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INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL DIGITALIZATION: A CONCEPTUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

Global digitalization has significantly transformed the mechanisms of international technology transfer, challenging traditional theoretical interpretations developed within the industrial economic paradigm. Classical approaches usually conceptualize technology transfer as a linear and transaction-based process focused on the exchange of tangible technological assets. However, such interpretations increasingly fail to reflect the complexity of contemporary technology transfer shaped by digital platforms, innovation ecosystems, and institutional frameworks.

This article aims to reconsider the concept of international technology transfer in the context of global digitalization. Based on a critical analysis of classical, institutional, and network-based approaches, the study proposes an author's conceptualization of international technology transfer that reflects its modern characteristics. International technology transfer is defined as a multivector, multilevel, and institutionally mediated process of transferring knowledge, technological solutions, and digital innovations among actors of the international economy through digital platforms and networked innovation ecosystems.

The proposed conceptual approach emphasizes the non-linearity of technology flows, the interaction of actors at different analytical levels, and the role of institutional and regulatory environments in shaping technology transfer outcomes. The findings contribute to the theoretical foundations of international economic relations and provide a conceptual basis for further empirical research and policy analysis, particularly in the context of digital transformation and innovation strategies within the European Union.

Keywords: international technology transfer; global digitalization; digital platforms; innovation ecosystems; institutional framework; digital economy; European Union.

JEL classification: F02, F63, O33, O38.

МІЖНАРОДНИЙ ТРАНСФЕР ТЕХНОЛОГІЙ В УМОВАХ ГЛОБАЛЬНОЇ ЦИФРОВІЗАЦІЇ: КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНИЙ ТА ІНСТИТУЦІЙНИЙ ПІДХІД

Глобальна цифровізація суттєво трансформує сучасну систему міжнародних економічних відносин, змінюючи не лише виробничі процеси та форми ринкової взаємодії, а й механізми створення, поширення та використання технологій у світовій економіці. В умовах цифрової економіки традиційні підходи до трактування міжнародного трансферу технологій, сформовані переважно в межах індустріальної парадигми, дедалі частіше виявляються недостатніми для пояснення сучасних процесів технологічного обміну. Класичні визначення зазвичай розглядають трансфер технологій як лінійний та транзакційний процес передачі матеріалізованих технологічних рішень або ноу-хау від країни-донора до країни-реципієнта, що не повною мірою відображає реалії цифрової трансформації.

Метою статті є концептуальне переосмислення сутності міжнародного трансферу технологій в умовах глобальної цифровізації шляхом формування авторського підходу, який враховує структурні зміни, зумовлені розвитком цифрових платформ, мережесих інноваційних екосистем та інституційних механізмів регулювання. У межах дослідження здійснено критичний аналіз класичних, інституційних та мережесих підходів до трактування трансферу технологій, а також узагальнено наукові напрацювання у сфері цифрової економіки та інноваційної теорії.

У результаті дослідження запропоновано авторське визначення міжнародного трансферу технологій в умовах глобальної цифровізації як багатовекторного, багаторівневого та інституційно опосередкованого процесу передачі знань, технологічних рішень і цифрових інновацій між суб'єктами міжнародної економіки, що здійснюється з використанням цифрових платформ, мережесих інноваційних екосистем та інструментів цифрової взаємодії. Запропонований підхід акцентує увагу на нелінійному характері технологічних потоків, взаємодії учасників на різних рівнях економічної системи — від мікрорівня підприємств і наукових установ до

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макрорівня національних і наднаціональних інституцій — а також на визначальній ролі регуляторного та інституційного середовища.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в інтеграції цифрового, інституційного та мережевого вимірів у єдину концептуальну модель міжнародного трансферу технологій, що дозволяє більш адекватно відобразити сучасну динаміку глобального технологічного обміну. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає у можливості їх використання для подальших емпіричних досліджень, а також для обґрунтування та оцінювання політик у сфері інновацій і цифрового розвитку, зокрема в контексті стратегій Європейського Союзу щодо цифрової трансформації та розвитку інноваційних екосистем.

Ключові слова: міжнародний трансфер технологій; глобальна цифровізація; цифрові платформи; інноваційні екосистеми; інституційне середовище; цифрова економіка; Європейський Союз.

