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Institutional logic for sustainable purchasing and supply management: Concepts, illustrations, and implications for business strategy

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Abstract

Amidst the number of studies on sustainable purchasing and supply management (PSM), we have yet to learn how sustainability becomes a logic for organisations and their stakeholders. Thus, this paper offers an extended approach on the emergence of an institutional logic of sustainability (ILS). Our contribution includes the macro mechanisms supporting the robust and continuous adoption of an ILS for procurement. Three distinct trajectories of an ILS emerged from the literature and their application to sustainable PSM is illustrated using real-world examples. The trajectories rely upon the evolution of (1) institutional entrepreneurs or (2) PSM structures, but also can happen through (3) the co-evolution of both. By offering a conceptual model and a set of research propositions for future theory and empirical testing, this paper helps scholars and practitioners to advance their knowledge on managing purchasing departments according to sustainability values and making it a competitiveness factor. Lastly, this paper adds value to both implementation and formulation of sustainable business strategies as the application of our conceptual framework can lead to better strategic alignment of PSM practices.

Keywords: sustainable development; institutional logic; sustainable purchasing and supply management; sustainable supply chain; sustainability practice; sustainability trajectory, business strategy.

1. Introduction

Sustainability-oriented actions and studies in business strategy have increasingly received a significant attention over the past years (Kumar et al, 2021); however, due to their complexity, the topic calls for further investigation (Johnsen et al., 2017; Meckenstock et al., 2016). Because companies often favour profit maximisation over other non-financial measures (Pullman et al., 2018), the formation of a sustainability logic in business processes is not fully conceptualised yet.

One of the main reasons for that is because the business strategy literature was heavily influenced for many years by the views of Milton Friedman and his principles on

neoliberalism and management (e.g. “the purpose of a firm is to increase its profits”). Recently, more balanced views such as ‘Balanced Scorecard’ (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) and ‘Dynamic Capabilities’ (Teece et al, 1997) noted that short-term profit maximisation was not sufficient to guarantee survival of the firm. The survival of the firm is also dependent on non-financial measures such as process technologies, learning and innovation competences. Given the increased complexity in today’s markets and the sustainability pressures that currently exist, new approaches for strategy formulation (Figge et al, 2002), business performance measurement and stakeholder management (Perrini and Tencati, 2006; Siems and Seuring, 2021) are required. Later, sustainability drivers (Hart and Milstein, 2003) and strategies (Orsato, 2009) identified successful approaches to meet the needs of society, target sustainability market niches, and reduce both product and process environmental impacts. Nevertheless, for the changes to be sustained in the long term and beyond specific market niches, they need to be internalised as ‘logics’ at the core of firms’ strategies.

Logics are contextual forces that lead to values, attitude, behaviours, and usually precede changes in organisations and can support sustainable businesses raising. Sustainable businesses are expected by key stakeholders to recognise the importance of implementing processes of sustainability in purchasing and supply management (PSM), rather than narrowly focusing on managing the performance of key indicators from an instrumental logic (Montabon et al., 2016; Paulraj et al., 2017; Touboulic and Walker, 2015b). Therefore, logics can be frameworks that guide research in sustainable supply chains, including sustainable purchasing (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017; Montabon et al., 2016). For that matter, it is still lacking studies that demonstrate how an institutional logic of sustainability (ILS) can emerge within purchasing departments.

Sustainability needs to become a competitiveness factor as it happens with quality, cost, speed, dependability, flexibility, and innovations (Krause et al., 2009). Not surprisingly, there is still a gap in the literature when examining more strategic decisions (Nunes et al, 2016) and a full integration towards a sustainable system (Luzzini and Ronchi, 2016; Machado et al, 2017). In this context, businesses need to turn sustainability into practice (Silva and Figueiredo, 2020); but this is easier said than done. This is also true at department level (Meehan and Bryde, 2011). This paper presents how the lenses of IL provides a new approach to investigate sustainability in PSM departments (Miemczyk et al., 2012). A new sustainability logic for PSM cannot be taken-for-granted; and therefore, its formation and maintenance imply an effective process of internalisation (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021; Mutch, 2018; Silva and Figueiredo, 2017). Therefore, due the fact that several organisations not only have a strong impact on the environment but also influence the practices of their key stakeholders (Ansari and Kant, 2017; Golicic and Smith, 2013), this paper aims to answer the following question: *how does PSM internalise an institutional logic of sustainability?*

Through a conceptual discussion, by understanding the role of buying firms at shifting their logics toward sustainability, this paper advances the body of knowledge on sustainable PSM. For this end, we discuss the institutional logic (IL) as a process-based perspective that suits our theory elaboration of the implementation of sustainable PSM initiatives. IL is related to a set of practices and behaviours that several actors share in an organisational field (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012), thus the purchasing department has a crucial role in supporting a shift for a sustainability logic. Despite the recent progress of the IL literature in the supply chain studies (e.g., Léon-Bravo et al., 2021; McLoughlin and Meehan, 2021; Pullman et al., 2018), it still in its early stages. Indeed, more research and theory are necessary to help in understanding the sustainability logic.

This paper is conceptual in nature. But to support further research, we present a set of research propositions based on the four macro dimensions necessary to have a logic of

sustainability: (1) event sequencing, (2) institutional entrepreneurship, (3) structure overlap, and (4) practice of sustainability. The stages to create a logic of sustainability are drawn and illustrated through three different trajectories. They explain sustainability as a logic in PSM. Following this perspective, this paper responds to several calls for research for: (1) new investigations on how sustainability is considered an institutional logic (Glover et al., 2014; Sayed et al., 2017); (2) more studies in operations management studying sustainability nature and practice (Silva and Figueiredo, 2017); and (3) further conceptual theory development in the literature regarding sustainable PSM (Johnsen et al., 2017) and, indirectly, supply chain sustainability (Touboulic and Walker, 2015b).

