

**Crossing Borders with Brainpower: A Systematic Review on Knowledge Transfer via
International Entrepreneurship and Future Research Pathways**

Mingchu Wang*
Greenwich Business School
University of Greenwich
m.wang@greenwich.ac.uk

Yingqi Wei
Leeds University Business School
University of Leeds
Y.Wei@leeds.ac.uk

Catherine L. Wang
Brunel Business School
Brunel University London
catherine.wang@brunel.ac.uk

Gideon Azumah
Leeds University Business School
University of Leeds
G.Azumah@leeds.ac.uk

*Corresponding author

Abstract

International knowledge transfer (IKT) plays a pivotal role in business and economic development, with international entrepreneurship (IE) being a key facilitator of this process. IE, characterised by innovative, proactive, and risk-taking behaviors that transcend national borders, aims to generate organisational value. A burgeoning research stream examines how IKT reinforces the IE process, employing various conceptual frameworks, theoretical lenses, and methodological approaches. However, this literature remains fragmented and has not been systematically reviewed. By identifying and analysing existing articles that investigate the nexus of IKT and IE, we clarify the conceptualisation of IKT and IE, identifying three broad research themes and evaluating the main theories and methodologies used. We identify three primary types of IE—returnee, transnational, and international corporate entrepreneurship—where international knowledge is transferred by individual or organisational knowledge agents. These transfers involve one-way knowledge transfer, two-way knowledge transfer, and interactive knowledge co-creation, producing outcomes at individual, organisational, and regional levels. Existing literature predominantly utilises six theoretical perspectives: social capital theory, human capital theory, social network theory, institutional theory, the resource-based view and its extensions (knowledge-based and dynamic capabilities views), and learning theory. Empirical studies employ diverse methods, including case studies, interviews, surveys, and observations. Our analysis results in an analytical framework for IKT via IE, suggesting future research directions along the dimensions of the 5Cs: complementarity of knowledge, (re-)contextualisation by knowledge agents, connectivity of knowledge, community capitalism, and cross-disciplinary research. This study synthesises the fragmented IKT literature in IE and provides directions for future research.

Keywords: Knowledge transfer, international entrepreneurship, knowledge agents

1. Introduction

The world has experienced significant turbulences in recent times due to pandemics, natural disasters, and political conflicts, leading to profound and lasting changes in the global business environment (Ciravegna et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, international entrepreneurship (IE), encompassing innovative, proactive, and risk-taking endeavours that transcend borders with the aim to generate organisational value (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000), remains an influential force in national and global business ecosystems and plays a pivotal role in creating opportunities for growth, fostering resilience, and driving positive changes to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015; Zucchella, 2021). Specifically, it functions as an important knowledge agent in transferring knowledge across national borders, or international knowledge transfer (IKT), to enhance individual competencies of international entrepreneurs and their organisations' capabilities necessary for identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, building and growing successful businesses and promoting regional development (De Clercq et al., 2012; Reuber et al., 2018).

Knowledge is firmly established in and confined to specific geographical locations (Hannigan et al., 2015) and IE can break through geographical boundaries to transfer knowledge globally. Individual agents, i.e., returnee and transnational entrepreneurs, through new venture creation, bring to home international (technological, managerial and experiential) knowledge obtained from their first-hand exposure to diverse markets. At the organisational level, international corporate entrepreneurship serves as a mechanism for infusing international knowledge into units of established multinational enterprises (MNEs). IE, in the form of returnee, transnational and international corporate entrepreneurship, can ultimately contribute to the enrichment of local, national and global business, social and economic landscapes (e.g., Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2020).

The importance of the relationship between IE and IKT has attracted academic interests, particularly since the seminal work of Drori et al. (2009). However, the literature is fragmented and there is no systematic review of evidence on IKT via IE, its enablers and barriers, mechanisms and outcomes. This calls for a detailed and integrative examination of existing studies to lay the foundation for a shared academic understanding. This helps to build a consensus on the conceptualisation of IKT and IE, identify research themes and their underpinning theoretical perspectives and methodological choices, shed new light for future research to further the understanding of this important phenomenon.

To achieve these objectives, first, we critically discuss definitions of IKT and IE. This clarifies terminological ambiguities and foster a more cohesive understanding of the topic. This groundwork sets the stage for future empirical studies and theoretical developments, contributing to the ongoing discourse on IKT via IE in this evolving landscape. Second, we specify knowledge agents, processes and outcomes of IKT via IE. Returnee entrepreneurs, transnational entrepreneurs, and international corporate entrepreneurs operate as knowledge agents by actively engaging in one-way knowledge transfer, two-way knowledge transfer, or interactive knowledge co-creation throughout the entrepreneurial process across national borders. This results in varied outcomes on individual, organisational and national levels, and the intersections of these levels. Building on the synthesis of connections between and across different levels of analysis, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches within the existing body of studies, we develop an analytical framework which not only provides a holistic summary of key elements of IKT via IE but also anchors proposed future research directions along the dimensions of 5Cs: complementarity of knowledge, (re-)contextualisation by

knowledge agents, connectivity of knowledge, community capitalism, and cross-disciplinary research. This lays a robust foundation for generating new perspectives and cultivating innovative knowledge, paving the way for fresh insights in our understanding of the intricacies involved in the knowledge transfer processes.

2. Methodology

We conducted a systematic literature review following Tranfield et al. (2003) by adopting the database-driven approach starting with a clear conceptual boundary of IE and IKT to ensure transparency and rigour of the review process (Hiebl, 2023). The initial selection process based on Web of Science resulted in 24 journal articles. Because formal search techniques based on keywords may overlook some relevant studies, we then utilised the snowball search technique by examining the bibliographies of 24 journal articles for additional work of relevance (Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005). We further identified 16 journal articles, leading to a sample of 40 papers spanning from 2009 to 2023. Considering the word limit, we do not further unpack here but Figure 1 summarises the selection process, and specific procedures are available upon request. Due to the complexity of the examined texts, we do not claim that our review is the only way of interpreting the studies we identified. Rather, we reckon that it is a reasonable interpretation based on careful reading and examination of texts (Ahuvia, 2001).

Insert Figure 1 here.

3. Literature Analysis: Themes and Trends

Our systematic analysis focuses on the definitions of IKT and IE and the processes and outcomes of IKT in IE. Three distinct forms of IE emerge from the literature as instrumental conduits for IKT: returnee entrepreneurship, transnational entrepreneurship, and international corporate entrepreneurship, as well as three distinct processes of IKT: one-way IKT, two-way IKT and interactive knowledge creation. The outcomes of IKT range from venture creation and performance to national and global economic landscapes.

3.1 Definitions of IKT and IE

Clear definitions enhance the overall quality, accessibility and comparability of academic papers. Conceptually clarifying the nature of IKT and IE builds the foundation for understanding more accurately the nature of the knowledge being transferred across national borders that is connected to IE (Barkema et al., 2015). This involves translating conceptual definitions that explain abstract concepts into tangible criteria to establish construct equivalence, positing the underlying mechanisms as the basis of IKT through IE, identifying enablers and/or barriers for IKT through IE, as well as evaluating outcomes of IKT through IE given the antecedents and the mechanisms. Out of 40 identified papers, 12 provide the definition of IKT and 18 clarify that of IE. Only six papers explain the definitions of both concepts (Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Tran & Truong, 2022; Yu et al., 2020; Bai et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2016; Valk et al., 2015).

