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The interconnected influences of institutional and social embeddedness on processes of social innovation: A Polanyian perspective

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ABSTRACT

Theorizing embeddedness requires sensitivity to the dynamic and multi-layered contexts of entrepreneurship. Social or network embeddedness influences how social and for-profit entrepreneurs leverage resources within their local environment, and institutional embeddedness explains how the (social) entrepreneurial environment is shaped by societal structures. To understand social innovation (SI) processes – meeting social needs, transforming social relations, and reconfiguring institutional structures – we need to account for social *and* institutional embeddedness. This paper explores how institutional structures shape the environment for SI, influencing social networks and how actors within organizations are able to respond to contextual changes. Ethnographic case studies of two UK social enterprises uncover different levels and types of embeddedness influencing social organizations. We connect macro and micro interactions using a Polanyian view of embeddedness, placing SI within institutional structures and examining how reciprocal social relationships are critical to SI's transformative potential. Findings reveal the interconnectedness of embeddedness, whereby embeddedness in institutional structures led to a breakdown of the social embeddedness necessary for collectivism critical to SI. Our multi-layered analytical approach has potential beyond understanding SI, making theorizing sensitive to processes of embeddedness of entrepreneurship in other contexts.

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Embeddedness; entrepreneurial embeddedness; contextualizing entrepreneurship; social innovation processes; karl polanyi; institutions; analytical history

Introduction

Academic researchers and policy makers have shown increasing interest in social innovation (SI) to combat environmental and social problems including increasing inequalities in health, education, employment, and wealth that have been exacerbated by financial and economic crises. Whilst SI encompasses a broad range of activities, researchers agree that it is underpinned by three general principles: It must meet a social need or address a social problem; it should create new forms of social relations; and it should enable collective empowerment to change and reshape institutional structures (Moulaert and MaCallum 2019; Laville and Eynaud 2019; Avelino and Wittmayer 2019). As SI concerns social and institutional transformations, knowledge of the social and institutional contexts in which it is embedded is fundamental to understanding processes of SI.

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Embeddedness concerns how entrepreneurship and SI are 'situated in contexts that enable and/or constrain certain activities, actions and strategies' (Wigren-Kristofersen et al. 2019, 1011). Embeddedness enables sensitivity to context by accounting for how entrepreneurial activity is contingent upon the social, cultural, political and economic environment in which it is embedded (Uzzi 1997; Welter, Gartner, and Wright 2016) – contexts that vary according to structural, spatial, temporal, and historical dimensions (Moroz and Hindle 2012; Parkinson et al. 2020; Wadwhani 2016). Extant research has focused on the role of social embeddedness in motivating SI and bridging resource gaps through social networks (DiDomenico, Haugh and Tracey 2010; Spear et al. 2017; Smith and Stevens 2010), using existing interpersonal ties to bridge multiple contexts (Kloosterman 2010), or adapting their range of contacts to meet business needs in processes of embeddedness that responds to changing requirements over time (Korsgaard, Fergusson and Gaddefors 2015). Institutional embeddedness explains the environment for SI, particularly how legal and policy frameworks, and institutional actors influence the establishment, scaling, and continued operations of SI, identifying institutional barriers that need to be overcome (Munoz and Kibler 2016; Davies, Haugh, and Chambers 2019; Kokko 2018). Furthermore, while institutional context may create barriers to SI, it also influences the type and structure of network constructed, and their ability to mobilize resources to support innovative change. Moreover, recent research identified the interplay of embeddedness processes across contexts (Roos 2019). Therefore, to fully understand embeddedness it is important to move beyond a single focus on social network ties, or static perspectives of embeddedness in institutional contexts, to theorize the different layers of embeddedness processes (Wigren-Kristofersen et al. 2019).

SI organizations can be placed on a continuum from entrepreneurial approaches that meet social needs using private market competitive and managerial methods, to collective, democratic, emancipatory approaches concerned with maximizing transformative potential (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019; Laville and Eynaud 2019). In exploring how different levels and types of embeddedness interact to influence SI processes, we demonstrate how the position on this continuum will move according to the shifting nature of embeddedness as institutional structures change over time. These structures frame logics that influence interactions between organizational actors and the context in which they are embedded. We develop a perspective of embeddedness inspired by Karl Polanyi's economic theorizing to better understand processes of SI, emphasizing the importance of both social embeddedness and institutional embeddedness linking local to macro forces.

We draw on ethnographic case studies and secondary data of two UK social enterprises (SEs) whose work had been affected by marketization of the social and voluntary sector. National SE is a supported housing organization for people with learning disabilities that has replicated its community-support model across the UK, and City SE is a locally based business support and employment training organization located in a deprived urban area on the periphery of a northern city. Through analytically structured histories over a 20-year period, our case studies reveal how different levels and types of embeddedness interact to influence social organizations' ability to maintain participatory mechanisms and effect social change (Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker 2014).

Polanyi's theorization of the economy embedded in and serving the needs of society – but subject to dis-embedding with increasing marketization – points to the importance of SI in addressing societal tensions that have arisen alongside the expansion of market society. We approach this by placing SI within interconnecting economic processes of market exchange, redistribution, and reciprocity, and examine how social embeddedness enables reciprocal, collaborative relationships to meet the transformative potential of SI. This is concerned not only with how SI acts within contexts created by institutions – whether enabling or disabling – but also how institutions shape the ability of actors in social organizations to respond to changes in context. We identify four interconnected layers of embeddedness that enable us to connect macro and micro interactions influencing SI. 'Macro-level' contexts include global and national elements, and 'local institutions' influence context at local and regional levels. The 'organization' adapts to market conditions, public policies, or the specific local context through changes in management practices or organizational policies.

'Individuals' are the volunteers, employees, clients and community members who experienced marketization through the erosion of resources, worsening employment conditions and lower quality services.

Our discussion and conclusion offer policy and theoretical contributions. Analysing our case studies through a Polanyian lens of embeddedness reveals how efforts to maintain participatory decision-making and transform institutions to effect social change were disrupted by dominant ideals of competition and marketization, highlighting how government support is critical to achieving social innovation. Our multi-layered perspective offers a new approach to uncover embeddedness dynamics in entrepreneurship, contributing to understanding of the influence of the multiple contexts within which processes of entrepreneurship are situated (Welter 2011; Zahra, Wright, and Abdelgawad 2014; Baker and Welter 2018). Furthermore, this approach accounts for the multiplicity of embeddedness in contextual dimensions that encompass the structural, spatial, temporal, and historical (Moroz and Hindle 2012; Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015; Wadhvani 2016), responding to the call to understand entrepreneurial embeddedness as 'dynamic, processual and multi-layered' (Wigren-Kristoferesen et al. 2019).

Social innovation and embeddedness

There is broad agreement that SI concerns addressing social needs while transforming social relations, reconfiguring institutional structures, and increasing potential for social empowerment through collaboration (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019). Addressing needs involves creative solutions to alleviate the worst effects of market breakdown, and filling market gaps that government institutions are unable or unwilling to address. To be considered SI these solutions should be transformative 'ideas, objects or activities that change social relations, involving new ways of doing, thinking and organizing' (Avelino and Wittmayer 2019, 195). A collective approach is considered integral to precipitating social change, involving citizens in the governance of social organizations to maximize emancipatory potential (Laville, Young, and Eynaud 2015). Participative governance transforms institutional structures through citizen interactions with governance networks in which they are enmeshed, to influence funding and contract regimes, policy and regulatory frameworks (Koliba 2015; Laville, Young, and Eynaud 2015) – pointing to the importance of different levels and types of embeddedness.

