

Immigrant integration as living a good life in rural Finland

A case study of women at the Metka village house, Lieksa

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis addresses the role of non-governmental organisations (NGO) in the integration of immigrant women in rural Finland. In my thesis I am also answering to the question of what integration means for immigrant women in rural Finland from the point of view of my informants. My thesis is female specific research and there is a feminist and antiracist approach in it. I am concentrating specifically on female migrants, their experiences and their definitions of integration. In my thesis I am presenting a critical viewpoint on integration and suggest that good life of immigrants should be taken into consideration when discussing different indicators of integration and planning the services for immigrants. Further I am presenting that NGO's do have an important role in providing services and support in integration. My study demonstrates what kind of wishes immigrant women have concerning their lives and future plans but it also presents the role of the Metka house in their lives. As immigrants' integration is currently very topical theme in public discussion in Finland I am willing to share what immigrants themselves have to say on the matter. My thesis belongs to the field of sociology and can also be placed in the field of integration and migration studies and research regarding non-governmental organisations. My research is also influenced by gender studies.</p> <p>My research is a case study and I did my fieldwork in Lieksa at Metka multicultural village house. I collected my empirical data via eleven individual interviews and via ethnographic observation. I have analysed my empirical data with thematic analysis. Based on my findings I am willing to broaden the term of integration to consist a role of good life. When I was conducting my interviews I noticed that integration is not the concept in which immigrant women would structure their lives and experiences as an immigrant in Finland. Instead of discussing their integration process my interviewees focused on the preconditions of good life such as livelihood, family, friends and giving and receiving help. Metka house has an important meaning for my interviewees and it operates as a place where immigrants can have various services organised by other immigrants. In the light of my analysis I am stating that when planning the official criteria for immigrant integration, that recognises matters such as education, work and language skills, it should take people's individual life situation and humane needs and wishes for their lives better in to consideration. My claim is that immigrant-led non-governmental organisation, in this case Metka house, supports the integration of immigrant women in many ways. It offers a place for social encounters, learning and helping others, tools for managing one's own life in a new environment but also safety, familiarity and support in fastening to local environment.</p> <p>Keywords: Immigrant, integration, women, good life, non-governmental organisations (NGO), rural areas, Finland, feminist research, antiracist approach</p>	

Tiedekunta Yhteiskuntatieteiden ja kauppatieteiden	Laitos Yhteiskuntatieteiden laitos
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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tutkimukseni havainnollistaa maahanmuuttajanaisten toiveita elämäänsä sekä tulevaisuuden suunnitelmiaan koskien sekä esittelee Metka-talon roolia heidän elämässään. Koska maahanmuuttajien kotoutuminen on tällä hetkellä ajankohtainen aihe julkisessa keskustelussa Suomessa, haluan esitellä maahanmuuttajien omia ajatuksia asiaa koskien. Pro graduni kuuluu sosiologian alaan ja sen voi myös sijoittaa integraatiota, maahanmuuttoa sekä kansalaisjärjestöjä koskevaan tutkimuskenttään. Työni on saanut vaikutteita myös sukupuolentutkimuksesta.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni on tapaustutkimus, jonka kenttätöön suoritin Lieksassa sijaitsevalla monikulttuurisella Metka kylätalolla. Empiirinen aineistoni koostuu 11:stä yksilöhaastattelusta sekä etnografisesta havainnoinnista. Analysoin empiirisen aineistoni temaattisen analyysin avulla. Pohjautuen tutkimuksessa tekemiini löydöksiin, esitän, että kotoutumisen käsite tulisi laajentaa koskemaan myös hyvää elämää. Tehdessäni haastatteluita huomasin, että kotoutuminen ei ole se konsepti, jonka avulla maahanmuuttajanaiset jäsentäisivät elämäänsä sekä kokemuksiaan maahanmuuttajana Suomessa. Sen sijaan, että olisimme keskustelleet haastateltavieni kotoutumisprosesseista, haastateltavani keskittyivät puheessaan hyvän elämän edellytyksiin kuten toimeentuloon, perheeseen, ystäviin sekä avun saamiseen ja antamiseen. Metka-talolla on tärkeä merkitys haastateltavien elämässä ja se toimii paikkana joka tarjoaa monipuolisia palveluita maahanmuuttajilta toisille maahanmuuttajille.</p> <p>Analyysini valossa väitän, että virallinen kotoutumista koskeva kriteeristö, joka tunnistaa muun muassa koulutuksen, työn sekä kielitaidon, tulisi ottaa ihmisten yksilölliset elämäntilanteet, inhimilliset tarpeet sekä toiveet elämänsä suhteen paremmin huomioon. Väitän, että maahanmuuttajavetoinen kansalaisjärjestö, tässä tapauksessa Metka-talo, tukee maahanmuuttajanaisten kotoutumista monin tavoin. Tällainen organisaatio tarjoaa paikan sosiaalisille kohtaamisille, oppimiselle sekä muiden auttamiselle. Se tarjoaa myös välineitä oman elämän hallintaan uudessa ympäristössä. Tällainen paikka tarjoaa turvaa ja tuttuutta, mutta tukee myös kiinnittymisessä uuteen ympäristöön.</p> <p>Asiasanat: Maahanmuuttaja, kotoutuminen, kotouttaminen, integraatio, naiset, hyvä elämä, kansalaisjärjestöt, syrjäiset alueet, Suomi, feministinen tutkimus, antirasistinen tutkimusote</p>	

CONTENT

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	THE METKA MULTICULTURAL VILLAGE HOUSE AND THE SOMALI FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF LIEKSA.....	6
3	FRAMING THE RESEARCH TOPIC.....	9
3.1	HISTORY AND PRESENT STATISTICS OF MIGRATION IN FINLAND.....	9
3.2	INTEGRATION LEGISLATION AND POLICIES IN EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVEL.....	10
4	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	16
4.1	MIGRATION MOVEMENTS.....	16
4.2	AN ANTIRACIST AND FEMINIST APPROACH.....	17
4.3	RESEARCH ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS.....	20
4.4	MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION THEORIES.....	22
5	METHODOLOGY.....	27
5.1	INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING THE RESEARCH POSITION.....	28
5.2	OBSERVING AND PARTICIPATING AT METKA HOUSE.....	32
5.3	FINDING THE RELEVANT THEMES FROM THE DATA.....	34
6	INTEGRATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN LIEKSA....	38
7	THE ROLE OF EDUCATION, WORK AND LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THE INTEGRATION ..	39
7.1	EDUCATION OFFERS TOOLS FOR HELPING OTHERS.....	39
7.2	WORK PLACE – POSSIBILITY TO WEALTHIER AND MORE MEANINGFUL LIFE.....	41
7.3	KNOWING THE LANGUAGE MAKES EVERYDAY LIFE EASIER.....	43
8	BROADENING THE MEANING OF INTEGRATION TO INCLUDE GOOD LIFE.....	45
8.1	INTEGRATION IS A FEELING OF “NOT BEING LOST”.....	47
8.2	LEISURE ACTIVITIES HELP IN MAINTAINING SOCIAL RELATIONS.....	50
8.3	FAMILY AND FRIENDS.....	52
9	PAYING BACK TO COMMUNITY – IMPORTANCE OF GIVING AND RECEIVING HELP	55
10	THE ROLE OF METKA HOUSE AS A PROVIDER OF SUPPORT AND SERVICES - “[THE VILLAGE HOUSE] HAS A HUGE MEANING. MY WHOLE LIFE DEPENDS ON IT”.....	59
10.1	LACK OF SAFETY NARROWS THE SCOPE FOR ACTION.....	63
10.2	LIEKSA IS A PEACEFUL PLACE AT FINNISH COUNTRYSIDE.....	65
11	IN SEARCH OF GOOD LIFE.....	68
12	METKA-HOUSE SUPPORTS THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN.....	74
13	REFERENCES.....	78
14	LIST OF PICTURES.....	83
15	APPENDIX (2).....	84

FIGURES:

1.FIGURE. Population by origin, country of birth and language 2016.

PICTURES:

1.PICTURE. Photo from the front of the Metka house.

2.PICTURE. Children participating Metakka project.

3.PICTURE. Interior of Metka house.

TABLES:

1.TABLE. Berry's acculturation model.

2.TABLE. Age range of interviewees.

1 INTRODUCTION

This is a story that takes place in rural Finland and in which immigrant women have a leading role. The town in question, Lieksa, does not have the best reputation in how it has welcomed immigrants at least if you trust in several news articles that have drawn a picture of a place where immigrants are under of continuous inspection whether it is a matter of welfare benefits or use of shared conference rooms. This is also a story of a persistent non-governmental organisation, Somali Family Association of Lieksa, which has solidified its role as an active immigrant organisation that offers a vast setting of different services and activities for people living in Lieksa. The association also runs homely space, Metka Village house which is open for any person who is willing to get to know different cultures and wants to take a risk to slipping into a well-knit but warmly receptive community. This study gives you an insight to my learning process as a master's student who struggled between my own assumptions of immigrant integration and the unexpected stories that I heard in the field and changed my ideas of the whole topic. The process of writing master's thesis can be full of emotions and self-reflections (I wish!) and there is a great possibility to update your worldview if you are ready to carefully listen what your informants are telling you while at the same time being aware of your position as a researcher.

Excerpt from research diary. July 2016.

"I went for a visit to Metka village house to get to know the place. The place was very attractive, people were coming and going and some of them were sitting, chatting and drinking coffee in kitchen. There were also people in work trial, they were cleaning and taking care of some other things too. I got to know some people visiting the house and the people working in there. We drank coffee together, studied English and admired a baby who was only one or two weeks old."

Ote tutkimuspäiväkirjasta. Heinäkuu 2016.

"Kävin tutustumassa Metka-kylätaloon. Kylätalo oli erittäin viehättävä paikka, ihmisiä tuli ja meni ja istuskeli keittiössä keskustelemassa ja kahvittelemassa. Talossa oli ihmisiä työkokeilussa, muun muassa siivoamassa ja hoitamassa muita asioita. Tutustuin kylätalon työntekijöihin ja muutamiin siellä vieraileviin ihmisiin, joimme kahvia, keskustelimme, opiskelimme englantia ja ihastelimme parin viikon ikäistä pikkuvauvaa."

The excerpt above from my research diary represents the every-day life at Metka house. There were quite a few people around, others working and others just spending time together. I started working on my thesis in spring 2016 and during the summer I spent a lot of time at the Metka house. I collected my empirical data at the Metka house by interviewing immigrant women who spent their time in there and participated in different activities organised by the Somali Family Association and its activists. In addition to interviewing these local women I also observed the everyday life at Metka house to get a better understanding of its role for my interviewees.

In the very beginning the aim of my research was to study what is the role of non-governmental organisations (NGO's) for the integration of immigrant women in rural Finland and whether the meaning of integration is alike for immigrant women and for authorities. During the interviews I understood that I am not able to answer both of my original research questions with my empirical data but instead I had a lot of information about what kind of wishes immigrant women have concerning their lives and future but also about the role of the Metka-house in their lives. Instead of concentrating solely on integration in its official or theoretical meaning I am trying to catch how immigrant women themselves tell about their lives and future plans and how one non-governmental organisation and all visitors to the village house can support these women in their endeavours and the difficulties they might face in their every-day lives. I am also looking at what kind of services the village house offers for immigrants and how non-governmental organisations could take immigrants and their integration better into account when planning their services and activities.

When I was conducting my interviews I wrote a research diary where I pondered the experiences I had at the Metka house. The time I spent in Lieksa and especially the discussion with my interviewees were very educational for me. When I was on my way to Lieksa for the first time, planning to get-to-know the place and the people there I thought I had a good understanding and foreknowledge what would be the matters that my interviewees would bring to the discussion regarding to integration and NGO's role in it. During my stay at the Metka-house I heard interesting, touching and even devastating stories from women, most of whom had previously lived very different lives than I have. Though the stories and background of the people differed a lot from my own in the end the wishes for the present and for the future were more or less the same for me and for my interviewees. Instead of pondering their integration process when settling to Finland my interviewees were

talking a lot about things that are founded on a good and peaceful life; for example their families and friendships, helping others and educating oneself to be better off. Due to these discussions I understood that I need to challenge the existing authoritative integration definition and bring a critical female perspective on the topic.

This thesis addresses the role of immigrant organisations in the integration of immigrant women at Finnish countryside. My thesis belongs to the field of sociology and can also be placed in the field of integration and migration studies and research regarding non-governmental organisations. My research is influenced by the gender studies as I am interested in the experiences of female migrants. I want to concentrate specifically on female migrants, their experiences and own definitions of integration, since immigration studies have traditionally been focused on male migrants or the researchers have not paid attention to the migrants' gender at all (Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2007, 15-16). My thesis has an emancipatory role as I am aiming to bring the female viewpoint in to the discussion and offer a place for women to get their voice heard. My research questions are the following:

1. What does integration mean for immigrant women in rural Finland?
2. How can non-governmental organisations support the integration of immigrant women?

Immigrants' integration is currently very topical theme in public discussion in Finland. Questions related to the topic vary from different views on how integration should be organised and helped in best possible way, immigrants' and majority populations' role in the integration process to the pondering about what is the cost of measurements supporting integration. When talking about integration the financial expenses are often taken into account. Several operators are involved in the integration measures and the amount of different services vary between different areas of Finland but also the status of immigrant influences on the services offered. Municipalities and employment services are responsible for services supporting immigrant's integration but also non-governmental organisations supplement these services (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2018.)

The theme of my research is topical as immigration to Finland has increased continuously for several years and since year 2015 Finland has received significantly more asylum seekers than during previous years. Integration of these people has raised a lot of debate among

politicians but also among ordinary people. The topic has been widely discussed in both Finnish and international media and has also led to tightening up the legislation regarding immigration. A cost-perspective is a common standpoint in the discussion of immigration. After the turn of the millennium an active immigration policy that underlines Finland's role in international competitiveness, need for workforce and concern about the Finnish dependency ratio has gained importance on the expense of immigration policies based on humanitarian questions (Saukkonen 2013, 88-90).

Immigrants and consequently migration research in Finland is concentrated mainly in the larger cities and naturally also majority of immigrant associations are located in cities (Pyykkönen 2007a, 107.). Also for this reason there is a need for rural migration research in Finland. Even if Lieksa, the place where my research takes place, is town it is still considered rural area due to its geographical location in Finland, long distances to bigger cities and sparse population. The role on non-governmental organisations may rise in near future, especially in rural areas, if the authorities retrench state allowances targeted to integration. Differences among different parts of the country might increase due to upcoming structural changes in welfare services (*sote-uudistus*).

Civic activity and participation in NGO's' activities has traditionally been very high in Finland and the amount of organisations in the country is relatively high. Immigrants have established their own NGO's and multiple organisations offer activities, guidance and help targeted to immigrants which supports the idea of NGO's being a natural place for integration. But what does integration mean after all? I am interested in how immigrant women see their own integration process and what are the key things that make someone integrated.

At first I give some background information about the Metka house and Somali Family Association of Lieksa, which is the organisation behind the multicultural village house. In the theoretical part of my research I briefly discuss migration to Finland and the number of immigrants in Finland. I also discuss the definition of integration and plans regarding integration at national and European Union level. The theory section of my thesis covers also previous integration research and research regarding non-governmental organisations. In the theory section I am also reasoning why I chose to concentrate on female migrants in my thesis.

I interviewed eleven immigrant women and spent a lot of time at the Metka Village house. During my stay there I took notes of my observations which I later used to supplement the data I collected via interviews. After I collected my empirical material, I transcribed the interviews and searched for the most important themes regarding my research questions. I describe my methodological choices and present my data in more detail in the materials and methodology section. In the methodology section I also discuss why I chose to have an antiracist and feminist approach in my thesis. In the analysis part I mirror the findings of my empirical data to the theory section. In the discussions part I elaborate the findings of my research and also discuss the decisions I had to make during the research process. In the very end of my research I go through the whole process, discuss some ideas of possible further research topics in the chosen research field but also give some food for thought for people who in a way of another are working in non-governmental organisations which work together with immigrants or have immigrants as their target group.

2 The Metka Multicultural Village house and the Somali Family Association of Lieksa

The Somali Family Association of Lieksa was founded in 2013 with the purpose of helping immigrants to integrate to Finnish society. Another goal of the Somali Family Association of Lieksa is “to act as a bridge to eradicate racism between immigrants and Finns.” (Metkylätalo 2018a.) As far as is known Metka house is the only multicultural village house in Finland. Even though the Metka house is founded by The Somali Family Association it welcomes all people despite the nationality or citizenship to take part on its’ activities. From the very beginning the Metka house has also provided employment for immigrants. (Yle 2015.)

1.PICTURE. Photo from the front of the Metka house. Photo from the website of Metka house, photographer unknown.



Different projects have formed the core of the activities of Metka house from the start. The first project at the house was called Leijat and it was funded by the European Social Fund. The idea of the project was that immigrants themselves develop the services targeted to

immigrants and then put the services into practice. Another target of the project was to survey the immigrants' need for services together with the University of Eastern Finland and develop pilot operations based on of the findings. (Metka-kylätalo 2018b & Yle 2015.) After the first project, Leijat, the Somali Family Association of Lieksa and Metka house have had several other projects which aim has been for example to spread the know-how of multicultural family relations and sexual rights and organise cultural activities for children. In the most recent project that started in February 2018 the target is to support the immigrants' participation and create new ways for organising activities. (Metka-kylätalo 2018c.)

2.PICTURE. Children participating Metakka project. Photo from the website of Metka house, photographer unknown.



The association organises events and various activities or offers a place for them. The Somali Family Association has also organised study trips to different locations in Finland.

The association bought a property on Rantalantie in Lieksa in 2015 in order to have a place for the association's multicultural operations. This house, currently named as Metka house, is located nearby the Lieksa town center and is built in 1946 and has previously been used as a practice and residential building for a municipal's doctor (Monikulttuurisuuden edistäminen selvitys, Lieksan Somaliperheyhdistys 2015). The house was empty for many

years until the Somali Family Association of Lieksa bought it (Metka-kylätalo 2019d). From the beginning the aim of the association has been to renovate the building and start diverse services and entrepreneurship in its premises. The work is already under way and greater part of the work is already done. The activities or services of The Somali Family Association include for example peer support, guidance, counselling services, trainings and workshops. Metka house is open for everyone from Monday to Thursday and advertises on its website that anyone can come to visit the house to ask for advice, to volunteer, make a working practise, organise a party, watch television or just spend some time and meet people, just to mention a few of the services or functions that the Metka house has. (Metka-kylätalo 2018a. & Metka-kylätalo 2018d.)

