

Structural evolution of academic literature on the social and solidarity economy between 2009 and 2024: how did the academic field develop during this period?

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Résumé. The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a growing field of research, whose rapid expansion warrants systematic mapping to unravel its intellectual structure and thematic trajectories. The aim of this study is to determine the intellectual structure and key performance indicators that define this field at the international level. To this end, a rigorous bibliometric analysis was conducted on a corpus of 300 documents extracted from the Scopus database and processed using the Biblioshiny/Vosviewer tool. The methodology combined performance analysis and structural analysis. The results confirm the prevalence of highly specialized publications (Bradford's Law) and highlight the importance of international co-publications for visibility.

Keywords: *Social And Solidarity Economy; Bibliometric Analysis; Bradford's Law; Science Mapping; Performance Analysis; Vosviewer.*

1. Introduction

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) has been growing rapidly in recent years, both nationally and internationally. It is attracting increasing interest from researchers, institutional actors, and practitioners. The social and solidarity economy (SSE) represents a diverse sector of economic activity, bringing together several actors (cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, etc.), characterized by democratic governance, social priorities, and a desire to promote solidarity and inclusion (Laville, 1994).

This research field is based on three distinctive pillars that structurally separate it from the traditional market economy. First, the primacy of social purpose over profit establishes that economic activity is oriented toward a goal of social or collective utility, with the pursuit of profit and individual enrichment being strictly limited (Chaves & Monzón, 2012). Secondly, governance is democratic and participatory: decision-making power is not proportional to capital, but is shared by members and stakeholders according to the fundamental principle of "one person = one vote" (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017). Finally, profitability is limited and surpluses are mainly reinvested in project development, reserve consolidation, and service improvement, ensuring that profit distribution remains secondary to the social mission (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001). These three principles give the SSE its hybrid character, positioning it at the service of the community.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the SSE among policymakers, researchers, and practitioners around the world. As (Lee, S. 2020) points out, this recognition is due to the SSE's potential to address major challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, social exclusion, etc. The SSE is seen as an integrated, human-centered, and environmentally friendly approach. Its fundamental objective is to create value for local communities and individuals, based on its core principles.

However, in light of this expansion, it is becoming essential to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of research in this field, particularly by identifying trends, key players, and emerging themes.

The objective of this study is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the literature devoted to the ESS in order to map the evolution of publications, collaborations between researchers, and the main areas of research. This approach makes it possible to objectively assess the evolution of scientific publications on this topic, identify major trends, key research players, and emerging themes. It thus provides a structured map of the scientific knowledge and networks that are advancing the understanding and recognition of the SSE at the international level (Garfield, 2006).

The question guiding this work is as follows: how has the scientific literature on the SSE evolved over time, and what are the main research trends, constituents, and themes that comprise it?

To answer this question, the methodological approach adopted is based on a bibliometric analysis of a corpus of articles in English, French, and Spanish from international databases (Scopus), using specialized tools for data visualization and interpretation. The research is thus based on a rigorous collection of academic publications, followed by statistical processing to identify major trends using production and citation indicators as well as science mapping techniques.

The article is structured as follows: the first section provides an introduction; the second describes the methodology used in detail; the third presents and discusses the main results; and finally, the last section offers a summary, the limitations of the study, and future research prospects in the field of the social and solidarity economy.

2. Bibliometric Methodology

a. Objectives and scope of the study

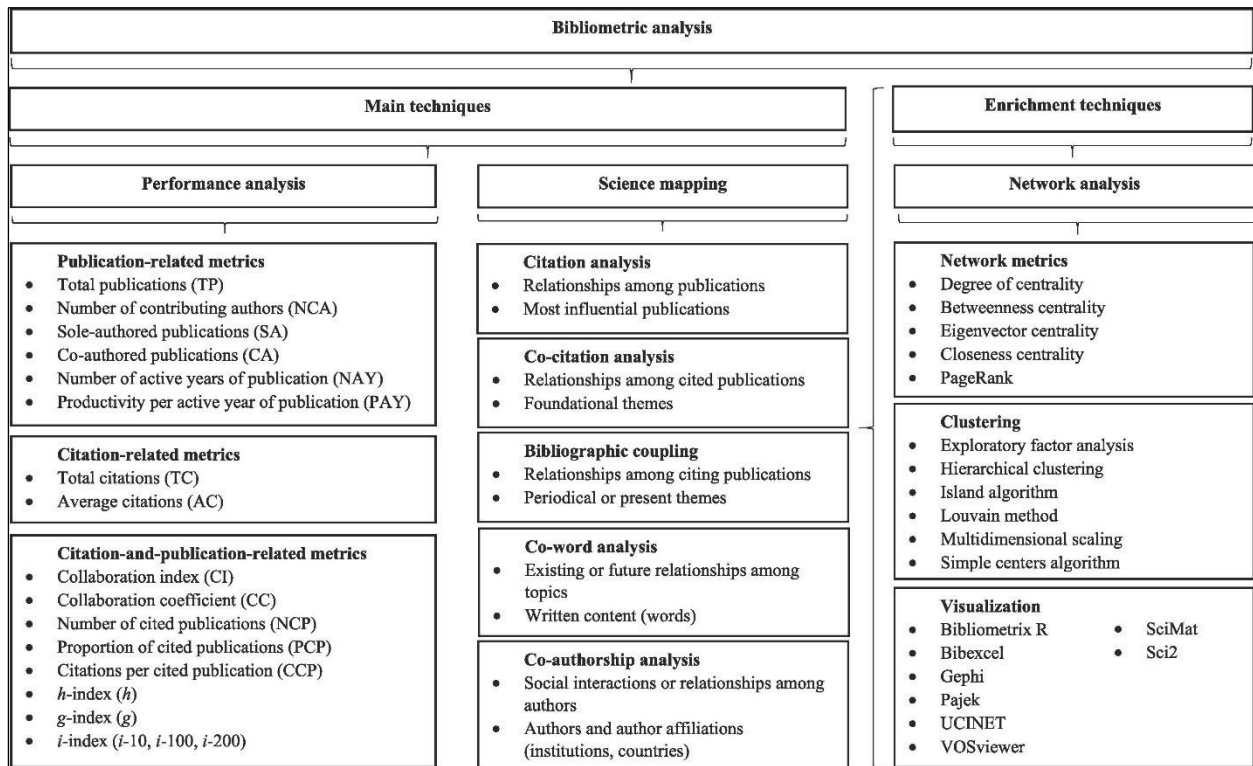
For a comprehensive understanding of scientific research on the social and solidarity economy, this paper aims to provide a retrospective overview of all literature on the SSE from 2009 to 2024. Its purpose is to: a) analyze the prolific scientific contributors to this field of research in terms of authors, journals, institutions, and countries, b) reveal the intellectual structure resulting from the connections and collaborations between these constituents (obtain a unique overview), c) draw new ideas for investigation, and d) trace the evolution of research using the social and solidarity economy and emerging global trends in this field (Donthu et al., 2021).

