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**HOW DOES A RURAL SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE OPERATE AS A
TERRITORIALLY EMBEDDED
ORGANISATION, AND HOW DOES
THIS SHAPE ITS CONTRIBUTION
TO RURAL REVITALISATION?**

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1. Summary

Abstract

The study contributes to existing literature by offering a more integrated, place-based understanding of how social enterprises operate within rural Spain, moving beyond fragmented outcome-based analyses towards a process-oriented perspective of rural transformation. This study examines how rural social enterprises contribute to rural revitalisation in Spain, focusing on the case of Apadrina un Olivo in Oliete, Aragón. The research responds to persistent challenges affecting rural territories, including depopulation, economic decline, abandoned productive resources, and the weakening of local services. Rather than treating social enterprises as automatic solutions to these problems, the study analyses how their contribution depends on the specific territory in which they operate.

The thesis uses the EMES framework as a conceptual benchmark to understand social enterprises as organisations that combine economic activity, social purpose, participatory governance and community orientation. This is complemented by a neo-endogenous perspective, which explains rural development as a process shaped by both local embeddedness and support from external actors and networks. The research is based on a structured review of academic and institutional literature and a qualitative case study of Apadrina un Olivo. The case study draws on secondary information and a semi-structured interview conducted in Spanish with the organisation's co-founder. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and analysed thematically through four main themes: territorial embeddedness, the operational model, local impact, and enabling and limiting factors.

The findings show that Apadrina un Olivo contributes to rural revitalisation through interconnected environmental, economic, and social dimensions. Its recovery of abandoned olive groves supports environmental restoration, while its sponsorship model attracts external resources and visitors to the village. The organisation also generates employment and strengthens local confidence by showing that change is possible in a depopulated rural area. However, the case also shows that territorial embeddedness is double-edged. The same rural context that gives the organisation its purpose also limits its access to labour, skills, and growth capacity.

The study contributes to existing literature by offering a place-based and process-oriented understanding of rural social enterprise in Spain. It argues that the impact of rural social enterprises should not only be assessed through outcomes, but through the territorial conditions, organisational choices, and external relationships that shape how impact is created and sustained.

Keywords: social enterprise, rural revitalisation, territorial embeddedness, rural Spain, Apadrina un Olivo, EMES framework, rural social enterprise

Resumen

El estudio contribuye a la literatura existente al ofrecer una comprensión más integrada y basada en el territorio sobre cómo operan las empresas sociales en la España rural, superando análisis fragmentados centrados únicamente en resultados y adoptando una perspectiva orientada a los procesos de transformación rural. Este estudio examina cómo las empresas sociales rurales contribuyen a la revitalización rural en España, centrándose en el caso de Apadrina un Olivo en Oliete, Aragón. La investigación responde a los desafíos persistentes que afectan a los territorios rurales, entre ellos la despoblación, el declive económico, el abandono de recursos productivos y el debilitamiento de los servicios locales. En lugar de tratar las empresas sociales como soluciones automáticas a estos problemas, el estudio analiza cómo su contribución depende del territorio específico en el que operan.

El trabajo utiliza el marco EMES como referencia conceptual para entender las empresas sociales como organizaciones que combinan actividad económica, propósito social, gobernanza participativa y orientación comunitaria. Esto se complementa con una perspectiva neoendógena, que explica el desarrollo rural como un proceso configurado tanto por el arraigo local como por el apoyo de actores y redes externas. La investigación se basa en una revisión estructurada de literatura académica e institucional y en un estudio de caso cualitativo de Apadrina un Olivo. El estudio de caso se apoya en información secundaria y en una entrevista semiestructurada realizada en español con el cofundador de la organización. La entrevista fue grabada, transcrita y analizada temáticamente a través de cuatro temas principales: arraigo territorial, modelo operativo, impacto local y factores facilitadores y limitantes.

Los resultados muestran que Apadrina un Olivo contribuye a la revitalización rural a través de dimensiones ambientales, económicas y sociales interconectadas. Su recuperación de olivares abandonados favorece la restauración ambiental, mientras que su modelo de apadrinamiento atrae recursos externos y visitantes al pueblo. La organización también genera empleo y fortalece la confianza local al mostrar que el cambio es posible en una zona rural despoblada. Sin embargo, el caso también muestra que el arraigo territorial tiene una doble dimensión. El mismo contexto rural que da propósito a la organización también limita su acceso a mano de obra, capacidades y posibilidades de crecimiento.

El estudio contribuye a la literatura existente al ofrecer una comprensión de la empresa social rural en España basada en el territorio y orientada a los procesos. Sostiene que el impacto de las empresas sociales rurales no debe evaluarse únicamente a través de resultados, sino también mediante las condiciones territoriales, las decisiones organizativas y las relaciones externas que moldean cómo se crea y se sostiene dicho impacto.

Palabras clave: empresa social, revitalización rural, arraigo territorial, España rural, Apadrina un Olivo, marco EMES, empresa social rural

2. Introduction

2.1 Context and relevance of the study

Rural decline in Spain is not only a demographic issue. It affects local economies, access to services, community life, and the use of productive resources. In low-density territories, population loss and ageing reduce labour availability, weaken services, and leave agricultural resources underused. For this reason, rural revitalisation cannot be reduced to economic growth. It involves rebuilding the conditions that allow a territory to retain value, sustain community life, protect environmental resources, and remain connected to wider systems of support.

Within this context, social enterprises are relevant because they combine economic activity with explicit social objectives. The EMES framework is used as a conceptual benchmark because it provides a reference model for analysing social enterprises through their economic activity, social purpose, participatory governance and community orientation (Defourny & Nyssens, 2021). This makes them particularly significant in rural areas, where their role may include creating employment, maintaining services, recovering local resources, strengthening community confidence, and connecting local needs with external networks.

However, treating social enterprises as automatic solutions to rural decline would oversimplify their role. Their impact depends heavily on the territory in which they operate. Local rootedness may give a rural social enterprise purpose, community trust and access to local knowledge, but it may also expose the organisation to the same constraints it aims to overcome, including demographic decline, lack of skilled labour, limited institutional support, and fragile local demand. This tension is central to the present study. In Spain, it is especially relevant because research has often focused on employment integration and the wider social economy, while territorially embedded rural initiatives have received less detailed attention.

2.2 Research question and justification

This study is guided by the research question: How does a rural social enterprise operate as a territorially embedded organisation, and how does territorial embeddedness shape its contribution to rural revitalisation? Territorial embeddedness refers to the extent to which an organisation is anchored in a specific place and shaped by that place's social relations, local resources, institutions, and constraints.

The question is justified by a gap in existing research. Previous studies have identified contributions of rural social enterprises in areas such as employment, service provision, environmental activity, and community development. However, they often focus on what social enterprises contribute, rather than how those contributions are produced within specific territorial contexts. This leaves an important analytical weakness: rural social enterprise impact is frequently described as an outcome, but less often examined as a process shaped by local constraints, organisational choices, and external relationships. This also justifies moving beyond a narrow entrepreneurial view of social enterprise, since rural revitalisation depends less on individual initiative or revenue growth alone, and more on organisations able to generate collective benefit, community engagement, and long-term social change.

The case of Apadrina un Olivo is appropriate for addressing this gap because its activity cannot be separated from Oliete, a small village in Teruel affected by depopulation and the abandonment of olive groves. The organisation connects environmental restoration, sponsorship, employment, visitor activity, and local value retention within one place-based model. This makes it useful for analysing rural revitalisation as a multidimensional process, rather than as separate economic, social, and environmental effects.

The study therefore does not use Apadrina un Olivo as proof that social enterprises can solve rural decline. Instead, it uses the case to examine a more precise argument that territorial embeddedness enables rural social enterprises to generate legitimacy, purpose, and local impact, but also exposes them to demographic, organisational, and capacity constraints. By combining a structured literature review with a qualitative case study and semi-structured interview, the research provides a process-oriented understanding of how rural social enterprise operates in low-density Spain.

2.3 Objectives of the study

- 1) To analyse how a social enterprise operates as a territorially embedded organisation, drawing on the EMES framework.
- 2) To examine how a rural social enterprise contributes to rural revitalisation as a multidimensional process, considering its economic, social, and environmental dimensions.
- 3) To explore how a rural social enterprise is shaped by its local context, and how this territorial embeddedness influences its behaviour and development.
- 4) To identify the key enabling and constraining factors that shape a rural social enterprise's capacity to generate sustained impact within its local context.
- 5) To analyse the case of *Apadrina un Olivo* as an in-depth example of a rural social enterprise, in order to understand how its operational model and territorial embeddedness interact to shape its contribution to rural revitalisation.
- 6) To situate the Spanish experience within a broader European context, using selected comparative insights to assess how context influences the role and impact of rural social enterprises.

3. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Definition and characteristics of social enterprises

There is no single, universally accepted definition of social enterprise in academic literature. Interpretations vary across contexts, shaped by differences in governance, organisational priorities, and the way economic activity is understood (Dart, 2004). In general terms, social enterprises operate at the intersection of market and social logics, incorporating characteristics of both charitable organisations and commercial enterprises, while being motivated by both social and economic goals (Overgaard & Kerlin, 2022). As a result, definitions differ across geographical and political environments, reflecting contrasting views on how economic activity should be combined with social objectives.

This definitional diversity has intensified over the years. It reflects the growing promotion of market-based approaches to addressing social problems, which encourage organisations to pursue social aims through economic activity in more sustainable ways. Consequently, the term social enterprise covers a range of organisations that combine social purpose with market activity in different ways.

Existing definitions of social enterprise vary in their focus, with some emphasising hybrid organisational forms that combine social missions with business models, while others centre almost exclusively on social purpose and innovation, regardless of profit orientation. For example, Yunus defines social enterprise as a “no-loss, no-dividend, self-sustaining company that sells goods or services and repays investments to its owners, but whose primary purpose is to serve society” (Yunus et al., 2010). Moulaert views social enterprises as hybrid organisations, with their dual social and economic functions reflected explicitly in both governance structures and income sources (Moulaert, 2013).

