Quo Vadis Epistemologia da Administração? Percurso atual e alguns direcionamentos futuros

Quo Vadis Epistemology of Management Studies? Current Path and Some Future Directions

Humberto Reis dos Santos-Souza
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ABSTRACT

The central objective of this article is to provide an overview of the scientific production on the epistemology of management through bibliometric indices and citation and co-citation analysis. The research combines bibliometric analysis with content analysis. The main findings indicate that Brazilian authors are leading contributors to the epistemology of management studies globally, yet with limited international collaboration. It is also observed that subfields within management studies, such as entrepreneurship and marketing, seek theoretical consolidation in their research themes. The findings also reveal the need to bridge the gap between theoretical production in management studies and managerial practices. Furthermore, the study presents the core references used in epistemological research in management. As a contribution, it offers a perspective on the current state of studies on this topic worldwide, highlighting the role of Brazilian researchers and their apparent inclination towards global South epistemologies. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of this theme in terms of theoretical/scientific rigor and the reflexivity necessary for a science that does not wish to remain on the periphery.

Keywords: epistemology of management studies, organizational theory, organizational studies.

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RESUMO

O objetivo central deste trabalho é traçar um panorama da produção científica sobre epistemologia da administração a partir dos índices bibliométricos e da análise de citações e co-citações. Trata-se de uma pesquisa que utiliza a combinação da análise bibliométrica com a análise de conteúdo. Como principais resultados nota-se que autores brasileiros são produtores expoentes em epistemologia da administração no mundo, mas com pouca articulação internacional. Percebe-se, que áreas da administração como empreendedorismo e marketing estão buscando consolidação teórica em seus temas de pesquisa. A necessidade de aproximar a produção teóri-

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RESUMO

ca em administração das práticas de gestão também emerge dos achados. O estudo ainda apresenta o *core* das referências utilizadas nas pesquisas em epistemologia em administração. Como contribuição, oferece-se uma perspectiva sobre como caminham os estudos acerca desse tema no mundo, destacando o papel dos pesquisadores brasileiros e sua aparente inclinação para epistemologias do sul global, bem como, salienta a importância do tema no que tange ao rigor teórico/científico e a reflexividade necessária a uma ciência que não quer caminhar periférica.

Palavras-chave: epistemologia da administração, teoria organizacional, estudos organizacionais.

Introduction

According to The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy in its Portuguese edition, epistemology is a segment of philosophy that investigates the nature and possibility of knowledge (Mautner, 2011). Delanty and Strydom (2003) point out that philosophers have debated the nature of knowledge and the distinction between knowledge (episteme) and opinion (doxa) since Plato's time.

Benton and Craib (2011) state that when modern science emerged between the 16th and 17th centuries, it was difficult to clarify the boundary between philosophy and science. It was only later that separating these fields of knowledge became conventional. Since this separation, two basic relationship modes have been established. On the one hand, it was argued that accurate knowledge about ourselves and the nature of the world we live in, and consequently the rules for accessing this knowledge, should be established by philosophers. Thus, it would be the role of philosophy to provide the foundations that would support the investigation to be developed in particular scientific specialties. On the other hand, an alternative view was designed, according to which specific sciences do not need to wait for philosophers to provide the foundations for constructing their knowledge. Philosophers can support the work of scientists, but the scientists, through their practical experience, continue the task of discovering how the phenomena they investigate function, as well as why and how to produce knowledge about them.

In the case of the social sciences, Delanty and Strydom (2003) and Benton and Craib (2011) point out that there has been a shift away from the understand-

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ing that the epistemology of these sciences is a prescriptive activity carried out by philosophers, who would offer a normative view of how the social sciences should be conducted. This has been replaced by a more influential view in contemporary times, according to which the practice of the social sciences and philosophical reflections are not separate activities but are intrinsically connected. According to this perspective, sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists are not merely practitioners of specific scientific fields. They also reflect on how this practice unfolds and is structured, how this articulation influences the conduct of research, and how it is embedded in the social context.

Management studies is part of the social sciences and, more specifically, of the applied social sciences. However, unlike its counterparts, such as sociology and anthropology, it has been slower to engage in epistemological reflections. Nevertheless, as it developed as a science, debates concerning the philosophical foundations of its scientific practice became unavoidable (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Thomas, 2006; Serva, 2013, 2017). Thus, reflecting on epistemology is essential for the theoretical consolidation of management studies beyond methodical and positivist application. While it is understood that there is no single form of theorizing, it is essential to note that epistemological reflections can provide part of the rigor necessary for conducting scientific research (Farjoun, 2010; Fisher & Aguinis, 2017; Lamy, 2022).

Considering this, concern for this theme within the field of management studies has gained space in traditional journals, indicating a growing interest in using and constructing different epistemologies (Serva, 2013).

In light of these considerations, the research questions guiding the study underlying this article are: (I) What is the landscape of scientific production on epistemology in management studies over the past five years? (II) How is scientific production in this field presented in the subfield of organizational studies? (III) What is the role of Brazilian authors in research on epistemology of management studies? The objectives of the paper are: (i) to outline a panorama of scientific production on epistemology in the field of management studies over the past five years based on bibliometric indices and citation and co-citation analysis; (ii) to analyze scientific production on epistemology around organizational studies; and (iii) to explore the role of Brazilian researchers in these contexts. The text that follow