b. Choosing the appropriate bibliometric techniques

According to this model (figure 1), the bibliometric analysis is a methodical approach that is mainly supported by two pillars: science mapping and performance analysis (Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., & Lim, W. M. 2021). It allows us to examine the evolution of a field by identifying its themes and the influence of its authors through the study of the social, intellectual, and conceptual structures of disciplines (Donthu, N., Kumar, S., et Pattnaik, D. 2020).

To evaluate the influence and contribution of research actors, performance analysis employs quantitative measures pertaining to publications (total number of publications) and citations (total citations) (Yu, D., & Shi, S. 2015). Science Mapping, on the other hand, is a bibliometric tool to analyze and mine scientific output (Moral-Munoz, JA, López-Herrera, AG, Herrera-Viedma, E., & Cobo, MJ. 2019).

Figure 1: Major bibliometric analysis technique



Source: Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., & Lim, W. M. (2021).

c. Data collection and Setting search parameters

The data were downloaded from the Scopus database in CSV (comma separated values) format in December 2024. To refine the results, advanced exclusion and inclusion criteria were used. First, the analysis covered the publication period from 2009 to 2024. 2025 was excluded because it had not been completed during the study period. Using advanced search parameters and Boolean operators, the following search equation (Topic search) was used: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("social and solidarity economy") AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "French") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "bk") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")).

The choice of this search equation aims to guarantee a rigorous, relevant, and geographically representative corpus for an analysis of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). The TITLE- ABS-KEY filter (“social and solidarity economy”) ensures that the subject is central to the title, abstract, or keywords, thus excluding marginal mentions. The selection of English, French, and Spanish (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, ...)) is justified by the need to cover major academic debate (English, the language of science) and to include substantial contributions from French- and Spanish-speaking communities, which are very active in the theorization of the SSE. With regard to academic fields (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, ...)), the combination of Economics (ECON), Sociology (SOCI), and Management (BUSI) reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the SSE and allows for the analysis of the

different facets of its performance. Finally, the choice of document types (journal articles, book chapters, conference papers) ensures that the corpus consists of works that have undergone a peer review process or represent a solid academic contribution.

d. Software Selection for Bibliometric Analysis:

The two software used for the analysis are:

- Microsoft Excel: It allowed the review of outliers in the data, which ensures the quality of the information for the study (Sabando-vera, D et al 2021). The data obtained and preprocessed from the database obtained have been processed in Microsoft Excel software for the realization of two-dimensional tables and graphs (León-Castro, M., & al 2021).
- VOSviewer: This software, a text exploration tool developed by Van Eck and Waltman (2010), was adopted in this study to analyze and visualize bibliometric networks. VOSviewer addresses the graphical representation of bibliometric maps and is especially useful for displaying large bibliometric maps in an easy-to-interpret manner (Aria, M., & Cuccurullo, C. 2017). Some research studies have adopted VOSViewer to facilitate literature analysis on various topics, such as climate change, sustainability, protected areas, landscapes, etc. (Zeng, L & al 2022). It is an open-access software developed by The Centre for Science and Technology Studies of Leiden University (Netherlands). This software allows the construction of two-dimensional bibliometric networks. This network shows the cognitive structure of the field of study, called bibliometric maps or science maps. (Sabando-Vera, D. & al 2022).

e. Analysis model

Table 1: Bibliometric research methodology

| Steps | Key Steps | Steps details | Tools and methods |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Definition & Collection of the Corpus | Query definition | TITLE-ABS-KEY :("social and solidarity economy") AND (LIMIT- TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT- TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT- TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AN D (LIMIT- TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIM IT- TO (DOCTYPE , "ch") OR LIM IT- TO (DOCTYPE , "cp")) AND (LIMIT- TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish") OR LIMIT- TO (LANGUAGE , "French") O R LIMIT- TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) | Boolean operators |
| | Data Extraction | Study period: (2009-2024) Number of articles: 400 | Scopus |
| | Application of inclusion/exclusion criteria | - Document type: articles, book chapters, and conference papers. -Language: French, English, and Spanish. -Field of study: economics, business, and sociology. Number of documents selected: 330. | Final Net Corpus in CSV ¹ format |
| Performance Analysis | Evolution and Productivity | Annual trend (exponential growth). Most prolific authors, sources, countries, and institutions. | R (Biblioshiny: the Shiny application for Bibliometrix) |
| | Influence Analysis | Ranking of documents, sources, and most cited authors, as well as dominant countries (by number of publications and citations). | R (Biblioshiny: the Shiny application for Bibliometrix), H-index |
| Science mapping | Theoretical Pillars | Co-citation of sources and authors. | VOSviewer |
| | Thematic Mapping | Co-occurrence of keywords (all keywords). | VOSviewer |
| | Evolution of themes | Emerging themes (recently appearing). (Overlay Visualization). | VOSviewer |

