

Check-in Finland

Recognising the returning expatriates in the strategy
for expatriate Finns



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Design for Government course at Aalto University

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Cover & Report layout: Liisi Wartainen.

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Introduction

As a part of the Design for Government course at Aalto University, our team has been working on a three-months project together with the Ministry of the Interior, Suomi-Seura (The Finnish Society) and other stakeholders as our partners. This report documents our process and the results. It includes our research methods, findings, final proposal – Check-In Finland, as well as reflection points.

The Strategy for Expatriate Finns

There are around 2 million people living abroad with Finnish roots. (Statistics Finland, 2019). The Ministry of the Interior is setting up a strategy for these expatriates for the year 2022-2026. The strategy aims to support expatriate Finns, expand their representation, create new ways to strengthen their relationship with Finland as well as make it easier to come back and integrate into society. Keeping in mind the significant number of Finns living abroad, some groups might be left underrepresented. More about the project [here](#) (in Finnish).

Our focus

During our research we have identified one underrepresented group – Finns, that are returning/ have returned from abroad. They are facing various challenges, including scattered information about returning and reintegrating to Finland's society both culturally and professionally. This group has unique needs that are currently not being addressed by the Government. Our intervention – Check-In Finland – offers an online platform as a one source of information for returning, but more importantly – acknowledgement and recognition of this group.

We are

a multidisciplinary team of students from different study programs and universities. Meet our team:



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Research Methods

Desktop research

In the beginning, we started working with two preliminary research questions: *How do expatriate Finns, current and returned ones, understand their identity and their relationship with Finland? and How would they like to develop and maintain their relationship with Finland?*

We used a survey commissioned by the Finland Society as a starting point to understand young Finnish expatriates (Arvola 2019). Johanna Peltoniemi's dissertation "On the Borderlines of Voting" (Peltoniemi 2018) was useful in highlighting the importance of identity for Finnish emigrants. We expanded our understanding of the relationship between national identity and everyday cultural practices from Tim Edensor's work (Edensor 2002). We also borrowed the idea of "Imagined Community" from Benedict Anderson and his seminal work: Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism (2006). Statistics Finland provided us statistical information on the latest migration trends. (Statistics Finland 2021).

To learn about existing good examples, we did desktop research and benchmarking in the context of our brief. Here are some examples that we found inspiring:

- **Retour En France** – a digital tool that can guide each person according to their specific situation before and after return. The implementation of this tool has been commissioned by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Secretariat for the Modernisation of Public Action. The tool is now updated every quarter.
<http://retour-en-france.simplicite.fr/ext/REFFront>
- **KEA New Zealand** – community of Kiwis worldwide. Connecting not only culturally, but also providing a network of valuable connections for professional career.
<https://www.keanewzealand.com/>
- **Create Lithuania** – programme for professional development and the applicability of best foreign practices to Lithuania with a focus on returning expats.
<https://kurklit.lt/en/>
- **Info Finland** – An "infopack" about Finland published by the city of Helsinki. Even though the webpage is not very user-friendly or well-known, it is a great example of systemized information.
<https://www.infofinland.fi/>
- **Volvemos.org** – supporting Spain's diaspora connection and promoting their return back home. The program involved more than 1.500 emigrants, more than 60 companies, 10 ministries from the Spanish Government, regional governments and the exterior service administration. Great example of a service created with a human-centered approach.
<https://volvemos.org/>

Stakeholder meetings

We aimed to keep our stakeholders involved in our process from the very beginning. The very first step was the roundtable discussion, held online with our Supergroup (3 teams working on the same brief). The discussion, which lasted 2,5 hours, was efficient and informative. We had a chance to get to know the people behind our partners – institutions, such as the Ministry of the Interior, Suomi-Seura (the Finland society), the Migration Institute of Finland and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. During the discussion, some problematic points were touched, such as the low rate of postal voting by the expats, the language barrier for expats who don't speak Finnish, and the lack of one centralized communication system/channel. Yet, one main focus of the brief appeared to be the need to find the underrepresented groups and hear their needs. As one stakeholder said during the discussion: "In terms of the strategy, what we aim is to listen to the needs of as many different voices as possible."

We have continued discussions with the stakeholders: received valuable feedback during the mid-term presentations, and organized separate meetings with representatives from different institutions.



Roundtable discussion with our project stakeholders / Screenshot: Rūta Šerpytė.

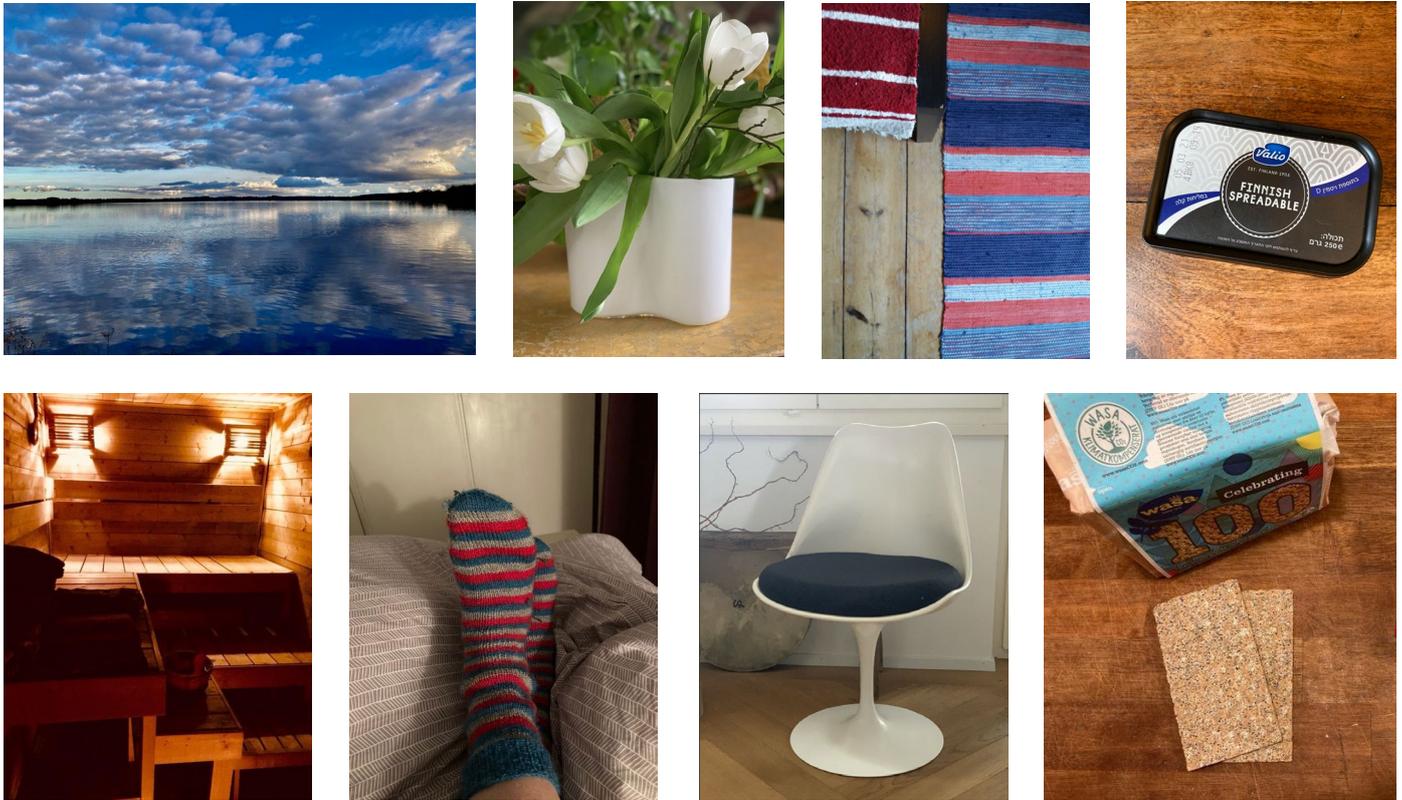
Survey

Together with the two other teams working on the same brief, we conducted a questionnaire that received 844 respondents. The survey addressed expatriate Finns on general issues related to their identity, situation and their relationship to Finland. The responses have stated that the relationship to Finland is multiple and that there are various feelings about identity. In addition, more than 500 expatriates (60%) feel that other Finns living abroad could benefit from hearing about their experiences. The survey gave us some interesting basis for a first understanding of the brief. We received qualitative responses to identify general trends and immerse ourselves into the real experiences of expatriates. We were surprised by the numerous responses we have received - this was a valuable insight by itself.

