

Systematic Review

Roots of Rural Youth: A Five-Year Systematic Review of Place Attachment

Alba Carrasco Cruz ¹, Fátima Cruz-Souza ¹ and Gustavo González-Calvo ^{2,*}

¹ Recognized Research Group on Psychosocial Analysis and Research, Department of Psychology, University of Valladolid, 47002 Valladolid, Spain; alba.carrasco@uva.es (A.C.C.); fatimaregina.cruz@uva.es (F.C.-S.)

² Department of Didactics of Musical, Artistic and Physical Expression, University of Valladolid, 47002 Valladolid, Spain

* Correspondence: gustavo.gonzalez@uva.es

Abstract

This systematic review examines how recent scientific literature addresses place attachment among rural youth, emphasizing the central role of emotional bonds with place in decisions to stay, leave, or return to rural areas. Based on an analysis of studies published between 2019 and 2023, it considers factors such as country of publication, study participants, methodology, research approach, theoretical framework, and main findings. A systematic search was conducted in Scopus and Web of Science, applying inclusion criteria based on type of research, year of publication, language, and article relevance. The review includes 19 peer-reviewed articles. Methodologically, the reviewed articles employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection techniques. Key themes include urban migration and the relationship between place attachment and environmental awareness. Despite limitations such as regional disparities in study coverage, the findings highlight the challenges faced by rural youth under urban normative cultural pressures. The review underscores the need for nuanced approaches that are sensitive to gender and other axes of oppression in addressing rural issues, and it advocates for a holistic understanding of rural youth experiences that takes into account intergenerational dynamics shaping their aspirations and decision-making.

Keywords: rural youth; place attachment; depopulation; migrations; gender



Academic Editor: Peter Hopkins

Received: 3 July 2025

Revised: 4 September 2025

Accepted: 11 September 2025

Published: 17 September 2025

Citation: Carrasco Cruz, Alba, Fátima Cruz-Souza, and Gustavo González-Calvo. 2025. Roots of Rural Youth: A Five-Year Systematic Review of Place Attachment. *Social Sciences* 14: 554. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14090554>

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The study of the realities faced by rural youth worldwide has gained significant importance within the social sciences over recent decades (Bouichou et al. 2021; Vogt and Fochezatto 2023). This is attributed to their crucial role in the socio-economic revitalization of these areas and in combating depopulation and over-aging, which currently characterize the rural landscape, especially in the Global North (Camarero 2022; Saint Onge and Smith 2020). These territories are marked by conditions that drive young people away, making them the primary group involved in migration to urban areas, with a particularly high incidence among women (Camarero et al. 2009; Camarero and Sampedro 2019; Corbett 2007).

Several studies concur that the primary reasons for this migration include the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and the centralized structure of the educational system, which situates higher education institutions in cities (Castle and Grant 2023;

Pedersen and Gram 2018). These structural conditions, along with dominant negative perceptions of rural life, form what Fulkerson and Thomas (2019) term “urbanormativity.” This term refers to the cultural interpretive framework that creates a symbolic hierarchy between rural and urban areas, associating urban life with identities based on personal growth while relegating rural identity to a marginal status (Fulkerson and Thomas 2019). This paradigm acts as an imperative for mobility among rural youth, for whom migration to urban centers becomes the only apparent path to a fulfilling life (Castle and Grant 2023; Farrugia 2016).

Thus, rural-urban migration among young people is influenced not only by economic and structural factors but also by highly subjective processes shaped by sociocultural and psychological factors (Carrasco-Cruz and Cruz-Souza 2025; Fulkerson and Thomas 2019). In this context, place attachment emerges as a crucial element in understanding the dynamics of mobility and permanence among rural youth (Cruz and García-Bengochea 2020; Farrugia 2016). Generally, much of the existing literature defines place attachment as the affective bond between individuals and specific locations (Low and Altman 1992). However, this definition is excessively broad, and there is significant disagreement regarding the conceptualization of the term, as well as its dimensions and associated concepts, such as place identity, rootedness, place satisfaction, sense of place, and place dependence (Lewicka 2011; Raymond et al. 2010; Smith 2018).

Despite this lack of conceptual consistency in the literature, the idea persists that place attachment has a unique nature, distinguishing it from other affective systems (Giuliani 2003). To create a more precise definition, Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) draw on one of the main characteristics of attachment systems: the desire of individuals to remain close to their attachment object (Ainsworth and Bell 1970; Bowlby 1969). Based on this, they propose the following definition:

“A positive affective bond between an individual and a specific place, the main characteristic of which is the tendency of the individual to maintain closeness to such a place”. (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001, p. 274)

One of the earliest references to the affective nature of attachments between people and places appears in the classic study by Fried (1963) in the field of environmental psychology, which analyzed the psychological effects of forced relocation on the residents of a Boston suburb. Subsequent decades witnessed a surge of interest in place attachment across various disciplines, including environmental sociology, human geography, and cultural anthropology—fields that had already begun to examine the intricate relationships between people and their environments (see Low and Altman 1992; Giuliani 2003; Lewicka 2011). Approaches from these disciplines influenced environmental psychology, generating alternatives to the dominant positivist approach, primarily focused on evaluating and quantifying individual experiences. Thus, the analysis of place attachment is embedded in broader discussions, such as the dissolution of local communities due to global dynamics or the symbolic and cultural construction of geographical spaces (Pinto de Carvalho and Cornejo 2018; Smith 2018).

The diversity of approaches and conceptualizations of place attachment stems from the multitude of theoretical traditions addressing it. As Lewicka (2011) argues, the concept of place attachment only makes sense within broader theoretical frameworks. Despite differing approaches, two main currents can be distinguished from the aforementioned theoretical trajectory. On one hand, Lewicka (2011) identifies a qualitative phenomenological approach originating from human geography, and on the other, a quantitative approach, predominantly in the field of environmental psychology. These two approaches correspond to those identified by Pinto de Carvalho and Cornejo (2018), who refer to a sociocognitive approach (Lewicka 2011; Scannell and Gifford 2010), characterized by

a positivist perspective and the use of quantitative methods, and a cultural approach (Low and Altman 1992; Farrugia et al. 2015), which shifts attention from individual experiences to the sociocultural processes shaping affective bonds with places.

Beyond these major currents, there are points of disagreement regarding specific aspects of the conceptualization of place attachment. One of the most significant relates to the dimensions that constitute place attachment. While it is complex to cover and develop all the multidimensional models of place attachment proposed throughout its theoretical trajectory, mentioning some of the most influential models can be illustrative of the theoretical landscape. First, the approach proposed by Scannell and Gifford (2010) stands out as one of the most groundbreaking contributions in the field, synthesizing the concept of place attachment into a practical and easily applicable framework for the first time (Smith 2018). Scannell and Gifford (2010) identify three constitutive dimensions of place attachment: the attached person, the psychological processes through which attachment develops, and the place itself, encompassing both physical and social subdimensions. This model has had a significant impact, influencing subsequent seminal studies such as those by Lewicka (2011) and Smith (2018), who employed this theory as a unifying framework within the field.

In contrast, there is a second widely accepted and reproduced approach in various studies (Raymond et al. 2010), based on a bidimensional model composed of place identity and place dependence. According to Raymond et al. (2010), place identity refers to those dimensions of the self that, as a result of the combination of feelings about specific physical environments and symbolic ties with places, define who we are. Place dependence, on the other hand, consists in a “functional connection based specifically on the individual physical connection to a setting; for example, it reflects the degree to which the physical setting provides conditions to support an intended use” (p. 426). The contrast between different models of place attachment highlights the lack of agreement on its dimensions and reveals some inconsistency in the very notion of dimension.

