

Title Page

Negotiation and sustainability: systematic review and agenda for future research

Ghazal Layeghi

Department of Economics and Management,

Free university of Bolzano, Italy

&

University of Trento, Trento, Italy

Email: ghazal.layeghi@unitn.it

Andrea Caputo

Department of Economics and Management,

University of Trento, Trento, Italy

&

Department of Management,

University of Lincoln, Lincoln, United Kingdom

Email: andrea.caputo@unitn.it

Adrian Borbély

Em Lyon business school, Lyon, France

Email: aborbely@em-lyon.com

Tariel Sikharulidze

Email: tarielts@gmail.com

Negotiation and sustainability: systematic review and agenda for future research

Abstract

This paper explores the limited literature linking negotiation with sustainability. Using the B-SLR framework to build a systematic review of the literature (up to date in January 2025), we identify four clusters of relevant contributions. The most central papers of each cluster are briefly described. Most contributions stem from the sustainability literature, with few papers from the field of negotiation: This reveals broad avenues for future research.

Keywords:

Negotiation; sustainability; stakeholder theory; literature review; agenda for future research

Track: Sustainable and Responsible Business Track

Introduction

Negotiation and sustainability are two trendy words in research, and each has its history. The field of negotiation and conflict management dates to the 1960s and the pace of publication has steadily increased since the 1980s. The field of sustainability, on the other hand, is much more recent. Although the term has been around since the industrial revolution, it has become a focus of concern much more recently.

On the one hand, sustainability is defined as the ability of a system, program, or intervention to persist over time, ensuring its continued implementation, maintaining behavioural changes among relevant stakeholders, and consistently generating benefits for individuals and systems (Moore *et al.*, 2017). More broadly, sustainability involves balancing economic, ecological, social, and political factors while maintaining intergenerational and intragenerational equity. It is context-dependent and shaped by the dynamic interactions within socio-ecological systems (Ruggerio, 2021).

Sustainable development is often debated and difficult to define philosophically, as it evolves through collective normative judgments and global and local consensus rather than a fixed conceptual framework. It is interpreted in varying ways, from weak sustainability, which prioritizes economic growth, to strong sustainability, which emphasizes ecological integrity (Parris and Kates, 2003).

This distinction highlights that while sustainability is the objective, sustainable development represents the process of achieving it. Sustainability therefore covers both an outcome and a process, either to create a sustainable-by-design organization or to turn an existing organization into a sustainable one.

On the other hand, negotiation may be defined as “the process by which joint decisions are made by two or more parties.” (Pruitt, 1981). It may also be viewed as: “a process where two [or more] parties with differences which they need to resolve are trying to reach an agreement through exploring for options and exchanging offers” (Fells, 2010, p.3). It is a joint decision-making process by which parties reach agreement to build contractual relationships, manage existing ones and, when appropriate, resolve conflicts and disputes. Research on negotiation is much more ancient – the first research being published in the early 20th century – and it spans over multiple disciplines, notably psychology, organizational behaviour, legal studies and public policy (Borbély *et al.*, 2017).

Looking at these two concepts, they appear to be the focus of two distinct bodies of literature that largely ignore one another. We investigate whether there is a joint literature touching on both subjects and how such a literature is structured. Finally, we will offer an agenda for future research.

Methodology

The present study applies the Bibliometric-Systematic Literature Review (B-SLR) framework (Marzi *et al.*, 2025). As a first step, in January 2025 we scrutinised the literature on the intersection of sustainability and negotiation to build an overview of the

research stream and implement a set of the representative keywords for database research.

Following the B-SLR framework, we delineate our inclusion/exclusion criteria before approaching the data collection process. To do so, we leveraged a comprehensive set of key definitions in the field of inquiry Thompson, Wang and Gunia (2010) and Caputo, Pizzi and Santini (2024).

As a result, we defined the search query as follows: TITLE-ABS-KEY (negotiation AND sustainability), we ran the search query on 12 January 2025 on Scopus database, limiting the documents to the ones published in the English language, the document type to articles published until 2024. We extracted a raw database of 160 units, cross validating the outcomes of our search with web of science and decided to only retain the Scopus and remove duplicates and ineligible documents.

From the raw database, we applied our inclusion/exclusion criteria, removing studies outside the scope of our selected topic. After screening abstracts, we excluded 67 articles unrelated to negotiation and sustainability, resulting in a final dataset of 97 documents.

Next, we moved to bibliometric analysis in *VOS viewer version 1.6.20* (van Eck & Waltman, 2010), adopting bibliographic coupling as the aggregation criterion. For the bibliometric indicators we adopted the R package Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

After independently reading the extracted documents, we identified the key research topic within each cluster (resolution = 52, minimum cluster size 8). We assessed and ranked the documents based on the calculation of the Composite Bibliometric Influence Score (CBIS) (Marzi *et al.*, 2024). Next, we selected a representative sub-sample of documents based on reading at least the first half of the papers ranked highest for each cluster.

Then, the clusters have been reviewed, following the prescriptions of systematic literature reviews by mapping the state of knowledge and grasping the content of the literature.

The next section reports first the descriptive bibliometric indicators of our sample and then the analysis of the science mapping and bibliographic coupling, which will then be followed by the results of the systematic literature review.

