THE EMERGING CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBLE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (rKM)

Identifying and Formulating the Core Principles of rKM

Lappeenranta–Lahti University of Technology LUT

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Examiner(s): Docent, Associate Professor Heidi Olander

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Responsible Knowledge Management, Ethics, Sustainability, Inclusivity, Common good, Wicked problems, Civilisational transition, Transversality.

This thesis examines the emerging concept of responsible Knowledge Management (rKM) by identifying its core principles as discussed in academic literature. The research focuses particularly on the actions, practices, and concerns associated with 'responsibility' in the context of Knowledge Management (KM). The findings show rKM as a new paradigm of KM that integrates ethical value frameworks, inclusivity, and a sustainable ecosystem view, reorienting value creation in organisations toward contributing to the common good.

The thesis applies an integrative literature review combined with grounded theory coding to analyse publications of the past 5 years, identifying, through close reading, recurring themes and concepts that shape the discourse on rKM.

The synthesis identifies three interdependent domains – normative frameworks, inclusivity, and sustainable ecosystem view – whose convergence constitutes rKM. While the literature recognises the need for moral guidance, pluralism, and long-term purpose, it often remains abstract and underdeveloped in terms of implementation. The contribution of this thesis lies in consolidating these dispersed insights, exposing contradictions, and providing a conceptual foundation for future research and practice.

The thesis concludes that rKM has the potential to provide a more responsible and future-oriented foundation for knowledge practices. It offers a framework for addressing the limitations of traditional KM while emphasising knowledge as a shared, ethical, and transformative practice.

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Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma tarkastelee vastuullisen tietojohtamisen (responsible Knowledge Management, rKM) orastavaa käsitettä ja pyrkii tunnistamaan sen keskeiset periaatteet akateemisessa kirjallisuudessa. Erityistä huomiota kiinnitetään niihin toimiin, käytäntöihin ja huolenaiheisiin, joita vastuun käsitteen yhteydessä tietojohtamiseen liitetään. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että rKM on tietojohtamisen uusi paradigma, joka yhdistää eettiset arvoperustat, inklusiivisuuden ja kestävän ekosysteemin näkökulman ja suuntaa organisaatioiden arvonluonnin yhteisen hyvän edistämiseen.

Tutkimus toteutettiin integroivana kirjallisuuskatsauksena yhdistettynä Grounded Theory -koodaukseen (ankkuroitu teoria). Analyysi kohdistui viimeisen viiden vuoden aikana julkaistuun tutkimuskirjallisuuteen ja pyrki lähiluvun avulla tunnistamaan toistuvia vastuullisen tietojohtamisen diskussia muovaavia teemoja ja käsitteitä.

Synteesissä hahmottui kolme toisiinsa kietoutuvaa kokonaisuutta – normatiiviset viitekehykset, inklusiivisuus ja kestävä ekosysteeminäkökulma – joiden konvergenssi muodostaa rKM:n ytimen. Vaikka kirjallisuus tunnistaa moraalisen ohjauksen, pluralismin ja pitkäjänteisen tarkoituksen tarpeen, se jää usein abstraktille tasolle eikä kehitä konkreettisia toteutuskeinoja. Tutkielman kontribuutio on näiden hajanaisten oivallusten kokoaminen yhteen, ristiriitojen paljastaminen ja konseptuaalisen perustan tarjoaminen tulevalle tutkimukselle ja käytännölle.

Tutkielma päättelee, että rKM tarjoaa mahdollisuuden vastuullisempaan ja tulevaisuuteen suuntautuneeseen perustaan tietojohtamisen käytännöille. Se avaa väylän perinteisen tietojohtamisen rajoitteiden ylittämiseen ja korostaa tietoa yhteisenä, eettisenä ja muutosvoimaisena käytäntönä.

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DECLARATIONS

Turnitin

The originality of this thesis has been reviewed with the Turnitin similarity checking service.

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Responsibility

The author, Hanna Koskinen, takes full responsibility for the content of this thesis and has reviewed and edited the content generated by the possible use of AI tools.

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1 Introduction

Knowledge Management (KM) research has long been accused of lacking criticality (Dumay, 2022; Heisig, 2023). The field is either ahistorical or amnesic (Wallace, 2007; Lambe, 2011), haphazardly reinventing itself with gusto (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008) yet persistently circling the same epistemic drain of oblivion (Davenport, 2015; O'Leary, 2016; Dumay, 2022; Dalkir, 2023). KM has paid dearly for its submission to "the logic of performance, aimed at maximising the overall efficiency of the system" (Peters, 2001, p. 48 paraphrasing Lyotard's ideas[1]). The resulting "commodity fetish" has effectively reduced knowledge "to encoded messages with exchange value – information that can be stored, retrieved, packaged, calculated, and transmitted" (Peters, 2001, p. 48, paraphrasing Lyotard's ideas). Similarly, individuals, once valued as contributors of human capital, have been reduced to what Deleuze termed "dividuals", mere data points and statistics in a databank (Peters, 2001, p. 105). Trapped in cycles of instrumentalism and the promise of ever greater efficiency, KM struggles to articulate *why* knowledge should be managed beyond the logic of performance. "The notion of performance and its criterion of efficiency are technological and cannot provide us with a rule for judging what is true or just or beautiful" (Peters, 2001, pp. 48-49).

Thankfully, rather than succumbing to oblivion, a reorientation is beginning to emerge. Responsible Knowledge Management (rKM) presents itself as a critical and timely subject of inquiry. As the limits of prevailing paradigms for growth and maximum performance become obvious, humanity is given the opportunity to appreciate the restorative aspects of knowledge work that may offer remedies for the so-called wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that defy the linear, straightforward solutions and demand collaborative, systemic approaches extending beyond narrow economic priorities and siloed thinking.

[1] *The Postmodern Condition*, 1984.

1.1 It Is Not the VUCA World Anymore

We live in a world where uncertainty has hardened into something more unsettling than mere unpredictability. The long-familiar VUCA acronym (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) once adequately described the turbulence organisations and societies faced (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014). It captured a world that was still, fundamentally, manageable. Leaders could be relied on to develop the right tools to diagnose its components properly and apply analytical clarity to deploy strategic responses (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014). In the logic of VUCA, challenges were dissectible: volatility might be an opportunity if properly hedged; uncertainty could be mitigated with more information; complexity obeyed the capacity to adapt; and ambiguity could be tamed through extensive experimentation (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014). This was, and remains, a managerial rationality deeply rooted in the neoliberal belief in control.

But something has shifted. As Jamais Cascio (2020) and Jeroen Kraaijenbrink (2022) argue, the VUCA lens no longer captures the condition we find ourselves today. A phase change has occurred, and the language of VUCA simplifies rather than describes what now feels increasingly like chaos.

Chaos in the contemporary context does not refer to a world of complete disintegration, lawlessness, or terminal collapse. Rather, it speaks to the disorientation of the observer faced with systems that resist conventional modes of understanding. Indeed, the word itself carries deep and varied connotations. In its ancient roots[2], it simply signified the abyss, the gaping void before the ordering of the cosmos; not violence, but primordial openness, a state before distinctions and structures were imposed.

In modern usage, chaos often simply suggests disorder, turmoil, or the unsettling breakdown of familiar patterns. However, scientifically, chaos is not the absence of order. Minute causes ripple through complex systems, generating outcomes that appear random; but these systems are, nevertheless, deterministic; the intricacy of their interactions makes them seem incomprehensible to human foresight.

[2] *Chaos* here refers to the original Greek conception (*chaos* in Hesiod's *Theogony*).

Thus, to say that we live in an age of chaos is not to suggest that meaning has vanished, but that many of the simplifying assumptions we previously relied upon, linearity, stability, control, no longer hold. The world now resists easy modelling; its interdependencies multiply; and our confidence in managing its trajectories with unproblematic knowledge diminishes. Chaos in this sense is not a failure of the world, but a reflection of the limits of our vantage point. The challenge is no longer to assert mastery over complexity but to cultivate forms of responsibility, resilience, and wisdom that can endure amid unpredictability.

Cascio's heir to VUCA, BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, incomprehensible) cuts closer to the bone (2020). In the BANI world, the problem is not that conditions are unpredictable, but that many of the structures we rely upon always were more fragile than we like to admit. Cascio (2020) notes that efficiency-driven systems, whether global supply chains, democracies, or ecological balances, now reveal their brittleness: robust until, quite suddenly, they are not.

Furthermore, BANI suggests that the very human assumption of control was itself an illusion. Non-linearity exposes how small causes can have massive, disproportionate effects, while incomprehensibility reveals that even as information grows, our ability to synthesise it meaningfully does not necessarily follow. Anxiety proliferates because we can neither predict nor fully comprehend the consequences of actions taken (or not taken) across deeply entangled, global systems. (Cascio, 2020)

1.2 Margins of the Current Understanding of Knowledge Management

In such a context, the traditional assumptions underpinning KM are no longer sufficient. BANI accentuates the urgency of rethinking why knowledge is created, shared, and utilised. Historically, knowledge has been managed primarily as an asset (Durst, 2021) or resource to drive competitive advantage within inter-organisational frameworks. While effective in fostering innovation and economic growth, this approach often neglects broader social and ecological considerations. The imperative to shift towards rKM reflects a nascent recognition that endless productivity growth, as a supreme ideology, offers neither a universal nor a sufficient solution to humanity's most pressing challenges.

Central to rKM is the adoption of systems thinking, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental ecologies. This perspective challenges the reductionist view of knowledge as merely a resource to be possessed, an approach that tends to concentrate power and benefits among a privileged few. Instead, rKM advocates for inclusive and collaborative practices that harness knowledge as a shared, dynamic, and evolving process (Durst, 2021). By fostering transparency, ethical considerations, and equitable access to information, rKM can serve as a catalyst for addressing global challenges jointly (Durst, 2021).

The pressing need for sustainability further amplifies the relevance of rKM today. The Earth's ecosystem is teetering at the edge of extinction, with climate scientists warning of irreversible consequences if collective action is not taken. In this context, KM must transcend organisational interests and contribute to transformative efforts that balance economic development with ecological preservation and social justice (Durst, 2021). This shift demands the re-drafting of an understanding of a collaborative ethos for the field of KM. By going beyond the organisational or national boundaries, including diverse stakeholders, embracing knowledge creation, sharing and retention for the greater good and promoting sustainability, KM can contribute to making a positive impact on a global scale (Durst, 2021).

The days of KM functioning under the premise of optimised organisational performance via rational, instrumental logic aligned with the VUCA world of strategic planning and resource allocation are outnumbered. It is time to pause and reconsider what knowledge management means when knowledge itself is incomplete, unstable, contested, or beyond full comprehension.

The contemporary relevance of rKM lies precisely here. In a BANI world, knowledge is not simply an organisational asset to be exploited but part of a fragile, ethical, and collective responsibility. The common good becomes central, not as a symptom of compliance or reputation management, but as a foundational compass for navigating this profound uncertainty. Responsibility in KM is no longer reducible to competitive advantage; it becomes a matter of sustaining viable knowledge ecosystems, cultivating ethical reflexivity, and recognising the moral weight of decisions made amid partial understanding.

The question driving this research is thus not how to manage knowledge more efficiently, but to what end we manage knowledge at all – and what kinds of responsibility we assume when navigating an incomprehensible world.

1.3 Objectives of This Research

It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate the concept of rKM as initially outlined by Durst (2021). As a field with multidisciplinary history, KM is inevitably characterised by a legion of definitions, reflecting the diverse perspectives of researchers and the contexts in which it is applied. This variety naturally extends to rKM, a concept which is just beginning to emerge.

However, it is apparent from Durst's (2021) viewpoint paper that rKM introduces additional adjunct features that KM has not, thus far, included. For her, the concept of rKM consists of the ideas of responsibility, conceptualised primarily in the context of inclusivity; sustainability, conceptualised in the context of pursuing a sustainable ecosystem at the world level; and systems thinking, conceptualised in the context of wicked problems and collaborative KM approaches for pursuing common good (Durst, 2021). Responsible Knowledge Management therefore appears to provide a framework for addressing the complexities of the contemporary world by reimagining knowledge not as a commodity to be exploited but as a shared means of collaborative effort toward sustainability. Through an integrative literature review and grounded theory analysis, this thesis seeks to determine:

1. What the core principles of rKM are as discussed in academic literature, particularly
    a. What actions, practices, and concerns the literature associates with 'responsibility' in the context of KM.

By inductively tracing and interpreting the elements of rKM, the objective of this research is to provide a conceptual outline that could serve as a catalyst for further scholarly inquiry into the evolution of KM. Through the analysis of academic discourse on responsibility in KM, this thesis hopes to reposition knowledge as a phenomenon embedded within broader societal and ecological contexts. The aim of identifying and analysing the emerging themes, contradictions, and conceptual gaps in the academic literature contributes directly to the

theorising of a grounded yet flexible framework for rKM that could enable more responsible, sustainable, and purpose-driven approach to knowledge management. In doing so, the thesis not only contributes to clarifying the conceptual contours of rKM but also lays groundwork for future empirical investigation into its practical application.

1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

The research strategy employed in this thesis reflects a layered approach. As illustrated in the figure 1, this strategy draws on two methods, part of the theoretical and qualitative traditions. An integrative literature review serves as the overarching umbrella for selecting and synthesising relevant academic discourse. Within this framework, grounded theory is used to analyse how rKM is described, conceptualised, and contextualised across different sources. Together, these methods support the construction of a conceptual framework that reflects both the current state of the field and its potential trajectories. This layered strategy was an independent idea conceived specifically for the purposes of this thesis, combining methodological elements to best address the emergent nature of rKM. In the course of the research, no previous studies were encountered that applied this exact combination of integrative literature review and grounded theory to investigate emerging concepts. As such, the approach represents a novel contribution to the methodological exploration of the topic.

Figure 1. Research Strategy for the emerging concept of rKM.

The following chapters are organised to guide the reader from context to contribution. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical overview of the history of KM, outlining its commonly accepted purposes and the complexities that arise from them. It situates KM within broader intellectual traditions and highlights the limitations of its prevailing approaches, thereby contextualising why a more responsible orientation may be necessary. Chapter 3 details the research framework, including the ontological and epistemological stance adopted, and explains the methodology employed. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the integrative literature review and grounded theory analysis, showing how key themes and principles of rKM emerge from the current discourse. Chapter 5 interprets these findings, discussing their implications for the future of KM and situating them within wider scholarly and practical debates. Finally, Chapter 6 offers conclusions, distilling the insights of the thesis and identifying directions for further research.

1.5 Theoretical and Empirical Limitations

As with any research endeavour, this thesis is subject to certain theoretical and empirical limitations that should be acknowledged to properly frame its findings and scope. These theoretical and empirical boundaries are outlined here to frame the scope of the thesis. Their methodological implications are considered in greater detail in Chapter 3, where the research design and analytical choices are presented.

1.5.1 Theoretical Limitations

RKM is an emerging and evolving concept without an established theoretical canon. As such, this thesis operates within a fragmented and still-developing body of knowledge, drawing most directly on knowledge management, systems thinking, business ethics, and philosophy. These disciplines provide the conceptual scaffolding for examining KM's history, its prevailing assumptions, and the ethical and systemic challenges it faces in contemporary contexts. At the margins, insights from behavioural economics are also relevant, particularly in highlighting how shifts in perspective may translate into different motivations and decision-making logics. The lack of a singular, unified framework necessitates an exploratory approach, allowing the empirical material to guide the

identification of core conceptual elements. This also means that while the thesis may propose an emergent conceptualisation of rKM, it does not aim to offer definitive or universally generalisable theoretical claims at this stage.

Furthermore, while notions of responsibility are central to the inquiry, this thesis approaches responsibility as it emerges within the academic discourse of KM and its adjacent fields. Alternative perspectives on responsibility, such as legal, political, or cultural interpretations, may remain only partially reflected in the present analysis.

1.5.2 Empirical limitations

The empirical material analysed in this thesis consists exclusively of published academic literature, selected through integrative literature review methods and subjected to grounded theory analysis. The inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed texts in English, published between 2020 and 2025, and identified through searches in selected databases (Scopus and Google Scholar). As such, some potentially relevant contributions may have been excluded due to language restrictions, database coverage, or lack of access.

The grounded theory coding process was conducted by a single researcher, which introduces the possibility of subjective bias despite efforts to ensure analytic rigour through memoing, documentation, and iterative reflection. While this is a common feature of qualitative research, collaborative coding or inter-rater validation might have enhanced reliability.

Finally, the absence of primary empirical data (interviews, organisational case studies, or practitioner perspectives) means that the findings remain grounded in academic discourse rather than enriched by direct empirical engagement with organisational practice. Consequently, while the thesis seeks to contribute to the conceptual development of rKM, its findings are best understood as a foundation for further empirical inquiry rather than as readily generalisable conclusions.

2 Theoretical Foundations, Evolution, and Limits of Knowledge Management

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundations of KM by situating the field in its historical and practical contexts. Rather than beginning with a fixed definition, it examines how the field has emerged, how it is commonly understood, and what purposes it is seen to serve. The chapter traces KM's development in response to organisational needs for creating, acquiring, sharing, and utilising knowledge, and examines how knowledge has been framed, often as a strategic asset, to support efficiency, innovation, and competitive advantage. It also highlights internal tensions that continue to influence how knowledge is understood and managed, providing a conceptual backdrop for more recent developments. Because rKM does not yet have a settled theoretical foundation of its own, this chapter aims to map the field's general development and tensions. In doing so, it sensitises the reader to the assumptions and problematics that later chapters will revisit in light of emerging perspectives.

2.1 The Emergence and Evolution of Knowledge Management

The origins of KM do not follow the arc of a typical invention story. There is no single point of origin, no definitive moment of emergence. Instead, KM is best understood as a field that came into being through a convergence of needs, ideas, and technological capabilities. As Lambe (2011) suggests, KM's arrival "as a new organisational tool" in the 1990s was less a birth than a renaissance, a recloaking of consultants', technologists' and conference organisers' expertise in management literature (p. 175).

Indeed, many of the foundational ideas associated with KM predate the 'field' itself. Lambe (2011) notes that the intellectual roots of KM stretch back to early public policy management, economics, and sociology of the 1960s, where the question of how to organise knowledge for retrieval and use had already been deeply explored. Yet by the time KM gained traction in the managerial lexicon of the 1990s, these early contributions had faded from view. What brought some of them back into focus was a shift in organisational

consciousness: a growing recognition that competitive advantage resided not only in material resources and strategy, but in how effectively knowledge could be mobilised (Grant, 1996).

Koenig and Neveroski (2008) chart this reawakening in close alignment with advances in information technology. They explain that the initial 'second' wave of KM in the early 1990s struggled with systems that attempted to contain all the elusive information scattered within an organisation. The promise of KM was clear: if information could be captured, structured, and stored, then knowledge, long treated as intangible, might finally be made manageable. Early KM efforts thus leaned heavily on IT solutions, focused on codifying, databases, intranets, and document repositories. The aim of this endeavour was to keep track of best practices and lessons learned (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008).

But the promise soon met its limits. What this early, technology-focused approach overlooked were the human and cultural dimensions that brought content and context to the information (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008). As organisations implemented KM systems, it became increasingly clear that the most valuable knowledge often resided not in documents but in interactions. Knowledge creation and sharing began to take place in communities of practice (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008). This realisation marked a subtle but profound turning point. KM began to shift from capturing knowledge to enabling its flow.

The third focus in the early 2000s was content management: metadata and taxonomies, i.e. the retrievability of what is known (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008; Dalkir, 2023). Organisations began to think about the tools that allowed for better structure, description, and arrangement of their documents and digital content (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008). This shift is associated with the broader principles of content management lifecycles, in ensuring that retrievable knowledge is also relevant and up to date (Durst, Bruns and Henschel, 2016). While this phase may seem more administrative, it brought issues like findability and user accessibility to the forefront.

The fourth and most recent phase, according to Koenig and Neveroski, extends the knowledge collection parameters further (2008). With the rise of extranets and shared digital workspaces, KM practices began to include partners, clients, and external stakeholders. This outward turn reflects a growing understanding that organisational knowledge ecosystems are not closed; they depend on flows of information and expertise across institutional lines. Recently, also technologies such as social media, multimedia sharing, cloud storage, big

data, and AI have begun to be leveraged (Dalkir, 2023). These tools enable crowd-sourced content, mobile knowledge sharing, and personalised knowledge dissemination that extend the KM system well beyond the boundaries of any single organisation (Koenig and Neveroski, 2008; Dalkir, 2023). KM, in this sense, has evolved from an internal support function into a tool for networked value creation.

This brief genealogy shows that KM has repeatedly reshaped itself in response to shifting organisational needs and technological possibilities. Yet each wave has tended to foreground particular aspects of knowledge while leaving others in the background. Recognising these shifting emphases helps clarify what KM has accomplished and what kinds of questions about knowledge it has left unanswered.

2.2 A Field or Fields? The Ongoing Struggle to Define KM

Whether KM can be regarded as a unified field or an affiliated set of concerns remains a matter of debate. Scholars have long lamented the absence of a singular theory, for which there are many contributing factors. The absence of a singular theory has often been interpreted as conceptual immaturity, though it may equally reflect the inherently interdisciplinary and contextual nature of knowledge work. What persists despite the specific diagnosis is an ongoing identity struggle.

Through the 2000s, as Koenig and Neveroski (2008) observe, KM has not evolved toward disciplinary convergence but has instead deepened along multiple disciplinary trajectories. By not converging, KM remains true to its foundational cross-disciplinary origins (Wallace, 2007). So much so, that KM can reasonably be characterised as “a science of complexity” (Dalkir, 2023, p. 15). Consequently, it “also has a reputation for incoherence and poor performance” (Roberts, 2015, p. 33).

Lambe (2011) argues that the “shallowness of knowledge management’s understandings of the traditions … it came from, and its lack of recognition of continuing near relatives” are factors that explain why it suffers from confusion and a persistent absence of common agenda (p. 190). It is the reason why KM lacks a coherent theoretical foundation, making education, professional development, and evaluation difficult; resulting in naïve or improvised practices that fail to convince, despite persistent organisational interest (Lambe,

2011). Roberts offers a somewhat more generous interpretation. She suggests that KM might serve a valuable role precisely "by unifying disparate activities" and offering "a lens through which to see the organisation as a whole" (2015, p. 125). This approach comes with the risk of ubiquitous KM being everywhere and everything, or nowhere and nothing. Only a clear and anchored sense of purpose and direction can prevent ubiquity from fading into obscurity.

The forgetting is not merely accidental. Lambe refers to what sociologist Robert Merton called the "palimpsestic syndrome", a tendency to overwrite older ideas with newer ones, effectively obliterating their origins by incorporation (Merton, 1993, xxiii as cited in Lambe, 2011, p. 190). Lambe dubs this dynamic the "Veneering Effect," borrowing from Charles Dickens' satirical description of fashionable, rootless newness (Lambe, 2011, p. 189). KM's apparent novelty in the 1990s, was largely a product of commercial drivers and rebranding, rather than actual conceptual innovation (Wilson, 2002; Koenig and Neveroski, 2008; Lambe, 2011).

To empirically demonstrate this forgetfulness, Lambe introduces the concept of a "citation memory", the median number of years between when a KM journal article cites a source and when that source was published (2011, p. 177). Across major KM journals, the median citation memory is about five years, with most citations referring to works published only a few years earlier, indicating a very shallow temporal engagement with foundational literature (Lambe, 2011).

Gu (2004) offers another compelling explanation for the apparent fragmentation of the KM field. According to Gu, much of its scholarly output is not published in explicitly KM-focused journals but rather dispersed across more established disciplinary outlets such as information systems, business, and computer science. This dispersion is partly strategic, reflecting the search for higher-impact venues, but it also highlights KM's persistent marginality and multidisciplinary dependency.

As a result, KM appears fragmented and underdeveloped when much of its substantive work remains hidden across disciplinary silos. This structural condition exacerbates the difficulty of cumulative knowledge-building, as scholars work with different terminologies, assumptions, and audiences. It also reinforces KM's identity as a boundary-crossing field that draws heavily from other established disciplines, borrowing theories, methods, and legitimacy from adjacent domains while struggling to consolidate a stable core of its own.

Argote, McEvily, and Reagans (2003) note the same difficulty of cumulating domain specific knowledge when "researchers fail to take advantage of ideas produced in other areas and simply 'rediscover' what is known already" (p. 572). Edwards, Handzic, Carlsson, and Nissen (2003) concur that "there are several knowledge management literatures", and accordingly advice that KM "embrace difference" "in a spirit of integration, of debate, of complementarity, of building bridges" (pp. 57, 60).

Jevnaker and Olaisen (2022) contend that in the field of KM, according to their analysis of three consecutive years of conference papers, the lack of definitions causes researchers to "tell a story exemplified with statistics" (p. 297). This carries the risk of allowing instruments to define inquiry, a concern originally articulated by Tornebohm[3] (Jevnaker and Olaisen, 2022). If instruments are treated as ends in themselves, knowledge work may mistake the measure for the reality. This is particularly evident in KM's historical embrace of quantifiable constructs such as intellectual capital or knowledge assets.

This tendency aligns with Kuhn's notion of normal science (1962, as referred to by Jevnaker and Olaisen, 2022), where research becomes routine, paradigms calcify, and anomalies are sidelined (Jevnaker and Olaisen, 2022). In such a climate, models like the SECI risk becoming ritualised instruments, applied out of habit. As a result, KM scholarship may reinforce what is measurable rather than what is meaningful.

Jevnaker and Olaisen found that "the dominating tendency among the papers [they compared] was to cater to the already known" (2022, p. 301). The authors suggest that much KM research functions as a confirmation of existing beliefs, rather than a site of theoretical or methodological experimentation. The field has embraced research that comes up with what Blumer (1969) called definitive concepts (Jevnaker and Olaisen, 2022). "The definitive concept's purpose is to Describe-Explain-Predict and Control and Rule" (Jevnaker and Olaisen, 2022, p. 295). Blumer also identified the existence of what he called sensitising concepts that are open-ended. Their purpose, on the other hand, is to "Describe-Explore-Reflect-Participate and Change" (Jevnaker and Olaisen, 2022, p. 295). This is the direction Jevnaker and Olaisen see as pivotal for future KM research.

The fragmentation and short memory of KM often end up reinforcing the frameworks that describe, explain, and predict in order to control. This orientation lends itself to measurement

[3] 1983.

and replication, but risks narrowing the field's imagination. The recognition that KM could also be guided by research that describes, explores, reflects, participates, and changes invites us to consider whether its diversity might be less a problem to be solved than an opportunity to think differently about knowledge.

In retrospect, the history of KM is not linear but layered, the fundamental assumptions largely established before the year 2000. Figure 2 below summarises the field's most formative milestones according to Lambe (2011) and Koenig and Neveroski (2008)[4].

[4] Appendix 1 contains a list of key publications and their insights to the field of KM.

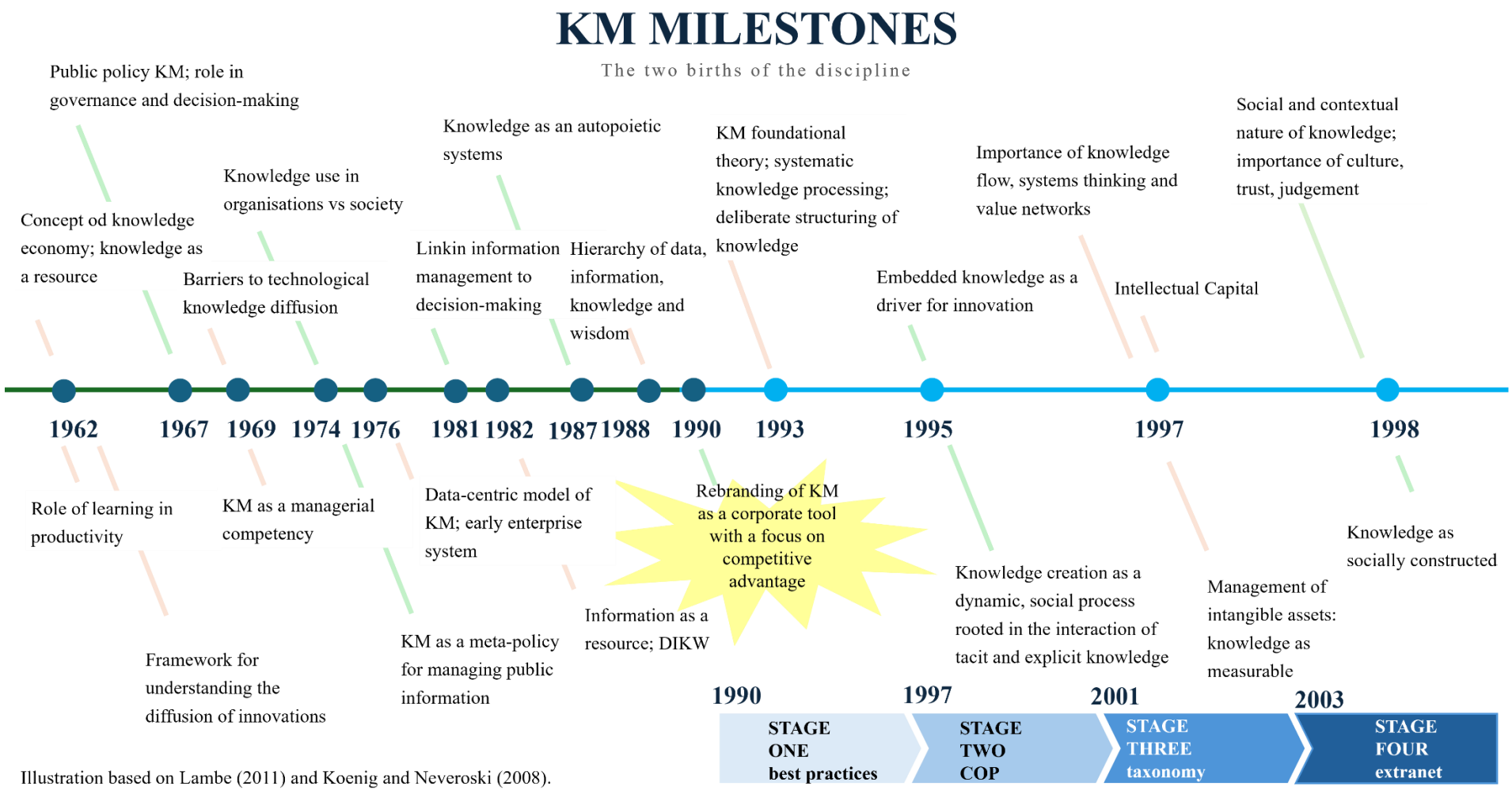


Figure 2. KM Milestones

2.3 What Has Knowledge Management Given Us So Far?

One of the clearest ways to understand what KM has stood for over the past decades is to examine what it has consistently focused on. Barley, Treem, and Kuhn's (2018) review of two decades[5] of KM literature does precisely this. Their work offers valuable insight into how KM has been conceptualised, what problems it has aimed to solve, and how knowledge itself has been framed. It also highlights the general, underlying assumptions shaping the field. By tracing KM's recurring focus areas, we can better see what has been marginalised.

