Organizational Support for Bicycle Commuting in Finnish Companies—A Low-Hanging Fruit to Be Picked up on the Way to Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

Bicycle commuting is an under-researched topic especially in the field of organizational study. The purpose of this thesis is to find out what the role of bicycle commuting is to Finnish companies as seen by the companies CSR and HR representatives. Furthermore, the purpose is to discover why bicycle commuter programs are so scarce in Finnish companies.

The methodology of this thesis is a qualitative deductive methodology, which means in practice that the theoretical framework provides the reference material for 14 propositions and their respective interview questions. By the help of this method, the frame of reference supports the empirical part, and the two become tied together. The data were collected in 11 interviews with CSR and HR representatives in 9 different companies, and the 14 propositions were analyzed on the basis of the interview results.

On the basis of the study, Finnish companies have a rather neutral attitude towards supporting bicycle commuting. It is seen as a good thing from many perspectives, but the prevailing conception is that it is the employee’s personal choice and not the company’s concern. It has or could have a component role in employee wellness or environmentalism. The companies find that what make supporting it challenging is their size, equality issues, difficulty of measurement, practice, the general attitude and the low profile of bicycle commuting.

Keywords: Bicycle commuting, Employee Wellness, Sustainable Development, Corporate Social Responsibility.
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1 INTRODUCTION

It is completely up to people themselves to make more informed choices, like commuting by bicycle, but also employers can design encouraging incentives to support their employees’ bicycle commuting efforts. Pollution, congestion, scarce physical exercise and obesity are challenges that trouble the developed economies throughout the world. Supporting a form of commuting that has a favorable effect on each of these challenges seems self-evidently sound; it contributes to addressing these problems that affect the well-being of the natural environment and the people living in it. Furthermore, bicycle commuting has been linked to having positive effects on absenteeism at the workplace and thereby it has a favorable effect on an organization’s productivity.

The underlying assumption in this thesis is that in companies bicycle commuting is in general seen as a viable and effective means of commuting, but its potential is still underestimated to some extent. Bicycle commuting is a thing for the minority of employees in general. It is presumable that the minority status of bicycle commuters causes a slightly underestimating attitude towards the form of transportation; the population of bicycle commuters has not reached a critical mass that would make it impossible for organizations, on one hand, to ignore or belittle it and on the other hand to see it as an opportunity.

1.1 Background

There has been growing interest towards an approach called “Health in All Policies”, which means making policies that promote and protect health outside the health care sector. A central character of this approach is its nature as a win-win arrangement. (Kahlmeier, Racioppi, Cavill, Rutter & Oja, 2010:120). Bicycle commuting works in favor of the employee, the employer and the society, so supporting it seems like a good example of the “Health in All Policies” idea; it is a win-win arrangement for many instances.

In 2005 in Finland, only 10.3 % of work related commutes were done by bicycle whereas 61.5 % were done by car so that the commuter was the driver. On these commutes, the mean number of people in the car was 1.2 (The National Travel Survey
2004-2005). For instance in Copenhagen, the share of work commutes done by bicycle is with 32% three times as big as in Helsinki (City of Helsinki, Economic and Planning centre, 2004). In Helsinki, the mean distance for a commute is 8.8 km as the crow flies (Helsingin Sanomat, 2010)—roughly a 30-minute bicycle ride. Though there are some minor differences in the climates of Denmark and Finland, there is capacity for expanding the population of Finnish bicycle commuters. The average distance of the commute does not really seem to justify commuting as the sole passenger in a car, which is the most common case.

Bicycle commuting has been studied relatively much in the fields of urban planning, city infrastructure, climate, commuter demographics, commuter attitude, cost of commuting, safety and travel time (Heinen, Wee & Maat, 2010), but it has hardly been studied in organizational contexts. In fact when discussing weather and climate, Heinen et al (2010) urge future research not to concentrate only on further study on the influence of weather conditions but to also to do research on the measures and facilities that decrease the negative effects of unfavorable weather.

For instance, Neuvonen (2002, as cited in Hakkarainen, Lettenmeier & Saari, 2005) pointed out that a bicycle commuting infrastructure that considers a climate with seasonal changes includes proper showering and changing facilities at work and also bicycle storage areas that are sheltered from the rain. Therefore the role of the employer as a provider of measures that decrease the discouraging effect of unfavorable weather is a niche that this study addresses to some extent. It is noteworthy that especially up here in Finland the climate has a highlighted role as a factor affecting the decision to commute by bicycle.

Perhaps the reason for the scarce research in this area is related to the mere supportive role of bicycle commuting in an organizational context, but as will be discussed later on, the role is extant and it has elevated, or at least should elevate, its profile as a contributor to sustainable development in a business context.

Nevertheless, when it comes to for instance pollution prevention companies can easily begin prevention by collecting “low-hanging fruit”, which means making easy and inexpensive behavioral or material changes that result in large emission reductions
compared with the costs (Hart & Ahuja, 1994 and Rooney, 1993 as cited in Hart, 1995). Though not reducing emissions of production directly, arranging some support measures for bicycle commuting can be seen as this kind of relatively inexpensive behavioral change that indirectly decreases pollution incurred by a company’s daily operation—the operations most often require employees to commute. In other words, even though there might be other higher-impact measures to be done, there is no reason not to pick up the “low-hanging fruit” too.

1.2 Aim of the study

Though small scale and moderate in impact, bicycle commuting has been around for years. As there is scarce organizational research on the topic, it is justifiable to carry out a study that reviews, from the organizational perspective, the extent to which bicycle commuting is present in large Finnish companies, how they experience the phenomenon and how they view its future in their organization. The aim of this thesis is to shed light on how Finnish companies relate to bicycle commuting in general and in particular to any potential programs they might have in place. Regarding their specific programs, the purpose is to find out how the organizations perceive the benefits gained. Furthermore, the subject organizations’ future vision for bicycle commuting is of interest to the study. The overall aim is to gain novel information about organizational attitude towards support programs for bicycle commuting and hopefully to land on information that helps furthering and developing organizational support for bicycle commuting. This study is based on the following research questions, which are discussed in section 3.1:

1. How do organizations’ CSR and HR representatives perceive the role of bicycle commuting?

   1.1 How do the CSR representatives perceive the linkage between bicycle commuting and CSR?

   1.2 How do the HR representatives perceive the linkage between bicycle commuting and HR?

2. Why is explicit and serious support for bicycle commuting still so scarce?
1.3 Definitions

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

[Corporate Social Responsibility means] The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large (WBCSD, 1998).

Sustainable development:

[Sustainable development is] development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).

Workplace wellness program:

[A workplace wellness program refers to] an organized, employer-sponsored program that is designed to support employees (and, sometimes, their families) as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization’s bottom line (Berry, Mirabito & Baun, 2010).

Bicycle commuting means the regular act of travelling from the place of residence to the place of work or study by bicycle.

Bicycle commuter programs mean workplace wellness programs that are focused on bicycle commuting.

The concept of a bicycle commuter program is used to depict any organized workplace wellness measures that are aimed at supporting those employees who already commute by bicycle and also those that are encouraged to start commuting by bicycle. It is important to note that in different companies these programs take different form and scope. Some companies have more explicit and detailed programs whereas others do not recognize having any program for it. This thesis includes both kinds of organizations, which means that regarding the companies that have specific programs more attention is
paid on studying and understanding that program. With regard to companies sporting no or close to no program, the current scene of bicycle commuting and any potential future programs are of interest to the study.

**Bicycle commuting incentives** are organizational offerings to employees that are intended to make bicycle commuting attractive. A set of bicycle commuting incentives makes up for a bicycle commuter program. Examples of the incentives are lease bicycles, maintenance service for personal bicycles, proper bicycle parking, showers, locker rooms, monetary compensations and other perks (e.g. breakfast, showering and changing on working time).

A **lease bicycle** is a bicycle provided to the employee, and it is owned and overhauled by a third party who receives a monthly payment from the employer.

A **company bicycle** is a bicycle provided to the employee, and it is owned by the employer who has bought it from a third party.

1.4 Delimitations

As will be discussed further on, bicycle commuting can be seen as a part of a bigger entity that could be chosen as the subject area of the study. These categorically higher level fields could be for instance studies on Employee Wellness Programs or Corporate Commuter Programs on the whole. To specify the research, this study is limited to bicycle commuting programs. Even though not studied per se, the related programs will be briefly touched upon to understand the position of bicycle commuter programs among them.

The study will only include companies that can be visited in the Helsinki-region. It is crucial to bear in mind the environmental factors that this limitation introduces; the Finnish climate and city infrastructure in Helsinki pose often mentioned challenges that deter people from commuting by bicycle. Every region in the world provides different conditions for an activity like bicycle commuting and tending to the context is a part of the analysis, but this paper attempts to look beyond mere environmental challenges and study the essence of bicycle commuting.
The study is taking the perspective of management. The bicycle commuter programs will be viewed only from a managerial perspective. While the perspective of the users is a very central one, it is beyond the scope of this study to include their specific views on the programs. It is assumed, however, that the management is to some extent knowledgeable of the opinions of its employees, i.e. the users of the programs, or at least it has its own perception of the opinions and thereby there is a reflection of their views in the managerial perspective.

One issue regarding the interviews is that they were carried out during February, March and April, so bicycle commuting was just starting to pick up at the end of the interview period. Bicycle commuting is by large a seasonal activity, so it may be that a study carried out later in the spring, in the summer or beginning of autumn would yield somewhat different results.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

In this introductory chapter, the background, aim, definitions and delimitations of the study were discussed. The second chapter is basically a continuation of the first one as it introduces bicycle commuting, but it is separated as its own chapter for the reasons that will be discussed later on.

In the third chapter, the methodology of this study is presented and discussed. In brief, the methodology is based on a deductive qualitative methodology that evaluates propositions derived from the frame of reference.

In the fourth chapter, the frame of reference is discussed; it includes description and reflection on topics that are relevant for this study. Furthermore, the frame of reference functions as a foundation for the propositions and interview questions that are introduced in connection with their respective theoretical topics.

In the fifth chapter, the results of the interviews are presented by evaluating the propositions. Each proposition is discussed and the discussion is backed up with quotes from the interviews. Discussing the proposition is the core of the evaluation, but for the sake of clarity each proposition is also evaluated as confirmed, partly confirmed or partly rejected.
In the sixth chapter, the results of the thesis are discussed. The perceived role of bicycle commuting is discussed with the help of the evaluated propositions. Furthermore, the challenges of supporting bicycle commuting are discussed and some suggestions for tackling them are presented.

In the seventh chapter, the study will be concluded by summarizing the findings and the discussion and by discussing implications of the study. The implications will be discussed from the perspectives of managers, employees and policy makers in general. Finally, some ideas for future research are presented.

2 INTRODUCING BICYCLE COMMUTING

In this chapter, I will introduce bicycle commuting as a continuation of the introduction to this thesis. It is for three reasons that it is separated as its own chapter. Firstly, it is not a part of the introduction to this study per se, but an introduction to bicycle commuting in general. Secondly, due to its nature as an under-researched topic it is justifiable to introduce bicycle commuting at length and therefore it deserves its own chapter. Thirdly, it is not presented as a part of the frame of reference as I want the frame of reference to retain a clear role as the basis for the propositions and interview questions.

Bicycle commuting means the act of traveling from the place of residence to the place of work, study or other place of service by bicycle. When it comes to bicycling, many trips are done for the sake of leisure, exercise, tour or competition whereas in bicycle commuting a different utilitarian element is included since the transportation of the person has a central role.

Heinen et al (2010) point out that bicycle commuting is differentiated from cycling for leisure or sporting purposes by the fact that it makes a contribution to economic prosperity. In this sense, the bicycle is a tool the citizen uses in the daily operations that benefit the economic development of the society. Furthermore, the health benefits—and thereby the societal benefits in the form of health care savings—of bicycle commuting are more preferable than random cycling done for other purposes; experts argue that
daily repetitive and necessary activities, like bicycle commuting, incur the most health benefits when it comes to exercise (Heinen et al, 2010).

Below, I will present a summary of a literature review by Heinen et al about the extant research on bicycle commuting. This compilation of research results forms the determinants or factors of attractiveness of bicycle commuting. They are presented in the following section as a way of characterizing bicycle commuting, the people who do it and their environments. After this review in section 2.1.2, I will discuss Heinen et al’s literature review and its relevance to this particular paper.

2.1.1 Review of previous research

Heinen et al (2010) have formed a comprehensive overview of the extant studies on bicycle commuting and analyzed the determinants for it. They divide the determinants of bicycle commuting into five groups each representing a different aspect in determining the attractiveness of bicycle commuting: 1. The built environment, 2. The natural environment, 3. Socio-economic variables, 4. Psychological factors and 5. Further aspects related to cost, time, effort and safety.

**Built environment**

The determinant of built environment is subdivided into three categories: (1) urban form, (2) infrastructure and (3) facilities at work.

Urban form is mostly about the distance to be traveled. The studies show that the shorter the distance, the higher the propensity to commute by bicycle and that there might be a maximum acceptable distance to be cycled. When it comes to differences between the genders, women tend to cycle shorter distances (mean 6.6 km) than men (11.6 km). Furthermore, the higher the road density, the more suitable the travel for non-motorized vehicles since the distances are usually shorter. Also, a higher mixture of functions in one area reduces distances and increases cycling; having your local convenience stores, post offices and hospitals nearby, encourages choosing a bicycle.