This variation in definitions is evident when comparing Anglo-American and European academic traditions seen in Kerlin’s work. Social enterprise in the United States is highlighted to have largely developed within an entrepreneurial framework, where innovation and revenue generation are critical defining features. Within this tradition, social enterprise can be broken down further into categories of their own, ranging from profit-oriented businesses engaged in socially beneficial activities, through hybrid organisations that combine commercial and social objectives, to nonprofit organisations engaged in mission-supporting commercial activity (Kerlin, 2006). This broader

definition has influenced much of the debate on social entrepreneurship, where organisations apply business-inspired methods to deliver social value in ways that are intended to be financially sustainable over time (Dees & Anderson, 2006).

However, while entrepreneurial approaches capture important dynamics related to innovation and market engagement, they present limitations when applied to the analysis of rural development challenges. Rural revitalisation processes are not primarily driven by individual entrepreneurial initiative or revenue growth alone. Instead, they depend on organisations that prioritise long-term community benefit and collective action and are driven by a desire for social change (Dees & Anderson, 2006). Entrepreneurial definitions alone are insufficient to capture the governance and territorial mechanisms through which social enterprises address rural decline.

3.2 Analytical Framework of Social Enterprises

Within this European tradition, the EMES approach to social enterprise provides a particularly robust analytical framework for this study. By combining criteria related to continuous economic activity, orientation towards social aims, participatory governance, and community embeddedness, the EMES framework allows for a nuanced examination of how social enterprises operate as actors of rural development and revitalisation. Given that Spain has been one of the countries involved in the EMES International Research Network since its establishment in 1996 as a European research initiative focused on the study of social enterprises and the social economy (Defourny & Nyssens, 2021), this thesis adopts an EMES-informed understanding of social enterprise as the conceptual basis for the subsequent literature review and the case study analysis of Apadrina un Olivo.

This approach is especially relevant for analysing rural social enterprises in general, whose significance often lies not only in what they produce, but also in how they are governed, how they mobilise collective action, and how they are embedded in specific territories. The EMES International Research Network has proposed an “ideal type” of social enterprise. Rather than functioning as a strict definition, this ideal type serves as an analytical reference point for comparing diverse organisational forms (Sofia & Ifigeneia, 2021). In this study, the EMES framework is used as a conceptual benchmark rather than as a strict legal definition. This means that it provides a reference model for identifying and analysing social enterprises through their main organisational features, including economic activity, social purpose, participatory governance and community orientation. This is especially useful in the Spanish context, where social enterprises do not operate under one single legal category and must therefore be understood through their characteristics rather than through legal form alone. This approach enables the examination of social enterprises as territorially embedded actors, without assuming uniform structures or outcomes (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010).

Describing social enterprises as territorially embedded actors implies that they are shaped by the conditions of the places where they operate. In rural areas especially, social enterprises tend to be closely aligned to their local community, which means the problems they are trying to fix are very much tied to what is going on in that specific place.

3.3 The social economy structure in Spain

The social economy in Spain has undergone significant changes over the last 20 years, shaped by organisational growth and the emergence of new organisational forms responding to evolving social needs (Díaz-Foncela & Marcuello, 2021). At the same time, it remains historically rooted in the development of the cooperative movement. Cooperative experiences laid the groundwork for the emergence of the social economy as an analytical and institutional category, making cooperatives the foundational component of the sector. This historical linkage has been formally recognised in Spanish legislation, which situates cooperative initiatives as the basis of the modern understanding of the social economy.

Within the social economy, organisations operate in the private sector but place collective or social objectives above the pursuit of profit. Instead of being tied to a single legal form, different organisational types are brought together that share certain guiding principles. These organisations are usually run in a democratic way, operate independently from the state, and reinvest any surplus into social or community purposes (Monzon & Chaves, 2012). In the European context, this understanding is reflected in documents such as the Social Economy Europe Charter and OECD reports, which describe organisations that address societal needs while operating through governance and ownership structures that differ from conventional for-profit firms (Social Economy Europe, 2015).

The social economy in Spain is formally recognised through Law 5/2011 on the Social Economy, which represents a key step in the institutionalisation of the sector. Spain was the first European country to adopt a legal framework defining the social economy as a distinct sphere of economic activity, thereby providing official recognition to organisations traditionally operating according to social economy principles. The law establishes a shared conceptual framework for a diverse set of entities, including cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations, and other organisations engaged in economic activity for collective or general interest purposes (Macías Ruano et al., 2021).

Law 5/2011 defines the social economy through a set of guiding principles rather than through an individual legal form, emphasising democratic governance, the precedence of people and social objectives over capital, and the reinvestment of surpluses in pursuit of

social aims. It was shaped by broader European recognition of the social economy, aiming to provide legal visibility and coherence to a sector that had already developed through practice (Alfonso Sánchez, 2010).

Beyond legal recognition, the institutional framework supporting the social economy has expanded progressively. Subsequent legislation, including Law 31/2015 and Law 9/2017 on Public Procurement, built upon this framework by incorporating social considerations into public contracting processes (Konle-Seidl, 2022). However, while these laws provide a unifying legal reference point, their implementation has been gradual, highlighting a distinction between formal recognition and the practical development of institutional support mechanisms.

Within the Spanish social economy, social enterprises operate across a range of existing organisational forms, such as cooperatives, associations, and foundations, rather than being recognised as a distinct legal category (Ucomur, 2017). Their identification therefore depends less on legal status and more on the combination of sustained economic activity, explicit social objectives, and governance arrangements aligned with social economy principles.

Viewing social enterprises within the social economy provides a clearer institutional context, while recognising that they can take different organisational forms. For the purposes of this study, this approach enables social enterprises to be analysed as territorially embedded actors operating within the Spanish social economy, without assuming uniform legal structures or outcomes.

3.4 Rural revitalisation: concepts, challenges, and strategies

Rural revitalisation within the European context has emerged in response to the continuing core challenges affecting rural areas, particularly lower income levels, limited employment opportunities and demographic decline caused by rural-to-urban migration (Matthews, 2019). Because these challenges are interconnected, the rural revitalisation process is typically interpreted as a long-term strategic focus, as opposed to solely being a short-term intervention. It may be pursued through a range of different approaches, such as urban–rural cooperation, innovation, and other strategies of economic diversification.

The act of revitalising a rural area is not just a matter of restoring physical infrastructure, but also involves the transformation of communities and how they relate to their surroundings (Moncea et al., 2023). Subsequently, the participation of governments, organisations and local communities, alongside structured coordination between local actions and broader policy decisions, are key factors in addressing the persistent disadvantages that these rural territories face (Liu et al., 2025). This highlights how difficult it is for a single organisation to address rural challenges alone. Instead, social enterprises often depend on relationships with different actors to respond to local needs, access external support and generate wider collective effects within the territory. As Borzaga and Sacchetti (2015, p.5) argue, coordinated forms of participation can produce “the most effective outcomes for stakeholders and the most desirable collective impacts”. For this study, these relationships are treated as part of the wider rural development context, rather than as a separate analytical framework.

In practice, rural revitalisation strategies aim to restore economic activity, reduce population loss (Gutiérrez Chacón et al., 2020), and strengthen local communities; all challenges that are particularly pronounced in Spain, especially in low-density areas. Revitalisation efforts also tend to focus on maintaining essential services and reinforcing community networks, recognising that economic recovery and social stability are closely connected.

Rural revitalisation, as discussed above, involves more than reversing population decline or restoring economic activity. It is a multidimensional process that brings together economic renewal, social stability, environmental protection and stronger connections between rural territories and wider systems of support. For this reason, rural revitalisation

is closely linked to sustainable development and territorial cohesion. Sustainable development provides the long-term logic for balancing economic, social and environmental goals, while territorial cohesion adds the spatial dimension by focusing on inequalities between places. These two concepts therefore help explain why rural revitalisation should be understood as a place-based development process rather than as a narrow economic intervention.

3.5 Sustainable development and territorial cohesion

Sustainable development and territorial cohesion provide the broader policy and conceptual context for understanding rural revitalisation. While rural revitalisation focuses on the recovery and strengthening of rural areas, sustainable development explains the need for this recovery to be economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally responsible. Territorial cohesion complements this by emphasising that development opportunities should not depend excessively on where people live. Sustainable development refers to a long-term approach that seeks to balance economic progress, social well-being, and environmental protection. Being formally recognised in the Brundtland report in 1987, the concept was defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987). Since then, the idea of sustainable development has become a central framework for helping to understand how development challenges are defined and addressed across different territorial contexts.

As opposed to solely focusing on economic growth, sustainable development highlights the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions. This perspective takes into account the need for an environmentally responsible approach to be combined with socially inclusive efforts in order for economic activity to be viable (Polasky, 2019). Therefore, sustainable development has shaped how different policy frameworks have been influenced in international contexts, most notably the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which provide a unified global reference for addressing interconnected development challenges. In the context of European countries, the rising level of diversity and complexity particularly in rural areas plays a key role in shaping rural development policies (Csáki & Lerman, 2001).