A screenshot of a survey form with several questions. The first question is "How strongly do you identify with Finnish culture?" with a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (I consider myself Finnish). The second question is "If applicable, how has moving away from Finland affected your Finnish identity?" with a text input field. The third question is "Which of the following organisations have you heard of?" with checkboxes for "The Finnish Expatriate Parliament", "Suomi-Seura ry", and "Suomi-koulut/schools". The fourth question is "In what ways do you currently participate in Finland, politically, culturally or socially from abroad?" with checkboxes for "Voting", "Active in the Finnish Expatriate Parliament", "Active in Suomi-Seura ry", "I am a member of a Finnish organisation (e.g. cultural, religious, sports, union)", "I am active in informal Finnish expatriate groups and societies (e.g. Facebook groups)", "Sharing / popularising Finnish culture and language abroad", "I or my children have attended a Finnish school", "I work with or for a Finnish company", and "Muu...". The fifth question is "If applicable, please provide additional details about your selection in the previous question (In what ways do you currently participate in Finland, politically, culturally or socially from abroad?)" with a text input field.

Examples of survey questions.

Probes



Examples of pictures survey participants sent us.

We have identified that a lot of Finnish expats felt a stronger connection to their home country after moving abroad and their Finnish identity got stronger. We wanted to explore the emotional links Finnish expats have with their home country, so we have designed a cultural probe. We asked 30 survey participants to send us 3 pictures from their everyday life, whenever they get reminded of Finland. In a short 4 day notice, we received 9 replies: 7 people sent pictures of various design objects, food products, nature and sauna. 2 participants replied saying that they don't think of Finland that actively. Even though we had a nice visual representation of Finland through the eyes of expats, this method did not give us deep insights that we could use in our project further on. However, we did use the same task later on in our project - as an icebreaker during our co-creation workshop.

Interviews

We have conducted 7 semi-structured interviews online. We have based our questions on the survey results, and prepared two scenarios with different approaches: one for expatriates still living abroad, and one for those who have returned. We were focusing our questions on the relationship with Finland, participation, communities, national identity and encounters with the Government institutions. The questions can be found in the appendix of this report. In general, our participants could be described as educated, “young professionals”, who were very engaged and interested in this topic. You can find the general information about our participants in the table:

Living abroad / returned	Age	Sex	Occupation	Country of expatriation	Reasons for expatriation
Living abroad	29	F	Marketing specialist	Denmark	Studies
Living abroad	30	F	Freelancer, creative	UK	Moved with boyfriend, stayed for a job
Living abroad	36	F	University employee (international office)	Austria	Moved to be with partner
Returned	28	M	Student, working in a software company	1) Australia, 2) Estonia	1) Exploring, 2) exchange
Returned	34	F	Freelancer, artist	Multiple countries, last ones - Russia and Peru	Mostly studies and job
Returned	31	F	Communications lead	1) Belgium, 2) Canada	1) Job offer, 2) partner moving
Finnish roots, recently moved to Finland	40 (?)	M	Designer	UK	Studies

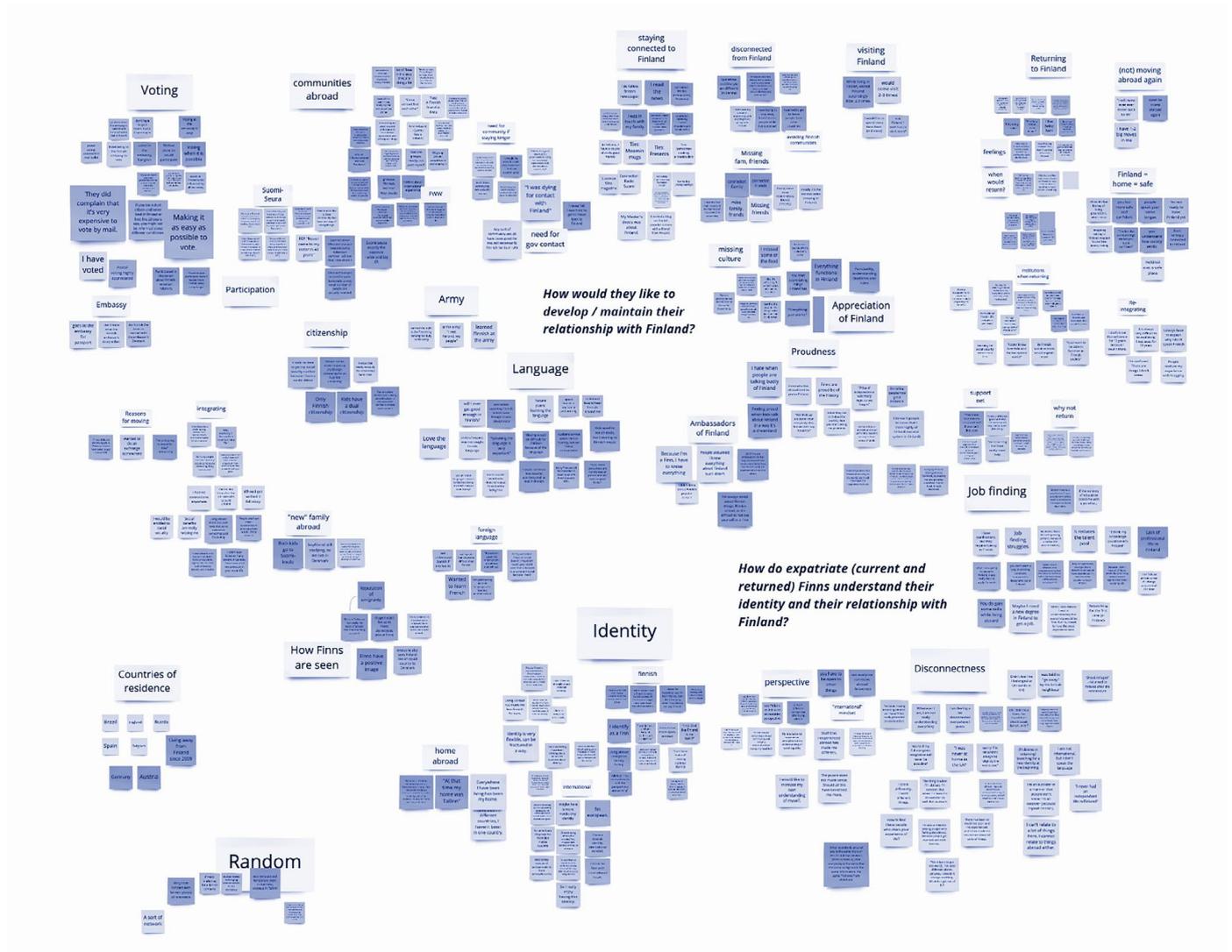
List of our interview participants.

Reflections on the research methods

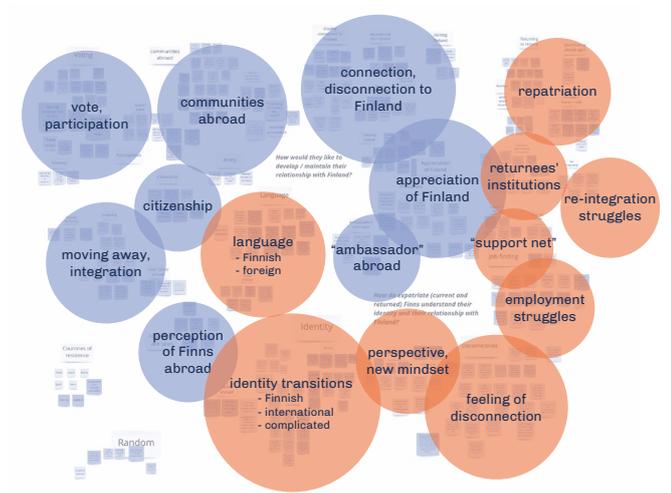
- Working closely with our stakeholders was beneficial for us, we could easily identify the ideas that would be the most valuable and exciting for them.
- The numerous respondents in our survey reveal the expatriates' need to express themselves and share their stories. This engagement was very encouraging and inspiring for us, we continued involving expatriates throughout our process.
- The survey could have been addressed to a wider group of expatriates (including returnees).
- We have mainly shared our questionnaire to Facebook groups which might leave some voices unheard (people active in Facebook groups are generally more engaged in participation).
- Collaboration with our Supergroup during the research phase saved us resources and later on resulted in different solutions, which could still work if implemented together.
- Cultural probe provided us a nice visual representation of Finland through the eyes of expats, although did not give us deep insights.
- Even though we got valuable and relevant insights from our interviews, the sample of our participants was not very diverse: they were all educated, similar age group and mostly acquaintances of our team members.