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is organized by first presenting a description of the research method, followed by the five analysis phases. Finally, some concluding remarks are made to achieve the objectives.
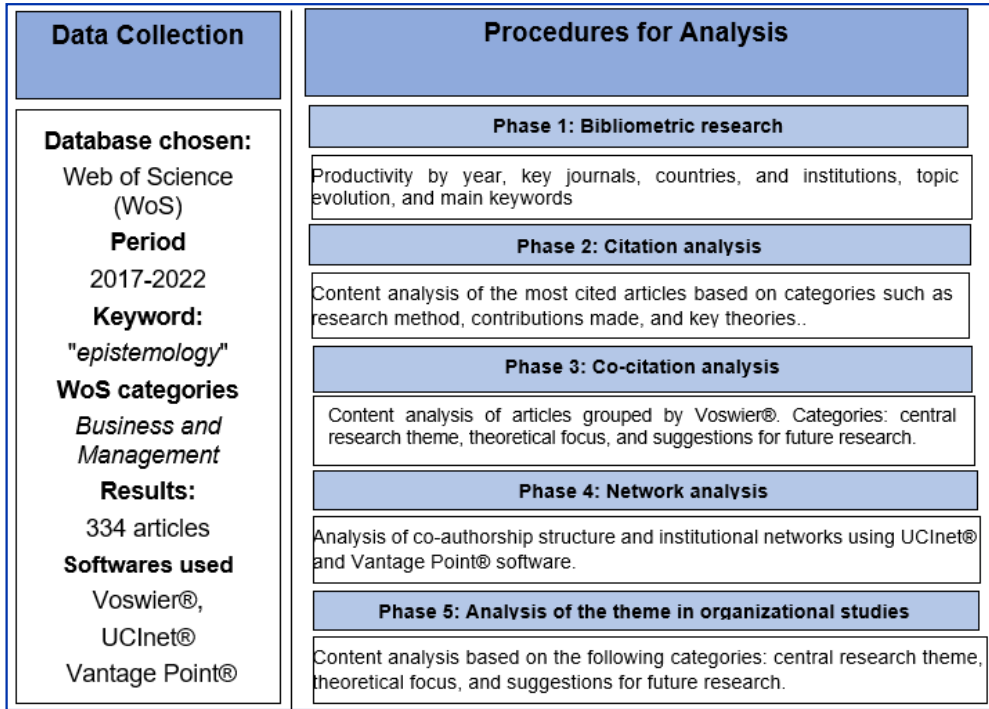
Methodological approach

The study underpinning this article adopted an exploratory methodological approach, combining bibliometric analysis techniques with content analysis. The chosen database was the Web of Science (WoS), as it aggregates the main journals in the field of management studies and because the indexing process is necessarily conducted by a human being and not solely by machines. The search in this database was conducted on November 9, 2022, using the term "epistemology". The period was defined as between 2017 and 2022 (in this case, the period was expanded because new studies could be added to the journals in 2022 and because there were already articles from 2023 in preparation to be published). The search focused on documents identified as articles. Given the scope of the study, the researched areas were Business and Management. From this procedure, 334 articles were retrieved. Figure 1 summarizes the structure used for the research conducted in this initial phase.

As a whole, the study encompassed five phases, namely: (1) bibliometric research, (2) citation analysis, (3) co-citation analysis, (4) network analysis, and (5) analysis of the theme of epistemology in organizational studies.

The first phase of the study focused on elements of traditional bibliometric research, including productivity by year, main journals, countries and institutions, the evolution of the topic, and main keywords (Donthu, Kuma, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, 2021). The second phase concentrated on citation analysis, covering the ten – 10 – most cited articles, which account for over 30% of all citations in the last five years. According to Pareto's rule, this selection reflects the works currently having the most significant impact in the field (Machado Junior, Souza, Parisotto, & Palmisano, 2016). Regarding the content and citation analysis, the study considered specific categories of analysis, namely: (i) the research method used, (ii) the contribution made, and (iii) the main theories.

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Figure 1. Research Structure.

Source: Developed by the Authors (2024).

The third phase of the study focused on co-citation analysis. This analysis aims to uncover seminal publications and foundational bases of knowledge, allowing for the identification of more influential authors and clusters by themes (Donthu et al., 2021). In total, the search returned 22,858 citations. The Vosviewer® software was used to construct the co-citation map by cluster. For the operationalization of this phase, the software was adjusted so that only references cited in conjunction with five articles were selected. With these parameters, 103 references were grouped into six clusters. The central studies of each cluster were evaluated through content analysis based on the following categories: central research theme, theoretical focus, and suggestions for future research.

In the fourth phase, co-authorship networks were analyzed. This analysis allows for an understanding of how certain research processes are structured and how specific authors and institutions interact with one another in scientific produc-

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tion in a given field (Donthu et al., 2021). In this sense, the present study utilized the UCInet® and Vantage Point® software. Thus, the 331 articles were analyzed to comprehend the co-authorship structure and institutions in the network.

Finally, the fifth phase focused on analyzing the theme of epistemology in the subfield of organizational studies. This is because this subfield of management studies traditionally tends to engage with this topic. The search terms "epistemol*" and "organizational stud*" were used within the management and business areas of the WoS. Topics such as title, abstract, keywords, and Keywords Plus oriented the research. Given the irregularity of publications per year, it was considered publications of the last 10 years, starting from the last one, occurred in 2020. This period was chosen as it adequately meets the timeliness requirements for this type of research. However, the analysis was expanded to 10 years due to the volume of studies found, which was deemed relevant for a more comprehensive analysis. Thus, the search parameters returned 12 studies between 2010 and 2020. Additionally, content analysis was conducted based on the following categories: central research theme, theoretical focus, and suggestions for future research.

It is worth highlighting that we are aware that the most cited article, said to have the greatest impact, is not always the most relevant one. These terms are imbued with political connotations and reflect positions within the scientific field (Barros & Alcadipani, 2023). More likely, an article published in English in a journal from a Global North country will be cited more than another published in a different language and/or in a Global South country (Mendes-da-Silva, 2020). This simple fact already excludes the non-Anglophone community, even though other elements are necessary for publication in high-impact international journals (Alcadipani, 2017; Barros & Alcadipani, 2023). However, publication in English in a major journal does not make an article more relevant. One might even ask: what is a relevant article? What defines the impact of an article?

