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# **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

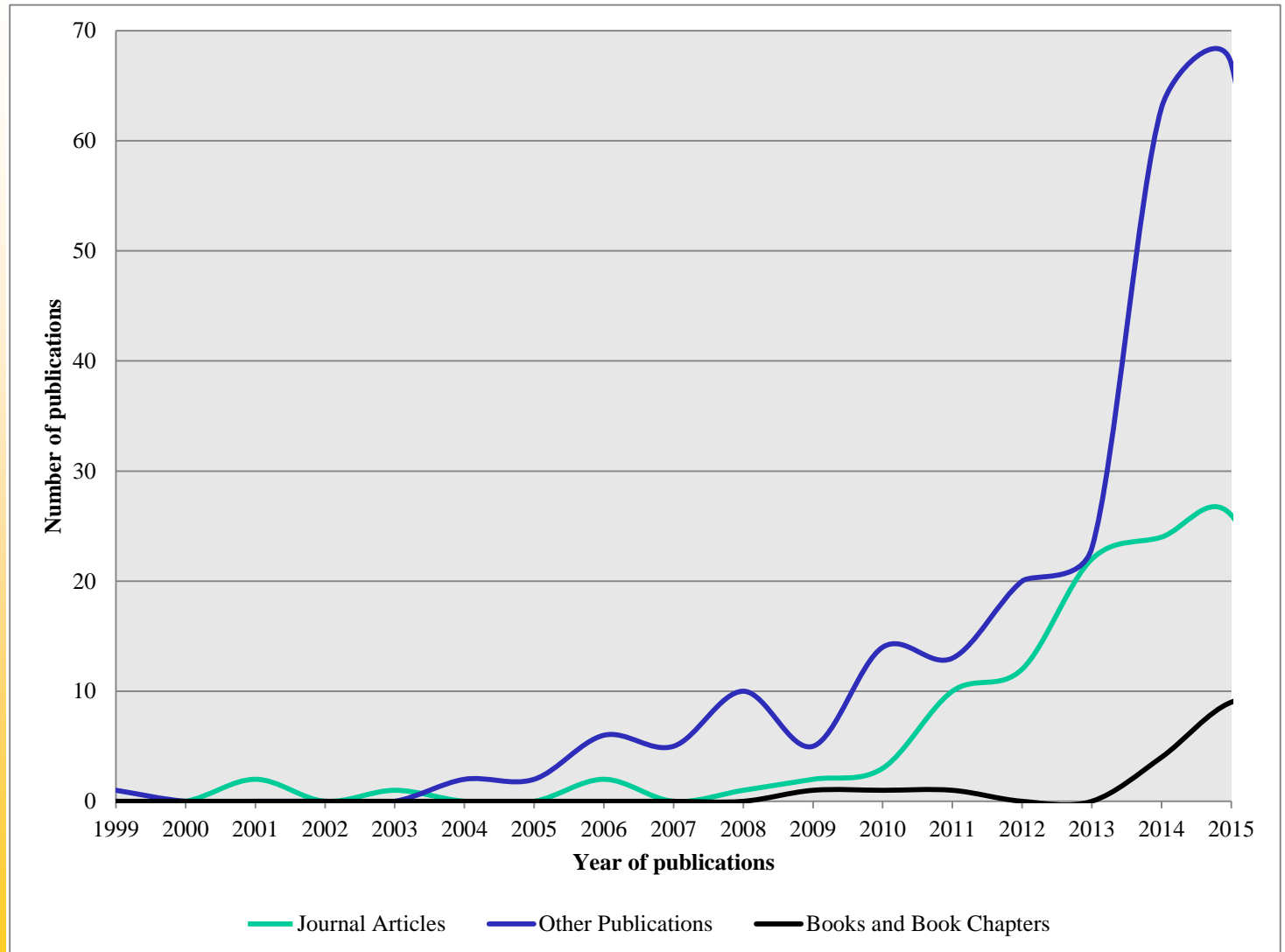
- ideas behind a **systemic view on entrepreneurship** are much older (Dubini 1989; Van de Ven 1993)
- related literatures:
  - (1) **innovation system** – systemic view on innovation but neglect the entrepreneur (Acs et al. 2014)
  - (2) **cluster** – clusters provide opportunities for entrepreneurship but neglect the systemic dimension
- drastic **increase** in popularity last 7 years