Economistic approaches to understanding and practicing SI associated with an 'Anglo-American entrepreneurial' tradition of social enterprise (SE) (Shockley 2015, 152) are influenced by Granovetter's network embeddedness perspective that examines patterns of relationships between individual or organizational actors to explain access to resources that overcome barriers to growth and success (Granovetter 1985). Here social networks are considered critical for SEs seeking to overcome resource constraints (Di Domenico, Haugh, and Tracey 2010), from deeply embedded close social relationships rooted in reciprocal obligations involving trust and solidarity; to arms-length ties involving less frequent interactions, governed by formal rules or laws (Smith and Stevens 2010). SE is often focused on improving wellbeing at the local level, with close networks identified as key to securing growth and sustainability (Spear et al. 2017; Jenner 2016). In contrast, larger communities may struggle to build cohesive collective action (Peredo and Chrisman 2006) due to weaker arms-length ties (Smith and Stevens 2010). However, condensed social networks can limit access to bridging ties that address gaps in support, knowledge, and finance (Jack 2005), and an overly local focus can restrict organizational innovation as members become resistant to new ideas (Uzzi 1997).

A full understanding of embeddedness requires a move beyond the structure or architecture of ties to take account of the context in which these network relations emerge (Hess 2004). SI is characterized as situated at the conflux of competing institutional logics and must navigate conflicting market and social demands to meet social needs (Defourny and Nyssens 2014). It is clear that institutional changes influence the profile and nature of SI, as evidence demonstrates how national

policy changes promoted SE to compensate for gaps created by government welfare cuts across Europe (Blundel and Lyon 2015; Dahles et al. 2019). In Denmark, welfare state modernization increased the SE sector through public-private co-operation and partnerships (Andersen, Gawell, and Spear 2016), while the British ‘social market’ for welfare has been transformed by the rolling back of the welfare state (Nicholls and Teasdale 2017). Research into the institutional embeddedness of SI and SE has taken some account of the institutional environment, through examining what constitutes favourable institutional conditions (Seelos et al. 2011; Muñoz and Kibler 2016), or how institutional barriers can be mitigated or overcome through creative social entrepreneurial activity – often building network ties in order to access resources (Dufays and Huybrechts 2014; Davies, Haugh and Chambers 2019; Kokko 2018) in adaptive processes of embeddedness (Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015).

Institutional context influences the environment for SI and therefore the characteristics of social networks surrounding SI, and the type and nature of support these networks are able to provide. This emphasizes the importance of both institutional and social embeddedness, linking local to macro forces. Polanyi’s conception of embeddedness takes on board these interconnecting contexts and how they are created: Whereas Granovetter is concerned with reciprocity between individual actors embedded in social networks within a given market system, Polanyi considers how the market system is constructed (Polanyi 2001 [1944]; Hess 2004), foregrounding society to reveal how institutional pressures to pursue economic logics suffuse value creation (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Embeddedness therefore enables and constrains SI, which is subjected to interrelated social, political, and economic contexts on different scales, with national regulatory structures interacting with local socio-political contexts to influence SI development. We are concerned not solely with how SI acts within contexts created by institutions, but how institutions shape the (in)ability of actors in social organizations to respond to changes in context.

Understanding embeddedness through Polanyi

The socially embedded and disembedded economy

Granovetter’s conceptualization of embeddedness that uses social contacts for market gain conflicts with Polanyi’s socialized view of the economy. Polanyi argues that the economy should be more than a mechanism of market exchange, and challenges the assumption that self-regulating markets benefit society (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Polanyi views the economy as embedded in and not separated from society, whereby economic activity takes place to meet needs for ‘living well’. Rather than economic motivations to acquire material wealth through ‘truck, barter and exchange’, people want to contribute to society whereby ‘man’s economy is as a rule, submerged in his social relations’ (Polanyi 1957, 65). In other words, the economy should be embedded in and serve society. Polanyi demonstrated how living by market rules creates precarious employment, inequality and uncertainty that ultimately lead to unsustainable social tensions, arguing that it was the increasing marketization of society that led to the Great Depression and rise of Fascism in the run up to WW2. In his view, the market became ‘disembedded’, determining society rather than serving it; ‘instead of the economic system being embedded in social relationships, these relationships were now embedded in the economic system’. (Polanyi [1957] 1971, 70)

The market disembedding from society is caused by commodification that occurs when goods that were not produced for sale on the market are bought and sold as commodities. Polanyi discussed commodification of land, labour, and money, and contemporary theorists have added knowledge (Jessop 2007), and caring (Fraser 2011).¹ Commodification creates pressures seen in increased labour precariousness evident in low pay and zero hour contracts, and limited access to land to sustain livelihoods (Polanyi 2001 [1944]; Peredo and McLean 2019). Increasing pressures create social dislocation, until society eventually reacts through a self-protecting double movement that seeks to rebalance the economy and bring the market back under social control (Polanyi 2001

[1944]; Muellerleile 2013). Democratic politics can alleviate pressures brought about by commodification through government interventions to reduce social injustices, unemployment, and inequality (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Contrasting the market regulation and welfare safety-nets characterizing postwar 'embedded liberalism' (Ruggie 1982) with the deregulation, marketization, and financialization of post Washington-consensus 'dis-embedded liberalism' (Harvey 2007) explains revived academic interest in Polanyi to understand the social dislocation, inequality, and crises of contemporary capitalism (Stiglitz 2001).

SI has been proposed as a Polanyian countermovement to re-embed the dis-embedded neoliberalized market in society, de-commodifying land, and labour through community land trusts and worker co-operatives (Peredo, Haugh, and McLean 2018; Peredo and McLean 2019), or by addressing the privatization of healthcare (Roy and Hackett 2017). Others see SI as a salve for social and economic problems created by excessive marketization, which prevents countermovement by avoiding the worst extremes of commodification and effectively props up the status quo (Nicholls and Teasdale 2017). The lens of commodification helps identify whether the outcomes of SI prioritize market or social goals (Thompson et al. 2020) or how to distinguish between instrumental and transformative SI (Moulaert and McCallum 2019). To understand this relationship between SI and embeddedness better we consider the levels of embeddedness within Polanyi's explanation of economy as instituted processes.

Connecting macro and micro levels of embeddedness – economy as instituted processes

Our Polanyian approach incorporates two broad levels of embeddedness that connect macro and micro interactions to understand how global and national institutional contexts influence SI processes at the organizational level, and the experiences of individual organizational actors. At the macro-level SI is contextualized within broader economic processes by examining Polanyi's ideas of co-existing, interconnected, instituted economic processes of market exchange, redistribution, and reciprocity. The micro-level analysis has similarities with network embeddedness, but rather than being concerned with rational economic relations within a market system, it considers the role of social embeddedness in enabling reciprocal, collaborative relationships supporting the transformative potential of SI.