Our contributions are threefold. First, we explain how the use of the IL lens helps to build sustainability logic for PSM, having internal activities and decisions as triggers to combine current actions with sustainability practices and business strategies. Thus, the IL framework presents macro and micro mechanisms and trajectories to understand how the sustainability become an institutionalised logic and it is not taken-for-granted. Based on this argument, different stakeholders may share amongst them a similar sustainability logic to support new strategies and practices in supply chains (Montabon et al., 2016; Siems and Seuring, 2021). Secondly, we provide a set of propositions for future empirical testing and not only instruct future research but also contribute for both practice and the development of new theories on the field. Finally, as third contribution, we propose three different trajectories that may guide a future research agenda on sustainable PSM. As suggested by Skilton (2011), we present three examples to illustrate those trajectories in practice in order to facilitate understanding our conceptual framework.

2. Institutional Logic of Sustainability

Institutional logic (IL) has its origins in Friedland and Alford's (1991). It builds on DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional theory, in which "institutions cannot be analysed in isolation from each other, but must be understood in their mutually dependent, yet contradictory relationships". Departing from this understanding, we assume IL as "the theory to understand how culture influences organisational change and how historical event sequencing can reveal the underlying patterns of cultural transformation" (Thornton et al., 2005, p.125). Therefore, Thornton and Ocasio (1999, p.804) define IL as "the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules".

Once IL are historically variant and influenced by economic and social changes, it drives both organisational and individual cognitions and decisions (Montabon et al., 2016; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). Therefore, the adoption of elements from a specific logic are often shared with other logics (Pache and Santos, 2013). Elements such as emotions (Friedland, 2017), rivalry (Reay and Hinings, 2009), practice (Lounsbury, 2007; Zhu et al., 2016) and power asymmetry (Nicholls and Huybrechts, 2014) can explain the emergence of a new IL. In addition, the understanding of IL requires the consideration of time and space dimensions. As a result, it is difficult to generalise logics from a particular historical context (Mutch, 2018). The IL is usually bounded by an organisational field (OF) (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008), which is defined as a set of organisations that compose a recognised area of institutional life (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 1998), and can be represented by a geographic community or an inter-organisational network (i.e., a supply chain) (Sayed et al., 2017; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008).

To understand IL, it is necessary to study at least three dimensions: event sequencing, institutional entrepreneurship, and structure overlap (Thornton et al., 2005; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). For Thornton and Ocasio (2008), competing institutional logics are often an

antecedent or consequence of change; so, it is not used here as a dimension to discuss IL. Thus, event sequencing is a temporal frame that is necessary in order to analyse organisational change, and the flows of power, practices and routines in relation to IL (Sewell, 1996; Thorton and Ocasio, 2008; Mutch, 2018). In this dimension, even daily events are produced and reproduced to reinforce the logic. Secondly, institutional entrepreneurship, has the institutional entrepreneur (IE) concept as its main reference (Thornton et al., 2012). The IE represents both individual and organisational actors in the company that contribute to institutional changes as driver or change maker (DiMaggio, 1988). Finally, structure overlap, encompasses the shift from individual rules and organisational structures and functions to distinct formats with distinct logics (Thornton et al., 2005). Formal and informal structures could change in the OF according to influences of the events and IE during the time.

In multiple sectors, organisations are involved in different interactions, practices and relationships with others that belong to the same OF. Therefore, according to Durand and Thornton (2018), organisations trigger changes in the institutional logic and vice versa, which demonstrates that there are meanings providing a particular order (Mutch, 2018). This may generate multiple IL and consequently implications on how organisations and the institutional field organise itself (Besharov and Smith, 2014; Lee and Lounsbury, 2015). Based on these arguments, we study PSM and its role to introduce an institutional logic of sustainability (ILS). ILS considers changes in the importance of stakeholders and defines sustainability as an organisational practice (i.e., the practice of sustainability), since it should occur as a result of structures (Giddens, 1984). It combines objective (e.g. visible environmental and social impacts) and subjective realities (e.g. converting ecological and social risks into perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours) that are inherent to the relationship between humans and nature.

Sustainability necessarily includes a paradigm change (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014; Stàl, 2015). To make sustainability happen, it is necessary to focus on the ecologically-dominant logic (Montabon et al., 2016; Borland et al., 2016). At supply chain level, the even dominant logic needs to be championed across different organisations and internalised through shared structures and practices, there are competing logics affecting on how to cope multiple logics (e.g. Léon-Bravo et al., 2021). To better understand ILS, Silva and Figueiredo (2017, p.8) define it as "the outcome of actions – developed and institutionalised by organisations – that improve the sustainability of a given organisational field". Thus, it is an ongoing process resulting from multiple loops of actions and performance measurements.

For the sake of simplicity, we consider the traditional and linear supply chain schema to illustrate a simplified understanding on how IL elements are embedded in an organisational field (see Figure 1). The changes permeate not only the focal companies (here represented by their purchasing departments) but also actors in the upstream and downstream supply chain. Sustainability as a practice integrates assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules, and has an influence on time (event sequencing), decision-makers (institutional entrepreneurs), and organisations (structure overlap). This is no different in supply chains. Thus, to manage and turn sustainability into practices in the supply chains (i.e., considering at least the triple bottom line dimensions), it is necessary to consider who, why and how these dimensions are related to the practice of sustainability (Silva and Figueiredo, 2020).