Source: developed by the authors

¹ CSV: comma separated values

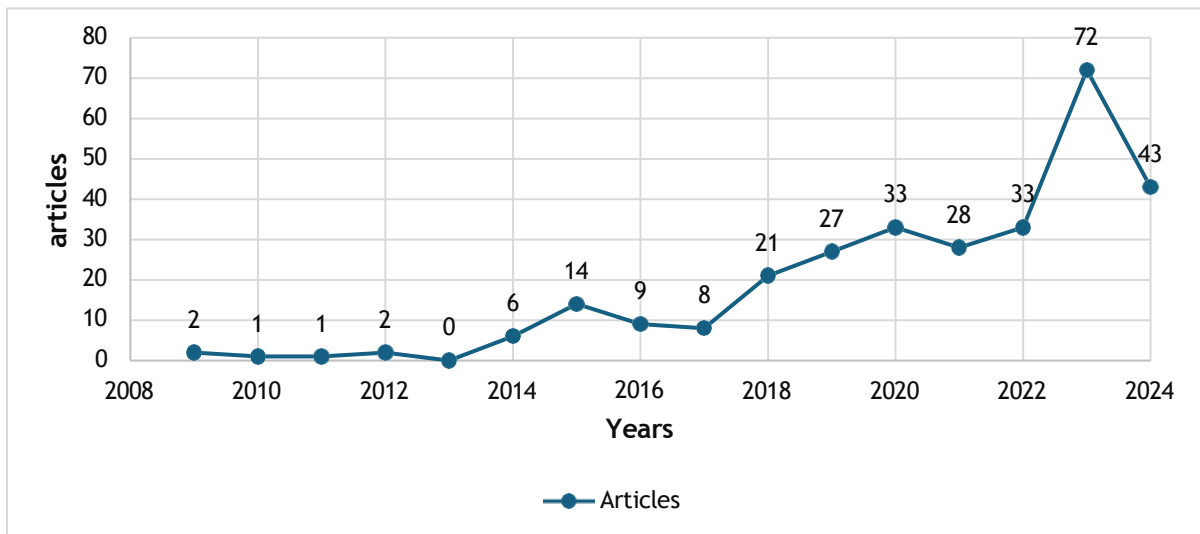
3. Results and discussion

a. Performance analysis

Performance evaluation is a common approach in literature studies which, even in the absence of mapping, makes it possible to characterize and measure the activity of the main players in the field of research (authors, institutions, journals), like the presentation of actors in an empirical study. (Donthu, N., et al. 2021).

i. Publication Trends from 2009 to 2024

Figure 2 : Dynamics of scientific production over time



This graph illustrates the evolution of annual publication trends on the SSE with a total of 300 articles over the period from 2009 to 2024. Analysis of this curve reveals exponential growth and marked volatility in scientific output (stagnation, then exponential growth in 2023). The number of articles published in 2023 represents approximately 24.83% of the total number of articles published over the entire period from 2009 to 2024. This figure confirms that 2023 was a year of exceptional peak production.

ii. Featured Authors

Table 2: Top 5 prolific authors in the social and solidarity economy

| Authors | Articles | Articles fractionalized |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Laville, Jean-Louis | 9 | 7,83 |
| Hiez, David | 5 | 5,00 |
| Richez-Battesti, Nadine | 5 | 2,08 |
| Bouchard, Marie J. | 4 | 2,33 |
| Marcuello, Carmen | 4 | 1,33 |

Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

The analysis dedicated to researchers' output made it possible to rank the most prolific authors in the corpus of 300 documents (articles, conference papers, and chapters), measuring their contribution

according to the number of articles published and the Articles Fractionalized indicator (Table 2). The most active author, both in terms of the number of articles published and the h- index (Table 3), is Laville Jean-Louis. He ranks first with 9 articles and maintains a high contribution (7.83), which indicates that he not only publishes a lot, but is often the sole author or lead author of most of his 9 articles.

The second most productive author is Hiez David, with a fractional score of 5.00 for 5 articles. This means that he is always the sole author of his publications or that he is listed as the sole author in the database. He is the author with the purest individual contribution.

Table 3: Author’s local impact

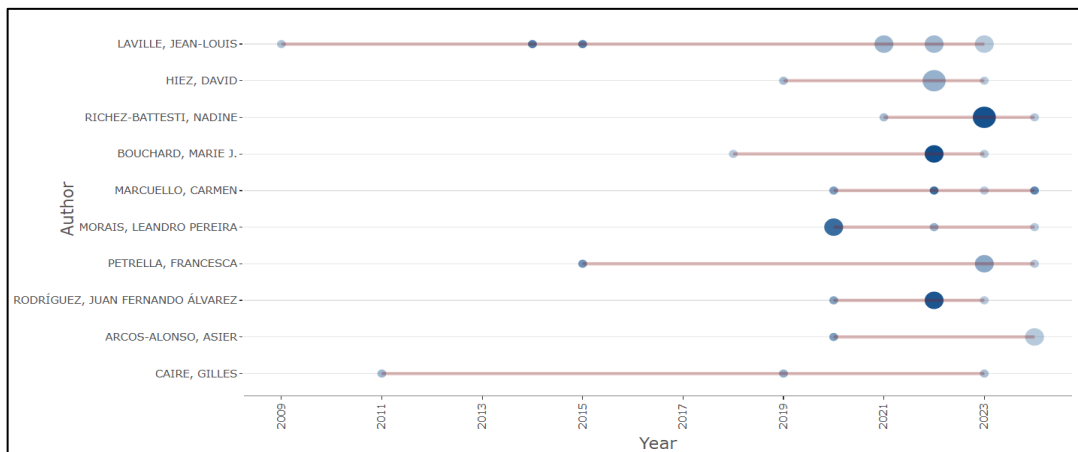
| Authors | H-index | TC |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----|
| Laville Jean-Louis | 3 | 60 |
| Marcuello Carmen | 3 | 23 |
| Rodríguez Juan Fernando Álvarez | 3 | 21 |
| Sahakian Marlyne | 3 | 374 |
| Abad Jesús Sanz | 2 | 10 |

Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

Table 3 presents bibliometric performance data for five authors, using the h-index and total number of citations (TC).

Analysis of the metrics shows that author Sahakian Marlyne is the pillar of the research field in terms of overall influence (TC=374; very high), even though the h-index is shared by others. The other authors have a significantly more limited influence in terms of aggregate citations. In a bibliometric review context, the work of author Sahakian Msectorarlyne should be given special attention as it represents the most important sources in the field.

Figure 3: Top authors' Production over Time.



Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

Figure 3 illustrates the trajectory of scientific output for each of these authors based on the Scopus database. The larger the circle, the more articles have been published by the author in that year. The deeper the color, the more citations have been received per year. It is clear that Jean-Louis Laville has the longest series of scientific output, which has continued uninterrupted from 2009 to 2023. As for RICHEZ-BATTESTI, NADINE, she has the highest number of citations in 2023 with a total of 3.67 citations per year.

iii. Collaboration between Countries

Table 4: SCP and MCP analysis of the top 5 publishing countries.