Infrastructure-wise cyclists find it most attractive to have many bicycle paths and to separate cyclists from the rest of the traffic, both cars and pedestrians. The importance
of this kind of arrangement is most important to inexperienced cyclists, women and young cyclists, whereas for experienced cyclists the place in the traffic is a bit more indifferent. This implies that it is a question of subjectively perceived safety, and that in order to attract new cyclists, infrastructure must be more favorable. Interestingly, cyclists prefer to ride alongside a two-lane road in comparison to a four-lane road, supposedly because on a four-lane road the drivers’ attention on the cyclist is reduced since they have to pay additional attention to the other drivers. Also, continuity of the cycling facility is an important factor; cyclists prefer continuous lanes as opposed to e.g. sudden endings of lanes and traffic control systems that oblige to stop. This factor is more important to inexperienced riders and commuters as opposed to leisurely cyclists.

Regarding facilities at work, Heinen et al discuss bicycle parking, storage facilities for clothes and the availability of showers as factors determining the use of bicycle as a means of commuting. All of these are preferred by cyclists and it has been concluded that having no facilities for cyclists at the workplace is a reason not to commute by bicycle. Closeable bicycle lockers where the bicycle is locked inside a small container are preferred over regular bicycle racks. Also, men seem to appreciate employers’ efforts to provide facilities for bicycle commuters more than women.

**Natural environment**

Compared with users of motorized means of transport, bicycle commuters are much more exposed to challenges revolving around physical effort, landscape, climate and weather conditions in general. Heinen et al found (1) hilliness and landscape, (2) the seasons and climate and (3) the weather to be important determinants for choosing to commute by bicycle.

**Hilliness and landscape**

High hilliness seems to deter commuters, but it seems that leisure cyclists and even experienced commuters do not mind hills. For the average or inexperienced commuter hills are unwanted, but still, when deciding to commute by bicycle or not, personal factors have more influence than environmental factors.
The seasons and climate

Quite expectedly, in areas with distinct seasons, there are the most cyclists in the summertime and in areas with milder winters there are more cyclists throughout winter than in places with harsher winters. Also, there are cyclists that do continue to cycle through the winter but the maximum distance decreases from 20 km in the summer to 10 km. What is good to remember is that darkness plays its own role in deterring people, especially women, from cycling during the winter. Interestingly, temperature might not be such an important factor as it is pointed out that Canadians cycle more than the US citizens even though Canada has a colder climate.

Weather

Regarding weather, as a daily changing condition as opposed to the long-term character of climate, the most deterring factor is the chance of rain. The other often studied factor is temperature, which, despite the above comparison between the US and Canada, has some determination in that higher temperatures result in more cycling. However, commuters are less influenced by temperature than other cyclists, supposedly because they are more dependent on cycling than recreational cyclists who can more freely choose the time they cycle. Commuters are more tolerable to cycle in any kind of weather.

Socio-economic factors

Relevant socio-economic factors that determine inclination to commute by bicycle include gender, income, vehicle ownership, employment situation and household structure. According to Heinen et al, age has a relationship with cycling but it is very ambiguous and it cannot be stated whether it is a universal one or not.

As mentioned already, men tend to commute by bicycle more than women. However, Heinen et al point out that the proportion of women cyclist is higher in countries where cycling rates are high in general than in countries with low cycling rates. That is, in countries like the Netherlands and Belgium where cycling is popular in general, a higher percentage of women do it too.
The studies on the relationship between income and cycling have yielded different results ranging from a positive to a negative relationship, and also to an indifferent one. Higher income has been found to make a person cycle more since he has more money to invest in a proper bicycle and he is more health-conscious, but on the other hand more money means more options for commuting, including buying a car. Like age, the relationship regarding income remains unclear.

When it comes to employment status, part-time workers commute by bicycle more than full-time employees. Heinen et al reckon this to be because part-time workers tend to live closer to their jobs. In addition to employment, other household structures affect the propensity to cycle. Groups who are inclined to cycle include childless individuals, students and those in-between jobs. On the contrary, people with high social status or a young family have reduced propensity to cycle. Also, being physically active in general means higher propensity to cycle. Interestingly, highly educated people cycle less on the whole.

Heinen et al conclude the part about the socio-economic factors by noting that the research results are very mixed and ambiguous and that the differences are large internationally. They continue by advising future research not to focus on this area since there most likely is a third variable, perhaps in the field of social values and attitudes that are related with the psychological factors.

**Psychological factors**

In this part, Heinen et al discuss how (1) attitudes and social norms, (2) perceived behavioral control and (3) habits influence the decision to cycle. Lastly they discuss people’s perceptions on what it would require to cycle to work and why they do not do it.

**Attitudes and social norms**

Not so surprisingly, having a positive attitude towards bicycling increases the likelihood to commute by bicycle, and that people’s attitudes towards using a car are more positive than towards using a bicycle. Health benefits and negative attitude towards car use have been found to result in higher likelihood for bicycle commuting. There are also
communal factors influencing cycling since, for instance, it is assumed that high regional popularity and good public image increase bicycle commuting, as do the example set by co-workers that commute by bicycle.

Perceived behavioral control

This means the perception a person has about the possibility to perform a certain action. The studies show that non-bicycle commuters perceive more obstacles to bicycle commuting than bicycle commuters. Also, cyclists perceive more possibilities for cycling than non-cyclists.

Habit

Commuting based on habit means that people have not rationally considered all the available options but choose their mode of transport out of habit. The aforementioned factors have all required some sort of rationale, whereas an individual doing an act out of habit has a more rational option available but breaking out of the habit does not necessarily occur. For instance, people who have cycled as a child have a higher likelihood to cycle as an adult also. This naturally means that habit has both a positive and negative effect on bicycle use; if people have a habit of using some other mode of transport, it may be difficult for them to change it.

Reasons to cycle and reasons not to cycle

The studies discussed by Heinen et al list the following pros and cons for commuting by bicycle:
## Table 1. Pros and cons of commuting by bicycle (adapted from Heinen et al, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ health</td>
<td>- too dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ exercise/fitness</td>
<td>- too much traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ fun</td>
<td>- bad weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ flexibility</td>
<td>- personal factors (too busy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ convenience</td>
<td>- lack of daylight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ enjoyment of scenery</td>
<td>- inconvenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- lacking sufficient fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- lack of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- being tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- too much effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- uncharacteristic transport mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- difficulties with trip-chaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- picking up children and shopping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.1.2 Previous research and this study

As is evident in table 1 in the previous section, the perceived cons of commuting by bicycle outnumber the pros. Qualitatively it is impossible to determine which column outweighs the other, but the sheer number of cons implies, at least on some level, that these cons make up a central reason for bicycle commuting being the chosen mode of transport only for a minority.

Since this study is carried out in Finland, it is in order to review some of the central environmental factors in the geographical area of the study. More precisely, the study will be done in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Heinen et al’s review in section 2.1.1 provides a good framework for discussing regional characteristics.

### Built environment

Regarding the built environment in the Helsinki-area, one of the objectives of City of Helsinki is to consider bicycling when planning residential areas, services and areas of work. Furthermore, the objectives include clarity of bicycle path network, continuity, improved condition, increased comfort and safety. The City of Helsinki also aims at
improving bicycle parking in public spaces by working together with property owners. With the help of official city planning and legislation, Helsinki also attempts to influence bicycle parking within the properties. (City of Helsinki, Economic and Planning Centre, 2004.) In Helsinki, the mean distance for a commute is 8.8 km as the crow flies, so distance-wise there are many commutes that are manageable by bicycle. As a side note, there is an added burden to the natural environment related to short distances driven by car since more fuel is consumed and the catalytic converters do not have time to warm up properly and hence the emission levels remain higher relative to longer drives.

Natural environment

Topographically, the natural environment in Helsinki is diverse. There are hills climbing up to about 40 m above the sea level and valleys between these. (Iltanen, 2005:4.) For cyclists this means that there are some hills in the city, which according to Heinen et al deter commuters, especially inexperienced ones.

With regard to darkness and harshness of the winter, Helsinki is not an optimal bicycle commuting region. As mentioned in the studies analyzed by Heinen et al, especially women are deterred by darkness. This is certainly an issue in Helsinki where during the darkest months of the year the cyclists often have to commute to work and back in the dark. Also, it was mentioned that cities with milder winters have more bicycle commuters than cities with harsher winters. On a global scale, the whole of Finland belongs to the temperate coniferous-mixed forest zone with cold, wet winters and moderate rainfall (Ilmatieteenlaitos, 2011a). High chance of rain was another factor found to deter bicycle commuters, so with moderate rainfall Finland and Helsinki have this constraint at least to some degree.

Even though temperature was found to affect cycling, Finland has a similar example as the one mentioned about Canada and the US: in the city of Oulu, about 600km north of Helsinki, the yearly mean temperature is with 2.35 degrees Celsius 3.2 degrees colder than in Helsinki (Ilmatieteenlaitos, 2011b), and still the share of cyclists is 20% which is double the share in Helsinki (Hakkarainen et al, 2005). Also in the winter time, the amount of cyclists in Helsinki drops to 6-8% of the amount in the summer time whereas
in Oulu the same figure is 35% (City of Helsinki, Economic and Planning Centre, 2004).

The City of Oulu was recently awarded by the then Minister of Culture and Sport, Stefan Wallin and the then Minister of Health and Social Services, Paula Risikko as a part of the everyday-exercise-promoting program “Kunnossa Kaiken Ikää” (eng. Lifetime of Fitness). The award was given for the city’s determined long-term consideration of bicycling in the planning of its infrastructure. Oulu was described as a Cycling City where cycling has been an equitable mode among other modes of transport in city planning since the 1960s. (KKI, 2011.) The effect of the public efforts to promote bicycling in Oulu gives reason to believe that good infrastructure supersedes the weather factor. This is encouraging since the infrastructure is naturally easier to affect than weather.

Socio-economic factors

In Finland, the percentage of all trips done by bicycle is 11% whereas for the Netherlands the same figure is 27% (Hakkarainen et al, 2005). Heinen et al pointed out that in low-rate cycling countries the proportion of women cyclists is lower than in countries where cycling is popular. Finland, as a low to moderate rate country, and the Netherlands are a good example of this. This theory is supported by the fact that in Helsinki, men are found to cycle more than women (City of Helsinki, Economic and Planning Centre, 2004). Furthermore, it was mentioned in Heinen et al’s review that men appreciate the employer’s support measures more than women.

Psychological factors

With regard to more positive attitudes towards bicycling as a promoting factor for bicycle commuting, there are some mixed messages in the media. The bicycle network of Helsinki, which was originally developed for leisure purposes, gets more cyclists using it for transportation, but the public development seems to be lagging behind. For instance, the bicycle traffic designer for Helsinki, Marek Salermo points out that it is incorrect to view cyclist and pedestrians as the same when planning decision are made. It would be more accurate to view bicycles as slow cars. (Helsingin Sanomat, 2009.)
Associating cyclists with pedestrians is one example of the prevailing and belittling attitudes towards cycling. Also, there seems to be an attitude that bicycling is worth supporting but that different kinds of image campaigns ought to be enough and proper financial investments are avoided. To some extent, cycling is seen as a nice extra that deserves some attention after catering for car traffic.

On the basis of this analysis, the challenges Helsinki has as a bicycle commuting city are hilliness, coldness to some extent, darkness, moderate rainfall and some attitude issues. Also, at the moment bicycle commuting is characterized by male domination. However, it is good to bear in mind that Heinen et al. argued that personal factors affect the choice of commuting by bicycle more than environmental factors.

3 METHODOLOGY

A methodology is “a general approach to studying research topics” (Silverman, 2010:109). The chosen method should reflect this approach (ibid:121). Silverman (2010:9) reminds that the methodology should be chosen on the basis of the task at hand. There are no right or wrong methodologies but rather more and less suitable ones.

There is no exhaustive distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, but what I find a simple way to characterize their difference is Silverman’s (2010:11) example of qualitative research addressing “how” questions and quantitative “how many” questions. Qualitative research uses words as data and quantitative uses numbers, but a research project in general often uses a bit of both methodologies. It is good to note that it often requires a lot more resources to combine the two methodologies, and it is therefore not recommended for e.g. students who do not have abundant time and a research team to back them up (Silverman, 2006:51). As my research questions are interested in “how” organizations’ representatives perceive the role of bicycle commuting, I see a qualitative methodology to be more suitable for this study. Furthermore, qualitative research is more used in pursuing understanding, which is the aim of my study.

More specifically, the methodology of this thesis is a qualitative deductive methodology, i.e. I will use deductive reasoning to process and combine prior
knowledge and the collected qualitative data. Deductive reasoning is a process where an established theory is tested to see if it applies to specific instances (Hyde, 2000). The two major paradigms in social science, quantitative and qualitative, are usually coupled with deductive approach and inductive approach respectively. However, this coupling is not written in stone, and in fact many important studies have had quantitative approach as a basis for inductive theory building on the one hand and qualitative approach used for deductive theory testing on the other. (Bitektine, 2008.)

Bitektine (2008) presents this methodology as qualitative method for deductive theory testing, but instead of making hypothesis and testing them empirically I will opt for forming propositions on the basis of theory and then evaluating them in light of the empirical research. In this thesis, I regard this difference as follows; testing hypotheses is perhaps a bit too rigorous an undertaking for this project, for which proposition evaluation seems more realistic. This project serves as an exploratory study into an under-researched field, and the conclusions will be rather tentative in nature, left to be developed by future research.

Bitektine (2008:162) notes that in case studies the deductive theory testing based on qualitative approach uses “a comparison of a pattern of observed outcomes (on several variables) with some pattern of expected values derived from a given theory”. In this thesis, the observed outcomes will be the interview results where a variety of issues are covered as different variables. The results will be compared with the expected values, which are the propositions derived from the theory in the frame of reference, i.e. the propositions are evaluated.