At the macro level, structural² embeddedness is understood through Polanyi's tripolar system of market exchange, redistribution, and reciprocity³ that operate within corresponding institutional spheres of market, government, and community, constructed over time through a series of decisions, laws, incremental changes in societal norms and culture, and organizational creation (Polanyi 1957). Market exchange requires a system of 'price-making markets' underpinned by rules and laws governing, for example, ownership, competition, financial markets and exchange rates. Government bodies represent Polanyi's 'central allocation' system of necessary redistribution, seen in structures such as the taxation system that redirects private income to collective need, whether to fund public goods such as health services, education, infrastructure, and income support, or to support the private sector in times of need – something the global financial crisis and Covid-19 pandemic brought into sharp relief. Reciprocity involves an exchange of goods or services that brings mutual benefit with no expectation of equivalence, motivated by empathetic social relations rather than self-interest, requiring symmetrical relationships and associated with solidaristic community logics (Block 2008). The elements within the system are co-existent and interrelated, but their respective strength and dominance varies over time and space as they are influenced by historical, social, economic, and political processes (Polanyi 1957).

Examining instituted processes also highlights how embeddedness in social networks influences how structural changes play out at the local level through organizational processes and individual relations. Movements of market exchange and redistribution are evident in relationships formalized in official systems, rules and legal frameworks, which are intertwined with elements of reciprocity as many of these relationships involve or are founded on social interactions. Polanyi's conception of

reciprocity differs from Granovetter's network theories that emphasize access to resources to influence organizational outcomes within a market system. 'Thick reciprocity' found in empathetic social relationships motivated by care protects society against excessive marketization as it links people from different backgrounds and interests through their connected struggles, evident in SI responses to inequality and social dislocation (Andre and Pache 2016; Block 2008), and central to participatory structures (Laville, Young, and Eynaud 2015). In this vein, the type and strength of reciprocal relationships offer scope for understanding how structural shifts impact on processes of SI at the local level and offer scope for social transformation (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019).

This view of plural institutional structures fits with the relationality of place, constructed through multiple and intersecting layers of context, encompassing political, social, historical, gender, class and race considerations (Massey 1991), to explain uneven economic development (Peck and Theodore 2007; Peck 2013). This has implications for our research, as institutional context influences SI differently over time and place, varying according to geographical, social, economic or political factors. Therefore, the form and nature of embeddedness will vary over time and place, underlining embeddedness as a process (Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015), which points to a need to look at history through a relational analysis that engages with the systemic through the particular and specific. Polanyian thinking suggests that rather than being homogeneous and static, SE organizational responses towards marketization will vary over time and place, depending upon how they are enmeshed with broader social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (Thompson et al. 2020; Peck 2013). In this sense, we consider 'roots and routes' to embeddedness (Gustafson 2001; Massey 1991), offering a multi-layered analysis that brings together micro and macro perspectives.

Method

This paper seeks to shed light upon how institutional context shapes both the changing environment for SI, *and* the ability of SE organizations to navigate change and continue to socially innovate, by examining how organizational actors experience embedding and dis-embedding over time. We approach this through an analytical structured history of two SE organizations: National SE is a supported housing provider with a head office in London and operations across the UK, and City SE provides community-level business support and employment training in an urban area in the north of the UK. Despite differences in operations, scale, and spatial organization these SE's share some key similarities. Both had been operating for almost 30 years and were founded on principles of SI – meeting social need, based on co-operative values and seeking to transform social relations (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019). Their main source of funding came from selling services in public sector markets as delivery agents for social welfare, and both had experienced threats to financial survival.

Initial case data were gathered as part of two separate PhD studies that both used a mix of ethnographic participant observation, fieldwork notes, and in-depth interviews with employees and managers over 6 months during 2016 (Table 1). As City SE comprised a small group of stakeholders and employees the organizational history was constructed from the narratives of eight participants, with their accounts triangulated to check details and accuracy. National SE operates on a wider scale and, as we had no access to board members, information provided by volunteers, employees, and managers was supplemented with a range of primary sources to capture historic events (Wadhvani 2016). National SE's development was captured in various reports, academic papers and book chapters that presented them as a best practice example. To preserve anonymity these are not fully referenced here.

Table 1 – Data Sources around here

To examine institutional embeddedness in each SE our analysis combines two methodologies: within- and across-case analysis to illustrate how the changes in the regulatory context impacted on SI in each SE; and analytically structured history to shed light on the temporal dimension (Table 2).



Table 1. Data collection methods.

Methods	National SE	City SE
Ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with stakeholders (see below)	6 months in depth ethnography (1 day per week) Additional visits maintaining contact over a 2-year period	6 months (full time placement)
Informal conversations and participant observations	Fieldnotes (16 pages)	Fieldnotes (48 pages)
Documentary analysis (including digital material)	3 commissioned reports, 2 book chapters, refereed academic paper, organization and practitioner web pages, organizational documents and articles	
Semi-structured interviews	20 hours	16 hours
Detail of interviews	<p><i>Current volunteers</i></p> <p>AA – Community volunteer, for more than 5 years <i>Current paid employees in the network model</i></p> <p>AB – Communication Coordinator, has worked for the organization for 6 years AC – Support Manager, has worked on the organization for 5 years <i>Current paid employees in projects</i></p> <p>AD – Support Coordinator, has worked on the organization for 2 years AE – Support Coordinator, has worked on the organization for 1 years <i>Past volunteers</i></p> <p>AG – Community volunteer for more than 5 years and left a few months before the research started</p>	<p><i>Current employees</i></p> <p>BA – Finance Manager, has worked for the organization for c.25 years BB – Trainer – has worked for the organization for c.25 years BC – Chief Exec – has worked for the organization since 2008 <i>Consultants/past employees</i></p> <p>BD – Provides business support on consultancy basis, and previously employed by the parent organization for c.15 years BE – Provides business support on consultancy basis and was Chief Exec of City SE when growing BF – Provides business support on a consultancy basis and was Chief Exec of City SE for a short time following contraction BG – Provides business support on a consultancy basis <i>Board members</i></p> <p>BH – Current board member, involved from start up BI – Current board member with recent involvement</p>

Grounded on historical events, we identified two eras in the regulatory context – the New Labour government and partnership between local governments and SE; and the Coalition government and austerity, which will be explained below. Initial data analysis examined individuals' experiences of differences in organization and their jobs in these two eras, identifying themes and coding categories, and comparing responses across organization members to identify variations. Through within-case analysis we created a story of each SE organization, moving beyond the individual level and focusing on 'the pattern formed by the confluence of meanings within individual accounts' (Ayres, Kavanaugh, and Knafel 2003, 873), to account for the different organizational phases through time. We then moved analysis across the organizations, reflecting SEs institutional embeddedness and comparing how the regulatory context affected them.

Table 2 – Methods for analysis around here

As current organizational culture is rooted in past experiences, we adopted a historical approach, that could account for the effect of institutions on the social entrepreneurial process (Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker 2014; Blundel and Lyon 2015; Wadhvani 2016). Critical points within these histories provide the foci for analysis in the understanding of how the level and type of embeddedness drove the organizational response to challenges posed (Wadhvani 2016). Therefore, organizational histories are presented alongside some initial analysis, in the form of an 'analytically structured history' which recognizes how interpretation contained within the story construction is permeated by theory (Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker 2014), evident in the timeline summary (Table 3) that illustrates the different levels of embeddedness in context. As each organizational history is structured to reflect broader institutional changes, we firstly provide an overview of their shared regulatory context tracing the development of the UK SE sector.