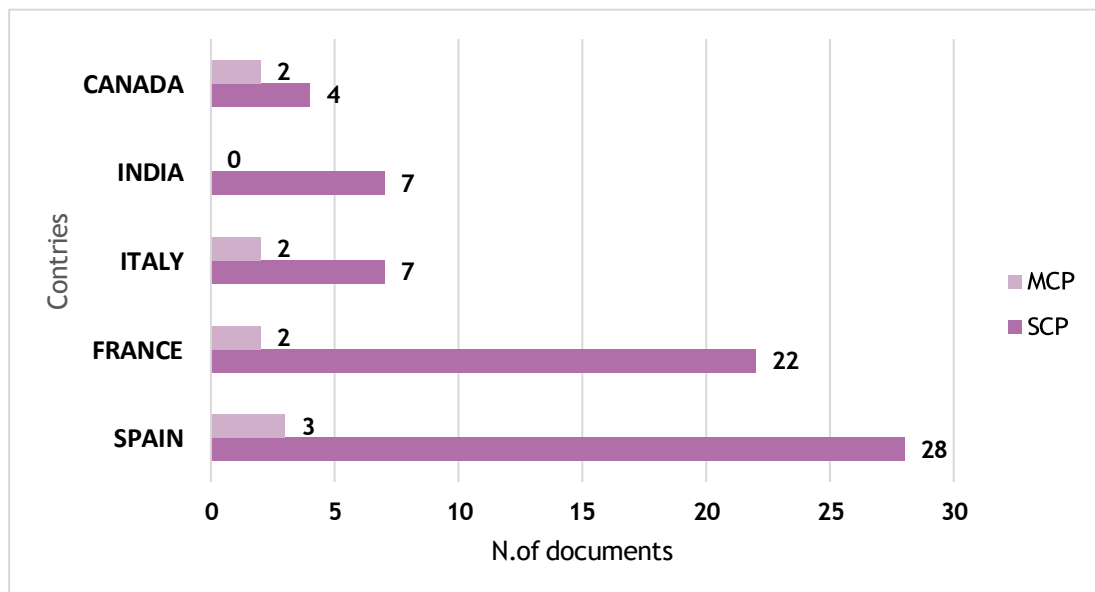
| Country | Articles | Articles % | SCP | MCP | MCP % |
|---------|----------|------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Spain | 31 | 10,3 | 28 | 3 | 9,7 |
| France | 24 | 8 | 22 | 2 | 8,3 |
| Italy | 9 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 22,2 |
| India | 7 | 2,3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Canada | 6 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 33,3 |

Note: SCP: Single country publications, and MCP: Multiple country publications

In terms of geographical distribution, Table 4 is based on the corresponding author's country to list the top 5 most productive countries in social and solidarity economy research. Spain represents the highest contribution with (31 articles, 10.3%), followed by France (24 articles, 8%), Italy (9 articles, 3%), India (7 articles, 2.3%) and Canada (6 articles, 2%).

The two indicators, single-country publications (SCP) and multiple-country publications (MCP), divide publications into two types of collaboration: national (collaboration between authors within the same country) and international (collaboration between authors across two or more countries). They thus provide an overview of the international collaboration network that has formed in this field of research.

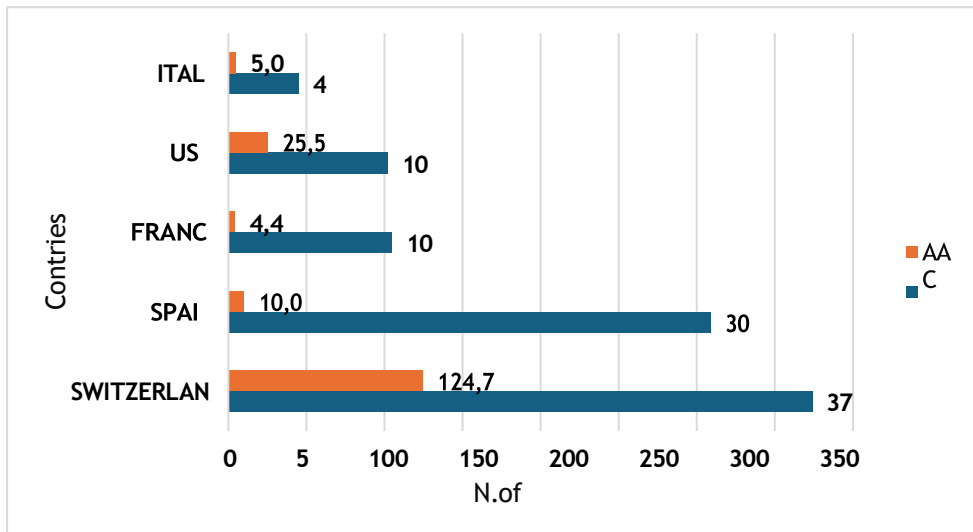
Figure 4: Top 5 countries of the corresponding author.



Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

As can be seen in Figure 4, Spain had the highest SCP (28) and MCP (3) among all countries. However, the MCP/SCP ratio for Canada (33.3%), Luxembourg (25%), and the USA (25%) was the highest among the countries studied, indicating that these countries are more involved in international collaboration than others.

Figure 5: Top 5 countries by citations (AC & TC).