Bibliometric Indicators

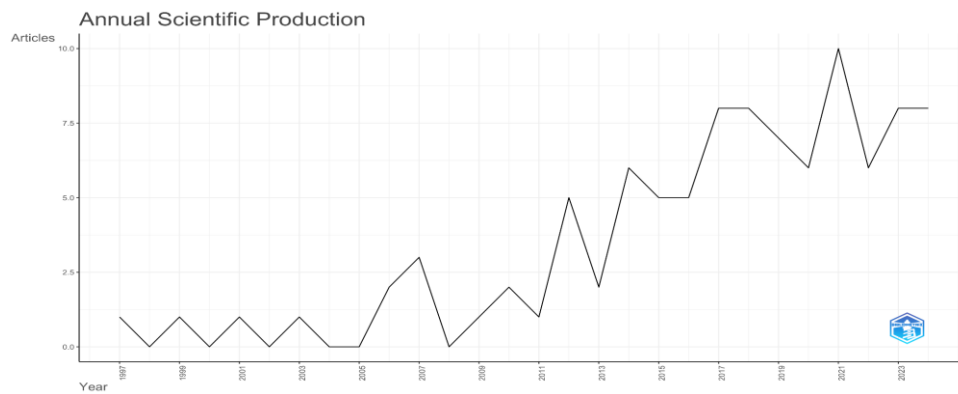
Table 1: Bibliometric Indicators

Category	Detail	Value
Data Main Information	Timespan	1997-2024
	Sources (Journals)	65

	Documents	97
	Annual Growth Rate (%)	8.01
	Document Average Age	8
	Average Citations per Document	22.53
	References	5,416
Document Content	Keywords Plus (ID)	407
	Author's Keywords (DE)	416
Authors	Authors	263
	Authors of Single-Authored Documents	21
Authors Collaboration	Single-Authored Documents	23
	Co-Authors per Document	2.78
	International Co-Authorships (%)	24.74

The research spans 27 years and draws from 65 journals across diverse disciplines, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the sustainability topic (Feeney *et al.*, 2023). A total of 263 authors have contributed to this field, with each publication receiving an average of 22.53 citations.

Figure 1 Annual Scientific Production



The field started in 1997 and is in a growing trend. The number of published papers steadily increased from the late 1990s. Publication numbers reached its peak in 2021, with approximately 10 papers published that year. Following 2021, it appears to be a slight decline or stabilization in publication numbers. Overall, the number of papers published is still limited, making the study of negotiation and sustainability a niche field.

Sources

Table 2 Sources

Rank	Sources	Articles
1	Journal Of Cleaner Production	12
2	Business Strategy and The Environment	5
3	Global Trade and Customs Journal	3
4	Group Decision and Negotiation	3
5	Journal of Organizational Change Management	3
6	Applied Geography	2
7	Cities	2
8	E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies	2
9	International Journal of Production Economics	2
10	International Journal of Supply Chain Management	2

A quick analysis of the journals that published two papers, or more, on the joint topic of negotiation and sustainability reveals that most outlets for publication are strategy journals. Although any categorization would be arbitrary, besides Group decision and Negotiation and the International Journal of Supply Chain Management, all journal titles suggest publishing communities that would take the issue from the sustainability end. Out of the 97 papers of our initial sample, only six stems from pure negotiation journals, three in Group Decision and Negotiation, two in Negotiation and Conflict Management Research and one in the Negotiation Journal. This suggests that sustainability scholars are looking at negotiation processes more than negotiation scholars publish about sustainability.

Most cited papers

Table 3 Citation analysis

Rank	Authors, Year, Journal	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
1	Perey R, 2018, Bus. Strategy Environ.	133	16,63	3,79
2	Ye G, 2012, Organ. Sci.	118	8,43	1,92
3	Bals L, 2019, J. Purch. Supply Manag.	116	16,57	3,02
4	Mitra R, 2017, Hum. Relations	109	12,11	3,89
5	Soltani A, 2016, J. Clean. Prod.	96	9,60	2,25
6	Chan H-L, 2018, Int. J. Prod. Res.	91	11,38	2,59
7	Holden M, 2006, Cities	86	4,30	1,19
8	Ding H, 2016, Int. J. Prod. Econ.	86	8,60	2,02
9	Rodima-Taylor D, 2012, Appl. Geogr.	77	5,50	1,25
10	Sterman J, 2014, Syst. Dyn. Rev.-A	64	5,33	2,78
11	Gibson Rb, 2006, J. Clean. Prod.	58	2,90	0,81
12	König N, 2017, Futures	57	6,33	2,04
13	Wu H, 2019, J. Clean. Prod.	57	8,14	1,48
14	Mitev N, 2009, J. Manag. Stud.	51	3,00	1,00
15	Paschall M, 2012, J. Manag. Educ.	49	3,50	0,80
16	Collins E, 2007, J. Manag. Educ.	43	2,26	1,74
17	Ahmer G, 2013, Simul. Gaming	42	3,23	1,65
18	Ding H, 2015, Int. J. Prod. Econ.	41	3,73	2,85
19	Schwilch G, 2012, Appl. Geogr.	35	2,50	0,57

20	Renn O, 1997, Bus. Strategy Environ.	34	1,17	1,00
----	--------------------------------------	----	------	------

The Journal of Cleaner Production, with 12 articles, ranked first among 65 journals in this field. Also, in Table 3, three articles by Soltani, Sadiq and Hewage (2016) with 96 citations, Gibson (2006) with 58 citations, and Wu *et al.*, (2020) with 57 citations were published in this journal.

With 5 articles, the journal “Business Strategy and the Environment” ranked second among 65 journals. Perey *et al.* (2018) published the most cited paper in this field in this journal, with 133 citations. Renn, Blättel-Mink, and Kastenholz (1997) also published in this journal, with 34 citations. The journal has a high impact with fewer but highly cited articles.

According to Table 3, papers in the Journal of Cleaner Production and Business Strategy and the Environment have high total citations and normalized citation scores.