3.PICTURE. Interior of Metka house. Photo from the website of Metka house, photographer unknown.



3 FRAMING THE RESEARCH TOPIC

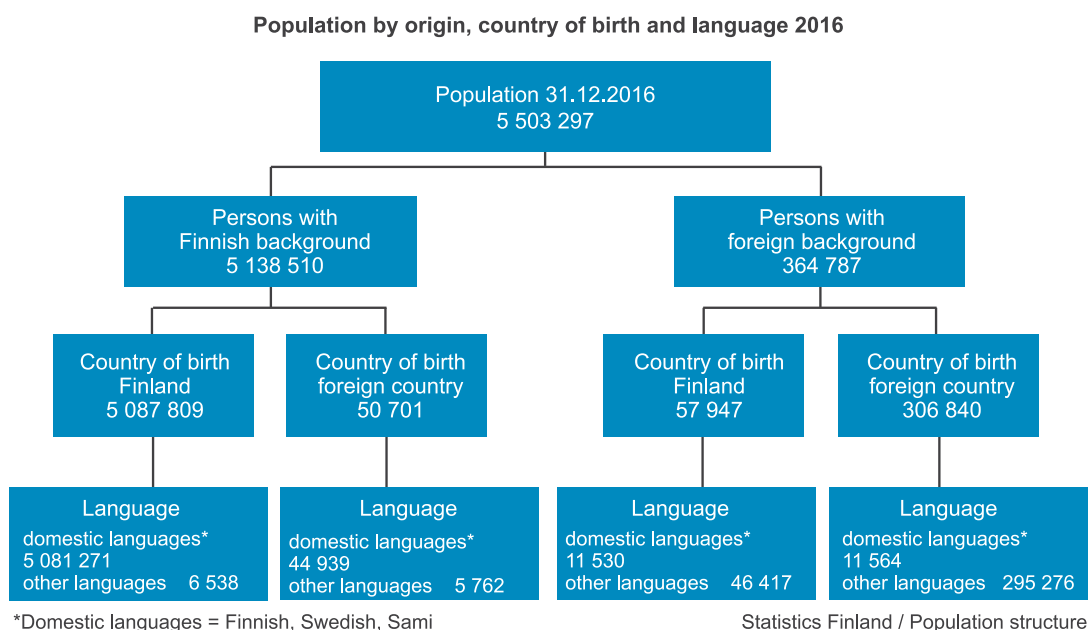
3.1 History and present statistics of migration in Finland

Immigration is a rather new phenomena in Finland and Finland has been a country of emigration for the most time of its history. After the Second World War immigration occurred mainly between Finland and Sweden and in the 1980s' biggest immigration group in Finland were Swedish people, most of whom had Finnish descent. (Rapo 2011 & Tilastokeskus 2012.) In 1990's the amount of immigrants increased temporally as the first refugees from Somalia arrived to Finland and Ingrians' got the status of returnee to Finland. In 1990s' also people from former area of Yugoslavia moved to Finland as refugees (Tilastokeskus 2012.) After the peak in arrival of Ingrian returnees and refugees from Somalia level of immigration decreased until the European Union enlargement in the end of 1990's when free movement of people made migration easier for people in new member countries, such as Estonia. (Rapo 2011.) The amount of foreigners in Finland has increased by approximately 10 000 people each year since year 2007 and according to Central Statistical Office of Finland (2012) the absolute yearly growth was highest at year 1991 and 2009 nevertheless year 2015 and year 2016 might be the highest peaks in immigration in Finland due to refugees fleeing war in Syria and its neighbouring countries albeit many of whom have left the country voluntarily or involuntarily after their arrival. Finland is part of the global history of migration movements but mainly has had a role of emigration country (Martikainen, Saari & Korkiasaari 2013, 54.)

Immigrant as a term covers various people who can be for example returnees, refugees, asylum seekers or emigrants. Generally the term means an individual who has moved to Finland from another country to stay permanently. (Pyykkönen 2007b, 67.) At year 2016 there were 244 000 foreign citizens (Tilastokeskus 2018a), 354 000 foreign language speakers (Tilastokeskus 2018b) , 358 000 foreign born people (Tilastokeskus 2018c) and 365 000 person with foreign background (Tilastokeskus 2018d.) In my thesis I am researching immigrants living in Lieksa which is located in North Karelia in Eastern Finland. The largest groups of immigrants in North Karelia in 2015 were "Russian 2,978, Somali 395, English 200, Estonian 218, Thai 166, German 146, Bengali 107, Chinese 107 and Arabic 102." (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö.) Foreigners are mainly located in the largest cities in Eastern Finland which are Kuopio, Joensuu, Mikkeli, Savonlinna and Varkaus. Biggest

immigrant groups come from Russia and in Eastern Finland almost 5000 people speak Russian as their mother tongue. The second largest group comes from Estonia with 1000 people and after that comes foreigners with Thailand, Myanmar and Somali descent that form a group of approximately 300 persons each. In North Karelia the share of foreign women is slightly higher than the share of foreign men. (Matsson & Kivilä, 2012, 7.)

1.FIGURE. Population by origin, country of birth and language 2016



3.2 Integration legislation and policies in European and national level

The act of the Promotion of Immigrant Integration guides integration and officials' work regarding integration in Finland. Responsible authority for the preparation of issues related to integration in Finland is the Ministry of Employment and Economy. According to the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, Immigrants' have both responsibilities and rights when integrating in the society. Immigrants should adapt themselves to Finnish society and acquire new skills, competences and practices which help them actively participate in the life of their new home country. (1386/2010; *Kotoutumislaki*). Immigrants should learn Finnish or Swedish language at certain level and also gaining knowledge of Finnish society

is desirable. Immigrants should be aware of their rights and duties in the society and also feel welcome (1386/2010; *Kotoutumislaki*.)

The latest public integration programme for years 2016-2019 was introduced 8th of September 2016 when Finnish government approved it. The integration programme is based on the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010; *Kotoutumislaki*). Finnish government is responsible for developing integration nationwide. Current government's government platform's alignments are taken into consideration in public integration programme. Four target areas in the public integration plan during year 2016-2019 are following: to bring immigrant's own culture's strengths in use for Finnish innovation possibilities, enhance integration by administrative co-operation, increase states' and municipalities co-work in work with immigrants under international protection, encourage open discussion about immigration politics but not tolerating racism. (Valtion kotouttamisohjelma vuosille 2016-2019.) The need to start integration process more quickly, meaning for example finding a place to live in a municipality (*kuntapaikka*), finding faster routes and better access to education and work life and offer more possibilities in learning Finnish or Swedish are highlighted when integration of asylum seekers is discussed in the integration programme. Increasing the participation to organisations and leisure activities is also mentioned in the public integration programme.

The immigrant herself has though the key role in successful integration process regarding to the integration programme. In the programme it is stated that successful integration rises from the immigrant herself and her own activity and society's role is just to support this process by offering different services and help. In the integration programme integration is strongly linked to immigrant's education, employment and learning the language. It is also stated in the programme that successful integration and employment can be answers to the challenges that Finnish dependency ratio and job market are currently facing. The civil society is also mentioned in the programme and immigrants' higher participation to the civil society is seen desirable. Therefore third sector has recognized role in integration at some level at least. (Valtion kotouttamisohjelma vuosille 2016-2019.)

European Union's action to make integration work are divided in four different policy areas that are employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. Indicators for employment are employment rate, activity rate and unemployment rate. In the field of

education the indicators are for example the highest educational achievement, share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science, share of early leavers from education and training. Social inclusion as for is measured by median net income, the share of population perceiving their health status as good or poor and ratio of property owners to non-property owners among immigrants and the total population. The active citizenship consist of the share of immigrants that have acquired citizenship, the share of immigrants holding a permanent or long-term residence permits and the share of immigrants among elected representatives. (European website of integration, EU actions to make integration work 2016.)

I would like to emphasize that in these four policy areas the active citizenship has very little importance even though it is one of the main policy areas. In the European Union actions to make integration work the integration is mostly measured by how hard-working, successful and educated immigrant is. The policy area of active citizenship includes monitoring how many immigrants have residence permits and how many of them have acquired a citizenship – things which are not in the hands of immigrants themselves. (European website of integration, EU actions to make integration work 2016.) Taking the civil society better into account when measuring the success of integration could give agency for people themselves.

The common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in European Union were formed in 2004 and reaffirmed by the Council of European Union in 2014. There is in total 11 Common Basic Principles. (European website of integration, EU actions to make integration work, 2016.) In European Union's Common Basic Principles in integration of immigrants the two-way integration is acknowledged, integration should happen in both ways so that also majority population is also in the process of adapting in the changing society and relations thus at the same time immigrants are required to respect the values of European Union and familiarize oneself with the basic knowledge of the host society. Common basic principles guarantee the practice of diverse religions and cultures unless they are in contradiction with European rights or national laws. In the principles education and employment play an important role. Education is mentioned to be central for integration as well immigrants' participation to education has important role in producing successful and active members of society (European website of integration, EU actions to make integration work, 2016.)

The term integration became in use in Finland in the 1990s' after the integration act (493/1999) passed. In Finnish integration policies and discussions there is two different terms related to the matter: *kotoutuminen* and *kotouttaa*. Former term means the process when immigrant and society interact and immigrant gets knowledge and skills to act in Finnish society and work life while supporting the maintenance of her own cultural background or mother tongue. Latter means the actions and services that state and other agents offer with a view to integrating the immigrant. (Lautiola, 2013,15.) The term integration gains various meanings despite the juridical definition, it can mean the process where immigrant adapts in the new society or the destination of integration itself. Notable is that both in European Union common basic principles in integration of immigrants and in Finnish national legislation integration is seen as two-way process that requests also the major population and society to take part in the integration. (Forsander, Ekholm & Hautamäki 2001, 32).

According to Haverinen (2016, 20) the Finnish integration policy can be seen linking to the European multicultural trend trough a certain way of thinking and acting regarding to immigration policy in conjunction with different parties. The target in integration has been to make the immigrants as equal part of the society, ensure same possibilities as an individual in the society while having a right to sustain their own ethnical or cultural identity, language and lifestyle. Behind these policies has been the idea of meaning and value of cultural rights that are essential part of the modern and open society. (Haverinen 2016, 20). According to this policy, every culture is seen valuable and benefitting the society in global competition but also as a way of increasing social, political and cultural dynamic trough intercultural dialogue. (Haverinen 2016, 20-21). Finnish integration policy has been awarded by its attitude towards minority groups and those group's members right's in Migrant Integration Policy Index comparison . In year 2014 Finland was ranked 4th out of 38 countries in the foregoing Index (Migration Integration Policy Index 2015 & Haverinen 2016, 21).

In migration research immigrant's place and integration in new environment and community has been studied a lot contrary to lesser interest in research field towards receiving communities' integration or adaption to immigrants. Immigrants and immigrant groups' belonging and non-belonging or exclusion are central in the research field. (Forsander et al. 2001, 32). Forsander et al. (2001, 32) names different integration strategies existing and

studied in the field that are assimilation, acculturation and adaption, later known as integration.

According to Finnish legislation immigrants are expected to find a working place and arrange housing or in another way find and organize satisfactory living conditions for oneself. Immigrants are also expected to learn new skills and gain knowledge to survive in the society yet they should not abandon their own ethnic background but combine these cultures and traditions. Also immigrant should adapt mentally to these changes and not only in practice. (Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2006, 13.) There is a lot of expectations and demands for immigrants that they need to fulfill if they wish to be acknowledged as integrated individuals in the Finnish society. In the Finnish law the two-way integration that would engage both majority population and the immigrants to the integration process is barely visible both in the legislation and also in the integration programme. Seems that even though two-way integration is supported in official level it does not show in public discussion or in practicalities.

According to Martikainen & Tiilikainen (2007) ethnicity stands for one's own experience of her identity as a part of certain ethnic group. Though identity is partly based on one's own experience, Martikainen & Tiilikainen state that also the power structure of certain society plays a role when negotiating ethnicities. According to Martikainen & Tiilikainen those ethnicities who have the less power in society have the smallest possibility in negotiating and defining their ethnicity. Ethnicity is not solely understood as unchangeable and something linked to the biological heredity but the current literature brings exempli gratia the flexibility and changeability of ethnicity to the discussion. (Martikainen & Tiilikainen, 2007). Perhoniemi & Jasinkaja-Lahti (2006, 70) state that there are several things that have an impact on how successfully immigrant is able to integrate. Experiences of discrimination, financial resources and immigrants' own attitude towards acculturation, among other things, do have an influence on the process in becoming a full member of society.

The first integration act (493/1999) was later repealed and replaced with Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) and in addition to earlier legislation "--the purpose of the Act is also to promote gender equality and non-discrimination and positive interaction between different population groups. In the integration act (493/1999) right to integration plan (*kotouttamisuunnitelma*) was only for unemployed immigrants and

immigrants who were customers of social services. In the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) rights for these services were updated to meet the present situation where Finland was more international and immigrants have more diverse backgrounds and reasons for migrating.

Today all the immigrants coming to Finland are entitled for immigration services already in the early stage when moving to the country. The obligation for planning and taking care of immigrants' integration is mainly duty of employment authorities unless the immigrant is not, for several reasons, capable to work, in such situation the responsibility is on officials in social work (Vuori 2012, 238-23.) Immigrant is obligated to take part to in planning her own integration process which means all the measures made to foster the process of learning how one should act in a society in question (Vuori 2012, 239.) Work and education have important role in making the integration plan; the plan may include for example education in Finnish or Swedish language, education in different schools, work practice or applying the work place but also leisure time activities that support the integration process of the customer. Among all these actions part of integration services is immigrants' right to get information and advices to organize her life in a host country (Vuori 2012, 239.)

The act underlines also co-operation with organisations for example when making municipal integration plans (Lautiola 2013, 15-16.) In national level integration is governed by integration agenda that includes focus points from government platform and in agenda for years 2012-2015 one important part was communal integration. In the integration plan organisations' share for integration is recognized and organisations are seen as important supplement to official integration services (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2012). Officials follow and evaluate integration from legislative point of view. For example Ministry of Labour, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education and many municipalities have made reports on how the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration is put into practice and what are the immigrants' experiences (Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2006, 14-15.)

Vuori (2012, 239-240) states that integration services are not offered only by the authorities but also many other actors such as teachers and project workers and actually every person who, in their work, are in touch with immigrants and to whom such interaction belong as a part of their work. I do think that important part of integration is also all the encounters,

relationships and communities that welcome the people who have moved to Finland yet it is sure that such aspect in one's integration process might be difficult to observe and measure.

4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Migration movements

People have always moved and the reasons for moving have been various; they move for example in search for better life or living conditions, to escape poverty, environmental catastrophes or conflicts (Castles, De haas & Miller 2014, 5). Among these things people move because of studies, love, family or because they just simply want to have experiences and adventures. Migration is much more and almost always more difficult process than just thinking about push and pull factors after which moving to a new country seeking for better life and then getting assimilated in the new location and society. Migration may have big influence on migrants' lives and possibly their offspring and future generations' lives too so it is usually not explicable in simplistic models. Migration has effects on both sending and receiving countries in various terms though vast majority of people are not migrants themselves. According to Castles et al. (2014, 27) approximately 97 percent of people in the world are not classified as international migrants but migration has an effect on their communities and way of live in varying extent. Today approximately half of the immigrants are women but in early 1990s' most of the immigrants coming to Finland were men (Matsson & Kivilä 2012, 10, Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2007, 15.)

Migration is a highly governed and monitored phenomena. Nation states control their borders since the nation state as an institution relies on a certain bordered and exclusive area that retains only people who have a legal right to be there. People from different countries, social classes, ages and genders have very different, varying and also unequal positions as migrants. When talking about immigration and immigrants it should be clarified who we actually mean. There is several ways how immigrants are defined in Finland, for example in statistics immigrants can be classified by nationality, country of origin, language or descent and each classification have an impact on the amount of population who we are researching (Rapo, 2011). In my thesis my informants vary by their descents and mother tongue but all of them have been born in another country and moved to Finland later in their lives.

In 2014 the most common reason to move to Finland was due to family and love (54%) and for adults family relations have had the biggest influence on the migration decision (47%). Less than one fifth has moved in Finland due to work (18%) and every tenth of migrants mentioned studying for the most important reason to move into the country (10%). In 2014 need for humanitarian protection was the most important reason to enter the country for every tenth of immigrants (11%). The rest eight percent consist of several smaller reasons such as climate or wish to explore one's Finnish ancestry (Tilastokeskus 2015.)

Finland has always been multicultural in the sense that people with several different cultures have been living side by side. Nevertheless, today it can be said that the country is more multicultural than ever; variety of people's background and ethnicity is wider than before due to increased immigration (Rastas, Huttunen & Löytty 2005, 16-17.) According to Rastas et al. (2005, 20) multiculturalism is a very contested and vague term that has to be defined in the context of each country and its' discussions about multiculturalism. Simply it can be said that multiculturalism is a situation where many different cultures live next to each other. Rastas et al. (2005, 22) call attention to the Finnish discussion where multiculturalism is perceived as young and new phenomena which by their definition is not true.

4.2 An antiracist and feminist approach

Universalism in science means that for example nationality, gender or social status of researcher should not have an impact on the research yet it is undeniable that these matters do have an impact on how researcher constructs and views the world. Therefore universalism cannot be perfectly achieved. Universalism should be pursued in heuristic way meaning that researcher should aim at it despite never fully reaching it (Kantola, Koskinen & Räsänen 2004, 15-16.) Researcher should also recognize the possible motives that they have and uncover them in the research so that the reader can critically read the research from the given standpoint. In my study I am interested especially in women living in rural area and their perceptions and thoughts about my topic at the same time being woman from countryside myself. The research position and its conscious choice has an important role in my research as one target in my study is female empowerment meaning that my informants are able to get their (female) voice heard. Migration is gendered phenomena meaning that women and men often have different reasons and motives when migrating yet other things such as age, education, language skills and personal characteristics have an impact too.

(Martikainen&Tiilikainen, 2007, 15.) Martikainen&Tiilikainen (2007, 15) state that gender has to be taken into consideration in migration research; not only females but all genders.