In this sense, Alcadipani (2017) highlights that journals described as having the most significant impact and prestige in management studies often possess a commonly functionalist and narrow view of what constitutes a quality study, which typically prioritizes a quantitative methodological approach and, if qualitative, aligns with a positivist epistemological tradition. This pasteurization of scientific practice makes research processes increasingly protocol-driven and reactive, leading to an

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apparent uniformity of research in management studies, distancing it from contextual reality (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017). Furthermore, the dependence on these metrics leads to risk aversion in scientific research, discouraging innovative and high-impact projects (Stephan, Veugelers, & Wang, 2017).

Although the mainstream widely uses performance metrics of an article to reflect its timeliness and relevance, there is a need to reflect on the effectiveness of these methods. This is because the very collection of bibliometric metrics for evaluating articles has its weaknesses, from issues of quality and rigor to influence on scientific conduct (Barreto, 2013; Stephan et al., 2017). In his editorial, for example, Mendes-da-Silva (2020) emphasizes that the occurrence of the quest for citations, to the extent that it neglects ethical rules, is not impossible to observe among authors, editors, and scientific journals.

Considering this scenario, it is worth observing that knowledge does not necessarily adhere to the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon line, as many Brazilian studies, for instance, stem from the choices and actions of researchers who illuminate and act on highly relevant phenomena that are often underexplored by the mainstream, opening new epistemological, methodological, and theoretical avenues (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017). In addition to these factors, the study by Stephan and others (2017) showed that more original articles are more likely to be highly cited after three or more years but are often ignored or undervalued in short-term evaluations. Furthermore, highly original articles tend to be published in journals with lower impact factors.

In any case, being aware of the issues of the geopolitics of knowledge and epistemological coloniality present in the field of management studies (Barros & Alcadipani, 2023), we chose to proceed with the study. However, we do not lose sight of its limitations and the fact that the chosen method generates controversial results.

Results analysis

This section is divided into five subsections to better organize the data: bibliometric research, citation analysis, co-citation, and network analysis, and, finally, analysis of the theme in organizational studies.

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PHASE 1: BIBLIOMETRIC RESEARCH

Figure 2 provides a brief overview of the scientific production on epistemology between 2017 and 2022 in the fields of Business and Management in WoS. Notably, the 11 articles classified in 2023 are in press, as the data extraction was performed in November 2022. Two peaks in productivity are observed, one in 2019 and another in 2022.

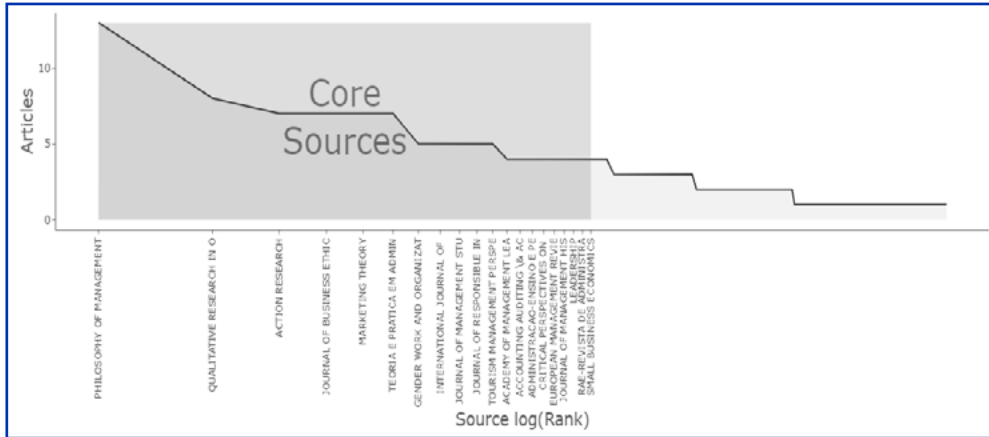**Figure 2.** Scientific production– 2017 to 2022 timeframe.
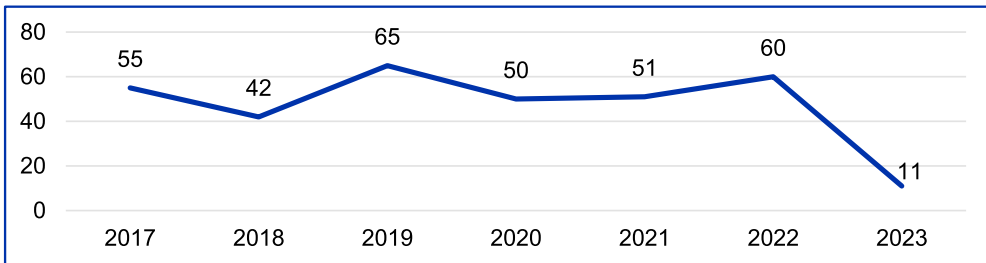
Source: Developed by the Authors (2022).

The body of the most relevant journals is presented in Figure 3. According to Bradford's Law, journals with a higher volume of publications on a given topic tend to establish a core of supposedly superior quality and greater relevance within a specific field of knowledge (Machado Junior et al., 2016).

The journal with the highest volume of published articles during the period was the Philosophy of Management, based in Australia, with 13 articles. This journal aims to define and develop the field of management philosophy, which has existed for ten years, and it discusses the philosophy of management in theory and practice, covering business ethics, ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, and politics. Its pursuit of bridging theory with the practical field of organizations aligns with what was identified in the articles analyzed in this study (Crossan et al., 2016; Merkl-Davis & Brennan, 2017; Van de Ven, 2007).

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Brazil's participation in generating knowledge on the topic stands out, with three journals present in the list of significant dissemination vehicles in the field: Teoria e Prática em Administração (TPA) with seven articles, Administração: Ensino e Pesquisa with four articles, and RAE - Revista de Administração de Empresas, also contributing with four articles.

Figure 4 presents the thematic map based on keywords. The map displays the themes discussed in the field of management studies according to their degree of development (density) and degree of relevance (centrality) along the X and Y axes. The first quadrant presents emerging themes that may gain more density, centrality, or declining themes (Giannakos et al., 2019). According to the readings, innovation is perceived as an emerging theme gaining centrality as a research topic.

