



Rural Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Challenges of the Territory (Place) in the Construction of a Business Identity in the Department of Córdoba (Colombia)

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the article is to explore the main obstacles faced by rural entrepreneurs in building their business identity. Under a qualitative approach and a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology, the "construction" that they carry out of their own self-definition as entrepreneurs is examined. The research suggests: (i) the importance of "place" in understanding the locale of business identity; (ii) the meaning of place that serves as a rich organizing discourse for rural entrepreneurship; and (iii) the complex ways in which business identities are shaped by place, while simultaneously participating in the 'construction' of legitimate and coherent identity in depleted and post-conflict communities.

Keywords: Rural entrepreneurship, discourse analysis, identity construction

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1. Introduction

In the last 20 years, the importance of rural entrepreneurship has been considered as a valuable policy in the revitalization of the agricultural sector in different regions of the world, such as: Europe, Asia, North and South America, aimed not only at the diversification of crops, but also at the realization of new economic activities (food processing, tourism, among others) framed in the so-called new rurality (Hassink, Grin, & Hulsink, 2016). This new vision of the rural promotes entrepreneurship as a powerful social practice for the generation of new income for people in rural contexts, based on the pluriactivity and multifunctionality of the territory, thereby providing new development alternatives that can contribute to the improvement of their quality of life (Pachon A., Bokelmann, & Ramírez M., 2016).

However, for some researchers of entrepreneurship, these positive and desirable attributions on rural entrepreneurship cannot be taken advantage of by all the people who live in these rural contexts,

since this requires not only the development of new skills and knowledge, but also the legitimization of new social practices (which, seen as available identities) allow the creation of new forms of entrepreneurial behavior (Welter, Gartner, & Wright, 2016), where people can perceive themselves as entrepreneurs within the framework of this new rurality; aspects that have not yet been studied in emerging and post-conflict economies (Aldairany, Omar, & Quoquab, 2018; Pato & Teixeira, 2016).

In this context, we believe that countries such as Colombia can be an ideal scenario to explore the way in which new business identities are being tried to be built in different parts of their territory, since entrepreneurship is promoted as a fundamental basis of the "Comprehensive Rural Reform", framed in the Peace Accords at the end of 2016. As a basic strategy to consolidate better territorial integration, social equality and eradication of extreme poverty in different rural areas of the country, through the development of different business activities, as a platform for the construction of a stable and lasting territorial peace (Melo, 2016).

However, the implementation of this strategy not only generates great material challenges (geographical, economic and infrastructure) and intangible challenges (values, culture and attitudes) (Li, Westlund, & Liu, 2019), but also the creation of new discourses and/or narratives that allow the construction of new business identities, which, supported at the local level, allow people to internalize new meanings and roles that contribute to the expression of multiple business behaviors and actions (Gill & Larson, 2014).

As a result, one of the main institutional challenges facing this type of change process is to help people develop their own entrepreneurial identities, given the amorphous nature of what it means to be an entrepreneur and the struggle that people experience in trying to internalize and express these types of identities in concrete and legitimate ways (Duening & Metzger, 2017). Hence, proposing a perspective of identity construction in the study of entrepreneurship in rural areas allows us to go beyond the traditional points of view supported exclusively by an economic rationality (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017) by conceiving it as socially situated and available as a point of support for what is possible to do within these social contexts (Hamilton, 2014).

In other words, rural entrepreneurship must be framed within a broader scenario of reasons, purposes and values in which entrepreneurship is framed in its economic vision; by being conceived as a "market phenomenon developed by people with special traits or set of behaviors that promote the creation of companies and that contribute to the economic growth of countries" (Essers, Dey, Tedmanson, & Verduyn, 2017, p. 18). Well, one of the main challenges in rural entrepreneurship is to generate business initiatives from the everyday, economic and social, which advocate in this process of change towards a business initiative created from a contextualized territorial reality, seen more as "a matter of daily activities than of actions of elitist groups of entrepreneurs" (Steyaert & Katz, 2004), where economic action can be explained not only by individual motivations, but also as part of a network of personal, family and place relationships in a process of construction of collective identities that swing between the business and the social (A. R. Anderson, 2015).

