

Appropriation of rural territory through narrative as a psychosocial strategy in children

Apropiación del territorio rural a través de la narrativa como estrategia psicosocial en niños y niñas
Apropriação do território rural através da narrativa como estratégia psicossocial em crianças

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Abstract

Introduction: territory can be constructed as a symbolic and affective space in which collective bonds, practices, and memories constitute integrating elements in community dynamics. Childhood, despite often being invisible, actively participates in the production of meaning about its environment, especially through narrative. **Objective:** this article analyzes the appropriation of territory among rural children and the role of narratives in this process. **Methodology:** this qualitative research, which allowed for the recognition of participants' perception regarding their sense of belonging, employed a phenomenological design. This design enabled an exploration of each participant's experiences and provided a significant contribution to the construction of subjectivity within the rural environment. The analysis was conducted through categorical coding with the support of Atlas.ti software. **Results:** the findings evidenced that narratives facilitate the resignification of the environment, expressing community bonds and strengthening dimensions of the psychological sense of community, such as membership and emotional connection. **Conclusions:** Narrative, as a psychosocial strategy, operates through transformation, reinforcing the symbolic appropriation of the territory and promoting collective empowerment starting from childhood.

Keywords: Appropriation of territory; Childhood; Narratives; Psychosocial strategy; Sense of community; Transmedia narratives.

Resumen

Introducción: El territorio puede construirse como un espacio simbólico y afectivo en el que los vínculos, las prácticas y las memorias colectivas constituyen elementos integradores en las dinámicas comunitarias. La infancia, aunque con frecuencia resulte invisible, participa activamente en la producción de significados sobre su entorno, especialmente a través de la narrativa. **Objetivo:** Este artículo analiza la apropiación del territorio entre niños y niñas rurales y el papel de las narrativas en dicho proceso. **Metodología:** Esta investigación cualitativa, que permitió reconocer la percepción de los participantes respecto a su sentido de pertenencia, empleó un diseño fenomenológico. Dicho diseño posibilitó explorar las experiencias de cada participante y aportó significativamente a la construcción de la subjetividad en el contexto rural. El análisis se realizó mediante codificación categorial con el apoyo del software Atlas.ti. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos evidenciaron que las narrativas facilitan la resignificación del entorno, expresan los vínculos comunitarios y fortalecen dimensiones del sentido psicológico de comunidad, como la pertenencia y la conexión emocional. **Conclusiones:** La narrativa, como estrategia psicosocial, actúa mediante la transformación, reforzando la apropiación simbólica del territorio y promoviendo el empoderamiento colectivo desde la infancia.

Palabras clave: Apropiación del territorio; Infancia; Narrativas; Estrategia psicosocial; Sentido de comunidad; Narrativas transmedia.

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Resumo

Introdução: O território pode ser construído como um espaço simbólico e afetivo no qual os vínculos, as práticas e as memórias coletivas constituem elementos integradores das dinâmicas comunitárias. A infância, embora muitas vezes invisível, participa ativamente da produção de significados sobre o seu entorno, especialmente por meio da narrativa. **Objetivo:** Este artigo analisa a apropriação do território entre crianças rurais e o papel das narrativas nesse processo. **Metodologia:** Esta pesquisa qualitativa, que permitiu reconhecer a percepção dos participantes sobre o seu senso de pertencimento, utilizou um desenho fenomenológico. Esse desenho possibilitou explorar as experiências de cada participante e contribuiu significativamente para a construção da subjetividade no contexto rural. A análise foi realizada por meio de codificação categorial com o apoio do software Atlas.ti. **Resultados:** Os achados evidenciaram que as narrativas facilitam a resignificação do ambiente, expressam os vínculos comunitários e fortalecem dimensões do sentido psicológico de comunidade, como a pertença e a conexão emocional. **Conclusões:** A narrativa, como estratégia psicossocial, atua por meio da transformação, reforçando a apropriação simbólica do território e promovendo o empoderamento coletivo desde a infância.

Palavras-chave: Apropriação do território; Infância; Narrativas; Estratégia psicossocial; Sentido de comunidade; Narrativas transmídia.



1. INTRODUCCIÓN

For the social and human sciences, territory is defined not merely as a physical or administrative delimitation, but as a space that is socially constructed from meanings, symbols, relationships, affections, and narratives (Haesbaert, 2013; Porto-Gonçalves, 2021). From this perspective, it could be argued that in rural contexts, the symbolic dimension acquires differential value, such that the inhabited place is intertwined with family, community, and social memories built upon traditions and experiences.