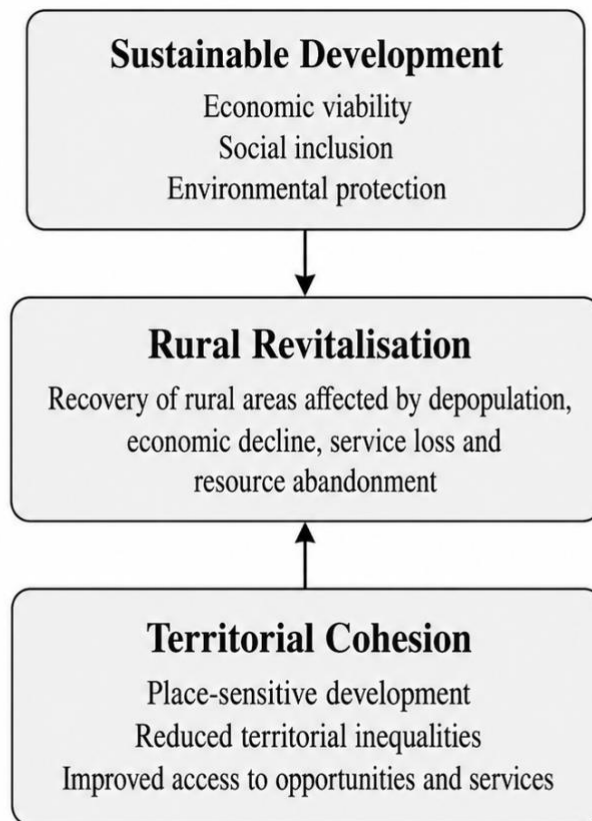
Territorial cohesion is a concept developed within European Union policy that focuses on reducing inequalities between distinct areas. It adds a geographical dimension to economic and social cohesion by recognising that where people live affects their access to opportunities, services, and living conditions. Within this framework, rural areas and regions facing long-term structural disadvantages are given particular attention in EU development objectives (Mirwaldt et al., 2009).

Despite its importance in EU policy, territorial cohesion does not have a clear, single definition. Since its formal inclusion as a policy objective through the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the concept has been interpreted in different ways across academic and policy debates (Medeiros, 2016). This reflects the fact that territorial cohesion is used more as a general guiding idea than as a clearly defined analytical concept.

In general terms, territorial cohesion is associated with a number of common themes. These include the aim of achieving more balanced development between regions, improving access to services and opportunities regardless of location, and strengthening connections between different regions. Rather than focusing only on redistributing economic resources, territorial cohesion also highlights the need for better coordination between policies and cooperation across different levels of governance (Faludi, 2006). From this perspective, territorial cohesion is particularly relevant for rural areas, which often face challenges linked to geographic isolation, lower population density, and limited access to infrastructure and services. By recognising territorial differences and promoting place-sensitive approaches, territorial cohesion provides a useful framework for understanding rural development challenges without assuming that the same solutions apply everywhere (Davoudi, 2005).

Sustainable development and territorial cohesion work alongside one another to provide a useful contextual policy lens for understanding rural development as a long-term, context-specific process rather than a one-size-fits-all policy challenge. Together, they help frame rural development as an issue that extends beyond economic growth, bringing attention to other factors such as environmental, social and spatial inequalities. However, the EMES approach remains the main framework used to analyse the organisational characteristics of social enterprises.

Figure 1: Conceptual Relationship Between Rural Revitalisation, Sustainable Development, and Territorial Cohesion



Source: own elaboration.

This relationship is important for the present study because rural social enterprises are analysed as organisations that may contribute to rural revitalisation by linking economic activity, social purpose, environmental recovery and territorial needs.

3.6 Social enterprises as territorially embedded rural development actors

This section brings together the concepts discussed above in order to clarify how social enterprises are understood in relation to rural development. The EMES framework remains the primary analytical lens, as it allows social enterprises to be analysed through their organisational features, including economic activity, social purpose, participatory governance and community orientation. This is complemented by a neo-endogenous perspective, which helps explain how rural development can be rooted in local territory while also drawing on external resources, actors and networks (Georgios et al., 2021).

The role of external actors is therefore acknowledged, but not treated as a separate multi-stakeholder framework. In this thesis, external relationships are understood as part of the rural development context in which social enterprises operate. This distinction is important because the analysis focuses on how Apadrina un Olivo connects local needs with external support, rather than on comparing the separate perspectives of different stakeholder groups.

From this perspective, social enterprises can be understood as community development actors that contribute to local development strategies (Zografos, 2007). Within rural areas in particular, their role can be linked to the development of social capital and skills in disadvantaged territories (Farmer et al., 2012). Community-based economic initiatives are also theorised as ways through which economic activity may support social, cultural, territorial and environmental goals (Berkes & Adhikari, 2006). These ideas frame rural social enterprises not only as economic actors, but also as organisations shaped by the communities and territories in which they operate.

Taken together, these perspectives frame rural social enterprises as territorially embedded organisations that mobilise local resources while also engaging with networks beyond the local area. Social enterprises can therefore act as connectors within rural territories, using local resources while also working with people and organisations outside the immediate community (Olmedo, 2020). Their dual focus on collective goals and local needs enables them to respond to territorial challenges, while external links may provide access to resources that are not available locally. In this way, how social enterprises interpret and prioritise local problems can influence the actions they pursue (Child, 2020).

Overall, this section establishes the conceptual basis for analysing Apadrina un Olivo as a rural social enterprise whose operation is shaped by both local embeddedness and external support. This framing allows the empirical analysis to examine how the organisation works within the territory, how it connects local needs with wider networks, and how these conditions shape its contribution to rural revitalisation.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Social enterprise research in Spain and its limits

Research on social enterprises in Spain overlaps closely with the broader literature on the social economy. Within this literature, three types of social enterprises receive particular attention: “work integration social enterprises, special employment centres, and social initiative cooperatives” (Pfeilstetter & Gómez-Carrasco, 2018, p.5). This focus is not accidental. Spanish social enterprise research has developed alongside policy debates on labour market integration and the institutionalisation of the social economy. As a result, employment-related models have become central to how the sector is identified, analysed and evaluated.

Much of this emphasis is reinforced by public policy. A briefing prepared for the European Parliament highlights the institutional development of the Spanish social economy framework, with particular attention given to employment integration enterprises (Konle-Seidl, 2022). This literature has therefore generated important evidence on employment integration, inclusion and labour market outcomes. However, it gives less attention to social enterprises whose contribution is primarily territorial, environmental or rural. The main gap addressed in this thesis is therefore not the absence of Spanish social enterprise research, but the limited analysis of how territorially embedded rural social enterprises operate in specific local contexts and how those territorial conditions shape their contribution to rural revitalisation.

As there is no uniform recognition of social enterprises in Spain, inconsistencies and limited comparability appear across studies. Due to the absence of a predefined official understanding of what a social enterprise is, researchers depend on indirect criteria that are utilised as a framework or base for their studies. This leads to different conclusions being drawn from study to study about the size and nature of the social enterprise sector. There is inconsistent mapping of social enterprises at national level, which further complicates attempts to understand the scale and composition of the sector (Fisac & Moreno-Romero, 2015). This makes cross-study comparisons difficult. Different inclusion criteria simply produce different pictures of the sector. Ambiguities arise due to regional and rural initiatives potentially being underrepresented in datasets constructed through employment-based or urban-centred criteria.

This definitional ambiguity matters for the present study because rural and hybrid initiatives may be harder to identify when research relies mainly on established legal or employment-based categories. Spain cannot be treated as a single uniform country when talking about social enterprises within it, as there is significant regional variation in the development of social enterprises from region to region (Pfeilstetter & Gómez-Carrasco, 2018).

At the same time, Spanish social enterprises are not limited to employment integration or traditional cooperative forms. Recent research points to emerging hybrid models in fields linked to sustainability, local development and environmental transition.

This can be seen in areas such as renewable energy, where community-based energy cooperatives combine environmental objectives with market-based activity (Huybrechts et al., 2024). The range of sectors in which Spanish social enterprises operate reinforces how diverse the field has become, including both traditional cooperative forms and most recently, modern innovation-driven approaches. However, these newer forms also show why social enterprise research in Spain needs to look beyond dominant employment-based categories and pay closer attention to initiatives shaped by place, sustainability and local development.

Social enterprises are explicitly identified in the literature as actors in local and rural development, particularly through agricultural cooperatives, rural-development organisations, and local action groups that promote agricultural and community-based initiatives across the country (Díaz-Foncela et al., 2021). However, while these initiatives are recognised within sectoral classifications, they are rarely analysed in depth through the specific question of how territorial embeddedness shapes their operation and contribution to rural revitalisation. This also means that findings from highly developed regional ecosystems cannot automatically be applied to less institutionalised rural territories, reinforcing the need for context-sensitive analysis, particularly in sparsely populated rural regions where institutional support structures may differ substantially.

In addition to academic case studies and typological analyses, large-scale survey evidence provides further insight into the structure of social enterprise activity in Spain. Survey data from the GEM 2015 Special Report indicate that new social enterprises continue to emerge in Spain. These organisations typically generate income through commercial

activity while also relying on grants or public funding, reflecting a hybrid financial structure rather than a purely market-based or charitable model (Bosma et al., 2015). However, as GEM data relies on self-reported survey measures of early-stage activity, it provides insight into entrepreneurial dynamism rather than long-term territorial impact.

Taken together, the literature provides useful knowledge on the Spanish social economy, employment integration, hybrid organisational forms and emerging social enterprise activity. However, its common limitation is that it gives less attention to how rural social enterprises operate within specific territories and how local conditions shape their capacity to contribute to rural revitalisation. The following section therefore examines rural social enterprises as territorially embedded development actors.

