



**Children in
Communication
about Migration
(CHICAM)**

**School as an Arena for Education,
Integration and Socialisation**

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Preface

The Project in Brief.

CHICAM was an 'action research' project funded by the European Commission (Framework 5 Programme) and co-ordinated by the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, University of London.

We set up six media clubs for refugee and migrant children (ages 10-14) in six European countries. The clubs met weekly after school hours over a year with some extra full days during school holidays. The clubs made videos and exchanged them on the internet. In each participating country, researchers and media educators employed by the project collaborated with youth workers and teachers, already working with the children. The clubs became social centres as well as a place to learn about and make media. Using the internet we established a communications network to facilitate the sharing of children's media productions, in order to generate dialogues between them.

As a research project CHICAM addressed three major aspects of structural change in contemporary European society: the increase in global migration, the uses of new communication technologies, and the specific needs of children. Through the work of the clubs it focused on the social and cultural worlds of refugee and migrant children in centres across Europe; and was mainly concerned with first generation refugees or migrants, for whom the experience of re-location is relatively recent. The children came from many different countries including Iraq, Sierra Leone, Angola, Somalia, Albania, Kosovo, Columbia, Turkey.

We investigated how these children represent and express their experiences of migration into the different host countries, and how their use of new media might enable their perspectives to inform the development of European educational and cultural policies. In the process, we were seeking to identify how particular experiences of reception, educational practice, family re-unification and community involvement may more effectively promote social inclusion and economic and cultural integration.

CHICAM was a three year project running from November 2001 to October 2004. The Centre for the Study of Children Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, London University, in London was working with:

UK	WAC Performing Arts and Media College, London.
Italy	Fondazione Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (CENSIS), Rome.
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The Approach we Took

The research approach the partnership took could be described as ethnographically styled. This was an in depth study of small groups of children or young people, their social relationships and experiences of schools and communities, the processes of them making media and of the media productions themselves. Taking an approach based within the new Sociology of Childhood we saw the children as active participants in their communities and in the experiences of migration and not merely as outcomes of social, psychological or developmental processes.

It is important to recover children as social actors (and their activity as a source of social change)...
There must be theoretical space for both the construction of childhood as an institution and the activity of children within and upon the constraints and possibilities that the institutional level creates.

(James and Prout, 1997:27)

Thus what the children said, how they acted and how they negotiated and challenged their places with each other and within social institutions were of paramount importance. A range of different types of data was gathered during the course of the site-specific case studies. These included: detailed field notes based on participant observation of groups at work; video and audio tapes of discussions and practical activities; pre- and post-production interviews, and on-going briefing interviews, with participants; interviews with facilitators/tutors; feedback from local audiences (for example, parents and peers); and, of course, the children's productions themselves, in the form of photographs, drawings and digital video productions. The aim here was to have a detailed record of the social process that led up to the finished product: how the research themes were discussed, what the children felt could and couldn't be said, how they prioritised and negotiated, how the dynamics and power relationships operated within the group, how they brought their own personal experiences (as set out in the interviews) into the process, what they made public and what remained private in the group, how they conceptualise their audience, and so on.

Over the year of the club activity the researchers spent a considerable amount of time within the field sites, engaged in a range of informal activities as well as in the observation of specific research activities. They visited the children's families, went out and about in the cities and towns in which the children lived and sat in on lessons. 'In between' settings - that is, opportunities for observation that arise in the spaces between structured activities or institutional contexts - are, in the partners' experience, particularly fruitful when working with groups of this kind and contributed considerably to the "thick" description we have been able to develop of the lives of the children who are at the centre of this study.

James, A. and Prout, A. (1997) (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, London: Falmer Press

The role of media production

This project started from the view that children are active agents in making meaning in their lives and in negotiating their identities through their social interactions, in the same way that adults do. Media are an increasingly important platform on which children (and adults) negotiate their social relationships with others and with the institutions of society. As media becomes more user friendly and accessible to children it becomes another way through which we can study their lives.

The processes of production (planning, shooting, editing, presentation) involve negotiation with others as well as making decisions about what will be represented, why and how. The final products are seen in the context of these negotiations but in many cases can also stand alone as strong statements of the children's lives and experiences. This is all rich material both for the study of their interactions with each other but also as a study of representation and identity formation of particular individuals and groups of children. This, taken alongside observations in other settings and interviews offers us extremely rich data.

Through making media themselves children also develop a greater understanding of media generally. Their perceptions of the media in their everyday lives take on a different light. What they watch, play or read is no longer distant and elevated but they develop a different sense of audience and of critique. They develop a sense that they too can participate in presenting and representing their experiences and the worlds they live in. So using media in a project of this nature was both as a tool of research but also of empowerment. This was especially important since we were working with children who risk disempowerment because of their circumstances as migrants and refugees.

The Research Reports

There are 4 research reports. They are the result of a process of individual and collaborative analyses of the data by both the researchers and the media educators in each centre, drawing on the different areas of expertise represented in the research partnership. Each report has been written by two partners. Each partner drew up a report based on their site specific case studies. These were then edited into the final reports by the lead partners for each theme. They have been written in such a way as to bring the data to the reader and therefore include extracts of raw data from interviews and field diaries. They do not aim to be objective 'scientific' reports but rather, as the result of ethnographic methods, they aim to offer detailed, in depth and nuanced accounts of the children's everyday experience of the themes central to the research; building friendships, family life, school and schooling and visual communication. Such accounts aim to facilitate both practitioners and policy makers in adapting policy and practice in ways that will best suit those who experience the results on the ground. Each report is accompanied by a CD containing a selection of the media productions that have informed the report.

Main Research Findings

1. There is a tendency to consider cultural integration on a par with linguistic integration. This means that multiculturalism as a holistic approach to comprehension and exchange between different cultures is often reduced to the integration of migrant pupils in the predominant social context through the acquisition of the host country language.
2. Assessment and school placement was an issue experienced as stressful by children in many clubs. Children and their parents testified to difficulties, as the system could be rigid; once put in a grade you had to stay. In other cases, children had to stay one or two extra years in the same class in order to keep up with their schoolmates. Many children could not rely on their parents, as they often were of little help, both due to lack of time (some were working long hours) and linguistic difficulties in addition to lacking knowledge about the host culture generally.
3. Schooling also creates tensions between the predominant culture and immigrants, and becomes a breeding ground for discrimination, as migrant children can be demanding for the teachers to deal with.
4. In most schools studied, home language teaching was almost completely absent from the school curricula. This reveals that the migrant student is not seen as an important individual but merely as a subject to be integrated in as short a space of time as possible. Such an approach negates the wider benefits and recognition of the importance and benefits to the 'host' countries of international and/or global cultures and economics.
5. None of the schools deserved to be called "multicultural" in a positive sense of the word. The consequence of this could be that through an educational system that lacks a multicultural orientation and prefers to deal with difference through ignorance, or, in the best of circumstances, tolerance, the child leaves its 'different' identity behind at home or elsewhere, for the sake of negotiating a new one. This is an impediment to the preservation of the past. It is often unfortunately also an obstacle to the inventive creation of a new hybrid identity.
6. We encountered very different approaches to with regard to official recognition of religious difference in the schools. It is clear, however, that all the children appreciated it where this was achieved.
7. Recognition of religious symbols (wearing of the headscarf and catering for different dietary needs) was very important to the children, marking to what extent they and their cultures were accepted.
8. While the schools acted as a major social centre (and therefore site of socialization) for the children, organising particular extra curricular social provision and support is an area that is problematic and needs to be addressed.