In this sense, this article explores the challenges that rural entrepreneurs face in their processes of building business identity in which they participate within the main entrepreneurship programs of the

Colombian government, called Sena Emprende Rural (hereinafter SER) which serves vulnerable population and in post-conflict situations, through the study of their different discursive practices, in the way in which "entrepreneurs" define themselves and their entrepreneurship based on their place (territory) and experience, in the insertion of different economic activities in different rural areas of the department of Córdoba. From this point of view, the article is conceived from four moments: The first, reconstructs some theoretical reflections made on rural entrepreneurship and the main interrelations that are established between entrepreneurship and the conceptualization that is made of the "rural". The second explores how identity can be conceptualized as a process of construction through language, which allows the individual to define and construct himself in relation to different social dimensions (particularly with place) that can condition or limit his entrepreneurial behavior. The third describes the discursive methodology used to explore the construction of identity by the entrepreneurs participating in the study. Finally, it presents the main findings obtained from the discourses of the entrepreneurs and the way in which they position their business identity while declaring the main obstacles they face to "become" entrepreneurs in dispersed rural areas and post-conflict situations.

2. Theoretical Overview of the Main Concepts

A View of Rural Entrepreneurship

Since the 80's, rural entrepreneurship has boomed in the literature on entrepreneurship, but it is from the 90's onwards that it is proposed as a strategy with great potential for change for rural development in certain regions around the world (Gladwin et al., 1989). Initially, this is conceived as: "... the creation of a new organization that introduces a new product, serves or creates a new market, or uses a new technology in a rural environment" (Wortman, 1990). On this basis, more recent definitions relate rural entrepreneurship not only to its geographical location, but also to the relationships of meaning that are established with the territory as a space of meaning and social life (Korsgaard, Müller, & Tanvig, 2015), which leads us to wonder about the importance of the way we define "rural", since it is in this adjective where entrepreneurship is contextualized by recognizing at least two important aspects: 1) that there is a diversity of entrepreneurial forms that can occur in rural areas and 2) that rural is not only built in a physical [spatial and/or geographical] way, but it is also a social construction, where certain activities are carried out that may or may not be legitimate, through which people define themselves and/or redefine their identity in relation to the place or territory (Korsgaard et al., 2015).

Hence, it is considered that the concern for the "rural" when exploring entrepreneurship is also a concern for social praxis and the potential effect that this type of context can have on business processes and vice versa, where the notion of place matters, as it helps us to have a contextualized understanding of entrepreneurship. by creating particular and specific needs for entrepreneurs. On the one hand, it allows us to visualize how business initiatives face problems such as: the ramification of illegal activities (Somerville, Smith, & McElwee, 2015); the weak infrastructure in communication and knowledge (Muhammad, McElwee, & Dana, 2017); limited access to government support (Aldairany et al., 2018), specifically, with regard to land tenure and the need to implement restitution policies as a basis for rural entrepreneurship (Unruh, 2019). And on the other hand, it allows us to explore how business initiatives

are managed in community based on the places where they are located, since these have a certain degree of "intradependence", which can be considered critical for the development of new business activities, since they provide a sense of attachment and identity based on the territory (Gorbuntsova, Dobson, & Palmer, 2018).

In other words, when exploring the rural in entrepreneurship we must try to understand how the notion of place and the very identity of people are also shaped as a fundamental part of the diversification of business activities, aspects that must be considered as fundamental for the development of business promotion policies in dispersed rural areas. which in most cases are based on an approach of agro-industrial development and opportunistic behaviors, leaving aside essential elements, such as: identity and territorial roots (Korsgaard et al., 2015).

IDENTITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DISCOURSE

As in other domains, the study of identity in the field of entrepreneurship is a complex construct, originating from its multidisciplinary roots, from which different conceptual meanings are attributed to it, recognizing its dual nature in the coexistence of the term "identity" and other related terms such as "the self", to refer to both the central core of a person (personal identity), as well as the social positions and roles that people assume and discard when interacting with others, as a way of managing multiple identities (social identities) (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011).

In trying to deal with this nature, several researchers in the field of entrepreneurship have responded by adopting explanatory frameworks developed mostly in social psychology, such as social identity theory (Turnner & Onorato, 1999), in which "personal identity" deals with the notion of the unique individual and the "social" aspect of the person. which reflects belonging to different social groups and their different cognitive processes that underpin our ability to change from one identity to another.

For example, Shepherd & Haynie, (2018, 2009), presents the theory of optimal distinctiveness, where they propose a series of strategies used by entrepreneurs to manage and balance their multi-role identities. They suggest that, although entrepreneurial roles offer people a range of possibilities to distinguish themselves from others, in terms of their passion (Murnieks, Mosakowski, & Cardon, 2014); motivation (Mathias, 2017); values (Kirkley, 2016); virtues (Duening & Metzger, 2017); cognition (Jarvis, 2016) among other aspects, entrepreneurs also want to satisfy their needs for belonging to avoid the risk of negative emotions and thus promote their psychological well-being with respect to perceived self-efficacy (Winkler, 2018).

Similarly, the so-called psychological theory of self-perception (Verheul, Uhlaner, & Thurik, 2005), explores how certain individual characteristics influence the entrepreneurial image of individuals and their perception of being entrepreneurial, concluding that certain achievements, such as starting a business or managing it beyond the start-up, can predict entrepreneurial self-image. Moreover, the theory of effectuality (Sarasvathy, 2008) suggests that entrepreneurs can have different types of behaviors (causal or effective) when starting a business. He says that those who behave effectively begin the business process by asking themselves who they are, what they know, and who they know. In turn, they identify the means they can use to create the business based on their identity, knowledge, and networks (Sarasvathy and Dew

2013). This is due to the difficulty that entrepreneurs experience when they are unable to define clear objectives, which means that they tend to explain their actions in terms of their identity, rather than their preferences or objectives (Sarasvathy & Dew, 2005).

While all of these theories have contributed to the literature on identity in the field of entrepreneurship, they have only scratched the surface of the construct of entrepreneurial identity. They assume from the beginning that individuals immersed in business processes maintain a relatively clear and coherent perception of what they are, the basis on which they act, conceptualizing identity as a means or resource that people possess (Duening & Metzger, 2017). These aspects are criticized by some, given that they retain a modern vision of the concept of identity, related to entrepreneurship, in terms of the existence of people with "special characteristics" as the predominant explanation of business behaviors and actions (Essers C., Dey, Tedmanson, & Verduyn, 2017).

In contrast to this conceptualization, authors such as Verkuyten (2005b) state "The concept of identity is not about individuals, nor about society as such, but about the relationship between the two" (p. 42). Hence, it is considered that entrepreneurs do not build their identities on their own, identity can be considered as a bridge concept between the individual and the social (Watson, 2009; Ybema, Keenoy, Oswick, Beverungen, & Sabelis, 2009). Where, as a discursive resource, it allows to show how business initiatives are socially constructed, as a social and spatial practice, which acquires new meanings in different times and places (Hytti, 2005). Essentially, it creates a medium through which the entrepreneurial self and social interaction (as norms and prescriptions) that arise from social interaction, impact individual behavior (Laakkonen, 2012).

Under this perspective, there is a separation from the traditional vision of the entrepreneur as an individual possessing "unique characteristics", to concentrate on the processes and contexts (characteristics of the place) (Gill & Larson, 2014) where business identity is built through social discourses (Gill, 2014). "This leads to conceiving identity as something social, produced intersubjectively, not personal and individual, since the individual is no longer considered a source of identity, this must be explored in discursive practices in situ" (McAvoy, 2016, cited in Ararat, 2019).

