

# Analysis of organizational tools from a societal perspective: a systematic literature review

Clayton Costa<sup>1</sup>[0000-0001-9279-8889], Amanda Xavier<sup>1</sup>[0000-0001-7190-5745],  
Tharcisio Fontainha<sup>1</sup>[0000-0002-4217-2551] and Ariele Ferreira<sup>1</sup>[0000-0002-7295-9240]

<sup>1</sup> Production Engineering Program, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

clayton@pep.ufrj.br

**Abstract.** Companies face simultaneous challenges to running their business through the sustainability perspectives, which involves social, economic and environmental dimensions, valuing their contribution to the local territory's prosperity, mitigating the disruptive effects caused by disasters and building legitimate and long-term relationships between stakeholders within the supply chain. This scenario emphasizes the need for organizational supporting tools for companies to deal with these challenges in their operational practices. Therefore, this research aims to investigate state-of-the-art organization tools that support companies in coping with sustainability and territorial development, overcoming supply chain disruptions and a diversity of stakeholders. The research adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) to conduct a bibliometric analysis of papers from Web of Science and Scopus databases that provide such tools. The research analyzed 688 abstracts and selected 54 papers for complete analysis. The results contribute to the identification of increasing attention to such tools, but they are spread among 42 journals. The keywords co-occurrence network analysis reveals an evolution in research on topics such as "COVID-19", "innovation" and "supply chain management". The analysis of the countries from institutions highlights a predominance of publications and collaborations involving the USA, European countries and China, revealing a gap in research between developed and emerging countries. This research suggests content analysis regarding the characteristics of the 54 tools identified in this SLR.

**Keywords:** Organizational tools, business and supply chain, bibliometric analysis.

## 1 Introduction

Companies run economic activities that involve buying and selling products and services for maximum profit (Friedman, 1970). These activities drive competition in the market (Ristovska and Ristovska, 2014) and create jobs (Haltiwanger et al., 2013; Orrenius et al., 2020; Decker et al., 2014). According to Aitken (1998), the supply chain is a network of interconnected and interdependent organizations that work together to manage the flow of goods, services and information, requiring integrated strategies for

effective long-term performance (Carter and Rogers, 2008). However, when considering the effects of globalization, Xu et al. (2023) emphasize that supply chain processes are becoming increasingly complex in the face of the massive needs and demands of stakeholders, favouring negative environmental impacts such as soil degradation, water pollution and reduced biodiversity (Xavier et al., 2021) and bringing significant challenges in economic, social and ecological aspects, requiring sustainable management (Barbosa-Póvoa et al., 2018; Seuring and Gold, 2013).

Companies must constantly cope with sustainability, which involves integrating economic performance, social inclusion and environmental resilience to benefit both present and future generations (Brundtland, 1987; Elkington, 1999). Recent studies focused on Green Innovation, Regenerative Sustainability, Industrial Ecology, Eco-innovation, Circular Economy and the Economy of Functionality and Cooperation to explore sustainable alternatives for organizations and supply chains. One example is short supply chains, which prioritize local products and contribute to stabilizing production costs, strengthening local economic development and efficient environmental management (Renting et al., 2003; Jarzębowski et al., 2020; Kiss et al., 2019; Bui et al., 2021; Malak-Rawlikowska et al., 2019). To implement these sustainable practices effectively, the collective engagement of stakeholders in decision-making processes is essential (Meixell and Luoma, 2015; Raji and Hassan, 2021; Dalirazar and Sabzi, 2022).

Companies generally focus on the value creation of their supply chains (Myllykangas, Kujala and Lehtimäki, 2010; Wheeler and Davies, 2004; Freeman et al., 2004). Nevertheless, this value creation must respond to stakeholder expectations and incorporate the characteristics of the territory and its endogenous resources (Salvado and Joukes, 2021). The territory is defined by Santos (2009) as the foundation of human activities and by Haesbaert (2004) as a space appropriated by political, identity and belonging relationships. Capello (2018) and Tapia et al. (2021) see the territory as a dynamic and multifunctional system interacting with social, cultural and economic elements, influencing local efficiency. Zhaoual (2007) and Cvijanovic et al. (2020) highlight the importance of local attributes in regional development. Maillefert and Robert (2017) state that territory enriches the value proposition of organizations, promoting a territorialized approach that positions territory as central to the creation of relational and experiential value.