9. Children generally experienced teachers as distant authority figures. They all had diverse 'models' of teachers and made comparisons between those in their countries of origin (who could be stricter or less strict), those in their present and past schools in their current country of residence (comparing primary and secondary schools) and those in their mosque classes. Such differences could initially be the source of some confused expectations.
10. There were several cases of non attendance. The reasons given confirmed several of our research findings in this and the other research reports. The main ones were; assessment, language acquisition, relevance, balancing academic work and play, precedence of family needs, school as impersonal and not meeting social needs.
11. A better balance between learning and playing is one of the highest priorities on the children's agenda. School seemed to have a restraining effect on creativity. This is important since arts and sports were a way of creating a collective identity and cross cultural relationships. Media activities also played an important role in this area.
12. The children make clear distinctions between central (public) spaces and marginal (private) spaces in the schools. Marginal spaces allow the children the possibility of experimenting more freely. The physical design and layout were very significant, e.g. in the UK case where the site is rambling and anonymous, leading to both academic and social repercussions.
13. We found that the children's aspirations are different from many of their peers in the host country. They expect a lot from the school and set their sights high.

Policy recommendations

Migrant children were at greater risk for exclusion in the schools examined. A number of risk factors were noted in the research, ranging from discrimination to poor language skills to social alienation and a dissonant value systems. A general conclusion from this six country European project is that the position of migrant children in school has to be strengthened. In some schools adjustments have already been made in order to meet the requirements of a multicultural student group, but in others very few steps have been taken so far.

Some clear indications about how and where to target investments can be made:

1. **Long term language support is essential.** Language support was available in most situations only for the initial period following arrival, but insufficient mechanisms were in place for testing the children's real command of the second language. This led to comprehension problems and lower performance. Schools should obviously guarantee language support – as is often the case – but this should be extended beyond the initial period, and should aim to assist kids in achieving the ability to express themselves articulately.
2. Every effort should be made to place children in **classes with peers** of the same age.
3. Migrant students often require **special assistance** because their parents are unable to help them with assignments and homework, either because of language or cultural distance or because of long work hours. Teachers and curricula should take account of this difficulty, perhaps through afterschool sessions available to all students.
4. **Second language training alone cannot be considered an adequate support** for the integration of migrant children into a school. More attention is necessary to the home culture and home language of the children who are arriving, especially in terms of the resources they already command. It can be especially useful to allow a transitional period with bilingual education and the possibility to take exams in the home language, if feasible
5. **Second language training should not be treated as a “remedial” subject** and care should be taken with all students not to stigmatise the new arrivals. This can be done by attributing value to their home language and home language achievements within the general school domain.
6. Overtaxed teachers risk hostility towards or discriminating against demanding migrant students. **Teachers require support** when facing many non-traditional students in their classrooms, both in terms of appropriate teaching material for different language levels and different cultures and to relieve some of the pressure of the new challenges.
7. **Cultural differences between traditional schools require effective links between family, school and community.** Low levels of parental involvement need to be contrasted and school must be sensitive to migrant children's special experiences. Some children do not live the “normal” life around which the curriculum is constructed. In schools with a high proportion of migrant and

refugee students, a mediator may be required. This could be a social worker or other such figure, and could serve as a partner for discussion of issues related to the school, both for children and their parents. This should reduce poor attendance, school-leaving and drop out rates, as well as address the dissonance between the high value attributed to education and the low value attributed to the actual educational experience.

8. Children appreciate the opportunity to express their own culture, but do not wish to serve as spokeschildren. Therefore, **multicultural schools cannot demand this** of their students, although they can – and should – allow it. This seems to be especially true of religious difference.
9. Migrant children are often particularly penalised in terms of access to organised extracurricular activity. The after-school time period is the moment at which kids of the CHICAM age range are at greatest risk for injury and delinquency. Some schools offer extracurricular activities for students, often arranged as an after-school youth club. **Migrant children need a space for socialisation with other children**, a place which accepts children both from the majority culture and from minority groups. Extracurricular activities could be music, sports, arts and lessons in citizenship. The aim should be to foster mutual respect and understanding of different cultures.
10. After-school programmes may be best organised outside the school facility itself. It may be important to create distance from the school context to support children in exploring new non-scholastic social identities. In some cases, however, programmes in the school facility itself may allow the children to “appropriate” the space and change their experience of the physical environment and the power relationships that normally govern their school routine. Care and attention to the physical environment of each school can help administrators to **decide where and how to place after-school activity venues**.
11. In some European countries there are **extra economic resources** for schools with a high proportion of immigrant children. These resources are important for these schools and should be available in all such cases. Extra resources seem to be best used to develop an evolving curriculum and to implement the following:
 - *Mother tongue classes*: children appreciate the chance to study in their mother tongue in school. Only Sweden, the Netherlands and to some extent Germany offered such an education. While allowing attachment to ethnic or national identity, it can also help learn the new language. When available, home language education must include the possibility to take exams in the home language.
 - *Homework support*: There should be possibilities for migrant children to have extra support with homework, as their parents have often not mastered the language of the predominant culture. This support should be offered without the stigmatisation of “remedial” education.
 - *Teachers need special training in intercultural education*: Migrant children’s experiences should be considered in school and be seen as a resource, rather than a obstacle. School should be characterised by an atmosphere of mutual understanding and exchange. Teachers need support in recognising and addressing socio-emotional matters, as

migrant children sometimes have traumatic experiences or come from families with forms of disruption with which veteran teachers are unfamiliar.

- *Media education:* work with the media migrant children grants them another “language” to express their thoughts and experiences. This can be acquired more rapidly than a second language and can help communication and mutual recognition with other students. Creative use of video camera, photography or music, empowers and repositions migrant children. Media education, especially in hands-on laboratories, also increases creative opportunities.
- *School as a physical space:* One striking finding was that the schools involved in the project were often designed for a teaching model that no longer gains consensus. Current school design reinforces highly asymmetrical relations between teacher and pupils. Restructuring of the school’s physical spaces to fit a more democratic teaching model could substantially change the experience of incoming students.
- *Social spaces in school:* In some schools there are social spaces aimed only for children, but in general school buildings are not built to meet children’s social needs. Teenagers do not play in a “playground”; they need other spaces for communication and social relations. Such spaces also facilitate integration.

12. Finally, it is important to note that the research methodology used in the CHICAM project allowed the researchers to explore aspects of children’s school experience that other research methods could not have uncovered. Not only was the experience universally appreciated by the kids themselves, but aspects of identity formation and perception of the school context were made evident without the kids even attempting to explain them. **This methodology holds great promise** in designing schools, making changes to curricula, developing extracurricular programmes and involving kids creatively in the management of their own destiny. Administrators should consider using such pilot workshops as a supplement to other forms of evaluation from the students themselves.

Introduction

The aim of this report is to analyse the relationship between migrant/refugee children and educational institutions that emerged from the CHICAM project. We will focus, in particular, upon the school as an institution and in terms of its everyday “bricks-and-mortar” appearance. Given that an in-depth analysis of the six countries’ school systems lies outside our concern, the reader is advised to look for cross-references in the bibliography in work package 1 for more detailed information.

School is the link between the family and the wider society, between the microcosm of primary relations and the macrocosm of society. At school, adolescents experience the passage from affective relationships to more abstract and impersonal relationships. Schools, moreover, are an integral part of national societies and transmit through their curricula (as well as through teaching methods, space and time management and the student-teacher relationship) the values which the national society considers central. As Anderson (1991) makes clear it is in school that ‘imagined communities’ are created and reproduced. Furthermore, there is no simple model of linear transmission from an adult teacher representing a single national culture to a passive student receiver: school is where many narratives intersect in potentially conflicting ways (Besozzi 1993).