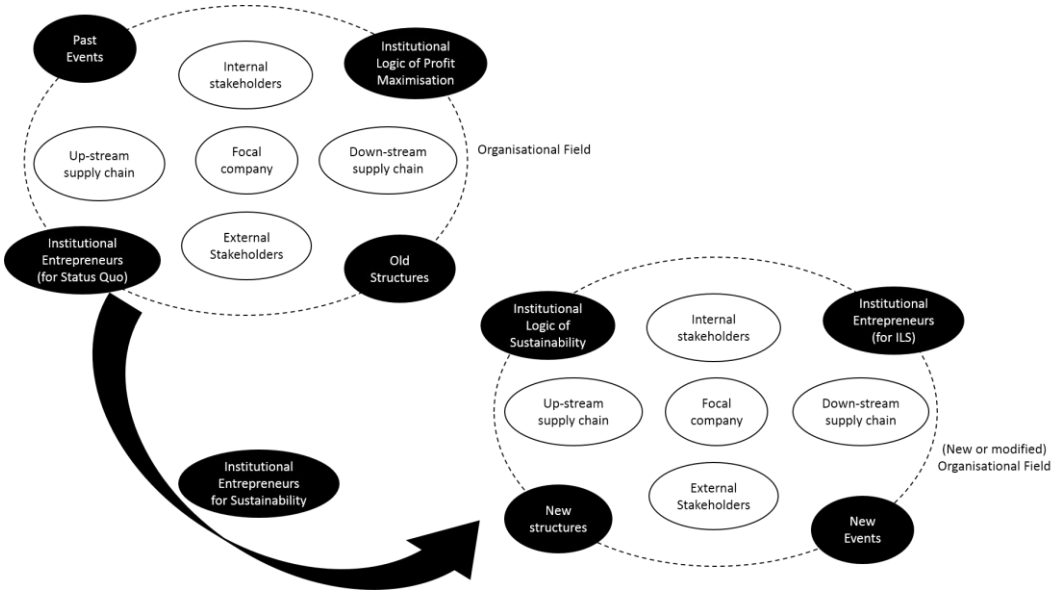

FIGURE 1: Changing towards an institutional logic of sustainability

As can be seen in Figure 1, the supply chain needs to consider a reconfiguration of different mechanisms in order establish and internalise an ILS. Sustainable PSM actions and decisions can be studied to examine such internalisation.

3. Sustainable Purchasing and Supply Management

Research about the intersection between sustainability and supply chain management (SCM) have been increasing over the past few years, mainly regarding sustainable PSM (Ansari and Kant, 2017; Johnsen et al., 2017). Sustainable PSM refers to how external resources combined with sustainability criteria affect how to manage SCs (Miemczyk et al., 2012). However, the literature lacks a clear comprehension on which tangible and intangible factors affect relationships mainly for sustainability (Houé and Duchamp, 2020). There is a need to investigate how sustainable PSM actions influence in the emergence of an ILS, which can support a change to a less normative approach of sustainability (Montabon et al., 2016). This happens because the selection and management of suppliers is critical to introduce sustainability and develop innovative solutions in supply chains (Crespin-Mazet and Dontenwill, 2012).

There are frequent claims that buying firms should implement practices that ensure and support sustainability values (e.g. Sancha et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2012). However, there is a low consideration to what are the needs, competences and resources existing in the suppliers side (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021) to meet sustainable purchasing criteria. This imbalance needs to overcome current dependent buyer-supplier relationships to further create sense of common purpose (Hoejmose et al., 2013). In addition, by assuming sustainability as a competitiveness factor (Dabhilkar et al., 2016; Krause et al., 2009), PSM in different industries use the best of their ability to manage a portfolio of suppliers that meet the order-winner criterion as well as minimum eligibility criteria. In doing so, companies can better document and communicate their SCM efforts (Krause et al., 2009). For instance, Mogre et al. (2017) indicate that by increase transparency efforts it will become easier to identify unethical behaviours from suppliers. Following this perspective, new purchasing initiatives and supply chain performance can be developed.

To understand sustainable PSM, Touboulic and Walker (2015b) suggests looking beyond tangible performance requirements (e.g. profit, emissions, number of accidents, etc) and look more closely at the relationships of supply chain members and their practices. To accomplish this, we need to understand how sustainable PSM is analysed and practised by observing the existing meanings. This may reveal the possibility of unusual sustainable purchasing actions and elements as part of the logic of sustainability. For instance, supplier selection or development may increase the chance of a logic shift. For instance, Rashidi et al. (2020) demonstrate the high relevance of supplier selection in managing supply chains, even though it is limited to environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability (Chkanikova, 2016). In addition, the need to increase a concern with supplier development is evident in the literature (e.g., Lalwani et al., 2018; Thorlakson, 2018; Yawar and Seuring, 2018), since it may be an alternative to stimulate changes within PSM for sustainability. This certainly opens a window of opportunity for research and theoretical insights based on a new logic (Montabon et al., 2016).

There is a strong concentration of research on the role of the focal company and its power to change the behaviour of its members throughout the supply chain (Schleper et al., 2017; Silvestre, 2015). However, the reality of supply chains is that there is an organisational field where, besides the focal company, other stakeholders also have significant influence on their suppliers (Sajjad et al., 2015; Sayed et al., 2017). To analyse sustainable PSM in this sense helps to achieving supply chain sustainability. However, it is necessary to consider that not always sustainable purchasing directly influence business performance directly (Luzzini and Ronchi, 2016). This happens because PSM initiatives can follow different logics to form sustainability strategies (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017), thus a new logic needs to be shared amongst SC actors based on several trajectories towards sustainability (Silvestre, 2015).

Far from the current frameworks, these trajectories depend on the history, events, experiences and the institutional environment in which each company (i.e. purchasing departments) and its supply chains are embedded. Supply chain sustainability trajectory is intrinsically related to how changes for more sustainable business practices happen efficiently, especially related to learning loops (Silvestre, 2015; Silvestre et al., 2020). Such trajectories often are based on context-based challenges, which intensifies their complexity (Roy et al., 2018). We claim that the study of a trajectory is only possible by adopting an institutional analysis. Institutional logic has emerged as a powerful tool to construct and understand both the results and the processes by which organisations adopt and consolidate practices and behaviours. The next section presents our conceptual framework in sustainable PSM logic.

4. Institutional Logic of sustainable PSM: A Conceptual Framework

The previous section shows that a new ILS needs to emerge to enhance sustainable PSM. Current studies assume different perspectives towards supply chain sustainability focusing on logics, namely: implementing sustainable supply chain actions (Glover et al., 2014; McLoughlin and Meehan, 2021; Pullman et al., 2018; Sayed et al., 2017), understanding sustainable supplier management (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021), analysing the social network (Lu et al., 2018), and shifting logics for supply chain design (Annala et al., 2019). Most papers assume IL as taken-for-granted. However, IL is about turning beliefs, goals, and ideas into practice. So, it is necessary to analyse each context to better understand the formation of ILS. The existing studies of IL show a gap on the understanding of "how logics translate into practice; in what ways logics compete or co-exist, how individuals act

upon them, and what implications this has for structures such as supply chains" (Annala et al., 2019, p.358).

