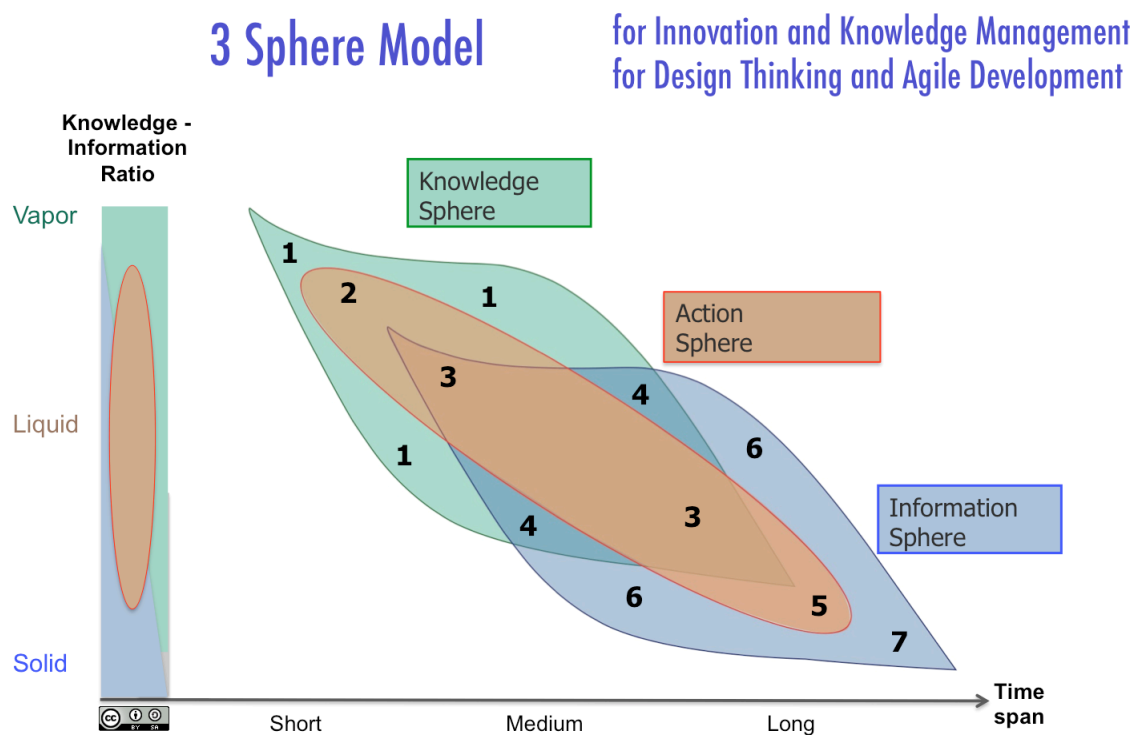


## The 3 Sphere Model

The model allows fast clarification of terms and identification of knowledge management issues. Furthermore, it helps to pinpoint KM related techniques and tools. It puts them into the right perspective and shows where they bring the greatest benefits. This accelerates the understanding when defining outcomes of a knowledge management project.

This model also explains the critical time dependence of knowledge and information with action. It shows how facilitation, agile methods, design thinking and collaboration software (SharePoint etc.) are connected. It has been developed based on the publication by Dr. Pavel Kraus and Dr. Gil Regev



Based on: Pavel Kraus and Gil Regev (2017) Beyond Activities  
<https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/230298>

skmf SWISS KNOWLEDGE  
MANAGEMENT FORUM

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### Underlying assumptions and definitions:

**Knowledge** is a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of someone or something (Wikipedia). It is always bound to people (Probst, Raub, Romhardt; D-A-CH Wissensmanagement Glossar). For this model we use the term «knowledge» defined as what people know in their heads at a given moment.

**Information** is that which informs. Information's existence is not necessarily coupled to an observer, while in the case of knowledge, the information requires a cognitive observer (Wikipedia). For this model we use the term information mainly as documented knowledge or captured knowledge expression such as conversation.

**The 3 Sphere Model has two axes.** The first one depicts the transition between knowledge and information. On top there is 100% knowledge, i.e. no recording or note taking has been done. On the bottom only information exists and knowledge has been forgotten. This transition can be also described as the three vapor, liquid and solid states.

The second axis depicts the time span in which knowledge or information exists. This also refers to the usage of techniques and tools, which deal with knowledge or information.

The 3 Sphere Model consists of three spheres, the knowledge, action, and information sphere. Their intersections form six distinct areas with different properties:

1. Intuition, Feeling, first thoughts – not very clear yet  
(M. Polanyi definition of tacit knowledge – 1960's – pre-thought – you know more than you can tell – you feel there is something there, but you cannot tell it. Plato's Meno paradox – e.g. if a scientist can explain what the problem is there is not problem anymore. You know tacitly there is a problem, but you cannot express it yet.)
2. When ideas become clearer, can be formulated in speech and expressed-communicated to others.  
Action is possible, but not mandatory. Action either changes the state of something, or prevents the thing from changing. 2 can be just talking, without necessarily acting, but talk is also an action. Link to Concrete Experience-Reflection Observation-Abstraction Conceptualization-Active Experimentation, D. Kolb's Experiential learning cycle. (Plan-Do-Check-Act turned 90 degrees counterclockwise)
3. Coexistence of knowledge and information. Knowledge gets noted down, recorded or captured in some way (written, audio, video etc.) Area 3 is the interplay of knowledge, action and information.
4. No idea – up for discussion – Look for answers in Polanyi / Theory U – O. Scharmer. Waiting zone – no action needed, necessary, desired etc. Knowledge is there, but it is not actionable yet – D. Ausubel (see below)
5. Artificial intelligence – action is taken by machines / algorithms / animals and carried out. Action without involvement of people's knowledge.
6. Stored information, no knowledge about it is present in the minds of people involved. Information ready to be reinterpreted and transformed back to knowledge again. Information is accessible through search, annotation, structure, tagging etc.
7. Stored information not readily accessible – so called «data grave»

**Example for positioning of a case onto the model:**

On-boarding of new team members. At the beginning they just receive documents, but have no clue how to consume it and make sense of it. This is a process going through 4 and still not understand or even notice them. One does not understand their relevance yet. Readiness to see and understand (Geoffrey Vickers). Jean Piaget, David Ausubel – only when you have pre-structures in your brain you can understand what you are looking at.

**Links**

Content	Link
BPMDS-Paper	<a href="http://www.aht.ch/170613_bpmlds-paper_beyond-activities_kraus-regev.pdf">http://www.aht.ch/170613_bpmlds-paper_beyond-activities_kraus-regev.pdf</a>
	<a href="https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/230298">https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/230298</a>
LinkedIn SKMF group	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4143903">https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4143903</a>
SKMF Blog	<a href="http://skmfnews.tumblr.com">http://skmfnews.tumblr.com</a>

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