We could agree with Harvey (1989) in seeing the school and the media as the two principal sources for constructing the identity of a country’s predominant culture. The possibility of linking these two spheres provided by the CHICAM project allows us to carry out an in-depth analysis of the reception of messages sent out by these agencies of socialisation and to interpret their problematical aspects. By founding media clubs, that is, through use of media technology, we are able to analyse the representations created by the subjects involved in the project through another type of representation, that is, visual representation.

This is why it is interesting to look at the relationship between values in the culture of origin of the CHICAM children and the values transmitted in school. However of even greater interest is the opportunity to look at possible contradictions between the school culture – and its role - and youth culture with its potentially ‘subversive’ attitudes. The research project showed how some pupils of foreign origin interiorised the culture of the school as an institution as well as the typical adolescent approach to daily school life. As will be seen, these two narrative paths clashed and competed in the visual representations proposed by the adolescents themselves.

A project like this may seem problematic from the point of view of comparison, and to some extent it is. There are great variations in the way countries in Europe deal with integration of migrant children. Even within a particular country there might be variations, depending on local policies. Differences can be related to history of immigration, size of multicultural population or size of community such as large cities versus small towns. Each research group found itself operating with widely differing schools that were not always representative of the national educational macrocosm (assuming such a thing exists). Thus, the schools connected to the CHICAM clubs provide examples of different immigration policies, as some clubs are located in relatively small towns (Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden) and others in big cities (Greece, Italy and the U.K.).

Nevertheless, the unique character of each setting will be highlighted and considered in terms of data integrating the research study overall. This type of qualitative research study allows us to carry out in-depth analysis of the settings and interacting subjects resulting in data that is complex and reflects the vitality of the subjects and environments it describes. Each school will be considered as a relational microcosm and the features distinguishing one from the other will be explored in some detail.

In order to discuss the relationship between migrant pupils and school we must analyse at macro level the methods employed by schools for their integration and for multicultural education. From this starting-point we gradually focus on daily school life (micro aspect) conceived in terms of teacher-pupil relations as well as school as a physical space.

Local policies of multiculturalism and integration

Overview of local policies

The word “multiculturalism” is often synonymous with the idea of overcoming linguistic barriers and difficulties. In other words, multiculturalism as a holistic approach to comprehension and exchange between different cultures is often reduced to the integration of migrant pupils in the predominant social context through the acquisition of the host country language. Although the one nation – one territory – one language approach to the concept of culture has been strongly undermined in an academic context (Geertz 1973, Clifford 1988, Appadurai 2000, Canclini 1990, Arselle 1990), in practice it is still responsible for a problematic trend towards reductionism. An example of this is the tendency to consider cultural integration on a par with linguistic integration. While learning the language of the new country is undoubtedly an essential condition for integration, this alone is insufficient. Various strategies have been developed in teaching the second language, each with its positive and negative sides, as will become clear from this review of the different schools in the project.

The school in the U.K. received extra funding for its high number of migrant children (a policy for the whole country.) This school also seemed to have made adjustments to its multicultural population to a greater extent than the others in the project. However, the policy was not to include home language or mother tongue teaching (see below). Instead the school has chosen to concentrate on just two foreign languages, French and Mandarin¹. Many students attended local mosques where they learned Quranic Arabic. Interestingly, the reasons for teaching Mandarin were due to an economic plan for the East London Docklands. Research had shown that most young people tended to stay living in the area. The view was that the most likely economic investors in the area and therefore the main employers were likely to be Chinese companies and so the local workforce should learn Mandarin.

The approach of the school in the U.K. was to avoid physical and symbolic separation of migrant and refugee pupils from the rest of the class, which meant that the children were immediately integrated

¹ The most common foreign languages taught in the UK are French, followed by Spanish or German.

into normal lessons (initially with teaching support staff) and that teachers had to find the time and methods of helping them. Interviews with teaching staff and pupils reveal that this has the effect of making the children feel frustrated. Those who have basic language skills feel they do not get enough support, while those at a more advanced linguistic stage requiring targeted help do not receive any form of support at all. But on the other hand, children are sensitive about being put into special classes or groups. As is evident below, it is actually very difficult to find a balance between “normal” and “special” treatment.

Diametrically opposed to the British model, though no less problematic, is the German approach. We cannot discuss the German system in general, as each Land [constituent state] adopts different methods. In the Land where the CHICAM research was carried out schools had Preparation Classes for foreign students. In this model pupils feel frustrated too; they feel excluded and are often taunted for being in these classes, as is evident from this excerpt in which Hakan talks about his experience of being excluded because of his status as a VKL (preparation class) pupil:

Peter [researcher]: How does it feel as a new child?
Hakan: Everyone says VKL, VKL 2 is bad.
Peter: That's what they say at school?
Hakan: Yes.
Peter: Really? And why's that?
Hakan: A boy say it so to me and then I hit [him] in front of Saftladen². But my sister no..., my brother not know.
Peter: But what do they think is so bad about VKL 2?
Hakan: Everyone says that was bad school then everyone says to me which class? – 'VKL 2' then I said 'yes bad' then I say 'I go grade 7 next year' eh, he laugh then I do like ... I do with him boxing or something like.
[...]
Peter: What do you think they believe is bad about it?
Hakan: What was bad?
Peter: Yes, what do they believe is bad about VKL 2?
Hakan: About VKL 2 they say, hmm, eh, everyone say VKL 2 is first grade not 7 or 8. And when he say to me like this then I angry to you then I hit rightaway.

The school's social worker confirms that these kinds of situations are experienced and arise especially because of language barriers and “normal adolescent integration difficulties”.

In Sweden, integration is the goal, and therefore, children are put into ordinary classes if possible. The policy has, generally, been to abolish special classes for children who do not reach the standard

² 'Saftladen' is the name of the youth club belonging to the school. (Translators note: In German 'Saftladen', lit. 'Juice Shop', means a dump, an inefficient or run-down place or business).

level. Although, migrant children sometimes are placed in preparatory classes, the goal is integration into ordinary classes as soon as possible. In multicultural schools in the large cities, there are, however, sometimes special curricula developed to meet the needs of a more multicultural student group. Children are encouraged to bring in their own cultural experiences to school and mediate them. In small towns (like the one in the CHICAM project), where the proportion of immigrant children is comparatively low, such an educational model is not strictly enforced and children have to follow the ordinary national curriculum. But attempts were made to incorporate children's own experiences as this excerpt from the Swedish field diary shows:

One girl has borrowed a video camera and is filming from inside a classroom. It's a lesson in "Swedish". The teacher is standing at the blackboard demonstrating how children should write an essay. Her example is "a school day". The pupils are all migrant children, so this is a special class. She is using a kind of association technique to show links between different people, events and places, a kind of mind mapping method in order to help children structuring their essays. In another scene, the teacher stands next to the girl who is shooting the film. (Another child has taken over the camera for a moment). The teacher is sitting next to the girl, who has applied the suggested technique to write an outline of an essay about a "journey to Kosovo". She explains by means of the paper she has in front of her how the links are connected to the teacher. The outline seemed to be approved by the teacher, but not explicitly voiced. Although, the teacher seems very engaged in her teaching, you can see from the camera scanning over the classroom that some of the children look restless and not very interested. Some also seem to be distracted by the camera.

It is obvious that the teacher is attempting to base the lesson in creative essay writing on the experiences of immigrant children, but she does not accomplish this goal. The children do not seem to be very involved in the task. There is not one single explanation for this, but probably a combination of language confusion, previous failures in school and perhaps most of all a lack of student motivation for this kind of task. The example, of "a school day" is probably not the best one to stimulate children's creative writing.

In Sweden, a student not reaching the required level, has no other option but to retake a grade, or in exceptional circumstances they can have extra support. There is also a possibility of having extra individual support in the Swedish language if necessary, whereas schools do not offer extra lessons for help with homework.