Another point of disagreement relates to the identification of place attachment as an essentially positive bond (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001; Jorgensen and Stedman 2006; Manzo 2003), as recent critical studies (Li et al. 2018; Pinto de Carvalho and Cornejo 2018) strive to identify the ambivalences and negative evaluations that permeate it. In this sense, although studies on place attachment initially prioritized urban environments, the rural environment constitutes a relevant area of study in this regard, allowing us to shed light on the macrostructural, cultural, and psychosocial factors underlying the mass exodus of young people (Cruz and García-Bengochea 2020). Based on these considerations, the present paper aims, through a systematic review of the literature, to provide an overview of the main approaches to rural youth attachment to their place of origin developed between 2019 and 2023, identifying key research themes, theoretical perspectives, and contributions to the understanding of rural issues.

2. Material and Methods

For the preparation of this systematic review, we followed the guidelines set by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al. 2010).

2.1. Search Strategies and Information Sources

The search aimed to review the existing scientific literature on place attachment among rural young adults. Two databases (Web of Science and Scopus) were selected based on the quality criterion of the articles, ensuring their indexing in JCR or SJR. The following search criteria were used in these databases: place attachment AND rural AND (youth OR young). The search was completed on 19 February 2024.

2.2. Eligibility Criteria

The following exclusion criteria were applied for the systematic review: (1) Articles published before 2019, (2) Publication types other than journal articles or literature reviews, (3) Publications not written in English or Spanish, (4) Duplicate publications, (5) Articles that do not address place attachment among rural youth as a central theme of the research.

2.3. Selection Process

The studies underwent a selection process (see Figure 1) comprising different stages and levels of exclusion. Initially, after entering the search criteria into the mentioned databases, criteria 1, 2, and 3 were applied using the filtering tools of Scopus and Web of Science. Once these criteria were applied, the resulting articles were exported to the Mendeley reference manager, which facilitated the application of criterion 4 by identifying duplicate publications. After this initial exclusion level, articles specifically addressing place attachment among rural youth as a central study theme were identified. This involved selecting articles that explicitly referenced all three issues in the title, abstract, or keywords. However, not all articles presented these characteristics clearly, so any discrepancies were discussed among the researchers until a consensus was reached regarding their inclusion or exclusion. Specifically, after this discussion process, three studies were excluded despite initially appearing to meet the criteria. A closer examination revealed that one did not address place attachment as a concept ([Matysiak 2022](#)), while the other two did not focus on the experiences of rural youth ([Choi 2023](#); [Stachowski and Bock 2021](#)).

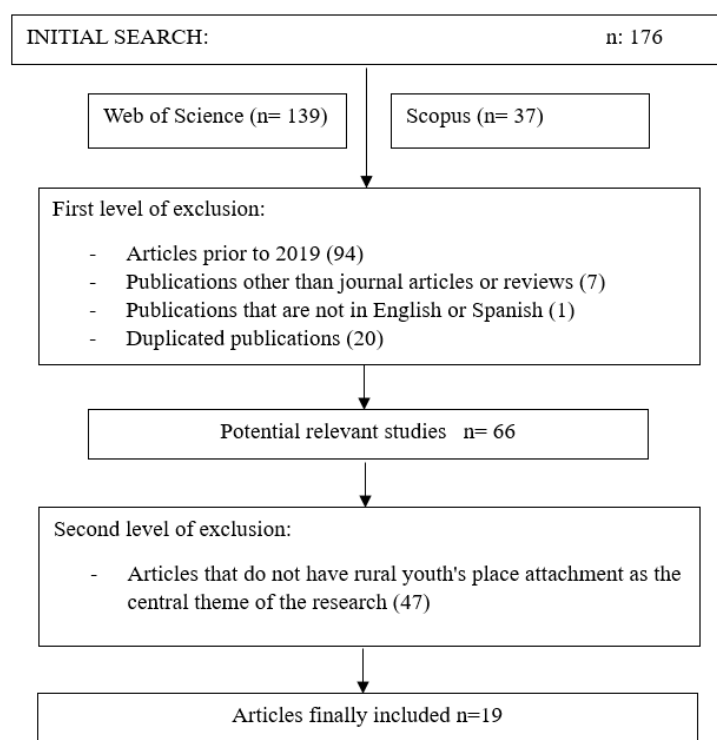


Figure 1. Flow diagram.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis Process

Following the article selection process, the researchers collaboratively worked on the selection and analysis of the extracted data. The following categories of analysis were established: (1) Author and Year, (2) Country, (3) Participants, (4) Methodology Type, (5) Research Topic, (6) Outcomes, (7) Concept of Place Attachment. Data related to place attachment among rural youth were extracted, ensuring relevance to the study's objectives.

Discrepancies in outcome selection were resolved through discussion. These categories were used to structure data collection, subsequent analysis, and the formulation of the results and discussion.

The selection of these analytical categories is intended to address the objective of capturing the conceptual and methodological diversity observed in recent studies on rural youth and place attachment. The categories “Author and Year” and “Country” facilitate the identification of temporal and geographical patterns within the extant literature. The categories “Participants” and “Methodology Type” offer insight into the scope and design of the studies, while “Research Topic” and “Outcomes” facilitate synthesis of key thematic concerns and findings. Finally, the inclusion of the “Concept of Place Attachment” facilitates an analysis of how this notion is theoretically framed across the reviewed works. This theoretical framing is central to understanding its role in shaping youth experiences in rural contexts.

2.5. Study Risk of Bias Assessment

To assess the risk of bias in the included articles, each one was independently assessed by the three authors, who worked in parallel to identify potential biases in areas such as selection, performance, and reporting. Any discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through discussion, and a final consensus was reached.

2.6. Synthesis Methods

Results were synthesized by comparing paper characteristics and outcomes, and any potential heterogeneity was explored through subgroup analysis. The collected data were finally synthesized into a table, where the information was structured based on the main analysis categories. To assess the risk of bias due to missing results, we evaluated potential reporting biases in the studies included. The certainty of the evidence for each outcome was assessed using an established framework, considering the risk of bias and other relevant factors.

3. Results

This section presents the results for the 19 articles selected between January 2019 and February 2024, based on the categories outlined above. Table 1 provides a summary of these results, highlighting the main aspects of each article reviewed. Following the table is a more detailed presentation of the results, providing an in-depth view of the findings across the categories, except for the year of publication, as all articles have been published between 2019 and 2024.

It is important to note that the reviewed studies exhibit significant methodological variability, including differences in sample size and the conceptualization of place attachment. This reflects the diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives from which the issue has been approached. While some studies have used quantitative surveys with samples exceeding 300 participants (e.g., [Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Gerhardt and Foster 2021](#); [García-Arias et al. 2021](#); [Simões et al. 2020, 2021](#)), others have conducted in-depth qualitative research with fewer than 20 participants (e.g., [Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022](#); [Stockdale and Ferguson 2020](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#)). These methodological discrepancies and variations in sample size limit the generalizability of the results from individual articles. Additionally, the predominance of studies conducted in Europe, the United States, and Australia, along with the notable scarcity of research in the Global South, may constrain the broader applicability of findings in underrepresented regions, where socioeconomic and cultural dynamics could differ from those examined in Western contexts. The results related to each category of analysis are presented in detail below.

Table 1. Summary of articles about place attachment of rural youth published between 2019 and 2023.