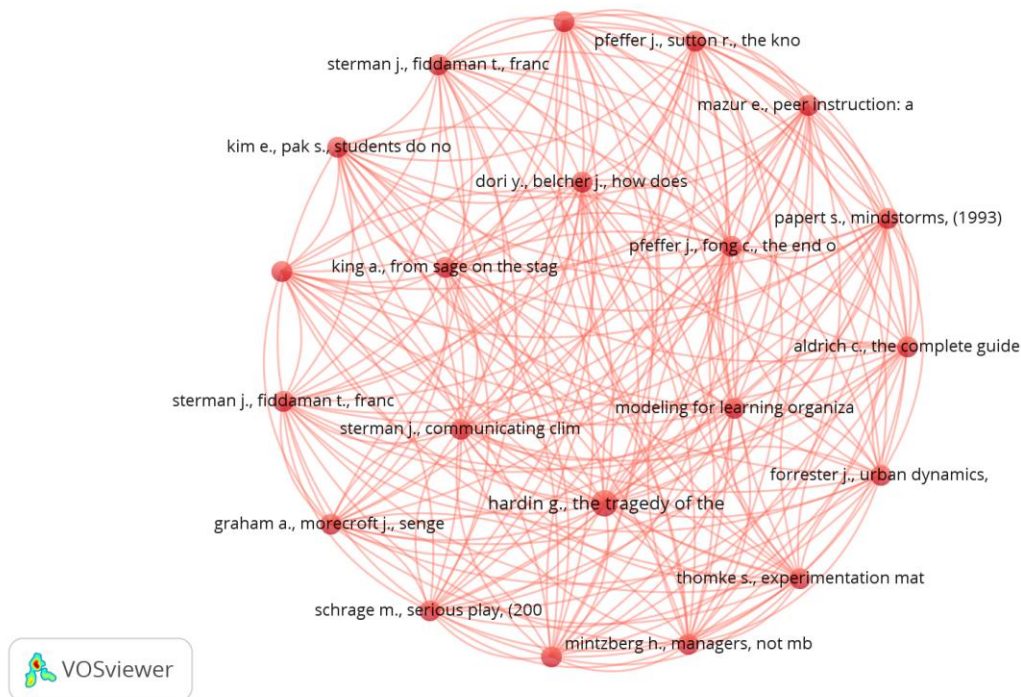
The paper by Mitra and Buzzanell (2017), published in Human Relations, has the highest normalized Total Citation (TC) score (3.89), reflecting its influence. Additionally, Perey *et al.* (2018) and Bals *et al.* (2019) have high normalized scores (3.79 and 3.02), which demonstrate their impactful contributions in this field.

By comparing Table 2 and Table 3, we can observe that journals such as Group Decision and Negotiation and Global Trade and Customs Journal, which publish three papers in this field, do not appear in the most cited papers list, indicating a focus on niche areas.

Science mapping

Theoretical foundations - co-citation analysis

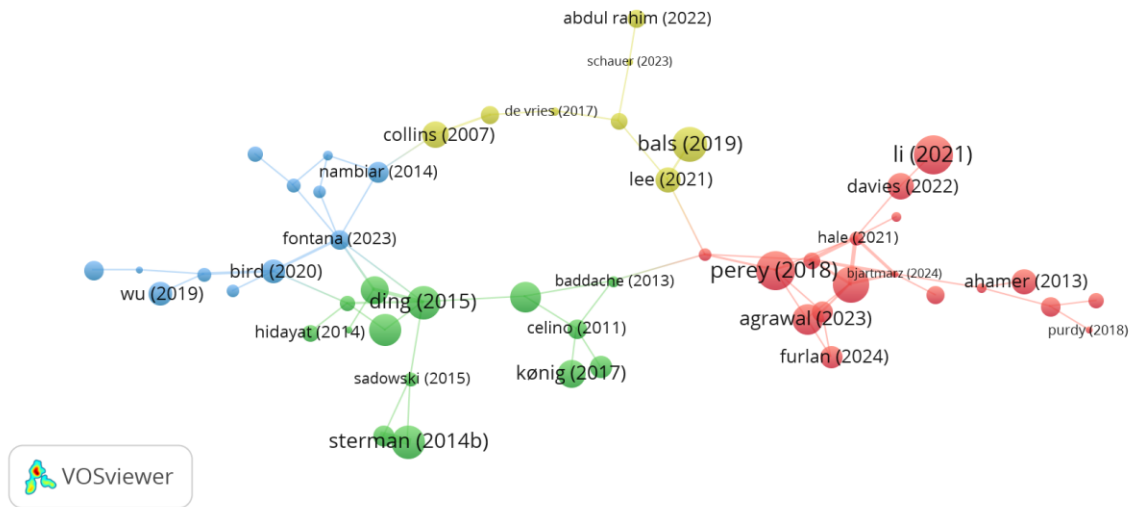
Figure 2 Co-citation Analysis



Co-citation analysis is an effective method for investigating the foundations of the intersection between negotiation and sustainability (Caputo, Kargina and Pellegrini, 2023). This co-citation analysis (Figure 3) indicates a highly interconnected research cluster with 21 items and 210 links. According to co-citation analysis, these 21 papers are the most influential publications (Donthu *et al.*, 2021) within this cluster. The total link strength of 420 and an average link strength of 2 per connection show that the co-cited works share a common foundation but do not cite each other frequently. Each item has a total link strength of 40, and each paper has been cited only 2 times, which is relatively low. Our co-citation analysis suggests that the research area is well-connected and clearly defined but may not yet gain significant attention outside the cluster (Donthu *et al.*, 2021).

