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# **Knowledge Translation in the Global South: An Exploratory Mapping of the Literature**

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**Emilie Combaz, Melanie Connor and James Georgalakis**

**July 2023**

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## Summary

This paper maps the literature that focuses on knowledge translation (KT) in the global South. It was commissioned as part of the **KT in the Global South research project**, supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The trilingual systematised review helps discern where information about KT is missing, emerging, or well-established, and highlights information on what the KT strategies employed are, where, how, by whom, and for whom.

## Keywords

Knowledge translation; knowledge; policy; practice; global South; low- and middle-income countries; review.

## Authors

**Emilie Combaz**, PhD, is an independent researcher and consultant in social sciences, with over 19 years' experience in academia and policy- and practice-oriented work on issues of human rights, development, peace-building, and humanitarian action. She is the main researcher and author of this paper – she set and ran the literature searches, conducted the qualitative content analysis of references, and wrote and revised the preliminary, intermediate, and final drafts.

**Melanie Connor**, PhD, supported the work on this paper by providing advice, conducting the quantitative analysis of the selection of references, reviewing and revising the intermediate drafts, and coordinating and streamlining exchanges about the paper with other participants in the research project.

**James Georgalakis** supported the work on this paper by providing expert knowledge and guidance on existing literature about knowledge translation for development, and reviewing the intermediate and final drafts.

## Executive Summary

Engaging research with policy and practice, also known as knowledge translation (KT), is a well-established field and investigates the use of knowledge or evidence to inform practice, policy formulation, and implementation. It has been widely documented in the health sector, particularly in the global North. This paper aims to map and explore the literature that focuses on KT in the global South. Therefore, in a first step, a search strategy was developed using an iterative process with key KT stakeholders from the global South. A systematised literature search was conducted in Google Scholar, Google, and Web of Science, which was guided by four research questions: (1) What are the primary strategies used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts? (2) How do these primary strategies differ in relation to key stakeholders and intended outcomes (changes)? (3) How do different strategies relate to sectors, disciplines, and geographies? (4) How do the different modes of KT interventions reflect different theories of evidence-informed policy and practice? References were used to map and explore the overall spread of the literature, and selected key references were used to extract content.

In total, 202 references were included after all inclusion criteria were employed. Most references were written in English, had a clear health focus, and covered several regions. Three-quarters of the references were of scientific origin and presented literature reviews and case studies.

The knowledge base generally provides good coverage on many aspects of KT, even as the scope of individual studies is extremely variable, and some areas remain under-researched (e.g. Asia and the Pacific, rural areas, contexts of war or autocracy, longer study time frames). In particular, the knowledge base amounts to a large coverage regarding: the aggregate size of studied populations, groups, or samples; geographies; types of political, economic, social, and cultural contexts; and time frames. There is also good, though differentiated, coverage about the main areas of change in processes and outcomes that KT may aim for (namely policy, practices, and collective action), about the causes, dynamics, and effects of both KT and the change that KT may aim for, as well as about the actors supporting KT, the actors targeted for change, and the types of knowledge being 'translated'.

Differences between the global North and South are primarily described as differences by stakeholders, with some minor coverage of differences by intended outcomes. Looking at practices as documented in publications, many researchers and research institutions practice KT only to a limited extent, using a narrow range of easier, less interactive KT activities with limited attention to target audiences. Often knowledge management has remained oriented towards

the priorities and perspectives of the large aid donors and actors in the global North that support this field for application in the global South.

Less well-researched, but mentioned in the literature, is KT as the provision of a cognitive bridge between different types of knowledge. This relates to the many forms and levels of brokering that occur between different knowledge cultures. Each knowledge culture has its own types of content, inquiries, and languages.

Only some KT interventions (and evaluations) documented in the literature appear to have been deliberately and explicitly based on any theory of evidence-informed policy and practice, be it at the outset of efforts or by the time of an assessment or the end of an initiative.

It can be concluded that findings about KT capacities, factors, and interventions are largely consistent across high-, medium- and low-income countries. However, due to differences or inequalities in the factors that shape KT practices, KT capacity seems lower in low-income countries than in middle-income countries, especially upper-middle-income ones. Lastly, comparative literature about efforts at contextualising KT in different configurations of power, relationships and ideas offers valuable lessons. Some lessons identify key context features that should guide KT choices, such as the degree of clarity and consensus among stakeholders (Oliver *et al.* 2021). More broadly, in many contexts, the problems, factors and solutions in knowledge use are not primarily about knowledge **translation**, but rather about knowledge **implementation**, especially about local actors' 'practical norms' (Olivier de Sardan 2021).

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## Acronyms

ICT	information and communications technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
KT	knowledge translation
LMICs	low- or middle-income countries
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OTT	On Think Tanks
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation
VCOPs	virtual communities of practice
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene

# 1. Introduction

The movement of engaging research with policy and practice goes back several decades and although its roots sit firmly within the health sciences, it has become an important feature across disciplines, sectors, and geographies (Oliver *et al.* 2022). A commonly used term to describe these processes is ‘knowledge translation’ (KT) (see Box 1.1). However, while there is a wealth of literature that has established ‘knowledge translation’, particularly in health research in high-income countries (Boaz, Fitzpatrick and Shaw 2009; Farley-Ripple, Oliver and Boaz 2020; Oliver *et al.* 2022), the discourse about KT in the global South and low- and middle-income countries seems to be less well established.

A lot of research and work has been conducted to investigate the use of knowledge or evidence to inform practice, policy formulation and implementation, with authors discussing the nature of these processes (ontology) and theory of knowledge (epistemology). For instance, Graham *et al.* (2006) provide a categorisation and a conceptual framework for thinking about the process and integrate the roles of knowledge creation and knowledge application.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, different forms of knowledge translation, exchange, transfer, and brokerage between research and policy and practice are described (Graham *et al.* 2006).

## Box 1.1 Choice of terms: ‘knowledge translation’

Numerous terms are used by KT actors and by those who study KT to describe all or part of the process. The terms have varied over time, differ between sectoral, professional and thematic fields, and are expressed diversely in different languages. For lists of frequent terms and discussions of these, see for example:

- In English: Banner *et al.* (2019); Barwick *et al.* (2014); Davies, Nutley and Walter (2008); Davis *et al.* (2003); Estey, Smylie and Macaulay (2009); Graham *et al.* (2006); Greenhalgh and Wieringa (2011); Health Service Executive Research and Development (n.d.); Murunga *et al.* (2020); Shaxson *et al.* (2012); Straus, Tetroe and Graham (2009); Sudsawad (2007).
- In French: Andreotti and Noûs (2020); Eastes (2021); Labasse (1999); Moinet (2009).
- In Spanish: Álvarez Aceves and Demuner-Flores (2016); Chaverri Chaves and Arguedas Ramírez (2020); Martínez-Sahagún and Escudero-Nahón (2018); Rea Rodríguez (2016).

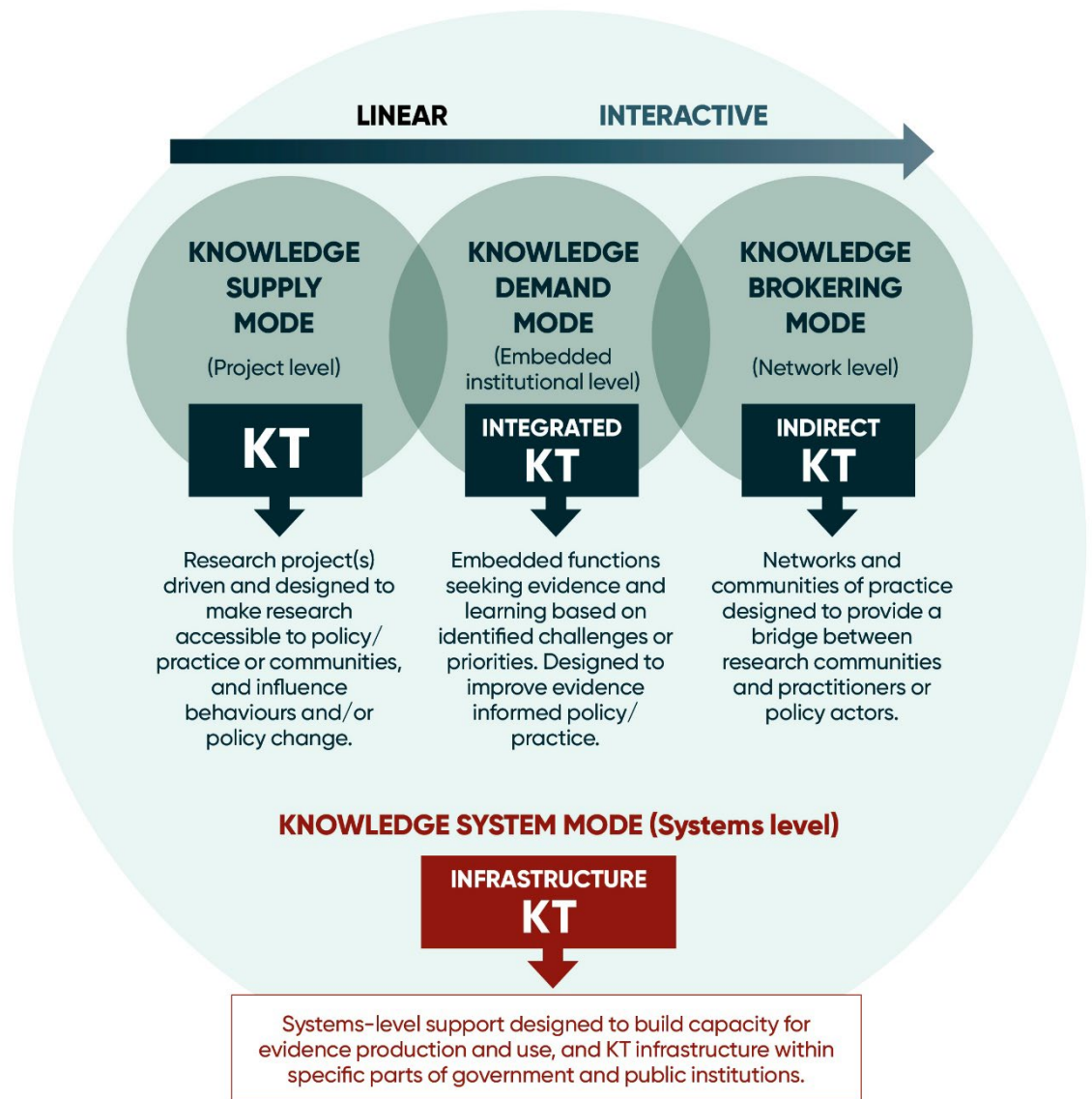
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<sup>1</sup> On this issue, also see for instance: Gluckman, Bardsley and Kaiser (2021).

The academic literature has identified a series of processes that can be differentiated by the causal relations or types of interactions between research and policy or practice (Fransman 2018). Several authors have described linear supply-driven research engagement (Huberman 1994; Weiss 1979), linear demand-driven scientific advice (Ward *et al.* 2021), bridging the gap between supply and demand (Holmes *et al.* 2017), and system-level interventions (Boaz and Gough 2014) that are designed to facilitate and enable knowledge exchange. Complexity-informed approaches from Science and Technology Studies conceptualise these processes beyond supply vs demand or the barriers to transferring knowledge (Jasanoff 2004). Increasingly, scholars and practitioners seek to address how knowledge is produced to bring together different ways of knowing (Cook and Brown 1999; Fricker 2007). This applies in equal measure to participatory, community-informed research that seeks to promote cognitive justice (de Sousa Santos 2018; Chambers 2017) and to scholarship that is embedded within policy mechanisms (Mijumbi-Deve *et al.* 2022).

Georgalakis has presented a conceptual framework (Figure 1.1) that builds on this literature, encompassing four interconnected modes that describe how knowledge from research may interact with policy and practice (Georgalakis 2022). The framework encompasses straightforward linear research engagement processes as well as interventions designed to enable knowledge production and use.

Figure 1.1 Four modes of KT



Source: Georgalakis (2022), reproduced with permission.

Visual description: An arrow at the top of the image starts with linear on the left and interactive on the right, with three columns directly below. The first column shows: Knowledge supply mode (project level). The words 'knowledge translation' are placed beneath, with an arrow leading down to the text 'Research project(s) driven and designed to make research accessible to policy/practice or communities and influence behaviours and/or policy change'. The second column shows: Knowledge demand mode (embedded institutional level). The words 'integrated knowledge translation' sit beneath, with an arrow leading down to the text 'Embedded functions seeking evidence and learning based on identified challenges or priorities. Designed to improve evidence-informed policy/practice'. The third column shows: Knowledge brokering mode (network level). The words 'indirect knowledge translation' sit beneath, with an arrow leading down to the text 'Networks and communities of practice designed to provide a bridge between research communities and practitioners or policy actors'. Underneath the three columns there is an overarching section: Knowledge system mode (systems level). The words 'infrastructure knowledge translation' sit beneath, with an arrow leading down to the text 'Systems-level support designed to build capacity for evidence production and use and knowledge translation infrastructure within specific parts of government and public institutions'. These modes of knowledge translation range from more straightforward linear research engagement processes to interventions designed to enable evidence production and use.

More traditionally conceptualised linear knowledge translation processes are described under 'knowledge supply mode'. Often, terms such as knowledge translation, research communications, or research uptake are used to describe these activities, particularly by research funders. Processes categorised under this mode are mostly project driven; they supply knowledge that, bar the need for some simplification or translation, is considered ready to be used. Researchers are frequently operating outside or on the periphery of policy spaces and will engage with intermediaries or boundary partners such as policy networks, the media, and practitioners. Examples range from single studies and small projects to large multi-project consortiums.

However, even where we conceptualise a process as being centred around the production and push of research to potential users, there has been a strong movement towards more interactive processes that seek to exchange knowledge rather than transfer or translate it (Georgalakis and Rose 2019; Mitton *et al.* 2007).

The 'knowledge demand mode' represents an embedded interactive demand-driven model that formalises relationships with knowledge users. These embedded functions usually focus on specific areas of policy and practice and seek to improve the use of knowledge in relation to specific challenges. The examples vary from institutionalised communities of practice which co-produce research to formal government scientific advisory services (Mijumbi-Deve, Ingabire and Sewankambo 2017a; Mijumbi-Deve *et al.* 2022; Morales 2021; Ward *et al.* 2021). This may remain a linear process where the demand shapes the supply of knowledge. We can see this most acutely in formal and informal government advisory systems and rapid evidence response services where the user controls the production of knowledge (Dunlop 2009).

Knowledge brokering or indirect knowledge translation processes are identified as 'knowledge brokering mode'. In the literature, this is often conceptualised as an intermediary function or cognitive bridge between different forms of knowledge and sectors. Brokers and brokering institutions may commission research (such as rapid reviews) or work across existing knowledge systems (Cummings *et al.* 2019). The networks in the knowledge brokering mode can be formal or informal networks and communities of practice. They are usually focused on specific contexts of policy or practice that convene dialogues between researchers, civil society, policy actors, and practitioners. This innovation brokering may emphasise making research knowledge more accessible through various platforms, which are usually independent of government structures but may be aligned with research institutions or consortiums (Georgalakis 2022; Gluckman *et al.* 2021; Shaxson 2017).