Companies and supply chains are susceptible to unforeseen disasters such as climate change, pandemics and conflicts, which affect their supply, production and distribution chains (Santhi and Muthuswamy, 2022). According to Trejos et al. (2022), these events have local and global impacts, affecting not only companies but also consumers and local and global communities, causing cascading effects (Katsaliaki et al., 2021; Stecke and Kumar, 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has underlined the resilience and adaptability of supply chains, revealing vulnerabilities and emphasizing the need for more flexible preparedness strategies (Paul et al., 2021; Chowdhury et al., 2021), such as an intertwined supply network, which is "an entirety of interconnected supply chains which, in their integrity secure the provision of society and markets with goods and services" (Ivanov and Dolgui, 2020). The pandemic has also altered consumption patterns and required rapid chain adaptations to maintain effective

operations, showing how disruptions can drastically interrupt these systems (Tian et al., 2024; Qin et al., 2023). In this sense, some research contributions were provided by Cardoso et al. (2023) by indicating which proactive or reactive strategies are recurrent in responding to each type of disruption and also by Fontainha et al. (2022a) through a reference process model for disaster response.

Companies are also facing constant disruptions in their supply chains. Nevertheless, companies and supply chains need to engage with various stakeholders, including public and private stakeholders and people and groups (Fontainha et al., 2017). These actors interact in dyadic and complex relationships (Fontainha et al., 2022b), which is also related to mechanisms such as cooperation, collaboration, coordination, co-creation, integration and trust (Zhang et al., 2023; Ali and Haapasalo, 2023; Newsholme et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2020; Valiyan, Abdoli and Saghari, 2022; Deferne, Bertschi-Michel and de Groote, 2023; Cipolla et al., 2014), which are essential in multi-stakeholder businesses and supply chains (Liu et al., 2021). The transparent exchange of information, defined by Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) as the quality of information shared intentionally based on clarity and accuracy, increases awareness and understanding of the information shared between two or more actors (Pagano and Roell, 1996).

The scenario presented in the previous paragraphs highlights that companies face simultaneous challenges to running their business, such as responding to sustainability challenges by considering the social, economic and environmental dimensions, building legitimate and long-term relationships between stakeholders within the supply chain, valuing their contribution to the local territory prosperity and, mitigating the disruptive effects caused by disasters. In this sense, some research developed tools such as process models that contribute to response operations to disruptive events in a more agile and precise way (Fontainha et al., 2022a; Cardoso et al., 2023). Some other research has also discussed sustainable solutions and alternatives to dominant economic models to contribute positively to the relationship between companies, people and local territories, considering the human dimension and the centrality of work and renewing the approach to relationships between actors (Xavier et al. 2024, Costa and Xavier, 2023). This paper considers organizational tools as well-defined structures such as frameworks, models, processes, methods, strategies, practices, approaches, and guidelines. Xavier et al.'s work (2017) has already analysed some of these organizational tools to structure and facilitate the integration of sustainable organizational processes.

Thus, this research aims to investigate state-of-the-art organization tools that support companies in coping with sustainability and territorial development and overcoming supply chain disruptions with diverse stakeholders. This research adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) and a bibliometric analysis of the available literature to analyze, classify, and visualize the bibliographic data. The studies presented in this article summarize the literature's contributions to the business dynamics of organizations and supply chains to encourage the academic body to expand and complement research in the thematic areas discussed.

After this introduction, the second section describes the research methodology. The third section presents the results and discusses the bibliometric analysis. The fourth section provides an overview of the findings and suggestions for future research.

## 2 Research Methodology

This research adopts an SRL following the steps suggested by Thomé, Scavarda and Scavarda (2016), which are planning and formulating the problem, searching the literature, data gathering, quality evaluation, analysis, synthesis and interpretation of the results, presentation of the results and updating the review.