For this reason, we are proposing sustainable PSM logic as a way to recognise changes in practices, or their replacement, in organisations in a given supply chain or industry. Thus, sustainability should be put into practice by agents, actions, and structures across time (Silva and Figueiredo, 2017). We assume that sustainable PSM logic emerges throughout the supply chain based on interactions between the different actors in society (cf. Thorton and Ocasio, 2008; Touboulic and Walker, 2015a). In a recursive cycle, both the IEs (mainly represented by purchasing managers) and the structure overlap dimension influence and are influenced by the event sequencing dimension regarding the 'practice of sustainability'. Since practices are made up of activities (Stàl, 2015), sustainability practice provides new meanings for supply chain members who are influenced by one (or more) IEs across time, achieving a change or replacing elements in the structure for an ILS. Table 1 presents the sustainable PSM logic framework, by applying the four dimensions of ILS.

Table 1: Framework for Sustainable PSM institutional logic

Dimension	Macro Elements	Micro Elements
Event Sequencing	1. Awareness 2. Pressure	Event frequency and relevance (adapted from ISO 14004:2016) Enablers and barriers (Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012; Sajjad et al., 2020) Pro-activity actions (Sayed et al., 2017)
Institutional Entrepreneurship	3. Institutional entrepreneurs 4. Working groups	Responsible for the change process (Peters et al., 2011), here represented by purchasing and supply managers Responsible for engaging people (adapted from Thornton et al., 2012)
(PSM) Structure Overlap	5. Internal integration and governance	Commitment of top management (Pagell and Wu, 2009) Internal codes of conduct and policies (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017) Sustainability as a competitiveness factor (Dabhilkar et al., 2016; Krause et al., 2009)
	6. Supplier screening	Supplier selection (Ageron et al., 2012; Liker and Choi, 2004) Supplier evaluation/monitoring (Leire and Mont, 2010; Léon-Bravo et al., 2021) Supplier classification (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017; Krause et al., 2009)
	7. Supplier development	Sustainability training (Teixeira et al., 2012) Sharing resources and capabilities (Gold et al., 2010) Trust and power relationships (Touboulic and Walker, 2015a); Supplier diversity (Carter and Jennings, 2002)
	8. External integration and governance	Collaborations and membership in NGOs (Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012; Leire and Mont, 2010) Collective initiatives (Peters et al., 2011) such as agreements, industry standards, and certifications (Lalwani et al, 2018)
Practice of Sustainability	9. Learning 10. Performance monitoring 11. Performance improvement	Routine (Silva and Figueiredo, 2017) Learning loops (Silvestre, 2015) Sustainability skills & competences (Schulze et al., 2019) Non-traditional sustainability issues (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021)

Despite the static and apparent disconnected relationship as presented in Table 1, the macro and microelements are interconnected and the four dimensions of an institutional logic approach (i.e., sustainable PSM logic) influence each other. For instance, "commitment of top

management" (a micro element) can influence on the "external integration and governance" towards sustainability (a macro element). Also, a "supplier diversity" decision (a micro element) can change "routines" (a micro element) and create new "learning" (a macro element) process in the company. The promotion of an institutional logic of sustainability relies on changing behaviours, beliefs, and practices of purchasing and supply managers.

Event sequencing

Event sequencing is a temporal dimension that demonstrates how many sustainability-related events happen during a certain period of time (Silva and Figueiredo, 2017) and how they are perceived in the purchasing department. These events could be historical or daily and are related to PSM change. To understand how event sequencing emerges in practice, we identified two macro elements from the literature: (1) awareness, and (2) pressure. The first relates to the characteristics of some events when influencing the logic of an OF (Sewell, 1996; Mutch, 2018). Awareness influences on all other dimensions mostly because it works as a trigger to changes in supply chain human capital, structures, and finally practices. It has the frequency and the relevance of events as key micro elements. In hindsight mainly, events can be considered within the spectrum of high or low frequency and relevance. 'Pressure', on the other hand, refer to the actions derived from awareness level; i.e., how enablers, barriers and pro-activity actions influence or are influenced by events along time. This is observed externally or internally in both the organisation and the supply chain (Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012; Sajjad et al., 2015; Sajjad et al, 2020). Purchasing managers often recognise such elements and internalise them as part of their decision process. This thread of events may define and stimulate a set of changes towards sustainable PSM (Ageron et al., 2012; Léon-Bravo et al., 2021; Sayed et al., 2017). The events could be negative, positive or neutral, according to the impact. Their use is recurrent and ongoing during the process of building an ILS.

Proposition 1 (P1): *Purchasing managers that recognise and experience relevant events in the supply chain, be them positive, neutral or negative in relation to the sustainability criteria in purchasing decisions, will tend to be more aware of sustainability pressure and practices.*

Institutional entrepreneurship

This dimension is responsible for stimulating new pathways in the company's and the sector's trajectory and introducing different practices that have not been previously adopted or even considered (Silvestre, 2015; Thornton et al., 2005). It is one of the dimensions working as a mechanism of change within organisations and acting as a driver to new activities in the relationship, for instance (cf. Walker and Jones, 2012; Silvestre et al., 2020). With regard to its areas of application, Peters et al. (2011) believe that institutional entrepreneurship can be valuable to sustainability logic. Institutional entrepreneurship is carried out by individuals or groups of individuals (Thornton et al., 2012) who create a starting point for a sustainability debate and its practice in an organisation and its supply chain. Purchasing managers have central role in this process since it is constantly responsible for managing their relationships. To enact the sustainable PSM logic, two macro elements are identified: (1) institutional entrepreneurs (IE), who are responsible for leading the change process towards the new institutional logic; and (2) working groups, who in contrast to the IE are responsible for engaging in the daily implementation of the changes required. Both macro elements are mutually exclusive, which demonstrate the potential of change in an individual or a collective

action. Based on these two macro elements, this dimension becomes as a critical in the process of change. For instance, the IE can stimulate and have different engagement levels towards the process of change in a continuum from the purchasing and supply managers to other supply chain members.