2.3.1 Knowledge Management – The Concept

To begin with, Barley et al.'s analysis reveals a field primarily concerned with improving organisational effectiveness through the strategic use of knowledge. Across the literature, KM is framed as a set of practices and technologies aimed at enhancing efficiency (doing things better and faster), securing competitive advantage (gaining a superior market position through smarter use of knowledge), driving performance improvement (raising individual, team, or organisational output), and enabling value creation (turning knowledge into economic or operational returns). In this context, knowledge is treated as a manageable resource, something to be captured, codified, integrated and/or protected, and finally deployed. Barley et al.'s research helps to reveal the narrowness of mainstream KM's ambitions and thus suggests also where its limits may lie.

Barley et al. (2018) state that KM (re-)emerged in the 1990s, first and foremost, to help organisations balance their internal knowledge flows in a strategic manner. In an economy increasingly defined by intangible assets, KM positioned itself as a 'wrangler' of this elusive resource. The central challenge lay in understanding "how knowledge operates in specific organisational context[s]" (Barley et al., 2018, p. 279). KM's development was closely tied to shifts in socioeconomic conditions, globalisation, and technological advances, all of which amplified the significance of knowledge as an organisational asset. Framed as a "strategic endeavour" (p. 279) by scholars, KM became understood as the managerial

[5] 1996 – 2015.

problem-solving approach focused on identifying and implementing practices that maximise the value derived from knowledge. This required the optimal balancing of differentiated (specialised) knowledge, which allows for expansion and innovation, and integrated (shared) knowledge, which promotes coordination and efficiency (Barley et al., 2018).

Barley et al. identify three recurring themes in how scholars conceptualise knowledge itself: its explicitness, its location, and the importance of enactment (2018). The first theme, explicitness, refers to the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge, meaning that it is both "within and beyond individuals" (Barley et al., 2018, p. 280). The second concerns where knowledge resides: within individuals, collectives, or systems, and whether it can move from one to the other and visa versa (Barley et al., 2018). The third theme questions whether knowledge is best understood as a static object to be possessed or as a dynamic process enacted in practice (Barley et al., 2018). These debates inform the foundational tensions in KM theory, yet, as the authors show, the dominant trend has been to treat knowledge as a possessable, manageable and primarily existing to serve the organisation (Barley et al., 2018).

Key motivations for KM include the integration of diverse knowledge forms to enhance organisational effectiveness, the codification of tacit knowledge into explicit forms for broader utility, and the strategic use of knowledge for innovation and competitive advantage. Early 90s scholarship on KM, such as the knowledge-based view of the firm, emphasised knowledge as a fundamental driver of organisational capability and performance (Grant, 1996). Over time, KM evolved into a general managerial practice highlighting the importance of investments in technology, human capital, and processes, the areas that impact the effective management of knowledge flows.

This managerial gaze is largely inward-looking, efficiency-oriented, and aimed at containing knowledge within the organisation. Very little thought is given to more open-ended, plural, and relational dimensions of knowing.

2.3.2 Focus Areas of Knowledge Management

Barley et al. (2018) identified four broad trajectories through which KM has been theorised and practised: integration, differentiation, transformation, and preservation of knowledge.

These trajectories represent distinct but overlapping ways of framing the purpose of KM, and they coexist within organisational systems rather than functioning as mutually exclusive categories. Figure 3 below summarises their proportional representation within the analysed sample. Based on their research, Barley et al. discovered that integration of differentiated knowledge (84,5%) has, by far, been the focus of most interest.

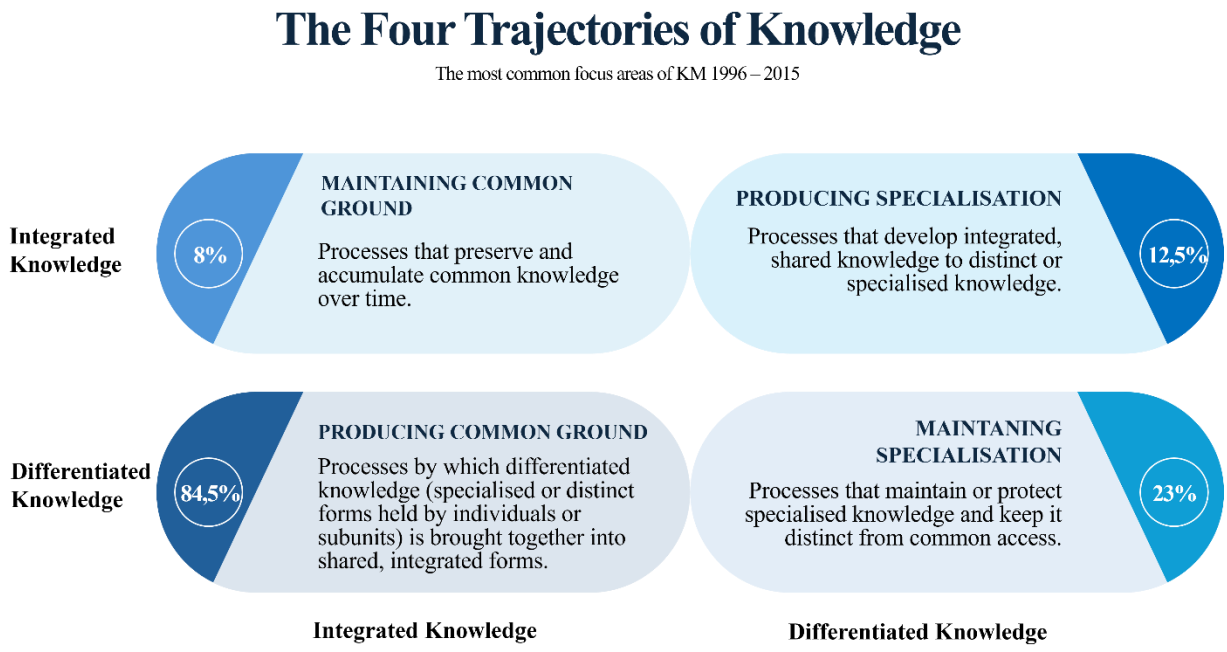


Figure 3. The Four Trajectories of Knowledge (Barley et al., 2018).

Barley et al. (2018) identify multiple reasons for the prioritisation of integrational processes. A key factor is the persistent view of tacit knowledge as a barrier to effective KM. Tacit knowledge, being context-specific and often difficult to articulate, is framed as an obstacle that organisations must overcome to harness the full potential of their knowledge resources. This framing has led to a focus on mechanisms for converting tacit knowledge into explicit forms or facilitating its transfer across boundaries. Additionally, the recombination of existing knowledge has been widely regarded as a critical source of innovation, further reinforcing the emphasis on integration. Barley et al. (2018) state that the prevailing assumption is that competitive advantage often stems not from the creation of entirely new knowledge, but from the strategic integration of pre-existing knowledge assets.

The research focus on integration of knowledge is also tied to the practical challenges faced by organisations in managing knowledge flows (Barley et al. 2018). During the early 90s development of KM, firms struggled to capture, transfer, and embed existing knowledge

within organisational systems. These challenges aligned closely with the operational goals of integration, such as streamlining knowledge-sharing processes and improving decision-making efficiency, which resonated strongly with both practitioners and scholars. Consequently, integrational processes became synonymous with KM success, sidelining the exploration of other trajectories, such as knowledge differentiation and the maintenance of specialisation.

Barley et al. further explain that the bias toward interest in integration is reinforced by its alignment with short-term, measurable performance metrics, which are often prioritised in strategic management studies. The tangible benefits of knowledge integration, such as enhanced productivity and innovation outcomes, have made it an attractive focus for research and organisational practice alike (2018). In contrast, trajectories such as differentiation to differentiation or integration to differentiation are less frequently studied, as their benefits are often indirect, context-dependent, or realised over longer time horizons (Barley et al. 2018).

Despite the dominance of integration-focused research, Barley et al.'s review underlines the existence of alternative knowledge trajectories that address the dynamics of differentiation and specialisation. These trajectories emphasise the need for organisations to balance integrational efforts with mechanisms that preserve or produce specialised knowledge, recognising that effective KM involves navigating the inherent tensions between integration and differentiation. Barley et al. argue that overlooking these alternative processes limits the conceptual and practical scope of KM, suggesting the need for a more comprehensive approach to understanding knowledge dynamics. While their review does not cover all research within the KM field, it does clearly chart the predominant directions and underlying assumptions that have shaped its development.

Undoubtedly, KM will continue to play a central role in the future due to its relevance to a range of new pressing business challenges. KM is essential for managing knowledge across multisite, multilingual, and multicultural contexts. At the same time, leaner organisational structures place growing demands on employees to work smarter and faster, further elevating the importance of effective knowledge practices. The mobility of the modern workforce has also introduced the persistent risk of corporate amnesia, where the loss of key personnel can disrupt continuity and institutional memory. Rapid technological advancements continue to accelerate connectivity and response times, making timely access to relevant knowledge

more critical than ever. Finally, in an age of rising misinformation and disinformation, KM stands as a vital counterforce, supporting the verification, organisation, and responsible dissemination of knowledge in order to safeguard informed decision-making. (Dalkir, 2023)

If KM's relevance to the future is certain, should it continue to privilege integrational efficiency above all else, or might its long-term vitality depend on giving greater space to other neglected trajectories of knowledge?

2.4 Some Recent Areas of Interest in Knowledge Management

As noted earlier, the fragmentation of the KM field is well documented. In addition to the memory reset and the continued parallel advancement of relative disciplines, it seems that in engaging with knowledge as both a resource and a process, KM opens itself to a vast array of niche investigations. While this granularity is necessary for capturing local realities, it also disperses the field's intellectual efforts and makes synthesis difficult. The result is a field rich in isolated insights but poor in cumulative knowledge, one that struggles to answer the broader question of what KM is ultimately for.

Agostini, Nosella, Sarala, Spender and Wegner (2020) provide an interesting bibliometric snapshot of one such prominent subdomain within KM research: inter-organisational knowledge management. Their analysis, covering the period between 1998 and 2019, can be read as an extension of the extranet developmental trajectory originally discerned by Koenig and Neveroski (2008). Agostini et al. trace how KM in inter-organisational settings has unfolded over three distinct periods, each revealing new emphases and complexities. In the first phase (1998–2009), KM was primarily linked to innovation and strategic alliances, with absorptive capacity playing a central conceptual role (Agostini et al., 2020). The second period (2010–2014) brought a shift toward performance-oriented research, increased attention to KM capabilities and practices, and explorations of supply chains as network structures (Agostini et al., 2020). The third and most recent period (2015–2019) highlights growing interest in the human and relational dimensions of KM, international and multicultural settings, and KM in entrepreneurial contexts, suggesting an increasing social interconnectedness of KM (Agostini et al., 2020). While not a comprehensive account of KM's evolution as a whole, this study offers a well-structured illustration of how KM

continues to fragment and specialise, and how the field is now preoccupied with issues of complexity, context, and connectedness beyond organisational borders.

Likewise, as referred to by Agostini et al.'s research (2020), Durst and Edvardsson (2012) provide a systematic literature review on KM in SMEs for the period of 2001 to 2011. Their review finds that while KM implementation, perception, and transfer in SMEs have been relatively well studied, knowledge identification, retention, and utilisation remain poorly understood (Durst and Edvardsson, 2012). They also critically discuss the tendency to apply large-firm KM models to SMEs, calling for more SME-specific approaches.

Massaro, Handley, Bagnoli and Dumay (2016), add a few years and expand the sample in comparison with Durst and Edvardsson's (2012) review. Their review includes theoretical articles and applies more elaborate coding and bibliometric techniques but does not add to the findings. They confirm what Durst and Edvardsson (2012) also noted that there is paucity of cross-country and comparative studies of KM in SMEs, and definitional inconsistency regarding SMEs (Massaro et al., 2016).

While these are just a few studies into specific areas of interest within the field of KM during the past decade, they highlight the central issue of the fragmentation of research. The field continues to produce a growing body of work focused on narrowly defined topics, be it inter-organisational knowledge sharing, or KM in SMEs, yet these investigations often remain disconnected from one another. As a result, the accumulating insights each illuminate a piece of the puzzle but rarely articulate the contours of the whole. If the field continues to generate narrow insights without cumulative purpose, how can we meaningfully answer the larger question of what KM is ultimately for?

Having explored the history of KM and gained a clearer understanding of its functions and scope thus far, it is now time to delve into the object of its interest – knowledge. In order to critically assess the strengths and limitations of KM, as well as to imagine alternative or more responsible approaches, it is essential to pause and consider what is actually meant by 'knowledge' in this context. What kind of object is knowledge? How has it been conceptualised, and with what consequences? These questions are not merely philosophical; they directly influence the ways in which knowledge is operationalised within organisations. Therefore, a closer examination of knowledge as the central concern of KM is necessary.

2.5 Knowledge As an Asset – Problems and Inconsistencies

Knowledge proves challenging to define incontestably. Despite being the foundational concern of KM, its boundaries remain porous, its meanings challenged, and its role shaped by its uses. This section explores the conceptual tensions that arise when KM attempts to label and manage knowledge, particularly when defined as an asset. It addresses the ambiguity between tacit and explicit knowledge, the assumptions rooted in the DIKW model, the preoccupation with measuring the performance of knowledge as an asset and the consequences of these orientations on the meaning derived from KM. These tensions are central to understanding KM's intellectual complexity.

In the Western philosophical tradition, knowledge is usually defined as 'justified true belief', and as such, subject to empirical validation (Roberts, 2015). Unfortunately, many concurrent actualities complicate this seemingly simple statement. First, what counts as justified true belief is open to question and depends on the perspective; second, knowledge may also be viewed as socially constructed; and third, "power influences what counts as – or is accepted as – real knowledge" (Roberts, 2015, p. 5). 'Justification' is often culturally and politically mediated, and what is considered 'true' may shift over time or between communities. In practice, knowledge resists containment. It moves through implicit understanding, informal practice, and discursive frames. It is always situated, partial, and, in some forms, ephemeral. This makes the notion of knowledge as neat unit of commodifiable fact more of a strategic aspiration than an ontological truth.

Nevertheless, defining knowledge as an asset has enabled KM to develop managerial tools and practices, but it has also generated persistent tensions: between tacit and explicit, between knowledge and information, and between lived practice and codified artefact. These tensions suggest that the asset metaphor is both enabling and limiting, raising questions about whether the most vital aspects of knowing can ever be contained within it.

2.5.1 The Explicit/Tacit Binary

History proves that KM chooses to focus on the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge, terms used to describe, respectively, knowledge that can be codified and shared

through formal means, and knowledge that is personal, experiential, and difficult to articulate (Nonaka, Toyama and Konno, 2000). Following the concept's operationalisation by Nonaka and Takeuchi, this distinction is frequently invoked to justify KM practices aimed at integrating, i.e. capturing and storing knowledge, especially to legitimise proprietary claims over the more inaccessible forms of knowing.

However, as Roberts (2015, p. 46) reminds us, citing Polanyi, "all knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge. A wholly explicit knowledge is unthinkable" (1966, p. 7). This suggests that even the most structured or formalised knowledge still relies on a degree of tacit understanding whether in interpretation, context, or application. The captured knowledge artefacts may represent parts of the whole, but they are not themselves knowledge without human engagement. This raises the question of whether the relentless effort to divide knowledge into explicit or tacit components is ultimately worthwhile, or whether it distracts us from more meaningful inquiries. A human is always part of the loop; the larger and more inclusive that loop becomes, the more dynamic, plural, and nuanced the knowledge it can support. Attempts to reduce knowledge to manageable fragments may offer the illusion of clarity, but at the expense of wisdom, risking the loss of the forest for the trees. Perhaps it would be more conducive to accept that knowing is an activity whose explicitness is beyond full capture and whose interpretation always needs frames of reference that exceed the facts.

In this vein, Wilson (2002), one of the most acerbic critics of KM, serves up some uncomfortable 'truths' about the concept of tacitness, and his understanding of the difference between the categories of knowledge and information. In no uncertain terms, Wilson claims that Nonaka and Takeuchi erroneously (on purpose or by accident) 'confused' tacit knowledge with implicit knowledge. Drawing on Polanyi's original formulation Wilson argues that "'tacit' means 'hidden', …hidden even from the consciousness of the knower" (Wilson, 2002, p. 22). Tacit knowledge is, therefore, not within the range of capture or conversion through the SECI model. What the model might address is more accurately termed implicit knowledge, something so far unexpressed but still in the realm of expressible (Wilson, 2002).

Indeed, if we follow Wilson's critique to its logical end, tacit knowledge may best be conceptualised not as a convertible asset but as a set of pre-reflective heuristics akin to what Kahneman (2011) describes as 'System 1' thinking: fast, automatic, and often opaque

decision-making processes. These orienting dispositions are not usually externalised or codified; rather, they are shaped by biography, context, and embodied experience.

Furthermore, Wilson (2002) is quite adamant that once knowledge is expressed, it becomes information. A codified, extracted message can be assimilated and incorporated but it is not the knowledge itself; “the messages can never be exactly the same as the knowledge base from which the messages were uttered” (Wilson, 2002, p. 2). This challenges the very core semantics of KM. If knowledge cannot be extracted, stored, or transferred in its full form, then what exactly is being managed by KM processes?

KM is seemingly unencumbered by these connotative disputes, continuing to worship at the altar of models like SECI. This ‘vital’ knowledge creation instrument rests on an idealised spiral of knowledge conversion from tacit to explicit, from individual to collective, and back again. While it has been praised for introducing dynamism into KM discourse, it also presupposes a self-reinforcing system in which knowledge flows are continuous, manageable, and endlessly generative, so long as the organisational conditions are correctly designed.

But this optimism carries with it an implicit metaphor of the organisation as a machine for perpetual innovation, in which knowledge workers convert their knowing into artefacts, codifications, and actions in service of institutional goals. This logic resembles the rhetoric of neoliberalism, where all human activity is harnessed toward productivity, and the systemic frictions of emotion, ambiguity, dissent, or ethical deliberation are treated as inefficiencies to be designed out. This fantasy of seamless conversion pays no heed to the partial, relational, and often resistant nature of knowing, or to the ethical responsibility of attending to these limits.

The persistent pursuit of the tacit/explicit debate raises the question of whether it is the most relevant distinction to focus on. If knowledge is better understood as socially constructed and continually reinterpreted in dialogue, then this fixation is missing the point. Rather than a final recorded truth, knowledge may be closer to an ongoing resonance – always partial, always in motion.

2.5.2 The Data Information Knowledge Wisdom (DIKW) Model

Some terminology is nevertheless required for the strategic handling of the various aspects of knowing. For this reason, KM has eagerly adopted the Information Science view of conceptualising knowledge as part of its own DIKW model, traditionally presented as a pyramid that assumes a progression. However, these four concepts might be more fruitfully understood as a kind of tetrarch: distinct domains with overlapping authorities, each governing a conceptual territory that is in constant negotiation with the others.

The DIKW hierarchy is widely used to conceptualise the relationships between the aforementioned four categories, despite its origins remaining obscure (Roberts, 2015)[6]. The linear and hierarchical representation is problematic, argues Roberts (2015), who prefers to see the relationship between data, information, knowledge, and wisdom as "multidimensional, recursive, and/or random" (p. 4). Data, she explains, is a collection of observations, measurements, or facts, the raw material from which information is formed; information emerges when data are organised into meaningful patterns; and knowledge is something that when applied to information, enriches its understanding through experience, familiarity, and learning (Roberts, 2015). Therefore, knowledge creation depends on information; likewise, the development of relevant information requires the application of knowledge. Referring to McKenna (2005), Roberts adds that wisdom lies in recognising the limits of knowledge (2015).

When viewed from this angle, the knowledge asset indeed begins to resemble information. This is Dillon's (2002) pragmatic counter to Wilson's (2002) existential refusal to treat knowledge as something manageable. He labels Wilson's 'information' as "recorded knowledge" (Dillon, 2002, p. 321). The tension between Wilson's (2002) philosophical critique and Dillon's (2002) pragmatic response reflects one of the central theory-practice dilemmas of KM discourse. Wilson is philosophically correct in asserting that knowledge, properly understood, cannot be managed: it is embodied, situated, and shaped by individual consciousness and social context. To treat it as an object is to engage in a category error.

[6] Lambe traces it to Harlan Cleveland (1982) who may have been inspired by T.S. Eliot (1934). Commonly also attributed to Ackoff (1988).

Yet, Dillon is practically correct. If we are to engage with the organisational realities of learning, memory, and judgment, we must be able to talk about them, to name and structure that domain, however imperfectly. This requires some form of terminological packaging. We may not be able to manage knowledge per se, but we can manage artefacts, environments, and practices that support knowing. For Dillon, "recoded knowledge is inert" and KM "refers to processes that manage this inert stuff" (2002, p. 324).

He argues that information systems must handle different levels of complexity, and that labelling some content as 'knowledge' serves to highlight those instances where information becomes deeply contextualised, synthesised, and perhaps even anticipatory (Dillon, 2002). Thus, while he does not provide a philosophically rich account of knowledge as embodied or tacit, he nonetheless defends the need for the term 'knowledge' to describe this highest level of abstraction in automated systems and institutional contexts.

It is clear from Dillon's text, however, that he acknowledges a transformation occurs when recorded knowledge is taken up by a subject. By referring to recorded knowledge as 'inert stuff', Dillon highlights its passive, externalised nature. However, he also indicates that this inert material becomes something else in the process of being interpreted, assimilated, or used. He does not spell this out in phenomenological terms, but the implication is there: knowledge is not fully actualised until it enters into a cognitive or interpretive relationship with a knowing subject.

This affects his understanding of what knowledge is in a subtle but telling way. Dillon's framework accepts that knowledge, once recorded, loses its immediacy and becomes artefactual, but at the same time, he implies that such artefacts have the potential to regenerate knowledge through engagement. In this view, knowledge exists in two states: as static artefact and as dynamic process. His defence of the term 'knowledge' for recorded content is thus pragmatic. He retains the label because it signals a higher level of information complexity, not because he believes the knowledge-as-lived-experience resides in the object itself.

So while Dillon's primary concern is functional categorisation within information systems, he does not completely deny that knowledge properly resides in people. He merely asserts that the artefacts we call knowledge are necessary stand-ins, imperfect but indispensable for the purposes of communication, storage, and retrieval. The transformation from inert record

to lived understanding happens beyond the document, but that does not negate the value of the document in facilitating that process. In this way, Dillon navigates a middle ground: he retains Wilson's epistemological caution but bypasses it in favour of practical system design. When KM makes knowledge manageable it results in a focus on codifiable artefacts.

If we reject the hierarchical interpretation of the tetrarch model, we come to understand that knowledge is not located at the midpoint on a stable ladder, but rather in a domain of fluid, negotiated interplay. In this light, attempts to manage knowledge as a singular, ownable entity begin to appear both conceptually fragile and politically charged.

If knowledge is rendered manageable through the DIKW model, how do we ensure that we are not only asking what can be codified, but also whose knowledge is being privileged and for what purpose?

2.6 The Will to Metrics: KM's Economic Telos

As Foucault noted, "[w]e live in a social universe in which the formation, circulation, and utilisation of knowledge present a fundamental problem" (1991, p. 165[7] ; as quoted by Peters, 2001, 39). He was pointing to the imbalance of power between those who possess knowledge and those who do not, and the possibilities or constraints this creates. In the business economics tradition, this imbalance has been reframed as a problem of valuation: the imperative to demonstrate the worth of knowledge. As Mouritsen, Larsen and Bukh (2001) observe, KM activities "have to be crafted in such a way that they support the pursuit of financial value" (p. 759).

From this follows what might be called *the will to metrics* – a deep-seated compulsion to translate knowledge into numbers, not only to understand it but to control it, rank it, and validate it. This impulse aligns with the megaparadigm of neoliberal economics, which extends economic rationality to "all rational conduct, or even simply all behaviour" (Peters, 2001, p. vii). The will to metrics stems from a discomfort with the unmeasurable, answered by accounting abstractions that claim to capture the existence and performance of knowledge. The drive to compare, whether competitively or for monitoring, fuels this urge to quantify. Even when numbers are incommensurate, unstable, misleading, or symbolically

[7] in *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*.

overburdened, they provide a means of ranking and differentiation. They offer organisations a way of situating the present and projecting progress, however illusory.

The will to metrics is exemplified, for example, in the writings of both Harris and Tayler (2019) and Mouritsen et al. (2001) who elaborate the difficulties inherent in knowledge metrics without escaping the struggle. They admit that knowledge, as an intangible, socially embedded, and relational phenomenon, resists translation into fixed numerical terms. But paradoxically, both texts respond to this resistance not by questioning the logic of measurement itself, but by intensifying efforts to find better metrics.

Harris and Tayler mention the behavioural trap of “surrogation”, where metrics displace strategy and become mistaken for the objective itself (2019, p. 66). While their analysis of this phenomenon is compelling, nowhere do they entertain the possibility that the compulsion to measure might itself be the problem. Could the desire for auditable proxies for abstract organisational goals actually be incompatible with the nature of those goals? They describe how metrics distort meaning, or encourage undesirable behaviour, but offer no alternative way of engaging with abstract goals. Metrics, in their framing, are both dangerous and non-negotiable.

Mouritsen et al. (2001), for their part, interpret intellectual capital statements as not measuring knowledge per se, but actively constructing managerial interpretations of it. Knowledge, they admit, has no stable “referent” and cannot be captured in traditional accounting terms (p. 739, quoting Latour’s word, 1991). Yet despite this insight, they remain wholly committed to the development of intellectual capital statements as management tools. Their solution is to blend numbers with narratives and visualisations, what they call "centres of translation", in the hope that this multimodal representation will allow for more meaningful intervention (Mouritsen et al., 2001, p. 735). But what is being translated remains elusive. Their examples show clearly that the numbers do not depict knowledge; they depict managerial activities in the name of knowledge. Still, the conclusion is not to abandon numeric inscription but to improve it, structure it, and legitimise it through storytelling.

Thus, what both articles ultimately reveal, perhaps unintentionally, is the discursive trap of KM under managerialism: even when the object is demonstrably unmeasurable, the discourse insists it must be measured. This reliance on metrics may be misguided and, in

some instances, risks becoming a concession to simplistic quantification. Knowledge may be fluid and socially enacted but must nevertheless be audited. The managerial numerologists do not escape what Fahey and Prusak (1998) called KM's eleventh deadliest sin: failing to recognise that "the significance of knowledge is not what it is, [or how much there is] but what you do with it" (Edwards and Lönnqvist, 2023, p. 913, referring to Fahey and Prusak, 1998).

Consequently, Mouritsen et al. (2001) seem to somehow assume that knowledge becomes actionable and by implication, real once it is "drawn away from the invisible inner space of individuals into [the] light" through the use of numbers (p. 759). The authors present this transformation as if it were a managerial triumph: the taming of the unknowable through inscription. But sadly, the act of assigning knowledge a number, treating it as a transaction, a portfolio, or an effect, does not make it any more tangible. The number does not capture the knowledge itself, only the conditions under which certain activities are recognised as knowledge work. In presenting this process as a viable means of rendering intellectual capital governable, the authors seem to confuse the construction of organisational artefacts with the surfacing of knowledge matter.

There is something troublingly credulous in the suggestion that knowledge can be dislocated from individuals and redistributed simply by making it visible to management. The metaphor of lifting knowledge from the tacit darkness into the light of accounting is seductive, but it flattens the complexity of knowing. It implies that once individuals' inner spaces have been mined for metrics (training hours, satisfaction scores, innovation counts) the knowledge they contain is no longer theirs, but a transferable organisational asset. Such a view treats knowledge as a disembodied resource to be counted and mobilised for productivity. In this sense, the intellectual capital statement becomes a ritual not of understanding but of appropriation. It is a tool to symbolically sever knowledge from persons and render it as organisational property.

Moreover, Mouritsen et al. (2001) are very candid in admitting that the interest in managing knowledge is entirely economic. This frankness reveals the fundamental limitations of the approach. The purpose of all activities done in the name of knowledge is to increase its worth, as manifested by a numerical label that can be compared internally and externally. The managerial gaze is totalising; what cannot be leveraged for organisational performance is of no concern.

If knowledge is numerically legitimised, its purpose and development lie in improving metrics. The field of KM is being primed to recognise only that which can be expressed through the language of economic utility. In such a paradigm, progress is a matter of performance against indicators.

It is important to realise that this instrumental orientation has consequences. It “does not provide a comprehensive grasp of [the] non-linear, organic processes that shape the entire universe”; organisational goals should not be reduced to mere “adding and subtracting [of] financial quantities” (Johnson 2017, p. 170; referring to Cobb, 2009). Johnson’s point being “that reality is organic” to which “the mechanistic view ... does not apply” (2017, p. 170).

In their 2002 article, Mouritsen, Bukh, Larsen, and Johansen highlight how intellectual capital statements are articulations of what an organisation understands KM to be. These statements give shape to a particular idea of knowledge: they specify what knowledge is for, what it relates to, and why it matters to a specific organisation. In this view, knowledge is always oriented toward a purpose. The firm becomes ‘knowledgeable’ or ‘intelligent’ only in relation to some intended outcome or telos. This insight is important, particularly if one asks: What exactly is that purpose? Is it just the upwards curve of the numbers? Exponential increase of profit?

In sum, the will to metrics emphasises that knowledge is primarily valued as a statistically verifiable stock and as a means of pursuing future value within the organisation – not for its potential beyond it. Metrics domesticate knowledge, turning it into a calibrated mechanism for driving shareholder returns. If KM continues to focus on how much knowledge an organisation can claim to have, does it risk neglecting the more important question of what can and should be done with that knowledge – beyond the pursuit of profit?

2.7 The Vacuum of Ethics in KM: A Marginalised Concept

Against this background, in 2025, a handbook contributor on ‘responsible and inclusive’ KM can also assert with unwavering conviction that "KM...does not exist for any other reason than to bring value to the organisation it serves" (McIntyre, 2025, p. 179). This statement is not an anomaly, it reflects the mainstream utilitarian view, crystallising what

much of the field takes for granted. McIntyre's assessment is delivered with serene self-assurance and without any awareness of its hollowness or a flicker of existential unease.

Dalkir's pre-eminent textbook, Knowledge Management in Theory and Practice (4th ed., 2023), devotes exactly one page to ethics, tucked into a section on team behaviour, as if ethics were a matter of etiquette. Firestone and McElroy's Key Issues in the New Knowledge Management (2003), despite its claim to represent a paradigm shift in KM, manages to do so without addressing ethics at all. And in Roberts' razor-sharp yet playfully titled Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Knowledge Management (2015), the index does include 'Egyptians' for their hieroglyphs, but not 'ethics'.