Insights

Affinity Diagram



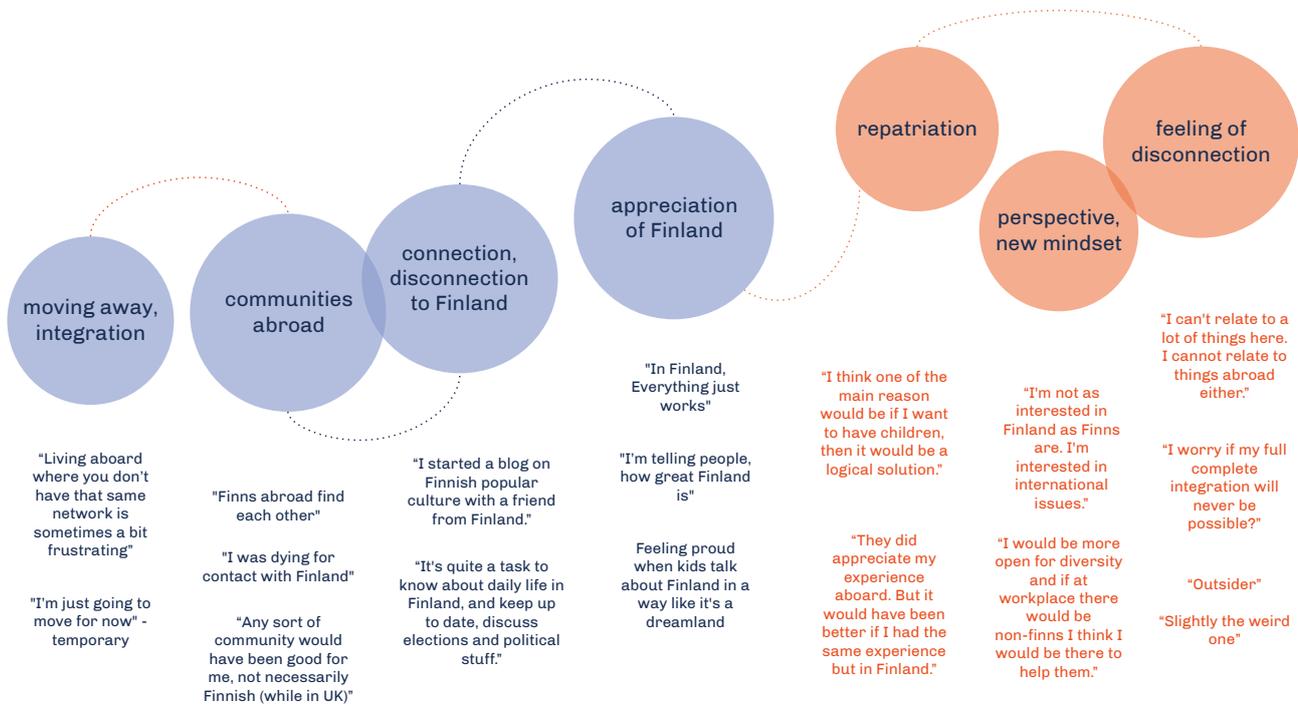
Interviews and data cross-checked.



Affinity diagram to identify the main findings (our focus is orange).

To build on the data and to make sense of expatriates' opinions, living abroad and returnees, we organized and clustered our observations in different categories. You can see them in our Affinity Diagram, a tool for data analysis. We chose to focus especially on the returnees, an underrepresented group, which we highlighted in orange. Common issues about repatriation, re-integration and language came up. Returnees are struggling with the definition of their identity, for example, some see themselves "more international than Finn". We have identified that some expatriates who return with "a wider perspective" may still feel like "outsiders" and "more and more disconnected from the culture every year" (quotes from the questionnaire).

Journey of an expatriate



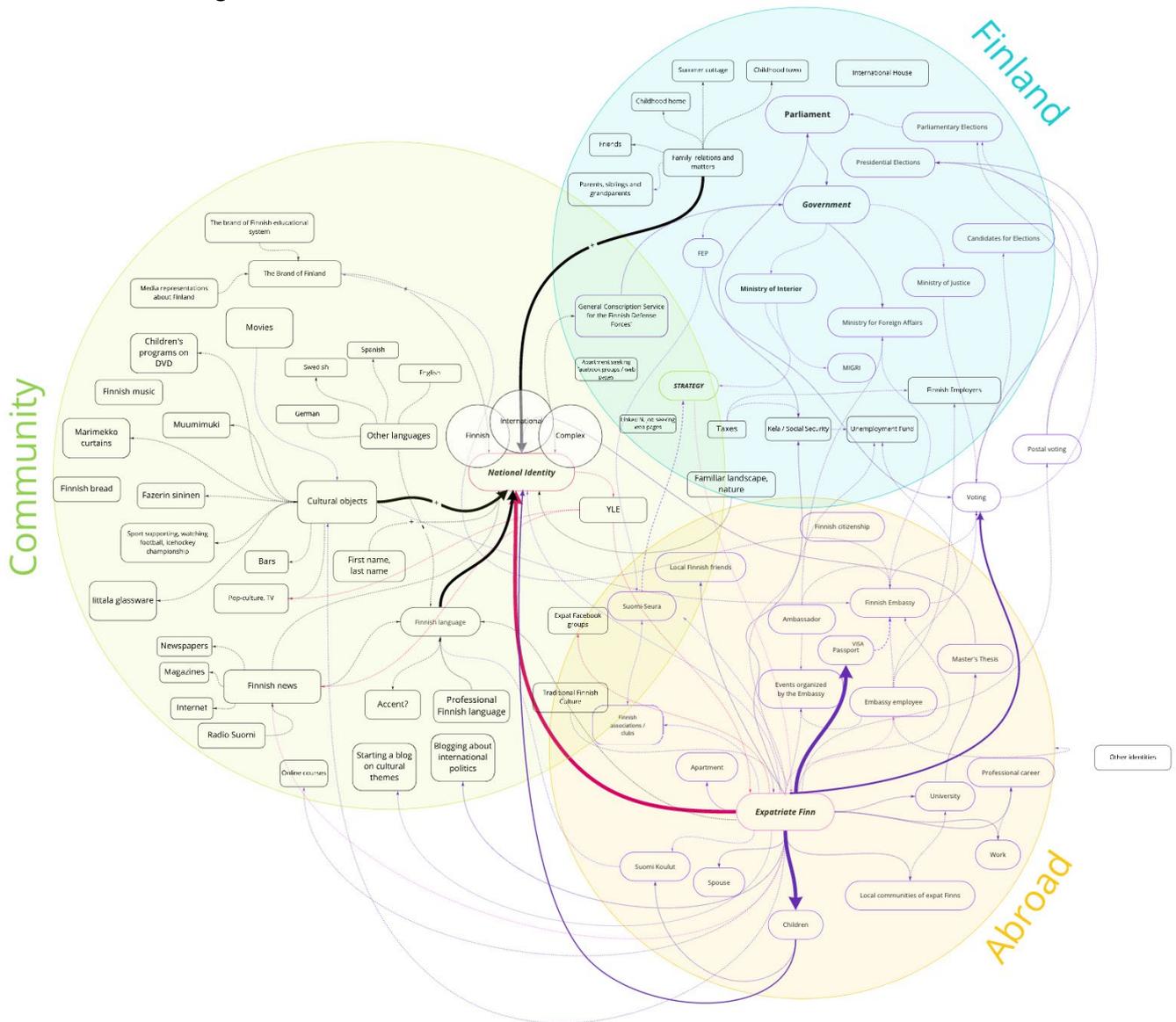
Expatriation journey.

To understand the expatriation and repatriation process from a more empathic point of view, we created a "journey of an expat" which we have illustrated with quotes from our interviews. The repatriation process is not easy, struggles occur, and some returnees may abandon the process along the way because it becomes

too complicated. The question raised here is whether Finland is able to attract people such as expatriate Finns, welcome them and keep them when they do come. After all, if repatriation and reintegration are not successful, people may find it easier to move away again.

Understanding the system by mapping it

As we started mapping different elements and relationships related to the experience of being an expatriate, we noticed how Finland is conceptualized as an imagined community that exists outside the physical borders of Finland. The relationship with Finland is cultivated through everyday cultural interactions, objects, and the Finnish language. These findings led us to understand the importance of identity and culture for expatriate Finns and paved a way for our design intervention at later stages.



The first version of our system map recognized the importance of community that is constructed outside geographical borders.

Defining our problem areas and design drivers

After our research phase, we decided to focus on the experiences of returned expatriates for three reasons:

1. Returned expatriates as a group are relatively unknown to the Government and public services. The number of returned expatriates reached a record high number of 9 638 individuals in 2020, which calls for a deeper understanding of this group and their needs (Statistics Finland 2020).
2. The expertise of returned expatriates could be better leveraged. Finland recognizes the importance of international talent on a strategic level, but returning expatriates and their unique talents are not fully understood or leveraged in the context of Finnish economy (Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns 2017-2021, 32-35).