UK SE policy context 1990-2016

This section introduces the regulatory, policy and political context shaping the UK SE sector (for more detail, see, for example, Nicholls and Teasdale 2017). Both National and City SE were founded in the early 1990s. Following Margaret Thatcher's emphasis on competition, individualism and rolling back of the welfare state, from 1990 John Major's Conservative government placed a focus on targets and the individual 'consumers' of public services, most notably through the Citizen's Charter, to drive improvements in public service delivery. The New Labour government elected in 1997 kept this focus on measuring public service delivery, seeking to increase and improve welfare provision through partnership working with civic and voluntary organizations to redress welfare withdrawal introduced by successive Conservative governments (Kendall 2000). Relying on the British culture of civic participation and community values, New Labour policies sought to institutionalize a single,

Table 2. Methods for analysis.

	Purpose	Strategy	Product
Within organization individual members	Identify how the organization and jobs changed in each historical era	Scrutiny of individual interview transcripts	Themes and coding categories
Across organization members	Identify variations within themes	Complementing data coding	Subthemes
Within organizations	Identify aggregation of themes within organizations	Scrutiny of individual interview transcripts	Additional themes based on within-organization differences
Across organizations	Compare the effects of institutional embeddedness in each SE	Relational analysis	Refine the cases narrative
Analytically structured history	Relate narrative cases with the institutional context	Case identification of analytic constructs	Construction of narrative driven by historical concepts, events and causation

(Adapted from Ayres, Kavanaugh, and Knafel 2003, p.874)



Table 3. National SE and city SE timelines (1990–2016).

National SE and City SE Timelines (1990 - 2016)		1990	1995	1997	2000	2005	2010	2012	2015	2016
Macro-level		Conservative government eroded state welfare. community care provision	Expansion in third sector	New Labour - increased public services provision through third sector, expansion of social welfare market			Coalition government - Austerity following global financial crisis and increasing marketization. Welfare responsibility moved from state to society.			
NATIONAL SE	Local institution	Influence of national policy - community based care/third sector		Best practice model. Third sector agent for local government. Professionalization and entrepreneurialism			Reduced funding for SE and emphasis on self-sufficiency and efficiency savings			
	Organization	Foundation of National SE. 15 networks		Expansion of the community model favoured by national policies. 100 networks in 57 locations			National SE's model considered too expensive for local governments			
	Individuals <i>volunteers and workers</i>	Embedded in and serving the community: Strong ethos supporting rights for people with learning difficulties. Long-term support, minimal intervention, co-creation		Disembedding process: Disciplining of SE towards market-oriented accountability			Market provision: Business model adapts to austerity - fewer support hours, transactional, eroding thick reciprocal ties, increased monitoring			
	Community and clients		Ongoing bespoke support from volunteer 'neighbour' - integration with local community and participatory decision making.	Employee Network Managers - overseeing 3 networks	Volunteers: 12 hours a week		Employee network managers: 5 networks; Volunteers 17 hours a week; Hourly paid employees; support work			
							Standardised service, extended to clients with complex disabilities. Participatory decision-making structures eroded.			

(Continued)

unified Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to enable local responsiveness and social innovation (Kendall 2000). Although formally independent, the VCS received public funding in accordance with government's goals, blurring the boundary between voluntary and public service agencies (White 2006).

By the mid-2000s debates on public services provision were dominated by neoliberal ideology and the VCS became mainstream delivery agents for meeting community needs whilst reducing state apparatus, bureaucracy and intermediaries (Smith 2010). The sector was instituted as a 'governable terrain' (Carmel and Harlock 2008), and the government's re-definition of the VCS as the 'third sector' eroded traditional voluntary and community values. A competitive market for public service provision was created introducing 3-year procurement contracts and expectations that organizations become more business-minded and entrepreneurial in order to win contracts (Dey and Teasdale 2016). The shift from grant to competitive procurement processes meant that both third and private sector organizations could bid for contracts, and (social) enterprise became the preferred option for welfare provision (Harris 2010; Teasdale 2012). Organizations were assessed on their performance in delivering public services according to government objectives, grounded on technical and market-oriented accountability – a far cry from the VCS's traditional values (Carmel and Harlock 2008; Ebrahim, Battilana, and Mair 2014). This disciplined VCS organizations in market norms, turning them into market-oriented organizations, normalizing de-politicization, and de-socialization of public service provision.

Following the 2008 global financial crisis, the Coalition government formed in 2010 introduced welfare spending cuts and austerity policies to reduce the public deficit. Their Big Society agenda aimed to encourage citizens to become the engine of welfare, moving responsibility for provision from the state to society (Kisby 2010). SE organizations were expected to look to the market for funding, which reinforced marketization, professionalization, and bureaucratization of the sector (Scott Cato and Raffaelli 2017). Heavy reliance on public contracts undermined SEs abilities to resist the changes and they were driven into a competitive agenda, forced to make efficiency savings as they competed for shrinking pots of funding (Kisby 2010). Targeting their diminished resources on service delivery – providing cut-price public services to fill gaps left by austerity – SE organizations lost emphasis on campaigning and advocacy (Dey and Teasdale 2016).

National SE

An embedded community model supported by national policy

National SE supports people with mental health and learning difficulties to live independently in a community-based network model. Up until the 1980s, care for people with learning disabilities in the UK had been dominated by institutional care-homes often separated from society. The founder campaigned for community based supported housing, and National SE's community embedded model led best practice in transforming inclusive care provision. National SE networks comprised ten tenants living in close proximity supported by a volunteer who helped with household tasks, dealing with formal agencies and responding to emergencies; and facilitated tenants in developing a mutually supportive network, and integration with the wider community. In keeping with the socially transformative goals volunteers helped embed tenants' views in ongoing service delivery by facilitating them in organizing local meetings and participating in management decisions.

Volunteers lived in rent-free flats within, and part of, the community to enable continual and ongoing support provision. Organizational documents reveal National SE's emphasis on recruiting people committed to their socially transformative values, as reflected in volunteer comments

A very strong ethos of National SE is that membership support each other so it becomes a self-supporting community ... [and] to connect them to wider community. ... I know there is a whole thing of the flat, but it's very different when you are a volunteer. You are actually there. *[Being a volunteer]* is not a job ... it's a way of life ... I think the model lends itself to only particular people applying. You should be strongly committed with the idea. It's all about the philosophy (Volunteer AF)

Although reciprocal rent payment in exchange for support could introduce questions over the voluntary status of volunteer workers, these sentiments represent the decommodification of labour and land – rather than being organized by market logics, support and housing arrangements were embedded in social relations (Cangiani 2011; Polanyi 2001 [1944]).

National SE expanded the community model across the UK throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Funded by large contracts with individual local authority social services departments, and a supportive policy environment, National SE grew from 15 networks in 1997 to 100 networks in over 57 locations by the mid-2000s, and had over 200 networks by the time of fieldwork in 2016. This was facilitated by a national policy shift towards care in community settings, alongside political support for third-sector welfare provision. However, this also introduced a more business-focused mentality towards social welfare delivery, bringing elements of competition and professionalization (Nicholls and Teasdale 2017). For a time, National SE managed to navigate the challenges of meeting societal needs within the market system by building-in participation to organizational decision-making as tenants and volunteers were put at the very centre of the organization, resisting marketization through the strength of reciprocity evident in thick social relations.