In this sense, the construction of identity through discourse has proven to be a novel dimension, in the role played by context in entrepreneurship processes (for example, in rural areas) (Jones, Ratten, Klapper, & Fayolle, 2019). It dispels the essentialist conception of the entrepreneur by leaving aside the individual and focusing on both social and discursive practices, on the way in which people, through the use of different discursive resources, position their identity with respect to place and other social dimensions [gender, ethnicity, among others] (Lewis, Ho, Harris, & Morrison, 2016; Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015)

On this basis, we approach the study of rural entrepreneurship as a contextualized phenomenon (social, cultural, spatial and institutional) whose delimitation affects the way people They evaluate the opportunities they want to achieve, since various social practices can affect the way entrepreneurs perceive their opportunities and the execution of them in relation to the place (Gill & Larson, 2014; McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015), culture (Audretsch, Obschonka, Gosling, & Potter, 2017) and the local discourses promulgated (McMullen & Warnick, 2016).

Aspects that in themselves represent a course for the community, which in the words of McKeever

et al., (2015) they provide a sense of attachment, belonging that implies rights and responsibilities with respect to certain activities where the traditional, the natural and the agricultural are part of the socially established daily activities (Deakins, Bensemann, & Battisti, 2016). On this basis, some researchers consider that the importance of entrepreneurship lies mainly in its power of change, which can be generate profound transformations in the rural sector, considering it as not very dynamic, restricted to agriculture and disconnected from the urban world.

Under this scenario, Certain tensions that entrepreneurs face when expressing their values and business identities in the rural context are recognized (O'Neil & Ucbasaran, 2016; Wry & York, 2017), because according to the Latin American Center for Rural Development, "in Colombia, indigenous and Afro-descendant youth and those in conflict zones represent heterogeneous realities of the rural world." (Pardo, 2017, p. 2), which together with other socioeconomic and gender aspects, limit their insertion in different economic activities. From which it can be deduced that another important challenge for rural entrepreneurship is the way in which new business identities are introduced that serve as a guide for the development of different economic activities, since these must be socially legitimized, since they cannot simply be artificially attributed or introduced and expect them to be accepted or claimed by people without them being available in these social contexts (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014).

This has led to a conflict between the construction of new business identities and the identity provided by the place, since it is argued that not only economic aspects must be taken into account, but also social processes must be paid attention to the development of entrepreneurship, as a fundamental basis for the creation of new business identities (A. R. Anderson, Warren, & Bensemann, 2018; Berglund, Gaddefors, & Lindgren, 2016). Where, traditional activities such as agriculture continue to be a fundamental part of both for the construction of identity of people in the countryside, as well as for the dynamic role of development in different rural contexts (Soto Villagrán & Fawaz Yissi, 2016).

From this point of view, the importance of the place according to Gill & Larson (2014) it is conceived as the fundamental basis for the construction of the entrepreneurial identity of individuals, since as a social process (Alsos, Clausen, Hytti, & Solvoll, 2016) it provides at least three basic anchors from which individuals can construct their identity in different ways, such as: 1) Lifestyle, which provides individuals with a unique way of carrying out their activities (*habitus*), by providing behavioral parameters; 2) Home, provides an environment of community and rootedness where individuals describe themselves and 3) Challenge, when trying to develop new businesses or economic activities despite adverse conditions (Larson & Pearson, 2012). Aspects that can be analyzed through a discourse theory in the way individuals construct their entrepreneurial identity in rural environments, as presented below when establishing some of the methodological aspects used to explore this construction of identity of rural entrepreneurs.

3. Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the study, we used a qualitative approach (McDonald, Gan, Fraser, Oke, & Anderson, 2015) through the use of semi-structured interviews as a data collection technique, where it is intended to examine the processes of identity construction based on the place and the experience of the subjects in the insertion of different economic activities in the rural context. In this context, studies on

business identity highlight discursive and narrative analyses that allow a better understanding of the entrepreneurial process in different social contexts (A. R. Anderson, 2015; A. Anderson & Starnawska, 2008).

