UPLIFT – Urban PoLicy Innovation to address inequality with and for Future generaTions

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Amadora Functional Urban Area

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1 Executive Summary

The current document is the result of the research activities carried out in work package 3 (WP3) of the UPLIFT project in Amadora, Portugal. It aims to understand which micro, meso and macro level factors influence vulnerable young people's decisions in education, employment and housing, and how these young people create their own strategies and make choices within the possibilities available in the given locality.

The framework of the analysis is based on the Capability Approach, an attempt for better understanding and interpreting the nature of modern age poverty, social inequalities, human development and well-being, devised in the 1980s by the Nobel prize laureate economist-philosopher Amartya Sen. The final aim of this case study report and of the analysis of the interactions of the behaviour of individuals and the institutions is to discover and suggest topics for a future Reflexive Policy Agenda for each of the eight localities of WP3 of UPLIFT, including Amadora.

The methods of exploring the factors behind individual decisions are primarily based on interviews with local policy experts and policy implementers and 40 vulnerable young people: 20 currently young people between the age of 15 and 29 and 20 interviews with people aged 30-43 - who were aged 15-29 at the time of the financial crisis of 2008.

Only six out of the 40 young people interviewed were still in school/training. Overall, most of the interviewees considered their school careers as finished since they showed no intention to resume their studies. The vast majority of them did not finish the 12th grade, which is currently the minimum schooling in Portugal. Still, in most cases, they have higher education levels than their parents. Despite the efforts of the education and social systems for promoting schooling, education is still devaluated by many, especially those from the Roma community. Other interviewees did express the value of education. But even in these cases there is a mismatch between an intrinsic will to proceed with studies and the pressure to start working, in order to contribute to household expenses, which leads to school dropout.

The recognition of the added value of education is very much linked with employment. Interviewees consider that low qualifications make it difficult to access employment or, at least, better jobs. A little less than half of interviewees were unemployed at the time of the interview and about half were in employment, most of which with unstable situations. They worked mainly in sectors of activity with low level of specialization such as construction, sales clerk, food services, cleaning services and security services. In most – if not all – cases, they are paid minimum wage or below minimum wage (in case of less formal or task-based work). Besides lower levels of education, other factors perceived as obstacles to a satisfactory work trajectory include ethnicity, the stigma of living in a poor or social housing neighbourhoods, and age.

About three out of four interviewees lived in social housing at the time of the interview, which is as overrepresentation of this housing form and concentration of vulnerability, considering that about 2.8% of the housing stock in Amadora is considered social. In approximately half of those cases, they had always lived in social housing, often in the same dwelling, while the remainder were rehoused from slums. This has most likely contributed to the fact that social housing is seen by most of its residents as an immutable solution, i.e., as if their right to a social house has been granted for life. This is favoured by the fact that there are no concrete time limitations for one to live in social housing. In any case, despite isolated cases of misconduct, indeed this seems to be the most viable housing solution for most people interviewed, making it difficult for them to envision life outside social housing.

Thus, overall, there is an entrenchment of vulnerable youth of Amadora in low education, poor quality jobs and social housing. There is a vicious circle in which inequality is reproduced and the chances of vulnerable youth exiting it seem slim. Any Reflexive Policy Agenda in Amadora should address these aspects in an interconnected way.

For instance, without the possibility of comprehensively and jointly intervening in different areas beyond education, the success of education-centred interventions will irremediably fall short. Engaging different stakeholders as well as young people and their families in shared reflection and joint work on how may young people and their families be supported so that the young do not need to drop-out from school for financial reasons could increase the possibilities of successful planning and action while simultaneously decisively moving forward to a new level as regards the development of reflexive policy agendas.

Developing such an agenda regarding the field of employment appears more troublesome in the sense that policy implementation is embedded into the wide labour market. Nonetheless, enforcing the orientation of young people through labour market opportunities according to their individual characteristics in the context of a shared reflection could prove successful.

Integrated into poor quality, low paying jobs that widely characterise the Portuguese labour market – even if sometimes with steady contracts – most vulnerable young people find it increasingly hard to find an appropriate housing solution in the private market. Once again, engaging the young with all relevant stakeholders and not only those in the housing sector in the search for shared solutions for vulnerable young people to find and, very importantly, be able to maintain a housing path outside social housing seems paramount. This could, for instance, include a service that could work along with the young to identify the most appropriate housing solutions according to life stages. This could include making some social housing units available for the young for time-limited periods; helping the young to activate existing national-level housing support and eventually topping them up with support at the municipal level; and finding ways of turning the focus of recent housing policies (e.g. New generation of housing policies; Basic law on housing) on young people into actual concrete solid solutions.

2 Introduction

The current document is the result of the research activities carried out in work package 3 (WP3) of the UPLIFT project[1] in Amadora, Portugal. It aims to understand which micro, meso and macro level factors influence vulnerable young people's decisions in education, employment and housing, and how these young people create their own strategies and make choices within the possibilities available in the given locality.

The main research questions we analyse in this study are:

- What are the different factors in different levels (welfare system, intermediary institutions, family background, individual characteristics) that retain vulnerable young individuals to live the life they would like to live or they should be able to live taking into account the possibilities the locality offers for them?
- Which are the factors that can be changed by means of Reflexive Policy Agenda - RPA - (a co-creation tool that includes vulnerable young people into policy design, implementation and monitoring)?

These two main questions rather serve as guidelines for the analysis, but are too broad to be answered fully, thus we have chosen those sub-topics in this framework that came out to be the most relevant in the local interview process. We aimed to focus on factors that cannot purely be explained by the deficiencies of the welfare systems, rather by the interactions between vulnerable young individuals and institutions as a response to the welfare framework.

Thus, the common thread of our analysis regards the overall entrenchment of vulnerable youth of Amadora in low education, poor quality jobs and social housing. There is a vicious circle in which inequality is reproduced and the chances of vulnerable youth exiting it are slim.

The methods of exploring the factors behind individual decisions are primarily based on interviews with local policy experts and policy implementers and 40 vulnerable young people: 20 currently young people between the age of 15 and 29 and 20 interviews with people aged 30-43 - who were between 15-29 at the time of the financial crisis of 2008. These interviews naturally revealed many, mostly already well-studied deficiencies of the national and local legislations and the welfare systems. Still, this case study report does not have the primary goal to formulate criticism about the general welfare policies and other structurally given resources in Amadora (this was already done in another work package of

[1] More information on the project can be found at: uplift-youth.eu

UPLIFT[2]). It rather aims to understand how these structural resources, policies, programmes, and services are implemented and how they influence the life strategies of young individuals. (For instance: how do individuals use the local social housing opportunities within the frame of the available number of social housing, and the current set of eligibility criteria.)

The final aim of this case study report and the analysis of the interactions of the behaviour of individuals and the institutions is to discover and suggest topics for a future Reflexive Policy Agenda for each of our eight localities of WP3 of UPLIFT, including Amadora. Reflexive Policy making lies in the centre of the UPLIFT project. It refers to a policy co-creation, refining process, which involves the target group of the policies (in our case vulnerable young people). This process aims to explore young people's narratives on their perceived reality about the locally available policies and services, and empower them to be part of the creation of knowledge on the policy framework. Moreover, this process takes young individuals' feedback on possible changes of policies seriously, and also invites them to monitor the implementation of these policies. By nature, it means a power-balanced cooperation between local decision makers and the target group of local policies, which process relies on both groups' interests and knowledge. Thus, the current research aims to deal less with fundamental systemic deficiencies of welfare policies, as it would exceed the competencies of local actors, but rather aims to discover those topics that can be handled locally.

In this report, we first introduce the framework of the analysis in Chapter 3, then we describe our methodology of the research and the analysis in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 first summarizes the main characteristics of the current life situation of vulnerable young people (40 interviewees) regarding their education, employment and housing conditions. Then we describe the main inequality traps we have discovered in our analysis, and the conversions that lead to the current outcomes (positions) of our interviewees. Finally, Chapter 6 contains the main suggestions for potential topics in education, employment and housing for a Reflexive Policy Agenda.

[2] More details about the local welfare systems in 16 urban areas of Europe can be found at: https://uplift-youth.eu/research-policy/official-deliverables

3 Framework of the analysis

This section contains the theoretical framework for the case study analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative research that has been accomplished in eight UPLIFT locations: Amadora, Amsterdam, Barakaldo, Chemnitz, Corby, Pécs, Sfantu Gheorghe and Tallinn.

The framework of the analysis of this case study report is based on the **Capability Approach**, an attempt for better understanding and interpreting the nature of modern age poverty, social inequalities, human development and well-being, devised in the 1980s by the Nobel prize laureate economist-philosopher Amartya Sen. The Capability Approach understands certain life-pathways as results of a complex interplay of various factors: the nature of the system (e.g., economic, housing, education); individual perception of the system and other micro level, individually driven factors. Moreover, the main goal of the theory is to be able comprehensively capturing the factors that are constraining or enabling an individual to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. Our analytical framework builds on the Capability Approach; however, it implies some adjustments and complements it with the life-course approach and the transgenerational approach.

The starting point for understanding the life strategies of vulnerable individuals is to define the **resource space,** which is a complex socio-economic environment around individuals, consisting of all formal rights (e.g., laws and legislations) and possibilities (e.g., subsidy schemes, programmes against social inequalities), which defines opportunities for all inhabitants in a given location. This environment might be enabling, e.g. providing work places, subsidies, networks, while it might be restricting as well, e.g. providing segregated school system, unaffordable housing. The resource space, as it is, largely depends on the socio-economic context in which people live: constitutional rights, economic development of the place, degree of inequalities, thus, it varies from location to location. In addition to this, the accessibility of resources is conditionally determined. For instance, even if there is a subsidy scheme to buy a flat, it is only accessible in case of having savings (wealth), having a certain income level and under certain circumstances (e.g., having children). This is based on individual characteristics; thus, we define an **individualized resource space**, in which an individual can navigate. This individualized resource space is what we basically interpret as **real freedoms, real opportunities**.

However, young individuals have their own culturally and socially embedded perception of their possibilities that are not necessarily match with the so-called real opportunities: either by having unrealistic view or by not seeing those opportunities that theoretically would be achievable for them. This distinction is a new element compared to the original Capability Approach developed by Sen, as our analytical framework places great emphasis on the distinction between **real and perceived opportunity spaces** to understand the origin and the consequence of the gaps between the space of available possible actions and the

perceived possible actions. The mechanisms that cause the gaps between the two (e.g., blind spots, false perceptions or conditioned to illegal interventions) are those that make it difficult for an individual to choose those positions in life that best suits his or her abilities and remain in the widely accepted legal and socio-cultural environment.

Inside the individualised resource space, based on the perceived and real opportunities, one can take different positions: **functionings** (*See in Table 1*). In the original theory, functionings are defined as "various things a person may value being or doing". In empirical terms, this can mean two things: 1) the actual and current achievement/outcome of an individual 2) a desired, valued outcome an individual would prefer doing instead of his or her current life choices. Thus, functionings are practically the achievements in a person's life, which he/she either achieved in reality, or may value doing or being.

Table 1: Potential functionings (either current or desired) by domains

Education	Employment	Housing
Qualification (completed and on-going education)	Working conditions (legal/illegal, full time/part time, one shift/three shifts)	Tenure type (public rental, private rental, owner occupation)
Quality of qualification (value of qualification depending on the specific school and dropout history)[3]	Salary level	Quality of housing (neighbourhood, affordability, density)

The main question of the case study analysis in UPLIFT is the mechanism with which these functionings (outcomes/positions/choices/desires) are chosen in the local resource spaces by vulnerable individuals.