As Silverman (2010:14) points out, data collection, analysis and writing are overlapping to a great extent in qualitative research; it is not straightforward to separate them. In this thesis, this feature is most visible in the overlap of chapter 5. FINDINGS and chapter 6. DISCUSSION where the chapters are technically separated but by nature the transition from analysis to discussion is quite subtle.
3.1 Research questions

This study is based on the following research questions:

1. How do organizations’ CSR and HR representatives perceive the role of bicycle commuting?
   1.1 How do the CSR representatives perceive the linkage between bicycle commuting and CSR?
   1.2 How do the HR representatives perceive the linkage between bicycle commuting and HR?

2. Why is explicit and serious support for bicycle commuting still so scarce?

The first research question is rather general in nature. Its purpose is to find out and describe what bicycle commuting in general seems to mean to organizations as expressed by CSR and HR representatives. The challenge is to overcome the key informant bias and have some concrete examples that demonstrate the organizational attitude.

Question 1.1 attempts to shed light on how CSR representatives think bicycle commuting is related to their field. Primarily, this thesis is interested in the CSR aspect, but secondarily the opinions of HR representatives are of interest, and therefore I have separated question 1.2 to address them. Employee wellness is a HR issue, but taking care of your staff is naturally a part of CSR as well. CSR is here the higher order category, but since bicycle commuting is tightly linked with employee wellness, a few HR perspectives are included in the study.

The second research question focuses on disclosing the reasons for why there is not that much support for bicycle commuting in companies. The underlying assumption is that there is room for improvement in this respect, and that it would be feasible and
beneficial for companies to invest in supporting bicycle commuting more than what is invested at the moment on average.

Both research questions regard the management in the organization; the purpose is to find out how the instance managing the program perceives it and not the public using the program, i.e. the employees constituting the rest of the organization.

It is important to note here that the key informant, the person who is most suitable to answer questions about the bicycle commuter program, may be biased; he may have been involved in setting up a program and therefore feel the need to defend its effectiveness. However, as conducting a comprehensive study encompassing all possible perspectives on the program within the organization is beyond the scope of this study, this bias simply needs to be recognized prior to the interviews and attempted to be identified if it actually occurs in the interview. After all, it is the person managing the program who is the most knowledgeable about it and therefore the richest source of information for this study.

3.2 Preunderstanding

The topic of this thesis is rather different from the usual topics within the studies of management and organization, which may give extraordinary implication of the presence of personal interest. Naturally, it is not so uncommon to choose a topic that raises personal interest, as suggested by Silverman (2010:79) among others, but making your hobby the topic brings some added passion to the work. This is a personal factor that needs to be recognized in the work process—and perhaps downplayed to some extent to maintain a professional stance.

I have my own preunderstanding which is tied to my own experiences about bicycling. Also, during this thesis process I have developed my preunderstanding about the theoretical topics that were presented in the frame of reference and are related to bicycling in the organizational context. What this means from the perspective of my study is that I may have an overly positive and idealistic view of bicycle commuting. My thinking may be affected by thoughts of companies being crazy for not supporting it and employees being ignorant for not commuting by bicycle. These kinds of thoughts
are not necessarily very productive to display in interview situations, for instance. After all, the aim of my interviews is to learn and understand, not to lecture.

3.2.1 About knowledge

What is perhaps important to note in this thesis is the validity of the interviewees’ responses. There exists the issue of how to treat the interview responses: are they considered direct representations of experiences or as narratives that are about activities that demand analysis by themselves (Silverman, 2006:109-52; Gubrium and Holstein, 2009; Riessman, 2008, as cited in Silverman, 2010:48). In the case of this study, the most logical stance is to view the responses as the interviewees’ individual interpretations of the organizations’ experience. As mentioned before, this interpretation must however be regarded as being made by a person that may have vested interest; a creator or manager of a program may make biased statements about the program’s success. It is important to pursue for statements beyond “we are really satisfied with the program”. The aim is to get examples and persuasive evidence on why the programs are successes or failures.

This notion of the interviewees’ interpretation of the organizations’ experience brings me to the issue of my philosophical paradigm as a researcher. I shun a positivist mindset thinking that one could find one absolute truth on what the impact of a bicycle commuter program is in an organization. Rather I see a chain of interpretations starting from the people that comprise the organization and make sense of the programs. Their experiences and ideas are processed and interpreted by the interviewee and eventually I interpret him or her. The only knowledge I can attain is what I can construct from my experiences of interacting with the interviewees, who I regard as my windows into the organization.

In other words, I have a constructivist view; the truth is not out there independent of people, waiting to be discovered, but the actors in the organization construct it and I attempt to interpret it. When I make my interpretation, I am also constructing knowledge and not just reporting what should be taken as an ultimate truth.
The reality of the program is an ontological issue, which is a question of identifying what one sees as the very nature or essence of things in the social world (Mason, 2002:14). My ontological stance is that a program such as a bicycle commuter program is a social construction; it exists as a composition of different kinds of elements like agreements, actions, rules, texts, attitudes, norms etc.—elements that are characteristic of programs in general. However, it is a relativistic issue in that there are many possible “realities” of a bicycle commuter program depending on the observer.

Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned with the principles and rules by which one decides whether and how a social phenomenon can be known, and how that knowledge can be demonstrated (Mason, 2002:16). My epistemological view is that I can know about these programs by enquiring and having interaction with the respondent and as the evidence I can only provide my interpretation constructed from the analysis. Hence, there are many factors affecting the results: my own preunderstanding, philosophical view, the chosen case companies and the conditions of the interviews being the most central ones. The probability of another researcher reaching the same conclusions at another point of time and with different case companies is rather small due to the amount of factors affecting the findings, but in principle it should be possible due to the transparency of my study. This touches upon the issue of reliability, which is discussed in the section about the trustworthiness of this study.

This discussion of my stance towards knowledge complies with Silverman’s (2010:109) idea of a model, i.e. “an overall framework for looking at reality. Models are what underlie the levels of analysis (Ibid:111) as will be illustrated later on.

3.3 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) present trustworthiness as the concept for measuring the quality of a study. They present four questions that can help researchers to determine the quality of their study:

1. ‘Truth value’: How can one establish confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?
2. **Applicability:** How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)?

3. **Consistency:** How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?

4. **Neutrality:** How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?

In conventional, positivist, paradigm these questions have been addressed with the criteria of “internal validity”, “external validity”, “reliability” and “objectivity”. (ibid.) However, Lincoln and Guba (1985:294) suggest that these criteria are inappropriate for naturalistic inquiry mostly due to relativism and interactionism that are central features of naturalistic inquiry compared to conventional inquiry. Instead, naturalistic inquirers should address these questions with the criteria of “credibility”, “transferability”, “dependability” and “confirmability”.

As mentioned in the previous section, I am following the constructivist paradigm as a researcher. Naturalistic inquiry on the other hand is a feature of the constructivist paradigm as a naturalistic set of methodological procedures is used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:24). Denzin & Lincoln (2005:24) also present clearly that the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the specific criteria for assessing the quality of a study following the constructivist paradigm.

Credibility means that the researcher firstly has to carry out the inquiry so that the probability of deeming the findings credible is enhanced and secondly the researcher has to have the findings approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:296). The fact that this thesis process included peer review and faculty supervision in the form of thesis seminars and other appointments aided in enhancing credibility especially as my propositions and interview questions were reviewed by the supervisor prior to engaging in interviews. Regarding the second issue, credibility was ensured by sending the thesis to the respondents so that they were given the opportunity to comment and correct their statements and my interpretations.
Having the propositions, interview questions and respondent statements reviewed and published in this thesis has a notable contribution to transparency.

Transferability addresses the issue of being able to apply the results in different contexts (ibid.:297). This thesis is a case study, so the findings only apply with regard to the specific sample of the study, the specific conditions and myself as the human instrument processing the data. Nevertheless, with consideration to the conditions of my study as the sending context my findings can provide inspiration and ideas for some receiving contexts. However, it is worth noting that in that case the major burden of proof lies with the one attempting the application to another context (ibid.:298). Also with regard to this criterion, transparency plays an important role as I attempt to include all relevant information in the study so that it is possible to have a comprehensive understanding of the context. This information includes for instance my own reflection about myself as a researcher, my preunderstanding, the interview guide and ample quotes from the interviews. Also, I attempt to give sufficient information about the case companies without compromising the anonymity of individual interview responses, which are not supposed to be able to be traced to any particular case company.

The importance of transparency is emphasized even more with regard to dependability. Basically as an alternative to reliability, dependability assesses how similar results a replication study would yield (ibid.:299). My ambition has been to strive to such transparency in the study that in principle a researcher with similar preunderstanding, sample and conditions would reach essentially the same results as I have.

Confirmability addresses the issue of objectivity. Scriven (as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985:300) defines a qualitative sense of objectivity in which the data, i.e. the actual testimonies of the respondents, are reliable, factual, confirmable or confirmed, whereas subjective testimonies are unreliable, a matter of opinion, biased or probably biased. In other words, the pressure of objectivity is not with the investigator, but with the data themselves (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:300). In the case of this thesis, I do not see confirmability as a central criterion. As mentioned before, my aspiration is to study the perception of the company representatives responsible for an issue like bicycle commuting. The study is very much interested in the “matter of opinion”. According to
my thinking, the opinions of these people affect their work and thereby they may affect bicycle commuting in their company.

3.4 Research method

Silverman (2010:109) defines a method as “a specific research technique (e.g. interview, focus group)”. Silverman (2010:124) suggests that for understanding ‘experience’, interviews are a suitable technique. He also posits that for interviews in qualitative research, ‘open-ended’ questions to small samples are the most suitable ones (Silverman, 2010:123).

Since experience and perception are what I intend to understand, the data for my analysis was collected via phone and face-to-face interviews with organizational representatives who act as key informants; they have the closest relation with managing support measures for bicycle commuting. Supposedly the key informants are HR managers since they can often be seen as guardians of employee well-being (Renwick, 2003). In larger organizations, there may be a specialized Wellness Program Manager (Berry et al, 2010). It seems that the economic crisis resulted in increased cost discipline and thereby many companies have made employee wellness programs an executive issue; the role of human resource management in the decision making has decreased (Koivu, Savola & Pehkonen, 2009).

The interview questions presented in the interview guide (see Appendix 1) are more or less open-ended, but due to the deductive approach there is some added structure to facilitate linking the responses to the propositions of interest. The purpose of the questions is to probe the representative’s reflection on the organization’s experience about supporting bicycle commuting. Excluding the first question, the questions are derived from the frame of reference, but they are rearranged from the order in which they are presented in the frame of reference to achieve a more natural flow for the interview.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish and later on in the analysis phase I translated relevant parts into English from the transcripts. The phone interviews were recorded, with permission of the interviewee, using call recording software and in the face-to-face
interviews a tape recorder was used. This facilitated writing accurate transcripts of each interview. In addition, notes were taken during the interview to facilitate on the spot reflection on the answers. This helped in coining extended questions not included in the interview guide. Also during the interviews, I noted that some information would not have been collected had I not taken some time to make notes. Sometimes the interviewee was waiting for me to finish writing and meanwhile he would add something. So the writing works as a sort of safe silence that allows the respondent some extra time to contribute something.

Three out of ten interviews were done face-to-face. As a learning experience, I decided to make the last face-to-face interview, which took place with the CSR representative in company D, more openly structured than the other ones. It was interesting to find that I could probe the topics the interviewee brought forth with increased ease. The discussion was somehow more relaxed and the flow of the dialogue more natural when I was not worrying about having an exact answer for all the questions on my list, but instead trying to go deeper on some individual topics. Naturally, there is a downside to this method in that it may be visible in the balance of the results with company D as more focus on some questions with the cost of having less content for others.

Mintzberg (1979, as cited in Eisenhardt) argues that while quantitative data can reveal issues that form the foundation of a study, it is the anecdotal data that enables the theory building. In addition, anecdotal data, as statements from the interviews, provides understanding. This thesis also includes anecdotes to give more depth, examples and transparency. However, it must be noted that in order to address validity of the study and the criticism of anecdotalism as a one-sided and selective way of presentation (Silverman, 2006:47), any potential contrary statements to the anecdotes have to be discussed.

3.4.1 Interview guide

An interview guide contains the themes of the interview. It functions as a checklist that helps the interviewer in the interview situation by providing a systematic listing of the issues to be covered and on the other hand by delimiting those issues that are not
included in the study. (Patton, 2002:343.) The guide can basically be a list of themes and more specific issues as bullet points under each theme.

The interview guide (see Appendix 1) includes all the questions for the interviews. The fact that it also includes the themes and the propositions is an aid for me in the interview situation. Some questions may need some modification in the formulation depending on the specific conditions and some questions may need clarification for the interviewee. For these reasons, the themes and propositions may be helpful. Usually an interview guide does not include specific questions but it is due to the deductive nature of this thesis that I strive for some added structure and therefore have prepared complete questions.

3.5 Levels of analysis

Silverman (2010:111) illustrates the relationship between models, concepts, theories, hypotheses, methodology and methods. An adaption of his illustration is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Earlier in this methodology chapter, I discussed the topics of models, methodology and methods, so what have not been discussed in this section are concepts, theories and hypotheses. The concepts of my study are discussed in the frame of reference—the central ones being Sustainable Development, responsibilization, CSR and Employee Wellness Programs. Silverman (2010:109) defines theory as “a set of concepts used to define and/or explain some phenomenon” so in this case the theory is the organizational framework for bicycle commuting that will be presented in section 4.4.4 where I combine these concepts to show their relations. As this is not strictly a hypothesis-testing study, I will not formulate hypotheses but propositions instead. These propositions are then evaluated in contrast to testing hypotheses.