The second quadrant presents niche themes. Typically, in this classification, the clusters are close to each other but specialize in a specific topic. In this quadrant, we find themes from specific fields, whether internal, forming an autonomous sub-field, or external, imported from other fields or disciplines with new developments within it (Giannakos et al., 2019). Notable in this classification are ethnography and critical management studies.

The third quadrant brings themes corresponding to the highest interest among researchers, where the keywords exhibit strong density and strong association (Gi-

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annakos et al., 2019). Noteworthy in this quadrant are research topics involving COVID-19, capitalism, intersectionality, and social justice.

Figure 4. Mapa Temático a partir de palavras-chave.
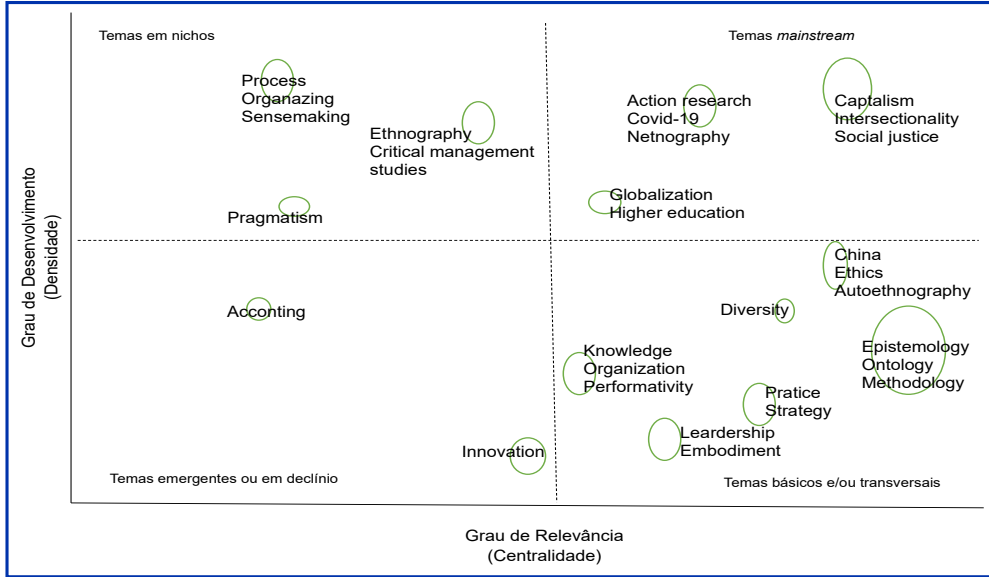
Source: Developed by the authors, using UCInet® (2022).

The fourth quadrant shows themes that have high density and low centrality. This means that we can find promising or established themes that are part of the construction of a particular discipline. Additionally, it presents themes that are essential for understanding the field (Giannakos et al., 2019). In this sense, the data from the research demonstrates the importance of the relationships between ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Delanty & Strydom, 2003; Benton & Craib, 2011; Sorrell, 2018).

PHASE 2 – CITATION ANALYSIS

This phase of the research comprised analyzing the most cited articles. From the initial research, using the parameters present in Figure 1, 334 articles were identified, resulting in 2,769 citations, of which 2,723 were without self-citations.

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The articles contributing over 30% (Pareto Rule) of all citations made (Donthu et al., 2021) were identified in the search for developing the analysis base. From the tenth article onwards, the volume of citations declined in its representativeness, with all being below a representation of 1.3% of the total.

Regarding the content analysis of the most cited articles, the study considered specific analysis categories, namely: (i) the research method used, (ii) the contribution made, and (iii) the main theories.

Theories and research methods identified

Throughout the analysis of the most cited articles, different research methodologies were used. On the one hand, Fisher and Aguinis (2017) present some foundations for developing new theoretical insights using empirical research along with preexisting conceptual ideas or preliminary theoretical models. On the other hand, Hoobler et al. (2016) employ a meta-analysis of seventy-three articles while seeking to integrate the results highlighted by different studies, exploring the relationships between various identified patterns and thus bringing order to previously unclear findings.

Kozinets et al. (2017) utilize qualitative ethnographic research to describe how a social group reacts to a specific event by delving into the theory of desires. Meanwhile, the work of Merkl-Davis and Brennan (2017) uses a framework to develop a greater understanding of a theory, thus linking current knowledge to its applicability in organizations. Eisenhart (1991) focuses on defining a theoretical framework as a guide for research based on formal theories. According to the author, it would be constructed using coherent and established explanations about a specific phenomenon and its relationships.

In addition, we can mention the work of Luoto, Brax, and Kohtamaki (2017), who systematically review the existing literature on servitization and conduct a narrative analysis. The research identifies several paradigmatic assumptions about Western influence on scientific practice, including realistic ontology, positivist epistemology, and managerialism.

We can also observe the work of Crossan et al. (2016), who aim to develop knowledge by bridging the gap between theory and practice, focusing on the relationship between scientific rigor and empirical relevance. They utilize a method

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called Q-Sort to address a knowledge production problem, thereby shortening the distance between theory and practice, as Van de Ven (2007) mentioned.

Despite the different methodologies employed in the articles, a predominance of qualitative data collection and analysis approaches is evident. Furthermore, the authors make a noticeable effort to establish a framework for theoretical construction and/or propose advancements. The predominantly qualitative methodological paths used also seem to move toward theoretical dialogue and the pursuit of some form of order within the field.

Identified contributions

A common aspect among the contributions of the analyzed articles pertains to the pursuit of systematization in knowledge development. Fisher & Aguinis (2017) proposed a structured way to conceptualize how theory-building can be accomplished, offering tools for researchers to systematically evaluate phenomena in conceptualizations and address the challenges present in the evolution of existing knowledge within a specific research field.

The work of Hoobler et al. (2016) continues the effort to bridge the gap between theory and organizational routines by presenting an empirical assessment derived from a meta-analysis. Thompson et al. (2020) follows a similar pursuit, attempting to provide insights that enable researchers to enhance the engagement of current theories with practical fields.

