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

Alterskye, A., Cuvero, M., Hernandez-Vivanco, A., Belitski, M. and Bortnovskaya, M.

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

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. The study reveals that, in an emergent ecosystem, entrepreneurs notice institutional voids and take part in institutional entrepreneurship to strengthen the institutional order of ‘Profession’ and ‘Community’ institutional orders. In a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem, the strength of ‘Community’ and ‘Market’ institutional orders and overlapping activity-based fields help 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, particularly highlighting divergent institutional logics in different ecosystem contexts. This represents a novel approach to analysing entrepreneurial ecosystems through the lens of the institutional logics perspective, by utilising a framework to understand the interinstitutional system-based institutional orders as influencers that shape the dominant institutional logic in a field of entrepreneurship.

Keywords

Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, Institutional Logics, Entrepreneurship, Start-Ups.

Introduction

The literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE) is wide and diverse (Hruskova, 2024), and the concept is of great interest due to 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 through which EEs have been studied (Spigel, 2015; Stam and Van De Ven, 2021; Leendertse, Schrijvers & Stam, 2022; Hong and Spigel, 2024; Theodoraki et al., 2022), there are still many questions with regards to how entrepreneurship elements and attributes within an ecosystem are interconnected (Brown and Mason, 2017; Klofsten et al., 2024). As such, there are calls for future research to expand our understanding of EEs through novel perspectives to unveil new findings concerning their context and structure (Stam and Welter, 2020; Wurth et al., 2022).

This study applies an institutional logics perspective (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) and uses a theoretical approach to develop our understanding of different EEs (Roundy, 2017). We respond to calls to broaden research into EEs by utilising a range of approaches (Theodoraki et al., 2022; Wurth et al., 2022), and exploring 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), and Liverpool in the United Kingdom (UK). Both cities serve as comparative cases of EEs at different stages of development. Hull, as an emergent EE, is marked by early-stage coordination efforts among stakeholders and a relatively low start-up density. In contrast, Liverpool's growing EE reflects a vibrant start-up scene, higher connectivity, and an increasing attraction of resources, characteristic of a growing or strengthening EE (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Pustovrh et al., 2020).

This approach analyses two EEs that are at different stages but are both embedded in the same macro-institutional framework (England, UK). This helps develop our understanding of the influence of institutions on the context and structure (Wurth et al., 2022) of EEs, allowing us to uncover the institutional influence on entrepreneurial activity in an EE, and also understand how macro institutional influences are impacted by micro institutional agent-based actions (Thornton et al., 2012) in a recursive relationship. The structural logic of the field of entrepreneurship in an EE can be exposed 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 can take part in entrepreneurial activity, whilst being influenced by – and shaping – embedded institutional influences. This results in a certain type of institutional logic made up of a unique combination of the institutional orders (Greenman, 2013; Gümüşay, 2018), serving to influence entrepreneurial activity in the field of entrepreneurship within the ecosystem.

A field of entrepreneurship is a meso level analytical lens, positioned between macro and micro perspectives. It allows for a more developed understanding of institutional processes, and it facilitates the interplay between agency and structure, which can shape an entrepreneurial context (Alterskye et al., 2023), such as an EE. An institutional logic is a socially constructed pattern of practices, assumptions, values, and beliefs through which individuals and organisations provide meaning to their daily activity and represent their lives and experiences. A field of entrepreneurship has a connected institutional logic (Alterskye et al., 2023; Watson,

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2013). Entrepreneurial activity and behaviour can be located within societal sectors and can 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 building blocks or cornerstone institutions of the interinstitutional system, comprising of Family, Community, Religion, State, Market, Profession, and Corporation. Together, these orders compose the key institutions of society. The influence of these orders combine to shape the institutional logic in a field of activity (Thornton et al., 2012; Friedland and Alford, 1991); in this case, entrepreneurship within an ecosystem.

Responding to calls for what is generalisable about EEs as opposed to what is inherently bound up in local social, economic, and political contexts in EEs (Wurth et al., 2022), and introducing novel insights into entrepreneurship and context (Welter and Baker, 2021), we ask the following research question: *What is the relationship between different EEs and divergent institutional logics?* To answer this question, our study uncovers combinations of institutional influences that form logics within different EEs, whilst also illustrating the relational influence that 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 not only shapes the contextual setting, but also shapes agent motivations and actions 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. Thus, they are taking part in institutional entrepreneurship (Leca et al., 2008) to help professionalise their entrepreneurship activities. This, in turn, develops Profession and Community institutional order (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) focused institutional logics. In Liverpool (growing EE), Market, Profession, and Community institutional orders influence 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 emerged as well. Evidence of the Community institutional order was found to be prevalent in both contexts, which reveals 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. Liverpool and Hull are positioned as two contrasting cases, with Liverpool illustrating the dynamics of a more advanced EE, where institutional orders interact synergistically to drive entrepreneurship; particularly through strong Market- and Community-based logics. In Hull, the emergent nature of the EE is highlighted by weaker institutional interactions, where Market and State logics often lack sufficient influence to stimulate entrepreneurial activity at scale. This comparison provides a clear framework for understanding how institutional logics function differently in emergent versus growing ecosystems.

We contribute to literature on EE, context, and entrepreneurship (Stam and Welter, 2020; Welter and Baker, 2021), firstly by developing an understanding of the contexts and structures (Wurth et al., 2022) of ecosystems through the deployment of the institutional logics perspective, which uncovers different EE configurations in fields of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2024, 2023) linked to the particular institutional logic present. This builds upon the work of Roundy (2017, 2019) and Korber et al. (2022), as the makeup and recursive influence of institutional logics are examined across more than one type of EE, and are not solely examined with regards to a particular activity, such as investment.

The institutional logics perspective adopted in this study responds to research calls for novel EE research perspectives (Wurth et al., 2022) and develops our 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 through the lens of the institutional logics perspective (Korber et al., 2022; Kromidha et al., 2024; Roundy, 2019), utilising this framework to better understand the interinstitutional system as something that shapes the institutional logic in the field of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023). By comparing these two EEs in context, we enrich our understanding of how institutional logics shape and are influenced by EEs in a recursive manner. This emphasises the importance of agent-based actions, professionalisation, community support, and the need for tailored policy interventions. Equally, using an empirical approach, we build upon the notion that not every EE needs to be configured in the same way (Schrijvers et al., 2024) in order to promote successful outcomes linked to productive entrepreneurship.

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In addition, we find that, where there is evidence of a perceived lack of entrepreneurial institutional order-based influence in an emergent ecosystem (Korber et al., 2022), such as the market, entrepreneurs will enact institutional entrepreneurship (Leca et al., 2008) through the professionalisation of entrepreneurial activity in order to upskill and help other agents within the ecosystem. We also find 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 (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004).

Finally, this study provides a clear comparative analysis across different regions, allowing us to further understand the role of historical (Fritsch et al., 2021; Fritsch and Wyrwich, 2014), cultural, and contextual factors shaping EEs and enriching research on varieties of entrepreneurship in different institutional contexts (Spigel, 2015; Stam and Welter, 2020; Kapturkiewicz, 2022; Spicer and Zhong, 2022).

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Investigating entrepreneurial ecosystems using the institutional logics perspective.

An EE is a “set of interdependent actors and factors coordinated in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship within a particular territory” (Stam and Spigel, 2018, p. 407), and these multiple actors exchange services in search of multiple valued outcomes (Donaldson et al., 2024). EE research has focused on many different factors and facets that make up an ecosystem, with many papers building upon the seminal article by Isenberg (2010), which listed a number of different sub-domains of an EE. We adopt the Isenberg view – as well as other articles that build upon it, such as Spigel (2015) – to posit that domains of an EE are made up of a combination of material attributes, social attributes, and cultural attributes (Spigel, 2013). However, it is both a challenge and an opportunity for EE research to uncover a broader systematic vision of what is happening within ecosystems (Cho et al., 2022; Theodoraki et al., 2022). This is where we introduce the institutional logics perspective as a lens through which we can consider many of these overarching domain-based factors. 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. A bottom up (Kapturkiewicz, 2022) approach, focusing on agent-based entrepreneurial work and practice in EEs, and a top down approach,

where institutions shape action, along with the recursive influences between these, can all be considered in an EE using the institutional view. Institutions set boundaries by allowing, confirming, or restricting opportunities and alternatives for agents taking part in entrepreneurial activities and behaviours (Barley and Tolbert, 1997). Equally, entrepreneurial actions and linked social actions are 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 through which we can understand the structure, connectivity, and dynamics of EEs. An institutional logic is defined as “the socially constructed historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2). The institutional logics perspective can be utilised as a meta-theory to investigate a broad range of institutions – not just organisations – and it helps to uncover heterogeneity and homogeneity in societally-based institutional settings, such as EEs (Roundy, 2017). This perspective enables the investigation of phenomena, such as entrepreneurship, linked to institutions acting as influencers of action. Indeed, institutions can frame mutual interactions and expectations of agents taking part in economic activity (Bathelt and Gluckler, 2014).

Linking to institutional theory, institutional pillars are important regulative/structural, normative, and cultural/cognitive/symbolic systems or processes that make up the “vital ingredient of institutions” (Scott, 1995, p. 59). The structural, cognitive/symbolic and normative dimensions of institutions are viewed as “complementary dimensions of institutions, rather than separable structural (coercive), normative, and symbolic (cognitive) carriers” (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008, p. 101). 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, to occur, and thus affect entrepreneurial outcomes within the environment or context that is subject to those same institutional conditions (Scott, 2013), such as in an EE. Utilising the institutional logics perspective and linked analysis helps to uncover institutional conditions associated with the institutional pillars in a social or economic context, and these findings can help different between EE configurations that contribute to productive entrepreneurship in different ways (Schrijvers et al., 2024). We may assume that, in established EEs, new ventures grow and scale up, while in

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emerging EEs, they struggle to survive (Brown & Mason, 2017; Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Stam, 2015). Existing entrepreneurship literature is yet to offer further empirical evidence about how EE elements work together effectively to facilitate productive entrepreneurship.