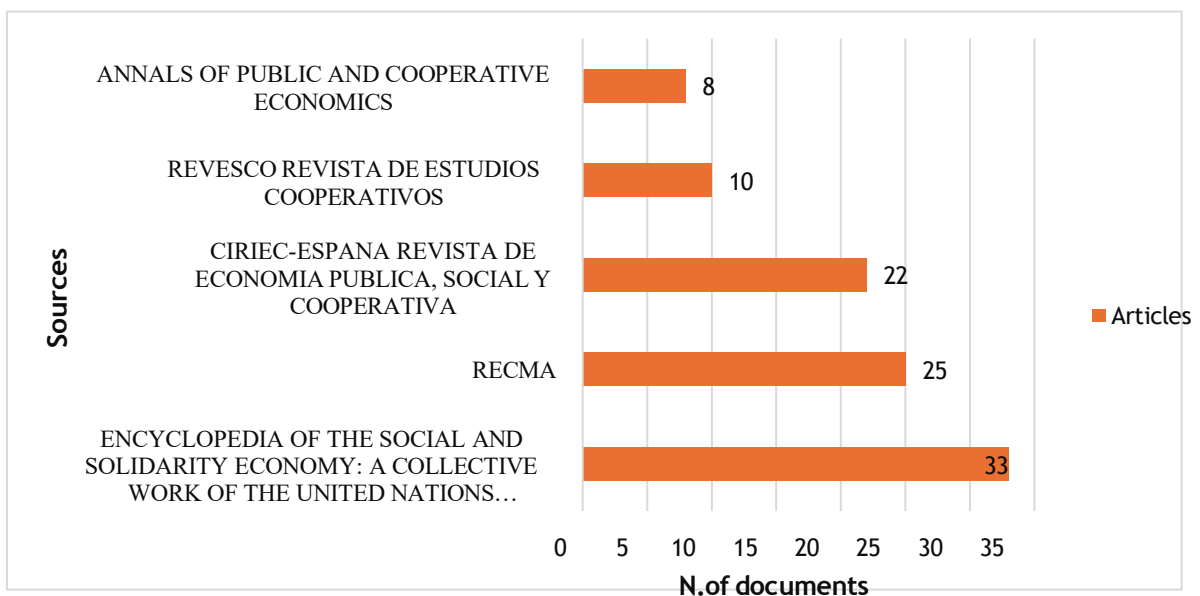
Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

Note: TC (total of citations), AAC (Averge article citations)

In addition, figure 5 presents the top ten influential countries in the field along with their citations achieved (TC) and average article citations. We found that Switzerland (374, 124.70%), Spain (309, 10%), France (105, 4.40%), the United States (102, 25.5%), and Italy (45, 5%) are the most influential countries.

iv. Top sources, documents and institutions

Figure 6: Influential sources



Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

Note: nom de total de la première source (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: A COLLECTIVE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON SSE (UNTFSSSE))

Analysis of publication sources reveals a significant concentration of scientific output around a small number of journals and entities specializing in the social and solidarity economy. Indeed, the three most prolific sources, namely the **Encyclopedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy, Recma, and Ciriec-Espana**, constitute the core of the literature, accounting for nearly 76% of the articles listed in the figure above.

Table 5: Influential sources according to their Impact (h-index) and Productivity (Bradford's Law)

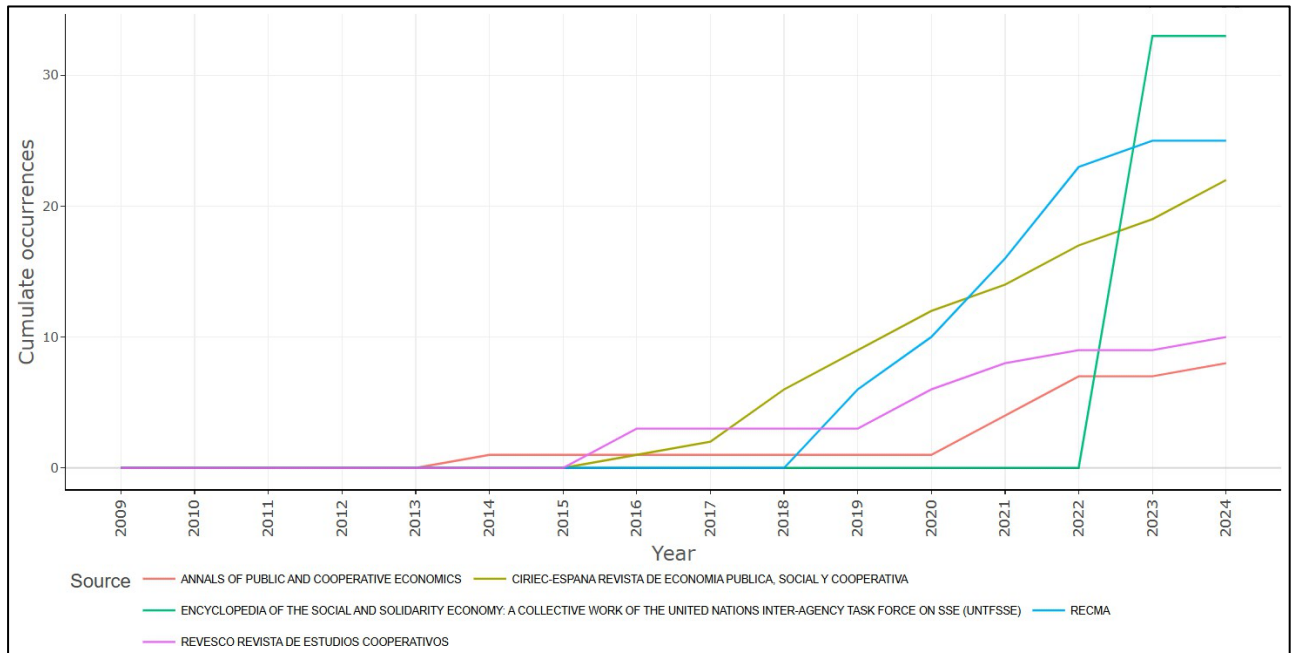
| Rank | Source | H-index | TC Articles | Bradford's Law | Zone |
|------|---|---------|-------------|----------------|--------|
| 1 | Ciriec-espana revista de economia publica, social y cooperativa | 8 | 283 | 22 | Zone 1 |
| 2 | Social and solidarity economy: beyond the fringe | 6 | 91 | 7 | Zone 1 |
| 3 | Annals of public and cooperative economics | 4 | 45 | 8 | Zone 1 |
| 4 | Revesco revista de estudios cooperativos | 4 | 30 | 10 | Zone 1 |
| 5 | Encyclopedia of the social and solidarity economy: a collective work of the united nations inter-agency task force on sse (untfsse) | 3 | 25 | 33 | Zone 1 |
| 6 | Recma | 3 | 23 | 25 | Zone 1 |

Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

To identify a concentration of journals in which authors offered in-depth discussions on the SSE, we applied Bradford's Law, often referred to as “Bradford's Law of Scattering,” a mathematical expression discovered by S. C. Bradford describing the distribution of articles on a given subject in scientific literature (Bulick.S, 1978).