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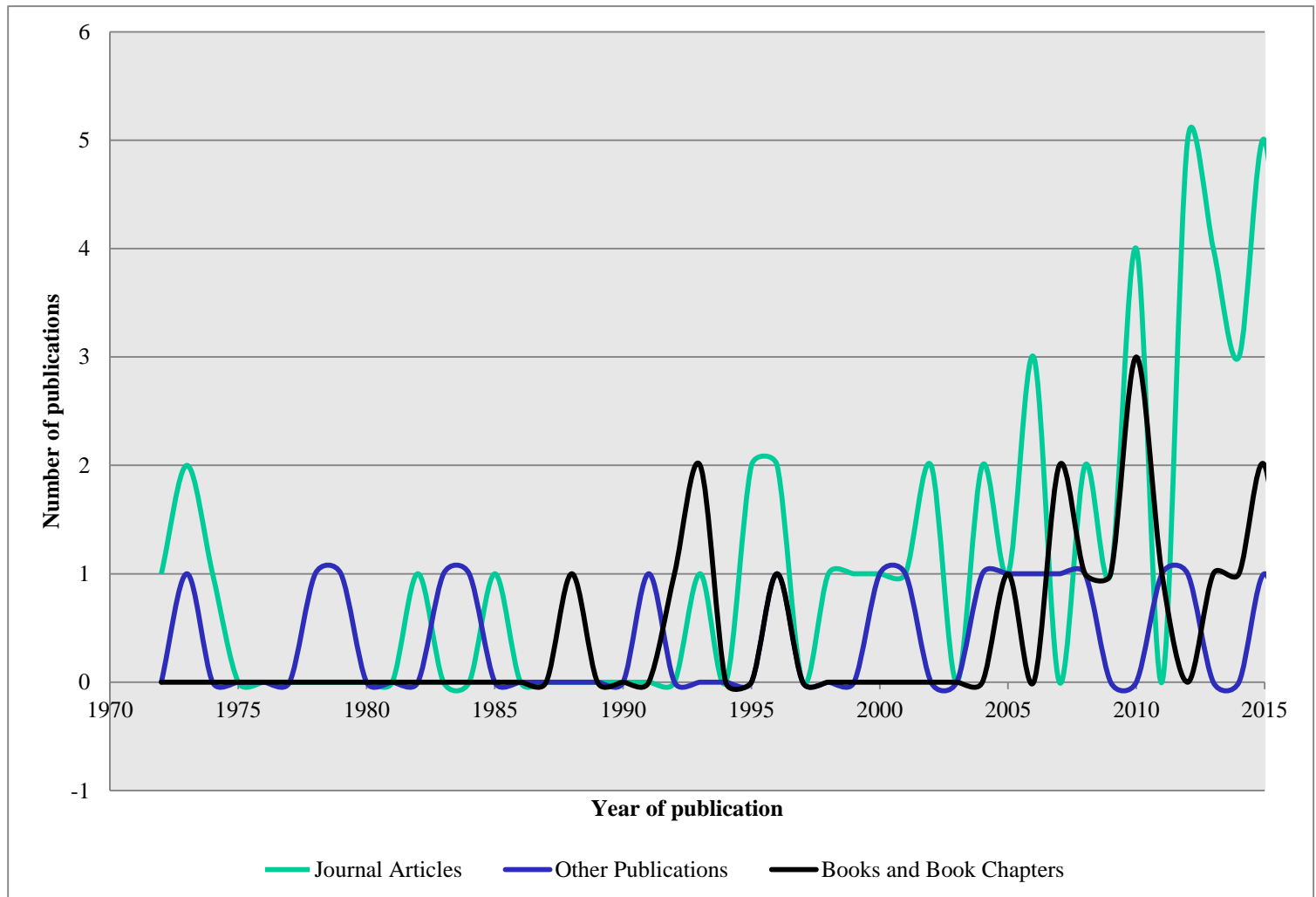
## Number of publications on EE 1999-2015





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# Number of publications on Entrepreneurial Systems 1972-2015





### 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





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**thank you for your attention!**



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