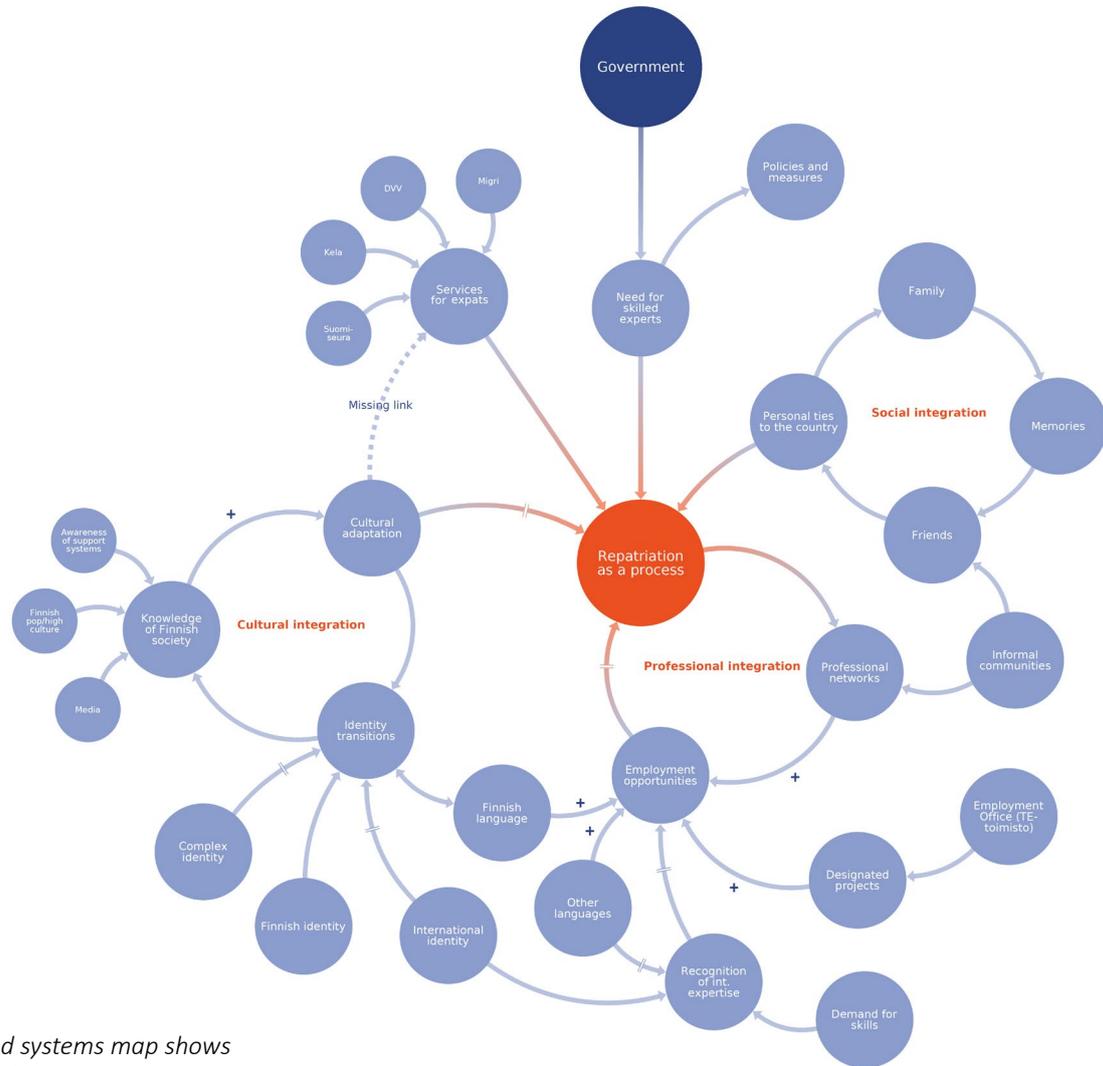
3. Successful integration is a crucial factor in attracting more expatriates to Finland in the future. However, there are few concrete services available that help in the integration process. The information related to repatriation is scattered and hard to locate.

Addressing this group in the new strategy for expatriate Finns is important, and we felt our work could contribute to their recognition. In an ideal scenario, returning expatriates should not feel like they have to shrink themselves in order to fit in the Finnish working life and society, and they would find their way to relevant services and networks. As we defined and redefined our goals, five key design drivers emerged:

COMMUNICATION	APPRECIATION	INCLUSIVITY	FUTURE-ORIENTATION	COMMUNITY
Enhancing the communication between the government and returned expatriates to better understand the expatriates needs. This communication should be sustained over time.	Increasing the understanding of the value of international experience and mindset in the Finnish job market. Returned expatriates are an asset to Finland.	Recognising aspects like a language barrier, an international mindset , complexity of national identity and cultural differences among returned expatriates.	Accepting that the importance of geographical borders is decreasing, Changing physical locations might become less important in the future of work.	Aiming solutions not for individuals, but for a community . Expatriates could benefit from sharing their experiences, and having a safety net.

Design drivers.

Reorganizing our systems map



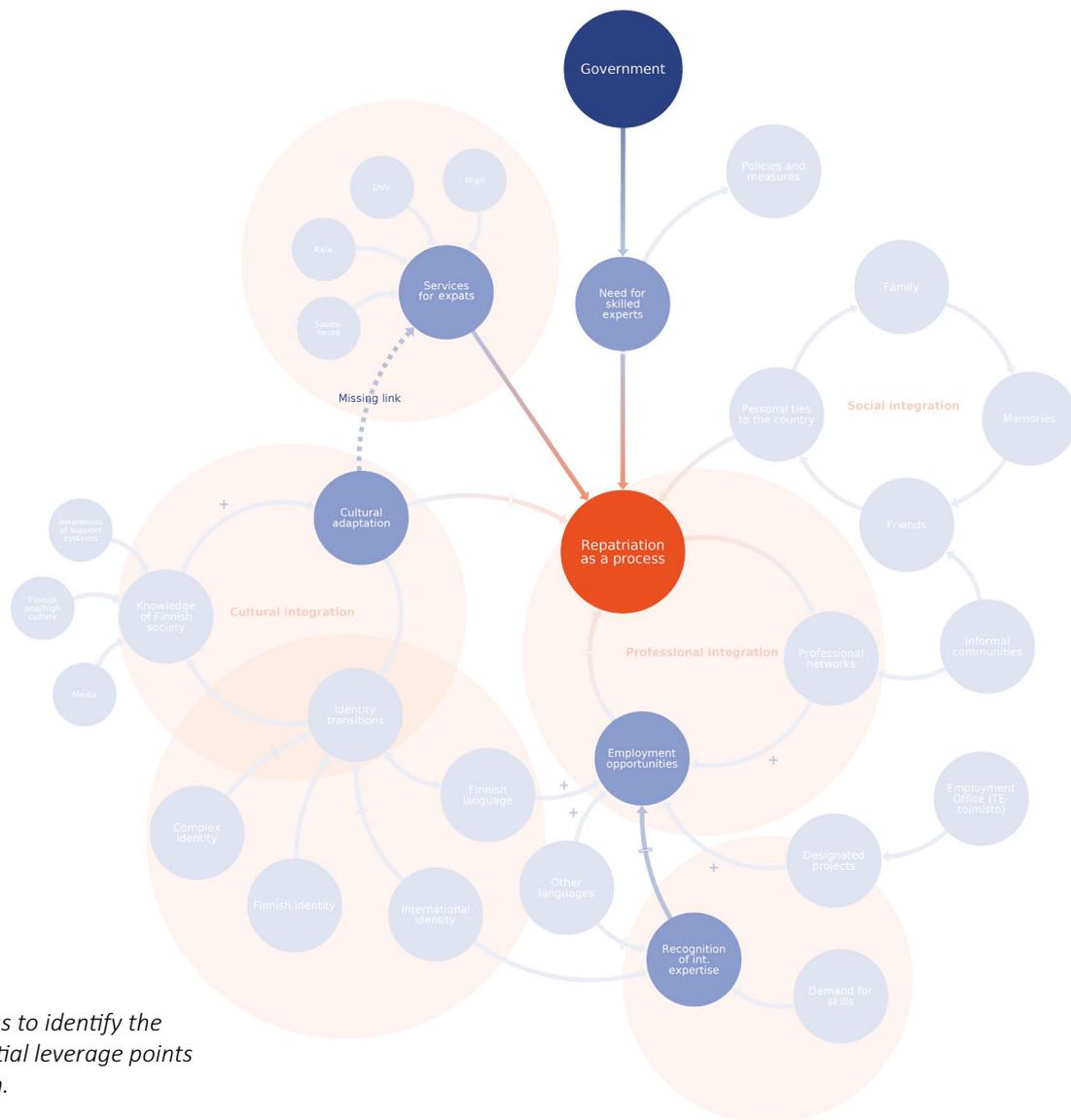
A reorganized systems map shows the process of repatriation. Systems map: Kaisa-Maria Suomalainen. Visual finalization: Liisi Wartainen.

After defining our design drivers, we reorganized our systems map to illustrate the process of repatriation and different dimensions of integration. We identified three dimensions of integration: social, professional and cultural integration.

On the social dimension of integration, elements such as family, personal networks and even memories are important. The process becomes more complex when transitioning to professional integration. Personal networks, credentials, language skills and employer needs start to play an important role, and they can either speed up or slow down professional integration.

There are also considerable delays in these feedback loops. We believe that international or complex national identity could possibly slow down the process of cultural integration.

