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# From Knowledge Capabilities to Responsible Transformation: Entrepreneurial Agency, Digital Adaptation and Sustainability under Institutional Constraints

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**Abstract**

*Purpose — This paper explains why knowledge investment and entrepreneurial action do not necessarily translate into socially sustainable transformation. Design — A critical, bounded integrative synthesis connects resource-based theory, organizational learning, entrepreneurial agency, digital transformation, environmental innovation and institutional governance. The Staniewski-associated bibliography is treated as a purposive intellectual corpus rather than an unbiased sample of the field. Findings — We develop a four-stage model in which knowledge conversion, agency activation, technological recombination and value accountability are jointly conditioned by institutional credibility and distributional inclusion. We specify six propositions, rival mechanisms and a falsifiable empirical agenda. Originality — Rather than treating digitalization or innovation as inherently beneficial, the framework distinguishes private appropriation from durable public value and identifies conditions under which entrepreneurial capabilities can amplify exclusion or environmental burdens. Limitations — The study is conceptual; bibliographic entries are drawn from a supplied list, and publication-level empirical findings have not been independently verified against all full texts.*

***Keywords:*** *knowledge capabilities; entrepreneurial agency; absorptive capacity; digital transformation; responsible innovation; sustainable finance; institutions*

## 1. Introduction and research problem

The central puzzle is not whether knowledge, entrepreneurship and digital technologies matter, but why comparable investments generate markedly different economic, social and ecological consequences. Resource-based accounts explain heterogeneity in valuable assets (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984); absorptive capacity and organizational learning explain their recombination (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; March, 1991; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Yet neither technological adoption nor entrepreneurial initiative guarantees broadly shared gains. A coherent framework must therefore distinguish capacity formation, value capture, externalities and institutional accountability.

We ask: Under which combinations of organizational capabilities, entrepreneurial agency, digital affordances and institutional conditions does innovation generate durable and inclusive value rather than merely private rents? Our contribution is a conditional causal architecture, not a claim that the reviewed studies have already empirically established its pathways. This distinction matters when integrating research across heterogeneous designs and levels of analysis.

## 2. Review design, corpus boundaries and evidentiary discipline

This is a bounded integrative conceptual review, not a systematic review, bibliometric analysis or meta-analysis. The starting corpus was supplied as a bibliography focused on publications authored or coauthored by M. Staniewski and complemented by classic works in management, innovation, sustainability and governance. Inclusion of all Staniewski-associated items serves a declared corpus-mapping purpose; it must not be mistaken for independent evidence of their relative importance or for an exhaustive representation of the field.

The synthesis proceeds in four steps: (1) classify each work by its primary conceptual object rather than by publication title alone; (2) separate measurement, explanation, normative argument and scenario modelling; (3) identify bridging mechanisms and cross-level mismatches; and (4) formulate propositions and rival explanations. Bibliographic metadata and titles support identification of research questions, not detailed claims about results. Without full-text appraisal, no causal effect sizes, statistical significance, or confirmed findings are attributed to individual studies. Future systematic testing requires database searches, explicit screening, risk-of-bias assessment and full-text extraction.

## 3. Core theoretical architecture

We propose four analytically distinct stages. Knowledge conversion concerns the movement from individual and tacit expertise to organizational routines (Polanyi, 1966; Alavi and Leidner, 2001). Agency activation concerns how individuals mobilize resources, intentions and relationships under uncertainty (Knight, 1921; Gartner, 1985; McClelland, 1961). Digital recombination changes coordination, discovery and appropriation possibilities (Teece, 1986; Henderson and Venkatraman, 1993). Value accountability evaluates economic returns alongside distributional and ecological consequences (Hart, 1995; Elkington, 1997; Ostrom, 1990). These stages may reinforce each other but are neither interchangeable nor invariably sequential.

Two moderators govern the model: institutional credibility (the enforceability, predictability and legitimacy of rules) and inclusion capacity (who can access, use and benefit from knowledge and technology). The model thereby distinguishes firm-level competitive advantage from social welfare and recognizes that apparent success on one level can conceal costs at another (Baumol, 1990; Moore, 1995).

