Spiritual Knowledge Management: Proposing a new approach and defining a Research Agenda

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Abstract

The field of knowledge management (KM) has undergone a fundamental transformation, and it seems a perfect time to reflect on new ideas to re-specify the future role of KM research and practice in a changing and increasingly dynamic world. One such new idea is presented in this paper by proposing the concept of Spiritual Knowledge Management. There is strong empirical evidence that the topics of purpose, spirituality, and self are more important than ever - for both individuals and organizations. At the same time a vast number of authors from very different fields all come to the same conclusion, that a fulfilling and successful life and work seeks to move from a current version of a self to a best version of oneself. Based on this the purpose of this paper is to define and conceptualize the concept of Spiritual Knowledge Management. We argue that the core process of Spiritual Knowledge Management is to enable, manage and organize the deep learning process in order to develop the best version of oneself (individual) or itself (organization). This paper is conceptual and its results should contribute to theory building in the field.

Keywords: Spirituality, Self, Knowledge, Deep Learning

1. Introduction

In recent years, the arena of spirituality has gained renewed interest in wide-ranging disciplines including not only disciplines as health, education, psychology, psychotherapy or personality (Kor, Pirutinsky, Mikulincer, Shoshani, & Miller, 2019) but also management and organizational behaviour (Crossman, 2016). In the literature is argued that spirituality can be seen with an individual (micro) or organizational (macro) focus, or an individual (private) or organizational domain (public) of perceptions and actions and that here are three main perspectives for considering spirituality: personal, in the workplace, and organizational (e.g. (R. G. Rocha & Pinheiro, 2021)). In terms of knowledge management (KM) the connection between spirituality and KM is currently addressed from two different perspectives. Bratianu and colleagues have introduced the concept of spiritual knowledge as an additional type of knowledge (Bratianu, 2017), (Bratianu, Vătămănescu, Anagnoste, & Dominici, 2020) and argue that "Spiritual knowledge is about the deep human concerns of our existence, and of our connection with the whole universe" (Bratianu, 2015). This field focuses strongly on the nature of spiritual knowledge as a very special form of knowledge. Rocha and colleagues investigate the relationship between organizational spirituality and KM (R. Rocha & Pinheiro, 2019), (R. G. Rocha & Pinheiro, 2021) and address the question whether organizational spirituality can contribute to KM (R. Rocha & Pinheiro, 2021b). So the main focus of these papers is the impact of organizational spirituality on knowledge management. Although both existing links in the literature between spirituality and KM are interesting, they tackle only rather small parts of KM. However, regarding the overarching subject of this minitrack, "The Future of Knowledge Management," we are interested in KM as a whole and that with respect to Spiritual Knowledge Management (SpKM). Therefore our concept of spiritual knowledge management focuses more on the process perspective and a specific and probably new focus of KM in general. Surprisingly, both a scientific literature review and a Google search for "spiritual knowledge management" return almost no results. So the research question of this paper reads as follows: *How can Spiritual Knowledge Management be defined and conceptualized? What are the main characteristics of Spiritual Knowledge Management and why should*

URI: https://hdl.handle.net/10125/103234
978-0-9981331-6-4

Spiritual Knowledge Management play a role in the future of knowledge management? To answer this research question in this paper we seek to present a first conceptual work on how the approach of spiritual knowledge management could shape the knowledge management of the future. The purpose of this paper is not to present a complete and consistently developed finished solution or model, but rather to start the discourse on the topic of Spiritual KM and the future of KM and to provide it with a concept.

2. What is spirituality?

In order to present and explain the idea of Spiritual Knowledge Management effectively, it is first necessary to clarify what spirituality actually means. In this section we will give an overview of the different definitions of spirituality and then focus a little more on a key element of spirituality, the self.