Such declarations and omissions are not accidental. They reveal that ethics is underdeveloped or structurally peripheral in KM, if not wholly absent from the core of how the field has defined itself (Heisig, 2023). I would argue that it is the existence of this void, this hollow core, that pushes the practitioners and researchers to repeatedly question what the focus of KM is or should be. The decades-long preoccupation with organisational value has left the field ethically and intellectually adrift.

This hollow core of KM can be attributed to engaging with the broader metanarratives that shape Western thought. Particularly those that valorise progress, productivity, competition, profit and control. Within this worldview, the unspoken normality of instrumental logic is in the driver seat. The primary concerns seem too logical to question. In this sense, KM has not gone astray so much as it has been perfectly consistent with the values of the system it inhabits.

"The positivistic view still dominates in economics" (Frey and Stutzer, 2002, p. 404). Homo economicus is the unerring rational agent, whose optimal environment is competition, where he perpetually outperforms others by consistently maximising utility more effectively than anyone else. Economists "have taken for granted that only those individuals can survive who correctly perceive the objective conditions" (Stroebe and Frey, 1980, p. 128). The reasonable man neglects emotions and spirituality, making correct decisions despite his 'dysconsciousness' (Seyama-Mokhaneli, 2024).

According to Escobar, "[t]he modern scientific and economistic worldview ... divides the world into subjects and objects, a world we can understand and manipulate at will" (2021, p. 6). He links this objectivising stance to modernity's deeper ontological dualisms, which

have disconnected humanity from the nonhuman world and "banished the sacred from social life, reducing it" to private belief (2021, p. 7). As he warns, such disconnection not only grants rights exclusively to humans but also undermines our capacity to coexist with the full range of living beings in a wiser, more collaborative relationship with the Earth (Escobar, 2021).

In this worldview, knowledge, alongside land, labour, and life itself, is simply an object of control. As Homo economicus observes the landscape of organisational life, intellectual capital, too, becomes another object in the service of competitive advantage. Its value lies not in what it enables humans to understand or become, but in how efficiently it can be converted into profit. Intellectual capital becomes a measurable input to production, a unit of value to be mined from employees' minds and converted into organisational output. The human being, once the knower, becomes merely a temporary vessel.

In the world of rational business, particularly under the sway of neoclassical economics, ethics is largely displaced by utility. Decision-making becomes a matter of cost-benefit calculation, guided by efficiency and market signals rather than moral reasoning. The rational agent, Homo economicus, is not bound by responsibility in the ethical sense but only by rational self-interest. Within this logic, the pursuit of profit is not just accepted but moralised as a driver of societal good, rendering ethical scrutiny redundant or even suspect.

It is thus no surprise that ethics as a topic of interest within the discipline of KM is almost entirely absent. Ethics presumes that actions have moral weight and that humans have obligations to something beyond self-interest. Ethics determine how one ought to act, what is right or wrong, just or unjust, and what kinds of actions contribute to the flourishing of all life. In traditional philosophical terms, ethical reflection can involve questions of virtue (Aristotle), duty (Kant), or consequence (Mill), but they all involve accountability.

As a managerial paradigm of business, KM inherits the ethical vacuum of the economistic worldview. Responsibility, if mentioned at all, is usually tethered to compliance, data protection, or efficiency, not to the deeper questions of what knowledge practices serve, whom they exclude, or what they sustain.

This absence is not a neutral oversight, it is structural, rooted in the utility of assets. McPhail (2009) draws attention to the "productive function of ethics" in the knowledge economy, a concept that captures the way ethical language and structures are increasingly mobilised for

purposes external to ethics itself (p. 808). In this framing, ethics is not grounded in relational responsibility, moral inquiry, or civic obligation, but rather in its utility, its capacity to support other organisational goals such as trust-building, risk management, or legitimacy. This transformation of ethics into a productive resource is especially visible in Intellectual Capital Reports, where 'ethical knowledge' is often translated into survey scores, compliance signatures, or integrity management systems (McPhail, 2009). These mechanisms allow ethics to be tracked, measured, and reported, thus rendering it a form of 'ethical capital' that adds to the organisation's intangible assets (McPhail, 2009).

The danger here is profound: ethics is being absorbed, reframed as a performance indicator, and used to reinforce the very managerial logic that would necessitate genuine ethical scrutiny. As McPhail notes, this shift may signal not the presence of ethics, but its end (2009, p. 818; referring to Jones, 2003). The more ethics is used to produce other forms of value, the less it functions as an autonomous mode of judgment.

From this perspective, the problem is not merely the absence of ethics in KM, but its instrumentalization. When knowledge, and by extension, ethics, is managed in service of capital accumulation or reputational control (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility), ethical deliberation is displaced by performative gestures.

McPhail (2009) identifies a distinction between broad and narrow ethical deliberations in the knowledge economy. Narrow discussions, he argues, tend to focus on technical questions (compliance, transparency, or information control) while broader approaches would engage with the normative foundations of knowledge systems, their civic implications, and their impact on justice.

Two examples from the KM literature illustrate this split with precision. Koulikov (2011) explores knowledge sharing through the lens of subcultures (hackers, participatory media producers, and ideological proselytisers). He identifies what he calls "new ethics of knowledge transfer", but these are better described as social justifications or subcultural norms that motivate informal knowledge exchange (Koulikov, 2011, p. 237). Nowhere does Koulikov engage with whether such practices are ethically good, nor does he interrogate their consequences. The article skirts normative analysis altogether, offering instead a kind of sociological curiosity about knowledge transfer occurring "along the entire spectrum of human activity" (Koulikov, 2011, p. 237). What emerges is not an ethics of KM but a

taxonomy of underground sharing cultures; provocative, but marginal to the core challenges facing organisations and society. Koulikov's (2011) contribution is broad in encompassing knowledge transfer in the society as whole but also narrowly focused on the challenge of controlling knowledge in digital environments, framing ethics as a risk-management issue tied to surveillance and control.

Land, Amjad and Nolas (2007) claim to introduce an "ethics dimension" to KM, but their focus is almost entirely on technical systems and processes, rather than on KM as an epistemic practice (1). Their examples, ranging from Enron's data destruction to NGOs' distorted reporting practices, reveal real concerns about accountability, surveillance, and manipulation, but these are portrayed as system-level risks rather than principled ethical reflections on behaviour. What is missing is any deeper inquiry into KM's normative foundations: How should knowledge be treated? Who has the right to define, store, or restrict it? Whose knowledge is valued, and whose excluded? Instead, the article performs the very displacement it critiques: reducing KM ethics to issues of technological misuse rather than confronting the managerial logic that enables such misuse.

While both texts invoke the language of ethics, they do so in ways that contain ethical discourse rather than expand it. Their primary concern is how to ensure existing systems remain functional, secure, and legitimate, not whether those systems should exist in the first place, or in what form. In McPhail's terms, these are examples of ethics that function productively but not reflectively (2009). They help sustain the knowledge economy's operations by offering procedural safeguards, but they fall short of interrogating the deeper values, assumptions, and exclusions upon which those systems rest.

When KM defines its primary objective as value creation, it implicitly dedicates itself only to the service of efficiency. This orientation demands that knowledge be harnessed to produce measurable improvements, faster processes, smoother coordination, increased output. This efficiency must be pursued, evidenced, and compared, which necessitates some form of consensus, genuine or imposed, about what counts as valuable, and it requires mechanisms of measurement to track whether value is indeed being increased. Anything that complicates or resists this smooth calculation (ambiguity, dissent, contextual complexity, generosity) is treated as an obstruction to be managed away. Within this logic, there is always room for more efficiency, more performance, more gain. If the focus is intra-organisational, the competition is with one's former self: continuous improvement becomes a moral

imperative. If the focus is inter-organisational, the drive intensifies: one competes not only against others but against the organisation's own past, always falling short of the imagined optimum. Yet if we step outside this paradigm of perpetual optimisation, a host of neglected priorities come into view: equity, sustainability, community, flourishing, meaning, even limits.

The problem is not that value creation is inherently wrong, but that it has become narrowly defined, tethered to monetary metrics and performance indicators. A reorientation of KM requires not only rethinking what counts as value but also reclaiming the legitimacy of non-economic forms of worth.

It must be noted that KM is not, in most cases, the primary engine of strategic direction, rather it is the mechanism of execution, embedded within the aims and logics that strategy sets. However, this does not absolve KM from responsibility. On the contrary, its complicity lies in the ease with which it pursues the prevailing priorities of performance metrics, efficiency targets, and organisational value narrowly construed. KM, as traditionally practised, rarely, if ever, interrogates the ends it serves. Its frameworks are designed to optimise, streamline, and extract – not to question.

KM could be ethically and intellectually invested in the implications of the strategies it helps implement. KM can – and must – do more. It already has, in the past. It is worthwhile asking: how could knowledge be mobilised in ways that increases long-term well-being?

2.8 Affirming Life: Systems Thinking as Ethical Worldview

Although first articulated in 1968, von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory remains a foundational and remarkably prescient contribution to the understanding of complex, interrelated phenomena. As the originator of systems theory in its modern form, von Bertalanffy challenged the long-dominant scientific worldview rooted in classical analytic procedures as too limited for studying wholeness, interdependence, and dynamic interaction.

Von Bertalanffy's principles continue to find relevance today in fields grappling with complexity, including KM. Over the past two decades, KM has endeavoured to reorient its focus from purely internal knowledge processes to the broader inter-organisational networks where organisations operate, and lately towards more sustainable uses of organisational

knowing. Knowledge has escaped its institutional confines and is increasingly understood as a force that flows across value chains, ecosystems, and stakeholder constellations. This evolution mirrors von Bertalanffy's call to shift focus from the individual parts of a system to the relations between them. His general systems theory offers a compelling lens for understanding knowledge as part of a living, adaptive organism, particularly one that is brittle, anxious, nonlinear, and incomprehensible.

Von Bertalanffy uses Kuhn's idea of scientific revolutions (1962) to explain how growing dissatisfaction with limitations of a current paradigm lead to a moment of conceptual rupture when anomalies accumulate, and previously suppressed questions begin to surface. These junctures usher in new paradigms, not merely through refinement but by fundamentally altering what is seen, investigated, and understood. This is what is currently happening within KM: the mounting complexity of global challenges, increasing concern over unsustainable knowledge practices, and persistent ambiguity around the role of knowledge actors contribute to intellectual turbulence that triggers "a shift in the problems noticed and investigated" (von Bertalanffy, 1971, p. 16). "[I]n such critical phases emphasis is laid on philosophical analysis which is not felt necessary in periods of growth of 'normal' science" (von Bertalanffy, 1971, p. 16). The prevailing conceptual models are no longer sufficient in explaining the realities of the field. The emergence of a new set of philosophical priorities for KM is evidence of such a rupture.

Even though it has been over 50 years since von Bertalanffy criticised the reductionist, mechanistic worldview of classical science, this paradigm still dominates much of today's thinking in the human sciences, including economics and, by extension, KM. The deconstruction of wholes "into isolatable causal trains" is incompatible with "parts 'in interaction'" (von Bertalanffy, 1971, pp. 16, 17). Complex, adaptive systems such as human behaviour, social structures, and organisational life cannot be worked out from isolated parts on their own; the "condition of summativity" does not apply when you are dealing with "a set of simultaneous differential equations, which are nonlinear in the general case" (von Bertalanffy, 1971, p. 17). Yet many contemporary frameworks, like the VUCA, continue to reflect precisely the kind of piecemeal logic von Bertalanffy rejected. VUCA encourages strategies that address each element of the acronym individually (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014) but is virtually powerless against their systemic interaction. The goal remains control: it is a framework that portrays a particular stimulus for the optimal reaction by the

organisation. With VUCA, you strive for equilibrium, which, ironically, is the opposite of thriving and being alive (von Bertalanffy, 1971). Similarly, Handzic notes, the evolutional tendency of KM towards specialisation is a way of "focusing on specific aspects of a problem" in an effort to tame the complexity of the whole (2017, p. 19).[8] Consequently, KM generally strives to stabilise and smooth-out knowledge flows, standardise practices, and neutralise disruption which tends to isolate phenomena and miss out on the dynamic interrelations that produce the ultimate meaning. Von Bertalanffy's insights serve to remind us that responding to complexity requires more than managing parts, it demands the capacity to engage with wholes.

Two core principles of open systems, as described by von Bertalanffy, are particularly useful for understanding how organisations operate within a broader societal context. The first is the principle of equifinality, which refers to the tendency of an open system to reach the same or similar end state from different starting conditions and through different paths. Unlike closed systems, where a change in inputs or process predictably alters the outcome, open systems exhibit a more flexible logic. In the context of organisations, this means that there is no single correct way to achieve strategic goals or societal relevance. Best practices may in fact lead to path dependency and obsolete practices (Roberts, 2015). Being open to multiple approaches is more creative, more in-tune with the current environment, and more inclusive. Equifinality opens space for diversity, experimentation, and context-sensitive problem-solving.

The second principle is more subtle but equally powerful: open systems do not seek static equilibrium, but rather maintain a dynamic state of tension, a productive disequilibrium that drives ongoing adaptation and renewal. According to von Bertalanffy, life does not flourish by settling into fixed routines or "pre-ordained grooves", but through a continuous striving, what he called "élan vital", toward higher levels of organisation and complexity (1971, 203). For organisations, this suggests that long-term vitality is not found in pursuit of efficiency, but in remaining open to possibilities. The interactions between an organisation and its stakeholders, markets, or social systems create stimulating tension that drives the whole system. The system remains coherently in motion, not collapsing into chaos, but never frozen into stillness.

[8] Also noted by Dumay, 2022.

2.8.1 Systems Thinking in Practice: Wicked Problems

The practical significance of this systems orientation becomes even clearer in light of Rittel and Webber's (1973) influential diagnosis of "wicked problems", a concept that exposes the futility of treating complex, pluralistic societal issues as though they were solvable puzzles with optimal solutions. Writing in the context of policy planning for social sciences, but with implications that resonate with economics and therefore KM, they argue that many of the most urgent problems facing organisations and societies are fundamentally unresolvable in traditional terms. These problems cannot be definitively formulated, have "no ends to the causal chains", and have "no true or false answers" (Rittel and Webber, 1973, pp. 162, 163). Resolutions to them can only be judged as better or worse, depending on the values and perspectives of those involved. Every resolution is consequential with new "waves of repercussions" that pose "another set of wicked problems" (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 163). In such conditions, any attempt to locate the problem *in* something risks oversimplification and unintended consequences. This, too, mirrors the limits of mainstream KM, which often frames its task as identifying optimal solutions to specific issues, without attending to the web of complex interrelations and its interpretive pluralism.

Rittel and Webber (1973) push this systems sensibility further by showing how its implications unfold in practice. They argue that both the problem formulation and every attempted resolution reflect a particular position and are ultimately political. In open systems, problems cannot be resolved once and for all. Each intervention generates new feedback and new tensions. What this means is that there are always many possible paths forward, none of which can claim universal validity, only provisional legitimacy. From a systems perspective, this is not a failure of planning but its condition: decisions must be made in full awareness of their partiality. The logic here is not optimisation but 'satisficing' (Simon, 1991), acting well enough, for now, in a way that remains responsive to change. Plurality is not just an inconvenience; it is the mark of a living system. Rather than suppress it, systems thinking demands that we remain accountable to it.

2.8.2 Post-Normal Science: Ethics for Complex Systems

This open, dynamic view of systems gains further ethical depth when considered alongside the concept of post-normal science, originally developed by Funtowicz and Ravetz and further elaborated by Meskens. If systems flourish through disequilibrium, through interaction, unpredictability, and openness, then so too must our knowledge practices. Post-normal science challenges the conventional understanding of science as a purely technical or objective endeavour, particularly in contexts where uncertainty is high, values are contested, and decisions bear weighty, irreversible consequences. In these conditions, knowledge must be produced not only by experts but by diverse actors from transdisciplinary fields through inclusive deliberation, where the 'truth' is not discovered but negotiated, transparently, reflexively, and in full view of the societal stakes involved. Meskens (2024) argues that such deliberation must involve what Funtowicz and Ravetz call an ‘extended peer community’, recognising that credible hypotheses emerge from the confrontation and co-interpretation of multiple viewpoints, and that this “(respectfully) confrontational” dialogic process itself lends them their legitimacy (Meskens, 2024, p. 2). Reflexivity[9] is therefore not optional but essential: we are never mere observers of complexity but participants in its co-creation (Meskens, 2024). Any attempt to address complex problems must also confront how we interpret and position ourselves in relation to them. In this expanded epistemic landscape, 'extended facts' include not only empirical evidence and expert opinion, but also the feelings, values, and situated experiences of those most directly affected, as well as critical reflection on the interests and assumptions that guide all participants, including scientists, policymakers, and citizens alike (Meskens, 2024, referring to Funtowicz and Ravetz concept).

Crucially, this ethical orientation is not limited to the present. Post-normal science calls on us to deliberate not only for ourselves, but for those who cannot yet speak. Meskens (2024) frames inclusive deliberative decision making as the best means of handing over the future as a common good to future generations, a gesture of care that recognises our autonomous moral authority in shaping what comes next. When systems thinking is understood in this light, flourishing becomes inseparable from responsibility. The vitality of an open system is not just a matter of sustaining adaptive potential, but of sustaining ethical possibility: to

[9] The ethical and epistemic practice of examining one’s own embeddedness in the knowledge system.

remain open to difference, accountable for our own positioning, and mindful of the futures we co-author through the knowledge we choose to validate and act upon.

At its core, General Systems Theory offers not a formula for control but a framework for possibility, a vision of reality grounded in plurality, disequilibrium, and interaction. While often misunderstood as a neutral mapping of systems, von Bertalanffy's work in fact gestures toward a far more vital and dynamic worldview. Systems, as he describes them, are not static structures but open, adaptive processes shaped by feedback, interdependence, and the coexistence of multiple, also conflicting, elements. This orientation makes systems thinking inherently inclusive and collaborative, not because it prescribes consensus, but because it values the generative tension of diverse perspectives. Far from seeking stability for its own sake, a living system thrives in flux; it survives by responding, evolving, and reorganising. When we shift our attention from isolated entities to the relations between them, new ethical and creative possibilities emerge. In such a view, flourishing and the common good are not abstract ideals, but potential outcomes of systems attuned to mutual responsiveness and distributed agency. This is not a logic of conformity but one of coexistence, one that resists closure, and in doing so, affirms life.

In an open systems view, knowledge cannot be bounded within the organisation but circulates across networks, ecosystems, and stakeholder communities. KM in this frame is about navigating interdependence, plurality, and responsibility; not about stabilising internal flows. This is a fundamentally different orientation from the intraorganisational model, which focuses on containing, codifying, and optimising knowledge as if it were an asset bound by organisational walls.

The preceding sections have highlighted both the achievements and the persistent tensions of KM, showing how its dominant assumptions shape what is emphasised and what remains overlooked. To sum up, this chapter has traced the development of Knowledge Management as a field shaped by managerial, technological, and economic imperatives. It has shown that while KM has offered valuable tools for organising and leveraging knowledge, it has done so within a narrow frame that prioritises efficiency, performance, and control – often at the cost of nuance, plurality, and ethical engagement. The chapter explored key tensions in how knowledge itself is conceptualised, particularly the limitations of treating it as a stable asset or codifiable entity. It examined how KM's fixation on metrics, rooted in economic logic and managerialism, has narrowed the field's understanding of value, reducing knowledge to

a performative proxy. It also revealed the near-absence of ethical reflection in mainstream KM, highlighting the instrumentalization of ethics in service of legitimacy rather than responsibility. Finally, through von Bertalanffy's systems theory, it introduced a radically different worldview, one that values openness, complexity, and interdependence over reductionism and stability. These insights lay the groundwork for understanding why a more responsible approach to KM may be not just preferable, but essential.

The next chapter turns from the theoretical to the methodological. It outlines the ontological and epistemological commitments that shape this thesis, followed by a description of the research design. The chapter presents and justifies the use of an integrative literature review and grounded theory as complementary methods for examining the emerging concept of rKM, while remaining attentive to the layered histories and conceptual ambiguities traced here.

3 Research Framework

The study of rKM requires a framework that accommodates its conceptual complexity, interdisciplinary nature, and emergent status. As a concept that challenges traditional KM paradigms, rKM calls for an approach that synthesises knowledge, highlighting aspects that differ. This thesis is positioned within the theoretical, qualitative research tradition that accentuates the interpretative nature of knowledge construction. The methodological choices reflect the researcher's desire to discover the core principles of rKM by identifying emergent codes, categories and concepts through an integrative literature review (ILR) and grounded theory (GT) analysis of specific academic texts. This chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological positioning of the thesis before detailing the methodological choices employed.

3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

The ontological stance of this research is shaped by a critical realist perspective, recognising that while the researcher does arrive at a trustworthy and authentic interpretation, it is still

only one version of the truth among truths (Seale, 1998). The researcher is seen as a bricoleur making a bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Each incorporated practice makes the symbolic universe visible in a different way, thus complementing each other. The aim is to conjecture an interpretation of what constitutes rKM.

The epistemological positioning is informed by interpretivism and constructivism, emphasising the conversational and symbolic nature of meaning. This approach holds that the result of the analysis will be a negotiated understanding between what the author of the academic text intends to convey and how the researcher interprets its meaning. The research assumes that knowledge and KM structures are real but not homogenic, static, or necessarily directly observable; the meaning they represent can be inferred and interpreted by the researcher from her specific location (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, understanding is shaped by social interaction and the interpreter's sense of contextual interpretive community (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The thesis recognises that neither KM nor rKM is a fixed or objective phenomenon; they are concepts that are continuously defined and redefined through academic discourse. By adopting an interpretivist lens, the research seeks to uncover how scholars currently conceptualise responsibility in the context of KM and how this is reflected in the choice of actions, practices, or concerns they focus their discussions on. The use of qualitative inquiry allows for an in-depth engagement with the academic texts, viewing them not merely as repositories of facts but as sites of meaning-making where competing perspectives on rKM are negotiated.

This thesis also integrates elements of hermeneutics, particularly in its emphasis on interpreting academic discourse as a dynamic and contextually embedded process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Understanding rKM requires recognising that knowledge management does not exist in isolation but is historically and socially situated. The hermeneutic dimension acknowledges that scholarly discussions of knowledge responsibility are shaped by specific epistemic traditions, disciplinary orientations, and ideological perspectives. Rather than seeking an absolute or universal definition of rKM, this thesis aims to bricolage a nuanced understanding of its core principles. Figure 4 summarises the essential views of the research framework.

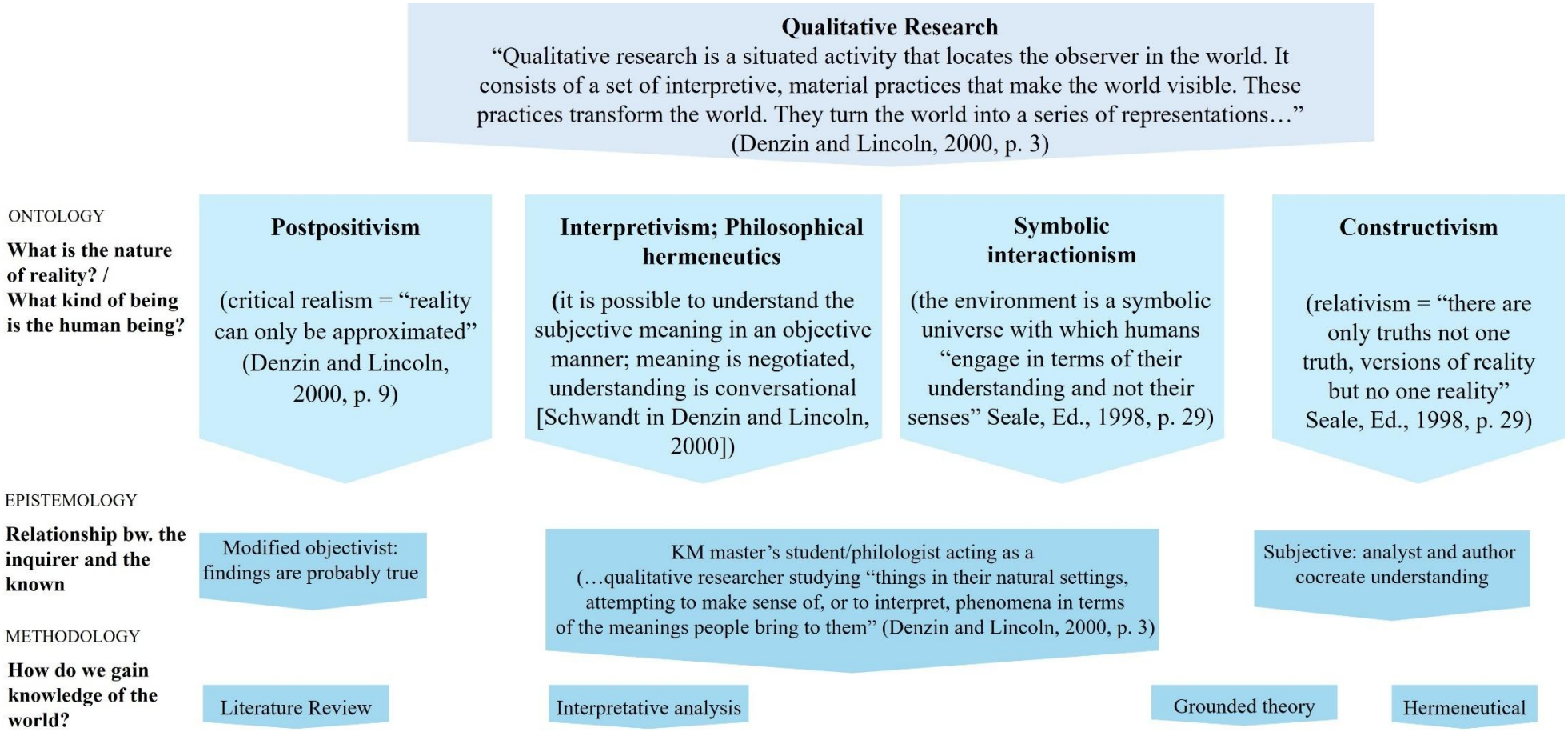


Figure 4. Research Framework.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The methodological choices of this thesis reflect a commitment to multidimensionality, ensuring that rKM is examined from both a synthesising and framework-generating perspective. The ILR serves as a foundational method for mapping the field of rKM, identifying how the concept has been discussed across academic literature. GT Method is used to distil into view the key descriptions of rKM propagated in the articles themselves, thus inferring a framework for defining the concept.

3.2.1 Why The Integrative Literature Review Approach

The plurality of approaches to literature reviews, as highlighted by Grant and Booth (2009), demonstrates the considerable diversity in how literature can be synthesised. Their study identified no fewer than fourteen types of reviews, each differing in purpose. But, upon closer examination, the distinctions between the types often appeared to blur. While some reviews emphasise systematic rigour, others allow for greater flexibility in synthesis, many share overlapping characteristics. Curiously, Grant et al.'s typology does not explicitly include the ILR, though it does contain approximations of it, such as the mixed studies review and the qualitative evidence synthesis. This somewhat ambiguous typology underscores the methodological fluidity of literature reviews in general and highlights the haziness of integrative approaches in particular.

Beyond issues of categorisation, the execution of literature reviews bearing the same label can vary significantly, as Hopia, Latvala and Liimatainen (2016) have demonstrated. They critically appraised the methodological adherence to the type of 'integrative review' and found considerable discrepancies in how these reviews were executed, particularly regarding literature search strategies, data evaluation, and synthesis. This inconsistency suggests that despite the prominence of the category, there is no singularly agreed-upon framework for ensuring its methodological rigour. The lack of consensus on quality criteria further complicates the field, as studies using the same methodological terminology may differ significantly in terms of systematic execution and analytical depth. This realisation

reinforces the necessity of clarifying and justifying all choices, particularly when engaging with an emergent research domain such as rKM.

Snyder (2019) offers a tripartite division of literature review approaches – systematic, semi-systematic, and integrative – each serving distinct research purposes. Of these, the integrative review is particularly well-suited for the study of an emerging concept, as it allows for the synthesis of diverse sources while facilitating theoretical advancement. Unlike systematic reviews, which are constrained by predefined inclusion criteria, or semi-systematic reviews, which focus on mapping theoretical frameworks, integrative reviews permit a more holistic engagement with literature across disciplines. This flexibility is crucial in studying rKM, where existing research remains fragmented, and no singular definition or framework has yet been established.

Further supporting the suitability of the ILR, Torraco (2005) emphasises its utility in constructing initial conceptual frameworks. In contrast to reviews that merely summarise existing literature, an integrative review actively synthesises insights to generate new theoretical perspectives. This thesis aligns with Torraco's rationale by leveraging an integrative approach to inductively derive thematic categories relevant to rKM. Given that rKM lacks a cohesive body of literature, the integrative review allows for the identification of underlying patterns, concepts, and tensions across disparate sources.

The integrative review's adaptability can also be examined through the perspectives of Elsbach and van Knippenberg (2020) and Alvesson and Sandberg (2020). While the former advocate for an integrative approach to synthesising existing research, the latter propose a problematising review that challenges foundational assumptions. But, these methodological stances are more complementary than contradictory. Both approaches ultimately aim to advance theoretical understanding, one by restructuring existing knowledge and the other by questioning its premises. Given the nascent state of rKM research, an out-of-the-box approach, favouring conceptual emergence over exhaustive inclusion, is particularly valuable (Alvesson et al. 2020). Here, less is more. It ensures a more coherent synthesis of insights, facilitating meaningful theoretical development. Table 1 summarises conceptualisations of the integrative literature review pertinent to this thesis.

Conceptualisations of the Integrative Literature Review				
	According to Snyder	**According to Torraco**	**According to Elsbach and van Knippenberg**	**According to Alvesson and Sandberg**
Typical purpose	Critique and synthesise	Form of research that generates new knowledge about the topic reviewed	Review of literature that moves beyond description of evidence to derive new insights through integration and/or critique	Primary aim of the problematising review is to re-evaluate existing understandings of phenomena; to challenge and reimagine our current ways of thinking about them
Research questions	Narrow or broad	Broad conception of what is known about the topic, and potential areas where new knowledge may be needed	Narrow/Focused or Broad/inclusive	Narrow
Search strategy	Usually not systematic	Not systematic but well documented and justified	More systematic than not	Unsystematic
Sample characteristics	Research articles, books, and other published texts	Author's subjective assessment of which materials speak to the main ideas and themes identified	Include all of the relevant research from the emerging topic	To read broadly but selectively; revealing but manageable sample; may call for the use of other forms of publication than the standardised review article, allowing for more exploratory and emergent types of writing and publishing.
Analysis and evaluation	Qualitative	Qualitative	Qualitative	Qualitative
Examples of contribution	Taxonomy or classification; Theoretical model or framework	A research agenda; taxonomy or other conceptual classification or construct; alternative models or conceptual frameworks; metatheory	Help to define the state of the art in a research topic and identify both progress and important gaps in the emerging literature	Overall aim is to combine critical and constructive considerations; to inspire new ways of thinking on a subject

Table 1. Based on Snyder (2019, p. 334); Torraco (2005); Elsbach and van Knippenberg (2020); and Alvesson and Sandberg (2020).