These are consolidated in spaces narrated and resignified by their inhabitants through cultural imaginaries and collective memories that configure the territory as a lived space, laden with meaning and constructed from the everyday and the cultural. Within this framework, the role of children as agents of territorial construction gains great value, as boys and girls cement bonds with their environment through narration, play, everyday experience, and even affectivity (Hart, 1997; Rizzini & Butler, 2003; Silva et al., 2024). In accordance with the foregoing, it can be asserted that children do not just inhabit the territory; they give it meaning through narratives that express belonging, security, and a collective sense (Castaño-Aguirre et al., 2021).

Furthermore, from a psychosocial perspective, narrative constitutes a tool that allows for the understanding of how people construct meaning and identity about their environment based on their stories (Bruner, 1992); that is, narrative not only describes life, but also activates processes of self-understanding and identity (Goffredi & Sheldon, 2024).

Particularly, children's narratives facilitate access to perceptions, emotions, and experiences that provide a valuable perspective often invisible in dominant discourses (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2024). In this sense, this article focuses on understanding how boys and girls in the village of Mancilla (rural sector of Facatativá, Cundinamarca) symbolically appropriate their territory, integrating trans-media narrative devices such as photography, a digital blog, and a participatory gallery as a strategy for strengthening the sense of community and community participation from an early age.

2. REFERENCIAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Appropriation of Territory: Construction of Identity and Sense of Community.

The concept of territory is fundamental in the human and social sciences, as it allows for the analysis of reality from perspectives that contemplate the relational, the symbolic, and the spatial. In this sense, territory does not refer only to the geographical, but to a social construction that is cross-sectioned by collective memories, meanings, power relations, and cultural practices (Haesbaert, 2013). From this viewpoint, territory acquires a dimension linked to identity and belonging, transcending the merely physical to become the space where the land and people's identity are integrated. (Costa & Andrade, 2023; Grajales, 2010) extend this perspective from traditional knowledge, pointing out that territory is configured from the social relationships that sustain and perpetuate it. In this way, territory should not be understood solely as a physical space, but as a dynamic construction influenced by identity, belonging, and social relationships. Its meaning transcends geographical delimitation to become a fundamental element in the life of communities, reflecting their history, culture, and forms of interaction with the environment. Thus, territory constitutes a framework of experiences and lived realities, a



space narrated by its inhabitants, which converts it into a relevant category for understanding identity, community, and psychosocial phenomena (Castaño-Aguirre et al., 2021).

From this understanding, referring to the appropriation of territory by communities constitutes a factor of utmost importance that more effectively ensures the conservation, validity, and care of territories that possess historical and cultural richness (Reyes-Guarnizo, 2020).

Furthermore (González-Véliz, 2024; Wahren, 2012), highlight that the appropriation of territory is a multidimensional process that involves collective practices, cultural and political resistance, as well as the creation of new meanings and relationships in the geographical space. He also states that this process allows social movements to reconstruct their community ties and experience new forms of organization and sustainability.

In the same way, the appropriation of territory can be both a precursor and a result of the sense of belonging, understood from the theory of the Psychological Sense of Community proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986). These authors define it as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that they are important to each other and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to being together” (p. 9).

This theory is structured into four fundamental components: Membership, Influence, Integration and Fulfillment of Needs, and Emotional Connection. From the Membership component, it is understood that the appropriation of territory not only establishes physical boundaries but reinforces group identity and emotional connection. That is, when a community appropriates its territory, it resignifies it as its own space that strengthens social cohesion. In this sense, McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue that when people feel that a territory belongs to them, both physically and symbolically, their sense of belonging to the community intensifies.

On the other hand, Maya-Jariego (2023) mentions that the Membership component refers to feeling like an active part of the community, recognizing its members and the shared symbols manifested in economic, cultural, and communicative aspects, and which is built through subcategories such as boundaries and borders, security and trust, identity, personal investment, and common symbols, which allow members to feel part of the community in various areas, thus providing a sense of belonging that reinforces the appropriation of territory as a space of stability and continuity.

In this way, the appropriation of territory is intertwined with the Psychological Sense of Community, since both involve processes that reinforce belonging, security, and collective identity. The appropriation of territory not only reflects Membership but also actively strengthens it, allowing the community not only to inhabit a physical space but to resignify it and consolidate it as a place of roots, identity, and social cohesion.

Narratives that Build Meaning: The Power of Storytelling.