In the Italian school, learning the Italian language is an immediate goal for newcomers. It is very much emphasised as this interview with a teacher exemplifies:

We allow all students from non-European countries, what we call extracomunitari, to enrol at any point during the school year, while normal schools can't when a student comes too late, but we can because we have two A and B classes in which we do Italian as a second language (IL2) immediately. So we have two teachers, so one does the normal teaching and the other literises [sic] the foreign newcomers, so that they can follow the lessons right away. Obviously we separate into different levels, there are kids who can't speak a word of Italian when they come, so they're at the beginner level, and therefore they leave the classroom for a few hours every day for another class, but after a month at this level they already speak, already understand and then there are more advanced courses at the second level of IL2 for the kids. And this is done with help from the kids in the classes, they have to help the newcomers to speak Italian quickly, so there they're asked to speak with each other, to communicate and teach things to each other... (Interview with a teacher, Italy).

The focus on teaching the second language does not exempt this approach from the negative aspects described above. Multiculturalism often suffers from naivety. In Italian schools, for example, intercultural education seems to benefit Italian students rather than providing a concrete means for the integration of foreign children. This approach is also tainted by its charitable implications exemplified in the attitude that the migrant children require special attention because they are in need or disadvantaged. Multicultural teaching in this school sits alongside teaching for children with hearing difficulties, both areas linked by language. Children who are hard of hearing learn to speak in the same way as foreign students.

Yet, the interview with this Italian teacher indicated that the school regarded being “experimental” (in the sense of meeting the needs of multicultural student groups) as its goal. He seemed to be proud of having a mix of nationalities in the school and said they tried to integrate multicultural issues in the ordinary curriculum. At least in theory, this school aimed at not being ethnocentric but instead having a global approach, for example when teaching history or Italian literature: “We don't just study Italian, German and French fables but those from the whole world, and we ask the kids to tell us their stories, from their countries [...]” But as will be seen, accomplishing such goals did not succeed, as the children's narratives of their school tell another story, a story of alienation and distance from teachers and school as a whole.

Special cross-cultural schools are found in Greece (Athens). Here, Greek is taught as a second or foreign language. The school is deemed cross-cultural if at least 45 percent of the student body comes from another country. The educators in these schools receive special training to manage the requirements. In reality, there are other schools, as well, that have high proportions of migrant children. Sometimes there are also reception classes (preparation classes). However, nowhere does the emphasis placed on language skills as a pre-requisite for integration emerge more clearly than in

Greece where foreign students do not enter their age-group class but the class with the same level of Greek language skills. Migrant or refugee students find themselves going to school with children much younger than they are, and this has obvious repercussions for their integration in their peer group as well as for their academic success (given that this system certainly does not encourage them to attend school regularly).

Balky: I did go to school anyway, I am not going now...
Nadina [researcher]: Why not?
Balky: Hmm...I don't know. It's boring...I would go if only it was not so boring
Nadina: What's boring? The classes?
Balky: Yeah.. And also, I don't like it that they put me in a low grade and all the other kids are smaller than me...You know, they are very little. What am I supposed to do with them? They play all the time. It's a bit boring...

In the Dutch club, on the other hand, there was a girl, who as a result of pressure from her parents, had retaken grade 7 for the second time, as her parents had refused to place the child in special education. Also the girl preferred to stay in her old school, even if this meant that she was much older than her classmates and perhaps an easy victim for bullying. In the Netherlands, a range of strategies for finding out the correct entry level to school could be differentiated. Children from refugee families, who have just arrived in the Netherlands, always enter the grade that corresponds with their age. They also participate in an intensive Dutch language course. Furthermore, there are options when it comes to choice of school and education, but in reality this is not an easy matter, as the above example illustrates. Parents do not always understand why the school suggests another (special) school for their children, because a special school may imply either less chance of a prosperous future or it may mean losing face in the family, for example in the Moroccan and Turkish community.

In summary, assessment and school placement was an issue experienced as stressful by children in many clubs. Children and their parents testified to difficulties, as the system could be rigid; once put in a grade you had to stay. In other cases, children had to stay one or two extra years in the same class in order to keep up with his/her schoolmates. Many children could not rely on their parents, as they often were of little help, both due to lack of time (some were working long hours) and linguistic difficulties in addition to lacking knowledge about the host culture generally. Schooling also creates tensions between the predominant culture and immigrants, and becomes a breeding ground for discrimination, as migrant children can be demanding for the teachers.

Mother tongue teaching

In some schools children could have lessons in their mother language. In the German club, this option was available, although not in all languages represented in the school, and they were not compulsory. None of the children in the CHICAM club took such lessons. They were financed through the consulates rather than school itself, which underlines that the overall concern of the school was to strengthen children's ability to learn German. The teachers also appreciated the CHICAM club as a place where children with different mother languages could meet and be encouraged to speak German.

Strengthening the children's mother tongue is the aim of the 'home language' classes. Within the Swedish school system, such classes have a long tradition that goes back to an intense debate among linguists and educators about the importance of strengthening the mother tongue in order to maintain ethnic and national identity as well as the bonds with close family, parents and siblings. They have now been renamed 'mother language classes' to underline the equal importance of the various languages and the resource that they may represent. In the Netherlands such classes were recently introduced. In the UK such classes used to be more widely available. Individual local authorities still fund some classes organized by local communities. In the UK school there were no such classes available.

In most schools studied, such teaching was almost completely absent from the school curricula. This suggests that the migrant student is not seen as an important individual but merely as a subject to be integrated in as short a space of time as possible. Such an approach negates the wider benefits and recognition of the importance and benefits to the 'host' countries of international and/or global cultures and economics.

Celebrating ethnic diversity

Another area of common ground takes the form of multicultural days organised in some of the countries involved. These days shine the spotlight on the culture of origin, providing a space in which it can (re)present itself. Despite the sporadic nature and exotic character of such events, foreign students become a representative of a culture, its symbol, and, at worst, a mascot. We should also remember that, as clearly emerged in the German Club, some cultures (or rather their symbols) are viewed more positively than others. In this context, we compared the attitude of some German pupils and of the teaching staff with regard to Latin American dances and the use of the veil by Muslim girls. Both cases involve stereotypes linked to these symbols: the stereotype of the hot-blooded Latin girl with music in her veins compared to that of submissive women repressed by the Islamic community. Thus the South American female student is in great demand as a dance expert and viewed in a positive manner by the teachers, while Turkish girls wearing headscarves do not enjoy this flattering attention; on the contrary, they are often the victims of rather aggressive behaviour and questions such as "Do you have any hair?". In the Greek schools, a theoretical affirmation of the benefits of multiculturalism translates in practice to an anti-Turkish approach. During history lessons you may hear expressions such as "the fall of the glorious Byzantine empire to the unfaithful" or "the Turkish yoke" .

The “TV studios” video made by the Swedish Club is very significant from this point of view, focussing on the two yearly “cultural days” when Arabic and Albanian culture were in focus. These days were organized by the mother tongue teachers, in cooperation with students and parents. They were filmed by CHICAM club members and many of them were personally involved. This event was represented in a format very familiar to them: that of the talk show. The music in the soundtrack that accompanies the images of dances and the exhibition of typical foods and objects is different to the traditional music of the culture. The typical dances are intercut with ringing phones and the whistling of modems. In this way technology is blended with tradition. The students thus reappropriate and complicate the narration of a multicultural day, refusing to be tied to symbols of a traditional Kosovo, preferring a Kosovo that is both full of history and perfectly immersed in modern life. In general, however, such actions may be counterproductive to integration, since minority cultures are presented as different and special or perhaps even exotic. For example, showing ethnic dances could be considered as old-fashioned and pointing out Albanians as backwards and “different”. The children involved in the project, now involving all countries, stressed repeatedly that they wished to speak as children rather than representatives of a community, and this is also confirmed in their refusal to speak of cases of discrimination related to their origins, and their tendency as far as possible to represent themselves as “normal”.