To enhance methodological rigour, this thesis follows the recommendations of Whittemore and Knafl (2005), who propose strategies for strengthening the integrative review process. Their guidelines (following Cooper, 1998) emphasise clear problem identification, systematic literature searching, explicit data evaluation criteria, rigorous data analysis, and transparent synthesis (2005). Within the constraints of this thesis, a more limited inclusion criterion is adopted (as opposed to systematic literature review) to ensure manageability while still maintaining methodological integrity. By focusing on peer-reviewed literature that directly engages with themes of knowledge management, responsibility, inclusivity and sustainability, the review remains both comprehensive and analytically robust. Table 2. summarises the main decisions and issues at each of the five stages of the integrative literature review conducted for this thesis.

Integrative Literature Review on the Concept of rKM	
Stage of review	**Illustration of decisions and issues**
Problem identification	Knowledge Management (KM) has traditionally been framed within efficiency-driven, asset-based, intra-organisational perspectives. However, the BANI world with its wicked problems has blurred organisational boundaries and increased the need for collaboration within ecosystems. The shifts in the global environment appear to demand a reframing of KM. Building on Durst's (2021) proposal of responsible Knowledge Management (rKM) as a way to enhance the common good, this review aimed to define the critical elements of rKM, trace how it diverges from traditional KM, and explore its relevance for future KM research.
Literature search	The search focused on variations of the rKM concept introduced by Durst (2021), including "responsible knowledge management," "responsible knowledge," "inclusive KM," "sustainable knowledge management," "ethics in knowledge management," and related terms. The period was limited to 2020–2025, reflecting the major socio-economic changes catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Searches were conducted in Scopus and Google Scholar. Results were screened through inclusion and exclusion criteria, with choices documented for transparency.
Data evaluation	The final sample consisted of both empirical and theoretical contributions, including journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters. Texts were analysed through close reading and detailed note-taking, followed by grounded theory coding to identify recurring themes. Coding was kept as uniform as possible to support subsequent categorisation. In vivo extracts were used to exemplify interpretative choices.
Data analysis	Extracted data included the most common themes present in the rKM literature and its nexus of related topics. These were categorised through thematic synthesis, with key dimensions of rKM refined iteratively. Visualisations were developed to synthesise and confirm emerging patterns across the literature.
Presentation	The findings were synthesised into a conceptual framework of rKM, mapping its core principles and highlighting tensions in the current discourse. This framework provides a basis for further empirical studies and academic debate.

Table 2. Decisions and issues of the review stages (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005, p. 549).

In this thesis, the ILR focuses on publications from 2000 to 2025, ensuring both historical grounding and engagement with contemporary debates, and draws on Scopus and Google Scholar as primary databases to access a diverse range of academic discussions.

3.2.2 Grounded Theory Extrapolation

"Grounded theory is an interpretive process that depends upon the sensitivity of a researcher to tacit elements of the data or meanings and connotations that may not be apparent from a mere superficial reading of denotative content" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639). Thus, complementing the ILR, this thesis employs the grounded theory method (hence GT)[10] to study a range of individual cases to extrapolate from them the conceptual framework of rKM (Charmaz, 2006, as cited in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). This approach enables a comparative analysis of impressions of rKM presented in the academic literature, identifying recurring themes, contradictions, and emerging theoretical directions. The inductive nature of grounded analysis allows this thesis to remain open to discovery.

Until now, the term inductive approach has been consistently used as originally conceived to be the core of GT (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, as paraphrased in Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). The inductive approach is a process of reasoning whereby patterns and concepts are derived from the data itself, without a prior theoretical burden. Later interpretations of GT, however, veer towards the term abduction, which can be understood as a process of reasoning that involves generating the most plausible explanation for observed data by also drawing on existing theoretical knowledge (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). Everything is data but data is not everything; the roles of imagination, serendipity, abduction, and reflexivity are central to the process of interpretation (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

Unsurprisingly, the inductive approach has drawn critique for its apparent disregard of existing theory and for the implied notion that researchers can approach data without prior assumptions. This is in part an oversimplification as Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argue: even the early versions of GT contained "abductive implications", despite not using the term explicitly (p. 16).

[10] Bryant and Charmaz note that in common parlance Grounded Theory has become to denote both the method and its result (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

In this thesis, the potential of abductive reasoning for GT is acknowledged. While attempts are made to remain attentive to emergent patterns in the data, it is recognised that theorising involves a creative interplay between observation and prior conceptual understanding. Therefore, this thesis draws on abduction, allowing for interpretive leaps that are guided but not constrained by existing theoretical insights relevant to the research topic. Lembert puts it succinctly when she argues for the importance of familiarity with the literature of the substantive area of study: as researchers, we must understand "the current parameters of the conversation" we "hope to enter" (2007, p. 254, in in Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). As a researcher with a humanist and philological background, I am particularly attentive to language and its contextual framing, how meaning is shaped by broader conceptual narratives, such as in the case of responsibility within KM discourse.

Following O'Reilly, Paper, and Marx's (2012) synthesis of the five key tenets of GT (guided by Glaser and Strauss original vision), this thesis seeks to explore the emergent concept of rKM and build a theoretical framework from the qualitative data presented in the academic literature. These nonlinear tenets, illustrated in Figure 5 below, are used iteratively to extract codes, categories and concepts from the data and relate them into a meaningful framework.

The constant comparative method represents the backbone of GT. It means the "simultaneous collection, coding and analysis" of the data for the purpose of generating a theory (O'Reilly et al., 2012, p. 250). This process is key to revealing the theoretical underpinnings embedded in the data (O'Reilly et al., 2012). Theoretical coding refers to the process of sensemaking whereby the researcher groups examples that appear similar and considers the "properties, dimensions, and boundaries" of each category, ultimately leading to the discovery of the core category (O'Reilly et al., 2012, p. 251). Theoretical sampling orients the discovery process along the lines of the emerging theory, and theoretical saturation is achieved when new data stops being illuminating, essentially verifying the full extent of the discovery (O'Reilly et al., 2012). Theoretical sensitivity demonstrates the researcher's "understanding of the field", it speaks to the ability to recognise what is pertinent to the emerging theory and what is not (O'Reilly et al., 2012, p. 255).

Grounded Theory Tenets

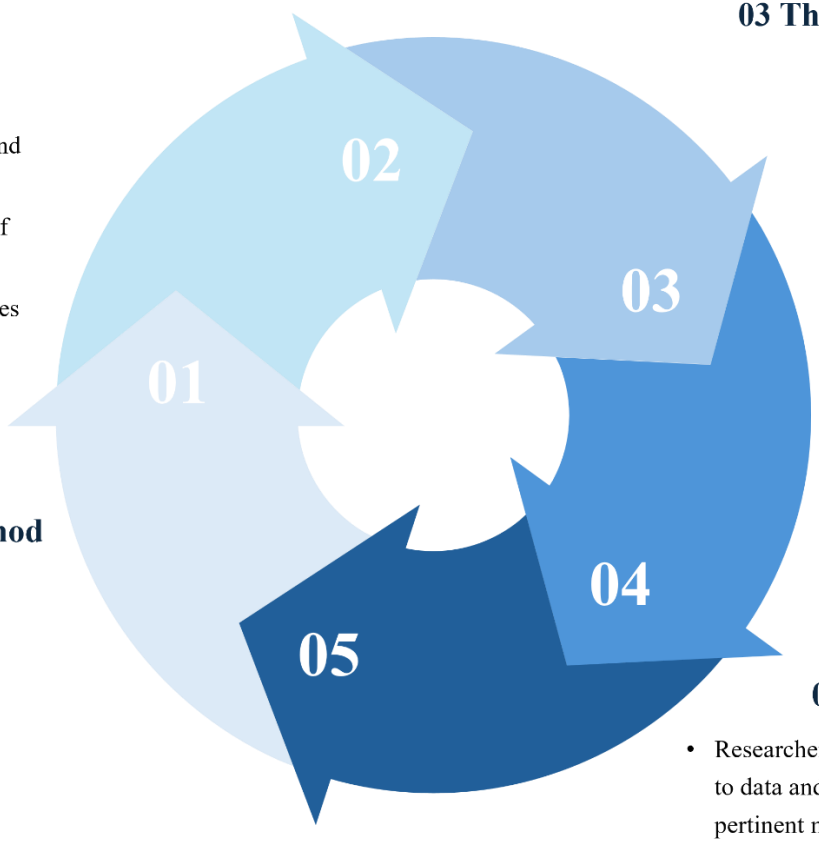
As summarised by O'Reilly, Paper and Marx (2012).

02 Theoretical Coding

- Categorising and grouping similar examples
- Identifying the properties, dimensions and boundaries of each category
- Exposing the theoretical underpinning of the phenomenon
- Iterative process of examining similarities and differences
- Data fitting
- Enables the identification of the core category (key indicator or explanation)

01 The Constant Comparative Method

- Naming data fragments
- Comparing incidents
- Adjusting the theoretical categories
- Saturating their properties
- Collection + coding + analysis
- Delimiting the theory
- Writing the theory



03 Theoretical Sampling

- The process of data collection controlled by the emerging theory
- Directs the researcher to further samples
- Refining the conceptual idea
- Facilitation of theory generation

04 Theoretical Saturation

- Achieving the completeness of the data categories
- When subsequent data no longer provides illumination
- Vital to verification of the theory

05 Theoretical Sensitivity

- Researcher's ability to give meaning to data and to recognize what has pertinent meaning to the emerging theory

Figure 5. The Five Nonlinear Tenets of the Grounded Theory.

Achieving a level of acceptable rigour is often assumed to be problematic with qualitative research and GT especially. This issue is extensively discussed, for example by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, who present one type of methodology to address the challenges. According to Gioia et al., one starts with acknowledging the different aims of quantitative and qualitative research (2012). Qualitative research aims to capture "general, less well-specified notions" of the "qualities that describe or explain a phenomenon of theoretical interest" (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 16). Concepts precede and differ from constructs that are well-specified and measurable, and therefore of interest to quantitative research (Gioia et al., 2012).

Figure 6 illustrates a step-by-step pathway from raw data (e.g., academic articles, or other qualitative sources) to the development of a new conceptual understanding. Starting on the left, the process involves identifying informant-centric terms and codes, the language and categories used by the original authors. These are then interpreted through researcher-centric lenses into higher-order themes, concepts, and dimensions, distinguishing between nascent concepts (new or emergent) and existing ones (those already found in the literature).

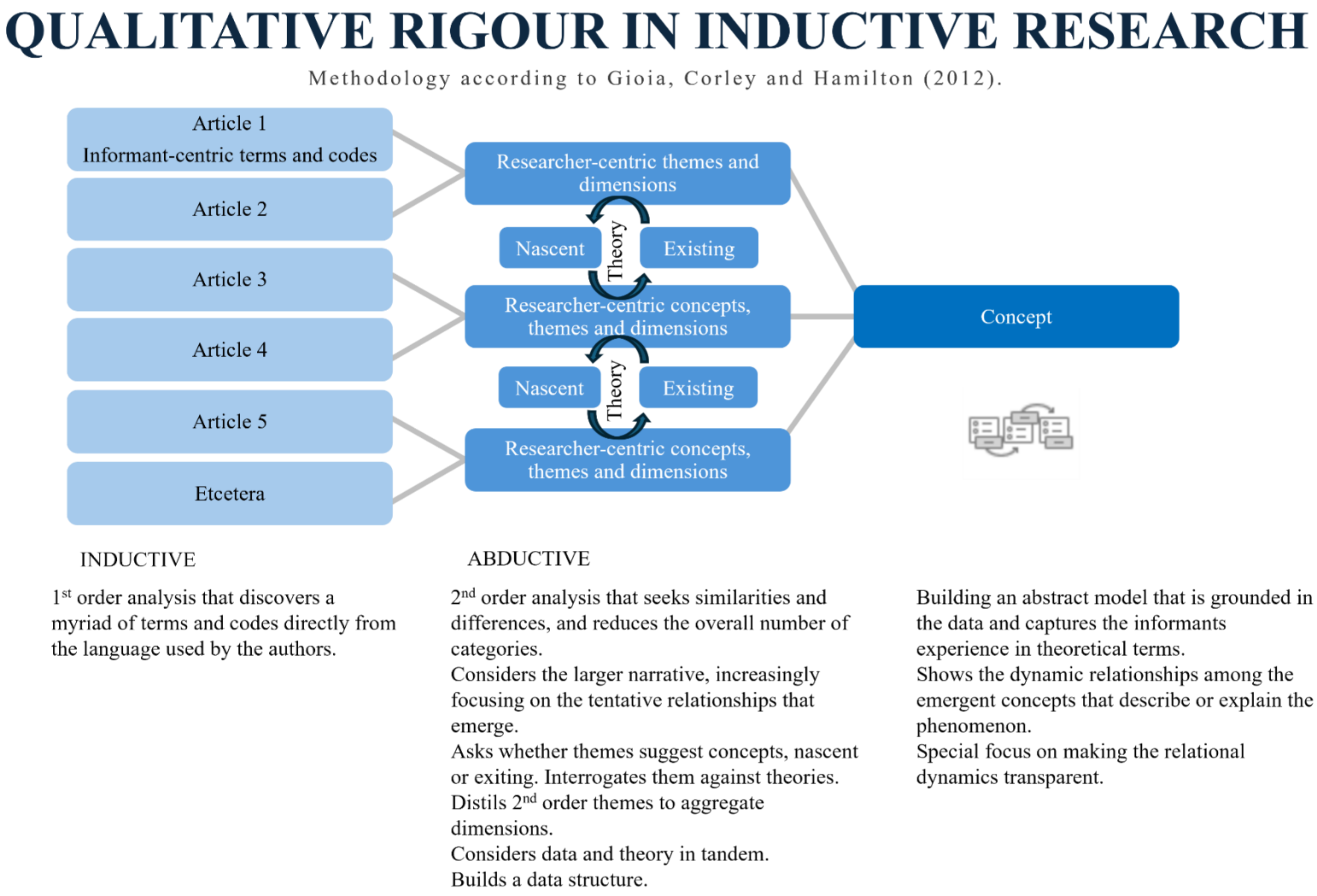


Figure 6. Qualitative rigour in Inductive Research by Gioia et al. (2012).

This analytical movement from first-order (informant) to second-order (researcher) constructs is at the heart of the Gioia methodology. As the analysis evolves, the researcher continually cycles between data and theory, refining the interpretations and identifying patterns and structures that allow them to synthesise a new concept. The final concept (visualised as a unified blue box) reflects both empirical grounding and theoretical insight, articulated through the GT method.

This visual and the accompanying approach reinforces the idea that this thesis aims to develop a concept, the emergent phenomenon of rKM. As such, the thesis does not seek to test a hypothesis or apply existing constructs to data. Rather, it follows an inductive-abductive path, seeking to understand how responsibility is framed and envisioned within the recent KM literature. By doing so, this research contributes to the conceptual clarity and theoretical development.

3.2.3 Ensuring Rigour and Validity

As described above, the analysis process begins with the ILR which, in curating the body of literature, serves as the umbrella method for sourcing and selecting articles relevant to researching the emerging concept of rKM, while GT provides the logic and method for interpreting and theming the content of these sources. By drawing on the GT principles throughout analysis, particularly the constant comparison of concepts across sources and sensitivity to the emerging patterns, this thesis aims to move beyond categorisation and toward a theoretically grounded framework that distinguishes rKM from KM, highlighting its more future-oriented dimensions.

Rigour and validity in qualitative research come through a reflexive approach to both data selection and its interpretation. In this thesis, reliability is reinforced through consistent criteria for source selection, designed to ensure that texts meaningfully contribute to understanding rKM, and through attention to the theoretical saturation process of GT. The transparency of the coding process is supported by documenting how first-order analysis informs second-order themes (Gioia et al., 2012)[11] and by ensuring that data categories are refined to the point of completeness, where new material can be consistently integrated into

[11] See Figure 17.

the existing structure (O'Reilly et al., 2012)[12]. To enhance validity, the thesis integrates multiple analytical perspectives, combining the broad synthesis of an ILR with the depth of GT analysis, allowing for a more comprehensive and multidimensional examination of rKM.

The methodological choices in this research reflect a deliberate alignment between the ontological, epistemological, and analytical perspectives required to explore rKM, allowing the thesis to make a meaningful contribution to both the theoretical development and practical implications of rKM in the contemporary knowledge economy.

Whereas the Introduction Chapter highlighted the theoretical and empirical boundaries of rKM as an emerging field, the following addresses the methodological trade-offs of this thesis more directly. The limitations of this research stem primarily from its interpretive nature and the constraints of its data selection. As a qualitative study, the findings are inherently shaped by the researcher's perspective, which, while grounded in established methodological rigour, remains a subjective interpretation of the available literature. The inductive approach, particularly in the grounded analysis of academic texts, allows for a nuanced exploration of rKM but does not claim to provide an exhaustive or definitive account of its conceptual boundaries.

Additionally, the scope of the literature review is necessarily constrained by the selection of sources, focusing on academic publications from 2000 to 2025, drawn from Scopus and Google Scholar. While these databases provide a broad and reputable foundation, they do not encompass all potential perspectives. The methodological choices of the thesis, the combination of integrative review and grounded analysis, emphasise depth over breadth, meaning that certain perspectives on knowledge responsibility may remain underexplored.

Furthermore, as rKM is an emerging and evolving concept, the research captures its development at a particular moment in time, rather than offering a static or universally applicable framework. These limitations do not diminish the value of the thesis's contributions but instead highlight the need for continued inquiry, validation, and theoretical refinement, encouraging future research to expand upon and critically engage with its findings across different contexts and methodologies. As the concept of rKM continues to

[12] See Table 5.

emerge, this thesis aspires to lay one of its early conceptual foundations. It is open to critique, refinement, and application across future studies.

4 Findings

Based on the categorisation of the final sample, the research revealed a collection of sources that, while diverse in format and methodological emphasis, remained broadly consistent in their conceptual ambitions. The sample did not cohere around a single disciplinary approach or uniform methodology but was nonetheless held together by a shared concern for rethinking KM in light of emerging ethical, ecological, and societal challenges. This thematic coherence offset the structural heterogeneity of the material.

4.1 Characteristics of the Sample

The texts in the sample comprised mainly journal articles (52%) and individual book chapters (30%), with a smaller representation of conference papers (15%) and only one full book (3%). This distribution reflected the early and somewhat scattered state of rKM discourse: it has not yet become the domain of major monographs or unified collections. The strong representation of chapters and conference proceedings suggests that rKM remains an evolving conversation, still often nested within broader KM topics or discussed in exploratory venues rather than established outlets with defined canons.

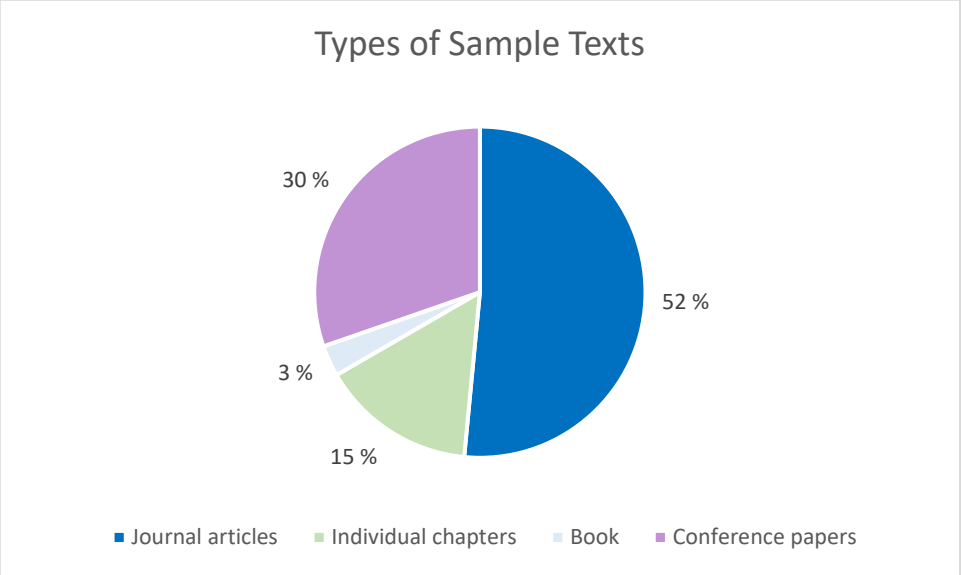


Figure 7. Types of Sample Texts.

The origins of the texts, 58% from Scopus and 42% from Google Scholar, provided a balance between academically curated sources and more grey or interdisciplinary literature. This dual sourcing enabled the inclusion of both rigorously peer-reviewed material and innovative or experimental thought pieces, without skewing the sample toward either end. It reflects a deliberate effort to capture the conceptual breadth of the field.

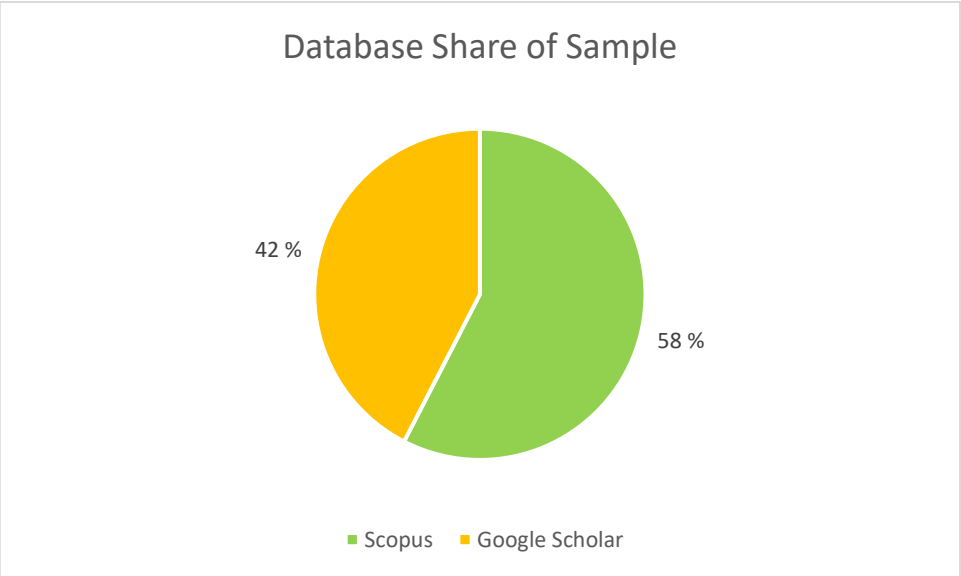


Figure 8. Database Share of Sample.

In terms of publication years, the selected texts spanned from 2020 to 2025, with 2022 marking the most productive year (34%). This peak suggests a recent intensification of scholarly interest in themes related to rKM, likely catalysed by global crises (e.g. pandemic,

climate urgency) and growing critique of traditional KM's value frameworks. The declining number of entries in 2024 and 2025 was expected given the lag in publication cycles and the narrow timeframe of the thesis. Perhaps the recent geopolitical turbulence, ranging from wars and authoritarian turns to global economic insecurity, may have disrupted the reflective conditions typically conducive to the development of philosophical musings. In this context, scholarly energy may have been diverted toward more immediate concerns. This might explain the modest slowdown in new conceptual proposals related to rKM in the last two years of the sample.

Another plausible interpretation is that the discursive terrain has shifted. While the concerns underpinning rKM (ethics, inclusivity, sustainability) remain relevant, they may now be addressed under different banners. Terms like indigeneity, decoloniality, regenerative knowledge, or flourishing may have gained traction. It is possible that the intellectual system has not abandoned the concerns of rKM but has redistributed them into new clusters of terminology and inquiry. In this sense, rKM continues the legacy of fragmented, multidisciplinary research just like its predecessor. Still, the presence of texts from every year confirmed the timeliness and continuity of the topic.

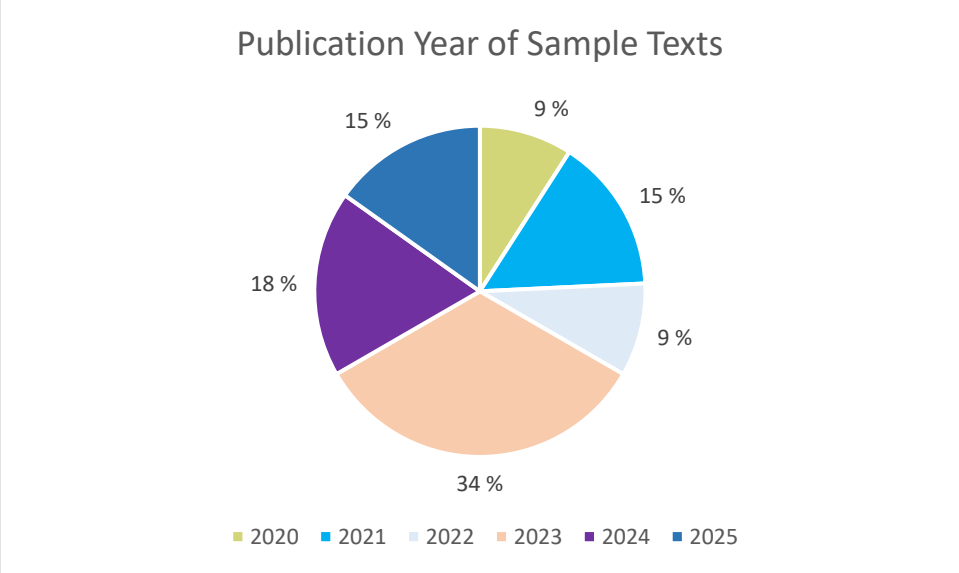


Figure 9. Publication Year of Sample Texts.

The majority of the texts were either literature reviews (59%) or conceptual explorations (17%), while case studies (10%), qualitative analyses (7%), and quantitative studies (7%) played a smaller role. This distribution indicates that rKM is not yet being evaluated or tested as a fixed construct but is instead being defined, imagined, and reframed. It also reflects the

preliminary stage of the field, where sense-making remains central, with less emphasis on standardised measurement or comparative implementation. The relative absence of empirical work further highlights the conceptual and ethical nature of the emerging discourse, while also pointing to opportunities for future studies to apply and challenge these ideas in practice.

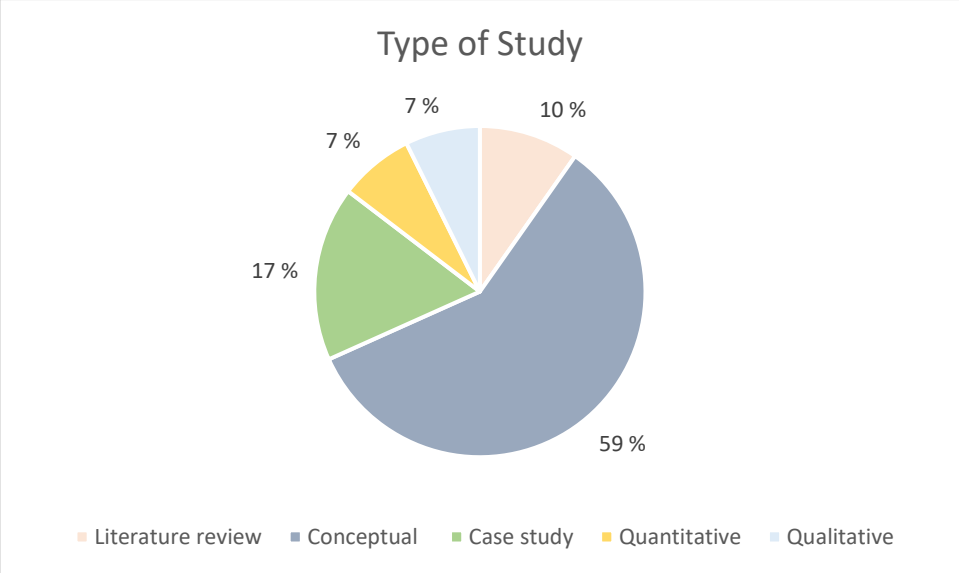


Figure 10. Type of Study.

The 41 texts (32 individual pieces and all the 9 chapters of the one entire book) were authored by a wide range of contributors, with most offering just one text. A handful of prolific authors (such as Rocha, Kerschbaum, Bratianu, Durst, Kaiser, Kragulj) emerged, suggesting the presence of dedicated voices within the rKM space but no hegemonic core.

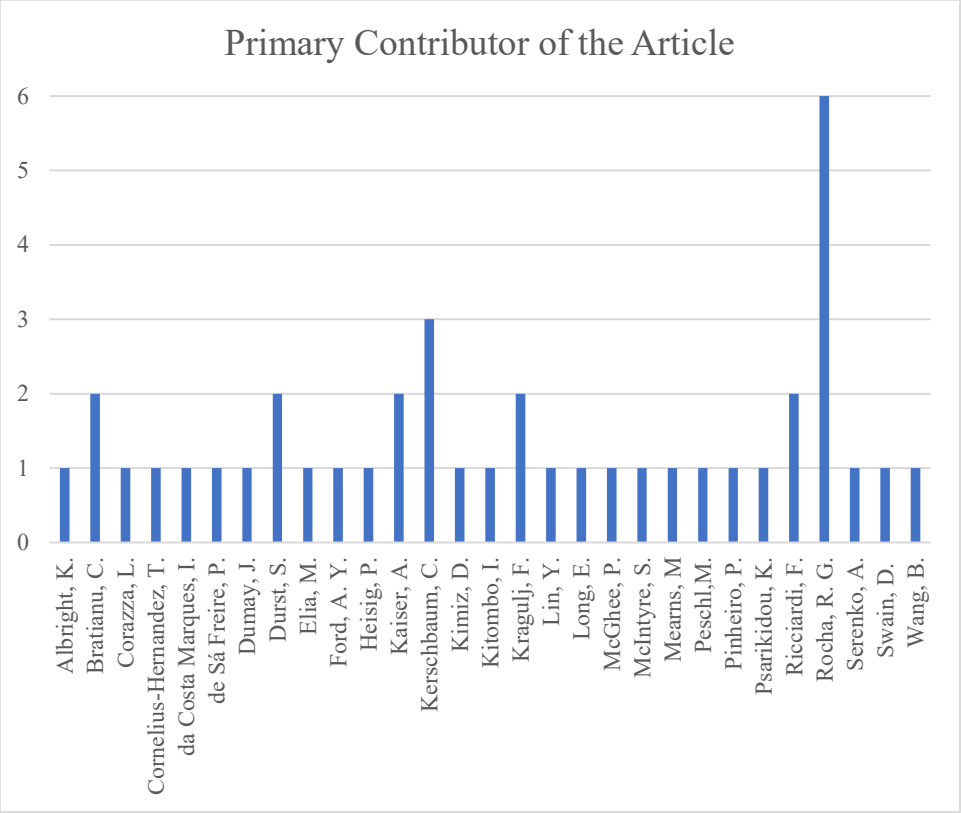


Figure 11. Primary Contributors.