Austerity context: global and national institutional shifts influencing organizational change

Due to reliance on government contracts National SE was vulnerable to the austerity pressures that followed the global financial crisis. Their traditional clients (people with learning difficulties requiring low levels of support) were targeted by cuts as eligibility for grant funding was whittled away to cope with swingeing cuts to local-authority funding (North 2011; Scott Cato and Raffaelli 2017). To compensate for the shortfall in funding National SE extended their client group to encompass age-related disabilities, mental-health, autism and ex-offenders. They also introduced paid workers who provided support by the hour that replaced the volunteer system in some locations, whilst increasing the support-hours volunteers were required to provide. The funding reduction was felt by volunteers and paid workers who were conflicted by an increasing sense of precariousness and the changed organizational ethos:

Everything was trying to keep going but it's very difficult when the founding commitment was eroded, and that source has been eroded by austerity, by introducing a business model . . . And in some ways, it made them more efficient and in other ways put them at the mercy of organizations like . . . definitely at the mercy of social services. There is no other funding, there's no way National SE can survive. So, every time they come, and we have to go to another bidding process for a contract they can basically say whatever they want, and we have to do it. (Volunteer AF)

Commodification and social dis-embedding affected both volunteers and tenants. Broadening the client group and changing the type of support threatened co-creation founded on relationships between tenants and volunteers, and within the tenant group. New contracts tend to be shorter term, focused on addressing single issues or problems affecting clients individually. Combined with the increasingly transactional nature of the work there is an impact upon the co-production element felt by volunteers and paid workers alike – the emphasis on building communities replaced by an outcomes-focused model:

So it was about setting up something that was longer and giving people a long-term project . . . But now it's changing . . . So it's shifting to more of the services where support is provided to be an hour or two a week, by a paid member of the staff. And it's looking at resolving the problem that somebody has. Not long-term development of the person . . . We try to provide people with skills, but that doesn't necessarily address the long-term problem. (Paid worker AC)

The new clients did not 'fit' the community model, while existing clients could not understand how the new model worked, leaving them 'lost in the system somehow' (Volunteer AA). The work had become less focused on emancipation through building relationships and more concerned with addressing immediate issues; a salve rather than cure.

Quality of support suffered and long-term relationships that had enabled communications and facilitated tenant support with minimal intervention broke down as volunteers left due to the changed structures and the increasing job demands, and network managers were put under pressure by increased workloads. This was exacerbated by the pressures that supporting institutions such as social services departments were facing:

The kind of work I am meant to be doing is more complex and people with desperate needs have come. So maybe people do have more severe needs ... they would have been from different services, but those services no longer exist. But now they are coming to National SE. [And our members used to have] quite mild disability, [however] only severe or complex are the ones that can be under services now. (Volunteer AA).

Social dis-embedding had a severe impact on organizational practices and social innovation. The shift in priorities stands out when comparing research reports commissioned by National SE. In the 1990s and 2000s reports focused on best practice in co-production and inclusion, while the latest report produced in 2018 emphasizes costs and affordability of the model. This chimes with experiences of volunteers and employees who have felt the change to financial drivers. The efficiency rationale requires volunteers to demonstrate impact, being 'able to prove through paperwork what change [they] were making in people's life' (Volunteer AA), illustrating an increase in measurement and surveillance associated with marketization (André and Pache 2016). Market logics commodified care and eroded the innovative edge of National SE, whereby more time is spent on securing funding than in taking care of beneficiaries.

... the voluntary sector is increasingly being run like businesses. Quite a lot of the time, a lot of energy and resources expended by the voluntary sector is on winning bids, on getting money and on getting the resources ... Yes, it becomes just like any other business. You are trying to attract customers. You're trying to attract money" (Paid worker AE)

The shift towards hourly paid work rather than reciprocal voluntary arrangements represents market commodification of labour that moves away from social values (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). National SE lost its philosophical commitment to co-production, and as a result volunteers saw their relationship becoming increasingly transactional. This had implications for their motivation; as the focus on supporting people as part of a community was lost volunteering came to be perceived as a career stage, or training for paid work. '[volunteers] get the kind of skills that they could use to get a job' (Paid worker AC). This interpretation of volunteering represents a move away from social value creation to building individual value, increasing stocks of human capital for career progression (Day and Devlin 1998; Smith 2010).

City SE

An embedded community organization connected to local government institutions

SE was established in 1992 as the economic arm of a locally rooted, community-based organization serving a deprived urban area in the north of the UK. The founders, a mixed group of local people including the business community started the organization specifically to access local economic development funding targeted at upskilling local residents and providing opportunities for employment. It initially experienced slow growth recruiting volunteers to provide affordable handyman and gardening services to local elderly and disabled residents.

Increased funding to address social deprivation from 1996 saw the small organization become a delivery agent for community economic development. The Chief Executive at that time reflected how they managed to create local impact with limited funding, particularly when compared to the City Council's work: 'We were doing that with crumbs and they were doing it with millions' (BE participant observation notes). City SE expanded services to provide employment support, education and training, business support including the purchase of affordable retail units for rent to aspiring businesses, and various projects in the arts and IT, growing to over forty full-time staff. Operations were spatially focused in a small area, with dense community networks whereby committee members

and employees had close local ties built through long histories of living or working locally, alongside family connections. BC relates community trust and confidence to geography, viewing their localness as key to service take-up as 'outsiders' can be treated with suspicion.

Reflecting the national shift to increase third-sector social welfare provision, a large proportion of City SE's growth came from a City Council contract to provide employment training. They worked with the Job Centre to support long-term unemployed in a partnership that combined state and community logics. The project overcame local suspicion of government officials, succeeding due to bonds of trust between residents and City SE. Then in a departure from the national trend towards an increased role for SE, the City Council introduced their own enhanced employment scheme that duplicated City SE's project, and their contract was not renewed. The conflict between the local government decision and City SEs support for the local area triggered an organizational crisis. Confident in their service quality and unwilling to make their local employees redundant, City SE lobbied the council and continued providing employment support, hoping those in power would recognize their worth and re-instate them. They subsidized the project from other parts of the business, leaving insufficient funds to pay rent, suppliers and wages, taking the organization to the verge of bankruptcy. Finance officer BA recalls how business decisions were less important than peoples' livelihoods, illustrating how the social dimension dominated.

Without any funding we agreed to keep the service going, and it was quite a big part of our budget and we kept it going out of just reserves ... there was seven people's jobs you know. And we worked with these people, they were, like, a part of it. (BA interview)

The organization managed to survive through the solidarity of five core staff who for a time worked voluntarily, relying on family income and taking other jobs to make ends meet.

