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# **LEARNING HOW TO CYCLE**

A study on social cohesion, integration and motility in  
Finland

Faculty of Social Sciences  
Master's Thesis  
5/2022

## ABSTRACT

Federico Ferrara: Learning how to cycle; a study on social cohesion, integration and motility in Finland

Master's Thesis

Tampere University

Master's Degree Programme in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research

February 2022

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This is a qualitative study on how learning to cycle can support the everyday life of immigrant women in Finland. The research focuses on social cohesion, motility, integration and analyzes the women's perceptions on how learning this new skill has or has not improved their everyday life. The aim of my study is to understand how the newly learnt cycling skills supports the everyday life of immigrant women in Finland and the importance of this learning process.

All the participants started learning to cycle in Finland and I collected the data first with an interview before the beginner course, and then I sent them a survey 3-6 months later. In this master's thesis my theoretical framework is based on the concepts of everyday life, social cohesion and Kaufman's theory of motility.

The results of the thesis indicate that cycling can support the everyday life of the immigrant women. They learned a new skill, but most importantly the idea of learning a skill, perceived as arduous, gave them a sense of empowerment, resilience and a better self-esteem. In addition, the new skill gave them the possibility of an enhanced motility and support their horizontal cohesion.

These results could influence positively the women's integration into Finnish society and with further investigation we could test these outcomes in a longer period and in various aspects of the everyday life of these women.

Keywords: Integration, cycling, everyday life, social cohesion, motility, immigration,

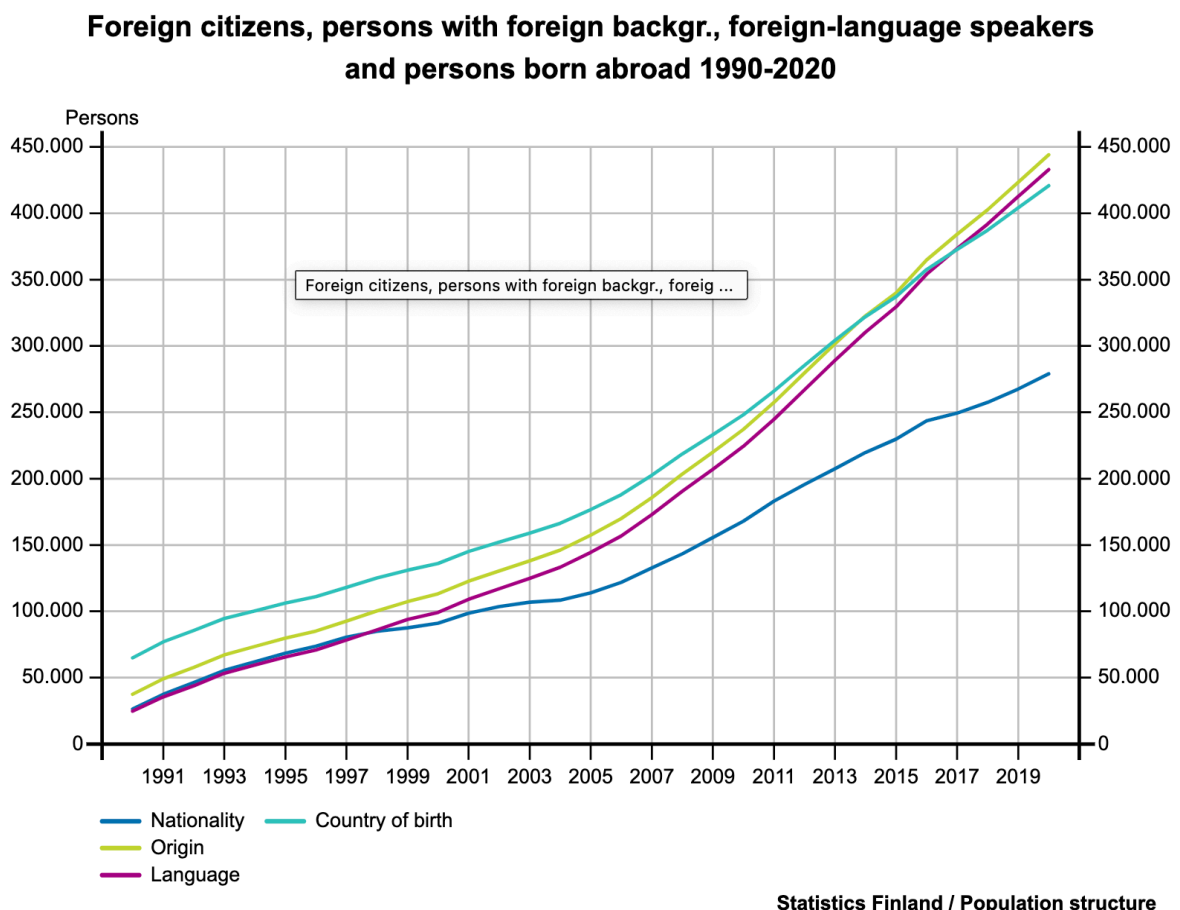
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## 1. Introduction

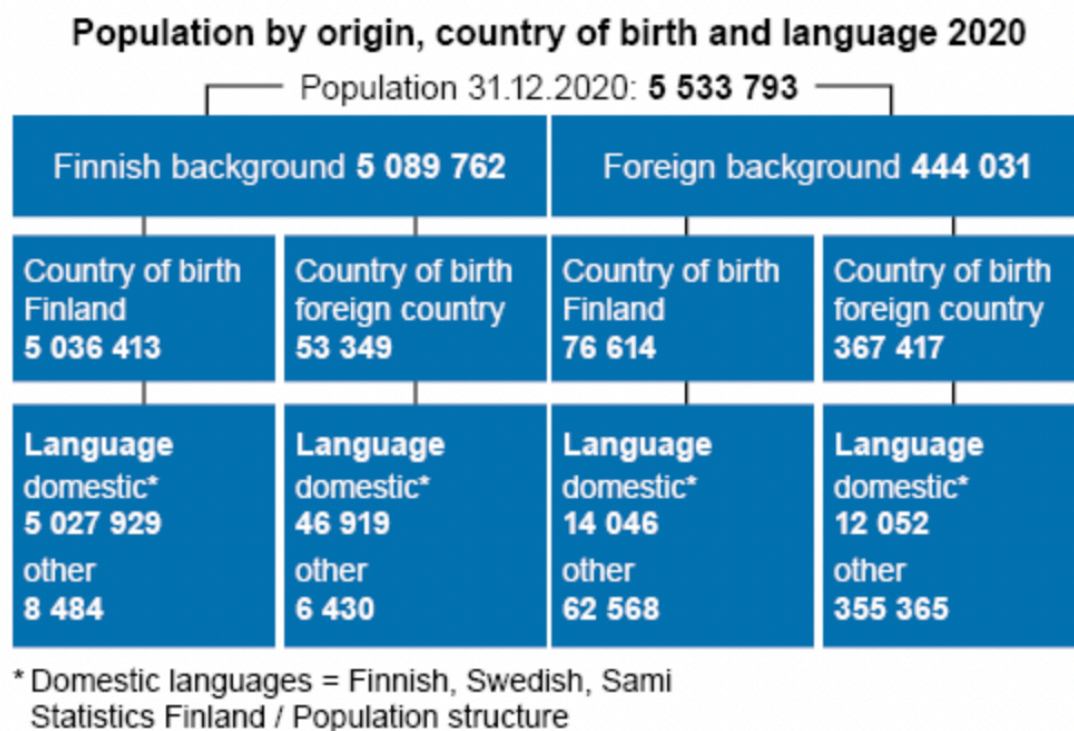
Finland has a relatively short history in hosting international migrants, in fact traditionally it has been an emigration country. Finnish citizens would migrate to Western countries, with Sweden being the most popular destination, especially after the peak of unemployment in 1967-68 (Heikkilä, 2002). Prior to the early 1990s, migrants in Finland consisted largely of returning Finnish migrants and their families (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2017). However, since the 1990s, Finland has started to receive more migrants, first from the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, Estonia, Somalia, and in the last decade from different countries in the Middle East, making Finland for the first time a “country of destination” for migration (Rapo 2011) as can be seen in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Foreign citizens, persons with a foreign background, foreign language speakers and persons born abroad 1990-2020 in Finland**

Numerically, Estonians, Swedes and Russians as well as former Soviet Union citizens (Statistics Finland, 2018) continue to make up the largest immigrant group living in Finland despite the increase in asylum seekers and quota refugees<sup>1</sup> from the MENA region in the last decade (OECD, 2017).

In 2020, according to Statistics Finland, there were more than 444,000 foreigners in Finland - accounting for almost 8% of the Finnish population - of which around 367,500 were born abroad (see Figure 2 below), thus making it increasingly a more multicultural society.



**Figure 2: Population of origin, country of birth and language 2020 (Statistic Finland, 2020)**

Immigrants are a diverse group of people and by any standard cannot be defined as homogeneous. People from many countries and continents have moved to Finland, having left their home countries for various reasons (war, cataclysm, political situation, family reunions, exc.), and are of different ages and genders.

<sup>1</sup> A quota refugee is a person who has had to leave his or her home country or country of permanent residence and who cannot stay in the country to which he or she has fled, and whom the United Nations refugee agency Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has determined to be a refugee

Statistically, in the last decades, only under 10% of immigrants have moved to Finland for humanitarian reasons (Miettinen 2018a), and they are asylum and subsidiary protection seekers and quota refugees.

With natural population growth in Finland having decreased, Finland's population has only increased due to migration gains from abroad (Ministry of the Interior, 2017). Such transnational migration brings unavoidable changes in demography, which consequently affected the receiving society and its structures. Integrating and including migrants into the new society is of vital importance.

The UNDP (2020) states that *"for migration to offer this benefit, migration related interventions must ensure that the newcomers are integrated successfully into society. When insufficient or ineffective efforts are made to ensure integration, newcomers can become marginalized. This makes them more vulnerable to risks of all kinds, including lack of educational opportunities, language barriers and inability to find decent work"*. Before considering the actions in Finland that the government has developed through the years to promote integration, the concept itself of integration first needs to be clarified.

In the international debate on this topic different notions have been discussed, with what is known in Finland as "kotoutuminen" usually being referred to as *integration*. However, many other terms are also used, such as the English terms *inclusion*, *adaptation*, *adjustment* and *absorption* or *assimilation*, as well as other terms in different languages (Swedish *etablering*, Dutch *inburgering*) all carrying distinctions in their meanings and approaches (Saukkonen, 2016).

What these terms all have in common is the active process needed to create those circumstances, which vary from to approach, that enhance the newcomers to be part of the new society. In the Finnish context, the national integration policy started, in a legislative sense, only in 1999, but we could simplify that integration is seen as the supportive actions of this process and as the outcome of those and this is the concept behind the Finnish verb "kotouttaa". The aim of the term was to avoid conceptual entanglement in the process of European integration and to take distance from the perception, associated with the concept of integration, that immigrants have

an obligation to integrate (assimilate) culturally into the majority population and its language and culture (Saukkonen 2020).

The Finnish government has worked on active integration since the 90s even if the first Aliens Act came to force already in 1984. Nonetheless, the Aliens Act was the result of preserving balance between national security concerns and the rights for foreigners (Palander, 2019). The state and individual migrant were seen as opposite dimensions and illegality, terrorism and crime were linked to migration.

In 1991, Finland passed a new Aliens Act (378/1991) after becoming a member of the European Council and having signed the Human Rights Convention (1989). Finnish legislators were motivated to replace the first Aliens Act to address the Finnish internalization, the mobility of people and the new international human rights engagement (Palander, 2019).

However, the concept of the integration of immigrants into Finnish society was given greater impetus only after the report of the Committee on Immigration and Refugees set up in 1995, eventually leading to the first Finnish Integration Act which was signed only in 1999 (Government Institute for Economic Research, VATT, 2014). The act included providing immigrants with knowledge in Finnish, raising awareness about Finnish society and culture and creating possibilities for education and work and maintaining their own language and culture (Immigration Act, 493/1999:1§).

The Integration Act set to promote the integration, equality and freedom of choice of immigrants, with measures that would support the needed skills and information for immigrants in their new society. The most concrete consequence of this act was that the employment office was able to accept immigrants as a special group and integration plans were drawn up for them. The Integration Act has been refined several times: the first major reform entered into force in early 2006 and was then updated five years later. One of the legal changes of interest that have been introduced over the years is the mention of the Participant in Finland scheme (Osallisuus Suomessa) in the 2011 Act. It aimed in experimenting new training concepts, to acquire, organize and guide training, and to provide training to a wider range of people.

The Finnish government decided to make integration a key development objective after the increased number of incoming asylum seekers in 2015 (more than 30,000) with its subsequent challenges and thus opted to update the national integration system. With the new approach, the government “[we] *identified already at that point that a key challenge for integration is the low employment rates of immigrant women and those with a refugee background*” (Lindström, 2018). In Fact, VATT had already proposed in 2014 that with a well-designed integration policy it would be possible to influence what immigration would mean for Finns and immigrants in the future (VATT, 2014).

A successful integration and inclusion require a set of skills for the individual and there are considerations to be made if the outcomes of this process fails. The counterpart and the disadvantage of inclusion creates an *incompetence*, which refers not only to poverty but more widely to the fact that the individual is not or will not benefit from the rights or experiences that are open to others. This can be divided into four categories (Saunders, Naidoo & Griffins 2007):

1. unemployment, livelihood problems, exclusion from education
2. generational experiences of exclusion, unequal treatment
3. loneliness, problems in social relations, exclusion from the democratic system
4. problems with physical or mental health, obstruction of meaningful activities / hobbies / self-realization

The lack of skills generates an *incapacity* which is strongly attached to social exclusion, which reduces the inclusion of individuals' experience. Emphasis should be placed on promoting inclusion and provide those tools and skills necessary to achieve a certain level of *formation* in the new society. To have more active and integrated immigrants in societal everyday life their surroundings, habits and their ability to move independently also need to be taken into consideration.

In their research on the active civic participation of immigrants in Finland, Saksela, Sagne and Wilhelmsson already highlighted in 2005 the idea that “more effort should be given to get immigrant women into the civil society and out of the home” (Sagne et al., 2005). According to the National Sports Survey in 2010, only 1% of Finnish women were completely immobile, while it was 16% for immigrant women. In a survey



conducted in 2020, The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, THL, found that 25 percent of all immigrant women living in Finland did not practice any kind of sport free time, with the figure rising to 53% when only considering women from the MENA. In all cultures, exercise does not have the same value as in Finnish culture and in many of the countries of origin of immigrant women the most important role of the women is taking care of their family and house, not leaving time for practicing sport (Zacheus 2011).