The majority of authors were affiliated with institutions in Europe and the Global North, which reflects the persistent epistemic imbalance in academic publishing. This pattern arguably confirms the structural exclusions that continue to marginalise knowledge contributions from the Global South (Ford, and Alemneh, 2025). The requirement that all sample texts be published in English further reinforces this dynamic, limiting participation and visibility for alternative knowledge traditions that may be deeply relevant to the discourse on responsibility in KM but are excluded from dominant publication circuits. That said, it is worth noting that this sample, despite its modest size, did include contributions from scholars based in Brazil, Uganda, Costa Rica, and South Africa. While not sufficient to offset broader patterns of exclusion, these voices are a welcome presence and indicate that the discourse on rKM is at least tentatively inclusive.

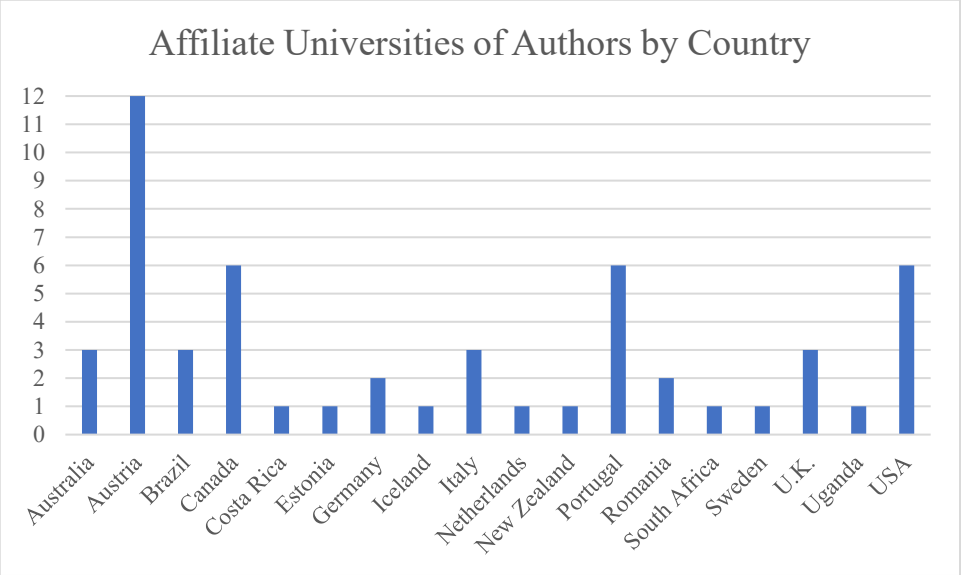


Figure 12. Affiliate Universities of all Contributing Authors by Country.

Despite its varied formats, sources, and methodologies, the sample was surprisingly coherent in its underlying preoccupations. All texts contributed, in some way, to the effort to rethink KM in light of sustainability, ethics, or societal value. This consistency supports the use of the sample for an ILR and GT analysis: it provides a broad but thematically convergent base from which the conceptual contours of rKM could be derived, while the field remains open, conceptually fluid, and not yet shaped by dominant paradigms. The fragmented state of the field may reflect its novelty but also its need for synthesis, which this thesis tries to provide.

4.2 Observations from the Scopus Search

The first literature search was conducted using the Scopus database, targeting publications between 2020 and 2025 that intersected themes of knowledge management (KM), sustainability, and responsibility. This search yielded a total of 82 results, reflecting the limited and still-developing nature of scholarly engagement with what may be considered rKM. A preliminary review of abstracts and keywords revealed several noteworthy patterns.

First, the term sustainability emerged as a ubiquitous label across many of the retrieved texts. However, in the majority of cases, the concept was applied in vague or instrumental ways. Frequently, ‘sustainable knowledge management’ referred to continuity of knowledge flows, digital infrastructure, or innovation efficiency, rather than engaging with the ethical, systemic, or long-term implications of knowledge practices. As such, while the term

appeared commonly, it rarely reflected a substantive or systematically defined sustainability framework.

In contrast, the word responsibility appeared much less frequently and, when present, was more likely to be conceptually aligned with the themes of the study. This disparity underscores the observation that while sustainability may have become a generalised buzzword in KM discourse, responsibility remains an emergent and under-theorised dimension.

Of the 82 documents retrieved, 46 were excluded from further consideration at this stage[13]. This included entries that based on the title, keywords, abstract and conclusions did not seem to match the target of investigation, and two articles that were found inaccessible. The specific exclusion criteria are listed in Figure 15 below.