The performance analysis reveals that the six sources constitute the Bradford Core (Zone 1) of the literature, confirming their essential role in the field of SSE. However, they have a highly heterogeneous impact: Source 1, “Ciriec-Espana Revista de Economia Publica, Social y Cooperativa,” is the undisputed leader with an h-index of 8 and 283 citations, attesting to its status as a theoretical pillar in the field. Conversely, the sources “Encyclopedia of the social and solidarity economy: a collective work of the United Nations inter-agency task force on SSE (UNTFSSSE)” and “Recma” are the most prolific in terms of number of publications (33 and 25), but their low impact (h-index = 3 and TC = 25.23) indicates that they are high-volume journals whose articles have limited resonance and influence in the scientific community.

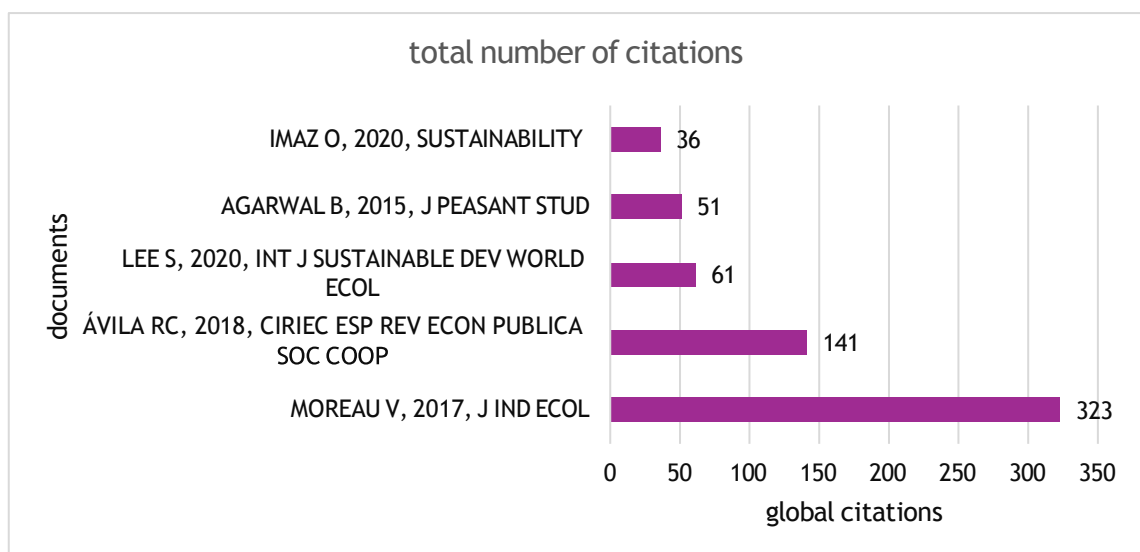
Figure 7: Source Dynamics of first 5 journals extracted from Biblioshiny



Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

Figure 7 illustrates the cumulative evolution of occurrences of five sources (journals or reference works) in a given research corpus over the period from 2009 to 2024. The graph reveals a heterogeneous influence dynamic in the field of research, where there is a dual predominance: on the one hand, it is shared between specialized and consistent journals such as “CIREC” (historical and regular) and “Recma” (specialized and fast-growing). On the other hand, it is dominated by the “Encyclopedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy”, which, despite its very recent impact (almost vertical growth since 2022), has become the most important and most cited source, justifying its status as a fundamental source of definition and theoretical reference for the entire corpus.

Figure 8: Key references for the social and solidarity economy: The most frequently cited documents.



Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

The bar chart shows the ranking of the most cited documents worldwide in the field of SSE. The analysis reveals a marked concentration of influence around a few fundamental works. The most influential document is the article by Moreau, V., Sahakian, M., Van Griethuysen, P., & Vuille, F. (2017), which dominates the ranking with 323 global citations. This score is more than double that of the second most cited article, by Ávila, R. C., & Campos, J. L. M. (2018), which has 141 citations in the journal CIRIEC ESP REV ECON PUBLICA SOC COOP. The gap in influence is then very pronounced, with the three other publications (Lee, S. (2020), Agarwal, B. (2015), and Imaz, O., & Eizagirre, A. (2020)) having significantly lower citation totals, ranging from 61 to 36 citations.

Table 6 : Top 5 des références locales citées

| Cited references | Citations |
|---|-----------|
| Ostrom e., governing the commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action, (1990) | 14 |
| Utting p., social and solidarity economy: beyond the fringe, (2015) | 11 |
| Gibson-graham j.k., a postcapitalist politics, (2006) | 9 |
| Polanyi k., the great transformation: the political and economic origins of our time, (1944) | 8 |
| Social and solidarity economy and the challenge of sustainable development, (2014) | 8 |

Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

The table of references cited highlights the theoretical foundations and key works that structure the literature on the SSE (Table 6). The most influential work is the classic **Governing the Commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action**, which tops the list with 14 citations. This reference highlights how communities manage to sustainably manage common resources (water, forests, fisheries, etc.) without resorting solely to privatization or the central government (Ostrom, E. 1990). Next, with 11 citations, is the more contemporary **work Social and Solidarity Economy: Beyond the Fringe**, which marks a turning point towards the modern definition and potential of the SSE (Utting, P. 2015). Finally, there are contributions from the institutional economics classic **The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time** by (Polayni, K. 1994), with 8 citations. The diversity of publication dates (1944 to 2015) reveals that the field of the SSE is based both on fundamental historical references and on recent conceptual developments.

