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**SOCIAL CONTROL, YOUTH, AND PLACE ATTACHMENT: EXPLORING
RURAL-URBAN MOBILITY EXPERIENCES FROM A GENDER
PERSPECTIVE**

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Rural areas in Spain face significant challenges related to depopulation, as well as demographic imbalances such as population aging and the masculinization of their territories. These dynamics are driven by a selective out-migration to urban centers, led primarily by young people and, in a particularly significant way, by young women. In this context, the small-scale nature of rural social networks plays an ambivalent role: while it fosters community-based dynamics of mutual support, it also reinforces mechanisms of social control among individuals. These mechanisms not only reproduce social norms within the community but also shape affective ties to place, influencing the life trajectories of rural youth and, especially, of women.

This study examines the intersections between rural–urban mobility, social control, and place attachment through the migration experiences of rural youth from Castilla y Leon, Spain. From a gender perspective, it explores the meanings attributed to rural and urban spaces at the moment of arrival in the city, paying particular attention to the role of community in the construction of attachment to places of origin. The study adopts a qualitative methodology based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 14 young people (6 men and 8 women) from rural backgrounds who have migrated to urban areas for educational reasons.

The findings highlight the central role of community and social control in shaping the experience of arrival in the city and, consequently, young people's subsequent relationships with their places of origin. These dynamics have specific implications for women, as rural social control is primarily linked to the regulation of sexuality and bodily practices through gender norms. It contributes to a symbolic construction of the city as a space of freedom. At the same time, the lack of stable support networks in urban environments can generate experiences of loneliness and precarity.

Palavras-chave: youth; gender; rural–urban mobility; community; social control.