The first stage of the SRL involves defining the research objective, which was formulated and presented in the Introduction section. The second stage involves defining the search in the Web of Science and Scopus databases since they contain the main considerable amount of words addressing business, sustainability and supply chain management and have well-rated indexed journals (Pimenta, Ball and Saloniitis, 2021). The search was carried out considering the 6 groups of keywords, as shown in Table 1. The complete search string was meticulously constructed from the concatenation of the strings formed by connecting the keywords of each group using the Boolean operator "OR" to join the keywords of each group and the Boolean operator "AND" to connect the strings of all the groups, thus allowing an advanced search for the SLR.

**Table 1.** Groups and strings of related keywords

Groups	Keywords/Strings
G1 (Value creation)	(business OR "supply chain") AND (model* OR process* OR practic* OR maturity OR assessment OR evaluat* OR activity OR framework OR tool OR "success factor" OR principle OR approach OR guideline OR indic* OR microfoundation*OR capabilit* OR task*)
G2 (Organizational elements)	AND (sustainab* OR green OR regenerat* OR eco* OR circular*)
G3 (Sustainability)	AND ("co*creation" OR collaboration* OR cooperation* OR collective* OR partner* OR integration* OR societal*)
G4 (Relationship mechanisms)	AND (humanitar* OR disaster OR relief OR crisis OR war OR risk* OR pandemic* OR resilience OR "refugee")
G5 (Disasters)	AND (territor* OR local* OR region* OR short)
G6 (Territory)	

The search was performed on September 23, 2023, using the search filters shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Search filters applied to databases

	<i>Scopus</i> database	WoS database
Document type	Article; review	Article; review article; early access
Subject area/ of study/research	Business, Management and Accounting	Business Economics; Operations Research Management Science; Public Administration

There was no limitation on the articles' publication period or language filter in both databases, so all the papers that met the search filter up to the date of the database search were considered. The search resulted in 441 articles in the Web of Science database and 414 in the Scopus database, resulting in the total of 855 articles. 167 duplicate articles were excluded, resulting in 688 documents for abstract review according to the following exclusion criteria:

- Studies that do not deal with business or the supply chain at an organizational level;
- Studies that do not deal with sustainability from the perspective of at least one of the three pillars (environmental, economic, or social);
- Studies that do not address one of the elements in group 2.

Two researchers were responsible for this stage, analyzing a random sample of 10% of the total number of articles, a procedure necessary to calculate the concordance index, which is a coefficient of consensus between evaluators, according to the study by Krippendorf (2004). After four rounds, with a discussion of the differences between the researchers, a percentage of 83.3% was reached, which is considered an almost perfect agreement, according to Cohen (1960). After achieving this result with a random sample, the two researchers performed an abstract review of the remaining papers, which resulted in the selection of 160 documents for full review. The exclusion criteria were also considered in this analysis, resulting in 54 articles for this study.

The third stage involves using an auxiliary table with the study descriptors that describe the main information, such as the article's name, authors, abstract, year of publication, etc.

Regarding the fourth stage, Thomé, Scavarda, and Scavarda (2016) argue that the study's methodological quality and the quality of the reporting of the results must be considered and that these two properties are closely related. Thus, to ensure these characteristics, this research considered only articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

The fifth stage consists of a bibliometric analysis of publications, including their evolution over the years, the most relevant sources, the journals that publish the most

