

# Knowledge Futures: AI, Technology, and the New Business Paradigm

IFKAD 2025  
2-4 JULY 2025  
NAPLES, ITALY

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS – IFKAD 2025

Special Track n.: 14

Thematic Area: AI and Circular Economy

### Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Based Innovation Ecosystem from the Perspective of Circular Economy Startups

#### Description

The transition to a Circular Economy (CE) is a complex challenge requiring significant changes at organization and society level (*Del Vecchio et al., 2021; Merli et al., 2018; de Jesus et al., 2019*). Companies need to rethink and innovate their business models to align them with the sustainability and circularity principles while leveraging innovation to disrupt the way they operate (*Bai et al., 2021*). In this context, Innovation Ecosystems have emerged as new form for organizing innovations (*Konietzko et al. 2020*): often they are driven by large organizations (Corporate Innovation Ecosystem) (*Ritala et al., 2013*) interested in establishing alliances with complementary organizations such as young ventures, suppliers, startups or spin-offs to achieve mutual benefits. An “innovation ecosystem” is addressed to sustain all the joint value creating activities performed by an evolving network of different actors integrating their products, services and projects on a digital technology platform (*Dedehayir et al., 2018; Jacobides et al., 2018*).

While the debate on the eco-innovation in the context of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as part of an Innovation Ecosystems is in its infancy stage (*Passaro et al., 2022*).

The benefits of belonging to an Innovation Ecosystem become more evident when the market changes at an unprecedented rate and when large companies respond slowly to environmental changes (*Prashantham and Kumar, 2019*). With complementary characteristics, startups are characterized by a limited availability of financial, organizational and human resources (*Spender et al., 2017*). Despite this, startups are inherently agile, innovative and flexible and have in their DNA the ability to change by demonstrating resilience and business agility (*Margherita et al., 2020*). Although collaboration with large corporations brings many benefits to startups, this process is not without risks and uncertainties (*Secundo et al., 2021; Gimenez-Fernandez et al., 2020*). In addition to limited access to the resources needed to grow and expand (i.e. capital, physical assets, capabilities, technology, etc.), startups in early development stages lack credibility and visibility, encountering difficulties in acquiring customers and scaling rapidly (*Larkin and O'Halloran, 2018*). These are the main reasons for collaboration with large corporations within the innovation ecosystems. In fact, within innovation ecosystems, startups run the risk of losing

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control of their resources, capabilities, and knowledge due to an asymmetry of power between them and the large corporation (*Hora et al., 2018*).

Finally, scholars started to highlight that the dynamic nature of ecosystems makes it desirable or even necessary to employ Digital technologies to meet the information needs in managing part-whole relations (*Wang, 2021*). The remarkable connectivity and embeddedness of such technologies, such as collaborative platforms, social media, machine learning, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and 3D printing (*Nambisan, 2017*), enable innovations undertaken often beyond organizational and industry boundaries. This sustains knowledge exchange among all the actors belonging to the ecosystem as well as the acceleration of the go-to-market strategy.

Despite the increasing literature focused on the Innovation Ecosystem (*Autio and Thomas, 2014*) as a whole (e.g., products or services as a package or a collection of actors interacting with each other), very few studies explored the perspective of the startups involved in (*Wang 2021*). Scholars have only sporadically examined the determinants that characterize the innovative startups performance when collaborating within an Innovation Ecosystem, especially in the context of Circular Economy. Yet how digital technology shapes the integration of efforts in ecosystems has been speculated (*Mann et al., 2012; Secundo et al, 2022*), but rarely examined directly with reference to the Circular Economy framework. Moving from the above premises, the aim of this track proposal is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge about the Innovative Ecosystems for Circular Economy from the startup perspective and supported by Digital Technologies.

We appreciate papers pertaining to the following closely interrelated areas:

- Role of the exponential digital technologies and data analytics in enabling the product/service/prototype development processes of startups within the Innovation Ecosystem.
- Analysis of the peculiarities of circular-born startups in addressing the risks of weakening both their own innovative potential;
- Role of advanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, supporting Circular Economy born Startups'
- Factors sustaining circularity of innovation ecosystems headed by large companies.
- Categorizations of emerging digital technologies enhancing the collaboration of large corporation and startups within the Innovation ecosystem.
- The impact of exponential digital technologies and data analytics on facilitating the development processes of products, services, and prototypes in startups inside the Innovation Ecosystem.
- The role of cutting-edge technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence, in improving strategic decision-making processes in circular startups.
- Categorizations of Artificial Intelligence enhancing the collaboration of circular startups within the Innovation ecosystem.

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## Keywords

*Innovation Ecosystem, Circular Economy, Start-ups, Digital Technologies, Artificial Intelligence*

## Organizers

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## Guidelines

Researchers wishing to contribute are invited to submit an **EXTENDED ABSTRACT** (in editable format) of **min 500 and max 1000 words** not later than **31 JANUARY 2025**, using the submission procedure available on the 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 for both extended abstracts as well as full papers available on IFKAD site: [www.ifkad.org](http://www.ifkad.org)

## Important dates

31 January 2025	<i>Extended Abstract submission deadline</i>
24 February 2025	<i>Acceptance notification to authors</i>
20 April 2025	<i>Early-Bird registration cut off</i>
02 May 2025	<i>Full paper submission deadline</i>
31 May 2025	<i>Registration deadline</i>
2-4 July 2025	<i>Conference sessions</i>

## For further information

For any information related to the event, please see the event website at [www.ifkad.org](http://www.ifkad.org) or contact the conference manager at [info@ifkad.org](mailto:info@ifkad.org)