The cognitive theory of narrative proposed by Schank (1995) states that human beings carry out mental processes through the construction of stories that structure their understanding of the world. Narrative in its various representations, whether oral, written, graphic, or even musical, has played a fundamental role in the existence of civilizations, as storytelling has allowed for the strengthening of



empiricism and provides experience to generations and people (Mar et al., 2021; Meza-Rueda, 2008). Therefore, (Sánchez, 2006; Seo, 2025) affirm that this term has multiple meanings that make it necessary to understand and approach it from a much broader perspective, not only as a literary category, but as a phenomenon that has given meaning to the existence of human beings since their emergence. From this perspective, the notion is proposed that narrative is not limited to an aesthetic or literary resource; rather, it is consolidated as a fundamental form of human existence.

In the Latin American context, narrative has been the instrument that has given the most value to history. González (2000) affirms in his theory of Latin American Narrative that since the 16th century, the act of writing was directly related to law; that is, there was not yet a conception of telling or describing poetic situations, but textual narrative arises from this legal writing. In the era of the Conquest, travelers began to write about America through chronicles and other narrative texts. For example, Friar Pedro de Aguado worked for 10 years observing and writing everything he saw about Muisca customs. Many other writers of the Colonial era were in charge of capturing, with their respective styles, what they lived or imagined during the Conquest, sharing with the world the first literary texts of Latin America and offering an explanation for what we are today.

It is thus, then, that the phenomenon of narrative has been forged as the inherent mechanism for the development of peoples, not only for their daily customs and practices, but also for territorial, institutional, and state development. Boyd (2018) highlights that, through countless generations, mankind has found reason for its reality through myth, religion, science, and oral accounts; Sadat-Rafiei and Asadi-Anar (2025), reinforces the previous idea by linking narrative with religion, ideology, and the cultural construction of meaning. In this way, the author reaffirms that human beings have sought to understand their reality through myth, science, and oral stories throughout time. Likewise, the Intercultural Communication Theory proposed by Hall (1997) holds that cultural narratives have a great impact on the construction of civilizations' identity and on the understanding of their reality, by generating interpretations of the diverse contexts in which communities coexist. Narrative is a symbolic vehicle that articulates identity, culture, and shared reality (Hall, 1997; López et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the review of national research on narratives has also concluded that this linguistic process is fundamental for the construction and development of human beings from their early years. In particular, Páez Martínez (2011), in her research conducted with children between 6 and 11 years old, argues that narrative or mythical thinking is the first form of reasoning that allows the newborn to integrate into their family and social environment; subsequently, this thinking evolves toward the linguistic and, with it, toward logical reasoning. Likewise, she states that the more children are exposed to listening to and reading different narratives, the greater their ability to interpret context and their cognitive development will be. The act of telling stories and describing the environment they inhabit allows children to recognize themselves as social subjects and understand the role they play in society. These stories converge with the experiences of other subjects and position each character—in this case, each boy and girl—within collectivity. Van Dijk et al. (2023) provide evidence that children between 4 and 12 years old, when producing free narratives, develop more complex language structures and reflect cognitive processes rooted in their social and cultural context.

According to Scolari (2013), the ability to imagine, narrate, and construct realities, theories, and probabilities about the environment are narrative competencies that have historically allowed human beings to survive and evolve. In fact, for him, individuals are not “homo sapiens” but “homo fabula-



tors,” as they are lovers of listening to, contemplating, and experiencing stories told by themselves or by others. This perspective is reinforced by Bouizegarene et al. (2024), who state that one of the essential functions of narrative is to generate more useful predictions about the world for the individual and to coordinate collective action through shared meanings; in turn, they affirm that narratives are cognitive and cultural tools that support human adaptation and social cohesion.

In line with Scolari (2013), the emergence of new information technologies has mutated the way these stories are communicated and expanded, as a narrative can now be found not only in books but also on multiple virtual platforms. This is why transmedia narratives appear, whose main characteristic is that the story (verbal, iconic, audiovisual, interactive, etc.) is shared across different media.

Connecting Stories Without Limits Through Transmedia Narratives.

Jenkins (2003) was the first to introduce the term transmedia narratives, stating that “the new era of convergence made the flow of content across different channels inevitable,” which allows the new receiver to consume, transform, and interact with the obtained information, in the same way Agirreazkuenaga and Ayllon (2023) analyze transmedia storytelling and emphasize how multiple platforms enable new forms of consumption, narrative extension, and audience interaction.

Thus, Transmedia Narratives (TN) are conceptualized as stories that are disseminated through multiple languages and styles of signification. Different concepts surround TN, the acronym Scolari (2013) attributes to transmedia narratives. Within these notions are Crossmedia, hybrid media, or multiple platforms, understood from the perspective of New Digital Information Technologies according to Ytreberg (2013). Now, the visual narratives that expand across digital media allow a territory’s own stories to become visible and accessible, making it possible to share the narratives of vulnerable or forgotten territories without limits and enabling the generation of emotional impact that fosters empathy and sensitization.

