Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS), Knowledge Mobilization and Innovation: From Knowledge Transfer to Co-Creation

Thematic Area: Strategic Management and Business Innovation

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Summary:

Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS) are playing an increasingly important role in innovation. They provide specialized expertise, connect organizations with external knowledge, and work with clients to develop new solutions. Beyond serving as knowledge intermediaries, KIBS can generate applied knowledge and support organizational learning, innovation capabilities, and broader innovation ecosystems. However, further research is needed to understand how knowledge is transferred, absorbed, recombined, and translated into innovation and firm performance.

This Special Track aims to advance research on KIBS and knowledge mobilization, focusing in particular on relationships among knowledge-intensive service providers, client firms, and other actors in innovation ecosystems. It welcomes theoretical and empirical contributions on four interconnected themes: (1) knowledge transfer, sharing, and co-creation in KIBS–client relationships; (2) absorptive capacity, organizational learning, and the conditions under which external knowledge leads to innovation and performance outcomes; (3) how intermediaries, networks, and innovation ecosystems connect and mobilize knowledge across organizational, sectoral, and geographical boundaries; and (4) how different KIBS specializations contribute to digital transformation, servitization, internationalization, and sustainable innovation.

The Track builds on established research on KIBS, innovation systems, and mutual learning, while drawing on recent work on value co-creation, knowledge sharing, and innovation ecosystems. Its distinctive contribution is to bring these research streams together and examine knowledge mobilization as a process that links interorganizational relationships and knowledge exchange with firms' absorptive capacity, innovation, and performance. Rather than treating KIBS as a homogeneous category or assuming that external knowledge automatically creates value, the Track seeks to clarify how, under what conditions, and for whom knowledge mobilization

generates value. In doing so, it aims to advance a more integrated research agenda at the intersection of KIBS, strategic management, and innovation.

The Track welcomes conceptual, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies across sectors, firm sizes, and geographical contexts. By bringing KIBS research into dialogue with strategic management and innovation studies, it aims to identify emerging research opportunities and build a more integrated understanding of knowledge-based collaboration and innovation.

Keywords:

Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS); knowledge mobilization; knowledge transfer; co-creation; absorptive capacity; innovation ecosystems; firm performance; digital transformation.