Practical factors can also have an impact on an immigrant woman's mobility, such as a poor financial situation, lack of information, cold weather or the Finnish language. In another research carried out in Sweden, several immigrants also mentioned that they were not used to exercising just to get exercise, as in their former homeland (former Yugoslavia), physical activity was part and parcel of everyday life, for example because of manual work or living on the land (Sandström, 2015).

Although exercise is very important in the integration of immigrants, there is still relatively little empirical research on this topic, but most of the results are positive. In addition to the general physical and mental health benefits of exercise, exercise reduces potential prejudices and makes it easier to become acquainted to other people, learn the language, and learn the rules of society. As the language of exercise is international, interaction with exercise is often perceived to be easier than in more formal situations (Lagerspetz, 2019). As pointed out in THL's survey, *"Promoting integration and taking into account welfare and health issues as part of the integration process contribute to improving the quality of life of the population with foreign background"*. (THL, 2020)

A lack of exercise could also impact the perceived well-being of these women. In fact, 45% of the women from the MENA region feel that their well-being is not good, obtaining the lowest results of all the seven categories of the research (Integration Indicators database, 2020). Exercise and the ability to move are also important to enhance the everyday life of immigrant women. In fact, Janhonen-Abuquah, in her interviews with immigrant women living in Finland conducted for her post-doctoral research, found that *"[women's narrations] revealed the importance of everyday life, arranging one's life in Finnish society was central to their narrations, (...) showed the*

*importance of social networks and the uniqueness of each woman and family". (2010, p. 3)*

Janhonen-Abruquah defines everyday life as *something* that is everywhere, be it in the abandoned country of origin and in the new receiving home. Although it might change as resettlement needs adaptation, it nevertheless continues, thus making everyday life, and its variation, a significant concept to be studied in relation to migration. The everyday life of immigrant women thus can be enhanced by achieving better health with some studies having found that this outcome can be achieved through learning the skill of cycling. In fact, in different studies conducted at least in the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, learning to cycle has contribute "*to a higher use of the bicycle and an increased activity participation*" (Van der Kloof, 2014). These studies also show that most foreigners know how to ride a bike and do not need any specific training, although especially people coming from Africa, Asia and the Middle East, have poor or non-existent cycling skills.

In 2018, a total of more than 75,000 people born in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, China, Somalia, Thailand, Vietnam, India and Turkey lived in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2020). All of these are nationalities among which cycling training needs have been identified. Many immigrants living in Finland have no previous experience of cycling. Due to cultural, religious or living conditions in the country of origin, cycling skills are weak or non-existent. This is especially true for girls and women. As an adult, learning cycling independently is difficult and therefore there is a need for tailor-made training, especially for adult immigrants. Cycling is one of the civic skills that allows you to move independently, cheaply and in a health-promoting way. Smooth movement from home to work, school and other places, plays an important role as a part of everyday life and well-being.

On the one hand, motoring is not possible for everyone and on the other hand public transport is deficient in many cities and especially in rural areas. The bicycle offers an excellent alternative for mobility and does not exclude the rider due to age, socio-economic status or lack of a driving license. In addition, cycling education has many secondary effects: independent and smooth movement in one's own living environment strengthens women's access to education and employment. It leads to

the development of a social network, which plays a key role in successful integration. With cycling skills, women do not have to rely on men to help them move around but can act more independently. In this way, cycling training has the effect of promoting the equality of immigrant women. The skill of cycling offers a considerable capacity to increase the mobility of these women.

Refugee women and non-Western immigrants are one of the population groups most likely to experience accessibility problems and transport-related social exclusion which could turn into transport poverty that could consequently influence negatively on a different aspects of the individual's everyday life as unemployment, decline of health, or social exclusion (Kenyon, 2002).

In order to respond to this need, in February 2018, the Finnish Cyclist's Federation started the "Immigrants on Bikes" project (IoB). The project aims to teach immigrants to cycle, which also in turn promotes a green lifestyle change. The new cyclists also benefit from increased mental and physical strength. This project will be the case study of my study.

The women taking the cycling courses have mostly arrived in Finland for humanitarian reasons with a high number coming from the Middle East and North-Africa. Following the newest data provided by the THL Finmonik's survey (Survey on Well-Being among Foreign Born Population), they are the ones that feel the lowest quality of life compared to the rest of the population living in Finland (Integration Indicators database, 2020).

In my study I am interested in understanding if the skill of cycling can be supportive of the process when a woman that has left her home country finds her place and meaning in the new society, known also as *immigrant incorporation* (Saukkonen 2013). This study explores where and how immigrant women move with their bikes, what places they can reach in their own neighborhoods, and the importance of enabling physical mobility for their social and regional mobility ("motility"). Participation in education and employment is seen as especially important in integration and for these to happen women must have the possibility and the resources to move outside their home. The aim of the study is to identify these factors regarding women's mobility and hopefully

to understand how to support their motility, using Kaufmann's three elements as the methodological base of my research.

Presumably, women who participate in IoB project's cycling courses have, in one way or another, been considering their own movement, and have recognized some need to attend the course and acquire a new skill in cycling. Some participants of the course have stated that biking has had a positive influence on their lives, for example regarding independence, empowerment, equality, mobility as well as physical and mental health. In my study I want to test if these statements are backed by evidence and through this work, I am eager to learn more how integration, inclusion and social cohesion are supported through learning this new skill in Finland.

My research question is "How do their newly learnt cycling skills support the everyday life of immigrant women in Finland?". The topic of the research is relevant because it will allow me to analyze how cycling support the women integration process and if it creates communities that are safer and more inclusive socially and culturally. In addition, integration through a new skill is a new approach in Finnish society and through this research we will have some preliminary data on its positive or negative impact. Finally, everyday life and social cohesion are topics of increasing importance in Peace and Conflict Studies and this research will give us more data about the work of this nature carried out in Finland.

A key point of the research objective is that cycling is seen primarily as a means of motility and not, for example, only as a sport or leisure activity. It is hypothesized that when immigrant women acquire cycling skills, this new tool for motility leads to an increased range of social and regional activeness for the individual as a result of a complex chain of effects (Van der Kloof, 2014).

Flamm and Kaufman (2006) demonstrated in their qualitative study regarding the operationalization of the concept of motility that is "*indeed a form of capital, similar to economic, social, or cultural capital, present as a factor in social differentiation that modern sociology cannot disregard.*" With my study I want to test if this outcome emerged from my testimonies of those participants that have learned to cycle and if and how this motility tool supports the everyday life of these women.

In addition to motility my questionnaire will also extrapolate data regarding health, empowerment and social life. Through open questions the participants will add that data that they feel to be subjectively important. More specifically my research questions are:

1. How do the women justify their mobility decisions?
2. Are there any changes in the women's autonomy as a result of acquiring the skill of cycling, and if so, what changes?
3. How the process of learning a new skill can influence the everyday life of these women? Does it have an impact in their inclusivity, integration and social cohesion?

In the next chapter I will present the baseline of the theoretical framework of this study. In the third chapter I will address the project case, introducing briefly the context that led to the on-going project, the work done in the past four years and the cities chosen for this study and my position as both researcher and manager of the IoB -project. In the fourth chapter, I will focus on the research methodology, explaining the two parts of data gathering before setting out the ethical considerations of this study. In the fifth chapter, I will highlight the findings emerging from my interviews and surveys, connecting them to the theoretical framework. Finally, in the conclusion chapter I will underline the main findings of the thesis, the topics that require additional study and I will contemplate the supplementary support they can give under the Finnish integration lens.

## 2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I provide an academic background that will be focusing on social cohesion and everyday life, and I explain and connect the theory of Kaufman to my study. This chapter forms the theoretical base for understanding the multifold everyday life and discovering if learning how to cycle can enhance them and support integration and social cohesion of the participants into the Finnish society. I present the concept of the three elements of Kaufman's motility theory -which found their base in sociology- building an interconnected theoretical framework which help to analyze the entity of my thesis. The theoretical framework could have been more comprehensive. For example, my study is based on multidisciplinary, and I considered the addition of other concepts such as gender and everyday peace into my work. However, I was concerned with the length of my study and with excessively multifaceted results; therefore, I decided not to incorporate these approaches into my framework. Nonetheless, I will occasionally benefit from these concepts to analyze some of the results of the study's data.

### 2.1. Social cohesion

Peacebuilding coined by Galtung in 1975 it's an evolving and on-going concept that shifted from the post IIWW top-down concept of peacekeeping and peacemaking to emphasize a bottom-up approach to remove the causes of war and offer alternative to it. Lederach (1995) refined the concept of peacebuilding in the 90s engaging NGOs and grassroots, local and international actors to achieve a sustainable peace process and consequentially the meaning of peace building.

In the last two decades, peacebuilding has also started to grant more importance to gender equality and young women's empowerment understanding that women have a fundamental role in securing the foundation of sustainable peace. In fact, they play a vital role in economic recovery and reconciliation, social cohesion and development and political legitimacy, security and governance (Security Council resolution 1325).

Social cohesion is very effective in ongoing situation of hostility, conflict, mistrust both or also those with developed in the past. Social cohesion is also an essential element for a democratic and peaceful country and should be integrated in national policies to cultivate a higher trust in the establishment and creating beneficial connection between and within different groups. There is no single accepted definition for the concept of social cohesion as it has differing significance, depending on context, culture, identity and social and political dynamics. However, it's agreed that it proclaims the complex *force/glue* that holds society together for peaceful coexisting and developing as pointed out by the definition of the World Bank and Search for Common Ground (SFCG). SFCG points out four characteristics that form this glue: 1) social relationships, 2) connectedness, 3) orientation towards the common good and 4) equality (SFCG, 2015).

Nonetheless, I find the following definition clear and helpful for my studies: “*Social cohesion is a method that has gained appreciation in everyday peace and can be defined “as the extent of trust in government and within society and the willingness to participate collectively toward a shared vision of sustainable peace and common development goals, ...(a) cohesive society is one where all groups have a sense of belonging, participation, recognition and legitimacy... Such societies are not necessarily demographically homogenous. Rather, by respecting diversity, they harness the potential residing in their societal diversity (in terms of ideas, opinions, skills, etc.)” (UNDP, 2020)*

Social cohesion is a prerequisite for sustainable development and peaceful societies creating and boosting common values and common destinies. A cohesive society prevents to promote hate and dissimilarities by enhancing a wide and multilayered cooperation, interaction and dialogue processes and channels, thus fortifying the resilience of the states and societies (UNDP, 2020). The different national players are working together to strengthen social cohesion and understands its purpose at the local level. It can serve with approaches and projects regarding “*mediation and dialogue, local governance, women and youth, and infrastructure for peace*” (UNDP, 2020).

Social cohesion is central of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) “*Peace, justice and strong institutions*” that aims to create and sustain more just, peaceful and inclusive societies and is also strongly linked with SDG 11 “*Sustainable cities and communities*” (especially 11.2, 11.3 and 11.9) where inclusivity, accessibility, resiliency and sustainability are the foundation for the cities of the future.

Social cohesion is adopted as an approach and process in countries divided by conflicts, but in my opinion is appropriate in migration and, consequentially, in integration related cases. Here the objective is a working and peaceful society where all societal stakeholders are working together with the same rights and responsibilities. Diversity and heterogeneity are seen as a potential and not only as a challenge or an expense. Inclusive social policies and protection for minorities, underprivileged groups, and historically marginalized segments of society strengthen social cohesion. Anti-social behavior and individual alienation, which can lead to violent extremism, are reduced by social cohesion and inclusion in economic, social, and civil political involvement. (UNDP, 2020)

The IoB project aims, on a national level, to increase the well-being, independence and motility and consecutively the integration and resilience of the women participating to the courses, which is a form of social cohesion. The project also emphasizes on equal citizenship, trust between citizens and among varied communities. The project aims to support the strengthening of sustainability and inclusivity in the Finnish cities and communities; cycling enhances new freedom of movement and opens new paths and possibilities in the Finnish society, thus working towards sustainable peace. The project has worked with big and small NGOs, churches, municipalities, associations and citizens. The goal has been to create an effective network of stakeholders able to offer courses to the participants and trainings to the volunteers to become coaches for the cycling courses.

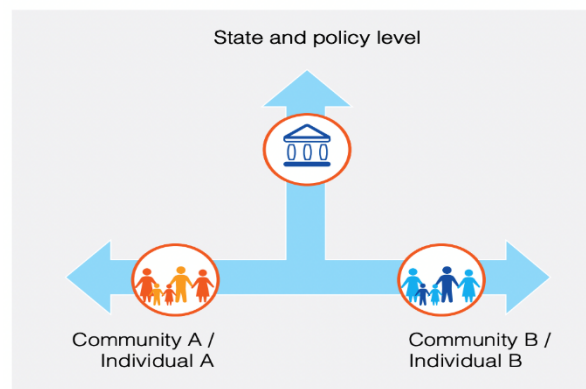
The project works in two directions; the first is towards the women, as explained before, and the second target are the people living in Finland. The project aims to raise their awareness, enabling new contacts and network relationship between different groups of society and it works directly towards Organisation for Economic



Co-operation and Development's (OECD) definition for social cohesion: "(aiming to) ...the well being of all members, minimizing disparities and trying to avoid marginalization within and between groups" (OECD, 2012).

UNICEF highlights the *quality of coexistence* between these various groups that should be established and can be "evaluated along the dimensions of mutual respect and trust, shared values and social participation, life satisfaction and happiness as well as structural equity and social justice." (UNICEF 2016)

In more details, it can be established that this is a project that was designed to support both strengthening horizontal cohesion and that of individual capacity building. Figure 1 below shows the relationship of horizontal, vertical cohesion and individual capacity building (UNICEF 2016).



**Figure 3: Social cohesion**

Horizontal cohesion means that it transforms relationship among communities at multiple levels, creating healthy social networks and connections based on a sense of belonging and joint future aiming at a cordial coexistence. It also reinforces the individual capacity as it empowers young people and, in part, marginalized women with capacity building (UNDP, 2020). There can be a further horizontal social cohesion estimation based on the sort of social capital, commonly referred as the accumulation of trust and desire to cooperate in a society.

Bonding, bridging and linking social capital are different aspects of horizontal cohesion. Bonding is with-in group type of social capital that builds trust and

commitment, bridging, differently, is a between group form in which social groups, social class, race, religion or other important sociodemographic or socioeconomic features create the possibility to “*bridge traditional lines of difference*” (Woolcock, 2001). Linking social capital is a concept used to describe links between people or institutions at various levels of the societal power hierarchy. The gap between bonding and bridging social capital has been conceptualized by some authors as different sorts of trust. Generalized trust (earned trust) might be thought of as bridging social capital, whereas attributed trust could be thought of as bonding social capital (Van Steveren et Korringa, 2007).