With these discussions covered, I can form an illustration of the levels of analysis in this study. In addition to portraying the relationships between the different levels, the illustration below depicts how my frame of reference and methodology are merged.
3.6 Research strategy

The research strategy of this thesis is a case study. “Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995:xi). Case study is not about choice of methodology but about choice of what is going to be studied; one can use many different methods to study a case (Stake, 2003:134). Cases are often individuals or programs that are studied for their uniqueness but also for their communality in an attempt to understand them (Stake, 1995:1). As the aim of this thesis is to understand the perception of and individual, a case study is a very suitable strategy. Furthermore, without questioning the challenges posed by a case study, it is a suitable strategy for a study with rather limited resources.
Miles & Huberman (1994:25) point out that qualitative researchers often struggle with determining what the case of the study is. They posit that a case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” and that “the case is, in effect, your unit of analysis” (ibid:25). In this thesis, the unit of analysis is the perception the organizational representative has about bicycle commuting and the bounded context is the organization in question.

Although case study is about in-depth understanding of a particular case, there are some differences among cases studies in this respect. Stake (2005:445-446) presents three different types of case study. An intrinsic case study means that the first and last purpose of the study is to understand that particular case without further ambition to theorize. An instrumental case study means using a case to provide insight into an issue, and hence the case itself is of secondary importance though studied in-depth; there is an external interest beyond the case. Finally, a collective case study or a multiple case study means extending the instrumental case study method to several cases in order to investigate a general phenomenon. For the purposes of this thesis, a collective case study is most suitable. By going to different settings, I attempt to comply with Stake’s (2005:449) idea when he writes “What can be learned here that the reader needs to know?” (Original italics) Although, I study each case individually, the ultimate aim is to understand the phenomenon of bicycle commuting and bicycle commuting programs.

Multiple case studies have a conceptual nature; there are some notions of e.g. how certain programs are implemented in different settings, and the programs are attempted to be tested to see how they vary under different conditions (Miles & Huberman, 1994:31). Since by nature multiple case studies are rather resource-consuming, I am not suggesting that I carry out a thoroughbred multiple case study with a research team and week-long exposure to each case but the basic elements of are present in this study. Baxter & Jack (2008) state that in multiple case studies several cases are examined to understand the similarities and differences between them. This one of the ways in which I attempt to make sense of how organizations relate to the programs: I make inter-organizational analysis and comparison in an attempt to have a well-rounded understanding of organizational experience.
3.6.1 Sampling

Patton (2002: 230-242) makes a rather comprehensive list of 15 different purposive sampling techniques that are, as theoretical sampling methods, suitable for case studies as opposed to statistical sampling of hypothesis-testing studies. The sampling method most suitable for this thesis is intensity sampling, which means selecting cases that are information rich but not unusual; they merely portray the characteristics of interest clearly and vividly. They are good, average examples of the population.

Supporting physical activity is present especially in larger organizations. The bigger the company, the higher the probability of the employees having possibilities for employer sponsored exercise. In practice, all large organizations have some support measures for employee exercise. (Koivu, Savola & Pehkonen, 2009.) This is the foundation of my theoretical sampling; I will contact the largest employers in Finland in a descending order starting from the number one company. I will use Talouselämä-magazine’s list of 100 largest Finnish employers in year 2006 (Talouselämä, 2006). For the purposes of this thesis, the exact ranking of the companies is not that relevant, so the extent to which the list is up-to-date does not play that big of a role, though it is naturally the most current I was able to find.

An important factor in selecting the cases is that the sample includes organizations that actually are engaged in measures that can be conceived to comprise a bicycle commuter program. The challenge might be that not many companies explicitly have a bicycle commuter program. In this thesis, the definition for a bicycle commuter program is a workplace wellness program that is focused on bicycle commuting. Workplace wellness programs were defined as:

[Workplace wellness program means] an organized, employer-sponsored program that is designed to support employees (and, sometimes, their families) as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization’s bottom line (Berry, Mirabito & Baun, 2010).
On the basis of this definition, I consider an organization to have explicit support for bicycle commuting if the organization belongs to either of the below types.

**Type 1 organization**

- The organization provides direct support such as lease bicycles, monetary compensation for bicycle commuting, maintenance for personal bicycle or some other measure that is directly aimed at increasing the amount of cyclists among other fitness-related modes of commuting.

**Type 2 organization**

- The organization provides facilities for bicycle commuters: showers, lockers, secure bicycle parking, drying facilities for clothes etc.
  
  AND

- It has made financial investment in these facilities in the recent years

The rationale with the requirement of recent investment in the facilities is that I consider only those cases information rich examples of pro-cycling organizations that show active support for bicycle commuting. Facilities like showers and lockers can be provided for a number of purposes and bicycle parking can be an unintentional element in the building infrastructure. In this study, however, the factor that distinguishes a company to be a type 2 organization is that it provides locked facilities for bicycle parking. It is a moderate support measure that is aimed specifically at cyclists.

Furthermore as I am doing an adapted multiple case study, I am interested to have in my sample companies that do not have any explicit support for bicycle commuting. Therefore, the third type is a type 3 organization.

**Type 3 organization**

- The organization has no direct support for bicycle commuting. It may have facilities like showers, lockers and basic unsecure bicycle racks, but there has been no recent investment in these facilities to increase the amount of cyclists.
3.6.2 Company contacts

As a part of sampling, I contacted the 20 largest employers in Finland in pursuit of interviews. You can see the guide for preliminary company contacts as Appendix 2. Basically, the first round meant contacting the companies and asking how they support bicycle commuting in order to determine the type of the organization. On the second round, the aim was to choose three largest companies for each type and then contact the people responsible for CSR in those companies and arrange interviews with them.

On the basis of the first round of contacts, I was able to reach 15 out of the 20 largest employers and divide them into two different types of companies: type 2 and type 3. It turned out that the clearest differentiator for type 2 and 3 companies was secure bicycle parking; if the company provided locked bicycle parking I deemed it as type 2 organization. Out of the 15 companies, 4 were type 2 companies and 11 were type 3 companies.

The most central finding at that stage was that none of the companies that I was able to contact had direct support for bicycle commuting; none had lease bicycles, monetary compensation or employer-sponsored maintenance for personal bicycle, so none was a type 1 organization. This was quite interesting considering the tendency of large employers being more active and systematic in supporting employee exercise. Many organizations had facilities, but they were not built intentionally to increase the amount of bicycle commuters.

To have a sample with all three types of organizations, I had to extend my sample with the help of a reference list of 65 companies using the lease bicycle service of the bicycle retailer Bike Planet (Bike Planet). The list does not include large corporations; only one company on the list is included in Talouselämä-500 list of 500 largest Finnish companies on the basis of financial performance. I contacted the five largest companies on this reference list and got two interviews.

Furthermore, I decided to include in the type 1 organization with direct support an interesting case in a company that does not have a lease bicycle service but instead has recently introduced an extension in its fitness bonus system; an extension that supports
bicycle commuting by giving kilometer allowance to bicycle commuters based on distance from home to work. The company directors have calculated that for every euro invested in supporting employee fitness there will be a return worth four euros in employee performance and satisfaction.

I made some interesting observations during the first round of contacts. Three people responsible for employee wellness reacted to my enquiry with laughter and two declined having any support measures and further commented that “it’s a personal matter” and that it is not the company’s concern. Furthermore, it was interesting that a big Finnish company owned by a Danish group had not experienced any bicycle commuting support policies trickling down to Finland from the home country of the owner, which is a country that is rather developed in terms of bicycling.

On the second round of contacts, my objective was to contact the largest companies out of the identified 4 type 2 organizations and 11 type 3 organizations and schedule an interview with a suitable CSR representative. I was able to schedule an interview with 3 type 2 organizations and 2 type 3 organizations.

In addition to the 2 scheduled phone interviews with type 3 organizations, one of the companies happened to have the time for the interview on the spot and preferred to give me the interview straight away. I had the questions ready, so I was able to conduct the interview, but unfortunately I had not yet the possibility for voice recording with the telephone, so I had to rely purely on note-taking. It was the first interview, and on the basis of it I made some alterations in the questions and their order, and therefore it functioned as a pilot interview. For this reason, there is less data recorded and presented in the results for the pilot interview. However, the interview provided good points for most of the propositions so it was a useful interview also from the content point-of-view. The data presented are paraphrased from the notes of the pilot interview whereas for the recorded interviews, the statements are direct quotations.

As the aim of this thesis is to approach bicycle commuting from the CSR point of view, I did the first interviews with CSR representatives. Nowadays large companies often have separate people or even departments managing CSR so it was not that difficult to find these people in the large organizations. Some of them had actual CSR-related titles,
whereas some were more geared towards communication but still stated that they were the ones best to comment on the issue from CSR point-of-view in their organization. The intra-company issues related to the social dimension of sustainable development are a part of CSR, but they reside usually in the HR department. For this reason, I added another layer to the interviews by asking the CSR representatives to forward me to a suitable HR representative in their organization with whom I could do the same interview with the same questions. I was able to get an interview with an HR representative in both a type 2 and a type 3 organization.

3.6.3 Case companies

In the table in Appendix 3, you will see a brief description of the case companies. The companies had different policies regarding publishing their name in the thesis, but for each company it was agreeable to mention their name as a company that took part in the study but not to report the answers so that they could be traced to the company in question. The characteristics of the companies are expressed as seen specific enough without making them too distinguishable. For this reason, for instance industry is not mentioned. Most of the companies are public companies, some are private and some owned by the state.

In the table in Appendix 3, the companies are arranged in an ascending order on the basis of scale of support they give to bicycle commuting. This ranking is, however, only my personal interpretation and its purpose is not to rate and divide the companies into good and bad ones. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is useful to arrange them somehow, and in my opinion the scale of support is the most natural factor. Also, defining the rate of support is very subjective, but in my opinion there is a clear difference in the support if a company located in the city center (read: prone to theft and vandalism) does not provide locked bicycle parking compared to a company that is willing to buy 1500 EUR racing bicycles as company bicycles for the employees.

It is worth noting that in company H, there was no specific CSR or HR person to be interviewed. In a small company of 15 employees, the natural interviewee was the CEO. I explained to the CEO that I have been interviewing either CSR or HR representatives and he replied that he speaks on behalf of both roles.
The companies that took part were:

1. Christian Berner Oy
2. Itella Oyj
3. Kesko Oyj
4. Metso Oyj
5. Pekkaniska Oy
6. Rautaruukki Oyj
7. Sulake Corporation Oy
8. VR-Yhtymä Oy
9. YIT Oyj

4 FRAME OF REFERENCE

In this section, I will review background information on issues that are in one way or another related to bicycle commuting and its incentivization. The purpose of this section is to conceptualize bicycle commuter programs in managerial and organizational contexts and to portray the relevance and importance of bicycle commuter programs to an organization. Furthermore, the purpose of this section is to sensitize the researcher to the field in order to be able to derive relevant interview questions. In this way, there is a clear course of research as the information in the frame of reference is channeled into the interview questions. The questions, on the other hand, provide triggers for data, and the data provide the foundation for interpretation and findings.

This section begins with discussion about relevant developments, relevant concepts and continues with discussion about the role of bicycle commuter programs. As the different parts of this frame of reference are discussed, relevant interview questions are presented. The purpose of this is to provide transparency for the basis of the questions and to adhere to the deductive design of this study.

4.1 Increase in organizational awareness

In organizations, environmental awareness and employee well-being are both issues that have gained attention of the management during the past decades. One indicator of the increased interest towards sustainable development and corporate social responsibility
was the establishment of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) in 1995, which is led by the CEOs of the member companies. WBCSD is therefore not a third party institution that would try to educate companies on how to carry out sustainable development, but it is more like a peer-lead platform for companies who voluntarily want to share knowledge and improve sustainability of their business. The council worked for ten years highlighting the importance of sustainable development for businesses and recently reported that since 2005 there have been signs of thoughtful companies having begun to understand the opportunities of moving towards increased sustainability. (WBCSD, 2009.)

Considering employee well-being, the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Europe has indicated that the priorities for promotion of workers’ health for 2008-2017 are to:

- devise national policy instruments on workers' health;
- protect and promote health at the workplace;
- improve the performance of and access to occupational health services;
- provide and communicate evidence for preventive action;
- incorporate workers’ health into other policies (WHO, 2008).

Regarding the first bullet, it is presumable that companies and national governments can work together to design measures like support for bicycle commuting. Governments can encourage companies to support bicycle commuting by for instance providing monetary stimulus; that is to say, governments can incentivize corporate incentivizing. However, the first bullet per se does not concern corporate managers as directly as the four following ones with which supporting bicycle commuting seems to resonate rather well:

- protect and promote health at the workplace
  - Initiating bicycle commuter programs communicates promoting health at the workplace by signaling that choosing a healthy mode of transportation is encouraged by the company.
- improve the performance of and access to occupational health services;
Making bicycle commuter programs a serious and natural extension of corporate policy is likely to increase employee access to the service and hence by expanding the amount of users of the service its performance increases.

- provide and communicate evidence for preventive action
  - As a form of aerobic exercise, bicycling is a preventive measure that decreases the risk of a variety of diseases and thereby absenteeism.
- incorporate workers' health into other policies
  - Bicycle commuter programs are not only about detached fitness programs, but include transportation to the place of work and is therefore a multidimensional phenomenon whose support ought to be incorporated to the company policies for commuting in general.

A further cooperative instance promoting among others bicycle commuting is the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) that was established in 2002. Working under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, THE PEP is a platform for countries to use as a forum for discussing and learning how to integrate transport, health and environmental policies. (THE PEP).