The 'knowledge system mode' is conceptualised in the literature as a systems-level model that targets both the potential users of research knowledge and the producers and intermediaries, that seeks to address the individual, institutional,

and cultural factors that promote or limit knowledge use (Punton 2016). This encompasses interventions that are institutionalised, with systems-level support designed to enable knowledge use within specific policy contexts. This might include training for policy actors in specific ministries, research policy partnerships focused on challenges, or the creation of new units or bodies designed to synthesise knowledge and evaluate programmes (Georgalakis 2022). This mode can include elements of all the other modes, as well as research capacity-building and knowledge translation, science advisory services and knowledge brokering.

Irrespective of these overlapping and interconnected modes of knowledge translation, the impact of knowledge on policy and practice remains variable and difficult to unpack, often taking time and indirect routes.

Such knowledge gaps on KT have particularly serious repercussions in the global South. In global South contexts, the need for evidence-informed solutions to development challenges is acute, but inequities in the production and use of knowledge, paired with socio-political constraints, often hamper the possibilities of generating new research or utilising existing knowledge (Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges 2022).

This is illustrated by studies on influencing policy with research in the global South (there are analogous findings on influencing practice with research). For instance, a cross-regional and cross-sectoral study, developed at the UK-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI), compared 50 cases of successful or failed influence of research on policy about development issues in the global South and countries in transition (Court and Young 2003, 2006). Results showed that the influence of research on policy was sometimes immediate and direct, but in most cases it 'was less direct and took some time, requiring strenuous advocacy' (Court and Young 2003: vii). Moreover, both **foreign** and **domestic** factors had a major influence on the domestic links between research and policy in the global South. For example, multilateral funding organisations typically influenced policy contexts and research priorities, raising concerns about priorities, legitimacy, and ownership (Court and Young 2006).

Similarly, another cross-regional and cross-sectoral study compared 23 cases of researchers trying to influence policy in diverse sectors and countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It showed that researchers can influence public policy decisions while policymakers influence policy decisions in the global South with timely and relevant knowledge, but that successful influence depends on a combination of policy context and deliberate KT strategies (Carden 2009).

Both Northern-produced syntheses (Carden 2009; Court and Young 2003, 2006) argue that the differences in contexts between the global North and the global South are so great in degree, and at times in nature, that findings about KT in the

global South are markedly different. Differences arise due to varying political contexts that in turn limit the applicability of policy processes. Theories of the global North policy processes and the percolation of ideas do apply, but they are insufficient and fail to address the political complexity of the global South (Court and Young 2003: vii, 2006: 456).

Policy change is described as a function of political demand and political contestation. Within this, critical aspects that shape the links between research and policy are, in particular: demand for change and new ideas by policymakers and society, the nature and degree of political contestation, and openness to new ideas, which also relates to the prevailing discourses among policymakers (Court and Young 2003: vii, 2006: 456). In adverse contexts, frequent political resistance to change was a serious obstacle, even where there was clear evidence. In supportive contexts, political openness and a favourable political culture enabled the use of research in policymaking (Court and Young 2003: vii).

## Box 1.2 Choice of terms: ‘global North’ and ‘global South’

Any terms to describe the global North and the global South are contested and come with conceptual, theoretical, ethical, and political limitations. There are large bodies of literature offering solid critiques of related terms such as the following (which are not synonymous): ‘developed vs developing countries’, ‘high-income vs low- and middle-income countries’, ‘the West and the rest’, ‘First World vs Third World’, ‘former colonial powers vs post-colonial countries’, ‘core vs periphery’, and ‘global North vs global South’. One shared problem is that these categorisations are binary and so broad that they are inevitably oversimplifications, grouping into one binary element countries that have major differences in the profile of their development and in their histories, societies, and economies. Alternatives that spell out lists of specific countries and regions quickly become unwieldy if they need to be used repeatedly in writing.

Consequently, by agreement among the project participants, this research refers to ‘global North’ and ‘global South’ as the least unsatisfactory terms. The authors acknowledge that this terminology still has limitations and is problematic in some respects, among others because its broad grouping of countries erases important differences within each category, and because it is vague about which countries get assigned to which side of the binary. But the comparative advantages of this terminology make it a good choice as a working tool. See its use by United Nations (UN) agencies such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for example in its 2018 report *Forging a Path Beyond Borders: The Global South*, and the UN Office for South–South Cooperation (UNOSSC), supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP).



## 1.1 Rationale of the present review

Given the historic overreliance on Northern-based English-language literature in this field, the persistent lack of attention to power, and to the plurality and complexity of political contexts, sectors, knowledges, and actors involved in KT (Jones *et al.* 2009) – as well as the possible differences in the applicability of findings originating from the global North to the global South – the present trilingual literature search and mapping aims to explore the literature in and from the global South. The aim of this paper is to explore strategies used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts of policy or practice.

This endeavour acknowledges that the KT literature seems to have made only a modest difference in actually improving how knowledge and research influences policy or practice for development (see, for example, Olivier de Sardan 2021). Scholarship in this field often fails to connect with the experiences of those working at the interface of research organisations and policy communities (Georgalakis 2021). This is particularly true for those working outside of health and beyond high-income countries. The concepts used to describe the use of knowledge in policy or practice can simply seem too abstract to be of any practical use, and endless discussions around how to define terms such as knowledge translation, or research mobilisation and uptake, often fail to grasp what is really going on.<sup>2</sup>

This working paper firstly screened both academic and grey literature to determine an inclusive search strategy that can be applied to discern information about KT in the global South. The paper aims to provide information on:

1. The primary strategies used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts.
2. How these strategies differ in relation to key stakeholders and intended outcomes (changes).
3. How the different strategies relate to sectors, disciplines, and geographies.
4. How the different modes of KT interventions (Figure 1.1) reflect different theories of evidence-informed policy and practice.

The review is thus meant to help discern where information about KT is missing, emerging, or well-established, and to highlight information on what the KT strategies employed are, where, how, by whom, and for whom.

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<sup>2</sup> This is discussed, for example, in Georgalakis (2021).

## 2. Methodology

The present review is based on a mix of review methodologies and can be characterised as a systematised review (Grant and Booth 2009) combined with a thematic content extraction and narrative synthesis. A systematic literature search in academic databases as well as in Google and Google Scholar was used to capture both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed literature. The research did not aim to be a systematic review or a meta-review, nor to generate new primary analysis of published knowledge. Instead, its focus was on reviewing and assessing a breadth of available knowledge, prioritising references with broad geographic and sectoral scopes for analysis. In addition, the review aimed to have an empirical focus, i.e. not focus on conceptual or theoretical issues and debates, but rather relate to actual experiences of KT through empirical material. For example, the review did not engage with debates about what knowledge, KT or the global South are, or about theorisations of KT that were not grounded in empirical material. However, if empirical publications raised conceptual or theoretical issues about KT, this was in scope.

An iterative process integrating suggestions from a Southern-led project Steering Group<sup>3</sup> and lead contacts at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was applied throughout the review process to provide feedback.

### 2.1 Search strategy

#### 2.1.1 Development of search strategy

A strategy for the literature search was developed to define the final search terms in three languages (English, French, and Spanish). Preliminary searches were initially conducted using the term 'knowledge translation'. Academic literature was searched using Web of Science and, as a complement for Southern literature, Google Scholar. Grey literature, including peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed practitioner and policy literature, was searched using Google and Google Scholar.

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<sup>3</sup> KT in the Global South project Steering Group members: Andrea Ordóñez, Southern Voice (Chair); Amédé Gogovor, Université Laval; Imran Matin, BRAC Institute of Governance and Development; Rhona Mijumbi, 3ie & Makerere University; Vanesa Weyrauch, Purpose and Ideas; Owusu Boampong, University of Cape Coast.

## Table 2.1 Examples of search terms and results of preliminary literature searches

Language of target publication	Language of search and search terms	Number of results
<b>Focus on academic literature: results in Web of Science database</b>		
<b>English</b>		
	Topic = exact expression “knowledge translation”	4,929
<b>French</b>		
	Topic in English = “knowledge translation”	8
	Topic in French = “traduction des connaissances”	0
	Combination of English or French synonyms in title	100s to 10,000s
<b>Spanish</b>		
	Topic in English = “knowledge translation”	13
	Topic in Spanish = “traducción del conocimiento” OR “traducción de conocimientos” OR “traducción de los conocimientos”	0
	Combination of English or Spanish synonyms in title	100s to 10,000s
<b>Focus on grey literature: results from advanced search syntax in Google</b>		
<b>English</b>		
	Topic = exact expression “knowledge translation”	Over 2 million
	Title = exact expression “knowledge translation”	> 35,000
	Combinations of KT synonyms + other topics in title (development / aid, global South, reviews)	0 to 10,000s
<b>French</b>		
	Topic = “traduction des connaissances”	188,000
	Title = “traduction des connaissances”	> 100 in title, but many about linguistic translation
	Combinations of KT synonyms + other topics in title (development / aid, global South, reviews)	0 to 10,000s

Language of target publication	Language of search and search terms	Number of results
<b>Focus on grey literature: results from advanced search syntax in Google</b>		
<b>Spanish</b>		
	Topic = variations on “traducción de conocimientos”	> 13 million
	Title = variations on “traducción de conocimientos”	> 400 in title, many seem relevant
	Combinations of KT synonyms + other topics in title (development / aid, global South, reviews)	0 to 10,000s

Source: Authors' own.

Searching with the exact expression ‘knowledge translation’ in the three languages resulted in numerous publications but with a narrow scope. Most were in English, from and about the global North, and concerned the health sector. This also confirmed that while practices of KT do exist in diverse contexts and forms worldwide, the vast literature about KT does not necessarily refer to it as ‘knowledge translation’.

Therefore, search terms were broadened and tested. An iterative process including KT stakeholders from the global South was employed. First a combination of keywords about ‘knowledge’ and ‘translation’ yielded in an enormous quantity of results, a number of them irrelevant. Some of the keywords were too general (‘knowledge’) by themselves, and keywords with multiple meanings lead to partly irrelevant results (for example, ‘translation’ also led to results about linguistic translation). Furthermore, initial search results showed that the expression ‘knowledge translation’ was not used in a consistent way by different actors. For example, some organisations included technology transfer or commercialisation under its umbrella, whereas others did not (see, for example, Straus *et al.* 2009). This meant that using the exact expression would limit finding relevant literature, but that broadening search terms too much would swiftly become unmanageable. Hence, it was important to use targeted combinations of keywords that would strike the right balance and elicit enough, but not too many, relevant results.

The initial searches also revealed that ‘knowledge translation’ does not automatically translate well, both between languages and between sectors or thematic issues. There are variations by sector, discipline, issue, language, and geography. Consequently, the trilingual searches required translating keywords from English into the other two languages, but also required cultural adaptation to their context. For example, in French, a number of results on *‘traduction des connaissances’* are about translation between languages, and it can be

important to also use keywords relating to '*communication*', '*vulgarisation*' and '*médiation*'. In Spanish, variations of the expression '*traducción de conocimientos*' get fewer results than, for example, '*aplicación*' or '*comunicación*', but more than '*divulgación*', '*socialización*', or '*transposición*'.

Semantic differences between sectors were addressed in a similar way. While some sectors, such as health, appear to frequently use the exact expression 'knowledge translation', others do not and either use related synonyms or entirely differently concepts (for example, in the education sector, 'teaching', 'learning', and 'pedagogy' often cover aspects of KT, while in agriculture, 'extension services' include some KT).

In order to diversify the search results, keywords about 'citizen' were included as well. This provided a wider spectrum of references in terms of sector, geography, and types of actors involved.

The final search terms included the exact expression 'knowledge translation' and immediately related expressions, with broader synonyms and associated terms on both 'knowledge' and 'translation' added in a managed way. Therefore, literature on KT was searched by using the exact expression 'knowledge translation', and combinations of synonyms about knowledge (such as 'research', 'evidence', or 'lessons') and KT (such as 'evidence-based', or 'knowledge + policy', 'action', 'practice', or 'citizen').

A strategic decision to proceed in this way was made because academic database Web of Science can run complex search queries with a large number of search terms. Depending on the number of results returned, search strings were then narrowed down as needed by taking out some broad keywords that brought in too many results, or by adding in sets of synonyms about one or more of the following three thematic areas: development or aid; global South; and/or reviews (as in 'literature review', to retain a manageable number of references if initial searches resulted in too many references).

The final search terms used are summarised in Table 2.2, which presents the most frequently tested and used search terms – there were adjustments and variations depending on the source searches (Web of Science, Google Scholar, or Google) and on the results returned, but Table 2.2 offers an overview.

**Table 2.2 Summary of search terms most frequently tested and used**

Language	Search terms
English	<b>Knowledge:</b> literature OR evidence OR knowledge OR research* OR science* OR scientif* OR study* OR studies OR finding* OR conclu* OR data OR evaluat* OR assessment OR result* OR outcome* OR impact OR lessons OR “best practices” OR “good practices” OR “case studies” OR “case study”
	<b>Idea of ‘knowledge translation’:</b> translat* OR “knowledge translation” OR citizen*
	<b>Global South:</b> South OR “Global South” OR “low-income countries” OR “middle-income countries” OR “low- and middle-income countries” OR “low- or middle-income countries” OR LMIC OR LMICs OR “developing countries” OR Africa* OR Asia* OR Pacific OR Americas OR “Latin America” OR “Central America” OR Caribbean OR “South America” OR “Middle East” OR “North Africa” OR “Former Soviet” OR “post-soviet” OR CIS OR “Central Asia” OR “Eastern Europe” OR Balkans
	<b>Development or aid:</b> develop* OR development OR (aid AND NOT (HIV OR AIDS)) OR ODA OR “official development assistance” OR assistance OR co-operation OR cooperation OR humanitarian*
	<b>Review (as in ‘literature review’):</b> (review AND (literature OR evidence OR knowledge OR research)) OR “literature review” OR “systematic review” OR metareview OR “meta-review” OR synthes*
French	<b>Knowledge:</b> littérature OR publications OR preuve* OR connaissance* OR recherche* OR science* OR scientif* OR étude* OR résultat* OR découverte* OR conclu* OR données OR information* OR évalu* OR examen* OR analys* OR issue* OR abouti* OR impact* OR bilan* OR effet* OR portée OR influenc* OR leçon* OR enseignement* OR “meilleures pratiques” OR “bonnes pratiques”