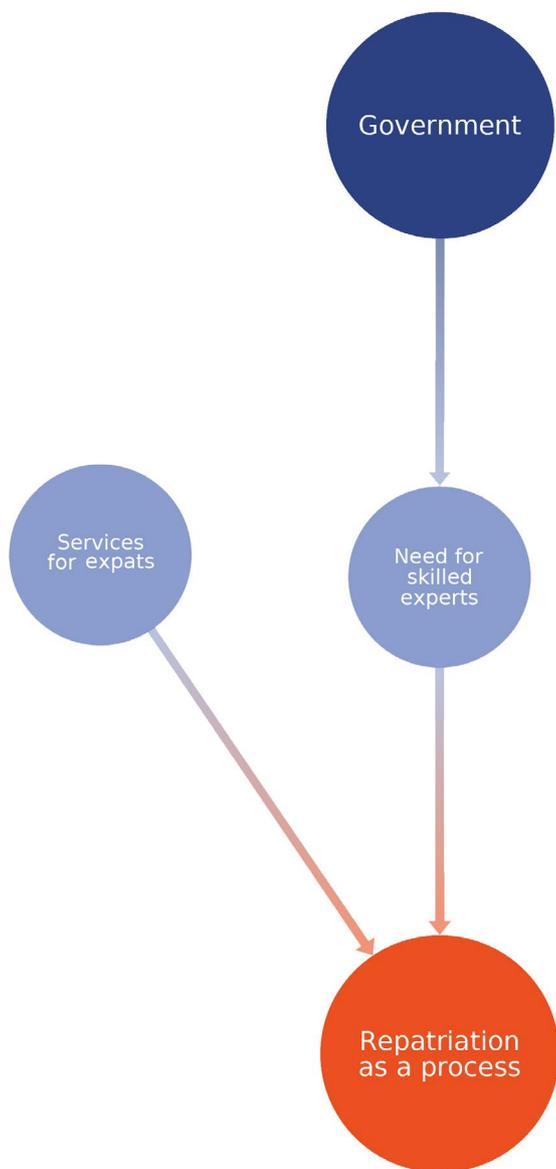
From a systemic perspective, we are interested in delays and information flows in the system, as they could be impactful leverage points for changing the system to be more accommodating for the needs of returning expatriates (Meadows 1998, 152, 156-157).



Next step was to identify the most influential leverage points in the system.

After identifying the most potential leverage points, planning our intervention became significantly easier. We decided that our design intervention would have to address one or more of the following leverage points in the system:

- Building a link between cultural adaptation and services for expats
- Reducing delay between recognition of international experience and employment opportunities
- Strengthening the link between services for expatriates and the process of repatriation



Improving the information flow between the services and the process of repatriation would have a positive effect on repatriation as a whole.

We decided to focus on the link between official services for expats and the process of repatriation where the Government has an important role to play. Improving the information flow between these two elements of our system would have a positive effect on the overall integration process.

Reflections on the insights

- The Affinity diagram served as a tool to cross-check a wide range of information from different sources (survey, interviews, stakeholder meetings). It has also helped us to set our focus and target existing conflicts.
- The journey of Expatriate helped us to understand the bigger picture and to highlight common stages in the various stories of the expats. It was also beneficial coming back to this tool in the later stages of our process: we used it as a basis for our co-creation workshop, and while creating a story of Nelli, our fictional returnee.
- A key reflection of this phase in our research is the usefulness of systems maps in understanding the complexity of expatriates' experience. As we progressed in our research, our systems map became more defined and allowed us to find the right focus for the project. We kept returning to our systems map throughout our process.
- At this stage, a lot of work is done without a clear direction. This phase might feel confusing, but rewards come later as we are able to build on different types of insights. In the co-creation phase, we were also able to validate some of our insights and to see whether we were on the right track with our analysis.

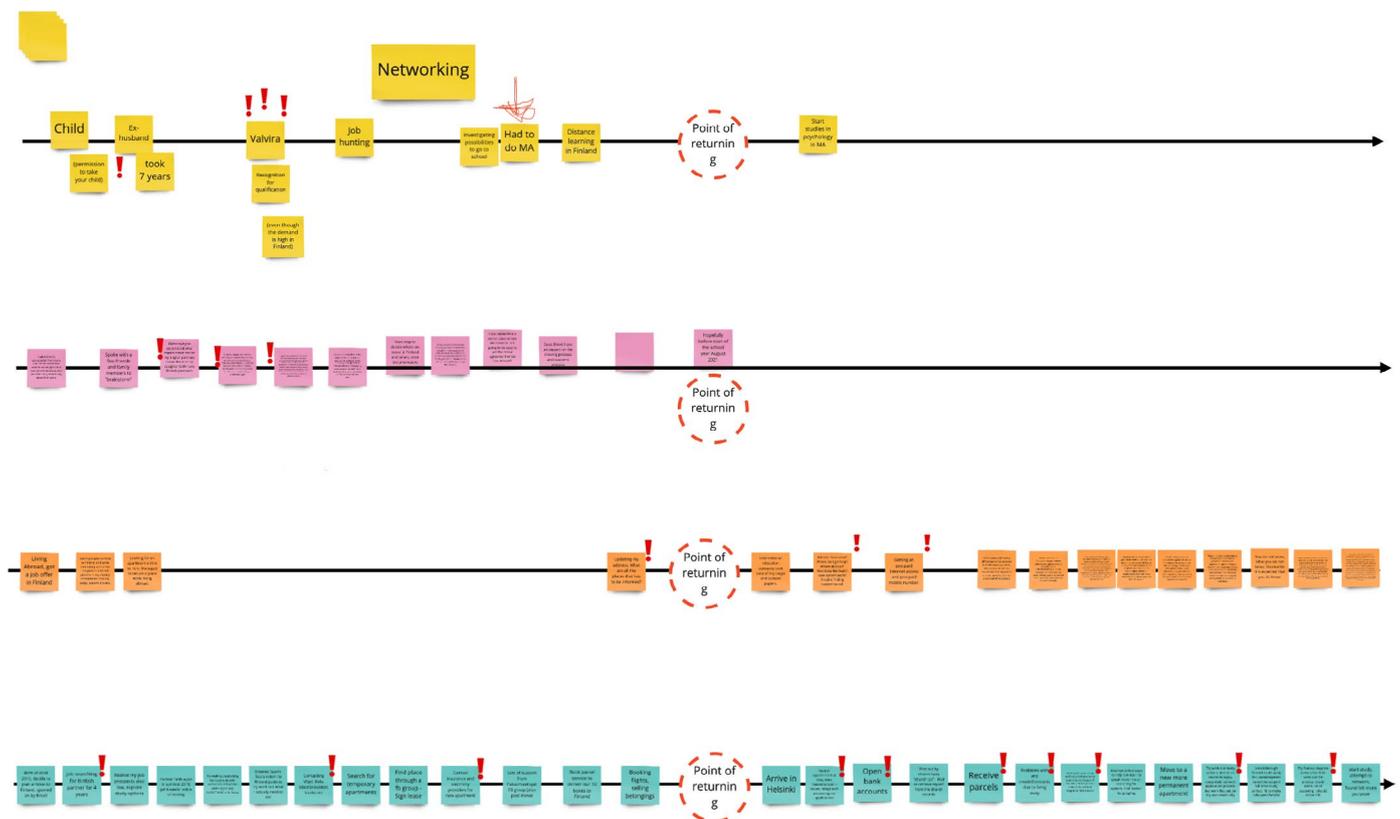
Co-creation workshop

We organized an online co-creation workshop with expatriates who have returned or are planning to return to Finland. We recruited people from a Facebook group Paluumuuttajat, Finns returning to Finland. We got 11 responses in a couple of days and finally, 6 took part in our workshop. The workshop was organised in the online working platform Miro. We planned 3 tasks to be completed, but in the end managed to go through only 2 of them: a warm-up task “Getting to know each other” and a “Timeline of returning expatriate” task where we asked participants to illustrate their returning process on a timeline and highlight the pain points which they have faced.

In the workshop, a few recurring themes emerged. Participants expressed their frustration for the lack of appreciation in their professional experience as well as struggles in validating their foreign degrees. Almost

every participant complained about the complex and bureaucratic process of returning. Information is hard to access and it’s scattered around different web pages provided by different authorities. One participant said “When you don’t know, you don’t know. So, you don’t know what to ask.” referring to how hard it is to find something when you are not even certain what you are looking for.

To have some ideation together, we asked our participants how the process of returning could be improved. Almost everyone spoke for clear instructions for the returning process and hoped that all the information needed would be in one place. A step-by-step guide for returning expatriates was suggested. Participants also emphasized that just creating a guide wouldn’t be enough. The whole system needs to be changed inside-out.



Examples of completed “Timeline of returning expatriate” tasks.