2.1. Spirituality in the literature

There is no single, widely agreed definition of spirituality. In a literature review based on around 100 articles and books Tanyi concludes that spirituality is an inherent component of being human, and is subjective, intangible, and multidimensional and that it involves humans' search for meaning in life (Tanyi, 2002, p.500). Here are three definitions of spirituality as examples:
"Spirituality is the way in which a person understands and lives life in view of her or his ultimate meaning, beliefs, and values. It is the unifying and integrative aspect of the person's life and, when lived intentionally, is experienced as a process of growth and maturity. It integrates, unifies, and vivifies the whole of a person's narrative or story, embeds his or her core identity, establishes the fundamental basis for the individual's relationship with others and with society, includes a sense of the transcendent, and is the interpretive lens through which the person sees the world. It is the basis for community for it is in spirituality that we experience our co-partnership in the shared human condition. It may or may not be expressed, or experienced in religious categories" (Fowler & Peterson, 1997, p.47).
"Spirituality is a belief or value system which permeates all of a person's life, giving life meaning in the context of six basic human relationships: 1) to God, or whomever or whatever is considered ultimate reality, 2) to self, 3) to others, 4) to the environment, 5) to the past, and 6) to the future" (Hoshiko, 1994) cited in (Doreen, 2016, p.6).
"Spirituality is a personal search for meaning and purpose in life, which may or may not be related to religion. It entails connection to self-chosen and or religious beliefs, values, and practices that give meaning to life, thereby inspiring and motivating individuals to achieve their optimal being. This connection brings faith, hope, peace, and empowerment." (Tanyi, 2002, p.506)
Of course, there are many other definitions from different fields and backgrounds. It is far beyond the scope of this paper to go into all these definitions in more detail and to analyze them. Detailed literature reviews can be found e.g. here (Karakas, 2010), (Dyson, Cobb, & Forman, 1997).

2.2. The self as key element of spirituality

One fundamental dimension and key element of spirituality, which can be found in almost all definitions and approaches of spirituality - even if they are sometimes quite different - is the self (Dyson et al., 1997, p.1183). A recent post on Harvard Business Review social media stated the following: (Review, 2022): *"To Change Your Behavior Now, Imagine Your Future Self. Many of us think that the person we are today is the person we'll always be. We cling to labels like "I'm an introvert," or "I'm not good with people." But that type of thinking leaves little room for growth. The reality is that we can and do change.So don't be so wedded to who you are today. Instead, intentionally focus on who you want to be. Start by recognizing how much you've grown and changed from your former self. This will serve as a reminder that growth is possible. Then imagine who you want to be in the future.Keep that vision of yourself top of mind."* Although this quote comes from a business-oriented context, it perfectly sums up the importance of developing the self.
Spirituality is connected inseparably with a continuous evolution of the self towards a fully developed and fully unfolded self. So we can also speak of self-development or self-actualization as a key to spirituality.

This understanding of spirituality is in line with a number of authors - from very different fields and backgrounds - who all distinguish between different forms of the self over time.
Richard Boyatzis, who comes from the field of organizational behaviour and coaching, differentiates between the real self, that is the self a person currently is and the ideal self, this is the self a person could be (R. E. Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006), (R. Boyatzis & Dhar, 2021). Based on this, the Intentional Change Theory is a five stage model designed to help people achieve and sustain desired changes and reach their goals (R. E. Boyatzis, 2006), (Van Oosten, 2006).
Otto Scharmer, whose background is the leadership and change management area as well as the action research

field, distinguishes between one's current "self" and the emerging future "Self" that represents one's greatest potential (C. O. Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). In his Theory U, Scharmer introduces the phase of presence, in which one connects with the source of the highest future possibility, and therefore enables the presence of the own authentic Self (C. O. Scharmer, 2009) and generating self-transcending knowledge (C. Scharmer, 2001).

Richard Rohr comes from Catholic spirituality and differentiates between the true self and the false self (Rohr, 2013). He argues that the true self is that part of a person that knows who you are, and whose you are. Like a diamond, buried deep within, this authentic self must be searched for, uncovered and separated from all the debris of ego that surrounds it. Rohr also points out that the transformation process from the false self towards the true self has much to do with letting go (Rohr, 2011).

Matthew Kelly, whose background is consulting as well as spirituality proposes the concept of a 'best-version-of-myself' in comparison to the current self (Kelly, 2004) and suggests that by finding legitimate needs, deepest desires and talents, one may be able to find this 'best-version-of-myself' (Kelly, 2017).