Narrative as a Psychosocial Strategy

The stories and discourses shared in communities create and cement emotional or symbolic ties in the territory. These narratives are not just simple stories told within a basic communication process; they become a powerful tool that acts as a psychosocial strategy by building relationships of identity, historical memory, and collective appropriation, and configuring the social imaginary of a community (Colín-Mar, 2022).

(Halbwachs, 2004; Orianne & Esutache, 2023), from the theory of collective memory, explains how memories are not only individual constructions but are developed within social environments. Each community weaves threads to understand its surroundings according to shared norms and values through communication within the territory. Thus, collective memory is conceived as a social process rather than a simple sum of individual memories. Both authors mention that memories are developed within social frameworks through which norms and values are shared to achieve an understanding of the environment.

Furthermore (Buñay-Reinoso, 2024; Hall, 1997), argue that narratives shared within a specific culture counteract the hegemonic narratives largely imposed by traditional media with particular in-

terests, transforming them into forms of resistance. This gives them a political dimension, in such a way that telling one's own story becomes equivalent to resisting the imposition of other versions. This leads to the creation of the community's own stories and, consequently, to the formation of a strong bond of appropriation and belonging. In this sense, narratives also act as a means of collective empowerment, since by giving importance to their own history, individuals construct their identity, disregarding the vision of external actors to the territory and strengthening the relationships and decision-making processes within the community itself.

3. METHODOLOGY

Approach and Design

The research was developed under a qualitative approach that allowed for understanding, from the voices of the boys and girls of the Mancilla village, how the narratives constructed from their daily lives are articulated with processes of territorial appropriation. Likewise, the study, possessing an inductive logic, sought to rescue meanings, memories, and emotions arising from their community experiences, as well as the recognition of their active role in the community. A phenomenological design was proposed, which favored a detailed exploration of the experiences narrated by the participants to describe and understand the studied phenomenon.

Population and Sample

The participating population consisted of 12 boys and girls between 9 and 12 years of age, residents of the rural sector of Mancilla, municipality of Facatativá, Cundinamarca.

The sample was intentional, selected according to criteria of age, residence in the territory, and informed consent granted by their legal guardians.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria were determined for the inclusion of boys and girls in the study:

- Children belonging to the Mancilla village, in the municipality of Facatativá.
- Children between 9 and 12 years of age.

The following were determined as exclusion criteria:

- Children not belonging to the Mancilla village, in the municipality of Facatativá.
- Children under 9 years of age and over 12 years of age.

Tools/Instruments

The instruments used included individual and focus group interviews to collect information that allowed for the identification of the dynamics through which the boys and girls of the Mancilla village recognize and appropriate their territory. Likewise, narrative and life stories were employed. Data collection was based on field notes, non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary review. Regarding the data analysis tools, transcription, an analysis log, and open coding were used, in addition to the Atlas.ti software for data coding.



Ethical Considerations

This study was considered risk-free, in accordance with Article 11 of Resolution 8430 of 1993, which establishes how health research should be conducted. This implied that there would be no direct intervention in the life or health of the participating individuals. In this sense, the work involved reviewing documents such as life stories or surveys, without touching upon sensitive topics or directly identifying anyone.

Furthermore, as indicated in Article 14 of the same regulation, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form; if they were unable to do so, their legal representative would sign it, unless there was an exception provided by law. The researchers committed to handling all information responsibly, always respecting confidentiality and acting within the legal framework. Finally, this work did not represent any type of risk for the team carrying it out.

4. RESULTS

The research sought to understand how the boys and girls living in the rural area of Mancilla relate closely and meaningfully to their territory, and to do so, the research team relied on their own narratives. The results were organized into three main themes: (1) how the territory becomes part of them through what they narrate, (2) the sense of community they express in their stories, and (3) how to use different media to collectively resignify that territory.

4.1. A Territory That Is Felt and Told: Symbolic Appropriation of Territory Through Narratives

During the narrative exploration workshops, the children shared memories, family anecdotes, descriptions of the surrounding landscape, and how they relate to their neighbors. Their narratives show much more than a physical place; they speak of how they live, feel, and resignify it:

“My mom takes good care of me, and we all live on the same farm, like one big family”; “Everything here is mountain, trees, and good people. It’s beautiful because one feels free.”

These phrases reflect a strong emotional bond with their environment; for them, the territory is not just a spot on the map, but a space full of memories, affections, and daily relationships. Thus, what could be seen as mere geography becomes a territory that is lived and remembered: “Memories are situated fragments of the past, they happen in a specific place; memory requires territory” (Marchant, 2020).