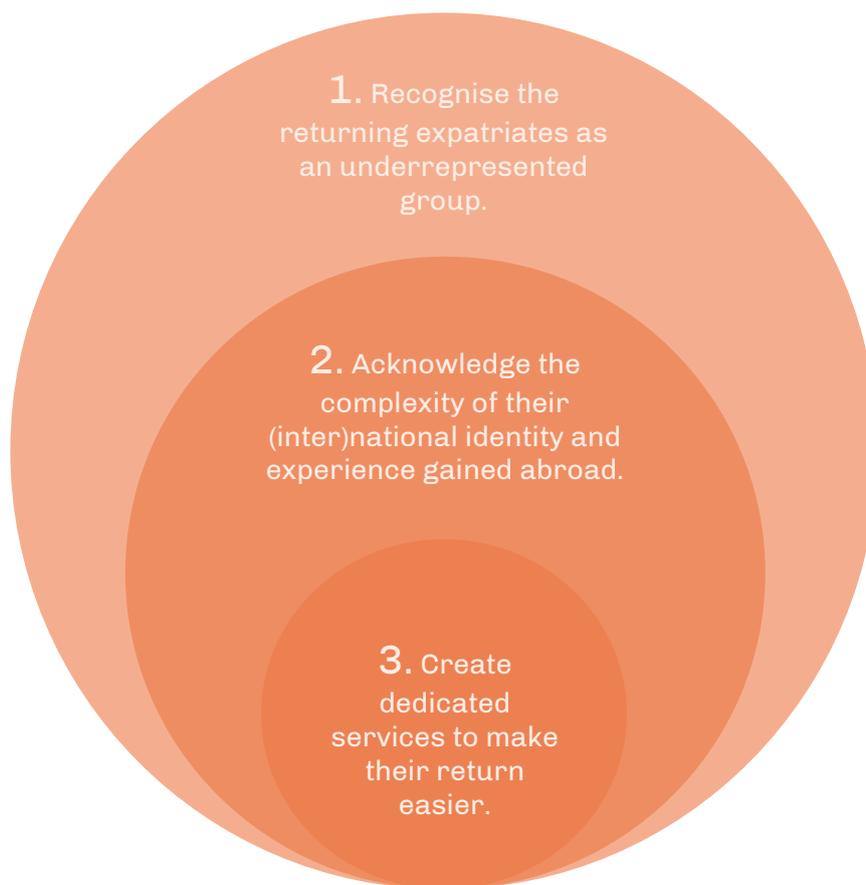
Living abroad / returned	Age	Sex	Years lived abroad	Occupation	Country of expatriation
Returned	30-39	F	18	Student	UK and Australia
Returned	30-39	F	12	Unemployed	UAE, UK, Qatar
Returned	40-49	F	15	Event industry	Asia (did not specify the country)
Returned	50-59	F	17	Immigration expert	Sweden, Indonesia
Planning on returning	40-49	F	20	Space and satellite industry	UK
Planning on returning	50-59	F	22	Children psychotherapist	Netherlands, UK

List of our co-creation workshop participants.

Reflections on the workshop

- We have learned that when organizing an online workshop, you need to reserve some extra time. Our participants were late, it took time for them to learn how to use the platform, and everyone was extremely talkative. Eventually, we ran out of time and didn't manage to go through the last co-creation task.
- It is important to be prepared for improvising. When we realized we would not have time to go through the last part of the workshop, we included some extra questions for the first tasks. This way we managed to include ideation in the workshop. Unfortunately, the last part, which was about building on each other's ideas, remained missing from our workshop.
- Improvising needs good communication between the organizing team. The workshop situation can be chaotic, and it is hard to follow different messaging channels. We learned that one communication channel needs to be settled beforehand and everyone needs to check it every now and then. It can give an unprofessional appearance if organizers plan the flow of the tasks during the workshop.
- In the end, despite the small difficulties we faced, the workshop went well, and we got good feedback from the expatriates. Everyone enjoyed their time and the participants agreed to keep in touch with each other after the workshop.
- We got good quality information and insights from the workshop. Our choice of the tasks, especially the timeline task, was successful. Through the stories of the participants, we truly understood the pain points of returning expatriates. The workshop had a big role in shaping our intervention.

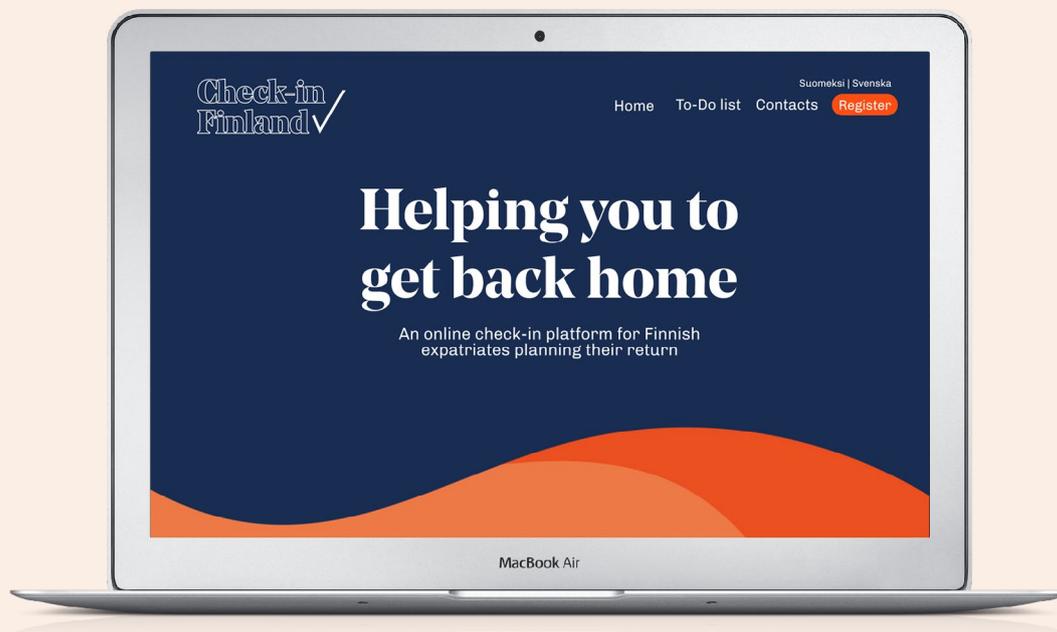
Proposal



What are we suggesting to the Government. Graphics: Rūta Šerpytytė.

Before presenting our proposal, we will explain the key points that we are suggesting to the Government. Looking at the big picture, we want to make some changes in the way returned and returning expatriates are being seen in Finland. First of all, we want them to recognise the returning expatriates as an underrepresented group. Secondly, we want their complex, international identity and the skills gained abroad to be acknowledged and valued in the Finnish society. And lastly, for all of this to become possible, new services must be created, specifically for the returning Finns.

Check-in Finland



Even though expatriate Finns are Finns, they have unique needs that should be taken into account. We have learned from our research and workshop that currently the system does not recognize or address these needs. The category of returned expatriates does not exist officially and there are no services provided to help them in the returning process.

We wanted to create something that would help to bridge this gap. After our team's brainstorming session, we combined our best ideas and came up with an online platform for expatriates planning their return. Check-in Finland is an easy-access, one source information platform and a step-by-step guide to help expatriates

navigate the complex bureaucracy matters. The service would provide customized help and to-do lists based on the expatriates' profiles to meet their individual needs. Check-in Finland would not be an answer to all of the questions in the returning process, but rather a guide, where expatriates could be directed to different pages that are relevant for them. The service could also provide some relevant content, such as knowledge about the social security system, the healthcare system or Finnish culture and language. Some extra articles or blog posts about specific matters could be provided, such as returning with a foreign partner, looking for a job in Finland or returning from the UK after Brexit.

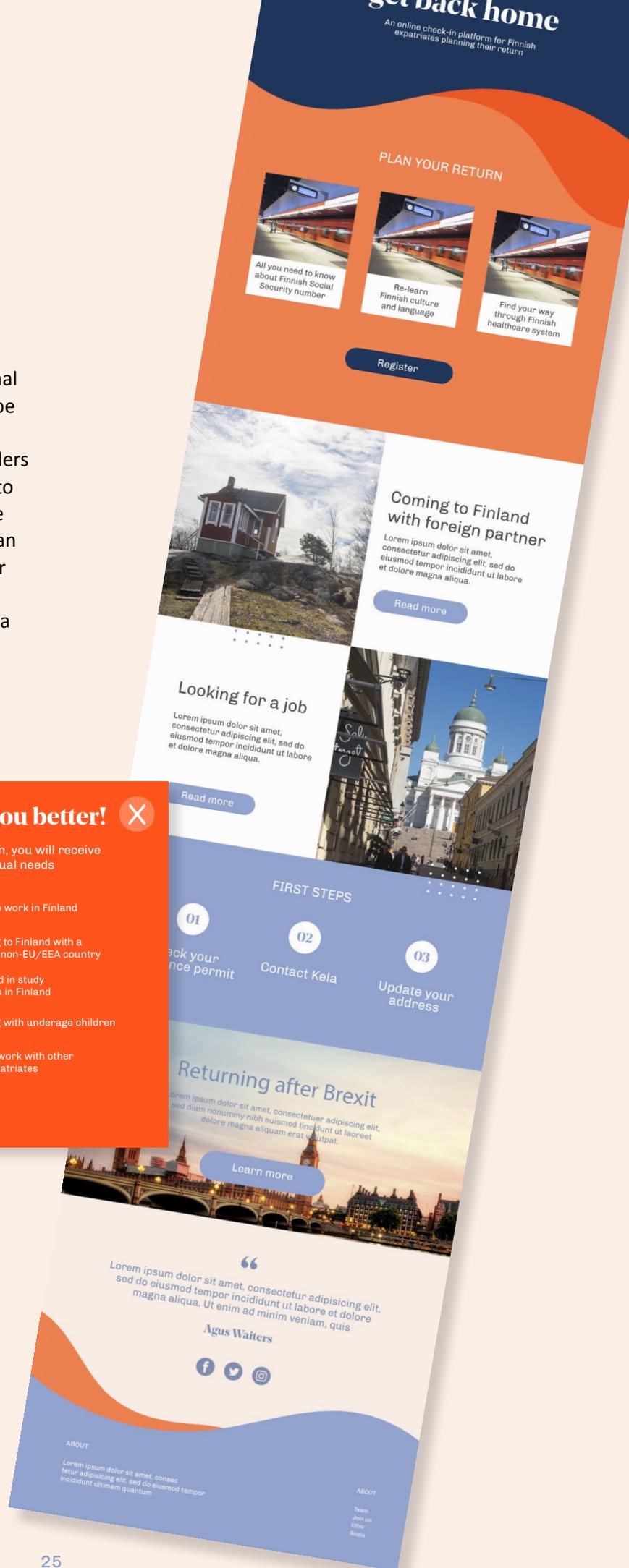
Using the service starts with a welcoming message. In the top menu there is easy access to the to-do list with tasks that need to be done before returning and registering to the platform. When registering, expatriates have to provide some personal information, including their identification number - be it social security number, passport number or other identification. This number signals the service providers about a new individual that is going to be returning to the country, so they can keep the statistics and share the information with needed authorities. The user can also provide some additional information about their personal situation, for example, if they are returning with kids, a foreign partner or if they are looking for a job in Finland.