A good example of how naïve multiculturalism can be overcome is revealed in the parallel between two videos produced by the Italian Club. In the first “Un oggetto del mio paese” (an object from my country) the children represent themselves in a stereotypical manner as representatives of typical characteristics, bringing impersonal objects in front of the camera, in some cases souvenirs from their countries of origin, thus answering what they believe to be the expectations of Italian adults or their degree of interest. In the second video, a series of interviews with foreigners and Italians in Rome’s Piazza Vittorio area, the problem of integration and identity appears more complex. Ethnic, national and even “supranational” ties are revealed and each interview shows a different facet of the migratory universe, as this excerpt from the field diary indicates:

A lack in the Italian language opens a space for another identity formation. When Meron is interviewing a man from South Africa and asks him, whether he feels himself to be an Italian or a South African, she comes up with the following: “Do you feel Italian or African?” suggesting that ‘African’ is a kind of supranational identity.

Ultimately, we would conclude that none of the schools deserved to be called “multicultural” in a positive sense of the word. In an educational system which lacks a multicultural orientation and prefers to deal with difference through ignorance, or, in the best of circumstances, tolerance, the child leaves its ‘different’ identity behind at home or elsewhere, for the sake of negotiating a new one. This is an impediment to the preservation of the past; but it is often unfortunately also an obstacle to the inventive creation of a new hybrid identity.

Religious recognition

All schools were characterised by Europe's principal religions, based on Christianity. Schedules and semesters were planned around Christian religious holidays. Christianity was the dominant religion in school, with the exception of Sweden. In Sweden religious preaching is currently forbidden, but school culture is still characterized by influences from those times. In the U.K., with its long tradition of immigration, school has tried to adjust to students' religious predispositions. In the other countries, schools "respected" different religions and holidays, albeit within a dominant religious framework. In the case of Greece, school was an experience which rendered everything homogeneous, and school routine started with public prayer in the schoolyard. In the Netherlands, the club was situated in a Catholic school teaching Catholic religion. Over time, however, the content of this particular subject has changed into a more general introduction to the philosophy of life in which most of the main religions are taught. The school celebrated Christian holidays, such as Christmas, but had future plans of acknowledging Muslim festivals as well, in recognition of the multicultural student population.

In the U.K. where schools in multicultural areas of larger cities have a long tradition of adjusting in deference to various ethnic and religious traditions, Christian, Islamic and Hindu holidays were celebrated. These were the main religions represented at the school and there were either special assemblies (Diwali) or school holidays (Eid). However, tensions and confusions did occur, because local authorities planned according to timetables and dates, whereas, Eid, for example, follows the phases of the moon, and the date when it takes place will therefore vary.

In Germany the religions of Protestantism and Catholicism were taught, as well as lessons in ethics. Other religions were not taught, but children were allowed to celebrate their religious holidays if parents asked for permission. In Italy, the one and only religion taught was Catholicism. Instead of studying Catholicism students could choose "ethics" or "philosophy of life".

In Sweden, although secularized, Christian traditions were celebrated in most schools, in the sense of Christian holidays, such as gathering in church at Christmas or at the end of term before the summer vacation when special hymns celebrating the coming summer were sung, sometimes together with the national anthem. Teachers, parents and children sing together. These occasions have high symbolic significance in Swedish culture, stressing national affinity and Swedish identity. Many parents take a day off to join their children on this particular day. Such traditions could create alienation in immigrant children with other beliefs, particularly for children and families who are not familiar with Western culture and traditions. When Lucia, (a very important Swedish cultural event, significant not only for its religious meaning) was celebrated, the children adjusted to this custom and participated. The impression was that the children kept their own festivals and customs within the family and in their ethnic community, but in school they accepted the Swedish ones. They did not reject them. However, the school respected Muslim traditions such as Ramadan and other religious holidays and provided the children with particular privileges. On the "cultural days", the school also presented small exhibitions, where Arabic children from Palestine and Jordan and Albanian children explained some basic rules from the Koran and other specific customs pertaining to their cultures.

We therefore encountered very different approaches to with regard to official recognition of religious difference in the schools. It is clear, however, that all the children appreciated it where this was achieved.

Religious symbols : headscarves and food

There is presently an ongoing discussion about the wearing of “headscarves” in schools all over Europe. The symbolic meaning of the headscarf is a sensitive issue, as from the perspective of non-Muslims it symbolizes a conservative view of women as subordinate to men. After years of discussion, the French government, prompted by the media, has taken an official decision to ban the wearing of headscarves in schools. In Sweden and in Italy, the debate has started quite recently. In Sweden, the issue led to big headlines in the media when two young women in Gothenburg came to school in nikabs. The school in question took the decision to ban headgear covering the whole face. The latest development in this debate is that decisions about headscarves have been delegated to the local school authorities.

This issue also arose in some of the CHICAM clubs. In Germany, there were negative reactions to wearing headscarves both among some of the teachers and among some of the students. In a club discussion, two Turkish girls seemed to be reluctant to wear scarves. They got support from another Turkish schoolmate, a boy, who used the words “headscarf is shit”. However, one of the girls’ older brothers insisted on her wearing the scarf in order to conceal her body, thus reinforcing the conservative religious meaning of it. In other words, there seem to be mixed feelings about wearing headscarves in the German group and a conflict between the preferences of the families and those of the predominant culture. In the schools of the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy children did not wear religious clothes, at least not within the school area. In the UK wearing headscarves is generally accepted.

Food is also part of the school routine. Lunch break is sometimes identified as a part of the socialization process in school. In reality, however, the lunch break can be very trying for both teachers and students. Moreover, students generate a discourse about school food as being “disgusting”. However, if we confine the discussion to whether or not there is an adjustment in view of religious traditions and requirements, we found that most schools do make an adjustment. In Germany and the U.K., meals were adapted for immigrant children, for example, by serving food without pork. In the other countries children could be served other kinds of food only after a request from parents. They also could choose vegetarian food. In other words, the schools had not adjusted to their multicultural students. The children in the Swedish club did not overtly complain about school food. On the contrary, they were very disappointed when dinner staff were on strike and food was not served. Some children were very hungry during this period and came to club meetings complaining about how hungry they were. The impression was that school lunch was appreciated, at least among the children in the club, who did not have enough spare money to buy, for example, a sandwich as a substitute for lunch. In the U.K., the experiences were the opposite. The children complained a lot about the food. They found English food “disgusting”, compounded by the noise and disruption of the dining hall. Also the dinner staff were considered rude and unhelpful.

In general, recognition of religious symbols and of dietary requirements was very important to the children, marking to what extent they and their cultures were accepted.

School as a social support

We cannot make any generalizations about schools' roles in supporting immigrant families in educational or social matters, as we only have access to a few cases. In some cases, there is apparently very little support from school, but in other cases there is support, for example the school in the Netherlands where teachers and the headmaster had a very supportive attitude: "Generally speaking the school gives as much support as possible". At one time when an Iraqi family was about to be evicted from their house, the school was inclined to offer the family the school attic, before realising that this was not viable. In the UK there was a teacher with special responsibility for refugee children.