Institutional logics develop at the level of the institutional field; hence the utilisation of the field of entrepreneurship construct (Alterskye et al., 2024, 2023). They 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 aid our understanding of the connection between everyday entrepreneurial practice and the interinstitutional system. Utilisation of the field construct (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015) helps us to tackle issues linked with understanding the structure and agency linked to practices in a social or economic context such as an EE and can open further avenues of analysis by uncovering the ways that agents interact, react, and try to shape a field (Fligstein, 2001) within an EE.

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 bound 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 geographical boundary, can be conceived of relatively easily (Wooten and Hoffman, 2016). Linking this to research on 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) assert 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 take part in entrepreneurial activity in different industries (Alterskye et al., 2024, 2023). This can also include actors (Hong and Spigel, 2024; Spigel, 2020a) that are not directly taking part in an 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). Fields of entrepreneurship are embedded within EEs (Alterskye et al., 2023), in which agents carry out entrepreneurial activities whilst influencing and being influenced by the overarching institutional logic attached to the field. The institutional logics perspective allows for the 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 orders influencing this logic can be uncovered, or the navigation of multiple logics (Worakantak et al., 2024; Besharov and Smith, 2014) 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.

Figure 1. The institutional logic of a field of entrepreneurship in an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

-----**Figure 1 here - About here**-----

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). 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, institutional orders, such as Family or the Market (Klyver et al., 2020), are composed of these dimensions (or pillars) of institutions in various forms. The institutional pillars cause institutionalisation in relation to an activity, such as

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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).

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 (replacing ‘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), focusing on the enabling effects that the Church has on entrepreneurship in the congregation, thus in this study 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 professional field of nouvelle-cuisine. 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 can 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 only offers a snapshot of the identified logics. The impact of external EE factors also remains under-researched; specifically with regards to 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. 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 a shaper of institutional logics in the field of entrepreneurship

The institutional logics perspective views society as an interinstitutional system (Friedland and Alford, 1991). This perspective helps the researcher 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, such as Family, Market, or Religion (Vu et al., 2023). Developing an 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, including Family, Community, Religion, State, Market, Profession, and Corporation. Combined, these “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 a given 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 our understanding of the societal-level institutional influences 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

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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). Indeed, it has been suggested that supportive regional institutional logics directly influence start-up rates (Vedula et al., 2019).

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 orders 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 that 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 the entrepreneurial activity that is taking place within a particular EE (Audretsch and Belitski, 2021) will help to improve our understanding of how institutional influences have affected that activity, either positively or negatively, as human actions and activities are determined by the institutional environments in which they occur (North, 1990). Indeed, it could be suggested that, due to agent-based strategic responses to institutional forces, the entrepreneurial activity in a region reflects the institutional environment of that region (Oliver, 1991).

2.4 How different interinstitutional orders interact in different contexts

The prevalent logic that can be found in a field of entrepreneurship within an EE will have a certain combination or mixture of interinstitutional order influences. These are comprised of some, or all, of the following: Family, Community, Religion, State, Market, Profession, and Corporation (Thornton et al., 2012). These combine to create a certain type of institutional logic that influences entrepreneurial activities and actions. The ways in which entrepreneurs navigate or shape an EE or a social/network structure can be uncovered, and context-based outputs and outcomes can be revealed (Welter and Gartner, 2016; Leendertse et

al., 2022). A response to a weak market-based logic may result in institutional entrepreneurship (Leca et al., 2008), or family-based logic (Reay et al., 2015), combined with other elements in the interinstitutional system, could influence entrepreneurial actions and outcomes. Religion, as an institutional order associated with the “Black Church” movement, could shape agent-based entrepreneurial activity (Hayes and Robinson, 2011), or religion-based logic could affect the work of social enterprises (Lee and Rundle, 2024). A market logic could help to counter family-based logics in family firms (Miller et al., 2017), and a strong community-based logic may enable entrepreneurship (McKeever et al., 2015). Business practices in depleted communities may align with community goals (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004), and entrepreneurs can benefit the community and also benefit from it (Fortunato and Alter, 2015). Equally, it is acknowledged that different institutional order influences, and different institutional logics, can counteract and dual (Yiu et al., 2014) with each other to influence entrepreneurial activity in some ways. There can also be competing influences from elastic or hybrid logics (Gümüşay et al., 2020). The conceptual framework presented in this paper allows the differences and nuances in the overarching institutional logic in the fields of entrepreneurship in different EEs and contexts to be uncovered.

In extant research, institutional logics have been applied and linked to entrepreneurship in a number of ways at national and regional levels (Korber et al., 2022; Kromidha et al., 2024; Pati et al., 2024; Roundy, 2018, 2019; Valliere, 2017; Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016), firm levels (Barth et al., 2015; Berrone et al., 2023; Fisher et al., 2017; Jaskiewicz et al., 2016; Zhang, 2023), in teams (Grinevich et al., 2019), and at individual levels (De Clercq and Voronov, 2011; Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2019; Slade Shantz et al., 2024; Spedale and Watson, 2014).

3. Method

3.1 Sample selection and unit of analysis

Building on prior research that has used the institutional logics perspective to better understand the behaviour of entrepreneurs and organisations (Worakantak et al., 2024; Yiu et al., 2014; Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016), we adopted this perspective as a theoretical background. Extending the literature on different institutional contexts and what shapes them (Belitski and Büyükbacı, 2021; Kapturkiewicz, 2022), we focused on uncovering the institutional order influences that combine to form institutional logics in two EEs: an emergent one (Hull) and a growing one (Liverpool).

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Hull, as an emergent or nascent EE, possesses the characteristics described in Spigel and Harrison (2018). This is reflected in the coordination that can be seen from stakeholders and actors when helping to enable productive entrepreneurship (Pustovrh et al., 2020) and increase connectivity between new ventures and other ecosystem actors. Hull can also be seen as an embryonic EE (Brown and Mason, 2017) due to the low comparative number of start-ups. Liverpool is defined by its start-up scene and its 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 type of EE (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Pustovrh et al., 2020). Table 1 provides an overview of the macroeconomic indicators of the ecosystems studied during the 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, the fact that self-employment rates are increasing faster than the global English statistics, and the increase in the number of micro firms. Table 1 provides key statistical indicators comparing the socioeconomic development of the Hull and Liverpool ecosystems between 2016 and 2019.

Table 1. Main statistics explaining the Hull and Liverpool ecosystems between 2016 and 2019.

-----Table 1 about here-----

Source: Adapted from Nomis (2024)

The criterion for participant selection in this study is based on purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009; Patton and Patton, 2015). In this way, purposeful sampling strategies intentionally avoid random selection, focusing instead on ensuring that specific types of cases relevant to the study are included in the final sample. This approach is based on the assumption that, given the study’s objectives, certain individuals may hold unique and diverse perspectives on the topics under investigation, making their inclusion essential (Merriam, 2009). Thus, we selected entrepreneurs who met three criteria. Firstly, participants had to have started a business, and had to be from, have lived in, or self-identified as having a connection with either Hull or Liverpool – the two EEs being investigated. Secondly, entrepreneurs had to have a knowledge of the business dynamics happening in their ecosystems (Hull or Liverpool). We addressed this requirement by selecting active entrepreneurs who participate in seeking and exploiting the resources provided by the EE (e.g., accelerators, events, or other training activities related to entrepreneurship in the city). This is relevant because more informed

participants could provide more valuable insights into the various aspects related to the institutional logics attached to the field of entrepreneurship and related to other fields, such as the industrial field. Thirdly, we purposefully searched for entrepreneurs that were able to provide unique insights based on a varied sample in terms of the age of the informant, business type (industry), business age, and business size. We actively searched for this varied sample by engaging and collaborating with professional networks, community organisations, incubators, accelerators, and professional events, such as fairs and congresses in both EEs.

The sampling process led to a final dataset collected from 30 entrepreneurs from Liverpool, and 30 entrepreneurs from Hull. At this point, saturation was reached in both EEs, which occurred when no new insights or explanations related to our research were generated, despite the varied profiles we increasingly included in our sample. Appendix B and Appendix C shows a detailed description of the characteristics of each participant included in this sample. Finally, data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews, in which the respondents were asked to discuss their business start-up story, and outline the influences derived from the EE that they were embedded in.

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 (Spicer and Zhong, 2022). Thus, we utilised an abductive process, in which collected data was reviewed in combination with a theoretical and conceptual framework – the institutional logics perspective – to develop our understanding of the phenomenon (Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Timmermans and Tavory, 2022; Van Burg et al., 2022). Our research was designed and performed in two stages, drawing on the qualitative analysis approach described in Pratt (2008, 2009).

In the first stage, we used the institutional logics perspective as a compass theory (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022, p. 43), in which the general categories of the institutional environment were known. This included the field construct along with the institutional orders of: Market, State, Community, Profession, Family, Religion, and Corporation. Therefore, we combined the theoretical institutional orders with context-based observations found in the data within each ecosystem, uncovering the underlying institutional logic of each EE. To this end, open coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was performed by three researchers using NVivo. In

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this process, 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. Starting with institutional orders, we identified provisional categories and initial codes based on the phrases, terms, and descriptions provided by participants in each EE. After labelling the codes and forming categories, we reviewed the data to match statements with the appropriate categories. In some cases, upon further examination, certain statements did not align with the established categories, prompting us to refine or remove categories as needed. This iterative process also included merging initial codes and forming theoretical categories, marking a shift from open to axial coding (Locke, 2001). This was a recursive process rather than a linear one, as we continually cycled between the initial categories and the emerging data patterns until coherent conceptual themes emerged (Eisenhardt, 1989). For example, in our data, the institutional orders of Family, Religion and Corporation were not relevant in either city, and neither was the state order in Liverpool. They were therefore merged into a specific category named “non-influential institutional orders”, which was then excluded from the analysis to instead focus on the main topics derived from the abductive inferences.