DATA COLLECTION

To carry out this research, the department of Córdoba-Colombia was chosen, specifically, the municipalities of Pueblo Nuevo, Sahagún and La Apartada, as part of the territories whose population distribution places 70% of the inhabitants in dispersed rural areas; where greater efforts must be made to reduce social inequalities according to statistics from the National Planning Department (DNP, 2016). In addition, for being one of the departments with the highest rates of business initiatives created in the last three years, occupying eighth place within 32 departments linked to the SER program. This aspect contrasts with the situation of other departments with a similar population distribution in dispersed rural areas, such as: Caquetá, Vaupés, Guaviare, among others (See Figure 1). Likewise, for being one of the departments chosen for the implementation of the peace agreements, as a pilot test for the realization of the development plans with a territorial approach (PDET).

Under this scenario, a snowball sampling was used in which 18 entrepreneurs belonging to the SER program were located, made up of 12 women and 6 men with high levels of vulnerability and who derive their main source of income from their rural business initiative. This research lasted 12 months where the business initiatives were the product of a training stage on Rural Business (9 months) and a business capitalization stage (3 months).

For our analysis of the construction of the entrepreneurial identity of rural entrepreneurs, we take as a basis the socio-cognitive model of Teun Van Dijk (2015), which analyzes the discourses of individuals through the triangulation between discourse, cognition and society and superficially identifies as the users of language belonging to a particular community, they speak and describe themselves from a specific social position as rural entrepreneurs, particularly the way in which subjects construct themselves as equal or different from others within a given social context (Ararat, 2010).

interrelated with each other make up their own social construction of place, Lefebvre (1991) (cited Gorbuntsova et al., 2018, p. 3), as illustrated below.

5. Synopsis of the Main Research Outcomes

The territory (place) as "Field"

One of the main associations that can be identified in rural entrepreneurs for the development of different business initiatives is the relationship of interdependence that they build of the place as a "field", understood as a community space where the place is organically intertwined with a particular lifestyle (Velvin, Bjørnstad, & Krogh, 2016), where the food security of entrepreneurs and their community prevails as a collective objective in the execution of different initiatives, as expressed below:

"What I like most about the countryside is having the things that are needed, for example, the crops to start with, the harvests, because we live from the crops, our community lives, our people live and our population lives around, our animals also live from those crops, if you chop the rice, the chickens eat from that, they have the egg for us to hold it too, and that's all about the countryside and you know that you live outdoors, cool and all that." (P)

"I see the countryside with many opportunities for those of us who work in the countryside, both in the way of life, to live quietly, to live a more relaxed life, not so congested, something that the town and the city oppress us, well, for those who know how to defend themselves." (H)

"No, the good life is here, the city absorbs them, and they forget the parts where they come from and one must preserve this culture that we have that we have learned to stay here, because it is what is most needed at this time and in the question of food because it is not the same to eat a chemical in the city as to eat it natural where you can plant in a pot in the yard even a tomato plant." (Q)

This denotes a constant interrelation between lifestyle and traditional activities associated with the "countryside" through values such as tranquility, fresh air and freedom focusing on community work and common welfare, based on a desire for autonomy to want to become better people as a basis for building their business identity, considering money more as a restriction in the performance of their daily activities; than as an end in itself, in the search for economic benefits as the main driver of their business activity (Baker & Welter, 2017).

Another important aspect that rural entrepreneurs use in the construction of their business identity based on place as "countryside", is that concerning the tangible resources from which they position their business initiative, for example: geographical "here you grow in summer, in winter you lose everything" (G); economic "it is difficult for us to get the money for the inputs... we sow what the river fertilizes" (A) and infrastructure "The countryside needs a lot of impetus from the government..., especially with the land, accessing a hectare of land is very difficult... nor do they have land to produce." (N). Conditions, which drive the development of different types of initiatives (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011), under the promulgation of certain premises of "moving forward" and "solving the situation", where rootedness prevails as a fundamental part of the personal development of those who have been born and raised in this place.

