, evidence of the professionalisation (Burton et al., 2016; Greenwood et al., 2002; Nabi et al., 2006; Zhou, 2005) of entrepreneurship, suggests that formalising entrepreneurial practices and enhancing entrepreneurial occupational prestige can strengthen EEs, and can act as an entrepreneurial activity based regional development strategy. Community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) support and facilitation of entrepreneurship is important at various EE stages of growth with business and social communities supporting and facilitating entrepreneurship activity in emergent and growing EEs.

Fifthly, we demonstrate that varying perceptions of state support in Hull and Liverpool illustrate how regulatory environments and state policies (Smallbone and Welter, 2012; Yiu et al., 2014) can either hinder or facilitate entrepreneurial activities, emphasising the need for tailored policy interventions that consider local attitudes and regulatory challenges. We demonstrate that the paucity of a market or state institutional order influence on entrepreneurial institutional logic is a critical roadblock for development of EEs, but can cause agents to enact institutional entrepreneurship to strengthen the field of entrepreneurship.

Our study demonstrates how useful the institutional logics perspective is as a theoretical lens to examine EEs of different types. The understanding of the recursive nature of institutional influence linked to entrepreneurship is captured, through macro influences forming an institutional logic at the field or meso level, with agents acting according to that institutional logic, and some institutional entrepreneurs trying to change and strengthen that logic, which in turn serves to strengthen elements of institutional influence at the macro level.

6. Conclusion

Theoretical contributions

This study makes two key theoretical contributions. Firstly, the institutional logics perspective adopted develops understanding of EEs as localised contexts in which embedded fields of entrepreneurship are sensitive to local institutional conditions, indeed, we have uncovered a particular mix of interinstitutional influences on the institutional logic attached to a field of entrepreneurship in two EEs. This mix of interinstitutional influence forms a particular type of institutional logic that can be discovered in a particular entrepreneurial context. This approach goes beyond only focusing on institutional logics attached to a specific activity or function in a field of activity, for example entrepreneurial venture support and resource gathering (Fisher et al., 2017), or green entrepreneurship in the sharing economy (Grinevich et al., 2019), but uncovers institutional logics linked to an overarching field of entrepreneurship in which there are multiple activities, structures, organisations, agent based actions and institutional interrelationships present. Agent based action shapes the institutional landscape and connected institutional logic in a non-deterministic way linked to the field and EE based conditions. This builds upon the literature in which the institutional logic connected to entrepreneurial activity in a small town was uncovered (Roundy, 2019), or the misaligned logics linked to investment in an EE were discovered (Korber et al., 2022), however, our approach provides a more holistic view of the institutional logic across fields rather than focusing on a specific context or activity. The empirical application and use of the institutional logics perspective in this way provides another useful lens to understand fields of

entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023) within EEs and contexts, and helps to uncover the context and structure of entrepreneurial ecosystems (Theodoraki et al., 2022; Wurth et al., 2022), whilst also contributing to the literature on entrepreneurship and context, as we develop understanding of how entrepreneurs shape or do context (Welter and Baker, 2021). Secondly, using the institutional logics perspective we examine EEs and demonstrate the way that entrepreneurs react (Morea and Dalla Chiesa, 2024) to and do context (Welter and Baker, 2021). This can be partly linked to the perception by agents that the field is only emanating from a narrow range of sources, and so needs to be strengthened through individual and collective action. Equally, the less pronounced influence of the Market and State based institutional orders on the institutional logic of the field of entrepreneurship, is prompting agent based institutional entrepreneurship (Misangyi et al., 2008) to compensate for this part void of influence. Institutional entrepreneurs in the field are developing and strengthening a Professional logic (Burton et al., 2016) linked to entrepreneurial activity in which an occupational prestige (Zhou, 2005) linked to entrepreneurship is being developed combined with a community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) based logic in which entrepreneurs feel that they are part of a group (Marquis et al., 2011a; Marquis and Battilana, 2009) of like-minded agents and organisations. The uncovering of institutional entrepreneurship-based activity by agents which results in the shaping of the institutional logic in a field of entrepreneurship represents a novel way of understanding the structure of EEs.

Practical implications

We uncovered findings which can act as guidance for key ecosystem actors to help development of EEs, for example dealing with issues caused by institutional voids. This is important because to facilitate entrepreneurial activity, practitioners need to better understand institutional voids (Puffer et al., 2010; Fiedler et al., 2017), and adapt to changing institutional contexts (Mickiewicz and Olarewaju, 2020).

The importance of the Community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) institutional order and connected institutional logic in the facilitation and building of fields of entrepreneurship in entrepreneurial ecosystems is underlined. This builds upon previous research in which it is understood that entrepreneurial activity can be facilitated through alternatives to a purely market based institutional logic (Gümüşay, 2018). In both growing and emergent EEs, Community has been discovered to be a vital and influential institutional order influence on the institutional logic in the field of entrepreneurship, albeit in slightly different ways. If there is a strong Community based institutional order influence on the institutional logic, this encourages entrepreneurial activity as agents feel that they are part of a supportive and like-minded group of entrepreneurs. Agents also feel positive influence and encouragement from the wider community (Marquis et al., 2011a) linked to entrepreneurial activities, and that they can benefit the local community through enacting entrepreneurial activity. In addition, the influence of other community based institutional fields and overlapping institutional logics linked to issues such as gender (Welter et al., 2014) and equality, or social entrepreneurship (Zahra et al., 2009), can have a positive effect on entrepreneurial activity in an EE, entrepreneurial activity can be seen as an emancipatory force for economic development or social good. If there is a less pronounced positive influence on the field of entrepreneurship from the Market and State institutional orders, influential agents, institutions and organisations are advised to form a community around the activity of entrepreneurship, which can strengthen the community focus of the institutional logic attached to the field, but also serves to help attract agents to the field.

Our study utilises a complex theoretical framework and position, and there are limitations linked to this. Using the field of entrepreneurship within an EE as a unit of analysis brings the difficult issue of establishing field boundaries and the influence of overlapping fields on entrepreneurial activity. An entrepreneur may reside in many overlapping or adjacent fields (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015) linked to different activities,

they may reside in a field of entrepreneurship, a field linked to their industry, a field linked to their social life, hobbies or past times, a field linked to their social networks, and so on. Some of these fields may be embedded within each other like a Russian Doll, or they may overlap, or be so close to each other that it may be difficult to attribute entrepreneurial activity or outcome solely to a certain field, such as the ‘field of entrepreneurship’. In terms of future research there is much to be done to further understand EEs and contexts, using the institutional logics perspective and the field of entrepreneurship, for example an investigation into the links between institutional logics and the lifecycle of EEs (Cantner et al., 2021), or the link between institutional logics and sustainable EEs (Volkman et al., 2021). Further establishment of the link between a field of entrepreneurship and an EE is important, as there may be many fields of entrepreneurship embedded within an ecosystem and other overlapping fields which have their own duelling (Yiu et al., 2014) logics. From an empirical perspective this research focused on the entrepreneurs themselves, but it is important to also understand institutional logics and the institutional context from the perspective of other key players and stakeholders (Fisher et al., 2017) within the EE. It is also important to embrace alternative theoretical lenses and perspectives, even to develop understanding of EEs and context through gaining insight from combined analysis and perspectives, such as practice theory (Thompson et al., 2020) for example.

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