Problem statement. The acceleration of global digitalization has fundamentally transformed the structure and dynamics of the international economy, reshaping not only production systems and market interactions but also the mechanisms through which knowledge and technologies are created, disseminated, and absorbed across borders. Digital technologies — including information and communication technologies (ICT), artificial intelligence, cloud computing, blockchain solutions, and digital platforms — have become integral components of contemporary innovation processes, significantly influencing the patterns of international technology transfer [1, p. 27].

In the classical economic literature, international technology transfer has predominantly been conceptualized as a linear and relatively sequential process involving the transmission of technical knowledge, equipment, or know-how from technologically advanced economies to less developed recipients [2, p. 41]. Such interpretations were largely shaped by the industrial paradigm, where technological change was closely associated with physical capital, manufacturing capabilities, and bilateral contractual arrangements. However, the rapid expansion of digital infrastructures and the emergence of global digital ecosystems have profoundly altered the nature of technological exchange, challenging the adequacy of traditional analytical frameworks.

In the digital era, technologies are no longer transferred solely through tangible assets or formal licensing agreements. Instead, technology transfer increasingly occurs through complex networks of interactions mediated by digital platforms, innovation ecosystems, multinational corporations, research institutions, and public authorities. These processes often transcend national borders and institutional boundaries, creating multidirectional flows of data, knowledge, and digital solutions that cannot be fully captured by conventional linear models of technology diffusion [3, p. 88]. As a result, international technology transfer has evolved into a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by non-linearity, multilevel governance, and institutional embeddedness.

Despite the growing recognition of digitalization as a transformative force, a significant theoretical gap persists in the conceptualization of international technology transfer. Many existing definitions continue to treat digital technologies as auxiliary tools rather than as structural determinants of the transfer process itself [4, p. 56]. Consequently, the digital dimension is often addressed fragmentarily, without being systematically integrated into the core understanding of how technologies are generated,

exchanged, and adopted in the global economy. This limitation reduces the explanatory power of traditional approaches and constrains their applicability to contemporary policy and research agendas.

The problem is particularly salient in the context of the European Union, where digital transformation has become a strategic priority and where technology transfer is increasingly embedded in broader institutional, regulatory, and policy frameworks. Initiatives such as the European Digital Strategy, the development of common data spaces, and the promotion of innovation ecosystems underscore the need for a more nuanced theoretical understanding of technology transfer that reflects its digital and institutional complexity [5, p. 103]. Without an updated conceptual framework, it becomes difficult to adequately assess the effectiveness of such initiatives or to design policies that foster sustainable and inclusive technological development.

Therefore, the core scientific problem addressed in this study lies in the mismatch between the rapidly evolving reality of international technology transfer under global digitalization and the persistence of outdated conceptual definitions that fail to capture its contemporary characteristics. Addressing this problem requires a rethinking of international technology transfer as a process that is not only economic in nature but also deeply embedded in digital infrastructures, institutional arrangements, and networked forms of interaction. The resolution of this theoretical challenge is a necessary precondition for advancing both academic research and evidence-based policy-making in the field of international economic relations.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The concept of international technology transfer has been extensively discussed in economic literature; however, the diversity of approaches reflects the complexity and evolving nature of this phenomenon. Early theoretical contributions primarily emerged within the framework of classical and neoclassical economics, where technology transfer was interpreted as a by-product of international trade, foreign direct investment, and capital mobility. In this context, technology was often treated as an exogenous factor embedded in goods and production processes, with limited attention paid to institutional and organizational dimensions [6, p. 73].

Early theoretical interpretations of international technology transfer were developed within classical and neoclassical economic frameworks, particularly in the works of P. Krugman, M. Obstfeld, and M. Melitz, who viewed technology transfer primarily as an indirect outcome of international trade and factor mobility. The firm-level and

investment-based perspective was further advanced by J. Dunning and S. Lundan, who emphasized the role of multinational enterprises, foreign direct investment, licensing, and joint ventures as key channels of cross-border technology diffusion.

Institutional and evolutionary approaches were elaborated by R. Nelson, who introduced the concept of national innovation systems, and E. Rogers, whose theory of innovation diffusion highlighted the importance of social interaction and network effects in technological change. More recent contributions addressing digital transformation and technology diffusion draw on the works of M. Castells, R. Baldwin, and A. Gawer, who focus on digital platforms, global networks, and ecosystem-based models of innovation.

