The impact of the changing entrepreneurial support landscape on the perceptions and behaviour of innovative entrepreneurs

As entrepreneurial support programmes are proliferating and changing the ecosystem, entrepreneurial support has been criticised as being numerous and fragmented, a so-called "cluttered landscape" (Hrsukova et al., 2023). A cluttered landscape of entrepreneurial support could lead to increased competition among support providers for limited resources and talent. It could also overwhelm entrepreneurs and make access to support and decision making more difficult, rendering support less effective (Bergman & McMullen, 2021).

However, the increasing number and diversity of support programmes do not necessarily mean a messy support environment. Entrepreneurs vary in typology and projects and more programmes may mean more available and adapted options for entrepreneurs (Hrsukova et al., 2023). In addition, market forces could play out allowing support programmes to either adapt to remain relevant or be phased out.

Besides, entrepreneurial support exists within an innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem (IEE), and can itself be considered a sub-ecosystem (Messeghem, 2024). To understand its role, we first need to better understand it. To this end, it is necessary to take into account its complexity, its interactions and its interdependence with the ecosystem as a whole. Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory posits that changes in one part of the system have a chain reaction at different levels of the ecosystem (Roundy et al., 2018). This leads actors within the system to adapt to their changing environment which results in coevolution.

In this paper, we focus on how entrepreneurs perceive the changing entrepreneurial support ecosystem and react to it, asking the question: **How does the evolving entrepreneurial support ecosystem influence entrepreneurs' perceptions and behaviour?**

We use a qualitative single case study of the French Riviera ecosystem interviewing a range of entrepreneurs including those who started their ventures before major changes in the ecosystem (2010s) to more recent ones. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using the Gioia method.

Preliminary results show that the ecosystem has birthed newer kinds of entrepreneurs (mainly those with academic scientific backgrounds) but has limited impact on levels of risk taking and mixed impacts on innovation trajectory and business models of startups.

The study develops a model of adaptation of entrepreneurs' perceptions and behaviour over time to entrepreneurial support ecosystem changes, and insights into coevolution dynamics. It provides insights for entrepreneurial support programmes into their impact and how they can better adapt their strategies. For policymakers, it offers insights into how investments in and coordination of entrepreneurial support influence ecosystem dynamics.

References

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