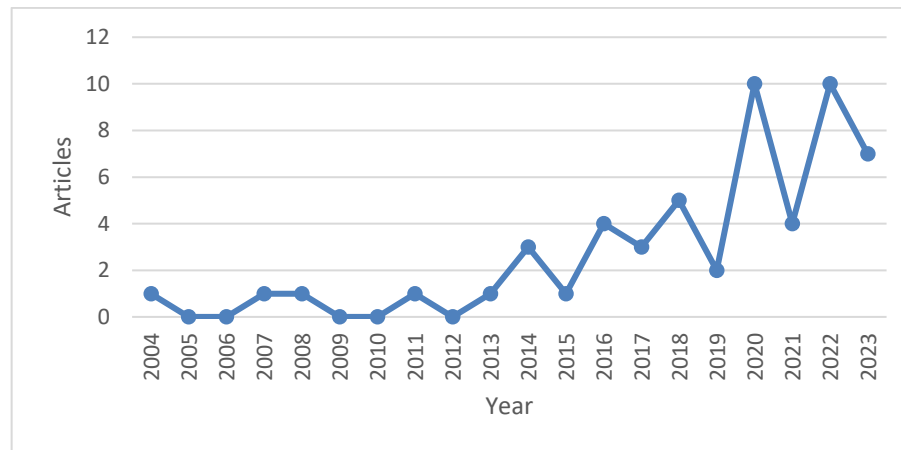
articles, the global collaboration map, and the co-occurrence network. These analyses were built using the VOSViewer software and the Biblioshiny graphic interface, one of the Bibliometrix tools. The sixth stage involves a discussion of the findings according to the contribution to researchers and professionals.

The seventh stage involves presenting the bibliometric analysis through a quantitative and qualitative approach supported by visual representations. The last stage, updating the review, is related to the need to regularly update the analysis's results since the dimensions and effects of these results can change as new research is published and new evidence is found (Thomé, Scavarda, and Scavarda, 2016). Therefore, this stage is suggested for future research.

### 3 Analysis of results

#### 3.1 Description and historical evolution of the data sample

Figure 1 illustrates the annual distribution of articles from 2004 to 2023 (September), showing a growth in the volume of publications, especially after 2013. This scenario reflects a growing awareness of severe socio-economic problems, such as the need for humanitarian crisis management networks (Hermes and Mainela, 2014), ecological conservation and restoration (Winn and Pogutz, 2013), the impacts of globalization on companies (Fotiadis, Vassiliadis and Piper, 2014) and sustainable practices in the supply chain (Stiller and Gold, 2014) related to the economic crisis. The considerable increase in research from 2019 onwards is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of which is associated with this disaster.



**Fig. 1.** Number of publications over the years. Adapted from the Biblioshiny graphical interface of the Bibliometrix package in R, version 4.1.4.

### 3.2 Analysis of the most relevant sources

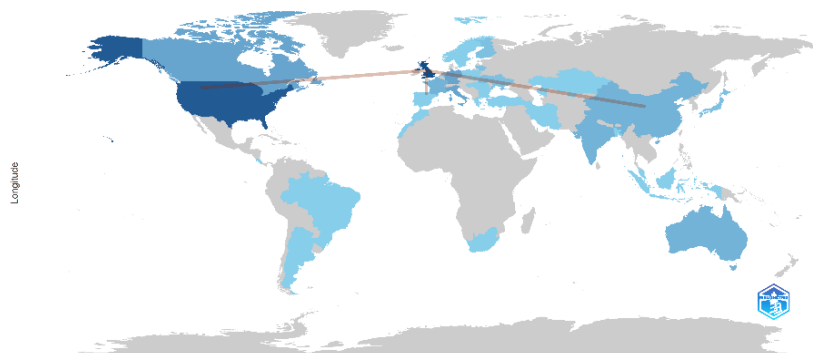
Figure 2 highlights the sources that have published the articles analyzed in this SLR with 2 or more publications. All the remaining 35 sources have only 1 publication.



**Fig. 2.** The 7 most relevant sources. Source: Biblioshiny graphical interface from the Bibliometrix package in R, version 4.1.4.