From a completely different background comes knowledge management theorist *Ikujiro Nonaka*. He describes knowledge creation as a continuous selftranscendental process through which one transcends the boundary of the old self (individually or as an organization) into a new self by acquiring and creating a new context, a new world view and novel knowledge (Nonaka & Konno, 1998). It is characterized as a journey "from being to becoming" (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000, p.8). Furthermore, he argues that '[t]o open oneself means to lose oneself [...] 'losing the self to find the self' is not simply the shedding of preconceptions and biases to perceive reality more clearly. It is about overcoming one's self-centered worldview and seeing oneself in terms of one's relationship with others, particularly clients and customers' (Nonaka, 2012, p.61).

Also the psychiatrist and psychotherapist *Viktor E. Frankl* focuses on the self aspect. He was the first to propose and introduce the term self-transcendence in detail and argued that human existence is always directed to something, or someone, other than itself and termed this constitutive characteristic of human existence "self-transcendence" (Frankl, 1966). It is through pursuance of the path of self-transcendence that we become fully human (Wong, 2016). In this context, Frankl emphasized several times, referring to a quotation from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, that when we take a person as he or she is, we make him or her worse. But if we take a person as he should be, we make him what he can become.

Stam et al. (Stam, Lord, Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2014) argue that the self-concept is how we perceive and what we know about ourselves, respectively. At the same time, they differentiate between the self as we currently experience it and the possible self. While the former is connected to the present, taking into account the current situation, constraints, etc., possible selves are the future-oriented parts of the self, and thus, they do not capture who one actually is (i.e. the current self) but one could become.

To sum up, it can be noticed that even coming from very different topics and with very different backgrounds (theology, consulting, leadership, change management, psychology, organizational behavior, coaching) the basic assumption is actually very similar: A fulfilled and prosperous life is closely linked to a self that is unfolded in the very best way possible. Among all the terms proposed in the literature (real self, true self, Self, etc.), perhaps the term "best version of myself" is the one that can serve as a generic term. The development towards this future best version of the self is, of course, a process in which a number of constraints have to be taken into account. As will be shown later, the process of self-realization and self-actualization from a present self to a future self, takes place both in persons at the individual level and in companies, organizations or generally speaking in any social system at the organizational level.

3. Spiritual Knowledge Management for individuals

At first, we apply the concept of spiritual knowledge management only to persons on an individual level. In doing so, we also contribute to the field of personal knowledge management, which is often considered an under-explored area (Cheong & Tsui, 2010).

3.1. A process perspective on Spiritual KM

Spiritual knowledge management focuses on the process from the current self to a future self that is different and in some way "better" (in the sense of more developed and unfolded) than the current one. Figure 1 shows this development schematically and highly simplified, since in practice it will probably never proceed straightforward. Therefore, a stepwise development takes place, which can be seen as a transformation from the current version of a person's self to the best version of himself/herself. Since that

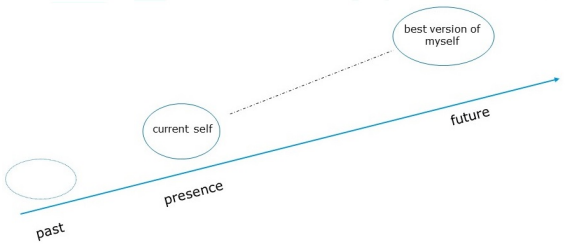

Figure 1. Process toward a future self

future best version of the self is not (completely) known at the beginning of this path, this process can be thought of as a process of becoming (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2005) and at the same time as a deep learning process. During this learning process, knowledge about the very nature and shape of the best version of the self is created, and at the same time, this knowledge shapes and clarifies not only the best version of the self, but also the way to achieve it. Moreover, at the same time, the person gets to know and understand his or her current self better. Following Nonaka and other scholars, knowledge can be defined as the capacity to act (Stehr, 2012), (Sveiby, 1997), (Sveiby, 2001). Accordingly, it is precisely the knowledge generated in this deep learning process that enables a person to ***act*** step by step on the way to becoming the best version of him or herself. Consequently, without creating this knowledge, a person would get stuck on his or her path and would not be able to develop and grow.