<b>French</b>	<p><b>Idea of ‘knowledge translation’:</b>  “traduction des connaissances” OR “vulgarisation des connaissances” OR “vulgarisation scientifique” OR  “communication des connaissances” OR “communication scientifique” OR “médiation des connaissances” OR  “médiation scientifique” OR citoy*</p>
	<p><b>Global South:</b>  Sud OR “pays du Sud” OR “hémisphère Sud” OR “pays à bas revenus” OR “pays à faibles revenus” OR “pays à  revenus moyens” OR “pays à moyens revenus” OR “pays à revenus médians” OR “pays à bas et moyens revenus”  OR “pays à revenus bas et moyens” OR “pays à revenus bas et médians” OR “pays en développement” OR “pays en  voie de développement” OR Afrique OR “Afrique sub-saharienne” OR “Afrique subsaharienne” OR africain OR  africains OR africaine OR africaines OR Asie OR asiatique OR asiatiques OR Pacifique OR Océanie OR Amériques  OR “continent américain” OR “Amérique latine” OR “Amérique centrale” OR Caraïbes OR caribéen* [caribéen OR  caribéens OR caribéenne OR caribéennes] OR “Amérique du Sud” OR “Moyen Orient” OR “Proche Orient” OR  “Afrique du Nord” OR arabe OR méditerran* [Méditerranée OR méditerranéen OR méditerranéens OR  méditerranéenne OR méditerranéennes] OR “ancienne Union Soviétique” OR “post-soviétique” OR postsoviétique  OR Russie OR CEI OR “Communauté des Etats Indépendants” OR “Asie centrale” OR “Europe de l’Est” OR “Europe  orientale” OR “Europe du Sud” OR “Sud de l’Europe” OR Balkans</p>
	<p><b>Development or aid:</b>  dévelop* OR développement OR aide OR APD OR “aide publique au développement” OR assistance OR solidarité  OR solidarités OR soutien* [soutien OR soutiens] OR soutenir OR appui OR appuyer OR coopération OR secours  OR bailleur* [bailleur OR bailleurs] OR donateur* [donateur OR donateurs] OR donatrice* [donatrice OR donatrices]  OR reconstruct* OR intervention* OR humanitaire</p>
	<p><b>Review (as in ‘literature review’):</b>  ((revue OR état OR analyse OR examen OR recensement) AND (littérature OR connaissances OR preuves OR  recherche* OR bibliographi* OR systématique)) OR “revue de la littérature” OR “revue de littérature” OR “revue des  connaissances” OR “analyse bibliographique” OR “revue bibliographique” OR “état de l’art” OR “état de la question”  OR “revue systématique” OR métarevue OR “méta-revue” OR synthèse* OR synthétiq*</p>

<b>Spanish</b>	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> literatura OR publicacion* OR evidencia OR conocimiento* OR investigacion* OR ciencia* OR científic* OR estudio* OR resultado* OR hallazgo* OR descubrimiento* OR conclu* OR datos OR informacion* OR evalua* OR impacto* OR leccion* OR “mejores prácticas” OR “prácticas óptimas” OR “buenas prácticas” OR “prácticas idóneas”</p>
	<p><b>Idea of ‘knowledge translation’:</b> traducción* OR traduc* OR aplica* OR divulga* OR comunica* OR socializa* OR transposición* OR transpon* OR “traducción de conocimiento” OR “traducción del conocimiento” OR “traducción de conocimientos” OR “traducción de los conocimientos” OR “aplicación del conocimiento” OR “aplicación de conocimientos” OR “aplicación de los conocimientos” OR “divulgación del conocimiento” OR “divulgación de conocimientos” OR “divulgación de los conocimientos” OR “comunicación del conocimiento” OR “comunicación de conocimientos” OR “comunicación de los conocimientos” OR “socialización del conocimiento” OR “socialización de conocimientos” OR “socialización de los conocimientos” OR “transposición del conocimiento” OR “transposición de conocimiento” OR “transposición de conocimientos” OR ((conocimiento OR investigacion* OR ciencia* OR científic* OR evidencia) AND (política* OR acción* OR actuación* OR práctic*)) OR compart* OR integra* OR uso* OR usa* OR empleo* OR emple* OR utiliza* OR explota* OR aplica* OR alcanz* OR alcanz* OR impact* OR influenc* OR influi* OR OR ((particip* OR implica* OR involucr* OR interac* OR relacion*) AND usuario*) OR intermediar* OR mediador* OR mediar OR visib* OR accesib* OR posicion* OR audiencia* OR publico* OR destinatario* OR ciudadano*</p>
	<p><b>Global South:</b> Sur OR “Hemisferio Sur” OR “Sur Global” OR “países del Sur” OR “países de bajo ingreso” OR “países de ingreso bajo” OR “países de medio ingreso” OR “países de ingreso medio” OR “países de ingresos bajos y medios” OR “países en desarrollo” OR “países en vía de desarrollo” OR África OR “África sub-sahariana” OR “África subsahariana” OR africano OR africano OR africana OR africanas OR Asia OR asiático OR asiáticos OR asiática OR asiáticas OR Pacífico OR Oceanía OR “América Latina” OR “Latinoamérica” OR “América Latina y el Caribe” OR LAC OR “Sudamérica” OR “América del Sur” OR “América Central” OR “Centroamérica” OR “Caribe” OR caribeño OR caribeños OR caribeña OR caribeñas OR “Oriente Medio” OR “Medio Oriente” OR “norte de África” OR árabe OR Mediterráneo OR Mediterráneos OR Mediterránea OR Mediterráneas OR “antigua Unión Soviética” OR postsoviétic* OR post-soviétic* / Rusia / “Comunidad de Estados Independientes” + “Asia central” + “Europa del Este” OR “Europa Oriental” + “Sur de Europa”+ Balcanes</p>



<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Development or aid:</b> desarroll* OR ayuda OR “ayuda internacional para el desarrollo” OR “ayuda para el desarrollo internacional” OR asistencia OR solidaridad* OR apoy* OR cooperación OR socorr* OR reconstru* OR intervencion* OR humanitari*
	<b>Review (as in ‘literature review’):</b> ((revisión OR reseña OR estudio OR análisis) AND (literatura OR conocimiento* OR evidencia OR investigacion* OR bibliográfic* OR sistemátic* OR metódic*)) OR “revisión de la literatura” OR “revisión de literatura” OR “revisión sistemática” OR metaanálisis OR metanálisis OR síntesis

Source: Authors' own.

## 2.2 Approach to reference selection and analysis

The final literature searches were run in March 2022 in Web of Science (Web of Knowledge) and in March and April 2022 in Google and Google Scholar. Web of Science was chosen because it covers a wide range of disciplines – from medicine and natural sciences to social sciences and humanities – and various journals within each discipline.

In addition, a non-systematic snowballing from a few of the publications found through the structured searches was used, examining the reference list of the given publication or the web pages associated with it to examine additional publications that did not come up in the systematic searches.

### 2.2.1 Criteria for inclusion, organisation, and prioritisation of references

References were considered eligible for inclusion if they had an empirical focus on KT in the global South. The concept of ‘global South’ was approached in an open-ended way and included anything labelled as ‘global South’, as well as all countries other than high-income ones, and countries and territories with middle- or low-rank socioeconomic indicators in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East (Western Asia) and North Africa, and the Caucasus and Balkans. There was no restriction on sectors included in the review. References that covered theoretical debates or conceptualisations of KT and/or were clearly related to the ‘global North’ were not included in this review.

Owing to the multitude of references found in the preliminary searches, the present paper only investigated publications from the past five years (2017–22). Academic publications included scientific journal articles, proceedings, and literature reviews (all peer-reviewed), while grey literature included publications such as reports, case studies, policy briefs, guidance notes, manuals and capacity-building materials, guides on resources, meeting summaries, periodicals such as bulletins, books, working papers, presentations at conferences or workshops, and web pages, including blog posts. The review did not include programme-related publications, such as programme reporting, annual reviews, and programme evaluations.

When a publication was available in more than one language, the first choice was English followed by French and Spanish, unless there was a notable difference in the presentation that led to a clearer, more precise description in one of the other languages, in which case that version was selected (for example, if an English translation was not of very high quality).

All references retrieved were subsequently categorised through a structured approach. Four main descriptors were used for the categorisation: (1) geographic coverage (single vs more than one world region), (2) sectoral coverage (single vs more than one sector), (3) focus on inequalities (significant focus of the publication on specific groups or structural inequalities – such as gender – vs no such focus), and (4) focus on specific KT actors (significant focus of the publication on specific KT actors – such as thinktanks or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – vs no such focus).

Within each of the above categories, the descriptors of the other three categories were also applied as much as possible – with priority to geography and sectors as major categories. For example, a reference whose content revolved around focusing on a specific sector was first dispatched to the section on sectoral references, and within it to the subsection on the applicable sector. Then, within that subsection, the reference was assigned to the subsection about the geographic area it covered. Eventually, the bibliography got structured into four sections based on those four descriptors, as well as a section for cross-cutting references that cover multiple world regions and multiple sectors, i.e. references with the greatest breadth and diversity of scope.

The present paper did not apply a quality assessment of the references but instead used prioritisation criteria to determine whether an included reference would be ranked as high, medium, or low priority in the organisation of the bibliography. Priority criteria were set in two steps. The first priority was a focus entirely on the global South (rather than a coverage of the global South alongside the global North<sup>4</sup>). This was followed by having a cross-cutting coverage: the highest priority was given to references that had a multiregional and multisectoral focus. This was followed by references that comprised a narrower geographical focus and fewer sectors, and single-country case studies received the lowest priority.

To ensure some basic quality control, publications were assessed and prioritised based on very basic criteria of methodological rigour, namely: offering a description of the methods used to make the empirical claims, and having some form of basic peer review or editing (for example, academic peer review or publishing, or editing by an organisation or publisher on non-peer-reviewed literature led to a higher priority than an academic conference paper or a self-published opinion piece). We did not apply quality scoring for each publication.

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<sup>4</sup> This was in line with the focus of this review. Additionally, one practical advantage of proceeding in this way was that references with joint North–South coverage often presented findings about the South merged with those about the North, or in ways that made it hard or impossible to distinguish.

### 2.2.2 Data extraction and analysis

Publications were mapped as described above to create a structured bibliography and reviewed in a narrative, exploratory way. Grouping and categorising of the references consisted of four strands of thematic analysis. The first was the thematic grouping of references used to construct the structured bibliography. The second was an in-depth description and mapping of the state of knowledge, as observed during literature searches and as shown in the final structured bibliography. The third investigated the themes that emerged during the narrative content exploration, in connection with the four research questions. The fourth was the themes that emerged not directly in relation to the research question, but from references that brought to light interesting aspects of KT (e.g. on equality and intersectionality). The approach, therefore, combined deductive components, relating to the research framework, and inductive components, based on themes that emerged during the literature searches.

The paper will continue with presenting and discussing the state of knowledge in the global South. Results will be discussed as part of the knowledge presentation. The paper will then present reflections on the literature, conclusions and limitations of the research approach.

## 3. Structured bibliography and mapping the state of knowledge

### 3.1 Search results

In total, 202 references were included in the mapping of the literature. The structured bibliography can be found in Annexe 1. Most references – 87 per cent (n = 176) – were written in English, with 4 per cent (n = 8) in French, and 9 per cent (n = 18) in Spanish. In total, 152 references (75 per cent) were scientific references, such as research publications (n = 87), literature reviews (n = 62), scientific journal editorials (n = 2), and Master's Thesis (n = 1). Furthermore, 14 references were books and one a book chapter. The grey literature amounted to 35 references encompassing reports (n = 24), working papers (n = 5), discussion papers (n = 2), and others such as rapid response documentation, manuals, and seminar write-ups (n = 4).

References were categorised into seven main categories. Most articles (n = 83, 41 per cent) were categorised as cross-cutting references, which do not have a specific geographic focus. Of these, 23 (28 per cent) also did not have a specific sectoral focus, while 32 (39 per cent) of the references were focusing on health topics. Furthermore, ten references (12 per cent) concerned environmental topics in several regions and seven (8 per cent) education-related topics. A further five references (6 per cent) addressed information and communication technologies and four references (5 per cent) were related to agriculture. The remaining references presented topics related to infrastructure and hygiene.

Four categories were created representing geographical areas. In total, 30 references were related to topics in sub-Saharan Africa, of which 19 (63.3 per cent) concerned health and 36.7 per cent (n = 11) were references that did not have a specific sectoral focus. The second category comprised references that address topics in Latin America and the Caribbean. This category consists of 15 references, of which six (40 per cent) do not have a specific sectoral focus, six (40 per cent) are health related, and three (20 per cent) relate to agriculture. There were two references that addressed health-related topics in the Middle East and North Africa region, and eight references that address topics in Asia and the Pacific region. Of these, seven references were related to health.

Another category of references centred around intersecting factors. In total, 25 references were categorised into this group. References addressed topics such as disability (n = 8, 32 per cent), age (n = 6, 24 per cent), race (n = 2, 8 per cent), and gender (n = 2, 8 per cent). The remaining references focused on health, education, or did not specifically address one topic. The last category comprises references that concern different type of KT actors. Most (n = 12, 31 per cent) of

these references relate to universities and research institutions. Furthermore, nine references (23 per cent) relate to knowledge brokers and seven (18 per cent) to KT networks. The remaining references address KT by grass-roots organisations (n = 5), research funders (n = 4), NGOs (n = 2), KT by end user (n = 1), and art (n = 1).

### 3.1.1 Methodologies used in the knowledge base

In general, references spell out their rationale, methodology, limitations, and findings. Furthermore, most references acknowledge at least some of the epistemological, ethical, and political issues associated with KT in general (for example, Adu, Gyamfi and Martin-Yeboah 2021; Craveiro, Carvalho and Ferrinho 2020; Doucet 2019; Estelles and Fischman 2021; Fillol and Ridde 2020; Garcé *et al.* 2018; Lewis, Rodgers and Woolcock 2022; Mc Sween-Cadieux *et al.* 2017; Frieden, Graber and M'zoughi 2018; Ng 2020; Oliver, Kothari and Mays 2019; Olivier de Sardan 2021; Oronje, Murunga and Zulu 2019; Rasekoala 2019; Romão 2020; Rosset and Altieri 2017).

There is coverage of major areas of change in processes and outcomes that KT may aim for, namely policy, practices, and collective action such as social mobilisation, organised citizen involvement, education, or participation. There can of course be some overlap between these areas. Table 3.1 lays out examples of references addressing these areas.