Tsoukas (2017) argues that contemporary theories must become increasingly sophisticated to address the challenges posed by the current organizational complexity. To adequately address this complexity, the development of new theories should include (i) an open ontology, recognizing that the world is in constant flux; (ii) a performative epistemology, where knowledge is inherently tied to action; and (iii) a poetic praxeology, acknowledging the complex motivations behind human actions as perceived by the researcher.

Merkl-Davies & Brennan (2017), in turn, present a theoretical framework considering a typology that identifies, synthesizes, and organizes existing research perspectives, highlighting similarities and differences between research traditions, associated theories, and related empirical investigations. This approach enables researchers to identify potential connections seeking to support the research evo-

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lution. Finally, Sorrell's (2018) work discusses classical assumptions regarding knowledge production, particularly those involving ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

In terms of contributions, researchers' efforts to develop tools and models that foster the advancement of existing knowledge while also exploring new avenues without diminishing the practical impact of their work can be observed.

PHASE THREE: CO-CITATION ANALYSIS

The 334 articles contained 22,858 references. Using the Voswier® software, the studies were grouped based on five co-citation nods, totaling 103 studies clustered into six groups, as presented in Figure 5

Figure 5. Co-citation clusters.
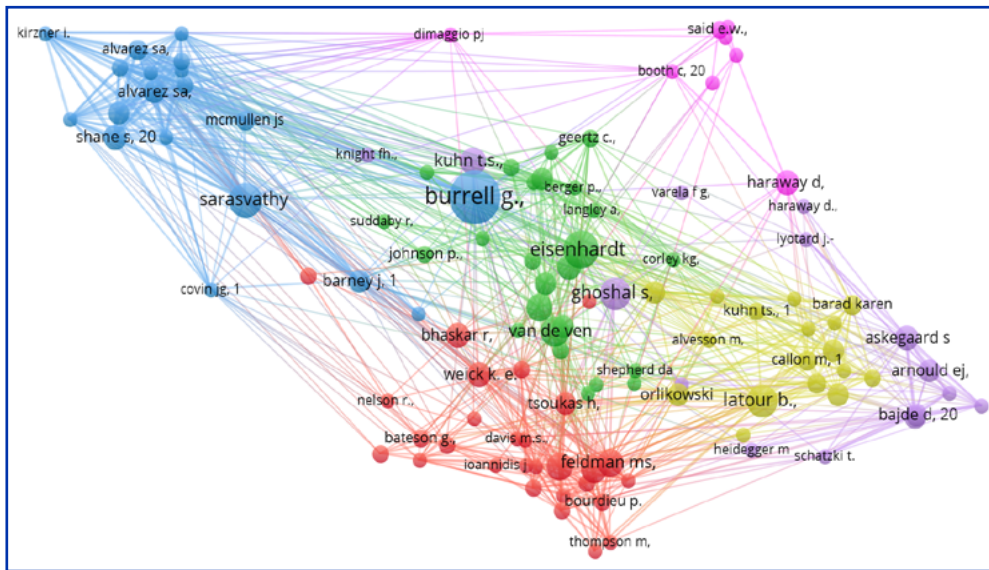
Source: Developed by the Authors using VOSviewer® (2023).

Cluster 1, in red, highlights several dilemmas between theory and practice, as well as the changing landscape management studies faces. Notably, the work of Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) stands out in this cluster, advocating for theory-building based on practice since organizational phenomena are dynamic. Ac-

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cording to the authors, as academia shapes management practitioners, theory needs to originate from practice, emphasizing the need to explain the emergent constitution of the socio-material world through the micro-dynamics of everyday life within organizations.

Similarly, Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011) discuss concerns that organizational theories may not be relevant to the practical world. They offer an alternative to this issue, which they term practical rationality, instead of theoretical rationality. They demonstrate how a closer connection to practice can help build theories more aligned with the organizational world.

Weick's (1969) study also appears among the most cited. The author reflects on social psychology research, particularly the ambiguous boundaries this type of research presents. He emphasizes the importance of generating questions from the research process rather than providing ready-made answers. Additionally, Weick offers insights into the social psychology researchers' entanglements with research subjects.

From a processual perspective and within an organizational change context, Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, and Van de Ven (2013) address the challenge of constructing organizational theories encompassing these phenomena. In this editorial from the Academy of Management Journal, they present some ontological assumptions underlying the research topic while also discussing the process of theorization considering the tensions brought by organizational changes.

Continuing the discussion on organizational change, Tsoukas and Chia's (2002) work views change as a fundamental aspect of organizational reality—one shaped by actors making decisions within an environment of uncertainty. In this sense, researchers must pay close attention to the factors surrounding organizational flow in its various spheres (cultural, political, cognitive etc.).

The articles presented in cluster 1 primarily address the process of theory construction within the context of practice and change in the field of management studies. These articles highlight the need to bridge the researcher with the researched environment/subject. This cluster demonstrates that change and practice are fundamental elements for building theories in management studies. Additionally, the contributions of researcher Haridmos Tsoukas are noteworthy, as he is a co-author

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of three of the main co-cited articles. It is also important to emphasize the presence of citations from Bourdieu's work, Practical Sense (1990).

Cluster 2, represented in green, focuses on the process of theoretical construction, primarily through qualitative methods. In this regard, the role of the case study in theory building is emphasized, following the proposals of Eisenhardt (1989) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007).

In turn, the editorial in the Academy of Management Review by Whetten (1989) discusses what constitutes a theoretical contribution. The article outlines the main elements that researchers need to consider during their research process and the writing of their reports. It also presents several factors that editors deem important when evaluating articles.

In terms of rigor, Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) provide an overview of qualitative research based on Grounded Theory. They highlight essential elements necessary for achieving the rigor required for theory construction.

Weick's (1995) study also illuminates the concept of sensemaking, illustrating how individuals and organizations construct meaning. The author's seminal work is a landmark in organizational studies research.