The analysis continued in the second stage, illustrating the field of entrepreneurship and linking institutional logic by reviewing multiple participants’ data in both contexts along with the compass theory. To this end, we utilised a method of “inference drawing from surprise” (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022, p. 1). Surprises linked to the data and the unit of observation were uncovered with regards to 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. We found that, although the Market institutional order strongly influenced Liverpool's EE institutional logic, its influence in Hull’s institutional logic was much less relevant. The specific analysis and comparisons between both EEs are further discussed in the next section.

The analysis of the data supported the development of 5 theoretical dimensions, 13 second order themes, and relevant codes that identified the presence of fields of entrepreneurship and interinstitutional 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) EEs. Codes are integrated as references to the analysed data based on Appendix A. Finally, illustrative quotes for each of these codes are shown in Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A.

Figure 2. Data structure

-----**Figure 2 about here**-----

Note: common first-order categories are shown in italics. The construct “non-influential institutional orders”, containing the institutional orders of Family, Religion and Corporation, is omitted from the analysis.

Source: Authors

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of our study in three parts. Section 4.1 describes the presence and development of the field of entrepreneurship in Hull and Liverpool, showing how entrepreneurial activity is shaped within each ecosystem. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 examine how different institutional orders influence the entrepreneurial institutional logic, focusing on Hull as an emergent ecosystem and Liverpool as a growing ecosystem.

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-LSF6-H, FLD-LSF7-H, FLD-LSF8-H). This process influences entrepreneurial activity, wherein the presence of incumbents and local businesses promotes mentorship and the development of new businesses (FLD-ECA-H1, FLD-ECA2-H). The evidence suggests that the presence of local businesses does provide motivational and moral support for new entrepreneurs to develop a company (FLD-PF1-H, FLD-PF3-H, FLD-PF2-H). Entrepreneurs aiming to develop a new venture may have the opportunity to be exposed to entrepreneurial opportunities, such as networking, which initially have a substantial effect on the motivation of founders to pursue the development of a new venture (FLD-IE1-3-H). However, as an emerging ecosystem, there is also a perceived lack of support and reduced access to funds, and some are unaware of the benefits that entrepreneurship engagement can have on laying the foundations for people to access the market and its resources (FLD-LSF1-7-H, FLD-LSF9-H). Once they discover the field of entrepreneurship, their exposure to resources, networking opportunities, and sources of motivation may inspire entrepreneurs to start a business.

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“It wasn’t really until I went to [local business help group] that I really started mixing with people who had set up their own companies. The previous companies that I worked for they were, you know, passed down from family, which is a totally different kettle of fish, I think, to come in across someone who has actually come up with an idea and they are putting it into practice”. (FLD-ECA3-H).

It can be seen from the data in Liverpool that 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, 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-ECA1-L, FLD-ECA2-L, FLD-ECA3-L). This leads to opportunities for start-ups and individuals to be exposed to a variety of industries, causing entrepreneurial practices to be spread across the field (FLD-PF1-4-L). Moreover, the sharing of experiences amongst economic agents and start-ups leads to the discussion of success stories from previously founded ventures. Such interactions facilitate knowledge exchange in public areas, exposing entrepreneurs to the culture of the city (MA-PO1-L, MA-PO2-L). Therefore, start-up discussions lead to heightened awareness and opportunities connected to the pre-existing heritage of industries that have been operating in the area for a sustained amount of time. These entrepreneurs are open to sharing knowledge, even with competitors (MA-PO3-L, MA-PO4-L). Equally, activities principally connected to specific industrial, cause-based, or professional fields also takes place often (MA-IN1-L, MA-IN2-L).

“[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 ... a tech company”(CO-EH3).

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. This observation, and linked observations across both ecosystems, provides a broader conceptual analysis of entrepreneurial activity as

something emanating from both market-based fields (e.g., technology) and societal-based fields (e.g., community development, gender empowerment). We found that, for these two ecosystems, entrepreneurship is influenced by adjacent or nested institutional fields, and entrepreneurship's influence varies depending on the strength and overlap of these fields. Hull was used as an example of weaker field interconnections.

The analysis of the data suggests the existence of ecosystem leadership, wherein the potential sharing of knowledge through open sources and access to entrepreneurial communities fosters innovation (Stam, 2015). The development of activities can be guided by incumbents, or supported through a collection of organisations, such as hubs, incubators, entrepreneurship support groups, and universities (Gomes, Facin, Salerno, & Ikenami, 2018). Most importantly, the influence of leadership can spill over from companies and entrepreneurs, changing the activities in the field by empowering not only start-ups, but also individuals, through social capital that arguably focuses on supporting financial benefits, etc. (Duan et al., 2023; Hill, 2018; Shao & Sun, 2021). The data from Hull shows that the main source of ignition for entrepreneurship was the engagement of nascent entrepreneurs with existing start-ups that acted as mentors (FLD-ECA1-3-H). The mixing of knowledge between entrepreneurs led mainly – not directly – to funding. Motivation, support, and potential access to resources and opportunities may have been left unclaimed without exposure to social capital (FLD-IE3-H). The data from Liverpool, as a growing ecosystem, showcases the effects of leadership and social capital through the creation of coworking spaces and events that increase the positive agent-based feelings and perceptions of entrepreneurship in the area (FLD-ECA1-3; FLD-PF2-4). In both EEs, the data supports the statement that, in early stages, leadership from existing start-ups acting as prominent leaders influencing potential economic agents is vital. As the ecosystem evolves, it expands upon the development of communities and enables future collaboration with incumbents and incubators, supported by a shared leadership across the established organisations.

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

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 of agents in the field coalesce around the activity

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of entrepreneurship and act to try to professionalise this activity (PR-PE-2-H). 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 – specifically, Profession institutional order support – for the activity of entrepreneurship (PR-PE9-H, PR-PE1-4-H).

“It’s not a networking thing. It’s how much you can offer to people, advice, you can go to the likes of [local entrepreneurs], 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] saying to me ‘it’s only the zeros at the end that is different, whether you are talking with [local entrepreneur] or [local entrepreneur] or myself’. We ain’t got as many zeros as them though, that’s for sure”. (PR-PE5-H)

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-1-2-H). 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 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). It should be noted that evidence suggests that entrepreneurs can overcome a lack of institutional influence by relying on the entrepreneurial community to attain knowledge and resources (CO-ME-1-H, CO-ME2-H). The State institutional order has some influence on the institutional logic of the field, particularly linked to the 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 use of state-based entrepreneurship support, or institutional financial support (ST-SU7-H), and this perception has pervaded participants normative institutional practices, with many suggesting that trying to obtain state help was the exception to the rule (ST-SU3-H, ST-SU5-H, ST-SU6-H).

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3 “*[Regarding the local Chamber of Commerce] I actually went in, spoke to somebody,*
4 *‘there’s no funding available at the moment’, ‘oh’, I asked them for advice about a*
5 *bank loan, with the business that I had and that wasn’t helpful”.* (ST-SU4-H)
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9 In Hull, there are active groups of agents trying to strengthen the entrepreneurial
10 institutional logic in the field, but the potential issue is that the institutionalisation of
11 entrepreneurial activities in the field in Hull is not occurring as much through other institutional
12 orders, such as the Market or State. This lack of Market influence means that institutional
13 entrepreneurs have to work particularly hard to strengthen the logic in the field. Equally, the
14 lack of a strong State-based institutional order influence means that nascent entrepreneurs may
15 decide not to take part in entrepreneurial activities, as there may be a perception that there is a
16 lack of help available from the State (Smallbone and Welter, 2012). Indeed, it could be
17 suggested that the institutionalisation of cognitive beliefs linked to this has constrained
18 entrepreneurship in the region (Bruton and Ahlstrom, 2003). Key elements of influence linked
19 to the Market and State institutional orders are perceived to be partially absent by agents, so
20 this causes the institutional logic linked to the field of entrepreneurship to be weakened. The
21 weakened entrepreneurial institutional logic present is noticed by agents and actors in the field,
22 and so they enact activities to try to strengthen the logic of the field, which influences new
23 entrepreneurs (CO-BU1-HULL, CO-BU2-H).
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35 Our findings on entrepreneurial activity in Hull, as an emergent EE, demonstrates that
36 the city is shaped by collective efforts from influential agents within the field – particularly
37 driven by Professional and Community institutional orders – but it faces limitations due to
38 weak Market and State institutional influences. This hinders broader entrepreneurial
39 engagement, while demonstrating emerging market logic in specific areas, such as
40 technology.
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49 **4.3 Institutional order influences the field based institutional logic of entrepreneurship** 50 **in a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem.** 51 52

53 Through the analysis of the data, the institutional logic connected to the field of
54 entrepreneurship in Liverpool is influenced principally through the Market, Community, and
55 Profession institutional orders. Cognitive, normative, and regulative institutional influences
56 embodied within the elemental categories have combined to form a strongly influential
57 institutional logic that helps to facilitate entrepreneurial activity. There is a question, however,
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as to whether this institutional logic is specifically linked with a field of entrepreneurship, or if it is emanating from adjacent fields, within which entrepreneurial activity may be a by-product that supports collaboration through incubator programmes and incumbents that enhance a start-ups reputation (CO-EH1-L, CO-EH2-L). 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-IN1-L, MA-IN2-L). The relative strength of multiple industry-based fields in Liverpool, such as the tech industry (FLD-PF1), 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. An “external logic” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 151) emanating from other fields is in effect (CO-ME1-L, FLD-PF2-4-L). Equally, agents in Liverpool are observing that multiple industry-based fields are becoming stronger, and this strengthens cognitive and normative institutional influences linked to the Market institutional order (MA-IN1-L, MA-IN2-L). This positive institutional influence, linked to the Market (Gumport, 2000) and derived from industrial fields, may be forming some kind of spillover (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018) effect, either helping to form a field of entrepreneurship or creating an institutional logic linked to entrepreneurship in other fields. This results in agents enacting entrepreneurial activity (MA-PO3-L).

“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”. (MA-PO1-L)

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-1-3-L), and a perceived community spirit in the city. Indeed, it could be suggested that participants share a common goal and have a common identity, allowing them to overcome adversity (Marquis et al., 2011a) (CO-COM-7-8-L) and make the city a better place, despite their background (PR-CO1-L). 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 contexts in start-up centres, co-working spaces, or start-up help schemes (PR-CO4-L, PR-CO6-L).