The remaining 36 items were retained for closer analysis, although this number is effectively 33, as four of the entries refer to individual chapters from the same edited volume and will be treated as one item (i.e. the entire book, including the 5 other chapters not individually identified by Scopus). These texts formed the potential Scopus-part of the sample for subsequent in-depth reading, comparison, and selection for inclusion in the ILR and GT analysis. The Scopus sample spanned conceptual and empirical works, including texts focused on phronesis, post-normal science, knowledge justice, inclusive governance, spiritual KM, and emerging ethical considerations in AI and digital systems. From the 33 candidates 19 made it into the final sample after close analysis of the full texts. Figure 13 below shows the Scopus query string used.

```
( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "responsible knowledge management" OR "responsible knowledge" OR "inclusive knowledge management" OR "sustainable knowledge management" OR "social responsibility in knowledge management" OR "future of knowledge management" OR ( "knowledge management" AND "phronesis" ) OR "ethics in knowledge management" OR "ethical knowledge management" OR "inclusive knowledge sharing" OR ( "knowledge management" AND "common good" ) OR "critical knowledge management" OR "values-based knowledge management" OR ( "purpose-driven" AND "knowledge management" ) ) ) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "BUSI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "ECON" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "DECI" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )
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Figure 13. Scopus Search Query String.

[13] See Figure 14 on page 75 for visualisation of the filtering process.

4.3 Observations from the Google Scholar search

The second search process, in Google Scholar, required a markedly different approach compared to Scopus due to fundamental differences in how the two platforms operate. Where Scopus allows users to combine multiple search criteria into a single, highly specific query, resulting in a narrowed and refined set of results, Google Scholar does not respond to increased specificity in the same way. In fact, the more search criteria one enters into Google Scholar, the more the results tend to diffuse rather than narrow. This inverse behaviour required a change in strategy: rather than running one composite search string, the process was broken into several targeted queries focusing on distinct aspects of rKM that had produced fewer hits in the Scopus search.

Guided by the gaps identified in the Scopus output, five separate searches were conducted in Google Scholar that yielded manageable and thematically relevant results. The publication timeframe for all these searches was aligned with the Scopus query, limited to the period between 2020 and 2025:

1. "Responsible knowledge management" – 93 results
2. Sources citing Durst's A Plea for Responsible and Inclusive Knowledge Management – 25 results
3. "Ethics in knowledge management" – 50 results
4. "Ethical knowledge management" – 35 results
5. "Knowledge management" AND "common good" within journals whose names contain Knowledge AND Management – 93 results

Other combinations were tested but proved either too broad or yielded no results. For example, the query "social responsibility in knowledge management" returned zero results, while "social responsibility" AND "knowledge management" produced over 24,000, far too many for practical screening. Similarly, "common good in knowledge management" gave zero results, and "knowledge management" AND "common good" resulted in over 4,800 hits, again too broad to process effectively. Queries such as "critical knowledge management" were problematic because the term "critical" was predominantly interpreted in the sense of "crucial" rather than "analytical". Searches for "values-based knowledge

management" produced no results, and "purpose-driven" AND "knowledge management" returned 1,350 results, another unmanageable amount.

To maintain a reasonable and manageable scale for a single-researcher study, the search efforts were limited to these five targeted queries. After removing duplicates already captured in the Scopus sample, a total of 240[14] unique text candidates were identified from Google Scholar. These were first screened based on title relevance, which yielded 94 potential sources. Further filtering through keywords, abstract and conclusions reading and access availability resulted in 27 items selected for full-text review. Following the close analysis, 13 items qualified into the final sample. Given the discretion allowed by ILR process, one article (G27) was handpicked outside both Scopus and Google Scholar searches as it emerged as relevant, being a source of one of the other sample texts (G07) identified through Google Scholar. The handpicked article also meets the inclusion criteria applied to the rest of the sample.

Compared to Scopus, the Google Scholar sample was more diverse in both form and disciplinary origin, encompassing peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings. The broader indexing parameters and less restrictive editorial curation of Google Scholar produced a more interdisciplinary selection of texts, requiring careful filtering through reading to ensure conceptual and methodological relevance.

The selected items span conceptual and empirical contributions to the emerging discourse on rKM, with recurrent themes including spirituality and phronesis, non-rational and aesthetic knowledge, organisational purpose, AI ethics, knowledge for the common good, and inclusive governance. Several of the included texts explicitly engage with future directions of KM, offering visionary or critical perspectives that align with the ethos of rKM. Others introduce philosophical or indigenous frameworks, contributing valuable normative depth to the sample.

Notably, the Google Scholar texts tended to be less concerned with managerial efficiency and more focused on ethical orientation, transformational knowledge practices, and epistemological pluralism. In several cases, KM was not the sole or primary focus but was situated within broader conversations about societal, spiritual, or educational transformation.

[14] See Figure 14 on page 75 for visualisation of the filtering process.

These characteristics contribute meaningfully to the GT development, especially in highlighting other rationalities and values not prominent in mainstream KM discourse.

While the sample required close scrutiny for academic quality and relevance, many of the selected texts offered critical expansions or redefinitions of what counts as knowledge and how it should be managed responsibly. As such, the Google Scholar sample provides an essential complement to the more functionally oriented Scopus texts, contributing to the overall diversity, richness, and conceptual range of the final study corpus.

It is important to reiterate the methodological limitations associated with Google Scholar. Unlike Scopus, which provides transparent indexing criteria and field-specific filtering options, Google Scholar functions as a proprietary search engine with no public index or inclusion standards. Its content base is therefore a black box, and this applies not only to what is included but also to how results are ranked by relevance. The algorithm that determines search result order is not open to scrutiny or adjustment. Moreover, search results on Google Scholar can be inconsistent across devices or time periods. Identical search strings may yield different results depending on the machine, user location, or even the date of the search. This challenge in replicability and transparency introduces an element of unpredictability to the research process and encumbers the reproducibility of the search results. To mitigate this limitation, the search process was documented in detail, including a list of the exact search terms, time frame, and any additional filtering steps used (i.e. Boolean operators), so that another researcher could attempt to replicate the search. This transparency allows the reader to evaluate the adequacy of the dataset and the reliability of the results – and enables subsequent attempts to reproduce.

To complement the textual description of both searches, the sequential filtering steps are visualised in Figure 14 below. The diagram summarises how the initial sets of 82 Scopus and 296 Google Scholar results were progressively narrowed through screening, eligibility checks, and full-text analysis to arrive at the final rKM sample. The figure also shows where items were excluded along the way and makes transparent how the Scopus sub-sample (19 items) and the Google Scholar sub-sample (13 items, plus one handpicked) together formed the basis of the overall corpus.

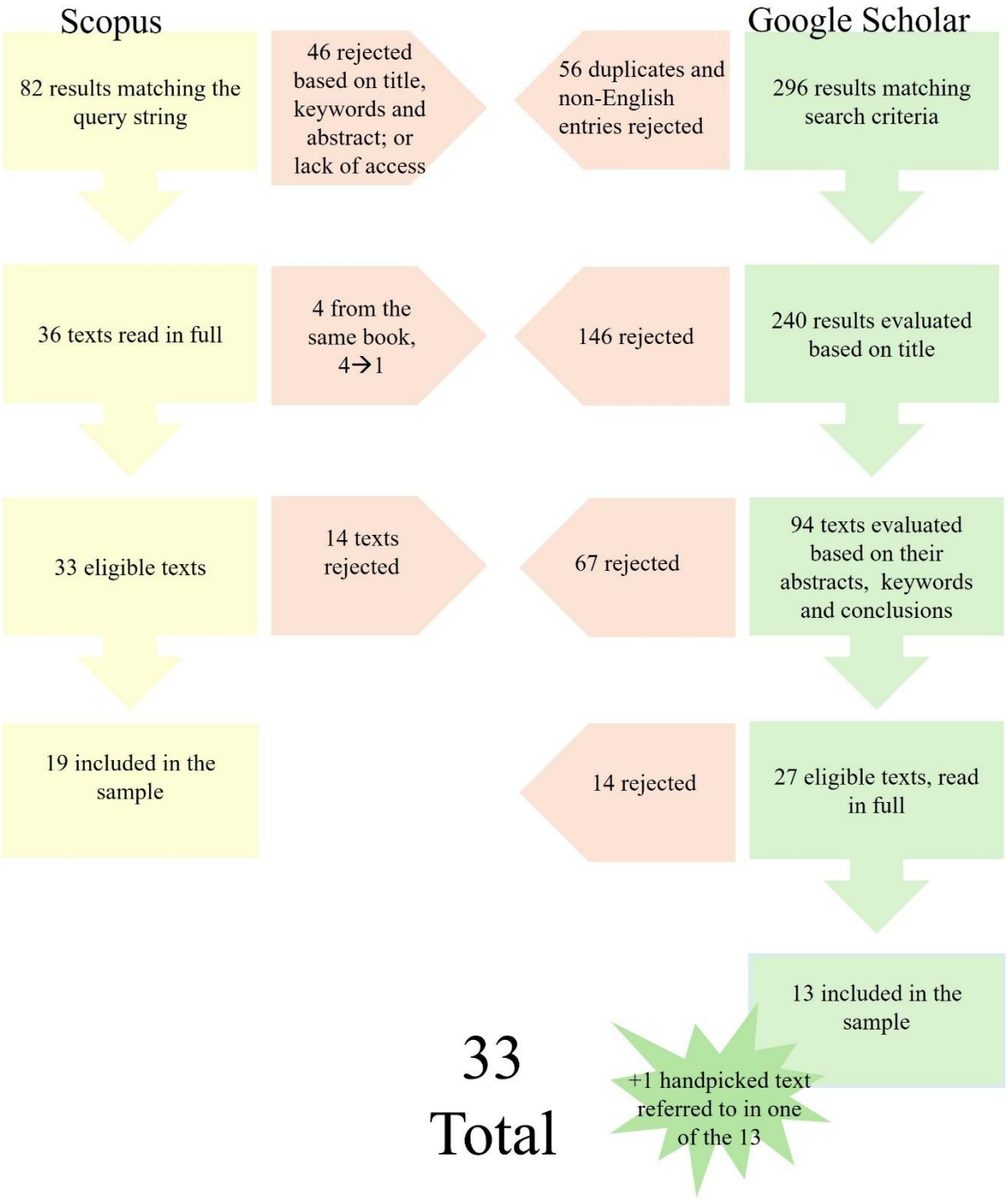

Figure 14. Filtering Process of Scopus and Google Scholar Searches.

To increase transparency and support the reproducibility of the sampling process, a visual summary of the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied across both Scopus and Google Scholar searches is also presented in Figure 15. Although the two platforms required different operational approaches, the final selection was guided by a shared conceptual orientation and consistent filtering logic, as illustrated below.

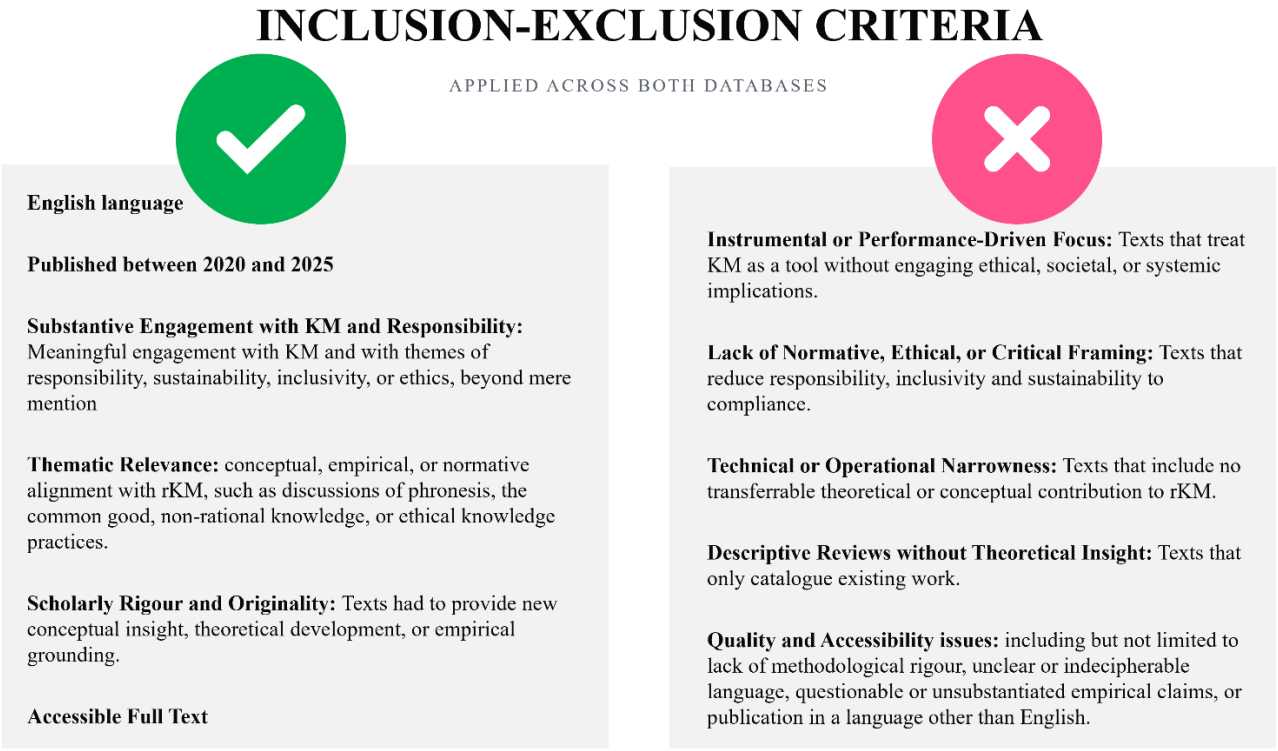

Figure 15. Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria

In addition to this visual overview, a few concrete examples of excluded texts are also provided. While the complete list of rejections is longer, Table 3 illustrates representative cases where the inclusion–exclusion criteria were applied in practice. These examples show that while many of the texts addressed related themes such as sustainability, responsibility, or inclusivity, they sometimes fell short either by treating these concepts in narrow or instrumental ways or by lacking engagement with KM as a theoretical or systemic field. Presenting these cases offers greater transparency into the selection process and clarifies the validity of the final sample.

Examples of Excluded articles			
Author(s), Year	**Title**	**Sample Excerpt (from Abstract)**	**Rationale for Exclusion**
Mukhuty, Upadhyay and Rothwell (2021)	Strategic sustainable development of Industry 4.0 through the lens of social responsibility	*"we critically argue novel perspectives on how human resource practices can enable sustainable development of Industry 4.0 in a socially responsible manner."*	Focuses on HRM-driven upskilling; responsibility framed as adaptation, not systemic or ethical transformation.
Dutta, Vedak and Sawant, (2022)	The old order Changeth! Building sustainable KM post COVID-19	*"the authors develop SKM systems and practices model relevant to a post-pandemic organisational context."*	Narrow view of sustainability as digital continuity; lacks ethics or transformative ambition.
Rocha, Kragulj and Pinheiro (2022)	The Wise Leader: Where did the Roads pave by Nonaka and Takeuchi lead to?	*"The results reveal that the concepts of phronesis and practical wisdom link knowledge management and leadership…"*	Bibliometric mapping only; minimal engagement with rKM; descriptive and limited theoretical development.
Lee (2021)	Place-Making in Public Libraries: Integrating Local History, Information, and Learning	*"this study shows how Tainan Library functions as a hybrid civic space…for engagement and knowledge sharing."*	Focused on place-making/urban studies, not KM; inclusion parallels noted but not rKM-relevant.
Bencsik (2024)	An International Comparison of the Sustainability of Knowledge	*"The results confirmed that a trust-based organisational culture…is a prerequisite for knowledge sustainability."*	Redefines sustainability as efficiency/innovation; no engagement with environmental or ethical limits.
Zoccali, Talarico, Lorena and Reina (2024)	KM Impact on CSR: A Systematic Literature Review	*"this study aims to understand how KM influences CSR considering the role of Technology."*	Frames responsibility as strategic compliance; descriptive SLR, no critical synthesis.
Nakash, Baruchson-Arbib and Bouhnik, (2021)	A holistic model of the role, development, and future of KM	*"Findings revealed a remarkable variety of issues that exist at the core of the KM discipline."*	Frames KM as legitimacy tool; no ethics or sustainability; reinforces traditional KM perspectives.

Table 3. Examples of Excluded Texts.

To illustrate the link between the theoretical foundations of this thesis and the empirical analysis, Table 4 below presents a matrix (refitted from Isabella, 1990, p.14) that juxtaposes key critiques of traditional KM with verbatim excerpts from the rKM sample, and the abductive leaps made in their interpretation. The table illustrates the retrospective strand of the iterative analysis, showing how the sample was examined against the theoretical foundations of KM. This complemented the later, prospective strand, where texts were organised into categories and aggregate dimensions. By aligning the 'preliminary organising categories' drawn from the theory chapter with direct quotations from the empirical material, the table makes visible how ideas that arose from the rKM literature often stood in sharp contrast to the underlying assumptions of traditional KM.

Since rKM is an emerging concept, there is no established theoretical library on which to rely. The theoretical foundations chapter therefore necessarily reflected a bricolage of antecedent ideas. This bricolage served as a mirror against which the rKM sample was interpreted, highlighting where the empirical material contradicted, departed from, or reworked those older assumptions.

Whereas traditional KM was characterised in the theory chapter as fragmented, instrumentalised, economistic, and reductionist, the rKM sample articulated alternatives that were markedly different. The abductive leaps represented in the right-hand column show how these contrasts could be synthesised into more generalised understandings that ultimately fed into the three aggregate dimensions discussed later in this thesis.

The purpose of including this table is therefore twofold. First, it demonstrates how the theoretical chapter acted as an active sensitising frame against which the principles of rKM seemed to rail, its older orientations guiding the interpretation of the sample toward more promising threads. Second, it shows that the movement from traditional KM to rKM is not simply incremental but paradigmatic, with the empirical material repeatedly surfacing orientations and practices that 'cure' the deficiencies of earlier approaches while opening space for new, still-emerging trajectories of rKM. Together with the Gioia (2012) Data Structure Figure 17[15], which illustrates the progression from raw data to aggregate dimensions, this table provides a complementary view of how theoretical critique and empirical insights interacted abductively to generate the findings.

[15] On page 93.

Theory Development Matrix		
Preliminary organising categories (theory foundations of traditional KM)	**Verbatim empirical sample (contradicting descriptions of rKM)**	**Abductive interpretative leap**
Is KM a field or fields? (incoherence, fragmentation, lack of cumulative knowledge)	*G10: "Rather than leaning toward defining a consensus, [it is preferable to] create awareness of the different perspectives on knowledge and its implications for organisational KM."* *S33: "breaking down barriers to accessing information, education and training, information and communication technology and participation in knowledge networks that allow a multiplicity of perspectives, insights, skills, expertise and experiences to be shared that contribute to creation, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge"* *G01: "In the literature on Knowledge Ecosystem, organisations aim to facilitate value creation through KM organised at the ecosystem level. This necessitates multi-partner collaboration for knowledge creation, joint goal setting, and collective activities for KM goals."* *G09: "There is a need for interdisciplinary KM to evolve out of multidisciplinary KM so that different historical roots and perspectives can be cohesive rather than simply additive (or proposing alternative views of KM)."*	Plurality as strength – rKM treats interdisciplinarity not as a defect but as a design condition for tackling complexity.

Table 4. Theory Development Matrix (refitted from Isabella, 1990, p. 14).

Theory Development Matrix (continued)

Preliminary organising categories (theory foundations of traditional KM)	Verbatim empirical sample (contradicting descriptions of rKM)	Abductive interpretative leap
Knowledge as asset / Tacit–explicit binary. Traditional KM reifies knowledge as property; binaries distort lived knowing	*G10: "KM methods such as shadowing, learning-by-doing, joint problem-solving… would require more support than investment into technical applications and infrastructure."* *G16: "…conceptualise organisational learning as a process that changes not only knowledge and capabilities, but also rules, and then social relationships"*	Knowledge as enacted practice – knowing is relational, situated, embodied, not simply extractable and codified.
Will to metrics. Obsession with quantification; surrogation traps; IC statements as managerial artefacts	*G11: "While it is essential to improve organisational efficiencies and manage knowledge inside companies, it should not be at the expense of society."* *G11: "it is not just consumers, but also investors, that want to know the risks current business models have in a world that no longer sees profit as the primary motivation for a company's existence"* *G21: "A promising way to look at strategic success in terms of sustainability and responsibility may therefore be to measure need satisfaction."*	Purpose-before-proxies – rKM challenges numeric fetish by reorienting evaluation toward needs, societal impact, and phronetic judgment.
Ethical vacuum. Ethics marginalised, instrumentalised into compliance or 'ethical capital'	*G10: "how do we ensure transparency and uncover the hidden agendas?* *S33: "to give the highest priority to ethical knowledge transfer. This entails not only the delivery of accurate and dependable information and knowledge but also the cultivation of critical thinking and digital literacy skills"*	Ethics beyond compliance – rKM situates ethics at the heart of knowledge practices: accessibility, justice, relational responsibility.

Theory Development Matrix (continued)

Preliminary organising categories (theory foundations of traditional KM)	Verbatim empirical sample (contradicting descriptions of rKM)	Abductive interpretative leap
Systems thinking / Wicked problems. Traditional KM treats problems as tame, solvable puzzles	*G11: "KM research needs to break free from the idea of developing more efficient organisations ... and switch to research that helps organisations grow and thrive in complex social and political environments"* *G16: "Scholarly awareness is growing that no matter how healthy and successful an organisation can become by leveraging its knowledge assets, [it cannot survive] if the system that the organisation depends upon is fragile."*	Coalitions for complexity – rKM positions KM as societal infrastructure for tackling wicked problems through collaborative, transdisciplinary communities.
Economic telos. KM historically tethered to performance, efficiency, profit	*G16: "studies converge in suggesting that the management of organisational knowledge can better contribute to the common good if it leverages network-level coproduction processes, evidence-based decision making and a participatory approach coupled with decentralised and distributed experimentation."* *G16: "This study argues that the common good, besides organisational performance, should be the final goal of organisational learning..."*	Common-good orientation – rKM redefines the ultimate purpose of KM: not simply profit or efficiency but collective flourishing, collaboration, and stewardship of shared resources.
Linear logic & reductionism. KM inherits mechanistic metaphors; struggles with emergent phenomena	*S29: "Any extension of linear logic to knowledge management resulted in unacceptable erroneous results."* *S29: "'Productivity of the knowledge worker is not – at least not primarily – a matter of the quantity of output.'"* *S29: "Quality needs nonlinear metrics because it is nonlinear attribute of any process."*	Nonlinear knowledge dynamics – rKM embraces complexity, emergence, and context-sensitive judgment.

Theory Development Matrix (continued)

Preliminary organising categories (theory foundations of traditional KM)	Verbatim empirical sample (contradicting descriptions of rKM)	Abductive interpretative leap
Exclusion of diverse knowledges. Homo economicus logic sidelines emotion, spirituality, indigenous knowing	*S29: "Managers integrate mostly rational knowledge and only tangentially emotional knowledge. Organisational culture integrates mostly emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge."*	Inclusive epistemologies – rKM recognises multiple ways of knowing, integrating emotional, spiritual, and cultural dimensions.
Managerial capture of knowledge. Knowledge becomes asset to be mined, appropriated, and controlled	*G16: "Learning is not only about creating knowledge: it is about changing the world through new beliefs and new rules."* *S05: "the market was transformed into a space for informal learning, enabling consumers to exchange knowledge and ideas...* *S10 "the transformative potential of EDI and KMb as catalysts for dismantling barriers to knowledge access and fostering more equitable distribution of research outcomes"* *S28: "The main idea of Spiritual Knowledge Management (SpKM) is to focus on the development and becoming of individuals and organisations transitioning from the current self (or state) to a future self that is different and in some way more developed and unfolded than the current state as a result of a process of self-realisation and transformation."*	Transformative practice – rKM reframes knowledge not as property but as capacity to change rules, relationships, and futures.

4.4 Distribution of the Sample

As mentioned earlier, the two searches produced a corpus of 33 results, or 41 texts when the 9 chapters of the one book are treated individually. Analysis eventually clustered these texts into three thematic dimensions – normative frameworks, inclusivity, and sustainable ecosystem – revealing the distribution of topics as unexpectedly balanced. Each dimension attracted roughly equal attention across the literature, even though the material was sourced from two different databases with distinct profiles. The Scopus sample tended to anchor discussions in more formalised and established KM debates around sustainability, phronesis, and ecosystemic responsibility, while the Google Scholar texts more often introduced normative, inclusive, and value-oriented perspectives that reimagine the future directions of KM. Despite these differences, the final corpus does not skew heavily toward one principle. Instead, the discourse on rKM appears to be emerging in equal measure along all three axes.

This balance was not the product of intentionally weighting the sample toward any of the three dimensions but arose from the systematic application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria. The search strategies for Scopus and Google Scholar were deliberately tailored as described earlier but no attempt was made to equalise the thematic distribution. For instance, the Scopus search did not return results focused on ethics in KM, which prompted the Google Scholar searches with the terms “ethical knowledge management” and “ethics in knowledge management” (also part of the Scopus query string). Similarly, while the notion of the common good was included in both searches, only the Google Scholar search produced relevant material on this theme. In this way, the two databases yielded samples that were partly overlapping but also distinctive in emphasis, reflecting both the strengths and limitations of each source. The results suggest that rKM is being simultaneously framed through normative, participatory, and systemic lenses. In other words, the literature does not privilege one path to responsibility but advances a plural and interdependent conception of what rKM entails.

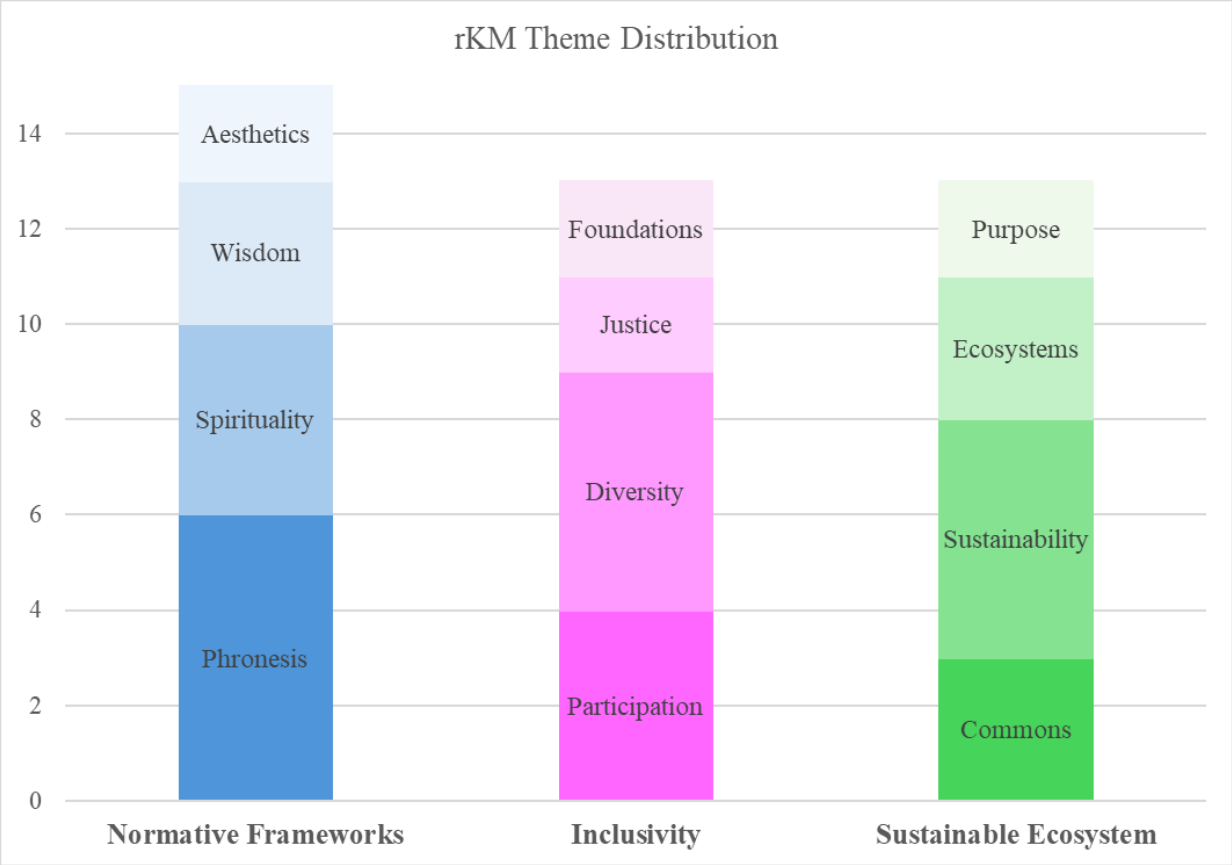

Figure 16. rKM Theme Distribution.

The next section transitions from the basic description of the sample toward exploring the ILR, unpacking these discovered thematic strands in greater detail.

4.5 Findings of the Integrative Literature Review

The academic literature reviewed for this ILR demonstrates a growing, though diverse, effort to articulate what responsibility in Knowledge Management might entail. Despite the conceptual novelty and varying disciplinary lenses, several recurring principles and associated practices emerged across the sampled texts.

The first prominent theme discovered is the positioning of practical wisdom (phronesis) as an orienting principle for rKM. Practical wisdom is *"generally understood as the ability to determine and undertake the best action in a specific situation to serve the common good"* (S28 Peschl, Kaiser and Fordinal, 2023, p. 5; referring to Nonaka and Toyama, 2007). Several authors proposed phronesis as a moral scaffolding that guides action, combining

ethical reflection with context-sensitive judgement. Practical wisdom was variously presented as a personal virtue, an organisational capacity, or a heuristic for decision-making that resists rigid, instrumental rationality. Phronesis *"provides a robust and future-oriented heuristic that enables us to weigh alternatives and make decisions for the common good. Phronesis is closely linked to the ability to actively shape the business environment and pursue a desirable future"* (S02 Rocha, Kragulj and Pinheiro, 2022, p. 436). This theme further extended into discussions of organisational phronesis, which blends learning, ethics, leadership, and spirituality into a holistic capacity to act responsibly in uncertain and complex contexts. *"Hence, phronesis is always directed toward living both in harmony with society and the environment as well as with oneself"* (S28 Peschl, Kaiser and Fordinal, 2023, p. 11).

Closely related was the emphasis on spirituality and non-rational knowledge, elements historically marginalised in mainstream KM. Many texts introduced spirituality not in the religious sense, but as a value-laden orientation towards wholeness, purpose, and the interconnection of life. *"[S]pirituality is the ongoing transformation of a human being in an engaged and responsible relationship with oneself, the other, [and] the world"* (S32 Long, 2023, p. 836; citing Dienberg and Warode, 2018, 815). These discussions foregrounded the self and organisation as entities unfolding toward a higher end, with knowledge processes framed not only as rational undertakings but also as reflective, ethical, and aspirational practices. *"[T]hese transformations are purposefully initiated, aiming for profound, substantial, and meaningful change that is intentionally triggered"* (S28 Peschl, Kaiser and Fordinal, 2023, p. 2). The emergence of Spiritual Knowledge Management (SpKM) manifested as an attempt to reconnect the epistemological with the ontological, aligning what is known with what is lived and strived for. *"The vision of an organisation will reflect the vision of its employees if and only if the individual visions are taken into account for the vision formation process of an organisation"* (G03 Kaiser and Martinez, 2023, p. 123; in The Future of Knowledge Management: Reflections from the 10th Anniversary of the International Association of Knowledge Management).

A third major area of emphasis turned out to be inclusivity and epistemic pluralism. Several studies challenged the dominant frameworks of KM that privilege managerial, codified, or scientific knowledge. Instead, they advocated the inclusion of alternative knowledges, local, instinctual, experiential, communal, indigenous, or practitioner-based, as essential to

responsible knowledge work. *"[K]knowledge inclusion becomes key for democratising the governance of science, technology and innovation trajectories"* (S05 Psarikidou, 2023, p. 4). RKM was increasingly described as participatory and reflexive, requiring researchers and practitioners alike to confront their own assumptions and biases. *"Reflexivity is … important as a principle that raises awareness of the limits of knowledge and of particular framings that may not be universally held"* (S05 Psarikidou, 2023, p. 4; referring to Stilgoe, Ower, and Macnaghten 2013). Importantly, inclusion was not only about representational fairness but also about epistemic justice: which knowledges count, and for which ends. Inclusiveness was seen to address *"historical and systemic inequalities; prioritise the needs and perspectives of marginalised communities; promote equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes; support mutual and reciprocal learning, active engagement, and respect for alternative ways of knowing and doing"* (S10 Cornelius-Hernandez and Clarke, 2024, p. 9; referring to Armitage, de Loë and Plummer, 2012; Canfield, Menezes, Matsuda, Moore, A., Mosley, Dewsbury, Feliú-Mójer, McDuffie, Moore, K., Reich, Smith and Taylor, 2020; Polk and Diver, 2020).

A fourth thread running through the literature was a turn toward systems thinking and the knowledge ecosystem view. Rather than treating organisations as bounded units with internal knowledge processes central in the competition against others, rKM is increasingly seen as an interorganisational, even societal, practice embedded in complex adaptive systems. *"[W]e need to reconceptualise KM as a technology for improving society"* (G11 Dumay, 2022, p. 767). This view placed emphasis on collaboration, interdependence, and the recognition of wicked problems that cannot be solved through isolated efforts. Terms such as 'knowledge commons' (S20, G23), 'regenerative systems' (S28), and 'meta-organisational responsibility' (G23) pointed to a broader horizon for KM, where knowledge is stewarded for collective benefit across time and space. *"[A]daptive learning needs to consider not only feedbacks from the markets, … but also from the value chain, local communities, governmental bodies, communities of practice, social movements, and particularly from all those actors that may represent next generations' needs and rights"* (G16 Ricciardi, Cantini and Rossignoli, 2021, p. 281).

The literature also identified a strong connection between rKM and purpose-driven strategy. Several texts argued that an organisation's legitimacy and ethical standing can be judged by its ability to articulate and realise a meaningful purpose, one that aligns with stakeholder

expectations and broader societal or ecological well-being. Here, responsibility was not merely compliance but aspiration: an organisation's orientation toward long-term, value-generating futures. *"[F]ocusing on morally important needs enables organisations to implement need-based strategies that are most likely to lead to sustainable and responsible outcomes"* (G21 Kragulj, 2023, p. 288; referring to Garvare and Johansson, 2010). Relatedly, aesthetic knowledge, defined as the sensibility to intuit and enact desired futures, emerged as a dimension of KM often overlooked but increasingly vital in situations where rational analysis is insufficient. *"[A]esthetics can also be seen as a precursor to knowledge because we first experience the world, and are hence subject to aesthetic perceptions, before we can engage in intellectual and conceptual thought about the world"* (S31 Kerschbaum, 2023, p. 629).

Another recurring finding revealed that rKM closely associated itself with sustainability as a strategic imperative. Beyond environmental sustainability, this included the sustainability of knowledge ecosystems, social systems, and the ability of organisations to thrive without eroding the capacities of others. Thus, rKM was not only a managerial tool but also a normative orientation toward systems-level regeneration, future-readiness, and mutual flourishing. The inclusion of sustainability often converged with other dimensions, especially systems thinking and ethical purpose. A *"truly sustainable business shifts its perspective from seeking to minimise its negative impacts to understanding how it can create a significant positive impact in critical and relevant areas for society and the planet"* (S03 Durst, 2021, p. 216; citing Dyllick and Muff, 2016, p. 166).

Also, a dimension present in the literature was the pedagogical role of academia in shaping future knowledge practitioners. *"Business schools ought to recognise that business leaders possess the power to shape and guide their organisations and society"* (S23 Rocha and Pinheiro, 2021, p. 12; referring to Hoffman 2020; and Roos, 2017). Several contributions highlighted the importance of education in sensitising students and researchers to the value of ethical, inclusive, and pluralistic approaches to knowledge. Rather than treating knowledge as neutral and technical, these texts called for a reorientation of curricula toward embracing non-rational ways of knowing, practical wisdom, and the ethical consequences of knowledge use. *"[R]ational-analytic problem-solving methods face challenges when applied to ambiguous or ill-defined problems"* (G02 Kaiser, Kerschbaum, Kragulj, Peschl and Zivkovic, 2024, p. 333). RKM, in this light, was not only a matter of organisational or

societal choice but also a matter of educational responsibility. Academia was increasingly tasked with identifying and redressing the missing ethics in managerial education, and with preparing students to navigate knowledge landscapes marked by complexity, difference, and uncertainty. The cultivation of critical awareness, reflexivity, and value-consciousness was positioned as a necessary precondition for responsible knowledge practices to take root in future contexts.

Finally, the literature suggested that technological change, especially AI, presents both a challenge and a frontier for rKM. Some authors advocated for responsible AI (RAI) practices as part of the broader rKM agenda, highlighting the importance of transparency, accountability, and alignment with human and societal values. This added a further dimension to the ecosystemic view of KM, where responsibility would be shared across human and non-human agents and shaped through governance across the full lifecycle of knowledge production and use. *"[T]he benefits of AI should not be limited to select few but should extend inclusively to diverse communities and individuals"* (S33 Lin and Dalkir, 2025, p. 149).

Taken together, these themes pointed to an evolving, multi-dimensional understanding of rKM. While none of the sampled texts offered a holistic definition of the concepts, they seemed to coalesce around a nexus of principles such as phronesis, inclusivity, systems awareness, ethical purpose, sustainability, and educational responsibility. Even though the texts included in this integrative review reflect a variety of theoretical and practical entry points into rKM, together they portray a shared desire to reimagine knowledge work as something more ethically grounded, socially engaged, and future-oriented than traditional KM has allowed.

4.6 Conceptual Constraints and Neoliberal Residues in the rKM Literature

The analysis further revealed that while the rKM literature contains many efforts to frame knowledge practices in more ethical, inclusive, and sustainable terms, it also carries forward conceptual residues from earlier paradigms. These elements appeared not as isolated anomalies but as recurring features across the sample. They represent forms of conceptual baggage that continue to shape the discourse around rKM. Here is a closer look at these contradictions and constraints within the sample.

One of the most prominent residues was the persistence of the growth paradigm. References to economic growth were frequent, even in texts otherwise oriented toward ethics or sustainability. For instance, one contribution stated that *"organisations shall cultivate and apply phronesis to pursue economic growth and the common good"* (S02 Rocha, Kragulj and Pinheiro, 2022, p. 427). Another referred to the European Green Deal as *"the European Union's new strategy for long-term growth"* (S15 Rocha, Paço, Alves and Dias-Cabral, 2024, p. 973, referring to an European Commission publication 2022a). Such statements demonstrate how growth-oriented language remains embedded in the discourse, even in discussions of responsibility and regeneration.

A second recurring residue was the tendency to describe responsible approaches as marginal or exceptional. For example, one author wrote *"how utopian it would be to think that the study of aesthetics in organisations could change the greater mechanism of how organisations and, in particular, business organisations function nowadays"* (S31 Kerschbaum, 2023, p. 11). Many others (S03, S05, S10, S28, S33) consistently labelled their suggestions 'alternative', illustrating how responsible perspectives were often positioned as peripheral rather than as central.

Another residue was the instrumentalisation of ethics and spirituality. Concepts such as phronesis, wisdom, or spirituality were at times operationalised as managerial tools. For instance, one study translated organisational phronesis into measurable dimensions with predictive value for HR and managerial practices (S26 Serenko, 2024). Another examined spirituality and wisdom in order to improve their *"comprehension and deployment"* within organisations (S27 Pinheiro and Rocha, 2020, p. 644). These cases demonstrate how ethical or spiritual orientations were sometimes thought of as basic performance enhancers.

Notably, both studies also revealed how unfamiliar these concepts were to the employees being surveyed. In a spirituality and wisdom study, the authors note that *"most of the interviewees do not know what organisational spirituality and organisational wisdom concepts are"* (S27 Pinheiro and Rocha, 2020, p. 639). Likewise, in a phronesis study, when participants were asked if they relied on *"intuitions, insights, hunches, or senses"* in workplace decision-making, responses were largely negative or minimal (S26 Serenko, 2024, p. 2119), signalling either that the terms were not readily understood in a decision-making context, or that such reliance was viewed as inappropriate to admit. These findings indicate that concepts such as phronesis, spirituality, and wisdom were not only reinterpreted

as managerial instruments but also remained poorly understood among practitioners, perhaps carrying the stigma of unprofessionalism.

The literature also reflected the logic of responsibilisation, in which ethical change is framed as the task of individuals rather than as a matter of structural conditions. One text, for example, stated that *"the individual must recognise that he/she has a responsibility toward society and especially a better society"* (S33 Durst and Foli, 2025, p. 7, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management). Often, where responsibility was emphasised at the level of individual actors, it occurred without supportive attention from institutional or systemic factors. Such appeals can only take us part of the way: personal motives are not always altruistic, individuals operate within cultural settings that may constrain their influence, and not all are equally positioned to act responsibly in ways that generate systemic change. Without institutional and collective support, individual virtue alone is insufficient to transform epistemic practices.

In a similar vein, many accounts retained a managerialist orientation in general, placing emphasis on senior leaders as the primary agents of knowledge and value-building. For instance, one contributor asserted that *"[i]t is top management's role to articulate the knowledge vision and communicate it throughout"* (S33 Mearns, 2025, p. 37, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management). She also noted that participation by others is *"reliant on top level granting legitimacy to the discourse"* (S33 Mearns, 2025, p. 16, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management). Other statements positioned senior leaders as the source of direction and legitimacy. In this material, collective participation was often described in terms of alignment with top management's vision, and dissent was generally downplayed. For example, one text observed that while *"there are indications that divergent thinking is necessary for creative ideas"*, *"it is convergent thinking that brings these ideas into actionable innovations"* (S33 McIntyre, 2025, p. 173, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management).