Proposition 2 (P2): *The existence of an institutional entrepreneur for sustainable PSM increases the level of engagement amongst multi stakeholders in sustainability practice at supply chain level.*

(PSM) Structure overlap

Regarding the third dimension, PSM structure overlap, several authors explain the relationship between sustainability and the SC (e.g., Akhavan and Beckman, 2017; Dabhilkar et al., 2016; Johnsen et al., 2017; Krause et al., 2009) and how structural changes are necessary for a practice to emerge. For our framework, structure overlap is one of the main dimensions in creating sustainability logic, since it shows how it is possible to turn sustainability into a practice and introduced in the organisational structure. Having the purchasing department as the space for change, the dimension is represented by four macro elements: internal integration and governance, supplier screening, supplier development, and external integration and governance (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017). "Internal integration and governance" was defined by Pagell and Wu (2009) as orientation toward sustainability and it explains how organisations introduce sustainability. Since it is considered at the strategic level (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017) its comprehension and practice facilitate the socially-constructed process for sustainable PSM. For example, Krause et al. (2009) suggest that sustainability need to become a competitiveness factor for buying companies. To promote the logic, two other micro elements are necessary: commitment of top management, and internal code of conduct and policies.

The macro element "supplier screening" highlights the need of buying firms in adding key sustainability criteria. Sustainable supplier management is one of the main issues to understand the ILS (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021), thus three micro elements emerge: (1) supplier selection (Ageron et al., 2012; Rashidi et al., 2020); (2) supplier evaluation/monitoring (Leire and Mont, 2010); and (3) supplier classification (Akhavan and Beckman, 2017; Krause et al., 2009). These elements will support PSM structure overlap and create a better performance in the supply chain. "Supplier development", as another macro element, presents a critical contribution for sustainable PSM (cf. Thorlakson, 2018; Yawar and Seuring, 2018). It goes beyond the transactional partnership and stimulates cooperation amongst SC members. Thus, sustainability training (Teixeira et al., 2012), sharing resources and capabilities amongst actors in a supply chain (Chen and Paulraj, 2004; Gold et al., 2010), trust (Touboulic and Walker, 2015a) and supplier diversity (Carter and Jennings, 2002), are micro elements needed at this point. These macro elements emerge as main categories towards sustainable PSM (Johnsen et al., 2017), according to the expected interaction.

The fourth macro element is "external integration and governance". It demonstrates the organisational capacity to maintain sustainability across time at the supply chain level. The elements involve the strategic level and how central actors in the relationship use their power to manage sustainability initiatives and assume a new structure in the sector/industry (Pagel and Shevchenko 2014; Thornton et al., 2012). Among other required issues, we observed it is common to have: "Collaborations and membership in NGOs" (Lalwani et al, 2018; Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012; Leire and Mont, 2010). This is a micro element constantly highlighted in the literature because it contributes to integrate other elements

towards structure changes (Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012; Leire and Mont, 2010). In addition, "collective (industry) initiatives" facilitates the sustainable PSM by developing a cooperative behaviour to strengthen the structure (i.e., the supply chain) (Peters et al., 2011; Villena et al., 2011). Considering the time dimension and the influence of an IE (i.e. purchasing manager or department), it is possible to understand how changes are happening and creating a new structure and logic. Hence, the following propositions are raised:

Proposition 3 (P3): *Higher levels of sustainability awareness of supply chain actors will lead to the emergence and support of sustainable PSM organisational structural changes.*

Proposition 4a (P4a): *Institutional entrepreneurs (i.e. purchasing manager or department) will act to structure elements and changes, concerning internal and external integration, governance, supplier screening and supplier development.*

Proposition 4b (P4b): *PSM structure overlaps will develop and attract IEs that can assist with the implementation of an ILS*

Practice of sustainability

Last but not least is the dimension "practice of sustainability". It demonstrates how sustainability is internalised as a practice (Stàl, 2015), rather than being included only in the form of sustainability communication or in the adoption of isolated environmental and social projects/programmes for a limited time or operating locations (Silva and Figueiredo, 2017; 2020). Sustainability criteria is crucial indeed for PSM performance but should be a result of established practices. This dimension receives influences from the events and the structure regarding sustainability. However, the IE has a stronger contribution as well. Three macro elements can contribute to sustainability in organisations: learning, performance monitoring, and performance improvement. To reach "learning", which demonstrates the implementation routine of the PSM strategy as a result of the building of supply chain sustainability (Chen and Paulraj, 2004; Oelze et al., 2016), it is necessary to verify routine (Silva and Figueiredo, 2017) and learning loops (Silvestre, 2015). For performance, we consider two micro elements: sustainability skills & competences (Schulze et al., 2019) and non-traditional sustainability issues (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021). This happen because when sustainability becomes a key requirement for PSM and then it is possible to monitor its practice and performance. Thus, we discuss performance alongside practices and not only as an isolated indicator of commitment to sustainability, or a way to rank organisations and departments.

Proposition 5a (P5a): *When one mechanism of change exists in isolation, the logic of sustainability is not fully internalised. The lack of structure overlap can lead to insufficient resources, lower performance, or ineffective actions from the institutional entrepreneurs (i.e. purchasing manager or department).*

Proposition 5b (P5b): *Sustainability is turned into practice if both mechanisms of change (institutional entrepreneur and PSM structure overlap) co-exist in the supply chain. Routine, skills and competences are developed and shared at supply chain level.*

At this stage, the new directions to reach an institutional sustainability logic in SCM or PSM is still theory-led (Montabon et al., 2016). Thus, we can speculate that a new logic may emerge at the company level due to customer pressure– mostly likely on the OEM, and

then moves 'upstream' in the supply chain to enhance sustainability over time all the way to raw materials suppliers. Effective sustainable PSM occurs when procurement departments and suppliers are working in an intertwined way that is embedding the practice of sustainability in the supply chain; i.e., everyone shares a similar institutional logic. Also, it is important to note that competing logics coexist and should be monitored while a sustainability logic is being developed (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021). Based on this argument, we respond to calls for discussion that brings sustainability with the aim of harm prevention, rather than focusing on harm reduction (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014). Our framework (in Table 1) helps both academics and practitioners to reflect through macro and micro elements and how they impede or support a new logic of sustainability to emerge in PSM.