3.1.1 The Definition of IKT

The 12 papers that explicitly define IKT (Hanle et al., 2023; Craiut et al., 2022; Crespo et al., 2022; Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Tran & Truong, 2022; Bengoa et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2020; Noh

& Lee., 2019; Bai et al., 2018; Audrestc & Caiazza, 2016; Lin et al., 2016; Valk et al., 2015) largely adopt or adapt Lazarova and Cerdin's (2007, p.422) definition: "transferring general and specific knowledge regarding foreign cultures, political-social context, and business environments, knowledge of local organisational practices, as well as knowledge of key suppliers and clients". However, the specific definitions of IKT varies in accordance with their research questions. For example, Hanle et al. (2023, p.1553) define knowledge transfer as "the transfer of either skills or capabilities (that is, expertise) or external information of strategic value – such as globally relevant information about key customers, competitors or suppliers, from the foreign subsidiary to its parent company" with a focus on institutional and organisational mechanisms as their research question addresses the role of government in promoting internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Some of these 12 papers focus on the nature of the knowledge by distinguishing technology know-how (e.g., technological knowledge, patents), and business-related know-how (e.g., business models, management practices) (e.g., Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Bai et al., 2018). Others focus on the differences between local and overseas business knowledge (e.g., Tran & Truong, 2022) and the advantages that overseas business knowledge could bring to entrepreneurs and firms (e.g., Craiut et al., 2022). Specifically, IKT unpacked in these papers involves the conveyance of specific, contextualised knowledge alongside general knowledge (e.g., Hanle et al., 2023; Valk et al., 2015). This encompasses a wide spectrum of understanding of different cultures, delving into the intricacies, values, customs, and social norms that shape societies (Crespo et al., 2022). It also involves comprehending the intricate web of business environments (e.g., Craiut et al., 2022), including but not limited to global market trends, regulatory landscapes, competitive forces, and emerging opportunities. By grasping the nuances of local practices while transferring international knowledge via IE, knowledge agents establish connections and adapting approaches to align with local norms (Lin et al., 2016).

Within the remaining 28 papers that do not explicitly define IKT, some centre around IKT as the provision of intellectual resources from overseas with the aim of promoting local growth in the form of IE (e.g., Tekin et al., 2021; Zygmunt, 2016). This implicit conceptualisation is relevant to the economics and sociology literature within which IKT is often viewed as a process happened during a certain developmental stage of both the sender and the receiver countries with the aim to exchange scarce resources and to advance economic growth (Wang, 2015). For example, Ferreira et al. (2020) investigate the influence of technology transfer, climate change mitigation and environmental patent on sustainability and economic growth in European countries. Albeit without the explicit definition of IKT, they suggest transferring technology to mitigate climate change as a collective effort. Moreover, the knowledge sharing and adaptation processes are impactful to foster sustainable economic development in European countries (Ockwell et al., 2008). This aligns with Spencer's (2003) definition on knowledge transfer and its impact on regional and global knowledge diffusion network.

The focal point of IKT within all the articles lies in the identification and utilisation of the key attributes of international knowledge, i.e., newness and competitiveness. According to Yu et al. (2020, p.6), "international knowledge is an intangible asset and provides a competitive advantage for firms in foreign markets. Both individuals and firms can utilise existing knowledge resource from prior cross-border business experiences to improve their learning from the foreign market entry experience." Studies have focused on the newness and competitiveness of the international knowledge transferred via IE such as experiential knowledge gained from individual cross-border experience (e.g., Yu et al., 2020; Valk et al.,

2015; Wang, 2020) and organisational network resources obtained from the international exposure (e.g., de Oliveira et al., 2021; Hashai & Zahra, 2022). The international knowledge encompasses innovative business frameworks, unique concepts, organisational acumen, and competitive management practices that enables and facilitates international entrepreneurial activities (Filatotchev et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2008).

3.1.2 The Definition of IE

The 18 papers that explicitly define IE mainly draw on the definition of McDougall and Oviatt (1997, p.293) who consider IE being “new and innovative activities that have the goal of value creation and growth in business organisations across national borders” or a refined version which defines IE as “a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organisations” (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000, p.903). Specifically, three types of IE are pertinent to the IKT process: returnee entrepreneurship, transnational entrepreneurship, and international corporate entrepreneurship.

Firstly, returnee entrepreneurship is the focus of ten papers, including Drori et al. (2009) which focus on both returnee entrepreneurship and transnational entrepreneurship. The rest nine papers draw on McDougall and Oviatt (2000) and Drori et al.’s (2009) to define returnee entrepreneurship as “a subset of diaspora entrepreneurship that involves immigrants’ entrepreneurs who have returned to their homeland to start business enterprises after a period of sojourning/living abroad” (Ojo, 2016, p.565). Some studies further contextualise returnee entrepreneurship by focusing on the length of overseas experience (e.g., at least two years of studying or working) (Tran & Truong, 2022), the purpose (e.g., to gain business or education experience) (Bai et al., 2018), the field of study/work (e.g., scientists and engineers) (Liu et al., 2015), the skill levels of returnees (Gruenhagen, 2021), and the economic status of host countries (e.g., developed/Western/OECD countries). Notably, Pruthi (2014, p.1139) integrates some of these characteristics and provides a contextualised definition of returnee entrepreneurs as “skilled personnel that have lived in a developed country for the purpose of work or study and have returned to their home country to start a new venture after several years of business experience and/or education abroad”.

Secondly, transnational entrepreneurship is the focus of 24 papers, including Drori et al. (2009), but only six papers have explicitly defined it (Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2020; Pehrsson et al., 2015; Valk et al., 2015; Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016; Drori et al., 2009). According to Drori et al. (2009), transnational entrepreneurs are migrants who maintain contacts within borders of different countries with the aim to sustain economic, political, social and cultural cross-border relationships for establishing and fostering new ventures. Santamaria-Alvarez and Śliwa (2016) define transnational entrepreneurship as the process where migrants, through their transnational ties, networks, and savings from remittances, start businesses that operate across two or more nations. In relation to IKT, transnational entrepreneurship has been investigated from such aspects as mutual co-operation through internationalization, international network promoting technology transfer and home country’s policy in influencing migrants’ entrepreneurial activities (e.g., Tekin et al., 2021; Grodek-Szostak et al., 2020; Van Loon et al., 2020).

Thirdly, international corporate entrepreneurship is a key conduit of IKT in seven papers, though only four explicitly define it (Hughes et al., 2020; Ahsan & Fernhaber, 2019; Raziq et al., 2019; Fortwengel & Jackson, 2016). For example, Raziq et al. (2019) focus on

multinational enterprises' subsidiaries that are encouraged to cultivate and transmit their knowledge and expertise to headquarters via international corporate entrepreneurship. Drawing from Oviatt and McDougall (2005), Raziq et al. (2019) define international corporate entrepreneurship as the internationalization process through which multinational enterprises explore and harness global opportunities.

3.2 Knowledge Agents and IKT Process

IKT via IE involves both individuals and organisations as knowledge agents. Returnee and transnational entrepreneurs as individual agents, through new venture creation, bring to home countries new business models, advanced technology, and managerial approaches that they have learned from their experiences in international settings. By leveraging international knowledge obtained from their first-hand exposure to diverse markets, they identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g., Gruenhagen et al., 2021; Ojo, 2016), initiate and manage new ventures (e.g., Audretsch & Caiazza, 2016; Liu et al., 2015), and ultimately contribute to the enrichment of local business landscapes (e.g., Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2020). Conversely, organisations as knowledge agents transfer international knowledge through international corporate entrepreneurship. For example, Lee and colleagues (2020) find that IE increases a subsidiary's contribution to multinational enterprises' global competitiveness. Moreover, IKT through international corporate entrepreneurship involved in merger and acquisition enhances the organisation's ability to align with the cultural setting in the host country (Hughes et al., 2020).