Register so we could help you better! ✕

By providing some information about your situation, you will receive customized support, based on your individual needs

<p>First name: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p> <p>Last name: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p> <p>E-mail: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p> <p>Phone number: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p> <p>Identification number: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I'm coming to work in Finland <input type="radio"/> I'm returning to Finland with a spouse from non-EU/EEA country <input type="radio"/> I'm interested in study opportunities in Finland <input type="radio"/> I'm returning with underage children <input type="radio"/> I want to network with other returned expatriates
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[See the prototype in Figma.](#)
 Prototype design: Rūta Šerpytytė.

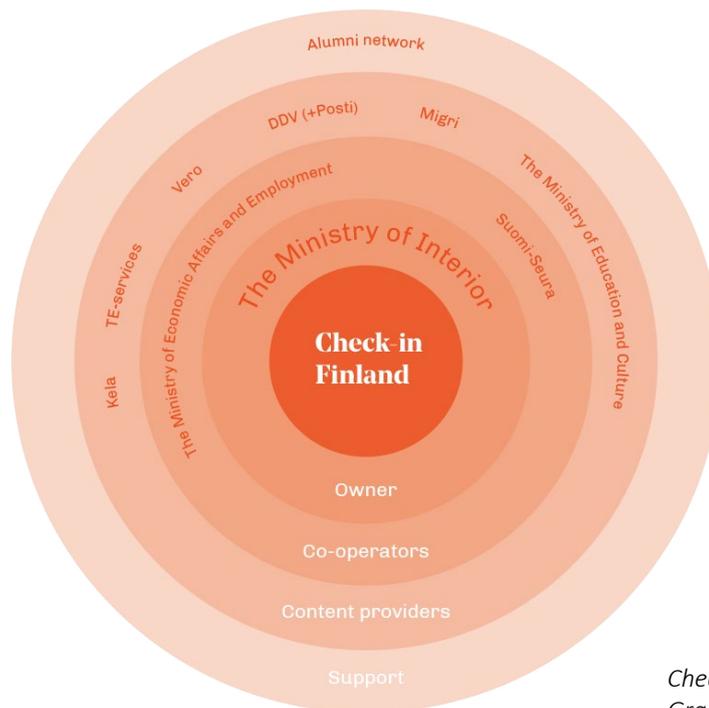


What does Check-in Finland offer to the Government?

Our proposal meets the needs of both expatriate Finns and the Finnish Government. By registering to the service, expatriates would officially mark their status as “returning” and give new statistics and analytics to the Government. Later on, this data could be used as a measuring tool for the current strategy and give valuable insights for the strategy 2027. The Government would also attract more Finns to return and get a hold of expatriates who are thinking about returning.

Service providers

We suggest that the owner of the service is the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration and co-operation with Suomi-Seura and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The Ministry of Education and Culture, TE-services, DVV, Migri, Kela and Vero could provide content for the service. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture could provide cultural and linguistic content and TE-services could offer help related to job search. We have identified that many returnees are willing to share and help each other and there is a significant returnee community on Facebook. This expatriate alumni network could also be involved in supporting the system.



Check-in Finland service providers. Graphics: Liisi Wartainen.

Reflections on the proposal

- Our proposal is a natural outcome of the journey we have taken in the past 12 weeks and our team is satisfied with the work we have done.
- We are happy that we were brave enough to narrow our scope but yet still include our early and perhaps the most crucial finding of complex international identity and mindset in our final proposal.
- We had a thought that our idea wasn't original or unique enough but in the end, it was something that was truly lacking from the system. The idea of the service might sound simple but there is a complex process behind it.

Conclusions

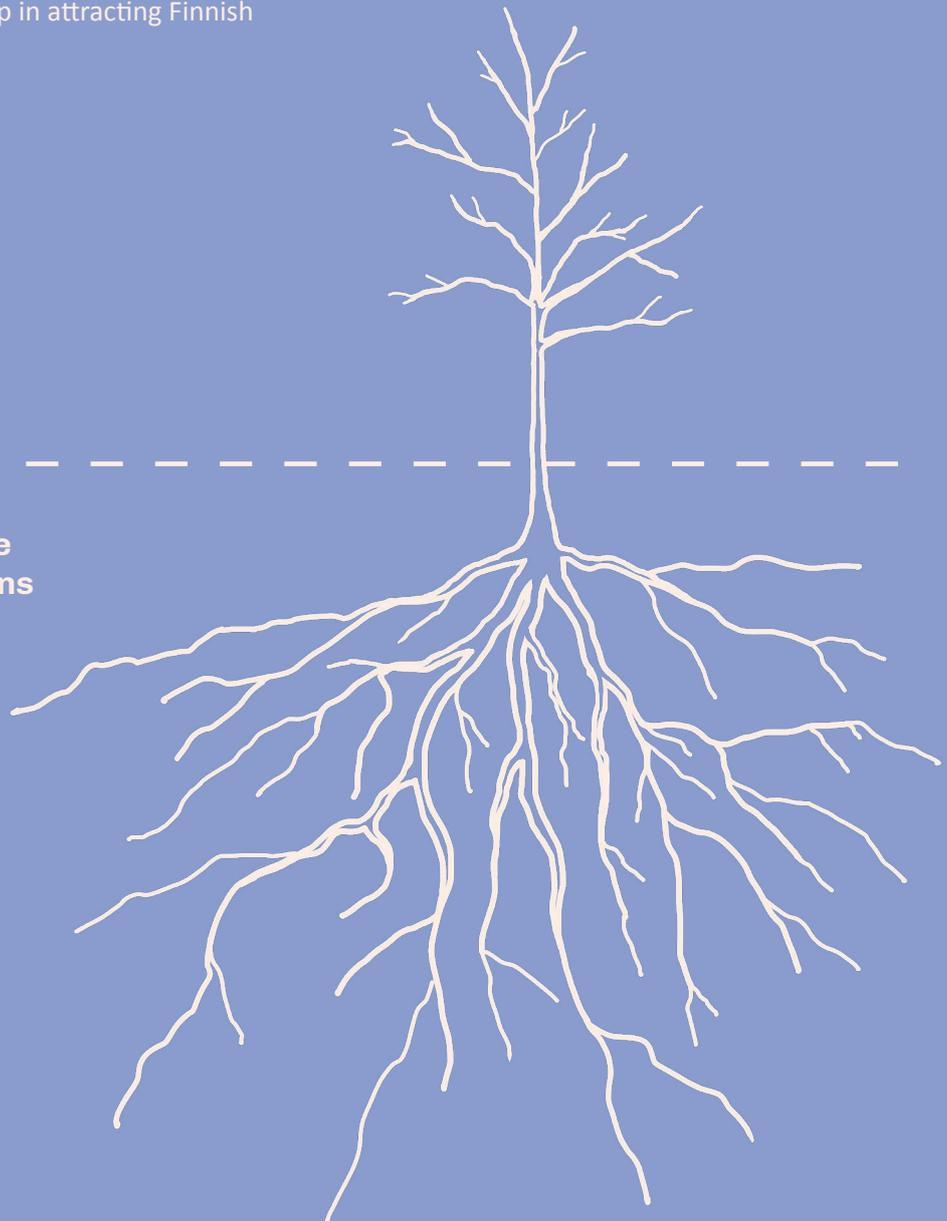
Our journey in understanding the unique situation of returning expatriates and creating a design intervention that would address both their needs and wider societal needs has been immensely rewarding. We believe we have been successful in identifying an underrepresented group among Finnish expatriates who could benefit from dedicated services and a deeper understanding of what it means to reintegrate after living abroad for an extended period of time.