Table 7: Ranking of the 5 most frequently cited organizations

| Affiliation | Articles |
|--|----------|
| Autonomous university of Tamaulipas | 7 |
| Roskilde University | 6 |
| Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas | 5 |
| Pontificia Universidad Javeriana | 5 |
| Universitat Oberta de Catalunya | 5 |

Source: Scopus database (Biblioshiny analysis)

Table 7 shows that the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas is the most productive in the social sciences, with seven articles published, followed by Roskilde University (six articles), the Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas and the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (five articles each), and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (also five articles). These universities are the most active institutions in terms of the number of publications on the SSE, showing where academic research on this topic is particularly dynamic and structured.

v. Science Mapping

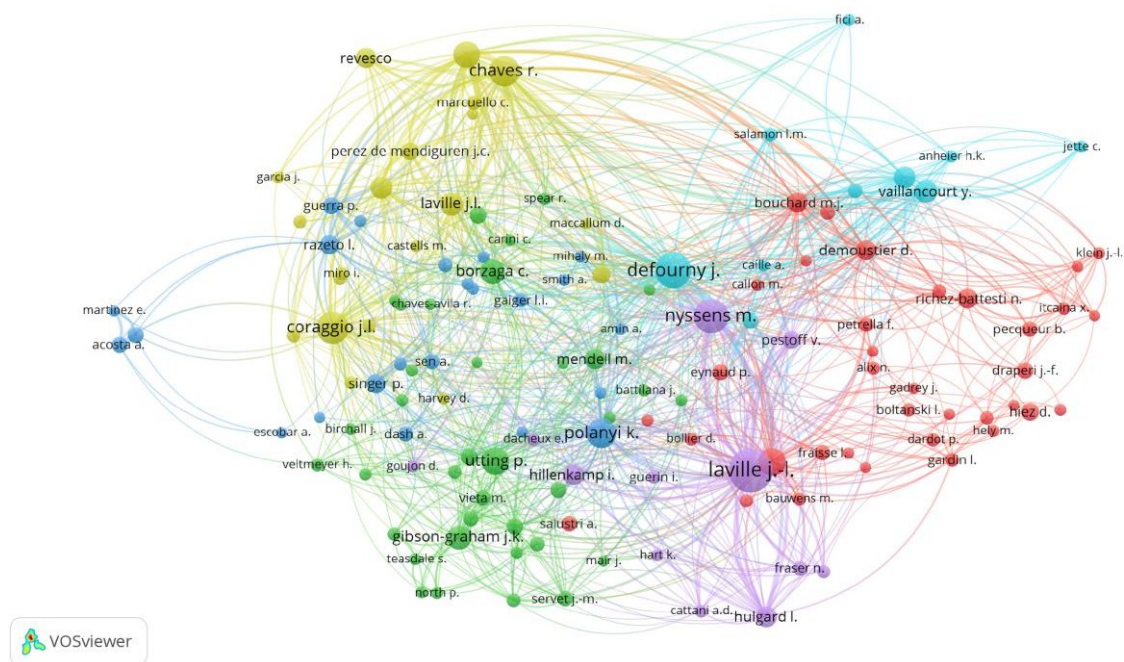
According to (Ding, Y., Chowdhury, G. G., & Foo, S. 2001), scientific mapping has become indispensable for researchers, as the explosion and dispersion of publications make understanding and organizing knowledge much more difficult. It allows the intellectual structure and main axes of a field to be visualized, which helps to better guide research. It also helps to map the structure of scientific research and its dynamics, according to (Passas, I. 2024).

1. Co-Citation Analysis

As noted by (Ding, Ying, Gobinda G. Chowdhury, and Schubert Foo, 2001) and transferred by (Leung, Xi Y., Jie Sun, and Billy Bai, 2017), co-citation analysis is the most commonly used bibliometric analysis method for deciphering the intellectual structure of a research field. It links documents, authors, or journals based on the articulation of appearances in reference lists (Zupic, I., & Čater, T. 2015).

- Co-citation des auteurs

Figure 9: Co-citation authors analysis in SSE research



Source: VOSviewer

To ensure clarity and readability of the authors' co-citation network, the threshold for the number of citations of an author was adjusted to 10, resulting in 137 authors being retained (Figure 9).

This co-author map highlights several scientific communities structured around central figures such as J.L. Laville (TC+144), Defourny (TC=100), Chaves (TC=71), and Polanyi (TC=67), whose node sizes indicate high productivity and a pivotal role in collaboration networks.

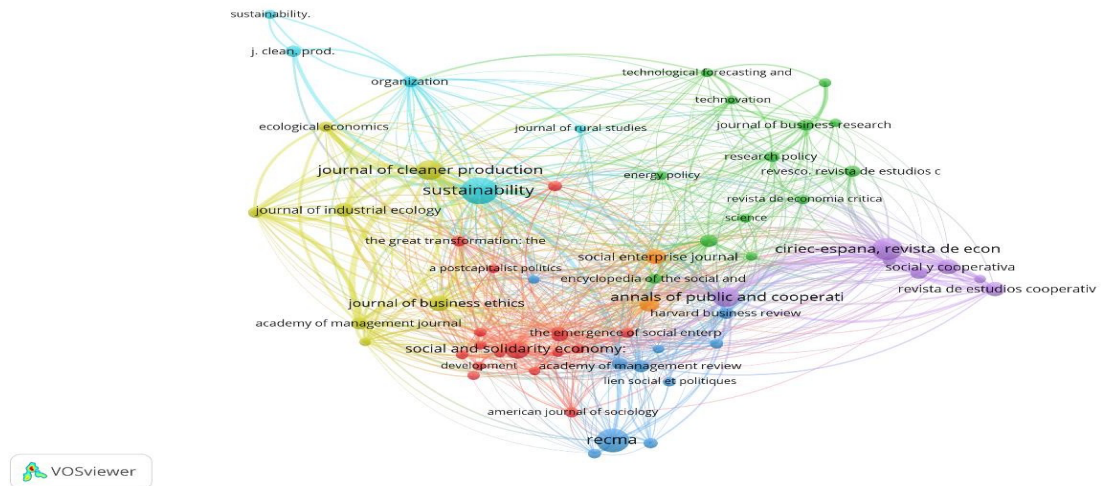
We also note that internal cooperation between authors and the density between clusters show that there is a field of research on the social and solidarity economy that is both structured around academic leaders and highly interconnected.