**Table 3.1 Examples of references addressing major areas of change (policy, practice, collective action)**

Main areas of change	Examples of included references discussing the area of change
<b>Policy</b>	Adu <i>et al.</i> (2021); AFIDEP (2018); AlKhaldi <i>et al.</i> (2021); Pabari <i>et al.</i> (2020); Bell and Squire (2017); Curran <i>et al.</i> (2022); Datta and Baertl (2020); de Salvo (2019); Erismann <i>et al.</i> (2021); Ezenwaka and Onwujekwe (2021); Fillol <i>et al.</i> (2022); Galende-Sánchez and Sorman (2021); Garcé <i>et al.</i> (2018); Goldman and Pabari (2020); Jessani, Kennedy and Bennett (2017); Jessani <i>et al.</i> (2021); Kuchenmüller <i>et al.</i> (2022); Liu <i>et al.</i> (2018); Liverani, Chheng and Parkhurst (2018); Malama <i>et al.</i> (2021); Mijumbi-Deve <i>et al.</i> (2017b); Mijumbi-Deve <i>et al.</i> (2022); Mijumbi-Deve and Sewankambo (2017); Mwendera <i>et al.</i> (2017); Frieden <i>et al.</i> (2018); Obuku <i>et al.</i> (2018a); Oliver <i>et al.</i> (2022); Oliver and Cairney (2019); Olivier de Sardan (2022); Ongolo-Zogo <i>et al.</i> (2018); Oronje

	<i>et al.</i> (2019); Paing <i>et al.</i> (2021); Partridge <i>et al.</i> (2020); Perez-Escamilla <i>et al.</i> (2017); Ridde and Yaméogo (2018); Roe and Stanojević (2020); Sriram <i>et al.</i> (2018); Stewart <i>et al.</i> (2022); Tilley and Cao (2017); Uneke <i>et al.</i> (2017, 2018); UNESCO (2017); Votruba, Grant and Thornicroft (2020, 2021); Votruba <i>et al.</i> (2018); Warira <i>et al.</i> (2017); Wolfenden <i>et al.</i> (2022); WHO (2020, 2021); Yearwood (2018); Yimgang <i>et al.</i> (2021)
<b>Practice</b>	Allen <i>et al.</i> (2018); Pabari <i>et al.</i> (2020); Ben Charif <i>et al.</i> (2017); Camargo <i>et al.</i> (2018); Chishtie, Chishtie and Jaglal (2021); de Alencar <i>et al.</i> (2020); Devos <i>et al.</i> (2019); Ezenwaka and Onwujekwe (2021); Garzón-Orjuela, Eslava-Schmalbach and Ospina (2018); Goldman and Pabari (2020); Gross, Andrade and Gagnayre (2017); Hernández-Soto, Gutiérrez-Ortega and Rubia-Avi (2021); Jessani <i>et al.</i> (2019, 2021); Linhares <i>et al.</i> (2022); Olivier de Sardan, Diarra and Moha (2017); Olivier de Sardan, Bako and Harouna (2018); Perez-Escamilla <i>et al.</i> (2017); Rockwell <i>et al.</i> (2017); Roe and Stanojević (2020); UNESCO (2017); Valle Flores and Colmenero Ruiz (2020); Widyahening <i>et al.</i> (2018); Wolfenden <i>et al.</i> (2022)
<b>Collective action</b>	Adamou <i>et al.</i> (2021); Chiba <i>et al.</i> (2021); Datta and Baertl (2020); Díaz Larrañaga <i>et al.</i> (2019); Ebitu <i>et al.</i> (2021); Edwards <i>et al.</i> (2020); Estelles and Fischman (2021); Fava <i>et al.</i> (2019); Froeling <i>et al.</i> (2021); Georgiou, Hadjichambis and Hadjichambi (2021); Goren and Yemini (2017); Gresle <i>et al.</i> (2021); Levy and Germonprez (2017); Lewis <i>et al.</i> (2022); Malek, Lim and Yigitcanlar (2021); Milnor <i>et al.</i> (2020); Niyibizi <i>et al.</i> (2021); Peter, Diekotter and Kremer (2019); Purwanto, Zuiderwijk and Janssen (2020); Sepulchre (2017); van de Gevel, van Etten and Deterding (2020); Vasiliades <i>et al.</i> (2021); Vasquez-Bermudez <i>et al.</i> (2019); Yemini, Tibbitts and Goren (2019)

Source: Authors' own.

### 3.1.2 Size of studied populations, groups or samples

Taking all the included literature into account, the aggregate size of studied populations, groups or samples is large, but their size in individual studies is extremely variable, from large studies (e.g. CDKN 2021; Erismann *et al.* 2021; Fillol *et al.* 2022; Georgalakis *et al.* 2017; Goldman and Pabari 2020; Manning, Goldman and Hernández Licona 2020; Shroff *et al.* 2017, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020; Norton *et al.* 2021; Oliver *et al.* 2021; Sullivan *et al.* 2017; UNESCO 2021) to small-scale ones (e.g. D'Ostie-Racinea, Dagenais and Ridde 2021; Jessani *et al.* 2019; Lewis 2020; Mijumbi-Deve and Sewankambo 2017; Milnor *et al.* 2020;

Rockwell *et al.* 2017; Taremwa *et al.* 2020; Uneke *et al.* 2017). While smaller sizes of study are not a problem in themselves, they do limit the generalisability and, in some cases, the power of the findings (for example, in the case of quantitative studies that apply inferential statistics to small purposive samples).

### 3.1.3 Time frames

References encompass various time frames, though publications with more limited time frames seem somewhat more frequent. A greater number of studies refer to one-time cross-sectional assessments or data, or short-term effects (e.g. Adelle *et al.* 2018; Etomaru, Bisaso and Nakayiwa-Mayega 2021; Ezenwaka and Onwujekwe 2021; Kalbarczyk *et al.* 2018; Malama *et al.* 2021; Myezwa *et al.* 2022; Uneke *et al.* 2017; Yearwood 2018) than to longitudinal data (e.g. Cummings *et al.* 2019; Manning *et al.* 2020; Mc Sween-Cadieux, Dagenais and Ridde 2018; Nyamtema *et al.* 2021; Oliver *et al.* 2021; Olivier de Sardan 2021; Ongolo-Zogo *et al.* 2018; Partridge *et al.* 2020; Sell *et al.* 2020). In particular, some studies have very narrow time frames, such as a one-off survey and consultation of 40 participants in a one-day event for stakeholders' engagement in Nigeria (Uneke *et al.* 2017). With such studies, the generalisability and sustainability of findings are typically unknown. By contrast, other studies follow developments in KT over months, years, or decades (see, for example, a study covering two decades, Majdzadeh *et al.* 2010, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020, and a book synthesising research spanning four decades, Olivier de Sardan 2021). The longer the time perspective, the more comprehensive the picture of KT factors, practices, dynamics, and effects, be they negative, neutral, or positive.

## 3.2 Primary strategies used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts

### 3.2.1 Diversity and balance in the knowledge base

Search results show that there are various academic, practitioner, and policy sources producing relevant publications. This diversity strengthens the overall rigour of the knowledge base, since these three types of sources typically approach the study of KT in the global South with different purposes, questions, and methods from one another.

Compared to practice- and policy-oriented literature, academic literature tends to view KT more holistically. This is connected to academic sources often embedding their perspectives in considerations of history, politics, society, or economy (e.g. Adu *et al.* 2021; Álvarez Aceves and Demuner Flores 2017; Bámaca-López 2019; Banner *et al.* 2019; Fillol and Ridde 2020; Lambert, Chen



and Cabral 2019; Levy and Germonprez 2017; Mc Sween-Cadieux *et al.* 2017; Frieden *et al.* 2018; Olivier de Sardan 2021; Oronje *et al.* 2019; Ortiz Cueto 2021; Sussi Oliveira and Fernández Martínez 2021). These distinctions are a generalisation, and there certainly are some practitioner or policy publications that do take critical distance and perspectives grounded in social sciences (e.g. Datta and Baertl 2020; Doucet 2019; Garcé *et al.* 2018; Georgalakis *et al.* 2017; Islam, Devine and Alcaraz 2020; Manning *et al.* 2020; Morales 2021; Oliver *et al.* 2019; Oliver *et al.* 2021; Romão 2020; UNESCO 2017).

References differ in the type of focus – conceptual, theoretical, or empirical. Specifically, some publications use their empirical material to inform conceptual debates about KT (this typically applies to literature reviews about KT, and is also the case in individual studies, such as Banner *et al.* 2019; Goren and Yemini 2017; Hanlin, Tigabu and Sheikheldin 2021; Isoglio 2021; Smits and Champagne 2020; UNESCO 2017). Some do so to inform theoretical debates about KT (which also typically applies to literature reviews about KT, and individual studies, such as Banner *et al.* 2019; Mukherjee 2020; Mwendera *et al.* 2017; Norton, Rodriguez and Willems 2019; Varallyay *et al.* 2020b; Votruba *et al.* 2020, 2021; Yearwood 2018). Others put the emphasis on their empirical material itself, addressing concepts and theories primarily as part of their framework to study the material (Chishtie *et al.* 2021; D'Ostie-Racinea *et al.* 2021; Etomaru *et al.* 2021; Hanlin *et al.* 2021; Jessani *et al.* 2019, 2021; Keita *et al.* 2017; Lewis 2020; Lewis *et al.* 2022; Mahendradhata and Kalbarczyk 2022; Mc Sween-Cadieux *et al.* 2017; Mijumbi-Deve and Sewankambo 2017; Milnor *et al.* 2020; Obuku *et al.* 2018a; Ongolo-Zogo *et al.* 2018; Rasekoala 2019; Rockwell *et al.* 2017; Romão 2020; Spagnolo *et al.* 2020; Sriram *et al.* 2018; Sullivan *et al.* 2017; Sussi Oliveira and Fernández Martínez 2021; Taremwa *et al.* 2020; Uneke *et al.* 2018; van Olmen *et al.* 2018; Varallyay *et al.* 2020a; Zuluaga 2019).

The present knowledge base includes a mix of:

- single-case studies (e.g. Chishtie *et al.* 2021; D'Ostie-Racinea *et al.* 2021; Jessani *et al.* 2019; Mijumbi-Deve and Sewankambo 2017; Ospina-Pinillos *et al.* 2020; Rockwell *et al.* 2017; Uneke *et al.* 2018);
- multi-case comparisons (e.g. Adelle *et al.* 2018; Asamani and Nabyonga-Orem 2020; Pabari *et al.* 2020; Bosch-Capblanch *et al.* 2021; Georgalakis *et al.* 2017; Islam *et al.* 2020; Keita *et al.* 2017; Lewis 2020; Mijumbi-Deve *et al.* 2022; Mpando *et al.* 2021; Olivier de Sardan 2021; Olivier de Sardan and Piccoli 2018; Olivier de Sardan and Vari-Lavoisier 2022; Ongolo-Zogo *et al.* 2018; Oronje *et al.* 2019; Perez-Escamilla *et al.* 2017; Phipps *et al.* 2017; Spagnolo *et al.* 2020; van Olmen *et al.* 2018; Votruba *et al.* 2021);

- various forms of syntheses (Erismann *et al.* 2021; Gresle *et al.* 2021; Khalid *et al.* 2020; Kuchenmüller *et al.* 2022; Malla, Aylward and Ward 2018; Manning *et al.* 2020; Oliver *et al.* 2021; Setty *et al.* 2019; UNESCO 2021);
- broad literature reviews (Ben Charif *et al.* 2017; Campbell *et al.* 2019; Chapman *et al.* 2020; Chiba *et al.* 2021; Edwards *et al.* 2020; Galende-Sánchez and Sorman 2021; Garzón-Orjuela *et al.* 2018; Georgiou *et al.* 2021; Goren and Yemini 2017; Obuku *et al.* 2018b; Partridge *et al.* 2020; Vasquez-Bermudez *et al.* 2019; Votruba *et al.* 2018; Yimgang *et al.* 2021).

A systematic review about KT found similar results, noting that most of the 66 original research papers it included were case studies (Murunga *et al.* 2020).

Furthermore, the type of material varies, with a mix of primary and field-based research (e.g. in case studies), and secondary and desk-based research (e.g. in literature reviews). References draw on a variety of methods, with a few quantitative studies (e.g. Nyamtema *et al.* 2021; Sullivan *et al.* 2017; Wolfenden *et al.* 2022), and an overall predominance of qualitative research (Bosch-Capblanch *et al.* 2021; Ezenwaka and Onwujekwe 2021), including mostly document reviews and interview-based methods as well as, for example, a few in-depth ethnographic studies (Olivier de Sardan 2021; Ridde and Yaméogo 2018), and mixed-methods research used from an international (e.g. UNESCO 2021; Votruba *et al.* 2021) to a local scale (e.g. Obuku *et al.* 2018a).

It is notable that there is recurrence of some authors, editors, publishers, funders and commissioning organisations among the sources explicitly using the expression ‘knowledge translation’. Some sources have developed a specialised interest in KT and associated topics, including some academic journals (e.g. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, and *Implementation Science*), and specific individual authors and institutions (e.g. Knowledge Translation Network (KNet) Africa, the Africa Evidence Network, Peru’s Consorcio de Investigación Económica y Social). This results in the valuable production, consolidation, and advancement of knowledge on KT through cumulative, in-depth, long-term specialist knowledge, making up a field of expertise on KT. However, some of the publications on KT are from particular clusters of frequent sources. This includes Canada’s IDRC, which is frequently named as a funder, partner, commissioning body, or participant in research about KT in the global South found for the present review (e.g. in CDKN 2021; Cummings *et al.* 2019; Mendez *et al.* 2018). Such configurations could carry the risk of group thinking and of particular actors’ outsized influence over the study and understanding of KT.

Cummings *et al.* (2019) investigated a multinational group of knowledge management for development (KM4D) stakeholders using focus group discussions. Their approach highlights the integration and co-creation of

knowledge across domains. It views knowledge as a global public good and a part of the commons.<sup>5</sup> It embraces the idea of multiple knowledges, of emergence and complexity in knowledge processes, and emphasises the importance of local knowledge. This approach typically involves multistakeholder processes (Cummings *et al.* 2019). The authors suggest a framework for systematic knowledge management (Table 3.2) consisting of three components. The first is based on practice and encompasses two concepts of embedded knowledge, both of which typically face funding constraints. The first concept relates to intra-organisational processes and its usual tools are information and communications technologies (ICTs), audits and scans for knowledge management, reference to best practices and case studies, and peer assistance. The other concept relates to inter-organisational processes, through communities of practices between organisations. Its usual tools are ICTs (Hernández-Soto *et al.* 2021: 239) – with a particular role for social media – as well as reference to best practices and case studies, and peer assistance.

Knowledge exchange within such virtual communities of practice (VCOPs) is examined in an exploratory systematic review of English-language literature, though the review was published in Spanish. So far, the mechanisms of participation in VCOPs, especially knowledge-sharing behaviour, have been studied by different authors based on extremely heterogeneous theories and methods, leading to the identification of a wide array of factors and dimensions. To synthesise such knowledge, the review brought together findings from academic literature about the key drivers of knowledge-sharing behaviour in VCOPs. The review focused on literature published since 2010 and was based on 42 studies and a qualitative content analysis. Usefully, the review included references that were diverse in their methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed), the VCOPs' participants (businesses, education, health and technology), and geographies (both global North and global South, though global North countries dominate). The review concluded that knowledge-sharing behaviour was multidimensional and depended on 'personal, interpersonal, contextual, and technological factors', i.e. members of VCOPs enact or withhold sharing knowledge depending on these factors. Personal factors related to VCOPs members' own characteristics, beliefs, or expectations. Interpersonal factors related to the relations that get established between VCOPs members, and contextual factors related to the sociocultural context (Hernández-Soto *et al.* 2021).

The second component in the framework is societal. It centres integrating and co-creating knowledge across domains, and emphasises the ecology and ecosystems of knowledge. As previously mentioned, it refers to multiple

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<sup>5</sup> 'The commons' is the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable Earth. These resources are held in common even when owned privately or publicly.

knowledges, local knowledge, and emergence and complexity in knowledge processes, all viewed from the perspective of the global public good and of knowledge commons. In its multistakeholder processes, it includes stakeholders perceived as new, such as citizens and the private sector (Cummings *et al.* 2019: 9).

**Table 3.2 Framework for systematic knowledge management for development**

Components	Concept of knowledge	Features
<b>Practice-based</b>	Knowledge processes embedded in intra-organisational processes	Practice-based Funding constraints Tools: ICTs, knowledge management audits and scans, best practices, case studies, peer assistance
	Knowledge processes embedded in inter-organisational processes	Inter-organisation communities of practice Role of social media Funding constraints Tools: ICTs, best practices, case studies, peer assistance
<b>Societal</b>	Integration and co-creation of knowledge across domains Ecology and ecosystems of knowledge	Multiple knowledges Multistakeholder processes, including 'new' stakeholders such as citizens and the private sector Global public good and knowledge commons Emphasis on local knowledge Importance of emergence and complexity in knowledge
<b>Cross-cutting universal frameworks:</b> SDGs (and possibly complementary framework on knowledge for development)		

Source: Authors' own, based on Cummings *et al.* (2019).