Subsequent studies expanded this perspective by emphasizing the role of multinational corporations and foreign direct investment as key channels of international technology transfer. Scholars argued that transnational firms facilitate the diffusion of advanced technologies through subsidiaries, joint ventures, and licensing agreements, thereby contributing to productivity growth in host economies [7, p. 118]. While this approach acknowledged the strategic behavior of firms, it continued to conceptualize technology transfer as a relatively linear and hierarchical process, flowing predominantly from developed to developing countries.

Institutional and evolutionary economic theories introduced a more nuanced understanding by highlighting the importance of absorptive capacity, national innovation systems, and institutional environments. According to this strand of literature, successful technology transfer depends not only on access to external technologies but also on the ability of recipient countries to adapt, modify, and internalize new knowledge [8, p. 56]. These contributions marked a significant shift away from purely transactional interpretations, yet they often remained anchored in pre-digital assumptions about the spatial and organizational boundaries of innovation.

With the advent of the knowledge-based economy, researchers increasingly focused on innovation networks, learning processes, and knowledge spillovers as central elements of technology transfer. The diffusion of innovations began to be viewed as a socially embedded process shaped by interactions among firms, universities, research institutions, and public authorities [4, p. 92]. This perspective laid the groundwork for understanding technology transfer as a multidirectional and interactive phenomenon. Nevertheless, many of these studies did not fully anticipate the transformative impact of digital technologies on the scale, speed, and structure of international knowledge flows.

More recent research has addressed the implications of digitalization for innovation and technology diffusion. Digital platforms, data-driven business models, and global digital ecosystems have significantly reduced transaction costs and lowered barriers to cross-border collaboration [9, p. 41]. Scholars have noted that digital technologies enable new forms of technology transfer that are less dependent on physical proximity and more reliant on virtual

interaction, shared digital infrastructures, and platform-based coordination. Despite these advances, the digital dimension is frequently treated as an extension of existing models rather than as a factor that fundamentally reshapes the conceptual foundations of technology transfer.

In the European context, academic debates increasingly intersect with policy-oriented analyses that examine the role of supranational institutions in facilitating technology transfer under digital transformation. Studies focusing on the European Union emphasize the integration of technology transfer into broader strategies related to digital sovereignty, innovation ecosystems, and regulatory harmonization [10, p. 104]. However, even within this body of literature, there is a tendency to analyze policy instruments and institutional frameworks without revisiting the underlying conceptual definition of international technology transfer itself.

Overall, the review of recent research reveals a persistent fragmentation in theoretical approaches to international technology transfer. Classical, institutional, and network-based perspectives each capture important aspects of the process, yet none provides a comprehensive conceptualization that fully reflects the realities of global digitalization. This gap underscores the need for a revised analytical framework that integrates digital infrastructures, institutional mediation, and multilevel interactions into the core understanding of international technology transfer, thereby creating a more adequate basis for contemporary economic analysis and policy design.

Despite extensive research on international technology transfer, an unresolved scientific problem remains in the lack of a comprehensive conceptual definition that systematically integrates digital platforms, networked innovation ecosystems, and institutional mediation into the core understanding of this process in the context of global digitalization.

The purpose of this article is to address the existing conceptual gap in the understanding of international technology transfer under conditions of global digitalization. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into individual channels and mechanisms of technology diffusion, they often rely on analytical frameworks developed for pre-digital economic environments. As a result, the multidimensional impact of digital technologies on the structure, direction, and institutional embeddedness of international technology transfer remains insufficiently reflected in prevailing theoretical definitions.

In this context, the article aims to develop an author's conceptual approach to international technology transfer that systematically incorporates the effects of global digitalization. The proposed approach seeks to reinterpret international technology transfer as a multivector and multi-level process that is institutionally mediated and increasingly enabled by digital platforms and networked innovation ecosystems. By doing so, the study moves beyond linear and transaction-based interpretations and offers a more comprehensive analytical framework aligned with contemporary economic realities.

Furthermore, the article is intended to contribute to the theoretical foundations of international economic relations

by clarifying the conceptual boundaries of international technology transfer in the digital era. The results of the study are expected to enhance the analytical capacity of researchers and policymakers when assessing technology-related strategies, particularly in the context of the European Union, where digital transformation and innovation policy have become central components of economic development agendas.

Research methods. The study applies a set of general scientific and special research methods, selected in accordance with the objectives of the article. Critical literature analysis is used to examine existing theoretical approaches to international technology transfer and identify their limitations in the context of global digitalization. Conceptual synthesis is applied to integrate insights from classical, institutional, and digital economy theories into a unified analytical framework. Comparative analysis is employed to contrast traditional linear models of technology transfer with contemporary platform-based and networked approaches. A systemic approach is used to substantiate the author's conceptualization of international technology transfer as a multivector, multilevel, and institutionally mediated process.