The voices collected in this exercise show the importance of family, the nearby community, and the place where they live; when the boys and girls mention, “I was born in Facatativá,” or comment that they live with their dad and grandmother, they are speaking from the heart. Moreover, when they say, “they already welcomed me, so now we are all friends,” it is observed how that feeling of belonging stems from affection and feeling accepted and accompanied. It is reflected that the territory is not just a place; it is the people who inhabit it that give it meaning. The filial sphere, for example, is mentioned many times (27 in total), and in those stories, the importance of parents, grandparents, and siblings is clearly noted; they help form that bond that is felt with their environment.

There is also something repeated in many voices: the importance of feeling safe, of trusting, of having

those who care for them nearby (this is mentioned about 15 times) or with whom they can share without fear (closeness is mentioned 14 times). Comments like “I feel more cared for when I am sick” or “we play with my neighbors because we live on the same farm” show that those small daily things have great value.

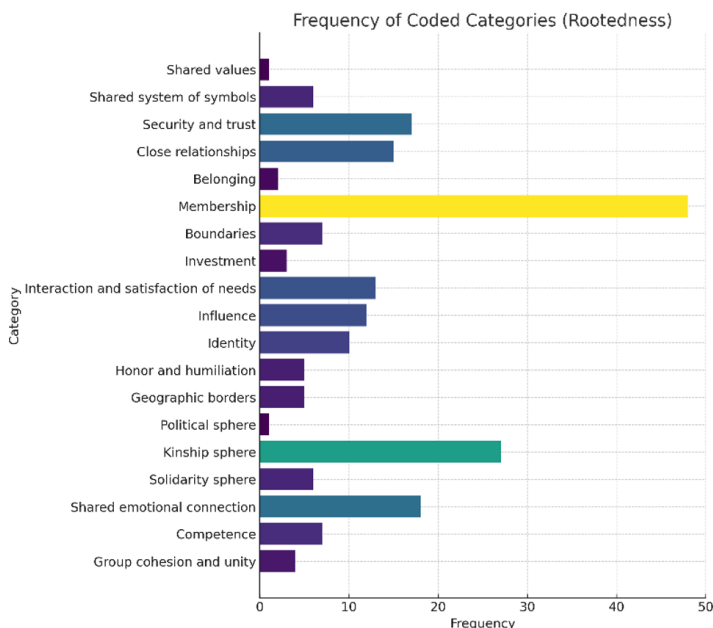
4.2. Community that is Felt and Built: Psychological Sense of Community and Emerging Categories.

The analysis conducted with the ATLAS.ti software allowed for the identification of a set of theoretical and emerging categories that configure the Psychological Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Among the most relevant are:

- **Membership:** expressed as feeling part of something, as when they say “we live close by” or “we’ve known each other since we were little.”
- **Security and Trust:** expressed in the act of trusting others, articulated with phrases like “there is no danger here,” or “we all look out for each other.”
- **Close Relationships and Filial Sphere:** manifested in having close networks, as they frequently mention living with uncles, grandparents, and cousins, and how they participate in common activities.
- **Common System of Shared Symbols and Values:** identified through the sharing of symbols and values, for example, when they talk about festivals, important places, or stories from the village.

Figure 1.

Frequency distribution of the analyzed categories.



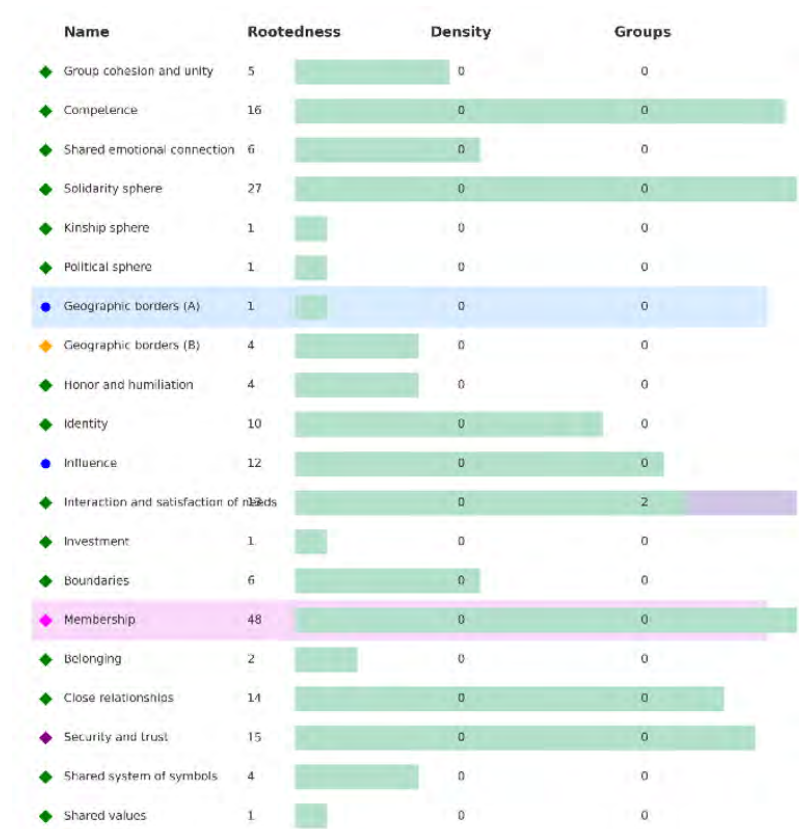
Note. Image generated with ChatGPT. This image was produced in response to the following request: <<Create a graph based on the data provided in the frequency table>>.