“So, I was actually very much sort of not pushed into it, but encouraged by other women in Liverpool who have set out into the freelance consultancy world. So, then I started speaking to the [local women’s network group], 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?” (PR-CO6-L)

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, helping Liverpool become a better place for all people that live there (CO-COM-7-10). This influence even formed the background to the entrepreneurial activities of some participants. They discussed the businesses that they had set up to help the local area and social causes or, when dealing with gender-based issues, the businesses 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) (PR-CO1-L, PR-CO2-L, PR-CO4-L, PR-CO6-L). Thus, fields of activity have formed around important community-based issues (Hoffman, 1999), which have resulted in entrepreneurial activity taking place to inspire founders to develop new ventures and reduce economic turmoil, such as poverty, in the city (PR-CO3-L, PR-CO5-L). Liverpool was previously considered an economically depleted city (Clouston, 1991; “Devastation stalks Merseyside economy,” 1991; Jenkins, 2003), and this has fostered “a unique form of enterprise that combines good business practices with community

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goals” (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004, p. 217), enabling agents to overcome adversity (CO-COM-11-12-L).

“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” (PR-CO2-L).

Our findings demonstrate that entrepreneurial activity in Liverpool is deeply rooted in community values, with EE agents using their skills and entrepreneurial and industry experiences to address local social and gender-based issues. The growing EE in Liverpool has a unique combination of new business ventures and community goals, both shaped by the city’s history of economic downturn and entrepreneurial resilience.

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, this is linked to the Market institutional order, e.g., technology, creative, leisure, and property (CO-EH4-L, CO-EH5-L). There were also some links to the professionalisation of entrepreneurship as an activity (Burton et al., 2016), and this influence had connections with the Community institutional order, e.g., incubator centres and co-working spaces. The State is also seen as an important agent of institutional change, linked to entrepreneurship (Smallbone and Welter, 2012).

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

5. Discussion

This study develops our knowledge of what we learn by comparing the composition of the institutional logics present in alternative fields of entrepreneurship in emergent and growing EEs, extending prior research on the application of institutional logics in entrepreneurship

(Korber et al., 2022; Kromidha et al., 2024; Roundy, 2017, 2019) and EE research (Spigel, 2020b). 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 systems are quite different in Hull and Liverpool, but there are some important similarities. Figure 3 (Panel A and Panel B) provides a graphical representation of the composition of the influence of the institutional orders on the institutional logics in the 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 EE research.

Firstly, our application of the institutional logics perspective in analysing fields of entrepreneurial practice within different types of EEs presents a theoretical contribution, which responds to calls for further understanding the context and structure of ecosystems and entrepreneurship (Welter and Baker, 2021; Wurth et al., 2022). Through our theoretical application of this perspective via two empirical EE contexts, we show that certain institutional order configuration influences can influence EE outcomes, and the EE can influence logics in a recursive manner, building upon Korber et al. (2022), Kromidha et al. (2024), and Roundy (2019). We build upon the theoretical viewpoint posited by Alterskye et al. (2023), in which it is suggested that entrepreneurial field-based dynamics can be uncovered using the institutional logics perspective. We have shown how these dynamics are different in EEs, due to the composition of institutional orders and the influence of these on prevailing logics. The theoretical framework detailed in our paper can be applied empirically to other contexts and EE types to further illuminate the workings of these ecosystems, revealing the ways in which they are linked to successful entrepreneurial outcomes.

Secondly, diverse institutional logics in growing and emergent ecosystems have been uncovered through the comparison of how different institutional orders shape EEs uniquely in varying EEs types. Emergent ecosystems focus on professionalising entrepreneurial activities and fostering a sense of community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) around entrepreneurship. In

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growing ecosystems, institutional logic-based influence has been uncovered to include more market-driven factors alongside Community-, State-, and Profession-based influences. This is important because considering multiple or a combination of (Roundy, 2017) institutional logics when analysing and developing EEs enriches our understanding of the structure of EE and entrepreneurial activity.

Thirdly, 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. This is particularly interesting, as it shows us the ways in which entrepreneurs can act as active agents of change shaping the entrepreneurial context that they are in, revealing an interplay between agency and structure (Watson, 2013). Indeed, our data shows that successful entrepreneurs build an entrepreneurship help and learning network to upskill and professionalise other agents in the ecosystem. They acted to build the Profession institutional order as a strong influence on the institutional logic in the field of entrepreneurship, due to a perceived lack of influence of other institutional orders, such as Market, or misaligned (Korber et al., 2022) institutional logics linked to entrepreneurship. In effect, they act as institutional entrepreneurs (Leca et al., 2008). In finding this, we have uncovered an interesting process, or template, that can be employed by agents within other examples of emergent EEs to help to further develop entrepreneurial activity.

Fourthly, the institutional order of Community (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023) is important at various EE stages of growth, with business and social communities supporting and facilitating entrepreneurship activity in emergent and growing EEs. In an emergent EE, it was found that the Community institutional order had a strong influence on the institutional logic linked to entrepreneurship, in that entrepreneurs were actively building the entrepreneurial community and utilising that community (Roundy, 2019) to help increase entrepreneurial activity. In the growing ecosystem, we found that the Community institutional order was also important for similar reasons, but there were other community-based influences linked to the history (Wadhwani, 2016; Wadhwani et al., 2020) of the region, meaning that entrepreneurs wanted to benefit their local community through their entrepreneurial ventures (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004).

Fifthly, we used the institutional logics perspective to uncover historical processes (Mutch, 2018) 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 the 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 purely a by-product of other fields, indicating the importance of historical and contextual factors in shaping EEs.

We also highlight that 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 reveals the importance of proactive and committed ecosystem actors and agents in developing and sustaining EEs (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Mason and Brown, 2014).

Finally, 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, highlighting 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 the 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 through which we can examine EEs of different types, uncovering EEs that have different configurations and linked success in promoting productive entrepreneurship (Schrijvers et al., 2024). 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. This, 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, by adopting an institutional logics perspective, our study improves the understanding of EEs. The embedded fields of

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entrepreneurship are highly responsive to local institutional conditions. In examining the EEs of Hull and Liverpool, we identified the distinct similarities and differences of interinstitutional influences shaping the institutional logics of both EEs. Hull, as an emergent EE, demonstrates a weaker Market and State influence, with Professional and Community logics driving entrepreneurial activity. In contrast, Liverpool, as a growing EE, demonstrates stronger synergies between Market and Community logics, fostering social entrepreneurship and collective action. This study, using the institutional logics perspective, further develops our understanding of the field of entrepreneurship (Alterskye et al., 2023, 2024) in EEs and examines specific activities to support entrepreneurship in these ecosystems, such as venture support, resource mobilisation (Fisher et al., 2017), or specialised niches extending studies on entrepreneurship activities (Grinevich et al., 2019).

Our findings extend the discourse in the literature – such as Roundy (2019) and Roundy et al.’s (2018) discussion of institutional logics across different contexts, and Korber et al.’s (2022) discussions on misaligned logics in EE investment – whilst also expanding on these works by offering a more comprehensive view of institutional logics across fields of entrepreneurship. More specifically, we explored the interconnectedness of activities, structures, organisations, and institutional relationships within two distinct types of EEs – growing and emerging – contributing to the multi-city and multilayer research of Kapturkiewicz (2022) and Spicer and Zhong (2022). In doing so, we contribute to the growing discourse on the role of context in entrepreneurship (Welter and Baker, 2021) and the role of context and structure in EEs (Theodoraki et al., 2022; Wurth et al., 2022).

Secondly, this study demonstrates how entrepreneurs react to and actively shape their contexts (Morea and Dalla Chiesa, 2024; Welter and Baker, 2021) through focusing on institutional entrepreneurship. In Hull, where Market and State institutional orders exert less influence, agents engage in entrepreneurship to strengthen Professional and Community logic. This aligns with Misangyi et al.’s (2008) view of institutional entrepreneurship, wherein agents compensate for voids in institutional influence through proactive, collective actions. In Liverpool, entrepreneurial agents foster a Community-based logic, creating a sense of community and identity (Marquis et al., 2011a; Marquis and Battilana, 2009). This dynamic interaction between institutional logics demonstrates how EE agents use EE elements to shape the institutional logic of places. Our work also extends Georgiou and Arenas’s research (2023) with an emphasis on the Community logic and how it shapes the dynamics of different types of EEs. This institutional logic is particularly visible in Liverpool’s historical context, where

economic adversity has fostered innovative forms of enterprise, combining business with social capital and community goals (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004).

Overall, our study advances the EE typology literature by providing a theoretical lens through which we can analyse how an institutional logic shapes the contexts within EEs. By looking into more nuanced relationships in two contrasting EE cases, we enhance our understanding of how EEs evolve, why they are context-sensitive systems and what institutional logic underpins an EE.

Practical implications

Our findings provide a contrasting view of EE dynamics in Hull (emerging EE) and Liverpool (growing EE), with institutional voids found shaping entrepreneurial activity in both cities. The interplay between institutional logics across different institutional orders – Market, Community, Profession, and State – reveals opportunities for ecosystem actors to mitigate these voids and develop the following strategies for policymakers (Table 2a), managers, and other ecosystem actors (Table 2b).

Table 2a - about here

Table 2b - about here

We suggest that, in Hull, policymakers should address the weak Market and State institutional orders by fostering better funding mechanisms and creating programs that align entrepreneurs with incumbents; particularly in emerging industries. In Liverpool, policymakers should continue leveraging strong Market and Community institutional orders, while ensuring state support complements industry-led initiatives. Programmes to address specific social and gender-based gaps will help enhance social focus, inclusion, and entrepreneurial resilience.