In light of this background, supporting bicycle commuting is rather topical. Even though the challenges of pollution, congestion, scarce physical exercise and obesity would not be the most notable ones a company may have, they are real and have indirect repercussions for business in a society. And even though supporting bicycle commuting will never abolish the challenges by itself, it is rather justified to do it and work in favor of gradually solving the aforementioned problems with all relevant means.

Furthermore, it must be admitted that, a bicycle commuting program will always remain a support activity in any company, so the expectations for its eventual importance on the corporate agenda must be regarded with a realistic manner. Still, there is no reason why it could not be dealt with the same kind of attitude as, say, investing in the ergonomics of the office.
Derived proposition:

- Companies have an increasingly positive attitude towards bicycle commuting.

Derived interview question:

- How would you describe your company’s attitude towards supporting bicycle commuting?
- What is the future of supporting bicycle commuting in your organization?

4.2 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this case, the needs refer above all to the needs of the world’s poor, but still in all countries, developing or developed, the goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability. (WCED, 1987.)

The origins of the concept date back a few decades. After the economic-efficiency-oriented 1950s and 1960s, the amount of poor people and their reduced access to the benefits of the economy increased attention towards social objectives in development: social objectives gained an equally important status as economic efficiency. In the early 1980s, the environmental objectives were added in the equation as evidence surfaced showing that environmental degradation was a barrier to further development. Thereby the plain economic development evolved into the threefold sustainable development (Munasinghe, 1993:1.) The term was popularized in the form of “ecologically sustainable development” by the Brundtland Commission Report in 1987 (WCED, 1987; Shrivastava, 1995). Another notable event in this chain of increasing international commitment to sustainability was the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which laid focus on ozone depletion, global warming and declining biodiversity (Shrivastava, 1995).

As described above in connection with the origins of the concept, sustainable development can be divided into three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars:
economic development, social development and environmental protection (United Nations, 2005) as illustrated in Figure 2. Munasinghe (1993:3) provides a description of the three components that also entails a cultural dimension as a part of social development. Economic sustainability is based on the notion that the flow of income should be maximal while the stock of assets (manufactured, natural or human) that yield that income should be maintained. Socio-cultural sustainability focuses on maintaining the stability of social and cultural systems. To a large extent, social sustainability is about equity, both intra-generational (elimination of poverty) and intergenerational (maintaining the rights of future generations). The cultural aspect adds the concern to preserve cultural diversity. Lastly, ecological sustainability means maintaining the stability of biological and physical systems. It is worth noting that maintaining diversity is central, but that still the purpose is to preserve the systems’ resilience and dynamic ability to adapt to changes; there is no ideal static state to be maintained, but what needs to be ensured is that the opportunities for human welfare are not reduced. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that biological and physical systems include man-made environments like cities. (Munasinghe, 1993:3.)

In Figure 2, you can see an illustration of the three components of sustainable development with three bullet points summarizing the central concepts for each component. Furthermore, on the lines of the triangle there are concepts that characterize the relationships among the components.

The relationship between the social and economic component is mainly characterized by the pursuit of intra-generational equity; the attempt to incorporate consideration of low income groups into economic decision-making. The manner in which it has mostly manifested in has been providing employment and direct subsidies to low income groups. Though very challenging, the main activity characterizing the relationship between economic decision-making and the environment has been the attempt to valuate ecological assets in money terms. The last relationship, between the social component and the environmental one, is the least clear one, but since the importance of the environment for the welfare of the human is indisputable the main issue is to ensure equitable environmental right for future generations. A central challenge for preserving this right is the popularity of environmental preservation; without common
acknowledgement and commitment the preservation efforts do not have adequate momentum. (Munasinghe, 1993:2.)

![Figure 2. Tradeoffs among the Three Main Objectives of Sustainable Development (Munasinghe, 1993:2)](image)

Though the model of the triple bottom line has been criticized for its questionable novelty and functionality of measurement (Norman & MacDonald, 2004), it provides a simple metaphor for sustainable development in the form of the notion of People, Planet and Profit as a down-to-earth representation of the social, environmental and economic components. The very debate about the usefulness of the triple bottom line as a robust responsibility accounting tool portrays the challenge of valuation and comparison of nonmonetary assets discussed above regarding the relationship between the economic and environmental components of sustainable development.

In other words, a business is adhering to sustainable development when it makes decisions that are financially profitable in the long-term, are equitable in terms of people
and have a favorable effect on the environment. Ideally, sustainable development is a very fundamental win-win arrangement into which bicycle commuting can be seen to make its own win-win contribution.

Regarding recent issues on sustainable development, the United Nations (2005) have stated that they will act with resolve and urgency to address the “serious and multiple challenges in tackling climate change, promoting clean energy, meeting energy needs and achieving sustainable development”. Furthermore, in 2010 the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon placed renewed focus on sustainable development as number one among six other key priorities for 2010—“the year of sustainable development” (UN News Centre, 2010). At least on the level of high-profile public discussion, sustainable development continues to draw attention.

4.2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development

As a concept, sustainable development was coined to address macro level issues and not corporate issues in particular. Nevertheless, sustainable development requires corporate contribution (Garriga & Melé, 2004). This corporate contribution is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), so it is the corporate dimension of sustainable development. Therefore sustainable development is the higher-order category of CSR.

Among the different concepts presented in this thesis, CSR has perhaps the clearest and strongest linkage to supporting bicycle commuting. The definition of CSR is subject to some debate, but the one I will use in this thesis is the one by WBCSD (1998):

"Corporate social responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large."

What resonates especially well with supporting bicycle commuting in this definition is the improved quality of life of the workforce, the local community and society at large. Physical activity, which means any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure, can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and osteoporosis, help control weight, and promote psychological well-being (WHO). As
physical activity, bicycling has these health benefits, which on their part rather undoubtedly make a positive contribution to quality of life.

For the local community, increased bicycling alongside presumed decreased car usage means less congestion, less air and noise pollution, less space for parking lots and less severe traffic accidents. It is rather justified to say that these factors increase people-orientation of communities over car-orientation, and thus, livability in the communities. For the society at large, the benefits are to some extent the same, but there is an increased emphasis on the benefit of better national health. The productivity of citizens is increased, whereas the costs on health care decrease.

**Derived propositions:**

- Organizations have high appreciation of sustainable development.
- Organizations regard bicycle commuting as an extension of their CSR.
- Organizations regard bicycle commuting as a win-win arrangement.

**Derived interview questions:**

- How does your organization relate to sustainable development?
- What would you say about the relationship between bicycle commuting and sustainable development in your organization?
- Who do you think gains from bicycle commuting?

4.2.2 Responsibilization and activation

Responsibilization means “expecting and assuming the reflexive moral capacities of various social actors” (Shamir, 2008:7). The actors of responsibilization are fundamentally individuals (e.g. employees, welfare recipients, managers, civil servants, citizens and consumers) whose roles and identities responsibilization attempts to reconfigure to mobilize these actors actively to undertake and perform self-governing tasks. To have the actors actively undertaking tasks is a way to activate them through responsibilization. However, also market entities can be addressed as the target actors to adhere to favorable socio-moral behavior like sustainability—this sort of responsibilization has become to be known as the question of CSR. (Shamir, 2008.)
When thinking about governance, neoliberalism posits that government is a continuum extending from political government to forms of self-regulation. Neoliberal forms of government include “indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them”. (Lemke, 2001.)

Lemke (2001:201) does not use the term responsibilization, but he discusses “the strategy of rendering individual subjects responsible”, which means shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty etc. from the state to the individual and transforming it into a problem of “self-care”. He continues that a key aim of neoliberalism is the congruence between a responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational actor whose moral quality is based on rational assessment of the costs and benefits of a certain act among alternatives; neoliberalism embraces entrepreneurial behavior in individuals.

In other words, the free market ideals of neoliberalism can be seen as the root of responsibilization. What responsibilization means as a technique of government, or management, is less regulation, controlling and coercion in favor of empowerment and moral expectations that come with individual responsibility that extends to economic performance.

As mentioned, both individuals and market entities can be responsibilized and that responsibilizing the latter in fact means CSR. What this suggests is that basically organizations can “outsource” responsibility to their employees by encouraging certain behavior, e.g. behavior that is favorable from the perspective of CSR. Be it individuals or organizations, living up to the expected and favored behavior is voluntary. However, Shamir (2008) points out that for organizations there is business value in doing the right thing, and personally, I imagine that also an employee who adheres to behavior favored by the organization is more preferred than an employee who does not.

**Derived proposition:**

- Organizations value employees who adhere to sustainable development.
- Organizations value employees who commute by bicycle.
Derived interview questions:

- How would you as an organization wish that your employees related to sustainable development?
- How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting shows the employee’s commitment to sustainable development?
- What do you think it means to your company that bicycle commuting takes place outside the workplace and working time?

4.3 Employee Wellness Programs

In this thesis, I will use Berry et al’s (2010) definition for Workplace Wellness Program, but I find the term Employee Wellness Program more suitable when discussing bicycle commuter programs, since the term does not imply that the physical activity necessarily takes place within the company premises or on working time and it emphasizes the employee as the subject. Hence, an Employee Wellness Program is:

> an organized, employer-sponsored program that is designed to support employees (and, sometimes, their families) as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization’s bottom line (Berry, Mirabito & Baun, 2010, definition for a Workplace Wellness Program).

There are a number of terms for this activity including Corporate Fitness Programs, Worksite Fitness Programs, Employee Fitness Programs and Company Sports (Kerr & Vos 1993, Shepard 1996 as cited in Aura, 2006), but for the abovementioned reasons of suitability Employee Wellness Program is used here. A further reason is that compared with the mere concept of fitness, wellness can also include issues related to, for instance, nutrition or weight control (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990), which can be included in a bicycle commuter program in form of e.g. a healthy employer-sponsored breakfast for bicycle commuters.

As a concept, an Employee Wellness Program is nothing new. In the US, employers have been interested in giving their employees health education and training since the 1920s (Schirmer, 1925 as cited in Gebhardt et al, 1990). However, the pioneering
programs were more about providing educational material to facilitate employee health instead of devoting time, space or change of worksite routine, and what is more these programs hardly had commitment of the top management (Ardell, 1985 as cited in Gebhardt et al, 1990). Also, the benefits have been realized decades ago as the programs have been a strategic part of reducing healthcare costs, improving worker morale, decreasing absenteeism and improving behaviors associated with higher productivity (Bruce, 1984; Regin, 1987; Sharkey, 1986 as cited in Gebhardt et al, 1990).

O’Donnell (as cited in Gebhardt et al, 1990) introduced three functional levels on which fitness and wellness programs can be organized. Level I is informative in nature and consists of newsletters, flyers, posters, health screenings and educational classes. This level does not necessarily have direct health advantages, but it may induce awareness and interest towards the following levels. Level II is activity-engaging in nature and consists of specific fitness programs that are intended to modify the employees’ behavior and life-style. Examples of level II programs are self-administered fitness programs, memberships at local fitness facilities, classes related to proper performance of physically demanding work tasks and classes addressing work station adjustment for ergonomics. Level III programs aim at creating an environment that assists employees to sustain healthy life-styles and behaviors by, for instance, providing equipment, space, locker facilities and making healthy food available. Often level III programs are extensions to level I and II programs, but they can also be organized separately.

Level II and III programs can both be further divided into two types. The programs can be “general fitness programs” that promote overall improvement in health and fitness or then “job-related fitness programs” that focus on improving specific performance for certain work tasks. The former is often used for white collar workers who mostly perform sedentary tasks and the latter is used for blue collar workers who need the performance for their physically demanding work tasks. (Gebhardt et al, 1990.)

Out of these three levels, supporting bicycle commuting resonates most with level III. Ideally, support for bicycle commuting is manifested by employer will to provide sustained measures that encourage bicycle commuting in the long-term. Providing equipment, lockers and showers are examples of support for bicycle commuting, and they seem to be well in line with the aim of level III programs and the examples given.
Regarding the two types within level III programs, bicycle commuting resonates better with general fitness programs, although there might be some marginal blue collar jobs that benefit especially of cyclists as employees.

Since physical fitness reduces absenteeism (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990), reduces healthcare costs (Ibid., Berry et al, 2010), facilitates employee retention (Berry et al, 2010) and improves work performance (ibid) bicycle commuting as a source of physical fitness has a clear connection to the economic component of sustainable development: it pays off.

Regarding the social component and its poverty aspect, the costs of bicycling are much lower than using a car. A simple, albeit not necessarily perfectly representative of actual cost, measure to compare cycling with driving is to look at the Finnish Tax Administration’s travel expense compensations paid for using your own vehicle for commuting. In 2011, the maximum compensation for using one’s own car for commuting was 46 cents/km and for bicycle (as compensation for other vehicles) 10 cents/km (Vero.fi: Kilometrikorvaukset 2011). According to some estimates, using a bicycle costs 2.5 cents/km (Holmala) and for instance Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, compensates 20 cents/km for using your own car (Kela, 2010). However it is rather safe to estimate that using a bicycle corresponds to 10-25% of the costs of using a car. Also, the initial cost of buying a bicycle is only a fraction of that of a car. It is a matter of opinion, but perhaps one could compare a new 500 euro bicycle against a used 5000 euro car. As a cheap mode of transportation, bicycling is equitable towards people in money terms, and therefore as a development measure it complies with the social component of sustainable development. Also, bicycling increases the transport possibilities of people from a variety of social status (City of Helsinki, Economic and Planning Centre, 2004) and organization-wise it strengthens organizational culture (Berry et al, 2010) thereby contributing to the people aspect.