Clustering by Bibliographic Coupling

Figure 4 Bibliographic Coupling

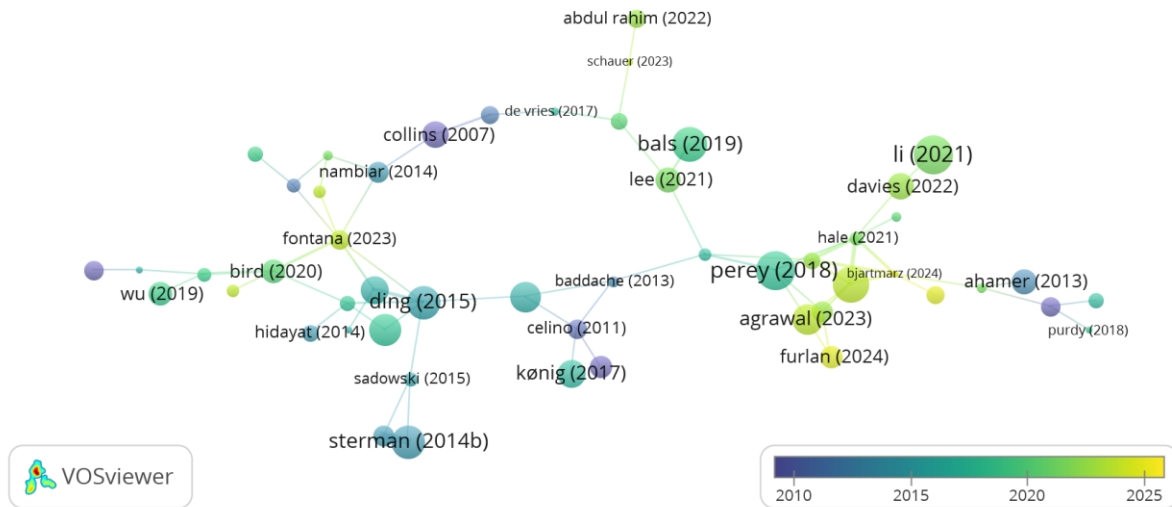


Bibliographic coupling occurs when two works cite a common third work in their references (Small, 1973). This method, with clustering techniques, is used to evaluate the current structure of a field and allows us to compare recent papers that may not yet have been cited (Caputo, Kargina and Pellegrini, 2023).

Out of 97 documents, only 52 documents constituted the largest set of connected items. This analysis provides us with 67 direct links between documents, with each document sharing at least one common reference. Higher number of links indicate a more prominent position of the article (Marzi *et al.*, 2024). On average, each link has a strength of approximately 1.85 shared references (124 total link strength / 67 links).

Clustering analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the knowledge base within a field (Caputo *et al.*, 2018). Using Vos viewer, these 52 papers were clustered into four different colours. The red cluster with 18 papers generally aggregated papers on collaborative approaches to sustainable resource management and circular economy. The green cluster with 14 papers can be summarized under Decision-Making for Sustainability. The blue cluster has 12 items, mainly about the Behavioural Aspects of Sustainability. Lastly, the yellow cluster contains eight papers on Negotiation and Stakeholder Engagement Strategies for Sustainable Development.

Figure 5 Overlay Visualization



To track the time of publishing, we provide the overlay visualization figure. Following the explanation by Marzi *et al.* (2024), the blue tones (2010–2015) indicate well-established topics or foundational research within the intersection of sustainability and negotiation, such as Sterman (2014b) and Ding *et al.* (2015). Green tones (2016–2020) represent developed topics that built upon earlier work and contributed to the maturation of the field, such as Bird and Soundararajan (2020) and Bals *et al.* (2019). Yellow tones (2021–2025) represent the emerging trends or topics in recent years, such as Furlan (2024), Agrawal (2023), and Schauer (2023).

Results of systematic literature review

Cluster #1 – collaborative approaches to sustainable resource management and circular economy – gathers contribution that look at existing sustainable supply chains and circular economic systems through a stakeholder or systemic approach. Its main papers study cooperation in waste management, re-commerce and collaborative business models.

Among the main papers of this cluster, Perey *et al.* (2018) study organizations that changed their business models to turn waste management from a burden to a valuable resource. This included negotiations with suppliers to modify supply chains and, internally, navigating the way waste is approached. Hale (2021) looks at how organizations look at teaming up around sustainable innovation projects. Ivanov (2022) studies Business Model Innovation and identifies negotiating with key stakeholders as one of its core elements. Pedersen *et al.* (2023) looks at how adopting a sustainable business model impacts relationships within the value network, leading to the idea that mapping stakeholders does not suffice, one needs to engage with them in co-creation processes. look at how e-retailers and recommerce actors coordinate to develop circular economy business models. Finally, Bjartmarz and Bocken (2024) look at stakeholder interactions at organizations' boundaries when developing sustainable business models. Taken together, these papers study sustainable business models and their impact on

management, mostly at strategic level. Only Pedersen, Clausen and Jørgensen (2023) seem to engage with the reality of such negotiation processes, while the other papers discuss their positioning and strategy elements.

The main papers of cluster #2 – decision-making for sustainability – look at how decisions are produced on sustainable issues. It takes the perspective of explaining the terms of choices for individual and most often collective decision-making, relying mostly on game theory and economics. In other words, it looks at how actors behave in the system as the context for potential negotiations among them.

The oldest paper, among those considered the most impactful, is Celino and Concilio (2011). It looks at participatory processes in land use planning, and the role that negotiation may play in crystalizing conflict among stakeholders. Sterman (2014) describes the use of “flight simulations” to tackle sustainability issues in business, in which participants must negotiate international agreements or divide resources. Ding et al. (2015) is an economics paper that studies how actors define pricing strategies while turning their supply chains sustainable. Ding *et al.* (2016) study how public incentive systems such as carbon caps impact the different actors of supply chains, and how they divide value among themselves. Soltani, Sadiq and Hewage (2016) study waste-to-energy processes, in which industries need to define a price to purchase fossil fuel waste produced by the municipality’s energy production system. In reviewing the literature on supply chain management, Asrol and Yani (2018) isolate a stream on supply chain negotiations and raise sustainability as a major point of focus in future research. In this cluster, negotiation is considered as one of the decision processes used to coordinate actors in a supply chain, or around a sustainable project. It is worth noting that this is the only paper explicitly mentioning conflict negotiations among participants to a project with a strong sustainability component. Their paper explores negotiation in participatory decision-making, particularly highlighting how this process in environmental planning often leads to conflict due to differing socio-environmental values. They found that traditional participatory methods, which focus on highlighting differences, may unintentionally intensify these conflicts. Their case of the *Torre Guaceto* wetland shows that by focusing on specific and manageable issues, such as olive oil production, rather than broader agricultural practices, they can change from conflict to collaboration in their negotiation. They suggest that negotiation should be reconceptualized not as a process for reconciling differences but as an explorative, action-oriented collaboration focused on decision opportunities.

In cluster #3 – behavioural aspects of sustainability –, the main papers look at to align sustainable values among stakeholders in supply chains, among top management teams or around environmentally contested projects. Elements such as precontractual signals, ethos, mindsets and strategic choices are used to explain how environmentalism and/or social values are shared among stakeholders.