Author and Year	Country	Participants	Methodology	Topic	Outcomes	Concept of Place Attachment
Nartova and Krupets (2019)	Russia	59 participants aged 20–35 (29 men and 30 women)	Qualitative methodology: Biographical interviews.	The paper examines how young Russians in three rural communities conceptualize their place, space and identity.	St. Petersburg, along with other major cities, serves as a primary reference point for comparing and evaluating opportunities, living standards, and other factors. Nevertheless, they tend to form relatively coherent and consistent local identities.	Place attachment is defined as a form of belonging. This is understood as a reflexive object at an emotional and rational level (Cuervo and Wyn 2014).
Farrugia (2019)	Australia	74 participants aged 17–29; <i>sic.</i> 33 men and 44 women (inconsistent with total)	Qualitative methodology: Semi-structured in-depth interviews.	Relationship between class, sense of place attachment, and the imperative of mobility and cosmopolitanism	The valorization of mobility and cosmopolitanism among youth creates complex relationships to place rooted in social histories and class experiences. This imperative is particularly evident in the narratives of middle-class young people.	Attachment to place is conceptualized as the complex, multifaceted relationship young people develop with their localities. This relationship is influenced by social class, experiences of mobility (both real and imagined), and cultural dynamics of inequality.
Turpeinen (2019)	Finland	34 participants aged between 20 and their early 30s. Gender not specified	Qualitative and ethnographic methodology: 47 semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and visual research, with 155 photographs.	The paper addresses the challenge for rural youth to migrate and settle in the city, based on the frictions that arise in everyday life.	For rural youth, the process of migration and settlement in urban areas presents a number of challenges. Unlike spatial adaptation, which can be relatively straightforward, socio-cultural elements play a significant role in the friction that arises in daily interactions.	Notion of embodied attachment, which refers to the affective relationship between individuals and their rural homes (Farrugia et al. 2015)

Table 1. Cont.

Author and Year	Country	Participants	Methodology	Topic	Outcomes	Concept of Place Attachment
Stockdale and Ferguson (2020)	Ireland	15 participants aged 18–30 (8 men and 7 women)	Qualitative methodology: Semi-structured in-depth interviews.	The paper examines the impact of rural housing opportunities on the immobility of rural youth and the significance of planning policies.	Attachment to place is inextricably linked with family history and exerts a positive influence on the desire to remain. Farming families facilitate the entry of young people into the housing market.	Place attachment is understood to be based on memories, family attachment, a sense of home, social ties to place, and physical factors in the environment (Lewicka 2011)
Simões et al. (2020)	Portugal	337 participants aged 18–29 (123 men and 214 women)	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	Challenges faced by rural areas regarding the mobility of the young population. It analyzes the interaction between objective factors (indicators of socio-economic status) and subjective factors (attachment to place).	A stronger place attachment correlated more strongly with improved prospects of returning than increased income prospects.	Place attachment is the affective bond that individuals form with specific locations, including their places of origin (Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira 2013). It also considers the role of community and the role of physical space (Farrugia 2016).
Monka et al. (2020)	Denmark	70 participants aged 14–16 (31 men and 39 women)	Quantitative methodology: apply a local attachment index, calculated from data obtained through ethnography and interviews.	Relationship between sense of place attachment and linguistic variations presented by young people from different rural areas in Denmark.	Differences between the two settings, rural and urban communities, as well as among individuals, can be accounted for by disparities in access to the place, life histories, and future aspirations.	Place attachment is a positive emotional bond between an individual and a specific place, primarily distinguished by the individual's inclination to maintain spatial proximity to said place (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001)

Table 1. Cont.

Author and Year	Country	Participants	Methodology	Topic	Outcomes	Concept of Place Attachment
García-Arias et al. (2021)	Spain	445 participants aged 15–19 (238 men and 207 women)	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	Factors that influence the decision of young people to migrate or remain in rural areas, taking into account the social and human capital that shapes their choices.	Variables that most influence the decision to emigrate include the number of hours per week devoted to study or cultural activities. These activities are more common among women. In contrast, men spend more time on leisure and sports activities, which increases the possibility of staying.	Model of place attachment is composed of three dimensions: social attachment, attachment to the natural environment, and attachment to cultural and architectural heritage.
Gerhardt and Foster (2021)	Canada	1277 participants aged 16 and older; women overrepresented by 8% compared to local census.	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	The article explores the role of debt in the mobility processes of youth in rural and peripheral regions.	Age, education, debt type, and comfort with debt are key predictors of migration intent. Personal debt emerges as a relevant economic factor, especially in Atlantic Canada, where outmigration persists. Findings support further research on youth mobility.	Place attachment is not defined. It is mentioned only generally as part of the subjective factors influencing youth migration decisions, but it is not further addressed in the analysis or discussion of results.
González Fernández et al. (2021)	Spain and Mexico	70 participants, mostly aged 20–24 (34 women, 4 not specified, 32 men)	Mixed methodology: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. The article focuses only on questionnaires applied at a Mexican university.	Relationship between educational pathways and young rural people's expectations of permanence or mobility, considering gender and social origin. Aims to compare Spain and Mexico.	Preliminary results from questionnaires at a Mexican university. Mobility challenges traditional rural-urban segregation in youth trajectories. Education, permanence, and employment outcomes are influenced by gender and social origin. Academic achievement does not always guarantee access to quality, well-paid jobs in rural or urban contexts.	Place attachment is not clearly defined. In this Spanish-language article, it appears in the English title as a translation of “arraigo” (also translated as “rootedness”), a vague term used to express young people's desire or possibility to remain in rural areas.

Table 1. Cont.

Author and Year	Country	Participants	Methodology	Topic	Outcomes	Concept of Place Attachment
Nguyen et al. (2021)	Vietnam	502 participants under 24 years old, all graduates (287 men and 215 women).	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	Determinants of graduates' work location choices (returning to rural hometowns vs. staying in urban areas like Hanoi) in Vietnam, focusing on place attachment, job opportunities, family support, and social norms.	Only 21.5% of graduates returned to their hometowns, with most remaining in Hanoi. Strong emotional ties to place influenced return intentions, but limited rural job opportunities discouraged return. Parental presence and encouragement also shaped decisions.	Place attachment is not explicitly defined but operationalized using five items from Jorgensen and Stedman's (2001) scale: relaxation in the hometown, happiness associated with it, preference for the home environment, frequency of visits, and nostalgia. No theoretical framework is discussed.
Riethmuller et al. (2021)	Australia	11 participants aged 20–24 (3 men and 8 women)	Qualitative methodology: Semi-structured in-depth interviews.	Formation of place attachment among young people who have migrated to urban areas and their subsequent decision to return to their rural origins.	Attachment to place plays an important role in young people's intentions to return to rural areas. The results indicate a strong attachment to rural areas, despite limited economic opportunities, whereas this factor was not as important for urban youth.	Place attachment is defined as the emotional connection of individuals to specific locations (Low and Altman 1992)
Simões et al. (2021)	Portugal	349 participants aged 18–38 (129 men and 220 women)	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	Structural and subjective factors that influence the willingness of individuals to return to rural areas after completing their university studies.	Participants whose mothers had tertiary education, who expected higher earnings three years after graduation, and who were strongly attached to their place of study were less likely to return to their rural origins. In contrast, those more connected to their rural roots showed greater interest in returning over time.	Place attachment is an affective bond between people and specific places and communities (Raymond et al. 2010) The authors posit that place attachment is often considered an affective dimension of place identity.

Table 1. Cont.

Author and Year	Country	Participants	Methodology	Topic	Outcomes	Concept of Place Attachment
Bernsen et al. (2022)	USA	1495 participants aged 11–18 (50% female, 45% male, 5% other identities)	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	Residential aspirations of young school children in two rural forest areas with transitional economies.	The motivation of young people to remain or return to rural localities is more closely related to their connections to the community and their environment than to local economic factors.	Two distinct notions of place attachment exist. The first is an emotional and positive bond between individuals or groups and their environment (Low and Altman 1992). The second, proposed by Evans (2015), views attachment as a conflicted and dynamic relationship.
Rodríguez-Díaz et al. (2022)	Chile	90 participants aged 13–24 (45 men and 45 women)	Quantitative methodology: Questionnaire	Elements of attachment to place that should be encouraged in order to curb youth depopulation in the Valparaíso area.	Significance of social connections and the importance of contact with nature as factors influencing attachment. Necessity for public policies to address not only economic and employment factors.	The concept of place attachment, as defined by Low and Altman (1992), encompasses the formation of an emotional bond with a specific location, which subsequently leads to a bond with the surrounding physical and socio-cultural environment.
Caretta et al. (2022)	USA	554 participants, university students (gender and age not specified)	Mixed methodology: questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews.	The role of place attachment in the perspectives on climate change among students in Appalachia, USA.	The socioeconomic status of rural Appalachia influences students' views on climate change. The overwhelming information exposure contributes to inaction among youth. Analyzing place-based identities reframes climate change as a critical issue impacting their communities.	Place attachment refers to the physical and/or emotional bond that an individual or group has to a particular place (Scannell and Gifford 2010). Place identity is part of place attachment.

