

Transition to adulthood in Casal da Boba, Amadora

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Keywords

Transitions to adulthood, Social exclusion, descendants of immigrants

Casal da Boba is a neighbourhood recently built in the city of Amadora, on the outskirts of Lisbon. Since 2002, families living in shantytowns across Amadora have been relocated here. The population is around 700 households, about 2000 people, and there's a significant presence (64%) of migrants from African origin as well as their descendants, mostly with Portuguese nationality.

A survey conducted in 2006 showed that this population is mostly underschooled, has low qualified jobs with low incomes. In the same trimester the unemployment rate was three times higher than the national rate. This survey also showed that even though there is a great degree of homogeneity of social conditions, there were still a few cases of young people that reached graduate studies and had more stable and qualified jobs. This observation led us to enquire: why do people of very similar social origins followed so different paths to adulthood? Do these paths differ according to gender and ethnic background?

The objectives of the research conducted, intends to answer these questions by describing the social profile of youngsters living in Casal da Boba; to reconstituting their transition paths to adulthood through school, family and work domains; and identifying the factors involved in the social construction of their reproduction and mobility paths.

To achieve these objectives we carried out a deeper analysis in 2006 and conducted a series of 20 semi-directive interviews to youth living in the neighbourhood.

The main results of this research were: - The younger generation, in Casal da Boba, just like Portuguese youngsters in general, have higher educational levels than their parents. They also tend to achieve better jobs; - Unemployment is more prone to affect younger individuals as well as more men than women; - Higher education reduces the probability of being in the labour market in precarious conditions, but even the more educated youth get unstable jobs; - Schools have a very important role either in reducing or reinforcing the reproduction of social processes. Their formal role is important (schooling itself) but they are also important in terms of opening or closing up the local and social relations.