Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Lab

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Towards an orchestration of the International Entrepreneurial Support Sub-Ecosystem

Contemporary transformations in entrepreneurship, marked by the rise of digital platforms and increased mobility among entrepreneurs, are redefining the logic of territorial anchoring. Ecosystems are becoming more open, porous, and interconnected [1, 2]. The classic definition of entrepreneurial ecosystems is no longer sufficient to account for this reality: innovation dynamics are increasingly transcending geographical boundaries, prompting a rethinking of international support mechanisms.

Methodology

Qualitative study of 35 experienced stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Montpellier and its region (interviews and observations conducted from January to April 2025).

Category of actors	Examples of actors	No. of interviews
Support	Incubators, competitiveness clusters, CCI International, Business France, Team France Export	13
Policy	Region, Metropolitan	13
Enterprise/ Entrepreneurs	Startups and exporting SMEs,	6
Finance	BPI, Business Angels	2
Human Capital	University and School	1
Markets	Consulting firms	1

This issue of EE Lab Publications explores the structure and dynamics of the International Entrepreneurial Support Sub-Ecosystem (IESSE) through a case study of Montpellier. This region provides an ideal setting for understanding how local entrepreneurial dynamics can be linked to global opportunities. The analysis is based on an in-depth field survey of 35 regional stakeholders. It highlights the structure of the sub-ecosystem, the tensions that run through it, and how it is orchestrated, paving the way for courses of action for public decision-makers, support structures, and entrepreneurial communities.

1. International Entrepreneurial Support Sub-Ecosystem

Montpellier is renowned for its longstanding commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship [3]. It is home to major players such as the Business Innovation Center (BIC), created in 1987, and more recent initiatives such as the MedVallée cluster, which aims to create a global center of excellence in global health (health, food, and environment).

The ecosystem for international entrepreneurial support is now organized on several levels and mobilizes a variety of public and private players around the international development of businesses. The Occitanie Region is deploying a strategy that combines local actions and a presence abroad via the Ad'Occ agency, the Region's Houses and Offices (New York, Casablanca, Shanghai, and Tokyo). The Montpellier Metropolis, in coordination with Ad'Occ, promotes the region's economic assets at strategic events (Vivatech, CES Las Vegas, Gamescom, MIFA) and actively supports businesses through targeted monitoring and economic missions.

These initiatives are coordinated with those of local players (CCI, Leader, business networks) and the national programs of Business France and Team France Export, thereby strengthening the coherence of the ecosystem. The study highlights the existence of an International Entrepreneurial Support Sub-Ecosystem (IESSE), structured around a multi-stakeholder public and private network coordinating their actions beyond national borders [4].

This sub-ecosystem is based on a multi-level architecture linking support organizations and entrepreneurial communities, while also interlocking with national and international entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE) (Fig. 1).

It is structured around four key dimensions:

1. **Internal orchestration** of the ecosystem, i.e., coordination of actors and actions within the territory;

2. **Adaptability of support structures** to local entrepreneurial needs and dynamics;

3. **Multilevel and intercultural collaboration**, promoting synergies between local, regional, national, and international levels;