3.2. Types of knowledge

In order to define and conceptualize Spiritual Knowledge Management, it is necessary to consider in more detail the qualities and characteristics of the specific knowledge that is at the center of the process towards the best version of oneself. As a first step, it can be assumed that spiritual knowledge management generates and addresses spiritual knowledge. This is in line with Bratianu who defines '[s]piritual knowledge is the direct result of the process of thinking about existence, and searching for meaning and purpose in our lives, a process based on deeply held personal values' and '... that spiritual knowledge reflects our understanding about the meanings of our existence.'(Bratianu, 2017, p.80). He points out that spiritual knowledge is in a continuous dynamic with rational knowledge and emotional knowledge and it powers the decision making process. In line with this definition and applying it to the learning process for the development of the self, we argue that spiritual knowledge consists of different types of knowledge that allow the decision-making process based on an understanding of the meaning of our existence:

- Knowledge about the best version of oneself
- Knowledge about the current version of oneself
- Knowledge about previous versions of oneself
- Knowledge about where a person is right now on the way toward the best version of oneself
- Knowledge about whether a person is still on the path toward the best version, or in other words, knowledge about whether the direction of the path is still the right one

Spiritual knowledge management is about creating these components of spiritual knowledge, transferring existing knowledge from an implicit and perhaps unconscious level to a level where it can be used for action and decision-making and providing enabling factors and enabling processes for creating this knowledge and the transformation of knowledge. To create these components of spiritual knowledge requires an enhanced understanding of learning and thus an extended theory of learning. It is about combining learning from the past and learning from the future to enable the best possible decision in the presence.
Breaking with the view that learning is strictly and solely connected with our past experiences and giving up the belief that the future is a forward projection of the past, several authors ((Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005), (Jaworski, 1998), (C. O. Scharmer, 2009)) propose an alternative source of learning: learning from the future. The idea is to shift attention to the individual's inner world and to sense the very moment by "connecting with the source of one's best future possibility and of bringing this possibility into the now" (C. O. Scharmer & Kaeufer, 2010, p. 25f). Thus, it is about learning "from a reality that is not yet embodied in manifest experience" (C. O. Scharmer, 2009).
Learning from the future has been studied by various researchers in recent years (Peschl, 2022), (Peschl, 2019), (C. O. Scharmer, 2009), (Grisold, Kaiser, & Hafner, 2017), (Kaiser, Kragulj, Grisold, & Walser, 2016), (Grisold & Kaiser, 2017), and all these authors have shown that self-transcending knowledge plays an important role. But what is self-transcending knowledge in relation to explicit and implicit / tacit knowledge? Self-transcending knowledge can be defined as not-yet-embodied knowledge (C. Scharmer, 2001) and the ability to sense the presence of potential, to see what does not yet exist (intuition and hunches)

(Uotila & Melkas, 2008). Self-transcending knowledge can be characterized by a set of criteria, which are: (Kaiser & Peschl, 2020)

- Relation and interaction with world and with something that is other than it-/oneself;
- Expansion of boundaries (of the self) and bigger picture; tem Purpose, meaning and final cause;
- Potentiality and tension between what is and what could/should be, what is not yet;
- Pulling and not pushing;
- Future-oriented and yet respecting, cherishing and including past/existing knowledge;
- Self-detachment and forgetting/unlearning;
- The source of novelty is found in an unfolding emerging reality.

One can conclude that the conception and characteristics of self-transcending knowledge are closely related to the core aspects of spiritual knowledge management. We can even go a step further and argue that learning from the future combined with learning from the past and creating self-transcending knowledge is a key factor in enabling knowledge about the best version of oneself. Figure 2 illustrates this schematically.