5. Future Research on Sustainable PSM Logic

To address the concerns of different stages of sustainable PSM, we offer a research model with propositions to be tested empirically (see Figure 2). By presenting that, we address the criticism raised by Annala et al (2019) on previous studies using IL. To do so, the macro and micro elements in our framework facilitate an understanding of how it is possible to translate a logic into practice (i.e., event sequencing and practice of sustainability), how individuals act in this context (i.e., IE, especially purchasing managers or department) , and implications of a sustainability logic for the organisational structures (i.e., PSM structure overlap). In sum, our paper expands the literature and contributes to the theory of sustainable PSM by showing how to turn sustainability into practice and internalise it as a logic.

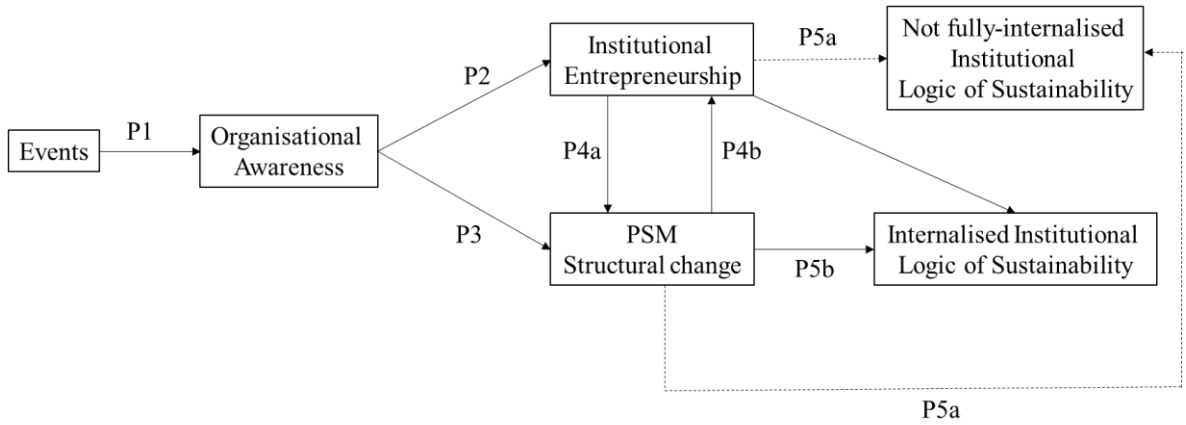

FIGURE 2: Representation of the proposed research model

As previously mentioned, each mechanism is interconnected in order to reach the sustainable PSM logic. The mechanisms have the same level of importance, even though there are different ways to analyse their relations and trajectories. To better explain our comprehension on different trajectories, we concentrate our contribution in two mechanisms of change: IE (purchasing managers or department having strong or weak contribution) and PSM structure overlap (adequate or inadequate). Thus, besides the presentation in Figure 2, it is possible to identify a combination among the propositions in order to find different trajectories. Trajectories are understood as the way change happen in the supply chain to make it more sustainable in the context where the organisations operate (Silvestre, 2015; Silvestre et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2018). The following trajectories represent possible ways that might be used by companies in supply chains as journeys in changing for sustainability. Here the three main trajectories are defined. Then, each trajectory is illustrated through an

example, which are aimed at facilitating their understanding not as empirical validation (Skilton, 2011).

Trajectory 1: *Institutional Entrepreneur as the key mechanism of change*

This trajectory is predominantly driven by IEs. The strengthening of purchasing manager or department precedes the build-up of structures for a logic of sustainability. The initial, and possibly minor, changes for sustainability occur even when the IE is still weak, and the structures are inadequate. Even if positive events are more frequent than negatives, the sustainability responses cannot be not turned in practice because of different stakeholders have unaligned behaviour, beliefs, and practices. The misalignment directly impedes the emerging structures to function better in supporting an institutional logic of sustainability. Nevertheless, IE can emerge but only after it has gained visible power. Then, IE has the power to provoke a change towards more adequate organisational structures. The sustainability logic is finally internalised because the structures allow the IE to transform awareness into action leading to higher levels of sustainability practice.

Illustration: The example of trajectory 1 here is a Brazilian manufacturer of educational and health products. The company experienced a set of positive events over time. Reflecting on how to change its contribution in society, the company had a pro-active behaviour in responding to pressures and barriers (e.g., creating the local supplier development programme) through structures related to PSM. In this example, the top management can be considered an IE not only to define how to deal with sustainability, but also creating working groups to plan sustainability initiatives forward. The implementation was somewhat ad-hoc and primarily driven on the values of IEs. The power and influence of the IEs preceded and led to new vision, strategic directions, which in turn started to develop structural changes in several departments, including the PSM. For instance, sustainable purchasing actions addressed selection of suppliers, favouring domestic suppliers as the means to reduce the carbon footprint of their supply chain. Later, long-term relationships were encouraged with the new suppliers, as well as the consideration of their social impacts. It was also observed sustainability learning by changing internal routines and then stimulating the change to supply chain actors. The example of this Brazilian company demonstrates that the strengthening of IEs preceded and had a high influence in the development of structure overlapping and sustainability practice. Such a trajectory demonstrates that IEs may be a key mechanism of change and are able to start the shift towards an IL of sustainable PSM.

Trajectory 2: PSM structures as the key mechanism of change

This time, the emergence of pressures and their consequent supply chain or PSM structures lead the process of change. IEs are seen as 'implementers' of top-down policies represented by the new structures. Strengthening of the structures happen for various reasons, namely: newer legislation, pressures from non-governmental groups, competitors' actions, internal awareness, etc. Organisations in the supply chain may adopt a certification or label as a response to high levels of awareness or pressures and that can lead to the appointment of a (weak) IE who is responsible to implement inspections, practices, and routines, rather than design and influence the process of change as in Trajectory 1. Because the structures now are adequate and support a logic of sustainability, the IE grows in power and influence. Trajectory 2 allow the eventual strengthening of IE completing the process of internalising the logic of sustainability in the whole supply chain.

Illustration: Here, the example of shifting towards a logic for sustainability using trajectory 2 is a British manufacturer of premium carpets. When the company was reacted to market forces, an existing department embraced environmental management, and led the certification of ISO 14001 management standards. The changes in procurement followed. Compliance not only on material purchasing but also on waste management were rapidly implemented. There was however no active participation of IEs to choose the process of change, i.e. build-up of an institutional logic of sustainability. Several external pressures from customers set the requirement of certification, and the certification guidelines instructed the new logic in relation to purchasing and dealing with third-parties. The companies' IEs had little power or influence on what had to be done as it was directed by external forces and guidelines. For many years, their job was to implement prescriptive actions to keep the company alive as a competitive player in the market. The aftermath of this initial stage includes the development of capabilities in sustainability which allowed the IEs to gain power and influence. From purchasing decisions to the sustainability vision of the company, the IEs ultimately become a voice because the formal structures that preceded them increased their power in the purchasing decisions.