In my study the possibility to affect vertically thus strengthening sector governance and the related institution’s capacity are minimal and weren’t strategically even part of the IoB project but it will be briefly discussed in the conclusion chapter of this study.

## 2.2. Everyday life

Peace and Conflict Research have found in this new ‘post-liberal peacebuilding’ an approach that criticizes the focus to institutions that has dismissed “*community, local needs and everyday experience*” (Berents, 2015). Mac Ginty highlights that it focuses its emphasis on the everyday diplomacy and bottom-up activities that can “*move a society towards conflict transformation*” (Mac Ginty 2014). The need of increased locality in peacebuilding has strengthened the concept of the *everyday* and its implication as an approach toward liberal peace.

Everyday life was first interpreted through its opposite qualities. Salmi, a Finnish sociologist (2004,) explains with human life’s dichotomies (everyday and non-everyday life): work and family life or public and private life or working and leisure time, everyday life is a secular concept adopted from “*intellectuals to describe a non-intellectual relationship to the world*” (Janhonen-Abuquah, 2010). Jabri (2006) defines “*‘everyday’ and ‘the local’ as important spaces of war/peace politics, knowledge-production, and potential emancipation*”. Lately, the everyday has been

accepted to include an overall constructed view of human life itself, characterized by dimensions like time, space and mode (Janhonen-Abruquah, 2010).

Everyday life also has social dimensions, and it includes self-evident, mundane and ordinary concepts that resemble being everywhere but impossible to be found (Felski, 1999/2000) Felski defines it as: “*We are all ultimately anchored in the mundane. Everyone from the most famous to the humblest, eats, sleeps, yawns, defecates; no one escapes the reach of the quotidian. Everyday life in other words does not only describe the lives of ordinary people but recognizes that every life contains an element of the ordinary*” (Felski, 1999/2000). Salmi (2004) strengthens this stating that it comprehends the entity of one’s life and could be used as a critical tool against life’s fragmentation. Felski (1999/2000) also states that three elements are: time, space and modality but further suggests that the everyday life is not a static concept but rather a process.

Janhonen-Abruquah (2010) clarifies in her study Salmi’s own elucidation on everyday life. For Salmi and Felski it is an ongoing process in which the subject combines his/her personal life experiences into the everyday life structure. Salmi (2004) concludes her definition of everyday life to be a process where people shape the structures of everyday life as part of their personal life, thus having the structural level of the society interacting with the everyday practices of the subject experiences, thereby embedding continuity and change to her definition.

In this study, everyday life is the context where immigrant women operate and live. Their everyday life is formed by the people around them and the environment where they operate, act and through this process they change their everyday life. The space where mundane and habitual daily activities of the immigrant women transpire construct their active process of everyday life. Moving to another country and settling in demands variation and adjustments nevertheless the everyday life goes forward. In correspondence to migration and integration those changes are an interesting notion to be analyzed. They can provide new insights on the subject perceived personal process of integration and could present elements or areas in which these women require more support, along with actions or assistance that do not function as planned and demand to be revised.

It is also important to notice that many of the participant's everyday life "*exists and also continues in transnational families' home of origins as well as in their new home country*" (Janhunen-Abuquah, 2010). Transnational women (and men) have part of their family members scattered all over the world and this is also part of their everyday life, but in my study, I will be focusing more on the aspects of everyday life linked with their motility and those connected with arranging their lives in the Finnish society.

In this study I recognize 'everyday' as a multifaceted, dynamic and routinized space where knowledges, relationships, experiences, ideas and actions are reflected and combined. The newly learned skill of cycling is a new possibility for change and for rebuilding those routines that could enhance their everyday life and that constitute their everyday peace. Mac Ginty (2014) suggests that everyday peace is a "*form of peace establishment...can be used alongside other forms of peacebuilding, such a social cohesion*" and continues that by combining a person's hobby with the benefits of everyday peace could be of value.

With the 'everyday' lens, as stated by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) we can analyze the individual exploration of its social and structural space of the society and in my thesis, I will focus on those changes that the new learned skill of cycling brings in their lives and how they, consequentially, influence their everyday lives.

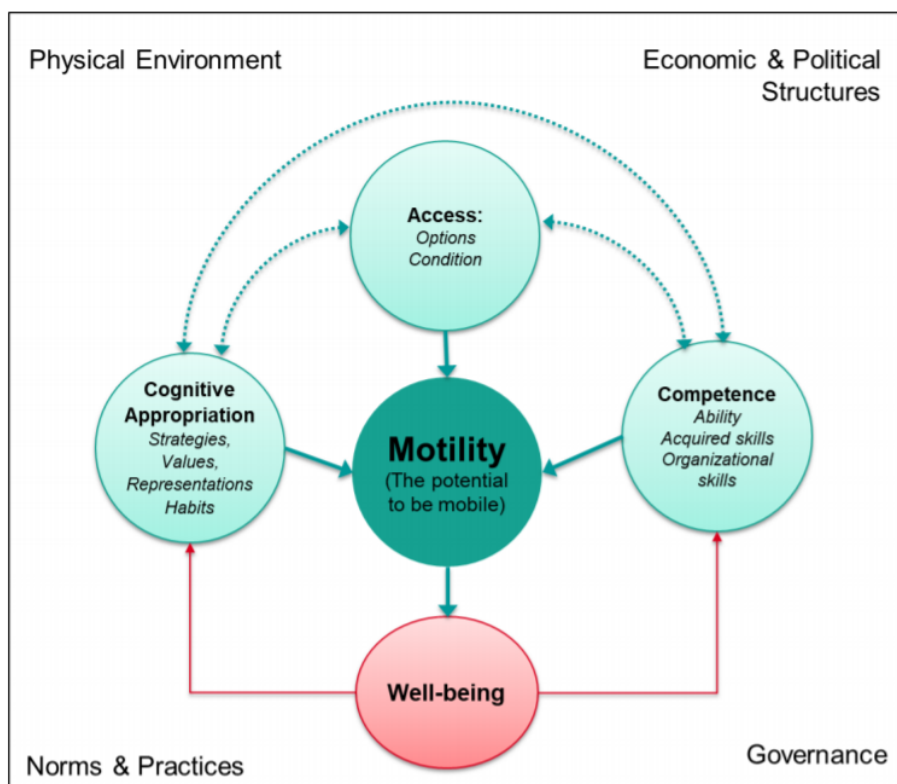
In my study, the biking courses and the skill of cycling are seen as one of these small actions in the everyday life of these women that have the power to disrupt the participant view of herself creating a new space where they can reshape the idea of their potential and their relationship with and within the Finnish society.

## 2.2 Kaufmann's motility

In modern society, spatial mobility is strongly interlinked with individual freedom and the possibility of adapting to spatial changes in relation to work or living conditions has begun to be essential and being capable of moving is a determinant factor for social integration (Flamm et Kaufmann, 2006).

In my study I analyze the mobility of the participants and in order to better describe the entity of mobility of a subject I use the concept of *motility* coined by Kaufmann (2004) with the purpose of describing the potential and actual capacity of these women to be mobile both geographically and socially.

Kaufmann's concept of motility is based on three elements, and they have influenced the formulation of the research questions and helped with the findings of the questionnaires. These three aspects are: the access rights, the competence for mobility, and the cognitive appropriation as seen in the Figure 4 below (Kaufmann, 2004).



**Figure 4: Kaufman's motility**

“Access” refers to reaching different means of transport and the *access rights* to them. With the increase of technological means of mobility, access right is not seen only as the private ownership of a vehicle, but individual and public means of transport (car and bike sharing) have broadened their options remarkably.

Access rights include the entity of those resources which are accessible to the individuals. Flamm and Kaufmann offer a list of these resources: private owned automobiles, reserved parking places, privately owned *light* vehicles (motorcycles, motor scooters, mopeds, bicycles, light electric vehicles etc.) membership of an individual public transport (companies renting different kinds of vehicles with very flexible conditions) and public transportation passes. These are the resources that form “*personal access rights’ portfolio*” (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2006).

“*Competence or skills*” refers to how a person can use the means. The main pillar of this aspect is “*acquired knowledge and organisational capacity in order to plan activities*” (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2006). “*Cognitive appropriation*” involves values, motives and behaviors that are in turn linked to gender roles, age, nationality, socio-economic status and regional differences. This is probably the most demanding aspect to perceive. People are generally constrained to base their mobility behavior on a simplified image of their reality, given the enormous range of choices supplied by transportation infrastructure and the built environment. Individuals, in particular, construct mental images of various modes of transportation, assessing the amount to which they are beneficial in their daily lives (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2006).

This cognitive process is very subjective, and as a result, it plays a role in determining an individual's mobility potential, or motility (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2006).

As stated previously the categories of analysis will be divided into three (auxiliary) themes:

- 1) Access
- 2) Cognitive appropriation
- 3) Competence

Through these auxiliary themes, the analysis scrutinizes how, and in which conditions the *motility* -theme is enabled, since the theme of motility is linked to well-being and integration in general. Flamm and Kaufmann (2006) define motility as “*how an individual or group takes possession of the realm of possibilities for mobility and builds on it to develop personal projects*”. They highlight that in contrast with the notion of

*accessibility*, where the core concept is the given possibility of a certain territory, motility focuses on the constructed modality of the individual relation with space.

Kaufman states that nowadays we overlook that in order to travel, people must possess special talents and *aptitudes* because traveling is such a common social occurrence. In his studies Kaufman elaborates five areas of skill for each travel's modality which are very suitable for our study: the driving know-how of a vehicle, spatial mastery, timing capacity, practical knowledge of that travel modality and self-control (Kaufman, 2006).

In our case study the know-how refers to the minimal experience required to operate with a bicycle, spatial mastery points out to the spatial knowledge of the itinerary combined with second sources of information needed for it (directions, maps). Timing capacity indicates assessing accurately the travel plan, especially when combining different modes of travel (for example commuting with a bike to the train station). Practical knowledge implies familiarity with the bicycle, to understand how it mechanically works, where it's possible to inflate the tyres and where it's safe to park it, etc. The skill of self-control refers to the ability to be operational under stress, to know how to act in frightening circumstances, to respond to bad behavior on the road and to focus on the cycling travel without external interference.

This list of skills needed to master various modes of transportation demonstrates that mastering a mode of transportation is first and foremost a matter of gaining experience, which necessitates a mid to long learning process. Nothing prevents a person with basic skills from appropriating a mode of transportation yet doing so frequently results in frustrating situations. To put it another way, mastering a mode of transportation requires regular use in a variety of scenarios and absorption of these experiences (Kaufman 2004).

By evaluating each theme by the emphasis presented according to the dataset, the results will be able to present a more elaborated picture of the complex phenomenon. In modern society motility has acquired an increasing importance and understanding in depth the role it plays in social integration can deliver new responses on how it

affects social differentiation and exclusion, also while discussing topics as migration and integration.

In this chapter, I have discussed everyday life and everyday peace and the concept of social cohesion. These three concepts with the addition of Kaufmann's three elements form the theoretical framework for analyzing the data gathered from my interviews and surveys. The concepts structured the analysis on finding connections between the newly learned skill of cycling, and participants' well-being, independence of movement and finally integration in Finland. Before presenting the methodology of my research, I will introduce the context of this case study.



## 3 Context

### 3.1 Immigrants on bikes -project

The “IoB ”-project started in February 2018 with the sponsorship of Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organizations (STEA) for the duration of three years. In the previous years, different organization and Finnish Cyclist Federation’s members had promote cycling courses in Helsinki, Tampere, Jyväskylä and municipalities close by to refugee centers especially after 2015, when Finland received ten time the typical amount of asylum seekers going from 3649 of 2014 to 32477 of the following year (Migri, 2021).

During these self-assessed cycling courses those in charge of the training noted that teaching to cycle was more complicated than what they previously assumed. There were linguistic and cultural barriers, pedagogical and technical challenges and unfortunately the results of the courses varied drastically, with many people not being able to learn to cycle by the end of the course. One of the cultural challenges is what Kalwitzky (1994) defines as the “*socialization of mobility*”, individuals develop representations, attitudes, and habits that determine their mobility behavior and relationships to various modes of transportation from a young age, through their interactions with others.

In addition, bad experiences and failure to master the skill of cycling during their childhood have strong repercussion into the behavior of adult. In the case where, in their country of origin, cycling was not allowed culturally, or it was not portrayed as a normal and convenient mode of transportation and that background was accompanied with negative personal experience that *individual motility capital* was impossible to obtain (Kaufman 2006) and after years working in the field, I can state that it also slows down the learning process.

In 2015 in Finland, for many asylum seekers a bike would have been the only tool available to leave momentarily the distant refugee center to get acquainted with the

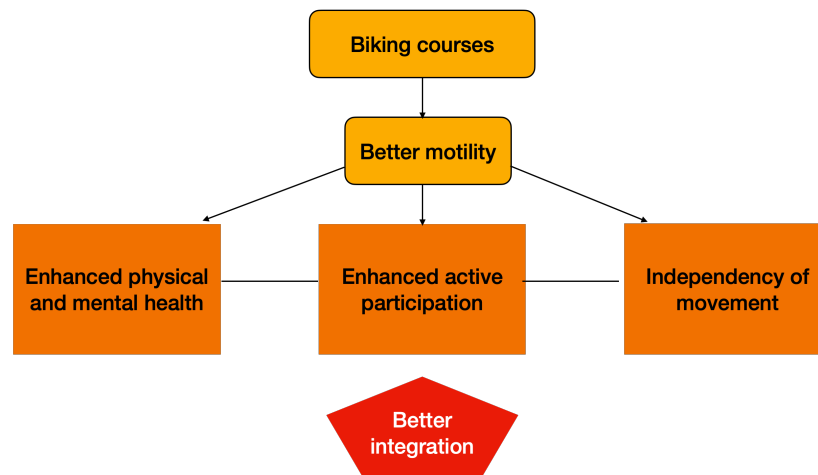
nearest city or municipality as bus or taxi fares were excessive for their economic situation. The bike was also an exercising tool and cycling created a possibility for the asylum seekers to have a moment to themselves from the crowded refugee centers.

The challenges of these cycling courses clarified the need for a different approach, focusing on methodologies that would work with adult immigrant people and creating a concept that could be taught without the use of a common language.

In addition to an effective and easily understandable course, the project also needed trainees, aka coaches, and a wide cooperation with those entities that already worked with the target group of the project: immigrant women that could not cycle.