## 4. Knowledge conversion and organizational capability

Human-capital architecture and knowledge-sharing routines can be complementary, but they answer different questions: who possesses expertise, how it is transferred, and whether incentives support application. Appraisal and coaching are governance mechanisms, not proxies for knowledge creation; intellectual-capital accounting is a measurement practice, not proof of productivity gains (Huselid, 1995; Argote et al., 2003; Davenport and Prusak, 1998). A critical interpretation must therefore test whether human-resource interventions change absorptive capacity rather than merely codifying performance.

Within this bounded corpus, the works on “Analiza stanowisk interesariuszy projektu "Budowa podziemnego magazynu gazu Kosakowo""; “The innovative role of personnel appraisal in the knowledge-based enterprises”; “Pomiar kapitału intelektualnego w spółkach energetycznych”; “Innowacyjne zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w Polskich przedsiębiorstwach” (Staniewski, 2012; Staniewski, 2012; Szczepankowski and Staniewski, 2012; Staniewski, 2011) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

A further set addresses “Bariery kształtowania kapitału ludzkiego [Barriers of the Human Capital Shaping]”; “Management in the new economy: Classic and modernity”; “The elements of Human Resources Management supporting knowledge management”; “Rola komunikacji w procesie coachingu [The Role of Communications in Coaching]” (Krochmal and Staniewski, 2010; Staniewski and Szczepankowski, 2009; Staniewski, 2008; Dziewulska and Staniewski, 2008) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

Related studies and contributions concern “Architektura zasobów ludzkich nie tylko na trudne czasy”; “Podstawowe elementy zarządzania wiedzą [Basic Elements of Knowledge Management]”; “Wybrane koncepcje zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi [Chosen Concepts of Human Resources Management]”; “Dzielenie się wiedzą w Buckman Laboratories-czyli jak to robili pionierzy” (Staniewski, 2007; Staniewski, 2007; Staniewski, 2007; Staniewski, 2004) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

The remaining strand examines “Praktyki zarządzania wiedzą w przedsiębiorstwach funkcjonujących w Polsce” (Dąbrowski et al., 2002) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

Collectively, this stream motivates the mechanism knowledge routines → organizational learning → adaptive

capacity. The competing explanation is selection: already successful firms may be better positioned to introduce sophisticated HR systems. Longitudinal designs with pre-treatment capability measures are required.

## 5. Entrepreneurial agency and relational embeddedness

Entrepreneurial intention, personality, family relationships and educational settings operate at distinct levels. Psychometric validation establishes measurement properties, not entrepreneurial causality. Communication may reduce uncertainty and provide emotional resources, but family obligations can also constrain risk taking. Ethics is not a residual topic: opportunistic value capture may yield private success without public benefit (Gartner, 1989; Shapero and Sokol, 1982; Schumpeter, 1934).

Within this bounded corpus, the works on "Intimate relationship communication, knowledge and relationship satisfaction in entrepreneurial success—the mediating role of self-efficacy and achievement motivation"; "Views of Warsaw students on LGBT+ Conclusions from the study"; "Entrepreneur's Family Communication Questionnaire—Psychometric properties of the tool"; "School as institution developing children's creativity" (Awruk et al., 2026; Awruk et al., 2023; Staniewski et al., 2023; Słomski et al., 2023) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

A further set addresses "Entrepreneurial dispositions personality inventory: Development and validation"; "Systems approach to entrepreneurial success: The theoretical discussion on the significance of family factors for effective entrepreneurship"; "The hope for economic success among the youth"; "The organisational and psychological predictors of entrepreneurial success: Pursuit of success" (Janowski et al., 2019; Staniewski and Awruk, 2017; Staniewski and Awruk, 2016; Staniewski, 2016) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