Martikainen & Tiilikainen (2007, 21) state that the gender approach came to migration research in the late 1960s' due to feminist critique. Feminist critique underlined that if gender is not taken into consideration when making research we cannot fully understand genders, phenomenon related to gender and even the gendered structures might stay hidden. Gender has an influence on the reasons why people migrate; women are traditionally seen as the ones' who take care of cultural community, also when settling to a new country. Men as for are often the pioneer migrants that leave first and usually are the ones who take a risk when using dangerous or long routes to country in target (Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2007, 21.)

Immigrant women do occur in the discussion about multiculturalism, migration and integration but often they do not get their voice heard. In Finnish discussion about immigrant women the conversation easily turns to differences between "Finnish culture" and the ethnicity that immigrant is representing. Especially differences in and question about family relations, women's clothing, woman rights and equality feature in the discussion (Keskinen, Vuori & Hirsiaho 2012, 21). It is problematic if the discussion about immigrant women and their rights, problems and possible oppression is dominated by people who are not women themselves and who represent the majority population.

Feminist research has its roots in 1960s' and 1970s' radical feminist movements and its target is to fight inequality in society and bring out matters' related to women and other marginalized groups trying to get their voice heard. It also challenges the prevailing power structures and knowledge system (Suoranta & Ryyänen 2014, 127-128.) Migration research has earlier been dominated by stories and experiences of men where as women have been more like silent and inactive followers of their spouses and families. Feminist movement is challenging the way how power is divided in the society and it is soldiering on to change this power structure and that way highlight how it effects on women and other marginalized groups (Suoranta & Ryyänen, 2014, 130.)

In her doctoral dissertation Rastas (2007, 56-58) tells about antiracist scientific approach and how the choice of such approach create a clear political antiracist agenda. Like Rastas (2007) I am committed to antiracist approach in my thesis and additionally feminist approach has played a role in constructing my research frame and research questions. According to Rastas

(2007) antiracist approach is based on following questions: “What new does the research question or the research topic bring to the discussion of racism, especially in Finland? Whose viewpoint it highlights? Could the research help people to structure their own experiences of racism, to help people understand others experiences of racism or does it create tools to prevent or resist racism?” (Rastas 2007, 56.) Rastas (2007) states that antiracism is a principle that guides her work and produces a demand to also discuss research and the customs how research is done as none of the research fields are free of racism. Reflexive research approach where researcher considers the power relations and the limits of her own knowledge in relation to the informants is also very important part of antiracist research approach. (Rastas 2007, 58) Choosing the antiracist approach in research raises questions of researchers political role and its advantages but also its limits. It is surely worth of underlining that researchers political aspirations are not the only steering principle for her study but also other knowledge interests have important role. Rastas (2007, 58) notes also that antiracist strategies might support essentialist ideas of race or ethnicity which calls for a reflexive approach even more.

Although I am not researching racism in my thesis I have chosen an antiracist approach in my study as in my opinion it is natural and even necessary for any research that concerns immigration and immigrants. Besides being a student of social sciences I am an active operator in non-governmental organisations and antiracism is inseparable part of me as an activist. Therefore I find antiracist approach natural way of constructing my research also. Even albeit Rastas is discussing only about antiracist approach in her research I think that a feminist approach can be easily combined with antiracist approach in research. In theories of intersectional feminism the overlapping roles that individuals and groups gain and these roles’ effect on the positions and power structures is acknowledged. As a researcher I am pursuing to become more aware of my own position in relation to the researched matter and I am also actively trying to challenge the prejudices that I have. In my thesis I am aiming to highlight the importance of the aspect of gender for research and also trying to offer a space for women to get their ideas and opinions heard in the integration research. During my research process I noticed that sometimes it was hard to silence my own voice and ideas in favour of the women who have the practical knowledge of my research topic. I have reflected my text, the language I use and the claims that I make according to my data and I hope that my reflections and the results that I will present in the end will help other people in their

goals of developing better services, creating more inclusive cultures to NGO's but also for a critical thinking of one's own prejudices and courses of action.

4.3 Research on non-governmental organisations

Organisations are unions formed by at least three members. Usually members of organisations share the same values, ideas or interests. Organisations are not aiming for profit and even if they do the money is used for the benefit of the organisation and its members (Pyykkönen 2007b, 32). Third sector includes associations, organisations, cooperatives and foundations (Lautiola 2013, 11).

The amount of non-governmental organisations founded by immigrants in Finland started to arise in the mid-nineties due to the increase in number of immigrants and variety in their background. Finnish state began to encourage immigrants to establish their own organisations at that time and between 1997 and 2002 immigrant's organisations were established most actively. There is several reasons why immigrants establish their own organisations and why some immigrant groups are more active in founding their own NGO's in comparison to others. Regarding to Pyykkönen (2007a) organisations can work as defence mechanism towards assimilation in new environment and help to maintain familiar cultural and language contacts from country of origin. On the other hand NGO's may also ease and support integration in the new environment. (Pyykkönen 2007a, 107 & Työministeriö 1997, 27,55,56.)

Non-governmental organisations have important knowledge regarding to immigration, immigrants and their integration. Immigrant's own organisations' can educate or produce information material to officials or other public institutions regarding to the communities they have specific knowledge about. Non-governmental organisations may also have important role in lobbying for the certain community, organizing information and bring out flaws or matters that are significant for community's members. Organisation's like this might have even more important role in the future as a consultant or expert when multicultural know-how is in greater demand (Niessen & Schiebel, 2007.)

Pyykkönen (2007b) states that international research of immigrant organisations has found mutual meanings and missions for these organisations. Immigrant organisations have an

important role in supporting survival of immigrant in new environment; organisations may decrease social, economical and cultural risks that occur from migration in the lives of migrants. These organisations also work as a cultural interpreters in new environments by supporting the culture of immigrants and “modifying” the culture and customs to fit better the dominant culture of the host country. One common finding in the research field is that it seems that national and ethnic groups form smaller groups in diaspora instead of collecting all the immigrants or ethnicities in a one or few bigger organisations. One finding is that immigrant organisations do not only support immigrants and their needs but also officials who are responsible for the integration of immigrants. Communicating with organisations instead of individual immigrants is easier and more effective and it enables officials to govern the integration process via organisations. (Pyykkönen 2007b, 75.)

Non-governmental organisations have various roles in their action. They provide community and peer support, work as an interest group and expert for their members and offer support and supplement to the authoritative work as well. (Ekholm 2015, 9.) As NGO’s often work with small budgets and with help of unpaid volunteers, municipalities and other bodies working with immigrant’s integration could provide financial or other support for NGO’s so that they could develop their skills. NGO’s could benefit from premises, training for organisational work and working with finances, providing financial support and taking NGO’s into account when shopping around with procurements by using social criteria. (Ekholm 2015, 5.) Immigrants are not only service users but also developers and providers. That should be taken into account when planning regional and municipal strategies for immigrant’s integration and organisation strategies. (Ekholm 2015, 5.)

According to Ekholm (2015, 17) organisations have many strenghts compared to officials in the way services are organised and how they work. Whereas officials are often people who belong to the majority population immigrant organisations might be easier body to identify for immigrant in need of services because of shared experiences; both service provider and the service users are immigrants and the service provider might have been in a similar situation than the person who is in need of help. As organisational work is not tied to office hours they are easier to approach. In different kinds of problems people might approach organisations that they trust in instead of waiting for the certain office to open (Ekholm 2015, 17). Low threshold policy is characteristic to organisations; people might find it easier to contact familiar organisation and ask for help and advice in various situations. Experienced

organisations can often support the whole family by contacting different officials such as health center and register office. Organisations can also help people with filling applications and other papers, interpreting and simply offering information about different services available. (Ekholm 2015, 18.)

Immigrant organisations have important role also in reaching elusive groups of people and producing knowledge about how well the existing public services reach various population groups and how the services could be changed to better meet the needs of different groups of people. Organisations are also often more adaptable and mobile than administrative organisations. NGO's can spread the information via grapevine, go to people's homes to meet them and offer information in the customers language represented by a person from the same county of origin. Organisations offer a place for networking, taking part to the various activities and meeting other people and thus has an important role in building self-respect, capability and self-care (Ekholm 2015, 18.) People who have once received help may later be the helpers themselves – they are not tied to the position of person in need.

Ekholm (2015, 27) states that immigrant organisations and people working in them do not only interpret and translate the language but also explain the structures that might differ in the home and host societies. Because the initial idea behind the work of organisations has been mutual support and help it is not surprising that approachability, flexibility and peer support are the strengths when it comes to NGO's (Ekholm 2015, 50). Non-governmental organisations are also space for producing nationality as people participating the activities of NGO's are socialized to particular courses of action. NGO's can provide place for immigrants to take part to the society, activate and take care of each other but NGO's also direct them to become certain kind of subjects in the given operational environment. (Pyykkönen 2007b, 22.)

4.4 Migration and integration theories

Term integration has its roots in Latin word integer which means harmonious. Integration gains meanings as “--harmony, becoming one and unification” (Pyykkönen 2007b, 37). As a political ideology integration means making the whole society harmonious which requires that minorities and the major population are in close interaction while at the same time both groups can remain their own cultural identity. Regarding to Pyykkönen ideal situation would

be that both minorities and the major population would learn from each other, exchange ideas, values and customs but in practise it often is so that minorities become a member of majority population and its culture instead of building bilateral culture. When it comes to legislation and integration programmes minorities are expected to learn several things, such as values and language, to be able to live in the society. Minorities are expected to go through the same socialisation process as major population who have the advantage that they have been part of the society of their whole life in most cases. (Pykkönen 2007b, 37-38.) It is artificial to discuss about the culture of majority population and the cultures of minority populations because people have very different and even overlapping identities and cultures that are not limited by their ethnicity or country of origin. Expecting immigrants to get to know the Finnish culture and manners might be unattainable goal as the majority population in Finland do not necessarily share the same culture among each other.

1. TABLE. Berry's acculturation model

Interaction with one's own ethnic group

→

	Yes	No
Interaction with majority population	Yes	No
	Integration	Assimilation
	Separation	Marginalisation

↓

John Berry has defined acculturation to be a process where individual is in touch with cultural environment that differs from customary environment in person's country of origin. Berry's acculturation model has been criticized as it presents cultures as stable element and simplifies structures in society. Despite critics, regarding to Forsander, Ekholm & Hautaniemi (2001, 37), Berry's model has clarified the naming and defining concepts in integration research. Berry has divided acculturation attitude to four different concepts that are integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. In Berry's model integration

means that person associates oneself to a certain ethnic group and values belonging in it but also work in other ethnic groups or with people who belong to different ethnic groups. (Forsander et al. 2001, 37.) Regarding to Berry separation as for means strategy where person act only with one's own ethnic group and avoids contact with other groups fearing that communication with other groups, such as majority population, would lead to loss of own ethnic identity, culture or habits. Segregation is strategy where major population excludes ethnic group (Forsander et al. 2001, 37.) According to Berry marginalization means situation where individual does not want to be part of one's own ethnic group or reference group but either does not identify to major population or other ethnic groups. In assimilation strategy person abandons the ethnic group she or he used to identify herself and instead feels belonging or strives to be part of the major population (Forsander et al. 2001, 37-38.) The Berry's model of integration continues the traditional idea of nation state or nationality group that share the same culture. The model shows integration as assimilation, collision or combination of two different cultural groups that are very restricted by their nature. In reality people coming from the same nation states or regions might have very different cultures among others even if they would share for example the same religion, traditions or language. In the light of my empirical data Berry's model seems too simple as my interviewees were in close interaction with several different ethnicities and their feeling of settling in was not limited only to their interaction activity with different groups.

Forsander et al. (2001, 38-39) states that when discussing integration there is only two groups considered: the majority population and the ethnic minority or individual. In these cases the majority population and its' culture are often represented as a stabile institution where the ethnic minority is expected to integrate, at least this setting has been in the center of the migration research field. Forsander et al. (2001, 38-39) asks critically if these groups mentioned earlier are really existing at least in the sense that they would be uniform and clear groups that consist of people with similar or same ethnicity and culture. Forsander et al. (2001, 39) highlights paradox where at the same time major population discusses about break down of the common culture in the society and the heterogenous nature of the culture is very visible but when it comes to the integration of immigrants the Finnish culture is suddenly presented as uniform and unitary. From Forsanders' critical notions we can derive a question about what is the culture that immigrants are supposed to integrate in. In Finnish discussion multiculturalism is understood as something that comes from the outside and is something "new" or "extra" in the already existing Finnish culture. The terms used about

immigrants reflect the ideas and categories about Finland, Finnish people and those who do not belong – once again the Finnish people and the society appear uniform and like-minded and immigrants possibly get the role of threat to the national cohesion (Forsander et al. 2001, 201-202.) Portes & Rumbaut (2001, 45) state that both the host society and the immigrant population are heterogenous and people in these groups differ from each other for example by their social class. Even those immigrants with same nationality do not form a homogenous group but they are often divided by the timing of their arrival and their generation. The timing of their arrival and context of the reception has an effect on how their assimilation process forms.

Previously employment has not been among the most important factors when discussing immigrants' integration but it has lately gained a very important role in the Finnish integration discussion. At present immigrants' employment is seen as a sign of successful integration whereas migrant without a workplace does not get the social status of belonging or being integrated that easily. At the same time person belonging to the majority population would not necessarily lose their role as integrated part of society even when facing unemployment (Forsander et al. 2001, 205.)

Forsander et al. (2001, 41) states that integration can be interpreted in two ways; either as a cohesion in a system consisted of different parts or external parts' entry to already existing system. When discussing integration in this way it can be either seen as a process where people are aiming to be members of group or as a state where existing system is trying to produce cohesion between different people or member groups. In Finnish context affluent society plays an important role when discussing the integration. Regarding to Forsander et al. (2001, 41) in the Nordic welfare system the goal is that everyone is integrated in the society through work, education or other key institutions and in case integration fails for some reason individual is considered as excluded from the society.

Vuori (2012, 235-236) uses the concept of everyday citizenship when discussing the skills and the knowledge that one needs to become a fully authorized and capable member of society and states that also Finnish citizens born in Finland go through the learning process to gain these skills and know-how. Vuori (2012, 236) though underlines that for Finnish people this process is easier because of the unquestioned position in majority population and

the mother language being the official language of Finland. Foreign descent or background forces people to put more effort in getting the knowledge at same stage.

Vuori (2012, 235-236) states that integration is a process where person has to learn certain operation models and information to be able to survive in their everyday life and the process builds on all the contacts, institutions and people that immigrant has in the host country. She claims that integration does not have clear starting or ending point but is continuous process that aims to the situation where the person can feel belonging to the society which as for constructs of the relationship between individuals and government officials (Vuori 2012, 135.) Vuori (2012, 236) underlines that everyday-citizenship is not only getting citizenship, asylum or work place but it is also learning all this hidden information that is existing in the society, institutions and in interaction between people but also between people and institutions.

Integration does not apply only to immigrants but also major population living in Finland but immigrants might face larger demands from the different parts in life when trying to be part of the society. Forsander et al. (2001, 42) explains that work has a significant role in integration in Finland and it is the most important way for individual to show that they are socially acceptable. When person is not working for a reason or another they should do something socially accepted instead such as study. To be integrated a person is expected to share the values and norms of society and cohesion in the society relies on reproducing these factors through people who follow the existing norms (Forsander et al. 2001, 41.) As there is no cohesion among the majority population's culture immigrant are facing demands that are difficult to fulfill. There is several methods though that are in use when integrating people in the society that are for example offering work placement or rehabilitation. However these methods are not usually voluntary but people are expected to participate in actions of integrating at the risk to be sanctioned (Forsander et al. 2001, 42-43.) Forsander et al. (2001, 195) states that employment statistics have a pivotal role in Finnish inclusion discussion and employment of immigrants is getting more and more topical when discussing immigration.

Integration gains various meanings in practical discussions. Integration may refer to the process and destination migrant is going through in the new society, but also the first three years in the country when immigrant is entitled to certain integrational services. In Finnish

legislation but also in the discussion on European Union level the integration is understood as a two-way process which means that the integration is not a process that only immigrant would go through but also the host society and major population are part of it. (Lautiola 2013, 15.)

Various kinds of organisations take part to practical integration work and these non-profit and mainly voluntary-based actors can be lumped together under the term third-sector. Some of the third-sector actors are rather small ones working only on local level but also national, bigger organised who may have established position as an expert organisation such as Väestöliitto but also international actors working in many levels all over the world, such as the Red Cross. Latter mentioned organisations are often seen as official actors more than third-sector actors and the Red Cross even has unique position as a supporting actor in certain activities based on Finnish law. Local third-sector actors participating to work supporting immigrant's integration vary from sports clubs to women's organisations and multi-cultural organisations. Some of the organisations focus on anti-violence, anti-racism, supporting women's rights, promoting multi-cultural sports and supporting immigrant's own language and culture. (Lautiola 2013, 19.)

5 METHODOLOGY

In my thesis I am interested in what does integration mean for immigrant women in rural Finland and how non-governmental organisation, in this case Metka house and The Somali Family Association of Lieksa, can support the integration of immigrant women. Furthermore I am discussing the meaning of good life in immigrant's integration. During my discussions with my interviewees the meaning of good life seemed very important factor. My research is qualitative case study for which I collected my empirical data via ten individual semi-structured interviews. In addition to my ten interviews I also used data of one interview that I conducted for another research at the same place. During my stay at Metka village house I also wrote a research diary and wrote down notes of my observations. I used my observations in my analysis to complement the data I collected from the informants in interviews.

5.1 Individual interviews and importance of recognizing the research position

My interview questions were semi-structured, which mean that I had prepared my interview questions before hand so that they are loosely linked to my research theme and research question. The aim in the interviews itself was not to follow the order or even the themes of the questions strictly. All of the interviews were unique and the aim of the discussions was to build on the themes and questions that the informants wanted to concentrate on. Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen (2010, 9) note that questions that researcher asks from interviewees are not the same as research questions. Interviewees are not giving straight answers to the research questions. During the interviews I tried to not direct the discussion too hard and wanted to give the informants possibility to speak freely about the matters they find important for themselves while at the same time tried to keep the discussions in the themes that are interesting from the viewpoint of my research.