Based on our findings, we suggest that future researchers explore how institutional entrepreneurs shape the development of EEs in contexts where Market and State institutional orders are weak. Given the findings in Hull, where entrepreneurs compensate for institutional voids by strengthening Profession and Community logics, further research on emerging EEs could focus on understanding the mechanisms, strategies, and long-term impact of institutional entrepreneurship. Furthermore, future research could focus on evaluating the impact of community-based institutional logics, especially in social entrepreneurship and when supporting underrepresented groups. This would facilitate a better understanding of how

different institutional logics influence diversity, inclusion, and equity in EEs across different regional and cultural contexts.

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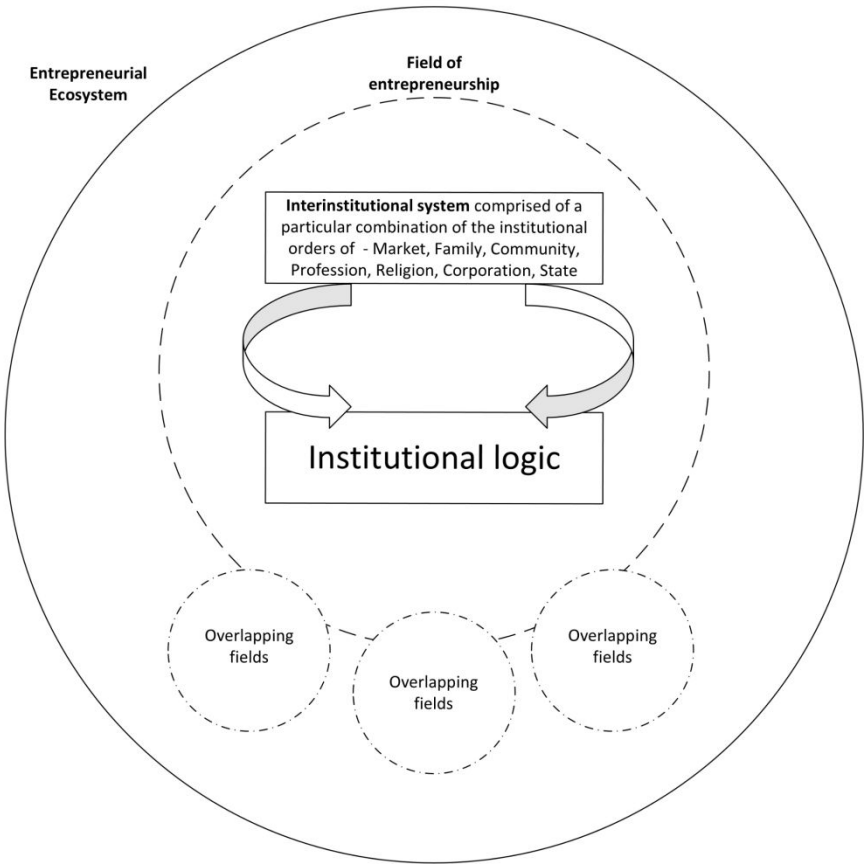
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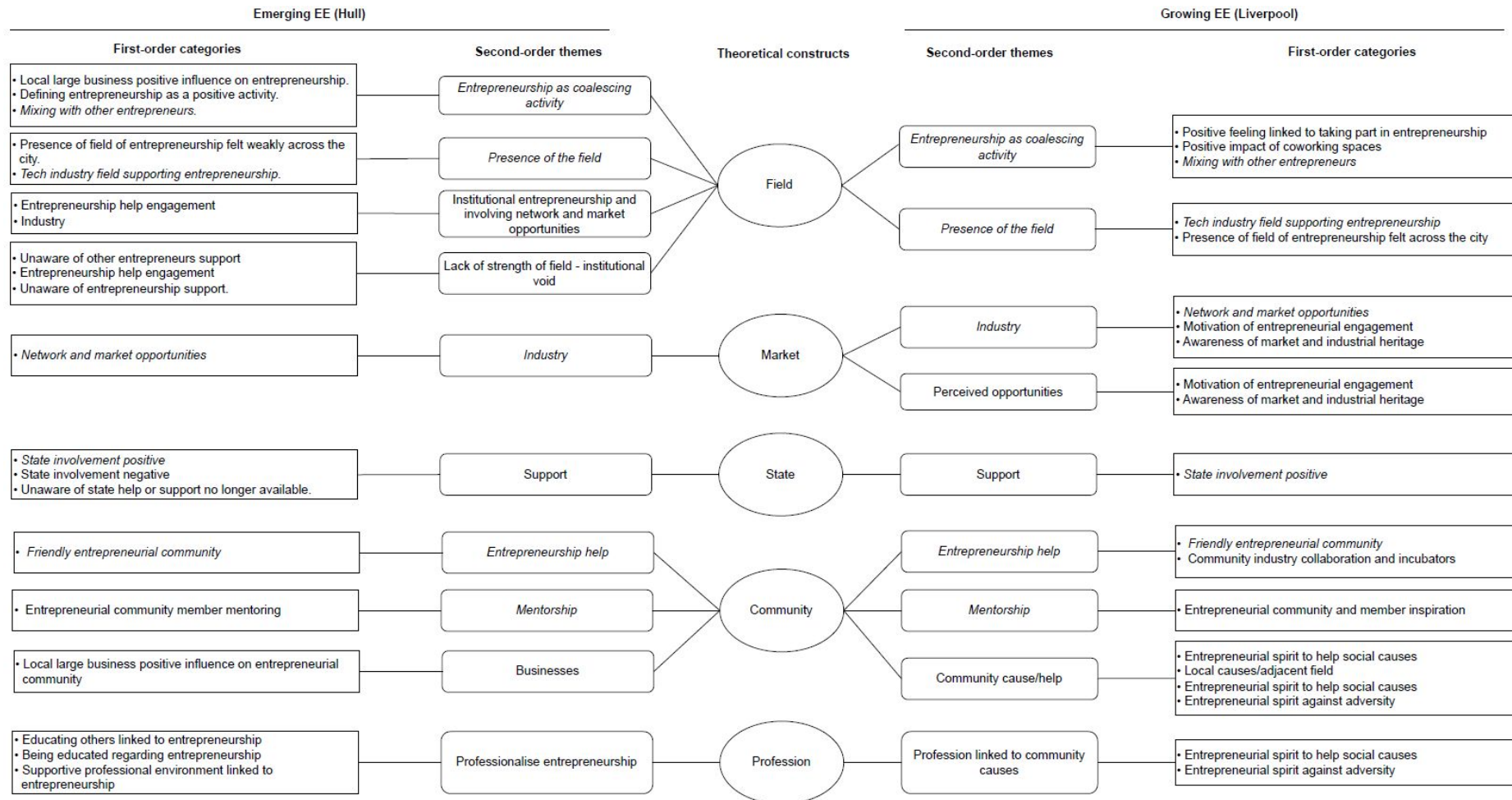
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Figure 1. The institutional logic of a field of entrepreneurship in an entrepreneurial ecosystem.



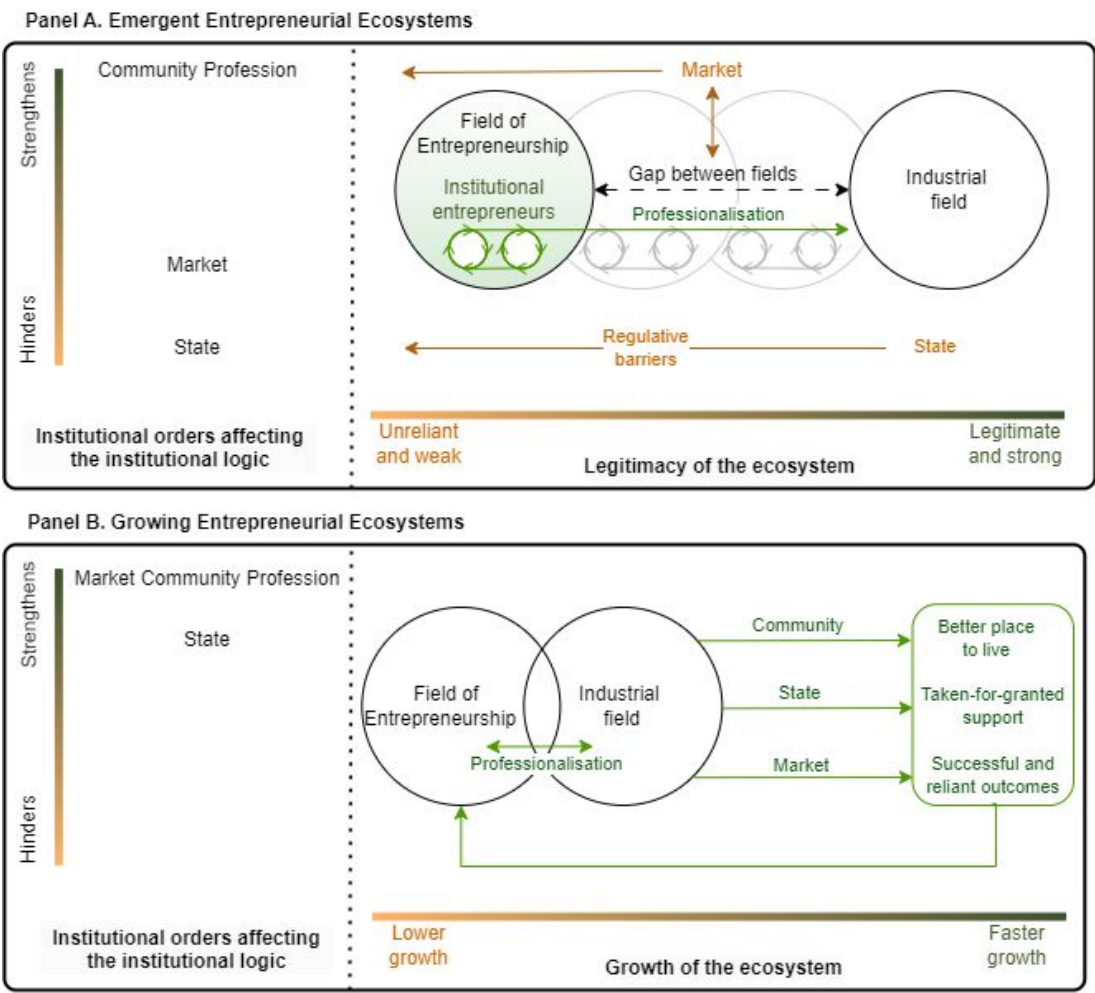
Source : Authors

Figure 2. Data structure



Note: common first-order categories are shown in italics. The construct “non-influential institutional orders” is omitted from the analysis.