Further, three IKT processes are associated with IE: one-way IKT, two-way IKT and interactive knowledge co-creation. The first refers to the flow of knowledge from an entity resided in one country to another entity in another country in a unidirectional manner. For example, Crespo et al. (2022) adopt the definition of knowledge transfer from Cavaliere and Lombardi (2015) as being "the partial or identical replication of knowledge from one location to another (Crespo et al., 2022. p. 2)" to investigate the role of subsidiary leadership and culture in promoting marketing knowledge inflows. They focus on the lateral and vertical knowledge unidirectional inflow to host country subsidiaries and find that strong subsidiary leadership and entrepreneurial culture promote the transfer of international marketing knowledge. Investigating the relationship between returnees' international knowledge transfer and their entrepreneurial decisions, Lin et al. (2016) study the unidirectional knowledge transfer carried out by returnee entrepreneurs from host to home countries, and recognise the importance of knowledge recontextualisation, a process whereby knowledge is perceived from a different perspective and acquires unique interpretations within different cultural settings.

Two-way IKT refers to mutual exchanges of knowledge between two international entities. For example, Craiut et al. (2022) regard knowledge transfer as a dynamic process that has evolved alongside technological advancements, with various linear, non-linear, and alternative models. In the context of IKT between Romania and other countries, they suggest that IKT involves the reciprocal flow of practical know-how resources between organisations.

Finally, interactive knowledge co-creation refers to a collaborative process where individuals/organisations actively participate in the interactive knowledge exchange which leads to the creation of new knowledge, insights, or solutions. In other words, in addition to the knowledge originally possessed by the knowledge agents involved in the process, there is new knowledge created as a result of their dynamic exchanges of ideas, expertise, and resources.

For example, Alonson-Martinez et al. (2021) find that the knowledge transferred via international patent collaboration not only promotes entrepreneurship at the national-level but also serves as a catalyst for cross-cultural knowledge co-creation. The interactive knowledge co-creation plays a pivotal role in shaping vibrant entrepreneurial landscapes through fostering innovation ecosystems.

3.3 Outcomes of IKT via IE

The existing literature focuses on three broad categories of outcomes of IKT via IE: 1) entrepreneurial opportunity identification, 2) venture creation, management and performance, and 3) regional development. Firstly, IKT facilitates the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities, enabling individuals (returnee/transnational entrepreneurs) to spot and capitalize on novel avenues for business creation and growth (e.g., Gruenhagen, 2021; Bai et al., 2018). Secondly, IKT plays a pivotal role in not only the inception but also the effective management of new ventures. Armed with intangible and competitive knowledge garnered from global experience, entrepreneurs can design and implement strategies that align with advanced international practices (e.g., Hashai & Zahra, 2022; Liu et al., 2015). Furthermore, IKT has a direct impact on enhancing firm performance. IKT equips new ventures or established organisations with a broader perspective, enriching strategic planning and operational processes (e.g., Lee et al., 2020; Pehrsson et al., 2015). This, in turn, leads to improved efficiency, increased competitiveness, and sustainable growth. Lastly, IKT promotes regional development by fostering innovation and IE. As entrepreneurs utilise international knowledge, they contribute to the overall economic vibrancy of communities, potentially attracting investments, talent, and resources (Ferreira et al., 2020; Van Loon et al., 2020).

In summary, upon reviewing the existing literature on IKT via IE, it becomes apparent that some studies presume the concepts of IKT and/or IE without furnishing explicit definitions to clarify their conceptual foundations. This introduces ambiguity, hindering a thorough understanding of the intricate relationship between IKT and IE. Therefore, we call for more nuanced clarification and theorisation of IKT and/or IE. Moreover, we advocate for a comprehensive exploration of the process that knowledge agents undertake in different institutional contexts and the diverse outcomes resulting from IKT via IE on different levels and at the intersections of these levels. We will revisit these points in section 5 when discussing future research.

4. Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Assessment

Drawing from the presented research findings, existing studies can be categorised into three overarching research themes:

Research theme 1: Exploration of the enablers of, and barriers to, IKT via IE.

Research theme 2: Investigation into the key attributes of IE and the mechanisms facilitating IKT.

Research theme 3. Examination of the outcomes resulting from IKT via IE.

These research themes are underpinned by different theoretical perspectives (see Table 1). In sections 4.1-4.4, we summarise how six theories – social capital theory, social network theory,

human capital theory, institutional theory, resource-based view and its extensions as knowledge-based view or dynamic capabilities view, and learning theory – have been used to address different research themes. In this submission, we do not include the discussion on learning theory as this theory is not widely used by existing studies, but relevant information is available upon request. It's worth noting that these theories are not isolated but interconnected to affect IKT via IE, which we will discuss below.

Insert Table 1 here.

4.1 Social Capital Theory, Social Network Theory, and Human Capital Theory

We group these theories because of their interconnectedness and shared common elements: social capital and human capital are complementary and can be developed through social networks. Social capital theory emphasises that individuals embedded in social networks rich in social capital have access to valuable resources (Adler & Kwon, 2002), which can be leveraged for IKT via IE. Social network theory analyses the structure and patterns of social connections among individuals/groups and how these connections influence the flow of valuable resources (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Social network theory thus adopts a more structural perspective by focusing on network connections that is relevant to the key attributes of international entrepreneurs, whereas social capital theory emphasises the qualitative aspects of relationships and the benefits derived from the quality of social connections that could influence both the process and the outcome of IKT via IE. In contrast, human capital theory centres on the individual's skills, knowledge, and capabilities as key contributors to personal and economic success (e.g., improved productivity and employability) and advocates that individuals can leverage social capital and social networks to enhance their human capital (Gruber et al., 2012). Although the three theories have different focuses, they often overlap in practical applications. Social capital theory has been used most widely in all three research themes, and social network theory and human capital theory have been applied in the context of research theme 2.

In research theme 1, Bai et al. (2018) recognise social capital as comprising both the network itself and the resources that can be mobilised within that network, which includes networks containing both relational and structural resources acquired by individuals and firms through their connections. Based on this, they find that in the operations of returnee entrepreneurial ventures, network capability mediates the positive relationship between international social networks of returnees and the venture performance. The network capabilities of returnees enable and facilitate IKT in the form of returnee entrepreneurship. It is worth noting that social capital theory employed in existing studies is concerned with the resources accessible through social relationships in both host and home countries for international entrepreneurs (Gruenhagen, 2019; Bai et al., 2018). Social capital theory views social networks in institutional conditions as sources of valuable resources such as trust, information, and support, considering social capital deriving from these relationships are beneficial for both international entrepreneurs on the individual level (Gruenhagen, 2019) and new ventures on the organisational level (Alonso-Martinez et al., 2021).

Some studies integrate social capital theory and social network theory. For example, Pruthi (2014) applies social capital theory to argue that returnee entrepreneurs' personal and professional networks provide social capital and hence influence the perceived feasibility of creating a venture in line with research theme 1. This study also employs social network theory,

recognising that social networks lead to sources of information and ideas, e.g., local business contacts, distribution channels, that trigger opportunities and provide resources for new ventures (Sullivan & Ford, 2014) aligning with research theme 2. Different from social capital theory, social network theory directs its attention to the structure and patterns of relationships between individuals or entities, emphasising the connections and interactions within a network. It delves into the nodes (international entrepreneurs or new ventures) and ties (relationships within or across host and home countries) between them, providing insights into how these connections influence IKT.

