

***Adjusting to new types of migrant pupils in France:
the case of Bulgarian Roma and Syrian refugee
children in urban versus rural contexts***

Claire Schiff

Bordeaux University, Center Emile Durkheim, CNRS UMR 5116

« Integration of Migrants and Refugees in the XXIst Century »,

Moscow, October 13-1, 2021

**Institute for Social Policy, National Research University Higher School of
Economics**

The study :

- Three schools in an urban neighborhood receiving many Bulgarian Roma children representing a relatively new and freely mobile intra-european economic migration (2013). (Ethnographic study)
- Schools in six small to medium rural towns each welcoming one resettled family of Syrian refugees since 2016. (Interviews and group discussions)

Illustrating the contrast :

- An elementary school « submerged » by Bulgarians : 5 migrant students per class with limited resources and a lack of help from local authorities.
- A small town prepares for over a year to welcome one resettled Syrian family with 5 children : a political and humanitarian commitment supported by the municipality

Several issues :

- How do different perceptions of newcomers influence expectations for educational inclusion?
- What are the effects of local contexts on the types of support provided to children?
- How do institutional and non-institutional actors collaborate to welcome these children in school?

Two types of newcomers : Syrians and Bulgarian Roma

- Economic migrants versus vulnerable refugees
- Spontaneous chain migration versus hyper-selected refugees
- The « the adoptee » versus the « hot potatoe »
- Rural versus urban context
- Dispersion, isolation and dependency versus concentration, collective identity and mobility

The similarities :

- Linguistic and cultural obstacles to communication
- Children previously unschooled
- Experiences of residential insecurity
- Gender norms viewed as different from the host society

Perceptions:

- With the Bulgarians : « We just can't make it work » : a losing battle
- With the Syrians : « We must make it work » : a mission

Practices :

- Syrians in rural schools : a host of mobilized actors but few special provisions. Integration as a collective project in a context of full immersion.
- Bulgarian Roma in urban schools : a series of specialized actors and facilities which adds to the existing concentration.

Conclusion :

- An effective system of immersion with non-institutionalized support and collaboration but which places high demands on the Syrian children.
- Specialization and segregation as a « comfortable » solution which places low demands on Bulgarian pupils and teachers.