Related studies and contributions concern "Organisational entrepreneurship, management philosophy of local company in Japan"; "Are ethics in entrepreneurship possible at all?"; "Trends in the Use of Cyclical Payment Channels by Polish Households: Implications for E-Banking"; "Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on the Entrepreneurship of Polish Students" (Staniewski and Nakatomi, 2015; Staniewski et al., 2015; Szopiński and Staniewski, 2014; Staniewski and Szopiński, 2013) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

The remaining strand examines "Bariery przedsiębiorczości studentów a nadzieja na sukces"; "New directions and trends in the trade of the XXI century" (Staniewski, 2009; Bitkowska and Staniewski, 2008) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

The key mechanism is relational support → efficacy and opportunity interpretation → action, conditioned by institutional and household constraints. A competing explanation is reverse causality: entrepreneurial success may improve relationship satisfaction and reported self-efficacy.

## 6. Digital recombination and institutional exposure

Digital tools can improve discovery, reduce coordination costs and generate novel business models, yet access is not use and use is not welfare. Machine-learning adoption and AI-assisted policy simulation differ in both unit of analysis and evidentiary demands. Innovation communities raise allocation questions, while macroeconomic scenarios require explicit assumptions and validation rather than being read as forecasts (Davis, 1989; Brynjolfsson and Hitt, 2000; Chesbrough, 2003).

Within this bounded corpus, the works on "Actual technology use among older adults and its effects in an emerging country: Exploring life satisfaction and social inclusion"; "Intelligent transformation: Navigating the AI revolution in business and technology"; "Value creation and appropriation from the use of machine learning: A study of start-ups using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis"; "Focus on yourself: The impact of users' self-focus orientation on NPD ideas' attention allocation in online innovation communities" (Al-Omoush et al., 2026; Costa-Climent et al., 2024; Costa-Climent et al., 2024; Xie et al., 2024) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at

full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

A further set addresses "Artificial Intelligence (AI) can change the way of doing policy modelling"; "A simulation of a possible war between Russia and Ukraine: How painful and how costly"; "How inflation and exchange rate affects pension plan systems real value: The case of Malaysia"; "Evaluating corruption under the application of the SOCIO-economic development desgrowth index (Đ-index): the case of Guatemala" (Estrada et al., 2023; Staniewski and Khan, 2022; Khan and Staniewski, 2018; Estrada et al., 2018) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

Related studies and contributions concern "How to apply multidimensional graphs in non-cooperative games [Preprint]" (Cohen and Staniewski, 2017) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

The hypothesized pathway is digital affordances → experimentation and recombination → differentiated outcomes. The competing mechanism is unequal appropriation: platforms and well-resourced incumbents may capture benefits while less-connected users experience exclusion.

## 7. Ecological transition and sustainable value

Green innovation should not be conflated with environmental improvement. Patent counts, renewable-energy uptake, financial resilience and emissions trajectories measure different phenomena. Green finance may reallocate capital without guaranteeing additional decarbonization; market openness can accelerate clean investment or resource-intensive expansion. Governance and institutional quality are therefore causal conditions, not background controls (Porter and van der Linde, 1995; Hart and Milstein, 2003; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Within this bounded corpus, the works on "Advancing environmental quality through innovation and green entrepreneurship"; "Unpacking the environmental consequences of energy patents: A quantile-based kernel regression perspective"; "The convergence of environmental innovation, stakeholder pressure, open innovation in logistics firms: pathway to renewable energy in the presence of managerial cognition & competitive advantage"; "The resilience of green bonds during market turmoil: Implications for investors and policymakers" (Hussain et al., 2026; Adebayo et al., 2026; Sadiq et al., 2025; Meo et al., 2026) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

A further set addresses "Policy implications of technological innovations, domestic material consumption and renewable energy consumption for achieving sustainable development goals in G7 economies"; "Unshielding the effect of financial globalisation and technological innovation on renewable energy consumption: A multivariate wavelet quantile-based approach"; "Energy intensive growth and the transition pathways: Insights into the role of renewable energy and open market conditions in developing countries"; "Green bonds and sustainable finance: The evolution of portfolio management in conventional markets" (Adebayo et al., 2025; Adebayo et al., 2025; Bekun et al., 2025; Meo and Staniewski, 2025) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