In Germany the children were offered extracurricular activities as well as social support. They had a social worker in the school, who was a resource for the children. They could get help with their homework and work out social and personal problems as well. It was also a place where they could play games and meet other children. A similar arrangement was made in Sweden with the local youth club and its staff of youth workers. During the period of the project these were moved inside the school and offered extracurricular activities such as chess, billiards, sports, handicraft, art work etc. Cooking, parties and excursions took place through the club. Children's homework was not supposed to be a task for the club, but sometimes children asked for help with it, which points to the need for such assistance. However, although the idea of a youth club seems attractive, it has some problems too. In some communities immigrant boys often have more freedom than girls, and the youth club was very much occupied by the boys. In the case of our school in Sweden, it came to the point where Swedish children felt excluded, and there were indications that this was a breeding-ground for tensions between Swedes and migrants, which underlines how difficult it is to attain integration.

In other clubs, such social and educational support did not exist. For example, in Italy, it appears that the parents themselves organised after-school activities. And they were often expensive as well. Immigrant children rarely had such opportunities. They were mostly living far away from school in poor neighbourhoods and their parents were working hard. Some of the children expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation. In Italy, there were clear indications from interviews with the children that they needed a social space (see below).

In summary, while the schools acted as a major social centre (and therefore site of socialization) for the children, organising particular extra curricular social provision and support is an area that is problematic and needs to be addressed.

Teacher - Pupil relations

In the Netherlands, as well as in Sweden, there were signs of a more anti-authoritarian teaching style. In most schools in the project, a teacher expected to be addressed formally as "Sir", "Miss" etc., which denotes a distance between the student and the teacher. In Swedish schools, however, children were permitted to call teachers by their first name without a title, and to use the informal and more intimate "du" (you). Dress codes among teachers as well as pupils were very informal in order

to stress the equal and “democratic” relation between children and adults. School uniforms were never used, as they symbolized a more authoritarian teaching situation, with connotations of military discipline, obedience and unequal relations between staff and students.

However, when children talked about school or made media productions about school, a somewhat different picture emerged. There is a discourse about teachers in all societies, which is cultivated in popular culture as well as in everyday conversations, which portrays teachers as strict and oppressive, using their power to create feelings of inferiority. This image of the teacher is seen in most productions about school.

In an Italian production called “Routine School Video”, children are not really oppressed but bored. The video is made in an ironic style with lots of exaggeration. The teacher is supposed to be “ugly”, for example. However, the Italian children appreciate teachers who “understand” them. They seem to regard teachers generally as old-fashioned and belonging to a different generation. The ones who “understand” are more modern and think in the same way as the students themselves. Such thoughts also came up in a discussion with a girl in the Swedish club. She talked about some teachers who are old-fashioned and lacked a sense of humour, teachers who are stiff and boring. She said: Can’t they understand that it is more fun to go to school and that learning is better if they are friendly, supportive and cheerful? This statement came during a discussion about the fact that she had dropped her grade in English when she got a new teacher. The same girl appreciated the more anti-authoritarian style of Swedish teachers as compared to her Albanian mother tongue teacher. She found that the Swedish teachers applied more progressive teaching methods. As an example, she mentioned that some teachers applied methods from quiz shows such as Jeopardy.

In a U.K. production called “The Register”, school routine was dramatised in the following way. The video starts with the focus on the teacher on the clock and on the register – all powerful symbols of order. The room itself looks ordered with maps and charts on the wall. The teacher is in control, whereas the students are oppressed and deliberately insulting each other. A somewhat similar example was a Swedish production about a strict teacher standing at the blackboard, asking questions in a geography lesson. Two girls are obstructive and are behaving obnoxiously as well as insulting a girl who cannot give the correct answer. Productions from the Netherlands confirm this picture as well. School was characterised as a disciplinary routine that does not allow surprises or any other breaking of the rules that accompany this routine. The teacher is portrayed with a stick, and is much more strict than would usually be the case in real life. When the children were encouraged to dream about their new school in the format of a talk show a different picture emerged. One boy suggested the name: The Magic Circle. He thought of an imaginative space, where creativity rules instead of induction.

In other words, the teacher is often described as a caricature. But the student is also portrayed as a caricature, that of the disobedient, subversive student. Such clichés are of course, strongly impressed in migrant children’s minds as well, which makes it somewhat difficult to interpret findings both in media productions and from interviews. Nevertheless, there is no smoke without fire, as these lines from the Greek report indicates:

The children dismiss school requirements by making fun of them. Managing to make fun of them without being penalised is a special skill. On the other hand, being penalised for doing so renders someone with a special status. By not following school rules, the children feel that they are claiming their own space and affirming their own identity, expecting to be recognised for who they really are. Often, they define themselves against the nerd of the class, or the teacher's pet.

All clubs report on teacher-pupil relations showing signs of teacher oppression, and even fear of punishment was expressed. The most extreme examples of dysfunctional teacher-pupil relations are reported from the U.K., where children felt distanced from the teachers. The teachers were not really "friends", to whom children could talk and with whom they could discuss their problems. Some of the children in the U.K. had disrupted and traumatic pasts and needed someone to trust and talk to about life in general and adjustment to school requirements.

Liesbeth (researcher): OK. All right. And do you know which teachers you would go to for what? I mean who do you talk to if you are in trouble and you need to talk to somebody. Are there teachers who you can go to?

Sahra: No.

Liesbeth: No. You don't know any of them well enough to be able to do that.

Sahra: Uh uh.

Liesbeth: That's important as well.

Sahra: Yeah it is. But in different schools they have like kind of you go to like a mentor or something and they don't have it here. So you just walk out and speak to them and cos I'm upset. This school doesn't have that. I think they do need it. Cos there are a lots of students who are maybe getting bullied or feel depressed and they just want to talk to you. I mean if they had like, and this is how the mentors, someone to talk to them about how you're feeling and they're glad to help you out with school work.

Liesbeth: Would that have helped you this year?

Sahra: Yeah. It would of. But the school didn't have them, so...

Liesbeth: Yeah. I agree. I think that's really important so there's kind of a safe place to go if you.

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Sahra:	Yeah. And the students. Some students. There's a boy who's getting bullied in school and he committed suicide. So yeah if he had someone to talk to he might not have committed suicide. Yeah that would've helped him. You know they think we don't need it cos it's so expensive. But it [would] help.
Liesbeth:	It's worth it in the end.
Sahra:	Yeah. It might save a life at the end of the day. And that's why some students break rules because they feel pressured and if they did talk to someone you know. Plenty more students could come to school and do well with the grades.

In Germany, the group had a discussion about punishment and they also made an animation about corporal punishment. The discussion revealed that a number of children had been punished by their former teachers in their home countries, for example by being slapped on the hands or the face, when the children were rude or arrogant about their homework. In one case, the child considered it to be acceptable, but another indicated that she was afraid of the teacher after the incident. One point of view, which came from a girl who had lived in the USA, was that you should even hit back, if a teacher was beating you. Another child reported that he had experienced German teachers hitting children. In the animation, the children attack the teacher who is punishing them, which was something they had never done themselves.

In the Netherlands there were clashes reinforced by the cultural diversity of the school population. There were, for example, discrepancies between school standards and values and those of the mosque, where some children attended at the weekend. There they could be beaten and the children accepted it. But at school the teachers talked to the children and gave them verbal reprimands but not physical punishment. However, the school in question aims to build a bridge between different cultures. It tries to form a link with the surrounding community and to work for reducing tensions that exist between the various cultures in the neighbourhood. School is seen as a place where children of different cultures meet and learn to respect each other and learn to live together.

The children in all clubs outlined disciplinary actions that were typical within the school environment. These suggestions arose from discussions in the clubs or media productions and included the following:

Verbal punishment (shouting)

Detention

Extra homework

Sending someone out

Putting the offender's name in a misconduct book / a black mark in the class records

Spending time in the "training room"

Being expelled and/or suspended

Putting him/her in the corner

Beating/hitting (exceptional, but occurred in former "home countries" and in fictive media productions)

In summary children generally experienced teachers as distant authority figures. They all had diverse 'models' of teachers and made comparisons between those in their countries of origin (who could be stricter or less strict), those in their present and past schools in their current country of residence (comparing primary and secondary schools) and those in their mosque classes. Such differences could initially be the source of some confused expectations.