In research theme 2, Lin et al. (2016) utilise social network theory to explore international knowledge brokerage and the entrepreneurial decisions of returnees. Their results indicate that returnees facilitating the transfer of advanced technological knowledge, along with a blend of technological and business acumen between their host and home countries, are more inclined to become entrepreneurs. Similarly, Wang (2020) employs social network theory and discovers that cross-border social connections with former colleagues abroad boost the chance of a returnee to establish a venture. These connections serve as valuable channels for accessing novel knowledge from overseas, thereby facilitating the identification and development of entrepreneurial ideas.

Drawing on human capital theory, Hashai and Zahra (2022) recognise the importance of the founding team due to the knowledge and skills they developed and honed based on their prior international experience, which resonates with research theme 2. Their findings contribute to identifying key attributes of international entrepreneurs by revealing that international experience within the same industry and across different industries engenders disparate forms of congenital knowledge, exerting divergent effects on the sustained growth of new ventures. Specifically, prior international experience within the same industry has a negative impact on the continued international expansion of new ventures, whereas that in different industries demonstrates a positive effect on the initiation and perpetuation of such growth.

4.2. Institutional Theory

Predominately, institution theory has been employed in research theme 1. The focus is largely on understanding the role of home and host country institutional conditions and their differences in fostering or hindering the IE process and IKT at individual, organisational and national levels. For example, Gruenhagen (2021) investigates the institutional environment of the home country of returnee entrepreneurs, along three dimensions, i.e., regulatory (e.g., regulations, the tax system and intellectual property protection), normative (e.g., societal acceptance of entrepreneurship, the appreciation of innovation and role models), and cognitive (e.g., availability of shared knowledge related to information about markets and legal protection) dimensions. The findings suggest that a perceived stable institutional environment serves as a catalyst for returnee entrepreneurship. Moreover, Gruenhagen (2021) identifies that a sense of estrangement negatively affects the intention to initiate a new venture in one's home country. Individuals aspiring to return and engage in entrepreneurship may experience detachment from their network ties in the home country because of an extended period of study or work in a foreign country. Their local knowledge may also become outdated over time (Lin et al., 2019). Consequently, estrangement denotes this potential loss of social and human capital in the home country which could impede the IKT via IE.

Besides leveraging institutional theory to investigate individual perceptions of the host and host

countries' institutional conditions, Grodek-Szostak, et al. (2020) investigate the role of technology transfer in promoting renewable energy resources in Poland, Czech and Latvia on the national level. They compare differences in institutional conditions of European countries on facilitating knowledge transfer of renewable energy and find that cross-country institutional interactions can promote efficiency of IKT by sharing procedural information and coordination mechanisms to foster cross border entrepreneurship. Sa and de Pinho (2019) employ institutional theory at the organisational and national levels and propose that through government support programs and favourable entry regulations, new and growing firms could benefit more from R&D investment.

4.3 Resource-based View, Knowledge-based View and Dynamic Capabilities View

The resource-based view and its extensions – the knowledge-based view and the dynamic capabilities view – have been employed in research theme 3. The resource-based view elucidates the role of a firm's internal resources and capabilities, e.g., specialised knowledge, technological proficiency, managerial expertise, and cross-cultural competencies, in shaping IKT via IE, and contends that distinctive and valuable resources and capabilities exert significant influence over its competitive advantage and enable the initiation, navigation, and sustainment of IE (de Oliveira et al., 2021; Barney et al., 2001). The knowledge-based view considers knowledge as a critical resource and posits that not only the possession of knowledge assets but also their effective management and utilisation contribute to a firm's ability to navigate the complexities of international markets (Cooper et al., 2023; Felin & Hesterly, 2007). In the IE context, the knowledge-based view emphasises that a firm's ability to acquire, create, and apply knowledge strategically is central to its success in leveraging IKT (Crespo et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2020). The dynamic capabilities view emphasises a firm's ability to adapt, innovate, and reconfigure its resources and capabilities in response to changing environments (Teece, 2014). In the IE context, where market conditions, regulatory environments, and cultural landscapes vary, dynamic capabilities are particularly important as firms need agility to make continual adjustments to secure value creating potential and to achieve competitive, advantageous positions relative to local firms.

Drawing on the resource-based view and the information economics perspective, Gharagozloo et al. (2022) investigate variations in how different countries choose to allocate resources for R&D initiatives at the national level. Their findings suggest that a more digitally advanced economy positively influences the transfer of national R&D to international entrepreneurs and SMEs. Similarly, de Oliveira et al. (2021) examine Vietnamese manufacturers in global value chains and propose that strategic choices of entrepreneurial ventures depend on their means and ends and are based on the analysis of their internal capabilities and resources, as well as the external environments. Engaging in international ventures serves as a means to navigate institutional misalignments that heighten uncertainties associated with conducting business within one's domestic market. This approach emerges as a viable strategic choice, even when factoring in supplementary costs and risks of internationalisation, avenue for eluding constraints within the home-country institutional conditions (Clarke & Liesch, 2017).

Building from the knowledge-based view, Crespo et al. (2022) study the role of leadership and entrepreneurial culture in promoting marketing knowledge inflows in a subsidiary in the context of international corporate entrepreneurship. They find that subsidiaries' strong leadership support and entrepreneurial culture are fundamental mechanisms that foster knowledge inflows from both the headquarters and peer subsidiaries that in turn enhance the

focal subsidiary's innovation abilities. Yu et al. (2020) explore the interactions between a firm's international entrepreneurial capability and its international marketing capability, with a focus on how these interrelations influence overall performance as well as the mechanisms and strategies through which larger firms can leverage the experiences and lessons learned from global small business firms to enhance the creativity of their members. Their findings suggest that the performance of born-globals is notably impacted by the owner/manager's level of international knowledge, as perceived interdependently with firm performance, while also being significantly influenced by the firms' dynamic capabilities, i.e., adaptation capability, absorption capability, and innovation capability.

Focusing on the dynamic capabilities view, Lee et al. (2020) attempt to unpack the process by which an MNE subsidiary practises transnational entrepreneurship to create effective knowledge in the local market. They find that subsidiary autonomy positively moderates the relationship between subsidiary entrepreneurship and knowledge creation. Knowledge creation has a positive impact on the network position of the subsidiary within the MNE network. Additionally, the enhanced network position positively influences the knowledge transfer to other overseas subsidiaries within the MNE network. Therefore, the dynamic capabilities view complements the resource-based view and the knowledge-based view theoretically by recognising that the ability to renew and reconfigure resources is essential for a firm's sustained competitive advantage in the dynamic global landscape of international entrepreneurship.

Through the employment of diverse theoretical frameworks, existing studies have endeavoured to provide nuanced understanding of the intricate mechanisms that underlie IKT in the realm of IE. This multifaceted inquiry contributes valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers alike, seeking to enhance the efficacy of IKT initiatives manifested through the avenue of IE. However, while certain theoretical frameworks guide research in the intersection of IKT and IE, a significant number of studies neglects to fully elaborate on the theories they adopt. Furthermore, the predominant utilisation of generic international business, management, and sociology theories underscores the limited advancement in the specific conceptualisation of IKT and IE. Our research emphasises the imperative for an integrated and targeted conceptualisation and theorisation of IKT via IE, aiming to guide future research in this domain.

Moving forward, the current body of research, focusing on three broad research themes, provides valuable but partial insights into the complex dynamics of IKT and IE. However, there remains a considerable knowledge gap, necessitating further exploration to uncover the intricacies that continue to elude our understanding on IKT via IE. The identification of these gaps emphasises the need for future research to delve into unexplored dimensions, thereby advancing the scholarly discourse on the triggers, process, and outcomes of IKT via IE, a topic to be explored in depth in section 5.