Table 1. Cont.

Author and Year	Country	Participants	Methodology	Topic	Outcomes	Concept of Place Attachment
Pedersen and Therkelsen (2022)	Denmark	19 participants aged 27–40 (7 men and 12 women)	Qualitative methodology: Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Ambivalent place attachment of young individuals returning to rural areas.	Urban-rural dominant hierarchy is reversed at certain life stages, such as parenthood, when young people value rural spaces more. Symbolism plays a significant role in causing ambivalences in place attachment. The paper also highlights coping strategies for these ambivalences.	A model of attachment that takes into account the increasing mobility of people, capital, ideas, and information (Gustafson 2001; Urry 2000; Wiborg 2004). Comprised of four dimensions: social relationships, materialities, past, and memories (Berg 2020).
Sowl et al. (2022)	USA	496 participants aged 34–43 (203 men and 293 women)	Quantitative methodology: Secondary source analysis	Brain drain in rural areas of the USA: The paper examines which factors experienced during adolescence and post-graduation promote return.	The university students who had higher levels of school attachment were significantly more likely to return home compared to graduates who had lower levels of school attachment.	The concept of place attachment focuses on the social aspects of attachment, which is understood as the result of the ability to connect with family and friends, and it influences migration decisions (Clark 2017; Spring et al. 2017).
Park (2023)	Japan	22 participants graduated (age not specified) (8 men and 14 woman)	Qualitative methodology: Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Intentions of 22 graduates to remain in their hometowns. Place attachment as a response to changing values and lifestyle	Attachment to hometowns can be interpreted as a proactive response to the challenges posed by prolonged recession and tremendous disasters.	Place attachment is an emotional connection to places at different scales, which evolves over time (Manzo and Devine-Wright 2021).
Beckwith et al. (2023)	Vietnam	114 participants aged 18–25 and 50–87 (59 men and 55 women)	Qualitative methodology: Narrative study and visual methods	How older and younger individuals perceive and experience environmental and climate change in two rural areas of Vietnam.	There are significant similarities between the generations about environmental values and concerns. Both generations have a crucial role to play in the management of natural resources and the resolution of environmental issues.	Place attachment denotes an emotional bond that connects groups or individuals to and within places. These bonds develop over time and can have a significant impact on how people make sense of the world (Devine-Wright 2013).

3.1. Country

The studies reviewed were conducted on four continents: Europe, America, Asia, and Oceania, with no publications identified in Africa. Europe is clearly overrepresented, with eight studies conducted in Russia (Nartova and Krupets 2019), Finland (Turpeinen 2019), Ireland (Stockdale and Ferguson 2020), Portugal (Simões et al. 2020, 2021), Spain (García-Arias et al. 2021), and Denmark (Monka et al. 2020; Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022). More modest but relevant contributions come from the United States (Bernsen et al. 2022; Caretta et al. 2022; Sowl et al. 2022), Australia (Farrugia 2019; Riethmuller et al. 2021), and Canada (Gerhardt and Foster 2021). Latin America is represented by studies in Chile (Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022) and Mexico as part of a cross-national comparison with Spain (González Fernández et al. 2021). Asia contributes with Japan (Park 2023) and Vietnam (Beckwith et al. 2023; Nguyen et al. 2021). Overall, the distribution confirms a predominance of research in Europe, moderate attention in North America and Oceania, and scarce but significant contributions from Latin America and Asia, with a notable underrepresentation of the Global South.

3.2. Participants

Although all the reviewed studies focus on young people from rural areas, the participants' ages vary across investigations. While most include individuals between 18 and 35 years old, some extend the age range into the late thirties and early forties (Simões et al. 2021; Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022; Sowl et al. 2022), include adolescents in their samples (Bernsen et al. 2022; Monka et al. 2020; Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022), or conduct intergenerational comparisons (Beckwith et al. 2023; Gerhardt and Foster 2021). Regarding gender, the samples are generally balanced, with only one case of underrepresentation of women (Nguyen et al. 2021) and two cases in which gender distribution is not specified (Caretta et al. 2022; Turpeinen 2019).

Within this category of analysis, academic activity stands out as a key selection criterion. Although university students represent a convenient data source, in rural studies this criterion is particularly relevant due to the concentration of higher education institutions in urban centers, which makes academic training one of the main drivers of youth migration (Castle and Grant 2023; Pedersen and Gram 2018). Five studies focus on secondary or university students (Bernsen et al. 2022; Caretta et al. 2022; González Fernández et al. 2021; Simões et al. 2020, 2021), while three focus on recent graduates (Nguyen et al. 2021; Park 2023; Sowl et al. 2022).

Mobility emerges as a second important selection criterion, beyond academic training: three articles select participants based on migration processes toward urban areas, focusing either on urban residence (Riethmuller et al. 2021; Turpeinen 2019) or on return migration to rural areas (Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022). Stockdale and Ferguson (2020) examine young people from farming families, while the remaining studies adopt more diverse participant profiles.

3.3. Methodology

Following the review process, the results showed a balanced distribution between qualitative and quantitative methodologies, with quantitative research slightly predominant. Eight of the studies use qualitative methods (Beckwith et al. 2023; Farrugia 2019; Nartova and Krupets 2019; Park 2023; Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022; Riethmuller et al. 2021; Stockdale and Ferguson 2020; Turpeinen 2019), while nine use quantitative methods (Bernsen et al. 2022; García-Arias et al. 2021; Gerhardt and Foster 2021; Nguyen et al. 2021; Monka et al. 2020; Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022; Simões et al. 2020, 2021; Sowl et al. 2022).

Only two of the reviewed studies are based on mixed methods research ([Caretta et al. 2022](#); [González Fernández et al. 2021](#)).

Within qualitative research, data has mainly been collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews ([Farrugia 2019](#); [Park 2023](#); [Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#); [Stockdale and Ferguson 2020](#)). However, other techniques have also been employed, such as ethnography ([Turpeinen 2019](#)), biographical interviews ([Nartova and Krupets 2019](#)), and visual research methods using photographs ([Beckwith et al. 2023](#); [Turpeinen 2019](#)). In the case of quantitative research, firstly, the questionnaire constitutes the primary data collection technique, being the sole method used in seven of the reviewed studies ([Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [García-Arias et al. 2021](#); [Gerhardt and Foster 2021](#); [Nguyen et al. 2021](#); [Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022](#); [Simões et al. 2020, 2021](#)). Secondly, [Sowl et al. \(2022\)](#) base their analysis on data obtained from secondary sources. Thirdly, the methodology employed by [Monka et al. \(2020\)](#) is noteworthy, as they apply quantitative analysis to linguistic data collected through traditionally qualitative techniques such as ethnography and in-depth interviews. Finally, the studies by [Caretta et al. \(2022\)](#) and [González Fernández et al. \(2021\)](#) use a mixed methodology. Both studies analyze data from questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. However, since the article by [González Fernández et al. \(2021\)](#) was still ongoing at the time of publication, the paper only presents preliminary results from the quantitative analysis.

3.4. Topic

Regarding the research topic, with the exception of three articles ([Beckwith et al. 2023](#); [Caretta et al. 2022](#); [Monka et al. 2020](#)), the phenomenon of youth migration to urban areas constitutes the central focus of the reviewed studies. Thus, this issue is addressed from various perspectives by the authors, who center their analysis on different factors that shape it. [Nartova and Krupets \(2019\)](#), for example, focus on examining how young people from three rural Russian communities conceptualize place and their own identity, addressing the normative imperative of urban mobility underlying rural-urban migration. Similarly, [Farrugia \(2019\)](#) analyzes this mobility imperative, considering its interplay with territorial rootedness from a class perspective.