With regard to the environment component of sustainable development, bicycling is a mode of transport that has nearly zero emissions, saves public space, decreases congestion, decreases use of energy and decreases noise pollution (City of Helsinki, Economic and Planning Centre, 2004). Some modest cycling emissions can be derived from the production of bicycles and construction of bicycle lanes (Hakkarainen et al,
2005), but still it is especially the very low emissions and energy save that contribute to the intergenerational equity of the environment component. Also, space saving and general increase in attractiveness in city environments can be seen as a dimension bicycling has in sustainable development as it was pointed out that cities are included in the environment component.

**Derived proposition:**

- For organizations, bicycle commuting is foremost related to managing employee wellness
- For organizations, bicycle commuting is an important element in managing employee wellness.

**Derived interview questions:**

- Do you see your bicycle commuter program as a part of some larger entity in your organization?
- In what ways does your organization promote the well-being of its employees?
- How would you characterize the role of bicycle commuting among your other employee wellness measures?
- How would you characterize the cooperation of employee wellness and CSR in your company?
- Do the physical benefits of commuting by bicycle help in some particular tasks of your employees?

### 4.4 The role of bicycle commuting for organizations

In this section, I will discuss some further aspects of bicycle commuter programs in an organizational context. In addition to the relevant concepts of sustainable development, responsibilization, CSR and Employee Wellness Programs that were discussed above, I will reflect further on the business case of bicycle commuter programs by discussing them from the perspective of the value chain. Furthermore, I will comment on other motivators for bicycle commuter programs and the topic of institutionalization. Lastly, I
I will introduce a framework I formed to summarize and illustrate the role of bicycle commuter programs in organizational context.

I chose the topics of value chain, other motivators and institutionalization on the basis of studying the common argumentation on bicycle commuter programs and Employee Wellness Programs in general. These seem to be the topics around which the discussion is revolving, and these are the topics on which I want to understand the experiences of the subject companies.

4.4.1 Value chain perspective

Any measures to support bicycle commuting are support activities for a company; meaning that they are not primary activities that would have a direct contribution to profits. In the traditional value chain perspective, you can argue bicycle commuter programs to make a contribution to human resources (HR), and human capital (HC) to be precise, since there is ample evidence that physical fitness reduces absenteeism (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990), reduces healthcare costs (Ibid., Berry et al, 2010), facilitates employee retention (Berry et al, 2010), improves work performance (ibid) and strengthens organizational culture (ibid). There is even evidence on the benefits of bicycle commuting in particular as the research institute TNO (2009) found that in the Netherlands bicycle commuters have on average one sick day less in a year than non-bicycle commuters, although this cross-sectional study did not conclude anything about the cause and effect relationship (Hendriksen, 2011). However to put it shortly, healthier employees mean more productivity.

Productivity on the other hand has a direct effect to primary activities that are carried out by members of the organization. Of course, commuting by bicycle is not the only way for an employee to be fit, and supporting bicycle commuting is not the only way for an organization to encourage physical health of its employees nor to reduce absenteeism or strengthen organizational culture. Nevertheless, an employee who adds commuting by bicycle to his weekly routine experiences increase in physical health and thereby reaches higher productivity and makes an increased contribution to primary activities. This chain of effects portrays the role of a bicycle commuter program as a tactical dimension facilitating pursuit of some higher-order organizational goals; it is
not a strategic issue by itself, but one of many tools organizations can use to achieve their goals.

As suggested by Luthans & Youssef (2004:146), the most valuable element of human capital is tacit knowledge, which means knowledge that is difficult to explicate or imitate and it is organization-specific. Tacit knowledge of the employees is what organizations need to tap into. I suggest that the prerequisites of tapping into tacit knowledge comprise employee retention, employee presence and employee vitality. Arguing that employee retention would suffer if an organization ignores an issue like support for bicycle commuting would be a stretch of imagination, but it is fairly justifiable to say that organizations with low turnover have better access to tacit knowledge of employees who are physically fit and therefore have less sick leaves and are more alert when at work.

The study by Berry, Mirabito & Baun (2010) confirmed that healthy people are more likely to stay in the employing organization; effective wellness programs decrease the rate of voluntary attrition. Regarding employee vitality, Berry et al discussed the concept of presenteeism as a derivative of absenteeism. Presenteeism means that the employees come to work but underperform because of illness or stress. (ibid.) Basically this is the same as employee vitality, and it was found to decrease with the help of wellness programs.

Naturally, setting up and maintaining a bicycle commuter program may be outsourced as many other support activities and tactical measures. An organization can hire a consultancy company to design the program (see e.g. fillarikonsultit.net – in Finnish) and it can hire a subcontractor to cater for lease bicycles (see e.g. www.tyosuhdepyora.fi – in Finnish). What the company cannot outsource are the people without whom the primary activities cannot be performed, and hence investing in these people is evidently sound. Of course, there are primary activities that can be outsourced as well, so this idea applies for the people who carry out primary activities that cannot be outsourced for one reason or another.

Furthermore, it can be suggested that supporting bicycle commuting has a direct effect, or can be maneuvered to have a direct effect, on one primary activity: marketing.
Depending on the company’s industry, it is very likely that emphasizing the fact that it supports bicycle commuting has a positive impact on the company image in the eyes of an aware customer. An organization can use a bicycle commuter program as a statement of consideration for the health of its employees and the environment—portray it as a part of the organization’s values. It is, however, a rather fine line between sincere CSR and CSR done for egocentric purposes as will be discussed later on.

The importance of people has been realized anew and expressed in statements like “our most important asset walks out the door every night” as declared by Intel Corp.’s Andy Grove and Microsoft’s Bill Gates (Luthans et al., 2004:143). Perhaps the appreciation of people and sustainable development will someday be summarized by another prestigious business leader in a statement like “our most important asset rides out the company parking lot every night”.

Derived propositions:

- Organizations perceive concrete benefits from deploying bicycle commuter programs.
- The benefits of bicycle commuter programs are, however, difficult to measure.

Derived interview questions:

- Have you done follow-up on the benefits of bicycle commuting?
- IF YES, what are your experiences on:
  OR
- IF NO, how would you imagine increasing bicycle commuting to affect the following areas:
  o Absenteeism
  o Expenses
  o Turnover
  o Performance
  o Changes in organizational culture
  o Corporate image?
- Do you think it pays off for an organization to make financial investment in supporting bicycle commuting?
- What would you say about organizing follow-up for the potential benefits and tracing the benefits to increased bicycling?

4.4.2 Other motives for bicycle commuter programs

As discussed above in section 4.4.1, however, supporting bicycle commuting is rather multidimensional and can be done for a number of motives within the notion of CSR. Garriga & Melé (2004) have discussed four different corporate approaches to CSR. In their study, they identified four different theoretical perspectives of CSR that each had emphasis on different motives. The four perspectives are instrumental theories, which exhibit companies as mere profit-making actors; political theories, which exhibit companies as pursuers of power in society; integrative theories, which exhibit companies as reactively responding to society’s demands; and ethical theories, which exhibit companies as taking social responsibility purely out of ethical reasons. (Ibid.) In a way, this division characterizes the different levels of sincerity and purity of a company’s CSR.

There is a connection here to Kohlberg’s moral stage theory that portrays a moral development curve with three levels each consisting of two stages. The first level is Preconventional morality, which is divided into stage 1. Obedience and punishment orientation and stage 2. Individualism and exchange. The first stage means that a person acts to avoid punishment and the second that he acts to be rewarded. The second level is Conventional morality, which is divided into stage 3. Good interpersonal relationships and stage 4. Maintaining the social order. The third stage means that a person acts on the motive of belonging to a group. The fourth stage means that a person acts according to the law. The third level is Postconventional morality, which is divided into stage 5. Social contract and individual rights and stage 6. Universal principles. The fifth stage means that a person acts in a consequentialist manner according to utilitarian principles thinking of consequences and choosing what is best for the largest number of people in a society. Finally, the sixth stage means that a person is guided by his rationale of the
universal law of ethics, and he is basing his actions on the notion that they are simply the right thing to do and therefore they are correct and worthy actions. (Kohlberg as cited in Crain, 1985:118-136.)

For instance, the Biltmore executive VP Steve Miller expressed a good example of Garriga & Melé’s last ethical theories to CSR, which also complies with Kohlberg’s universalist stage, when he commented on Biltmore’s reason for adopting an employee wellness program by saying “It’s the right thing to do for our people” (Berry, Mirabito & Baun, 2010). This sort of motivator represents the most desirable and sincere basis for an organization to provide support for their employees’ wellness efforts.

As a motive for supporting bicycle commuting, adhering to the universalist stage of moral development is a tad utopian. Although, as seen in the example from Biltmore, it is not impossible at least on the level of a public statement, but having motivators related to the value chain perspective discussed in section 4.4.1 is more likely. In my opinion, the value chain perspective is based on the reward-seeking second stage, whereby it is concerned with the results of actions as value-adding or non-value-adding. I suggest that by large the modern management’s moral development is better characterized as reward-seeking than universalist. In other words, it is more likely for a manager to commit to moral acts that have business value than moral acts that have “only” moral worth.

Related to the issue of motive is the origin of a policy; what brings about a policy—is it a reactive or proactive act? According to Shamir (2008), many corporations assert that in order to be successful, responsible policies must be developed within the organization, so that they respond to the organization-specific situation.

**Derived proposition:**

- Organizations support bicycle commuting as an effort to be considerate employers, but they also expect to benefit in ways beyond altruism.
Derived interview question:

- What would you say are the main motives in your organization for supporting bicycle commuting? *Ultimate motive*

Regarding this question, the ultimate motive means a trigger to probe a deeper motive depending on how the respondent replies the question.

4.4.3 Institutionalizing bicycle commuting in an organization

Making support for bicycle commuting a natural extension of organizational policy means institutionalizing the support as a persistent act of the organization. Institutionalizing is defined as “the behavior that is performed by two or more individuals, persists over time, and exists as a part of the daily functioning of the organization” (Goodman & Dean, 1981 as cited in Sims, 1991:494). Sims (1991:494) continues by clarifying that the act may vary with regard to persistence, number of people in the organization performing the act and the extent to which it exists as a part of the organization. In other words, there are no clear boundaries for an act to be institutionalized or not, but presumably the degree of persistence, number of proponents and centrality in the organization determine the strength of institutionalization.

The number of people commuting by bicycle is very likely to have an effect on institutionalizing support for bicycle commuting as an organizational act. A critical mass of bicycle commuters is required for bicycle commuting to be regarded as a distinct characteristic of an organization.

With regard to persistence, bicycle commuting programs should be stable in that they would not be implemented as, for instance, mere managerial whims. It might be that some managers are more interested in supporting bicycle commuting than others, which then becomes visible in the support measures. Managers that set an example for employees by commuting by bicycle themselves is of course one measure of supporting bicycle commuting, but overall managing support for bicycle commuting should not be individualized or personified to certain managers; it should be an organization-wide act that is implemented and maintained diligently. As expressed by Berry et al (2010),
wellness programs have to be natural extensions of the organization’s identity and aspirations.

The role of bicycle commuting as a part of the daily functioning of the organization is an interesting dimension. On one hand, bicycle commuting preferably takes place on a daily basis, but this is an issue where the nature of support for bicycle commuting as a support activity in the value chain surfaces. The essence of support for bicycle commuting is naturally the commuting itself, and it happens outside the organization and outside working time, so in that sense it is not directly a part of organizational functioning. The fact that support for bicycle commuting is a support activity means that its centrality in the daily functioning of the organization is at best moderate. However, as stated above, the degree to which an act complies with these three issues of persistence, number of proponents and centrality only determines the strength of institutionalization—not the existence of it.

Derived propositions:

- Bicycle commuting still concerns a minority of employees.
- The implementation and sustenance of bicycle commuter programs is dependent on some individual “champions”.

Derived interview questions:

- How long have the different measures of support been used?
- How popular bicycle commuting is in your company?
- How does the decision-making work regarding a program like a bicycle commuter program? Who makes the initiative and who the final decision?
- IF THERE IS SUPPORT: Where did the idea of supporting bicycle commuting in your company come from?
- IF THERE IS NO SUPPORT: Has someone in your company raised the issue of bicycle commuting and wished for support measures?
- Are there some individuals in your company that are known for commuting by bicycle? Are they trying to promote bicycling?
4.4.4 Organizational framework for incentivizing bicycle commuting

In Figure 3, I have demonstrated how bicycle commuting incentives can be placed in an organizational context. The figure depicts the related concepts and shows the areas where bicycle commuting incentives make a contribution. It is conceivable that companies that value these concepts in carrying out business deem supporting bicycle commuting more important than companies that value these concepts less.

The central concepts are the ones that were discussed in length above: sustainable development, CSR, responsibilization and Employee Wellness Programs. In addition to these, a couple of further concepts are presented here and included in the figure. Even though not necessarily requiring the same attention as the central ones, they are worth mentioning.

![Organizational framework for bicycle commuting](image)

**Figure 3. Organizational framework for bicycle commuting**

In the middle of Figure 3, bicycle commuting incentives are represented as a part of Corporate Commuter Programs and Employee Wellness Programs. Both programs can include a variety of tools alongside support for bicycle commuting and they are naturally completely voluntary programs for companies, so not every company has one.
The way in which support for bicycle commuting knits together these two organizational policies is a good example of incorporating workers’ health into other policies, which was the fifth priority for promotion of workers’ health as indicated by WHO as discussed above in section 4.1 (WHO, 2008).