Table 1. Main strands of academic research on social enterprise in Spain

Study / source	Main focus	Contribution to understanding social enterprises in Spain	Relevance to the common limitation
Pfeilstetter & Gómez-Carrasco (2018)	Typology and regional development of social enterprises in Spain	Identifies key social enterprise types in Spain, including work integration social enterprises, special employment centres and social initiative cooperatives. Also highlights regional variation within the sector.	Shows that Spanish social enterprise research is strongly shaped by typological and employment-oriented categories.
Konle-Seidl (2022)	Institutional and policy development of the Spanish social economy	Shows how public policy has shaped the development of employment integration enterprises and the wider social economy framework in Spain.	Reinforces the dominance of policy and employment integration in the Spanish literature.
Fisac & Moreno-Romero (2015)	Definition, classification and mapping of social enterprises	Highlights the difficulty of identifying and comparing social enterprises in Spain due to the absence of a single recognised definition.	Shows why rural and hybrid initiatives may be harder to capture through existing classifications.
Huybrechts et al. (2024)	Emerging hybrid models in renewable energy and sustainability	Shows that Spanish social enterprises are expanding into sustainability-oriented fields, such as community-based energy cooperatives.	Demonstrates the growing diversity of the field beyond traditional employment-focused models.
Díaz-Foncea et al. (2021a)	Social enterprises in local and rural development	Recognises agricultural cooperatives, rural-development organisations and local action groups as part of the wider social enterprise landscape.	Shows that rural initiatives are recognised, but not always analysed in depth through rural revitalisation.
Bosma et al. (2015)	Survey evidence on social entrepreneurship activity	Provides broader evidence that social enterprises in Spain often combine commercial income with grants or public support.	Captures entrepreneurial activity, but gives less insight into long-term territorial processes.

Common limitation identified: These studies provide important knowledge on social enterprises in Spain, but give less attention to how territorially embedded rural social enterprises operate in specific local contexts and how those conditions shape their contribution to rural revitalisation.

Source: own elaboration.

4.2 Rural social enterprises as territorially embedded development actors

Rural social enterprises are relevant to this thesis because they are discussed in the literature as organisations that respond to development problems through locally rooted and socially oriented activity. Rural development is understood as a process of positive change in rural areas that can improve both individual and collective quality of life (Díaz-Foncea et al., 2021). However, many rural regions across Europe, including Spain, face structural conditions that make this process difficult. Population ageing, youth out-migration and the decline of services such as healthcare, banking, retail and professional employment have weakened the capacity of many rural areas to sustain economic and social life (Farmer et al., 2012; Stockdale, 2004).

Within this context, the literature identifies social enterprises as potential responses to gaps in service provision, employment and community support. In areas where public services have withdrawn or market actors are absent, social enterprises may provide small-scale and locally adapted services such as transport, care, retail and community support (Nicholls et al., 2015; Sinclair et al., 2018). Their value lies not simply in replacing missing services, but in adapting provision to specific territorial needs. However, this role is not automatically sustainable, as many social enterprises face constraints linked to financial viability, organisational capacity and long-term resource access (Ab Samad et al., 2017; Staicu, 2018).

Employment creation is another recurring theme in the literature. Social enterprises may provide jobs directly, support people excluded from traditional labour markets, and generate local economic activity in places where employment opportunities are limited (Birkhölzer, 2015; Haugh, 2005; Li & Wong, 2007). Some studies emphasise their role in developing employability skills and supporting transitions into work (Javits, 2013). Nevertheless, this contribution is usually limited in scale and cannot, by itself, overcome the broader structural constraints of rural labour markets (Kiss et al., 2022). Employment should therefore be understood as one dimension of a wider rural development role, rather than as the only measure of social enterprise impact.

A central feature of rural social enterprises is their territorial embeddedness. Steiner and Teasdale (2019) argue that rural social enterprises can draw on local resources, community knowledge and place-based relationships, allowing them to respond to

interconnected local challenges. Community-based social enterprises also mobilise local people and resources through participation and collective action (Rinne-Koski & Lähdesmäki, 2024). This can strengthen social connections and reduce isolation in rural areas where geographical dispersion and limited services restrict everyday interaction (Kelly et al., 2019). At the same time, the effectiveness of this work depends on sustained participation, which may be difficult in sparsely populated or ageing communities.

The literature also connects rural social enterprises to environmental and community outcomes. Social enterprises may contribute to locally embedded environmental initiatives and strengthen social cohesion through community participation (Gurău & Dana, 2018). These activities are often shaped around the needs of local communities and relevant local actors, reflecting their territorial character (I. Vickers & Lyon, 2014). However, their effects are usually localised, uneven and difficult to generalise across settings, which is consistent with wider evidence that social entrepreneurship activity varies significantly across contexts and often remains small-scale and community-driven (Bosma et al., 2015). This makes it necessary to analyse not only what social enterprises contribute, but how those contributions are produced in specific places.

Selected European evidence reinforces this point. Richter (2019) shows that rural social enterprises can operate as embedded intermediaries, combining strong local embeddedness with connections to wider networks. Evidence from Ireland also shows how rural social enterprises respond to service withdrawal, economic decline and social isolation by combining market-based activities with social objectives, although their success depends heavily on local leadership, community engagement, institutional support and diversified funding (O'Shaughnessy & O'Hara, 2013). UK evidence adds a more cautious view, showing that while social enterprises may contribute to environmental goals, these activities are often fragmented, small in scale and constrained by financial fragility and competition from private actors (D. I. Vickers, 2010).

Taken together, this literature suggests that rural social enterprises should not be understood as performing one single function. They may support employment, maintain services, mobilise community resources, contribute to environmental activity and connect local needs with wider networks. However, their impact remains context-dependent and shaped by factors such as funding, organisational capacity, community participation and institutional support (Islam, 2022). This makes a territorially embedded approach

necessary, because the contribution of a rural social enterprise cannot be properly understood without examining the place in which it operates.

4.3 Research gap and contribution of this study

This gap points to the need for a more integrated and context-sensitive understanding of rural social enterprise in Spain, particularly in relation to how territorially embedded organisations operate within specific local contexts. Existing studies provide valuable knowledge on social enterprises in Spain, rural social enterprise activity and selected European experiences, but they often describe contributions in terms of separate outcomes such as employment, service provision, environmental action or community development. Less attention is given to how these contributions are generated through the operation of a territorially embedded organisation within a specific rural context.

This thesis addresses that gap by examining how a rural social enterprise operates in a particular territory and how local conditions shape its contribution to rural revitalisation. The focus is therefore not only on whether social enterprises can produce positive outcomes, but on how those outcomes are connected to territorial embeddedness, organisational choices, external support and local constraints. This allows the thesis to move beyond a fragmented account of impact and towards a more integrated understanding of rural social enterprise as a place-based development actor.

The case study of Apadrina un Olivo is used to explore this issue in depth. By analysing the organisation as a territorially embedded rural social enterprise, the study examines how environmental recovery, employment, external support, community confidence and local constraints interact within one specific rural setting. This provides the basis for the methodology and empirical analysis that follow.

5. Research Design, Methodology and Collection of the Empirical Material

5.1 Methodological Approach

This study adopted a qualitative, theory-informed research design aimed at developing a context-sensitive understanding of how a rural social enterprise operates as a territorially embedded organisation, and how territorial embeddedness shapes its contribution to rural revitalisation. The research was grounded in an interpretivist approach, prioritising an in-depth exploration of processes, relationships and contextual dynamics over generalisation.

The methodological approach followed directly from the research gap identified in the literature review. Since the study seeks to understand how rural social enterprise contributions are generated within a specific local context, the research prioritised depth, interpretation and contextual detail rather than broad comparison. This made a qualitative case study approach appropriate, as it allowed the analysis to examine how organisational processes, local conditions and external relationships interact in practice.

To address this gap, the study focused on Apadrina un Olivo, a rural social enterprise based in Oliete, Teruel. The case was analysed through a theoretical lens informed by the EMES framework, allowing for a structured interpretation of economic, social and governance dimensions. This was complemented by a neo-endogenous perspective, which supported the analysis of how the organisation combines local embeddedness with external support and resources.

5.2 Data Collection Techniques

The primary data collection technique used in this study was a semi-structured, in-depth interview with a key informant from Apadrina un Olivo. The interview format was designed to allow for both consistency and flexibility, enabling the exploration of predefined themes while also allowing the respondent to elaborate on relevant experiences and examples. The interview guide, including the questions used to structure the conversation, is included in Annex 1.

The selected participant was the co-founder of Apadrina un Olivo and has been directly involved in the organisation since its creation in 2014. He was treated as a key informant because of his central knowledge of the organisation's origins, business model, operational development and territorial role. Public organisational information also identifies his work in project coordination and new business development, which made him especially relevant for understanding both the strategic and practical dimensions of the case. His position provided direct insight into how the organisation links olive grove recovery, employment, external support, local economic activity and the wider objective of generating a sustainable economy in Oliete.

Given that the study is based on one interview, the choice of respondent required specific methodological justification. The interviewee was not selected as a general representative of all possible local perspectives, but as a central organisational actor with detailed knowledge of how the project was created, how it operates and what constraints it faces. This design limits the diversity of viewpoints included in the empirical material, but it allows for a detailed account of the organisation's internal logic, development process and relationship with the local territory. To preserve pseudonymity in the presentation of the findings, the respondent is referred to as "Interviewee", while his organisational role is described because it is methodologically relevant.

5.3 Data Collection Process

The data collection process consisted of one semi-structured interview conducted with the selected respondent. The interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and was conducted in Spanish, allowing the interviewee to express his views naturally and in detail.

Prior to the interview, the participant was informed of the purpose of the study, and consent was obtained for recording and transcription. The interview was recorded, transcribed and translated into English for analysis. All data collected was used solely for academic purposes within the scope of this research.

The interview guide was structured around the central themes of the study, including organisational operation, territorial embeddedness, mechanisms of impact generation, relationships with external actors and key challenges. During the interview, particular emphasis was placed on eliciting detailed explanations and concrete examples in order to capture the processes through which the organisation operates and generates impact.

Following transcription, the data was analysed thematically. Responses were organised according to the main dimensions of the research question: the organisation's territorial embeddedness, its operational model, its contribution to rural revitalisation, and the enabling and limiting factors shaping its work. This thematic organisation is presented in Annex 2, which shows how interview evidence was grouped and interpreted during the analysis. The findings were then read alongside the theoretical framework and the literature review, allowing for a structured and empirically grounded interpretation of the case.