This approach turned out very suitable for my research because after conducting the interviews I realised that my presumptions of what kind of data I would have was suddenly calling for update. Luckily I hardly limited the discussion themes with my interviewees and therefore had more versatile data that I would have had if I had strictly followed fixed interview questions. Due to diverse data it was easier for me to rebuild my research questions and formulate a new approach towards my research problem. The order and the outline formulated by the researcher may not be the most suitable for interviewees and therefore the researcher should be open-minded when examining her material (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.) Ruusuvuori et al. (2010, 14) points out that the material may be interpreted as bad if it does not answer the research questions that the researcher has chosen. Instead of accusing the material researcher should allow new ways of reading the material and be able to look the material from another angle and even change or modify the research questions.

When the number of interviewees is small it is better to concentrate on different meanings given to the discussed matter and pay attention to the similarities and differences that can be found between the answers of different interviewees. With a small group of informants researcher should carefully listen what interviewees tell about themselves and about their relation to the matter that is researched instead of trying to give unambiguous answers applying to the whole group. (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, 17.) Therefore in my thesis I

concentrate on one local case, Metka house. Even if I did not limit the themes of discussion too much, when I was transcribing my data I noticed that sometimes I was hurrying too much. I think it requires a huge concentration and also experience from the researcher to understand when it is good to slow down and try to find the right questions to make it easier for the interviewee to tell more about their ideas and opinions in more in-depth.

Researcher should explain according to what principles the research is done and what kind of decisions and definitions are done when proceeding in the research. Researcher should also openly tell about possibly limitations of the research and discuss about how the research data is consisted and how researcher has come up with chosen conclusions. When creating the theme groups for the data to be analyzed it is important to ensure that the criteria for creating the themes are meaningful and commensurable. There is existing several ways to make the categorization of the data easier such as tables, concept maps and other visual tools. The trustworthiness of the researcher and her research gain an important role when evaluating the research and its' credibility since the reliability of quantitative research cannot be evaluated with standardized research instruments. Researcher should ponder how well she is able to open her material to the reader and whether the interpretation of the material is justified. (Ruusuvuori et al.2010, 25-27.) In the following chapters I will tell about the process of collecting the empirical data to my thesis and discuss the challenges that I faced during the process.

I interviewed immigrant women in Lieksa in North Karelia region who participate in a way or another to the activities of Somali Family Association of Lieksa which is a local non-governmental organisation that runs multicultural Metka-House. Metka-house offers several services and activities for immigrants living in Lieksa. The women interviewed were variably active in their involvement in the organization in question. I conducted the interviews in Finnish so one of the requirements for my interviewees were that they had been living in Finland already several years to be able to discuss in chosen language. I did not limit my interviewees in any age group or other variables, the only criteria for my interviewees were that they are immigrants, women, able to communicate in Finnish and that they had taken part in activities of third sector in Finland. The age of the interviewees varied from teenager to women in their sixties. Majority of my interviewees were women from age group 25-34. All other age groups were represented except elderly people and

pensioners. I searched my interviewees via Metka Village house located in Lieksa with great help of Anja Sarasoja who is working at the Metka Village house.

2.TABLE. Age range of interviewees

Age group	Number of interviewees
15-24	1
25-34	4
35-44	2
45-54	2
over 55	1

Almost all of the interviewees had finished at least comprehensive school and approximately half of the interviewees had finished secondary education. Bachelor's degree was the highest degree among the interviewees. Majority of the interviewees in the two lowest age groups were planning to apply for further education. My interviewees represented five different nationalities but to protect the anonymity of my interviewees I am not writing more specifically about my interviewees countries of origin.

The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to one hour and were mainly spoken in Finnish. Due to the inadequate Finnish language skills of two interviewees, those two interviews were conducted in interviewees' mother tongue by using interpreter. I had no possibility to use qualified interpretations in my study because the level of the language skills of my interviewees came to my knowledge shortly before the interviews were taking place and I did not have financial support to use professional interpretation services. One helpful woman at Metka house volunteered to interpret the interviews which brought me into situation where I had to decide whether I can interview people who do not fit in the demands I had in my mind when I planned my interviews, also I had to decide whether I am fine with using interpreter who is not professional. When conducting the interviews via interpreter familiar to my interviewees I also took a risk of that it possibly affected my interviewees in a way of another.

When pondering my own position and my conception of integration in comparison to my interviewees conceptions I started to think do I want to get my interviewees voice heard or my own voice after all. These questions arose to my mind especially when I was reflecting

my presumptions and research questions in the light of my empirical data. It was also difficult to consider what kind of readings are allowed from my empirical data because I did not want to succumb in bolstering up my own ideas in at the expense of my interviewees. I had a certain understanding of how my interviewees would understand integration as a phenomena and process and also I had presumptions about what kind of role NGO's have in the integration process from the viewpoint of my interviewees. During the interviews I realised that my own understanding of the integration is rather rigid and artificial and seemed to retell the narrative familiar from the public integration discussion or the mechanical approach familiar from the authoritative texts. I also noticed that the way I constructed the matter was not the most suitable for my interviewees.

These were very important insights for me because before the interviews I thought I would know my research field and the world of my interviewees rather well but I found out that my viewpoint was an outsider's viewpoint. Because I do not have personal experience of integrating to a new society I approached the process as it would be clear and logical process which integration surely is not. During the interviewees I also found out that immigrants do not discuss only about the relations between majority population and ethnic minority but their networks and interactions are often spreading out in many different directions with several groups and even cross-border, at least this was the case in my research.

When conducting my interviews I noticed that part of them were more fruitful than others. It was due for example the variety in Finnish language skills of my interviewees but also because the different ways of constructing the idea of integration, good life or settling in. With some of my interviewees I was more on the same page where as with some I was afraid if they fully understand what I wanted to find out. Using the interpreter also brought unexpected challenges in my interviewees and their evaluation.

Huttunen (2010, 42) draws attention to the problems that may arise when a researcher uses an interpreter when conducting interviews. When using an interpreter the interviewer has to first of all consider whether she can trust the interpreter but also carefully think whether she is analyzing the speech of interpreter instead of analyzing the answers of interviewee herself. Researcher should also think the possible risk of loosing some meanings and nuances in the interviewees' answers if there is no common language. (Huttunen 2010, 42). I wanted to take the risk and interview also those women who were not able to have the discussion fully

in Finnish as they were willing to participate the discussion but also due to the limitations in time and unavailability of other interviewees. The interview situation was relaxed for me and in my point of view also for the interviewees. After the interviews I was thinking whether the presence of interpreter was relaxing or unnerving for the interviewees. I did not discuss about the interview questions with the interpreter separately before the interviews, apart from interviewing the interpreter herself earlier. Due to this I could not be completely sure if the interpreter fully understood all my questions.

Language and especially its translation was a challenge in my research anyway as I conducted majority of my interviews in Finnish but wrote my analysis and discussions in English. The meanings of what people have said might change a lot when translating from language to another especially if the translator is not professional, which I am not. Due to the risk of losing something when translating my data I have added all the quotes from my empirical data both in Finnish and English to be more transparent but also to give my interviewees a possibility to be understood in the language they were talking in.

5.2 Observing and participating at Metka house

When I started collecting my empirical data I had not planned to also use ethnographic observation as one of my research methods. However I started to keep a research diary during my stay at Metka house. I made notes about what I had seen or experienced while staying with my informants and later realized that I could make a good use of my notes. The research diary can also work as a tool for following the possible changes in researcher's approach and ideas about the research topic but also as a description of the process where researcher is growing together with her research and becoming more confident.

June 2016. Excerpt from my research diary.

“At the first visit to Metka house I conducted only one interview because I was too afraid to ask more people to participate my research. I was pondering how people might react to me and would they be interested in to participate the research, because when I arrived to the Metka house I only told them that I came from the University to get to know the house. “

Kesäkuu 2016. Ote tutkimuspäiväkirjastani.

”Ensimmäisellä vierailullani sain tehtyä yhden haastattelun, mutta en uskaltanut kysymään useampia ihmisiä haastateltavaksi. Haastateltavien valinnassa mietitytti se, miten ihmiset reagoivat minuun, sillä tullessani talolle kerroin lähinnä olevani yliopistolta ja tullut tutustumaan kylätaloon.”

My ethnographical observations offer a good addition to the data that I collected via interviews. Huttunen (2010) ponders that researcher’s theoretical presumptions and impressions become visible in the empirical part of the research when writing research diary. Huttunen suggests that it would be important to write down as many notes of the observations as possible including such remarks that would not seem very essential during the observation or interview. That kind of observation might have very important role later when researcher refines her research questions. (Huttunen 2010, 41-42.) The feelings, and observations that I wrote in my research diary helped me to return to the interviews and take a grip on the atmosphere in certain discussions and encounters when I was writing the analysis and discussions of my thesis.

Ethnography has its roots in anthropology and it has traditionally been used when researching other cultures often in distant locations. It has been used as a research method already from the late 17th century and since then anthropologists wanted to understand cultures’ and everyday life of people in communities not familiar for the researcher. Though ethnography was first research methodology in the field of anthropology that studied distant and unknown places (unknown for the Western world) it has later been used in research conducted also in the immediate surroundings of the researcher. For example in 19th and 20th centuries ethnography was used in researching the urbanisation in United States and later in 19th century it was more and more used when researching school environments and organisations to mentions few (Paloniemi&Collin 2010, 204).

The aim in ethnographic research is to illustrate what happens in the research environment, how people in certain environment see and interpret acts of themselves and other people sharing the same environment. Ethnography is useful research method when a researcher is willing to reveal and structure actions that seem ordinary (Paloniemi&Collin 2010, 205). It is also a useful tool when researcher wants varied and detailed data of the phenomenon in question or when researcher wants to use this method in addition to other research methods aiming to create richer data (Paloniemi&Collin 2010, 205). For example when I was asking

my interviewees about their feelings of safety in Lieksa I was surprised that only few of the participants, on the contrary to my presumption, brought the threat of racism into the discussion. Later on one woman that I had interviewed earlier was singing to a baby in Metka houses' kitchen while we were drinking coffee and in the song she sang that Finland is very racist country.

July 2016. Excerpt from my research diary.

”—When spending time at Metka-house I did not notice barely any signs of a racism in Lieksa that I thought would be one of the most discussed topics. Except for the moment when a mother sang to her baby and in the song she said that Finland is a good country even though it is very racist.”

Heinäkuu 2016. Ote tutkimuspäiväkirjasta.

” --talossa ollessaan [ei] voinut aistia ainakin minun mielessäni Lieksaa leimaavaa rasistista ilmapiiriä. Poislukien hetki, jolloin pikkuvauvan äiti lauloi lapselleen Suomen olevan hyvä maa, vaikkakin tosi rasistinen.”

Ethnographic observation can bring out matters that deepen the information gained through interviewing people. For example observing the interaction between interviewee and her family members and paying attention to people who visit in a space where interview takes place may give valuable information for the researcher. (Huttunen 2010, 44.) When I was conducting interviews I did not pay attention to how things were said but what was said. However I observed what was going on in the interviewing situation and wrote notes about my observations straight after the interview ended or when I was transcribing the audio material. It was notable that part of my interviewees had children along with them in the interview situation, children came to the room where the interview was taking place or called to the informants during the interview. This supported my notion of the huge importance that family and especially children had in my interviewees' life.

5.3 Finding the relevant themes from the data

In my thesis the theoretical framework is built on a few smaller theories or concepts that help in interpreting the analysis. I use thematic analysis method in my thesis which means that I formulate theme groups of the empirical data that are essential in the light of my research questions. Usually the key themes are led from the data by finding things that are connective between different interviews but also by creating the themes derived from the

theory or chosen framework. Themes that are discussed with different interviewees are usually found from every interview yet they often appear in varying extent and in different forms. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

I collected citations from the data and tabulated them under the key themes that I have formed. The key themes are mainly derived from my data but also my theoretical concepts play a role in choosing the themes. I built my analysis theme by theme by starting with the answers that are richest and then put flesh on the bones by adding other informant's answers in interviews and findings that I collected with ethnographic methods while spending time with my interviewees. I worked with my empirical data by using this method with each of the themes after which I wrote a coherent text of each of the themes. After writing the findings in this form I wrote my own interpretation of the data while mirroring it to the theory.

Sometimes new themes might arise from the data and the themes might not follow the thematic structure that researcher has built for the interview. In some cases the themes are very similar to the structure of interview. Researcher should be open to her research data and give the interviewees the chance to really speak their mind in the research (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

I had to soon admit that the themes that I thought would have the most important role in how interviewees structure their sense or integration were not visible in the answers my interviewees gave to me. The research position and its' conscious choice have an important role in my research. One target in my study is feminist empowerment meaning that my informants are able to get their (female) voice heard. I had to do a lot of self-reflection about my position and research motives so that my own thinking and way of structuring or understanding integration would not have too much effect on what I find interesting or important in my data. Mietola (2007) has pondered the position between interviewee and interviewer and their effect on interviewee and the things they are telling in the interview. Mietola states that it is impossible to reach and forward the "real voice" of the interviewee but the understanding of the positions that researcher and informants are having in the situation gives valuable information for the analysis. (Mietola 2007, 162-163.)

July 2016. Excerpt from research diary.

”Today I got a feeling that my research questions are bad. I would like to understand how immigrant women understand integration, analyse it critically and compare it to the official definitions of integration. Today I familiarised with integration indicators and they seemed comprehensive and many things that are mentioned in the indicators arised in the the discussions with my first interviewees. I think I imagined that I would find something ground breaking, something that would crack the tired impressions and attitudes about integration that state and society has. I am wondering now am I more interested in the Finnish public discussion regarding integration and how I would take part to it with my empirical data? Or to take part to the discussions of integration politics? It might be thought that such discourses are harder to define than the statements on the matter from the officials –”

Heinäkuu 2016. Ote tutkimuspäiväkirjasta.

”Tänään tuli sellainen olo, että tutkimuskysymykseni ovat huonoja. Haluaisin ymmärtää sitä, miten maahanmuuttajanaiset ymmärtävät kotoutumisen ja kriittisesti tarkastella ja verrata sitä viranomaisten kotoutusmääritelmiin. Tänään perehdyin Suomen kotoutumisindikaattoreihin ja ne vaikuttivat kattavilta, myös monet niistä asioita jotka ensimmäisessä haastattelussa nousivat esiin, on mainittu myös indikaattoreissa. Kuvittelin ilmeisesti saavani tuloksiksi jotain todella mullistavaa, sellaista tietoa joka murtaa viranomaisten ja yhteiskunnan luutuneita käsityksiä siitä, mitä kotoutuminen tarkoittaa yksilölle. Olenko kuitenkin enemmän kiinnostunut siitä, miten empiiristä aineistoani voisi verrata Suomessa käytävään yhteiskunnallisen kotouttamiskeskusteluun? Kotouttamispolitiikkoihin? Tällaiset diskurssit lienevät vain vaikeammin määriteltävissä kuin se, mitä viranomainen on asiasta lausunut—”

At first I was confused with the fact that I did not get the answers I had assumed to get. My first reaction was that the interviewees were answering “wrongly” or they just didn’t understand what I was trying to say. This was one of the biggest learning outcomes for me in the process of collecting my empirical data – I really got an insight in my interviewee’s ideas and thoughts and had a chance to change my view on some of the topics that I thought I have a good and diverse understanding. However, I came to the conclusion that in order to get my informants voice heard or at least to be able to give them more space, I had to accept the differences in the ways of knowing and talking about things and also accept the limitations of my own thinking and knowledge. The analysis of my empirical data is based

on a thematic analysis in which I am looking for common features and themes or differences in what my interviewees told me.

The interview material does not always follow the themes made by the researcher, but in the interviews one may find something different or unexpected. Ruusuvuori et al. (2010, 11-12) state that there is no clear path to how the material should be analyzed and interpreted, but the researcher's own viewpoint and the way in which the research questions are set affect the interpretation of the material. The classification, analysis and interpretation of the data are closely related, but these stages have different tasks. These different steps are unlikely to happen in chronological order but rather live side by side and for example help to clarify and outline the research problem. During my interviews I found out that even if my interviewees were talking mostly about every-day matters in many cases they were at the same time telling about situations, decision or events in their lives that either supported their attachment to the place in question or weakened it, about their experience of agency and attachment.

I searched for the essential and recurring themes from my empirical data. Part of the themes arose from the themes of my interview questions and part of them I found not until in the interview. After I found these themes I started to collect all those answers from my data that fit under a certain theme. I created an excel-sheet where I tabulated the themes that I decided to use in my analysis and then collected all answers from my data where the following themes were mentioned; integration, third sector, everyday life, language skills, education, work, family and friends, giving and receiving help, Lieksa, activities and safety. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006). Finding and selecting the themes was challenging as some of them were clearly more obvious than others. In some cases my interviewees also had different ideas or opinions in certain questions. In some cases only one or two interviewees discussed a matter that I found important for the analysis and then I was unsure how much weight I can put on one viewpoint. In my analysis section I am aiming to be transparent about how many of my interviewees were supporting a certain idea and if there were opposing ideas or opinions of some questions.

6 INTEGRATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN LIEKSA

In my thesis I am researching what integration means for immigrant women in rural Finland and how non-governmental organisation can support the integration of immigrant women. Integration as a concept and NGO's role in supporting it has played a major role in my thesis right from the beginning but in my analysis I found it useful to look at my empirical data also in relation to the idea of a good or satisfying life. In my analysis I am discussing the meaning of the integration, different tools supporting integration and the indicators for measuring it. I found that it is important to ponder the meaning of good life and empowerment of immigrant women when discussing integration. Integration is a widely used term and even though it gains several meanings depending on the situation and also depending on the person who is at a given time talking about it, it is also a phenomenon that has been studied for decades. Despite my critical notions about integration and how it is measured I am willing to take part in the integration discussion aiming to highlighting the importance of supporting a good life, functioning everyday life and immigrant's own agency and empowerment when pursuing for example immigrant employability.

The reason why I am willing to broaden the term of integration in my research is that when I was conducting my interviews I noticed that integration is not the concept in which immigrant women would structure their lives and experiences as an immigrant in Finland. Integration was discussed several times, but instead of discussing the integration process my interviewees focused in the preconditions of good life such as livelihood, family, friends and giving and receiving help. I have divided my analysis in four sections that deal with integration in authoritative sense, the meaning of good life as an important part of integration, the role of the Metka house as provider for services and support and importance of receiving and giving help in the lives of immigrant women. In this section I will lead the reader to discussion between me and immigrant women living in rural Finland. The discussions took place at the Metka house.