- Co-citation sources

In order to obtain a representation of the intellectual structure of the field that is both readable and meaningful, the co-citation threshold was set at a minimum of 10 co-citations. 61 sources out of 7,094 met this requirement. This figure is a co-citation map of journals, constructed using VOSviewer, which shows the most central journals in the literature on the SSE. The largest nodes

« Ciriec espana, revista de economic », « Sustainability », « Journal of Industrial Ecology », « Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics », « Recma », « Social and Solidarity Economy » represent the journals with the most references or links. The colors indicate clusters of journals that share thematic similarities: one group focused on sustainability/ecology, another centered on the social economy, cooperation, and public policy, etc. The density of links between clusters shows that research on the SSE lies at the intersection of several fields (sustainable development, industrial economics, business ethics, cooperative studies), confirming the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

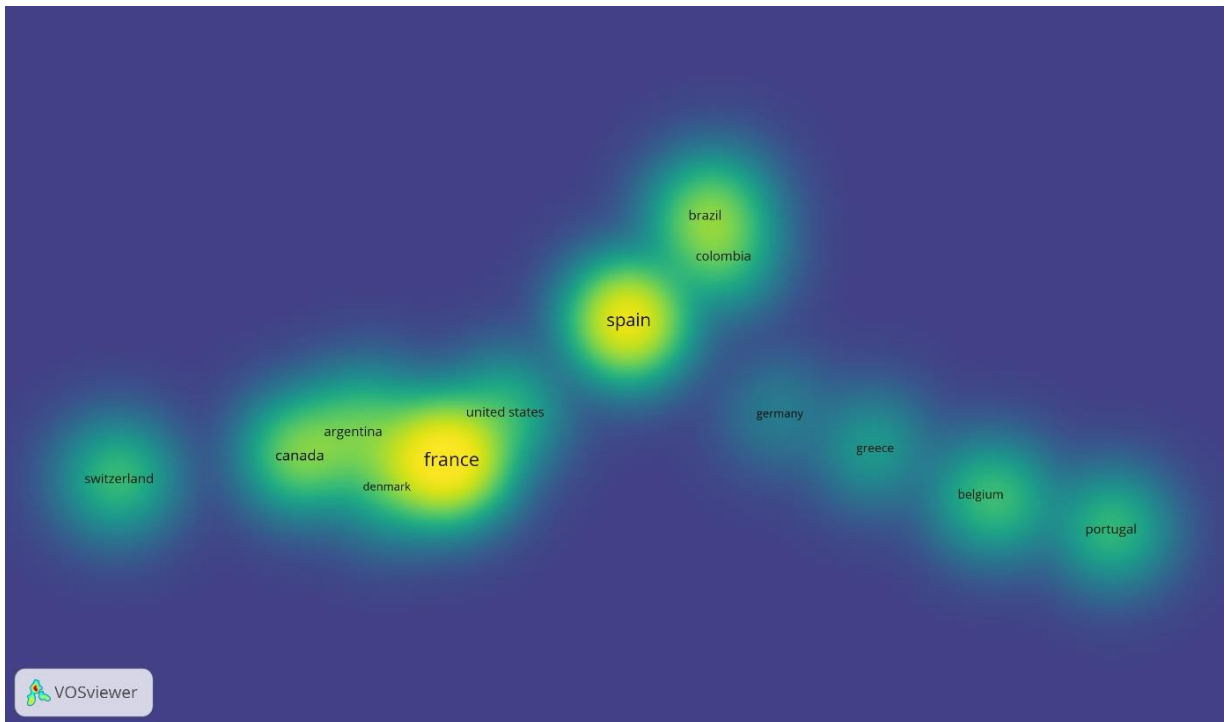
Figure 10: Network of co-citation of sources in the SSE



Source: VOSviewer

2. *Co-authorship countries*

Figure 11: Mapping of countries actively researching



Source: VOSviewer

To map the network of collaboration between countries, the co-publication threshold was set at a minimum of three articles per country, and 27 countries were selected for the mapping analysis. The density map shows the geographical distribution of scientific output in your corpus. The yellow areas correspond to the most productive countries, mainly Spain and France, followed by Canada and the United States.

The spatial layout reflects proximity in terms of collaboration or themes: countries that are close together on the map tend to co-publish or work on similar topics, while those that are further apart are more peripheral in the network. Scientific output in this field is heavily concentrated in Spain and France, with a modest contribution from other countries in Europe (Europe and Latin America).

Source: Sortie Biblioshiny

The word cloud below (Figure 13) shows that the works in our corpus revolve heavily around two central concepts: “sustainability” and “sustainable development,” which are closely linked to “social and solidarity economy.” A set of related themes revolves around this core, including “circular economy,” “sustainable development,” “economics,” “innovation,” and “social policy,” indicating that the research combines environmental issues and socio-economic dimensions to analyze the transition to more sustainable development models.

4. Conclusion

This bibliometric study mapped scientific output devoted to the SSE over the period (2009-2024) and highlighted key trends, major players, and evolving dynamics in this field. The analyses revealed sustained growth in the number of publications since 2018, with a notable dominance of European countries and sources (Spain and France). Analysis of keyword co-occurrences reveals several structuring research areas, such as “sustainability,” “social and solidarity economy,” and “social innovation,” which shape the intellectual structure of the SSE field.

Nevertheless, this study has several positive points. First, the quantitative analysis of a trilingual corpus (English, French and Spanish). This approach enriches the multidimensional understanding of the subject on an international scale, thus offering a much more representative view of the field of research by integrating marginalized European and Latin American research traditions.

Secondly, the combination of bibliometric indicators (author and institutional productivity, co-author networks, keyword co-occurrences, relevant journals) makes it possible to accurately map the intellectual structure of SSE research and identify major theoretical hubs and emerging themes. However, like any quantitative methodology, bibliometric analysis has some limitations. One of the main limitations of this article is that the bibliometric analysis was based exclusively on the Scopus database, which could limit the representativeness of the data, particularly by excluding relevant publications indexed in other databases such as Web of Science or Google Scholar. In addition, the study period from 2009 to 2024 could introduce a bias by not taking into account earlier publications or recent developments that have not yet been included in the database, which could affect the complete understanding of the dynamics in the field of the social and solidarity economy. Similarly, the analysis focused solely on academic publications, potentially neglecting other sources of information such as institutional reports, theses, or unindexed documents, which could limit the overall perspective on the development and trends of the SSE in the literature.

Lastly, this study paves the way for further investigation. The thematic areas identified by this bibliometric analysis could be explored in future research using complementary methodologies, such as meta-analysis, to assess the cumulative effect of SSE interventions on specific variables (social cohesion, performance), or in-depth qualitative studies (case studies) to understand their causal complexity.

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