There are several megatrends in the contemporary global economy and business practices. One of these megatrends is the ever-increasing importance of information and knowledge. Accompanied with the fast evolution of information communication technology (ICT) this development has led to a global rise of various knowledge-based services offered to firms and public organizations, like different types of consultancy and various ICT and R&D services, often collectively referred to as knowledge intensive business services or KIBS (Muller & Doloreux, 2009).

By dedicating this special issue of International Journal of Innovation in Digital Economy (IJIDE) to KIBS we have aimed at providing new insights into the production and utilization of knowledge intensive business services and thus expanding and diversifying the ongoing discussions on them. Although this new special issue might not provide new seminal innovations for the KIBS literature, it will confirm and continue scientific KIBS discussions and encourage improving existing KIBS frameworks and perspectives further for the needs of the future communities.

The articles in this special issue provide a good example of the wide variety of approaches that can be used to investigate KIBS, illustrating concretely how the general theme of KIBS can gather together researchers from a multitude of theoretical and methodological perspectives (Muller & Doloreux, 2009). This in turn suggests that KIBS discussions have a strong potential to serve as an arena for developing dialogue between researchers from different research traditions and disciplines in the future as well. Though this special issue was never intended to be a collection of articles written by researchers from the same country, during the editorial process it became evident that our special issue gathered interest mostly among Finnish researchers. So the special issue also turned out to be a predominantly Finnish viewpoint to the global discussions on KIBS.

In the first article Päivi Eriksson et al. focus on the critical factors for the management of client contacts in small new-technology-based services (T-KIBS) companies. By using narratives constructed from ethnographic field work and interviews the article illustrates, how client contacts are managed and services co-produced with clients in four Finnish case companies, and how client-oriented multicompetence is a core asset in turning technology into business. The authors argue that one critical factor for the management of client contacts in the case companies is recruiting and partnering with people who are willing to take close contact...
with clients and openmindedly listen to the ideas and needs of clients.

In the second article Marko Ikonen and Pekka Abrahamsson investigate successful management of software development projects, a subject that is especially relevant for KIBS companies acting as software suppliers. Based on an extensive review of the fragmented literature on project success in software engineering research the authors construct a holistic project success model for software development projects, and then evaluate it empirically in the context of a large multinational software corporation. As a result the authors suggest that by providing a way to understand success in software development projects the proposed model can help KIBS organizations to improve their project practices and increase their capabilities in running successful projects.

In the third article Tytti Kurtti et al. propose a new conceptual classification of knowledge in the context of knowledge-intensive services. Instead of traditional divide into explicit and tacit knowledge, the authors advocate for classifying knowledge into three classes: explicit, implicit and tacit. This tripartition of knowledge, and especially implicit knowledge, is then illustrated by using a travel industry sales event as an example of a knowledge-intensive service. As a conclusion the authors suggest that implicit, situated knowledge should be taken into account in the management of knowledge-intensive services. Although the article is not discussing knowledge tripartition specifically in KIBS organizations but in knowledge-intensive service organizations in general, it provides important understanding about an issue underlying all knowledge-intensive business services, i.e. knowledge.

In the fourth article Rauno Rusko discusses virtual business incubations as an important, but little studied type of KIBS. Departing from the viewpoint of the service provider characterising the other three articles in this special issue, the article takes a customer and societal perspective to KIBS. Based on the notions that most services provided by traditional, location-based incubations are possible to be provided virtually and that with virtual incubations it would also be possible to avoid the societal problems caused by traditional incubations, the author argues that virtual incubations would be better or even the only way to serve companies in peripheral areas. Tourism branch in Finnish Lapland is used as a case example to illustrate the potential of virtual incubations for developing peripheral areas.

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