A critical review of entrepreneurial ecosystems research: towards a future research agenda

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objective of my talk

• Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (EE) is a recent, **popular concept** to study entrepreneurship in a region

• **critical review** of EE literature

• number of suggestions to take up in a **future research agenda**
structure

1. why EE according to entrepreneurship literature?

2. historical background

3. definition of EE

4. critique on EE

5. future research agenda
1. why EE?

- neglecting the role of context in entrepreneurship studies – most focus on individual characteristics and behaviors of individuals or firms

- lack of systemic/holistic approach – focusing on just one part of the entrepreneurial process
2. historical background

• ideas behind a **systemic view on entrepreneurship** are much older (Dubini 1989; Van de Ven 1993)

• related literatures:
  (1) **innovation system** – systemic view on innovation but neglect the entrepreneur (Acs et al. 2014)
  
  (2) **cluster** – clusters provide opportunities for entrepreneurship but neglect the systemic dimension

• drastic **increase** in popularity last 7 years
Number of publications on EE 1999-2015

The graph shows the number of publications in EE from 1999 to 2015, categorized by type: Journal Articles, Other Publications, and Books and Book Chapters. The number of publications increased significantly from 2014 onwards.

- **Journal Articles**
  - Steady increase from 2000 to 2013
  - Significant increase from 2014

- **Other Publications**
  - More varied, with peaks in 2004 and 2009
  - Large increase from 2013 to 2015

- **Books and Book Chapters**
  - Relatively stable until 2013
  - Sharp increase from 2014

**Year of publications**
- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015

**Number of publications**
- 0
- 10
- 20
- 30
- 40
- 50
- 60
- 70
Number of publications on Entrepreneurial Systems
1972-2015

Number of publications
Year of publication
Journal Articles
Other Publications
Books and Book Chapters
3. definition of EE

• no universal agreement on definition: focus is on systemic view on entrepreneurship

• Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: ”a set of interdependent actors and factors coordinated in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship within a particular territory” (Stam and Spigel 2017, p. 1)
4. critique on EE

(1) **no clear analytical framework: list of elements**
   (like human capital, finance, networks, culture, etc.)

- little attention to connections or hierarchy in importance of elements

- make clear **what is cause and what is effect**
4. critique on EE

(2) while being systemic, no application of network theory and network analysis as a tool

- what are the minimal requirements to qualify for EE?
- overlap of types of networks (knowledge, economic, social, political)?
- typology of different EE regarding network configurations?
- density of interactions: good or bad for entrepreneurship?
4. critique on EE

(3) role of institutions?

- not clear what (formal and informal) institutions impact on network structure and performance of EE

- need for a micro-perspective: entrepreneurial experimentation (niches) and institutional entrepreneurship

- focus on institutional change: institutions need to change, but also break resistance from vested players: to enable growth of entrepreneurial activities
4. critique on EE

(4) focus on single regions/clusters

- no comparative multi-scalar systemic approach (like local/non-local linkages)

- how do geographical aspects (like variety) impact on niche formation?

- why are some regions more successful in inducing required institutional change than other regions?

- why are agents in some regions better at creating, abolishing and changing institutions?
4. critique on EE

(5) static framework

- little understanding of network dynamics (elements and connections) in EE over time

- better understanding of the formative stage of EE

- a dynamic perspective on EE enables to compare different EEs by stages of development

- take more seriously the eco-system concept: focus on co-evolution
5. future research agenda

• apply network theory to understand better the systemic nature of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

• institutions (macro) and institutional entrepreneurship (micro: role of agency)

• multi-scalar approach

• dynamic perspective on Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
thank you for your attention!