4.4 Methodological Issues

The IKT via IE literature has employed a wide range of methods (e.g. case studies, interviews, surveys, and observations). Except five conceptual papers (Bengoa et al., 2021; Ahsan & Fernhaber, 2019; Noh & Lee, 2019; Audretsch & Caiazza, 2016; Drori et al., 2009), out of the 35 empirical papers, 21 papers collect data via online surveys (e.g., Hughes et al., 2020; Sa & de Pinho, 2019; Lin et al., 2016), secondary databases (e.g., Gharagozloo et al., 2022; Hashai & Zahra, 2022), and offline channels (e.g., Gruenhagen, 2021; Liu et al., 2015). The remaining 14 papers employ qualitative approaches (e.g., case study, interview and content analysis).

Insert Figure 2 here.

The unit of analysis in the 35 empirical papers varies in the form of individual (9 articles), organisational (11 articles) and national levels (6 articles) with some crossovers between different levels (9 articles). Considering the work limit, we do not detailedly explain empirical approaches, units of analysis, and key findings here, but this information is available on request. In addition to 35 empirical papers, there are five conceptual articles on the nexus of IKT and IE from distinctive levels. Ahsan and Fernhaber (2019) focus on the organisational level by identifying a range of potential opportunities for subsidiaries to utilise MNEs' existing expertise and resources via corporate entrepreneurship. Audretsch and Caiazza (2016) propose that different regions experience varying growth rates, primarily attributed to disparities in knowledge investment and the level of institutional support for knowledge exchange and entrepreneurial activities from the national level. Bengoa et al. (2021) integrate knowledge transfer literature and assess IE-relevant literature with a focus on academic entrepreneurship from the organisational and national levels. Similarly, Noh and Lee (2019) review existing studies on technology transfer from the organisational and national levels and call for future research to investigate the role of individual entrepreneurs in transferring technology. Only the conceptual paper by Drori et al. (2009) reviews international entrepreneurship, including returnee and transnational entrepreneurship, and relevant knowledge transfer from all individual, organisational and national levels.

5. Discussion and Future Research Directions

Our literature analysis results in our analytical framework of IKT via IE (see Figure 3). Through this framework, we contribute to the IE literature by providing a critical understanding of the IKT process that mutually reinforces the IE process. International knowledge is transferred by individual or organisational knowledge agents in returnee, transnational and international corporate entrepreneurship, and involves three distinctive processes - one-way knowledge transfer, two-way knowledge transfer and interactive knowledge co-creation, which results in outcomes at individual-, organisational-, and regional levels. Below, we discuss the implications of our analytical framework and propose future research directions along the dimensions of 5Cs: complementarity of knowledge, (re-)contextualisation by knowledge agents, connectivity of knowledge, community capitalism, and cross-disciplinary research. The five dimensions are inter-connected, which we will delineate below.

Insert Figure 3 here.

We start with discussing the complementarity of international knowledge to domestic knowledge, a crucial attribute that instigates its transfer across borders, followed by knowledge (re)contextualisation underscoring the essential role played by knowledge agents in ensuring effective IKT in returnee, transnational and international corporate entrepreneurship. We move onto discussing knowledge connectivity on a global scale, within which returnee, transnational, and international corporate entrepreneurship contribute to the web of global innovation and collaboration via three distinctive knowledge transfer processes. We then discuss the significance of IKT via IE in boosting outcomes at the individual, organisational and regional levels beyond economic performance, to contribute to community capitalism aligning with SDGs. Finally, we call for future cross-disciplinary research to integrate economics, sociology, and environmental science to yield better understandings on IKT via IE. Therefore, our discussion builds on, but expands on the analytical framework in Figure 3.

5.1 Complementarity of international knowledge to domestic knowledge

Existing literature centres on elaborating different types of IE (i.e., returnee, transnational and international corporate entrepreneurship) and distinctive mechanisms involved in IKT (i.e. one-way knowledge transfer, two-way knowledge transfer and interactive knowledge co-creation). However, there is a gap in our understanding of the nature of the knowledge transferred via IE. Fundamentally, knowledge transferred by entrepreneurs and that by organisations can be different along several dimensions. For example, knowledge transferred by entrepreneurs are often more experiential and tacit, whereas that by organisations may also include explicit knowledge (e.g., codified information, procedures and manuals). Because organisations tend to be structured with established procedures, the knowledge transferred is likely to differ in terms of the degree of dynamism and responsiveness to market change and adaptability to unique circumstances. Hence, international corporate entrepreneurship may be less agile in IKT, compared with returnee and transnational entrepreneurship. Moreover, the distinction between technology and business-related know-how, and between local and overseas knowledge present challenges to entrepreneurs and their firms in the IE process. Further research is needed to delineate the nuanced nature of the knowledge transferred. Delving into these intricacies will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the specificities of IKT via IE.

Complementarity of knowledge helps unleash the potential of different knowledge originating from diverse sources to work synergistically to enhance overall understanding, problem-solving, and innovation (Acharya et al., 2020). The integration of diverse knowledge components can lead to a more effective and competitive IE activities (Ghio et al., 2014). Future research along this direction will enable scholars to appreciate the interconnectedness and mutual reinforcement of diverse knowledge components exchanged in IE. Specifically, complementarity of knowledge might involve leveraging technical expertise alongside cultural insights or combining industry-specific know-how with a deep understanding of local market dynamics. Therefore, the nature of complementarity of knowledge calls for further investigation as we need to know what knowledge have been transferred, and how international knowledge complements domestic knowledge to advance IE.

5.2 (Re-)Contextualisation by knowledge agents

Existing literature highlights that knowledge is contextually dependent and embedded in institutional and market environments of its origin (Williams, 2007). Being a contributor to global knowledge connectivity and a vehicle for knowledge absorption and distribution across borders, IE activities require knowledge to be recontextualised in accordance with the host country setting (Lin et al., 2016). This requires individuals and organisations as knowledge agents in returnee, transnational and international corporate entrepreneurship to contextualise and recontextualise knowledge to enable successful IKT via IE.

In the returnee entrepreneurship process, knowledge recontextualisation features the realignment process of leveraging their international experience and the current setting of their home country (Wang et al., 2023; Tran & Truong, 2022). After studying or working in a foreign country, returnee entrepreneurs may experience estrangement because of the disconnection from network ties in their home country, and their local knowledge may have become outdated (Gruenhagen, 2020). Therefore, in order to effectively transfer international knowledge, returnee entrepreneurs need to engage in a cycle of unlearning and relearning. The unlearning process includes filtering, selecting and discarding unfit knowledge obtained from their

international experience, when being applied in their home country, and aligning with its institutional setting. Organisational learning literature highlights that unlearning is integral to upgrading organisational practices (Tsang & Zahra, 2008), and facilitates organisations to respond to changing environment (Zhao et al., 2013). Our study brings this forward by proposing unlearning as a starting point of the cycle to recontextualise international knowledge. Unlearning lays the foundation for effective knowledge adaptation and utilisation, which leads to relearning to create new knowledge in the new institutional setting in pursuit of entrepreneurial development.