Discussions of AI and ethics displayed further traces of neoliberal project logic. While inclusivity and fairness were commonly named as important, texts still concluded by describing constraints that limit their realisation. One contribution stated that ethical AI

remained aspirational because project planning often relied on *"whoever is available"* and prioritised a *"minimal viable product"* (S33 Lin and Dalkir, 2025, p. 167, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management). Observing also that *"in the end, they must compromise and go with what ever data is available"* (S33 Lin and Dalkir, 2025, p. 166, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management). These examples illustrate how ethical ideals continue to be summarily surrendered to practical project limitations.

Finally, several contributions remained within an intraorganisational frame, where knowledge was still tied to performance, productivity, and value delivery to the organisation. One text asserted that KM *"does not exist for any other reason than to bring value to the organisation it serves"* (S33 McIntyre, 2025, p. 179, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management). Even when inclusivity or epistemic justice were mentioned, they were often presented in terms of strategic gain or as external factors to which organisations must respond. For instance, it was argued that "*[t]he issue is not so much that KM drives the need for diversity programs, but that diversity will drive the KM approach"* (S33 McIntyre, 2025, p. 174, in Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in Knowledge management).

In sum, the sample contained recurring elements that reflect continuity with earlier paradigms. Growth-orientation, marginalisation of responsible approaches, instrumentalisation of ethics and spirituality, responsibilisation of individuals, managerialism, project pragmatism, and intraorganisational framing and adaptation all appeared as conceptual residues. These findings highlight the persistent influence of established logics, despite all the efforts to propose alternatives within the literature on rKM.

4.7 Grounded Theory Findings: A Framework for rKM

This research is among the first to attempt to articulate a composite view of rKM. The theoretical foundations outlined in Chapter 2 served as a reflective backdrop, brightening the emerging image. Juxtaposing the historical view of mainstream KM with this emerging, future-oriented portrait brings the contrast into focus: KM has traditionally treated

knowledge as an asset, pursued efficiency through metrics, and largely neglected ethical reflection. This has left the field fragmented, hindered in cumulative knowledge-building, and prone to niche investigations. The grounded analysis of recent publications revealed both continuity and rupture: continuity in extending the trajectory of KM as a field, yet rupture in reframing as problematic precisely those aspects that traditional KM left unquestioned.

Concepts such as phronesis, spirituality, inclusivity, and systemic responsibility appear as nascent correctives, pointing toward a reframing of KM as ethically and ecologically accountable. Importantly, the interdisciplinary and plural character of rKM does not deepen fragmentation but positions it as part of the cure: responsibility is framed through inclusive, systemic approaches capable of addressing wicked problems and pursuing the common good. In this sense, the thesis is pioneering because it stages a systematic dialogue between the inherited limits of KM and the emerging orientations of its discourse, thereby making visible the contours of a possible paradigm shift.

To this end, Figure 17 below presents examples of the data structure used in this thesis. Adapted from the Gioia (2012, referring to Corley and Gioia, 2004), it makes transparent the analytical progression from raw material to theoretical abstraction. The first-order concepts in the left-hand column are direct quotations extracted from some the reviewed articles, which capture the diverse language and emphases found in the sample. These were iteratively compared, grouped, and refined into a more concise set of second-order themes, shown in the middle column, that represent interpretive categories rather than the verbatim expressions of the texts. Finally, these themes clustered into three aggregate dimensions – normative frameworks, inclusivity, and sustainable ecosystems – that emerged as the core elements defining rKM. By displaying this process visually, the figure demonstrates how the broad and fragmented discourse across the literature was systematically distilled into coherent dimensions, thereby showing both the transparency and rigour of the analysis.

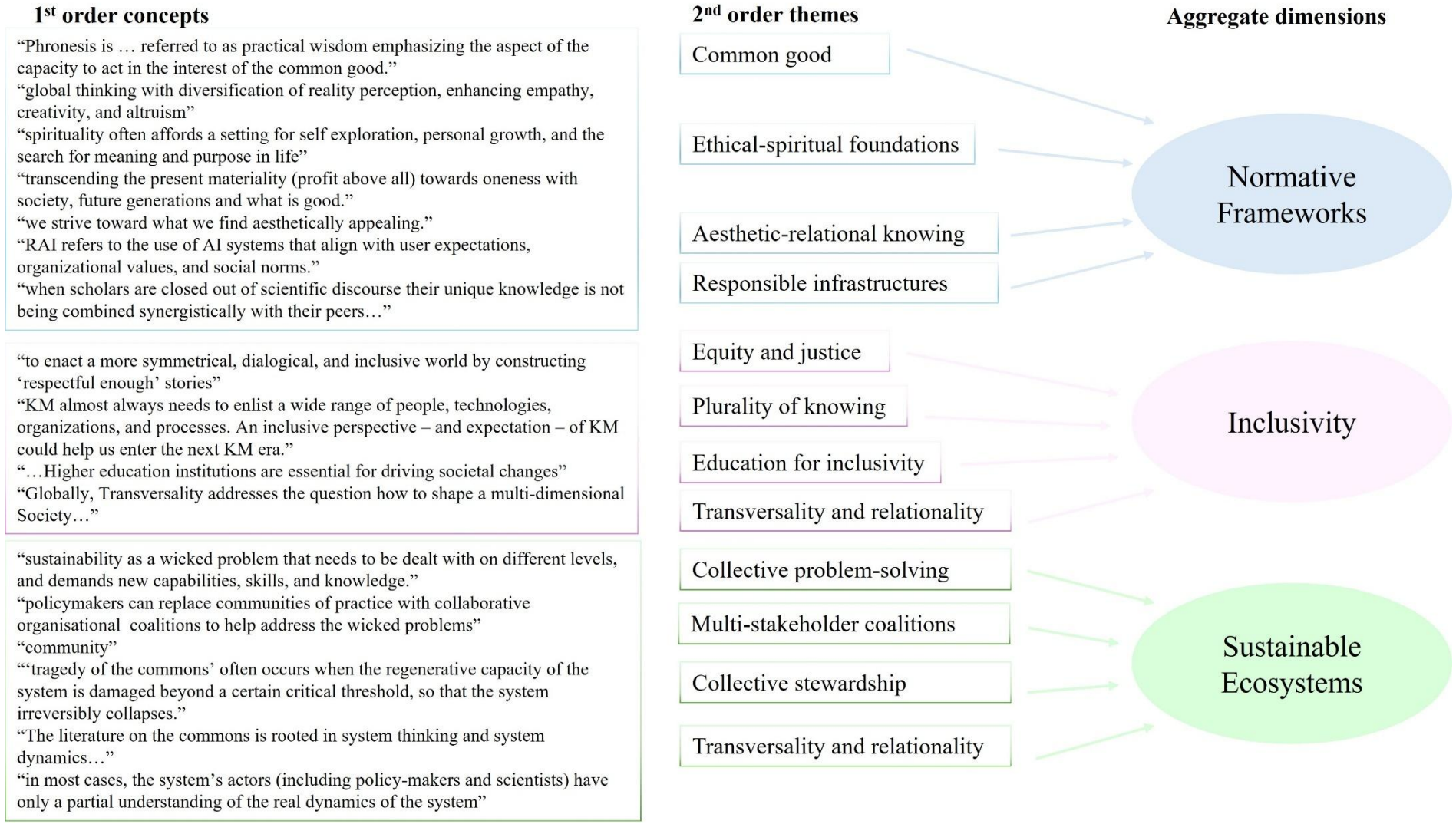

Figure 17. Data Structure (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 21).

Building on this foundation, the GT analysis produced a conceptual architecture for rKM that shows how responsibility is articulated and embedded across the entire sample. Whereas Figure 17 illustrates the analytical process, the framework presented below synthesises its substantive outcomes. The resulting framework (Table 5) groups the contributions of individual articles into the three mutually reinforcing principles, i.e. the aggregate dimensions identified above. Together, these principles capture how rKM is both imagined and enacted in response to contemporary challenges.

Rather than emerging from a rigid coding algorithm, the framework reflects the cumulative insights formed through prolonged immersion in the material: reading and rereading, comparative notetaking, clustering, and interpretive synthesis. It highlights not only empirical regularities but also conceptual tensions and complementarities across the literature.

Each principle integrates a range of practices and concerns: some oriented toward moral and value commitments, others toward diversity and access, and still others toward systemic interdependence and collective problem-solving. Table 5 below presents this architecture in detail, linking each practice to the specific sample texts that contributed to it and demonstrating the breadth of perspectives underlying the framework[16].

[16] See Appendix 2 for full list of sample texts and their short codes.

rKM Framework		
Principle	**Practices and actions**	**Issues addressed**
Normative Frameworks Guiding rKM S02, S03, S08, S12, S23, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30, S31, S32, G03, G04, G06, G07, G14, G16, G27	Phronesis/Practical wisdom S02, S12, S25, S26, S28, G07	Striving for common good S03, S12, G16, G27
		Striving for Altruism S30, S32, G27
	Spirituality and Faith-at-Work and Wisdom S12, S27, S29, S30, S32, G04, G07, G27	Striving for oneness S29, S32, G27
	Aesthetics S08, S31, G06	Striving for resonance S28
	Personal growth S02, S23, S28, G03	Fulfilling one's purpose S28
	Indigeneity G04, G07, G27	Intergenerational accountability S12, G27
	Transversality G14	Plurality of diverse rationalities G14
Inclusivity S02, S05, S09, S10, S20, S23, S33, G01, G02, G07, G09, G10, G14, G16	EDI/DEI S33, G09	Epistemic injustice S09, S10, S33, G07, G09, G10
	Open Access (OA) S09, S10, S33	
	Open Science (OS) S05, S09, S10, S33	
	Responsible Research and Innovation S05, S10	
	Knowledge Mobilisation (KMb) S05, S10, S33	
	Sensitising education S02, S05, S23, S33, G02, G16	
	Responsible AI (RAI) S33, G01, G09, G14	
Sustainable Ecosystem S02, S03, S05, S08, S12, S15, S20, S23, S33, G01, G02, G11, G16, G21, G23	Commons S05, S20, G16	Joint effort to resolve wicked problems, global challenges, and tragedy of the commons S02, S03, S05, S12, S15, G02, G11, G16, G21, G23
	Collaborative advantage S12, G11	
	Collaborative Organisational Coalitions G11	
	Meta-organisations G23	
	Need-based coalitions G21	
	UN SDGs S15, S23, S33, G11	
	Purpose-driven strategy, Multi-stakeholder focus S08, G11, G21	

Table 5. rKM Framework.

4.7.1 Normative Frameworks Guiding rKM

The first principle, or aggregate dimension, encompasses the various value logics, ethical compasses, and purpose-oriented narratives that provide direction and meaning to rKM. These include phronesis or practical wisdom, spirituality, aesthetics, indigeneity, and notions of personal and organisational growth. Rather than seeking rational optimisation alone, these texts present rKM as an inherently normative endeavour, concerned with doing what is right, good, or meaningful in the face of uncertainty.

For example, practical wisdom (S02, S12, S25, S26, S28, G07) was repeatedly invoked as a means of ethical sensemaking and action in complex environments. Spirituality and faith-at-work (S27, S30, S32, G04, G07, G27) offered value frameworks grounded in interrelatedness, innerness, and aspirational well-being. Other contributions (e.g., S08, S31, G06) introduced aesthetic knowledge as a form of corporeal experience, capable of guiding action when facts alone are insufficient.

Together, these texts portray rKM as more than an assortment of philosophical ideals; the result is a mode of collective, future-oriented striving, informed by values that orient individuals and organisations toward the common good.

4.7.2 Inclusivity

The second principle captures the call for plurality, openness, and epistemic justice in rKM. The texts coded under this theme recognise that responsible knowledge practices must include diverse voices, challenge exclusionary structures, and actively confront inequities in how knowledge is produced, accessed, and applied.

This includes explicit attention to DEI/EDI initiatives (S33, G09), open science and open access (S05, S10, S33), and recognition of local and indigenous knowledge systems (G04, G07, G27). Several texts (S09, S10, S33, G07, G09, G10) addressed epistemic injustice, calling attention to how hegemonic narratives marginalise or silence alternative knowledges. Others (S02, S05, S23, S33, G02, G16) argued for educational reform to sensitise future professionals to these dynamics and reflexivity from current ones to recognise the prevailing biases.

Importantly, inclusivity here is not presented as a formality or add-on, but as a foundational requirement for ethical and effective knowledge management. It reflects an epistemological shift: the recognition that in a diverse and interconnected world, responsible knowledge practices must be inherently plural.

4.7.3 Sustainable Ecosystem View

The third principle centres on the systemic and relational dimensions of knowledge. It frames rKM as embedded within, and responsible to, a wider socio-ecological context. This includes long-term sustainability, stewardship of the commons, and recognition of interdependence between knowledge actors and systems.

Texts in this cluster (S02, S03, S05, S08, S12, S15, S20, S23, S33, G01, G02, G11, G16, G21, G23) conceptualise knowledge not only as a resource but as a dynamic force shaped by, and shaping, the systems it inhabits. Articles on the commons (S05, S20, G16), meta-organisations (G23), and need-based coalitions (G21) extend the scope of rKM from the organisational level to regional, societal, and even global scales. The inclusion of SDGs (S15, S23, S33, G11) and wicked problems (S15, S23, S26, S28, G11) reinforces this outward orientation.

This principle also overlaps with the normative and inclusive logics: it embeds value-based decision-making and pluralist participation into a systems thinking perspective. The result is a holistic view of rKM that is dynamic, relational, and forward looking.

4.7.4 A Relational Model of rKM

These three principles, Normative Guidance, Inclusivity, and Sustainable Ecosystem thinking, together articulate a grounded yet aspirational model for rKM. Rather than prescribing a static set of practices, they reveal how rKM is conceptualised across contexts: as an emergent interplay of values, inclusiveness, and systemic awareness, all working toward flourishing – of organisations, societies, and ecosystems alike.

The framework synthesised here is not meant to finalise the meaning of rKM but to map the conceptual territory that current scholarship points to. It provides the bare bones for further discussion, application, and refinement.

This concludes the presentation of the findings. Together, the ILR and GT analysis have revealed both the diversity and coherence of perspectives shaping the emergent field of rKM. While the ILR mapped the emerging 'philosophical analysis' of the KM field, the GT synthesis offered a deeper, relational understanding of its emerging priorities. The resulting framework provides a conceptual basis for distinguishing rKM from traditional KM, specifically in terms of its ethical grounding and purpose. In the following chapter, these findings will be interpreted and contextualised in light of what this possible 'conceptual rupture' within KM may signal for the field's future.

5 Discussion

This thesis set out to identify the core principles of rKM as discussed in the sample, concentrating on the actions, practices, and concerns that give substance to 'responsibility' in the context of KM. What this thesis has revealed is not just a framework for the concept itself but a call to pursue an orientation of meaningfulness through ethical principles. Unless it decisively breaks from the inherited, too narrowly pursued logics of growth, efficiency, productivity, and competition, rKM risks becoming just an attractive label. In its current, fragile state of emergence, it faces obstacles that could derail its promise before it has a chance to take root as a living practice. This chapter begins by examining those risks, how they could strip rKM of its ethical intent and reduce it to a superficial extension of traditional KM, before turning to what it might become if it can shed its inherited baggage and embrace its full potential.

5.1 What rKM must not become

The risks for rKM are clear and the worst-case scenario is sharply different from its aspirational form. The most obvious risk is value appropriation by neoliberal logics.

Although terminology is the key to precise meaning, in many instances authors of the sample texts used word choices that resulted in contradictory, ambiguous, diluted or simply unambitious messages. For example, by writing *"values and spirituality in organisations are related to increasing performance"* (S23 Rocha and Pinheiro, 2021, p.10; referring to Tischler, 1999; Poole; 2009; Brown, 2003) or *"companies must prioritise sustainability to remain competitive and relevant in today's global market"* (S15 Rocha, Paço, Alves and Dias-Cabral, 2024, p. 796; referring to Imran, Salisu, Aslam, Iqbal and Hameed, 2019) the authors subordinate spirituality and sustainability to competitiveness, efficiency, and market legitimacy. In this distorted form, rKM appears to make unpalatable ideas more palatable by claiming they work alongside old operational priorities. Spirituality and sustainability are not considered 'worthy' on their own but can be entertained because they serve corporate strategy. As noted by some authors, *"organisations are likely to adopt those practices that they are socially expected to adopt, independently from these practices' actual impact on the common good"* (G16 Ricciardi, Cantino and Rossignoli, 2021, p. 281). Instead of pursuing the common good, the appearance of responsibility presents itself as an easy and alluring trap.

Sustainability, in particular, was invoked with dogged vagueness, often meaning little more than 'manageable' or 'enduring'; *"[a] value-based approach to knowledge management can lead to economic, social and environmental sustainability"* (S02 Rocha, Kragulj and Pinheiro, 2022, p. 430). Many authors unimaginatively chose to defer to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an anchor. This is also problematic because of the way the SDGs are structured: they remain deeply embedded in existing economic logics. They assume growth can be 'greened' or 'decoupled' from environmental harm (e.g., SDG 8), which is a contested and often discredited claim for a finite planet. The goals' framing tends to translate systemic, political, and ethical problems into technical ones instead of addressing the root causes like colonial legacies, or wealth concentration. Far from catalysing the systemic shifts required, the SDGs risk delaying them, providing a sense of incremental progress while leaving the underlying extractive order intact.

Because of that, the SDGs represent, at best, an insufficient and convenient compromise. They offer an easy alignment for organisations wishing to signal commitment without confronting the deeper economic and cultural paradigms driving ecological and social crises.

Simply adopting the SDGs as a sustainability reference unfortunately inherits their limitations.

5.1.1 Experience Cannot Be Bestowed

A second major obstacle to rKM taking over as a guiding orientation comes from the very under-theorised aspect of the organisational/systemic uptake of these different types of nonrational knowledges. The sample material was saturated by three common assumptions that were not identified or described as such by the authors themselves. First, they assumed that KM, specifically rKM, is the vehicle of delivery for the aspirational and responsible tacit values – be they practical wisdom, spirituality, faith-at-work, aesthetics, indigeneity, or sustainability. That is, *"[t]he dissemination of individual wisdom, towards organisational wisdom, depends on Knowledge Sharing."* (S27 Pinheiro and Rocha, 2020, p.639). Second, they implicitly assumed that there exists 'settled content' that can be spread through said knowledge sharing. For example, *"Phronesis is a disposition that reliably does the right actions, makes the right choices, and has the right feelings"* (S32 Long, 2023, p. 837; referring to Hills, 2015). And third, they did not elaborate how this value-laden knowledge transforms from the individual state to the collective state. The hinted narrative resembled contagion-style value diffusion.

Although frequent mentions were made to these tacit nonrational forms of knowledges being inseparable from lived experience, developing through reflection on events, learning from consequences, and cultivating judgment over time, e.g. *"[t]here is no phronesis without experience and learning from experience"* (S25 Rocha, Pinheiro, d'Angelo and Kragulj, 2021, p.633; referring to Bierly, Kessler, and Christensen, 2000), it was still assumed that for transfer purposes these diverse experiences can be treated as functionally equivalent in their moral yield.

A conceptual gap was discovered between this individual-level emphasis and the claims about these ethical components becoming collective. The texts only assumed that if those with well-developed philosophical abilities interact closely enough with others some of it will 'rub off', and once a critical mass of individuals have internalised these values and capabilities, they will somehow coalesce into 'collective phronesis', i.e. *"collective phronesis is the sum of people's loftier independent and dispersed phronesis"* (S32 Long,

2023, p.837; referring to Kodama, 2021); or ‘organisational wisdom’ *“[t]he wisdom of the organisation is a set of individual skills and wisdom, which, when united, generates harmony”* (S27 Pinheiro and Rocha, 2020, p. 642; referring to unnamed interviewee 5). Yet the texts did not grapple with the concrete challenge of variability of individual judgements and completely ignored the resulting assumption that what is being disseminated becomes a homogenous universal stance that can be adopted wholesale. The time required to acquire the depth and variety of character-building experiences was not discussed. Thus, in the most disadvantageous case, collective spirituality, phronesis or wisdom are declared to exist simply because some leaders or visible individuals embody them, while the wider organisation continues to operate in darkness.

By not addressing how to engineer opportunities for all organisational members to undergo the kinds of rich, ethically charged, and situationally complex experiences that foster the development of better judgement, the sample left a structural blind spot.

5.1.2 Change Through Culture and Intrinsic Motivation

Generally, the value-based ideas are envisioned as entering KM largely through a combination of conceptual reframing in the literature and cultural infusion into organisational practice. By embedding ethical, purpose-driven, and systemically aware plural perspectives into the very definition of KM, it becomes more than just a toolkit for efficiency or competitive advantage.

Several sources present this integration as a matter of expanding KM’s scope, so it becomes an interface between operational knowledge processes and the organisation’s value commitments. For example, KM is positioned as a mechanism for aligning sustainability goals with strategy, *“Knowledge Management could serve as an interface between organisational practice (daily business) and sustainable strategic planning”* (S12 Kragulj, Kerschbaum and Kaiser, 2023, p.712); fostering stakeholder co-creation *“KM strategies should aim to facilitate collaboration and co-creation among stakeholders and encourage the sharing of diverse knowledge and expertise”* (S15 Rocha, Paço, Alves and Dias-Cabral, 2024, p. 804); and capturing tacit, purpose-related knowledge *“shifting a current state or situation toward a future state that is more advanced, intricate, authentic, and – from a normative perspective – a state better aligned and ‘in resonance’ with what is considered*

ideal or 'ought to be'" (S28 Peschl, Kaiser and Fordinal, 2023, p. 2). Others frame it as reinterpreting KM's core activities, so they explicitly incorporate moral judgment, inclusivity, and long-term societal benefit. The greater good *"forms the starting point of this approach to KM"* (S03 Durst, 2021, p. 216); *"[k]nowledge management is not just a practice of moving knowledge about, it is an act of equity, it is building an inclusive culture"* (S33 Mearns, 2025, p.36, citing Trees, 2022). In this way, the value-based ideas are not bolted on as external considerations but are woven into the system's operational logic.

For current researchers and practitioners, the literature does not delineate a clearly defined mechanism or structured professional development path for internalising rKM. For them the entry points depend on intrinsic motivation (S33) and are about the willingness to broaden the mindset and reframe priorities. Shifting from tame problem-solving to engaging with wicked problems (G11) or moving from an organisation-centric advantage model to systemic-societal-level value generation (S12) are examples of this type of reorientation. For the vast majority, second-hand exposure to trailblazers' example seems to be inferred.

For the select few that want to lead the way, this translates into calls to embed phronesis and purpose in strategy, to use KM to support responsible decision-making, and cultivate inclusive processes for stakeholder engagement, as in *"more human-centered approaches to strategy and the inclusion of all stakeholders as a target audience for organisational value creation"* (S08 Kerschbaum, 2025, p. 3; referring to Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1995; Nonaka, 1995; Laloux, 2014; Robertson, 2015; Gartenberg, Prat, and Serafeim, 2019; Gast, Probst and Simpson., 2020; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2021).

For future professionals, there is a much more explicit strategy: education. Several sources (S02; S03; S23; S33; G02) argue that integrating phronesis, sustainability, and rKM principles into business school curricula and higher education is essential to producing graduates who already embody these values at the start of their careers. This involves rethinking the meaning of professional success (S23), moving beyond 'techne-oriented' instruction (S23), and creating experiential learning opportunities in communities to practice value-based decision-making and problem-solving of community issues (S23). In this sense, academia is framed as the seedbed for a generational shift, ensuring that upcoming KM professionals enter the field with value-based thinking already internalised, rather than requiring reorientation mid-career.

5.1.3 Granting Access

The third and final danger to rKM's successful development is succumbing to paternalistic inclusivity. In the sample, inclusion is still often framed from a Global North vantage point, inviting other knowledges to participate on terms set by dominant actors, e.g. evaluating submissions against *"Western hegemonic academic legitimacy"* (S09 da Costa Marques, 2022, p. 819); *"also including knowledge that has been developed in different parts of the world"* (S33, Durst and Foli, 2025, p. 4); noting *"it is important to create space for voices from the Global South"* (S33 Kitimbo and Kumah, 2025, p. 137; referring to Raju 2020). Even the word 'inclusivity' "evokes associations of incorporation and friendly acceptance for the purpose of control"[17] (Welsch, 1995, p. 939). In the bleakest eventuality, rKM could end up reinforcing existing epistemic hierarchies, tokenising diverse perspectives while keeping most of the decision-making power intact. This undermines its credibility as a framework for pluralism and risks alienating precisely those stakeholders whose participation is essential for systemic sustainability.

Should all these risks materialise, rKM becomes an empty signifier, an attractive label for conventional KM practices repackaged with ethical language. It would exist primarily in policy documents and marketing materials, signalling virtue while preserving underlying profit-first imperatives. Its diffusion would be superficial, relying on inspirational speeches and symbolic gestures rather than creating real opportunities for members to develop and enact value-based judgment. Inclusivity would be nominal, filtering acceptable diversity through dominant cultural and market logics. Sustainability would be reduced to efficiency, and purpose would be defined in service of competitiveness. The result is a sophisticated form of greenwashing and ethics-washing, where the rhetoric of responsibility conceals business-as-usual operations. In short, what rKM must not become is an alluring extension of the same instrumental KM it seeks to replace. Yet there is hope.

[17] "»Inklusion« ist wohl nicht der beste Ausdruck dafür, denn er weckt Assoziationen der Eingemeindung und der freundlichen Aufnahme zum Zweck der Beherrschung."

5.2 rKM's Transformative Potential: Where Many Streams Meet

Viewed through a more optimistic lens, the sample contains many courageous ideas nudging the field toward more responsible practices. RKM does share with traditional KM a certain degree of fragmentation, with its discourse and practice spread across multiple distinct managerial domains. However, unlike KM, these domains in rKM tend to align toward a shared overarching ambition, the advancement of more responsible, ethically grounded knowledge practices, and thus contribute collectively to improving the field. Accordingly, rKM emerged as a flexible managerial meta-framework, absorbing concepts and practices from adjacent fields such as change management, human resources, organisational learning, organisational development, and strategy. This amalgamation was not framed as a neat theoretical synthesis but appeared more as a pragmatic convergence, where rKM serves as the umbrella under which diverse managerial approaches are subsumed, often justified by their shared concern with intangible resources.

These domains function as discursive entry points through which authors articulate how the different practices and actions comprising rKM might become embedded in practice. For this reason, the analysis does not attempt to quantify their frequency; doing so would risk misrepresenting their role, especially given that no settled theories of rKM's diffusion exist at this stage. The sample texts remain conceptual, only sketching possibilities. The emphasis here is on their integrative function; how the aggregate dimensions of rKM are envisioned to diffuse through multiple adjacent managerial discourses. Their very intermingling is what is significant: it suggests rKM is conceived less as a discrete programme and more as an interdisciplinary practice that draws together diverse managerial logics into something larger than the sum of its parts.

In the process, complex and sometimes incompatible logics were placed side by side: for example, organisational learning was invoked both as a collective adaptation process and as a mechanism for embedding leader-driven values *"tacit knowledge is so important for organisations - because it enables the understanding [of] organisational issues in their full complexity"* (S31 Kerschbaum, 2023, p. 632). *"Following this approach, the company would start from the inside – its founders [sic] personal vision, intuition, inspiration, its genuine purpose – and strive to improve the (outside) world around it"* (S08 Kerschbaum 2025, p.2).

Strategy was described in terms of both rational planning and emergent, tacitly informed purpose *"rationally informed decisions would cover only half the spectrum of strategy creation"*, *"holistic knowledge of organisational purpose seems to be, for the most part, tacit knowledge"* (S08 Kerschbaum, 2025, p. 2, p.7). The references to HR- and OD-related concerns, such as employee flourishing, emotional intelligence, and value alignment, are similarly folded into rKM discourse, with the implicit assumption that these human-centric processes are naturally part of knowledge work rather than requiring their own disciplinary framing. Practical wisdom management will *"help organisations understand a previously underexplored facet of their workforce"* (S26 Serenko, 2024, p. 2109), *"[t]he members are bonded to the organisation by the communion of objectives and their identification with it"* (S27 Pinheiro and Rocha, 2020, p. 644; referring to Crossman, 2016; Kolodinsky Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2008; Konz and Ryan, 1999; Smith, 2008), *"a hermeneutical loop, like a virtuous learning organisation in a practically-wise organisation, creates a climate for flourishing"* (S32 Long, 2023, p. 841).

5.2.1 Value Diffusion Across Managerial Domains

Across multiple excerpts, rKM is framed as a kind of integrative 'systems view' that links these separate managerial domains into a shared framework for theorising how values, purpose, and sustainable change can be embedded and diffused throughout an organisation. The material repeatedly emphasises rKM's role in weaving together different sources and types of knowledge, tacit, aesthetic, spiritual, experiential, and aligning them with organisational purpose and stakeholder needs (S08; S25; S28; S31). When paired with systems-oriented language about interdependence, resonance, and the organisation's embeddedness in social and ecological contexts (S12; S28; S33), rKM begins to resemble a meta-level coordinating perspective.

The overwhelming impression is that rKM brings coherence to diverse managerial practices, framing them as interrelated mechanisms through which ethical commitments and sustainable behaviours are fostered and maintained across the organisational whole. The synthesis of different managerial activities in relation to the diffusion of value-based approaches presents rKM as the meeting ground where these domains interact, overlap, and reinforce one another (Figure 18 below). The texts treat value diffusion not as a single-

channel process but as something that emerges when various managerial functions are mobilised in complementary ways, each bringing a distinctive mechanism for embedding values and purpose across the organisation.

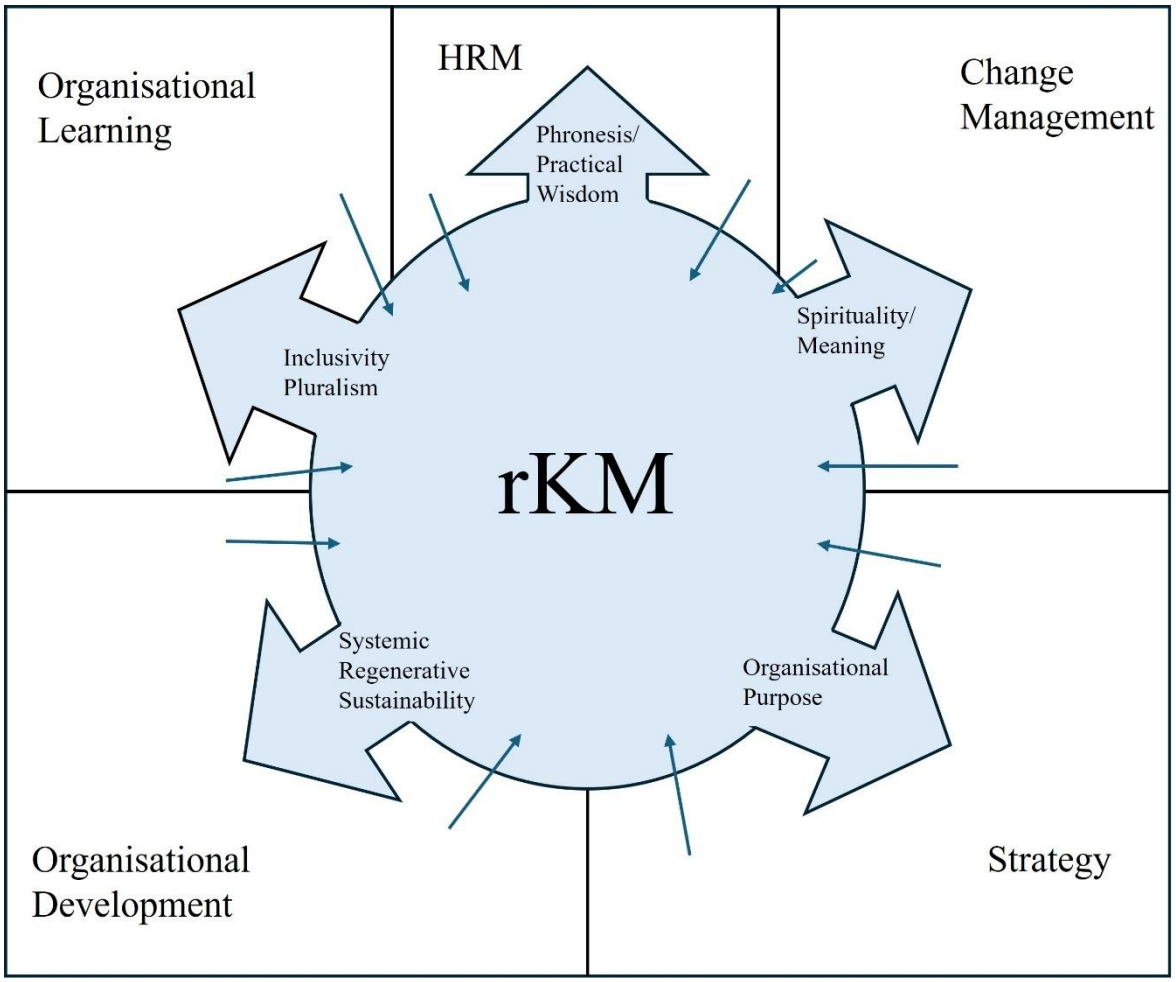

Figure 18. rKM as Integrative Meta-Framework

The Meta-Framework illustrates how the managerial domains (outer layer) provide the discursive entry points through which rKM is envisioned to take root, while normative value frameworks (inner layer) diffuse outward to shape organisational practice. The overlap of these perspectives represents a pragmatic convergence, where rKM acts as the meeting ground. In this sense, the figure also synthesises the current state of theorising about how rKM might take effect: it conveys both the integrative ambition and the unsettled character of a concept still in formation, prior to systematic application or empirical study. The following sections continue this exploration into the points of convergence.

5.2.2 Strategic Framing and Organisational Learning

The domain of organisational strategising is reframed to include tacit and aesthetic forms of knowing, allowing purpose to emerge and be translated into action beyond what rational analysis alone can achieve; *"we should begin our analysis by finding a working definition of purpose and a respective method to either access or construct it. Only then we can think about the generation of an appropriate strategy to realise it"* (S08 Kerschbaum, 2025, p. 5). Strategy is described as bundling individual and stakeholder needs into a coherent organisational direction, with practical wisdom guiding the weighing of alternatives and the selection of value-aligned means, *"Shared stakeholder needs specify the common good of stakeholders"* (G21 Kragulj, 2023, p. 288). This strategic reframing situates rKM as a means of ensuring that the chosen purpose is continually informed by diverse perspectives and adaptive learning processes.

Organisational learning and development contribute the processes through which values are described to be enacted and internalised over time. Learning here is often collective, experiential, and tied to phronesis, enabling employees and leaders alike to make sound judgments that reflect ethical and long-term considerations, *"[u]nderstanding employees' perspectives on organisational phronesis is a step in discovering how to bridge gaps in incorporating it into the company"* (S25 Rocha, Pinheiro, d'Angelo and Kragulj, 2021, p. 631). Social learning frameworks (G23 Corazza, Cici and Dumay, 2021) extend this to heterogeneous groups, showing how cooperation in non-stable environments fosters shared understanding and sustained commitment to value, *"the purpose of social learning is one of learning to cooperate in the presence of different actors"* (p. 306; referring to Coudel, Tonneau, and Rey-Valette 2011). RKM's role is to capture, connect, and mobilise these learning outcomes so they are not isolated but become embedded in system-wide practice.

5.2.3 Human-Centred Capacities: HR, Change, and OD

Human resource management enters the picture as the domain envisioned to be most directly concerned with shaping the capacities and dispositions of individuals. Through mechanisms like emotional intelligence development, reflection on workplace experiences, and the intentional alignment of employee and organisational values (S26; S27), HR-related

practices enable the future best versions of the self and the organisation to manifest (S12). These processes rely on rKM to facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge, experiences, and narratives that embody the desired values.

Change management and organisational development employ a systemic, process-oriented lens, focusing on how to align structural and cultural elements so that values and purpose are not confined to rhetoric. They address the connective tissue of the organisation, the relationships, practices, and discourses that bind members together, *"[i]t is necessary to align the soul of the organisation with its employees, creating connectivity"* (S27 Pinheiro and Rocha, 2020, p.642, citing unnamed interviewee 6) *"Organisational culture integrates mostly emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge"* (S29 Bratianu, 2023, pp. 10-11), and ensure that shifts in values translate into sustainable change rather than one-off initiatives. RKM supports this by integrating intangible cultural assets with operational processes, making the value shift visible and actionable across units.

5.2.4 The Core Normative Frameworks

Through the synthesising of these different managerial activities, rKM is thought to diffuse the overlapping value frameworks, mutually reinforcing their currents. Each value framework offers a slightly different entry point into the conversation about how organisations orient themselves ethically, yet the thrust of the material suggests that they are concurrent and, in many cases, intended to merge into a more holistic orientation for organisational life.

Phronesis (Practical Wisdom) is the most explicitly theorised framework and appears as the ethical compass for decision-making, integrating moral judgment, experiential learning, and long-term orientation (S02; S25; S28; S32; G07; G27). It is proposed as both a personal disposition and an organisational capacity, enabling leaders and employees to choose actions that advance the common good. In the diffusion of values, phronesis is the interpretive and guiding function, it helps actors navigate competing demands, reconcile conflicts, and keep sight of purpose amidst complexity.

Spirituality in its various guises offers a framework rooted in meaning, connectedness, and a sense of higher purpose (S12; S27; S28; S32; G27). Its proposed impact is to infuse work

with intrinsic motivation and alignment between personal and organisational values, fostering authenticity, commitment, and resilience. Spirituality is linked to notions like resonance (S28) and regulative ideals (RI) (G27), which anchor ethical reflection in deep cultural or even sacred references, before extending them to broader societal and environmental concerns. *"This shaping the world and being shaped by the world in a resonating manner not only leads to selecting the 'right' potentials for enacting a joint thriving ecosystem, but also sheds a new light on our understanding of sustainability and sustainable (organisational) behaviour"* (S28 Peschl, Kaiser and Fordinal, 2023, p.12). *"RIs help us navigate complex situations and make decisions based on the underlying values and principles embodied in the ideal. RIs also act as motivators, inspiring individuals to strive for betterment and to address societal challenges. They supply a sense of direction and purpose, even if they may never be fully achieved. Therefore, RIs encourage continuous improvement, guiding our efforts toward a more desirable outcome"* (G27 McGhee, 2025, p. 293)

Organisational purpose emerges as both a tacit and negotiated construct, *"purpose, unless there is an explicit purpose statement, is rather a set of intangible common beliefs held by the organisations [sic] members"* (S08, p.7), *"[s]takeholders steer the organisation as they define its purpose and influence its enactment"* (G21 Kragulj, 2023, p. 289). It is described as a convergence of founders' visions, stakeholder needs, and social challenges, serving as the anchor point for strategy and action. Purpose is the directional element: it sets the trajectory for the diffusion of values, shaping what kinds of behaviours and initiatives are encouraged or legitimised. In practice, purpose is rarely isolated, it is informed by phronesis, sustained by spirituality, and directed toward sustainability.

Sustainability, especially in regenerative or systemic forms, is positioned as the horizon within which all other frameworks should operate (S12; S15; S28; G16). Its proposed impact is both external (addressing ecological and societal well-being) and internal (reorienting organisational advantage toward conjoint, system-level value creation). Sustainability serves as a unifying goal that tests whether other frameworks are genuinely enacted or remain rhetorical.

Inclusivity, diversity, and equity, in other words, pluralism (S03; S05; S09; S10; S33; G14), function as a prescriptive frame through which the application of phronesis, purpose, spirituality, and sustainability can be assessed. They serve as safeguards against narrowing

‘values’ to the perspectives of a dominant culture, institutions, or managerial elites, instead insisting on the recognition of multiple ways of knowing. They encourage the genuine co-production of knowledge among researchers, practitioners, and lay people, ensuring that participation is not merely symbolic, but that all contributors share in the benefits and insights of the co-created understanding, and that these outcomes circulate throughout the entire system. Their impact is to democratise the reciprocal discourse process, ensuring that value alignment does not smooth diversity into a uniform, managed consensus.

While these normative value frameworks are individually named and discussed, they are not to be understood as discrete programmes to be selected and implemented in isolation. Rather, they appear as concurrent streams that, when brought together, form a richer and more resilient value architecture. In this synthesis, phronesis guides judgment, spirituality supplies depth of meaning, purpose provides direction, sustainability defines the ethical horizon, and inclusivity shapes the process through which all of these are lived. The proposed outcome is a merged, multi-dimensional ethos capable of permeating organisational life and anchoring it in a system-wide commitment to the common good.