The territory (place) as "Company"

In this context, it is possible to identify a different conception of business on the part of rural entrepreneurs, where the place as a field conditions the notion that they have about what a "company" is and the management of it, because being constantly oriented towards the community, entrepreneurs find in daily activities a space to socialize, provide food and obtain economic well-being. In this context, the "company" is seen as a space for learning, community work and access to public resources, as various subjects participate in the performance of different productive activities, associating the notion of company with that of a "productive project".

In this way, rural entrepreneurs are trained in actions in the countryside (mainly agricultural and poultry), as an opportunity to participate in these projects, which gives them It allows access to certain government resources (mostly in kind) in the search for a common welfare, as a viable alternative in which entrepreneurs reevaluate their opportunities and business initiatives (Conger, McMullen, Bergman, & York, 2017), as stated in the following discursive practices:

What I like most for me is the union that we can have as a company since we can be a big family, the union that exists between everyone and what is missing from one the other is placed, we respect the opinion and accept the opinion of everyone in the company." (E)

"What I like most to be in the warehouse (company) is because there you have socialization with people, economic trades and we get the money there too, that's what I like the most." (P)

"My interest is that it helps you because you solve the needs you have at home and you learn to get ahead, it's like I told you, to have another extra help. (A)"

As a consequence, the companies resulting from the rural entrepreneurship programs in Córdoba are based on the so-called rural entrepreneurship by "necessity", since this is not defined in terms of the

opportunities present in their territory (place) but of the current institutional offer that the state has contemplated for this part of the territory, which allows them to access certain resources to carry out some productive activity. This vision of development not only limits the different productive activities that can be developed in the field, but also conditions the generation of value from these activities, since the development of diverse or complementary companies is not encouraged, in different stages: inputs, harvesting, post-harvest, processing, marketing, among other aspects, which allow generating value to the activities carried out. given the lack of state infrastructure; which makes rural entrepreneurs conceive their entrepreneurship as a set of agricultural activities that have been merely formalized by state agencies, leaving aside the importance of entrepreneurship as a transformative force (Welter, Baker, Audretsch, & Gartner, 2017) in the development of new economic activities that, institutionalized among themselves, can serve as a basis for the economic development of the different territories. As this entrepreneur puts it when he states:

"Generally in the countryside not all activities are agricultural, sales are managed, which is where I develop, which is the sale of catalogs, but also in the countryside that is also done because one goes to the field, buys and sells and also sells, so also it does not necessarily have to be from the countryside to live from the countryside and to love the countryside, one likes the countryside by nature, for the peace, for the tranquility, for the humility of the people, here the people are healthy. (R)

The foregoing urges the enactment of new forms of government support that include new programs (not only agricultural and livestock) but also new services and products inherent to the conditions of the territory, which do not limit the performance of different activities, since these affect entrepreneurs' ability to be more productive and efficient making it difficult to carry out new activities, aspects that are evident when discursively positioning other activities that try to transform the decline of lagging areas and rural-urban migration (Nwankwo & Okeke, 2017).

The foregoing urges the enactment of new forms of inclusion of service and productive programs that contribute to the realization of new ways of being or carrying out already established activities, as part of the solution of the problems associated with the place, related to the crops, the river, the temperature, the terrain and the winter or summer seasons. Aspects that agree with the deficient results of the different business policies that have promoted urbanization and industrialization in different urban areas in Colombia, as a basis for economic development, aspects that have already been studied in other latitudes worldwide, such as the United States, Canada, China and Japan (Liu & Li, 2017) , where the rural area has been seriously affected by the implementation of this type of policy, which has caused a downward spiral in the decrease of employment, depopulation, economic depression and the deterioration of the quality of life of the different rural areas (Li, Westlund, Zheng, & Liu, 2016).

