

# Successes & Failures: an ethnographic study among children of highly skilled international professionals in Finland

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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
  - North-north or south-north
- Expatriate: "a person who lives outside their native country"

# 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
- everyday lives in Finland
- belonging & identities & distinctions

# Fieldwork

- **International 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
- **Digital cameras** to children and teenagers
- **Film** "Hanging Out"



# Fieldwork

- Negotiating the role: adult among children & teens
- Assistant teacher or not a teacher? Friend? Adult?
  - The least adult role (Mandell 1988)
  - Playing and joking
  - Failures: English skills, online worlds, cleaning up in art class, bad jokes
  - Improvisation & vulnerability
  - Gaining trust in time



# Drawing projects



- difficult to conduct in a school setting where teachers follow strict curriculums
- would require long-term planning

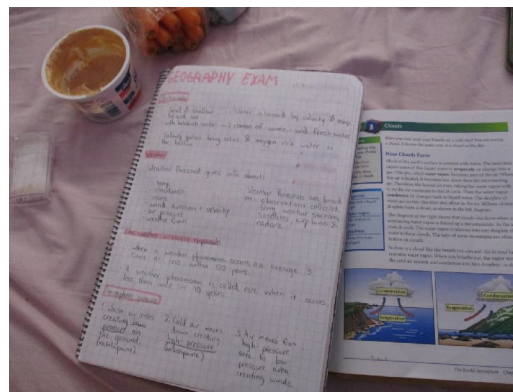


# Photo projects

life beyond school

”important things in your life”

- 9-year-olds excited but not many photos
- 14-year-olds not very interested
- I got visual material but not new knowledge



## Film:

# Partipatory joint project vs reality

- Ethics with the film:
  - the participants had the right to forbid me to show the film to anyone
- The film turned out to be very different from what I had planned
  - Ethnography is flexible