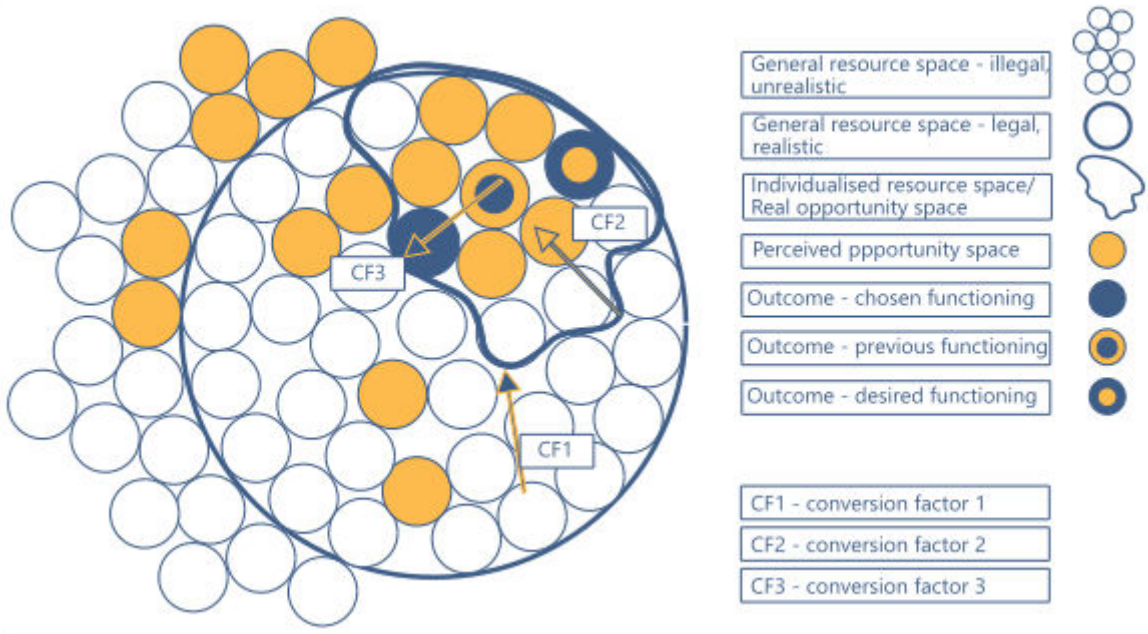
According to the original Capability Approach, individuals ideally choose from real opportunities based on what they value or desire. However, it is not necessarily possible to interpret the decisions made by individuals in a vulnerable life situation as value-based decisions, as they could be based on their everyday life difficulties (compulsion), or also be a consequence of past decisions. Hence, two ideal types of decision chains can be identified: 1) value-based and 2) path dependent – which are not easy to distinguish, as values are born by internalising the circumstances. In case of value-based decisions, the individual can live a meaningful and fulfilling life, while under the notion of path-dependency we understand patterns of past outcomes, which, in time, increase the likelihood of a limited number of future choices that are not necessarily advantageous for the individual. Understanding the outcomes from the perspective of a life-course approach is essential to be able to evaluate

[3] The quality of education is interpreted in a wide sense, outside of education, having socialising effects on students (e.g., functions/dysfunctions developed in schools that enable/disable functionings in the labour market or the housing market).

the agency potential and the role of agency in the life-path of an individual. Thus, the **Life-course Approach** is an important additional component to the Capability Approach. Among the past life events and experiences, the behaviour of the family system and the childhood home environment play a key role, which provides a potential to understand what trajectories and possibilities an individual has. The theory of the **Transgenerational Mobility** contributes and valuably complement the capability approach with emphasizing the role of socialization and the parental experiences and behaviour as conversion factors.

The routes (conversions) i) from formal resource space to real opportunities (CF1 on Figure 1), ii) from real opportunity space to perceived opportunities (CF2 on Figure 1), and iii) from perceived opportunity space to chosen or desired functioning (CF3 on Figure 1) are paved by **conversion factors**: the interference of institutional and individual conditions that lead to the creation of individual life-strategies. Conversion factors refers to the fact that different individuals have different capabilities to convert public policies and formal rights into valuable opportunities (Kimhur, 2020: 4, CF1 on Figure 1). Certain conversion factors enable some elements of the opportunity space to be made visible and usable, while other factors have the ability to conceal the real opportunity space, resulting in a gap between the real and perceived opportunity space (CF2 on Figure 1), and a distorted decision about chosen functionings (CF3 on Figure 1).

Figure 1: A modified concept of the Capability Approach



Source: Own elaboration

One may think that the perceived resource space is part of the real resource space, and the conversion from real to perceived necessarily results in the reduction of choices. According to our research however, vulnerable young individuals tend to see options for themselves also outside the social norms and legal framework (real opportunities), thus are able to

widen their space of options even if it is not realistic from an external viewpoint or not valued positively by the society.

Our analysis of the interviews was based on four sets of conversion factors:

- **Individual conversion factors** (micro level conversion factors) focus on a person's psycho-social set, domain-specific capabilities, individual character (e.g., sex, intelligence, financial literacy, learning abilities, work ethics), things a person values (e.g., attitude towards education, certain professions) and his/her social network (including the secondary social group where an individual belongs to: neighbourhood, schoolmates, friends, etc.).
- **Family conversion factors** (micro level conversion factor as well) focus on the original family system[4], where he/she was brought up, family's educational/employment background, values, believes and attitudes in the family, psychosocial environment.
- A special focus is given to **institutions** (meso-level conversion factors), where we are interested in how institutions narrow down, or rather correct, the perceived space of possibilities in their interactions with individuals. Institutional conversion factors focus on attitudes and behaviours of an institution[5]. Just as the individual conversion factors, institutional conversion factors work out differently for (different groups of) people (see exposure to institutional dysfunctions).

Even being embedded in individual behaviour, institutional response or family event we consider **crucial life events** as independent conversion factors, some of which may have a decisive role in widening or narrowing down the choices one has in certain situations.

[4] Family system includes the position of the individual in the original family dynamics. For instance, whether it is a supporting and functional or a negative, dysfunctional environment.

[5] Institutionalized norms in our interpretation are the ones that are followed by most members of an institution. One widely known example is institutionalized discrimination, when a large majority of the members of the institutions systematically behave differently (in a negative way) with people belonging to a certain social group (e.g., ethnicity or gender).

4 Methodology

4.1 Interviews with policy implementers/experts

For the purposes of the WP3 case study, a total of six interviews were conducted. Four with public entities and two with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Two focused on the field of education, consisting of two public schools. Two others focused on the field of employment: a municipal company and one NGO. In the field of housing, a representative of one NGO was interviewed and in the field of social protection, the interview took place with a representative of a *junta de freguesia* (parish). The NGOs are not exclusively dealing with employment and with housing but they were chosen considering the relevance of the work each of them develops in these areas, including lobbying and advocacy actions.

In most cases, the entities interviewed are implementing policies. In any case, it may be argued that some have (limited) scope for decision-making. This is e.g. the case of one of the schools, included in the TEIP programme (see section 5.2) or the municipal company that is in charge of a business incubator.

Additionally, relevant information was identified in the stakeholder interviews conducted within the scope of WP2. Thus, it was decided to also use this information in selected cases. These interviews are also identified as stakeholder interviews but they include a reference to WP2. As a reminder, it is important to mention that these interviewees were selected for their relevant knowledge and experience in the FUA, ensuring a combination of views from public officials – municipality of Amadora, Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, schools – and NGOs working in the domains of education, employment and/or housing, to enable a critical assessment of social developments and policy impacts.

4.2 Interviews with young people

A total of 40 interviews with young people were conducted, 20 of which were currently young at the time of the interview, i.e. aged 15 to 29, and 20 with those who were in this age group at the time of the economic and financial crisis arising in 2007-2008 (defined for the purposes of the research as the group of the 'former young'), which means that they were aged between 30 and 43 at the time of the interview. The team decided to attempt to balance the number of interviewees across the age range of each group. To this end, it established a quota system. As a result, seven people were aged 18 to 21, eight were aged 22 to 25, four were aged 26 to 29, nine people were aged 30 to 34, and 11 were aged 35 to 43. It should be mentioned that only one person interviewed was aged 15 to 17, which is related to two distinct difficulties: on the one hand, the increased difficulty in securing necessary consents (according to UPLIFT ethics) in due time and, more importantly, due to the lack of richness of the interviews.[6] Despite the attempt to reach a balanced group of

[6] In a couple of cases, for this reason, interviews ended up not being considered for the final sample.

interviewees as regards gender, the majority of interviewees were women (26) both as regards the current young (12) and the former young (14).

Reaching out to interviewees was facilitated by the crucial help of gatekeepers who mediated access. The team decided to use as many gatekeepers as possible in order to find interviewees with different life experiences, including their place of residence. A snowball recruitment technique was employed in a very limited number of cases. The interviews were conducted by the members of the research team and by a Sociology MSc student who was able to act as a peer-researcher. The interviews were conducted with the support of the interview guides produced within the scope of UPLIFT and that were common for all eight case studies across Europe.

4.3 Analysing the interviews

The interviews were partially transcribed, i.e. only pieces selected by the researchers as particularly relevant were transcribed. Individual interviews were then hand-coded, input into the UPLIFT Analytical Excel Sheet and analysed through the common methodological framework agreed upon within the scope of UPLIFT.

The report includes information and direct quotes of some interviews. In order to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, they are identified solely by the number attributed to their interview, their gender and their age group, i.e. if, at the time of the interview, they belonged to the group of the current young or the former young.

4.4 Group meetings

In the case of Amadora, two Youth Town Hall Meetings (YTHM) took place face-to-face: 1) with younger young adults (aged 15-20) and 2) with older young adults (aged 21-29).

The first event took place on 14 June 2021 with students of a local school covering some of the most vulnerable areas in Amadora, including one of the main rehousing quarters. A representative of this school had already been interviewed in a previous phase of the project. To carry out the YTHM, the CESIS team contacted the school again to assess the possibility of holding an event with students aged 15-20. The school was willing to re-collaborate and the YTHM was held with a class of the 11th grade with 16 students, 5 boys and 11 girls, from different ethnic backgrounds and from middle/lower income households. The meeting took place at 10:30 am during teaching time.

The methodology was based on the constitution of three separate groups of students to reflect on issues from the three main areas of work of the UPLIFT project (education, employment and housing). Each group had about 15/20 minutes to discuss and reflect upon questions raised by the team related to one of the areas. These discussions and reflections took place simultaneously in the three groups, all of which reflected on the different themes in question. In total, this meeting lasted for about 2 hours.

The second event took place on 14 July with young adults living in Bairro do Zambujal, a social housing quarter in Amadora. The event was set up jointly with a relevant gatekeeper, our partner in the project, which contacted and organized the meeting around the availability of the young people. The meeting took place at the premises of another NGO, which kindly provided the space for this event. This meeting was attended by five young people, given that due to restrictions related to COVID-19, there was a restriction on the number of people inside the premises. The participants were aged 20 to 26; four women and one man, from different ethnic backgrounds. Three participants were working and two were recipients of the social insertion income, the Portuguese minimum income scheme. In this case, given the size of the group, and contrary to what happened in the first event, the discussion regarding the three main areas of UPLIFT was carried out by the group as a whole, without any subdivision.

Two storytelling workshops took place in Amadora, one with professionals and another one with young people.

The storytelling workshop with professionals took place on 6 July 2022. It was conducted online and it involved 11 professionals from public and private entities of Amadora in the fields of education (municipality; two schools), employment (*junta de freguesia*), housing (municipality) and social protection (municipality), Five participants represented NGOs working in all four areas. Supported by the results and quotes of interviews conducted with young people, the group debated the current importance of the interaction between factors for the definition of trajectories of integration and/or exclusion, as well as the relative importance of conversion factors, in each of the three main domains researched by UPLIFT.

The storytelling workshop with young people took place on 4 August 2022 in the premises of a local gatekeeper. There were five participants aged 21 to 29, three males and two females, of different ethnic backgrounds. They all experienced financial vulnerability and they all lived in social housing. Some had already participated in UPLIFT as interviewees while the remainder had not. The local NGO selected the young people according to the characteristics shared by the research team and, in order to build trust, was also in charge of inviting them on behalf of UPLIFT, for the session.

Some quotes from the interviews were presented and put up for discussion by the participants (see table A.2. in the Appendix). After some initial shyness and embarrassment in participating, the group proved to be quite participatory and the event proved to be a space for sharing opinions and perspectives. Each person was asked to reflect about what they consider to be a success profile in the areas of education, employment and housing. It was an opportunity to understand what is most valued by the young people and to obtain different opinions and different perspectives.

5 Findings

5.1 Outcomes: what have vulnerable young people reached

5.1.1 Education

Regarding the educational context, most of the interviewees, current young but mostly former young, considered their school careers as finished and showed no intention of resuming their studies. There are some exceptions among the group of current young people. Some of these interviewees expressed their intention to continue or to resume their studies in order to complete compulsory education or to obtain a higher education degree.

