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ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Navigating the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

An Ethnographic Analysis of Institutional Logics and Strategic Adaptation in Senegalese Business (2000–2026)

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial ecosystems in West Africa are characterised by a complex interplay of formal and informal institutional logics. Understanding how enterprises navigate this pluralistic environment is critical for analysing business development and economic prospects in the region. This study aims to ethnographically analyse the dominant institutional logics within the Senegalese entrepreneurial ecosystem and to explicate the adaptive strategies businesses employ to operate within and across these competing frameworks. A longitudinal, immersive ethnographic study was conducted, combining participant observation within multiple small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and extensive semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs, government officials, and financial intermediaries. A core finding is the strategic oscillation between formal bureaucratic logics and informal communal logics, with approximately 70% of observed firms maintaining parallel bookkeeping systems to satisfy different institutional demands. A dominant theme was 'regulatory pragmatism', where formal compliance is performed selectively while reliance on kinship networks for credit and dispute resolution remains paramount. Business strategy is fundamentally shaped by the need to simultaneously legitimise operations within state-centric frameworks and harness resources embedded in socio-cultural norms, creating a hybrid model of entrepreneurial adaptation. Policymakers should design regulatory frameworks that acknowledge and integrate, rather than seek to replace, effective informal institutions. Financial literacy programmes should be adapted to address the realities of managing dual logics. institutional logics, strategic adaptation, entrepreneurship, ethnography, informal economy, hybridity, Senegal This paper provides a novel, granular analysis of the micro-practices of 'logic switching', offering a new behavioural framework for understanding financial and strategic decision-making in pluralistic institutional environments.

Keywords: *Ethnographic study, Institutional logics, Strategic adaptation, West Africa, Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Informal economy*

Article Highlights

- Strategic oscillation between formal and informal institutional logics defines business adaptation.
- Parallel bookkeeping systems satisfy competing demands from state and community frameworks.

Regulatory Pragmatism

A dominant theme where formal compliance is performed selectively while reliance on kinship networks for credit and dispute resolution remains paramount.

This paper provides a granular analysis of the micro-practices of

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulatory pragmatism involves selective formal compliance and reliance on kinship networks.• Hybrid entrepreneurial models emerge from navigating pluralistic institutional environments.	<p><i>'logic switching' in Senegal.</i></p>
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ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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