6. Case Study: Apadrina un Olivo

6.1 Introduction to the Case Study

Apadrina un Olivo is a rural social enterprise based in Oliete, a small village in the province of Teruel, Aragón. The organisation was created in 2014 in response to two closely connected problems: the abandonment of olive groves and the wider process of rural depopulation affecting the area. Its model is based on recovering abandoned olive trees through a system of sponsorship, local production and external support, with the broader aim of generating economic, social and environmental value within the territory.

The organisation's activity is strongly tied to the specific conditions of Oliete. The village represents the type of low-density rural context discussed in the previous chapters, where population decline, limited economic opportunities and the deterioration of traditional agricultural activity create significant obstacles to rural revitalisation. In this context, the recovery of olive groves is not only an environmental activity, but also a way of reconnecting abandoned productive resources with employment, visitor activity, local identity and external financial support.

Apadrina un Olivo is particularly relevant for this thesis because its model brings together several dimensions of rural revitalisation within one place-based initiative. Through the sponsorship of olive trees and the sale of products linked to recovered agricultural resources, the organisation connects external supporters, companies and consumers with a specific rural territory. This relevance is strengthened by the perspective of its co-founder, whose role in project coordination and new business development provides direct knowledge of the organisation's origins, operational model and territorial development. This makes the case useful for examining how a rural social enterprise operates as a territorially embedded organisation rather than as an isolated business initiative.

The case provides a focused example of how one rural social enterprise connects local problems, abandoned resources, external support and organisational action within a specific territory. This makes Apadrina un Olivo a highly suitable case for examining how territorial embeddedness can shape both the contribution and the limitations of rural revitalisation.

7. Findings and Analysis

7.1 Territorial Embeddedness as a Structural Condition

Apadrina un Olivo's significance lies in the fact that its activity cannot be separated from Oliete. The organisation is not simply located in a rural area. Its purpose, model and limits are all shaped by the specific territorial conditions of the village in which it operates. From this, territorial embeddedness is not only a positive feature that gives the organisation authenticity or local legitimacy. It is a structural condition that influences what the organisation can do, who it can involve, how far it can grow and where its impact remains concentrated.

The scale of the territory matters as the interviewee describes the organisation as being rooted in a "village of 300 people". As well as framing the case geographically, this shows the narrow social and economic environment in which the organisation operates. In a village of this size, the local labour pool is limited, community relationships are highly visible, and organisational decisions have immediate consequences for the surrounding territory. Rural revitalisation is therefore not an abstract objective, but a practical challenge taking place in a very small population base.

This territorial condition is most apparent when it comes to labour and skills in the region. The interviewee explains:

"Finding talent is very difficult in the territory".

This shows how difficult recruitment is in the area, while revealing that the same rural context that gives Apadrina un Olivo its purpose also restricts its operational capacity. The organisation exists due to the fact that Oliete faces abandonment, depopulation and a decline of traditional agricultural activity. However, those same conditions also reduce the availability of people available to sustain and expand the project. Territorial embeddedness therefore works in two directions: it creates the reason for action, but it also limits the resources available to act.

This becomes especially clear when the interviewee links economic regeneration to the availability of people. This is one of the clearest findings in the case, showing how Apadrina un Olivo is trying to generate local economic activity in a place where one of the basic conditions for doing so, an active and skilled population, is already weakened. The organisation's task is therefore not only to recover abandoned olive trees, but to make

the project attractive enough to bring people, skills and long-term commitment into the territory.

The deeper structural limit appears in the relationship between abandoned resources and human capacity. As the territory contains many olive trees that can potentially be recovered, the main limiting factor in achieving this is the lack of skilled people. This makes the case more analytically useful than an example of a rural success, as it shows how the social enterprise can struggle to sustain its activities in a low-density rural context.

The key insight from this section is therefore that territorial embeddedness is a dual-sided structural condition. Oliete gives Apadrina un Olivo its mission, identity and local legitimacy, while also limiting its access to labour, skills and growth capacity. The organisation's contribution to rural revitalisation is shaped by this tension: it emerges from the territory, but it is also constrained by the territory.

7.2 Operational Adaptation and the Rural Social Enterprise Model

Operational adaptation refers here to the way Apadrina un Olivo adjusts its model to make rural activity viable in a setting with limited local capacity. In Oliete, the lack of local labour, limited local demand and the decline of conventional agricultural production mean that the model is shaped as a response to scarcity. To make the recovery of abandoned olive groves viable, Apadrina un Olivo builds an operating model that draws people, money and attention from outside the village while keeping the activity anchored in the territory.

The first adaptation is the use of purpose as part of the operating model. In this case, the social enterprise's purpose is not utilised as a marketing or communication tactic. It helps make participation in the project meaningful, both for those directly involved in the organisation and for those who support it from outside. This is key because the model depends on more than conventional agricultural activity. It has to create commitment around a rural project that would otherwise struggle to attract attention, people and resources.

The same logic appears in the sponsorship model, where personal connection and commitment are created through the adoption of an olive tree rather than through a simple donation. This stems from the “emotional experience” that the organisation aimed to generate from the beginning of the project. By allowing supporters to adopt and name a specific tree, the model has the potential to turn a distant supporter into someone with a concrete relationship not only with the social enterprise, but also with Oliete itself.

This relationship is also maintained through the production side of the enterprise, where sponsors receive olive oil from the recovered trees. This gives the sponsorship model more than a symbolic connection, as supporters receive a physical product linked to the tree and territory they have supported. In this way, the model closes the loop between the abandoned local resource, the external supporter and the product generated from Oliete. Companies extend this model on a larger scale, as one company can adopt “100 or 200 olive trees”. This shows how corporate participation can amplify the project's visibility and spread its reach across a wider network of employees, clients and audiences. For an organisation operating in a village of 300 inhabitants, this external reach is not secondary. It is part of how the initiative sustains attention and resources beyond the local scale.

The key insight from this section is that Apadrina un Olivo's operational model is adaptive because it converts a local territorial problem into a system capable of attracting external support while keeping activity anchored in Oliete. Rather than simply funding rural revitalisation, the model makes it operational by connecting abandoned resources, emotional commitment, production and external participation within one place-based system.

7.3 Multi-dimensional Rural Revitalisation

The local impact of Apadrina un Olivo is not concentrated in one single outcome. Its contribution to rural revitalisation comes from the way environmental recovery, economic activity, employment, local value retention and community confidence overlap within the same territory. The case therefore shows rural revitalisation as a gradual and multidimensional process, rather than as a simple increase in economic activity.

The environmental dimension is the most directly connected to the organisation's original purpose. The recovery of abandoned olive groves is not only an ecological activity, but also a visible attempt to reverse territorial neglect. The interviewee describes this as having a "positive effect for the ecosystem". This matters because the olive trees are not treated as isolated agricultural assets. They form part of the village's productive, environmental and symbolic landscape. Their recovery gives visible form to the idea that abandoned rural resources can be reactivated.

The organisation's impact also appears through the movement of people into Oliete. The interviewee notes that "around 3,000 people pass through the village annually" because of the project. This does not mean that visitor activity has transformed the local economy by itself. However, for a small village of around 300 inhabitants, this movement creates visibility, spending and contact with people beyond the territory. In this sense, the project contributes to rural revitalisation not only through what it produces, but also through the attention and circulation it brings into the village.

Employment adds a further social dimension to the case. The interviewee refers to the organisation's role in "generating employment for people with intellectual disabilities". This shows that the contribution is not only economic, but also inclusive. Work becomes a way of connecting people to the local economy and giving social value to activities linked to the recovered olive groves. The important point is not that jobs are just created, but that employment becomes part of a wider attempt to reconnect people, resources and the territory.

The organisation's local rootedness also shapes the direction of its impact. The interviewee emphasises that the project aims for "the benefit to remain in the village". This shows that territorial embeddedness is not only a condition of the organisation's

operation, but also a deliberate value-retention strategy. Apadrina un Olivo seeks to ensure that employment, suppliers, productive activity and economic value remain connected to Oliete rather than being extracted from it. Its contribution to rural revitalisation is therefore not only measured by whether activity is generated, but by where that activity remains anchored.

The case also points to a less tangible form of impact, which is viewed as local confidence. The interviewee's statement that "change is possible" is important because it shows how the project may influence the way the village imagines its own future. In contexts affected by depopulation and abandonment, revitalisation can depend partly on whether people believe that new activity can be created and sustained. Apadrina un Olivo appears to challenge pessimism by making change visible within the village itself.

Apadrina un Olivo therefore contributes to rural revitalisation through several connected forms of local impact. Environmental recovery, visitor activity, employment, local value retention and community confidence reinforce one another within the territory. These contributions remain uneven and dependent on the specific conditions of Oliete. The case shows that rural social enterprises can generate meaningful local change, but that change is often gradual, fragile and deeply dependent on the territorial conditions in which it takes place.

7.4 Enabling and Limiting Factors Affecting Impact Capacity

The findings show that Apadrina un Olivo's capacity to sustain its impact depends on a balance between enabling and limiting factors. External support, visibility and corporate participation help the organisation reach beyond the limits of a small rural village. However, these enabling factors do not remove the constraints created by workforce shortages, organisational capacity and the difficulty of maintaining a shared mission as the project grows. The central issue is therefore not whether the enterprise can attract more support, but whether it can absorb that support without weakening the organisational model that made it effective.

The labour constraint identified earlier becomes especially important when considering the organisation's future capacity. The issue is not only that qualified people are difficult to find, but that this shortage limits how far the organisation can grow without weakening its internal stability. The interviewee describes this challenge as something that "conditions the project a lot" and identifies "finding qualified people" as one of the most difficult parts of running the organisation. This means that growth cannot be understood only in terms of attracting more support or financial resources. It also depends on whether the organisation has enough people and skills to manage that growth in practice.

This creates a direct tension between ambition and absorption capacity. The interviewee warns that "if you grow too much you can destroy everything", because the project may not be able to absorb or manage that growth. This is one of the strongest findings in the section. It suggests that growth is not automatically positive for a rural social enterprise. In this case, expansion has to be measured against the organisation's ability to maintain operational stability, protect employee wellbeing and preserve the local connection that gives the project its meaning.