Conflicts between schoolmates

We shall not go into length on this subject, since Deliverables 7 and 8 deal with peer group relations, but shall only focus on some school related cases. In most schools, bullying was not accepted officially. Nevertheless, bullying was reported in all clubs. Bullying could take place both as a result of tension between children from the predominant culture and those from a minority culture, and also between children within a minority group. German teachers stressed that conflicts had not so much to do with rivalries between nationalities, race or ethnicity, but more with personal matters. In Sweden, it was apparent that bullying is very much related to school, as fictions were staged in a school setting. One explanation is that school is a closed space, based on ranking and competition, promoting the expression of power relations. Furthermore, children are forced to socialise with and to be near children they have not chosen themselves. Therefore, it puts pressure on social competence and getting along with others and it is unsurprising that tensions and aggressions build up. Consequently, the atmosphere at school is often tough, involving bullying, name-calling and other harassing behaviour. In Sweden, the migrant children sometimes used their own mother tongue for calling names, like a secret language, which the school did not accept. Using the mother tongue became a tool for gaining power for children who often experience inferiority. It can be used as a means of resistance and as a counter culture, when other means to obtain power control are not available.

Not going to school - resistance

School attendance was an issue in some clubs, notably the UK and Greece. Two children in the Greek club did not attend school. Stivan did not because he was working in order to support himself and his family in Iraq. His cousin Balky went for a bit and then dropped out, because she was registered at a class with children much younger than herself. In front of the other kids in the club she was quite evasive about it:

Nadina [researcher]. Why don't you go to the proper school then?

Balky: Oh, it's all the same... I will still be with smaller kids, you know, because of my Greek... It's so boring...

Nadina: But your Greek is very good. You are fluent.

Balky: No... There is no point

Nadina: Isn't it more boring to stay home all day?

Balky: No.

Nadina: Come on...

Balky: OK, sometimes it is...

continued over the page...

Nadina: What do you do at home all day?
 Balky: Watch TV... And now that my mother was sick there was a lot to do and help her... also errands, shopping, stuff... Then take Chuchu to school and back... Sometimes play with my aunt's baby. And also play with Stivan and the other kids in the neighbourhood...
 Nadina: Do you spend a lot of time with them?
 Balky: Yeah... But most of them go to school.
 Nadina: So?
 Balky: So I meet them in the afternoon or in the evening... and we hang around and talk.
 Nadina: Well, see? You can still hang around with your friends and go to school at the same time...
 Balky: Hmmmm..... No, not really. There is so much else to do. And it is more difficult for me because of the language.
 Nadina: Your Greek is excellent, you know that, and if you go to school it will be even better. It's a pity to give it up. You are so smart and you really learn fast. I think you would do very well.
 Balky: But what's the point? I mean, we are not planning to stay here forever... We will eventually go to the States when our papers are done. So I don't really need Greek.

When analysing the interview in which Balky is explaining why she did not go to school, the following reasons were offered:

- Placement at a lower class level
- Age difference
- Lack of reception classes
- Language frustration
- Boredom at school
- Low motivation because the stay in Greece is temporary
- School is time consuming
- School impedes family needs.

Several of our research findings in this and the other research reports were confirmed by the reasons children gave for non attendance. The main ones were; assessment, language acquisition, relevance, balancing academic and play, precedence of family needs, school as impersonal and not meeting social needs.

Breaking the routine - The CHICAM club as a space for empowerment

A better balance between learning and playing is one of the highest priorities on the children's agenda. Breaking the routine is a way of doing that. The school in the Netherlands organized several special days every year, focussing on a theme, such as culture. All normal classes were cancelled and every place in the school was turned into a creative space where children could work both with their hands and with their heads.

Another way of breaking the routine, applied in this particular school, was organizing school sports games. Sports was one of the focal points of the school in terms of building a sense of community, and football games were especially popular. As all the CHICAM boys wanted a place in the school team, football became an important topic in the club. All boys participated in the selection procedures, but in the end only two were selected. The school football tournament (involving teams from different schools competing) took place on a Wednesday afternoon, and a CHICAM reporting team went there to shoot the game and to interview and film some of the players, coaches, and fans (pupils and teachers). Being selected for the school team increased status at school among schoolmates; but filming the football game increased status as well. The CHICAM production team used the reporting to get involved in the football game in its own way. On the other hand there was a lot of interest in the camera and in being filmed and interviewed among the players and the fans. All children expressed pride with respect to the school they represented either as players or as fans. In this way, sports seemed to provide a way of creating a collective identity; and sports reporting may stimulate this process even more (in that the images focus on common ground and common interests) - as the popularity of television sports has indeed proven.

In mainstream school classes, a clear hierarchy of status relations among children was visible. In the Dutch school, for instance, the Moroccan children sat in front, the Turkish kids in the back, and the Dutch and refugee children in the middle. However, these distinctions did not apply in the CHICAM club. The club provided children who were otherwise excluded from group fellowship with prestige and status. Teachers were surprised to find that pupils who were not particularly high achievers in school in fact did very well when they were in a different setting, the CHICAM club. The productions made in the club did reveal other aspects of the children that the teachers had not noticed before. School seemed to have a restraining effect on creativity, at least in immigrant and refugee children. In several respects, working with the media was empowering for the migrant children with whom we worked. These arguments will be developed in our report on Visual Communications (Deliverables 14 and 15).

School as a Physical Space

School as a physical space and can be regarded as a “text” offering various readings and impressions. The atmosphere of the school is not only shaped by people, but also by the architecture and design of the school, as pointed out by Michel Foucault (1975) in his studies of institutional buildings such as prisons.

This kind of approach to the school allows us to analyse the different narratives related to it; the differences between the official description of the school as an institution and everyday experiences. In this context spaces assume different meanings and can become a battle-ground. With the exception of Sweden, no country pays particular attention to school architecture. In most cases school buildings completely lack appeal, although the children adopt an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they have internalised the official reading and show themselves to be proud of and attached to their school; on the other, they perform a whole series of actions aimed at reappropriating the space and giving it a new meaning.

As far as use and perception of the space are concerned, we must make some important distinctions; firstly, between schools with an authoritarian or anti-authoritarian approach, and between primary and secondary schools. Schools where the pupil – institution relation is more equal leave their pupils greater room to express themselves. Here it is the school itself that gets the pupils to personalise their classrooms (as in the case of German and Dutch schools). Similarly, primary schools allow more room for socialisation and learning is less teacher-focussed. The video made by a primary school pupil from the Greek Club begins with the classroom door being opened. The camera takes the viewer into the classroom where fellow pupils pose for a photo, dance and sing. The school space is a safe, cosy space (the door shuts protecting it) and incorporates significant friendly relationships. Likewise, the Dutch film on a day at school opens with the protagonists playing in the playground. The school is an enjoyable space for socialisation. In the Dutch primary schools, the teachers themselves have painted their classrooms to make them brighter and more welcoming, decorating the classroom walls with cards bearing the pupils’ birthday dates and so on. Even the perimeter walls of the German school building are covered with paintings and graffiti created by the pupils themselves, who, as in the case of Sweden, have a huge playground at their disposal.

In schools with stricter rules, and in secondary schools, pupils tend to have a more rebellious attitude, with more cases of rules being overturned, in a more or less evident manner. An example of this is the relation that the students in the English CHICAM Club have with their uniforms, originally intended to underline and strengthen the sense of identification with the school and which have become the object of daily bargaining. In fact, the pupils make continuous efforts to personalise and modify them. When the UK club went on a trip out of school, the children were very relieved to find that they were not required to wear uniform.

