

# **“The school is much better in Finland.” Children of international professionals navigating structural constraints**

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**Career  
expatriates**

**Temporary  
migrants**

**Transnational  
corporate elites**

**Highly skilled  
experts**

- Highly skilled professionals move abroad for career reasons
  - Voluntary mobility
  - Relatively well-off
  - Often temporary stays
- Not nomads but may appear as nomadic



# Expatriate childhood: Children's experiences of temporary migration (2019-2024, Academy of Finland)



## 8-15-year-old expatriate children in Finland

- position in Finland and on the global arena
- belonging
- everyday lives in Finland
- participant observation
- children's interviews
- photo & film projects with children



# Schools

## Most international schools in Finland

- are free municipal schools
- follow the Finnish curriculums



In the capital city area, it is difficult to get into the international schools because they are full

→ children may end up in the preparatory classes of Finnish schools

# Temporary expatriates and long-term integration goals

*”Children do not integrate to Finland when they do not learn Finnish.” (Finnish teacher)*

*Why do I need to learn these Finnish words?  
It’s boring. I’m not going to need them. I’m  
going to move to a more interesting place. (Amir, 9)*

- Intensive Finnish studies in the school
- Parents’ language studies vs professional careers



# Temporary stays and children

- School starts at the age of seven
  - Keep up with the school in one's passport country?

M: When you came to this school, was it easy to start studying?

S: Yeah. Because the things that we learn here I've already learned...Like I'm revising things more and more times.

M: Ok. So if you went to India now, what would happen?

S: I would be sad. I would be behind all my friends in India. And I don't want to go to India. (Sonu, 9 years)

The school is much better in Finland.

One can just relax and enjoy. (Ajey, 9 years)

- Preparatory class may be below one's age level
- Secondary education mostly in Finnish



- Migrants are the target of various integration measures with long-term goals
- Temporary skilled professionals – “nomadic expatriates” – are an unknown category in the Finnish migration policies (or measures)

→ Children and families may end up in positions that may feel uncomfortable and unsuitable

→ If the family does not intend to settle down permanently but plans to (or must) continue nomadic lifestyle, children’s education poses challenges

→ nomads are not floating outside structures