External support remains an important enabling factor, but its relevance here lies less in how it expands the model and more in the pressure it creates for the organisation to manage growth carefully. Corporate and individual support can increase visibility, resources and public attention, but these benefits only strengthen the project if Apadrina un Olivo has enough internal capacity to absorb them. External support therefore enables the organisation to go beyond the limits of a small rural village, but it does not remove the need for careful coordination, workforce capacity and organisational stability.

Another limitation concerns the maintenance of a shared mission-driven culture. The interviewee explains that the organisation tries to create a culture in which people are encouraged to “go one step further”, but also recognises that some employees may see the role as “just a job”. This reveals a deeper organisational tension. Apadrina un Olivo depends not only on labour, but on a particular kind of commitment to the project’s social and territorial purpose. As the organisation grows, maintaining that shared culture becomes harder, especially when new employees may not all relate to the project in the same way.

A further risk is founder dependency. The interviewee acknowledges that if founders lose motivation, “the project could struggle”, even though the organisation is working towards becoming more self-managed through a leadership structure. This points to a long-term vulnerability. The founders’ commitment has clearly helped drive the project, but the organisation’s future stability depends on whether knowledge, leadership and strategic direction can be distributed more broadly. Without that transition, the model may remain too dependent on the motivation and coordination of a small founding group.

Apadrina un Olivo’s long-term sustainability depends on balancing external support with internal and territorial capacity. Visibility, sponsorship and financial growth can strengthen the project, but they do not remove constraints linked to labour, organisational culture, absorption capacity and founder dependency. The case therefore shows that sustaining impact depends not only on attracting resources, but on managing growth without losing stability, purpose or territorial connection.

7.5 Summary of Findings from the Case Study

To synthesise the findings from the case study, Table 2 summarises the four themes identified through the analysis. The table brings together the main finding from each theme and the key insight generated from the case. This helps clarify how Apadrina un Olivo operates as a territorially embedded rural social enterprise, and how its contribution to rural revitalisation is shaped by the interaction between its location, operational model, local impact and organisational capacity.

Table 2. Summary of Findings from the Case Study

Theme	Main finding	Key insight
Territorial embeddedness as a structural condition	Apadrina un Olivo's activity is shaped by the specific conditions of Oliete. The territory gives the organisation its mission and legitimacy, but also limits its labour, skills and growth capacity.	Territorial embeddedness is dual-sided. It enables the organisation's purpose, but also constrains what it can achieve.
Operational model as a response to territorial constraints	The organisation adapts to rural scarcity by creating a model that connects abandoned olive groves with external supporters, sponsorship, production and corporate participation.	The model makes rural revitalisation operational by turning a local territorial problem into a system of external support anchored in Oliete.
Multidimensional contribution to rural revitalisation	The organisation contributes to rural revitalisation through several connected forms of local impact, including environmental recovery, visitor activity, employment, local value retention and community confidence.	Rural social enterprises can generate meaningful local change, but that change is gradual, fragile and dependent on territorial conditions.
Enabling and limiting factors shaping impact capacity	External support, visibility and corporate participation enable the organisation to reach beyond the village, but its long-term sustainability depends on workforce availability, absorption capacity, organisational culture and leadership continuity.	Sustaining impact depends not only on attracting resources, but on managing growth without losing stability, purpose or territorial connection.

Source: own elaboration based on the case study interview and thematic analysis.

8. Discussion

8.1 Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Question

The research question asked how a rural social enterprise operates as a territorially embedded organisation, and how this shapes its contribution to rural revitalisation. The case of Apadrina un Olivo suggests that territorial embeddedness should not be understood only as the fact that an organisation is located in a rural place. Rather, it refers to the way the territory actively shapes the organisation's purpose, model, impact and limits. In this case, Oliete is not simply the place where the organisation is located. It is the source of the problem being addressed, the foundation of the organisation's purpose and the condition that strongly shapes what the organisation can realistically achieve.

The case supports both the EMES-informed understanding of social enterprise and the neo-endogenous approach to rural development. From an EMES perspective, Apadrina un Olivo combines economic activity, social purpose and a clear connection to community needs. From a neo-endogenous perspective, it also shows how rural development can depend on combining local resources with external support and networks (Olmedo & O'Shaughnessy, 2023). The organisation follows this logic because its activity begins with a local resource, abandoned olive groves, while its operation depends on supporters, companies, customers and visitors beyond the village. However, the case adds depth to this perspective by showing that external resources do not generate rural revitalisation simply because they enter or operate within a territory. They become meaningful when they are connected back to a specific place, a visible problem and a concrete organisational model. In Apadrina un Olivo, sponsorship works because it links external commitment to named olive trees, local production and the recovery of Oliete itself.

The findings also support the view that rural social enterprises can draw on local resources, community knowledge and place-based relationships (Steiner & Teasdale, 2019). Apadrina un Olivo is clearly rooted in the conditions of Oliete, and its legitimacy comes from responding to visible local problems. However, the case complicates any purely positive interpretation of territorial embeddedness. The same territory that gives the organisation its mission also limits its access to labour, skills and growth capacity. This is one of the main contributions of the case, showing that territorial embeddedness is double-sided. It enables action by giving the organisation purpose and credibility, but

it also restricts action because the territory lacks some of the resources needed to sustain and expand that purpose.

This interpretation develops the literature on social enterprises as actors in local and rural development. Díaz-Foncea et al. (2021) identify social enterprises as being relevant to local and rural development, but the case of Apadrina un Olivo shows more specifically how that role can be produced in practice. Its contribution is not generated through one isolated outcome. It emerges through the connection between environmental recovery, employment, visitor movement, local value retention and community confidence. The case therefore helps clarify that rural revitalisation is not only an economic process. It is multidimensional and place-based, with different forms of impact reinforcing one another within the same territory.

The case also fits wider European research on rural social enterprises as responses to economic decline, service withdrawal and social isolation (O'Shaughnessy & O'Hara, 2013). However, Apadrina un Olivo adds a more specific insight because its model is built around the recovery of an abandoned resource. As well as being an environmental or agricultural asset, the olive trees become the link between external supporters, local production, employment and territorial identity. This reveals a point that the literature does not always address in depth, that the operational model of a social enterprise matters. Rural revitalisation is not produced simply because an organisation has a social mission. It is produced when that mission is translated into a working model capable of connecting local problems with external participation, productive activity and other factors that generate genuine local impact.

At the same time, the case challenges overly optimistic views of rural social enterprise impact. Apadrina un Olivo generates meaningful local change, but its impact remains fragile because it depends on people, organisational capacity and the ability to manage growth carefully. This links to Islam's (2022) argument that social enterprise impact does not expand automatically, but depends on capacity, strategy and the conditions under which the enterprise operates. In this case, greater visibility and support should not be understood as automatically positive. These factors can strengthen the organisation by attracting resources, attention and external participation, but they can also create pressure if the organisation cannot absorb growth comfortably without weakening its stability, territorial connection and internal structure.

The discussion of this case therefore points to a more precise understanding of rural social enterprise contribution. Rather than showing that rural social enterprises can solve rural decline, Apadrina un Olivo shows how one rural social enterprise can produce place-based change under specific territorial constraints. The case supports the literature that presents rural social enterprises as locally embedded development actors, but it also extends this literature by showing how embeddedness operates in practice as both an enabling and limiting condition. In this sense, Apadrina un Olivo helps clarify that rural revitalisation depends not only on social purpose or external support, but on the organisation's ability to connect territory, model, impact and capacity over time.

8.2 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research is based on a single case study of Apadrina un Olivo. This means that the findings cannot be generalised to all rural social enterprises in Spain. The value of the case lies instead in the depth of analysis it provides. By focusing on one organisation operating in a specific rural territory, the study is able to examine how territorial embeddedness shapes the organisation's model, impact and constraints in practice.

Second, the empirical analysis draws on one semi-structured interview with a key organisational informant. This limits the range of perspectives included in the study, as it does not directly incorporate the views of local residents, employees, sponsors, public institutions or other community actors. However, the interviewee's role as co-founder and his direct involvement in the organisation's development make his perspective particularly relevant for understanding the origins, operational model, strategic decisions and limitations of the project. This does not remove the limitation, but it strengthens the usefulness of the interview for the purpose of this research.

Third, the study does not provide a quantitative measurement of Apadrina un Olivo's impact. The analysis focuses on qualitative interpretation rather than statistical assessment of outcomes such as employment creation, visitor spending, environmental recovery or long-term demographic change. For this reason, the findings should be understood as a context-specific analysis of how impact is generated and constrained in one case, rather than as a definitive measurement of the organisation's overall effects. Future research could build on this study by including multiple interviews, local stakeholder perspectives and comparative evidence from other rural social enterprises in Spain.

9. Conclusion

This thesis examined how a rural social enterprise operates as a territorially embedded organisation, and how this shapes its contribution to rural revitalisation. The case of Apadrina un Olivo shows that territorial embeddedness is not only a background condition. It shapes the organisation's purpose, operating model, impact and limits.

The main conclusion is that Apadrina un Olivo operates by turning a local territorial problem into a practical organisational model. The abandonment of olive groves in Oliete gives the project its reason to exist, while the sponsorship model, local production and external support make the recovery of those resources possible. In this sense, the organisation's contribution to rural revitalisation depends on its ability to connect the territory with people, resources and support beyond the village.

The study also shows that rural revitalisation is not a single outcome. In the case of Apadrina un Olivo, it involves environmental recovery, local economic activity, employment, value retention and community confidence. These dimensions are connected through the organisation's model, which gives abandoned resources new economic, social and symbolic value. This responds directly to the objective of understanding rural revitalisation as a multidimensional process.