6. Conclusions

In this article we have given an account of some discursive practices used by some rural entrepreneurs in the promulgation of their business identity, seen as a process of construction where the subjects as belonging to a particular community, where they speak and describe themselves from this specific social position. Our findings illustrate that, although entrepreneurship is a phenomenon highly promoted by government programs – SER, the results are sometimes not the product of the identification of opportunities by their participants, but of the institutional offer available to the government for these dispersed rural areas and in conditions of vulnerability.

Although the importance of taking into account the intradependent relationships that rural entrepreneurs build in relation to the "place" has been maintained, it is also true that new values and business activities must be introduced and legitimized, which are promulgated by the same actors in order to be able to construct new "business" identities from the discursive point of view. that promote new ventures and try to reduce at a cognitive level the so-called negative dissonance (or non-belonging), which conditions people's entrepreneurial action and the way they perceive themselves as entrepreneurs in different social contexts (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018).

As a result, to continue exclusively promoting the processes of identity construction based only on the institutional offer available as the only way to access economic resources, is to ignore the way in which rural entrepreneurs solve their own economic and social problems from the everyday, in other words, it is to ignore the different ways in which people socially construct their identities. based on their personal experiences and interaction with others and with the place where they belong. Hence the importance of continuing to explore the study of the entrepreneurial phenomenon in different rural areas, where through different theoretical lenses such as identity (in its discursive perspective) allows more empirical studies to be carried out, where new analytical paths are attempted to be built that allow us to contextualize entrepreneurship in a better way. as part of a social, community process interrelated with specific social contexts [territories] and not as an isolated or generic economic activity, whose ultimate goal is not only the generation of wealth, but the way in which, through entrepreneurship, various communities can be articulated to carry out not only traditional activities but also new economic activities that provide a more nuanced vision of rural entrepreneurs and their initiatives Business.

7. Limitations, Implications, and Further Directions of Research

The present study is subject to several limitations that derive primarily from its qualitative and interpretative orientation. While the adoption of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework allowed an in-depth exploration of how rural entrepreneurs construct and position their business identities in relation to place, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the specific cases analyzed. The interpretations reflect socially situated meanings that depend on the context of the SENA Emprende Rural program and the territorial dynamics of the department of Córdoba. Future research could address these limitations by employing mixed or longitudinal approaches that integrate discursive, behavioral, and socioeconomic data to capture a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial identity formation.

Another limitation concerns the representativeness of the sample. The participants were all beneficiaries of the SENA *Emprende Rural* program in three municipalities—Pueblo Nuevo, Sahagún, and La Apartada—which may not reflect the diversity of experiences found in other Colombian rural regions, particularly those with different cultural, geographical, or ethnic configurations. Expanding the scope of analysis to include multiple territorial contexts would enable comparative insights into how discursive resources vary across communities and influence the perception of legitimacy and belonging among entrepreneurs.

Despite these limitations, the study offers significant implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, it reinforces the need to examine entrepreneurship not only as an economic or individual phenomenon but as a discursive and contextual practice through which people negotiate social positions, identities, and legitimacy. Practically, it highlights the importance of incorporating symbolic and communicative dimensions into rural development and entrepreneurship policies. Programs such as SENA *Emprende Rural* could benefit from training components that explicitly recognize the role of language, narrative, and local discourse in shaping entrepreneurial self-perception.

Future research should further investigate how institutional and governmental discourses intersect with local narratives to define what is socially recognized as a “legitimate” entrepreneurial identity. Comparative studies between post-conflict and non-conflict regions—or between rural and urban entrepreneurs—could enrich understanding of how power relations and socio-spatial conditions affect identity construction. Additionally, exploring gendered and generational differences in these discursive practices could provide a deeper view of the plural ways in which entrepreneurship and territory intertwine in the ongoing process of building inclusive and sustainable rural economies.

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