Main results of the research. The analysis of existing theoretical approaches demonstrates that the conceptualization of international technology transfer has not kept pace with the profound transformations driven by global digitalization. Traditional definitions, rooted in industrial-era assumptions, tend to emphasize bilateral transactions, physical assets, and formal contractual arrangements. While these elements remain relevant, they no longer capture the full scope of contemporary technology transfer processes, which are increasingly shaped by digital infrastructures, platform-based interactions, and complex institutional environments.

In the context of global digitalization, technology transfer extends beyond the movement of tangible technologies or codified knowledge. It increasingly involves the circulation of data, algorithms, digital services, and embedded technological capabilities that are co-created and adapted within transnational innovation ecosystems. Digital platforms enable continuous interaction among firms, research institutions, public authorities, and users, facilitating real-time knowledge exchange and collaborative innovation across borders. As a result, international technology transfer evolves into a dynamic and iterative process characterized by feedback loops, network effects, and multi-actor participation [1, p. 64].

Based on the synthesis of classical, institutional, and digital economy perspectives, this study proposes an author's conceptualization of international technology transfer that reflects the structural changes induced by digital transformation. International technology transfer in the context of global digitalization is defined as a multivector, multilevel, and institutionally mediated process of transferring knowledge, technological solutions, and digital innovations among actors of the international economy, carried out through digital platforms, networked innovation ecosystems, and digital interaction mechanisms. This definition emphasizes several interrelated dimensions that

distinguish it from traditional interpretations.

First, the multivector nature of international technology transfer implies the coexistence of multiple directions and forms of technological exchange. Unlike linear models that assume a unidirectional flow from technologically advanced economies to less developed ones, digitalization enables reciprocal and horizontal transfer among firms, regions, and countries with varying levels of technological development. Start-ups, research centers, and small and medium-sized enterprises increasingly participate in global technology flows, contributing to a more decentralized and inclusive innovation landscape [9, p. 119].

Second, the multilevel character of international technology transfer reflects the interaction of processes occurring at different analytical levels. These include the micro-level of firms and research organizations, the meso-level of innovation networks and digital platforms, and the macro-level of national and supranational institutions. Digital infrastructures link these levels by reducing coordination costs and enabling scalable collaboration, thereby reshaping the governance of technology transfer and blurring traditional boundaries between domestic and international innovation activities [11, p. 87].

Third, institutional mediation constitutes a central element of the proposed conceptual approach. International technology transfer under digitalization is embedded in regulatory frameworks, policy instruments, and institutional arrangements that shape access to digital infrastructures, data governance, intellectual property protection, and competition rules. In the European Union, for example, technology transfer is increasingly influenced by supranational initiatives aimed at fostering digital sovereignty, harmonizing standards, and supporting cross-border innovation ecosystems [5, p. 102]. These institutional factors not only facilitate but also constrain technology transfer, highlighting the need to incorporate them into the core conceptual definition.

Finally, the role of digital platforms and networked ecosystems distinguishes contemporary international technology transfer from earlier forms. Platforms act as intermediaries that connect diverse actors, aggregate resources, and coordinate innovation activities on a global scale. They enable new modes of collaboration, such as open innovation, crowdsourcing, and data-driven experimentation, which significantly accelerate the diffusion and adaptation of technologies. Consequently, technology transfer becomes an ongoing process of joint value creation rather than a discrete transactional event [12, p. 51].

The proposed conceptualization contributes to the theoretical literature by integrating digital, institutional, and network-based dimensions into a unified analytical framework. It provides a more adequate basis for analyzing contemporary technology transfer dynamics and supports a deeper understanding of how digitalization reshapes international economic relations. Moreover, this approach offers a foundation for further empirical research and policy analysis, particularly in contexts where digital transformation plays a strategic role in economic development.