Trajectory 3: *Coevolution of both mechanisms of change*

In this trajectory, organisations through purchasing departments combine the strength of both mechanisms of changes simultaneously. This trajectory seems to be one of the rarest since it breaks the transition zone in a direct way for sustainable PSM logic. It is not always possible to say which mechanism leads the changes as they emerge and are strengthened in shorter management cycles with one happening immediately after another if not completely coevolved. In this case, purchasing events that produce a higher level of awareness and pressure rapidly turn into action because both IE and the PSM structure are supporting each other in the process of change. As both mechanisms of change evolve towards an established and sufficient level of maturity, the ILS is defined and practiced as a mutual interaction of different supply chain stakeholders. In some cases, this may require a radical change, a new business model, or a different relationships and dynamics in the supply chain.

Illustration: The example of trajectory 3 involves a British University. Being placed at the bottom of a national green campus ranking, the Vice-Chancellor perceived great reputational risk. As a result, a working group including academic staff was created to help with a plan of how the University should build a sustainability strategy. Concurrently, the University hired an Environmental and Sustainability manager to implement the initiatives that could improve their position in the ranking. To support the implementation, a team for Environment and Sustainability department was created. In addition, one of the first initiatives was to nominate 'Green Champions' in various departments, including in IT, as the purchase, use, and disposal of computers were identified as a key sustainability issue. For example, PSM structures in the IT department were largely affected due to new procurement guidelines which resulted in the choice of new suppliers (e.g. sustainability criteria for supplier screening). At the same time, other departments such as catering, were taking similar initiatives (e.g. choosing fair-trade products for the University restaurant and cafeteria). Here, we see a different pattern. The IEs (both as individuals and groups) and the structures are developed at the same time and create a positive feedback loop which facilitates and speeds up the internalisation of an institutional logic of sustainability. IEs and structures get stronger simultaneously because personnel receive appropriate training, are given adequate power and influence over purchasing decisions, and are supported by established structures aligned with both internal (reputation) and external (rankings, certification guidance) forces.

Trajectories for an IL of Sustainable PSM

In this paper, we suggest that IE and PSM structure need to be developed to fully promote the logic of sustainability. The order of which they are developed may not impede the internalisation. However, if one of them is developed in isolation and limits the development of the other mechanism, the process may be insufficient to sustain a new practice. This happens because co-existing or competing logics can easily replace the ILS (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021) in the absence of strong IEs and adequate structures. Following the discussion presented so far, Figure 3 provides a representation of this phenomenon. It shows the different trajectories that has been identified based on the current literature and illustrated by real examples. The figure is a clear contribution to enable organisations to understand which elements can support each trajectory to an IL of sustainable PSM. Supply chains can take different sustainability trajectories because sustainability is a journey instead of a destination (Silva and Figueiredo, 2020; Silvestre, 2015). So, it needs to consider not only performance, timing of decisions, and speed of change; but also, how a new institutional logic of sustainability can be turned into a practice. It is important to highlight that these trajectories are theoretical in nature and the illustrations should not be seen as empirical validation yet.

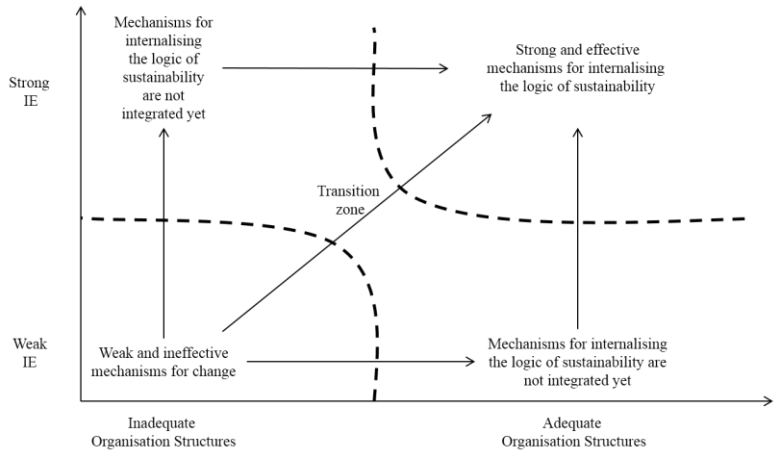

FIGURE 3: Trajectories for internalising a logic of sustainable PSM

While the trajectories presented in Figure 3 offer possible paths for internalising the logic of sustainability, our proposal demonstrates the need of having an analysis of historical contingence (events) and institutional changes in the implementation process as a whole. Thus, it is important to reinforce that events are probably the key triggers of strengthening of IEs and changes of structures. The sustainable PSM logic framework (Table 1) can be an alternative method for organisations to start their sustainability journey. The ILS model is a flexible approach to analyse, plan, and implement sustainable PSM initiatives. It allows investigation at different unit of analysis, business contexts, and time periods. It also breaks the dichotomic need of categorising supply chains as sustainable or not at first glance. This paper advances the literature for sustainable PSM by applying the lenses of IL. Besides indicating that changes are necessary, this paper offers the mechanisms of change that support the shift towards an ILS for organisations and their supply chains.

6. Conclusions and implications for business strategy

By proposing the sustainable PSM logic framework, this conceptual paper describes how sustainability becomes a logic based on mechanisms of change and trajectories. Our framework shows that, more than institutionalised sustainability, we need to turn sustainability an institutional logic (cf. Mutch, 2018). It allows us to rethink how to study sustainable PSM and how alternative theories from other disciplines are helpful (Johnsen et al., 2017) to investigate the same phenomenon. Since the concept of institutional logic is not often used in the PSM literature (Léon-Bravo et al., 2021), current studies do not address several necessary aspects for the theory (cf. Annala et al., 2019). Thus, our framework will help scholars and practitioners in the analysis of purchasing management processes and performance when developing their sustainability strategies. The ILS can be internalised and established at the core of business management. The framework provides the potential to support changes from sustainability-performance to sustainability-practice (Silva and Figueiredo, 2020).

