

Observing and Participating: Ethnographic Research Among Expatriate Children and Youth in Finland

Dr. Adjunct prof. Mari Korpela
Academy research fellow
Faculty of Social Sciences
Tampere University, Finland



**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

Expatriate childhood: Children's experiences of temporary migration

(2019-2024, Reserach Council of Finland)



8-15-year-old expatriate children in Finland

- position in Finland and on the global arena
- everyday lives in Finland
- belonging & identities & distinctions

Ethnographic Fieldwork

- International schools are free municipal schools in Finland
- Fieldwork with 9-year-olds 2019-2020
(9 months)
- Fieldwork with 14-year-olds 2021-2022
(8 months)
 - participant observation
 - children's interviews
 - drawings, photos & film



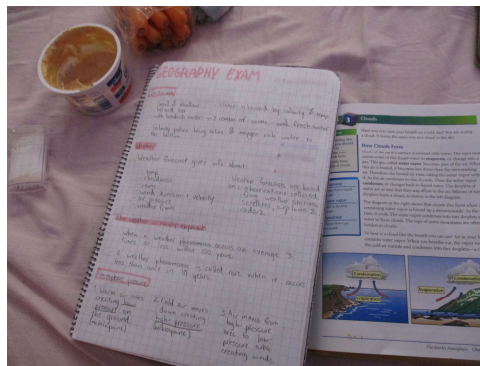
Participant observation

- Adult among children & teenagers
 - Note-taking: researcher
 - Assistant teacher or not a teacher?
 - Kind of a friend (secrets, misconduct)
- The least adult role (Mandell 1988)
- Negotiating one's role among the children and teenagers and among the teachers
- Improvisation, **play** (games, jokes), vulnerability
- Gaining trust in time



Participatory photography

- Access to private space
- Material realities
- Mundane activities
- Recruitment challenges
- Lack of motivation



Film: Hanging Out (19.47)

- Playing with friends
(vs collaborative project)
- Playing with the researcher
and the camera
- Stand-up comedy, joking and
play central in teenagers' lives