Corporate Commuter Programs usually include any measures that aim at diverting employees from drive-alone commuting by cars e.g. to using public transportation, carpools, vanpools, telecommuting and all forms of human powered commuting including bicycle commuting. For instance, the US Environmental Protection Agency established the Best Workplaces for Commuters program which gives guidance and awards companies on innovative and environmentally friendly commuting solutions (EPA, 2009).

Employee Wellness Programs are any means an employer uses to facilitate physical activity of the employees (Aura, 2006). As mentioned earlier, this term is chosen over a handful of others since it does not imply any spatial or temporal restrictions for the programs and it emphasizes the employee as the subject. This issue represents another contact surface between Corporate Commuter Programs and Employee Wellness Programs with regard to bicycle commuting; bicycle commuting does not take place in the workplace and usually not on working time, so it is a very efficient way for a company to combine transportation and fitness and to maximize the time that is devoted to the actual work tasks.

From the organization’s perspective, incentivizing bicycle commuting can be regarded as socially responsible investing. Socially responsible investing can be defined as “the process of integrating personal values and societal concerns into investment decision-making” (Schueth, 2003). Social responsibility, as defined by Schueth, concerns professional managers as investors that invest in companies. For instance, in the stock market this means screening companies to avoid investing in “sin stocks”, companies in e.g. alcohol, tobacco and gaming industries (Ibid.). The concept is usually employed in the field of capital markets to refer to a responsible way to compile investment portfolios. However, in this paper I use it in a way that slightly differs from the conventional usage. I use it to refer to socially responsible organizational investment decision-making; in other words, it is used to refer to the managerial decision-making
on what processes or projects to invest in within a specific organizational context. As you can see in the placing of the arrows in Figure 3, socially responsible investing is an antecedent of CSR.

In the figure, bicycle commuting incentives are depicted to make a contribution to CSR. Naturally, an organization has multiple areas of CSR and bicycle commuter programs can be seen as one of them. As mentioned, sustainable development is a higher-order category for CSR, so it is depicted on the background of CSR. Furthermore, it being mostly a macro level concept, it is depicted as continuing outside the figure, i.e. outside the organizational context to other areas of the society.

Aura (2006) studied the effects of Worksite Fitness Policies on intellectual capital and found that there is a linkage between the two. Worksite Fitness Policy is in this case the same as Employee Wellness Program but with an emphasis on the physical activity taking place at the workplace. Aura (2005:24) divided intellectual capital into human capital, which is capital characterized by the individual employee; structural capital, which is capital characterized by the organizational structure; and relational capital, which is capital characterized by external organizational relations with customers, suppliers and R&D partners.

Aura’s (2006:214) study showed that a Worksite Fitness Policy has the clearest connection with structural capital but that there was also a connection to human and relational capital. With regard to structural capital, a Worksite Fitness Policy had a positive effect on company climate and job satisfaction; with regard to human capital, a Worksite Fitness Policy had a positive effect on the employees’ perceived health, work ability, working efficiency, stress release, motivation, mental stamina and well-being; and finally with regard to relational capital, a Worksite Fitness Policy had some positive effect on corporate image and recruitment.

As implied above, both CSR and intellectual capital are related to human resources in the area of support for bicycle commuting. Companies that support bicycle commuting and succeed in increasing the amount of bicycle commuters are likely to reap benefits on intellectual capital by being able to enjoy better productivity of employees. But also as a CSR measure, companies that seemingly support bicycle commuting are able to
exhibit more consideration towards ethics. Through increased intellectual capital and CSR, companies are thus able to increase their competitive position in the market place, and hence there is a contribution to the bundle of resources of the company and thereby to the resource-based view of the firm.

The resource-based view of the firm posits that an organization uses its capabilities to transform resources into a competitive advantage, and that the competitive advantage can be sustained only if the resources cannot easily be duplicated by the competitors (Hart, 1995). Hart (1995) continues to present an extended theory by arguing that the global developments require updating the resource-based view in order to have sustainable economy that can cater for the fast growing world population. He introduces the concept natural-resource-based view of the firm, which means that a shift is required to root the competitive advantage into capabilities that facilitate environmentally sustainable economic activity.

**Derived proposition:**

- Increasing bicycle commuting strengthens an organization’s resources from many perspectives.

**Derived interview questions:**

- How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting incentives strengthen the organization’s resources in many different ways?
5 FINDINGS

The purpose of this section is to determine how the propositions can be evaluated on the basis of the interviews. The following discussion is closely linked to Appendix 4. Compilation of interview responses, in which I have gathered snippets of the interview transcripts and translated them into English. In the appendix, you can see anecdotes that I have placed under each proposition. After discussing the results related to each proposition, there is a conclusive reflection on the validity of the proposition on the basis of this sample. Furthermore, you can see a summary of the evaluation in a table form in the Appendix 5.

Most of the responses in the compilation were triggered by the questions planned for a particular proposition, but I have taken some freedom in placing a comment under a particular proposition even though it would not have been the exact topic of discussion at the moment. This way I have attempted to create a coherent and rich voice for the company representatives. Already in this form, I think the compilation gives exactly that—a voice for corporate Finland discussing bicycle commuting. In other words, I think that as such the compilation is a good read for anyone interested in the topic.

5.1 P1. Companies have an increasingly positive attitude towards bicycle commuting.

Among type 3 companies, neutral seems to be the word for describing the attitude towards bicycle commuting. Positive attitude towards exercise in general was visible, but separate attitude towards bicycle commuting in particular was scarce and organizational level interest was missing. In type 3 companies, bicycle commuting had not been discussed at all as far as the representatives were concerned.

Among type 2 companies, commuting by bicycle was found a good option for commuting, but it was characterized as a personal choice and not exactly the company’s concern. Some companies had reflected on it and still kept the issue on the agenda, but at the moment felt that there was nothing more to do that made any sense.
Type 1 companies reported a positive and active support towards supporting bicycle commuting.

On the basis of the interviews, proposition 1 seems a bit too optimistic. In all three type 1 companies, the support for bicycle commuting is rather novel with company G having the most experience as it introduced the lease bicycle in 2008. Type 2 companies also had at least started discussing the issue or had introduced some measures in the recent years. However, type 1 companies seemed not to report any increase in the positivity of their attitude. Naturally, this is not a longitudinal study so this is mere interpretation, but still I would say that as such, proposition 1 is not really confirmed. On the basis of this sample, it seems more realistic to think that the attitude varies from neutral to positive depending on the case.

5.2 P2. Organizations have high appreciation of sustainable development.

Quite expectedly, every case company had high appreciation of sustainable development. It was found “the word of the day”, but many also explained how they had made it a dimension of their strategy. Nothing came up that would have compromised the proposition as it is. On the basis of this sample, it can be evaluated that the proposition is confirmed at least on the face value level; in principle, the way companies talk about sustainable development might differ from their actions.

5.3 P3. Organizations regard bicycle commuting as an extension of their CSR.

Type 3 companies did not really report having discussed bicycle commuting as a part of their CSR. However, they did acknowledge the linkage in general, in that if they had explicit support measures they could be linked also to their CSR.

Interestingly, the CSR representative for company B stated that they have discussed and determined policies for company cars and business travel with regard to responsibility. It goes to show the current marching order, but it also is an indication of the fact that bicycle commuting could be managed from the perspective of some sort of commuter program. Also, the HR representative of company D stated that:
There has been a lot of discussion regarding the fact that we give more support to car commuters than users of public transport, so maybe this could be a part of that in that we would start to support users of public transport and these lifestyle exercisers in a way that was comparable to the support we give to car commuters.

Type 2 companies indicated that bicycle commuting is connected to CSR but it is not that central in it. Company E points out quite interestingly that when a company reflects on its options in terms of emissions and energy consumption, bicycle commuting is not very significant and the actual production has more emphasis. It is the same argument that was done by the pilot company as the respondent suggested the company might be accused of greenwashing if it tried to compensate the emissions of its production by investing in bicycle commuting to reduce emissions. However, company E pointed out that if the employee is thinking of his choices in terms of emissions and energy consumption, commuting by bicycle gets more emphasis and meaning.

Type 1 companies all indicated that supporting bicycle commuting is a part of their sustainability and that it was a theme they were consciously thinking when they were planning the support.

Basically, the companies that do not have direct support for bicycle commuting do not consider bicycle commuting to be a part of their CSR whereas the companies that do have direct support regard it as one part of their CSR. Therefore the proposition is only partly confirmed.

5.4 P4. Organizations regard bicycle commuting as a win-win arrangement

All companies found multiple beneficiaries with the individual perhaps being the clearest one, the employer the second clearest one and then the society and nature at large. In connection with this topic, the HR representative in company D brought up the fact that because of accidents bicycle commuting can have adverse repercussions for the individual and the employer. With exception to this note, it is quite clear that the interviews backed up the proposition.
5.5 P5. Organizations value employees who adhere to sustainable development.

Some issues related to sustainable behavior were mentioned to be regulated by rules, but otherwise in all companies there were indications of valuing employees who share the company values regarding sustainability and hoped that all their “employees would relate to it as we do as a company”. There were different kinds of guidebooks and principles provided that the employees are to follow.

The CSR representative in company D pointed out that if the employees are encouraged “to recycle or commute by walking or cycling then they perhaps learn a way of thinking that makes them do more informed decisions in other contexts as well”. The CSR representative in company E referred to a similar idea by stating that ”bicycle commuting can have a symbolic meaning”.

The HR representative in company G suggested that age has an impact on how a person relates to sustainable development as she said, “I think that nowadays it is a very important thing to young people”.

Company H even had bicycle commuting mentioned in the HR manual where it said that “we encourage employees to commute by walking, cycling or by public transport”. The CEO further pointed out that in their case this is actually the practice also.

In addition to cycling or walking to work, recycling and energy saving were the most often mentioned issues where the employees could present their commitment to sustainability. All in all, there were no contradictory comments to the proposition so on the basis of this sample it can be claimed to be confirmed.

5.6 P6. Organizations value employees who commute by bicycle.

My interview questions addressing this issue were perhaps not formulated in the best possible way. At first, I was asking in a quite vague manner how companies relate to bicycle commuters compared to non-bicycle commuters. Naturally, companies would not discriminate on the basis of an issue like this—or on the basis of any other issue for that matter. What I was aiming for with this question was to try to get some comments
on whether bicycle commuters are somehow seen more sustainable development – oriented than non-bicycle commuters.

The rationale was that since the companies did appreciate sustainable development (proposition 2), valued employees who adhered to it (proposition 5) and also to some extent felt that companies were partly benefitting in the win-win scenario of bicycle commuting (proposition 4) they would also relate differently to bicycle commuters—someway in a more positive manner. The word *relate* may have been the Achilles’ heel, since it was a bit too vague and made the respondents think of discrimination.

The answers to my first questions all emphasized that the company cannot discriminate on the basis of how the employees commute. Some did indicate that locally there may be something going on that they do not know, but as an organization they relate equally to all employees.

After the first five interviews, I changed the question and finally in the last six interviews I was asking the respondents to comment on the claim that bicycling to work shows commitment to sustainable development.

The answers to the new question confirmed the claim only partly since most added that it depends on the motive of the individual and that it is actually more likely that the motive is something else than environmentalism, such as the fitness aspect, statement of being an athlete or a non-motorist or simply just being after the sense of achievement. The most concise, yet a tad cynical, statement was given by the HR representative in company D: “I don’t think that people think that big”. It was also pointed out that you can show the commitment in many different ways.

What does all this then mean for the proposition? At least on the basis of this sample you have to scrap the idea that bicycle commuters would be more sustainable development –oriented than other employees, since the motive to commute by bicycle can be totally selfish. Also, it seems that at least explicitly bicycle commuting is no factor on which an employee would be valued. As such the proposition is confirmed, in that I cannot say that companies would not value bicycle commuters, but I did not find any indication that there would be some “special” positive or negative value for them.
Companies value them as any other employees, so the proposition is confirmed, but at the same time in a way it contains little substance.

5.7 P7. For organizations, bicycle commuting is foremost related to managing employee wellness

The assumption behind this proposition was that, within CSR, supporting bicycle commuting is mostly an employee wellness issue. All companies stated that supporting bicycle commuting is or would be primarily a part of employee wellness. The CSR representative of company C continued that “Through employee wellness, you can link it to our social responsibility.” Many added that you can approach it also from the environmental aspect, but it seemed to be the secondary choice.

Company D had had some discussion about starting to support bicycle commuting, but the company health and occupational committee had decided that it is not something that should be committed to, at least yet:

*We do think about these things also amongst us sustainable development people. As an issue it is comparable to recycling, paper consumption, and for instance the fact that do we use porcelain or paper cups or biodegradable paper cups, or that we do encourage public transport or carpooling—it is a part of the discussion, but we are not yet there that there would actually be a project for it. Time will tell from which side it will eventually emerge.*

Here the company CSR representative provides a nice statement that briefly explains the discussion the company has had and the fact that the company is in between choices and that it is not certain which department would take it under its wing if support was to be committed to one day. It also includes examples of issues the company representative thinks are comparable to bicycle commuter programs from the environmental perspective.

The CSR representative of company E presented a process in which it had started with employee wellness and then the environmental aspect came into play when the company took a closer look at the environmental impact of their operations. Perhaps this shows in some way the trend that society has begun to put more emphasis on environmental
issues. She also points out the practical linkages to instances like company purchasing and real estate management; purchasing handles negotiations with a local bicycle retailer on staff discounts for equipment and the real estate management is responsible for showers, lockers and bicycle parking.