At the same time, the case shows that territorial embeddedness is double-sided. Oliete gives Apadrina un Olivo its mission and relevance, but it also limits the organisation through labour shortages, difficulty attracting qualified people and restricted local capacity. The same rural conditions that make the project necessary also make it harder to sustain. For this reason, rural social enterprises should not be treated as simple solutions to rural decline. Their impact depends on the conditions that allow their model to work over time.

The thesis contributes to the study of rural social enterprises in Spain by showing how impact is produced, rather than only identifying what impact exists. It shows that rural social enterprise impact depends on the relationship between territory, operational model, external support and organisational capacity. This is the main value of the case study.

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11. Annex

Annex 1: Interview Guide

This semi-structured interview guide was designed to collect qualitative evidence for the research question: How does a rural social enterprise operate as a territorially embedded organisation, and how does this shape its contribution to rural revitalisation?

The interview focuses on how the organisation is shaped by the territory of Oliete, how it adapts its model to local conditions, how it connects local and external actors, and how these territorial characteristics influence its contribution to rural revitalisation. Follow-up questions were used flexibly depending on the interviewee's responses.

Interviewee: Representative of Apadrina un Olivo

Purpose: To understand how Apadrina un Olivo operates as a territorially embedded social enterprise and how this shapes its contribution to rural revitalisation in Oliete.

1. Interviewee introduction and organisational background

Could you briefly introduce your role and explain what Apadrina un Olivo does?

Follow-up questions:

- What are the organisation's main objectives today?
- How has the project changed since it was founded?
- What problem was the organisation originally created to address?

2. Territorial embeddedness and local context

How does being based in Oliete shape the way Apadrina un Olivo operates?

Follow-up questions:

- What local needs or problems does the organisation respond to?
- How important is knowledge of Oliete in shaping decisions?
- To what extent does the organisation depend on the local context to function?
- Has the organisation had to adapt its model to the needs or limits of the territory?

3. Local relationships and community participation

How would you describe the organisation's relationship with the local community in Oliete?

Follow-up questions:

- How has this relationship changed over time?

- Do local residents participate directly in the organisation's activities, or do they mainly benefit from them?
- How important is local trust for the organisation's work?
- Are there any difficulties in involving the local community?

4. Business model as a territorially embedded model

Can you explain how the olive tree adoption model works and how it is connected to the local territory?

Follow-up questions:

- How does the adoption model support the recovery of abandoned olive groves?
- How is the revenue from tree adoption used within the organisation?
- Which parts of the model are most connected to Oliete and its local needs?
- What would happen to the olive groves or the local area if the organisation did not exist?

5. External actors and local anchoring

What role do external actors, such as sponsors, companies, institutions or visitors, play in the organisation's work?

Follow-up questions:

- Why are external actors important for the organisation?
- Could the organisation function without them?
- How do you make sure that external support benefits the local area?
- Are there risks in depending on external actors?
- Can you give an example of a partnership that has had an important effect on the project?

6. Contribution to rural revitalisation

How has Apadrina un Olivo contributed to rural revitalisation in Oliete?

Follow-up questions:

- What changes have you seen in local employment, economic activity, tourism, environmental recovery or community life?
- Which of these changes are most directly linked to the organisation's work?
- Are there important impacts that are less visible or harder to measure?
- How do local residents view these changes?

7. How territorial embeddedness shapes impact

How does the organisation's connection to Oliete influence the type of impact it can create?

Follow-up questions:

- Does being strongly rooted in the territory make the organisation more effective?
- Does the local context also create limits or challenges?
- Are there impacts the organisation would like to achieve but cannot?
- Are there trade-offs between growth and staying locally rooted?

8. Limitations, sustainability and future development

What are the main challenges in sustaining and developing the model over time?

Follow-up questions:

- What limits the organisation's ability to grow or scale?
- Are there tensions between expansion and maintaining local authenticity?
- What is the biggest risk for the future of the project?
- Has the organisation had to adapt because of these challenges?

9. Closing question

Is there anything else you think is important for understanding how Apadrina un Olivo operates as a territorially embedded organisation and contributes to rural revitalisation?

Annex 2: Thematic Analysis of Interview Transcription

Theme 1 - Territorial Embeddedness as a Structural Condition			
Code	Evidence	Interpretation	Link to objective
Labour scarcity and demographic constraint	"We are in an area with low population density, that means there are no human resources and finding talent is very difficult in the territory"	The organisation operates under structural demographic constraints that directly limit access to labour and skilled workers in the rural territory.	Objective 1, 3, 4
Territorial labour limitation and place-based adaptation	"The project was created to generate an economy, to generate an economy it has to create jobs, but to create jobs there have to be people. So this means that we have had to make the work attractive, to make the values of the project attract certain people to the territory because they want to work with us, because they believe in what we do and for me that is the biggest local challenge we have."	The organisation's operations and recruitment strategies are shaped by rural demographic decline, requiring the project to use purpose and organisational values to attract people to the territory.	Objective 1, 3, 5
Small-scale rural context	"We are in a village of 300 inhabitants"	The small population size of Oliete shapes the scale, labour capacity, and operational possibilities of the organisation.	Objective 1, 3
Local embeddedness and territorial integration	"All our impact is local, all our suppliers are local, our workers, the vast majority are local"	The organisation is deeply embedded within the local territory through its reliance on local suppliers, labour, and locally retained impact.	Objective 1, 3, 5
Local value retention	"We are always looking for ways for everything to happen and for the benefit to remain in the village"	The organisation intentionally seeks to retain economic and social value within the local territory, reinforcing place-based development dynamics.	Objective 1, 2, 3, 5
Mission-driven organisational culture	"We try to create a culture within the team that encourages people to go one step further"	The organisation attempts to build a mission-oriented internal culture that strengthens commitment within a challenging rural operational context.	Objective 3, 5
Rural talent outmigration	"Lack of people in rural areas. There are many olive trees to recover, but what is missing is active, skilled people. Talent has moved to big cities like Madrid and Barcelona. We need to bring talent back to rural areas"	Rural depopulation and urban talent migration limit the organisation's growth capacity and ability to expand impact within the territory.	Objective 1, 3, 4, 6

Theme 2 - Operational Model as a Response to Territorial Constraints			
Code	Evidence	Interpretation	Link to objective
Values-based attraction strategy	"We have had to make the work attractive, to make the values of the project attract certain people to the territory"	The organisation uses purpose and values as a strategy to attract people to the territory and compensate for rural labour shortages.	Objective 1, 3, 5
Emotional engagement model	"When we created the project, we thought about generating an emotional experience"	The operational model was intentionally designed around emotional engagement rather than purely transactional relationships.	Objective 3, 5
Symbolic participation and emotional attachment	"From there, you have to name it. And naming it is very important because people symbolise things in the olive trees through that act. But that already creates an emotional bond with the tree, which makes you stay connected to it over time"	The symbolic act of naming an olive tree creates emotional attachment and encourages long-term stakeholder commitment to the project.	Objective 1, 5
Continuous stakeholder engagement	"Then every month we send updates. We tell you what is happening in the project, we make you part of our daily work"	Regular updates maintain ongoing engagement and integrate sponsors into the daily activities of the organisation.	Objective 1, 5
Tangible reward mechanism	"And finally, this experience has a reward, which is that we send two litres of olive oil to your home"	The olive oil reward reinforces participation through a tangible and personalised connection to the project.	Objective 3, 5
Corporate sponsorship scaling mechanism	"One individual sponsor adopts one or two olive trees, but a company can adopt 100 or 200 olive trees"	Corporate sponsors provide the organisation with the capacity to scale support and receive a significantly larger number of olive trees.	Objective 1, 5
Corporate awareness and stakeholder outreach	"The company gives you or opens up the possibility of telling what you are doing to all the people within the company. So I think this is something very positive, something that allows us to raise awareness, to educate, to bring new clients and as I said, working with companies is similar to working with individuals, we also seek companies and that involves contacting them through LinkedIn, going to events, getting to know them"	Partnerships with companies function as mechanisms for awareness generation, stakeholder expansion, and external visibility.	Objective 1, 4, 5
Hybrid private funding structure	"All the funds we manage are private, whether from companies or individuals"	The organisation relies entirely on private funding sources, reflecting a hybrid operational structure based on individual and corporate participation.	Objective 1, 4, 5
Revenue diversification through sponsors	"Well, I think that now, to give you an idea, individuals might represent around 500,000 euros in revenue and companies around 200,000"	The organisation combines revenue from both individuals and companies to maintain financial sustainability and diversify income sources.	Objective 1, 5
Strategic importance of corporate partnerships	"But they are an important part, although they are not yet the most important"	Corporate sponsors are viewed as strategically important actors that strengthen the organisation's operational capacity and long-term sustainability.	Objective 3, 5
Purpose-driven organisational orientation	"For me, the most important thing is the purpose. First comes the purpose and then the numbers have to support it. Our organisation is one of purpose and values"	The organisation prioritises social purpose and values above financial growth, reinforcing its mission-driven orientation.	Objective 1, 5
Private financial dependency	"All the funds we manage are private, whether from companies or individuals"	The absence of public funding increases the organisation's dependence on private actors and community participation.	Objective 4, 5
Sustainable growth philosophy	"The solution is not about doing more, it is also about doing better with what already exists"	The organisation prioritises sustainable and effective development over rapid expansion or scale-driven growth.	Objective 4, 5
Experiential engagement and awareness generation	"This is a very important part of the model because people come, see what is happening and then share it with others and support the project"	Sponsor visits strengthen emotional engagement, territorial awareness, and wider visibility of the project through relational participation.	Objective 1, 2, 5