Cherrier, Russell and Fielding (2012) study the implementation of corporate environmentalism within organizations. Especially how top managers sometimes negotiate internally and adjust their views, manage differing perspectives, and align organizational priorities when dealing with corporate environmentalism. Dhanorkar, Kim and Linderman (2019) look at bilateral negotiations on an online marketplace linking suppliers with potential buyers of waste materials, as well as their system-wide effects.

They discuss various types of uncertainty in negotiation, including response uncertainty, state uncertainty, and effect uncertainty. According to them, negotiation is a nonlinear, often iterative process, where the outcome may not be proportional to the effort expended. In some cases, an exchange might not even take place. The paper emphasizes the role of industry homophily in reducing uncertainty and fostering trust. When buyers and suppliers share knowledge of their respective industries, they develop a common understanding that simplifies negotiations and decreases information asymmetry. Furthermore, the paper applies the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) to the negotiation process, illustrating how buyer-supplier relationships evolve across three levels. At the node level, buyers adjust their behaviours; at the dyad level, negotiations influence trust and decision-making; and at the network level, collective interactions enhance overall efficiency.

Bird and Soundararajan (2020) look at precontractual practices including cheap talk among parties interested in entering a sustainable supply chain. Cheap talk refers to informal communication that can convey trust and useful information. It helps parties understand each other's interests and willingness to negotiate, fostering a cooperative atmosphere for future agreements. Additionally, cheap talk acts as a filter to identify incompatible parties; if someone avoids casual communication, it may indicate a lack of interest in pursuing a relationship. Therefore, it can be strategic tool in early stages of negotiation. Pickering (2021) studies identity alignment and how it may facilitate exchanges between a project manager and the local community around a contested environmental project. The paper expands the behavioural aspects of sustainability by emphasizing how ethos shapes negotiation dynamics, fostering trust and long-term environmental commitment. In this case study, the project manager cited crime reports, environmental damage, and personal observations to try and frame sustainability as a shared responsibility. By doing so, he created a persuasive and trustworthy ethos, allowing him to influence the community's attitudes toward environmental protection. More recently, Fontana, Atif and Heuer (2023) study how sustainability objectives infuse in supply chains and how buyers exert their negotiation power on suppliers. The paper suggests that while buyers' negotiation power is necessary, it is insufficient for Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM). The lack of financial rewards or support for suppliers' proactive social sustainability efforts limits the effectiveness of buyer pressures. Furthermore, the horizontal pressures from similar suppliers create a competitive environment that can either encourage collaboration or maintain their status quo based on the suppliers' willingness and ability to bear the costs.

Cluster #4 – negotiation and stakeholder engagement strategies for sustainable development – dives into the practical use of negotiation and conflict management in sustainability settings. Its main publications offer advice on how to manage conflict (i.e., in clean construction projects) and how to negotiate in the context of environmental uncertainty.

Collins and Kearins (2007) appears as the oldest paper in our sub-sample of impactful pieces. It is an education paper looking at how to use stakeholder negotiation exercises in class. Environmental issues are often complex, involving technical challenges, scientific uncertainty, and difficult social and economic trade-offs. One way to explore these challenges is through experiential learning, such as simulated stakeholder negotiations. The goal of this exercise is not to teach specific negotiation skills or

techniques but to encourage critical reflection on how negotiation processes and outcomes impact individuals, organizations, and society. Participants are given one specific role and asked to negotiate a specific outcome, often with certain students acting as facilitators, or guardians of the process. Li and Cheung (2020) look at dispute settlement negotiation as a tool used to improve the sustainability of construction projects by increasing the decision-making performance of contracting parties. Since project disputes are common in the construction industry, the efficiency of Construction Dispute Negotiation (CDN) is a key factor in evaluating the success of a project. However, biases in decision-making hinder effective dispute resolution. Reducing bias in CDN enhances sustainability by lowering costs and streamlining the resolution process (economic), minimizing resource waste (environmental), and strengthening relationships and collaboration within the industry (social). Lee *et al.* (2021) offer guidelines for taming conflicts in project-based organizations involved in international sustainable development projects. Schauer, Majer and Trötschel (2023) study uncertainty in negotiation with a focus on the COVID 19 vaccine supply negotiations; as such, this is the only piece in our sample that studies sustainability-related negotiations from the perspective of negotiation theory.

Discussion

Early conclusions point to the very limited number of papers published in negotiation journals: in our sample of 52 papers, only three stems from negotiation journals (one Group Decision and Negotiation, one NCMR and one Negotiation Journal). Only one of these three papers actively engages with negotiation theory (Schauer, Majer and Trötschel, 2023). There seems to be a long way until negotiation academia grapples with sustainability. We will propose an agenda to guide and structure such research efforts.

Most papers emanate from sustainability scholars. They look at negotiation as a way to align stakeholders' objectives in terms of interests and/or values. Depending on the scenario, negotiation is used among internal stakeholders, or to address external ones. Although many papers frequently use the term "stakeholder", only three explicitly reference R. Edward Freeman, the founder of stakeholder theory. This suggests that while the concept is widely applied in sustainability and negotiation research, its theoretical foundations are often overlooked.

However, stakeholder theory seems to be the most interesting bridge between both the research fields of sustainable business and negotiation. Stakeholder theory states that human ventures should not aim for the sole maximization of shareholder value but should take into consideration all the organization's stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). Sustainability is just that: the acknowledgment that the organization's stakeholders (the workforce, regulators, the company's natural habitat, etc.) should be considered when decisions are made.

The issue with stakeholder theory is that it lends itself to two different possible approaches. The macro approach is used in the field of strategy. It consists of describing all stakeholders (personnel, clients, suppliers, regulators, neighbouring communities, etc.) and defining general relationships among them. The second, micro approach, stands in the field of negotiation: it looks at how individual stakeholder relationships are created

and managed, and possible conflicts resolved. For example, Porter's five forces model aims to identify which stakeholders hold most power over the organization; however, Porter does not write about how to negotiate when in a position of power, or weakness (Porter, 1979; 2008). Therefore, there is a macro vs. micro divide in the applications of stakeholder theory. Such a divide may explain why these two streams of literature rarely interact (Borbély and Caputo, 2017).