Related studies and contributions concern "The long-term response of FDI to insecurity and corruption: evidence from Nigeria"; "Does Forest Disturbance Matter For Climate Degradation"; "Comparative Analysis of Features of Polish And Lithuanian Day-Ahead Electricity Market Prices"; "Polish day-ahead electricity market prices" (Abu et al., 2022; Haseeb et al., 2021; Bobinaite et al., 2013; Bobinaite et al., 2012) delineate different constructs and settings. They are used here to map the scope and boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism, not as interchangeable empirical confirmations. Their designs, populations and outcome definitions must be compared at full-text level before any directional synthesis or claim of agreement is warranted.

The mechanism is environmental innovation plus credible institutions → measurable net environmental gains. Competing pathways include rebound effects, greenwashing and leakage of pollution across jurisdictions; outcome measures must incorporate life-cycle and distributional boundaries.

## 8. Propositions and boundary conditions

P1. Knowledge-sharing routines are positively associated with adaptive capability only when incentives reward cross-functional application rather than documentation alone.

P2. Relational support is associated with entrepreneurial experimentation through self-efficacy, but the association weakens under severe household resource constraints.

P3. Digital adoption predicts innovation outcomes more strongly when complementary skills and organizational redesign are present than when technology is deployed in isolation.

P4. Digital inclusion moderates the relationship between technology use and life satisfaction; access without meaningful capability development yields smaller social benefits.

P5. Environmental innovation is associated with net ecological improvement only where monitoring and regulatory credibility limit rebound, leakage and symbolic compliance.

P6. Sustainable finance supports durable transition more strongly where additionality, transparent metrics and institutional accountability constrain superficial relabelling.

These propositions are hypotheses derived from theoretical integration; none is represented as an established finding of the entire corpus. Tests should use multi-level longitudinal data, preregistered outcomes and measures that distinguish private returns from social and environmental externalities.

## 9. Research design and falsification agenda

A viable empirical design would link individual entrepreneurial surveys, firm-level HR and digital-adoption panels, and regional indicators of regulation and environmental performance. Measurement invariance is essential before comparing contexts. Temporal separation and instrumental or quasi-experimental strategies may help address selection and reverse causality; neither should be asserted without a defensible identification argument. Rival models include technology-first determinism, institutional determinism and selection by initial firm quality. The proposed model is weakened if knowledge routines fail to predict adaptive capacity after baseline performance is controlled, or if digital gains remain entirely attributable to pre-existing resource advantages.

## 10. Discussion: theoretical contribution and practical implications

The article contributes a conditional account of responsible transformation: resources become capabilities through organized learning; agency mobilizes those capabilities; digital tools change the feasible set of recombinations; and institutional arrangements determine whether captured value is durable and socially legitimate. This sequence resolves a recurring category error in broad innovation narratives: firm-level profitability is not evidence of macro-level sustainability. It also distinguishes measurement contributions from substantive causal explanations, allowing psychometric, case, simulation and environmental-econometric work to occupy appropriate positions in a common analytical architecture.

For managers, the framework suggests auditing complements rather than purchasing technology in isolation. For policymakers, it directs attention to access, contestability, credible monitoring and distributional outcomes. These are conceptual implications requiring contextual testing, not policy-effect estimates.

## 11. Limitations and conclusion

The analysis is deliberately bounded by a researcher-centred supplied bibliography. This introduces selection and citation-concentration risks; the corpus should be expanded with independently searched rival studies before submission as a comprehensive field review. Bibliographic metadata were not verified item by item against publisher records, and the full text of every cited work was not supplied. Accordingly, the manuscript avoids claims about study findings that cannot be substantiated. A journal-ready version requires source-by-source DOI and metadata verification, full-text critical appraisal, and adaptation to a named journal's word limit and reference rules.

The proposed framework is useful only insofar as it generates discriminating empirical tests. Knowledge, entrepreneurship, digitization and sustainability should not be treated as mutually reinforcing slogans. Their relationship is conditional, multi-level and open to falsification.

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