The literature review in this field reveals the complexity of rural-urban migration, which involves multiple stages and does not occur exclusively in one direction. Several studies seek to identify the factors influencing young people's attachment to their rural home territories, thereby shaping their decision to stay or migrate ([Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [García-Arias et al. 2021](#); [Park 2023](#); [Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022](#)). More specifically, two of the studies focus on exploring how material factors such as personal debt ([Gerhardt and Foster 2021](#)) or access to housing ([Stockdale and Ferguson 2020](#)) play a role in anchoring or displacing youth from rural and peripheral areas.

On the other hand, addressing reverse migration trends, other authors explore the factors that facilitate the return to rural areas after completing university studies ([González Fernández et al. 2021](#); [Nguyen et al. 2021](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#); [Simões et al. 2020, 2021](#); [Sowl et al. 2022](#)). Additionally, some of the reviewed studies examine themes related to settlement and adaptation processes inherent to migration, whether in urban environments after leaving rural areas ([Turpeinen 2019](#)) or upon returning to one's rural hometown ([Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022](#)).

Furthermore, two of the reviewed studies focus on analyzing the relationship between environmental concerns and territorial attachment ([Beckwith et al. 2023](#); [Caretta et al. 2022](#)). [Beckwith et al. \(2023\)](#) address these issues from an intergenerational perspective. Finally, from a sociolinguistic standpoint, [Monka et al. \(2020\)](#) study the connection between territorial rootedness and sociolinguistic variations among young people in different rural

areas of Denmark. Thus, with the exception of Monka et al.'s article, the themes of the studies reflect two of the main challenges currently facing rural areas: depopulation due to youth outmigration and the global climate crisis.

3.5. Outcomes

The findings of the reviewed articles reveal significant diversity, reflecting the range of topics investigated. Within studies adopting perspectives centered on urban-centric cultural hierarchies that promote migration, [Farrugia's \(2019\)](#) article highlights the tension between the pressure to migrate—as a cultural imperative linked to progress and cosmopolitanism—and the desire to positively reconstruct the meaning of home. The results show that, while some young people manage to reframe their place of origin through working-class pride or a connection to the natural environment, others internalize stigmas associated with rurality and reproduce discourses of territorial denigration. The persistence of the urban as a normative model is also evident in the paper by [Nartova and Krupets \(2019\)](#), where, despite having strong local identities, participants use nearby major cities as benchmarks to compare and evaluate their living conditions in rural areas of Russia. However, this relationship may be reversed in certain circumstances, as revealed in the research by [Pedersen and Therkelsen \(2022\)](#) in Denmark, which suggests that parenthood is a critical life stage during which young people prefer rural settings to settle and raise their children. In another vein, [Turpeinen \(2019\)](#) shows that rural youth in Helsinki experience unexpected affective frictions when confronted with the rhythm and bustle of urban life.

On the other hand, studies focused on identifying the factors influencing rural youth mobility consistently point to place attachment as a key variable. Four studies ([Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Nguyen et al. 2021](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#); [Simões et al. 2020](#)) present findings that indicate a strong place attachment is highly associated with intentions to stay or return, even more so than with economic factors. In fact, [Park's \(2023\)](#) article in Japan shows how place attachment may emerge as a response to severe economic challenges or environmental disasters, functioning as a form of resilience and territorial defense. Regarding the main factors that reinforce young people's place attachment, research highlights the role of community ties and the natural environment ([Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022](#); [Stockdale and Ferguson 2020](#)). Specifically, [Sowl et al. \(2022\)](#) find a correlation between such attachment and the intention to return.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the impact of material constraints on the ability to remain in rural areas. In this regard, the article by [Gerhardt and Foster \(2021\)](#) on Canada's Atlantic provinces points out that personal debt is an under-explored factor in young people's decisions to emigrate, while [Stockdale and Ferguson \(2020\)](#) underscore the importance of family material support, especially for facilitating access to housing. Similarly, data from [Nguyen et al. \(2021\)](#) highlight the relevance of job opportunities and perceived quality of life in rural areas, although subjective factors related to territorial bonds also appear to carry significant weight.

Additionally, [Simões et al. \(2021\)](#), in their research conducted in the Azores (Portugal), identify various variables correlated with youth migration or the lack of intention to return, such as parents' education level, expected income levels, or attachment to the city where students pursue their studies. In the Mexican case, [González Fernández et al. \(2021\)](#) find that although some students express interest in working in rural areas, this does not necessarily translate into a return to their place of origin, as this interest is mediated by gender, social background, and actual employment opportunities.

With regard to the impact of gender on rural youth retention, [García-Arias et al. \(2021\)](#) report that in the Altiplano region of Granada (Spain), more hours spent on studying or cultural activities are associated with a greater likelihood of migration to urban areas.

The relevance of these findings lies in the gender perspective applied: young women tend to spend more time on these activities. In contrast, young men devote more time to leisure and sports, activities associated with stronger place attachment and a desire to stay. In contrast, [Gerhardt and Foster \(2021\)](#) find a higher propensity to migrate among men (44.6%) compared to women (36.7%) in the region. Along the same lines, other studies suggest that young women are more likely to return to their rural places of origin. In [Simões et al.'s \(2020\)](#) article on the Azores, this is attributed to women placing greater importance on social ties, having lower wage expectations, and the relevance of the service sector in the area studied. In the U.S.-based paper by [Sowl et al. \(2022\)](#), the trend is linked to caregiving responsibilities that women assume for dependent family members. [Beckwith et al. \(2023\)](#), in turn, emphasize the disconnection of Vietnamese women from the public sphere due to social norms that confine them to private spaces. In the sociolinguistic article by [Monka et al. \(2020\)](#), linguistic variation in Danish regions reveals a greater presence of local features in men's speech, while women prefer not to disclose their rural origins, fearing social disadvantage in other settings. Finally, racialized or indigenous backgrounds are only explored in the Canadian article by [Gerhardt and Foster \(2021\)](#), which identifies a higher propensity to migrate among these groups.

Regarding the relationship between place attachment and perceptions of climate and environmental change, the paper by [Caretta et al. \(2022\)](#), conducted in declining industrial areas of the United States, underscores the potential of place-based identity analysis to generate new climate narratives that help young people understand it as an issue affecting their own communities. Moreover, [Beckwith et al.'s \(2023\)](#) intergenerational perspective reveals the interrelation between place attachment and environmental change, where environmental degradation disrupts that attachment. The paper not only analyzes discourses of vulnerability among young and elderly people but also frames different generations in an interdependent relationship, highlighting their shared concerns about environmental degradation and their crucial role in resource management.

Finally, it is important to note that, in addition to the heterogeneity of local and regional contexts, the diversity of methodological approaches—only 9 out of 19 studies use standardized quantitative measures (e.g., [Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [García-Arias et al. 2021](#); [Simões et al. 2020, 2021](#)), while others rely on qualitative (e.g., [Caretta et al. 2022](#); [Nartova and Krupets 2019](#)) or mixed methods—precludes direct comparison between “high” and “low” levels of place attachment. None of the reviewed studies established consistent thresholds for such classifications, although those that report mean scores (e.g., [García-Arias et al. 2021](#), 3.63/5; [Nguyen et al. 2021](#), 3.897/5; [Simões et al. 2021](#), 31.86/40) suggest moderate to strong attachment tendencies. This methodological diversity justifies our focus on the contextual factors shaping attachment, rather than on aggregate prevalence estimates.

3.6. Concept of Place Attachment

All studies concur in defining place attachment as an emotional bond between individuals and specific places, whether through an explicit or implicit definition in the way the concept is operationalized. However, the definitions presented offer relevant nuances, highlighting different aspects of the concept and being based on theoretical proposals from various authors.