Only four current youngsters are still in the school context, two of them are working students. All of these students have African origin, with no Roma youngsters in this situation. The ages of these students do not go beyond 18 years.

With complete compulsory education, i.e. 12 years of education, there are only 5 former and 8 current young people, none of them Roma. Among the former group, the maximum level of schooling varies between the 9th and 12th grades, which are prevalent among people of African origin. Among the Roma people interviewed, the maximum level of schooling is 9th grade, although the highest prevalence is at 6th and 7th grade levels. Among the adult Roma interviewees, two women do not have any level of education.

The Roma population, in general, does not reach very high levels of schooling, with very low expectations in relation to school and it is not very likely that Roma youngsters will go beyond the 6th year of schooling (Mendes et al, 2014). Even so, "boys remain in school longer than girls (…) Girls suffer greater pressure to leave school because the classes are mixed and families do not like that, in the early stages of adolescence, they can mingle with boys, especially non-Roma and without an adult reliable supervision, whether from Roma, or non-Roma, persons" (Mendes et al., 2014: 81). Although a change in mentality of the new generations of Roma people is beginning to be noticeable, older Roma women experienced a period of greater restriction in terms of schooling, having been greatly impaired in terms of the qualifications attained, which is very much related to the fact "Roma men consider that the school has little value for women due to the roles that are traditionally attributed to them, that of taking care of the children and the house" (Mendes et al., 2014: 100).

Young Roma participants, in particular, have lower levels of education that do not go beyond the 7th grade, and are therefore characterized by early school leaving paths. Family issues are particularly relevant in the case of these young people and adults, as there are several constraints that mainly affect girls. In the case of former young people, school attendance was not culturally accepted and there was family pressure for early school leaving. In the case of boys, this pressure is lower. On the other hand, several interviewees formed their own family or/and had children at very young ages and this is a factor to be taken into account,

since it limits school attendance and largely determines school dropout among this population.

Another dimension also present in both the current group and the former group is school retention, which characterizes some of the school careers of these interviewees. Year repetitions, sometimes more than once, are present among the interviewees, for example, due to school absenteeism.

A considerable part of schooling at secondary level for both current and former young people was achieved through vocational courses. Some examples of the courses obtained are in the areas of Computer science, Bakery, Restaurant and bar work, or Educational auxiliary support. In certain situations, more than one professional course was completed.

There is only one person, belonging to the former group, with a completed higher education qualification. Additionally, another person attended university but had to suspend their enrolment due to difficulties in reconciling family life and the educational path – a single mother without a family support network.

5.1.2 Employment

The interviewees' occupational status is distributed as follows: for the group of current youth one third is in school (as full-time student, working student, or attending professional training beyond high school), one third is unemployed, and another third is employed. Regarding former youth, roughly half (n=11) were employed and the remaining group (n=10) were unemployed. None of the former youth interviewees reported attending formal education or professional training programmes (beyond high school).

The six interviewees attending school or professional training programmes were of African descent, and 4 out of 6 were females. As we can see in Tables A.3 and A.4 (in the Appendix), two interviewees were full time students (between grades 7 and 12) and two were working students. These were attending vocational high school (informatics and bakery), while the full-time students were in the regular academic track of high-school. The part-time students held typical student jobs, namely in pizza delivery and the catering sector. Both of the interviewees attending professional programmes (one has high school completed and the other has some university education) had difficulties finding a job or staying employed and decided to attend professional training as an alternative to unemployment.

The unemployed current youth is mostly of Roma ethnicity (5 out of 7), and also have an overrepresentation of females (5 out of 7). This group can be divided among those who have never looked for jobs and those who previously had jobs. Four females who are unemployed are stay at home mums (one of them was expecting). Both Roma males, in spite of their young age, already have partners and children. The former youth group who is unemployed is a mix of those who state that they have never had a job and currently are not looking for a job (3 out of 10), those who previously had jobs and are currently not looking (4 out of 10), and those who held jobs before and are looking for a job (3 out of 10). This group has an

overrepresentation of women, who are occupied with either taking care of children or caregiving for their parents. This is the reason why they are not looking for jobs. Those looking for jobs (all Roma ethnicity) claim as main difficulties their lack of education and family caregiving.

Regarding employment, five current youth (out of 18) and eleven former youth (out of 21) are employed. This group is divided between those employed with a contract and those without a contract, or with a short-term contract (less than 6 months), or unknown. Among the current youth only two were employed with a contract. They worked in the catering sector or in cleaning services. Other youth working in precarious jobs worked in stores, in the construction sector and in catering. The employed current youth is either of African descent or Caucasian, and less than half are females.

Among the former youth, six have employment contracts and seven (out of 11) are females. Regarding the ethnicity of the former youth with employment, six are of African descent, three are Roma, one is Caucasian, and one is of Brazilian nationality. Among those with a stable contract, some were working in local associations, schools, and day-care centres. Local associations and schools seem to provide employment to seven of the former youth. Other occupations recorded include educational assistant, security officer/youth counsellor, cleaning services, and assistant cook. Even though some of the former youth had stable work contracts, they earned minimum wage.

5.1.3 Housing

About three out of four interviewees lived in social housing at the time of the interview. In approximately half of those cases, they had always lived in social housing, often in the same dwelling. For the other half, however, social housing represents an upward movement in the housing ladder. This is especially the case of those who have been rehoused from slums and live in more recent social housing quarters. This group includes both current young and former young.

Only in eight cases – four in each sub-group of young people – interviewees mentioned that they were living in dwellings of the private renting sector. Regarding three out of the four currently young, it was not possible to identify their previous housing status because they were too young to pay it attention and/or unaware of it. In one case, there was an upward movement from living in a shanty to private renting. However, the participant interviewee is still of a very young age and it was not possible to grasp the exact conditions behind the move. In any case, it should be mentioned that the dwelling is shared with his mother and grandmother and that this is a work-intensive household as all individuals work – the interviewee is a working student and he mentions that almost all his income is invested into household expenses.

As for the former young in private renting, one mentioned they have always lived in private rented dwellings, one mentioned they had been born and raised in a slum after which he moved into private renting, and a third interviewee moved within private renting, moving

from renting a room to renting a whole dwelling. According to the interviewee, this is only made possible due to extra money derived from the overtime made by the interviewee's husband, which sheds light onto the considerable vulnerability of this situation. The fourth case regards an interesting example of what could initially be seen as an upward movement – from social housing to the private rental market – but is in fact a volatile situation. This interviewee lives in the same social housing quarter where she lived all her life. Her cousin left his social housing dwelling and rented it illegally to her. She has to pay a rent higher than what she would need to pay in social housing and may have to leave the dwelling if her cousin decides to return.

Other movements are even scarcer. In the case of the currently young, there is the situation of a Roma young woman who left the homeownership context of the parental home when she got married and went to live with her husband and in-laws in a social housing quarter. There is also the case of a woman who recently arrived in Portugal and is living in an institution that provides support to single mothers.

Regarding the former young, it only includes one move from private renting to social housing, apparently boosted by a situation of chronic illness and a movement out of social housing where the interviewee lived with her mother to live in a room, for free, at a cousin's home.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the starting point and the current situation regarding housing of the current and former young groups in Amadora. The arrows define the directionality from the starting point to the situation at the time of the interview. Darker colour arrows indicate more moves and lighter colour arrows indicate less moves. The numbers of the interviewees undertaking some kind of movement between the two moments are indicated within the arrows while the numbers of interviewees who have always lived in the same type of housing (even if not in the same dwelling or quarter) are indicated within the rectangles.

Figure 2. Starting point and current housing situation of the currently young group in Amadora

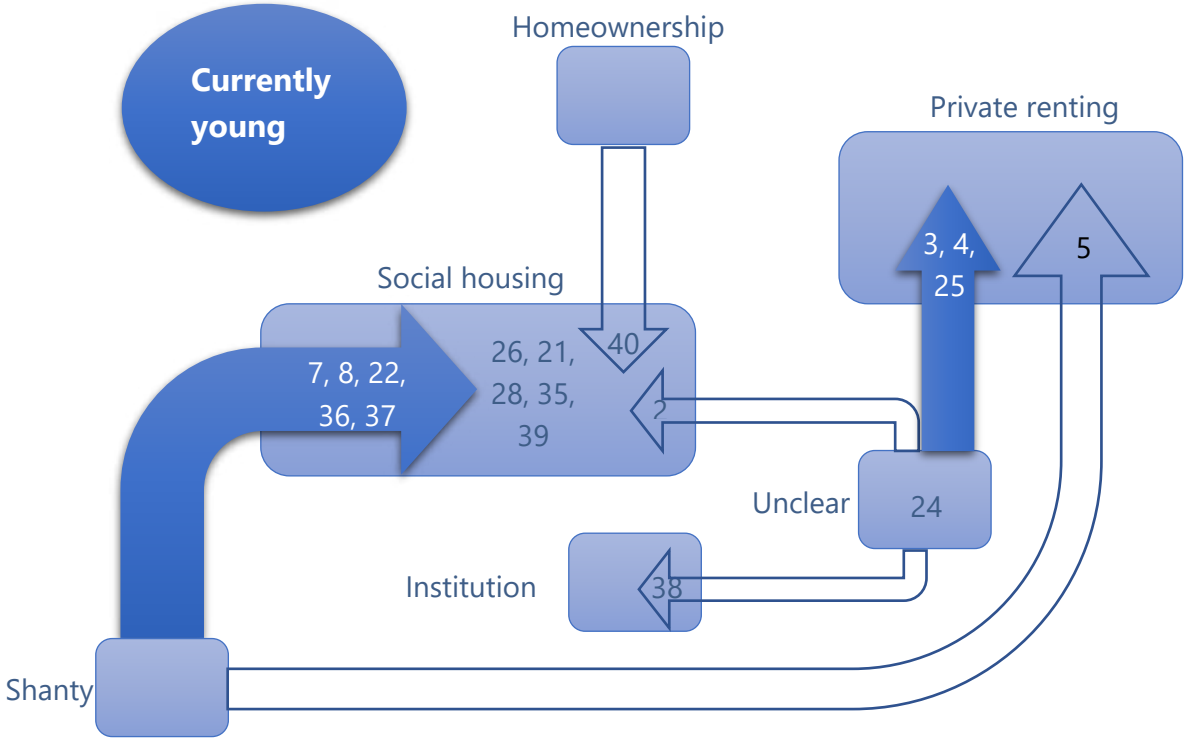
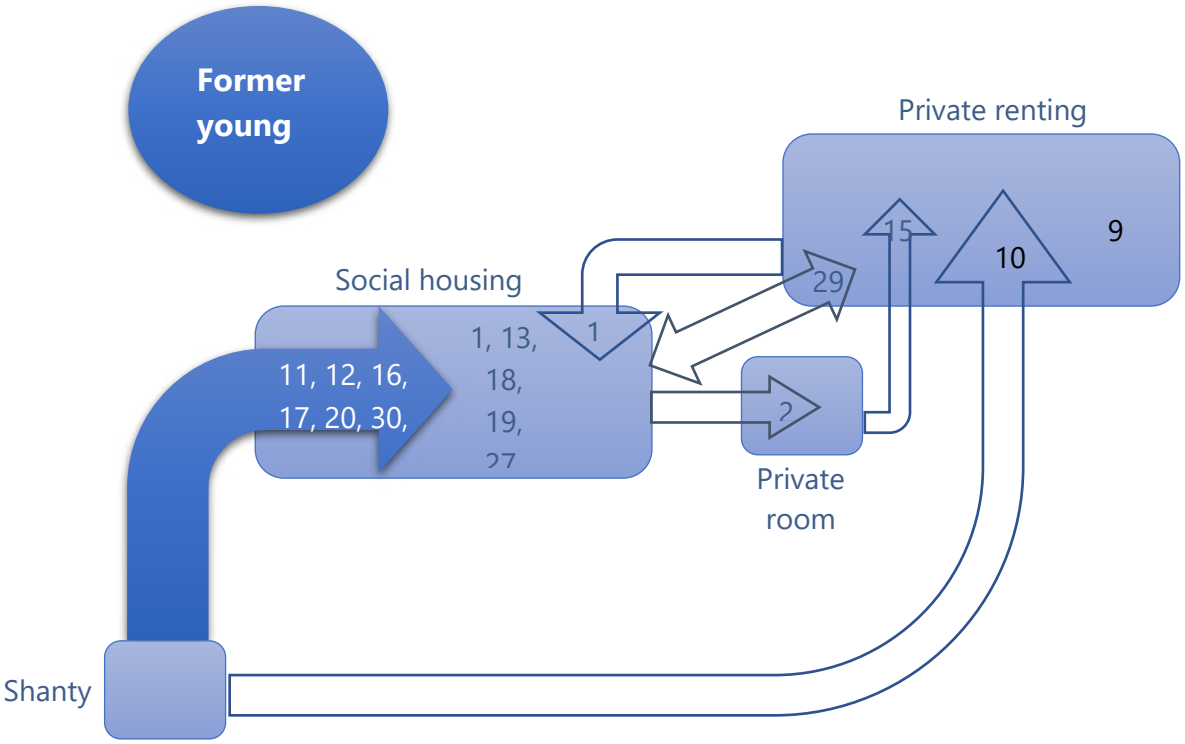


Figure 3. Starting point and current housing situation of the former young group in Amadora



5.2 Resource space: formal freedom of choices for young people

5.2.1 Education

In Portugal, schooling is free and universal and is available to all through the public education system. It is a right enshrined in the CRP (Constitution of the Portuguese Republic), whose current minimum is 12 years of compulsory education or until reaching 18 years of age. Even so, data from the Portuguese Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC)[7], show that there are still situations of school dropout, as well as problems with retention, which in the case of Amadora are higher than those registered at national level.

