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SUSTAINABILITY BY DESIGN:

RETHINKING STRATEGY, PEOPLE & DIGITAL FUTURES

8th International Conference on Management and Organization

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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**ICMO 2026 — 8th International Conference on Management and
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Sustainability by Design: Rethinking Strategy, People & Digital Futures

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Jovana Tomaševića 37, 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro
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University of Montenegro, Faculty of Economics Podgorica
Jovana Tomaševića 37, 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro

FOR THE PUBLISHERS

Ivan Radević
President, The Montenegrin Academy of Management (MAOM)

Mijat Jocović
Dean, Faculty of Economics Podgorica, University of Montenegro

EDITED BY

Ivan Radević
Matej Černe

COVER DESIGN

Dušan Šćepanović

TECHNICAL PREPARATION

Jovana Milić
David Vukićević
Dragana Ćirović

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The 8th International Conference on Management and Organization (ICMO 2026), held under the theme “Sustainability by Design: Rethinking Strategy, People & Digital Futures”, brings together scholars, editors, doctoral researchers, institutional leaders, and invited voices from academia, business, and society. The conference is designed as a focused academic meeting point for discussions on how sustainability can be intentionally embedded into strategy, organization design, people management, leadership, innovation, and digital transformation.

This Book of Abstracts includes abstract-based contributions accepted for presentation at ICMO 2026. The contributions reflect the breadth of current management and organization scholarship, with particular emphasis on sustainable organization, human-centered work, digital futures, artificial intelligence, governance, innovation, research methods, and teaching and learning in management education.

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Ivan Radević and Matej Černe
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UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISES' TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN OPEN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS: EVIDENCE FROM WIDENING ECONOMIES

Stojan DEBARLIEV

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Economics – Skopje, North Macedonia
stojan.debarliev@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Aleksandra JANESKA-ILIEV

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Economics – Skopje, North Macedonia
aleksandra.janeska-iliev@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Ljubomir DRAKULEVSKI

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Economics – Skopje, North Macedonia
ljubomir.drakulevski@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Bojan KITANOVIKJ

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Economics – Skopje, North Macedonia
bojan.kitanovikj@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Theoretical background

The integration and commercialization phases of entrepreneurial companies frequently become the bottleneck, particularly in situations where there is a lack of institutional support, intermediaries, and inter-organizational trust (Hosseini et al., 2017; Hällérstrand et al., 2023). Open innovation research demonstrates that businesses are increasingly creating and capturing value by combining internal knowledge with external ideas, partners, and pathways to market. Simultaneously, perspectives on entrepreneurial ecosystems and national and regional innovation systems contend that rather than relying solely on the capabilities of individual firms, innovation outcomes are determined by the arrangement and coordination of actors, including universities, businesses, governments, intermediaries, and civil society, as well as a plethora of enabling conditions related to finance, regulation, infrastructure, and networks (Stam, 2015; Acs et al., 2017). Institutional voids, fragmented governance, and uneven enforcement increase transaction costs and reduce incentives for long-term collaboration, which is another way that institutional theory explains why so-called widening and transitional economies may have persistent gaps between knowledge production and commercialization (Jjagwe et al., 2024).

When sustainable entrepreneurship enters the picture, we can conceptualize the commercialization entails creating profitable businesses that produce social and environmental benefits in addition to financial gains, which frequently calls for greater stakeholder alignment and longer time horizons (Qian et al., 2018; Barbosa et al., 2025). The sustainability promise of new open innovation ecosystems is often limited by limited absorptive capacity, policy mixes that do not consistently de-risk experimentation and scaling, and weak technology transfer infrastructures such as underdeveloped technology transfer offices and intermediaries (Perkmann et al., 2013). Using two complementary outcomes – technology transfer readiness and commercialization capability – we build on these streams by presenting technology transfer and sustainable entrepreneurship as ecosystem-level outcomes that depend on a blend of enablers in the form of finance and government incentives as well as barriers.

Purpose of the study

The study aims to explain how sustainable startups in emerging open innovation ecosystems overcome institutional and resource constraints to achieve sustainable commercialization. It addresses the identified research gap explaining why while open innovation for sustainability is expanding rapidly, the mechanisms linking ecosystem openness to commercialization outcomes, especially under weak or uneven institutions, remain under-specified and empirically fragmented. Accordingly, the research examines the influence of barriers to technology transfer, financial support conditions, and government incentives on two essential outcomes in nascent open innovation ecosystems – technology transfer readiness and commercialization capability. This is analyzed across four Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia).