Three articles ([Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#); [Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022](#)) reference the study by [Low and Altman \(1992\)](#), defining place attachment as a positive emotional connection between individuals and specific places that leads to a bond with both sociocultural elements and the physical environment. Similarly, [Monka et al. \(2020\)](#) rely on a definition proposed by [Hidalgo and Hernández \(2001\)](#), emphasizing people's tendency to maintain proximity to their place of attachment. [Turpeinen \(2019\)](#) builds on

the concept of embodied attachment developed by [Farrugia et al. \(2015\)](#), understanding place attachment as a bond constructed through daily experiences in inhabited spaces, shaped by bodily sensations. [Farrugia \(2019\)](#), although not providing an explicit definition, offers a nuanced and critical conceptualization, viewing place attachment as a complex, multifaceted relationship that young people develop with their localities, influenced by social class, mobility experiences (both real and imagined), and the cultural dynamics of inequality inherent in the urbanormative paradigm.

Regarding the multidimensionality of the concept, the distinction between sociocultural aspects and those related to the physical environment is reflected in several studies ([Simões et al. 2020, 2021](#); [Stockdale and Ferguson 2020](#)), consistent with the social and physical dimensions of place proposed by [Scannell and Gifford \(2010\)](#). Other proposals differ from this model. [García-Arias et al. \(2021\)](#) propose a three-dimensional model comprising social attachment, attachment to the natural environment, and attachment to architectural heritage. [Sowl et al. \(2022\)](#) present a conceptualization focused solely on the social aspects of place attachment, shaped by relationships with family and friends. [Pedersen and Therkelsen \(2022\)](#) reference [Berg's \(2020\)](#) model, suggesting that place attachment consists of four dimensions: social relationships, materialities, memories, and the past. These authors emphasize the impact of the increasing mobility of capital, information, and people on the construction of place-based attachment. As several articles indicate ([Beckwith et al. 2023](#); [Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Park 2023](#)), place attachment becomes a dynamic and evolving bond.

As shown, there are diverse conceptualizations of place attachment and its associated concepts, which are sometimes vague or contradictory. For instance, [Caretta et al. \(2022\)](#) consider place identity to be a constituent part of place attachment, while [Simões et al. \(2021\)](#) view place attachment as an affective dimension of place identity. In contrast, [González Fernández et al. \(2021\)](#) do not clearly define place attachment. In this Spanish-language article, the term “place attachment” appears in the English title as a translation of the concept “arraigo” (also translated as “rootedness”), a vague term used to express young people’s desire or possibility of remaining in rural areas, without providing an explicit definition or analysis of the concept. Similarly, [Gerhardt and Foster \(2021\)](#) use the term “place attachment” broadly, without a specific definition, treating it as one of the subjective factors influencing young people’s migration decisions, although without further elaboration. Finally, in the data paper by [Nguyen et al. \(2021\)](#), place attachment is operationalized without an explicit theoretical definition, using five items from [Jorgensen and Stedman's \(2001\)](#) scale: relaxation in the hometown, associated happiness, preference for the home environment, frequency of visits, and nostalgia.

4. Discussion

The literature reviewed in the framework of this research provides a body of knowledge that, while requiring nuanced analysis and acknowledgment of its limitations, allows for the exploration of the current state of studies on rural youth and their place attachment. It also enables the identification of key challenges currently facing rural areas and the role place attachment plays in understanding these dynamics.

The centrality of mobility toward urban areas—explored in 16 of the reviewed articles (e.g., [Farrugia 2019](#); [Nartova and Krupets 2019](#); [Simões et al. 2020](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#); [Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022](#); [Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022](#); [Turpeinen 2019](#); [Park 2023](#))—demonstrates the persistence of rural depopulation dynamics. These dynamics are driven by industrialization and deagrarianization processes that have reconfigured rural spaces globally ([Bouichou et al. 2021](#); [Camarero and Sampedro 2019](#); [Vogt and Fochezatto 2023](#)). The selective outmigration of young people results in aging demographic

structures, especially in Global North countries, undermining the social sustainability of these territories (Saint Onge and Smith 2020). In this regard, the diverse age range of participants in the reviewed studies positions the very notion of youth as a cultural and historical construct. In rural contexts, this notion is transformed by increasingly prolonged emancipation processes and progressively older population structures (Camarero 2020). Beyond social sustainability, two of the reviewed studies (Beckwith et al. 2023; Caretta et al. 2022) highlight a growing concern for environmental and ecological sustainability, with specific implications for rural areas due to their greater dependence on local natural resources (Camarero et al. 2009).

While academic literature on rurality has traditionally focused on macro-structural dynamics (Camarero 2020, 2022; Bernsen et al. 2022)—such as employment or educational opportunities—the findings from the reviewed studies highlight the significant role of subjectivity in the migration decisions of rural youth. In this regard, social ties and a sense of community belonging emerge as key factors in young people's decisions to remain in or return to rural areas, often exerting a greater influence than economic or labor factors in the development of a strong sense of place attachment (Carrasco-Cruz and Cruz-Souza 2025). Studies suggest that social bonds can carry more weight than economic factors in the migration decisions of young people (Bernsen et al. 2022; García-Arias et al. 2021). Likewise, research by Simões et al. (2020) and Park (2023) shows that a strong place attachment can foster a desire to stay or return, even in the face of economic and structural barriers.

Regarding the conceptualization of place attachment, the findings reveal a notable diversity that mirrors the theoretical debates present in the literature (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001; Raymond et al. 2010; Lewicka 2011). This diversity should not be interpreted solely as fragmentation but rather as a sign of an expanding field, shaped by diverse disciplinary and methodological traditions. As Lewicka (2011) argues, place attachment is not a univocal concept; rather, its meaning is derived from the epistemological frameworks within which it is constructed. From this perspective, the tensions between more structured, quantitative approaches (García-Arias et al. 2021; Simões et al. 2020, 2021) and phenomenological, qualitative ones (e.g., Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022; Farrugia 2019; Turpeinen 2019) can be understood as fertile ground for interdisciplinary dialogue.

Likewise, attachment to place is not configured in a way that is unrelated to power relations. This literature review shows how urbanormative cultural hierarchies (Fulkeron and Thomas) are intertwined with other power structures such as class (Farrugia 2019), gender (García-Arias et al. 2021; Simões et al. 2020; Sowl et al. 2022) or racialization (Gerhardt and Foster 2021). Thus, the effects of social class on the possibilities of permanence materialize in aspects such as access to housing (Stockdale and Ferguson 2020), personal debt (Gerhardt and Foster 2021), or employment opportunities (Nguyen et al. 2021). Furthermore, this research calls for further investigation into the connections between gender and rural depopulation. In this regard, although the literature has traditionally identified women as the main protagonists of rural exodus (Camarero and Sampedro 2019; Corbett 2007; Cruz 2006), the review shows that in certain contexts, men have been identified as having a greater propensity to migrate (Gerhardt and Foster 2021), while women have been identified as having a greater propensity to return (Simões et al. 2020; Sowl et al. 2022).

These issues represent valuable avenues for future research in the field of rural and gender studies, through nuanced perspectives tailored to specific social contexts. Likewise, adopting an intersectional perspective can broaden the scope of research by addressing the complex ways in which gender interacts with other axes of oppression—such as social class, racialization, or sexual orientation—to shape the processes through which attachment to

place is constructed and define the possibilities for young women to remain in rural areas within frameworks of power relations.