Ongoing survival in austere times – socially embedded but dependent on local government

City SE's main income now comes from delivery of small employment training and business support contracts for local and city-regional government organizations. They talk about the precariousness of their position, working evenings and weekends both to support local people setting up businesses, and to find time for completing grant applications and monitoring reports required as a condition of funding (fieldwork notes). Staff continue to work unpaid to ensure City SE's survival. As they feel unable to offer long-term job security, new opportunities for growth are met with caution using consultancy staff rather than employing additional paid workers, and there is frequent talk of the difficulties in securing financial sustainability for City SE and other local social organizations: 'If you have got 3 months money in the bank then you are doing well. Very well. ... Six months is unheard of!' (BC participant observation notes)

Given the increased expectation that social organizations are sustainable in market terms, City SE has responded by adopting creative and innovative strategies to ensure organizational survival. Employees aimed to deliver services with a shrinking pot of money, concerned with working hard and creating a sustainable business to address local unemployment and poverty without the need for government support. Team meetings discussed having to 'make work pay', and the importance of appearing professional and businesslike to provide legitimization for government procurement, encapsulated by the chief executive stressing how SE 'needs to be a business first'.

City SE created partnerships to tender for higher value contracts in a climate where size is equated with efficiency and reliability; and introduced loss-leader courses to demonstrate ease of delivery, client benefits and meeting targets for local council clients. They put their rationale in the context of austerity and measurement, demonstrating how they sought to reconcile social and market logics. Here BB discusses how this strategy met their targets and expanded local availability of services; their concern for helping local government clients meet targets demonstrates reciprocity from City SE and brings more symmetry to the relationship.

There was both the financial incentive for us to do it because it was a way of hitting our targets ... getting as many people as possible involved. There was the benefit of actually working with people who benefit from what you're doing ... [and] we were helping the children's centre hit their targets and justify their existence, which has become more and more difficult over time because of the cuts they've had to their service (BB, interview)

Although conscious that they had to 'play by the rules of the game' (BC interview), City SE's business initiative was tempered by consistent political discussions that rejected market logics and rooted the team within the social milieu. Political debates were a daily feature of City SE; where they consistently re-affirmed their social mores, criticizing local and national politicians of all political parties for abandoning their local community.

Conflict between social and market goals in city SE – potential dis-embedding

Despite their solidarity, collectivism and clear commitment to the local community there were indications of neoliberal logics infiltrating City SE's thinking that threatened their social goals. Their funding depended on a work integration social enterprise (WISE) model reflecting ideals of entrepreneurship as a welfare solution, whereby integrating people into capital accumulation processes, rather than social objectives, is the primary goal (Dey et al. 2016). While critical of the harsh local economic conditions that supported businesses were trying to set-up and survive in, City SE remained convinced that the answer could be found in entrepreneurship and hard work.

If you're relatively healthy and you've got a fair, you know 'you can!', ... you motivate yourself to get that bit of oomph. Anyone can be an entrepreneur can't they? And it's not always down to money. You can be an entrepreneur selling bottle tops you pick up off the floor if you wanted to. You know it's not always down to cash, it's down to will and the right idea at the right time and the right place (BG interview)

This thinking reinforces normative ideals of entrepreneurship, implying individual responsibility for local people to address their multiple and complex problems created by economic transformations. Entrepreneurship is seen as a solution to address 'social exclusion and isolation' as it 'gives people a purpose' (BB interview), although associated with neoliberal goals of reducing welfare dependency and generating tax receipts (Dey et al. 2016). These conflicting views highlight the difficulties in reconciling social and market logics.

Analysis

The transformations that National and City SE experienced over 25 years, detailed above and summarized in Table 3, reveal how organizations are made and remade by interconnected political, economic and social processes. Building on the broad macro and micro levels identified in our theoretical framing, our analysis identifies that these processes stretch across four levels of embeddedness in contexts: 'macro'; 'local institution'; 'organization'; and 'individual'. Although both organizations were subject to UK policy shifts towards increasing marketization associated with global neoliberalization at the macro level, this intersected with their embeddedness in local institutional formations to influence their response. The way this was navigated hinged upon interrelations with employees, clients, local communities, councils and other stakeholders, influencing their ability to maintain socially transformative goals. Although both organizations continued to meet social needs, they were more influenced by institutional structures than able to transform them; alongside this National SE appeared to abandon participatory decision-making structures in the swing to market efficiency.

Table 3 – Timeline and levels of embeddedness – around here

Initially National SE's model fitted the political direction of travel as it helped bring about desired changes from residential to community care, and welfare provision by the third sector rather than government. This helped National SE create legitimacy with government representatives across the country, enabling them to build relationships with governance networks influencing social-care

provision (Koliba 2015) and reconfiguring institutional structures to maximize their transformative potential (Avelino and Wittmayer 2019). Generous funding supported National SE's best practice model that involved tenants in the governance of the organization (Laville, Young, and Eynaud 2015), keeping it rooted in the social environment, embedded in and serving the community. Despite operating nationally, the organization prioritized thick reciprocal relationships among clients, volunteers, management and local authority clients, in a form of relational bureaucracy (Gittell and Douglass 2012; Block 2008). The co-production model emphasized peer-support to give tenants more control over their lives. Volunteers' close bonds with clients maximized intrinsic rewards for their work motivated by care rather than financial recompense (André and Pache 2016). Reciprocity integral within the model de-commodified labour and caring as market influence was minimized, and social relationships emphasized (Vail 2010). This addressed the potential for dis-embedding as thick reciprocal practices embedded service beneficiaries and frontline employees to maintain emancipatory social goals (Block 2008). Here, Polanyian reciprocity and redistribution were working in tandem to achieve transformative SI.

In response to the changing policy emphasis on competition and marketization, exacerbated by the austerity agenda following the global financial crisis (Kisby 2010), National SE succumbed to institutional pressures that increasingly prioritized financial efficiency and income generation at the expense of co-production and social relationships (Nicholls and Teasedale 2017; Barinaga 2020), leaving the organization more vulnerable to changes in market conditions (Lähdesmäki, Siltaoja, and Spence 2019). Prioritizing financial efficiency impacted social embeddedness and the ability of National SE volunteers and employees to maintain thick reciprocity in their relationships in a two-pronged (re)commodification process affecting care and labour. Diluting the volunteer model re-commodified labour by introducing a transactional relationship where the organization demanded more hours from volunteers who felt pressured to deliver what was considered market value in relation to their rent costs. The emphasis on 'service standards' altered the perspective of the volunteer role, which became more about individual gain rather than collective benefits. Reduced contact between National SE management and their employees, volunteers and clients eroded the participatory practices (Lee et al. 2019). The loss of embeddedness reinforced formal controls and performance measures, further eroding the thick reciprocal bonds founded on trust (Sezgi and Mair 2010) in a vicious circle of increasing employee controls and dwindling social embeddedness.

The commodification of care and labour brought about by austerity was accompanied by a broader shift from collective social transformation to meeting individual needs, representing dissolution of the innovation in social relations that National SE sought to achieve. Personal relationships with clients and co-creation of social-impact were replaced by one-way care delivery and transactional support, disconnecting volunteers and employees from the social outcomes of their work, which was manifest in the sense of powerlessness and increased work-pressures (Noddings 2013; Lee et al. 2018; Brieger, De Clercq, and Meynhardt 2020;). In this sense, at the community level, volunteers became alienated, questioning their identity, and residents were no longer supported in maintaining social relations. Moreover, at the organizational level, the aim of improving living conditions by building a supportive community group founded on co-operative values was lost, replaced by individuals hiring services in a market transaction. National SE drifted away from their original socially transformative mission to focus on winning contracts within the competitive market – the financial imperative trumped the social goals (Kisby 2010; Dey and Teasdale 2016). Colonized by market rationality rather than reciprocity, National SE became commodified in Polanyian terms and can no longer be considered to be socially innovative (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019).