During these four years of the IoB -project, the Finnish Cyclists Federation organized various courses. The most demanded ones were the beginner courses in which the participants had no previous experience. After the second year of the project, the feedback of the participants underlined the requirement for an advanced course, as some of the women felt intimidated and insured to cycle in urban surroundings. In this course we taught them the most important traffic's rules, how and where to cycle and we reinforced their skills cycling together in small groups around the city, thus lowering the threshold to utilize the bike in their everyday lives. Additionally, the IoB -project organized some maintenance courses, teaching the basics on how to adjust the bike in order to have a working and safe bicycle. At the end of these courses the fixed bikes were donated to the participants, thus enabling them to cycle even if they could not afford to purchase one.

The target of the project can be simplified in the following diagram (figure 5 below)



**Figure 5: Cycling impacting integration**

At the end of these cycling courses a feedback form was given to the participants and according to their self-assessment (n=202) almost 90% of the participants learned to cycle in a good or very good degree. To this day (1.3.2022), the initiative has counted 130 courses, trained more than 900 new cyclists and over 110 coaches were formed with a total of 15 Finnish cities having participated in the project.

To maximize the number of participants to the study I decided to perform the initial interviews in those cities where the IoB -project had the best cooperation. I was aware that finding women keen to participate in qualitative research, being interviewed in a non-native language by an unknown male could have brought difficulties, therefore I contacted those familiar NGOs -with whom I already had worked- relying on the trust that I had with them, and they had with their customers.

I explained the core concepts of my study to the coordinators of the groups of those organizations and they passed the information to their group members that decided to participate in the cycling course. Before starting the course, I explained to the participants the main factors, phases and aim of my study and afterward I asked for volunteers that would have want to participate to the investigation. I believe that former notion of my investigation combined with my short presentation helped create enough trust between each other and I had the possibility to proceed with the first interviews.

### 3.2. Researcher position

I have been the Program Manager of loB-project since 2018. This has given me the possibility not to only create and roll out the entity of the project but also the opportunity to train hundreds of women in dozens of courses, all around Finland, gathering firsthand experiences and data regarding the meaning of cycling for immigrant women.

During the courses I would listen to the women's discussions, and I would follow their emotional process that went concomitantly with their learning one. Generally, before the courses they were polite, excited and frightened, during the learning process doubt and frustration would prevail, while at the end of the course joy, pride and openness were the prevalent emotions detectable within the participants.

The first times I was acting as a coach I remembered to be baffled by the emotional process the women sustained, and I also noted a great difference in these women's approach to me and other males coaches compared to female one. Generally, they were cautious and restrained. However, the polite, shy and distant relation changed in a very friendly and open relationship toward the end of the course. Starting the course, women usually would not shake my or other male coaches' hand and some would prefer not to look directly into my eyes, which I felt to be natural having worked for almost a decade with immigration and integration related projects in Finland. Nonetheless, it seems that sharing this intensive (emotional) course connected the coach and the learner, reshaped the behavior and the approach of the women towards their teacher, creating an enhanced, open and trustworthy relationship.

In these moments of fulfillment these women would hug their teacher, take selfies and even share their contact's info. Once I listened a woman asserting to her male coach *"I will never forget you, you taught something I thought I would never master, you make me cycle"*. In the same occasions I would regularly listen to how these women would plan out loud what would be the next skill to master *"If I did this, I probably could learn to swim, to drive a car and even to speak Finnish"*.

Their cognitive process was unanticipated and that was the main reason why I decided to proceed to research this topic. I regarded cycling to be a convenient and practical skill, but their spontaneous reactions followed by their logical reasoning

after succeeding to initially master cycling, made me understand that there could be interesting aspects to be analyzed.

Throughout the IoB project, I have analyzed my personal position in relation to the women participating at our courses and to the topic of the study. I have discussed my position and role and ethical concerns together with my superintendent, some of my colleagues, with my thesis supervisor and with some of my peers in the thesis seminar.

Choosing to research my own project gave me the opportunity to understand the topic and its details in a better, wider and more complexed manner that would have been impossible if I would have researched a more random subject without previous knowledge and participation. As a researcher, I recognize that my reality is formed by pre-accepted analytical constructions and working in this project already pointed out various aspects that I decided, later, to further investigate and consequentially affected the approaches I have chosen for this study.

Sami (2004) suggests that the researcher, should define his/her connection with the research and through the self-evidence of everyday life, the researcher should focus on those aspects of the everyday life that diverge from his/her own.

Through my working position it was almost mandatory to analyze the project to grasp the outcomes of the project and through my studies and passion for the concept of everyday peace I was interested to understand how the learnt cycling skill could support the everyday lives and futures of these women.

In this investigation, being the researcher and the head of the project, I used both an active and participatory approach. The active approach is defined by my participation in the project activities while running, observing and examining it. The participatory approach aims to create social or individual change which is the goal of the IoB-project (Reinharz, 1992).

Being a researcher, I tried to only observe and listen to the participants, taking an objective and almost invisible role, however being also the manager to whom all other trainers would turn to and expected to make the final decisions, my study have

had merely an active approach. Nonetheless, in the following chapters, I will also add some of the observations that I had, during these years of trainings, to create a wider frame to contextualize the responses of the interviews and those of the surveys.

The data collection is explained in length in the following chapter.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1 Target group

The target group of my study are immigrant women that live in Finland that do not know how to cycle. Since the start of the “IoB” -projects more than 900 people have participated in the beginner courses all around Finland (1.3.2022) and I reached my target group through the stakeholders of the “IoB -project”. I wanted to interview the participants before they started the course. Participation was completely voluntary. I had previously informed the stakeholders about the thesis and its subject, giving them the possibility to explain it to the course participants before the course and then those interested could freely decide whether they wanted to participate. However, I didn't know beforehand who would participate in the interviews or their age, motor or linguistic skills.

The participants are living in Tampere, Oulu, Helsinki and Kerava and their ages are between 18 to 65 years old, and they were born in the Middle East, Central America, Africa and Europe.

### 4.2 Data and data collection

The rounds of interviews were planned for April-June 2020 in different cities of Finland, but the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled all the cycling courses from March until the end of May 2020.

In this study 13 women (see chapter 4.4) were interviewed before they participated in the cycling course. However, two of them could not finish the basic course, for different reasons, therefore I had to eliminate them from my study and two women did not answer to the survey. Therefore, the study will be based on the responses of the nine remaining women who participated in the second session through a questionnaire. Some of them participated just in the beginner course while others also participated in the advanced course. I contacted them in 3 to 6 months' time to see if and how the new skill has impacted their lives.

I have taken several steps in the data collection report. Firstly, I designed open-ended questions that help to generate data, and set an objective for information collection. Secondly, I prepared a reliable survey instrument online in order to make the survey as accessible for participants as possible. Finally, the questions were standardized, and the language was kept simple in order to make the questions easily comprehensible. Here, additional effort was made to properly format and word my questions so they would serve the research purpose (Floyd, 1992). Here, the participants were exposed to the same clear questions, and thus, as Bourke et al. argue, allowed the researcher to better reflect the differences in the answers of the respondents. (Bourke et al., 2016).

The second part of the data gathering was, for geographical reasons and cost effectiveness, carried out through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent 3-6 months after the women had participated in the course, thus giving the participants the possibility to incorporate the new learnt skill into their everyday life. The survey was planned on the same Google form platform, which was filled by the participant. The form was available in two languages (Finnish and English).

The order of the questions was designed to start from the easiest and the shortest to answer, while progressing towards wider questions – and longer answers. This decision was made in order to involve persons with the questionnaire, and hopefully help the interviewees to commit to proceeding with the questionnaire and to ultimately answer the following (also more significant) set of questions.

There were also challenges regarding the data, because of the language barrier. The participants were not all fluent in Finnish or English and they might have experienced discomfort in expressing themselves especially when having to do it by themselves replying to the form on the computer. This, in turn, might have affected their answers to my questions, which is something I will keep in mind when analyzing the gathered data.

However, a couple of participants informed me during the first interview that filling a questionnaire on a computer in a no-native language would not make them feel comfortable and would be time consuming and unpleasant. We decided that I would



interview those participants by phone, decreasing the risk of them falling out from my research group, which sadly did not work out as planned.

#### 4.3 Method of analysis

I used content analysis to analyze the data and evaluate the existence of specific words, topics, or concepts in the study's qualitative data. This analysis create the possibility to draw conclusions about the texts' themes, the audience, and even the culture and time period in which the text was written.

The data for my study was acquired first through an interview and the follow-up by a survey. The interview and the questionnaire were methodologically studied with the help of Kaufmann's three elements, access, competence and cognitive appropriation (Kaufmann 2015), to create units of analysis and classifications for processing the interviews.

Theoretical concepts are in dialogue with the data, and the processing of the results is done by abduction (Tuomi, Sarajärvi 2003, 95-97), the data from the interviews and questionnaires was used to make observations with the help of the theory, and the validity of the theory was tested with the data (Asvoll, 2014).

The methods used are based on a phenomenographic approach (Metsämuuronen 2006), in which phenomena and events are linked to explanatory contexts and the interviewees' experiences and different conceptions illuminate the phenomenon being studied, the motility connected to everyday life of these immigrant women.

#### 4.4 First part of data gathering: interview

The interviews were held in English, Spanish, and Finnish, and I did not use an interpreter's assistance. It must be stated that the linguistic skills of the participants varied a lot, from basic to fluent, which in part could have influenced the substance, the length and quality of their responses.

Before analyzing the interviews, I will explain the structure behind them. Working for more than three years in this field before rolling out the research, I knew that the interview could be uneasy and hard for some participants. As explained before, I was

aware that there would be a linguistic *interference* during the process and a cultural one. I also had experienced some gender-related challenges while coaching and consequently planned the interviewee's environment to be neutral, natural and near other people.

In many courses that I had previously held, I had noticed that in the beginning, there was a certain discomfort when the course's attendees understood that there were also male coaches as part of their teaching team. This varied with age, provenance, religion, time spent already in Finland of the participant, and it was not a homogeneous reaction. However, it was a relatively consistent attitude by many participants, and therefore it needed to be taken into consideration when approaching the new course attendees also on this research purpose.

I had to make sure that the questions would be easily understandable, that the interview would take place in a public area where other people would be close by. I aimed to create a calm and pleasant atmosphere to assure that they would respond to my questions, feel safe, and attend both parts of the study. As stated before, the first questions were set to be more straightforward and quantitative to lead to a comfortable and smooth experience and create a safe space where the interviewed would feel relaxed and could respond to the other questions. I also tested a first version of the questions with two women with basic Finnish and English skills and I had to rewrite two questions as they did not completely understand their meaning.

The questions presented in the interview were designed to reflect the main research question stated previously in chapter 1. This is conducted by a multiple set of questions; the first part (introduction, questions 1-5) was designed to introduce the topic and collect the necessary information (name, email, phone number) of the participant to facilitate the second interview/survey of the study.

In the second part, the participants evaluated their motility, the time needed to move around to do their tasks and their *independence*.

In the last part, they explained what they thought would help them improve their daily lives and consequently their integration into Finnish society.

The second part of the first interview was related to evaluating their cycling skills and how long they have been living in Finland (questions 6-8). In this part, I also collected data related to the course's type, the location of the course, and the cycling skills of the participants before the course. This data (partially quantitative) will help me analyze whether there is a correlation between the entity providing the course (different local coaches) and the impact that the subjects have had from cycling. E.g., for how many days did the person in question participate in the course and if she was able to learn cycling. This will also help to indicate if there happened to be less efficient teaching done in some individual courses that would bias the bigger picture of the whole scale analysis.

Question 9 was designed to learn the length of time spent by the participants in Finland to analyze, with the second questionnaire, the possible correlation between cycling in their daily lives with the time spent in the new home country.

The fourth set of questions (10-14) was designed to be the substance questions on motility. These questions were constructed to be open questions, allow enough space for answers, and learn about the participants' daily lives and their motility customs. Questions included and combined topics of the social realm, spatial dimensions and life-span developmental-related topics. Subtopics cover themes related to such matters as significant personal connections, individual identity narrative, integration, and general everyday life-related matters in the participant's individual experience realm. These questions were intentionally more open for variation. This method gives more space and a sense of safety to the participants. They may answer about their habits with minimal guidance or narrowing down, thus lessening the risk of their answers being manipulated. This was meant to offer a fruitful pool of answers for the following qualitative analysis of the gathered material.

The final part (15-16) was studied to understand better their expectations and their current feelings regarding living in Finland and their integration. Question number 15 was probably the most important to understand the participants' expectations toward the cycling skill and how it could influence their lives. Before starting this process, as a researcher, I was also fascinated to observe, if the new learnt skill could also impact their daily lives in ways they did not foresee in their interviews.

With the last question of the interview, I wanted to give the possibility to the interviewees to decide which would be the best way for them to participate in the second phase of my study. Four participants replied that they would have preferred to be interviewed again by phone rather than compiling the internet questionnaire in Finnish or English.

To have a broader picture for this study on immigrant women living in Finland, I have also included those four women who did not continue with the follow-up session. Adding their responses to our data can deliver a more exhaustive background about their daily lives, habits, how they commute, and their expectations regarding cycling.

13 women participated to the first interview (figure 5 below).

First name and surname	Age	Your language skills	Which course will you participate in? When and where?	How long have you been living in Finland?
Nazira	50-65	Finnish; Arabic; Other	Tampere, 9-11.6.	10 years or more
Monsef	50-65	Finnish; Dari; Persian; Other	Tampere, 9.-11.6.2020	10 years or more
Raedh	50-65	Finnish; Arabic	Tampere, 9.-11.6.2020	10 years or more
Elvira	10-17	Finnish; Russian; Other	Tampere, 9.-11.6.2020	Less than 1 year
Fatima	30-49	Finnish; English; Arabic; Other	Kerava 15.-16.6.	6 to 9 years
Dafne	30-49	Suomi/ Finnish;Englanti/ English;Espanja/ Spanish	Helsinki, 16.-17.6.	1 to 3 years
Tuba	18-29	Englanti/ English	Helsinki, August	Less than 1 year
Haymanot	18-29	Suomi/ Finnish;Englanti/ English;Muu / Other	Kotka, 4.-5.8.2020	6 to 9 years

Melanie	30-49	Suomi/ Finnish;Englanti/ English;Espanja/ Spanish	Helsinki 12.-13.8.	10 years or more
Leah	30-49	Finnish; Englanti/ English	Helsinki 12.-13.8.2020	10 years or more
Genet	30-49	English	Helsinki	6 to 9 years
Nina	50-65	Finnish; English; Russian	Helsinki	10 years or more
Tessy	30-49	English	Biking course, in Oulu.	1 to 3 years

**Figure 6: Information of the women that took part at the first interview**

#### 4.5 Second part of data gathering: questionnaire

The second part of the data gathering started in October and finished in November 2020. As explained before, I had to eliminate in total four participants (Raedeh, Haymanot, Monsef and Nazira) and thus the following analyses are based on the responses and interviews of nine women.