7 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION, WORK AND LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THE INTEGRATION

7.1 Education offers tools for helping others

Almost all of the interviewees had finished primary school either in Finland or were currently studying there. In addition to the primary school they had studied Finnish language both in courses and by themselves. Majority of the interviewees who had finished primary school or secondary school hoped that they could study more. Working in a field of welfare and health, medicine and tourism stood out from the interviewee's speeches. Helping other people was one of the key things that motivated my interviewees to educate themselves in Finland.

“I want to study and then help people. I need to help people in Sudan because there is orphans, all the parents are dying. In Darfour, there is no mother and no father. Children do not have food, they do not have anything. I wish for helping them.”

”Minä haluaisin opiskeleman ja sitten auttamaan ihmisiä. Tarvitsen auttaman, Sudan, koska Sudanissa on orpoja lapsia, kaikki vanhemmat kuolee. Tämä on Darfourissa, ei ole äiti, ei ole isä. Lapsella ei ole ruoka, ei ole mitään. Minä toivon tämmöinen auttamista.”

Educating themselves interested many of my interviewees because they thought it would give better chances in getting a workplace but also it was seen as a way to learn skills which could be used in helping others either in Finland or in their home countries. Getting a study place was though difficult for many and some of the interviewees seemed frustrated because they had a high motivation for studying but despite that they could not get in to school. Without education one's position is seen more fragile and it is visible in the following informant's answer:

“Okay so what kind of person is integrated in Finland in your opinion?”

“I think that a person who does not study anything, does not do anything... you know. For example if you face some problems and you do not know for example how to write, if you cannot do anything by yourself, you cannot do anything and life is a lot more difficult.”

“So you need to study and...”

“Yes, I need to study a lot.”

“Is there any other important things besides studying?”

“If you have studied then you can think doing other things. But if you do not have anything for example if you cannot read no one can help you all the time. You cannot always get an interpreter. For example I spent six months without interpreter, I came to Finland, I did not get the services of interpreter. My life was difficult, during those six months I tried to talk but I made mistakes all the time. But I do not care if I make mistake. I just need to try again.”

”Joo, no millanen ihminen on sun mielestä kotoutunut Suomessa?”

”Minun mielestä ei kotoutus hyvin jos ei opiskele mitään, ei mitään on (-) sinä tiedä. Esimerkiksi jos tulee hankala, mitä tekemistä, jos ei osaa kirjoittaa. jos ei osaa mitään, ei voi mitään tehdä, elämä on vielä vaikeampi.”

”Eli pitää opiskella ja...”

”Joo, minä tarvisin opiskella ja kovasti.”

”No mitä muita tärkeitä asioita vois olla kuin se opiskelu?”

”Muita asioita, jos sinä olet opiskellut sinä voit miettiä mitä tekemistä. Mutta jos sinulla ei ole mitään, jos mieltä jos ei osaa lukeekin, ei osaa ei kukaan voi auttaa. Ja kokoajan ei saa tulkki. Esimerkiks minu, kuusi kuukautta eikä minulla ole mitään tulkki. Minä tulen Suomeen, minä en saa mitään tulkki. Ja mun vaikea elämä jos, ja 6kk minä yritän puhua ja menee kaikki väärin. Mut ei haittaa, jos menee väärin. Vain yrittää.”

Ability to read and write were seen very important because without those skills handling one's life was seen very difficult especially because the resources for interpreter services are unlimited. Education was also seen important because it makes people more aware of their rights and possibilities in life. One interviewee highlighted that especially women and children need to get into school because without education possibilities in life are limited and people will lack of important skills.

”I want to study and help people.”

“Yes.”

“Because we have people in here you cannot do anything. it is important in life that children get into school but at my place [home country] no one studies. Nobody studies and women do not have rights...”

“Are you talking about your home country?”

“Yes.”

”Haluan opiskelee ja haluan auttaa ihmisiä.”

”Joo.”

”Joo, koska meillä on ihmiset, ei osaa mitään. Elämässä mitä on, tärkeää mikä ei oo tärkeää, ja lapsi pitää pääsee opiskele, meil ei ole kukaan opiskele. Ei mitään ja naisilla ei ole oikeus...”

”Puhut sä nyt sun kotimaasta?”

“Joo.”

The varying backgrounds of my interviewees effected on the meanings they gave to education at least in some extent. Whereas some emphasized the meaning of education in pursuing better livelihoods for others education was a question of being able to stand for one's rights.

7.2 Work place – possibility to wealthier and more meaningful life

Some of my interviewees were frustrated on the fact that there is only work practises to offer but not real education or working possibilities. According to Forsander (2001, 41) the aim of the Nordic welfare state is that everyone is part of the society via work, education or other key institution and in the case when an individual fails in getting a work or study place she might be seen outsider of the society. My interviewee told that she had paid attention to the number of immigrants working in Lieksa. She said that on the streets you can see a lot of immigrants but you rarely see them at workplaces.

”Well is it visible that there lives people from different cultures in Lieksa? I mean for example do you see it at the streets, is it somehow visible? Is there such enterprises or so?”

”Yes you can see people always in supermarket, but if you see these people in a shop, school, day care, I mean people from different cultures, they are rarely working in there. It might be that you go to a work practise somewhere and the immigrants who are working are maybe from Russia, Poland or Thailand... But not many [people are working], very few.”

”Miten tota näkyyks Lieksassa et tääl asuu ihmisiä eri kulttuureista... niinku katukuvassa. Onks se jotenki havaittavissa? Onks jotain sellasia yrityksiä tai jotain?”

”Kyllä sinä näät aina ihmiset supermarketissa, mutta kun jos työelämässä (-) näkee paljon, kaupassa, päiväkodissa, koulussa, näet että on eri kulttuurien ihmiset, mutta se töissä harvoin on. Voi olla, että sinä menet jossain ja on työharjoittelija ja... tai sinä katsot töissä on ulkomaalainen on ehkä venäläinen tai puolalainen tai thaimaalainen..Mutta ei paljon, hyvin vähän.”

Often immigrants are in work-trials but not in paid work. Many of my interviewees were willing to work and study but despite their enthusiasm they were not succeeded in their aims. The Metka house supports immigrants in their efforts in seeking for a work place by advising, for example organising events about entrepreneurship and by offering work trial places for immigrants. Part of the employees at Metka house are immigrants.

Metka house offers work for immigrants in different projects both paid work and work-trials. Those who were in work-trials at the house were for example cleaning and taking care of children. Those interviewees who worked currently or had worked previously at the house had gained new information, learned new skills and good experiences. One interviewee mentioned that she was satisfied with her work experience at Metka house because she had learned a lot about Finnish working life and had had a possibility to do different kinds of jobs. My interviewees talked a lot about the problem of unemployment and lack of work places in Lieksa. Many of my interviewees had used a lot of time for seeking a work place but many of them were not succeeded.

“Lieksa is a small place and it is good for me, I have no problem with it. It is nice to be here but the problem is that there is no work. This is a big problem. I want to go to work. Maybe if I do not find work this year, I might move to a big city. I want to go to work.”

”What kind of work would you like to do?”

“I want to work in retirement home because I tried it for eight months and I can do it well. I would like to do that if I find a place.”

“Lieksa on pieni paikka ja hyvä minulla, olen tyytyväinen koska ei ole mitään ongelmaa. Kivaa, mutta vähän ongelma kun ei ole töitä. Tämä on iso ongelma. Minä haluan töihin. Ehkä jos ei tämä vuosi löydä töihin, minä muuttaa iso kaupunki, minä haluan töihin.”

”Minkälaisia töitä sä haluaisit tehdä?”

”Mä haluan vanhainkodissa, koska minä kokeile kahdeksan kuukautta, minä osaan hyvin nyt. Minä haluan ehkä, jos minä löysin.”

Part of my interviewees were planning to move in a bigger city for seeking a work place. They were satisfied in living Lieksa but due to the lack of work places many were forced to move away. Work had a big importance in the lives of my interviewees especially if there was no work available. Women wanted to work to have something to do and to have better income. One my interviewees had started a business but unfortunately the company had not grown big enough for her to get a living. It was a huge disappointed to my interviewee. There was a lot of interest towards entrepreneurship at Metka house, the actives of Metka house planned to start a cafeteria and dressmaker’s shop at the house. One of my interviewees had worked earlier in tourism and said that she benefitted of her good language skills in her work. Work places in the field of tourism are often multi-cultural and therefore the working environment is also international. The interviewee had though faces discrimination at that work place due to her being foreigner.

My interviewees were interested in working in the field of welfare and health, as a doctor and in tourism. Having a work place was seen as a possibility for better income and better quality of life. One of my interviewees told that work is the most important thing in life because without work life is just sitting and holding out with insufficient social security.

Immigrant’s employment has currently an important role in the integration discussion in Finland. But what if the work is not available? Could volunteer work and active participation in third sector replace the lack of paid work? For my informants helping others was very important and it also brought content in their lives. At least currently the respect for un-paid work in organisations is not anywhere near to the respect for paid work.

7.3 Knowing the language makes everyday life easier

My interviewees thought that the Finnish language skills have an important role in dealing with Finnish people and surviving in every-day life Finland. Lack of Finnish skills felt hard according to my interviewees as the language has so important role in every-day life and it is crucial if one wants to be in contact with Finnish people. Also those informants whose language skills were very good felt that it is tiring to take care of things in a foreign language when it is not perfect as all the things take so much time. One of my interviewees told that

she makes a lot of mistakes when speaking or writing in Finnish. Broadly speaking some of my interviewees had felt that as immigrants they need to do many things better compared to Finnish people so that their success would be noticed. According to my interviewee the language makes the communication with Finnish people a lot easier and nicer.

“I have no problems now due to I know the language.. Because I think that if you do not know the language people become a bit [racket, read:people become annoyed]”

“So if you do not speak the language...”

“It might be difficult then.”

“En minä ole mitään ongelma mutta kyllä minä koska minä nyt osaan suomea.. Koska minä ajattelen, että yksi asia on että jos ei osaa tai ymmärrä ja ihmiset tulevat vähän [ölinää, lue:i ihmiset ärsyyntyvät]”

”Ai et jos ei puhu kieltä, ni...”

”Se voi olla vaikeaa.”

According to my interviewee Finnish people might get angry with immigrants if they are not able to communicate in Finnish. One of the interviewees told that knowing the local language and after that knowing the Finnish culture were the most important things when it comes to integration. By knowing the culture interviewee meant not only knowing the legislation but also knowing the customs and being aware of things Finnish people like to do when they have free time. Interviewee told that knowing the Finnish culture does not lead to becoming a Finnish herself but it helps in understanding the cultural differences. When the interviewee came to the Metka house for the first time she had to learn many other cultures besides the Finnish. She said that knowing the different cultures helps when helping other people.

My interviewees had learned Finnish language at least in some extent by discussing with Finnish people. All in all my interviewees were very interested in learning new languages and many of them had knowledge about few different languages already. One of my interviewees studied English especially because otherwise she would have been bored. One of the interviewees wished that people would use mainly Finnish when they are staying at Metka house and mentioned that people from some language groups sometimes speak in their mother tongue which was not familiar to my interviewee. On the other hand she thought that if there was more people speaking her mother tongue she might do the same.

8 BROADENING THE MEANING OF INTEGRATION TO INCLUDE GOOD LIFE

Peoples' lives mainly consist of everyday life. Quite simply this was one of the greatest insights I got when I was collecting empirical data for my thesis. When I was first time going to interview people for my thesis I assumed that they would be discussing about their integration process deeply and with a lot of self-reflection. Soon I understood that my informants did not interpret their lives referring to integration but merely by discussing about how fluent their everyday life is. Biggest challenges regarding to my interviewees lives in Lieksa were the expense of living, unemployment and difficulty to get an education. These are also the reasons, according to my interviewees, why so many immigrants move away from Lieksa. Also the level of social services had worsened.

”Has there been some changes in Lieksa during those three years [the interviewee has lived in Lieksa for three years]?”

“Before?”

“I mean the time you have been in Lieksa, has it changed?”

“Yes, it has changed a lot. Now if you want an appointment with social worker, you wont get it.”

”No onks jotain muita muutoksia täällä Lieksassa tapahtunut sen kolmen vuoden aikana [haastateltava on asunut Lieksassa kolme vuotta]?”

”Ennen?”

”Sinä aikana kun sä oot ollut täällä, niin onko tää muuttunut?”

”On, muuttunu paljon. Paljon muuttu. Nyt jos sinä haluat social aikakin [tapaaminen sosiaalityöntekijän kanssa], niin ei saa.”

I chose only women as my interviewees because I wanted to hear especially their ideas and experiences about the matter. I noticed that children and their wellbeing had a very big role in the discussions. The interviewees talked also about routines, homework, children's studies, friends and hobbies a lot and those were clearly important topics in the discussions. These themes or tasks can be seen female-typical as women still have bigger responsibility in taking care of children and home and organizing the homework. One of my interviewees emphasised the importance of doing housework well to ensure the wellbeing of her daughter.

”How old is your daughter?”

“Four years old.”

“Oh, she is a little girl!”

“Yes. Now if I am at home, if I need anything, well my daughter comes first. Sometimes we play, sometimes we travel to Helsinki as my friend lives there. If we are at home I cook and clean. I like that the home is clean.”

“Yes, it is important that home is tidy [laughing].”

“Yes it is and it is important for my daughter.”

”Minkäikäinen tyttö sulla on?”

”Neljä vuotta.”

”Aa, pikkutyttö!”

”Joo. Nyt oon, jos oon minulla on kotona on, jos mitään tarvitsen minun on tyttö on tärkein minulle. Leikkimään, joskus menee matkusta Helsinki, minun kaveri siellä asu. Ja jos on takaisin, minun on kotona on laittamaan ruokaa ja siistimään. Minä tykkään minun siisti on kotona.”

”Joo, siisteys on tärkeätä [naurua]”

”Joo, tärkeätä. Ja minun on tärkeätä, minun tyttöni tarvita.”

One interviewee told that previously her life consisted mainly of taking care of her child, visiting library and going to the market. With the child they discussed in interviewee’s mother tongue and she thought that taking the child to half-day day care would be necessary for the progress of the child’s Finnish language skills. As the distance between home and the day care was rather long, getting a workplace had started to seem important for the interviewee to get some activities to her life.

When talking about settling in many of my interviewees mentioned the differences in customs and social relations between Finland and their countries of origin. One interviewee told that she felt she had integrated to Finland when she realised she was not getting angry anymore about the differences between Finland and her country of origin when it came to culture and customs.

“Yes, because I think, how can you do so [laughing], when we were living in a block of flats all the rules were very difficult for me. There was so many rules, like hundred thousand things that you are not allowed to do and I thought that this is like a prison! You can not do anything even it is your home! [Laughing] why can not you do anything at your home...

When it is 10 in the evening, you can not watch television anymore because it's voice is too loud... I would like to go to shower, but I can not. WHAT! [laughing] The sound of water going to drain is too loud... -- I was really angry for real. How can you live in this country.”

”Joo, koska minä ajattelen, että miten te voisitte [nauraa] tehdä niinku, sillan kun asuimme kerrostalossa oli minulle tosi vaikeaa kun oli sääntöjä, oli satatuhatta, ei voi tehdä ja minä ajattelin, no heii tämä on sama kuin vankila! Ei voi tiedä mitään täällä ja se on sun koti! [nauraa] miksi se ei voi kotona tehdä.. eiii se on kello kymmenen, ei voi televisio kiinni, ei kova ääni, ei.. minä haluan ottaa suihkun, ei suihku voi ottaa. MITÄ! [nauraa] Tulee kova ääni kun vettä menee.. menee vesi siellä putkessa... - - Ja minä olin, oikeesti minä olin todella vihainen. Miten te voisitte elää tässä maassa...”

For example living in a block of flats in Finland felt a trouble in the beginning as there was a lot of rules in the housing cooperative. She felt that she was not allowed to do anything in her own apartment not to upset anyone with noise. Also the discussion culture, which was very different from the one my interviewee had back in her home country, was confusing in the beginning. She said Finnish people were often more quiet and reserved than she had been used to. After she had adapted to the local customs at least partly and understood reasons behind the way people behave she felt she had settled in. The interviewee felt that it is necessary to make small sacrifices to be able to fit in but she also thought that such changes were superficial and do not make deeper changes in people. The interviewee defined her identity via her place of residence and felt that she can operate in the Finnish society. She shun saying that she would be from Lieksa or Finland and said that she is not the only foreigner who would just like to be by oneself at home, near to family and workplace. One interviewee told that during the weekdays she spends time selling food, discussing with people at the town and going to Metka house to study languages and meet people. Household work, meeting with friend and going to hobbies were part of many of the interviewees weekdays.

8.1 Integration is a feeling of “not being lost”

Integration was not a familiar word for all of my interviewees but when they caught the idea they often referred to social services and “learning the rules”. My interviewees also talked a lot about work, studying, their families and friends and their wish to help others in Finland or elsewhere. Integration was seen as knowing the local rules and culture and demanding

adaption to the local culture and way of living at least on some level. Some of the interviewees were quite well aware of the legislative definition of integration and what they were expected to do to be integrated and also what services were available for them as immigrants. Integration was seen as "managing", "knowing how things work here", "peaceful and good life" and feeling of "not always being lost."

"What are the most important things for integration to happen? "

"Peaceful and good living."

"So that everything is working out?"

"Yes."

"Mikä on kaikkein tärkeintä kotoutumisen kannalta?"

"Rauhallinen ja hyvä elämä."

"Että kaikki toimii?"

"Niin."

Quotation above sums well what my interviewees valued in their lives. My interviewees were talking a lot about their families, their struggles in finding a work or study place, about their worries over family members living in another countries but also about homework, relationships and importance of being helpful for others. Some of my interviewees told directly or in between the lines that they had learned to live in Finland and managed their everyday life but still they did not feel they had become Finnish. Becoming Finnish was an idea that few of my interviewees mentioned when discussing about integration. Several interviewees told that their country or culture of origin defined their identity but living in Finland might have had an impact on their habits and required learning new skills and customs. Becoming Finnish, what ever it means, is not a value itself in my opinion nor desirable state of being even from the viewpoint of official integration indicators. I find it interesting to ponder how immigrants see what it is to "be Finnish" and whether my interviewees have an experience of being expected to become one themselves. It might be thought that for my interviewees being Finnish means a position where you know the rules and customs of the majority culture, have settled down in where you live and your every-day life is satisfying. One interviewee told that in her opinion integrated immigrant feels comfortable of staying in Finland and knows how to act at least in some situations.

“Okey so, what kind of person is integrated to Finland in your opinion?”

