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Intelligent Knowledge For Sustainable Organizations

CALL FOR EXTENDED ABSTRACTS - IFKAD 2026
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Special Track n.: 09

(Disruptive) Innovation Ecosystems (DIE) in the Era of Twin Transition: The Lens of Intelligence and Knowledge Recombination Capabilities

Description

The convergence of digital and ecological transformations – commonly referred to as the twin transition – is reshaping how firms innovate, create value, and sustain a competitive advantage. This phenomenon is particularly salient for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which face growing pressure to integrate sustainability principles into their digital transformation strategies (Latino, 2025). The twin transition represents a complex, systemic transformation rather than a mere technological evolution. It success hinges on firms' capacity to engage in ecosystem-based collaboration and to develop intelligence and knowledge recombination capabilities suited to fast-changing and uncertain environments (Xiao et al., 2022). Within this context, the theoretical perspective adopted here offers a framework for understand innovation through a strategic and entrepreneurial lens. From this standpoint, innovations arise from the combination and reorganization of existing knowledge components, each rooted in fundamental scientific or technological concepts (Schumpeter, 1964). The interactions among these recombined components give rise new meanings, applications, and functions, forming the foundation of new value creation and innovation (Savino et al., 2017).

Integrating ecosystem thinking into the discourse on knowledge recombination capabilities is particularly relevant (Zhang and Hao, 2025). Innovation ecosystems (IE) – networks of interdependent actors that collaborate to create and capture value – play a central role in enabling firms to access complementary resources, co-develop solutions, and accelerate learning cycles (Granstrand and Holgersson, 2020; Linde et al., 2021). Within these ecosystems, firms are not isolated entities but co-evolving participants embedded within relational and institutional configurations that influence their capability development (Leite et al., 2025).

Moreover, orchestrating an ecosystem itself requires recombinant capabilities, such as the firm's collaborative integration (Carnabuci and Operti, 2013). These capabilities are essential for navigating the twin transitions, which demands technological foresight and sustainability alignment.

Open innovation ecosystems (OIEs) have proven particularly effective in supporting SMEs to develop capabilities by facilitating knowledge exchange, intelligence and knowledge recombination capabilities, resource sharing and co-creation between universities, firms and public institutions (Barile et al., 2024; Secundo et al., 2025). Such ecosystems help SMEs overcome structural barriers, including a lack of skills or digital infrastructure – conditions necessary for effective twin transformation (Secundo et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of literature, much of the current research continues to treat digital and sustainability transitions as separate domains, often overlooking their interdependencies. The concept of the twin advantage – the synergy between digital technologies and sustainable practices – is only beginning to be explored both theoretically and empirically (Aagaard and Vanhaverbeke, 2024).

Although research has advanced our understanding of knowledge recombination capabilities in digital transformation and IEs, important gaps remain. Existing studies often examine how firms develop and enhance innovation through knowledge recombination in changing knowledge environment (Zhong et al., 2024). However, little attention has been paid to how SMEs develop ecosystem-oriented knowledge recombination capabilities to simultaneously address digital and environmental objectives, despite their resource constraints and agility. The processes through which firms and ecosystems co-evolve and recombine their capabilities, strategies and business models to enable the twin transition

remain underexplored (Grimaldi et al., 2025).
In the face of rapid technological evolution – such as advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain – and growing pressure to adopt sustainable practices, firms cannot succeed in isolation. Although technological advancements offer strategic tools to support sustainability, these are not always effectively exploited (Corallo et al., 2025). For instance, AI is increasingly recognized as a key enabler of eco-innovation (Montresor and Vezzani, 2023). Furthermore, AI adoption has been shown to enhance human and structural capital, contributing positively to green value creation while nurturing human intelligence (Huang et al., 2025). To fully leverage these opportunities, firms must collaborate within innovation and knowledge ecosystems to co-evolve business models, strategies and capabilities. Building on these recent developments, this track seeks to explore how enterprises recombine knowledge and technology in order to achieve twin transition's outcome, leveraging knowledge recombinant reuse capability and knowledge recombinant creation capability. It aims to address existing gaps by promoting contributions that examine the interplay between IE and intelligence and knowledge recombination capabilities as enablers of the twin transition.
Leveraging on theory building, empirical investigation and practice-oriented insights, proposed areas of contribution include:

- The role of intelligence and knowledge recombination capabilities in navigating digital and green transitions;
- The co-evolution of firms and ecosystems in developing sustainable and digital business models;
- Mechanisms of capability maturity and their evolution within ecosystems;
- How OIEs and university-industry collaborations foster innovation and knowledge recombination for twin transition;
- How advanced technologies (e.g., AI, IoT, blockchain, extended reality) support SMEs in underpinning micro-foundations and knowledge practices within OIEs;
- The use of capability maturity models to assess and guide readiness for twin transitions;
- The micro-foundations and knowledge practices that underpin intelligence and knowledge recombination capabilities for innovation and sustainability.

We also welcome case studies that demonstrate how intelligence and knowledge recombination capabilities are activated and orchestrated through cross-actor collaboration in sectors, such as agrifood, manufacturing and energy.
Ultimately, this track aims to foster dialogue across disciplines – including management, knowledge management, innovation studies, entrepreneurship and sustainability – and among scholars, practitioners and policymakers.

Keywords

Twin Transition, Knowledge Capabilities, Knowledge Intelligence, Innovation Ecosystems, Open Innovation

Organizers

Domenica Barile, University LUM Giuseppe Degennaro (Italy)
Maria Chiara De Lorenzi, University of Salento (Italy)
Armando Papa, University of Salerno (Italy)
Giustina Secundo, University LUM Giuseppe Degennaro (Italy)
Maria Elena Latino , University of Salento (Italy)

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Guidelines and Requirements

Researchers wishing to contribute are invited to submit an EXTENDED ABSTRACT (in doc/docx format) of min 500 and max 1000 words, not later than **31 JANUARY 2026**. 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

31 January 2026 – Extended Abstract Submission Deadline
24 February 2026 – Acceptance Notification to Authors
20 April 2026 – Early-Bird Registration & Payment Deadline
02 May 2026 – Full Paper Submission Deadline
31 May 2026 – Regular and PhD Students Registration & Payment Deadline
15 June 2026 – Conference Program Release
1-3 July 2026 – 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**