With regard to public policy in the area of education, substantial outcomes have been achieved since the late 2000s. The national programme of Educational Zones for Priority Action (TEIP), initially created in 1996, is currently underway in 136 school clusters over the country, including 8 of the 12 school clusters existing in Amadora. This programme was reinforced and expanded, providing schools in vulnerable territories with special resources such as more equipment and additional teachers and other educational experts, e.g., psychologists, social workers and mediators (Abrantes et al. 2013). The aim of the programme is to reduce social and educational inequalities through the creation of specific mechanisms to identify, support, protect and supervise schools in poor, segregated and marginalised districts, including the allocation of additional equipment, teachers and other educational experts (e.g., psychologists, social workers and mediators). The specific goals were to: (1) enhance learning processes and reduce dropout rates; (2) create vocational courses and (3) articulate school with local communities. Beginning in 2006, after some years of political disinvestment, the TEIP programme was reviewed and expanded under a new Socialist administration committed to system rationalisation and accountability. It established four main priority areas: (1) the quality of school careers and achievement; (2) failure and dropout rates; (3) the transition to the labour market and (4) schools as educational and cultural agents within local communities.

The *Centro Qualifica Amadora*, run by the municipality in collaboration with two public secondary schools and a private vocational school, helps young people (as well as adults) find adequate opportunities of education or training and supports them in their trajectory, for instance as they resume studying or change tracks. The municipality has also supported the local expansion of *Generation Orchestra* (*Orquestra Geração*), a project set up in Portugal in 2007 by a network of public and private partners, funded by the EU programme EQUAL, to promote the social inclusion and social mobility of vulnerable children and young persons; it currently involves three school clusters in Amadora. More recently, the municipality adopted a strategic educational plan (*Plano Estratégico Educativo Municipal*) and a specific plan to tackle school failure and dropout (*Plano de Prevenção e Ação sobre o Insucesso e o Abandono Escolar na Amadora*) based on a local diagnosis (Mateus, 2019).

[7] Available at: https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/248/.

The retention/dropout rate in Amadora by 2017 was substantially higher than those registered at the national level. Nonetheless, similarly to the country as a whole, these rates show a considerable decrease in Amadora between 2007 and 2017. Also consonant with national trends is that early leaving is much higher among males than females and much higher among foreign-born than native students (see Table 3).

The above-mentioned school failure and dropout can be based on several factors. These factors can be individual, family, or school, and in many cases, there may be an interconnection between them. Early school leaving is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, with numerous causes and consequences: '*The municipality of Amadora has several challenges. And it obviously has to do with some more vulnerable population (…) I don't think they have inequality within the school. What I think is that there are different starting conditions (…) school failure is ultimately also linked to parents' schooling and other factors, like housing issues, etc.*' (Stakeholder interview 1, WP2)

Various NGOs work with young people in the FUA of Amadora to improve their educational performance and prospects, in particular through projects supported by *Escolhas*, a national programme created by the government in 2001. Currently in its 8th generation (2021-2022), this programme supports five projects in Amadora, all of them involving young persons from vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Overall, they believe that substantial efforts have been expended since 2008 to improve schools – namely with the investment of the municipality in infrastructure and extracurricular activities, which started earlier in 2002 – and the increasing autonomy and responsibility of schools enabled them to better address local needs. However, serious problems are said to persist. Our interviewees point out the excessive standardisation of the educational model (especially with regard to student assessment and grades), the limited investment in adult education (affecting young people that dropped out of school too early, as well as older people that have low levels of education) and the insufficient training of professionals to deal with specific problems in their daily activity at schools. One interviewee, who works at an NGO that supports population living in a social housing quarter, refers to further difficulties arising from the segregation of students between schools of the same area based on their socioeconomic backgrounds.

5.2.2 Employment

Regarding the labour market dimension, the unemployment rate is not available at the level of the FUA, but at the level of the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon it stood at 9.5% in 2017, slightly above the national unemployment rate of 8.9% (Urban Report of Amadora). The highest rate in 2017 was found in the age group of 15-29 years: 16.6%. The unemployment rate of young people in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon rose dramatically in the post-2008 crisis and decreased in the subsequent years of economic recovery. In 2017, it was still higher than in 2007. The age group of 15-29 years in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon also registers

an exceptionally high inactivity rate, 48.1% (considerably above the 41% of the overall active population), and higher than the 42.3% registered in 2007.

The distribution of young people across employment sectors in Amadora is quite uneven (Urban report of Amadora). Although many residents of Amadora commute to Lisbon to work, young workers in Amadora are largely employed in wholesale and retail trade, transport, hospitality and food service activities, with only a small presence in other sectors such as industry, manufacturing, construction, administrative services, and professional, scientific and technical activities. This imbalance appears to have increased since the post-2008 crisis. On the one hand, there has been a substantial reduction of young people employed in shrinking sectors like industry and construction, especially between 2007 and 2012. On the other hand, sectors that did grow since 2007 – such as information and communication, public administration or professional, scientific and technical activities – have not shown a proportionate increase of young people in their workforce.

The rate of precarious employment in the FUA stands at 29.9% – below the national rate of 34.3% –, with men slightly more affected than women (Urban Report of Amadora). This rate decreased between 2007 and 2012, as permanent workers were more able to keep their job than precarious workers, but it increased again in the recovery years, confirming the little security provided by many of the jobs created after the crisis. Similarly to what happened at the national level, those aged between 25 and 34 years register the highest rate of precarious employment in Amadora (32,2%), although their comparative position has improved since 2007.

Several public policy programmes exist at the local level to promote integration in the labour market. There are four Offices for Professional Integration (Gabinetes de Inserção Profissional) in the FUA of Amadora. These are run either by Juntas de Freguesias (Águas Livres and Encosta do Sol) or by NGOs (Moinho da Juventude and Aproximar). The Junta de Freguesia of Alfragide has also been operating an Employment Office since early 2020 in cooperation with a local NGO (CooperActiva). Besides providing information and assistance to job-seekers, all of these organisations and others – national and local, public and private – collaborate regularly to provide training, often financed by EU funds and free of charge for trainees.

In the freguesia of Falagueira-Venda Nova, a Local Contract for Social Development (Contrato Local de Desenvolvimento Social) was carried out from 2016 by a Catholic charity (Santa Casa da Misericórdia), which ceased already, and a more recent one is carried out by an NGO since 2020 (CooperActiva). The national programme for the creation of these Local Contracts for Social Development, supported by public funds, was launched in 2007 to enhance social change in vulnerable areas and enhance life quality and well-being. It entails measures in the areas of employment, training, parental and family intervention, and capacity-building of local communities and institutions. The municipality also created in 2016 a public company (Amadora Inova), which combines three areas of intervention: supporting

entrepreneurs (Amadora Tech), tackling school failure and early dropout (Amadora Sorri) and promoting social innovation (Amadora Cuida).

Our interviewees report that many of the young people seeking employment in Amadora accumulate difficulties associated with low education, little if any work experience and lack of digital skills, as well as factors of discrimination like gender or ethnicity. According to our interviewees, the Offices for Professional Integration and local organisations with activity in this area struggle with insufficient resources and staff, poor connections with one another, and requirements established by the state or the EU that are too rigid and bureaucratic, making it very difficult to develop adequate ways to meet the needs, monitor trajectories and seize the potential of job-seekers. Therefore, the responses made available to unemployed young people are very much circumscribed to one-size-fits-all solutions, mostly internships and training. In turn, the interviewees point out that local companies invest little in equipment and training (especially in technological respects) and there is a large prevalence of temporary contracts, long working hours and low wages.

5.2.3 Housing

The housing market in Portugal has been characterised by some interlinked features: a high pace of construction; a weak dynamic of the rental market; a high share of homeownership; and an increasing percentage of vacant dwellings.

State investment in housing has been traditionally weak and has been overlooked by the commitment to create and consolidate the three major pillars of the welfare state: education, health and social security.

The social housing sector in Portugal represents only about 2% of the overall housing stock, and about 2.8% in the municipality of Amadora. Access to social housing has been blocked by a market, which had to absorb a large number of families living in shanties for whom the impetus given to owner-occupied dwellings was never an affordable alternative, and neither was the private rental market. Thus, social housing policies in Portugal have not adequately responded to the housing needs of many vulnerable families.

In the Portuguese context, Amadora is the municipality with the 5th highest share of families in a situation of housing need, i.e., families that meet the requirements to access public housing but are waiting to be provided with it – this is the case of 3.87% of the families living in the municipality, meaning 2,839 families (IHRU, 2018: 27).

Over the years, the rising housing costs in the city of Lisbon resulted in some areas of Amadora becoming more expensive and therefore out of reach for low-wage and even median-wage workers, especially those with good access to public transport (such as the city centre, Alfornelos or Reboleira), while several other areas increasingly concentrate the poorest population and still have insufficient public and private services.

Although the local implementation of the Special Rehousing Programme began in the mid-1990s, it is still unfinished. Overall, the implementation of the programme in Amadora is

described as late and incomplete as well as significantly based on the low-cost option of building large social housing quarters on cheap lands instead of smaller units across the municipality.

According to Moreno et al. (2017), there are 2,098 social housing dwellings in the municipality of Amadora, 73.7% of them located in three large PER agglomerations (Casal da Mira, Casal da Boba and Casal do Silva). Most of the people living in dwellings owned by the municipality come from self-constructed illegal housing and their current places of residence have the same dominant socio-economic characteristics of the previous ones: high unemployment, low education, low income and substantial dependence on welfare benefits (Moreno et al., 2017).

Based on ethnographic research in several self-constructed and social housing quarters, including Casal da Mira and Casal da Boba in Amadora, Alves (2019) highlights the persistence of low housing quality, isolation from social and economic activities, overcrowded accommodation and lack of data collection by public actors to adequately monitor progress over time.

Other concerns regarding the housing market in Amadora are the increase of illegal rentals, overcrowded dwellings and long-term permanence of families in social housing, associated with difficulties in breaking cycles of poverty and social exclusion. This is especially worrisome in the case of young people, as they would be expected to earn a living and move into the private market.

Portugal's Recovery and Resilience Plan, recently submitted to the European Commission, mentions "the absence of a social housing stock of adequate size and of a structured response to urgent housing needs" (República Portuguesa, 2021: 89). Also, the national strategy – New Generation of Housing Policies (Nova Geração de Políticas de Habitação) – launched in mid-2018, acknowledged the impact of social inequalities in access to housing and the extreme vulnerability of young people. The strategy aims to increase the share of publicly supported housing within the overall housing stock from 2% to 5%, which represents 170,000 more dwellings. The first law establishing the principles of housing policy in Portugal, in force since October 2019, includes a general principle that special protection should be granted to young people as well as people with disabilities, the elderly, families with children, lone-parent and large households, and others in vulnerable situations.