In the coming years, Finland as a country is facing the need to attract more international experts to address the shortage of skilled workforce. Creating a service that would officially recognize the existence of returning expatriates and offer a smoother transition to the society, would be an important step in attracting Finnish expatriates to return to Finland.

At the same time, experiences related to expatriation and repatriation will become more common in the future. This is why we are not only suggesting a service solution, but a deeper shift in mindset. By adopting Check-in Finland as a service dedicated to returning expatriates, the Government is also recognizing that people are on the move in the future. It is possible to cultivate a strong bond with Finland while living elsewhere, and plan a smoother return when the opportunity comes. Finns are leaving, returning or thinking of returning. Regardless of their status, Check-in Finland is an interface that connects Finns with international hearts to their country of origin.

Check-in Finland

**Changing the attitude
towards returning Finns**





Thank you!

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Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire

(Prepared together with our Supergroup)

About you

1. What age are you?
 - Under 18
 - 18-29
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60-75
 - 75+
2. What gender do you identify with?
 - Female
 - Male
 - Non-binary
 - Prefer not to disclose
 - Prefer to self-describe
3. What is your relationship to Finland?
 - Finnish citizen
 - Dual citizenship
 - Parents and/or grandparents are Finnish citizens
 - Partner/child is a Finnish citizen
 - Other (open box)
4. Which of the following applies to you? (multiple answers)
 - I am currently living away from Finland
 - I am living away from Finland but planning on returning soon
 - I reside in Finland but used to live abroad
 - I am moving away from Finland for the first time soon
 - I was born abroad but have Finnish roots/parent(s)
 - Other (write in option?)
5. How long have you lived away from Finland?
 - 0-1 year,
 - 1-5 years,
 - 5-10 years,
 - 10-15 years,
 - 20+ years
6. What country are you currently residing in, or have you resided in as an overseas resident?
7. What is your language fluency in the following (on multi-scale graph as shown below)

<input type="radio"/> Finnish	Basic	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Fluent/mother tongue
<input type="radio"/> Swedish (1-5)	Basic	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Fluent/mother tongue
<input type="radio"/> English (1-5)	Basic	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Fluent/mother tongue

Your experience living abroad:

1. How strongly do you identify with Finnish culture? [Scale of 1-5, explain scale]
2. If applicable, how has moving away from Finland affected your Finnish identity? [short answer field]
3. Which of the following organisations have you heard of?
 - The Finnish Expatriate Parliament
 - Suomi-Seura
 - Suomi Koulu schools
 - Others....?
4. In what ways do you **currently participate** in Finland from abroad?
 - Voting
 - I have participated in the Finnish Expatriate Parliament
 - I am an active member of Suomi-Seura
 - I am a member of a Finnish organisation (cultural, religious, sport, union, etc.)
 - I am active in informal Finnish expatriate/overseas groups and societies (e.g. Facebook groups)
 - Sharing/popularising Finnish culture and language abroad
 - I or my children have attended a Finnish school (e.g. Suomi Koulu)
 - I work with or for a Finnish company
 - Please provide additional details to your selection, or any other ways in which you participate with Finland from abroad [open field]
5. What, if anything, has prevented you from participating in Finland from abroad?
6. In what ways **would you like to participate** in Finland from abroad? [open field]
7. What resources do you typically consult when encountering problems regarding your experience abroad?
 - Personal contacts
 - Official expatriate/overseas networks (eg. through the government)
 - Unofficial expatriate/overseas networks (eg. those found on Facebook)
 - Government resources
 - Suomi-seura resources
 - Social media
 - Other, please feel free to share specific organisations or platforms with us [open answer field]
8. Do you, or did you feel supported by the Finnish government as an overseas resident? (y/n)
9. Do you feel that other overseas residents could benefit from hearing about your experiences living abroad? (y/n)
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of being a Finn living abroad? (positives, negatives, experiences or hopes and suggestions for the future)

Thank you for sharing your time with us

If you would like to continue participating in this project over the next few months, or would be happy to be interviewed by us, please check the relevant box and leave your contact information down below!

I would like to

- Be interviewed in the next few weeks
- Participate further (e.g. workshops)

If you have ticked yes to either of the above options, please provide your email address: [short answer field]

Appendix 2. Interview questions

I. Interview questions for the participants living abroad:

1. Background information

1.1 Tell me a bit about yourself: What do you do currently? How old are you?

1.2 Where do you live currently? What were the reasons for moving away? How long have you been living away from Finland?

1.3 Have you lived in other countries too? Where and how long?

2. Relationship with Finland

2.1 Are you a Finnish citizen? Do you have citizenship of any other country?

2.2 Do you speak Finnish? What other languages do you speak?

2.3 How would you describe your relationship with Finland now? How are you maintaining your relationship with Finland?

2.4 How often do you visit Finland?

2.5 What do you miss most about Finland?

3. Participation

3.1 Do you somehow take part in the matters of Finnish society? Politically, culturally or socially?

3.2 Have you voted while living abroad?

3.3 Did you try postal voting in the Parliament election 2019? If you did, how did you feel about it? What did work and what didn't?

3.4 Did you ever face any challenges while participating in Finland from abroad?

4. Community

4.1 Are you a member of any expatriate Finns communities or organizations? (For example Finns in xxx Facebook groups)

4.2 What is the reason for you to belong in these communities?

4.3 If you are not a member of any community, have you ever experienced a need for taking part in some kind of community? Would you see yourself benefit somehow in taking part in them?

4.4 Are you familiar with Suomi-Seura (Finnish Society)? Ulkосуomalaisparlamentti (Finnish Expatriate Parliament)?

4.5 What are your feelings about these communities or organizations? Do you see them as important or valuable to the expatriate Finns?

4.6 Have you ever felt a need for the support of Finnish communities while living abroad?

5. Identity

4.1 How would you describe your national identity? If asked about national identity, how would you define yours?

4.2 Where do you think your home is? What affects your sense of belonging?

4.3 If you had to pick a geographical location to answer the question where are you from, what would you pick?

4.4 Do you think that moving abroad has affected your Finnish identity somehow?

6. Possible returning

6.1 Have you ever considered returning to Finland? What would be the reason for returning to Finland?

6.2 Would you imagine some problems that could occur when returning to Finland?

6.3 From where would you try to seek help in the matters of returning to Finland?

7. End

7.1 What are your experiences generally living abroad as a Finn? Do you have a story about anything that you would like to share with us?

7.2 Anything else you would like to add?

II. Interview questions for the participants, who returned to Finland:

1. Background information

1.1 Tell me a bit about yourself: What do you do currently? How old are you?

1.2 What is your history of living outside of Finland? Which countries have you lived in and for how long? What were the reasons for moving away?

1.3 When did you come back? Could you expand on your reasons for returning to Finland?

2. Relationship with Finland

2.1 How often did you use to visit Finland while you were living abroad?

2.2 What did you used to miss the most about Finland while living abroad?

2.3 How would you describe your relationship with Finland now? How did it change before, during and after your experience of living abroad?

2.4 How did you maintain your relationship with Finland while you were away?

2.5. What kind of ties did you have with Finland while you were away? (You can mention relationships, concrete objects (e.g. house) or cultural ties.) How have these ties changed now that you are back?

3. Returning to Finland

3.1 How did you experience your return? Was there something you'd like to share with us? (Did you encounter any problems, if so, what kind of problems?)

3.2 Did you feel welcome when you moved to Finland? What made you feel so?

3.3 What kind of encounters, if any, did you have with authorities after you returned? How would you describe them?

3.4 How was it for you to settle in Finland? (Could you describe your process of settling in more detail?)

3.5 Do you keep in touch with people from your former place of residence? What kind of ties do you have with your former place of residence?

3.6 Do you feel "at home" now? Could you expand your answer? What helped with your integration?

4. Participation

4.1 Did you somehow take part in the matters of Finnish society? Politically, culturally or socially?

4.2 Have you voted while living abroad?

4.4 Did you ever face any challenges while participating in Finland from abroad?

5. Community

5.1 Did you belong to any expatriate Finns communities or organizations? (For example Finns in xxx Facebook groups)

5.2 What was the reason for you to belong in these communities?

5.3 If you weren't not a member of any community, have you ever experienced a need for taking part in some kind of community?

5.4 Have you ever felt a need for the support of Finnish communities while living abroad?

6. Identity

6.1 How would you describe your national identity? If asked about national identity, how would you define yours?

6.2 Where do you think your home is now? What affects your sense of belonging?

6.3 How has living abroad affected you and your identity and relationship with Finland?

6.4 In your opinion and experience, what contributes to a person's identity?

7. End

7.1 What are your experiences generally living abroad as a Finn and returning back? Do you have a story about anything that you would like to share with us?

7.2 Anything else you would like to add?