The idea, in the beginning, was for the participants to reply by themselves in their own time to my questions. However, while interviewing them for the first time, I noticed that two of them did not master the technical capacity to do it independently and together, we conveyed that I would have called them and interviewed them. Nonetheless Monsef and Nazire decided not to continue with the second part of the survey.

I had also to exclude Haymonot and Raedh because, for different reasons, they did not complete the basic course hence they were not eligible for the study. I will explain in length these four participants decisions and their unsuitability in the following Ethic subchapter.

The survey was divided in three sections: the first was intended to understand which courses they participated in, if their expectations were met and what were their current cycling skills, their accessibility status and the weekly use of the bike. In this section the participants also expressed their motilities and exercise customs.

The second part was set to disclose the impact of cycling in their everyday life in their movement and through a social lens. The last three questions were set to understand a wider point of view of cycling regarding job hunting and if they would recommend to their family and friends and finally, I asked them to point out one thing that would improve their lives in Finland.

Analyzing the survey, the first data available is the amount of training days the nice women completed. Almost half of the women (4) participated only in the beginner course. In contrast, the rest participated at least to three days of our training with three women counting five, thus having more time to improve their skill. Kaufman logically states that to master a transportation mode repetition is the key, experience must be accumulated, because with a basic level the experience could still be frustrating (Kaufman 2006). He explains that the skill itself may not be sufficient, but they need to “acquire a wide experience of driving” and investigations have pointed out that for new car drivers it requires more than 3000 km to achieve a minimal understanding of that skill (Pervanchon, 1999).

The subject relation to the motility experience can have decisive turnout. The individual capacity to increase a certain mode of travel requires learning of past experiences “through a process of conceptualization and memorization” (Kaufman 2006). The act of cycling involves cognitive and psychomotor activity that are not simply to combine in short period of time, particularly if the subject has not practiced any sports in the past and her main physical activity resides in walking and performing housework. A positive experience improves the personal aptitudes toward the new mode of transportation while a negative one will create a process where the outcome would be lack of experimentation and discarding of that option.

The findings of the survey will be discussed in length in chapter 5.

## 4.6 Ethics

For my study, I have used the ethical guidelines provided by the Finnish National board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2019). Participation in the questionnaire was fully voluntary, and the participants have had the right to either comply or to refuse to take part in the research project.

Participants were informed how the data they provided would be processed and that their personal information would not be used in the study. The open-ended questions in the questionnaire make it convenient for the participants to only provide the amount of information they felt comfortable providing, as the questions are planned not to force the participants to give certain kinds of answers.

Participants could also withdraw from taking part in the study at any time, before, during or after answering the questionnaire, without any negative consequences. In fact, 4 women did not partake, for different reasons, to the second part of data gathering and only their first interviews were added to this study. For Haymanot was a unanimous decision being she 5<sup>th</sup> month pregnant. I was not aware of the pregnancy while interviewing her, but after only 10 minutes a coach told me that she found her to be very tired and while talking to Haymanot she told about the pregnancy. I talked with her, and we decide that it would be safer if she would join the course again after the childbirth. Falling during the first day of the beginner course has been quite common, hence we approached conservatively to the issue and decided to postpone her course.

Raadh had to stop her course during the first lesson due to family crisis and she didn't participate in the following days of training making her incompatible with the objective of the study.

For Monsef and Nazira, I believe, that the language skill, the older age and the lower it-skills combined interfered with the participation in the survey. I suppose that this technical challenge and the linguistic barrier, they only spoke basic Finnish, impacted negatively in their participation. We had established together that the follow-up would be carried out as phone interview call, but ultimately, they decided not to continue. These women were also the older (50-65 years old) participants and had presumably lower IT-skills. Probably for them, to participate in a language, which was not their mother tongue in a stressful digital environment made them choose not to continue.

In addition to the mentioned features that might have negatively impacted their participation to the follow-up, there could be also reasons that their background nor their interviews could clarify, and it could be found in the provided course itself. In fact, the Tampere course had some operational challenges. The leadership of the course was given to our stakeholder, the new venue for the course was not previously tested and unfortunately did not have all the necessary requirements (the training space was not wide nor long enough) and in top of that more than half of the trainers had not had previous experience coaching. All these aspects could have impact negatively their learning process.

The language aspect has in part influenced the results of my thesis. I conducted the interviews in Finnish, English and Spanish but only two participants had the possibility to respond in their mother tongue. Most of the women could respond to my questions in clear and understandable manner but with two women the conversation in both Finnish and English was very basic, and it might have affected their understanding of certain contextual meaning or concept and possibly with the entity of their response.

I decided that the best procedure to ensure neutrality was for me to know nothing about the interviewed, and for that reason I could not rely on the help of any interpreters in the first interview. To have had a previous interview with the women could have affected their responses and could have also affected my decision whether to accept the interviewed in my investigation if I would have had linguistic challenges or other problematics. I aimed to openness, transparency, and *invisibility*. My role as both researcher and manager gave me a privileged status and that of power, thus not having any possibility in choosing to whom gather the data nor knowing their background stripped me of that possibility to influence it.

The interview data was filled out with personal information in order to be in contact later with the participants for the second session of the study. The questionnaire was designed on the Google form platform with no one else but me being able to access the data, thus the data was secured. The following questionnaire was designed on the same platform and the participants' personal data was anonymized from the thesis (4.4. and appendices) as promised to the women participating in the study.



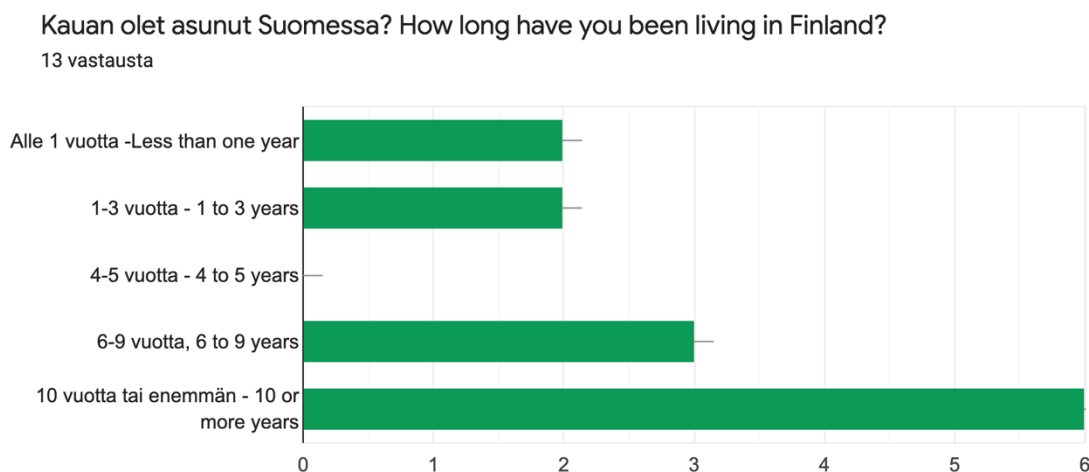
In the following chapter I will present the findings of my study and discuss them in reflection of the concepts explained in chapter 2.

## 5. Findings and discussion

In this chapter, I analyze the data provided from of the interviews, the results of the survey, and compare the women's expectations based on their first interviews and I discuss the findings that emerged from the data.

Starting the interview, I asked the participants to define their cycling skills. 70% said that they did not know at all how to bike, 23% stated that they had tried before (mostly when they were kids) but could not ride a bike, and Tuba stated that she knew "*a little bit about it,*" but still she could not cycle and was not using a bicycle. Basing on the Kaufman concept of motility all these women were missing the skill to use this option in their everyday life.

The women that participated in the survey were between 16 to 65 years old, with most of them, 77%, allocated in the 30-49 years old category. They self-evaluated Finnish (10) or English (9) knowledge to be at least basic. English was the native language for one participant, while for the other Finnish or English were the second or third most spoken language. About 70% of the participants had lived in Finland for six years, while 30% had less than three years (figure 6 below)



**Figure 7: How many years have you lived in Finland?**

In general, the older the participants were the more time they spent at home, but it seemed that all of them left home for internship, work, groceries or school-related issues and thus for the *mandatory* aspects of life. Six of them were studying either in school, Finnish language courses or at the universities, couple of them were performing rehabilitative work in the same NGO, only one woman specifically stated that at the moment of the interview she was unemployed. Dafne, Tessy and Melanie were the only three that concurrently worked and studied, and eight women explained that part of their everyday life consisted in taking care of their children and five highlighted also the household chores.

Most of the participants walked to commute and used public transportation for longer trips or were dependent on their husbands' or siblings' car rides. The basic purpose of any mode of transportation, by definition, is to transport people and objects from one location in space to another. Walking was mentioned by everyone as the normal type of commuting from one place to another. It was also interesting to note that only one participant had a driver's license, even if many of the participants had a car in their household. In general, transportation modes can be thought of as instrumental resources that people use to move in order to fulfill wants or duties (Kaufman 2006). This description raises an important question: what criteria are people likely to use when evaluating a mode of transportation to meet their daily life organization needs, taking into consideration their overall lifestyle? I will return to this point in the following chapter while discussing the findings of this study.

For commuting, the women spent a daily average (walking, public transportation, car ride) of 2 hours, with 77% of them commuting between zero and two hours a day (look figure 7 below).

Monta tuntia keskimäärin päivässä käytät liikkumiseen (auto, kävely, julkinen liikenne jne.) -  
 Normally how many hours do you move during your day? (car, walk, public transportation, etc.)  
 13 vastausta

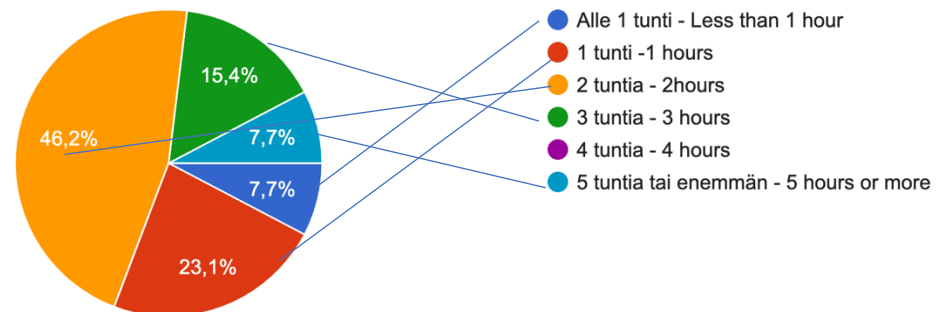


Figure 8 Normally, how many hours do you move during the day?

When asked for more information about their movements' social aspect, the participants stated that they would walk mainly by themselves or less frequently with some members of the family (mom, sibling or spouse) and only sporadically with friends. Elvira explained that *"I move by myself or with my mom, generally I sit in the afternoon at home by myself"* and when connected with her other response *"I go to school, in the afternoon I sit at home and I go with my mom at the shop"* sharing her daily routine, it's clear that her network is small, and she has not yet adapted to her new surrounding and society. Part of her loneliness and *social disconnection* might depend on the fact that Elvira was the youngest participants, 17 years old, and she had moved to Finland less than a year before the first interview.

Returning to the modes of commuting, walking was seen as the most economical and easy way to move from one place to another, even if it was slow and time-consuming. The most essential and fascinating aspect of the first interview, for me, was to discover their ideas and expectations on how the cycling skill they were meant to gain would impact their everyday life. Fatima replied that *"(learning to cycle) would help a lot, a could move faster, going with the bike to school and even in the forest. If I learned how to bike in the winter, I would have more time because it would shorten the time I would use by walking. I would have more time to study to do my part of work in the house and more time for myself. We do not have enough money for another car, and the one*

*car we owned is my husband's.*" Leah also stated that the commodity in cycling derive from saving time and not needing to rely on public transportation's schedules.

Melanie underlined another aspect *"I always wanted to learn, everybody at the workplace has been wondering about my lack, they even tried to help me learn it: my husband, my father, some friends, but I've never learned. If I could really learn it, I could move freely and be part of a certain group of people and things that would include the biking skill. For example, my husband cycles a lot, and he is annoyed that we cannot share his passion. In addition, it is especially important for me because I feel that this has limited my life"*. Her response emphasizes a concept that is repeatedly present in my data. Learning to cycle would be essential for the logical motives of the enhancement of their motility's portfolio but it also carry a meaningful value for the self-esteem of the subject and how she perceives herself in comparison with her surrounding and the society she lives in.

This sensation of failure and limitation was also present in other participants' answers, Nazira stated that: *"It would help my life, my self-esteem as I often have tried but failed"*. Many women felt that not knowing how to cycle or not learning that skill affected them negatively because they could not participate in activities where biking was included, but mostly because they were experiencing personal inferiority and a shortcoming. In fact, Genet explained that *"I was ashamed not knowing to bike, as my seven years old knows and asks me why I do not. I could go biking with him. biking with my friend, giving me more ways of moving, it would be a big change for me"*. She was not feeling embarrassed only for the incapacity to cycle but also because she could not share certain moments in her daily life with her kid. She could not fully sustain the role of the mother -teaching her kid- and she was also cut out when the child wanted to cycle.

I could repeatedly observe this sense of shortcoming while teaching hundreds of women during the biking courses and how this changed when they finally were independently pedaling. The self-esteem was influenced positively by this success. After the course, I often listened to their similar conversations on how they would joyously and loudly set their future achievements *"If I could do this, then I can learn how to swim, how to drive a car..."*.

These women were also hoping to learn how to cycle for economic, independence and health reasons. Two of them underlined that they would *"not need to pay a monthly fee to the local public transportation"* with this skill. Many women highlighted the *"freedom"* that cycling could bring to their everyday life not needing to be dependent on other factors to move around the city. Raedeh said that she was also keen to learn because she wanted to practice more sport and lose weight. Another participant also added that cycling *"would be the safest way to commute and she could finally avoid public transportation and thus a possible COVID-19 contagion"*.