Discussion and implications. The proposed conceptualization of international technology transfer has several

important implications for both economic theory and policy-making in the context of global digitalization. By redefining technology transfer as a multivector, multilevel, and institutionally mediated process enabled by digital platforms and networked ecosystems, the study challenges the dominance of linear and transaction-based interpretations that have prevailed in earlier literature. This shift broadens the analytical scope of international economic relations and allows for a more realistic representation of contemporary innovation dynamics.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of digital platforms and ecosystems into the core definition of international technology transfer contributes to bridging the gap between traditional trade and investment theories and emerging approaches in the digital economy. The emphasis on multivector flows underscores the increasing relevance of horizontal and reciprocal technology exchange, which cannot be adequately explained by center-periphery models alone. As digital infrastructures lower entry barriers and facilitate cross-border collaboration, technologically less advanced actors may become active participants in global innovation networks, thereby reshaping established hierarchies in the international division of technological labor [13, p. 78].

The multilevel dimension of the proposed approach also has significant analytical implications. By explicitly linking micro-level interactions among firms and research organizations with meso-level platform dynamics and macro-level institutional frameworks, the conceptualization highlights the interconnected nature of technology transfer processes. This perspective enables researchers to examine how changes in regulatory regimes, data governance rules, or competition policies influence innovation outcomes across different levels of the international economy. Consequently, it provides a more robust foundation for comparative studies and cross-country analyses in the field of international technology transfer [14, p. 94].

From a policy standpoint, the findings of this study are particularly relevant for the European Union, where digital transformation has become a central element of economic and industrial strategies. The proposed conceptual framework aligns with the EU's emphasis on innovation ecosystems, digital sovereignty, and coordinated policy interventions. By recognizing the institutional mediation of technology transfer, policymakers can better assess the effectiveness of existing instruments and identify potential bottlenecks related to regulatory fragmentation, unequal access to digital infrastructures, and disparities in digital capabilities among member states [10, p. 112].

Moreover, the conceptualization underscores the importance of digital platforms as strategic policy objects rather than neutral technological intermediaries. Platforms shape access to data, define standards, and influence competitive conditions within digital ecosystems. Therefore, policies aimed at fostering international technology transfer must account for platform governance, interoperability, and fair competition to ensure that digitalization contributes to inclusive and sustainable technological development [15, p. 59]. This insight is particularly relevant in the context of ongoing debates on platform regulation and data

governance within the European Union.

Finally, the proposed approach has implications for future empirical research. By providing a clearer conceptual framework, it facilitates the development of indicators and analytical models that capture the complexity of international technology transfer in the digital era. Researchers can build upon this framework to explore the interaction between digital readiness, institutional quality, and technology diffusion, thereby generating evidence-based insights that support both academic inquiry and policy design.

Conclusions. This article has addressed a key theoretical challenge in the field of international economic relations by reconsidering the concept of international technology transfer in the context of global digitalization. The conducted analysis demonstrates that traditional definitions, largely developed within the industrial economic paradigm, no longer adequately reflect the complexity of contemporary technology transfer processes shaped by digital infrastructures, platform-based interactions, and institutional frameworks.

The study contributes to the existing literature by proposing an author's conceptualization of international technology transfer as a multivector, multilevel, and institutionally mediated process enabled by digital platforms and networked innovation ecosystems. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how technologies, knowledge, and digital innovations circulate within the global economy, moving beyond linear and transaction-oriented interpretations. By integrating digital, institutional, and network-based dimensions into a unified analytical framework, the proposed definition enhances the explanatory capacity of theoretical models applied to international technology transfer.

One of the key findings of the study is the recognition of digital platforms and ecosystems as structural elements of technology transfer rather than auxiliary tools. Their role in coordinating interactions, reducing transaction costs, and facilitating collaborative innovation underscores the need to incorporate platform governance and data-related considerations into the analysis of international technology diffusion. At the same time, the emphasis on institutional mediation highlights the importance of regulatory environments, policy instruments, and supranational governance structures in shaping the direction and outcomes of technology transfer processes.

The conceptual framework developed in this article has important implications for both academic research and policy-making. For researchers, it provides a foundation for the development of empirical indicators and analytical models that capture the multidimensional nature of technology transfer in the digital era. For policymakers, particularly within the European Union, the proposed approach offers a theoretical basis for designing and evaluating strategies aimed at fostering innovation, enhancing digital sovereignty, and promoting inclusive technological development under conditions of global digitalization.

Finally, the study opens several avenues for further research. Future studies may apply the proposed conceptualization to empirical analyses of specific sectors, regions, or

policy initiatives, as well as explore the interactions between digital readiness, institutional quality, and international technology transfer outcomes. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms

through which digital transformation reshapes international economic relations and technological competitiveness.

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