4. **Openness to global dynamics**, connecting local actors to networks and enabling them to seize international opportunities.
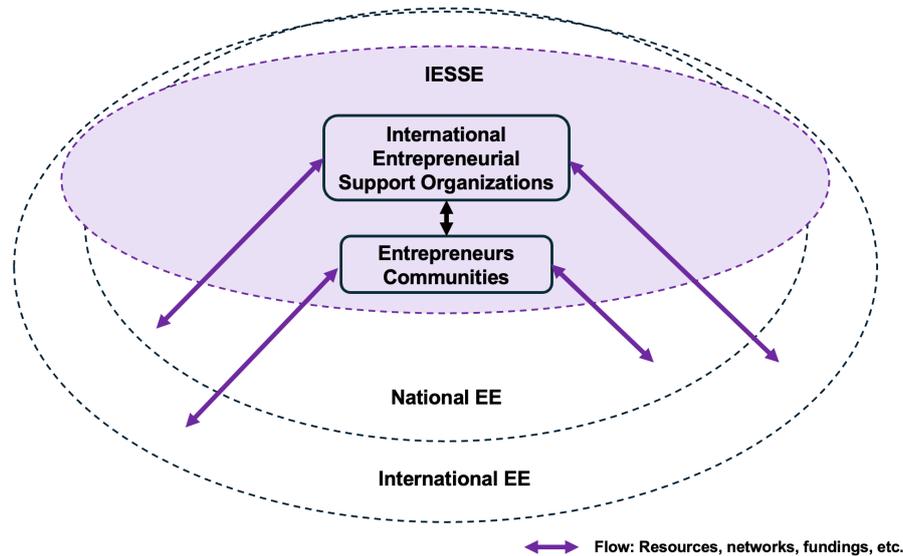

Figure 1. Representation of the sub-ecosystem

2. Tensions within the sub-ecosystem

The analysis of the IESSE in Occitanie highlights three major tensions that are currently hindering the consolidation of this orchestration:

1. Lack of clarity in the support offered, which is perceived as too broad and undifferentiated, making it difficult to identify the relevant contacts:

"The companies that come to see us say: 'Ah, I don't know who to talk to—there are 15,000 services and 15,000 support structures'" (Support actor # 4)

2. Unclear positioning of entrepreneurial communities, oscillating between beneficiaries, customers, or competitors, which limits their participation in orchestration processes and their influence in building collective learning.

3. Duplication of internationalization services between public and private structures (diagnostics, networking, financing), leading to redundancies and a lack of strategic coordination:

"Support must be strengthened, but above all, it must not be fragmented. The problem is the proliferation of structures. The ecosystem is drowning in the number of organizations." (Support actor #7)

These tensions show that orchestration is based on distributed governance, subject to constant trade-offs between coordination, differentiation, and strategic alignment. They can be illuminated through three angles of analysis (Fig. 2):

1. The logic of action, referring to the implementation of concrete measures and initiatives to support companies in their internationalization;

2. The issue of borders, linking territorial roots and international openness;

3. Identity coherence, expressing the ability of actors to act collectively around a shared identity.

These three dimensions make it possible to define a sub-ecosystem, highlighting how it is structured around coordinated action, evolving borders, and a shared identity.

Far from being temporary weaknesses, these tensions reveal the structural challenges facing the IESSE. To address them, orchestration plays a central role in reconciling local and global dynamics.
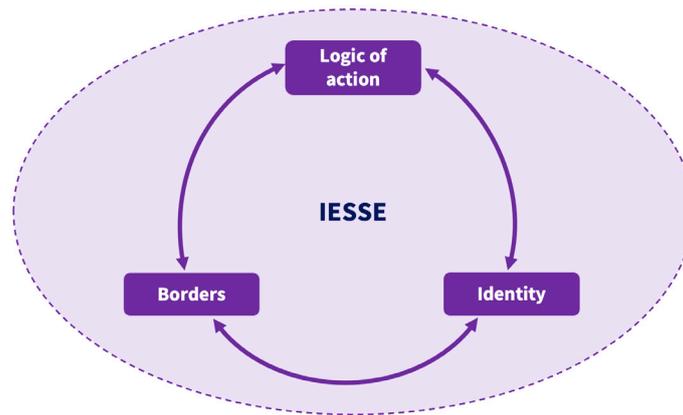
Figure 2. The three key dimensions of the IESSE

3. Orchestration of the sub-ecosystem

Analysis of the IESSE highlights complementary mechanisms through which organizations supporting international entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial communities orient their strategies toward internationalization. Orchestration is based not only on structural coordination, but also on relational mediation, cultural anchoring, and the ability to adapt to global trends.