In the second question of the survey, the women were asked to describe the cycling course in their own words, their expectations and if they were met. Reasonably all the participants stated that they wanted to learn to cycle. In four responses, the aspect of fear and the awe to have learnt the new skill were present, underlining once more the anxiety and the expectation to fail that they were experiencing beforehand. 30% of the participants highlighted their happiness in learning, and Melanie annexed that she was glad that *"Every instructor was kind and helpful but nonetheless pushed in order for me to take the next step, that encouragement worked."*

This is also another aspect that I frequently observed in the courses. The fear of the speed, of falling and of failing could decelerate or stop the learning process of the student completely, and the words of encouragement and the emotional support of the coaches made the participants believe in themselves and take the extra step to surpass their comfort zone and proceed with their practice. This can be seen as a metaphor of how, generally, integration process should work. People that have recently moved in a new country are trying to learn, cope and update their knowledge to function in their new societies. Often the process can be overwhelming and without a proper *push* or the right support these efforts devolve into stagnation and into failure. Creating a safe space where the subject could *borrow an external confidence*, where assistance is found closely could support their endeavors and could change the outcome of the entire process.

In the cases related to the cycling courses, the coaches held the key to reshape the past negative experience of these women. Through their emotional support they shift the sense of failure, of some women, and collocated their experience into the normal learning process. The coaches created the safe space were not being able to master

the skill at once was not seen a failure, but indeed was reshaped as an important part of mastering the cycling skill.

In the following question, I inquired about their feelings before and during the 3-hours course. None of them felt neutral referring to it. In fact, all the women replied that they were either afraid or excited to participate in the course, as we can see from Melanie's answer: *"I was afraid before starting the course, but I decided to learn this time, so I really push myself in order to do it. I am happy to have been able to experience this specific happiness one feels when riding a bike"*. Melanie added *"It was an exciting and thrilling experience. I feel at the top of the world and very independent after learning biking"*.

The initial stress and fright were muted into joy and a feeling of independence, achieving to pedal for the first time by themselves. The sense of success after pushing oneself over the limit creates a euphoric state of mind, and for a moment, life seems to be more accessible and feasible. Nina adds also that *"I thought I would never learn (to cycle). In the end, it was easier, and I was unnecessarily afraid"*. She realizes that her negative emotions reshaped the entity of the task, that fear acted in her disadvantage about facing the challenge she easily overcame it. This is a valuable lesson that could help in her everyday life. In fact, Mac Ginty underlines the importance of the capability of a subject to endure stressful and uncertain situations in their daily life and Romashov focuses on the active side of the individual to making choices and taking actions, both providing a healthier, functional and meaningful everyday life of the individual.

Self-control and learning not to panic are also one of the five general skills of mode of travel (Kaufman, 2006) and this category surfaced repeatedly in the survey. Fear combined with controlling one's sensation of failure were visible while learning to cycle, especially in the first day and if the women participated to the basic course. The same reactions were detectable when they, for the first time, started to cycle in urban surroundings where other people were also commuting. Le Breton adds that if a skill is taken for granted, as cycling is for the Finnish people, the subject trying to learn it might not understand the general knowledge and skills needed to master this way of movement, thus contributing to the immobility of immigrant people (Le Breton, 2002).

Continuing with the survey, I asked them to evaluate their current biking skill, with 79% responding “very good” or “good” and the remaining 21% “fairly well”. Thereafter I inquired if they had purchased a bike after the course to comprehend if there would be a correlation between the two factors. Seven of them owned a bike, and only two did not have one. In fact, these two women, Fatima and Elvira, responded that they either had a fair or good biking skill which was under the average of the other participants. In addition, Fatima and Elvira had both only participated at the beginner course, making their days of training (2) lower than the average.

Through the basic course, the participants learned the basic skill of cycling, but mastering the skill comes from practicing it by themselves or where possible (Helsinki and Oulu) participating in the advanced cycling course and the cycling trip that was organized after participating at the basic and advance courses. More days of trainings enhanced a better skill and consequentially the will to exercise with it. Daily access to a bike created a better cognitive appropriation, helped with repetitions and the development of their technique, which strengthened their skill and made it effortless to start using it as a feasible option in their *motility's portfolio*.

Notwithstanding the limited amount of the sample of the thesis, the data support the idea that if longer courses are not available in a certain locality, a higher appropriation of the skill occur with daily accessibility that often comes with the ownership of a bicycle. A new skill needs to be improved and practiced. According to the data fear was the common emotion most of the women had in relation with cycling, therefore lack of perseveration and exercising would again rise the threshold of cycling.

Four women stated that in October-November, when the second part of the survey was rolled out, that they were cycling 2 to 5 times a week while the rest of the participants said that they were not cycling at all. To better understand the significance of this results, as most of the women participating at the investigation lived in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, I compare it to the report provided from the city of Helsinki in 2021. The pie chart shows how many people of Helsinki cycles and how often. I use this chart to parallels my study results to the people living in Helsinki.



## Helsingissä pyöräillään paljon

Yli puolet helsinkiläisistä pyöräilee viikottain

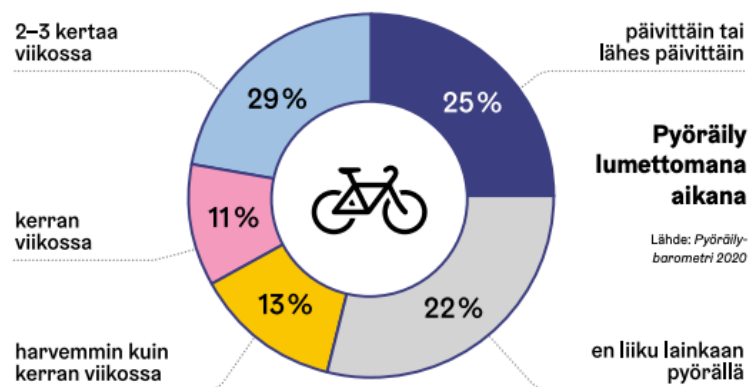


Figure 9: People cycling in Helsinki (period without snow), (Pyöräilykatsaus, 2021)

People living in Helsinki are quite active cyclists, even in Finnish standards, in fact, around 65% of them cycle at least once a week when there is no snow on the street.

Unfortunately, it is not clear if the results of the question of the survey were due to the cooling of the weather and the start of the rains, or in fact, they did not use the bike as a daily mode of transportation. For a correlation, the figure below shows on average on how the number of Helsinki's cyclists is divided during the year (2019-2020). We can see that even more seasoned cyclists tend to drastically reduce their commuting on two wheels starting by October (loka) and having the lowest number of rides from November (marras) to March (maalis).

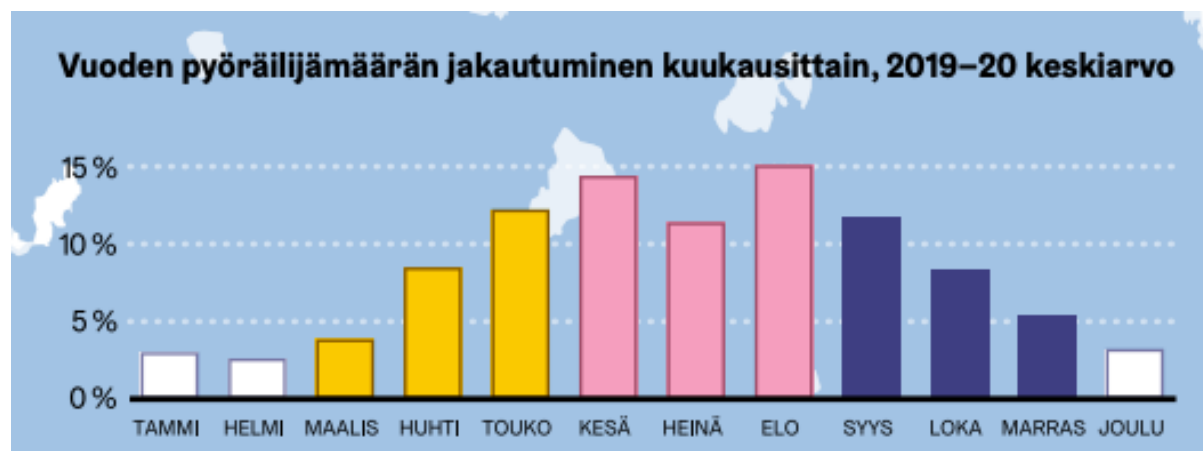


Figure 10: Number of cyclists divided by months, year 2019-2020 (average), (Pyöräilykatsaus, 2021)

Using both figures we could claim that 2/3 of people living in Helsinki cycle at least once a week, but the number of cyclists diminish remarkably in the coldest and darkest months of the year and the same phenomenon is possibly duplicated with the women that participated in my investigation.

In fact, in the following question, when they were again asked to tell how they moved if not utilizing the bicycle, Dafne stated that "*I use mainly the public transportation and I walk a lot, lately I haven't been cycling because of the weather*", highlighting the concept discussed above as did Fatima, Tuba and Melanie in other part of the survey. The cold weather and the possible slipperiness on the road remodel cycling as unpleasant and presumably could accentuate the need of safety of the individual.

Five of the participants stated that the biking skill made them feel more independent, and they could move more freely. When asked to think whether the new skill somehow influenced other aspects of their lives, they underlined an increase in their self-esteem. Nina stated that she could stop taking her medicines for diabetes, and Melanie answered that "*...I feel more in line with society. Back in my home country is quite normal to use a bike, but here is part of the culture. Something I felt I was missing out.*" pointing out how cycling made her feel more culturally and socially integrated as now she was also, as the others, biking in her city.

Tuba stated that "*Yes, I have become more confident and independent. I feel I can go anywhere without any help from anyone*", highlighting the sense of empowerment and freedom she achieved. The idea was also supported by Fatima "*It helped me gain confidence in myself, I know that I can bike like others whenever I have time*". These affirmations clearly show how cycling helped these women in their horizontal social cohesion, feeling more connected with their society and being part of it as anyone else. Otherness is an undeniable part of the immigrants' experiences and for Tuba and Melanie to feel "*more in line*" with their everyday life and their surroundings and to "*bike like others*" portray their founded sense of equality with the native population and this has an immense value. It does not only imply that they have developed a new mobility aptitude, but it also marks a factor of social integration. Cycling become a vehicle of bridging social capital that connects the new cyclist with those group of people and community they felt previously unreachable or distant. The sense of

incompetence stressed by Saunders (2007) does not apply anymore for these women as they have the possibility to experience same things others do.

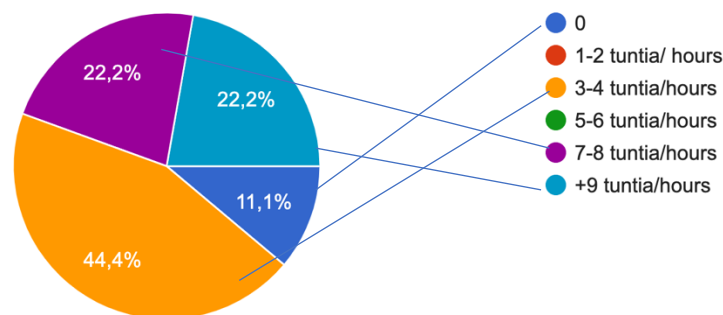
Cycling become one of those everyday life's structures, in Salmi (2004) definition, that can reshape the personal lives of these women, resulting in the structural level of society interacting with the everyday practices of the subject's experiences, thus embedding continuity and change in their lives. Cycling has the power to reshape part of their mundanity, it affects all the three of Felski's everyday life components, space, time and modality which resonate with part of Kaufman's five area of skill of travel's modality. Their spatial movement changes, they travel in a more independent way, consuming less time and presumably learning new paths and new parts of the city.

Tuba added that "*biking has been one of the most important skills that I have learned so far in my life. It helped me during COVID when I wanted to avoid crowded public transport. It was easier and cheaper to bike around the city along with exercising the basic covid restriction requirement. Also, it helps me in doing exercise when I don't want to go to gym*". Tuba and Melanie responses highlight also their enhanced individual capacity building. By learning this new skill, they acquired the knowledge to perform with the bicycle and when they master also their organizational capacity, they will achieve what Kaufman defines as the *savoir-faire* (Kaufman, 2006). They have acquired access, cognitive appropriation and competence, thus effectively enhancing their motility.

However, not all the responses of the survey were positive. In fact, Leah's response regarding her cycling habits stated that "*Not really at this point in time. I got sick after learning, and then it got cold, so I hope to ride and practice in the Spring/Summer next year*". She learned how to cycle but still had not the possibility to insert cycling in her daily life due to an injury. In her present moment, cycling remained an *abstract* skill that is not connected with new experiences but merely with the training session. Nonetheless, she wishes to make the final shift when the weather allows it. Kaufman explains that motility "*may or may not be transformed into travel*", in Leah's case she acquired the skill, increasing her *mobility potential* but she hasn't yet built cycling in "*her relationship with space*" (Kaufman, 2006).

The participants' spatial movements were, as in the first part of the survey, conducted mainly by walking, but six women said that they were also using public transportations or car rides to commute around the city. This could also imply that the winter and the weather affected their cycling time and their time spent walking, making commuting in a motored vehicle more comfortable. Interestingly, after learning the cycling skill, the number of hours of exercise (including sports, walking and physically tiring homework) increased from an average of fewer than four hours to more than five hours (an increase of 25%) as illustrated in the figure 11 below.

11. Kuinka paljon harrastat liikuntaa viikossa laskien mukaan urheilun, kävelyn ja fyysisesti rasittavat kotityöt? - How much exercise do you do per week,...ports, walking and physically tiring homework? \*  
9 vastausta



**Figure 11: How much hours of exercise do you practice weekly**

In part, this difference could be explained with a smaller number of participants of the second phase, but if we also consider that the first part was rolled out in the summer and the second with the beginning of the winter, the results were surprisingly positive. Fatima was the only one that announced that she was not exercising at all, meanwhile for the other the number of hours increased.

I also inquired if their closest social groups had commented anything regarding their biking, and eight of them had had positive feedback "*you are courageous*", "*you learned very fast*," while others were surprised how fast they had learned, and others were supportive even if they feared the new hobby; all factors benefiting the new cyclists' self-esteem.

Deepening into the biking process and how they experienced it in their daily lives, I was eager to learn more about what they thought was the best and worst part of

cycling, how it differed from walking or commuting with public transportation, and where they bike. The women pointed out that the negative sides would be related to not being fully confident while cycling. Dafne said that she did not know enough about bike maintenance underlining a lack in the practical knowledge of Kaufman's area of skill. Nina highlighted an increase of stress while *"biking in places where there are other cyclists and walkers"*, Tuba, Melanie and Fatima stated, as pointed out before, the winter was tough as it made it less pleasant to cycle, and Leah admitted that she was still afraid of falling.