In terms of transnational entrepreneurship, knowledge recontextualisation refers to the process of adapting, adjusting, or transforming acquired knowledge to suit specific cultural, institutional, and market contexts of different countries (Sa & de Pinho, 2019). It requires the ability to reinterpret and apply obtained international knowledge in a manner that is relevant and effective within diverse business environments. The fluid and ongoing nature of transnational entrepreneurship facilitates knowledge connectivity by recontextualising and tailoring international knowledge, received and transferred by transnational entrepreneurs, to be employed in specific contexts while navigating the complexities of varying markets, regulations, and consumer behaviours across borders. This also sets the ground for potential two-way knowledge transfer and interactive knowledge creation as transnational entrepreneurs not only bring knowledge to foreign markets but also gain insights and understanding from the unique challenges and dynamics of those markets. This reciprocal exchange of knowledge fosters a dynamic learning environment, promoting innovation and adaptability. Furthermore, the adaptability of transnational entrepreneurs in recontextualising knowledge enables them to bridge cultural and institutional gaps, fostering effective cross-border collaboration and enhancing knowledge connectivity in global business ecosystems.

In the context of international corporate entrepreneurship, recontextualisation of knowledge pertains to the adaptation and transformation of international knowledge by established organisations when they launch new ventures in different countries. This process involves recontextualising and modifying existing organisational knowledge, strategies, and practices to align with the specific cultural and institutional dynamics of the host country (Fortwengel et al., 2023). The fluid and ongoing nature of international corporate entrepreneurship emphasises the systematic adaptation and co-creation of knowledge based on the existing knowledge to align with the unique challenges and opportunities presented by different international markets. Therefore, within the recontextualisation process, the learning and unlearning cycle carried out by international corporate entrepreneurship via knowledge transfer and co-creation at an organisational level contributes to the global knowledge connectivity and initiates increasingly structured processes and resource allocation by established organisation seeking to expand their global footprint (Fortwengel, 2017). Moreover, as existing studies have primarily investigated the dynamics of knowledge recontextualisation within the transfer process from developed countries to developing countries, exploring this in the Global South context represents a promising avenue for future research. This could shed light on how IE adapts to the specific contexts of developing economies and contributes to more nuanced understandings of the recontextualisation process.

5.3 Connectivity of knowledge

Knowledge connectivity refers to the degree and effectiveness of the links, interactions, and networks that facilitate the transfer, sharing, and co-creation of knowledge among individuals,

organisations, or entities within the global value chain (Cano-Kollmann et al., 2016). Knowledge connectivity goes beyond transmitting information; it involves establishing and maintaining connections that facilitate a dynamic exchange of insights, which fosters innovation, problem-solving, and collaboration in the international context (Andersson et al., 2015). Existing literature have investigated knowledge connectivity focusing on the interactions between MNEs and their host locations (Cantwell & Santangelo, 1999), the incentives driving the pursuit of knowledge (Song & Shin, 2008), and the co-evolution of firms and locations within the global value chain which transfer tacit knowledge via both organisational pipelines and personal relationships (Cano-Kollmann et al., 2016).

Our review suggests the dearth of research focusing on the role of IE in international knowledge connectivity. Building upon insights garnered from 40 papers reviewed, we call for more research on this topic, particularly recognising IE as a catalyst and learning mechanism for international knowledge connectivity; international entrepreneurs can act as key connectors in social networks linking stakeholders of researchers, investors and customers, but also as intermediaries translating knowledge to commercially viable products and services. Dynamic capabilities of international entrepreneurs in continuously learning, adapting to changes, and managing environmental uncertainties would also make a fruitful avenue of future research.

Within the global value chain, key activities including both specialised and non-repetitive activities, and standardised and repetitive activities are distributed to matching geographic locations (Lorenzen & Mudambi, 2013). Through IE, individuals and corporates are able to reconfigure the existing international division of labour by leveraging unique knowledge acquired and implemented it across different countries. Moreover, this engagement with varied environments fosters a rich exchange of perspectives, expertise, and experiences. As individuals and corporates navigate these international landscapes, the cross-fertilization of ideas offers the potential to knowledge co-creation. Therefore, future research can investigate the role of IE in reshaping the global economic framework which could result in a more dynamic and flexible arrangement of tasks and responsibilities, influenced by the strategic utilisation and co-creation of specialised knowledge in various international settings, fostering more cohesive and dynamic globally connected knowledge networks.

5.4 Community capitalism

Community capitalism refers to an economic model that places a strong emphasis on local or community-based initiatives, cooperation, and shared benefits within the broader capitalist structure (van Dyk, 2018). It involves firms that prioritise community development, social responsibility, and sustainable practices alongside their economic objectives of profit maximisation and market share enhancement. At the local community level, IE acts as conduits for the transfer of diverse knowledge through their entrepreneurial activities, which strengthens the community's economic foundation.

Furthermore, as international entrepreneurs engage with different markets and cultures, they bring to local community valuable insights and practices that can inspire and empower local businesses (Kraus et al., 2021) and enhance their competitiveness (Breitenecker et al., 2016). The positive effects of IKT via IE on regional innovation and economic development have been emphasised in existing research (Autio et al, 2011; Agarwal et al., 2007). For instance, community initiatives and grassroots activities play a pivotal role in integrating the knowledge disseminated through IE into the fabric of local economies (Smith & Bagchi-Sen, 2012; Fuller-

Love et al., 2006). This aligns with the broader perspective that community engagement is essential for realizing the full potential of IKT via IE, thereby contributing to the principles of community capitalism (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

In summary, the transfer and integration of overseas and local knowledge through IE can lead to the establishment of sustainable businesses that contribute to the overall resilience of local communities (del Olmo-García, 2023). By addressing local challenges and leveraging global insights, IE enhances the competitive advantage of their ventures as well as the robustness of economy within the local community. Therefore, IE activities that transfer knowledge across borders contribute to SDGs as it promotes economic growth, decent work, and industry innovation. Future cross-disciplinary research in areas such as political economy and sociology is promising to understand the complex dynamics of IKT via IE and its impact on knowledge connectivity and community capitalism, contributing valuable insights to address grand challenges in both international business and broader social science.

5.5 Cross-disciplinary investigation of IKT via IE

IKT via IE involves the intersection of various domains, including business, economics, sociology, and political science (Drori et al., 2009). A siloed approach within a single discipline may overlook crucial aspects of the process, hindering a comprehensive understanding. For instance, political factors play a pivotal role in influencing policies that impact IKT mechanisms (Kostova et al., 2008). Sociological perspectives contribute insights into cultural dynamics and social networks, elucidating how societal structures influence knowledge transfer via entrepreneurship in different cultural contexts (Jones & Coviello, 2005). A holistic investigation requires a synthesis of insights from diverse fields to capture the intricate interplay of factors affecting knowledge transfer.

Therefore, cross-disciplinary research is imperative for investigating IKT via IE, especially in addressing grand challenges in international business and management, as well as broader social science (Fernhaber et al., 2022). The interconnected nature of global business necessitates a comprehensive approach that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries (George et al., 2016). Grand challenges such as sustainable development, economic inequality, and geopolitical tensions demand insights from economics, sociology, political science, and management to formulate effective solutions (Buckley et al., 2017). A cross-disciplinary lens enables researchers to explore the intersectionality of these challenges and understand how knowledge transfer in IE can contribute to mitigating or exacerbating these issues.

Furthermore, cross-disciplinary research enhances the theoretical richness of the study. Integrating perspectives from different disciplines allows for the development of more robust and nuanced conceptual frameworks. Moreover, cross-disciplinary research facilitates the development of practical insights with broader applicability. Investigating IKT via IE through a cross-disciplinary lens enables the identification of actionable strategies that consider the interplay of economic, political, and social factors. For example, a study integrating insights from management, political science, and sociology may offer nuanced recommendations for entrepreneurs navigating cross-cultural collaborations in politically sensitive regions, acknowledging the impact of both institutional and societal factors (Welter & Smallbone, 2010). Cross-disciplinary research, therefore, not only advances theoretical understandings but also provides pragmatic guidance for IE in an interconnected world.