Figure 3. Influence of the institutional orders on the field of entrepreneurship in emerging and growing Ecosystems



Source: Authors

Table 1. Main statistics describing the Hull and Liverpool ecosystems between 2016 and 2019

Indicator	Hull	Liverpool	England
Average Population in thousands	267 (0.4)	481 (0.6)	55,766 (0.6)
Average self-employment rate	5.7 (0.2)	7.3 (0.9)	10.9 (0.1)
Average gross weekly pay in pounds	459.9 (2.0)	522.7 (3.7)	566.9 (2.8)
Average number of enterprises	6,001 (1.4)	13,834 (6.0)	2,303,344 (2.2)
Average percentage of micro; 0-9 employees	82.2 (0.5)	87.8 (0.5)	89.5 (0.1)
Average percentage of small; 10-49 employees	14.1 (-2.1)	9.8 (-3.2)	8.6 (-1.1)
Average percentage of medium; 50-249 employees	3.1 (-4.2)	2 (-4.4)	1.6 (-1.9)
Average percentage of large; 250+ employees	0.7 (10.3)	0.5 (-5.6)	0.4 (0.0)

Note: Average annual growth in parenthesis

Source: Nomis (2024)

Table 2a: Policy recommendation in addressing institutional voids in emerging and growing ecosystems of Hull and Liverpool

Policy strategy	Hull (Emerging EE)	Liverpool (Growing EE)
Enhance Funding Access (Fiedler et al., 2017).	Develop targeted funding schemes (grants, microloans) and public-private partnerships for start-ups .	Expand financial support to underserved entrepreneurs and innovative ventures tied to social goals
Strengthen State Support (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015)	Simplify bureaucratic processes and promote awareness of state-provided entrepreneurial resources.	Facilitate collaboration between state agencies and local entrepreneurial hubs to create streamlined support.
Develop Market Linkages and logic(Gümüşay, 2018)	Encourage state-sponsored incubators focusing on emerging sectors like tech to integrate local businesses .	Foster policies that strengthen connections between industry fields and entrepreneurial activities.
Community-Driven Policies (Puffer et al., 2010; Georgiou and Arenas, 2023).	Support initiatives promoting mentorship and community networking to enhance local entrepreneurial activity.	Invest in community-driven programs that address social entrepreneurship and promote gender inclusivity (Welter et al., 2014).
Incentivise Innovation	Create incentives for cross-industry collaboration and innovation, leveraging Hull’s growing tech sector.	Provide funding for collaborative innovation projects between industries and start-ups.

Source: Authors

Table 2b: Recommendation for managers and other ecosystem actors in addressing institutional voids in emerging and growing ecosystems of Hull and Liverpool

Policy strategy	Hull (Emerging EE)	Liverpool (Growing EE)
Build Collaborative Networks (Marquis et al., 2011a)	Establish peer networks among entrepreneurs to share knowledge and resources.	Strengthen partnerships between entrepreneurial hubs and industries like tech, creative, and leisure.
Leverage Mentorship for changing EE fields (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015)	Utilize local business leaders as mentors to foster knowledge transfer and support for new ventures.	Expand mentorship opportunities, focusing on diverse entrepreneurs and social impact ventures (Zahra et al., 2009).
Develop Community Spaces (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023)	Invest in co-working spaces or hubs to foster interaction and experimentation in key sectors like technology.	Continue supporting incubators that link entrepreneurial activity to industrial fields.
Enhance Training Programs, and in particular for impact and social entrepreneurs (Zahra et al., 2009)	Create skill development programs tailored to nascent entrepreneurs, addressing funding and business acumen gaps.	Offer specialized training programs for social entrepreneurship and industry-specific innovation .
Encourage Inclusion (Mickiewicz and Olarewaju, 2020; Marquis et al., 2011a).	Advocate for gender and diversity-focused initiatives to engage underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship (Welter et al., 2014).	Scale successful gender and community-based entrepreneurship initiatives across the city.

Source: Authors

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Appendix A

Table A1 Table of coding for the growing ecosystem of Liverpool

Theoretical construct theme	Second order	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Field of Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship as coalescing activity	- Positive feeling linked to taking part in entrepreneurship.	[Discussing what is happening in Liverpool]That positivity that you get from Silicone Valley where feeling is a good feeling. You play with a company to start another one and be really successful with that one or the third or fourth one. That doesn't quite happen all that much in the UK I've found.	FLD-ECA1
		- Positive impact of coworking spaces.	But I do know that – I can see that there are more and more coworking spaces emerging in Liverpool, which is great. And I think they're the ones that... You know, "I've got an idea. I'm working from home. Oh right, okay. Well, for £100 a month, I can go and I can get a coworking desk space, and actually it gets me out of the house, and I start talking to other entrepreneurs." I think they're key. Because then you've got – you know, you're talking to somebody making the coffee, and before you know it, they're saying, "Oh yes, I went to – have you tried speaking to this person, or this company?" The coworking spaces, I think are critical.	FLD-ECA2
		- Mixing with other entrepreneurs.	The business people you meet here, and the people that can maybe help you in certain ways and the great thing about it is, because people have got their own businesses, they all want to be here. It's not like a normal business where you're thinking, thank god it's Friday. What are you doing over the weekend? People are here because they've got their own business and they really want to build their business and be here. It's just a completely different type of environment.	FLD-ECA3
	Presence of field	- Tech industry field supporting entrepreneurship.	I got my first tech job here in the Baltic. So, I was very much involved in the community when it was just starting and we liaised with a lot of the businesses around here and started to formulate some relationships with them and that's why [inaudible – 0:07:17] became what it was because of them, and they supported us. So, it made sense when we were looking for the office four years later, that we'd come back, because we always hung around here anyway, and whether that was in an independent coffee shop, or there's an amazing technology school here that we do a lot of work within. So, as soon as we found there was an office spare and it was time to get one, then it was a no brainer really that we'd be here.	FLD-PF1
		- Presence of field of entrepreneurship felt across the city.	So there's stuff going on directly in the City centre but it's definitely starting to spread outside all over the City which is great so no it's totally the place to be for like up and coming businesses, I think.	FLD-PF2
			Yes, so there is a great scene here. I think there are lots of opportunities for people. I think sometimes, what those opportunities may miss out on, are those opportunities for, kind of, mixing more. So, you will go along to a particular place or event, and it will be the same people, or the same types of people, that are there at those events. I think in... So, it's much better if those events – which why I also run events which are much more casual, much more about helping people in a more casual manner, and a more network kind of manner. In a more friendly, 'let's get to know each other' kind of manner. So yes, there is a great start-up scene here and there are lots of great initiatives.	FLD-PF3
			it's just part of our makeup. I'm surrounded, I'm literally surrounded by entrepreneurs.	FLD-PF4

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Market	Industry	Network and market opportunities	So, yes we've gone from nothing to where we are, but it's all because of our, it is down to the network of people that we've been able to meet while being in Liverpool. Because we wouldn't be anywhere trying to do it on our own, we've managed to meet other people from other businesses and then they've been like oh actually you're doing something that's really interesting that could benefit us.	MA-IN1-L
			"what surprised me, is that my competitors are willing to sit round the table with me and discuss my pricing strategy and you know it has been really amazing and also some of those competitors have become collaborative partnerships, we have built packages together, we have passed clients in between each other and it's become more of a referral network than these are my clients, you are not taking them"	MA-IN2-L
	Perceived Opportunities	Motivation of entrepreneurial engagement	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.	MA-PO1-L
			Liverpool is quite a social city, so there's always lots of sort of grass roots things going on, there's the port for example or there's people just doing things because they want to and then you get, you can meet people at the library, or you can meet people you know. There's just lots of little pockets of culture or activities going on that aren't necessarily sort of overseen from like a company perspective or you know the council have arranged it, it's all sort of, you know it's just happening, and people are just doing things because they're interested.	MA-PO2-L
		Awareness of market and industrial heritage	Yeah, the Baltic area, is our equivalent of London's Shoreditch, and which is basically the pitch from creative Liverpool. We've also got a sort of a new health cluster, and things - and the - we've now got the new Sensor city - sort of building. So there are initiatives out there.	MA-PO3-L
			"Obviously Liverpool has the gaming heritage with Psygnosis being around. I think it's helped a lot of games companies in Liverpool being around that. That gaming heritage in Liverpool I think has helped to attract people".	MA-PO4-L
State	Support	- State involvement positive	I'm seeing better business support now. People like Innovate UK have helped us. There have been some interesting programmes through the local Enterprise Partnership, which is a bit more interesting, a bit more innovative. What else has helped us? Some stuff coming out of universities and academia has been good. So yes, I've tried - any opportunity, I grab, and then I look at it. So, I've tried them all. And there are some good ones. But on the whole, most of them are no good.	ST-SU1-L
			It's a council run team that try and drive investment and people can move to Liverpool. By proxy, they also spend a lot of time supporting local businesses and generating interest in what we're doing.	ST-SU2-L
			[Regarding council run entrepreneurship support] it does work, and I think it's very well known in Liverpool now and sometimes when I meet people and I go I'm at the library on Thursday and they go are you one of those mentors and I go yes, and they go oh god you work for [local councillor] and I go yes, and they go bloody hell. So, it's getting to be quite well known now.	ST-SU3-L