From these responses we can again understand that for some of the participants there are still challenges for a complete cognitive appropriation of the cycling skill. This will be achieved through repetitions which will enhance their aptitudes toward cycling and reshape cycling from something new to a mundane part of their everyday life.

The most confident feedback came from Melanie who stated that *"(the) best is the feeling of the wind in my hair, some sort of feeling of extra freedom and also to know that I am not polluting our environment. Worst, well, I have used my bike only during this summer, so I haven't found bad sides yet."*

Regarding the positive aspects, again, the women underlined the freedom and independence that biking brought to their lives as better self-confidence. In addition, they felt that by biking, they were contributing to increasing their health by exercising more and acting to fight climate change. Fatima also pointed out that she could save money by not paying for public transportations or for *"gas and insurance."*

When they compared with other forms of commuting, they pointed out how faster they can move with the bike and the sense of adrenaline while pedaling, they also liked that they did not have to rely on time schedules or paying for transportations and finally many of them wrote that it was not only a way of commuting but also a way to practice sport and live healthier.

Only Tuba had found new friends through biking, probably also due to the short period of time of practicing and because they felt more secure in biking in less concentrated areas and usually in their neighborhoods. It would be interesting to have new feedback in a year and test if biking per se could help in networking or not.

55% of the participants thought that maybe cycling could improve their possibilities to find work in the future, and 90% would recommend biking to their family and friends.

In the survey, the participants were asked to think about one thing that would improve their everyday life in Finland. Fatima, Leah and Melanie were hoping to find a permanent job, Elvira, Dafne and Tuba wanted to learn Finnish, and Tessy stated that biking was the thing she was missing. Naturally, to be happier and to feel more integrated into their *new* society, the most important factors to these women, and for immigrants in general, are work and linguistic skills which help them “...begins to experience herself as a full and equal member of her new home country” (Saukkonen, 2016). The first delivers you a sense of meaning and economic possibilities, while the second enables new prospects for friendships, cultural awareness and a sense of belonging.

Comparing the women's expectations with their later opinions on the possible influence that cycling could bring in their lives, it can be said that their predictions were correct. Through their testimonies also new aspects came to light as the topics of adrenaline, sport and pollution. Nina emphasized “*I can cycle fast*” and Leah and Genet underlined cycling has increased their health, thus making them feel more active or, as mentioned before, Nina had a very positive impact from cycling, in fact, she stated that since she adds cycling into her everyday life, she was able to quit her diabetes medication.

In the last chapter of my master's thesis, I will complete with the study's main findings and elaborate conclusions and suggest possible actions to be taken in the future.

## 6 Conclusion

Since 2018 more than 900 women participated in the loB project's cycling courses. During the first two years I, and other coaches, received dozens of feedbacks that learning to cycle had an added value, that it was not only to learn to ride a bike, but it had a deeper significance. This master's thesis has analyzed the cycling skill from the immigrant women perspective through the "loB" project run by the Finnish Cyclists Federation. I focused on understanding the meaning that cycling had or did not have on the questions that were introduced in the first chapter: How the cycling skill can influence the lives of immigrant women in Finland? Moreover, I have aimed to highlight the connection such a simple skill could have in everyday life of these women in Finland.

The data gathered offers an inner glimpse of the everyday life of these nine women, their testimonies are not only connected to cycling but also to their expectations, their routines and future hopes of their lives in Finland. The investigation was small-scale and cannot reflect the heterogeneity of an imaginary category of "immigrant women", nonetheless observing their statements I can cautiously point out various interesting interpretations.

The most elementary fact is that learning how to cycle is possible even in an older age, without any previous experience, and for many, the physical and emotive support provided by a trained coach can have a solid impact to learn the new skill. Secondly there is strong evidence that the learning process itself can be very emotional and can provide a stronger self-esteem and a feeling of empowerment with the appropriation of the new skill. Women that learned to cycle have repeatedly highlighted the excitement in overcoming something that, in cases for decades, had caused them feelings of insecurity, fear and inequalities. The result of the study points out to a better relationship within themselves, where they feel capable of learning, and they are keen to upgrade their know-how in wider area than the one related with cycling.

The data also suggests that longer cycling courses and daily access to a bike increase the aptitudes required for an effective appropriation of cycling as one of the modes of transportation.

Cycling itself have brought to some of the new cyclists a new sense of freedom, facility and proudness of the enhanced motility and even health improvements. Logically, those who cycled more were the ones emphasizing the benefits of the appropriation of the new mode of transportation while those who were still in the process of acquire the needed experience to master the skill were somehow positive towards their brief cycling experience, but cycling had not yet influenced their everyday life.

Altogether, the study reveals a positive influence of cycling in the everyday life of the participants. The support that the coaches, both native Finnish citizens and people with a foreign background, created the *spirit* embedded in the concept of social cohesion. This new form of cooperation between groups of people that might not normally meet nor connect, the emotive fast-establishing relationship between the coach and the participants created a safe space where the immigrant women's everyday life is shortly supported into learning a new skill. Both the process of achieving a new set of skill and the capacity of cycling improve directly the everyday life of these women. During the learning process most of the women would come across an emotive turbulence; within an hour they would hit their low by being ready to give up to a peak where they would be screaming with joy for their success. The overcoming of previous fear and going over their comfort zones teaches them that learning is reachable, and aptitudes can be changed and enhanced: their everyday life can be update and change might bring new opportunities.

The data indicates that cycling might support a horizontal cohesion and strongly enhance the individual capacity building. Cycling created a sense of belonging, where the new cyclist felt to be an equal member of the community not experiencing the lack of cycling as a shortcoming compared with the other. For people that perceive themselves as outsider and are, sadly but predominantly, seen by the society as the other, the feeling of inclusion and affinity have a great value. In this study case, cycling can work as a bridging tool between groups of people and in increasing the sense of societal inclusivity of the individual. This study strongly



pointed out that the process of learning further contributes to better self-esteem and empowerment of the subject, which might facilitate their integration. Clements (2012) argues that a greater focus on "*relational ethics and egalitarian community building*" is more likely to result in long-term peace than imposed macro-level development projects. Sustainable peace is fulfilled when "*trust, equality, and welfare*" are the higher targets and positive incentives for social cohesion, as teaching to cycle, are one possibility to accomplish it (Clements, 2012).

Finally, the process itself of learning a new useful skill seems to create a space of possibility in which the women experience a new and stronger image of herself. Many women perceived cycling as one of those skill outside their reachability, something that was for the *others*. Now that they have achieved to acquire it, it did not only represent a wider motility, but it positively supported their mindset in continuing to learn something new, which support the ongoing process of integration.

Cycling is a very advantageous skill in the Finnish society and as observable in this study's data it can support various parts of their everyday life. Cycling opens the door to something new. The women own perceptions changed creating the possibility to reinvent and reshape their past identity; the migrant women move away from her cultural identity towards her individual identity. The new skill created a fissure in the old image of themselves creating a new one, where these women have taken a step away from their past, to embrace a new integrated version of themselves where learning is feasible, supported and accessible.

However, a more complexed, wider and longer studies are required to establish how cycling could, for example, influences their active participation or work against social exclusion. My study was affected by the Covid epidemic and could have had a wider range of interest and a longer follow up of the new cyclist to have a deeper understanding of its influence in the everyday life of the participants. The thesis was supposed to handed over by the Spring of 2021 but Covid, work-related issues and family life postponed it for a year. Also, for this reason, I'm very thrilled to have supported one of the IoB- project coaches, Marjo Harju, to investigate further on the thesis findings in her dissertation for the University of Turku. The research was started in 2021 and hopefully Harju will provide more detailed results on the topic by 2023.

Based on the results of this thesis and field work performed by the IoB project, it could be advised to include cycling courses as part of the Integration Plan (which includes Finnish language studies, other education or practical training,) offered to immigrants moving to Finland, thus strengthening the sector governance and the vertical cohesion.

Generally, the integration plan must be made no later than three years after the person receives their first residence permit or their right of residence has been registered. The idea behind the Integration Plan is to provide “*services and measures that will support the immigrants in learning Finnish or Swedish and help them acquire other knowledge and skills needed in society and the labor market are laid out in the integration plan.*” (Integration.fi)

The results of my thesis show that cycling is a skill that enhances the subjects' motility and self-esteem. These elements could support better and faster integration, and adding cycling courses as one of the services offered to immigrants could give extra support in their everyday lives and enhance their active participation. Inclusivity is a pillar of functional integration, and to achieve a better inclusion, we need certain types of skills, and cycling should be one of those that - we as a society - invest in. It's well known that cycling is ecological, low-cost, enhances better mental and physical health and increases motility. This study strongly pointed out that the process of learning further contributes to better self-esteem and empowerment of the subject, which might facilitate their integration.

The unemployment of immigrants speaking foreign languages has decreased over the years, accordingly to EK employments statistics (Confederations of Finnish Industries, 2021) from 31% in 2001 to 18% in 2019, in the same period for those workers speaking national language we moved from 13% to 9%. However, the results are gloomier when analyzing immigrant mothers; only 31% of them are working.

As the EK's statistics shows the support for immigrant women with families is particularly important. Increasing education, language skills and work experience would help the integration of immigrant women with families into the labor market.

This can be quite challenging, especially if the woman is 30 years old or older when arriving in Finland. However, sharing information and increasing awareness could help. It would be important for immigrants to understand that even for women is worthwhile to be part of the working life and that they are allowed to work, that exercising produces benefits that can vastly support their everyday life and that the 50-year-old is not yet old. In fact, Zacheus believes that increasing health counseling alone could go a long way, as self-care often spreads to physical health and in other areas of life. (Zacheus, 2011).

Successful integration of immigrants in Finland is one of the biggest challenges. A very big share of people with a foreign background in Finland live in the Helsinki metropolitan area (Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo). Many major issues and challenges are resolved for better or worse, depending on how integration progresses there. In this respect both the city of Helsinki and Vantaa have understood the importance that cycling could have for the integration of immigrant people, especially women, and have for the past two years invested in bringing these biking courses close to adult immigrant people and this service will continue at least during summer-autumn 2022. During the IoB -project more than half of the people that learned to cycle were living in the mentioned metropolitan area, thus this is a significant decision from these cities to invest in this approach for a better motility and integration of their residents. Helsinki has resourcefully decided that the cycling courses are open to all its adult residents, permitting new kind of connections and encounters between different group of people thus enhancing an horizontal cohesion.

For future investigation on the topic, I would recommend using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and to compile a more detailed interview and questionnaire and have a time lapse of at least a year. In this study, not being familiar with the participants nor their linguistic skills I hesitated in producing longer and exhaustive samples fearing a low attendance, especially in the following up. Learning from my experience, I would first have had a short initial conversation explaining the concept of the study, thus assessing the linguistic skill and to test their future commitment to the investigation. I would then, if possible, benefit from the assistance of an interpreter in both data gathering sessions, to permit them with the possibility to express fully their opinions and thoughts.

## Acknowledgement

This thesis has opened new doors to understanding the everyday lives of immigrant women living in Finland and this study was possible only with the help of many brave women and the cooperation with many NGOs working in Finland. During the “IoB”-project and this master’s thesis I had the opportunity to teach women from more than 40 countries with different backgrounds and hopes for the future

I have had many insightful conversations with these women which have given me new tools and understanding not only in this related research question but about migration and integration in general and the various challenges people face while starting a new life from scratch. Dozens of times I also witnessed women overcoming their comfort-zones, cultural burdens and fears to rewrite the image of themselves updating it in a less conservative and more courageous one.

These processes have been surprisingly emotional, and they have reminded me how the everyday life of human beings can be supported towards a better and healthier and more independent direction. We need time, empathy, care and openness. I’m grateful to have had the possibility to experience these changes and to have had many meaningful conversations with these women. I will carry these fruits with me, and I’ll try to share them along my paths with all those interested in it.

There are many people to be grateful for. I would first like to express my deep gratitude to all the coaches that have taught hundreds of women all around Finland, especially Hanna Kilpinen, Sami Viitanen, Fabrizio Turci, Azad Hassan and Taina Renkonen. Their passion and commitment to teach women to cycle and to train new coaches were exemplary.

I thank my thesis supervisor Anitta Kynsilehto from Tampere Peace Research Institute who has accepted my thesis subject even if it was not the common direction of the institute. She was patient during this Covid epidemic and with the changing time schedules. I’m also very grateful to senior researcher Eeva Puumala for her detailed analysis on my study, which gave me an extra boost in defining the results of this thesis.

Additionally, I want to thank my wife for having supported me during this process, where I have been combining work, university and being a father. It has not always been easy.

In addition, I want to thank the FCF for giving me the opportunity to oversee this project. I had the possibility to run it independently, to shape it as I felt the best, but I was also supported by the Federation whenever I needed.

I also want to thank the FCF for giving me the time to work in this study and to gather the data during the biking courses. Finally, I want to thank all those organizations, schools, churches and municipalities that with their cooperation made all this work possible.

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## 6. Appendix

### Interview form

Miksi keräämme tietoa? Why are we gathering information? Keräämme tietoa pyöräilykursseista, jotta voisimme mitata hankkeen vaikuttavuutta ja millaista lisäarvoa se on tuonut osallistujien elämään. Kysely lähetetään osallistujalle joko sähköpostitse tai puhelimitse. Täytähän tietosi huolellisesti ja vastaathan seuraaviin kysymyksiin. We are gathering information about the courses held by IoB project to measure the influence these courses had in the everyday life of the participants. The questionnaire will be sent by email or can also be done over the phone.

1.Etu- ja sukunimi/ First name and surname

2.Sukupuoli - Gender \*

Nainen - Woman

Mies - Man

Muu - Other

3.Ikä - Age \*

10-17

18-29

30-49

50-65

yli 66 - over 66

4.Sähköposti/ Email

Oma vastauksesi

5.Puhelinnumero/ Phone number

Oma vastauksesi

6.Sinun kielitaitosi/ Your Language skills

Suomi/ Finnish

Ruotsi/ Swedish  
Englanti/ English  
Somalia/ Somalia  
Arabia/ Arabic  
Dari  
Kiina/ Chinese  
Espanja/ Spanish  
Venäjä/ Russian  
Persia/ Persian  
Muu / Other

7.Mille kurssille aiot osallistua? Missä ja milloin? - Which course will you participate in? When and where?

Oma vastauksesi

8.Osaatko pyöräillä? - Can you ride a bike?