Like National SE, City SE's start-up and initial growth relied on availability of redistributive funding, but their response to financial austerity took a different course due to their embeddedness in the local community. The Council's introduction of their work integration scheme conflicted with national policy favouring SE, illustrating how instituted processes of redistribution and reciprocity

are felt differently across geographic areas (Peck and Theodore 2007), indicating the importance of embeddedness in spatial context (Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gadderfors 2015). Although grounded in the local area, City SE's dense network ties proved unable to influence local institutional structures. This could be attributed to a competitiveness agenda involving an 'entrepreneurial urbanism' approach to regeneration whereby local officials focused on the private sector as the only route to 'serious' economic development (Harvey 1989), and social enterprise was seen as peripheral.

Thick local embeddedness may have hampered City SE's campaign to save their project, as contrary to examples in the literature where communities access resources across contexts (Marti, Courpasson and Barbosa 2013), they were unable to bridge to outside expertise. Given national policy supporting SE, City SE could have lobbied for support from MPs and national SE organizations. Yet, in a form of over-embeddedness (Uzzi 1997) City SE were unable to make these connections, failing in their challenge to local government redistributive structures. The threat to City SE's survival reinforced deeply embedded ties that hinged upon personal relationships and acted to strengthen their social goals: When the organization came under threat, employees took the decision to work for free or substantially lower wages – in essence de-commodifying their labour, whereby their contribution was recognized, valued and rewarded through thick reciprocal relationships (Block 2008). In their actions to sustain the organization, they demonstrated their social commitment to each other, retaining their socially transformative goals through their commitment to the local area, their embeddedness and social mission (Cornforth 2014; Mouleart and MacCallum 2019; Barinaga 2020). However, although local networks were dense and strong, City SE's parochialism may have meant they survived rather than thrived.

Although City SE continued to socially innovate, it was on a reduced scale, further constrained by macro level institutional changes. The legacy of contraction made City SE cautious about growth, concerned about their ability to sustain new jobs given the precarious state of funding associated with austerity. Subject to national pressures of increasing marketization within the sector, City SE legitimized themselves by adopting competitive practices, recognizing a necessity to present themselves as professional to competitors and funders (Jenner 2016). The competitive market environment pitted them against other locally based social enterprises for funding, which eroded thick bonds between organizations and prevented their collectivism from achieving critical mass and momentum on a wider community level (Block 2008). Furthermore, their WISE model is more concerned with addressing social problems and improving economic participation than effecting collective empowerment and transformative impacts (Dey et al. 2016; Moulaert and MacCallum 2019). This may explain why City SE's discussions of support provision occasionally lapsed into mainstream entrepreneurial rhetoric that conflicted with concerns about local powerlessness and inequality, illustrating how SE actors experience conflict between social and market logics.

City SE resisted the pressures of market concerns by frequent re-affirmation of their commitment to addressing inequality and social exclusion in the local community. Political debates about social and economic inequality were a performative act – vocalizing resistance to marketization and competitive logics shaping their environment strengthened collective resolve (Brieger, De Clercq, and Meynhardt 2020; Wickert and Schaefer 2015). It revealed how the business logics displayed could be understood as a form of tactical mimicry (Dey and Teasdale 2016), whereby City SE performed the competitive entrepreneurial role, while maintaining their social identity by reaffirming community and political allegiances. Nonetheless, whilst discussions of how free markets and government inaction create inequality can strengthen feelings of power and purpose, reinforcing commitment to social goals (Brieger, De Clercq, and Meynhardt 2020), City SE's response remained governed by market rules. Rather than challenging the causes of inequality they can only alleviate the symptoms within the parameters set by structural forces.

A Polanyian inspired conceptualization of embeddedness

We return now to how a Polanyian inspired view of embeddedness has contributed to our understanding of SI processes, and how this can be extended to theorizing on entrepreneurship. We expand first on how Polanyi's view of the socially embedded economy focuses attention on the socially transformative goals of social innovation and entrepreneurship, which is of key import given conflict between social and market logics in SI (Ebrahim, Battilana, and Mair 2014), and we explain how societal rooting is key to ensuring social transformation. Secondly, we explain how the multi-level institutional approach can be applied to understand multi-layered processes of embeddedness that stretch across contexts to offer a model for framing future research.

The socially embedded economy

Polanyi's conception of the socially embedded economy helps maintain the focus on whether SE organizations continue to socially innovate as they adapt to changes in context over time. Our cases point to how social embeddedness that enables thick reciprocal relationships between organizational leaders, workers, beneficiaries, and the wider social environment are essential to sustained prioritization of social foci, particularly in the face of increasing market pressures. It draws attention to how abstract processes of marketization are experienced within social organizations, eroding thick reciprocal relationships and replacing them with commodification. National SE volunteers and workers were pushed away from their intrinsic motivations to contribute to the common good (Brieger, De Clercq, and Meynhardt 2020; Lee et al. 2019), towards a focus on monetary rewards. This created alienation as economic motivations conflicted with the foundational emancipatory aims of SI – in Polanyian terms National SE became dis-embedded from society to put market considerations first (Polanyi 2001 [1944]).

While the experiences of National and City SE show how social embeddedness is fundamentally important to creating SI, they also demonstrate that social relationships alone are insufficient to effect social transformation. Recalling the three elements of SI; meeting social needs, participative organizational governance, and transforming institutional structures (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019; Avelino and Wittmayer 2019), it is clear that both National and City SE struggled to meet all SI criteria throughout their journeys. They continued to meet social needs but their ability to maintain collaboration in organizational management and to transform institutional structures was shaped by the wider institutional environment. Whilst local scale and deep embeddedness supported the participative management structure in City SE, National SE relied on investment in formalized organizational roles and processes (Gittell and Douglas 2012). Moreover, both National and City SE were only able to effect institutional transformations when the changes coincided with the direction pre-ordained by the dominant institutions.

The lens of the socially embedded economy draws attention to how changes in institutional context towards increased markets and competition for social welfare shifted responsibility for addressing social problems back to society. However, as societies' needs for living well are met through a mix of market, government, community [and household (family)] structures (Polanyi 2001 [1944]), social change cannot be resolved by one single type of institution but requires a collaborative effort (Sud, VanSandt, and Baugous 2009). Instead of the Anglo-American view that presents social innovation as enterprising organizations bridging market and social logics (Shockley 2015), the role of government is also brought forward. This goes beyond practical funding and contracting support to legitimize and encourage citizen empowerment, engaging society in democratic decision-making processes that institute changes necessary for social innovation (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019). Rather than increasing marketization this involves putting the market to work for the benefit of society, or re-embedding the market in society (Polanyi 2001 [1944]).