While some national policies have been positively assessed by UPLIFT interviewees – more broadly the New Generation of Housing Policies and more specifically Porta 65, 1º Direito, Reabilitar para Arrendar and Da Habitação ao Habitat – limitations are signalled with regard to insufficient public financial investment and too complex application procedures, both contributing to limited numbers of young people being covered. The growing trend of decentralisation raises the fear that housing policies may eventually become less effective rather than more effective, as municipalities are required to design and implement solutions for which they lack money, time and qualified professionals. Furthermore, municipalities and

other local actors do not have any capacity to influence factors with a massive impact on housing such as the legislation on urban rentals or price speculation.

5.3 Resources and strategies of vulnerable young people

5.3.1 Low education: between devaluation of schooling and the urge to contribute to household expenses and needs

Most interviewees have higher education levels than their parents. The difference is particularly visible among Roma interviewees. This constitutes the group with the lowest qualifications among the total of interviewees (mainly around the 6th grade), but even so, the majority have achieved a higher level than their parents, some of whom did not study beyond the 4th year of schooling, and there are even some cases who did not complete any level of schooling. The population of African origin also has a level of schooling well above their older relatives, as the people interviewed have typically completed 12th grade while their parents have mostly 4 years of schooling, similar to Roma parents.

As already mentioned in section 5.1, the majority of interviewees' education, both current and former young, did not exceed the 12th grade, with only one case having completed higher education. Parents' schooling follows the same line, i.e., it does not go beyond the 12th grade, and is usually far lower. It is among the parents of the Caucasian people interviewed that there are higher levels of education between the 9th or 12th grade levels. In some Roma families none of the parents completed any educational level or only one of them, usually the father. As evidenced by a representative from the field of education who states that *'parents' schooling is the indicator that, sociologically studied, has the greatest influence on children's school results*' (Stakeholder interview 1 WP2), with the opinion that this is a fundamental problem, because *'if I am poorly educated, first of all my children probably have a huge disadvantage and they will probably also be poorly educated*' (Stakeholder interview 3).

This low level of education that characterizes some families, particularly those from the Roma community, is particularly evident in women. The sparse appreciation of school and its benefits, alongside some aspects of Roma culture, dictated that some of the Roma women interviewed were forced to leave school at a very early age. Roma culture is traditionally based (although nowadays there is more flexibility on the part of younger people) on the premise that Roma girls and youngsters should not attend schools where they have close contact with other non-Roma children, from the moment they start menstruation.

It is among former young people that the lack of support and encouragement regarding school attendance was most significant, especially among Roma young people, often leading to repetion, drop-out and overall low levels of education. This is the case of Interviewee 31, former young person, female, with incomplete 4th grade, who mentions that her parents had low schooling, her mother did not know how to sign her name and at the time Roma girls could only attend school until the 4th grade. This was taken for granted and her parents did

not contradict this tradition. She regrets not having studied more: '*Those who have studied are assured in life, those who don't ... it's complicated*'. Interviewee 34, former young person, female, with 5th grade education, has experienced a different path and says that her father did not let her miss school. However, she had to repeat the 4th grade twice due to the fact that she was a Roma girl, as she was already physically more developed and because she was already menstruating: '*I already had a [developed] body. I became a 'woman' [menstruated] at 11*'. Her father asked for her to be held back and repeat a year so that she would not mingle with other older non-Roma children. She believes that her father only let her go to school so that the family would not lose the entitlement to social support - one of the requirements of the Portuguese minimum income scheme (RSI) is that children attend school at least till the age of 16.

Although some interviewees recognize that there is currently greater flexibility on the part of Roma families in relation to the school attendance of young people, there are still those among current young people who have put aside ambitions due to cultural issues. Interviewee 40, current young person, female, with 7th grade education, says that she would have liked to have continued in school and taken a higher degree in Law. She states, however, that this was not allowed due to the number of hours she had to spend at school and that this would be target of disapproval and comment from the Roma community: '*It was our ethnicity [this way of thinking], that's it. They could talk about us, this and that, etc*.'

Along with this pressure, family formation (not only among women) or pregnancy situations at very young ages dictated the end, and in a (few) cases the postponement, of schooling, even if this occurred at a very young age still covered by mandatory school attendance. When this happens, mostly among Roma girls, the educational path is 'closed'.

In the specific case of Amadora, there has been attention and work, namely by schools and local associations, that has been carried out specifically with the Roma population, which seek to find strategies to ensure that young people, particularly girls, do not drop out of school early (see e.g. Magano and Mendes, 2016). This ongoing work with families has had results, even if they are not immediate, as the director of a school group says. According to him, some Roma families did not want their daughters to go to the 2nd and 3rd school cycles for fear of their interaction with other older, non-Roma children. This was a problem that required a specific approach by the school to families, which constituted a very complicated and challenging situation. Even so, there were some cases of school dropout by Roma girls due to the non-transition from the 1st to the 2nd cycle, despite the efforts made by the local schools

In other ethnic groups, there is a mismatch between an intrinsic will to proceed with studies and the pressure to start working, in order to contribute to household expenses, leading to school dropout:

Interviewee 35, male, current young person, has had a difficult educational path. He completed the 12th grade but his home environment was not the best due to his bad relationship with his mother. He considers that the teachers did not provide the best follow-up; there was no motivation from the teachers. There were too many rules and not enough enthusiasm to learn. He got worse in high school, but ultimately considers studying very important and that's why he completed the 12th year: '*They say it's important, but then you also have to help at home*'.

When he got home from school, he had to help around the house (shopping, several tasks, taking care of his grandmother) and he says that, because of that, he could not respond to the school's requests: '*My head was not in the right place to do the school work; I had to go and get motivated but it was difficult.*' His mother did not have time to give him the support he needed. He missed that support but did have support from other people outside the family environment.

His mother wanted him to start working and leave school but he considered that it was better to continue in order to have more studies and wait longer before starting work. He ended up in conflict with his mother over this decision. He started to study and work at night but could not manage. He refers to it being too tiring and ended up giving up school to work, thus contributing to family expenses.

He is considering going to university but the contribution of his income is important and that is why he has not decided yet. He would like to take Graphic Design. At the moment, he works in a cleaning company in a shopping mall.

From the reports of the interviewees, it is clear that financial difficulties, situations of violence or devaluation of the school played an important role in choices and educational paths. As interviewee 28, current young person, says: '*I asked myself «why do I have to study?» It's not the school that's going to give me diapers, it's not the school that's going to give me milk for my child.*' Similarly, interviewee 1, former young person, mentions that financial difficulties led her parents to lose their home and that this had an impact on her education since she felt obliged to leave school to help her mother pay off debts. On the other hand, interviewee 12, male, former young person, says that he left school because he suffered from violence from his brother and thus decided to leave the house. During that time, he slept on the streets and at friends' houses. All of this disturbed his schooling path significantly.

Some former young people report episodes of violence within the family. This family violence is not only on the part of parents in childhood but also on the part of partners once in adulthood. Childhood episodes of violence are reported as being triggered by the young person's behaviour in the classroom, or outside it, which was then punished at home. It was

evident in the interviews that the family plays a decisive role in the school career of children. As a school director says, *'the school is doing it but cannot fully reverse the situation of retraction and little appreciation of the school. There are families that do not value school. I had an episode 2, 3 years ago, a mother telling her daughter, in front of us, that the school was no interest to her at all.'* (Stakeholder interview 2).

On the other hand, and even though the family plays an important role, dropping out of school is also a personal choice for some people. Situations of lack of interest, failure due to absences, rebelliousness, a failure to adapt to the environment, or peer group influence:

> Interviewee 27, female, former young person studied until the 9th grade. The school journey was not easy. She had a break at 12/13 years old because she helped her mother at work. Two years later she completed the 7th, 8th and 9th grades in a year and a half by the capitalisable units system, taken at night. She claims that she had no learning difficulties and was a good student. It was a big shock when she came to a school in Amadora because she dressed differently (posh clothes with hairpins). She was assaulted every day until she ended up defending herself. She describes herself as being very different from everyone else in a complicated school. She was the only Caucasian in her class. She had many complaints of bad behaviour from teachers: *'I also wanted to be like everyone else. I would rather be discriminated against by the teachers than by my peers. And if I didn't have certain attitudes that for them were normal, I also had problems after leaving the classroom and that's what I didn't want*.'
> She was very angry about things that happened at home (bad relationship with her parents) and she missed classes a lot. She considered that this was a way of punishing them: '*I only punished myself; I was the only one harmed by it*.'
> The fact that she dropped out of school was not frowned upon by her parents, because her father had meanwhile been arrested and her mother needed her help. She thought it was best for everyone to leave school.

Despite this insufficient focus on schooling, the existence of alternatives to the regular path of young people makes it possible for some to complete high school, i.e., 12th grade, through alternative paths. This was the case for almost all former young people who reported having completed their education through professional paths, taking advantage of the varied training offer, available not only for young people but also for adults, distributed throughout the public and professional schools of the city, higher education establishments and also in the IEFP's [IEFP - Institute of Employment and Professional Training] professional training service. Through these educational offers, it was possible for some young people to obtain equivalence for the 9th and 12th grades. Among current young people, this also happens, but less frequently, since most of them have already completed the 12th year of schooling, with the exception of young Roma. This is probably related to the fact that compulsory schooling in Portugal depends on the person's age: nine years for those born between 1981 and 1994,

i.e. roughly those aged between 27 and 41 at the time of interviewing; twelve years for those born between after 1994, i.e. roughly those aged up to 27 at the time of interviewing

This professional training, however, is not a guarantee of a professional activity, since there is no correspondence between the professional activity performed and the professional training they acquired, something that is visible in both groups of young people. There are even those who have attended more than one training course, usually within the scope of the IEFP which prove to be little or not at all consequential in professional terms. However, in employment centres managed by the IEFP, training courses are mandatory for people registered as unemployed. The courses offer vary according to the level of education achieved and the interests of jobseekers themselves.

Furthermore, the added value of education is widely recognized by the interviewees who consider that low qualifications make it difficult to access employment. They consider that having the 9th or 12th grade is insufficient and some say that they would like to have studied more and express regret for their past choices, something that is more frequent in the former group. However, in both groups the desire to resume their studies is not very strong, meaning that this 'chapter' of their lives is ended mostly due to the fact that they have chosen different paths (start working, begin a family,...). There are still, however, those who aspire to reach a higher level of education. In the group of former young people, it is among those of African origin that the desire to embark on higher education is evident (2 cases), while among people of Roma and Caucasian ethnicity, the 9th or 12th grade is the most desirable although at the moment the interviewees show neither availability nor willingness to do so. The ambitions of the youngest are also focused on obtaining courses, whether in a more professional scope or at a higher level. Of the four people who are still studying, only one intends to go beyond the 12th grade, something that also reveals the low aspirations of some of the young people.

In general, the educational paths took place, mostly, without learning difficulties and without conflicts, either with teachers or with peers, and the good relationship with them was highlighted Current and former interviewees recognize the support and encouragement received from teachers during their educational journey. For example, interviewee 7, female, current young person, says that she received support from a teacher who noticed her financial difficulties and her vision problems and helped her to buy her first pair of glasses.

However, other interviewees mentioned that they felt little support from teachers, especially the younger ones. Situations of discrimination and differentiated treatment were pointed out as existing, especially among current young people. Some of the interviewees mention that they had learning difficulties, that the teachers did not motivate them and that this also had repercussions on their educational paths: '*They just put the test in front of us, then they said a few things and told us to get on with it. I thought it was like that most of the time*' (Interviewee 35, current young, male). This young man says that there was a lack of meaningful connection between teacher and student which would facilitate the school journey.

One of the interviewed professionals belonging to a local association that manages a 'Escolhas' Programme[8] in the municipality of Amadora made some criticisms of the way in which teaching is organized and the lack of motivation among children that still exists in the school context. According to her, schools have stagnated in terms of teaching methodology and it is necessary to adopt a new approach that favours motivation and that goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. This motivation will enhance the continuity of studies and permanence in school: '*The challenges (…) have a lot to do with the teachers. When they speak, they do not tell us about the children's difficulty in learning but about the difficulty they have in motivating them. And so, keeping the school system that we already had, which was the kids all sitting down, all very well-behaved listening to a presentation, this needs to be reinvented. Kids need to have a more dynamic school, more attractive in the sense that it encourages and motivates them to research and learn in a more dynamic way'* (Stakeholder interview 4, WP2).