Importantly, the call for conducting cross-disciplinary research to investigate knowledge transfer via IE aligns with the pursuit of SDGs. Investigating knowledge transfer via IE through a cross-disciplinary lens allows researchers to examine how entrepreneurial activities can align with and contribute to the achievement of specific SDGs (Montiel et al., 2021). For instance, a cross-disciplinary integrated approach involving economics, sociology, and environmental science might shed light on how international entrepreneurial ventures can foster sustainable practices and social inclusion, thus contributing to SDG goals (Schaltegger et al., 2018).

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Figure 1. Literature Selection Process: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

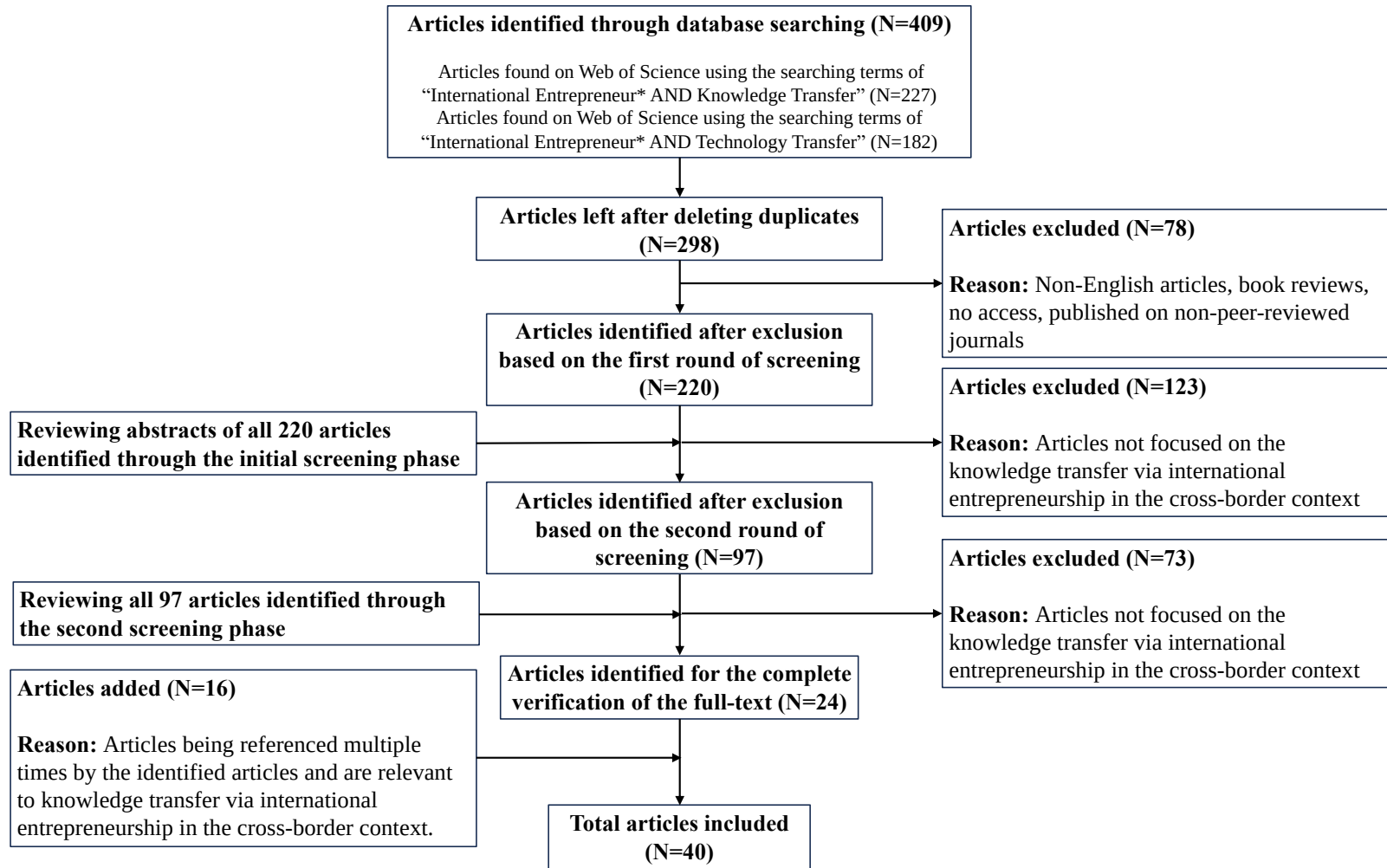


Figure 2. An Analytical Framework of IKT via IE

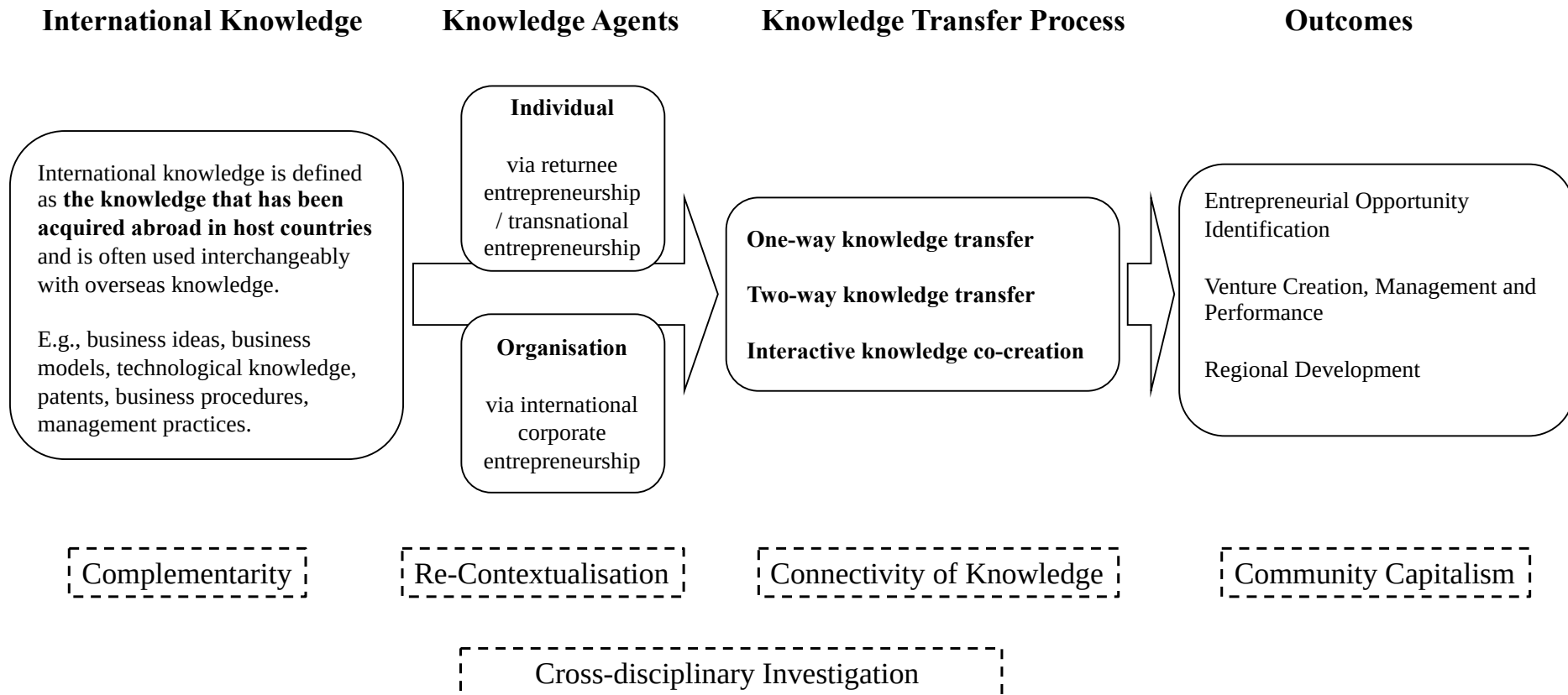


Figure 3. A Summary of Methods and Contexts

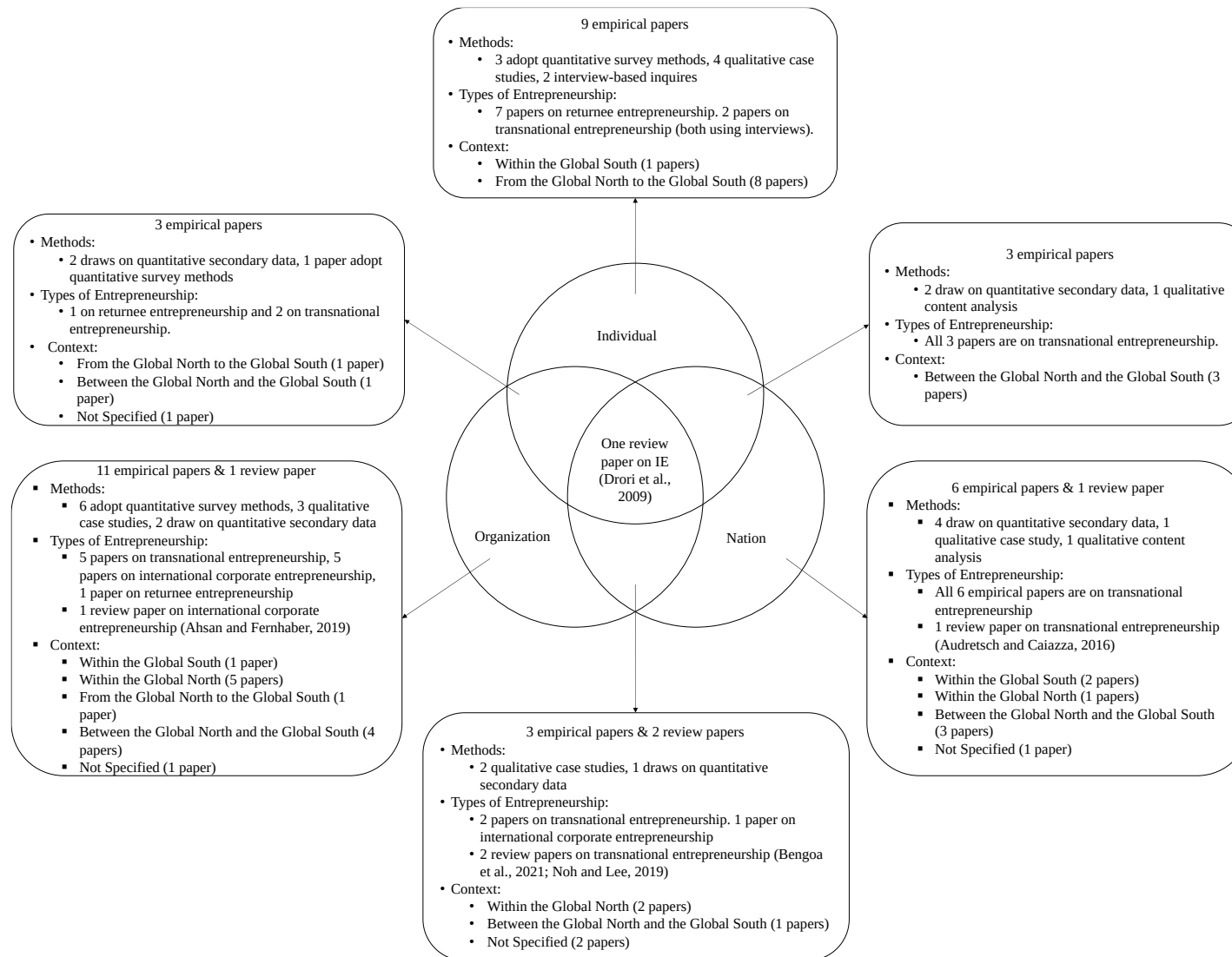


Table 1. Summary of Research Themes, Theoretical Perspectives and Key Findings

Theoretical Perspective	Research Themes	Key Findings
Social Capital Theory	Research themes 1, 2, and 3	1. Network capability mediates the positive relationship between the international social networks of returnee entrepreneurs and their international performance (Bai et al., 2018). 2. International Patent Collaboration helps detect new business opportunities, increases acquisition of precise knowledge, and creates stronger networks that favour the appearance of new ventures with a global strategy (Alonso-Martinez et al., 2021).
Social Network Theory	Research theme 2	1. Local ties are indispensable for venture creation by return entrepreneurs despite the availability of international ties developed abroad (Pruthi, 2014). 2. Returnees who transfer advanced technological knowledge and a combination of technological and business knowledge between host and home countries are more likely to become entrepreneurs (Lin et al., 2016).
Human Capital Theory	Research theme 2	1. Same-industry and other-industry international experience leads to different types of congenital knowledge, which differently affect international new venture's continued international growth (Hashai and Zahra, 2022). 2. Entrepreneurial activity in the Visegrad countries is determined significantly by the economy structure and human capital (Zygmunt, 2016).