### 3.2.2 Structures of inequalities and intersectionality

There is some coverage on structures of inequalities and their intersectionality in KT, even though much of the literature on KT in the global South explicitly aims to tackle development issues related to poverty and other structural inequalities.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Structures of inequalities include: socioeconomic class (including wealth, income, education, position in relation to capital and to paid and unpaid labour); caste; gender and sexualities; race, ethnicity, culture,

Publications sometimes refer to inequalities as part of the knowledge being translated. For example, the knowledge being translated may use gender-disaggregated data or explicitly refer to gender issues (e.g. Cameron *et al.* 2020; Curran *et al.* 2022). But they rarely examine inequalities as part of KT itself.

Very few references about KT focus on one or more structures of inequalities in KT altogether (please see Annexe 1: Structured Bibliography). For example, very few publications are dedicated to gender issues in KT in the global South (exceptions include Ng 2020; Rasekoala 2019; Vasiliades *et al.* 2021). As for the bulk of literature on KT, it has no focus on inequalities, and largely fails to mainstream the consideration of structures of inequalities, let alone intersectionality.<sup>7</sup>

Within the literature that does address inequalities, there is very uneven coverage of different inequalities, with serious gaps about some inequalities and about important facets of specific inequalities. For example, whilst there is some work related to disability (e.g. Barwick, Dubrowski and Petricca 2020; Malek *et al.* 2020; Ospina-Pinillos *et al.* 2020; Sepulchre 2017; Valle Flores and Colmenero Ruiz 2020; Votruba *et al.* 2018, 2020, 2021), there appears to be a dearth of work on caste. But even within available publications on disability, there are serious problems, including the adoption of a largely medical approach to disability instead of due consideration of the social model of disability alongside a medical model where applicable; and a focus on physical disabilities, with little on sensory disabilities (such as deafness or blindness), intellectual disabilities (such as learning and communication disabilities, neurodivergence), and mental or psychological disabilities (such as schizophrenia, complex trauma, depression, or anxiety).

Furthermore, within individual references, coverage of all major types of inequalities is not systematic. For example, a publication may cover age and gender, but no other structure. Even when references consider structural inequalities, a number of them often use weaker approaches, in that they use flat descriptions of situations instead of analyses of structural inequalities as **relations of power**; for example, referring to 'women and girls' as a stand-in for 'gender'. Typically, references will use descriptions of status in hierarchies and of specific groups, instead of more comprehensive analyses of power relations that would also include analysing the power dynamics that connect the different groups, from exclusion to adverse inclusion and exploitation.

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and religion; nationality, indigeneity, migration or displacement status; geography (including urban or rural setting, remoteness, and physical and service infrastructures); age; health; and disability.

<sup>7</sup> This is true of KT literature about the global North and the global South. The rest of this subsection remains focused on literature about the global South, but the critiques it makes apply to publications about the global North too.

Most references fail to adopt an intersectional approach. Among the references that do discuss more than one structure of inequality, inequalities are approached simply as **additional** to one another, for example through cross-categories such as ‘under 18 and indigenous’. There often lacks attention to the **compounding** dynamics of inequalities, and to their particular **contextual** configurations in a given time and place.

Even when references consider power relations, many still tend to adopt approaches that are ‘aware of’, ‘sensitive to’, or ‘responsive to’ inequalities, rather than transformative, to borrow language from gender studies (among the exceptions are, for example, Ng 2020; Rasekoala 2019).<sup>8</sup>

### *General factors influencing KT practice*

Murunga *et al.* undertook a systematic review of KT by researchers and research institutions in LMICs, which included 40 articles, and synthesised factors that influence the practice of KT by researchers in LMICs (2020: 9, 11). The review highlighted that research use by target audiences was not commonly reported and was only mentioned in a few studies. Context-specific factors were also mentioned, such as researchers’ interest in KT and institutional incentives promoting KT. Furthermore, researchers’ and their institutions’ credibility and reputation, and the relevance of research evidence, as perceived by target audiences,<sup>9</sup> were other factors discussed. The review by Murunga *et al.* (2020) also mentioned factors related to researchers’ contextual understanding, and decision makers’ research background, as well as the relations, incentives, and stances between researchers and policymakers. For example, the differences in ‘views, demands and incentives among researchers and policymakers in relation to research, its use, policy actor roles and policymaking’ (*ibid.*: 11). Issues such as the nature of the policy issues (for example, whether the issues are seen as technical, contested, or in the policymakers’ interest) and power in situations, structures, and systems which highlight the political context, donor influence, and international influence, such as the influence by the World Health Organization (WHO) on decision-making.

## 3.3 Differences by stakeholders and intended changes

The review of the KT literature shows a greater focus of references around the types of stakeholders, with limited analyses organised around the types of

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<sup>8</sup> As examples drawn from the vast literature about the spectrum of approaches to gender, see two practitioner-oriented guides (Hillenbrand *et al.* 2015; UNICEF n.d.) and one academic publication (Pederson, Greaves and Poole 2015).

<sup>9</sup> In exchanges with the paper authors, Enrique Mendizabal noted that this factor has already been well studied, as evidenced by work about the credibility of thinktanks conducted by On Think Tanks (OTT). This includes a **working paper** and a **reading list** of English-language publications by OTT.

intended outcomes, such as policy vs practice vs mobilisation, or detailed outcomes (for example, in policy, the difference between aiming to influence ideas, values, interests, processes, institutions, structures, or decisions).<sup>10</sup>

Coverage is good but differentiated on the causes, dynamics, and effects of both KT and the change that KT may aim for. It is likewise good but differentiated on the stakeholders examined, in their nature – individuals or institutions – and types (e.g. state officials vs private pressure groups vs NGOs vs general public). For example, some references cover a wide array of targeted actors (e.g. Oliver *et al.* 2021), while another focuses solely on members of an NGO (D'Ostie-Racinea *et al.* 2021).

Among publications that focused on one or more specific types of KT actors, the present research found references about a wealth of actors: universities or academics (individuals or journals); research funders (including funding institutions); aid donors; knowledge brokers; NGOs (including through engagement with evaluations); grass-roots or community-based participation (informal, or more formalised such as community advisory boards); media; end users' online searches; multiple stakeholders interacting through institutions, partnerships, networks, or secondments; artists; the state and public administrations; and private businesses (see Annexe 1 for the respective references).

The references included in this review show that there is a disparate coverage for types of activities and interventions for KT. A significant number of references focus on the efforts at KT made by knowledge producers and brokers (sometimes called the 'supply side') (e.g. Díaz Larrañaga *et al.* 2019; Etomaru *et al.* 2021; Guerra, Orjuela and Serrano 2018; Kalbarczyk *et al.* 2021a; Kalbarczyk *et al.* 2021b; Lewis 2020; Mc Sween-Cadieux *et al.* 2017; Obuku *et al.* 2018b). There seem to be far fewer studies on the knowledge users' side ('demand side') (e.g. Mijumbi-Deve *et al.* 2017b, 2022; Stewart, Erasmus and UJ-BCURE Team 2017; Uneke *et al.* 2017). There seems to be a growing number of studies on relationships between knowledge producers or brokers and knowledge users (e.g. Banner *et al.* 2019; Etale and Jessani 2020; Georgalakis *et al.* 2017; Jessani *et al.* 2021; Keita *et al.* 2017; Mpando *et al.* 2021; Nguyen *et al.* 2020; Oliver *et al.* 2022; Oliver *et al.* 2021; Roe and Stanojević 2020; Uneke *et al.* 2018).<sup>11</sup> As for the types of knowledge dynamics that are studied, there seems to be distinctly more research respectively on formal KT initiatives and

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<sup>10</sup> This is in contrast, for example, with vast literature in political science that is not specialised in KT, which offers studies organised around stakeholders but also around policymaking processes or outcomes.

<sup>11</sup> The categories of knowledge producer, broker, and user can of course be fluid and overlap (for example, in the more interactive or grass-roots types of KT, someone can take up all three roles, alternatively or simultaneously). Nonetheless, the categories are still useful for identifying people's and organisations' positions in relation to knowledge and to KT.

institutions than informal practices, on top-down KT than bottom-up KT, and on directed or facilitated KT than diffuse or self-led KT.

Overall, the diversity of research on the types of knowledge being translated and on the actors supporting KT ensures that all main categories of knowledge type and KT actors are covered, although the degree of research is uneven. In particular, this review found distinctly more research that revolved around academic knowledge and academia-related actors of KT (e.g. Murunga *et al.* 2020) than on any other knowledge type (such as informal knowledge, or scientific research from sources outside academia) and any other KT actor (such as thinktanks, NGOs, or grass-roots movements, for example grass-roots community advisory boards who translate knowledge in ‘vernacular’ (Milnor *et al.* 2020)). This likely relates to two issues: (1) academic research using the exact term ‘knowledge translation’, and (2) the exact term ‘knowledge translation’ being used less in non-scientific settings and outside the health sector.

### 3.3.1 Researchers and research institutions

The aforementioned coverage patterns result not only from knowledge producers’ and brokers’ decisions, but also from the actual state of KT practices around the world – especially more formalised KT. For example, Murunga *et al.* (2020) conducted a systematic review documenting and analysing KT practices and activities undertaken by researchers and research organisations. This review found a small knowledge base with limited sectoral diversity, mainly focusing on health, and documents and analyses KT practices in predominantly LMICs. Furthermore, about half of the researchers in LMICs do not practice KT (Murunga *et al.* 2020). Instead, researchers and research institutions allocate more effort and investments to roles and functions in research than in KT (*ibid.*: 1, 16). This is mainly because researchers face a range of capacity constraints and barriers, at both individual and institutional levels. Barriers include ‘inadequate KT knowledge and skills, particularly for communicating research and interacting with research end-users, insufficient funding, and inadequate institutional guidelines, structures and incentives promoting KT practice’ (*ibid.*: 12).

In addition, it has also been shown that researchers undertake a narrow range of easier, less interactive KT activities, while investing little time to interact with different target audiences and to tailor their communication of findings to these audiences. The most frequent dissemination formats reported were scientific publications and conferences, whereas media were the least frequent avenue used (Murunga *et al.* 2020). Researchers engage more in ‘producer push’ than in ‘user pull’ or in exchange activities (*ibid.*). Producer push activities are described as research products in language appropriate to specific audiences, messages that set out specific actions, and attending workshops, conferences and other events (*ibid.*). In contrast, only a limited number of researchers engage



in interactions outside their research process, such as participating in expert committees or groups, or in government-sponsored meetings (*ibid.*).

Researchers seldom engage in activities such as publishing non-scholarly articles, accepting requests from journalists to participate in interviews or debates, or making their research publicly available on websites, indicating that KT related to user pull was rare (*ibid.*). Furthermore, it is rare for researchers to align their research with government policy priorities, to actively interact with policy actors, and to synthesise evidence for policy and practice. Alignment with policy priorities was found more often in the area of health research than in articles describing government policy priorities and policy dialogues (Cheung *et al.* 2011, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 10).

In general, the most frequently mentioned outputs from research are single basic science and observational studies. Systematic reviews or other forms of syntheses are rarely mentioned, indicating that there is a lack of synthesising the evidence base to inform decisions on policy and practice (Cheung *et al.* 2011, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 11; Uneke *et al.* 2012, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 10).

In contrast, in a small-scale study on reproductive health research in Bangladesh, researchers self-reported using multiple KT activities to share their findings with policymakers, although they did not seem to systematically track and assess their impact (Walugembe *et al.* 2015, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 10). However, only a small number of respondents developed policy briefs, had one-on-one meetings with policymakers or provided technical assistance to them, produced research reports, and engaged the media. Moreover, few respondents knew how and when during the policymaking process their findings were utilised, suggesting that they do not systematically assess the impact of their KT activities (Walugembe *et al.* 2015, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 10).

Another small-scale study included in the systematic review found that there are fewer and less diverse interactions between academic researchers and industry, including for products or services based on researchers' work, compared to interactions among academic researchers (Lashari *et al.* 2017, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 10).

The situation may be changing, however. One Spanish-language systematic review of English-language academic publications investigated knowledge transfer by higher education institutions and found publications mostly about the global North, with only a few discussing the global South. The review findings confirmed that knowledge transfer can take a variety of forms, from commercialisation, academic or spin-off companies, patents or licences, to technology transfer or industry–academia relations (Guerra *et al.* 2018). Higher education institutions have been increasingly interested in knowledge transfer, however, and have been integrating it into their strategies for innovation and

social appropriation of knowledge. Strengthening relationships of trust between academia, businesses and state is significant for increasing the impact of knowledge transfer in wider society, through new products, services and solutions that go on to foster ecosystems of innovation (Guerra *et al.* 2018: 316).

Over the past decade there has also been a strong movement, particularly in health in Africa and South Asia, towards embedding science advice and evidence use in government ministries (Stewart 2015). Initiatives range from rapid response services (Mijumbi-Deve *et al.* 2017a) to establishing dedicated multidisciplinary teams designed to break down barriers between the producers and users of research (Sen *et al.* 2017). Overall, it can be concluded that there is great variation in the degree and nature of interactions specifically between researchers and policymakers, depending on context and background.

### 3.3.2 Gaps in interventions conducted to improve KT capacities and practices

A number of past and current interventions and tools to improve KT by researchers and research institutions in LMICs have taken place, though very few have given rise to assessments published in academic peer-reviewed journals (Murunga *et al.* 2020: 17). These interventions have largely focused on improving researchers' **individual** capacity for KT through trainings and capacity-building – on KT (theory, application, barriers, and facilitators), research communication, systematic reviews, or developing and sustaining relations with policymakers and the media (*ibid.*: 17).

Other interventions have aimed to strengthen collaboration and to support the establishment and operation of networks for KT, such as EVIP-Net and the Consortium for Health Policy and Systems Analysis in Africa (*ibid.*: 17). Importantly, there has been a dearth of **multipronged** interventions aiming to enhance individual and institutional capacity for KT by researchers and research institutions in LMICs, according to Murunga *et al.* (2020: 17). This is despite evidence showing the crucial need for such approaches (*ibid.*: 17).

### 3.3.3 Actors specialised in 'knowledge management for development'

While knowledge management has a long history, some authors (Cummings *et al.* 2019: 3) argue that knowledge management for development is a more recent occurrence generated by large aid donors and actors in the global North for application in the global South.<sup>12</sup> Such KT remains primarily oriented towards the priorities and perspectives of these donors and actors (*ibid.*: 3).

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<sup>12</sup> The present review could not examine this claim due to time constraints. However, it may be worth noting that historians of Western and non-Western development and humanitarianism have documented attempts at knowledge management and KT that are much older than the 1990s, be it under conditions

A 2017 consultation of experts suggested that UN-related knowledge brokering simultaneously displayed aspects of the third generation of knowledge management (inter-organisational communities of practice), fourth generation (knowledge processes embedded in organisational processes, and practice-based knowledge management), and fifth generation (local knowledge, and multi-stakeholder processes) (*ibid.*: 8).