We therefore are led to conclude that most papers we studied only tangentially touch upon the topic. There are few papers on the sustainability side that take an in-depth dive into negotiation, Dhanorkar, Kim and Linderman (2019) and Pickering (2021) being the exceptions. This therefore leaves a very open agenda for future research.

Agenda for future research

S-BLR sets the stage for future research. Our analysis of the existing literature revealed very few contributions that tackle both topics of negotiation and sustainability, leaving many questions unanswered. We will classify these questions into two broad categories.

1. What place does negotiated decision-making have in sustainability efforts?

This broad question leads in turn to two series of research questions.

Firstly, it would be interesting to study networks of stakeholders, both internal to an organization, or inter-organizational, and compare those that function based on power dynamics, vs those which are founded on negotiation dynamics (along the distinction posed by Ury, Brett & Goldberg, 1988). Certain organizations have developed a negotiation culture, broadly using joint decision-making methods to gather agreements and align stakeholders, while others rely on more unilateral decision methods, often relying on top-down unilateral decisions based on authority (Borbély & Caputo, 2017). Here, a parallel may be drawn with the change management literature that distinguishes planned change (imposed from the top) from the emergent approach, driven from the bottom up (By, 2005).

These references lead us to posit that it should be easier to insufflate sustainability through stakeholder negotiation mechanisms than through a top-down dynamic (where those powerful impose directions, and those powerless execute them). Resistance and bypass strategies may be triggered when people are being coerced, which suggests that negotiation may be an efficient (if not the most efficient) mechanism to promote sustainability.

Proposition 1: it is easier to promote sustainability in human systems based on participation and negotiated decision-making than in systems based on unilateral, power-based decision-making.

An example in support of this first proposition would be the scope 3 carbon footprint accounting. According to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (*GHG Protocol Corporate Suite of Standards and Guidance Update Process GHG Protocol*, 2024), widely used by S&P 500 companies, companies need to compute their direct emissions

(scope 1), their indirect emissions (scope 2): mostly how the energy they consume is being produced) and the CO₂ emitted upstream and downstream from their activity (scope 3). Scope 3 imposes that companies force, or negotiate with their suppliers, transporters and distributors to limit their own CO₂ emissions, as the CO₂ they emit will be included in their own footprint. Companies are therefore required not only to get the best price from their suppliers, but also to get the greenest supplies. They are also incentivized to sell locally to limit downstream transportation emissions. These efforts can only be achieved through negotiations with existing commercial partners, or through contractual agreements with new partners.

Secondly, according to Purvis *et al.*, 2019, sustainability rests on three pillars: economic, social and environmental. According to this theory, sustainability may only be achieved if the focus is not solely on one of the pillars (e.g., the environmental impact) but covers all three pillars. In other words, green impact cannot be durably achieved without an economically sound business model and without consideration for the social aspects of the venture (Purvis, Mao and Robinson, 2019). This framework suggests that a broad focus over sustainability should include healthy industrial relations, a sentiment of fair distribution of the proceeds of human work, quality of life at work (especially actions against unproductive work-related conflicts) and constructive social dialogue mechanisms. In this view, negotiation becomes one of the cornerstones to build sustainability within organizations, and, more broadly, in human societies. In other words, is not only about negotiating sustainability but also about recognizing that negotiation, no matter what topics it covers, has a role to play in sustainable development.

Negotiation is a process; it is also a set of both soft and hard skills (Chapman, Miles and Maurer, 2017). And much like most skills, negotiation skills may be transmitted through training, with more or less efficiency (Movius, 2008). Spreading such skills may lead to more negotiated decision-making: since people are getting better at it, then it should lead to more decisions taken this way. We posit that spreading negotiation skills within an organization may contribute in its path toward sustainability.

Proposition 2: negotiated decision-making within organizations contributes to making them more sustainable, initially within the social pillar and, further, within the other pillars.

An application of this proposition may lie in inclusive processes aimed at preventing occupational illnesses and at promoting quality of life at work. At the individual level, the younger generations of workers crave for empowerment and participation (Altizer, 2010); setting up the right management philosophy, one that promotes discussion, consultation and negotiation of work conditions, may therefore be key in developing socially sustainable organizations. At collective level, the same goes for healthy social dialogue processes (De Prins, Stuer and Gielens, 2020).

Many papers mention values (and values alignment) when mentioning interactions around sustainable issues. The way values impact negotiations is still a vastly uncharted territory.

1. How does sustainability affect negotiations?

Negotiating for sustainability is not negotiation-as-usual. We could not find any theoretical piece that ascertains this and clearly defines the specificities of this type of negotiation. This is therefore an open invitation to contribute to that matter

To better understand how sustainability shapes negotiations, we need to make an important distinction. In negotiation, parties aim to fulfil two distinct sets of motivators: interests have to do with the result of the negotiation, whereas values have to do with how said result fits with the identity of the negotiators (Borbély *et al.*, 2022). For example, one may have as an interest to pay as little as possible (motivators purely at interests' level) but may instead mostly care about paying a fair price (value of equity, or justice).

Reaching sustainable outcomes may be treated as a value when the organization defines itself as sustainable – or wishes to do so. It may be treated as an interest if organizations may suffer consequences for not being sustainable, or not sustainable enough. Therefore, voluntary sustainability processes may have to do with values and compulsory processes may have direct implications on the parties' interests.

Defining sustainability in terms of values is nothing new; certain articles in our sample do it. Ivanov (2022) mentions values-based approaches for stakeholder management, citing Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2019) and Freeman and Auster (2015). Celino and Concilio (2011) also speak of environmental values as principles parties adhere to and may need to abandon for a compromise to be found. The piece by Lee *et al.* (2021) defines the three pillars of sustainability (economic growth, social equity and environmental protection) as three potentially incompatible values. This focus on values challenges a purely “interests-based” negotiation approach, as values function differently than interests in negotiation (Borbély *et al.*, 2022).