Cluster 3, represented in blue, centers around the seminal work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) in their book Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life. This book lays out the ontological and epistemological foundations based on several sociological paradigms that underpin various organizational theories. The paradigms presented by the authors include functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist.

Additionally, Cluster 3 reflects an effort to construct theory in entrepreneurship, as evidenced by the seminal works of Sarasvathy (2001), Shane and Venkataraman (2000), and Shane (2012). For instance, Sarasvathy introduces the theory of effectuation in entrepreneurship, which delineates the role of experimentation in the entrepreneurial process. Meanwhile, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) and Shane (2012) provide a theoretical framework for consolidating entrepreneurship as a field of research within management studies.

In the same vein, the research efforts of Alvarez and Barney (2007, 2010, 2013) and Alvarez, Barney, and Anderson (2013), present epistemological discus-

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sions in entrepreneurship, focusing on the process of theorization concerning the analysis, perception, exploration, and creation of opportunities. It is noted that Cluster 3 contains articles that mark the efforts to delineate the construction of theories in entrepreneurship, possibly because this is an emerging subfield that still requires further research for theoretical consolidation.

Cluster 4, depicted in yellow, presents more robust sociological and/or philosophical studies, prominently featuring the work of Latour (2005), one of the founders of Actor-Network Theory. This cluster also highlights the seminal work of Kuhn (1970), titled The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Another notable inclusion is the study by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), titled Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Additionally, Giddens's (1984) work, The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration, constitutes part of Cluster 4. Law (2004) discusses research methods in his work After Method: Mess in Social Science Research. Michel Callon (1984), also a founder of Actor-Network Theory, is likewise noteworthy, along with Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), who discuss contemporary political theory based on a more substantive critique of social arrangements, drawing from Foucault. It is important to note that Alvesson is a significant figure in Critical Management Studies.

Cluster 5, illustrated in lilac, presents the study by Ghoshal (2005), titled Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices, where the author critiques the process of theorization that negatively influences managerial practice. Although located in Cluster 5, this study is closely related to Cluster 1, as it integrates theory and practice. Another group of studies in Cluster 5 focuses on theoretical discussions in the subfield of marketing, stemming from Consumer Culture Theory and Actor-Network Theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Askegaard & Linnet, 2011; Bajde, 2013; Earley, 2014; Fitchett, Patsiaouras, & Davies, 2014; Hill, Canniford & Mol, 2014).

Cluster 6, depicted in magenta, reflects a smaller volume of studies aligned with feminism and critical studies, mainly focusing on feminist social theorist Donna Haraway. Although not included in the primary grouping due to methodological choices — where studies were aggregated based on a minimum of five co-citations — it is noteworthy that this final cluster cites several works by Paulo Freire, undoubtedly recognizing the significance of this author in social critique.

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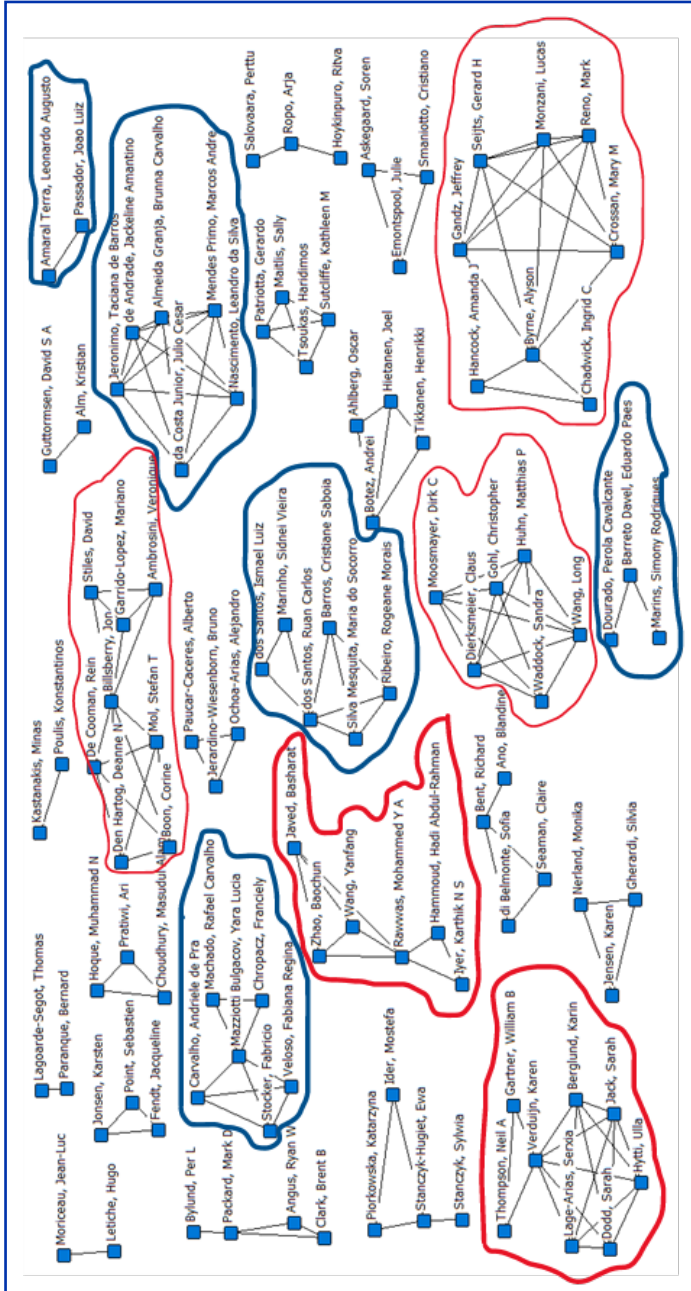
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PHASE FOUR: NETWORK ANALYSIS

This section discusses the co-author and institutional network maps. It is important to highlight the presence of Brazilian researchers in 20% of the co-authorship clusters, meaning they make up 5 of the 25 groupings (Figure 6). The other groupings are not homogeneous regarding the countries of origin of the researchers, perhaps due to the geographical and linguistic proximity among European and/or Anglophone countries.