This may be happening because the expertise exists at national level in LMICs, but also because financing for operations has been falling. Internal knowledge management and implementation in the field contribute to UN organisations' legitimacy as knowledge brokers, since the UN system has potentially hierarchical relations with other organisations working on development knowledge. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a helpful framework which both UN actors and others involved in knowledge management have referred to (*ibid.*: 5–6). Nonetheless, a specific framework on knowledge could be a useful complement to fill gaps in the SDGs on 'knowledge for development'.<sup>13</sup>

Inter-organisational communities of practice, which are part of third-generation knowledge management, have played an important role in connecting professionals of knowledge brokering across and between organisations. Internally, many development organisations are concerned about losing the expertise of their employees who leave, and of consultants who work for them only temporarily. Thanks to knowledge communities with stable memberships, such as the IDRC-founded 'Knowledge Management for Development' (KM4Dev), expertise is not lost even as individuals move between organisations and consultancies (*ibid.*: 6).

Multi-stakeholder processes are important to facilitate links between the UN and local actors for knowledge management for development. Major facilitators of links include NGOs, social entrepreneurs, and the private sector in all its diversity, from multinational corporations to local small businesses (*ibid.*: 6).<sup>14</sup>

However, local knowledge is inadequately covered, and thus brokered, by UN knowledge management. Some factors behind this are readily identified by UN experts themselves. For example, differences in languages prevent sharing

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of colonialism, imperialism, or greater local autonomy or independence. Lessons from those earlier attempts could well be useful, both to recognise historical legacies in today's KT, and to learn from successes and failures in a comparative, context-informed way. See, for example, Bámaca-López (2019); Broadbent (2012); Doucet (2019); Estey *et al.* (2009); Hitomi and Loring (2018); Kirkland (2019); Ng (2020); Olivier de Sardan (2021); Smylie *et al.* (2004).

<sup>13</sup> See a proposal by Brander and Cummings (2017), summarised in Cummings *et al.* (2019: 10).

<sup>14</sup> However, a 2017 review about the role of the private sector in development, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), warned that: '[t]he decision to partner with the private sector should be rooted in a theory of change that establishes whether and how the private sector is best placed to realise specific development results' (OECD-DAC 2017: 11, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 6).

knowledge between UN country offices and local people.<sup>15</sup> However, UN experts, such as those consulted in this study, tend to ignore more structural factors causing international development actors to marginalise local knowledge, and to sometimes drown out local voices. For instance, inequalities in symbolic power and convening power lead to hierarchies of credibility, where international organisations are at the top, followed by national governments, and local communities coming in a distant third (*ibid.*: 7).

### 3.3.4 Knowledge brokers active in the development field

The literature describes knowledge brokering in the development field, i.e. making connections between people to facilitate the use of knowledge, as complex, diverse, and contextual (Conklin *et al.* 2013, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 3; Kislov *et al.* 2017, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 3).<sup>16</sup> Beyond these general observations, however, there are two major types of brokering, which have noteworthy differences.

First, a widely researched type of brokering in development is about facilitating the use of knowledge from research in policy and practice. Such research has used varying terminologies, such as ‘knowledge intermediaries’, KT, and ‘knowledge co-creation’. There are diverse models for such brokering, and many people engage in knowledge brokering without labelling their activities as such (Jackson-Bowers 2006, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4).

However, common features of brokering include: building relationships and networks (not just communicating information); familiarity with the domain, including on relationships and networks; brokers’ credibility as experts (instead of a positioning as advocates or lobbyists); and trust between participants (Jackson-Bowers 2006, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4).

However, in development, people can broker knowledge at ‘very many different levels, not just between research, policy and practice’ (Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4). One perspective to understand this is to think of knowledge cultures. Each knowledge culture has its own types of content, inquiries and languages, and each individual is part of different knowledge cultures (Brown 2008, 2011, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4).

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<sup>15</sup> The source article describes local languages as the barrier, but it could just as well be said that many UN officials’ lack of mastery of local languages is the barrier.

<sup>16</sup> Some practitioners in international development – mostly within the UN system – defined knowledge brokering by its role in adding value and by its functions: ‘adapting, translating, connecting, acting as an intermediary, match-making, convening of networks and professional learning, connecting supply and demand for knowledge, catalysing and facilitating’ (Cummings *et al.* 2019: 5). In this reference, ‘development’ is primarily understood in reference to the UN’s SDGs, and refers to efforts to advance economic, social and environmental development, whether the effort is by local, national or international actors.

Brokering thus occurs at many levels and in many ways. For example, 'brokers at the grass roots make linkages between these different types of knowledge' (Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4). Other development actors make linkages between local knowledge, scientific knowledge (e.g. extension services that aim to improve farming practices), and other knowledge from diverse sectors, such as health and agriculture.

Brokering therefore has a crucial role in development 'as a cognitive bridge between these different types of knowledge' (Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4).

## 3.4 Differences by sectors, disciplines, and geographies

### 3.4.1 Geography

Results presented in Annexe 2 show that all major geographic regions in the global South are covered. Different studies cover KT in different areas: some across the entire global South (Annexe 2), others across one or more regions, countries or subnational locations within in. The more limited the coverage, the more uncertain the generalisability and applicability of the findings about KT in other settings. However, studies with narrower geographic scopes can provide invaluable depth to findings, where wider scopes are strong on breadth.

There are differences in the number of references from the different regions. Most references are from sub-Saharan Africa (n = 30), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (n = 15). Some areas do appear to be under-researched such as Western Asia, Middle East and North Africa (n = 2), and Asia and the Pacific (n = 8) (Annexe 2). Specific sub-regions within world regions seem under-researched too, such as regions in sub-Saharan Africa where French and Portuguese are among the official languages (such as parts of Western and Central Africa), compared to those where English is among the official languages (such as parts of East and Southern Africa). Besides, there seems to be some under-research on KT in rural areas, though this may be caused by the limitations in the keywords, as these excluded terms applicable to KT in sectors predominant in rural areas (for example, keywords about extension services for agriculture).

The knowledge base covers very diverse political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of countries overall. This being said, research seems scarcer on contexts marked by autocracy, by war or other forms of widespread violence (outside of KT in the international humanitarian field), by less formal or less powerful public institutions, and by economies that perform very poorly for development.

It has been shown that country income status, country context, institutional culture, research type, and research topic all influence capacity for KT, with differences between and within countries explaining a multitude of variations (Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8–9, 16) while different sectors and academic disciplines are not associated with significant differences in KT strategies (Oliver *et al.* 2021: 62).

Murunga *et al.*'s (2020) review found that KT capacities, factors, and interventions are largely consistent with what has been reported in high-income countries. However, there are differences between countries due to differences or inequalities in the factors that shape KT practices (*ibid.*: 18). For example, low-income countries have fewer KT capacities than middle-income countries, especially upper-middle-income ones (Maleki *et al.* 2014, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8). There are also differences in knowledge about country-specific research priorities between countries (El-Jardali *et al.* 2018, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 6).

Institutional culture is an important factor influencing KT capacity within and between countries (Ayah *et al.* 2014, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8). For example, being part of an effective research network may be one specific positive factor (Gonzalez-Block and Mills 2003, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8; Shroff *et al.* 2017, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8; Georgalakis *et al.* 2018).

### 3.4.2 Differences by research type and research topic

The coverage of sectors is unequal, but the specifics are hard to ascertain due to the use of different terms in different sectors to discuss KT. One third (n = 69) of all references concerned KT in a health context (Annexe 2). Other sectors such as education, agriculture, and topics related to the environment are represented as well. However, it is difficult to ascertain how much research there has been because of a variation in terminology to discuss KT, which may have resulted in an oversight of publications due words and expressions not included in the search strategy.

The overreporting of health-related publications is a serious problem given the importance of multiple other sectors and of cross-sectoral work for development. Under-reported sectors include social protection; work and economics; housing and shelter; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); land; agriculture; food; territorial planning (urban and rural); infrastructure; energy; ICTs; environment (including climate, and environment-related disasters); and security.

This pattern, combined with other aspects of the knowledge base, has negative consequences for how KT in the global South is studied and understood. For example, one well-documented hurdle in KT has been KT actors' dearth of attention to power and the fundamentally political nature of KT, from micro to

macro scales (for a discussion on this, see Oliver *et al.* 2021: 55–60). The failure to bring political science and economy into many KT efforts may well be one reason for this hurdle.

Murunga *et al.* (2020) state that the type and topic of research influences the extent to which researchers are involved in KT activities (Nedjat *et al.* 2008, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 9; Lavis *et al.* 2010, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8–9). For example, health systems researchers were more likely than basic and clinical researchers to undertake KT activities targeting non-scientific audiences (Nedjat *et al.* 2008, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 9).

In contrast, Oliver *et al.* (2021) state that policy sectors or academic disciplines do not determine the approach that researchers and decision makers choose in order to engage stakeholders in their work. Stakeholder engagement shares many features across sectors and disciplines. However, decision makers' and researchers' choices depend on a balance of interest between generalisable evidence and local evidence, and on how much consensus there is about what is known when collaborative work begins (Oliver *et al.* 2021: 62).

### 3.5 Differences in underlying theories of evidence-informed policy and practice

The use of explicit conceptualisations and theory by researchers and research institutions to design KT activities is limited (Murunga *et al.* 2020). However, a number of practitioner and policy KT efforts seem to have been based on explicit theories of change that spell out their understanding of evidence-informed policy and practice (for examples of discussions of interventions, see Brownson *et al.* 2018; Devos *et al.* 2019; Garzón-Orjuela *et al.* 2018; Mc Sween-Cadieux *et al.* 2019; Wolfenden *et al.* 2022; Yearwood 2018).

One point of agreement in the literature is that there is a diversity of concepts (and associated terminology) used to describe KT in the global South – sometimes but not always in reference to terms, concepts, and definitions from the global North, especially Canadian institutions' definitions of KT (for example, Banner *et al.* 2019; Hanlin *et al.* 2021; Kraemer-Mbula *et al.* 2020; Murunga *et al.* 2020; Oliver *et al.* 2021; Shaxson *et al.* 2012; UNESCO 2017). In the absence of explicit theories, concepts and terminology may therefore offer some entry points to identify tacit understandings by actors involved in KT about what KT is, how it works, and how evidence relates to policy and practice. Still, whether the entry point for analysis is theories or concepts and terminology, dealing with entirely or mostly implicit approaches poses serious challenges for secondary research conducted in a short time frame.

### 3.5.1 Challenges posed by implicit approaches to theories

Further, while **explicit** theories of KT are sometimes scant, there are always at least **implicit** theories embedded in interventions, but these are complex and time-consuming to ascertain through secondary research only. This makes it difficult to run comparisons and, for instance, to learn about the validity, effects, and relative impact of different theories. Among others, the following study challenges arise. KT actors, as any social actor, have at least implicit representations. So, whether KT actors spell out any theories or not, their actions will reflect their understanding of their situation and their goal, based on their ideas, values, and interests. However, this is harder to analyse than at least partly explicit representations.

Second, some KT actors may develop their explicit theory entirely inductively and during their action, so that they have no explicit theory at the start but do have one in later stages of their KT action. This means that any publication about KT action that this actor generates early on will be more complex to parse for the underlying theory in a review of secondary literature.

Third, there can be a divergence between a KT actor's stated theory as laid out in publications, and the theory their eventual actions reflects. This may be due to external constraints forcing them into a suboptimal course, preventing them from taking actions that would have matched their understanding of evidence-informed policy or practice. Furthermore, circumstances may have made actors change course, or because they did not enact their stated intent (for example, actors may claim to adopt an inclusive approach, but end up excluding certain groups, wittingly or not) which results in challenges for secondary research.

Fourth, some of the studies found in the research (such as Cummings *et al.* 2019; Olivier de Sardan 2021) suggest that individual and collective KT actors may simultaneously harbour multiple, at times contradictory, theories about evidence-informed policy and practice. This can happen more so when the theories remain implicit, or when several actors with different theories are trying to collaborate on a single KT initiative. Therefore, any investigation should examine differences in theories both between the different modes of KT, and also within each KT mode.

Fifth, some KT endeavours are based on theorising that is deeply grounded in the context of intervention (akin to advocacy plans tailored to an issue and a particular context). In such a case, some of the crucial aspects of the theory would not easily be generalisable or comparable with other contexts or would only be so after in-depth analysis identifies the contextual conditions of history, society, and economy and how it shapes what constitutes 'evidence', 'policy' and 'practice', and clarifies the links and relative weight between generalisable variables (such as evidence and intended outcomes), and contextual ones.



### 3.5.2 Tentative findings as starting points for future analysis

Overall, the four modes of KT (Figure 1.1) and associated theories in the research framework match the actual KT practices documented in the literature well – in particular, the many activities that are supply-driven or demand-driven.

At the same time, the literature confirms that KT actors have multiple alternative or complementary ways to theorise KT and evidence-informed policy and practice, and that centring analysis on the axis of linear vs interactive approaches is useful, but not the only insightful approach. For example, the approaches and underlying concepts of knowledge documented in the expert study on generations of KT yields useful insights about how knowledge and its use are understood theoretically (see Cummings *et al.* 2019).

One important nuance the literature brings, compared to the hypothesised modes of KT, is that parts of the KT practices identified in the literature – especially those that combine supply- and demand-side action – are not about formalised initiatives with a plan and theory (whether implicit or explicit), but about a myriad of informal activities and associated theories that develop in an organic way, probably in response to learning, opportunities, and constraints that arise over time. This covers, for example, what the synthesis of expert views calls KT as a ‘cognitive bridge’ between different knowledge cultures, especially as part of the fifth generation of KT that revolves around a system or ecology of development knowledge at society-wide level (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

In those cases, actors carrying out KT adapt their actions and pull different levers of KT activities as their understanding (and theory or theories) of how evidence could inform a targeted policy or practice in context evolves (Oliver *et al.* 2021).

Lastly, there remains an open question about interpreting the weaknesses and gaps in KT practices identified earlier in this paper, and how much of these shortcomings result from theories vs other factors. For example, researchers often use less interactive types of activities and do not diversify their target audiences much (Murunga *et al.* 2020). Do these shortcomings result from constraints on actions that KT would like to take but cannot? Do they result from KT actors’ deliberate or unconscious theory of KT and evidence-informed policy or practice? Or do they result from a mix of both constraint and theory? The source material identified constraints, but there was not enough information on whether researchers’ representations of KT also played a decisive role. This illustrates that further secondary research, and likely further primary research, is needed if comparisons of theories within and between different modes of KT are needed.

## 4. Drawing lessons from failures, successes, interventions, and contextualisation

The present research contributes to filling a gap in existing research on KT in the global South. Prior literature on KT has established that merely having knowledge about evidence into use processes is not enough to succeed at influencing policy and practice. In addition, it is unclear and contested how applicable knowledge about the global North is to the global South. Lastly, available secondary literature on KT in the global South has some shortcomings, such as a frequent focus on the health sector and on sub-Saharan Africa. By exploring recent knowledge on the global South in three languages across world regions, sectors, and academic disciplines, the present review offers a cross-cutting view that identifies areas and topics that often get missed in similar reviews.

While this review is broad in scope and gives an indication of the state of the literature, it has several limitations due to time constraints and feasibility considerations. In particular, the results presented here are not a systematic review, and had to leave aside relevant areas of the literature that are associated with search terms not closely associated with particular expressions such as 'knowledge translation'. Whereas the reader can learn about gaps in this KT literature, this review cannot provide a comprehensive picture of current practices and innovations in KT across sectors and geographies. There are undoubtedly significant innovations underway in KT in the global South which have not yet been sufficiently documented in ways that would have allowed this review to pick them up.