Finally, it is important to recognize that this systematic review has limitations that prevent its findings from being generalized beyond the specific corpus of articles analyzed, mainly due to the small number of studies reviewed (19). This limitation is also related to the methodological disparity among the studies included. The review covers quantitative research with more than 300 participants (e.g., [Bernsen et al. 2022](#); [Caretta et al. 2022](#); [García-Arias et al. 2021](#); [Simões et al. 2020, 2021](#); [Sowl et al. 2022](#)), as well as qualitative studies that do not seek to establish statistically representative samples ([Nartova and Krupets 2019](#); [Farrugia 2019](#); [Turpeinen 2019](#); [Riethmuller et al. 2021](#); [Rodríguez-Díaz et al. 2022](#); [Pedersen and Therkelsen 2022](#); [Park 2023](#)). These methodological differences make it difficult to identify comparative patterns or generalizable trends. Furthermore, the limited representation of studies conducted in the Global South—particularly in Africa—is a significant limitation, as it restricts the applicability of the findings to contexts where socio-demographic, economic, and cultural dynamics may differ substantially from those examined in this review. In this regard, it should be noted that this limitation is also linked to the selection process itself, as the review focused exclusively on publications in English and Spanish for practical reasons of access and systematization, potentially excluding a significant portion of scientific production in other languages. Despite these limitations, this revision contributes to the systematization of a fragmented body of literature, articulating the perspectives and findings of recent, high-quality research on attachment to place among rural youth.

5. Conclusions

This systematic review provides a significant overview of recent studies on place attachment among rural youth while also opening the door to new lines of research that could further enrich this field of study. In particular, the underrepresentation of research conducted in the Global South—especially in Africa—highlights the need to broaden the geographical scope of future studies. Furthermore, promoting longitudinal research that captures changes over time in the construction of rural place attachment would make a valuable contribution to the field.

The prominence of mobility processes toward urban areas as a research focus reflects the persistence of depopulation dynamics that challenge the social sustainability of rural regions. Within this framework, place attachment emerges as a key concept for understanding these migrations, as it integrates affective, symbolic, and structural factors. One of the main contributions of this review has been to reveal the axes of power embedded in affective bonds with places. Urbanormative cultural hierarchies intersect with forms of oppression such as gender and social class, thereby shaping the possibilities of remaining in rural areas for different groups of youth.