5.3.2 Poor quality jobs and the effects of low education, discrimination and self-limitation

Educational and family conversion factors have important consequences for young people's successful labour market integration and the quality of employment trajectories that ensue.

The UPLIFT interviewees in Amadora acknowledged different individual resource spaces, but in general, schools attended by our sample of individuals have low levels of resources. Some of Amadora´s youth invest and believe in educational achievement as a way to effectively gain access to good, secure jobs, while others do not invest in education – because they do not see it as an effective lever to reach a satisfactory position within the labour market. A third group, maybe because they do not believe or perceive school and employment success to be within the realm of their possibilities, design and engage in alternative socio-economic strategies to make ends meet.

However, individualized resource spaces are equally shaped by individual (such as ethnicity and gender) and family based conversion factors which also affect young people's real and perceived opportunity spaces. For those living in socio-economic resource scarce neighbourhoods in Amadora – with limited school, housing and employment possibilities – the interviews denote a heavy weight of this context on the employment-type functionings of both current and former youth. As we will see later, residing in a social housing neighbourhood in Amadora can negatively affect the chances of finding a job – including a low-skilled job – for the Amadora interviewees.

[8] More information, see Chapter 5.2 and the Urban Report on Amadora, available at: https://uplift-youth.eu/sites/default/files/upload/files/D2.2%20Urban%20report%20-%20Amadora.pdf.

Is education a conversion factor to find a "good" job?

Overall, low educational levels are felt by interviewees to restrict employment opportunities but higher educational levels (usually the 12th grade, as analysed in section 5.3.1) generally have not taken interviewees beyond minimum wage jobs.

Independently of the reason for leaving school early, almost all consider that low educational attainment harms their opportunities in the labour market. One of the interviewees mentioned that she feels that sometimes her education is insufficient (9th grade), because some jobs ask for the 12th grade. Despite this, she is not motivated to study for another three years to get the 12th year: '*I would leave at 30*' (Interviewee 28, female, current young).

There is also awareness among some interviewees that there is an educational inflation, in the sense that the labour market increasingly requires higher educational qualifications as compared to the recent past. However, some interviewees also feel that the low level of specialization of some of the jobs available seems to not justify the 12 years of compulsory education. One of the young people stated that he thought that 10th grade was enough to get a job, but as he started his work activity, he realized it was hard to find work. There are basic jobs that already ask for a college degree, he states, and the quality of employment also varies depending on the required education. He thinks he has too much education for the job he has right now (cleaning services) (Interviewee 35, male, current young).

From the 40 interviewees there were only three cases of people taking higher education programmes in the areas of Computer Science and Social Service: two current young people had attended a higher educational institution but dropped out and a former young person had completed a higher education programme. The three cases are all people of African descent. Although both young people who dropped out were working while attending higher education programmes, factors such as lack of money, problems with student visa documents, a pregnancy, and not having enough social support, led them to leave their studies.

The trajectories of both young people provide illustrative examples of the type of obstacles young people face to achieve qualifications beyond compulsory education:

> Interviewee 23, male, current young, studied till the 12th grade in Angola, then entered the university and attended until the second year (of three). He had to drop out due to financial problems, even though he worked part-time. Now he works in construction, changing windows and window panes. In the process of finding work he identifies the issue of education and training. He claims to need more training, perhaps at higher education level. Initially, the first difficulty was the (immigration) documentation and only then the training.
>
> He got a job through a local NGO. In Portugal he has worked in a factory and considered the working conditions very bad (in terms of the schedule, people,

breaks, and money). He also tried a restaurant in Lisbon, but he mentioned that '*it didn't work out*'. In Angola he had several jobs, namely in catering, travel agencies, Uber, as a church leader, and in the national electoral commission, among others.

And another example:

Interviewee 38, female, current young, finished 12th grade in Cape Verde. She went to college (in Portugal) and the idea was to study and work, but she had to give up her plan. She could not get a job as soon as she arrived in Portugal because she had a baby. She worked in direct sales (door-to-door) but did not like it because she thinks this job had no ethics. She was only in this work for three days. She ended up getting a job at a hairdresser where she stayed for two months.

She then volunteered at a day care centre before starting the training course to see if it really was an area she liked. She is now enrolled on a training programme to become an Education Specialist through the Employment Centre, lasting one year.

At the time they were interviewed, most people – both former and current young – worked mainly in sectors of activity with low level of specializations such as construction, sales clerk, food services, cleaning services, and security services, among others. Although not all interviewees provided information regarding their salary, most – if not all – are paid the minimum wage or below minimum wage (in case of less formal or task-based work). Participants in the YTHM, many of whom were students, also emphasised this, often reporting that their parents earned the minimum wage or only slightly above. These types of jobs are also often characterized by demanding working conditions, long hours, strenuous physical conditions, or unsafe working conditions. Sometimes, these derive from the need to work over-time or take a second job, as stressed by the participants in the YTHM.

The following examples illustrate how people try to reach a balance between employment contract security and higher or lower wages, and how sometimes they accumulate several jobs in order to make ends meet.

Interviewee 26, male, current young, opted for a cautious employment strategy. He kept the same employment for five years, privileging stability and a permanent contract over remuneration. During this time, over limited periods, he had second jobs. The objective was to earn more money but he eventually quit all of them because he ended up having very long working hours (12 to 16 hours per

day). He regrets not having chosen one of these jobs (in a supermarket) over his main job. He was making more money and he would have been granted a permanent contract after two months. However, even if overall cautious, his job strategy changed when he decided to quit his main job as he was planning to join a new job in a storage and household appliances shop. The working conditions promised were better (better pay, better working schedule) but he failed to show up and then he lost this opportunity. He states that local policies never influenced his strategies as he never resorted to any public or private entity to find a job and he was never unemployed.

He identified several opportunities throughout his professional life. In his own words, it is not hard to find a job for someone with his characteristics; the thing for him is that some people only want to work in some activities. In his opinion it is easy to find work in the catering industry, in cleaning and as a security guard.

Interviewee 35, male, current young, recently started his working career. Thus, he mentions not having a lot of experience but considers himself content. He works in cleaning and is responsible for cleaning a mall. He mentioned that the machines are heavy and it takes physical effort. Sometimes he is sore. He works full-time with an employment contract. He plans to continue with this job until he starts college. He will try to keep both, but if not, he thinks of quitting his job. He is satisfied with the income but not the work. He would like to find something less tiring. He does not feel discriminated against in this kind of work because there are all kinds of people working there.

Those interviewees who have achieved more satisfactory employment situations report having minimum wage with a stable tenured contract. However, given that minimum wage contributions are small, in case of unemployment or disease, the social protection provided is usually not enough for individuals to survive on their own. Alternative strategies to compensate for low minimum wage earnings in Portugal include, for instance, living with extended family or residing in social housing, if available (see next section).

Aspirations: perceived opportunities versus real opportunities

Some of Amadora's current youth professional aspirations include continuing professional training, working as a pastry chef or/and in the future owning their own pastry café, kindergarten educator, or security guard. Frequently, current youth mention the plan of emigrating, mostly to other European countries, but many also consider that they would not like to live apart from their families:

> Interviewee 28, female, current young, completed the 9th grade and a pastry course. One day she would like to work in a pastry café and would like to open her own business. She is unemployed, but works as a baby sitter informally. She has been looking for work but needs a day care spot so she can leave her child. She has always worked in cleaning services. She worked for a cleaning company for a year and a half. When her mother fell ill, she wanted to take off some time but this was not accepted by the employer and she was dismissed. She was fired again when she became pregnant with her second child.

Professional goals reported by former young people include having a better paying job and more job security. Only one former young person mentioned the wish of advancing their qualifications (i.e., completing a gardening training). For most of our sample of former young people, advancing education or adding professional qualifications is not perceived as an opportunity to achieve better working conditions.

Looking for jobs outside Amadora

Individual strategies to find employment opportunities are influenced by macro-level factors such as local employment markets (i.e., the FUA of Amadora) and its proximity with the capital city, or even as some of the interviewees mention, the prospect of emigrating to other European countries (only one interviewee mentions North America). It is worth mentioning that some interviewees have already had working experiences abroad. However, they have returned to Portugal and to Amadora as they saw that experience as an opportunity to earn some money more easily (due to the fact that the jobs are better paid) and not as a definitive choice. The relationship with their families left behind also had an important role in influencing their decision to return. Others, as well as many YTHM participants, reported having close family members who have migrated, mostly to another European country.

Several young people – during the individual interviews but also during the YTHM and the storytelling workshop – referred to Amadora as a restricted local employment market, and would consider looking for jobs outside Amadora, in Lisbon or even outside Portugal. Some consider only Lisbon and do not wish to move away from their families. The cost of transportation to and from the capital city and time spent on commuting is seen as an obstacle by some interviewees. YTHM participants emphasised that, on the one hand, it is good that Lisbon provides opportunities but that, on the other, working in Lisbon is more tiresome and implies being dependent upon and spending a lot of time in transportation.

Influence of the culture of origin plus structure of opportunities

Some of the Roma interviewees seem to have alternative individual strategies of socio-economic integration, that do not imply an investment in education and a formal labour market integration. Although the interview did not investigate the specific reasons why this alternative route is used, some of the Roma interviewees place more value in keeping a close knit family and community attachment. A few consider that in order to maintain their family attachment and obligations, they are not as able to invest in formal education and formal employment integration. However, without a more in-depth examination it is difficult to assert that this position is a consequence of family and community obligations or that Roma families do not identify viable alternative routes in the formal labour market.

In all cases, as mentioned in the previous section, Roma interviewees tend to have lower educational levels compared to other interviewees. Some Roma interviewees had tried to follow available and regular employment pathways towards unstable and low paying jobs, but looking at the different outcomes, only one case achieved the desired stable employment contract (compared with five cases of young people of African descent).

The following example of a female Roma young person illustrates some of the questions raised above:

> Interviewee 40, female, current young, has completed the 7th grade (PIEF). She then completed an educational assistant course and attended four more courses through IEFP (Institute for Employment and Professional Training).
>
> Currently, she is unemployed and never worked. She considers that because she has only the 7th grade, she cannot get a job (…) '*Since I was a little girl I was a houseworker, a server, talking to people, communicating, have an education, I've always had that. I do anything. Always. One does not need a great education. We know that it (education) is necessary.'* She recognizes that schooling is important but thinks that the state should '*look more for us, for people who do not have work.*'

Besides lower levels of education, other factors perceived as obstacles to a satisfactory work trajectory and mentioned by interviewees, are ethnicity, the stigma of living in a poor or social housing neighbourhoods, and age, among others.

Discrimination in the workplace on the basis of ethnicity is reported by some of the interviewees and also by YTHM participants. A few Roma interviewees also consider that their ethnicity has a negative influence in their chances of finding jobs, some because they already had this experience and some who have not but assume this perception to be true, thus self-limiting their options and aspirations. One YTHM participant noted: '*nowadays, in our society, we always hear that there should be equality in every sense but this is not what*

happens in practice (…) Society should talk less and do more!' Residing in social housing neighbourhoods is also seen as a stigma, and some even mention providing alternative addresses in their résumé in order to raise their chances of being considered for jobs. There are, however, myriad other factors considered as discriminatory, such as young age, sexual orientation, teenage pregnancy or pregnancy in itself, and immigration status (some of the interviewees had only student visas).

According to a local association leader, "*the main obstacles (for finding a job) for young people relate to the fact that they do not have professional experience; and eventually, have some weaknesses in their socio-professional skills that hinder access and keeping a job. The lack of communication, resilience, persistence, and self-organization skills – are some of the factors that hinder the integration of young people in the labour market*"(Stakeholder interview 6).

For this reason, and considering that public employment services usually do not provide anything other than standardised services, several local institutions try to provide an integrated follow-up of young people regarding their pathway to labour market integration. These professionals aim to work in an individualized way with each person, providing more or less formal training in order to promote their empowerment and skills that lead to an enhanced labour market integration.

Motherhood and children

An important theme for women interviewees concerns motherhood and children. Women with children have increased obstacles to find and hold jobs, including accessing appropriate and affordable childcare. Some of the Roma mothers chose not to look for jobs once they had children, in order to fulfil their family duties. Others rely on family support to free up time to look for and keep a job. However, if that family support is not available, they will need to postpone entry or even exit the labour market until childcare is available or children reach school age.