In Figure 6, the clusters with Brazilian authors are highlighted in blue. Among the eight largest clusters (circumscribed in red), three are composed of researchers from Brazil, indicating that there is a considerable participation of Brazilian authors among scholars interested in the epistemology of management studies at a global level. Additionally, some researchers previously mentioned in earlier stages of the research, such as Tsoukas and Askegaard, are also listed in the most significant clusters.

The institutional network map (Figure 7) shows a centrality in Manchester, Leeds, and Stockholm universities, which form the leading production network. The only Brazilian university represented in this network is the Federal University of São João Del Rei. Other Brazilian universities appear in smaller networks with little or no interaction with international research institutions. Notably, the University of São Paulo, the Federal University of Paraíba, and the Federal University of Bahia produce their research independently, without links to other institutions.
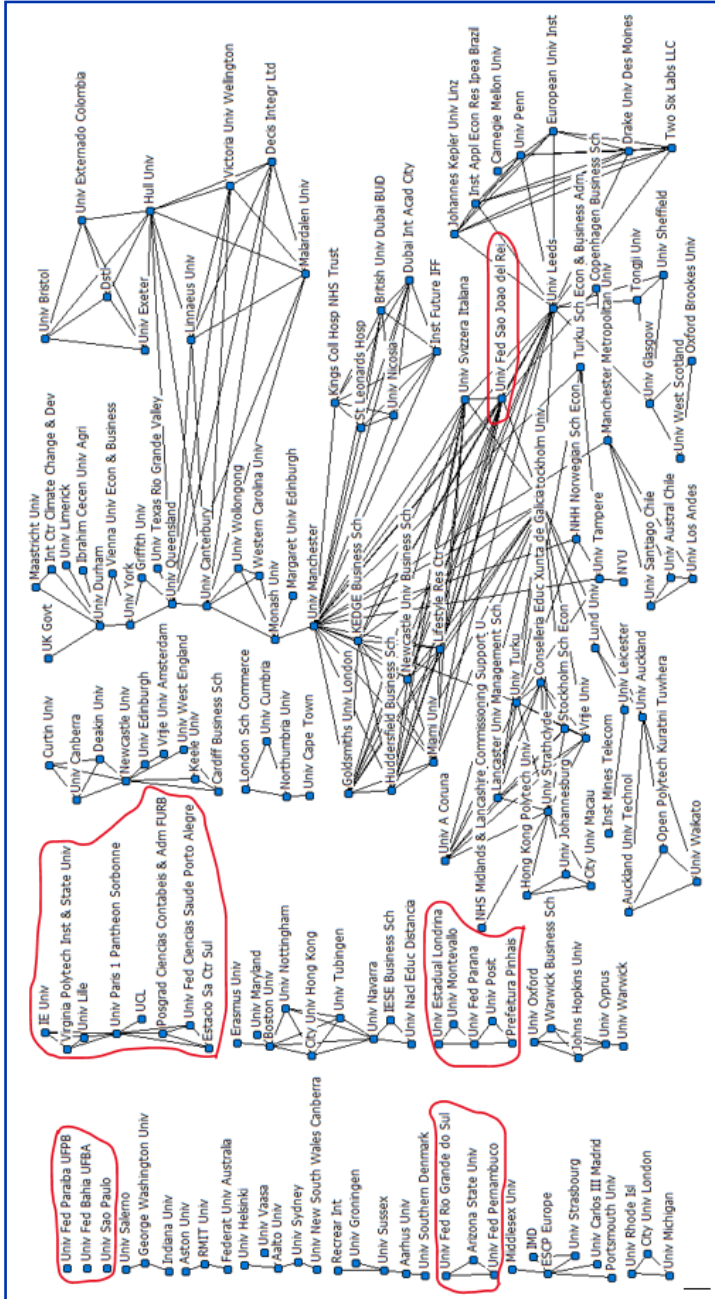
In addition to the previous map (Figure 6), it is observed that, although Brazilian researchers have played a central role in scientific production in epistemology of management studies, they still need a greater exchange with universities and researchers from other countries.

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Figure 6. Co-Authorship Network.

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Figure 7. Institution Network Map.

Source: Developed by the Authors using VantagePoint® (2023).

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PHASE FIVE: FASE CINCO: EPISTEMOLOGY SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIONS ANALYSIS CONSIDERING ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES FIELD

As described in the section dedicated to the methodological approach, 12 articles were selected for this phase of the research according to the search strategy (Search Keys: 'epistemol* and 'organizational stud*'; Areas: management and business from WoS; Topics: title, abstract, keywords, and Keywords Plus), as represented in Figure 8. Among the total studies, it is noteworthy that nine – 9 – are authored by Brazilian researchers. Additionally, most of the journals are also Brazilian, with the highlight being the Revista de Administração de Empresas (RAE), which features 5 studies. Furthermore, of the 79 citations, 41 are from RAE (51.9%), positioning the journal as a prominent publication on the topic of epistemology within the subfield of organizational studies globally. Moreover, the citation count indicates that researchers frequently refer to this source in their work. Considering these aspects of regionality, it is essential to emphasize that some of these articles address organizational studies from the context of Latin America (Misoczky & Camara, 2020; Wanderley & Bauer, 2020).

From a methodological perspective, the articles are characterized either as theoretical essays or literature reviews. The theoretical perspective highlights the Socio-Material Theory for discussions on the managerial formation of leaders (Cox & Hassard, 2018); the necessity for epistemological development in management studies through historical research in Brazil (Ferreira, 2010); and the use of Comparative Management Theory (Colonialist School, Uncritical Post-Colonialist School, Critical Post-Colonialist School) for understanding organizational phenomena from multiple lenses (Borim-de-Souza et al., 2015). Another approach is adopted from a critical national epistemology, originally grounded in Guerreiro Ramos and Maurício Tragtenberg (Paula et al., 2010). In the same vein, it is noted among the articles that a critical perspective can clarify the relationships between the paradigm of complexity and the need to construct an epistemology specific to management studies that questions the underlying discourses about the way of doing science (Serva et al., 2010).