“At least a person, how would I say, a person who feels comfortable to be in here, knows how to be in here and knows how to act in some situations.

“Yes.”

“So that one is not always lost.”

“Okei eli millainen ihminen on sun mielestä kotoutunut Suomessa?”

”Ainakin sellainen, miten sanoisin, sellainen ihminen joka viihtyy täällä, tietää miten olla täällä ja tietää miten toimia jossain tilantessa.”

”Okei”

”Ettei tunne aina olevansa hukassa”

As many of my interviewees told me learning of local rules and manners is very important, therefore being active in some organisation may increase the knowledge of the local culture but also support the ability to operate in institutions. The concept of everyday citizenship by Vuori (2012, 236) involves the hidden information that is existing in society, institutions and in interaction between people and institutions. Citizenship, refugee status or employment does not automatically make an immigrant integrated but there is a lot of everyday knowledge that immigrants have to learn to become members of society.

Good skills in Finnish language, being active and educating oneself or getting a work place were also seen as attributes of integrated person. Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti (2006, 13) state that immigrants are expected to find a workplace, organise a place for living or in some other way arrange oneself a satisfying life. According to Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti immigrants are also expected to learn new skills, gain such knowledge about the society that helps in getting along while at the same time they should not abandon their ethnic background. Immigrants should combine the local culture and manners to their own culture and habits and at the same time adapt to the change in a mental level (Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2006, 13.) There is a lot of expectations for immigrants about how they should organise their lives but also how they should mentally and socially adapt to the culture and society. Because immigrants are expected to manage their lives in a certain way to be accepted or to succeed in their process as integrated immigrants it would be very important to support the agency and capability of immigrants themselves. It should also be openly

discussed what is the subject that we are talking about when we create the subject of “an ideal integrated citizen” in official documents.

8.2 Leisure activities help in maintaining social relations

According to my interviewee the Metka house is a nice place for children’s leisure activities because there is a lot of activities organised for children and there is also a playground and trampoline for the kids. Usually there is several kids at the Metka house and they can spend time together. Informants mentioned the importance of the activities organised for children, not only because it is nice for kids, but also because it enables the mothers to socialise when their kids are playing together. The women might arrange a meeting and come to the Metka house or go to a park together with their children. Because of the project funding there has been good resources for organizing the activities for children. One interviewee told that she has attended to the choir rehearsals at Metka house and she also told that majority of the singers in the choir are foreigners. The choir gathers every now and then but for example during the Ramadan they do not arrange rehearsals. One interviewee wished for more activities for adults and defined she would be interested in arts or other creative activities. Part of the interviewees came to the Metka house to learn sewing taught by a volunteer teacher. Interviewee who is working at Metka house told that the activities are organized based on the interest of the members of the Somali Family Association and added that it is good if people would openly tell about their wishes for possible activities.

One of the interviewees told that she is interested in similar hobbies than Finnish people such as nature photography, watching birds, going to sauna and spending time in the forest. Especially the Finnish nature was important for her. One informant wished for more common events and trips with Finnish people in order to learn more about different cultures. The informant was especially interested in going for a trip to forest together with Finnish people.

”The Finnish every-day life... I mean what do they like about and what are their hobbies. That kind of things. When you know [more about people’s lives], you can understand them better even if you were very different by yourself. But when you know the other, it is the same as when I am in this house, I need to integrate. Because this is a new world for me. At first I came to Finland and I had to learn the Finnish culture after which I came to Metka-house and I had to learn all the other cultures also because those are also different and if we want to work here together and if I want to do something it is good for them, and I need also, to learn [the other cultures]”

”Semmonen arkipäivän suomalaisille, mitä he, mistä tykkäävät, mitä he tekevät, mitä he haluavat tehdä kun on vapaa-aika, semmosia juttuja. Kun sinä tiedät, sitten ymmärrät ihmiset vaikka sinä olet erilainen mutta se kun sinä tiedät mikä toinen.. se on sama kun minä olen täällä taas, tässä talossa, minun pitää kotoutua. Koska tämä on minulle myös uusi maailma. Minä tulin ensin Suomeen ja minun pitää oppia sen suomalaisen, suomalaisten kulttuurista ja sitten minä tulin Metka-taloon ja minun pitää oppia kaikki muut kulttuurit koska se on myös erilainen ja jos me haluamme yhdessä olla töissä ja minä haluan tehdä jotain ja se on heidän, heille hyvä, minä pitää, minun pitää ensin oppia.”

Understanding the Finnish people and how they live their every-day lives was seen important to make the contact with majority people easier. One informant told that she had participated to a club activity which was joint for immigrants and elderly people. In the club they had done for example handicrafts, drank coffee and spend time together. She told that she had enjoyed the activity a lot as she likes to be around other people.

The meetings of Somali Family Association are organised in Finnish. One of my interviewees told that she participates the meeting when there is some ordinary matters on the agenda but if there is some more “important” or “big” issues in the discussion she opts out. Interviewees also told that they get information about upcoming events and other matters via the association.

Part of the women told that exercising is one of their hobbies, for example walking and going to the gym were mentioned. One of the interviewees told that she used to go to the swimming pool but quit going there when the swimming turn only for women was quit.

One of the interviewees also told about the cooperation together with the Family Federation of Finland, Väestöliitto. Now and then Somali women also organize an event only for women when they come to the Metka house to cook food and spend time together. The immigrant organisations may have an important role in lobbying for better services for immigrants. Such organisation could be a natural body to act on immigrants behalf to get for example better sport services for the city. Due to the expertise and possible contacts immigrant organisations could start a discussion on why the female specific swimming turn would be worth of keeping.

8.3 Family and friends

Almost all of my interviewees had children. Children and families at all were discussed a lot during the interviews. Some of my interviewees had small children whereas some had children who were already adults. Part on the interviewees were living in a same country with their children whereas some waited for a decision of family reunification to get their children to Finland also. Especially those interviewees whose children were already older were hoping that it would be easier to travel to see them. Taking care of small children while at the same time trying to apply for workplaces, studying or taking part to activities were seen as a challenging combination. One interviewee told that she likes to watch children playing together at Metka house because her own children are far away from her back in her home country. Many of the interviewees had family members back in their country of origin or in other countries and therefore their everyday lives and family relations were very transnational.

Friends and acquaintances were also discussed a lot. Interviewees told that they had got friends via Metka-house, studies and work. Taking care of little children took a lot of time of the interviewees but part of interviewees had combined caretaking and maintaining social relations by coming to Metka house together with their children

“Is your day some how different when you come to Metka-house? If you compare it to other days?”

“Yes it is, it is nice. Women discuss together and children play. All mothers come here and kids play outside. It is very nice.

”No onks sun päiväs jotenkin erilainen kun sä tuut tänne talolle, jos sä vertaat muihin päiviin?”

”On erilainen, kiva. Ja naiset keskustelee ja lapset leikkivät. Joo todella, kaikki äidit tulevat tänne ja lapset ovat siellä ulkona. Siellä on. Todella kiva.”

Metka house is natural meeting place for kids and there is a lot of leisure activities targeted especially for them. Metka house was seen as a place for brightening everyday life because it offers social contacts, hobbies and sometimes even surprising events such as visiting pupils from school or students or researchers who are willing to interview people.

Making friends with Finnish people was difficult according to my interviewees except one of my interviewee who told that she comes well along with Finnish elderly people. My interviewees thought that Finnish people are friendly but becoming friends and having in-depth relationships with Finns was seen very difficult. Common experiences and cultural knowledge were considered as things that ease making friends. Many of my interviewees told that it is easiest to make friends with people with same nationality or people whose culture and habits are similar to one's own. Some of my interviewees were married to a Finnish spouse and in their words it had a key role in learning the language and feeling comfortable. They add that if they would not have a spouse in Finland they would most likely leave back to their home countries. One of my interviewees mentioned that she longs for the safety net and communality in her home country:

“You have three kids?”

“Yes I have three kids and man.”

“Do you have friends back in Africa?”

“Yes. I used to cry. In Finland life is more difficult, you know if it is hard if you do not have food for example or you ran out of money you can not eat. But in Africa it is easier, if you cook food everyone sits together and eat. Nobody thinks about food in a same way. Life is difficult. I wish that there will be peace in my country so I could go back to live in there. I do not want to live in another country.”

”Ja sul on itellä kolme lasta?”

”Mulla on itellä kolme lasta ja mies.”

”Onks sulla tota ystäviä vielä siellä Afrikassa?”

”Oon. Minä itkin joskus. Ja täällä Suomessa joskus on elämä vaikeeta, tiedätkö jos (-) tosi vaikeeta, esimerkiksi jos ei ole sinun oma ruoka, sinulla raha loppu, ei voi syyä. Mutta Afrikassa se on helppo, jos tekee ruoka, kaikki istuu yhdessä ja syö. Ei kukaan ajattele ruoka, ei kukaan ajattele samoin. Elämä on vaikea. Nyt jos, minä toivon jos maahan tulee rauha, minä lähden elämään minun maassa. Minä en halua elää toinen maa.”

My interviewee mentioned a situation when someone does not have food but neighbour has and it will be shared together. Interviewee was willing to return to her home country if there was peace. Some of my interviewees had family either in their home country or the family was scattered in several countries. In such situations the interviewees did not have an idea

about when she would meet her family members again. My interviewees were in contact with their distant family members if possible and supported them financially.

Several of my interviewees had made friends at Metka house and even got to know Finnish people among people from various different cultures. Interviewee mentioned that Finnish friend would be good for learning the language and culture, getting to know the history of Finland but also just to have someone to spend time with. One of my interviewees told that for a long time she only knew her husband and his relatives. She had not made friends with her husband's relatives because they usually met only in parties and the encounters were rather distant. Interviewee told that her husband has a big role in her integration to Finland.

Some of the interviewees took turns in taking care of the child with children's father to be able to visit Metka house.

“Do you come here often?”

“Yes but not that the baby is born...”

“There is more urgent things now?”

“Yes, more urgent things.”

“Look at this and look at that, there is a little bit.. [talks about her children in the room] but if I had time or if their dad would take them for his turn. In that way I can get some time here and there and then I also come here to discuss with my friends.”

”Käytkö sä usein täällä kylätalolla?”

”Käyn, mutta nyten kun tämä [vauva] syntyi...”

”On vähän kiireellisempiä asioita?”

”Kyllä, kiireellisempiä asioita.”

”Tämä katso ja tämä katso, vähän on.. [puhuu lapsistaan] mutta jos mulle se aika tai, heidän isä, ottaa heidät vuorostaan, hänen vuoro. Eli näin saa aika välillä, tulen täälläkin ja keskustelen mun kaverit kanssa ja näin. Vähän juttelen niin.”

As women still are more often in charge of taking care of the children and home NGO's could maybe attract immigrant mothers to take part to their activities via the children. When I was familiarising myself to my empirical data I noticed that many activities at Metka house are running around kids. Many of my interviewees also discussed about their lives and weekdays linked to their children. For example the Finnish language skills of their children

and relations to other kids were important things. Due to these notions I pondered how big role children have in their mother's integration process, some immigrant mothers could be reached via their children. Organising activities for kids could be a way to attract elusive mothers that spend their time mainly at home.

9 PAYING BACK TO COMMUNITY – IMPORTANCE OF GIVING AND RECEIVING HELP

Many of the interviewees brought giving and receiving help into discussion when we discussed about the role of third sector in their lives. Helping others was important motivator or reason to volunteer or to educate oneself. Metka house was seen a place or kind of a platform for giving and receiving help. People who had received help themselves thought that it is important to pay it forward but also people who thought that there was not enough or suitable help available when they arrived were willing to share their knowledge and experiences with the newcomers

”And it was good that Metka house was here, that it works here in Lieksa, Metka house helped. Somalis’ or immigrants who live in here get many things in here, they get a lot of help [at Metka house]. Sometimes people come here with a letter written in Finnish and ask for help in reading it. Previously there was no one to help them but now that Metka house exists they can come and ask for help, they have a paper and they need help in reading it or they need to call to Kela or some other place, they need help and we even helped with the phone calls because I know Arabic because I used to live in Arab country. I know the language better than Finnish language, so this was one way I was helping others, when new refugees came, from Iraq and so on, they came here because I know the language and I helped them in many things because the time when I came to live in Lieksa it was social workers or so helping us but now they get a lot more information when we are telling them, because we used to be in a same situation. We can tell what they can have in Lieksa, what can happen in your life, for example if you need to go to hospital or make an appointment there, I advised them and they were thankful and said that it is good that people at Metka house think these things...”

”Ja se oli hyvä että Metka-talo oli täällä, että tehdään täällä Lieksassa, se auttoi, Metka-talo. Somalialaiset tai maahanmuuttajat ketkä täällä asuu ovat täällä, he saavat paljon asioita, paljon auttamaan. Joskus täällä oli henkilöt jotka eivät osanneet suomen lukemista tai kirjoitus ja he tulivat kirje kotiin tai he tarvivat että joku auttaa. Heillä ei ollut mitään auttamassa, mutta nyt kun Metka-talo alkaa, he saavat kokoajan, me katsoimme, ihmiset tulevat ja kysyvät, mulla on tämä paperi ja tarvitsen, mitä se tarkoittaa ja näin, jos oli puhelimessa Kelalta tai muu paikka,

käy auttamassa ja ihan puhelimesta mekin autettiin ja sen näin, ja kun minä osaan arabian kieltä kun asuin ennen arabimaassa, näin osaan hyvin, parempi kuin suomen kieltä. Arabian kieltä, eli näinkin minä autoin välillä, uusi pakolaiset, irakilaiset ja nämä, he tulivat meille täällä kun minä osaan arabian kieltä ja näin minä neuvoin heitä, monta asiaa ja he sanoivat että se on vähä, sillä meidän aikana, kun minä tulin asumaan Lieksassa, ei se ollut, vain sosiaali tai muut auttamassa, mutta ei saa kuin nyt mitä he saavat, he saavat paljon tietoa, me kertovat, koska me olemme sama kuin he, ennen, eli me voimme kertoa mitä se oli täällä Lieksassa voi saada, mitä elämässä käydä, esimerkiksi jos tarvitsee sairaala ilmoittaa aikaa tai näin eli, minä neuvosin paljon ja kiittävät meille ja sanovat, että se oli hyvä, että Metka-talossa miettivät asia...”

One interviewee tells about different services that Metka house offers to immigrants and from her answer it can be noticed that mutual help has a huge role in organising the support services at Metka house. When talking about Metka house and its meaning for people, many of the informants mentioned helping others. Ekholm (2015) states that networking, participation, participating to activities and meeting other people have an important role in developing the self-esteem and feeling of capability. These activities are also important from the viewpoint of self-care. Volunteering in non-governmental organisation gives an agency to immigrants and leads to a situation where they are not tight to a position of person in need of help. (Ekholm, 2015.) Metka-house has an important role in helping immigrants with everyday problems because due to shortage in Finnish language skills some immigrants are not able to patronise with Kela for example.

”Yes I have been here a long time. I think Lieksa is a good place, it is small but good. In here I get good service. If I have difficult situation, a problem or I do not understand something I come to Metka house and they explain to me”

“You get help from here?”

“Yes, you can get help from here.”

”Joo, kauan täällä. Minulla on mielestäni Lieksa on hyvä paikka, pieni paikka mutta hyvä paikka. Minä saan palvelu, joka on hyvä palvelu Lieksa. Ja jos on minun on hätätilanne, ongelma tai en ymmärrä, mitä ei ymmärrä, Metka-talo minä tulen ja he selittävät minulle.”

”Täältä saa apua?”

”Joo, täältä saa apua.”

Metka-house offers help in immigrant's own language with every day matters such as filling in different documents and reserving an appointment with a doctor. Ekholm's (2015, 5) idea of immigrants not being only people in need but also as a service developers and service providers is visible in my empirical data. My interviewees highlighted the importance of helping others and the idea of paying back to community was seen very important. Because of this motivation, personal experiences as an immigrant in Finland, experience of living and balancing between two or even more cultures and because often also diverse knowledge of languages, immigrants should be taken along in planning and decision making at least in matters that affect them and other immigrants.

The interviewees saw that the work of Metka house and Somali Family Association of Lieksa is valuable especially for immigrants. One interviewee raised people's different background's in to discussion as a challenging thing. Some of the immigrants taking part to the activities of Metka house had come to Finland from the middle of war and crisis whereas some of people did not have such experiences. The cultures of people coming to Metka house may be very different in comparison to each other. The stories of people coming from difficult circumstances were shocking but for many people hearing such stories was also an important reason for helping. Employees and volunteers of Metka house have comprehensive language skills together which is a great help when helping immigrants in their everyday problems and errands.

”What is the best in Somali Family Association of Lieksa?”

“The best thing is, for example if you get a negative decision to your residence permit, and we do not know the Finnish language well enough, I try to read but I do not understand but employee [at Metka house] knows the language because it is her mother tongue. They help. And we say thank you.”

”Mikä tässä talossa tai somaliperheydistyksessä on parasta?”

”Parasta on, jos esimerkiksi negativ tulee migri, meidän ei osaa tämä on suomen kieli hyvin, minä lukea, mutta mitä tarkoittaa minä en ymmärrä, mutta työntekijä osaa hyvin ja hänelle on äidinkieli. He auttavat. Ja meidän sano kiitos.”

The interviewee told that the best thing in Metka house is that you can get help in your mother tongue. One interviewee also told that Metka house has an important role in making the standard of services better because previously the help was in the hands of social workers from where you could not get the service in your own language. Those of the informants who had received help from social workers or other people working with immigrants were satisfied with the service. They had got help in every day matters such as using the domestic appliances and giving information about different services. Even if the informants were happy with help they had received from social workers or other authorities they thought that the work that Metka house is doing offers an important supplement. Vast knowledge in languages, knowledge of different cultures both local culture and the immigrant's culture was seen as a strength of the NGO. Knowledge in languages and cultures was valued as it makes passing the information easier but eases also taking care of every day issues. One interviewee also mentioned that due to the retirement of an authority the services went off.

One interviewee told that as she has never had to face war or any other severe crisis she is happy if she can in a way or another help people who have had these experiences. One interviewee who had come to Finland as a refugee was hoping that she could go to help people in her home country. She was hoping to get education and help in Finland so that she could ease the difficult circumstances that people, especially children, are facing in her home country. She was very disappointed because she had not get into school in Finland especially because she saw education as a very important matter in being able to help people back in her home country. According to one interviewee education and Finnish politicians have the major role in helping people in trouble spots. In the first place education was seen very important among several interviewees because by means of education people had gained important knowledge and in some cases it had decreased the need for help later in life.