Similar concerns were expressed by the participants in the YTHM who feel that men can find a job more easily than women, notably in the private sector, since employers tend to fear the absences from work resulting from pregnancy and the need to care for small children.

Having children, even if they are attending school, imposes restrictions on the number of hours and schedules that people (usually women) are available to work. When interviewees are in precarious employment situations, a pregnancy can be the unofficial cause for ending an employment position. Even if firing a pregnant woman is forbidden by law, which includes terminating a temporary contract on this basis, it is often the trigger for employers to find any other reason for not renewing a temporary contract. Thus, motherhood adds a strong disadvantage to women trying to build positive employment trajectories towards better paying jobs, secure contracts, and good working conditions. Most of the time, as our interviewees' examples have shown, a secure employment contract – even if it pays minimum wage – is their best possible goal, due to their educational levels plus the lack of labour

experience. The following case provides a clear example of the hard choices mothers face, particularly when economic resources, childcare and social support are limited:

> Interviewee 28, female, current young, is formally unemployed, although she works informally as a babysitter. She believes that she will only have the opportunity to look for a better job when she can find her youngest child a day care spot. She would like to work in cleaning services or in the pastry area, but the working hours are not compatible with children's schedules. She thinks that there are good job opportunities in cleaning services but the pay is low, at the minimum wage level. She has thought about going to England to work because she has family there, but decided not to go because of her children.

Community resources and associations

Local community associations and schools provide different programmes to help young people and older individuals integrate in the labour market. Some provide employment services, such as help with building a résumé, identifying job opportunities, job applications, interview practice, and even connecting candidates to potential employers.

For instance, a local public organization, offers the *Programa Qualifica (Programme Qualify), 'to encourage those young people who have stopped studying for some reason, who are working or not, to complete high school. We have the programme for adults and we also have a partnership with the School (…), where the youngest can take the EFA courses and everything else, in order to also allow them to be integrated and complete their studies'* (Stakeholder interview 5).

A local NGO offers three integrated programmes: a conventional Professional Insertion Office (GIP), a labour intermediation programme with the objective of supporting those who may be in a situation of greater vulnerability in the labour market, and a cooperation agreement with the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training that focuses on building capacity and training of vulnerable audiences, in order to enhance their employability. The three projects are delivered in a systemic and integrated way, in order to support each person's goals, their training path success, and to help them integrate into the labour market (Stakeholder interview 6).

Community associations also offer jobs with stable employment contracts for local residents, thus providing rare opportunities in the local labour market. Professional training programmes also constitute an alternative to unemployment providing simultaneously a chance to add qualifications and a source of revenue. However, these training courses frequently do not translate into real job opportunities, which seems to be related, at least partially, with two types of mismatch. On the one hand, there is a mismatch between the

training being provided and actual labour market needs; on the other, between the training being provided and the jobs wished for by young people that, in many cases, remain unattainable due to low education, discrimination or both.

Another public organization is investing in an entrepreneurship incubator programme. The incubator helps *SMEs, microenterprises, or individuals to create their own employment and some of the participants are unemployed. This agency organizes presentations with the Employment Centre since mid-2016, clarifying what people can do to create their own employment. 'Of course, some of these people succeed while others fail; there are others that do not see their project approved …'* (Stakeholder interview 3).

5.3.3 Perceptions of social housing as permanent and only viable solution

Social housing in Amadora is both hard to leave and to enter. As mentioned in section 5.2, social housing policies in Portugal have not adequately responded to the housing needs of many vulnerable families. This is particularly true in the case of Amadora where, as also mentioned previously, there was a late and incomplete implementation of the PER. In most cases, in order to gain access to social housing, people should be registered as PER beneficiaries. As emphasised by a stakeholder interviewed, '*here the issue is that we are still implementing the final stage of the PER. The construction of the municipality's social housing stock was funded by the PER. Thus, they have to be occupied by families identified in the PER, including from the shanties that have not yet been fully eradicated. There is only a very small amount of around 100 dwellings that may be used for tackling other vulnerable situations*' (Stakeholder interview 3 WP2).

Indeed, the municipality had to deal with an enormous population living in slums. In 1993, the PER registered around 7,000 families, i.e., approximately 11.3% of the total number of families that had been registered in the 1991 Census as living in Amadora.

Additionally, social housing is mostly seen by its residents as an immutable solution, i.e., as if their right to a social house has been granted for life. This is favoured by the fact that there are no concrete time limitations for one to live in social housing. Interviewee 21, a woman in the group of the currently young, living with her husband, daughter and in-laws. mentioned she had thought about leaving social housing as she also assumed to have the financial means to rent in the private market. However, she abandoned the idea due to her husband's family opposition. They considered it more beneficial for them to save the money they would spend in the regular rental market and to wait for some time for a social housing dwelling to be allocated to them.

Despite a few isolated cases of misconduct, social housing indeed seems to be the only housing solution for most people interviewed, both those currently and formerly young. A stakeholder interviewed emphasised that those who were rehoused tend to be those who have no financial capacity to leave social housing; what she calls, in her words, of families that are socially and economically very homogenous. She notes that those who have the

capacity to do so tend to take advantage of other housing solutions such as the support for buying a house.

Thus, most of those living in social housing have difficulties envisioning life outside social housing. Besides financial constraints, several micro-level conversion factors contribute to this.

One such factors is the intergenerational pattern of living in social housing that is evident in a significant proportion of the young people interviewed. Very frequently, parents and sometimes grandparents live in social housing as well as other relatives such as uncles and aunts. In many cases, the dwelling is shared with these relatives, as well as with adult siblings, often because the dwelling was once allocated to their (grand)parents.

Among Roma interviewees, there are also cultural reasons. Several noted that the tradition in this specific community is that a newly-wedded couple moves to live with the husband's parents.

It is also important to mention that public measures supporting housing are widely unknown among vulnerable young people. For instance, none of the young participants in the YTHM could identify any such measures.

Another reason behind this idea of social housing "for life" is the previous experience most of the families had in slums. Especially for the older interviewees, the social housing quarter represents an improvement regarding their previous environment. This is the case, for instance, of interviewee 11, a woman in the group of the former young who reported to have lived in a shanty with poor plumbing and without its own electricity supply – that was illegally channelled from the neighbours. This improvement in terms of housing seems to somehow diminish the wish for further changes.

However, more often, a crucial aspect is the feeling of ownership over the social housing dwelling. A stakeholder interviewed emphasised that '*some families consider that they should not pay rent. They believe that they should not pay because the shanty where they previously lived was theirs. They believe that if they did not pay rent there, then they should not pay rent in social housing. That someone needs to refund them for the expenditure they had with the shanty*' (Stakeholder interview 3 WP2).

This sense of ownership is sometimes so deeply rooted that some interviewees talked about a "market" for social housing dwellings. Dwellings are "sold" and "bought", i.e., some people sell their right to live in social housing to someone else. Despite being illegal, this is straightforwardly described by some interviewees.

Interviewee 13, male, former young, lives in a dwelling allocated to his godfather. He has been trying to change the entitlement to his own name but, so far, he has been unsuccessful because he is unable to locate his godfather. During the interview, he mentioned the goal of "selling" the dwelling as soon as he is entitled to it in order to be able to move elsewhere.

In any case, the most important conversion factor seems indeed to be the fact that, in most cases, those living in social housing cannot afford to move into the private market as they lack both the regular income to pay a mortgage or rent and the financial reserves to pay for the expenses associated with buying or the upfront rental fees. In the former case, these costs include a percentage of the price of the dwelling (up to 20%) as well as administrative and tax expenses. In the latter case, these are less significant but nonetheless include the amount of one month in advance and a deposit, which means that new renters should have available ahead a total amount equivalent to three months of rent.

In this respect, the rents in social housing are income-adjusted. In most cases, this leads to low amounts of rent that can be as little as less than €5/month. However, in other cases, especially when formal income is a bit higher, rents may reach amounts closer to private market prices. According to one of the professionals interviewed, this is a crucial aspect for households' decision to move out of social housing.

When social housing rents increase, households need to face this challenge. A professional working for a local NGO mentioned, for instance, the desperate situation of a resident who saw her social housing rent increase substantially. This person assumed that having her daughter studying at the university would no longer be possible as she would need to start working full-time in order to ensure the household has sufficient income to pay for the new amount of the rent demanded for their social housing unit.

However, even high work-intensity households struggle to generate sufficient income and not even living in one of these households means an easy access to the private market.

> Interviewee 26, male, is in the group of the current young. He lives in social housing with his partner and son, as well as with his partner's mother and grandmother. All adults in the household work. Since leaving school, he has had stable jobs but with a low salary which has made him look for a second job from time to time.
> He always lived in social housing. He wishes he could move outside social housing, where he could live only with his partner and child, but he is seemingly very realistic regarding the actual possibilities of this that he considers as very slim. He is strongly convinced that at least currently and in the near future he will have no possibility to consider any housing solution other than social housing.
> In his words, private renting would only be possible if 10 people rented a dwelling. He provided the example of an uncle earning €700/month and renting a T0 for €500/month, and consequently experiencing significant financial difficulties. He also mentioned the difficulty of saving money for the security deposit when renting a dwelling, and the sheer impossibility of saving enough for buying. Thus, in his opinion, public housing is the only feasible solution for him.

Those not working or working in the underground economy obviously face additional challenges as they also lack crucial documentation such as payslips: '*Without the payslips, we cannot do anything, not even get an ATM card*' (Interviewee 40, female, current young).

Thus, most interviewees in social housing see it as the most secure housing option. As mentioned, in most cases rents are low – sometimes less than €5/month. Additionally, up until recently, evictions were not that frequent as explained by one of the institutional stakeholders: "*Evictions meant filing a court suit. As justice in Portugal is not exactly swift, usually there were no evictions. In the few cases where there was a suit, the sentence could come after eight years or so, when the household was already completely different, when the reasons behind the suit were also altered, etc.*" (Stakeholder interview 3 WP2).

Another relevant institutional factor regards the existing mismatch between the size of the social dwelling and the composition of families. As a result, many young people find themselves in a large household living in a small dwelling. A professional explained that this results from the rules in place: '*at the time of rehousing, the rules regarding the type of family were applied scrupulously. However, after ten years the dwellings may be overcrowded! Children grew up or were already adults but not married. And now they are married and have children of their own but did not leave the dwelling*' (Stakeholder interview 3 WP2).

On the other hand, however, to a certain extent, young people seem more protected from other aspects of housing exclusion since they often share a household with other relatives – parents but also adult siblings, uncles and aunts, cousins, etc. This is not exclusive of the most vulnerable young people and it is reflected in national statistics. Eurostat figures from 2021 point to the high prevalence of families with three or more adults (with or without children) in Portugal (18.5%) compared with the EU27 (12.4%), which is far less linked to family ties than to economic need.

This was also referred to in interviews with stakeholders: '*most applications are not from young people but rather from those middle-aged. The demand from young people up till the age of 30 is not significant. They are still integrated in their families of origin. They are still not autonomous*' (Stakeholder interview 3 WP2).

Still another relevant institutional factor is the access of some of the young people to documentation. Sometimes, young people do not have all the residency documentation needed which hampers their situation at various levels and may have an impact on housing as well.

One of the stakeholders interviewed pointed out that this may actually impede housing allocation: '*There were situations of young people who were actually born in Portugal but that, at the time of the rehousing, were renewing their papers. They had the proof that they had an appointment at the Immigration and Borders Service but the papers were not valid. They had problems! In one case it regarded three siblings, aged 20 something, each of which with small children. They were desperate because they were told that they could not be rehoused because their papers were not valid. After a lot of effort, they were able to prove that they had been*

born in Portugal and that they were living in Amadora so that they could be rehoused' (Stakeholder interview 4).

Another implication of the lack of documentation relates to possible situations of default. The same stakeholder notes that *"if the person is still trying to get the papers, s/he will not be able to work and therefore will have no money to pay for the rent. But if she gets help with the papers, then there will a way out and s/he will certainly commit to pay the rent as everybody else"* (Stakeholder interview 4).

The most apparent crucial life event with decisive influence on housing strategies and paths of interviewees in Amadora is ill-health. This has been found in previous research which has demonstrated that this is one of the three most crucial aspects of increased vulnerability of already vulnerable populations in Portugal, along with unemployment and relationship breakdown (Diogo et al., 2021).