As such, our proposed model views barriers as institutional and coordination tensions that impede readiness and commercialization. In contrast, finance and additional incentives function as ecosystem mechanisms that mitigate risk, facilitate investment, and enhance market access for innovation-driven and sustainability-focused entrepreneurship. Considering this, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: Technology transfer barriers negatively affect technology transfer readiness.

H1b: Technology transfer barriers negatively affect commercialization capability.

H2a: Better financial support conditions increase technology transfer readiness.

H2b: Better financial support conditions increase commercialization capability.

H3a: Stronger government incentives increase technology transfer readiness.

H3b: Stronger government incentives increase commercialization capability.

Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design is utilized to evaluate the proposed relationships within the framework of emerging open innovation ecosystems in the four developing economies. We got the data by sending a structured questionnaire online to experts and managers from more than 100 organizations that focus on innovation. These organizations included industry members, research institutions, and intermediaries with experience in technology transfer and entrepreneurship development. The model defines technology transfer readiness as the readiness to participate in open innovation and transfer processes, such as innovation culture, leadership, partnerships, and infrastructure (Borah et al., 2023; Menter, 2024). Additionally, commercialization capability is perceived as the capacity to convert innovation into marketable products like IP protection, product-market fit, market access, and startup support (Johnson et al., 2023).

Following best practices in variance-based structural equations modeling for prediction-oriented models and complex nomological structures, the analysis is conducted in two stages. First, the exploratory factor analysis is conducted to evaluate dimensionality and internal consistency. Then, PLS-SEM (SmartPLS) is used to test structural paths through bootstrapping, reporting path estimates and explained variance (R^2). This method is in line with common methodological advice for PLS-SEM in research on innovation and entrepreneurship, especially when the goal is to develop theories and make predictions in complex contexts (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2022).

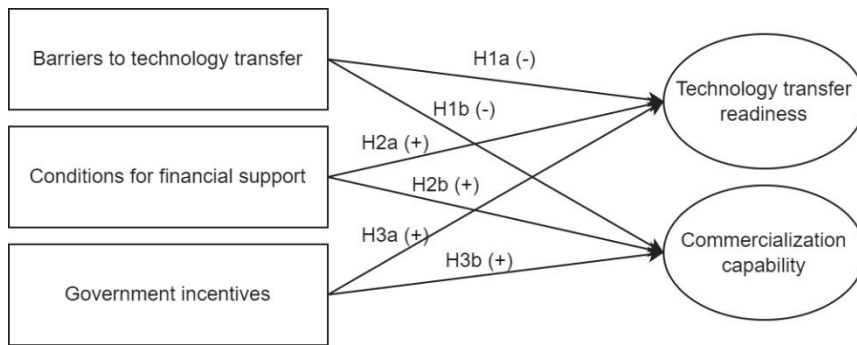


Figure 1. Empirical model

Expected findings

Preliminary evidence suggests that obstacles to technology transfer considerably hinder both technology transfer readiness and commercialization potential, validating the notion that institutional and coordination tensions impede the integration and scaling of innovations within transitional ecosystems. Theoretically, these effects align with previous findings indicating that cognitive distance, misaligned incentives, and inadequate bridging institutions hinder effective university-industry collaboration and the subsequent commercialization of research outputs (Perkmann et al., 2013). On the other hand, conditions for financial support or the availability and accessibility of funding sources like grants, investment opportunities, and tax breaks, are expected to have strong positive effects on both outcomes. This pattern corresponds with ecosystem research highlighting resource mobilization and infrastructure scaling as crucial to entrepreneurship and innovation performance, especially in contexts with limited private capital markets and elevated risk (Acs et al., 2017). Lastly, government incentives or the policy tools that promote collaboration, IP protection, and commercialization, are expected to have a positive effect on technology transfer readiness and, to a lesser extent, on commercialization capability. This suggests that policy may be particularly effective at improving conditions for upstream collaboration, while commercialization outcomes also rely on market-facing capabilities and finance. This aligns with the perspective that policy actions can lower transaction costs and synchronize incentives, necessitating supplementary firm-level competencies and financial mechanisms to convert readiness into substantial, sustainability-focused market impact (West & Bogers, 2014).

Theoretical and practical contributions

This research reveals the mechanisms through which nascent open innovation ecosystems in expanding economies convert knowledge into enduring entrepreneurial results. It distinguishes between technology transfer readiness and commercialization capability, illustrating that obstacles weaken both, while financial support conditions and government incentives enhance them. This demonstrates that collaboration-focused reforms primarily foster readiness, whereas sustained commercialization necessitates complementary financial and market-oriented competencies.

Keywords: *Technology transfer; Commercialization capability; Open innovation; Sustainable entrepreneurship*

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