Theme 3 - Multi-dimensional Contribution to Rural Revitalisation			
Code	Evidence	Interpretation	Link to objective
Tourism-led local economic stimulation	"We have to add another indicator which is tourism that we have generated, since around 3,000 people pass through the village annually to see the olive trees, to discover what we do and all this obviously generates money locally"	The project contributes to local economic activity through tourism and visitor-generated spending within the village.	Objective 2, 5
Environmental restoration and ecosystem recovery	"So the project is offering a solution to all those people, we take care of the olive groves, we restore them and all of this has a very positive effect for the ecosystem, for nature, for everything"	The restoration of abandoned olive groves contributes to environmental sustainability and ecological regeneration within the rural territory.	Objective 2, 5
Inclusive employment and social integration	"Generating employment for people with intellectual disabilities"	The organisation promotes social inclusion by creating employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.	Objective 2, 5
Corporate growth potential and financial expansion	"I do think companies have a lot of potential for growth and it would not surprise me if in a few years we had more capital from companies than from individual sponsors. But they are an important part, although they are not yet the most important."	Corporate partnerships are viewed as a potential mechanism for expanding the organisation's financial capacity and future impact generation.	Objective 2, 4, 5
Community mindset transformation	"People now think that change is possible. They think that an entrepreneurial activity can bring change to their village. I think this was something that people did not even imagine before, that a project could be created in the village. Because everything was negative, everything was defeat, nothing had worked. So I think this has created a positive effect and encouraged other projects to also be developed."	The project has contributed to a shift in local attitudes, encouraging optimism, entrepreneurial thinking, and belief in the possibility of rural change.	Objective 2, 5
Local pride and community engagement	"Yes, yes, there is a part of the village that is very active. Yes, the village supports it, I think they are proud of what is happening in their village"	The organisation has strengthened local participation, community support, and collective pride within the village.	Objective 2, 5
Limits of tourism-led development	"Well, I thought it would have more impact. It is true that we already receive many people, but we have not managed for that to mean a big change in terms of suddenly having double the visitors. It is a beautiful award that recognises you, but it has lacked a more direct effect in terms of more tourists or something like that. So, I think the biggest effect we achieve through tourism is within our own community"	Although tourism increases visibility, its broader economic effect remains limited, highlighting the constraints of tourism-led rural revitalisation.	Objective 2, 4, 6
Multi-dimensional impact generation	"So it is a balance of first having financial resources and then also being lucky enough to find the right person in the territory to take us further. And with that we can generate more environmental impact, more social impact, more economic impact"	The organisation views economic, social, and environmental impacts as interconnected and dependent on resources and local capacity.	Objective 2, 4, 5
Organisational culture and mission alignment	"There is one part of the team that believes strongly in the project and another part that sees it more as a job. At the beginning, when we were few, we were all very committed to the project, but as you grow, some people just see it as a job"	As the organisation grows, maintaining a shared mission-driven culture becomes increasingly difficult.	Objective 2, 4, 5
Local value-oriented growth approach	"We prefer to grow less but maintain quality and a strong connection with the area and continue creating real value locally"	The organisation prioritises maintaining local quality, territorial connection, and meaningful local impact over rapid expansion.	Objective 4, 5
Awareness generation through experiential engagement	"This is a very important part of the model because people come, see what is happening and then share it with others and support the project"	Visits from sponsors and supporters strengthen awareness of the project and reinforce external engagement with the village and its activities.	Objective 2, 5

Theme 4 - Enabling and Limiting Factors Shaping Impact Capacity			
Code	Evidence	Interpretation	Link to objective
Rural talent scarcity as a structural limitation	"Finding talent is very difficult in the territory. So this conditions the project a lot"	Labour shortages and limited access to skilled workers directly constrain the organisation's operational capacity and long-term development.	Objective 1, 3, 4
Corporate partnerships as enabling mechanisms	"The company gives you or opens up the possibility of telling what you are doing to all the people within the company. So I think this is something very positive, something that allows us to raise awareness, to educate, to bring new clients and as I said, working with companies is similar to working with individuals, we also seek companies and that involves contacting them through LinkedIn, going to events, getting to know them"	Corporate partnerships function as enabling factors by increasing awareness, expanding stakeholder networks, and supporting organisational growth.	Objective 4, 5
Sustainable development over expansion	"The solution is not about doing more, it is also about doing better with what already exists"	The organisation prioritises gradual and sustainable development rather than rapid expansion or scale-driven growth.	Objective 4, 5
Growth limitations and workforce constraints	"If you grow too much you can destroy everything, because the project cannot absorb it or cannot manage it. That is, if you give me 10 million euros right now and tell me to recover all the olive groves in the area, I will not be able to, because I will not be able to generate the workforce. There are no people, it would be very difficult, so I think this is something that has to be done gradually, little by little"	The organisation's growth capacity is constrained by labour shortages and limited territorial capacity, requiring gradual and manageable expansion.	Objective 1, 3, 4, 5
Financial and human resource dependency	"It depends on having more financial resources and more talent in the team"	The organisation's ability to increase impact depends on access to both financial capital and skilled human resources.	Objective 4, 5
Interdependence between resources and impact generation	"So it is a balance of first having financial resources and then also being lucky enough to find the right person in the territory to take us further. And with that we can generate more environmental impact, more social impact, more economic impact"	Economic, social, and environmental impact generation depends on organisational capacity, financial stability, and access to suitable local talent.	Objective 2, 4, 5
Mission-driven culture and employee commitment	"We try to create a culture within the team that encourages people to go one step further. But it is not easy, because even if you have purpose and vocation, for many people it is still just a job"	Maintaining a strong mission-driven organisational culture becomes increasingly difficult as the organisation grows and diversifies its workforce.	Objective 4, 5
Internal organisational stability	"The important thing is not to obsess over the number, but to focus on having everything well organised internally, making sure everything works, everyone is satisfied and improving salaries"	The organisation prioritises internal stability, employee wellbeing, and organisational cohesion over numerical growth targets.	Objective 4, 5
Risk of organisational dilution through rapid growth	"So if you grow too fast, you risk bringing in toxic people who can damage the whole team. In rural areas, you have to be very careful with hiring because there are fewer options and sometimes people are moving around trying to find work"	Rapid expansion can threaten organisational cohesion and culture, particularly within small rural labour markets with limited hiring options.	Objective 3, 4, 5
Difficulty attracting qualified labour	"People... Because it is difficult to find qualified people. If you only want to hire local people, it becomes even harder. In the end you hire someone who is not the best fit and you have to manage that. It is not like Amazon where you offer a high salary and hire the best. Here, even if you offer a lot, the best people might not come."	Rural organisations face significant challenges in attracting and retaining qualified workers, limiting organisational efficiency and growth potential.	Objective 1, 3, 4
Growth versus authenticity tension	"Yes, absolutely. We prefer to grow less but maintain quality and a strong connection with the area and continue creating real value locally"	The organisation consciously prioritises territorial connection and local value creation over aggressive scaling strategies.	Objective 2, 3, 4, 5
Adaptation of the model over time	"Yes, at the beginning we focused on growth, but we realised that growing too fast can be negative. The main limitation is the lack of people in rural areas. There are many olive trees to recover, but what is missing is active, skilled people. Talent has moved to big cities like Madrid and Barcelona. We need to bring talent back to rural areas. There are some changes now, like companies investing in the area and bringing people, but it is still necessary to attract and retain talent."	The organisation adapted its growth strategy over time in response to rural demographic decline, labour shortages, and territorial limitations.	Objective 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
Founder dependency and organisational risk	"I think one risk is the dependence on the founders. If the founders lose motivation, the project could struggle. Social enterprises are often closely tied to their founders. We are working to make the project more self-managed with a leadership structure, but it remains a risk."	The long-term sustainability of the organisation remains vulnerable to founder dependency and leadership concentration.	Objective 4, 5

12. Declaration of Use of Artificial Intelligence

Declaración de Uso de Herramientas de Inteligencia Artificial Generativa en Trabajos Fin de Grado

ADVERTENCIA: Desde la Universidad consideramos que ChatGPT u otras herramientas similares son herramientas muy útiles en la vida académica, aunque su uso queda siempre bajo la responsabilidad del alumno, puesto que las respuestas que proporciona pueden no ser veraces. En este sentido, NO está permitido su uso en la elaboración del Trabajo fin de Grado para generar código porque estas herramientas no son fiables en esa tarea. Aunque el código funcione, no hay garantías de que metodológicamente sea correcto, y es altamente probable que no lo sea.

Por la presente, yo, Oliver Thomas Birch, estudiante de Grado en Administración y Dirección de Empresas con Mención Internacional (E4) de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas al presentar mi Trabajo Fin de Grado titulado "**How does a rural social enterprise operate as a territorially embedded organisation, and how does this shape its contribution to rural revitalisation?**", declaro que he utilizado la herramienta de Inteligencia Artificial Generativa ChatGPT u otras similares de IAG de código sólo en el contexto de las actividades descritas a continuación:

1. **Brainstorming de ideas de investigación:** Utilizado para idear y esbozar posibles áreas de investigación.
2. **Crítico:** Para encontrar contra-argumentos a una tesis específica que pretendo defender.
3. **Referencias:** Usado conjuntamente con otras herramientas, como Science, para identificar referencias preliminares que luego he contrastado y validado.
4. **Metodólogo:** Para descubrir métodos aplicables a problemas específicos de investigación.
5. **Corrector de estilo literario y de lenguaje:** Para mejorar la calidad lingüística y estilística del texto.
6. **Sintetizador y divulgador de libros complicados:** Para resumir y comprender literatura compleja.

7. **Revisor:** Para recibir sugerencias sobre cómo mejorar y perfeccionar el trabajo con diferentes niveles de exigencia.
8. **Traductor:** Para traducir textos de un lenguaje a otro.

Afirmo que toda la información y contenido presentados en este trabajo son producto de mi investigación y esfuerzo individual, excepto donde se ha indicado lo contrario y se han dado los créditos correspondientes (he incluido las referencias adecuadas en el TFG y he explicitado para que se ha usado ChatGPT u otras herramientas similares). Soy consciente de las implicaciones académicas y éticas de presentar un trabajo no original y acepto las consecuencias de cualquier violación a esta declaración.

Fecha: 30 Mayo 2026

Firma: O. Birch