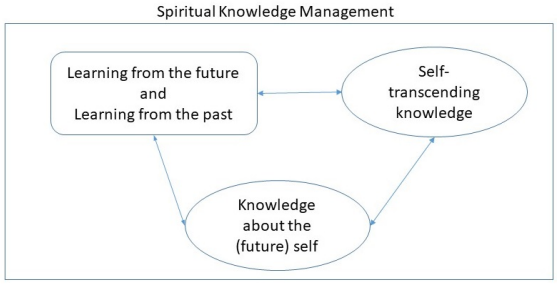

Figure 2. Key process for spiritual KM

In terms of the process of deep learning that enables the transformation from the present self to the future self, we will try to determine what specifically needs to be learned. Various authors (Kelly, 2004), (Maureder, 2004), (Kelly, 2017), (Kaiser, 2017) argue that the fulfilled self, i.e., the best version of oneself, is defined or characterized by (at least) three dimensions, namely, legitimate needs, wishes, and desires, as well as talents, strengths, and resources. If this holds true, then knowledge about these three dimensions - knowledge about needs, knowledge about deep desires and wishes, and knowledge about resources and strengths - has to be generated as part of the deep learning process.

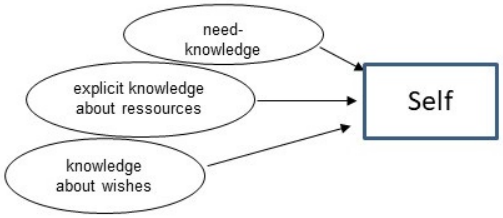

Figure 3. Knowledge dimension of the Self

Consequently, Spiritual KM must also focus on the factors that enable such a deep learning process, as well as methods for generating these three knowledge dimensions.

Some authors argue that finding the best or ideal version of the self is not only a deep learning process but also implies getting rid of already existing knowledge. Scharmer calls for 'letting go' (C. O. Scharmer, 2009), Boyatzis and Akrivou suggest to reduce the influence of the 'ought self' as someone else's interpretation of what a person's ideal self should be (R. E. Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006) and Dowrick proposes to get rid of familiar aspects when creating a self-model (Dowrick, 2012). Grisold and Kaiser argue that unlearning, as the reduction of the influence of old knowledge, can lead us closer to the best version of our self. Underlying this argument is a systems thinking perspective on the concept of unlearning and a knowledge perspective on the self (Grisold & Kaiser, 2017). The approach of uncovering a true self has been ever-recurrent in spiritual wisdom and philosophy, calling for periods of letting go and 'being empty'. For this reason unlearning is also to be considered a key process within Spiritual KM.

If we now combiner all the parts that have been mentioned and discussed, a first overall impression of the Spiritual KM as a complete system emerges. This is shown schematically in Figure 4.

Therefore, spiritual knowledge management also has a lot to do with the topics of vocation (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012) and calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013) and learning about one's own vocation.

4. Spiritual Knowledge Management in organizations

Organizations can be seen as complex living systems, that permanently (re)produce and maintain themselves, which requires them to engage in a lifelong

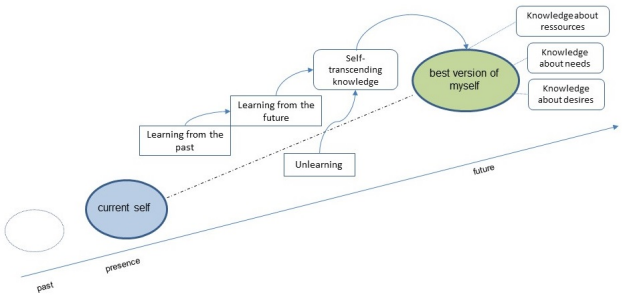

Figure 4. Spiritual KM as an entire system

(organizational) learning process. This learning process includes interactions with both the external environment but also with the organizations (internal) self. Both domains mutually influence each other. Through this interaction mechanisms, every organization builds up its own self by shaping its environment and by being shaped by it in an ongoing feedback loop. Spiritual Knowledge Management on an organizational level wants to explore these dynamics and find out how an organization can not only adapt over time but also develop a capacity to actively engage with its self and by that direct their actions towards the realization of its future potential.