So, when negotiators and business organizations alike negotiate agreements aimed at increased sustainability, negotiators need to balance between their classical interests (profit generation, respect of set budgets, etc.) and their motivations linked with sustainability. This is usually done when clear objectives are set for them in their upcoming negotiation efforts.

One example would be sourcing agents in distribution: their incentive system is usually linked with the costs of the goods and services they purchase. When asked to buy “green”, they often face a tension between finding the best prices, and sourcing sustainably. Sustainable products, whether sourced locally, or respecting some higher environmental and/or social standards, generally cost more. HR managers may also face a similar tension between hiring as few people as possible, at minimum wage, or guaranteeing quality of life at work and job safety.

How negotiators navigate these potentially incompatible motivators may be linked with different organizational factors, leading to the following propositions for future research.

Proposition 3: clarity in individual motivators (including how they translate into objectives in negotiation and incentive schemes for the negotiators) will help negotiators navigate potential tensions between regular and sustainable motivators.

Proposition 4: individual negotiators will be more disposed to pursue sustainable objectives in their negotiations if they have been involved in their organization's efforts toward sustainability (objective definition, organizational change to make room for efforts toward sustainability, etc.).

The way people identify their own value system regarding the three pillars of sustainability Purvis, Mao and Robinson (2019) should undeniably have an impact on the way they negotiate. People who personally value social responsibility may push for higher expectations regarding worker protection in their negotiation partners, and in their deals. The same goes for people inclined toward environmental protection. Those who value these two elements less may remain centred, in their negotiation efforts, on the economic variables.

Proposition 5: individuals who value sustainability personally will be leaning more toward sustainable motivators (their individual values), rather than regular business motivators (their organization's interests).

Finally, research clearly states that people tend to be more at ease negotiating with people they appreciate. Such an attraction may relate to perceived similarity in values. Here, we may factor in the entire literature on homophily (for a review, see Ertug *et al.*, 2022). We see no reason why homophily should not apply when it comes to sustainable values. In other words, negotiators will favour negotiating with people who share similar sustainable objectives. They may even look for negotiation partners that also share their value profile. Therefore, displaying one's efforts toward a sustainable future may serve to select people for one's own network of partners.

Proposition 6: negotiations will be facilitated when the parties display similar values regarding sustainability.

Conclusion

When it comes to negotiation and sustainability, most of the work lies ahead. However, good news is that different disciplines offer different frameworks to build knowledge and understanding on the topic. Acting upon these foundations may prove even more pressing that sustainability is bound to infuse more areas of human activity.

Our agenda for future research implicitly calls for interdisciplinary collaborations and our hope is for negotiation academics to start collaborating with sustainability scholars to produce relevant research to fill the missing link between our two topics.

References

- Altizer, T. E. (2010) 'Motivating Gen Y amidst global economic uncertainty', *The Journal of Learning in Higher Education*, 6(1), 37-45.
- Aria, M. and Cuccurullo, C. (2017) 'bibliometrix: An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis', *Journal of Informetrics*, 11(4), pp. 959–975.
- Asrol, M. and Yani, M. (2018) 'Method and Approach Mapping of Fair and Balanced Risk and Value-added Distribution in Supply Chains: A Review and Future Agenda', *International Journal Supply Chain Management*, 7(5), pp.74-95.
- Bals, L., Schulze, H., Kelly, S. and Stek, K., (2019) 'Purchasing and supply management (PSM) competencies: Current and future requirements', *Journal of purchasing and supply management*, 25(5), p.100572.
- Bird, R.C. and Soundararajan, V. (2020) 'The Role of Precontractual Signals in Creating Sustainable Global Supply Chains', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 164(1), pp. 81–94.
- Bjartmarz, T.K. and Bocken, N.M.P. (2024) 'Sustainable business models and organizational boundaries—A literature review', *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 33(7), pp.6716-6736.
- Borbély A., Ebner N., Honeyman C., Kaufman S., and Schneider A.K., (2017) 'A "Grand" Unified Negotiation Theory in Context', *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, 1, pp. 145-158.
- Borbély A., Giraudon B.A. & Sikharulidze T., (2022), Between interests and values, often choose one must, in Ebner N. & Reynolds, J, *Star Wars and Conflict Resolution*, DRI Press.
- Borbély, A., & Caputo, A. (2017) 'Approaching negotiation at the organizational level', *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 10(4), pp. 306-323.
- Breuer, H. and Lüdeke-Freund, F. (2019) 'Values-Based Stakeholder Management: Concepts and methods in CSR', *sustainability, ethics & governance*, pp. 217–239.
- By, R.T. (2005) 'Organisational change management: A critical review', *Journal of Change Management*, 5(4), pp. 369–380.
- Caputo, A., Marzi, G., Pellegrini, M.M. and Rialti, R., (2018) 'Conflict management in family businesses: A bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 29(4), pp.519-542.
- Caputo, A., Kargina, M. and Pellegrini, M.M. (2023) 'Conflict in virtual teams: a bibliometric analysis, systematic review, and research agenda', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 34(1), pp. 1–31.

Caputo, A., Pizzi, S. and Santini, E. (2024) 'Sustainability and SMEs: Opening the black box', *Journal of Management and Organization*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 413–420.

Celino, A. and Concilio, G. (2011) 'Explorative Nature of Negotiation in Participatory Decision Making for Sustainability', *Group Decision and Negotiation*, 20(2), pp. 255–270.

Chapman, E., Miles, E.W. and Maurer, T. (2017) 'A proposed model for effective negotiation skill development', *Journal of Management Development*, 36(7), pp. 940–958.

Cherrier, H., Russell, S. V. and Fielding, K. (2012) 'Corporate environmentalism and top management identity negotiation', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(4), pp. 518–534.

Collins, E. and Kearins, K. (2007) 'Exposing students to the potential and risks of stakeholder engagement when teaching sustainability: A classroom exercise', *Journal of Management Education*, 31(4), pp. 521–540.

De Prins, P., Stuer, D. and Gielens, T. (2020) 'Revitalizing social dialogue in the workplace: the impact of a cooperative industrial relations climate and sustainable HR practices on reducing employee harm', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 31(13), pp. 1684–1704.