### 3.3 Global map of collaboration between countries

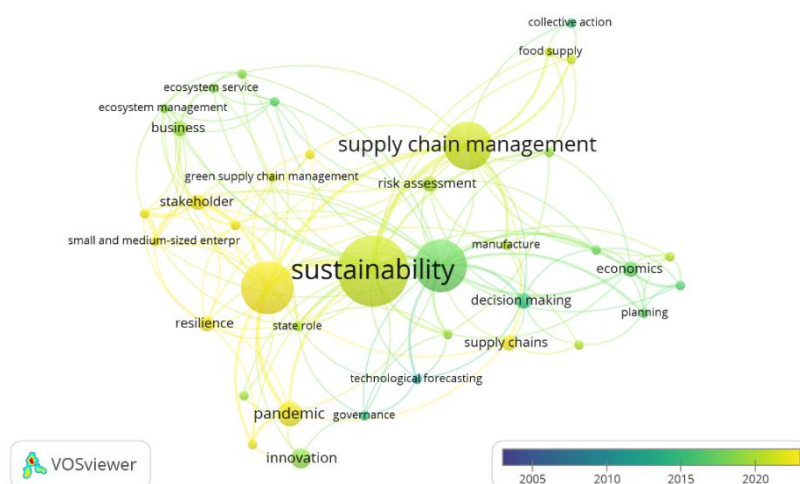
Figure 3 presents the collaborative relationships between the countries indicated by brown lines. The blue color's intensity reflects a country's scientific production level. The darker, the greater the number of publications. The USA has the highest number of articles (15), followed by the UK (14), Italy (9), Australia (8), China (6), India (6) and Canada (5). The other countries colored blue on the map have fewer than 5 publications but have produced at least 1 scientific article. The map shows that there have been active collaborative links between the USA and the UK, the UK and France and the UK and China. It is worth noticing that there is no significant collaborative research between developed and emerging countries besides China.



**Fig. 3.** World collaboration map. Source: Biblioshiny graphical interface from the Bibliometrix package in R, version 4.1.4.

### 3.4 Keyword co-occurrence network

Figure 4 presents the co-occurrence network over the years. A minimum of 1 occurrence was established for inclusion in the network, ensuring the temporal scope of the publications and their keywords. From the 273 keywords, the latest trends and thematic relevance emerge, visualized by the size of the circles in the network generated. The distances between circles indicate the strength of the relationship, and the colors differentiate the thematic clusters over time, with yellow pointing to the most recent themes and dark green and blue to the oldest.



**Fig. 4.** Keyword overlap visualization based on co-occurrence. Source: VosViewer, version 1.6.20.

## 4 Conclusion

Companies are facing a complex and globalized environment of business and supply chains in the contemporary scenario, the challenges of sustainability, anticipation and contingency to the effects of disasters, the constructive and beneficial interrelationship between stakeholders and the recognition of the local territory as a central resource for value creation are factors that are imperative to be incorporated into the strategic decisions of companies, and therefore the development of new tools that holistically address these themes and that have a practical implementation for the organizational reality is necessary. Thus, this study aims to investigate state-of-the-art operational tools that support companies in coping with sustainability and territorial development, overcoming supply chain disruptions, and a diversity of stakeholders. The research adopts a SLR that analyzed 688 abstracts and identified 54 papers discussing operational tools that support companies' management and supply chains.

The bibliometric analysis revealed that the first paper was published in 2004, intensifying increasingly and irregularly from 2013 onwards, especially after 2019 due



to the COVID-19 pandemic. The journals that contributed most were the *Journal of Cleaner Production* (6) and *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* (3). The research visually represents the global collaboration between researchers, emphasizing the interactions between the USA, UK, France and China, suggesting the need to expand international collaboration, especially between developed and emerging countries. The most frequent and recent keywords were "sustainability", "COVID-19", "pandemic", "innovation" and "supply chain management".

Our results contribute to an understanding of the importance of this study, illustrating why this research has important themes to consider for creating value in businesses and supply chains. In addition, the contribution of this study to researchers and professionals lies in the flexibility of the association between the points that affect the dynamics between stakeholders, their logistics management and the flow of information, allowing the creation of research hypotheses as well as offering the possibility of adapting such support tools to organizations to extend sustainable and resilient benefits, legitimate and long-term relationships and the valorization of the local territory as a living and endogenous space.

Future research suggestions involve a content analysis of the literature selected in the SLR, which involves the categorization of the operational tools, their structures and other characteristics, as well as update this SLR.

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