At its core, it is about organizational self-actualization. We argue that organizational self-actualization is derived from individual self-actualization. Individual self-actualization can be defined to be "self-fulfillment, namely the tendency for the individual to become actualized in what he/she is potentially. It is the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming." (Maslow, 1981) Individual self-actualization is a desire, not a driving force, that could lead to realizing one's capabilities and it can be interpreted as "the full realization of one's potential" and of one's "true self." Our hypothesis is that an analogy can be made from individual level to organizational level, as the guiding question of every organization is: What is the [unique] (future) value we want to bring into the world?. If this holds true we can define: Organizational Self-Actualization as the "best version" of the organization, that become actualized in what it is potentially. This "best version" lies in the future, thus it has to be developed in a future-oriented transformation process. It is latent and "not yet" In many cases, it is not fully "visible" and understandable yet and has to be actively developed, i.e., what is hidden has to be brought forth. Organizational Self-Actualization, is thought to set into action what the organization is about (i.e. its purpose). Within this learning process, the organizations self is shaped and oscillates towards the ideal organizational self or the best version of itself.

Given these suggestions about organizational self-actualization, all the claims mentioned for the individual level in the context of spiritual knowledge management are very similarly - or even equally - applicable to organizations as well. We assume that for the field of spiritual KM in organizations we can build on existing work of discovering organizational purpose (e.g. (Fontán, Alloza, & Rey, 2019),(Rey & Malbašić, 2019)) and vision formation as well as development of shared visions (e.g. (Hoepfl, 1997), (R. Boyatzis & Dhar, 2021), (Kaiser & Fordinal, 2010))

5. Spiritual Knowledge Management in comparison to other, related concepts

In the literature we find a number of KM-oriented concepts that might be related or even similar to the concept of spiritual KM at first glance. This section explains how Spiritual KM differs from similar concepts and what makes it unique.

Recently, the concept of *Wisdom Management* was introduced as an extension and further development of knowledge management (Jakubik & Müürsepp, 2021). The authors argue that this concept makes a theoretical contribution to the fifth phase of KM by drawing attention to wisdom and wisdom management as the next potential phase of KM. They explore how wisdom is presented in the KM literature, and how understanding of wisdom from the philosophy and psychology literature could contribute to KM (Jakubik & Müürsepp, 2021). There is a connection between Spiritual KM and Wisdom Management insofar as it is an aspect of wisdom, as well as a wise person or company, to recognize and follow the best version of one's self. Hylving and Lindberg discuss practical wisdom in the context of ethical dilemmas and big data. (Hylving & Lindberg, 2022). The concept of practical wisdom, often referred to as phronesis, following a very old concept of Aristotle, has been gaining popularity in various fields in recent years (Bratianu & Motoc, 2022; R. Rocha & Pinheiro, 2021a; R. G. Rocha, Kragulj, & Pinheiro, 2022; Ames, Serafim, & Zappellini, 2020). Phronesis can be seen as an intellectual virtue and is generally understood as the ability to determine and undertake the best action in a specific situation to serve the common good (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007). The connection to spiritual KM is obvious, as phronesis is one of multiple aspects of spiritual knowledge, or to put it the other way round, the creation of spiritual knowledge could enable wise decisions and a phronetic attitude. One could argue that instead of the best version

of self, phronetic self would also be a good term for what is central to spiritual KM. Comparing Spiritual KM with Wisdom Management and Phronesis and Practical Wisdom, the uniqueness of the idea proposed in this paper lies in the process perspective of concretizing the best version of oneself and creating knowledge about it.
Another concept that one might assume to be similar or related to spiritual KM is *Belief Management*. One of the main aspects in this approach is the consequent and rather very formal distinction between belief and knowledge (Girle, 2021). One of the most popular definitions of knowledge is interestingly enough: Knowledge as justified true belief. Although this understanding of knowledge and thus also knowledge management is very popular (but at the same time very often misunderstood), the understanding of knowledge in spiritual KM is knowledge as capacity to act. As stated in the paper, spirituality in a general sense must be strictly distinguished from the religious form of spirituality. The latter has much to do with faith and belief and less with knowledge. The characteristic of every religion is that I believe in something without really knowing it in the last consequence. Therefore, the connection between spiritual KM and Belief Management is rather weak and only comes into play when it is a question of unlearning beliefs about the self that prove to be not viable and sustainable (Grisold & Kaiser, 2017).
Even the concept of Hunch mining (Nelson, Clark, & Stewart, 2018), (Nelson, 2021) could be related to spiritual KM. Hunches are important tools for making time-critical highly complex decisions in turbulent environments and are strongly related to intuition. While research on hunch mining tends to focus on how to better use and deploy hunches and intuition in the decision-making process and how to lift them ”above the surface,” so to speak, the relationship to Spiritual KM could be how to use hunches and intuition about the specific form and characteristics of the best version within the learning process. This could also be a topic of the future work in the further development of the ideas of the Spiritual KM.
To sum up, there are indeed several concepts that have tangents with the proposed spiritual KM and from which the spiritual KM could benefit and learn in the future. However, the overall concept and main aspects of Spiritual KM are quite new and innovative and could not be replaced by any of the above concepts