Finally, the diversity of methodological approaches identified, far from being a limitation, should be understood as an invitation to develop comprehensive research lines capable of integrating both measurable dimensions of place attachment and the situated meanings and experiences that shape it in specific contexts. In the case of rural youth, whose relationships with territory are simultaneously mediated by material, symbolic, and environmental factors, such integration is particularly necessary.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.C.C., F.C.-S. and G.G.-C.; methodology, A.C.C., F.C.-S. and G.G.-C.; software, A.C.C.; validation, A.C.C., F.C.-S. and G.G.-C.; formal analysis, G.G.-C.; investigation, A.C.C., F.C.-S. and G.G.-C.; writing—original draft preparation, A.C.C. and G.G.-C.; writing—review and editing, A.C.C., F.C.-S. and G.G.-C.; supervision, G.G.-C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The researcher Alba Carrasco-Cruz has been funded by the Programa INVESTIGO SEPE 2023 (CP23/157), financed by the European Union-NextGenerationEU.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: All data analyzed in this study is included in the article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Ainsworth, Mary D., and Silvia Bell. 1970. Attachment, Exploration, and Separation: Illustrated by the Behavior of One-Year-Olds in a Strange Situation. *Child Development* 41: 49–67. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Beckwith, Lily, Sophie Warrington, and Huyen Nguyen. 2023. Listening to Experiences of Environmental Change in Rural Vietnam: An Intergenerational Approach. *Progress in Development Studies* 23: 461–80. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Berg, Nina Gunnerud. 2020. Geographies of Wellbeing and Place Attachment: Revisiting Urban–Rural Migrants. *Journal of Rural Studies* 78: 438–46. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bernardo, Fátima, and José Palma-Oliveira. 2013. Place Identity, Place Attachment and the Scale of Place: The Impact of Place Salience. *PsyEcology* 4: 167–93. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bernsen, Nick R., Max S. Crandall, Jessica E. Leahy, Jason B. Abrams, and Chris R. Colocousis. 2022. Do Rural Youth Want to Stay Rural? Influences on Residential Aspirations of Youth in Forest-Located Communities. *Community Development* 53: 566–84. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bouichou, El Houssain, Tahirou Abdoulaye, Khalil Allali, Abdelghani Bouayad, and Aziz Fadlaoui. 2021. Entrepreneurial Intention among Rural Youth in Moroccan Agricultural Cooperatives: The Future of Rural Entrepreneurship. *Sustainability* 13: 9247. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bowlby, John. 1969. *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1: Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.
- Camarero, Luis. 2020. Despoblamiento, baja densidad y brecha rural: Un recorrido por una España desigual. *Panorama Social* 31: 47–73.
- Camarero, Luis. 2022. Los habitantes de los territorios de baja densidad en España. Una lectura de las diferencias urbano-rurales. *Mediterráneo Económico* 35: 45–66.
- Camarero, Luis, and Rosario Sampedro. 2019. Despoblación y Ruralidad Transnacional: Crisis y Arraigo Rural En Castilla y León. Article. *Economía Agraria y Recursos Naturales* 19: 59–82. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Camarero, Luis, Fátima Cruz, Manuel González, Julio A. del Pino, Juan Oliva, and Rosario Sampedro. 2009. *La población Rural de España: De los Desequilibrios a la Sostenibilidad Social*. Colección Estudios Sociales, no. 27. Barcelona: Fundación “la Caixa”.
- Caretta, Martina, Angela Brandon Anthony Rothrock, and Nicolas P Zegre. 2022. Exploring Climate Change Perspectives. An Analysis of Undergraduate Students’ Place-Based Attachment in Appalachia, USA. *Rural Sociology* 87: 847–72. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Carrasco-Cruz, Alba, and Fátima Cruz-Souza. 2025. Return to the rural: Ambivalent place attachment among youth in rural Spain. *Journal of Rural Studies* 119: 103724. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Castle, Sarah, and Ruby Grant. 2023. Belonging, Identity and Place: Middle-Class Tasmanian Rural Young People in Urban University. *Journal of Rural Studies* 103: 103139. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Choi, Hemin. 2023. Determinants of Internal Migration to Smaller Cities: Local Public Goods, Job Opportunities, and Lifecycle Stages. *Local Government Studies* 50: 617–42. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Clark, William A. V. 2017. Residential Mobility in Context: Interpreting Behavior in the Housing Market. *Papers. Revista de Sociologia* 102: 575–605. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Corbett, Michael. 2007. All kinds of potential: Women and out-migration in an Atlantic Canadian coastal community. *Journal of Rural Studies* 23: 430–42. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Cruz, Fátima. 2006. *Género, Psicología y Desarrollo Rural: La Construcción de Nuevas Identidades*. Edited by Pesca y Alimentación Ministerio de Agricultura. Serie Estudios. Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura Pesca y Alimentación.
- Cruz, Fátima, and Andrea García-Bengochea. 2020. Socio-Spatial Bonds and Local Governance: Place Attachment and Participation within the Palencia Model Forest Initiative. *Estudios Geográficos* 81: 1–20. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Cuervo, Hernán, and Johanna Wyn. 2014. Reflections on the Use of Spatial and Relational Metaphors in Youth Studies. *Journal of Youth Studies* 17: 901–15. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Devine-Wright, Patrick. 2013. Think Global, Act Local? The Relevance of Place Attachments and Place Identities in a Climate Changed World. *Global Environmental Change* 23: 61–69. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Evans, Ceryn. 2015. Moving Away or Staying Local: The Role of Locality in Young People’s ‘Spatial Horizons’ and Career Aspirations. *Journal of Youth Studies* 19: 501–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Farrugia, David. 2016. The Mobility Imperative for Rural Youth: The Structural, Symbolic and Non-Representational Dimensions Rural Youth Mobilities. *Journal of Youth Studies* 19: 836–51. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Farrugia, David. 2019. Class, Place and Mobility beyond the Global City: Stigmatisation and the Cosmopolitanisation of the Local. *Journal of Youth Studies* 23: 237–51. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Farrugia, David, John Smyth, and Trevor Harrison. 2015. Affective Topologies of Rural Youth Embodiment. *Sociologia Ruralis* 56: 116–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fried, Marc. 1963. Grieving for a Lost Home. In *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis*. Edited by Leonard J. Duhl. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 124–152.
- Fulkerson, Gregory M., and Alexander R. Thomas. 2019. *Urbanormativity: Reality, Representation, and Everyday Life*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- García-Arias, Manuel Alejandro, Alfredo Tolón-Becerra, Xavier Lastra-Bravo, and Úrsula Torres-Parejo. 2021. The Out-Migration of Young People from a Region of the ‘Empty Spain’: Between a Constant Slump Cycle and a Pending Innovation Spiral. *Journal of Rural Studies* 87: 314–26. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gerhardt, Alyssa, and Karen Foster. 2021. Beating broke by getting out? Examining the relationship between personal debt and community outmigration. *International Journal of Child Youth & Family Studies* 12: 25–47. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Giuliani, Maria Vittoria. 2003. Theory of Attachment and Place Attachment. In *Psychological Theories for Environmental Issues*. Edited by Mirilia Bonnes, Terence Lee and Marino Bonaiuto. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 137–70.
- González Fernández, Manuel T., Felipe Contreras Molotla, Enrique Contreras Suárez, and Luis Navarro Ardoy. 2021. Formación, arraigo y movilidad rural-urbana en la juventud mexicana y española. *Inter Disciplina* 9: 139–155. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gustafson, Per. 2001. Meanings of place: Everyday experience and theoretical conceptualizations. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21: 5–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hidalgo, María del Carmen, and Bernardo Hernández. 2001. Place attachment: Conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21: 273–81. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jorgensen, Bradley S., and Richard C. Stedman. 2001. Sense of place as an attitude: Lakeshore owners attitudes toward their properties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21: 233–48. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jorgensen, Bradley S., and Richard C. Stedman. 2006. A Comparative Analysis of Predictors of Sense of Place Dimensions: Attachment to, Dependence on, and Identification with Lakeshore Properties. *Journal of Environmental Management* 79: 316–27. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lewicka, Maria. 2011. Place Attachment: How Far Have We Come in the Last 40 Years? *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 31: 207–30. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Li, Xin, Reinout Kleinhans, and Maarten van Ham. 2018. Ambivalence in Place Attachment: The Lived Experiences of Residents in Danwei Communities Facing Demolition in Shenyang, China. *Housing Studies* 34: 997–1020. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Low, Setha M., and Irwin Altman. 1992. Place Attachment. In *Place Attachment*. Edited by Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low. Boston: Springer, pp. 1–12. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Manzo, Lynne C. 2003. Beyond House and Haven: Toward a Revisioning of Emotional Relationships with Places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23: 47–61. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Manzo, Lynne C., and Patrick Devine-Wright. 2021. Introduction. In *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods, and Applications*, 2nd ed. Edited by Lynne C. Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–9.
- Matysiak, Ilona. 2022. Stayers or Leavers? Spatial (Im)Mobility Patterns of Young University Graduates Living in Rural Areas in Poland. *Sociologia Ruralis* 62: 131–48. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Moher, David, Alessandro Liberati, Jennifer Tetzlaff, and Douglas G. Altman. 2010. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. *International Journal of Surgery* 8: 336–41. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Monka, Malene, Pia Quist, and Alexander R. Skovse. 2020. Place Attachment and Linguistic Variation: A Quantitative Analysis of Language and Local Attachment in a Rural Village and an Urban Social Housing Area. *Language in Society* 49: 173–205. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Nartova, Nadya A., and Yulia N. Krupets. 2019. ‘It Is Hard for Me to Live in the City’: Local Identities and Place Attachment Among Young Rural Russians. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes* 149: 342–61. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Nguyen, Thuy Thu, Thi Phuong Linh Nguyen, Thi Thanh Hoa Phan, and Trong Nghia Vu. 2021. Work location choice- the perspective of graduates: Survey dataset in Vietnam. *Data in Brief* 35: 106788. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Park, Joonha. 2023. Nonmetropolitan Youths and Their Attachment to Hometown in Postgrowth Japan. *Asian Journal of Social Science* 52: 8–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Pedersen, Helle Dalsgaard, and Malene Gram. 2018. ‘The Brainy Ones Are Leaving’: The Subtlety of (Un)cool Places through the Eyes of Rural Youth. *Journal of Youth Studies* 21: 620–35. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Pedersen, Heidi Dølvik, and Anette Therkelsen. 2022. Being a Part of and Apart from: Return Migrants’ Ambivalent Attachment to Rural Place. *Journal of Rural Studies* 94: 91–98. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Pinto de Carvalho, Laís, and Marcela Cornejo. 2018. Por Una aproximación crítica Al Apego Al Lugar: Una revisión En Contextos De vulneración Del Derecho a Una Vivienda Adecuada. *Athenea Digital. Revista De Pensamiento e Investigación Social* 18: 2004. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Raymond, Christopher M., Gregory Brown, and Delene Weber. 2010. The Measurement of Place Attachment: Personal, Community, and Environmental Connections. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30: 422–34. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Riethmuller, Morgan L., Peta L. Dzidic, and Elizabeth A. Newnham. 2021. Going Rural: Qualitative Perspectives on the Role of Place Attachment in Young People's Intentions to Return to the Country. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 73: 101542. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Rodríguez-Díaz, Paulina, Rocío Almuna, Carla Marchant, Sally Heinz, Roxana Lebuy, Juan L. Celis-Diez, and Pablo Díaz-Siefer. 2022. The Future of Rurality: Place Attachment among Young Inhabitants of Two Rural Communities of Mediterranean Central Chile. *Sustainability* 14: 546. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Saint Onge, Jarron M., and Scott Smith. 2020. Demographics in Rural Populations. *Surgical Clinics of North America* 100: 823–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Scannell, Leila, and Robert Gifford. 2010. The Relations between Natural and Civic Place Attachment and Pro-Environmental Behavior. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30: 289–97. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Simões, Francisco, Antonella Rocca, Rita Rocha, Cátia Mateus, Elena Marta, and Jale Tosun. 2021. Time to Get Emotional: Determinants of University Students' Intention to Return to Rural Areas. *Sustainability* 13: 5135. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Simões, Francisco, Rita Rocha, and Cátia Mateus. 2020. Beyond the Prophecy Success: How Place Attachment and Future Time Perspective Shape Rural University Students' Intentions of Returning to Small Islands. *Journal of Youth Studies* 23: 909–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Smith, Jeffrey S. 2018. *Explorations in Place Attachment*. London: Routledge.
- Sowl, Stephanie, Rachel A. Smith, and Michael G. Brown. 2022. Rural College Graduates: Who Comes Home? *Rural Sociology* 87: 303–29. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Spring, Amy, Elizabeth Ackert, Kyle Crowder, and Scott J. South. 2017. Influence of Proximity to Kin on Residential Mobility and Destination Choice: Examining Local Movers in Metropolitan Areas. *Demography* 54: 1277–304. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stachowski, Jakub, and Bettina Bock. 2021. Unsettled Settlement? Translocal Social Anchoring and Patterns of (Im)Mobility among Polish Families in Rural Norway. *Geoforum* 126: 372–82. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stockdale, Aileen, and Susan Ferguson. 2020. Planning to Stay in the Countryside: The Insider-Advantages of Young Adults from Farm Families. *Journal of Rural Studies* 78: 364–71. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Turpeinen, Lauri. 2019. Sensations of Arriving and Settling in a City: Young Finnish Rural Out-migrants' Experiences with Moving to Helsinki. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 49: 40–55.
- Urry, John. 2000. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Vogt, Carin D., and Adelar Fochezatto. 2023. Factors Associated with Rural Aging in Brazilian Municipalities: An Analysis Using Quantile Regressions. *Bulletin of Geography: Socio-Economic Series* 61: 103–20. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wiborg, Agnete. 2004. Place, Nature and Migration: Students' Attachment to Their Rural Home Places. *Sociologia Ruralis* 44: 416–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.