Preface

This book is organized into seven sections. The first one is dedicated to learning and innovation, their rise within the management discourse, the possibilities of their analysis, as well as the varied ways in which they shape contemporary organizational realities. Davydd J. Greenwood shows how the idea of postindustrial society and knowledge-intensiveness is a tool used by scholars and consultants to promote their own means, despite the fact that research universities are neither knowledge-intensive nor eager to learn. Juha Kettunen continues the examination of higher education institutions and the problems they face in producing innovations, and the potential for knowledge management theory in enhancing them. His chapter focuses on human capital as the premier asset of these organizations, and the challenges appearing in the attempts to use it to foster innovation and inter-institutional cooperation.

Jeff Gold and Richard Thorpe delve into the subject of professional learning, using their action research-based study of a law firm to highlight and analyze its collective and distributive character. Paul Trott and Andreas Hoecht study the topic of innovation risks associated with strategic outsourcing, as well as the possible measures to keep them under control. Finally, Lars Steiner uses Actor-Network Theory, as well as the concept of autopoiésis to analyze knowledge management within a collaborative project uniting university and business actors. The study sheds light on both knowledge management and the possibilities of researching knowledge-intensive organizations and projects.

The second section explores the language of knowledge, both in terms of the discourse surrounding knowledge and language used to learn, innovate, and share experiences. Ester Barinaga studies performative aspects of international research team perceptions on project’s development and construction, and by drawing on Wittgenstein’s theory calls for studying knowledge-intensive work also from the linguistic angle. Jo A. Tyler and David M. Boje, conversely, argue that storytelling and narratives, as conscious creations, cannot be used to convey tacit knowledge, although they can help reflect on the already lived experience. Louise Grisoni continues the exploration of the relation between language and knowledge, positing that poetry as a possible link between explicit and implicit types of knowledge in organizations.

Stephen Sheard, broadening the focus of discussion, shows a resurgence of proto-alphabetic communication in contemporary technology, and argues for reexamination of the sources of symbolism animating contemporary discourse of knowledge management.

This discussion sets ground for the third section of the book which focuses on the issue of managing knowledge in organizations. Krzysztof Klincewicz analyzes the dissemination of particular forms of knowledge management discourse and ideologies by looking at the role IT Research companies and institutes play in promoting particular concepts, solutions, and perspectives. Fátima Guadamillas-Gómez and Mario J. Donate-Manzanares go into details of knowledge management strategies implementation in technology-intensive organizations, drawing from two success stories documented in research. Arla Juntunen continues a similar theme, reporting on a study of the modes for effective development of a knowledge management platform in high-velocity markets. Jonathan D. Owens concludes the section by
arguing for the importance of modelling new process development in contemporary business environment, with particular emphasis on a structured approach involving the creation of roadmaps.

The fourth section of this volume picks up the theme of management and control, starting with Anders Örtenblad’s critical study of knowledge sharing practices. Analyzing ideas within the dominant discourse of knowledge management, he highlights the dangers of taking these ideas at face value, without a thorough understanding of power relations embedded therein. Angelo Ditillo, also examining managerial control, uses his analysis to propose criteria for evaluating control measures used for knowledge sharing and development in organizations. Aino Kianto and Jianzhong Hong agree that the growth of knowledge-intensive companies and new organizational forms makes the traditional forms of control obsolete, and look at possible replacements, in this chapter they propose two new approaches, focusing on intellectual capital and competence development.

Vidar Hepsø takes a closer look at actual workings of organizational control mechanisms; in a chapter based on a field study in an oil and gas company, he analyzes collaboration and conflict in common information spaces, that is, places where knowledge is shared, negotiated, and disseminated throughout an organization. Agnieszka Postuła, in a chapter also based on a field study, contrasts tendencies for creativity and control in software development companies.

In the fifth section, we look at the culture of knowledge, working to situate knowledge-intensive organizations within a broader social context without abandoning focus on the managerial practices encountered in these organizations. In a chapter based on qualitative study of six multinational companies, Patrocinio Zaragoza-Sáez, Enrique Claver-Cortés, and Diego Quer-Ramón search out knowledge management practices conducive to the rise of a new knowledge society. Cliff Bowman and Pauline Gleadle also base their findings on a study of a large corporation, using the case of 3M in the United Kingdom to describe how corporate culture can help negotiate tensions between creativity and financial control. Maria E. Burke, reporting on a three-year international ethnographic study within higher education institutions, describes the interplay of culture and organizational structure, providing groundwork for building knowledge management systems allowing higher levels of information fulfillment.

Darius Mehri delivers a participant observation-based account of engineering work in Toyota Company, highlighting a culture of reliance on explicit knowledge, often undervalued in knowledge management literature, in an organization known for successful integration of innovation and product development processes. Federica Ricceri and James Guthrie also challenge dominant discourse on knowledge management, presenting a critical review of published guidelines for development of organizational policies regarding knowledge resource management in knowledge-intensive companies.

Having looks at management relations within knowledge-intensive organizations, in section six we turn towards the knowledge workers and issues concerning individuals taking part in knowledge economy. Christiane Prange discusses strategic alliances capability from knowledge-based view but, in contrast to traditional approaches, she does not take a macro perspective but rather concentrates on bringing the individual back into the equation. Meryem Sevinc, Lawrence Locker, and John D. Murray also look into a discourse commonly excluding the individual: they examine advantages and drawbacks of the ongoing automation of data mining processes. As a result of this analysis, they argue for the need of greater human participation in the form of an analyst-centered approach to knowledge discovery.

Johanna Shih moves the focus towards actual knowledge workers, presenting a study of the work lives of high-tech engineers in Silicon Valley. In particular, she highlights the details of temporal organization of work among these knowledge workers. Alice MacGillivray, maintaining a similar research sensibility, takes us to the public sector, reporting on a Canadian public sector science initiative. Drawing upon the community of practice perspective, she stresses the dynamic character of knowledge work. In another field study-based chapter, Tatiana Andreeva uses data from Russian companies to argue
for distinguishing between knowledge creation and knowledge sharing in defining employee roles in knowledge-intensive settings.

The seventh and final section both sums up the major themes of the volume and opens up the field for further research and analysis. Called discussing knowledge, it groups together the broadest, theoretical contributions. Thus, Steffen Böhm and Chris Land take on the fundamental issue of value, its relation to knowledge and its status in contemporary economy, arguing for the continued relevance of the labour theory of value despite, or even because of, ongoing transformations of the global economy. Alexander Styhre examines the use of media in knowledge-intensive organizations, arguing for their role in not only integrating otherwise divergent technologies and tools, but also taking the lead in breaking down boundaries between inside and outside, between embodied and technological matter.

In the penultimate chapter, Ben Tran takes a step back to provide a thorough overview of knowledge management concept evolution, presenting the dominant ideas of the discourse as well as different organizational structures understood to enhance knowledge creation, management, and development.

Our own chapter concludes the volume with a critical overview of the knowledge management concept and its most common forms. Despite the prevalence of its usage in a simplistic rhetorical fashion in popular management, we argue that it also plays an important role in reinforcing managerial domination. As such, we believe this book constitutes not the final word on management in knowledge intensive organizations, but rather a recapitulation of the current state of research, as well as a demarcation of areas necessitating further study.

REFERENCES