This orchestration revolves around two complementary dynamics:

- Local orchestration, which structures resources, infrastructure, and territorial identities in order to consolidate a coherent entrepreneurial base;

- International orchestration, which is more flexible and often informal, driven in particular by entrepreneurs from the diaspora or with transnational backgrounds [5].

In this context, support structures occupy an interface position: they are catalysts for the territorial fabric and accelerators of international openness [5]. This dual logic is neither linear nor hierarchical: it is based on relational adjustments, distributed coordination, and a shared vision. It constitutes a strategic resource but also generates tensions that limit the clarity and effectiveness of the ecosystem.

The glocal orchestration model (Fig. 3) illustrates this link between local roots and international openness. It does not prescribe a fixed architecture, but offers a flexible framework for action based on the ability to collectively mobilize resources and stakeholders around a shared ambition: to make internationalization a concrete and accessible opportunity for entrepreneurs in the region.
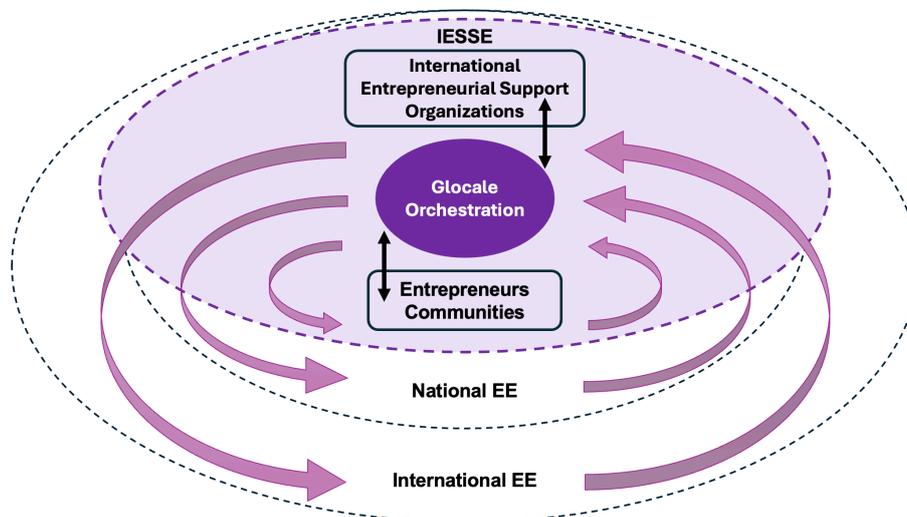

Figure 3. Glocal orchestration model

4. Proposals

1. Improve the clarity and coordination of the offer

Strengthening the effectiveness of the sub-ecosystem requires better structuring and clarity of the support offering. This involves pooling certain resources, clarifying the roles of public and private actors, and developing shared tools (dynamic mapping, collaborative platforms). The aim is to simplify the process and avoid redundancies.

2. Build a shared identity for the sub-ecosystem

Collective identity is an essential lever for overcoming fragmentation and uniting stakeholders around a common ambition. Building this identity requires clarifying the strategic vision, coordinating the various regional and international initiatives, and strengthening the role of entrepreneurial communities as stakeholders in the orchestration process.

3. Strengthen the role of entrepreneurial communities in orchestration

Entrepreneurial communities are powerful channels for the circulation of information, the emergence of collective projects, and international outreach. For them to become true co-orchestrators, their positioning must be clarified, their capacity for collective action strengthened, and they must be further integrated into governance bodies.

Key takeaways

The International Entrepreneurial Support Sub-Ecosystem in Montpellier is based on a multi-level architecture linking public and private actors and the entrepreneurial community, combining strong local roots with an international outlook.

The orchestration of this sub-ecosystem is based on a dual dynamic, both local and international, which constitutes a strategic asset but also generates tensions related to coordination, the clarity of the offering, and the positioning of the players.

To enhance its collective effectiveness, three levers appear essential: improving the clarity and coordination of the offering, building a shared identity for the sub-ecosystem, and strengthening the role of entrepreneurial communities in its orchestration.

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