En ollenkaan - Not at all  
Olen joskus kokeillut, mutten en osaa vielä - I have tried some time but still cannot ride a bike  
Osaan hieman - A little  
Osaan hyvin - I've good biking skills  
Pyöräilen joka paikkaan - I bike everywhere

9.Kauan olet asunut Suomessa? How long have you been living in Finland? \*

Alle 1 vuotta -Less than one year  
1-3 vuotta - 1 to 3 years  
4-5 vuotta - 4 to 5 years  
6-9 vuotta, 6 to 9 years  
10 vuotta tai enemmän - 10 or more years

10.Millainen on normaali päiväsi? Mitä teet? - How is your normal day? What do you usually do? \*

11.Miten liikut päivän aikana? Käveletkö, käytätkö julkista liikennettä, autoa tai muita liikkumisvälineitä? - How do you move during the day? Do you walk, use the public transportation, the car, or other means of commute? \*

12.Monta tuntia keskimäärin päivässä käytät liikkumiseen (auto, kävely, julkinen liikenne jne.) - Normally how many hours do you move during your day? (car, walk, public transportation, etc.) \*

Alle 1 tunti - Less than 1 hour  
1 tunti -1 hours  
2 tuntia - 2hours  
3 tuntia - 3 hours  
4 tuntia - 4 hours  
5 tuntia tai enemmän - 5 hours or more

13.Liikutko yleensä yksin, kavereiden, työkavereiden lasten tai puolisososi kanssa - Do you usually move alone, with friends, coworkers, kids or your partner? \*

14. Kuinka paljon harrastat liikuntaa viikossa laskien mukaan urheilun, kävelyn ja fyysisesti rasittavat kotityöt? - How much exercise do you do per week, including sports, walking and physically tiring homework? \*

0 tunti/hours

1 -2 tuntia/hours

3-4 tuntia/ hours

5-6 tuntia/ hours

6-7 tuntia/hours

Enemmän kuin 8 tuntia - More than 8 hours

15. Millainen vaikutus pyöräilytaidoilla voisi olla sinun elämääsi? What influence the biking skill could have in your life? \*

Oma vastauksesi

16. Ottaen kaiken huomioon, miten tyytyväinen olet elämääsi Suomessa ? - Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life in ? \*

Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied

Tyytyväinen - Satisfied

En ole tyytyväinen enkä tyytymätön - Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied

En kovinkaan tyytyväinen - Not very satisfied

En ole tyytyväinen - Unsatisfied

17. Otamme uudestaan yhteyttä 6kk-12kk kurssin jälkeen. Haluatko että otamme yhteyttä puhelimitse vai sähköpostitse? \*

Puhelimitse - by phone

Sähköpostitse - by email

Jos mahdollista kasvotusten - if possible face to face

## **Appendix, Questionnaire (after 3-6 months)**

1. Etu- ja sukunimi/ First and surname

2. Sähköposti/ Email

. Puhelinnumero/ Phone number

4. Mihin kurssit olet osallistunut? Missä ja milloin? - In which course have you participated in? When and where?

5. Moneen kurssipäivään olit osallistunut? - In how many training days did you participate in? a. 1 day

b. 2 days

c. 3 days

d. 4 days

e. 5 days

6. Osaatko nyt pyöräillä? - Do you know now how to bike?

a. Erittäin hyvin/ Very good

b. Hyvin/ Good

c. Auttavasti/ Fairly

d. En ollenkaan/ Not at all

7. Montako kertaa viikossa pyöräilet? - How many time you bike in a week

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5

f 6-7

8. Kuvaile omin sanoin pyöräilykurssia. Millaisia odotuksia sinulla oli? Täyttyivätkö ne? - Describe the cycling course in your own words. What expectations did you have? Were expectations met?

9. Millaisia tunteita kurssille osallistuminen etukäteen aiheutti? Esim. jännittikö kurssille osallistuminen? Muuttuivatko tunteet kurssin aikana tai sen jälkeen? - What feelings did attending the course cause in advance? For example, was it exciting to attend the course? Did emotions change during or after the course?

10. Miten pyöräilytaito on vaikuttanut elämääsi? - How did the biking skill influence your life?

11. Uskotko, että pyöräilytaito on auttanut sinua muilla elämän osa-alueilla? / Vaikuttanut muihin elämäsi osa-alueisiin? Miksi? Miksi ei? - Do you believe that cycling has helped you in other areas of life? / Influenced other aspects of your life? Why? Why not?

12. Miten perheesi tai ystäväsi ovat kommentoineet pyöräilyn harjoitteluasi? - Have your family members or friends commented your biking practice? If yes, how?

13. Mikä pyöräilyssä on parasta, mikä ikävintä? - What are the best and the worst sides of bicycling?

14. Miltä liikkuminen pyörällä tuntuu: eroaako kävelystä tai julkisista kulkuvälineistä, tuntuuko samalta/ erilaiselta? - How does it feel to cycle; Does it differ from walking or using public transportation? If yes, how?

15. Oletko löytänyt ystäviä/ tutustunut ihmisiin pyöräilyn aloitettuaasi? - Have you made new friends / get to know new people after you started biking practice?

16. Mitkä ovat yleisimmät paikat minne liikut pyörällä? Miksi juuri nämä paikat? - What are the most common places you go by bike? Why these very places?

17. Voiko pyöräilytaito parantaa mahdollisuuksiasi löytää töitä? Can the biking skill help you with seeking a job?

18. Suositteletko pyöräilyä ystävillesi tai perheellesi? Miksi? - Would you recommend biking to your friends and family members? If yes/no, why?

### Questionnaire's answers

First and surname	In which course will you participate in? When and where?	In how many training days did you participate in?	Describe the cycling course in your own words. What expectations did you have? Were expectations met?	What feelings did attending the course cause in advance? For example, was it exciting to attend the course? Did emotions change during or after the course?	Do you know now how to bike?	Did you own a bike?	- How many time you bike in a week
Fatima		1	Professional training	Excitement	Hyvin/ Good	En/ No	0
Tuba	Beginner, Advance and Bike Maintenance courses. Helsinki.	5	I learnt how to bike along with traffic rules and regulations. I also learnt basic maintenance activities of the bike. However, maintenance course should be more extensive.	It was an exciting and thrilling experience. I feel at the top of the world and very independent after learning biking.	Erittäin hyvin/ Very good	Kyllä/ Yes	2

Genet	Summer at Helsinki	5	My old expectations was bikeing is very difficult but when I understand how to bikeing is it was wrong expect I had.	Before the course I was so afraid to try but after the course all is change	Hyvin/ Good	Kyllä/ Yes	2
Leah	Beginner course, Mid-August 2020, Helsinki	2	I wanted to ride a bike without extreme fear.	It was exciting to attend the course. I was very happy at the end for being able to achieve this goal.	Auttavasti/ Farily	Kyllä/ Yes	0
Dafne	Basic course during summer	3	I wanted to learnd the basics to be able to ride a bike, and feel confident enough to purchase one	I felt very excited from the very beginning, just after the third (more advanced) lesson, I felt frustared and scared when not able to ride along the road with the other cyclists (students and regular people)	Hyvin/ Good	Kyllä/ Yes	0
Elvira	uinti, piirustus , en tiedä vielä missä mä voin mennä kursille	2	Olin kiinnostunut kurssista ja olen onnellinen, että onnistui. Kiitos kurssilta!	Mua jännitä vähän ensimmäisenä päivänä, sitten kaikki meni hyvin.	Auttavasti/ Farily	En/ No	0
Nina	10.,14.8.2020 Suvilahden parkkipaikka, 7.9.2020 Lasten liikennekaupunki, 25.9.,2.10.2020 Suvilahden parkkipaikka	5	Odotukset täyttyivät, opin ajamaan pyörällä. Pidän kurssista todella paljon!	Luulin etten koskaan onnistuisi. Olikin helpompaa ja pelkäsinkin turhaan	Hyvin/ Good	Kyllä/ Yes	0
Tessy	Biking course Oulu	3	To know how to bike	Got scared at first, buh it was fun. 😊	Hyvin/ Good	Kyllä/ Yes	4 to 5 times



Melanie	Beginner course 12/8 and 13/8 16:30-18:00 @ Suvilahti	2	I went with the hope that I could finally learn how to ride a bike. And to my surprise I did. Every instructor was kind and helpful but nonetheless push in order for me to take the next step, that encouragement worked.	I was afraid before starting the course but I decided to learn this time so I really push also myself in order to do it. I am happy to have been able to experience this specific happiness one feels when riding a bike.	Hyvin/ Good	Kyllä/ Yes	2
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First and surname	In addition to biking, how do you move during the day? Do you walk, use the public transportation, the car, or other means of commute?	Do you usually move alone, with friends, coworkers, kids or your partner? *	How much exercise do you do per week, including sports, walking and physically tiring homework? *	How did the biking skill influenced your life?	Do you believe that cycling has helped you in other areas of life? / Influenced other aspects of your life? Why? Why not?	Have your family members or friends commented your biking practice? If yes, how?
Fatima	Car	With kids	0	it affected my life positively. I used to bike to work before winter and I'll start biking again when the snow is gone. Thankfully I can also go on rides with my daughters and husband, very glad I learned how to bike	It helped me gain confidence in myself, I know that I can bike like others whenever I have time	No
Tuba	Public transportation	Alone or with partner.	3-4 tuntia/hours	I feel more independent Biking has been one of the most important skill that I have learned so far in my life. It helped with COVID when I wanted to avoid crowded public transport. It was easier and cheaper to bike around the city along with exercising the basic covid restriction requirement. Also, it helps me in doing exercise when I don't want to go to gym.	Yes, I have become more confident and independent. I feel I can go anywhere without any help from anyone.	Yes, they think I learnt it quickly because I had never biked in my life before.
Genet	I am using public transport	With my kid	3-4 tuntia/hours	I can move more easily	Yes it's helped me a lot I get more self confused and also I try to teach for my kid	Yes they are surprised when I start to biking because they know me before I learned biking.
Leah	Walking, dancing	Alone and/or with my family	3-4 tuntia/hours	En osaa sanoa	Not really at this point in time. I got sick after learning, and then it got cold, so I hope to ride and practice in the Spring/Summer next year	Yes - learning to ride a bike as an adult was a courageous thing to do.
Dafne	I use mainly the public transportation and I walk a lot, lately I haven't been cycling because of the weather	alone	7-8 tuntia/hours	En osaa sanoa	I still need to practice a lot, but definitely I'm building the confidence	yes, they think I should keep going and keep trying, they recommend to be less critical of own my skills

Elvira	Kävelen	Yksin, kavereiden ja äidin kanssa	+9 tuntia/hours	En osaa sanoa	Kyllä uskon. Ensi vuonna aion pyörällä ja varman että se autaa mua tuntea itseni itsenäisempi	He tukivat minua
Nina	Autolla ja kävellen	Lapsen kanssa	+9 tuntia/hours	Pystyn liikkumaan helpommin - I can move more easily	Vaikuttaa, minun ei tarvitse ottaa diabetes-lääkkeitä	Tytär pelkäsi puolestani, mutta auttoi
Tessy	Biking and public transport	Alone	7-8 tuntia/hours	Tunnen itseni itsenäisempi - I feel more independent	Has made life little easy.	No
Melanie	I mostly walk everywhere. And in case I leave towards another city I use a car.	I walk by myself, with my husband or dog.	3-4 tuntia/hours	I feel more independent, I broke my wrist in a ski accident so safe to say i have not been biking in a while.  But i have to say that yes having this new skill changed my life. I feel more confident. Before i wanted to hide the fact that i didn't know how to ride a bike. Now, I have no need to change the subject or answer questions about why i couldn't ride a bike. Now is not a worry.	Yes, I feel more in line with society. Back in my home country is quite normal to use a bike, but here is part of the culture. Something I felt I was missing out.	Yes, my friends and family and quite surprise and very happy for me.

First and surname	What are the best and the worst sides of bicycling?	How does it feel to cycle; Does it differ from walking or using public transportation? If yes, how?	Have you made new friends / get to know new people after you started biking practice?	What are the most common places you go by bike? Why these very places?	Can the biking skill help you with seeking a job?	Would you recommend biking to your friends and family members? If yes/no, why?	If you could choose one thing that would improve your life in Finland, what would it be?
Fatima	Biking is sport, you move while in your way to your daily shopping or school or whatever and it's free you don't pay gas or insurance, but in winter it's hard in Finland	Yes, you go on your own race and time, faster than walking and free	No	I don't bike now	Maybe	Tyytyväinen - Satisfied	A full time job
Tuba	Best part is you feel young and independent. Worst part is in winters you feel cold.	Yes, it's easier and less time-consuming and no bus card required.	Yes	To shops and malls when I want to go for shopping.	No	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	Driving and Finnish language
Genet	I know only the best side. It's help to exercise after exercise u feel good enjoy and selfe confidence u get	Cycle is more like exercise .	No	Malmi that is more near for my house	No	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	So money things I got after I come to Finland
Leah	Best: Freedom to move around; ability to exercise. Worst: Fear of falling	It provides a different way to be physically active and move around more.	No	I am not biking at the moment	No	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	A career in collaboration with Africa
Dafne	the worst: I don't know anything about bike maintenance so, so I need to learn about that, and that it can be dangerous when the weather is challenging. The best is to keep yourself active, healthy and to be independent when able to	yes, more adrenaline, it's faster somehow, no need to rely on the public transport schedules	No	I try to take roads in open fields, because I feel safer	Maybe	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	to be able to speak the language as a native Finn

	move anywhere in 2 wheels						
Elvira	Parasta- osan pyörällä, mulla ei ole pyörän vielä.	Helpompi kuin juosta	No	Olin vain kurssilla	Maybe	En kovinkaan tyytyväinen - Not very satisfied	Haluaisin osata suomen kieli
Nina	Kivointa on, kun ajaa kovaa. Ikkävintä on, kun ympärillä on paljon muita ihmisiä ja pyöräilijöitä :)	Nopeaa, mahtavaa, talvisin kylmää :)	No	Lähimmälle parkkipaikalle harjoittelemaan	No	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	Ostaisin veneen
Tessy	Worst side is learning how to ride . Best side is knowing how to ride.	It feels great. Makes it faster than walking and also exercise.	No	Gym, supermarket, city center etc.	Maybe	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	Biking 🚲
Melanie	Best is the feeling of the wind in my hair, some sort of feeling of extra freedom and also to know that I am not polluting our environment. Worst, well I have used my bike only during this summer so I haven't found bad sides yet.	I like skying a lot, so it feels like skying in the sense that it can be fast and it gives me energy and happiness. I don't think in anything else when I'm skying or biking, I just enjoy.	No	I live in Kaivopuisto so I bike around there.	Maybe	Todella tyytyväinen - Very satisfied	Find a work position that appreciates me. :)