The category that appeared most frequently was membership, which is associated with other components of the Psychological Sense of Community (PSC). A synthesis of this can be seen in expressions such as “a family, a group,” “family group, group of peers,” or “people who work together and support each other,” reflecting a collective view of the community as a network of support and solidarity.

In turn, the identity category revealed how children perceive themselves as part of their community, not merely as a place, but as something that constitutes part of their own being. This connection became evident when they spoke about what belonging means to them, recognizing themselves in their peers, relatives, and neighbors. Through their words and actions, they highlighted values such as teamwork and collaboration, and they expressed ideas like “group at home, group at school.” This indicates that, for them, community is not divided by spaces but is experienced as an affective whole that remains constantly interconnected.

Taken together, these findings suggest that rural childhood constructs the sense of community through an affective, experiential, and territorial logic. Primary relationships, shared landscapes, mutual protection, and everyday bonds emerge as fundamental pillars in the appropriation of territory and the construction of community identity.

Figure 2.
Qualitative Coding Report



Note. Note. Image taken from the coding conducted with ATLAS.ti software, based on data obtained from the interviews.

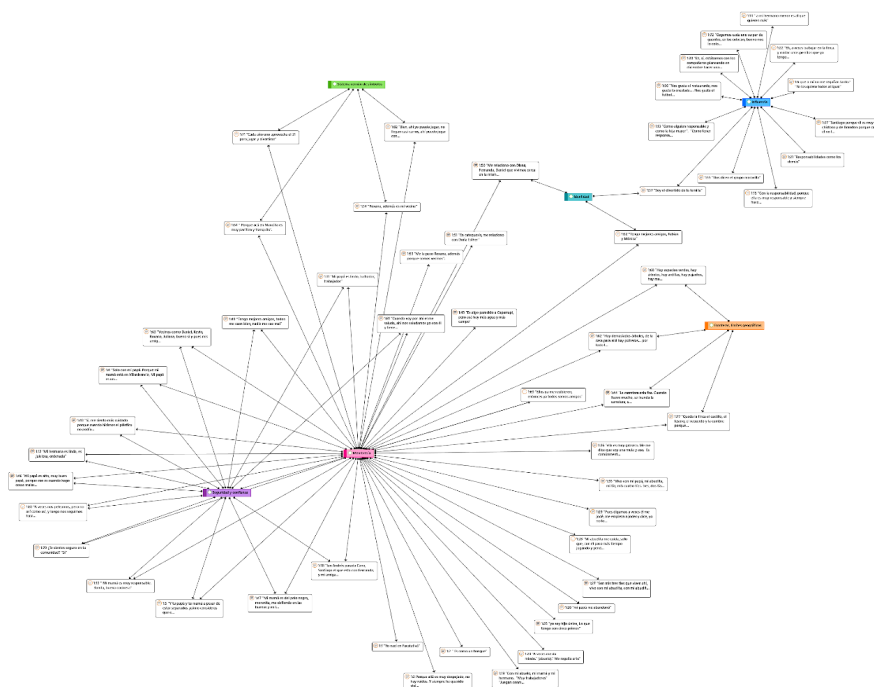
The membership category was the most frequently mentioned by the children (48 references), reflecting a strong sense of belonging and connection to their community. This finding suggests that they clearly recognize the symbolic boundaries of their group and perceive themselves as active members of it.

Among the most recurrent categories was the filial sphere (27 references), which highlights the strong presence of affective bonds with family. This was followed by shared emotional connection (16), referring to common lived experiences; sense of safety and trust (15); close relationships (14); interaction and meeting needs (13); influence (12); and, finally, identity (10).

At the second level, themes such as boundaries, solidarity, and shared symbols were identified. Although not the most frequently cited, these offer important insights for understanding the phenomenon under study. Less frequent categories, such as cohesion, shared values, or political participation, nonetheless add valuable nuances to the overall analysis.