### 4.1 Strengths and weaknesses in the state of knowledge

Despite its limitations, this review was able to identify and map a large number of relevant publications, thus offering a good vantage point on the state of knowledge. It confirms that there is a large knowledge base about KT in the global South. Overall, there is a high degree of methodological rigour, and a frequent – though not systematic – acknowledgement of the ethical, political, and epistemological issues involved. The knowledge base encompasses a good balance of academic, practitioner, and policy sources, and diversity in focus as references use their material to address KT through a more conceptual, theoretical, or empirical lens. The study approaches (e.g. single- or multi-case

studies), types of empirical material used, and methods are also diverse and well balanced in the overall base. Interestingly, there seem to be differences in quantity and contents by language in publications, with references in French and Spanish, for example, discussing KT from generally more critical perspectives embedded in social sciences.

The knowledge base, taken in the aggregate, generally provides good coverage on many aspects of KT, even as the scope of individual studies is extremely variable and as some areas remain under-researched (e.g. Asia and the Pacific, rural areas, contexts of war or autocracy, longer study time frames). In particular, the knowledge base amounts to a large coverage regarding: the aggregate size of studied populations, groups or samples; geographies; types of political, economic, social and cultural contexts; time frames. There is also good though differentiated coverage about the main areas of change in processes and outcomes that KT may aim for (namely policy, practices, and collective action), about the causes, dynamics, and effects of both KT and the change that KT may aim for, as well as about the actors supporting KT, the actors targeted for change, and the types of knowledge being 'translated'.

The findings presented in the literature also seem to have multiple strengths. The knowledge base provides a balanced mix of descriptive, narrative, analytical, and synthetic findings. Many studies offer findings that are conclusive, not just indicative. Moreover, among the many references that examine some form of inference, a majority seem to establish causality, not just correlation. Lastly, high-level findings about KT in the global South seem generally consistent across the literature. However, differences, nuances, contradictions, and oppositions do exist, especially in the less high-level findings. This is likely due to a combination of differences in study contexts, in study scopes and methodologies, and in authors' values, ideas, and interests.

A few weaknesses are present in the knowledge base and call for attention or caution. For instance, there is a recurrence of some specialised authors, editors, publishers, funders and commissioning organisations among the sources found. While this means KT has become a field with in-depth, long-term specialist knowledge, this also carries the potential risk of group thinking and of particular actors' outsized influence over the study and understanding of KT.

Another weakness is that the coverage of sectors is uneven and patchy: health and, to a lesser extent, education appear to be much more studied, while literature searches run for this research found barely any references that would focus on other vital sectors such as social protection, housing, or energy-related topics. Relatedly, there is coverage by all scientific disciplines, but medical sciences are over-represented, and some (sub)fields are notably under-represented, such as political science, history, and economics. Similar observations about uneven and patchy coverage arise about the types of

activities and interventions used for KT, with under-research about the side of knowledge users and about the relationships between them and knowledge producers and brokers. Worryingly, there is clearly both under-research and under-analysis on structures of inequalities such as gender and their intersectionality as part of KT itself.

## 4.2 Strategies and variations in KT in the global South

Drawing on a few high-level literature reviews that have both cross-regional and cross-sectoral scopes, the paper synthesises information about KT in the global South by answering the four lead questions.

### **Research question 1: What are the primary strategies used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts?**

The analysis draws on an overview of the types of ‘knowledge management for development’ identified through an initiative that brought together researchers in knowledge management outside and within the development field. This initiative identified five generations of knowledge management for development, each with different perspectives, methods, and tools (Cummings *et al.* 2019). Furthermore, types of knowledge and inequalities were also discussed.

The study concluded that, when the diversity of knowledge management is taken into account – from informal grass-roots work to formal multilateralism – current knowledge management for development brings together practice-based and societal approaches. Practice-based knowledge processes are embedded within organisations (for example, through the use of peer assistance or knowledge scans), and between organisations (for example, through best practices or peer assistance in inter-organisation communities of practice). As for societal knowledge management, it revolves around the integration and co-creation of knowledge across domains, and the ecology and ecosystems of knowledge. It includes multiple knowledges, with an emphasis on local knowledge, and on the importance of emergence and complexity in knowledge. It involves multistakeholder processes, including citizens and the private sector. It is oriented towards the global public good (as laid out, for example, in the UN’s SDGs), and knowledge commons (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

### **Research question 2: How do these primary strategies differ in relation to key stakeholders and intended outcomes (changes)?**

The review shows that researchers and research institutions practice KT only to a limited extent. A number of researchers in LMICs practice KT, but a significant part do not. Moreover, researchers resort to a narrow range of easier, less interactive KT activities, while investing little time to interact with different target

audiences' needs and responses. They engage more frequently in 'producer push' than in 'user pull' or in exchange activities. In general, researchers interact comparatively more with policymakers, and less with industry, media, other stakeholders, and the wider public (Murunga *et al.* 2020).

The degree and nature of interactions specifically between researchers and policymakers seems to vary by context. Overall though, it is rare for researchers to align their research with government policy priorities, to actively interact with policy actors, and to synthesise evidence for policy and practice (Murunga *et al.* 2020).

Even when researchers did engage with target audiences, they did not seem to systematically track and assess their impact. More broadly, interventions to improve KT have largely focused on improved researchers' individual capacity for KT, and neglected interventions through institutional capacity-building and change, and through multipronged interventions to enhance both individual and institutional capacity (Murunga *et al.* 2020).

Looking at a different set of stakeholders, the previously mentioned study about actors specialised in 'knowledge management for development' concluded that this type of knowledge management has remained primarily oriented towards the priorities and perspectives of the large aid donors and actors in the global North that supported this field for application in the global South. However, this may be slowly changing, as other actors involved have been doing effective knowledge brokering. For example, the UN system and some other aid actors are turning more into brokers of internal and external knowledge than producers of knowledge, through inter-organisational communities of practice and multistakeholder processes. While international organisations often neglect and inadequately broker local knowledge, other actors such as NGOs are better at this (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

Meanwhile, there is an emerging literature on the movement in Africa and South Asia towards embedding knowledge brokerage functions in government agencies or creating dedicated client services in universities to meet the evidence demands of policy actors. These developments, although predominantly in health, may become very significant for how knowledge translation is operationalised and understood in a Southern context (Mijumbi-Deve *et al.* 2022; Sen *et al.* 2017).

Knowledge brokers active in the development field are a wide and diverse category of stakeholders, with two main subtypes that show noteworthy differences with one another. A first type aims to facilitate the use of knowledge from research into policy and practice, through processes such as knowledge intermediation, translation, or co-creation. This commonly entails building relationships and networks, and trust between participants, with brokers who are

positioned as credible experts (rather than as advocates or lobbyists) and familiar with the domain and its stakeholders (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

The second, less well-researched type, is about providing a cognitive bridge between different types of knowledge. This relates to the many forms and levels of brokering that occur between different knowledge cultures. Each knowledge culture has its own types of content, inquiries, and languages (Brown 2008, 2011, cited in Cummings *et al.* 2019: 4). For example, development actors can make linkages between local knowledge, scientific knowledge, and other sectoral knowledge (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

**Research question 3: How do different strategies [used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts] relate to sectors, disciplines, and geographies?**

At the widest geographic scale, findings about KT capacities, factors and interventions are largely consistent across high-, medium- and low-income countries. However, due to differences or inequalities in the factors that shape KT practices, KT capacity seems lower in low-income countries than in middle-income countries, especially upper-middle-income ones (Murunga *et al.* 2020).

Beyond this, differences between and within countries matter, separately and together. Country-specific factors are at play, though specifics on this are scarce in the reviewed literature. However, while differences between countries matter, they alone cannot explain variations in KT capacities: differences within countries play a major role too (*ibid.*).

An important source of variation, within and between countries, is institutional culture, though specifics on this are scant. For example, being part of an effective research network may be one distinguishing positive factor, in areas such as institutional incentives for KT, capacity-building for KT, and impact assessment of KT efforts – the indicative example in this case is the cross-regional Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (*ibid.*).

Even within the same institution, the type of research conducted is another important factor. For example, one study on the Tehran University of Medical Sciences in Iran found that researchers working on health systems were likelier to do KT than those doing basic or clinical research (*ibid.*).

Similarly, the topic of research, and the associated research culture, may influence researchers' KT. For example, in a large-scale, cross-regional study that examines the support provided by health research institutions to their researchers' KT, researchers working on childhood diarrhoea were consistently more likely to have worse KT capacity than researchers working on malaria prevention, contraception, or tuberculosis treatment, yet also more likely 'to

believe that their research was ready for application' (Lavis *et al.* 2010, cited in Murunga *et al.* 2020: 8–9).

In contrast, policy sectors and academic disciplines are seemingly not associated with significant differences in KT strategies adopted by researchers or decision makers to engage stakeholders in their work. If anything, there are many shared features across sectors and disciplines (Oliver *et al.* 2021).

**Research question 4: How do the different modes of KT interventions [used to enhance the use of knowledge in Southern contexts] reflect different theories of evidence-informed policy and practice?**

Only some KT interventions (and evaluations) documented in the literature appear to have been deliberately and explicitly based on any theory of evidence-informed policy and practice, be it at the outset of efforts or by the time of an assessment or the end of an initiative. This shortcoming may be particularly pronounced in KT done by researchers and research institutions. In the absence of explicit theories, concepts and terminology may therefore offer some entry points to identify tacit understandings. By contrast, while explicit theories of KT are sometimes scant, there are always at least implicit theories embedded in interventions, but several challenges make them complex and time-consuming to ascertain through secondary research only.

Due to this, the present research can only offer the following tentative findings as starting points for future analysis. Overall, the four modes of KT and associated theories in the framework for this research match the actual KT practices documented in the literature well. Nonetheless, KT actors have multiple alternative or complementary ways to theorise KT and evidence-informed policy and practice.

One important nuance the literature brings compared to the hypothesised modes of KT is that parts of the KT practices identified in the literature – especially those that combine supply- and demand-side action – are not about formalised initiatives with a plan and theory (whether implicit or explicit), but about a myriad of informal activities and associated theories that develop in an organic way, probably in response to learning, opportunities, and constraints that arise over time. Lastly, there remains an open question about interpreting the weaknesses and gaps in KT practices identified earlier in this paper, and how much of these shortcomings result from theories versus other factors such as external constraints on KT actions.

## 4.3 Lessons from failures, successes, interventions, and contextualisation

There are well-established factors that shape KT as enabling conditions or as obstacles. In broad terms, four types of factors are most influential. The first relates to the context for KT research use – namely, whether research gets used by target audiences to inform decisions on policy or practice is crucial. Power in the situations, structures and systems, such as political context, donor influence, and international influence, are major determinants (Murunga *et al.* 2020). Hierarchies of knowledge about development, where local knowledge is devalued, is an obstacle (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

The second type of factor relates to knowledge producers. Factors here include research institutions' incentives and support for KT, as well as researchers' interest and skills in KT, and their understanding of context. A crucial skill is the ability to tailor, target, and time research communication for different audiences, and to choose the right messengers and channels. Factors also include researchers' credibility, reputation, and institution, as well as the credibility, relevance and timeliness of evidence, all **as perceived** by target audiences (Murunga *et al.* 2020).

The third type relates to knowledge users. One is decision makers' understanding of research. Another is the nature of the policy issues – including whether the issues are seen as technical, contested, or in the policymakers' interest (*ibid.*).

The fourth relates to the relations between knowledge producers and users, especially the relationships, incentives, and stances between decision makers and knowledge-producing individuals and institutions. In particular, both the quality and diversity of collaborations and networks with target audiences matters (*ibid.*).

As for interventions to improve knowledge producers' capacities in KT, an important finding is that multipronged interventions that improve individuals' and institutions' capacities are important for sustainable improvement (Murunga *et al.* 2020). Continuity of funding and long-term perspective are important too (Cummings *et al.* 2019).

### 4.3.1 Lessons from contextualisation efforts

The degree of clarity and consensus among stakeholders about (1) the evidence and (2) the context of decisions determines how researchers and policymakers can best engage stakeholders in context. This is because, in some contexts, generalisable evidence may not be available or clear, or not combined inclusively with context-specific evidence such as local data and tacit knowledge. Moreover,



for successful KT, stakeholders must take into account the structural socio-political factors that shape how actors produce and use evidence, namely: power, interests, and politics; institutions, relationships, and alliances; ideas, cultures and world views (Oliver *et al.* 2021).

More broadly, in many contexts, the problems, factors and solutions in knowledge use are not primarily about knowledge **translation**, but rather about knowledge **implementation** (Olivier de Sardan 2021). Consequently, disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, and political science are invaluable when thinking about this. For example, Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan's research has looked at why so many national and international KT initiatives for development (such as participatory consultations, pilot projects, randomised control trials, trainings, etc.) have failed for decades to meaningfully change practices in Niger and other global South countries, in sectors such as health-care (e.g. midwifery) and social protection (e.g. cash transfers). His anthropological research shows that local actors' 'practical norms' that stem from historical, economic, political, and social context are crucial to explaining the gap between intended KT plans and actual practices (*ibid.*).

Accordingly, the author concludes that fostering change towards better practices lies with empowering field-level 'contextual experts' as insider reformers with the skills to create change that starts from within local 'practical norms', social logics, and governance modes, rather than pushing 'travelling models' of best practices, which international and national development actors believe they have contextualised but which actually fail to account for frontline contexts of implementation. Internal reformers who are contextual experts have three sets of competencies: lived knowledge of the implementation environment from the inside; reflexivity, i.e. the ability to have perspective and critical distance towards the context; and a capacity for innovation (*ibid.*).

## 4.4 Critical reflections on the literature

This final section presents critical reflections about the state of knowledge and the contents of the literature reviewed, as points to consider:

- **Systematicity:** think about KT in consistent frameworks, and reflect on gaps and disconnects. For example, recognise that some aspects of KT may not be documented and known on purpose, to protect some of the actors involved.
- **Humility:** know when KT is not the right question or the right answer. For example, recognise when local actors' 'practical norms' that stem from historical, economic, political, and social contexts are actually the key, rather than 'knowledge' as such (Olivier de Sardan 2021).

- **Reflexivity:** adopt greater self-awareness on KT as part of power relations. This includes doing the following:
  - Think about what doing no harm means in KT, and apply it;
  - Re-connect knowledge on KT to other bodies of knowledge, and learn from those (such as political science on policymaking, or practitioner knowledge on advocacy);
  - Address the limitations of problem-solving, which dominates KT studies;
  - Beware of the limitations created by a focus on innovation; and
  - Decolonise what 'knowledge' refers to, doing so without turning the global South into a distinct 'other' from the global North.
- **Justice:** systematically build transformative, intersectional approaches to power into KT work.

## 4.5 Limitations

The present work has a number of notable limitations, some inherent in the research approach and topic, others related to issues in the search tools and knowledge base, and driven by the time frame of the project.