It was also emphasised in stakeholder interviews: '*Access to health and to health determinants influence housing significantly. If someone has ill-health and is not able to work then s/he will not be able to keep a housing situation other than social housing*' (Stakeholder interview 4).

The case of interviewee 27, female, of the group of the former young, is illustrative. She always worked as a domestic worker, including abroad, and managed to have relatively high salaries which allowed her to live for ten years in a private market dwelling. Then she was diagnosed with an incapacitating disease and, by the time of interview, had not worked for three years. Spending €450/month in rent became unfeasible. She used to work in the underground economy and thus was not entitled to a sickness benefit. So, she returned to her mother's home in a social housing quarter where she does not need to contribute to expenses. Her income is €180/month and she hopes to be entitled to a social housing dwelling herself as she sees no other possible option.

Interviewee 14, female, also of the group of the former young lived in several houses after she started working. In her words, she had income enough for that, even if some of them were shared with friends. She was then diagnosed with a rare disease. She stopped working and currently receives an invalidity pension. She had to move into a three-bedroom social housing dwelling with her three children where two of her siblings already lived.

6 Discussion points for (a potential) Reflexive Policy Agenda in Amadora

The most crucial aspect of vulnerability in Amadora regards the entrenchment of vulnerable youth in low education, poor quality jobs and social housing. There is a vicious circle in which inequality is reproduced and the chances of vulnerable young people exiting it are slim.

As regards education, a few discrepancies could be identified. At the micro-level there are undoubtedly opposing perspectives regarding what the "other side" could do or have done differently. Some young people did mention the inability of some teachers to motivate them while professionals emphasised the challenges brought by many of the vulnerable students which make them harder to reach.

However, both young people and policy implementers do seem able to pass beyond such assumptions and recognise existing constraints: lack of family support, difficult studying conditions, absence of role models and, most of all, the urgent need to contribute to household expenses. Both the young people and the professionals noted that education levels reached by previous generations were significantly lower, making them unprepared to support the educational paths of their children.

Moreover, completing the 9th grade already represents a substantial increase compared to the educational level of most parents. The 9th grade also represents the reference in terms of compulsory schooling for many, most of all for the former young,[9] as well as roughly studying till the age of 16 which is the minimum age to enter the labour market. When young people reach this age threshold, the pressure put on them to become an income-generating member of the household increases and the incentives for studying, if any, are subsumed by the financial concerns of families.

The pressure for young people to enter the labour market at an early age is exactly where education policy implementers face the most difficulties to act. Again, both the young people and the professionals tend to agree that there are substantial efforts regarding the promotion of school success and preventing school drop-out. However, one of the current young people interviewed hit the target when he noted that '*everybody says school is important but … then you also have to help at home*' (Interviewee 35, male, current young).

Without the possibility of comprehensive and joint interventions in different areas beyond education, the success of education-centred interventions will inevitably fall short. Engaging different stakeholders as well as young people and their families in shared reflection and joint work on how young people and their families can be supported so that the young

[9] As mentioned above, compulsory schooling in Portugal depends on the person's age: nine years for those born between 1981 and 1994, i.e. roughly those aged between 27 and 41 at the time of interviewing; twelve years for those born between after 1994, i.e. roughly those aged up to 27 at the time of interviewing.

people do not need to drop-out from school for financial reasons could increase the possibilities of successful planning and action while simultaneously decisively moving forward to a new level as regards the development of reflexive policy agendas.

Schooling is widely envisioned by young people as important, especially as an instrument to achieving better jobs. There is an apparent discrepancy between the perspectives of young people, more focused on the formal levels of education, and stakeholders, who additionally identify the entire set of soft skills as crucial for young people to obtain and, very importantly, to keep a job.

In times of labour market expansion, this discrepancy loses importance as the market tends to absorb everyone. But in times of crisis such as those explored within the scope of UPLIFT, any skills mismatch becomes a vulnerability for young people's integration into the labour market; offer exceeds demand and employers may more easily choose those who they consider the most appropriate and decline those who they consider not to possess the adequate skills. Again, engaging the young in joint reflection and action as a means to boost their skills at different levels could contribute to resolving or at least anticipating possible issues.

However, one should be conscious that the field of employment appears more troublesome in the sense that policy implementation is embedded into the wider labour market. Young people in Amadora strongly conveyed the idea that they can only enter the labour market through the pathway of poor quality, poorly paid jobs. Importantly, they feel that this is what they can expect regardless of their educational level and skills. They mentioned the ease of finding a job in devalued sectors such as cleaning, catering, construction or security, even if their educational level is not so high. And also that these are the sectors where they can expect to find employment – and where many of them actually work – even when their education levels are higher than average. A reflexive policy agenda in Amadora could include the way to support the orientation of young people through labour market opportunities according to their skills and preferences.

Significant challenges pertain to the field of housing and overall there seems to be agreement between young people and professionals on the issues faced. Both parties agree that securing housing is becoming increasingly difficult in Portugal and especially in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, of which Amadora is a part. This affects society overall and those most vulnerable are particularly at risk. In Amadora, social housing sometimes seems to emerge as the only viable housing solution.

With poor quality, low paying jobs – even if sometimes with steady contracts – most vulnerable young people are not able to find an appropriate housing solution in the private market. Additionally, the interviews have shown that frequently the few cases where this was attempted – with different degrees of success – have been interrupted by situations of unemployment and illness. It is no surprise that life paths marked by financial insecurity are particularly vulnerable to different types of life events.

Social housing then becomes the solution where young people have been raised and where they intend to stay, in dwellings allocated to their (grand)parents while endeavouring to obtain one for themselves. Once again, engaging young people with all relevant stakeholders and not only those in the housing sector in the search for shared solutions for vulnerable young people to find and, very importantly, be able to keep a housing path outside social housing – which is a small sector - seems paramount. This could, for instance, include a service that could work along with the young to identify the most appropriate housing solutions according to life stages. This could include making some social housing units available for the young for time-limited periods; helping young people to access existing national-level housing support and eventually topping them up with support at the municipal level; and finding ways of turning the focus of recent housing policies (e.g. New generation of housing policies; Basic law on housing) for young people into actual concrete solid solutions.

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8 Appendix

Table A.1. Structure of the Youth Town Hall Meeting

UPLIFT – Youth Town Hall Meeting

Wold Cafe discussion

- Three groups/themes – Education, Employment, Housing
- Three rounds (15-20 minutes per round)
- Use of prompts
- Final plenary session with presentation/synthesis of results of each group and commenting

Education

1. Why have you become pupils at this specific school? What were your options? By that time, what did you know about this school (positive and/or negative)? And what is now your opinion?
2. Did you have any difficulties/disadvantages in your schooling path? Did you have any help? Of what kind? Would you have liked to have help (programmes, services, individual people, etc.)? How can school be or would have been a better experience for you?
3. What are your plans regarding your education? How far do you want to go? Why?

Employment

1. What kind of opportunities are there in Amadora's labour market? What kind of jobs? Are there different kinds of jobs available? And what about the salaries? Do you think that the jobs are equally available for everybody or do you think that there is discrimination? If so, of what kind?
2. Considering the difficulties, what can one do to find a (satisfying) job? Is there public support, services you can use, strategies you can put in place?
3. If you had to describe a "good job", how would you describe it? What are, for you, the most important things in a job (salary, tasks, career progression, relationship with colleagues, etc.)?

Housing

1. How do you reckon your current dwelling? Are you happy about it (size, location, neighbours, etc.)?
2. What is your opinion regarding housing costs? Are they affordable? Do you know any public support with housing? Which ones? Would you use them if you needed them? Which ones?
3. Imagine we are in 2030. Where are you living (alone, with partner/children, with parents, other people)? How is your house? And where is it located (in Amadora, elsewhere in Portugal, abroad)?

Table A.2. Sentences presented at the Storytelling workshop

'I wish I have studied more (…), this is something I regret. At that time, I only liked to hang around in the streets with my friends but if it was now I would study more. But now I cannot, right..? I have to earn my money because we cannot live on dreams! But I would like to have studied because I would not have to worry about work; I would find one in a jiffy!'

Interview 12, Male, Former young

'I studied till the 12th grade. I did secondary education at a vocational training centre in Amadora. Then I did a cooking course, a course for becoming a family and community support professional and a course for becoming a security guard'.

Interview 1, Female, Former young

'I have worked as a security guard, in client support for several companies, at information desks in malls, in cooking, in cleaning and in many others. I cannot even remember all the jobs I already had'.

Interview 1, Female, Former young

'Everybody looks for a job. It's normal, one's got to eat! The problem is that employers always require the 12th grade as a minimum. I guess that is the reason why many people complete secondary education. If you have less you find nothing! As soon as I finished the 12th grade I immediately changed jobs! I could no longer be cleaning other people's crap so I got a job in an office, in client support, with a safer contract and a slightly higher salary'

Interview 18, Male+, Former young

'I get the minimum wage (…) and I have to pay for the house and for expenses such as water and electricity (…). And also for food and stuff that cannot be ignored such as materials or clothes for my daughter. At the end of the month I have no money in my bank account. I cannot afford to get sick or to even think of something that is not essential. I cannot have fun'.

Interview 9, Male, Former young

Table A.3. Current Young (Work and Education)

	Student 7-12	School dropout (with or less than grade 6)	School dropout (7-9 grade)	School dropout (10-12)	Grade 12 completed	Has vocational HS (=G12) completed	Some university	University degree completed	Female	Ethnicity	Total
Full time student	2								1	A:2	2
Working student (PT)	2								1	A:2	2
Attending professional training FT (beyond HS)					1		1		2	A:2	2
Unemployed, never looked for a job before		2*	2&						2	R:4	4
Unemployed, had previous jobs, looking		1&	1&		1				3	R:1 C:1 Unknown: 1	3
Employed (no-contract, temp short term, unknown)			1		1		1		1	C: 2 A:1	3
Employed (w/ contract)					1	1			1	A:1 C:1	2
Total	4	3	4		4	1	2	0	11	18	18

* - disability, chronic disease, & - stay at home mom, caregiver
A – African descent, R – Roma, C – caucasian, B- Brazilian

Table A.4. Former Young (Work and Education)

	No schooling	School dropout(with or less than grade 6)	School dropout (7-9 grade)	School dropout (10-12)	Grade 12 completed	Has vocational HS completed	Some university	University degree completed	Female	Ethnicity	Total
Unemployed, never worked before (not looking)	1&	1&	1*						2	R:2 A:1*	3
Unemployed, Had previous jobs but is not looking anymore		1&	1*		1*	1&*			3	C:1 R:1 A:2	4
Unemployed, had previous jobs and looking for job		2	1						2	R:3	3
Employed (no-contract, temp short term, unknown)		1	2		1	1			3	A:2 B:1 R:2	5
Employed (w/ contract)		1	3			1		1	4	A:4 R:1 C:1	6
Total	1	6	8	0	2	3	0	1	15	21	21

* - disability, chronic disease, & - stay at home mum, caregiver
A – African descent, R – Roma, C – caucasian, B- Brazilian

Table A.5. Rates of schooling retention/dropout

		TOTAL	Sex		Country of origin		TOTAL	Sex		Country of origin	
		Total	Men	Women	Foreign born	Natives	Total	Men	Women	Foreign born	Natives
		Total_primary education					Upper secundary education				
National (Maindland)	2007	10	11,8	8,1	-	-	24,6	27,8	22,0	-	-
	2012	9,5	11,2	7,6	18,1	9,1	19,7	22,2	17,3	27,4	19,2
	2017	5,4	6,6	4,2	12,6	5,2	14,9	17,0	12,9	28,0	14,4
Metropolitan Area of Lisbon	2007	11,3	12,7	9,8	-	-	26,7	28,7	25	-	-
	2012	11,2	12,7	9,6	-	-	23,7	26,0	21,4	-	-
	2017	6,5	7,6	5,4	-	-	19	21,2	16,7	-	-
AMADORA	2007	15	16,9	13,0	-	-	34,0	35,2	33,1	-	-
	2012	15,9	17,1	14,6	28,1	14,0	33,5	35,3	31,3	39,8	31,9
	2017	10,2	12,0	8,4	20,1	8,8	21,3	23,0	19,4	36,6	18,5

Source: DGEEC, available at: https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/248/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=382&fileName=DGEEC_DSEE_DEEBS_2022_TxRetDes_NUTSIII20.xlsx