Interacting levels of embeddedness

Our analysis sheds light on processes of embeddedness within interconnected layers and types of context to understand how embeddedness is contingent upon shifting contexts over time. The four layers of interacting processes of embeddedness in context – macro, institutional, organizational, and individual – are depicted as nested from macro to individual in [Figure 1](#). This reflects the hierarchy of influences dominating existing neoliberal economic arrangements, as opposed to Polanyi's socially embedded economy. [Figure 1](#) illustrates how macro-processes are connected to micro-experiences through dynamic processes of embeddedness connecting organizations with multiple actors across layers. Organizations connect to institutional structures at national and local level, and to individual clients, employees, and community. The multiplicity of different strengths and types of connections, top-down and bottom-up, varies according to context, resulting in diverse forms of organizational embeddedness.

Macro-level institutional contexts include global and national elements, for example, processes of neoliberalization and global crises that influence nations and localities, and government policies setting the direction of the country. Local institutions influence context at the local or regional levels, in this case city and regional government departments that interpret and deliver national policies alongside local programmes of work. These two layers make up 'institutional embeddedness', connecting organizations with broader institutions as routes to the outside world, which can influence managerial forms and organizational practices, in our examples the competitiveness agenda and availability of public resources. [Figure 1](#) reflects how macro-level processes shaped the framework for the other layers. In our case studies, National SE flourished when it aligned with the shift in public policies; City SE struggled to survive due to the clash between local council and national policies.

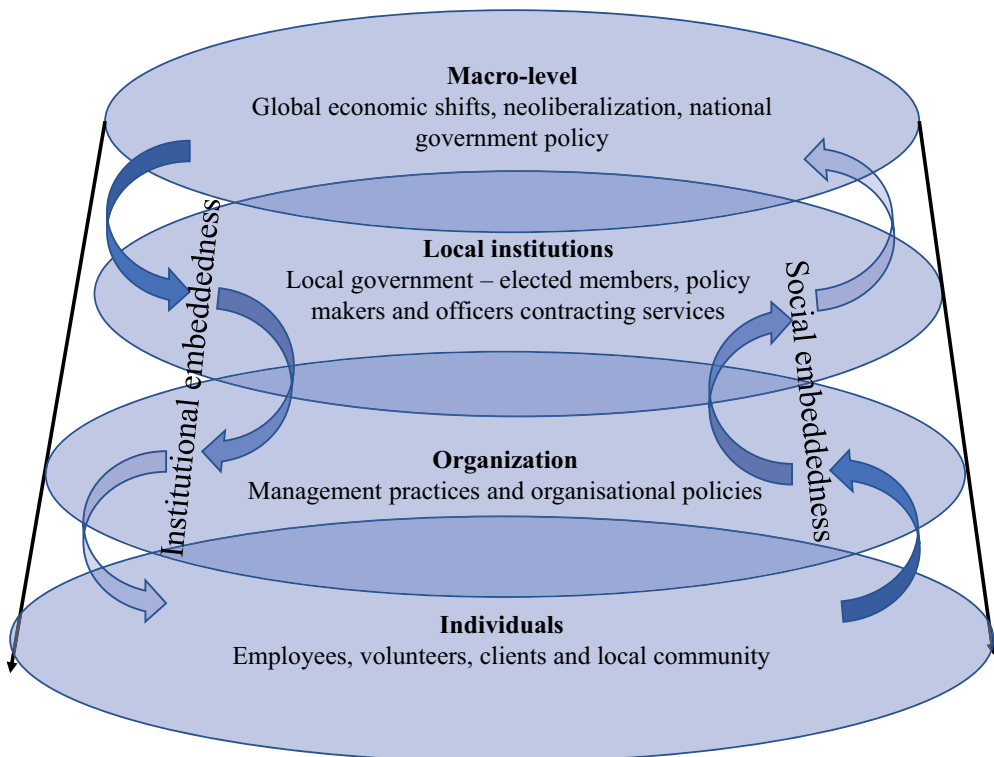


Figure 1. Interacting levels of embeddedness.

Embeddedness in organizational context concerns the policies and practices that shape an organization's development, such as the business model, human resources, financing and employee engagement, as it adapts to market conditions, public policies or specific local context. Individual embeddedness concerns the experiences of social actors within the orbit of our organizations, the volunteers and workers delivering services, and the clients and community members receiving them. It is here that organizations connect to society in what we termed social embeddedness. This is not a one-way relationship where social connections are used to secure resources for business needs, but involves the reciprocal and collaborative relations that hold the innovative potential of SI. Here we observed the shift of National SE from embedded in and serving the community, to marketization and disembeddedness following the policy shift to a social welfare market, while City SE remained deeply embedded in the community throughout periods of change.

Although consideration of SI highlights the socially transformative role of entrepreneurship and innovation, our approach will apply to studies of entrepreneurship embedded in other contexts. Rather than being static, our approach accounts for the multiple layers of institutional and social embeddedness to uncover the dynamics of entrepreneurship. In this sense, and paraphrasing Uzzi (1997), we capture embeddedness as a process resting upon the contingent nature of management and organizational practices, situated in and shaped by interactions with local institutions and macro-structures, along with the community members and individuals forming organizations to different extents.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore how institutional context shapes both the changing environment for SI, *and* the ability of SE organizations to navigate change and continue to socially innovate, by examining how organizational actors experience embedding and dis-embedding over time. The lens of Polanyi enabled us to connect the experiences of those working and benefitting from SI to the shifting institutional environment and ascertain whether social organizations are achieving social innovation throughout change. We found that the social bonds in National SE were disrupted by competition and marketization of the social enterprise sector, causing the organization to lose sight of its social goals, whilst City SE maintained thick social ties at the expense of growth. Although generalizability of the results is limited by the contextualized nature of the case studies, they shed light on how processes of marketization are felt within social enterprises. Practical implications point to the need to prioritize employee, client and community engagement to achieve and maintain social transformation through SE organizations, whilst underlining how government institutional support is critical to creating and sustaining SI.

The approach adopted has significance to studies of entrepreneurship in context more broadly, adding to the significant body of work that seeks a deeper understanding of the influence of social, cultural, political, and economic environments that entrepreneurial activity is embedded within (Welter 2011; Zahra, Wright, and Abdelgawad 2014; Baker and Welter 2018). Our approach offers potential to account for the multiplicity of embeddedness in contextual dimensions that encompass the structural, spatial, temporal, and historical (Moroz and Hindle 2012; Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015; Wadhvani 2016). Our research focused on interdependencies between macro-economic shifts, government institutions at the national and local level, social enterprise organizations, and their workers and clients. Further research might explore how different dynamic dimensions of context interact to influence entrepreneurial processes. This could be applied to industry contexts, such as academic entrepreneurship, or by focusing on how specific places bend national policies to the local context as in e.g. rural entrepreneurship or other contexts where the economy is in particular need of re-embedding in the social.

Notes

1. Whilst caring activities carried out by women initially enabled the commodification of labour, this caring work itself has been commodified as women work more and longer hours, importing care from developing countries, which intensifies commodification.
2. By structural we refer here to societal structures rather than Granovetter's 'structure' or pattern of network ties. Although we prefer the term structural we use institutional throughout the paper to avoid confusion with Granovetter's theory.
3. A fourth instituted process – householding – was included in The Great Transformation, and although this lost emphasis in later work, this would contribute to understanding entrepreneurship, particularly informal entrepreneurship and social reproductive work such as caring.

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