The article uses co-word analysis to study the literature on territorial development. Exploiting bibliographic material from 6 bibliographic databases, the authors try to identify the main topics that are addressed within this scientific field and their evolution. The paper identifies the main topics of this field of research and how they are related to one another. In addition, it highlights the time trends of the topics, observing that their importance varies over time. The analysis also shows that while some topics can be considered the basic core of the discipline, others are new and are developing only recently (e.g., sustainability, innovation), while others are progressively losing importance (e.g., social capital).

Overall, I deem that the topic investigated, as well as the type of analysis performed, are interesting. However, I have three general concerns/suggestion:

- The paper is really difficult to read, in part because of the English writing (which must be improved), in part because of the structure itself, which undermines clarity to a great extent. I'll detail specific aspects below, but in general the article lacks a linear logical sequence. Some concepts are anticipated but explained only after some pages, some others are not explained at all, some periods and paragraphs are misplaced… This latter issue is particularly evident in the result section, where there are several parts that are much more likely a discussion and that (more importantly) seems completely disconnected from the results that are presented. I suggest the authors to revise the entire structure of the manuscript and to decisively improve the writing, otherwise it is really difficult to understand what they did and what they obtained.
- The authors decided to conduct a different analysis for each bibliographic database. Honestly, if this is the first attempt of conducting such a type of analysis in this field, I would find much more interesting to have an aggregated analysis, using the entries from all databases at the same time. The comparison between databases might then be a side complement of this analysis, especially if it is focused on specific comparisons (e.g., open access vs. academic subscription databases, Spanish vs. international databases).
- As a final general comment, I noticed that authors frequently describe the methodology referring to the functions of the software they used (some examples are fount at lines 538, 552, 731). However, these functions are just a means to perform some methodological techniques. Therefore, these techniques (i.e., what the software functions do), rather than the software functions, should be (at least very briefly) described. Just to cite an example that I also mention later, at line 731 the authors say that "the R-Bibliometrix tool was used to generate thematic cluster maps". This says nothing about the method. How are these thematic clusters created? Using some proximity measure?

I add here some other (not minor) comments that I find relevant:

1. Can the authors provide some references to previous attempts (if existent) made to describe the literature on territorial development (also performed with standard review techniques)?
2. Lines 102-122: To improve clarity, the last part of the introduction should be structured, in my opinion, in i) identifying the gap to be filled, ii) define the objectives of the paper and iii) provide a very brief overview of how to address these objectives. In line 105 the authors write that "this article contributes to closing this gap", but I see no gap described in the lines above (by the way, honestly, I don't understand what is written in lines 102-104).

3. Line 134-136: I get the sense of the period, but the wording is wrong.
4. Lines 132-164: I admit that I am not familiar with co-word analysis, and maybe also because of this it took me some effort to interpret this part. First, you need to define what you are talking about. What is a node in your case? Are keywords the nodes? What is a link? What is a cluster? What do you mean by link strength? In lines 155-157, for example, you refer to "subgroups of words…that are more strongly internally linked to the nodes that are not part of the subgroup", but without providing a definition of the concepts used is difficult to figure out what you mean.
5. Lines 138-140: Can you provide some formula indicating how the density and centrality measures are computed?
6. Equation 1: I don't understand how the strength of association is measured, neither from equation 1, nor from the description above it. The 2018 VOSviewer manual says it is similar to equation 6 in Eck and Waltman (2009). I don't know whether that is the exact definition (probably not, because you're working in a network framework), but the authors can start from there for better explaining the statistic used.
7. Lines 207-211: These are the research questions. They should be placed at the end of the introduction, not in the methods.
8. Lines 216-218: Here are two examples of anticipating something that is discussed later in the text and that might confuse the reader. The first is "creating thematic groups to be processed…" (I deem this is what is done in Table 3) and the second is "where the co-occurrence links between the nodes of territory and rurality are explored" (here the authors directly anticipate some results). Please, either explain here what is done or (better) follow a sequential approach where you explain each step one by one, otherwise it becomes very hard for the reader to follow and understand.
9. Table 1: In the last column, the total is a raw sum of the other columns, but what about duplicates, i.e., papers that are present in more than one database?
10. Line 257: How is the geographical origin defined? Is the location of the institution? Is the location where the study is performed?
11. Lines 290-293: Please omit this period, is not relevant.
12. Lines 321-322: What is the "total strength of co-occurrence"? How is it measured?
13. Tables 4-7: Are the figures in these tables the values of the strength of association (equation 1)? Please specify. It might be interesting to add a column indicating the strength of each node, to highlight which are the most important ones.
14. Lines 353-358: It seems to me that this is a different kind of analysis from the one in the table, isn't it? Please clarify this.
15. Figures 3-13: How are these figures built? To my understanding, in these networks, one finds: i) keywords; ii) groups of keywords (the ones in Tables 4-7); and iii) metadata (geographical area). Does this mean that the networks include not only keywords? Again, detail and clarify the method.
16. Lines 392-393: What does it mean, technically, that "the issue of ecosystem services emerges"?
17. Lines 410-412: This sentence seems out of place.
18. Lines 444-449: This sentence seems out of place.
19. Lines 474-478: This somewhat clarifies what is reported in the figures. It should be placed either in the methods (better) or immediately before presenting the first figure.
20. Lines 479-492: I think the analysis of titles is quite different from the analysis of the keywords. Instead of using this heterogeneous strategy I would consider omitting the Dimensions database (which, to my understanding, does not provide keywords) from the analysis.