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Community	Entrepreneurship help	- Friendly entrepreneurial community	people are friendly and they are kind and they want to help each other like you said, you have spoken to other entrepreneurs other people that just willingly want to give them advice, you know people, I don't know, it's a generous City and it's quite left wing to a degree. So you know that's why the eco thing has gone down so well, there's lots of parks in the City so I think that and the river, so I think that Liverpool's attracted nature lovers who obviously are going to be more eco conscious than not, and then with that comes compassion, generally, so yeah I think it's a kind City, it really is.	CO-EH1-L
		- Community industry collaboration and incubators	Does is one of the first sort of tech hubs, incubators and [mega 00:51:24] spaces to open up in Liverpool. It was always envisioned as a resource for the community in Liverpool, these are great things. As you say, because of that, people are incredibly invested in Does. We recently moved premises from Hanover Street in Liverpool to the new place that you've seen, and the amount of work that went on, to move all of the kit out of the old offices into - we were there day, after day, after day, sanding the floors in that building. And the people who came out of the woodwork to help, it was fantastic to see how invested everybody is in that, which they wouldn't have been in a commercial enterprise. Now conversely, there was that level of work to do, because there's no money.	CO-EH2-L
			Baltic Creative are they are a community interest company, so they had all have the catalyst for the areas so Baltic Creative 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.	CO-EH3-L
			I've got friends, good friends, that are directors of, like, RBS, and Sisco. You know, we talk to each other. PWC, all the big companies. So, we formed a relationship. We'd go out, we'd have dinner. Do you know what mean? All that kind of stuff. So, the power of networking is huge to get your professional reputation out there.	CO-EH4-L
			"No, it will be fine. It's absolutely fine." And part of that, was I met [incubator manager], who runs the [local] Incubator, which is on the same floor. She gave me a tour around, and it was... It became very clear, very quickly, that there is actually – there is free, sort of, desk space that I could use, if I wanted to. So, I took her up on her offer, and we're still working from the Hub at the moment.	CO-EH5-L

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Community	Mentorship	- Entrepreneurial community and member inspiration	I'm very proud yeah and you know I've won a few awards and things. I'm very inspired by [local entrepreneur]. She's an amazing woman in Liverpool and supports women in business and she's very you know entrepreneurial herself and very inspiring and gives people the confidence to go out there.	CO-ME1-L
			I don't know, lots of people seem really happy to collaborate on various different projects and various different, various different events, projects, ways, they seem to be able to get involved with things really quickly. And everything is quite open, so I've organised an event where we've greeted people called Liverpool Make Success and we organised it altogether. But it was kind of like across city event, so we got lots of different organisations involved and everybody was just really happy to participate, and everyone participated for free, it was organised for free, it was facilitated by Liverpool Library. But everybody just got on board with it and wanted the event to happen, so it happened. So, it's just really collaborative and everybody just, the group of people that I've met they've just really and it's not a small group either, quite a lot of people who we can get involved, so.	CO-ME2-L
	Community/cause help	- Entrepreneurial spirit to help social causes	I think it's got quite as kind of, it's got a spirit here which is why I think it's a great place for community businesses to launch, it's an amazing place for social entrepreneurship. It's always been a good City so that type of stuff, it's a good nightlife City, it's a good, you know type of trading type City. So I think it's got its own vibe I think. Yeah I would say it's a good place to start up. I would encourage people to start up business in Liverpool.	CO-COM1-L
			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.	CO-COM2-L
			She's doing really awesome things, supporting different people and hooking people up. You find there are a lot of people who are really just passionate about connecting people in the city. They're all helping to write these touch papers of collaboration between people and keeping the... it's not just about the production and inspiring people in to working together, but also, it's tough and having that support network there between everyone that you can find a way of muddling through, and it's not the end of the world, that's really important as well.	CO-COM3-L
			So the first port of call was the [local women's network group] and they have business, Women in Business, I can't remember but something, they have soirée's, like networking soirée's.	CO-COM4-L
			I mean I think coming from like a poverty stricken area, you are all a bit like a wheeler and dealer, and you know you have to fight to survive so I think that's where the entrepreneurial streak comes in.	CO-COM5-L
			So I was actually very much sort of not pushed into it but encouraged by other women in Liverpool who have set out into the freelance consultancy world. So then I started speaking to the [local women's network group] , 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.	CO-COM6-L

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Community	Community/cause help	- local causes/adjacent field	visit like different organisations like the [local women’s network group], isn't like sort of competitive and backstabbing and bitchy. It's much more collaborative. It's supportive, it's encouraging. And it's just such a - it's such a nice environment to be in - or the environment that I've created, I feel as though I really am giving back, and I'm making a big difference in people's lives, and I think that is an amazing thing to be able to do. It's an amazing privilege.	CO-COM7-L
			I started speaking to the [local women’s network group], 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	CO-COM8-L
			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....	CO-COM9-L
			So I was actually very much sort of not pushed into it but encouraged by other women in Liverpool who have set out into the freelance consultancy world.	CO-COM10-L
		- Entrepreneurial spirit against adversity	because [local incubator centre] operates on a shoestring, and have no investment, the mindset as well, is not a commercial mindset. It’s a community mindset.	CO-COM11-L
			I think there is just that strength in character. I don’t know whether it's because of the blitz and you know all the adversities which as a City we have had to face over the years.	

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Profession	Community/cause help	-		
		Entrepreneurial spirit to help social causes	I think it's got quite as kind of, it's got a spirit here which is why I think it's a great place for community businesses to launch, it's an amazing place for social entrepreneurship. It's always been a good City so that type of stuff, it's a good nightlife City, it's a good, you know type of trading type City. So I think it's got its own vibe I think. Yeah I would say it's a good place to start up. I would encourage people to start up business in Liverpool.	PR-CO1-L
			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.	PR-CO2-L
			She's doing really awesome things, supporting different people and hooking people up. You find there are a lot of people who are really just passionate about connecting people in the city. They're all helping to write these touch papers of collaboration between people and keeping the... it's not just about the production and inspiring people in to working together, but also, it's tough and having that support network there between everyone that you can find a way of muddling through, and it's not the end of the world, that's really important as well.	PR-CO3-L
			So the first port of call was the [local women's network group] and they have business, Women in Business, I can't remember but something, they have soirée's, like networking soirée's.	PR-CO4-L
			I mean I think coming from a poverty stricken area, you are all a bit like a wheeler and dealer, and you know you have to fight to survive so I think that's where the entrepreneurial streak comes in.	PR-CO5-L
			So I was actually very much sort of not pushed into it but encouraged by other women in Liverpool who have set out into the freelance consultancy world. So then I started speaking to the [local women's network group] , 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.	PR-CO6-L
		-		
		Entrepreneurial spirit against adversity	because [local incubator centre] operates on a shoestring, and have no investment, the mindset as well, is not a commercial mindset. It's a community mindset.1.	PR-CO7-L
			I think there is just that strength in character. I don't know whether it's because of the blitz and you know all the adversities which as a City we have had to face over the years.	PR-CO8-L

Table A2 Table of coding for the emergent ecosystem of Hull

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Field of Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship as coalescing activity	- Local large business positive influence on entrepreneurship	You know I looked at some of the biggest businesses in the area you know you have got [local business 1], you have got [local business 2], you have got some really big businesses which are local grown. They are directors, they are founders. They are not hugely publicised yet they have got to have some huge influence on the local area and I suppose those types of people inadvertently influence you as a business owner to aspire to be where they are.	FLD-ECA1-H
		- Defining entrepreneurship as a positive activity.	it's funny because I never even knew what an entrepreneur was until we set the business up and [local entrepreneur] who became my business mentor and he's like you are an entrepreneur, I'm like what, I don't even know what it means. And now I do, I like the fact that I have got, actually, I have got a label now whereas before I didn't	FLD-ECA2-H
		- Mixing with other entrepreneurs.	It wasn't really until I went to [local business help group] that I really started mixing with people who had set up their own companies. The previous companies that I worked for they were you know passed down from family which is a totally different kettle of fish I think to come in across someone who has actually come up with an idea and they are putting it into practice.	FLD-ECA3-H
	Presence of field	- Presence of field of entrepreneurship felt across the city.	- 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	FLD-PF1-H
			There were a few people that came in and they just wanted to give it the hard sell and they didn't really fit in to be fair because that's not what this group was about. This group was more about support and motivation than anything else.	FLD-PF2-H
		- Tech industry field supporting entrepreneurship.	I never could - I hadn't come across a community like that before, in terms of how outward looking the founders [of a local tech incubator] were, [local entrepreneur] and [local entrepreneur]. And how much support people like [local entrepreneurs] gave. It was just eye-opening, the business side of it.	FLD-PF3-H

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Code
Field of Entrepreneurship	Lack of strength of field - Institutional void	Unaware of other entrepreneurs support	I think everybody else are just normal working people. They've got jobs. I don't know anybody.	FLD-LSF1-H
			A lot of businesses don't really have that access to funding, or don't really know where to look to find that sort of stuff or have the courage to start their own business, for whatever reason, their own sort of preconceptions.	FLD-LSF2-H
			It really wasn't something that was part and parcel of – I would have said 90%, well more than 90%, you know the huge majority of the adults in other families that you one interacted with, were, you know to one degree or another working for somebody else, you know mostly larger organisations.	FLD-LSF3-H
			when I set my business up I think it was, it was quite blasé really, the response from family it was oh right, well done not wow you have set your own business it was nothing like that because I think, I don't think growing up, me and my family we have never been in that type of situation. So I suppose in a sense it was quite alien to us that you know this little lad off [local estate] was now setting up his own business. I think maybe some people I don't know if the word doubt is correct but maybe some people just sat back and thought really, that won't do well.	FLD-LSF4-H
			I attended that, not really with any expectation or knowing what it meant, it just meant that, you know are you thinking about starting a business, and I was like yeah that's me and that's all I knew about it and I went and there was, honestly the room was full of people that wanted to start a business. So I'll give you an example of who was there at my time. The [local business] was massive.	FLD-LSF5-H
			There's an element, which is probably the main motivation to be honest, of just simply putting something back.	FLD-LSF6-H
	Institutional entrepreneurship and involving network and market opportunities	- Entrepreneurship help engagement	I attended that, not really with any expectation or knowing what it meant, it just meant that, you know are you thinking about starting a business, and I was like yeah that's me and that's all I knew about it and I went and there was, honestly the room was full of people that wanted to start a business. So I'll give you an example of who was there at my time. The [local business] was massive.	FLD-LSF7-H
			There's an element, which is probably the main motivation to be honest, of just simply putting something back.	FLD-LSF8-H
		- Unaware of entrepreneurship support.	A lot of businesses don't really have that access to funding, or don't really know where to look to find that sort of stuff or have the courage to start their own business, for whatever reason, their own sort of preconceptions. Participant Hull20.	FLD-LSF9-H
		- Entrepreneurship help engagement	I attended that, not really with any expectation or knowing what it meant, it just meant that, you know are you thinking about starting a business, and I was like yeah that's me and that's all I knew about it and I went and there was, honestly the room was full of people that wanted to start a business. So I'll give you an example of who was there at my time. The [local business] was massive. Participant Hull13.	FLD-IE1-H
			There's an element, which is probably the main motivation to be honest, of just simply putting something back.	FLD-IE2-H
		- Industry	There's an app development agency upstairs, there's a core two or three people. I think they sort of knew each other before, although one of the three, he met through the [local tech incubator]. So two of them knew each other before, and then the third met through [local tech incubator], and they set up a business together.	FLD-IE3-H

