

School experiences and meaning-making among youth from Bento Rodrigues after the Fundão Dam Collapse (Brazil)

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

The Fundão Dam Collapse (2015), in Mariana (Brazil), caused social and territorial transformations in affected communities. In Bento Rodrigues, students were displaced and educational trajectories had to be reorganized.

After the collapse, young people from the community began attending schools in Mariana and later in provisional educational spaces. These changes affected not only school routines but also experiences of belonging and community life.

This study aims to understand how young people from Bento Rodrigues interpret their school experiences after the collapse, considering the relationships between memory, territory, and schooling.

METHOD

This research is part of an ongoing doctoral study developed in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG/Brazil) and adopts a qualitative approach. The analysis is based on three narrative interviews conducted with 18-year-old youths who experienced the collapse during childhood and later attended different schools after displacement. Narrative interviews were chosen because they allow participants to reconstruct their experiences and meanings from their own perspectives.

Narrative analysis was used to identify recurring themes related to:

- school memories;
- displacement experiences;
- belonging and territory.

To preserve anonymity, pseudonyms inspired by elements of the Rio Doce Basin and the Mariana region were adopted.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The former Bento Rodrigues school is remembered as a space marked by proximity, community life, and affective relationships.

After the collapse, students began attending larger and more impersonal schools in Mariana, and also reported experiences of exclusion and discrimination.

Although the new school in the resettlement is recognized for its better infrastructure, the former school remains an important emotional and symbolic reference in the youths' memories.

The findings show that school experiences are related to the territorial and social transformations produced by the disaster.

CONCLUSION

The disaster affected not only material living conditions, but also symbolic dimensions connected to school and community life. The youths' narratives reveal that school is understood not only as a formal educational institution, but also as a space of memory and belonging.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

The next stages of the research will include new interviews and broader analyses of the meanings of school for the affected population.

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