Dhanorkar, S., Kim, Y. and Linderman, K. (2019) 'An empirical investigation of transaction dynamics in online surplus networks: A complex adaptive system perspective', *Journal of Operations Management*, 65(2), pp. 160–189.

Ding, H., Zhao, Q., An, Z., Xu, J. and Liu, Q., (2015) 'Pricing strategy of environmental sustainable supply chain with internalizing externalities'. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 170, pp.563-575.

Ding, H., Zhao, Q., An, Z. and Tang, O., (2016) 'Collaborative mechanism of a sustainable supply chain with environmental constraints and carbon caps', *International Journal of Production Economics*, 181, pp.191-207.

Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N. and Lim, W.M., (2021) 'How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines', *Journal of business research*, 133, pp.285-296.

Ertug, G. *et al.* (2022) 'What does homophily do? A review of the consequences of homophily', *Academy of Management Annals*, 16(1), pp. 38–69.

Feeney, M. *et al.* (2023) 'Organizations, Learning, and Sustainability: A Cross-Disciplinary Review and Research Agenda', *Journal of Business Ethics*. Springer Science and Business Media B.V., pp. 217–235.

Fells, R. (2010) *Effective Negotiation: From Research to Results*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Fontana, E., Atif, M. and Heuer, M. (2023) 'Implementing social sustainability through market pressures: an inter-organizational network analysis in the Pakistani apparel supply

chain', *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, 53(1), pp. 156–180.

Freeman, R. E. (1984) *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman

Freeman, R.E. and Auster, E.R., (2015) *Bridging the values gap: How authentic organizations bring values to life*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

GHG Protocol Corporate Suite of Standards and Guidance Update Process | GHG Protocol (2024). <https://ghgprotocol.org/ghg-protocol-corporate-suite-standards-and-guidance-update-process>. Access date: 26.02.2025

Gibson, R.B. (2006) 'Beyond the pillars: sustainability assessment as a framework for effective integration of social, economic and ecological considerations in significant decision-making', *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management*, 8(3), pp. 259–280.

Hale, L.A. (2021) 'Courtship for business model innovation: Early stage value negotiation for the sustainability of smart homes', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 297.

Ivanov, K. (2022) 'Values-based business model innovation – The case of Ecosia and its business model', *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 26(5).

Lee, K.T., Lee, J.M. and Kim, J.H., (2021) 'Guidelines to support negotiation for sustainable international development based on hierarchical roles and responsibilities of project-based organizations', *Journal of Management in Engineering*, 37(5), p.04021043.

Li, K. and Cheung, S.O. (2020) 'Alleviating bias to enhance sustainable construction dispute management', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 249.

Marzi, G., Balzano, M., Caputo, A. and Pellegrini, M.M., (2024) 'Guidelines for Bibliometric-Systematic Literature Reviews: 10 steps to combine analysis, synthesis and theory development', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 27(1), pp.81-103.

Mitra, R. and Buzzanell, P.M. (2017) 'Communicative tensions of meaningful work: The case of sustainability practitioners', *Human Relations*, 70(5), pp. 594–616.

Moore, J.E., Mascarenhas, A., Bain, J. and Straus, S.E., 2017. Developing a comprehensive definition of sustainability. *Implementation Science*, 12, pp.1-8.

Movius, H. (2008) 'The effectiveness of negotiation training: On teaching', *Negotiation Journal*, 24(4), pp. 509–531.

Parris, T.M. and Kates, R.W. (2003) 'Characterizing and measuring sustainable development', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 28, pp. 559–586.

Pedersen, S., Clausen, C. and Jørgensen, M.S. (2023) 'Navigating value networks to co-create sustainable business models: An actionable staging approach', *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 32(1), pp. 240–258.

Perey, R. *et al.* (2018) 'The place of waste: Changing business value for the circular economy', *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 27(5), pp. 631–642.

- Pickering, K. (2021) 'Negotiating Ethos: An Army Corps of Engineers Resource Manager Persuades a community to Protect a Recreational Lake Area', *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 84(3), pp. 205–241.
- Porter M. E. (2008) 'The five competitive forces that shape strategy', *Harvard business review*, 86(1), pp.78–137.
- Pruitt, D.G., (1981) *Negotiation behavior Academic Press*. New York.
- Purvis, B., Mao, Y. and Robinson, D. (2019) 'Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins', *Sustainability Science*, 14(3), pp. 681–695.
- Renn, O., Blättel-Mink, B. and Kastenholz, H. (1997) 'Discursive methods in environmental decision making', *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 6(4), pp. 218–231.
- Ruggerio, C.A. (2021) 'Sustainability and sustainable development: A review of principles and definitions', *Science of the Total Environment*. Elsevier B.V.
- Schauer, M., Majer, J.M. and Trötschel, R. (2023) 'Nine Degrees of Uncertainty in Negotiations', *Negotiation Journal*, 39(2), pp. 207–228.
- Small, H. (1973) 'Co-citation in the scientific literature: A new measure of the relationship between two documents', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 24(4), pp. 265–269.
- Soltani, A., Sadiq, R. and Hewage, K. (2016) 'Selecting sustainable waste-to-energy technologies for municipal solid waste treatment: A game theory approach for group decision-making', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 113, pp. 388–399.
- Sterman, J. (2014) 'Interactive web-based simulations for strategy and sustainability: The MIT Sloan LearningEdge management flight simulators, Part I', *System Dynamics Review*, 30(1–2), pp. 89–121.
- Thompson, L.L., Wang, J. and Gunia, B.C. (2010) 'Negotiation', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 61, pp. 491–515.
- Ury, W. L., Brett, J. M., & Goldberg, S. B. (1988). *Getting disputes resolved: Designing systems to cut the costs of conflict*. Jossey-bass.
- Wu, H., Cai, J., Ren, Q., Xu, J., Chu, F. and Lyu, Q., (2020) 'An efficient and economic denitration technology based on fuel pretreatment for cement cleaner production'. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 272, p.122669.