21. Lines 511-527: This part seems out of place. Like the previous ones, it seems more suitable to be placed (if relevant) in the discussion.
22. Lines 540-542: Is the bullet point necessary here?
23. Line 551: Maybe the authors meant “Figure 13” instead of “Figure 12”.
24. Lines 551-562: This paragraph contains very important information on how to interpret the Figures. It should be placed before presenting the first figure of this type, not before the last.
25. Line 575: Maybe the authors meant “Scopus”, not “Elsevier”
26. Lines 579-631: These paragraphs seem to me completely disconnected from the paragraph that stands before it as well as from the content of section 3.2 as suggested by its title.
27. Lines 602-607: This paragraph seems very much like a “copy and paste” of lines 511-518.
28. Figure 14: The authors said that the figure is created considering all documents from all databases. Did the authors omit duplicate entries (i.e., papers that are present in more than one database)? In addition, why does the figure start from 2007 and not from 2000?
29. Lines 670-720: How are these paragraphs related to Figure 14 and to the longitudinal analysis that is recalled in the title of the section?
30. Lines 731-732: What are these “thematic clusters”? This seems to be, potentially, a very interesting analysis, so the authors need to better explain how these clusters are created, not just saying “the software did it” (see the third general suggestion). Maybe such an explanation can also be useful to understand why some clusters are very similar to each other.
31. Figure 15: Why are there more labels than bubbles? The figure is not entirely clear. It might also be useful to add some reference value for density and centrality.
32. Lines 757: What is “intensity”?
33. Lines 775-777: The authors say that “within the local development cluster, the driving themes of territorial development research are now concentrated”. Maybe the authors meant of “territory research” rather than “territorial development research”? To my understanding, “territorial development” in Figure 15 is a different cluster.
34. Line 789: Wasn’t the field of “rural development” already among the basic topics also in Figure 15?
35. Line 806-807: I suppose there exist some free software to change the file format. I wouldn’t see an issue there.
36. Discussion: In my opinion, the discussion only partially manages to capture the relevant aspects raised by the results. Specifically, a very long part (from line 922 to line 1026) is devoted to discussing some of the topics identified by the analysis, while very few or no consideration is made about the observed links between these topics (except for the urban-rural connection), about the variation of the topics’ importance over time, or about the emergence and disappearance of some areas of research. In particular, it might be interesting that the authors try to hypothesize or discuss why they observed these specific patterns, also referring to existent literature on territorial development. In addition, it would be valuable to compare the results with previous studies (if existent) that analysed the literature on territorial development.
37. Conclusions: With such a long discussion, I would suggest the authors to reduce the length of the conclusions, just summarising the most important point, also in light of the reviewed discussion.
38. Figures and Tables: There are some Spanish words here and there.

References

Van Eck, N.J., & Waltman, L. (2009). How to normalize cooccurrence data? An analysis of some well-known similarity measures. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60(8), 1635–1651.