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Codes
State	Support	- State involvement positive	I was successful in getting an award following my submission of a business plan to the Hull City Council Acorn Fund.	ST-SU1-HULL
			I had a meeting with East Riding Council, their business centre. I remember going to see them about something, after I first got set up.	ST-SU2-HULL
		- State involvement negative	I feel as a business owner now the support that we had in the early days from the likes of government, the likes of funding and all that, I have no time for it whatsoever.	ST-SU3-H
			[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.	ST-SU4-H
		- Unaware of state help or support no longer available	feel like, you know, there's not enough of a message to say there is support for you. You know, if you've got a business idea, if you've got a skill that you're not using, that you want to use, you know there is some help there for you to capitalise on that. Some people are just afraid, because they feel like, if I'm in a job and earning money, it's a dangerous environment to walk away from a job where that income just disappears. That guaranteed income.	ST-SU5-H
			I didn't feel there was business support in the City.	ST-SU6-H
			unfortunately it all closed down due to funding. So it's all disappeared now and there doesn't seem to be much out there in terms of advice to what there was.	ST-SU7-H
Community	Entrepreneurship help	- Friendly entrepreneurial community	I think there was a lot of contacts that I made and quite a few of us have kept in touch with each other and I think it was like the positive vibe that you get from entrepreneurs really. We all seem to be like out of the same mould if you know what I mean, we were all positive, glass half full type people, which – I mean it's not that I haven't been around lots of business people before but I think because we are all new to business and we are all that positive already, that's what struck me really, something a bit different.	CO-EH1-HULL
	Mentorship	- Entrepreneurial community member mentoring	You know inviting us down to his office and lending me his FD for a day, to help us to try and keep the business going and then he brings in his own personal finance advisor to try and help us. I mean you don't, you put a price on that, do you know what I mean?.	CO-ME1-H
			You know there's a group of people who I look up to. I've got a mentor, you know I do look up to my mentor, he is a good friend as well as a mentor. So if I take away the friendship and look at the business side of it then yeah I do look up to him. He is very encouraging, he gives me great advice. Sometimes he gives advice that I'm not really okay with but you know on the other side of it he gives me advice that is motivational and it makes me sort of sit back and go oh right okay then.	CO-ME2-H

Overarching dimension	Second order theme	First order category	Illustrative quotes	Codes
Profession	Businesses	- Local large business positive influence on entrepreneurship	You know I looked at some of the biggest businesses in the area you know you have got [local business 1], you have got [local business 2], you have got some really big businesses which are local grown. They are directors, they are founders. They are not hugely publicised yet they have got to have some huge influence on the local area and I suppose those types of people inadvertently influence you as a business owner to aspire to be where they are.	CO-BU1-H
			don't think they would think about [Local company 1] or [Local company 2] or [Local company 3] and think, well look at what he's done he's amazing, I think they just think oh that might be a good Company to work for because you know they get lots of press coverage and they employ a lot of people and everything else.	CO-BU2-H
	Professionalise entrepreneurship	- Educating others linked to entrepreneurship	they have given up their own time to speak personally and quite openly about the things that they got right in business and the things they got wrong.	PR-PE1-H
			we had a great opportunity when [local company] came in, you know the Solicitors and they actually gave some really good like legal side of things of setting up a business, you know limited business etc., and how to do it and you know you sort of go to those lectures in a little room and get some really good influential business people from Hull sort of giving you advice and helping you out and it was really good to be fair, you know. We did learn a lot to be honest from it.	PR-PE2-H
			I mean this was the point and I mean sometimes I make the point, I am part of the education group in the [local business support group] and I have made the point sort of several times over that one of the things that probably we ought to try and get across to, when you go in and talk to kids at school it probably doesn't cross their mind really very much either that you know that this is an option but it isn't an option that's for everybody because of the characteristics, you know looking back on it, you need to make something like this work.	PR-PE3-H
			[Discussing attending an entrepreneurship help course] When you had [local entrepreneur] and [local entrepreneur], I mean these are big people, big people, you know, starting something from nothing, that was great energy.	PR-PE4-H
			it's not a networking thing, it's how much you can offer to people, advice, you can go to the likes of [local entrepreneurs], 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] saying to me it's only the zero's at the end that is different, whether you are talking with [local entrepreneur] or [local entrepreneur] or myself, we ain't got as many zero's as them though, that's for sure.	PR-PE5-H
			So I went "great." So I got an invite, went to the course. I'm sat there, and I didn't realise I was actually there as part of a student. I thought I was actually going to be there talking about the business side of it.	PR-PE6-H
			So I think I was an entrepreneur at a young age but I didn't know that and it was only recently through taking a programme called 'Step Change For Growth' with [local entrepreneurship help group], I did that programme and I actually learned actually you know something, yeah I suppose I am an entrepreneur. I've not believed it for a long time but then when you are faced with the sort of rights and wrongs of what an entrepreneur is it makes you realise that you are. So yeah I suppose I've always had an entrepreneurial flair.	PR-PE7-H
		- Supportive professional	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.	PR-PE8-H

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Yeah I think everybody's pretty supportive. Definitely [local entrepreneurial group] is. Definitely the people in [local tech incubator], everybody is, you know, keen to see everybody succeed. Yeah, I think everybody wants to see everybody do well. I've not really, well I can't think of any negative

PR-PE9-H

For Peer Review

Appendix B

Liverpool participants

Participant code	Age	Business type	Business age	Business size
Liverpool1	44	Technology consultancy	14 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool2	24	Media Company	3 years	Micro business with business partner
Liverpool3	52	Architects	10 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool4	37	Technology company	7 years	Micro business with business partners
Liverpool5	43	HR consultancy	2 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool6	46	Social enterprise	17 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool7	27	Technology company	5 years	Small/Medium with employees

Liverpool8	51	Property company	1 year	Micro business with business partners
Liverpool9	30	Technology hardware development	Under 1 year	Micro business with business partner
Liverpool10	31	Digital marketing	Under 2 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool11	41	Digital agency	21 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool12	60	Financial consultancy	18 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool13	35	Product design	7 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool14	36	Cleaning company	Not disclosed	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool15	57	Care service company	24 years	Medium with employees

Liverpool16	39	Design technology company	6 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool17	53	Online rental services company	Under 2 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool18	50	Digital/ICT consultancy	8 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool19	38	Media Company	Not disclosed	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool20	44	Social Enterprise	12 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool21	61	Transport technology company	Under 2 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool22	36	Hospitality services company	Under 2 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool23	Not disclosed	Financial services company	5 years	Small/Medium with employees

Liverpool24	36	Lifestyle website/motivational speaker	4 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool25	48	Social enterprise/Events	4 years	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool26	49	Manager of a large property company which has a business start-up centre	10 years	Medium with employees
Liverpool27	41	Brewery	Under 1 year	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool28	37	Art products	10 years	Micro business, no other employees
Liverpool29	35	Wood products	Under 1 year	Small/Medium with employees
Liverpool30	38	Photography/Art products	5 years	Micro business, no other employees

Appendix C

Hull participants

Participant code	Age	Business type	Business age	Business size
Hull1	53	Children's party planner	Under 2 years	Micro business with 1 staff member
Hull2	Not disclosed	Online publishing house	Under 2 years	Micro business with business partner
Hull3	44	Photographer	12 years	Micro business, no other employees
Hull4	50	Promotional merchandise and Printing company	12 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull5	28	Property development and rental company	5 years	Micro business, no other employees
Hull6	42	Media production company	4 years	Small/Medium with employees

Hull7	49	Business Training	Under 2 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull8	24	Photographer	7 years	Micro business, no other employees
Hull9	39	Building contracts management	7 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull10	35	Fashion/clothing retail	8 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull11	26	Training company	Under 1 year	Micro business with business partner
Hull12	39	Auto mechanic and car sales	7 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull13	35	Catering/Hospitality business	4.5 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull14	25	Marketing agency	Under 1 year	Micro business with business partner

Hull15	37	Training company	8 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull16	22	Vending machine supplier	Under 2 years	Micro business with business partner
Hull17	68	Software company	Over 30 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull18	27	Bid writing/management consultancy	Under 1 year	Micro business, no other employees
Hull19	53	Sales Consultancy	Under 1 year	Small/Medium with employees
Hull20	33	Business Consultancy	Under 1 year	Micro business, no other employees
Hull21	Not disclosed	Internet marketing agency	Under 2 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull22	27	Photographer	Under 2 years	Micro business, no other employees

Hull23	41	Engineering/electronics	6 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull24	29	Training company	8 years	Micro business, no other employees
Hull25	53	Brewery	Under 1 year	Micro business with business partner
Hull26	42	Internet marketing agency	Under 1 year	Micro business, no other employees
Hull27	35	Digital marketing agency	3 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull28	26	Digital video production	3 years	Small/Medium with employees
Hull29	43	Telecoms	18 months	Small/Medium with employees
Hull 30	42	Construction technology	3 years	Small/Medium with employees