According to Ekholm (2015) immigrant organisations have an important role in reaching elusive groups. Organisation have also up-to-date information about how well the public immigrant services reach the target group and even some ideas about how the services could be improved. Ekholm (2015) states also that the organisations are often more mobile and adaptable than the authorities. Organisations also have the contacts via which they can spread information via grapevine. Organisations may even go to the homes of immigrants to offer the services in immigrants mother tongue. (Ekholm 2015.) Experienced organisations may also support the whole family at once by contacting the authorities or health care providers and by spreading information. During my stay at Metka house I noticed that people

are looking out for each other and when they were for example worried about someone they could discuss together what to do with the matter. The community at the Metka house seemed rather close and many of my interviewees were thankful for the help they had received in there. I was also pondering that even if all or even majority of immigrants in Lieksa do not use the services of Metka house there is still a great chance that the information is dripping to them via the more active visitors.

I did not notice significant hierarchies between employees and visitors at Metka house but everyone were discussing with each other informally. Ekholm (2015) states that one of the advantages of NGO's compared to public services is the way how the services are organised. The flexibility and autonomy when it comes to the time and place when the activities and services are organised might lower the threshold for immigrants to ask for help or find one's way to the services offered. (Ekholm 2015,18). Due to shared experiences the organisation might be more natural actor to identify with.

10 THE ROLE OF METKA HOUSE AS A PROVIDER OF SUPPORT AND SERVICES - “[the village house] has a huge meaning. My whole life depends on it”

During my stay at the house I got to know people working in there and spent time in the kitchen with other visitors. We were drinking coffee and Somali Tea, practising English and Finnish and admiring a little baby who was just couple of weeks old. When talking about the different services and how to operate in the Finnish society interviewees often mentioned Metka house and its support in several situations. Those interviewees who told that they had received help from Metka house were very motivated to help others in the future. Immigrants' activity on non-governmental organisations can also be seen as a way of adapting to a new culture and its rules.

Besides offering various leisure activities the organisation offers services and help. One the interviewees told that she had become happier after she joined the association and activated in it. One interviewee even stated that her whole life depends on the Metka house due to all the support and help that she has received in there.

“[the village house] has a huge meaning. My whole life depends on it.”

”[kylätalolla on] Tosi iso merkitys. Koko elämä riippuu siitä.”

Many of the interviewees told that being active in the association felt meaningful and brought social contacts and content to life. If the association was not existing my interviewees told they would spend more time alone at home or with their families. In the beginning the association was established to bring forward the Somali culture. One interviewee told that volunteering in NGO was not familiar to her from her previous life but after joining the association she had learned a lot about how to run the NGO and how its activities are financed. Earlier the same interviewee had heard about different village associations but did not actively participate into their actions. The interviewee thought that Metka house could do more cooperation with other organisations but so far there had not been enough time or need for that because there was already a lot of activities and events and the Metka house.

Helpful people and possibility to practise language skills were also mentioned when I asked about different services. Especially the possibility to get help in various situations were brought up in several discussions and I also paid attention the importance of giving and receiving help when I stayed at Metka house. Many of the interviewees wanted to be part of the association so that they could help other immigrants because they were helped when they arrived themselves or so that the newcomers would have it easier when settling in to Finland

”What is the meaning of this village house for you? This Metka house?”

“It has a good meaning. It is a good place and a lot of friends and you also learn Finnish and many other things because people come here and I try to organise something and everyone working in here are helping me out.”

“It is a good place and people are helpful?”

“And when people come here and want to organise things, everyone in here help you and I got a lot of knowledge on here even if I had lived in Lieksa for a long time. Some important things, if you need to go to an office or something, I would not go alone but always with my husband. Because I am afraid that I do something wrong and now that there is a lot of people who have the same situation, some important thing, I get a lot of information and noticed that many people come here if they need help. It is very good because this integration is difficult for people, for example if you do not know the language and you

cannot even fill in some paper because of that, everyone in here will help you and it is good.”

”-- Mikä merkitys tällä kylätalolla on sulle? Tällä metka-talolla?”

”Hyvä merkitys. Se on hyvä paikka ja paljon kavereita ja tässä oppii suomea myös ja paljon eri asioita koska ihmiset tulevat tähän ja yritän järjestää joku asia ja kaikki auttaa”

”On hyvä paikka ja auttavaisia ihmisiä?”

”Ja kun ihmiset tulevat järjestämään joku oma asia ja tässä voi, kaikki auttavat, minä sain tietää enempi koska pitkä aika asu tässä Lieksassa semmonen joku tärkeä asia, toimistossa tai jossain, minä ei yksin lähde, aina mieheni kanssa. Koska minä pelkään, joten, teen väärin tai ja nyt kun tässä ihmiset myös sama asia kuin meille, minä paljon saa tietää ja minä huomasin, että paljon ihmisiä tulee tähän jos joku tarvitsee apua. Se on hyvä, koska tämä kotoutuminen ja se on ihmiselle vaikea, se on ensiksi kieli, huono suomen kieli, jos edes joku lomake pitää täyttää ja sinä ei osaa hyvin ja tässä voi kaikki auttavat sinua ja se on hyvä.”

According to my interviewee integration was difficult and a place like Metka house can help in settling to the new country in many ways for example by helping with translating documents and spreading useful information. One finding was that informal contact enabled the mutual trust among the visitors from different cultures which is very important for creating a culture where also the sensitive matters can be discussed. One of the employees at Metka house told me that they have had a lot of colorful and delicate discussions at the house which in my opinion is very important for all the parties in raising the mutual understanding but also very interesting if there is a view to collect information about themes or topics that might cause confusion. As I wrote in the theory section according to international research immigrant organisations have an important role in supporting immigrants in the new environment. NGO's can act as a cultural interpreters and make it easier to understand local manners and culture but also in minimizing the possible risks that might be linked to moving to a new country.

The interviews showed that Metka House also promotes two-way integration since also people with Finnish descent come to the house to do voluntary work and socialise with people. Finnish volunteers are for example instructing in handicrafts, volunteering as a choir leader, helping in renovating the house and helping out with childcare. Metka house is a place where immigrants and majority people can meet and interact with each other in a casual way, thought it seems that so far the majority of people participating in the activities of

Metka house are immigrants. It is understandable though in my opinion as the activities and services are targeted especially for immigrants. The Finnish people who volunteer at the Metka house and support its activities with their contribution are at the same time supporting the two-way integration of immigrants. According to the act of the Promotion of Immigrant Integration immigrants should adapt themselves to Finnish society and acquire new skills, competences and practices which help them actively participate in the life of their new home country. These expectations might be difficult to reach individually but it seems that NGO's could support immigrants at least in their participation to the civil society and in offering a place for intercultural learning. Other advantages of NGO's are also flexibility, possibly similarities in life experiences, language skills, ability to interpret both language and the culture and also a possibility to offer various services in a one-stop principle. (Pyykkönen 2007b, 75 & Ekholm 2015, 18.) According to Pyykkönen (2007b, 22) organisations are also a place for producing nationalism because the nation state has an impact on how the NGO's operations are organised in a legal sense. Even when the organisations enable immigrant's participation to civic society and activate people for mutual care they also produce certain kind of subjects and agents defined by the society. (Pyykkönen 2007b, 22.)

One of the interviewees who participate actively to the activities of Metka house hoped that people would notice all the work that the employees and volunteers do at the house. One of the interviewees told that the staff of Metka house were in main responsibility of organising activities at the house but the board of Somali Family Association of Lieksa is guiding their work and actions. Part of the events are limited only for certain groups and in those cases the organising responsibility shifts from the board to these organising groups. When I asked about how the interviewees would change the activities of the association the answers were very positive and there was not any suggestions for how they would develop the association and its activities.

Metka house is also a place where it is possible to find new friends and acquaintances and taking part to the activities. Metka house offers also a possibility to practise Finnish language. When I was spending time at Metka house I noticed that there was often a lot of people at the house just spending time together. Metka house is a very charming place, people were coming and going, sitting in the kitchen drinking coffee, watching football or planning future projects together. A possibility to watch tv-programmes and news in the own mother tongue was also seen as an important service at the Metka house.

10.1 Lack of safety narrows the scope for action

Working at Metka house caused fear among two interviewees due to the criticism that has been expressed towards the Metka house but also because of the racist speeches and acts towards immigrants in Lieksa. In a report of the survey made for Metka house's Leijat project turns out that significant number of immigrants living in Lieksa have faced physical or verbal threats (Sotkasiira 2015). People who were criticizing Metka house were often suspicious of where the money comes from for running the house.

"The only thing they are thinking about is where do we get money, because they are paying taxes and thinking how do we have this [metka house]. Some time ago one man had said, our guard told, the man was walking by the house and had yelled that they [Finnish people] pay taxes and we have this house."

"Does that happen daily or how often?"

"Well, sometimes some old man. Old people are so angry."

"-- ainoa juttu, he ajattelevat, että mistä tulee rahaa, että me maksamme veroja ja teillä on tämmönen.. -- Vähän aikaa oli yksi mies, joka sanoi, yksi meidän vartija sanoi ja käveli vaan edessä ja huutaa teille me maksamme veroja, teillä on tämä."

"Onks toi ihan päivittäistä vai tapahtuukst tota niinku..."

"No, satunnaisesti joku vanha mies. Vanhat ihmiset ovat vihaisia."

One interviewee told about a man who had been coming to yell at the garden of Metka house. One interviewee was afraid about the feedback she might get after she started to participate actively the activities of Metka house. She was afraid that she might get a stigma of an "immigrant person" or an "immigrant advocate". The interviewee told that racism and opposing immigrants was more visible in Lieksa years ago when there were more immigrants, back then there was racists writings in the newspapers and in facebook. Since then the situation has calmed down until present time when new refugees arrived to Lieksa.

"I think the climate has calmed down until now that the new group came, a group that is waiting in a reception centre, I think people became angry again."

"So always when there is some change, or some new thing, people are reacting?"

“Negative reactions...I think it is difficult to just wait and see what happens because I think that many people in reception center would not stay in Lieksa if they get residence permit, I am quite sure that they will move away. I do not think that they want to stay in Lieksa. It might be that some small group wants to be here but I do not think that many will.”

”On rauhottunu, mutta nyt kun tuli taas toinen porukka, tai uusi porukka, joka odottaa siellä vastaanottokeskuksessa, ihmiset mun mielestä tulivat taas vihaisia.”

”Et aina kun on joku muutos, tai uusi juttu tässä, niin sit siihen reagoidaan?”

”Negatiivinen on reagointi... Että minä näen, että se on vaikeaa ja pitää odottaa ja katsoa mitä tapahtuu, koska mun mielestä vastaanottokeskuksesta ei paljon ihmiset jäävät Lieksassa jos he saavat oleskelulupa, varmasti he muuttavat pois. En usko, että haluavat olla Lieksassa. Tai voi olla, että pieni porukka haluaa olla Lieksassa, mutta en usko, että paljon haluaa.”

Few of the interviewees thought that racism fastens especially on those immigrants who have arrived to Lieksa as refugees or asylum seekers whereas other immigrant groups have not been so nervous about such threat. A great number of immigrants have moved away from Lieksa and the interviewees believe that also the newcomers will do so if they get an asylum. Some of the interviewees thought that when immigrants move away it soothes local people but at the same time the attitudes of some local people were seen as a push factor that drives people away from the city.

Immigrant organisation have an important role on putting matters right, raising awareness of about different cultures but also as a peer support offerers if the members of organisation face racism. One interviewee mentioned that people at Metka house are actively following what is written about the house and the organisation that owns it. The organisation markets the activities that the house has for offer and also seeks to dissolve false information and prejudices for example in connection with the financing of the organisations' activities. According to Ekholm (2015, 5) immigrant organizations act as interest groups, places for peer support and as experts of their members. Organisations often work with small budgets and they could benefit a lot from financial aid as well as the ability to develop the skills needed in the organization. In the case of Metka house part of these resources are wasted in proving the legitimacy of the organisation and its actions to local people and even to local politicians.

10.2 Lieksa is a peaceful place at Finnish countryside

One of my presumptions was that in rural areas and in small cities the public services are limited in comparison to bigger cities. I assumed that integration services are restricted and therefore the role of NGO's would be more important in supporting the every-day life of immigrants but also in producing the services for immigrants. According to the information I got in the interviews it seems that my presumptions were quite right. There is for example social service available for immigrants in Lieksa but there is no separate immigrant services. My interviewees were quite happy with the service level in Lieksa but in many cases they mentioned Metka house and the additional services that it is offering.

"I think that Lieksa is a good place, even it is a small place it is good. I get services and the services are good in here. And if I have an emergency situation, a problem or I do not understand something I come to Metka house and they will explain to me."

"Minulla on mielestäni Lieksa on hyvä paikka, pieni paikka mutta hyvä paikka. Minä saan palvelu, joka on hyvä palvelu Lieksa. Ja jos on minun on hätätilanne, ongelma tai en ymmärrä, mitä ei ymmärrä, Metka-talo minä tulen ja he selittävät minulle."

It seems that Metka house has irreplaceable role in the lives of my interviewees and without it people would be left hang out to dry. The rural location of Lieksa was visible in the discussions with my interviewees especially when they told about the difficulties to get a work place and also when they were telling about the prejudices they had faced. The interviewees were mainly content with the Services in Lieksa and liked the peacefulness of the city. Part of my interviewees thought that Lieksa is a small city and part said it is countryside. I think that the background of my interviewees affected on how they viewed the place as those interviewees who came from big cities considered Lieksa as countryside whereas those coming from countryside or small city themselves considered Lieksa as a small town.

The interviewees discussed the age structure of Lieksa as one challenging issue as many young people move away from there due to the lack of work and study possibilities. Regarding to some of my interviewees especially elderly people seemed to be the ones who are most prejudiced against immigrants and were frightened about any changes

“I think that for the old people it is difficult when everything changes in front of their eyes. Usually they do not want it and I think it is easier for young people. But there is a lot of old people in here who do not want, from what I have heard of, they do not want tourists in here... We do not want tourists in here because if a lot of tourists come it is not peaceful anymore [interviewee is mimicking an old person]”

“So they just want to be in peace and quiet?”

“In privacy, without tourists, immigration, no tourists, nothing... It is the same both here in the center and in the forest. Same same. [Laughter]. It is not easy place for foreigners. I do not talk about myself because I have had it easy, I have not had problems with people but I think that some people are quite thick-skulled. I think this place will die if you think in that way.”

“Well it might be so... Like if anything new is not allowed and the old things disappear, it does not really work...”

“And it will die because nothing will happen after that. It is one problem if some problem needs to be said, it depends on what do they want. Well, if Lieksa dies, then let it die... [laughing]”

“Ajattelen, että vanha ihminen, että vanha ihminen, se on vaikea kun kaikki muuttuu silmät edessä. Yleensä eivät halua.. Nuorille on helpompi. Mutta täällä on paljon vanhat ihmiset jotka eivät halua, minä joskus oon kuuntelin, eivät halua, ei turisteja halua... emme halua turisteja tulee tänne, paljon turisteja tulee [matkii kärttyistä vanhusta] meillä on rauhassa..”

”Halutaan vaan, että on vaan hiljasta ja omassa rauhassa?”

”Omassa rauhassa, ei turisteja, ei maahanmuuttoa, ei turisteja, ei mitään... Näin vanhat ihmiset. Täällä keskustassa ja metsässäkin sano. Sama sama. Se on vähän näin. [nauraa] Ei hyvä, ei helppo paikka ulkomaalaisille. Minä en puhu minusta, koska minulle on ollut hyvä, ei mitään ongelmaa, ei mitään ongelmaa ihmisten kanssa.. mutta mun mielestä heillä ovat vähän. Kova pää. Koska tämä paikka kuolee jos miettii näin.”

”Niin, se on kyllä.. et jos mitään uutta ei saa tulla ja vanha katoaa pikku hiljaa, niin ei se oikein..”

”Ja se kuolee, koska ei mitään tapahdu sen jälkeen. Se on yksi ongelma, että joku pitää sanoa (--) mutta se riippuu mitä he haluavat. No, kuolee Lieksa, anna kuolla.. [nauraa]”

The fear of change was seen as one key things that make it harder to make the town more vital and it was seen to lead to withering of the city in the end. On the other hand part of my interviewees thought that the town had evolved in a better direction and also thought that city has currently better image than previously. My interviewees thought that Lieksa is a good place for people who want to be in peace and quiet. It would be interesting to study

more about the prejudices that different age groups have and specify the reasons behind the biased ideas. In chapter 8.3 in my thesis I tell about my interviewee who told that she comes very well along with elderly people and has also participated in a group common for immigrants and elderly people. Maybe such joint activities would bring different groups closer to each other.

11 IN SEARCH OF GOOD LIFE

In my Master's thesis I researched what does integration mean for immigrant women living rural Finland and how non-governmental organisations can support the integration of immigrant women. I collected the empirical data for my research at the multicultural Metka house located in Lieksa, North Karelia. According to my analysis the Metka house has very important role in the lives of those immigrant women who participate to the activities of house. My interviewees told that the Metka house offers work and work practices, leisure activities, possibilities to make friends and maintain relationships, help in difficult situations an a place for studying Finnish and other languages. Among all things mentioned I claim that the Metka house also offers a place where an individual can find tools and help for building a good life.

Many of my interviewees told that the line to the social services is long and one cannot always trust in getting help from the social workers in a right time or in their own language whereas at Metka house is possible to have help and support in various situations flexibly. Metka house cannot offer all the services immigrants need but it is a good supplement in many cases and its principle supports the immigrants own agency and capability. Immigrants may for example ask for help from the Metka house if they want to make an appointment with social worker or immigrant can turn to employees or volunteers at the Metka house if they need help in translating or filling in papers they need for using the social services or other public services.

According to my informants good life consist of meaningful relationships, possibility to be with one's family and take care of one's family members. Being able to work and educate oneself had also an important role in living a meaningful life even though in some cases my informants were frustrated because they had not get a work nor study place. Working and educating oneself were though highly respected things in my interviewees lives. Meaningful content in life was important part of feeling comfortable and satisfied. Many of my interviewees saw helping others as one of the most important things in their lives and were committed to serving other people in a way or another. In many cases the desire for helping well from my interviewees own experiences as an immigrant who has just arrived to Finland. My informants had received either great help from others and wanted to pay back to the community and then again part of my interviewees had not received much help when they arrived and they wanted to give a better experience for the newcomers.