As a conceptual paper, **theoretical implications** are highlighted. As a base to promote the ILS, the four mechanisms (i.e., event sequencing, institutional entrepreneurship, structure overlap, and practice of sustainability) are required to establish a new logic in PSM departments. Therefore, by internalising ILS, PSM departments in focal companies are likely to extrapolate the new logic to other supply chain members. In addition, we demonstrate in this paper that sustainability logic is possible through different trajectories, which can emerge based on the research propositions provided. Further studies explore these theoretical discussions to better understand the role of PSM toward sustainability. Also, this paper contributes with a different approach from those that previously investigated IL in SCM. Previous studies focused on competing and multiple logics, the taken-for-granted approach, or the debate around institutional pressures. Thus, this paper offers IL as new lenses to study sustainability management, including sustainable PSM. We believe that the current approach supports the building theory in the field.

There are **practical implications** in using the sustainable PSM logic framework as a tool to analyse practices and derive actions towards a higher level of sustainability. This is done by monitoring the macro and micro elements alongside the introduction of practices and structures related to sustainable PSM. This may happen mostly if sustainability is defined as a key factor for survival or competitiveness, as it happens with quality and cost, for example. Purchasing and supply managers may also find it useful to develop instruments to identify events, develop IEs and structures, as well as measure their practice of sustainability. Furthermore, the trajectories for an ILS in PSM can inform a pragmatic path that respects the business environment, availability of organisational resources, and other stakeholders' views. Employing this perspective, a set of scenarios can be considered allowing the decision-maker to use the events, people, and structure to trigger and sustain sustainability initiatives and practice over long period of time.

From a **business strategy perspective**, there are three key takeaways. First and foremost, we need to acknowledge that seminal studies from different schools of thoughts on business strategy have already recognised the need to incorporate sustainability values and practices in the strategic agenda. For example, the work of Porter and van der Linde (1995) already suggested a possible convergence of environmental performance and competitiveness from an industrial organisation perspective. Orsato (2009) derived sustainability strategies based on differentiation and cost-efficiency. Similarly, Hart's natural resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (Hart, 1995) dates almost 30 years now. Later publications using stakeholder theory and RBV largely influenced the literature (Joseph et al, 2019).

So, as the first takeaway, our study sheds light on how sustainability values or strategies may find their way through different trajectories at functional-strategy level.

Furthermore, because functional strategies may precede or influence the formulation of a business strategy, CEO and Chief Sustainability Officers (CSO) should be aware of what positive or negative events are taking place in their procurement departments. Several companies created an environmental department due to certification such as ISO 14000 (Nunes, 2011) and much before they actually had a CSO. Not surprisingly, the 'arrival' CSOs in the C-Suite is a fairly recent change in the top administration. Notwithstanding, the functional-level initiatives have been auditing and monitoring suppliers beyond the traditional performance measures (cost, quality, speed, etc), and should be able to inform top administration about critical supply chain trade-offs as a new ILS is planned. Thus, while CSOs' extent of commitments still varies largely across different organisations (Ivory and Mackay, 2020), understanding sustainability at critical functions such as procurement could be a vital aspect to build a robust bottom-up business sustainability strategy.

Another implication for business strategy refers to minimising risk and misalignment between business strategy and functional strategies. The rapid growth of sustainability reporting and its associated risk of 'greenwashing' can be significantly reduced if communication between procurement function and C-Suite are frequent and transparent on the matters affecting sustainability throughout supply chains. Alongside reporting of tangible performance measures, businesses will be assessed on what role they play for local and global sustainability (Hoffman, 2018). For instance, the recent trend of embracing United Nations Development Goals (UNSDGs) at supply chain level (Pederneiras et al, 2021) is a business strategy decision with strong implications for procurement. Differently from the bottom-up approach, this top-down strategy can encounter significant constraints and feasibility which can affect not only the economic sustainability but also social contribution of the firm. Strategy, as a deliberate plan, is as good as the quality of its implementation. Our conceptual framework can help CEO and CSO to understand the implications of a business strategy for supply chain sustainability and how they can instruct their firm to play a positive role for the socio-ecological system where they operate in.

Finally, as sustainability becomes a mainstream business practice and logic, the aforementioned social and environmental requirements will go beyond 'sustainability' market niches, as well as cascade from large organisation reaching small and medium enterprises. The noticeable emergence of 'green' or sustainable venture capital firms and the consequent upsurge of sustainability-related start-ups is likely to change business ecosystems. In doing so, firms will need simple rather than simplistic approaches to respond to sustainability challenges. As per our framework, documenting and analysing events, identifying and developing IEs, and building up structures are key steps to internalise an ILS. Otherwise, firms risk having sustainability as a thin 'veneer', which can easily disappear at the first encounter with a barrier, constraint, or trade-off against established measures, particularly profit.

In short, this paper pioneers a contribution to the formation of a sustainable PSM logic. It is not however without limitations. As mentioned before, despite using real case examples, those were aimed at illustrating the trajectories opposed to testing hypotheses or build theory. As with conceptual papers that are based on an inductive-deductive approach, this paper presented preliminary and limited insights on the relationships between mechanisms of change and trajectories. While that does not invalidate the current proposal, it sets a direction for future research. Thus, **future research** could empirically apply this framework to investigate formation, performance, and robustness of ILS under different trajectories and industries. In sustainable PSM research, we believe this study reveals a new area for investigation. Future studies are needed to advance it, using evidence-based approaches to solve real-world problems built upon robust theoretical concepts and consistent

methodological approaches. For instance, modelling and quantitative research could show how different companies internalise sustainable PSM logic as well as which trajectories were used. On the other hand, qualitative research could also address the influence of business environments on the practice of sustainability through case study and action research. This type of research also suggests that long term analysis, including longitudinal research, are welcome to really identify journey and trajectories towards sustainable PSM. In addition, we call for further studies that demonstrate how ILS compete or co-exist with previous logics on PSM. This should increase our knowledge on how and why changes occur to make organisations more sustainable.

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