Institutional Theory	Research theme 1	1. The perception of a stable institutional environment stimulates returnee entrepreneurship, and that the perception of estrangement negatively affects the intention to start a new venture in

		the home country (Gruenhagen, 2021). 2. Cross-country institutional interactions can promote efficiency of knowledge transfer by sharing procedural information and coordination mechanisms to foster cross border entrepreneurship (Grodek-Szostak et al., 2020). 3. Through government support programs and favourable entry regulations, new and growing firms could benefit more from the research and development investment (Sa and de Pinho, 2019).
Resource-based View/ Knowledge-based View/ Dynamic Capabilities View	Research theme 3	1. The performance of born-global firms is impacted by the owner/manager's level of international knowledge, as perceived interdependently with firm performance, while also being influenced by the firms' dynamic capabilities (Yu et al., 2020). 2. Investments in learning, knowledge, and capabilities are critical but subject to diminishing returns, implying a need for subsidiaries to make astute resource allocation decisions (Ahsan and Fernhaber, 2019). 3. Subsidiary autonomy in the local market positively moderates the relationship between subsidiary entrepreneurship and knowledge creation (Lee et al., 2020). 4. The more organisationally stable periods of an INV's foreign unit, the stronger the positive relationship between product/market knowledge transferred from the parent firm and the foreign unit's dynamic capabilities (Pehrsson et al., 2015).
Learning Theory	Research theme 3	1. Knowledge sharing between the acquiring and acquired entities fosters organisational ambidexterity (Hughes et al., 2020). 2. The experiential and vicarious learning of returnee entrepreneurs positively contributes to firm performance (Liu et al., 2015).

		3. In the entrepreneurial trajectory, returnees engage in learning, re-learning and unlearning to foster sustainable entrepreneurial growth (Tran and Truong, 2022).
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Note:

Research theme 1: Exploration of the enablers of, and barriers to, IKT via IE.

Research theme 2: Investigation into the key attributes of IE and the mechanisms facilitating IKT.

Research theme 3. Examination of the outcomes resulting from IKT via IE.

Appendix 1. The Number of IKT via IE Publications