Meanwhile, space in school is experienced in a more fluid manner, and marginal spaces take on an important value. The relation between ‘central’ and ‘marginal’ becomes fundamental because it is inverted. A marginal space is one that the institution does not consider central, viewed as uninteresting and unimportant. Marginal spaces give children the possibility of experimenting more

freely. Spaces thought of as central to a school such as classrooms become marginal for some children. In the same way, marginal spaces, such as the bathrooms and playground, become central. The emotions associated with these marginal spaces are pleasure, relaxation, intimacy, assuredness, and friendliness. Below are the comments of two girls regarding these spaces:

This is the garden where we meet in the morning before the first bell rings, during recess and when it's time to go home. There's a football table where the boys plays, is a nice place in which you can relax there are some benches where we usually sit and chat.

I took this picture of the female bathroom, I know it's kinda gross but there's nothing we can do about it, but bathrooms are important too: to go to do our things, to free ourselves from boring lessons like history and geometry, etc... For me the bathroom is necessary because, when I want to do my make-up I can do it there because there is the mirror. ³

The bathroom is perceived by the speaker as marginal. In fact she points out that “the bathrooms are important too.” This “too” implies that some other person (Adults in general? Teachers? The school system?) considers that space as useless or meaningless.

The small corridors hidden from the teachers' eyes, the unsupervised spaces, are places where the children's school culture comes to the fore. In a Greek video, the girl filming underlines the shift from the institutional space, regulated by adults, to the informal space of her peer group. Both her tone of voice and the register of the narration change, marking this change-over. Her indulgent, accommodating presentation of communal spaces acquires a more knowing, searching tone when she begins to speak of the bathrooms:

In Regin's video of her school, she takes us on the guided tour of her school toilets (accompanied by her classmates), in which she goes into great – almost clinical – detail about the situation, the usage, the problems. [...] Her style of narration here is very different from the one used when showing the playground and the headmaster standing in the middle, where she is full of niceties about 'her school'. A benign presentation shifts into an acute accusation along with a camera which shifts from 'public', open space where roles and rules are kept, to a 'private', enclosed space where roles and rules are overturned. In the latter space, the child takes on power, the power to point and comment.

Children play in the “in-between” spaces. Weaving from one rule to another, they subvert the imposed spatial controls by playing with the controlled space. They manage to escape the rules and the given routine by not taking them seriously. In other words, they are involved in a semiotic guerrilla war that causes the code of conduct to slide from a serious tone to a more comic one.

³ In translations, we have tried to respect what children wrote as much as possible, mistakes included. Grammar and syntax mistakes can be extremely relevant to this kind of analysis. For example Rodica wrote “there is THE mirror” instead of “there is A mirror”. This mistake is demonstrative of the importance she places on the bathroom.

We have described the marginal space as a space of reappropriation used by migrant pupils in the same way as their local peers. However, the fact that they are unsupervised makes these marginal spaces not very safe places to be. The problem of safety was given particular emphasis with regard to the English school and warrants greater investigation given that the school is a concrete example of current British school building policies. The school is situated in an extremely new neighbourhood. It is a modular type of building apparently designed without taking into account the intended use. In fact, the building is very rambling and hard to oversee. Located in an area with one of the highest crime rates in London the school is vulnerable to unauthorised entries. It resembles a bizarrely-coloured modern prison. Both pupils and teachers feel lost in this rather impractical structure. Although the number of students is increasing steadily the school cafeteria has already exceeded its maximum capacity. The feeling of insecurity that a structure of this type generates in students is intensified in the case of foreign students. As the researcher underlines in her notes: "I often encountered students from the club in the school who seemed confused about the basic timetables and who people were. In a time of upheaval they often appeared very nervous". One of the ways in which local students reacted to this feeling of confusion was by tampering with the CCTV system or setting off the fire-alarm to disrupt lessons. One of the girls from the Club commented as follows:

Liesbeth [researcher]: Do you think the whole business of, you know, the half days and the fire alarms and things going on in the building has affected the students?

Sahra: No. Some of them they just wanna go home and be...I guess because the teacher don't...They think they have control of the students but they don't. Cos a lot of things that do happen...

Liesbeth: So does that make it feel not safe for you?

Sahra: Yeah cos there's other people that come into the school and things happen. And it's not so good cos the school's too big and you know teacher don't know everywhere the student are. The students can be you know in the school and they can all be there cos the school very big and especially outside in the field. There's really big grass space and we can go out. They don't have much...And the cameras. The students just disable them so it doesn't really matter because the students are very out of control.

The school in question was one of the first to be built under private funding initiatives and marks a new trend in the school investment sector. The inadequacy of the structure and the repercussions on interaction and teaching were far from positive. Pastoral care and social contact between teacher and students suffered as a result of the problems with the building and the size of the school. For the students in the Club this affected every aspect of the school – social as well as academic. In addition the systems that did exist were not transparent for students or parents.

In summary the children make clear distinctions between central (public) spaces and marginal (private) spaces in the schools. Marginal spaces allow the children the possibility of experimenting more freely. The physical design and layout were very significant, e.g. in the UK case where the site is rambling and anonymous, leading to both academic and social repercussions.

Aspirations for the future

We must draw attention to an extremely important factor, that is, the distinctiveness of migrant or recently arrived refugee students with respect to their peers. While they find themselves immersed in the youth culture of the host country they still tend to have a feeling of respect for the school and greater expectations than many of their peers from the host country. There are many examples of this, but the most obvious is David's rap in defence of schools ("The Place to Be"), which sent a very positive message about school. David was very proud of his work, but he was reluctant for other students to see it. He was continually struggling with his 'street' image, in which he needed to oppose authority, and on the other hand the belief that he must try to conform and have an education to fulfil that future and his reason for being in this country.

The students found themselves trapped between two cultures and aspirations that were hard to reconcile. On the one hand, they wish to be part of the youth/school culture of their peers, and therefore part of the peer group, on the other, they have expectations of the school. In fact, the majority of children involved in the project, in the various countries, see the school as being an extremely important investment for their future, and, at the same time, a dull, boring place not fully answering their expectations. As one girl from the Dutch Club said, the school is "a gate away (sic) to the future" but in practice it translates into a daily experience that is not really constructive.

In discussing the short-term future with the children, both their expectations and those of their parents became apparent. For refugee families education is a means to integration. The children were very keen to get high marks and their perspectives and dreams for the future were reflected in their aspirations to future professional status. These were perhaps unrealistic. They talked about getting rich and famous and about exciting professions such as becoming a professional football player, a television star or a fashion designer. Others were ready to help other people, for example by becoming a lawyer, a nurse, a midwife or surgeon. Migrant children had professional aspirations that differed very much from those of their parents. Some children talked, for example, about going back to their home countries to apply their wisdom and knowledge; others thought it was better to stay in the new country, as did Fernando from the school in Italy:

Fernando: Is good to stay here, for the school, I just want to go back for a while to play with my friends there, go around Lima, and then live here in Italy, here is better for my future, for study, there are more things, stuff...

Antonella [researcher]: What you want to become?

Fernando: A doctor

Antonella: You'll have to study a lot, won't you?

Fernando: Yes, I know, I'll study computer and technology at high school, and then I'll go to university...

Antonella: Why you want to be a doctor?

Fernando: I want to help people.

Antonella: What do your parents say about that?

Fernando: They agree...but they also say it's a long way away, we will see....

In summary we found that the children's aspirations are different from many of their peers in the host country. They expect a lot from the school and set their sights high.

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