Furthermore, certain categories—such as interaction, influence, and the filial sphere—were not only recurrent but also showed a high degree of interconnection with other categories, underscoring their significance within the proposed conceptual model.

Figure 3.
PSC Co-occurrence Map



Nota. Co-occurrence diagram generated through qualitative analysis with software such as ATLAS.ti. It graphically represents the network of relationships between thematic categories and the coded quotations.

The densest and most connected node corresponds to the membership category (in magenta). When reviewing all the narratives, what stood out most was the number of times children mentioned feeling part of a place: their home, school, or neighborhood. This category turned out to be the most



frequently repeated and the one most strongly connected to others. More than 30 statements were identified that referred to this category. In these accounts, children did not speak from theory but from their everyday experiences: how they live with their families, how they relate to their neighbors, or what they feel at school. Although they did not use complex words, their expressions made it clear that these bonds are meaningful to them. Many of these statements referred to daily life: the affection they receive at home, the trust they feel toward those who live nearby, or the sense of calm in the place where they live. Altogether, these references shaped an idea of community closely tied to emotions and everyday life.

Regarding the categories safety and trust (in lilac) and the filial sphere (in blue), it is evident that both are strongly linked to what children understand as “feeling part of something.” Their words suggest that their idea of community arises from affection and close ties. For instance, when saying things such as “I feel more cared for,” “my mom takes good care of me,” or “when I go up to the roof, she tells me to be careful,” they reveal that the presence of someone who protects them provides a sense of tranquility. As for the filial sphere, family clearly comes first: it is at home where they learn what it means to belong, to coexist, and to feel loved.

In turn, the boundaries and geographic limits node (in orange) is connected to narratives that reference the natural and geographic environment. Expressions such as “it is like a forest,” “when it rains, the road floods,” or “there is more water and more countryside” show how the idea of community also emerges from the sensory and emotional experience of the landscape.

Finally, several expressions were identified related to community integration, including: “they already welcomed me, so now we are all friends,” “my mom always mistreats my dad,” and “we play with my neighbors because we live on the same farm.” These statements reveal the coexistence of positive dynamics, such as friendship and a sense of belonging, alongside family tensions or conflicts. Taken together, these elements illustrate the inherent complexity of the social and emotional fabric within the community.

4.3. When Stories Travel Across Media: Transmedia Narratives as a Strategy of Resignification

One of the most valuable aspects that emerged during the project was the use of a transmedia narrative strategy designed from and for the active participation of children. It was through actions conceived from this perspective that their stories could be told across different formats and media, giving them new life and broader reach. In this sense, one of the most meaningful moments of the project materialized when the children were able to narrate what they live and what they feel, using their own words, images, and sounds.

As a first step, a kind of museum was organized in the Mancilla community center, which they called the “Territory Gallery-Museum.” This was not just any museum—it was theirs: with photographs they themselves had taken, drawings, texts, and maps that spoke more from the heart than from logic. Each element in this space carried a story and seeing them together was like peeking into their world.

As the final product, a blog was created, built throughout the project with their narratives. Yet it did not contain only written texts: it also included audios, videos, and captured moments worth preserving. This blog became a corner to which one can return, where something of what they lived remains.



The space was not designed only for themselves but also for anyone willing to listen attentively to their voices. It is precisely from this perspective that one can say the stories were not merely shared; they did not remain confined to words or drawings. Instead, they became part of something larger. Likewise, the territory, which at first appeared to be only a place, was transformed into a space filled with memories, symbols, and affections—a place where their memories dwell.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research confirmed that territory, as a symbolic construction in childhood, is shaped by experience, memory, and affectivity. In this sense, through the oral, visual, and transmedia narratives collected during the process, it was possible to identify that the children of Mancilla, beyond locating themselves within a geographic space, inhabit it through meanings and re-signify it through their daily practices and the stories they share. This interpretation aligns with Haesbaert (2013), who argues that territory should not be understood merely as a physical space but rather as a social construction that is cross-cut by power relations, multiple meanings, and a strong emotional and affective component.

Likewise, drawing on McMillan and Chavis's (1986) Psychological Sense of Community (PSC) model, the study sought to identify the dimensions that relate to the sense of belonging experienced by the children of Mancilla with their territory, and which of these dimensions exert the greatest influence on the construction of such belonging. The analysis revealed membership as the main dimension, which, in interaction with needs fulfillment, influence, and shared emotional connection, consolidated a robust PSC. In the children's narratives, expressions such as "I feel more cared for when I am sick" or "we play with my neighbors because we live on the same farm" illustrate how territory is conceived through significant bonds, belonging, and, above all, care. From this perspective, it can be stated that the children of Mancilla symbolically appropriate their lived space, expressed in their affective memory and territorial identity. This resonates with Trujillo-Vanegas (2022):

who notes that in children's narratives, material and symbolic reproduction is linked to rural cultural practices, establishing extended relational networks with multiple connections. Within these, the possibility emerges of imagining, saying, and enacting alternative ways of inhabiting and relating, suggesting that territory is constituted through the actions and emotions of children (p. 108).