First, the core concepts in the research topic are contested, and have been described with a range of different terms. KT is a notoriously contested concept with varied definitions and uses (see, for example, the discussion in Graham *et al.* 2006). So is the use of the 'global South' terminology (see Box 1.2). This had two implications that generated limitations. One limitation is that the search syntax is bound to have missed possible relevant publications. In response to the diversity and contestation of terms about KT and the global South, combinations of search terms that would be as inclusive as possible to catch publications about the research topic were used. However, there may be some gaps remaining.

Second, unlike many prior in-depth or systematic reviews of KT which had a narrower search focus and – even then – did not claim to be exhaustive, the present research deliberately did not limit review by source type of study, sector, or geography (other than the entire global South). While this yielded rich results quantitatively and qualitatively, the large number of relevant results obtained led the researchers to narrow the scope in other ways to keep the results manageable for decisions on inclusion. One methodological adjustment made was to limit searches to publications from the past five years. This, of course, means that highly relevant references published before 2017 have been missed.

On top of the limitations generated by the research approach and topic, some limitations to findings and reproducibility stem from the search tools and

knowledge base themselves. This is worth emphasising as these problems are likely to particularly hinder researchers from the global South, who often have fewer resources such as budget, support staff, and IT tools to tackle them. The problems are twofold: some of the relevant search tools and knowledge are not **openly and freely** accessible, and even with tools and knowledge that are, some are not **easily** accessible. For example, to search the academic literature, extensive use of the Web of Knowledge academic database was made, which has a lot of time-saving options to filter and refine searches compared to Google Scholar. However, access to this database is not free, and may be too costly for researchers outside academic institutions, as well as for many researchers in the global South, to access. Furthermore, a number of references – especially, but not only, academic ones – are behind paywalls. In several cases, the full text of some references was not accessible and, therefore, content may have been missed.

In sum, given the limitations of the present research, this review is exploratory, and does not claim to be a systematic review, meta-review or similar. It is not based on systematic searches, but rather on structured searches combined with non-systematic snowballing and on purposive recommendations. It is likewise not based on systematic content analysis, but rather offers a mapping of relevant publications, and an initial documentation and critical discussion of Southern KT models. There are undoubtedly significant innovations underway in KT in the global South which have not yet been sufficiently documented in ways that would have allowed this review to pick them up.

The limitations identified above have implications for the scope and findings, but also for the reproducibility of this research due to the non-systematic, partially purposive nature of the searches.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary

This analysis provided an exploratory review of recent academic, practitioner, and policy literature in English, French, and Spanish in order to document and discuss KT practices in the global South. Its thematic analysis used a combination of deductive and inductive methods and enabled a critical examination of the state of knowledge. The research then built its substantive findings based on a synthesis of contents and reflections about the knowledge base. The research was thus able to categorise the KT strategies used in the global South and to identify differences by stakeholders and goals, and by sectors, disciplines and geographies, before discussing the often-tacit theories of evidence-based policy and practice that underly KT. Furthermore, it identified lessons drawn from KT failures, successes, interventions, and contextualisation. This included identifying key factors shaping KT processes, outcomes, and interventions. It also included engaging with the nuances of contextualisation, starting from the observation of current shortcomings in KT and conditions of uncertainty about evidence and context, and building up to lessons and pathways to successful adaptation of KT to different conditions. The remainder of this conclusion will offer suggestions for further primary and secondary research on KT in the global South.

### 5.2 Suggestions for further research

#### 5.2.1 Suggestions for further secondary research on KT

Given the limitations of this research and the gaps in coverage in the literature found for this review, some additional secondary research would be valuable, though on targeted areas only to avoid duplicating work already completed by other literature reviews and syntheses. One constant that is worth keeping is the use of multiple languages, especially to avoid using only English. Indeed, one interesting complement to the present work could be to conduct searches in academic and grey literature in a few more languages – for example, German, Italian, or Mandarin (Chinese) – as there are a plethora of academic journals available that publish exclusively in these languages.

Other interesting lines of enquiry could include using additional search terms to elicit results from further sectors, disciplines, and thematic areas. Additional academic databases could also be used, such as Cairn for French-language literature.

A final possibility would be to conduct secondary research on how KT is done in media, or on videos and audios produced by grass-roots actors.

### 5.2.2 Suggestions for further primary research

The systematic review of KT by researchers and research institutions in LMICs identified three key issues to understand researchers' KT capacity and practice and to identify effective interventions (Murunga *et al.* 2020: 14):

1. The need for more and better research on capacity and practice;
2. The need for multifaceted interventions that address gaps in capacity and practice, for both individual researchers and research institutions; and
3. The need for better designed studies that evaluate interventions.

There needs to be more and better research, and a stronger evidence base, about KT in LMICs, the authors of the systematic review conclude, adding that this need for more high-quality literature on KT exists in high-income countries too. A greater number of research and evaluation studies of higher quality is needed on all aspects and influencing factors of researchers' and research institutions' KT in LMICs: capacity; practice; and effective interventions to strengthen KT capacity (*ibid.*: 13, 16, 18). This should also include some standardisation of the methods and tools used to assess capacity and practice, in order 'to aid comparison across research type (basic vs applied), research topic, institutions and contexts' (*ibid.*: 16, 18).

In line with Murunga *et al.* (2020), the following recommendations can be made:

- Extend beyond case studies and purely descriptive studies;
- Base investigations on theory;
- Draw on literature and methods of policy analysis from political science;
- Use participant observation and documentary evidence;
- Provide nuanced interpretations of 'context', 'policy', and 'research';
- Investigate researchers' interest in KT, and how this influences their KT practice; and
- Pay attention to the range of impacts and effects of research.

To evaluate interventions in particular, KT practitioners and scholars are recommended to use 'realist approaches, pragmatic trials, impact evaluations, implementation research and participatory action research' (Murunga *et al.* 2020: 18). These methods are more suitable to evaluate social, contextually sensitive interventions. In addition, evaluations should pay greater attention to the variety of impacts and effects resulting from research (*ibid.*: 18).

As a complement to the suggestions by Murunga *et al.* (2020: 18), there is a further need to include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research that generates primary material, theories, identification of key issues and dynamics (and of key factors, if causalities can be determined) about:

- Inequalities and intersectionality in KT;
- Fine-grained contextualisation of KT informed by political, economic, social, and cultural considerations, based on social science approaches that take power into account;
- Comparative case studies, with comparisons between both similar cases and between different cases; and
- Most aspects mentioned under the earlier suggestions for additional secondary research, and related ones that lend themselves to primary research (for example, research into the use of art or storytelling).

Throughout, it would be valuable to learn from successes, failures, and average outcomes of KT efforts – all three defined broadly, so they relate not only to easily visible outcomes such as policy changes, but also to less visible effects such as changes in processes, relationships, norms, institutions, or in values, ideas, interests, and power.

## Annexe 1: Structured bibliography

This annexe offers a mapping of publications through a structured bibliography. It presents publications that are cross-cutting, that cover more than one geographic region, and/or more than one sector. These are the widest-scope references the search resulted in. The annexe lays out the most relevant references found, grouped according to the prioritisation criteria laid out in the methodology section of this paper.

### English

Cummings, S.; Kiwanuka, S.; Gillman, H. and Regeer, B. (2019) **'The Future of Knowledge Brokering: Perspectives from a Generational Framework of Knowledge Management for International Development'**, *Information Development* 35.5: 781–794, DOI: 10.1177/0266666918800174

Georgalakis, J.; Jessani, N.; Oronje, R. and Ramalingam, B. (2017) ***The Social Realities of Knowledge for Development: Sharing Lessons of Improving Development Processes with Evidence***, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies and The Impact Initiative, DOI: 10.35648/20.500.12413/11781/ii244

Langer, L.; Erasmus, Y.; Tannous, N. and Stewart, R. (2017) **'How Stakeholder Engagement has Led us to Reconsider Definitions of Rigour in Systematic Reviews'**, *Environmental Evidence* 6.1: 20, DOI: 10.1186/s13750-017-0098-7

Lewis, D.; Rodgers, D. and Woolcock, M. (eds) (2022) ***New Mediums, Better Messages? How Innovations in Translation, Engagement, and Advocacy are Changing International Development***, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Manning, R.; Goldman, I. and Hernández Licona, G. (2020) ***The Impact of Impact Evaluation. Are Impact Evaluation and Impact Evaluation Synthesis Contributing to Evidence Generation and Use in Low- and Middle- Income Countries?***, Working Paper No. 2020/20, Helsinki: United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), DOI: 10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2020/777-4

Murunga, V.; Oronje, R.; Bates, I.; Tagoe, N. and Pulford, J. (2020) **'Review of Published Evidence on Knowledge Translation Capacity, Practice and Support Among Researchers and Research Institutions in Low- and Middle-Income Countries'**, *Health Research Policy and Systems* 18.1, DOI: 10.1186/s12961-019-0524-0

Oliver, S. *et al.* (2021) ***Engaging Stakeholders with Evidence and Uncertainty: Developing a Toolkit***, CEDIL Methods Working Paper No. 4, London and Oxford: Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL)

(Above reference associated with the following brief):

Oliver, S. *et al.* (2021) ***Engaging Stakeholders to Co-Design Rigorous and Relevant Research and Evaluation***, CEDIL Methods Brief No. 5, London and Oxford: Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL)

Oliver, S. *et al.* (2018) ***Stakeholder Engagement for Development Impact Evaluation and Evidence Synthesis***, Inception Paper No. 3, London and Oxford: Centre for Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL)

Patel, R. and Yeo, S. (2021) ***What Works? Developing a Global Evidence Base for Public Engagement***, Report, On Think Tanks (OTT)

UNESCO (2021) ***UNESCO Science Report. The Race Against Time for Smarter Development***, Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

### French

Fillol, A. and Ridde, V. (2020) **'Gouvernance globale et utilisation des connaissances pour l'action', une revue de la portée interdisciplinaires des écrits'**, *Revue sur le transfert et l'utilisation des connaissances* 4.2, DOI: 10.18166/tuc.2020.4.2.15

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (2021) *La Revanche des contextes. Des mésaventures de l'ingénierie sociale en Afrique et au-delà*, Paris: Karthala

(Above reference associated with the following works):

Ridde, V. and Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (2017) '**La mise en œuvre des interventions de santé publique en Afrique: Un thème stratégique négligé**', *Médecine et Santé Tropicales* 27.1: 6–9, DOI: 10.1684/mst.2016.0605

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (2022) '**“Relying on your own strengths”. Faced with aid dependency, promoting contextual experts in public policy in Africa**', *Global Africa* 1.1: 96–111

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P.; Bako, M.T.A. and Harouna, A. (2018) **Les normes pratiques en vigueur dans les secteurs de l'éducation et la santé au Niger**, Etudes et Travaux No. 127, Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL)

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P.; Diarra, A. and Moha, M. (2017) '**Travelling Models and the Challenge of Pragmatic Contexts and Practical Norms: The Case of Maternal Health**', *Health Research Policy and Systems* 15.60, DOI: 10.1186/s12961-017-0213-9

(The above is expanded version of the book chapter in French):

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (2018) **Les modèles voyageurs à l'épreuve des contextes et des normes pratiques : le cas de la santé maternelle**, in D. Pourette; C. Mattern; C. Bellas Cabane and B. Ravololomanga (eds), *Femmes, enfants et santé à Madagascar. Approches anthropologiques comparées*, Paris: L'Harmattan

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. and Piccoli, E. (eds) (2018) **Cash Transfers in Context: An Anthropological Perspective**, New York, NY: Berghahn Books, DOI: 10.3167/9781785339578

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### Spanish

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Kraemer-Mbula, E.; Tijssen, R.; Wallace, M.L. and McLean, R. (eds) (2020) *Transforming Research Excellence. New Ideas from the Global South*, Cape Town: African Minds

Oliver, K. and Cairney, P. (2019) 'The Dos and Don'ts of Influencing Policy: A Systematic Review of Advice to Academics', *Palgrave Communications* 5.21, DOI: 10.1057/s41599-019-0232-y

## Studies on specific sectors

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### Environment, including climate, and environment-related disasters

#### English

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## Studies on specific geographic areas

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#### *Cross-cutting perspectives (more than one sector)*

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### English

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## Latin America and Caribbean

### *Cross-cutting perspectives (more than one sector)*

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#### *Spanish*

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## Western Asia / Middle East and North Africa

### Health

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## Studies on specific groups or structural inequalities

### Intersectional perspectives (partial or full)

#### *Cross-sectoral approaches*

##### *English*

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### Age (from childhood and youth to older age)

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## Indigenous peoples

### English

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## Race, ethnicity (based on language and/or culture), and religion

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## Disabilities and health problems

### English

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**Interviews in a Multilevel Comparative Case Study**, *Health Research Policy and Systems* 19: 35, DOI: 10.1186/s12961-020-00651-4

## Studies on specific types of KT actors

### KT by universities or academics (individuals or journals)

#### English

Kalbarczyk, A.; Rao, A. and Alonge, O. (2021a) **'A Mixed Methods Study to Develop a Tool to Assess Institutional Readiness to Conduct Knowledge Translation Activities in Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries'**, *BMJ OPEN* 11.10, DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-050049

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## KT through grassroots or community-based participation (informal or formal such as community advisory boards)

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## KT through end users' online searches

### English

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## KT by multiple interacting stakeholders (through institutions, partnerships, networks, or secondments)

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## KT by or with artists

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## Annexe 2: Summary of categorical groupings of the references listed in the structured biography

	Number of results	Per cent
Overview broken down by languages (all 202 references)		
English	<b>176</b>	87
French	<b>8</b>	4
Spanish	<b>18</b>	9
Overview broken down by type of publication (all 202 references)		
Scientific publications	<b>152</b>	<b>75</b>
- Research publication	87	
- Literature reviews	62	
- Scientific journal editorials	2	
- Master's thesis	1	
Books	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
Chapter in a book	<b>1</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Grey literature	<b>35</b>	<b>17.5</b>
- Reports	24	
- Working papers	5	
- Discussion papers	2	
- Other (rapid response documentation, manuals, and seminar write-ups)	4	
Category 1: Cross-cutting, with no specific geographic focus		
Total references in this group	<b>83</b>	<b>41</b>
- No specific sectoral focus	23	
- Health	32	
- Environmental	10	
- Education	7	
- Information and communication technologies	5	
- Agriculture	4	
- Infrastructure and hygiene	2	
Category 2: Sub-Saharan Africa		
Total references in this group	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>
- Health	19	
- No specific sectoral focus	11	
Category 3: Latin America and the Caribbean		
Total references in this group	<b>15</b>	<b>7.5</b>
- No specific sectoral focus	6	
- Health	6	
- Agriculture	3	

	Number of results	Per cent
<b>Category 4: Middle Eastern and North Africa</b>		
Total references in this group	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
- Health	2	
<b>Category 5: Asia and the Pacific</b>		
Total references in this group	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
- Health	7	
- No specific sectoral focus	1	
<b>Category 6: Intersecting factors</b>		
Total references in this group	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>
- Disability	8	
- Age	6	
- Race	2	
- Gender	2	
- Other (health, education, or not specifically addressing on topic)	7	
<b>Category 7: KT actors</b>		
Total references in this group	<b>39</b>	<b>19</b>
- Universities and research institutions	12	
- Knowledge brokers	9	
- KT networks	7	
- Grass-roots organisations	5	
- Research funders	4	
- End users	1	
- Art	1	

Source: Authors' own.



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