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University of Basilicata, Matera, Italy

The Ecology of Knowledge in the AI Era

CALL FOR EXTENDED ABSTRACTS - IFKAD 2027
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Special Track n.: 29

Rewiring Open Innovation Ecosystems in the AI Era: New Pathways for Knowledge and Technology Transfer

Description

In an increasingly complex and interconnected landscape, innovation rarely originates within the boundaries of a single organization. It emerges from the circulation, recombination, and transfer of knowledge and technologies among heterogeneous actors (firms, universities, start-ups, research centres, Technology and Knowledge Transfer Offices, innovation intermediaries, investors, and public institutions) operating within Open Innovation Ecosystems (OIEs). OIEs can therefore be understood as ecologies of knowledge, in which value is generated less by individual actors than by the orchestrated flows that connect them.

Within these ecologies, Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT) is the core mechanism through which distributed knowledge becomes innovation. Inbound, outbound, and coupled Open Innovation flows, university–industry–government collaborations, corporate–start-up partnerships, and structured, recurring co-creation programmes (open innovation contests, challenges, hackathons, proof-of-concept and validation initiatives) show how research results and entrepreneurial ideas can be translated into new technologies, ventures, and societal value. Yet KTT remains fragile: knowledge is sticky, absorptive capacities are unevenly distributed, intellectual property and contractual arrangements shape who captures value, and many promising results never bridge the gap between proof of concept and market adoption.

Artificial Intelligence is rewiring these dynamics. AI-enabled tools and platforms can support technology scouting, intelligent matchmaking between knowledge seekers and providers, IP and patent analysis, partner evaluation, and market assessment, accelerating the path from research to commercialization and new venture creation. Recent evidence suggests that AI-based platforms can evolve from passive intermediaries into active orchestrators of OIEs, through intelligent stakeholder matching, dynamic governance and coordination, facilitation of knowledge recombination, and the scaling of collaborative innovation processes.

However, AI creates value only when embedded in knowledge-centric, human-guided processes, organizational routines, and trust-based relationships. OIEs are socio-technical systems in which technologies, knowledge dynamics, value creation, and orchestration are closely intertwined. AI also raises new questions about data access and governance, the ownership of AI-generated outputs, and the risk that resource-constrained actors, such as SMEs, early-stage start-ups, and less digitally mature institutions, are excluded from AI-mediated knowledge flows.

This transformation extends beyond the technological dimension. The Industry 5.0 perspective calls for KTT processes that combine technological advancement with human-centricity, sustainability, and resilience, so that OIEs generate not only economic and technological value but also address societal and environmental challenges through responsible and inclusive innovation.

Accordingly, the Special Track examines how OIEs are being reshaped as the established Open Innovation paradigm meets the opportunities offered by AI and other emerging technologies. It focuses on the mechanisms, actors, capabilities, and governance arrangements that shape knowledge and technology transfer. This convergence can open new pathways for knowledge valorisation and entrepreneurship, while preserving the human, relational, and inclusive dimensions on which ecosystems depend.

Indicative Topics

The track welcomes contributions employing diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, case-based, and conceptual contributions exploring how Open Innovation Ecosystems can navigate the increasing complexity of innovation ecologies by leveraging Open Innovation and AI to strengthen knowledge and technology transfer, while opening new pathways for knowledge valorization, entrepreneurship, and commercialization. Contributions bridging research and practice, including evidence from Technology Transfer Offices, corporate open innovation units, and ecosystem intermediaries, are particularly welcome.

Indicative topics and research questions include:

- How can Innovation Ecosystems navigate and orchestrate the increasing complexity of contemporary innovation ecologies?
- How are knowledge and technology transfer processes being reconfigured within AI-enabled Open Innovation Ecosystems?
- How is Open Innovation evolving within increasingly interconnected and technology-enabled Innovation Ecosystems?
- How do AI and emerging technologies reshape knowledge flows, interactions, and collaboration among ecosystem actors, and under which conditions do AI-based platforms evolve from passive intermediaries into active orchestrators of Open Innovation Ecosystems?
- How can Open Innovation and emerging technologies jointly enable knowledge creation, circulation, recombination, and valorization?
- How are AI and emerging technologies transforming technology scouting, intelligent matchmaking, IP management and licensing, and the commercialization of research results?
- How are the roles and relationships of universities, firms, start-ups, entrepreneurs, Technology and Knowledge Transfer Offices, innovation intermediaries, and other ecosystem actors evolving, and which new boundary-spanning roles are emerging in AI-mediated knowledge and technology transfer?
- How can structured and recurring co-creation programmes (open innovation contests, challenges, hackathons, proof-of-concept and validation programmes) bridge the gap between research results and market adoption?
- How do corporate–start-up and university–industry–government collaborations enable bidirectional knowledge and technology transfer and shared value creation for all participating actors?
- How should intellectual property, data, and contractual governance (e.g., co-patenting, data sharing, ownership of AI-generated outputs) be designed to support fair and effective knowledge and technology transfer?
- How can Innovation Ecosystems foster entrepreneurship, including academic spin-offs and research-based start-ups, and the emergence of new pathways from knowledge and research results to market opportunities?
- What capabilities (e.g., absorptive capacity, digital maturity, orchestration capabilities) are required to access, integrate, orchestrate, and valorize distributed knowledge and resources within open and AI-enabled Innovation Ecosystems?
- How can AI-mediated knowledge and technology transfer avoid excluding resource-constrained actors (SMEs, early-stage start-ups, peripheral regions) and foster more inclusive innovation ecosystems?

Keywords

Open Innovation; Entrepreneurship; Innovation Management; Artificial Intelligence; Innovation Ecosystem; Open Innovation Ecosystem; Capabilities

Organizers

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Guidelines and Requirements

Researchers wishing to contribute are invited to submit an EXTENDED ABSTRACT (in MS Word format) of min 500 and max 1000 words, not later than **22 JANUARY 2027**. All submission must be done via dedicated form on our website. The abstract should address theoretical background, research objective, methodology, and results in terms of expected contribution to Knowledge Management theory and practice.
Authors are required to follow the guidelines and templates available on IFKAD website: www.ifkad.org

Important Dates

22 January 2027 – Extended Abstract Submission Deadline
19 February 2027 – Acceptance Notification to Authors
16 April 2027 – Early-Bird Registration & Payment Deadline
23 April 2027 – Full Paper Submission Deadline
28 May 2027 – Regular and PhD Students Registration & Payment Deadline
12 June 2027 – Conference Program Release
28-30 June 2027 – Conference sessions *(to be considered as 3 full working days)*

Please note that all above indicated dates are **CUT-OFF** deadlines. There will not be an extention to any of these.

Further Information

For any information related to the conference and/or any special track, please see the event website at www.ifkad.org or contact the conference manager at **info@ifkad.org**