5.3 What rKM could be

In its best form, rKM would be more than an integrative managerial framework; it would be a living, evolving system attuned to the complexity of the worlds it inhabits and serves. It would not only coordinate existing streams of practice but alter the currents themselves, aligning them with principles that sustain life, plurality, and mutual flourishing across generations.

This kind of reorientation of the mind cannot be shaped on the current status quo. Tweaking existing models will not do. A shift of epistemic proportions requires reconfiguring how we understand the world and belonging.

In the case of sustainability, associations of endurance along with minimising harm affirm the existing business practices as not extractive or exploitative. This line of thinking will never lead to regenerative sustainability and degrowth; it will not be enough to incite restoration over preservation. A new logic – one that recognises the limits of the planet and

the need to heal what has been damaged is paramount. Without abandoning the old mindset of ‘sustaining what is’, we cannot make it to what could be.

Similarly, in the realm of inclusivity, majority ‘accepting’ difference still reinforces gatekeeping and hierarchical norms. This perspective imagines inclusion as benevolently extended towards the other without reconceptualising the existing structures themselves. In contrast, transversality and plurality advocate for a radical rethinking of belonging: one where difference is foundational, where power is redistributed. Ergo: inclusion should not be granted from within.

The old worldviews are not neutral; they actively shape what we think is possible. Transformative change begins with recognising that the old ways of thinking are incompatible with the futures we seek to build. Letting go is not a loss; it is an act of liberation. Only by breaking with the past can we create space for the new visions to take root.

Addressing these limits requires anchoring rKM in theorems that reframe the possible. From the sample, two such theorems surfaced, peripheral at first, but with the potential to transform the whole fabric.

The first is the reframing of civilisation itself – a foundational shift in worldview that makes regenerative sustainability both possible and necessary. This emerged most clearly in S28, where sustainability was linked to more advanced, authentic, and normatively ideal futures, and echoed in other sources that hinted at flourishing and decoloniality or decreed minimum level effort as insufficient. Further explicit research uncovered Escobar’s (2021) work that expands these threads into a complete epistemic pivot: from seeing the human project as one of managing resources, to understanding it as participating in a living web of relationships. This reframe denounces sustaining the present and replaces it with regenerating the conditions for life, grounded in relationality, reciprocity, and long-horizon care. “The notion of civilisational transition(s) designates the complex movement from the dominance of a single, allegedly globalised, model of life to the peaceful, though tense, co-existence of a multiplicity of models, a world where many worlds fit, a pluriverse” (Escobar, 2021, p. 2).

The second transformational theorem discovered is transversality, which appeared in the sample through the Responsible AI article G14 as an applied method for organising diverse training material perspectives. In its philosophical form, through Welsch’s transversal

reason, it offers far more: the structural capacity for diverse ways of knowing to meet, interact, and adapt without collapsing into sameness (Welsch, 2003). Applied to rKM, transversality ensures that plurality remains alive within shared purposes, allowing the system to evolve in response to complexity rather than smoothing diversity into managed consensus. "[T]he clarification of the dissent constitutes the final statement, and in it, the activity of reason is accomplished"[18] (Welsch, 1995, p. 937).

Together, these two theorems supply what rKM needs to carry its emerging coherence across the threshold into transformative change. The reframing of civilisation fixes its purpose; transversality shapes its form. One redefines the horizon, the other builds the pathways toward it.

RKM will not evolve from the same logic that made it necessary. It will not arise from the managerial appetite for best practices, nor from the technical desire to perfect efficiency. Those are the dying habits of a worldview that has already proven itself incapable of solving the problems it created. "An axiom of the notion of civilisational transitions is that the current problems cannot be solved with the categories and historical experiences that created them" (Escobar, 2021, p. 3). If rKM is to matter, it must align itself with the deep work of civilisational transition, a shift from the hegemony of a single, dualistic modernity and universal science toward a pluriverse in which many worlds not only fit, but flourish. This cannot be a decorative addition to existing structures. It requires dismantling the epistemic architecture that insists there is, somewhere, a neutral vantage point from which to measure and rank all knowledge. Such a vantage point is the imperial fiction of our age.

To dismantle it, rKM must operate according to the logic of transversal reason. Welsch's insight is that reason, at its most responsible, needs "to develop a practice of transience"[19] (Welsch, 1995, p. 946) and understand that salvation does not lie in this or that orientation but in the ability to orient oneself (Welsch, 1995). Reason is movement – constant, deliberate, unfinished – between heterogeneous positions (Welsch, 1995). It accepts that clarity often means clarifying why no single agreement is possible, and that the articulation of shared dissensus can be as constructive as consensus. "Different rationalities overlap and intersect, complement or contest one another, and become entangled without ever

[18] "dann stellt die Klärung des Dissenses die letzte Auskunft dar und ist darin die Tätigkeit der Vernunft vollbracht."
[19] "eine Praxis der Übergängigkeit zu entwickeln"

reassembling into an overarching order"[20] (Welsch, 1995, pp. 942-3). In rKM, this means moving from collect–codify–disseminate to surface–hold in dialogue–keep alive. The task is not to domesticate plurality into uniform standards, but to keep plurality visible, valued, and in motion, allowing knowledges to transform one another. "Diversity and transience are the final findings"[21] (Welsch, 1995, p. 943).

Escobar's civilisational perspective names the stakes of this method. We are not simply improving a system; we are replacing it. The goal is not to patch Western capitalist modernity, so it limps along a few decades more, but to usher in a transition to ways of living grounded in relationality, reciprocity, and locality. RKM, in this vision, is an ecosystem practice: organisations must see themselves not as control centres manipulating external resources or reacting to hostile conditions, but as participants in living webs. This shift descales our ambitions from the abstracted global economy back to the tangible local, where actions have visible, lived consequences; where knowledge is rooted in place; where agroecology, food sovereignty, communal labour, and digital commons become legitimate arenas of rKM, not extracurricular curiosities. "Thus, the key to constructing liveable worlds must lie in the cultivation of ways of knowing and acting based on a profound awareness of the fundamental interdependence of everything that exists. This shift in vision is necessary for healing our bodies, ecosystems, cities, and the planet at large" (Escobar, 2021, 6).

These two theorems, transversality as method, civilisational transition as horizon, are hinged. Without transversal reason, the pluriverse Escobar envisions will dwindle due to globalisation's "uncompromising war against everything that is communal and collective" (Escobar, 2021, 8). Without the vision of civilisational transition, transversality risks becoming an elegant form of perpetual process with no emancipatory aim. Together, they give rKM both the navigational instrument and the destination: the skill to move between worlds without reducing them, and the commitment to sustain many worlds in co-existence.

There are not mere 'nice to have' theorems. They are exigent principles, essential for the field's future. Knowledge is relational, situated, and plural by nature; living systems thrive on diversity and exchange; organisations, like ecosystems, are healthiest when no single species dominates. RKM will thrive or wilt by its willingness to become this kind of

[20] "Unterschiedliche Rationalitäten überlagern und kreuzen sich, ergänzen oder bestreiten einander, gehen durcheinander, ohne sich noch einmal zu einer Gesamtordnung zu fügen."
[21] "Vielfältigkeit und Übergängigkeit sind der letzte Befund"

transversal praxis for a pluriverse. It must be oriented toward the flourishing of the commons of life.

5.4 Omissions in the rKM Discourse

The literature also remained silent on some pressing issues, reflecting the nascent stage of the rKM concept and the current absence of empirical data. As a result, several dimensions would benefit from further investigation as the field continues to evolve.

While calls for collaborative advantage were frequent, they did not come with a clear roadmap for shifting from the protection of one's own position toward creating shared benefits across value chains. Authors invoked the promise of synergy and transparency, but these gestures were tempered by reminders of the risks of disclosure, leaving unanswered how rKM could help organisations embrace true openness. Similarly, although asymmetries of power and voice were widely acknowledged, very little was said about how to dismantle the entrenched structures, or what kinds of norms could ensure genuine parity among contributors. Equal standing in knowledge work is asserted as an ideal, yet without concrete methods, it remains aspirational.

Beyond operational challenges, conceptual clarity also remains elusive. Sustainability is invoked repeatedly as a horizon for rKM, but as things stand, the field leans heavily only on the SDGs. Given the SDGs grounding in growth logics, there is plenty of room to develop working definitions, adoption criteria, or success stories of more ambitious scope. Similarly, the notion of the common good is treated as a lodestar but not really tethered to operational meaning. What is 'common' and what is 'good' are left undefined, making the term vulnerable to rhetorical appropriation. These omissions suggest that further conceptual work is needed.

Global scope presents another unresolved tension. Despite being positioned as a response to wicked, planetary problems, rKM discourse has yet to address how such ambitions might navigate national interests and sovereignties. The possibility of transcending national boundaries while still maintaining sensitivity to local contexts is crying out for substantive solutions. This silence need not imply impossibility, but it highlights a domain where additional theorising will be required.

Finally, the literature leaves underdeveloped the mechanisms through which responsible practices can be embedded. The path from intrinsic motivation and capability to communal responsibility and practice is hitherto unmapped. Systematically mobilising mechanisms such as mentoring, peer learning, and reflective practice might offer interesting research avenues to the spread of values among current practitioners. The prevailing image of organic diffusion, where value frameworks are expected to catch on through inspiration or the arrival of new generations is simply not enough. This narrative leaves unanswered the more difficult question of how to embed change in existing organisational cultures.

Together, these omissions point toward areas where rKM discourse is still in formation. For rKM's future promise to materialise, these unresolved issues must be addressed explicitly through sustained research and dialogue.

In the end, the choice for rKM is stark. It can take root as a living, responsible practice or become the ethical veneer on business-as-usual. This chapter has shown both the perils and the possibilities: the ease with which responsibility can be appropriated, the depth of vision offered by civilisational transition and transversality, and the questions the current discourse cannot yet answer. RKM is poised to topple the extractive order with a living, plural, regenerative practice capable of holding complexity without domination. The question is – will it? The path forward will not be easy. It requires abandoning the so-called neutral vantage point of the West, treating plurality as a condition of life, and confronting the unresolved issues that stand between aspiration and enactment. The conclusions that follow distil these insights into a closing reflection on what rKM's societal impact could be and outline the research agenda needed to help it take root.

6 Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the question: What are the core principles of responsible Knowledge Management as discussed in the academic literature, and what actions, practices, and concerns are associated with 'responsibility' in the context of KM?

The findings reveal that rKM is emerging in the literature as a new paradigm of knowledge management that integrates ethical value frameworks, inclusivity, and a sustainable

ecosystem view, reorienting value creation in organisations toward contributing to the common good.

6.1 Main Findings

Through an ILR and GT analysis, this thesis mapped a concept still in its early stages – visible in fragments across individual publications, but never before brought together into a consolidated account. The aim was to synthesise how the scholarly discourse currently defines, envisions, and seeks to embed responsibility within KM. Each individual observation reinforced the image of a discipline in transition.

The findings reveal rKM as a paradigm shift rather than a marginal refinement of existing KM. It reframes knowledge as a living, relational, and context-bound phenomenon whose value lies in its capacity to serve the common good. It is grounded in systems thinking, ethics beyond compliance, inclusivity of diverse ways of knowing, and the pursuit of regenerative rather than merely sustainable outcomes.

At the same time, the thesis uncovered tensions that run through the literature. Many contributions name similar ideals, but leave them suspended in the abstract, with hardly any implementation mechanisms for uptake. In several cases, managerial or neoliberal logics seep back into the framing, diluting the radical intent. While individual texts align in recognising the need for moral guidance, pluralism, and long-term purpose, they seldom engage with the structural and political challenges such commitments entail, or with the question of how individual responsibility must be backed by systemic support to have real effect. This synthesis differs from previous work not by introducing new principles but by uniting these scattered recognitions into a shared conceptual foundation, and by making visible the contradictions and omissions that must be resolved for rKM to take root.

From the GT synthesis, the academic literature's discussion of responsibility in KM can be grouped into three interdependent domains: normative frameworks guiding rKM, inclusivity, and sustainable ecosystem view. These domains do not stand in isolation but intersect. At the convergence of all three domains sits rKM itself.

Figure 19 presents these relationships as a Venn diagram, distilling the conceptual structure of rKM as synthesised from the literature. The diagram visualises the distinct elements of

each domain, the principles found at their overlaps, and rKM at the centre as the integrated outcome of their convergence.

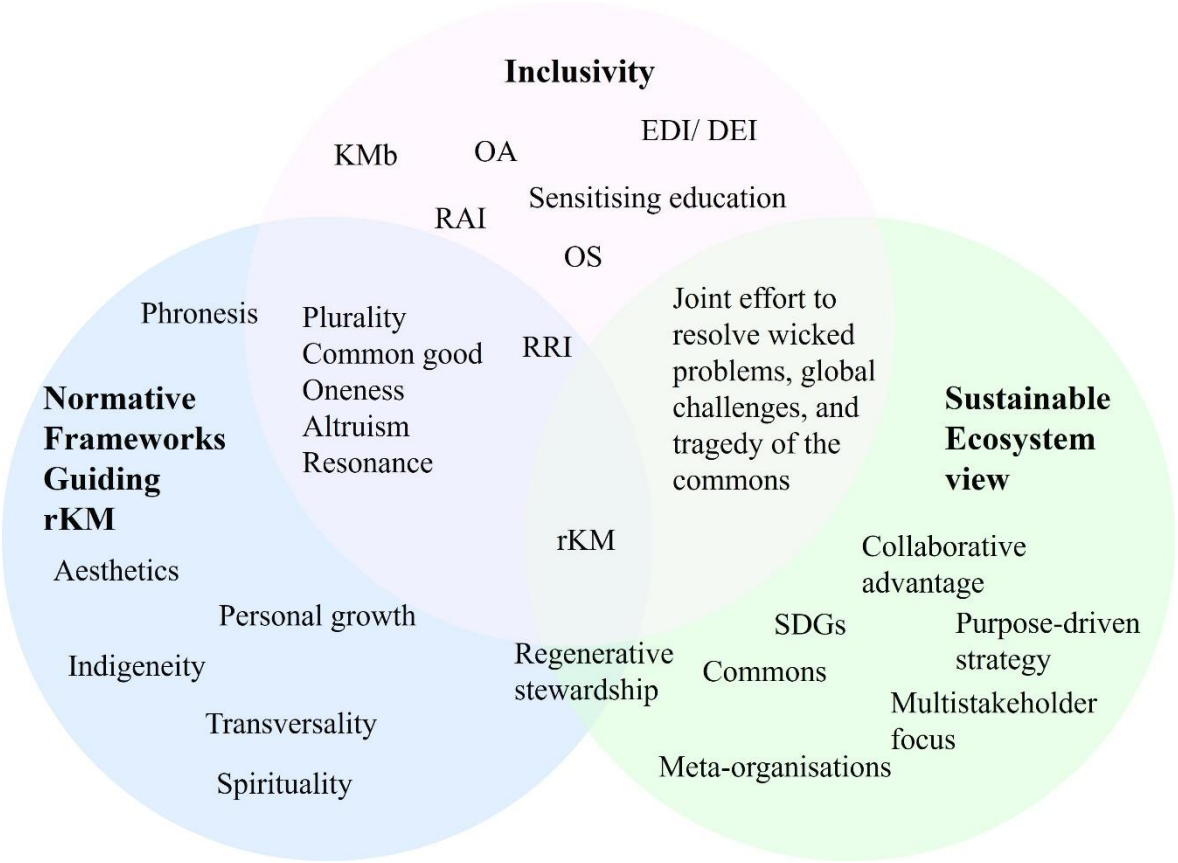

Figure 19. Venn Diagram of the Conceptual Domains Emerging from GT.

The diagram illustrates the three conceptual domains emerging from the GT synthesis:

1. Normative Frameworks Guiding rKM (left circle): Ethical and philosophical foundations such as phronesis, aesthetics, indigeneity, spirituality, transversality, and personal growth. These elements orient rKM toward meaning, value, and purpose beyond efficiency, providing the moral scaffolding for responsible knowledge practices.
2. Inclusivity (top circle): Practices and concerns that open KM to a diversity of knowledges, perspectives, and participants. This includes equity and diversity initiatives (EDI/DEI), sensitising education, open science (OS), responsible research and innovation (RRI), and knowledge mobilisation (KMb). Inclusivity here is both representational and epistemic, ensuring equal standing for varied contributors.

3. Sustainable Ecosystem View (right circle): A systemic orientation that situates KM within broader socio-ecological interdependencies. This includes collaborative advantage, purpose-driven strategy, multi-stakeholder focus, meta-organisations, and regenerative stewardship. While sustainability frameworks such as the SDGs appear, the emphasis in rKM leans toward regenerative models that maintain the capacity for future flourishing.

   At the overlaps:

   Between Normative Frameworks and Inclusivity: plurality, common good, oneness, altruism, and resonance, the shared moral language guiding inclusive knowledge work.

   Between Inclusivity and Sustainable Ecosystem View: joint efforts to resolve wicked problems, address global challenges, and avoid the tragedy of the commons.

   Between Sustainable Ecosystem View and Normative Frameworks: regenerative stewardship, care for systems and communities as an ongoing responsibility.

   At the centre: rKM itself. an integrated practice that draws strength from all three domains and their intersections, making it more than the sum of its parts.

Together, these domains and their intersections show that rKM is both a conceptual integration and a practical orientation, one that cannot be understood in isolation from the societal conditions in which it must operate. The next section situates rKM within this broader context, considering how its principles align with and respond to the realities of a BANI world, systems in perpetual disequilibrium, and the pluriversal interplay of knowledges.

6.2 Placing rKM in the Wider Frame

The societal context into which rKM must emerge is defined by BANI conditions: brittleness, anxiety, nonlinearity, incomprehensibility. These are not temporary disruptions but structural realities of our time. In such conditions, attempts to stabilise and control knowledge through fixed frameworks are doomed to obsolescence. RKM’s strength lies in its ability to navigate, rather than resist, the volatility of open systems.

From a systems theory perspective, lasting equilibrium is a myth: systems are always in motion, adapting, breaking, reforming. RKM accepts disequilibrium as a permanent condition, designing knowledge practices that can respond, rebound, and reconfigure without clinging to false stability.

The pluriverse perspective strengthens this capacity. Rather than seeking to reduce diversity of knowledges to a single hierarchy, rKM treats plurality as a condition of life – a wellspring of meaning, creativity, and resilience. Yet this pluralism is not fragmentation; it is held together by transversality: a continual movement across boundaries, creating connections without erasing difference. Transversality in rKM is not a method with an endpoint but a never-ending loop of learning, interpretation, and resolution, each iteration deepening the shared capacity to live and work well in complexity.

6.3 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretically, this thesis offers the first consolidated mapping of rKM as an emerging concept, integrating ethical, systemic, and plural perspectives into the KM field. It advances the critique of the asset-based and instrumental approaches that have dominated KM since its inception, and it repositions ethics as a core organising principle rather than an afterthought.

Practically, the synthesis provides orientation for organisations and practitioners seeking to move beyond extractive knowledge practices. It offers a conceptual compass for designing KM systems and cultures that privilege collaboration over competition, openness over control, and regeneration over endurance. While the findings stop short of prescribing ready-made models, they identify the qualities and commitments that such models must embody to be worthy of the term ‘responsible’.

6.4 Limitations

Like all research, this thesis is bounded by its design choices. The period of study, the focus on English-language peer-reviewed sources, and the use of selected databases necessarily limited the scope of material examined. Access constraints meant that some potentially

relevant works could not be included. The analysis was conducted by a single researcher, whose perspective inevitably shaped the interpretation. These limitations, while narrowing the field, also reflect the exploratory and agenda-setting nature of the work. The aim was not exhaustive coverage but the construction of a robust conceptual map that others can expand, test, and contest.

6.5 Directions for Future Research and Practice

For rKM to move from philosophical aspiration to lived practice, it must address the unresolved practical and structural challenges identified in this thesis. The following areas demand urgent inquiry and experimentation:

1. Investigation of the mechanisms for moving from competitive to collaborative advantage. What are the organisational and inter-organisational mechanisms that enable transparency about risks and critical knowledge? Comparative policy analysis and case studies could identify governance models, incentive structures, and trust-building practices that support a shift from competition to collaboration.

2. Exploration of the models for equitable power-sharing among stakeholders. Which frameworks redistribute authority in the creation and use of knowledge? Participatory action research could co-design and test power-sharing arrangements across diverse organisational, sectoral, and cultural contexts.

3. Examination of the operational strategies for achieving equal standing. How do different organisational forms achieve parity among diverse knowledge contributors? Multi-case comparative research could document and assess practices that secure equal standing in decision-making and knowledge validation.

4. Development of a KM-specific definition and practice of sustainability. What kind of sustainability models are fit for KM? How can they go beyond the growth-oriented SDGs? Conceptual work could clarify what sustainability means in KM, while longitudinal studies could evaluate cases where regenerative outcomes have been achieved and maintained.

5. Study of mechanisms for transcending national boundaries and interests. How could KM foster cross-border cooperation without being subsumed by geopolitical competition? Network analysis and cross-case research could identify governance and communication structures that enable cooperation in politically sensitive contexts.

6. Clarification and operationalisation of the common good in KM. What constitutes a shared understanding of what counts as 'good' for KM? How could this good be cultivated, recognised and evidenced in societal and ecological outcomes? Ethnographic and participatory studies could draw on the pluriverse of perspectives, embedding this as part of an iterative learning loop where communities themselves communicate, in situated, lived terms, when change is moving in the right direction and when it is not, without reducing the signal to abstract proxies or metrics.

7. Examination of the possible reframing of the entrepreneurial self. How could the drive for personal excellence and wisdom be redirected toward altruistic and communal outcomes? How can professional success be redefined to support this? Narrative and ethnographic studies could explore how professionals construct 'responsibility' in their self-concept, and what organisational or cultural conditions prevent the privatisation of virtue.

8. Evaluation of the processes that embed value frameworks through organisational learning. Which organisational learning mechanisms (e.g., mentoring, communities of practice, reflective inquiry) are most effective in embedding and sustaining ethical commitments over time? Longitudinal case studies could capture how values persist, evolve, or erode within organisational knowledge systems.

9. Identification of mechanisms that engage existing practitioners in value adoption. Which strategies are most effective for transforming the knowledge practices of long-standing members of organisations? Action research or participatory design projects could test interventions that foster buy-in and shift entrenched behaviours without coercion.

10. Integration of rKM into professional education. How could rKM principles be included into higher education and professional training curricula? Curriculum development research and educational trials could assess how exposure to rKM concepts influences the attitudes, competencies, and decision-making of future KM practitioners.

6.6 Closing Reflection

Rather than offering yet another single, universal logic, rKM seeks to orchestrate complexity without a leading instrument. It aspires to connect the diversity of worlds and ways of knowing, holding them in a shared commitment to the flourishing of life. In this sense, rKM is a space of ongoing negotiation, where responsibility is enacted through interconnectedness, reciprocity, and care across boundaries.

The history of KM shows that it did not begin as solely a tool for organisational value or competitive advantage. Early strands were far more communal in orientation, concerned with sharing, learning, and building capacity across boundaries. Over time, however, these impulses were eclipsed by narrower managerial imperatives, and the field lost sight of its own plural, societal roots. RKM, as articulated here, offers a way back, not by idealising the past, but by reactivating its more generative impulses and aligning them with the demands of the present.

In a BANI world, with systems in perpetual disequilibrium, rKM's openness, plurality, and transversal movement are strengths. Its measure of progress lies in resolutions, the constant re-evaluation of prevailing conditions. The ecosystem's members communicate, through their lived signs, the iterative and reflexive experience of what it means to be part of a whole. Whether rKM will take root depends on choices made now. The path forward will not be linear, but it will be rich in possibilities. The question is no longer whether we can afford to make knowledge management responsible – it is whether we can afford not to.

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Appendix 1. Formative Knowledge Management Works and Key Insight

This appendix (based on Lambe, 2011; Koenig and Neveroski, 2008) lists formative works in the development of KM. While the managerial version is typically dated to the 1990s, many of its conceptual foundations were laid much earlier, stretching back to the 1960s in economics, public policy, sociology and information science. Equally notable is that the list concludes before 2000, reflecting how KM's core ideas have remained largely stagnant since the end of the 20th century. The subsequent decades have focused mainly on the popularisation, refinement, and contestation of those core ideas.

1962 – Frits Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*

Introduced the concept of the "knowledge economy" and the role of knowledge as an economic resource.

1962 – Kenneth Arrow, *The Economic Implications of Learning by Doing*

Highlighted the role of learning in economic productivity and introduced the idea of "learning by doing."

1962 – Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*

Developed a framework for understanding how innovations and knowledge spread through societies.

1967 – L.K. Caldwell, *Managing the Scientific Super-culture*

Introduced "knowledge management" in a public policy context, emphasising its role in governance and decision-making.

1969 – Kenneth Arrow, *Classificatory Notes on the Production and Transmission of Technological Knowledge*

Explored why knowledge does not always spread despite its benefits, emphasising barriers to diffusion.

1969 – Dale Sand, *The Management of Knowledge Organisations*

Outlined knowledge management as a general managerial competency, emphasising knowledge collection, creation, and application.

1974 – Kenneth Arrow, *The Limits of Organisation*

Distinguished between knowledge use in organisations vs. society, identifying costs of coordination and information transmission.

1974 – Nicholas Henry, *Knowledge Management: A New Concern for Public Administration*

Defined knowledge management as a "meta-policy" for managing public information.

1976 – Berry & Cook, *Managing Knowledge as a Corporate Resource*

Presented an early data-centric model of KM, emphasising enterprise knowledge systems.

1981 – Dale Sand, *Information, Organisation, and Power*

Extended knowledge management concepts, linking information management to decision-making.

1982 – Harlan Cleveland, *Information as a Resource*

Introduced the Data–Information–Knowledge–Wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy.

1987 – Milan Seleny, *Management Support Systems: Towards Integrated Knowledge Management*

Defined knowledge as an "autopoietic" system, emphasising its self-sustaining nature.

1988 – Russell Ackoff, *From Data to Wisdom*

Further developed the DIKW model, influencing later knowledge management thinking.

1990 – Consulting Firms (McKinsey, etc.)

Rebranded knowledge management as a corporate tool, focusing on competitive advantage rather than its earlier public policy and economic roots.

1993–1995 – Karl Wiig, *Knowledge Management Foundations* (Trilogy)

Laid foundational theory for KM; emphasised systematic knowledge processing and the deliberate structuring of knowledge for competitive advantage.

1995 – Ikujiro Nonaka & Hirotaka Takeuchi, *The Knowledge-Creating Company*

Introduced the SECI model and concept of *ba*; framed knowledge creation as a dynamic, social process rooted in the interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge.

1995 – Dorothy Leonard(-Barton), *Wellsprings of Knowledge*

Emphasised core capabilities and knowledge creation within firms; highlighted how embedded knowledge drives innovation.

1997 – Verna Allee, *The Knowledge Evolution*

Explored KM from a systems thinking and value network perspective; argued that knowledge flows are central to organisational adaptation and value creation.

1997 – Karl-Erik Sveiby, *The New Organisational Wealth*

One of the first to focus on knowledge as a measurable asset; introduced models for managing intangible assets.

1997 – Thomas A. Stewart, *Intellectual Capital*

Popularised the concept of intellectual capital in business; positioned knowledge as an economic asset and source of organisational wealth.

1998 – Thomas H. Davenport & Laurence Prusak, *Working Knowledge*

Provided a comprehensive and accessible framework for KM; emphasised the social and contextual nature of knowledge, and the importance of trust, culture, and judgment.

1998 – Etienne Wenger (et al.), *Communities of Practice*

Framed knowledge as situated and socially constructed; introduced the idea that communities are key units of knowledge sharing and organisational learning.

Appendix 2. List of Included Sample Articles and their Short Codes

S02 Rocha, R.G., Kragulj, F. & Pinheiro, P. (2022). Practical wisdom, the (not so) secret ingredient for responsible knowledge management. VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems. Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 426-447.

S03 Durst, S. (2021). A plea for responsible and inclusive knowledge management at the world level. VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems. Vol, 54, No. 1, pp. 211-219.

S05 Psarikidou, K. (2023). Configuring more responsible knowledge-based bio-economies: the case of alternative agro-food networks. Journal of Responsible Innovation. Vol. 10, No. 1, 2196818.

S08 Kerschbaum, C. (2025). A beautiful strategy – bridging the gap between the (aesthetic) perception and (strategic) realization of the organisation's purpose. VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems. Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 1-14.

S09 da Costa Marques, I. (2022). Anthropophagy, European enlightenment, science and technology studies, and responsible knowledge construction in Brazil. Social Studies of Science. Vol. 52, No. 6, pp. 812-828.

S10 Cornelius-Hernandez, T. & Clarke, A. (2024). The current state of integrating equity, diversity and inclusion into knowledge mobilization: a systematic literature review. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal.

S12 Kragulj, F., Kerschbaum, C. & Kaiser, A. (2023). Relatedness and futureness: Key pillars for developing knowledge-based management for sustainability. In: Proceedings of the 24th European Conference on Knowledge Management (ECKM 2023).

S15 Rocha, R.G., Paço, A., Alves, H. & Dias-Cabral, C. (2024). Unleashing the power of responsible knowledge management: A catalyst for sustainable business transformation. Knowledge Management and E-Learning. Vol.16, No. 4, pp. 791-810.

S20 Ricciardi, F., Bertello, A., Forliano, C. & De Bernardi, P. (2020). Knowledge behaviours when the commons are at stake: Insights from the Covid-19 crisis. In: 2020 IEEE International Conference on Technology Management, Operations and Decisions (ICTMOD 2020).

S23 Rocha, R.G. & Pinheiro, P. (2021). Business education: Filling the gaps in the leader's awareness concerning organizational phronesis. Sustainability (Switzerland). Vol. 13, No. 4, p.2274.

S25 Rocha, R.G., Pinheiro, P., D'Angelo, M. & Kragulj, F. (2021). Organizational phronesis scale development. In: Proceedings of the 22nd European Conference on Knowledge Management (ECKM 2021).

S26 Serenko, A. (2024). Practical wisdom in the workplace: conceptualization, instrument development, and predictive power. Journal of Knowledge Management. Vol. 28, No. 7, pp. 2092-2119.

S27 Pinheiro, P. & Rocha, R.G. (2020). Knowledge sharing: A link between organizational wisdom and organizational spirituality. In: Proceedings of the 21st European Conference on Knowledge Management (ECKM 2020).

S28 Peschl, M.F., Kaiser, A. & Fordinal, B. (2023). Enabling the phronetically enacted self: A path toward spiritual knowledge management. Sustainability (Switzerland). Vol. 15, No.18, p.13957.

S29 Bratianu, C. (2023). Approaching the complexity of knowledge management. In The future of knowledge management: Reflections from the 10th anniversary of the International Association of Knowledge Management (IAKM) (pp. 3-22). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

S30 Rocha, R.G. & Pinheiro, P. (2020). Organizational wisdom and organizational spirituality in knowledge management: What is known? In: Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Intellectual Capital, Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning (ICICKM 2020).

S31 Kerschbaum, C. (2023). Aesthetics as knowledge: An aspect in the future of KM? In: Proceedings of the 24th European Conference on Knowledge Management (ECKM 2023).

S32 Long, E., 2023. Spiritual knowledge management: Practical wisdom and faith-at-work brought to life. In: Proceedings of the 24th European Conference on Knowledge Management (ECKM 2023).

S33 Dalkir, K. (2024). Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management: Ensuring Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equity in Knowledge Processing Activities.

Durst, S. and Foli, S. (2025). Responsible and Inclusive Knowledge Management Made Concrete. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 1-12). Auerbach Publications.

Mearns, M. (2025). Facilitation of Knowledge Sharing and Capturing Practices in Organisational Strategy Development. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 13-39). Auerbach Publications.

de Sá Freire, P. and Yao, Y. (2025). Integrated Map of Critical Knowledge: A Tool for Knowledge Governance in Interorganizational Networks. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 40-62). Auerbach Publications.

Swain, D.E. (2025). Healthcare Collaboration Frameworks Supporting Inclusion: Including Practitioners, Researchers and Patients in Health Knowledge Management. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 63-83). Auerbach Publications.

Albright, K.S., Brandner, A. and Nabatanzi-Muyimba, A.K. (2025). Inclusiveness in Knowledge Management Education: Empowering Future Professionals for a Diverse World. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 84-111). Auerbach Publications.

Ford, A.Y. and Alemneh, D.G. (2025). Addressing Epistemic Injustice in Scholarly Communication at Individual and Collective Levels. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 112-128). Auerbach Publications.

Kitimbo, I. and Kumah, C. (2025). Perspectives on Diversity in Knowledge Management Research. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 129-147). Auerbach Publications.

Lin, Y. and Dalkir, K. (2025). The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Inclusive Knowledge Management. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 148-171). Auerbach Publications.

McIntyre, S. (2025). A Toolkit for Inclusive Knowledge Management. In Handbook of Inclusive Knowledge Management (pp. 172-198). Auerbach Publications.

G01 Wang, B., Tan, B., Boell, S. & Yu, J. (2025). Responsible management for AI-augmented knowledge: A knowledge ecosystem approach. In: Proceedings of the 58th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences.

G02 Kaiser, A., Kerschbaum, C., Kragulj, F., Peschl, M.F. & Zivkovic, C. (2024). Beyond the ivory tower: Teaching non-rational knowledge to business students and practitioners. In: Proceedings of the 25th European Conference on Knowledge Management (ECKM 2024), 1, pp. 333-341.

G03 Kaiser, A. & Martinez, H.A., (2023). Future paths of knowledge management: How do spirituality, calling, and knowledge management fit together? In: The Future of Knowledge Management: Reflections from the 10th Anniversary of the International Association of Knowledge Management (IAKM). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, pp. 113-129.

G04 Bratianu, C. & Bejinaru, R. (2023). From knowledge to wisdom: Looking beyond the knowledge hierarchy. Knowledge, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 196-214.

G06 Kerschbaum, C. (2025). 'New' types of knowledge in KM – Towards a definition of aesthetic knowledge and knowing. In: Proceedings of the 58th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences.

G07 Rocha, R.G. & Kragulj, F. (2024). Practical wisdom: The ultimate purpose for cultivating spirituality in business. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 256-264.

G09 Dalkir, K. (2023). Key milestones in the evolution of knowledge management: What is next? In: The Future of Knowledge Management: Reflections from the 10th Anniversary of the International Association of Knowledge Management (IAKM). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, pp. 47-65.

G10 Heisig, P. (2023). Knowledge management essentials: Reflections on the core of the discipline and future outlook. In: The Future of Knowledge Management: Reflections from

the 10th Anniversary of the International Association of Knowledge Management (IAKM). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, pp. 91-109.

G11 Dumay, J. (2022). Using critical KM to address wicked problems. Knowledge Management Research & Practice, Vol. 20, No. 5, pp. 767-775.

G14 Elia, M., Ziethmann, P., Krumme, J., Schlögl-Flierl, K. & Bauer, B. (2025). Responsible AI, ethics, and the AI lifecycle: How to consider the human influence? AI and Ethics, pp. 1-18.

G16 Ricciardi, F., Cantino, V. & Rossignoli, C. (2021). Organisational learning for the common good: An emerging model. Knowledge Management Research & Practice, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 277-290.

G21 Kragulj, F. (2023). Conceptual principles of the need knowledge-driven organization. In: Knowledge Management and Sustainable Value Creation: Needs as a Strategic Focus for Organizations. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 285-303.

G23 Corazza, L., Cisi, M. & Dumay, J. (2021). Formal networks: The influence of social learning in meta-organisations from commons protection to commons governance. Knowledge Management Research & Practice, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 303-318.

G27 McGhee, P. (2025). Cultivating ethicality in organisations through spirituality, practical wisdom, and indigeneity. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 291-313.