These insights highlight that the children of Mancilla hold a situated knowledge of territory, and that this understanding is sensitive to changes in the landscape and to rural dynamics. This observation complements Reyes-Guarnizo's (2020) argument that territory should be understood as a relational category articulated with the body, the environment, and subjectivity.

The application of transmedia narratives as a psychosocial strategy enabled the children's stories to be visualized and disseminated in unconventional formats, thereby strengthening their voices as mechanisms of collective action and co-construction of knowledge. In this regard, the creation of a community gallery-museum and a digital blog not only promoted the active participation of children but also became a form of symbolic resistance. These initiatives gave voice and visibility to a historically marginalized population through their territorial narratives, thereby "claiming their right to narrate the place they inhabit" (Jenkins, 2003; Scolari, 2013).



Furthermore, the proposed narrative exercise broke away from an adult-centered perspective, opening the way to recognize childhood as an active agent in the construction of community. In doing so, the children's voices activated processes of intergenerational integration, fostering collective memory and social cohesion. This finding is consistent with Porto-Gonçalves (2021), who emphasizes the significance of inhabited territories in strengthening collective identities, particularly in marginalized contexts.

In conclusion, transmedia narratives, when conceived as a psychosocial strategy from a participatory approach, emerge as a powerful tool for making rural childhood visible and for re-signifying territory. Thus, this study contributes to Community Psychology by showing how children's stories, in addition to reflecting the world they inhabit, also produce it, transform it, and defend it.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research allow us to conclude that children's narratives constitute a pathway for understanding how the symbolic appropriation of territory is configured in rural childhood. Among the children of Mancilla, a significant bond with their environment was observed, narrated by them through elements of nature, landscape, community life, family, and everyday experiences. According to Haesbaert (2013), this can be described as multiterritoriality, in which territory is not experienced solely as a physical space but also as a set of affective, mnemonic, and meaningful scenarios.

Children's participation in the rural context was strengthened through the use of both traditional and transmedia narratives, which served as the methodological axis of this study. The gallery-museum and the digital blog, as products of the process, demonstrate that children not only establish links with their territory but also represent and re-signify it through their own lived experiences. This is consistent with Jenkins (2003) and Scolari (2013), who highlight transmedia narrative as a tool that democratizes voices and broadens the forms of symbolic representation.

The exploration of the stories of the children in Mancilla enabled the identification of the dimensions of the Psychological Sense of Community (PSC), in line with the model of McMillan and Chavis (1986). Within these contexts, membership emerged as the most prominent dimension in the participants' stories. This finding made it possible to link their narratives to processes of territorial attachment from childhood—a crucial element in rural environments, where the feeling of belonging is closely connected with interpersonal relationships, local knowledge, and collective memory (Castaño-Aguirre et al., 2021; Porto-Gonçalves, 2021).

These findings also demonstrate that rural childhood strengthens the sense of community through a logic that intertwines emotions, lived experiences, and territorial ties. Close relationships, shared environments, reciprocal care, and daily bonds become essential elements for taking ownership of space and constructing a collective identity.

Moreover, this study deepens the understanding of childhood, which should not be seen merely as an object of study but as a subject capable of knowing, building, and co-constructing knowledge within its own context. As Trujillo-Vanegas (2022) notes, territory for children is constructed through emotional bonds that generate unique ways of living, protecting, and transforming their environment.



From this perspective, narratives transcend the simple telling of personal or group experiences; they also represent political and cultural manifestations that reinforce the identity of those who generate them.

Finally, future research should continue exploring the contributions of narrative as a tool for psychosocial intervention, particularly among vulnerable, marginalized, or historically overlooked groups. It is important to emphasize that fostering spaces where children can narrate and represent their territories means moving toward more inclusive, participatory, and culturally relevant development models.

Conflict of Interest

In compliance with current regulations—Resolution 8430 of 1993, Resolution 2378 of 2008, and other international ethical guidelines—we, Diana Milena Vargas Rodríguez, Derly Juliana Talero Castiblanco, and Liliana Fernanda Moreno Rubiano, declare that this article is not subject to economic interests, political affiliations, family relationships, or particular interests with organizations related to its content.



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