6. Research Agenda

Building on all of the preceding considerations, in the following a research agenda for spiritual knowledge management is defined.

1. The first block of the research agenda is about the self. We have proposed a knowledge-based approach to characterize the self. However, there are a variety of alternative approaches and concepts about the self that do not consider the self from a knowledge-based perspective. These approaches could also be very useful and valuable for the topic of Spiritual Knowledge Management. An important research aspect has to be the further elaboration of a self-concept.

2. Furthermore, we argue that another important part of this research agenda is to explore and develop tools and methods to support both individuals in the process of deep learning from the current self toward the future best version of self, as well as organizations. There is evidence from research and practice that existing tools from the field of systemic coaching (R. E. Boyatzis et al., 2022), (Passmore & Evans-Krimme, 2021) and systemic organizational development (Bond & Seneque, 2013) can be used for this purpose and that these approaches and techniques may be extended and further developed.

3. There is a need to explore an expanded form of decision support systems. Both individuals and organizations need support in deciding what kind of change is necessary and appropriate. This includes information about the current position on the path to the best version of self. Consequently, the development of a purpose measurement is required for deciding how close a person or organization already comes to its best version, and thus its purpose, and how deeply committed it is to that purpose in its current actions. For this point, it is also essential to develop a sound IT support. This could be for example some form of dashboard system that presents the essential and critical information in a way that allows effective decisions to be made.

4. Next, the entire field of self-transcending knowledge has to be further developed. In particular, this will be about the development of enabling factors that foster the generation of self-transcending knowledge.

5. Another topic on the research agenda is the field of learning from the future. There are already a number of research results and evolved methods in this area. However, it seems necessary to connect them more and better with the self-aspect

and the different types of knowledge along the process of Spiritual KM.

6. Especially in the organizational context of Spiritual KM, we need to address the question of whether organizations have a self at all and how this self is characterized and defined. What are the differences to the self on the individual level? To what extent are the individual self of the members of an organization and the self of an organization mutually connected or interacting?

7. Conclusion

Given the fact that meaning and purpose is essential for a large number of people and that the same applies to organizations (and the people acting in them) (Dubois & Saribas, 2020), it is necessary that KM also increasingly addresses and focuses on this topic. With the introduction of the concept of Spiritual KM, we tackle this issue and open the discussion and discourse. In order to answer the research question of this paper we argue that the field of spiritual knowledge management primarily addresses the essential knowledge of who I can be as a person and who we can be as an organization, and explores and develops processes, methods and structures for this purpose. The umbrella topic for Spiritual Knowledge Management could therefore be: *Enabling the deep learning process towards the best version of myself (individual) or itself (organizational).*

The contribution of this paper is to identify the processes and mechanisms in Spiritual KM and to provide a research agenda that identifies areas that need further research in order to methodologically elaborate Spiritual KM and make it usable for practice. This is a conceptual paper whose findings are intended to help theory building in the field.
As this paper is conceptual, empirical research is needed to examine whether the components we have proposed are complete and to examine the structure of the deep learning process towards the best version of oneself. Another limitation of this paper is that we have mainly described the process components of Spiritual KM and concrete techniques and methods along the deep learning process are still missing. Although we have a number of techniques and methods in mind and have had very good practical experience with some of them, it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail. It will be the focus of future work not only to present such methods but also to evaluate them empirically.

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