According to Ekholm (2015, 5) the idea of immigrants not being only people in need but also as service developers and service providers seems fitting to my data. It is hard to say does the will for helping others well especially among immigrants or is it human character that just need right time and place to appear. Immigrants have though higher chance to face discrimination in Finland than people who are part of majority population and immigrants may also end up in unusual situation where you need to learn several new manners and things as an adult if you move to a place very different from what you have used to. Such experiences may encourage people to share the knowledge and experience they have to pave the way for people who have it all yet to come. The experience of living and balancing between two or even more cultures and because often also diverse knowledge of languages, immigrants should be taken along in planning and decision making at least in matters that affect them and other immigrants.

Part of my interviewees said that the Metka house is an important place also because it introduces Somali culture to people without previous knowledge and enables maintaining language and culture in a new country but also eases familiarising oneself with the local people and culture with the help of other immigrants and even in one's mother tongue. The Metka house offers a place for intercultural communication as the visitors are from many different cultures.

The concept of integration was difficult for many of my interviewees due to language barrier or because the term itself was not natural for my informants when they wanted to describe their process of settling in in Finland. I was also pondering whether my interviewees had adopted the idea of integration through work, education and language so strongly that there just was not a room for criticism when it comes to defining integration. I pondered the integration as a concept a lot during my fieldwork and after it also. Among other things I was thinking for example am I allowed to challenge the expertise of my interviewees in such matter of which they have personal experience. At first I reflected a lot my own interpretations of why the discussion of integration was so low and whether I was just dissatisfied that the informants answers did not align with my presumption of the matter.

Ruusuvuori et al. (2010) state that the data itself does not give a straight answer to the questions that researcher has but the researcher has to familiarise herself with the data and evaluate it critically. Researcher has to be ready to waive her own presumptions regarding to the study and that way give space for new interpretations or ideas to arise from the data.

The aim of qualitative research is to find out new meanings and ways of structuring things and set one's sight on understanding the surrounding reality in a new way. However I want to tell about the reflections that I had regarding to the discussions about integration. My own presumptions and my empirical data did not meet in regards to integration speech and defining integration from which I made following deductions:

1. Immigrant women had accepted the hegemonic discourse of integration and for that reason emphasized same themes as authorities, such as education, work and language.
2. The meaning given to integration from the viewpoint of immigrant women was aligning with the public discussion of integration which highlights education, work and language skills. Immigrant women view these matters as one of the most important ones when it comes to integration.
3. I did not succeed in asking such questions with which we could have had more in-depth discussion about integration.
4. The language barrier might have led to misunderstandings and therefore the interviewees did not fully understand what I tried to ask and could not catch the idea of my questions.

Immigrant's country of origin and educational background supposedly effect on the views that immigrants have on integration but different immigrant groups are also internally heterogenous. Backgrounds of my interviewees were varying and they brought differing ideas in to the discussion during the interviews. Therefore I had to make a lot of generalisations and simplifications in my analysis to be able to find similarities in the immigrants' views on integration.

In a public discussion and in different media texts integration is often seen as necessity, it might be described as failed, people are frightened with "Swedish model" and the immigrant's motivation towards integration is challenged. Authorities have their own definition for integration and it is directed by legislation which outlines for example the supply of immigrant services and both responsibilities and duties of immigrants. It is very important that people get information, support and help when they move in a new country. People migrate for various reasons and that is why the need for help and support may differ a lot among immigrants. During my research process I understood that what I see as

integration is after all supporting peoples every-day lives so that they could live a good life and arrange satisfactory living conditions for themselves. Even though I had a very critical view on the “integration talk” of the authorities in the beginning, and still have but for different reasons, it seems that many of the things which importance authorities have emphasised are also important for the immigrants themselves. After writing my analysis I would like to highlight the meaning of supporting immigrants themselves in their will to create and develop services supporting integration. More attention should be paid to the various conditions, backgrounds and possibilities of immigrants integration in regards their education, life situation and place of residence.

After conducting the interviews I have reflected a lot the language and terminology I use. How to talk about “Finnish people” and “immigrants” without underlining the prevailing roles which already now prevent some people to feel as valuable part of this society as the majority of Finnish people. Who defines what it is to be Finnish and what kind of image I am creating when discussing about being Finnish? The language and words we use in every-day life effect on the way we see the world and different people. My interviewees said that integration is a feeling of “not being lost” and it includes managing one’s own life and knowing the rules and the culture in the host society. Integrating someone aims to making the immigrant part of the society, “appropriate” and “acceptable”.

In theory section I wrote that immigrant organisations have an important role in supporting survival of immigrant in new environment as organisations may decrease social, economical and cultural risks that occur from migration. These organisations also work as a cultural interpreters in new environments by supporting the culture of immigrants and “modifying” the culture and customs of immigrants to fit better the dominant culture of the host country. I made same finding in my analysis as my interviewees brought up the meaning of the Metka house as social environment, help of every-day life and as interpreter for both language and the culture. Immigrants have a possibility to maintain their culture at the Metka house via different celebrations and by speaking their mother tongue. People visiting the Metka house have also possibility to get to know Finnish culture among many other cultures together with people from different ethnicities and majority population. It is possible that NGO’s create and produce certain kind of subjectivities because people participating to work of NGO’s are also taught to work in Finnish organisation culture and under Finnish regulations. My analysis supports the previous research about immigrant organisation’s important role in

providing community and peer support, work as an interest group and expert for their members and offer support and supplement to the authoritative work as well.

Part of my interviewees told that the level of immigrant services had lowered or gone off temporarily and in such situations the meaning of Metka house might be even more important. People turned to the Metka house to get help with taking care of different matters. Services of Metka house are available flexibly and the services are easily accessible for example due to the Metka houses' employees and volunteers' vast knowledge of languages and informal relations among employees and visitors. As stated earlier organisations have many strengths compared to the authorities in the way services are organised and how they work. Whereas the officials are often people who belong to the majority population immigrant organisations might be easier body to identify to for immigrant in need of services because of shared experiences; both service provider and the service user are immigrants and the service provider might have been in a similar situation than the person who is in need of help. As organisational work is not always tied to office hours they are easier to approach. In different kinds of quandaries people might approach organisations that they trust in instead of waiting for the certain office to open. (Ekholm 2015.)

According to Ekholm (2015) immigrant organisations have an important role also in reaching elusive groups of people and producing knowledge about how well the existing public services reach various population groups and how could the services be changed to better meet the need of different groups of people. NGO's are also often more adaptable and mobile than administrative organisations. NGO's can spread the information via grapevine and even go to people' homes to meet them. Organisations offer a place for networking, taking part to various activities and meeting other people. In my analysis I state that people trust on Metka house also as an informant.

As in previous research has turned out organisations have an important role in building individuals self-respect, capability and self-care. As in my analysis turns up, people have received and given help via organisations and also experienced involvement when participating in actions of Metka house. Metka house offers content to my informants lives and without its existence their lives might be more limited to their homes. Receiving help from others and also offering help to others has a notable role in the lives of my interviewees and the same phenomena has been acknowledged also in previous research.

According to my analysis I claim that guidance and helping services, leisure activities and employment actions offered by the Metka house were important for those immigrants who were covered by such services. In previous research the role of NGO's and especially the role of immigrant NGO's in immigrant integration has been acknowledged (Pyykkönen 2007b). In the theory section I wrote that organisations often work with small budgets and they could benefit from financial support and trainings offered to the actors in NGO's (Ekholm 2015.) Third sector has great possibility to support the integration of immigrants and by supporting the work of such organisations cities and municipalities could foster the agency, employment and capability of immigrants. Immigrant organisations are in a key role in creating and developing immigrant services that take the viewpoint of immigrants better in to consideration. Possibility to educate oneself, work and learn the local language and culture are important matters in immigrant integration but when discussing integration it would be very important to also ponder the means of good life and how the immigrants can be supported in building a satisfying life in Finland. According to my data it shows that family and friends, leisure activities and especially the possibility to share mutual help and support was important for my interviewees. Immigrant empowerment does not come out of thin air but it requires space to organise activities, services and meetings. The Metka house was a delightful example of a cosy place where there is a possibility for sudden encounters between different people. If such activities are organised in context of NGO people need at least financial aid, information and know-how on management of organisation.

12 METKA-HOUSE SUPPORTS THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

In the light of my analysis I am stating that official criteria for integration, that recognises matters such as education, work and language skills, need to take people's individual life situation and humane needs and wishes for their lives better in to consideration. The good life of my interviewees consist of meaningful relationships, possibility to be with one's family and take care of one's family members. Taking care of one's family members mean for example being able to offer a good life for one's children but it can also mean being able to support distant family members financially or having a possibility to easily and safely visit family that is living in another country. Also being able to work and educate oneself had an important role in living a meaningful life even though in some cases my informants were frustrated because they had not get a work nor study place.

Part of my interviewees were trustful for their future and were planning to educate themselves later in life. On the other hand part of my interviewees had not found a workplace or had not get into school despite all the effort they had made. Not being able to educate oneself or make one's own living had a negative impact on how satisfied with their life my interviewees were. The Metka house provides employment to several immigrants, offers possibility to work-trial and volunteering. Those immigrants who had been working at the Metka house said that it gave them insight to Finnish working life.

Being separated of one's family and especially living separate of their children caused sadness among my interviewees. Reasons for why my informants were living separate of their children were for example that their families were not reunificated or that their children, possible grandchildren and other family members stayed in their home country even if one family member had moved to Finland. In cases as the latter I mentioned the reason for living separate was because of my interviewees individual choice to move to Finland for example due to marriage.

My claim is that immigrant-led non-governmental organisation, in this case Metka house, supports the integration of immigrant women in many ways. Such organisation offer a place for social encounters, learning and helping others. It also offers tools for managing one's own life in a new environment. Such place offers safety and familiarity but also supports

fastening on local environment. Organisation or especially a space which is multicultural, diverse and welcoming can work as a safe and encouraging place for people who are for a reason or another at a risk to be excluded, discriminated or silenced in the society. In ideal situation such organisations and places can support immigrant women to learn skills and tools for managing their every-day lives more independently, get meaningful content in their lives and better find a place in the local community and even in the whole society.

If immigrant-lead organisations succeed to support people in their integration process and aims to create a good life, it might lead to a situation where such organisation can have a more visible role in the community and then their opinions and ideas could not be passed over. Immigrant organisations could have an important role in lobbying for their members though at least in Lieksa in the case of Metk -house the association had not reached established and accepted position at such level where it would have a realistic possibility to have a say on local decision making and taking part to different planning processes. In my analysis such questions did not turn up but some of my informants thought that Somali Family Association worked on correcting rumours and doubts regarding to associations finances and activities. It seems that so far the whole potential of Metka house cannot be utilised because the surrounding community is not ready for it yet.

I built my Master's thesis on immigration and integration research and discussed also with previous research about non-governmental organisations. From the beginning I wanted to also take feminist approach and rural viewpoint along to my study which in the end had smaller role in my thesis than I had planned. I did not focus on just female specific questions in my research but many female specific themes such as the importance of family, friends and other social relations but also helping others arose in to discussion in the interviews. Initially I planned to stress the rural location of my informants and research case even more as my presumption was that public integration services are more limited and hardly accessible in rural areas compared to urban areas in Finland. In the end I did not concentrate on the public immigrant services that much but due to my informants I understood that there has been difficulties to get appointment with social worker and for some time the service was not even available due to retirement of the employee. Even though my informants were mainly happy with the public services it is true that in rural areas the services depend on work contribution of fewer people and the availability of certain services are vulnerable if the employee for example gets sick or resigns. When the authorities or public services are not available my informants turn to the Metka house to get help in taking care of different

matters. The Metka house has a role of additional service provider when the public services are not working well but in addition to that it is the first place where people often go if they need help in their own mother tongue or if they need cultural interpreting.

When collecting my empirical data I noticed that many of the activities at the Metka house revolve around children. Informants organised their lives in regards to their children and they discussed a lot about child care and household work. Children's language skills and their relationships to other kids were also discussed. The children's role in their parents, and especially their mothers, integration would be interesting theme for further research. Questions that could be researched are for example how non-governmental organisations and other actors organising integration services or activities take immigrants with a family in to account and could some immigrant groups be reached better via their children.

My empirical data arose interesting questions about the role of agency and empowerment in immigrants' lives and in further research it would be interesting to familiarise oneself with these themes. According to my interviewees it seems that empowerment has an important role in supporting the agency, capability and participation of immigrant women which support the creation of satisfying every-day life if the basic needs of individual, such as housing, livelihood and possibility to be with your loved ones, are also met. When my interviewees felt that they can manage in their every-day lives and even help others, it helped them in navigating in a new country and culture. When researching immigrants empowerment the researchers own position in relation to the position of informants should be reflected as still many of the people researching integration of immigrants in Finland are part of the majority population. Besides pondering different positions more attention could be paid to the situated knowledge and the research should well from the urge on finding solutions on how to encourage immigrants to take part in civic society, decision making and planning processes. There are several interesting paths in immigrant empowerment that would be very interesting to study such as how the feeling of empowerment affects of the level of satisfaction in immigrants life, does the level of empowerment show in participation to activities of civic society and what would be the best possible ways to support the empowerment. Such topics could be studied in the doctoral thesis.

I claim that supporting the integration and good life of immigrants and aiming to produce even better services for people moving to Finland it is necessary to make a shift from authority-led structure of services to one were immigrants themselves are in charge or

creating and developing the services. Many organisations do important work regarding to immigrant integration and services targeted to immigrants already now through organisations that target their activities to immigrants should also think carefully are its operations led by immigrants themselves or is the core of the organisation formed of people who belong in majority population. Even if organisations had good intention when organising events or activities for immigrants there is risk of falling into course of action where people belonging to majority population are organising things for immigrants instead of working together with them. In the worst case organisation are not taking immigrants along nor giving responsibility for them even though without immigrants the whole operation would be pointless.

It is very important to create cosy and welcoming environment and even an actual space where immigrants could come to meet each other, network, make friends and share experiences and mutual help and support. In such places immigrants should have the leading role themselves though combination of different nationalities, including also people with Finnish descent create a community where services and information can be interpreted in different languages, intercultural discussion can help to understand cultural differences and differing manners and habits of people from various backgrounds can be better understood. Municipalities have a key role in supporting such organisations and meeting places and they could show their support by offering free or affordable places for organisations, taking organisations along when planning and discussing services but also by offering straight financial and educational support for NGO's.

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14 LIST OF PICTURES

1.PICTURE. Photo from the front of the Metka-house. <<http://vernerihanke.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/metka-front.jpg>>

2.PICTURE. Children participating Metakka-project. <http://c5fdmkd4.c5.suncomet.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/13680703_10205766843844160_8404237764121996655_n.jpg>

3.PICTURE. Interior of Metka-house. <http://c5fdmkd4.c5.suncomet.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/IMG_4681.jpg>

15 APPENDIX

1.APPENDIX. Interview questions.

Haastattelukysymykset

Pro Gradu-opinnäytetyössäni tutkin kansalaisjärjestöjen ja muiden harrastusryhmien roolia maahanmuuttajanaisten kotoutumisessa Suomalaisella maaseudulla.

Olen kiinnostunut kuulemaan maahanmuuttajanaisten kokemuksia heidän arjestaan ja elämästään Lieksassa, heidän osallistumisestaan yhdistystoimintaan sekä siitä, miten yhdistystoiminta on vaikuttanut heidän elämäänsä.

Käsittelen haastatteluaineistoa luottamuksellisesti. Käytän haastatteluaineistoa tutkimuksessani niin, että haastateltavat eivät ole tunnistettavissa.

Perustiedot

- Ammatti
- Koulutustausta
- Ikä

Alkukysymykset, tutustumista

- Kerro arjestasi Lieksassa
 - mitä yleensä teet ihan tavallisena päivänä?

Kylätalo ja järjestöt

- Käytkö usein kylätalolla?
- Onko päiväsi erilainen kun tulet kylätalolle? Eroaako se tavallisesta arkipäivästä?
- Miten löysit tiesi kylätalolle?
 - Käytkö usein täällä?
 - Millaisissa harrastusporukoissa tai yhdistyksissä olet mukana täällä kylätalolla (tai muualla)?
 - Mitä näissä porukoissa tehdään?
 - Kuka järjestää toimintaa?

- Millaista ajattelit yhdistystoiminnan olevan? Mikä siinä on parasta? Mitä muuttaisit?
- Onko arkesi muuttunut tullessasi mukaan yhdistystoimintaan?

Sosiaaliset suhteet ja verkostot

- Kerro minulle perheestäsi ja ystävästäsi?
- Oletko tutustunut uusiin ihmisiin kylätalolla toimiessasi?
- Oletko saanut ystäviä harrastusporukoista/yhdistyksistä?
- Onko sinulla suomalaisia/muista maista tulleita ystäviä?

Paikka

- Millainen paikka Lieksa on? Miten kuvailisit Lieksaa? (Maaseutu, kaupunki, rauhallinen, jotain muuta?)
- Mikä merkitys kylätalolla on sinulle?
- Mikä merkitys kylätalolla on muille Lieksalaisille?
- Onko Lieksa tai lieksalaiset muuttuneet maahanmuuttajien saapumisen myötä?
- Millaisia muutoksia olet havainnut?

Kotoutuminen

- Millaista elämäsi on Lieksassa?
- Mitä kotoutuminen tarkoittaa sinun mielestäsi?
- Miten kääntäisit kotoutumisen äidinkielellesi? Mitä se tarkoittaa? Miten se eroaa suomenkielisestä sanasta?
- Millainen ihminen on kotoutunut Suomessa? Mainitse mielestäsi tärkeimmät kotoutumista edistävät asiat? Mikä on edistänyt sinun kotoutumistasi?
- Millaisia tietoja ja taitoja on oltava, jotta arki sujuu Lieksassa/Suomessa?
- Oletko sinä kotoutunut?

2.APPENDIX. European Union's common basic principles in immigrant's integration

- *CBP 1: "Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States"*
- *CBP 2: "Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union"*
- *CBP 3: "Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible"*
- *CBP 4: "Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration"*
- *CBP 5: "Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society"*
- *CBP 6: "Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration"*
- *CBP 7: "Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens"*
- *CBP 8: "The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law"*
- *CBP 9: "The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration"*
- *CBP 10: "Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public policy formation and implementation."*
- *CBP 11: "Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective."*