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Figure 8. Scientific Production and Citations in Epistemology in the Field of Organizational Studies.

Título, autores, ano	Periódico e nº de Citações	
Potencialidades da análise histórica nos estudos organizacionais brasileiros. Ferreira (2010).	Revista de Administração de Empresas	15
From relational to relationist leadership in critical management education: Recasting leadership work after the practice turn. Cox e Hassard (2018).	Academy of Management Learning & Education	14
Sustainable development and sustainability as study objects for comparative management theory: Proposing styles of reasoning for an unknown metropole. Borim-de-Souza, Balbinot, Travis, Munck, e Takahashi, (2015).	Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal	14
A tradição e a autonomia dos estudos organizacionais críticos no Brasil. Paula, Maranhão, Barreto e Klechen (2010)	Revista de Administração de Empresas	13
Paradigma da complexidade e teoria das organizações: uma reflexão epistemológica. Serva, Dias e Alperstedt (2010).	Revista de Administração de Empresas	11
The historic (wrong) turn in management and organizational studies. Bowden (2020).	Journal of Management History	6
Simondon: Investigating the pre-organizational. Letiche e Moriceau (2017).	Culture and Organization	4
Tupi, or not Tupi that is the question": Perspectivismo ameríndio e Estudos Organizacionais. Wanderley e Bauer (2020).	Revista de Administração de Empresas,	1
Pensar desde a América Latina em diálogo com a organização das lutas sociais descoloniais: Explorando possibilidades. Misoczky e Camara (2020).	Revista de Administração de Empresas	1
Epistemologia de Certeau e sua Contribuição para os Estudos Baseados em Prática em Organizações. Machado, Chropacz e Bulgacov (2020).	Revista Ciências Administrativas	0
Perspectiva construcionista social e dimensão cultural: contribuições para os estudos organizacionais. Veloso, Stocker, Bulgacov, e Prá Carvalho (2020).	Revista de Gestão e Secretariado	0
O Alinhamento entre a Teoria Ator-Rede e a Sociologia Relacional: uma Discussão Onto-Epistemológica para os Estudos Organizacionais. Villar e Roglio (2019).	Teoria e Prática em Administração	0

Source: Developed by the Authors based on research data, 2023.

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Meanwhile, a word of caution is presented by Bowden (2020), who emphasizes the need for careful examination of conceptual errors in theoretical construction in organizational studies, especially those tied to the historical turn.

Regarding future research perspectives, there is a highlighted need for understanding the ideologies and discourses associated with organizational practices and a historical perspective on Brazilian administrative thought (Ferreira, 2010). Additionally, maintaining the tradition of critical organizational studies rooted in the works of Guerreiro Ramos and Maurício Tragtenberg in Brazil is essential (Paula et al., 2010). Another approach for future studies could focus on utilizing epistemology based on paradigm of complexity as a route to advance the epistemology of management studies and, consequently, organizational theories (Serva et al., 2010).

Final considerations

This section revisits the research questions that guided this study: What is the landscape of scientific production on epistemology in management studies over the past five years? How is scientific production in this field presented in the subfield of organizational studies? What is the role of Brazilian authors in research on epistemology of management studies?

In response to these questions, the results revealed the most cited researchers and key references, notably highlighting the work of Tsoukas and Askegaard, who emerge in various analyses. Current topics discussed through the lens of epistemology include sustainability, gender, innovation, and impact. In Brazil, the focus is on critical studies. It is also observed that subfields of management studies such as entrepreneurship and marketing seek theoretical consolidation in their research themes. Additionally, there is an emphasis on the process of theory construction from a context of practice and change within organizational studies. Overall, according to the parameters of this research, this seems to be the path that the epistemology of management studies is taking according.

Brazil's role in the scientific production of epistemology in the field of management studies is also noteworthy. However, collaboration and exchange with international researchers could benefit Brazilian research efforts. Nevertheless, Brazilian

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researchers are positioned among the leading productivity clusters on the epistemology of management studies globally.

Moreover, while Brazilian researchers may be incorporating and debating global northern epistemological issues, there are indications that they are also interested in global southern epistemologies, as indicated by articles focusing on organizational studies (Borim-de-Souza et al., 2015; Ferreira, 2010; Paula et al., 2010; Serva et al., 2010). Thus, from a decolonial perspective, future studies could delve into these researchers' role in knowledge production in epistemology. It is also worth questioning why Brazilian researchers invest so much in this topic. An investigation with editors of journals that publish on the epistemology of management studies could help elucidate these queries.

This study's main contribution was to provide insights into the ongoing research in the epistemology of management studies globally and the role of Brazilian researchers within this context, particularly in organizational studies.

However, a significant limitation of this work is the scope of studies based on the Web of Science. This search may not include some relevant research that could contribute to the field of management studies. This research choice comes with trade-offs, and this limitation must be acknowledged. Additionally, the classification of the most cited studies reflects the weaknesses already discussed in the section devoted to the methodological approach (for instance, does the article with the highest number of citations necessarily indicate the most relevance? Are there other aspects that could be highlighted in the analysis?). Other studies could dedicate efforts to addressing these weaknesses.

Recognizing these limitations, it is worth noting the work of Professor Maurício Serva, who has conducted research on this topic in Brazil throughout his career, including leading a significant colloquium focused on this theme. He may support the findings of this research by stating that "the segment of the epistemology of management studies demonstrates its contribution to the development of the management studies in the country and places us in a prominent position in the international arena" (Serva, 2017, p. 747). This same researcher also emphasizes the need to question the meaning and validity of scientific production, suggesting that research requires a degree of reflexivity essential for a science that does not want to remain peripheral (Serva, 2017). This is no easy task, highlighting the importance of this debate.

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