Regarding the type 1 companies, it was interesting to see that they all seemed to refer to a psychological dimension behind employee wellness:

F (HR): *We use it to support employee wellness or actually the workplace atmosphere on the whole.*

G (HR): *Perhaps we no longer talk about employee wellness but wellness in general and as a whole... The younger the people the more their working time and free time are intertwined.*

H (CEO): *[The order] is employee wellness, environment and then this we-spirit.*

Company F representative suggested that the fitness bonus system, which the bicycle commuter program is a part of, not only improves the physical wellness of the employees, but also the atmosphere of the workplace. The idea that company G representative wants to talk about wellness in general because nowadays work and free time are more intertwined seems to be in line with the idea that nowadays work-life balance has increased importance since the working environment has become more stressful. Finally, company H representative refers to a “we-spirit” that has resulted as the employees participated in a long-distance bicycle race. Preparation and all chit-chat about the race seemed to have some sort of a bonding effect.

On the basis of this sample, the proposition is confirmed: bicycle commuting is foremost related to employee wellness. However, there are many other linkages and it might be that it will not be the case forever. The examples of company D and E show that there may be development in the field and that thinking might shift. On the other hand, the examples from the type 1 companies show that even though employee wellness was the primary factor, it has some psychological value-adding implications.
5.8 P8. For organizations, bicycle commuting is an important element in managing employee wellness.

After establishing that supporting bicycle commuting is foremost an employee wellness issue, this proposition was to determine how important it is as an employee wellness measure among the other measures. Some representatives were of the opinion that it could be an equal measure and the opinion was that there was a lot of potential in it:

A (CSR): Supporting bicycle commuting could be an equal measure in promoting employee wellness along with the measures we have now.

Or that it was an equal measure already:

G (HR): I see that it is on the same level [with the other measures]... It has as big a role as these exercise coupons and others we provide to support our employees’ exercise.

However in most cases, bicycle commuting was seen as having a very small role among other employee wellness measures. Company B representative makes a quite good explanation of the role a bicycle commuter program would have if the company had an explicit one:

B (HR): We have a rather extensive employee wellness program. One part of it is called ‘supporting exercise’ whose share of the entire program is—how would I say—one fifth. This [supporting bicycle commuting] would be an even smaller subsection of that share, so rather small in relation to the whole.

It was interesting that the company that seemed to be most committed to supporting bicycling also did not overestimate its role and seemed to have a very realistic view:

H (CEO): The most important thing is to have a sane workplace where things are well taken care of in a sensible manner; It cannot be replaced by something like this [supporting bicycle commuting]... The way it goes is that this is the frosting on the cake... I would not exaggerate its role, but it is a good thing if you are able to provide it.
It is pretty safe to say that this proposition is exaggerating the role of bicycle commuting as an employee wellness measure. It can have some importance as a part of a whole, but it seems to be an overstatement to say that alone it is an important employee wellness measure when compared to others.

5.9 Organizations perceive concrete benefits from deploying bicycle commuter programs.

The initial intent of this proposition was to probe the benefits companies would have had from supporting bicycle commuting. However as it turned out in the study, the larger companies that were contacted did not have any direct and systematic support for it. On the other hand, in the smaller companies that did have direct support there was no systematic measurement of benefits. For this reason, the purpose of this proposition was changed slightly; the new purpose was to find out what the company representatives’ personal view was on the potential effects increased bicycle commuting might have on (1) absenteeism, (2) turnover, (3) performance, (4) organizational culture and (5) company image. After discussing each of the five areas, I asked the company representatives if it pays off for a company to invest in supporting bicycle commuting.

Absenteism

With regard to absenteeism, there seemed to be a consensus that in theory it should decrease if bicycle commuting increases, but the cause and effect relationship was found a bit problematic. Firstly, it is difficult to say which of the events is the cause and which is the effect. Secondly, proving the relationship is difficult since there are so many factors affecting absences. Two company representatives also mentioned that the effect might be negative if the employee has a bicycling accident and has to take sick leave. Also, company H emphasized that the atmosphere in the workplace has more influence than any individual factor.

Turnover

More than half of the respondents doubted the effect on staff turnover. Although the HR representative of company B was basically also of this opinion, she pointed out that it could have an effect as one factor among others in how the company takes care of its
employees but not as an isolated factor. A couple saw that there could be an effect. The CSR representative of company D mentioned that it is personal and that perhaps the younger generation might appreciate it in terms of turnover also:

*For some people the fact that a company shows interest towards an issue like this can be a sign that the company wants to look at things with fresh eyes and not just stick with the old.*

The representative in company F, which has the set of fitness bonuses, also was of the opinion that supporting bicycle commuting can affect turnover as a part of the package:

*We have noticed that these fitness bonuses have committed our staff to the company, in that employee turnover is very low, so I would imagine that supporting bicycle commuting has the same effect... Many think that since there is no system like this in other companies they are not interested in applying elsewhere.*

The representative of company H was of the same opinion:

*I do believe that the fact that in our HR manual we have quite many things that we offer and other don’t has its own impact. It is the package on the whole that you can offer.*

The HR representative for company G made a half-serious comment that the leasing period can affect turnover since it is 24 months. She did of course admit that the employee can exit the leasing contract if the employment is discontinued. She did, however, also point out the effect a lease bicycle can have as a competitive advantage in recruitment:

*G (HR): I think nowadays this is the kind of thing that you use to compete [for good employees] also.*

**Performance**

All company representatives saw that in theory employee performance is increased if bicycle commuting increases. This was seen to happen either through better physical
condition, increased alertness due to getting fresh air and morning exercise, and also it was seen as being linked to reduced absences and thereby increased input in the workplace.

Organizational culture

The opinions on the effects on organizational culture differed quite much. A couple was of the opinion that there would not be any effect on it; a couple thought once again that it might work as one factor among others:

\[ D \text{ (CSR): I think any change has some effect on organizational culture, but } I \text{ do not think that as an isolated thing it would have a big effect... It could work as a change among other changes.} \]

\[ B \text{ (HR): Maybe I would see it as a part of a whole—what kind of a culture we have in general in supporting employee wellness. Bicycling could be a part of the whole and the whole would have some effect.} \]

Although the CSR representative of the same company had a bit different view:

\[ B \text{ (CSR): I think we have so many other ways to support exercise that adding this one thing would hardly change the employees’ view of the employer.} \]

Also in this connection, the generation factor was brought up:

\[ D \text{ (HR): Well, now that the young generation is rolling in maybe this could bring some added dynamism...But yes, these kind of small things do have... there could be some added “laid-back” atmosphere.} \]

\[ G \text{ (HR): It increases the way in which we as a company—our employees—relate to sustainable development. After all for young employees it is an important topic and therefore also to us, the employer.} \]

The CSR representative of company E pointed out the effect a bicycle-related event can have on the culture:
“Maybe for instance the competition we had showed how people got excited on different levels of the organization”

Also, the HR representative for company F mentioned the potential effect on organizational culture in form of an event. She told about having been considering organizing some bicycle-related event for the staff that would extended with some other get-together:

F (HR): *We gladly organize these events for running or other sports and then have a sauna night or a party afterwards instead of just having a party.*

There were also comments on positive pressure to start commuting by bicycle. If bicycle commuting increases, it can happen with a snowball effect:

F (HR): *There is a positive pressure when you see that your colleagues go for a run or cycle to work and you witness it day after day.*

G (HR): *I think it creates some sense of community... After all when the person next to you takes advantage of this possibility, you start to think yourself that maybe there is some potential.*

Another issue that was brought up regarding change in organizational culture was leading by example as the CSR representative of company E talked about a company executives who “parked the bike in their personal parking space in the executive parking lot” in a way in order to make a statement among the other executives. Also company H representative made indication to this factor:

H (CEO): *Perhaps from my own perspective as the CEO I do believe that it sets a good example that you try to stay fit. I’m sure it is contagious that you take part in cycling events and so forth.*

You have to admit that the effect increased bicycle commuting can have on organizational culture is kind of blurred and in the best case it makes some small contribution as a small crumb of the whole. However, the ideas presented by the interviewees indicate that it could have an effect in the form of youthfulness or in the form of sense of community incurred by an event. Also, it can create a more sporty
culture with positive pressure from cycling peers and you may be able to use it as a tool to lead by example. If you think that the proposition states that companies should perceive concrete benefits, it is an overstatement to say that they are brought in form of improved organizational culture since the findings were rather speculative in nature.

**Does it pay off?**

The answers for asking whether it pays off or not were divided into three groups. There were the ones who settled for stating—pretty much unconditionally—that they think it pays off (all type 1 companies and one type 3 company). Then there were the ones who were calling for more factual evidence about the benefits and then there was company D where both the CSR and HR representatives stated that after looking into it in their company they had come to the conclusion that it does not pay off in their case (the considered method of support was the lease bicycle).

The big question of whether investing in bicycle commuting does not seem to be answered clearly and decisively in these interviews. In the comments to the five areas through which increased bicycle commuting could generate added value to an organization, there is a lot of indication that it could bring some small benefits as one factor among others. However, the idea that its role would be very secondary seems to be present throughout the comments and it is admitted that it is partly due to the fact that not enough is known about the concrete benefits. For this reason, I would not accept the proposition as such and I would name the lack of information and knowledge as the main reason why it cannot be accepted. These comments do not per se reject the possibility that organizations could get concrete benefits but at least you can reject the idea that they would clearly and unanimously perceive concrete benefits.

5.10 **P10. The benefits of bicycle commuter programs are, however, difficult to measure.**

It was stated rather unanimously that measuring the benefits is difficult. Proving the cause and effect was perhaps seen as the most notable difficulty in measurement. In connection with the previous proposition, it was mentioned that bicycle commuting can have a beneficial effect on different areas as a part of the whole. With regard to
measuring the benefits, this idea surfaced again as there was concern on whether you could isolate the effect of only bicycle commuting among other factors:

    A (CSR): If something changes in employee well-being it is difficult to say that it is due to some isolated factor. I think tracing the benefits is difficult; it is difficult to prove cause and effect.

    B (CSR): Measuring the cause and effect of these kinds of things is very difficult even with a large sample, and often if you try to measure it, the result is that there are so many factors that it is impossible to conclude anything.

The HR representative in company B brought up the fact that even currently companies are struggling with the difficulty of measuring the benefits of employee wellness programs in general:

    B (HR): This is a big challenge because in general it can be very challenging to try to determine what the benefits of the employee wellness program are as a whole and even more so on the level of an individual part of the program... We still do it [the employee wellness program] since we know that on the whole it has an impact, but it is really difficult to try to measure the effect of an individual factor.

The CSR representative of company E had similar thoughts about her own field of work:

    E (CSR): If there was enough data to do the business case—like with any other investment in sustainable development—there would be a great market for it.

The interview answers are well in line with the proposition, so confirming it is quite safe. The discussions did bring about some ideas for carrying out the measurement. The CSR representative in company B pointed out instead of trying to measure issues like impact of fitness to performance, it might be easier to measure environmental effects like CO2 emissions. The representative of company H had a similar idea as he suggested that you could measure the kilometers commuted by bicycle and regard them as reducing kilometers driven by car. Some representatives implied that having a larger
mass of cyclists would help. For instance the CSR representative of company C suggested that with a large enough sample you could have two control groups out of which the other would commute by bicycle and then you could make it a more isolated factor for measuring different results. All in all, it is difficult to measure the benefits, but there are some methods that could be feasible to venture.

5.11 P11. Organizations support bicycle commuting as an effort to be considerate employers, but they also expect to benefit in ways beyond altruism.

The purpose of this proposition was to find out what the representatives perceived as the company motive to support bicycle commuting (in case they felt the company was supporting it) or alternatively what the motives would be if the company was supporting it. First I asked plain and simple for the motive or motives and then after the response I asked if there was some common, ultimate motive behind the ones that were stated.

Nearly all representatives mentioned employee wellness and environmentalism as the motives—only those two and in that order for the most part. The CSR representative in company C did doubt making an environmental argument about it. The representative for company H also added a third motive to be a sort of will to be modern and to be a forerunner. The HR representative for company F was the only one who mentioned in the initial response that:

I must admit that the employer has his own interest in that when the employees are in good condition there are less sick leaves, which is very good for the company.

When asking for the ultimate motive, same kinds of sentiments were visible in the responses of six representatives:

A (CSR): The better the fitness and vitality of the employees the better the input they give to the company.

B (CSR): The ultimate motive might be responsibility, or how would I crystallize it: to make profit in a responsible manner.
B (HR): Both of these [motives] in a way aim at—how would I put it—development of corporate responsibility image and thereby makes us more attractive to investors.

C (CSR): A healthier staff has the energy to work better.

D (HR): So that people would feel better and work more. It’s that simple.

F (HR): They are there too [the business benefits], it is a mutual benefit.

One representative did not think there was any further motive and two felt that the ultimate motive was responsibility in general. The majority of the respondents did mention business benefits in some form. The fact that employee wellness was in most cases the first motive mentioned and that most representatives did admit some kind of motive for business benefit make it rather justifiable to confirm the proposition; there is a sense of responsibilization related to supporting bicycle commuting.

5.12 P12. Bicycle commuting still concerns a minority of employees.

None of the companies had statistics on the amount of bicycle commuters and four representatives did not give an estimate either. One estimated that it was the same as in Finland on average. Perhaps you could think that if it was not a minority that was commuting by bicycle it would have been noticed even in the larger company. All type 1 companies had some estimate ranging from tens (out of a hundred), 20 (out of 120) and three (out of 15). Naturally if there are no statistics, it is easier to give an estimate in a smaller company like all type 1 companies.

On the basis of this sample, it seems that bicycle commuting is a thing for the minority, so the proposition seems to be confirmed. This seems to be the case also in the companies that do have direct support for it.

5.13 P13. The implementation and sustenance of bicycle commuter programs is dependent on some individual “champions”.

The basic procedure in the companies was that any individual could do an initiative for supporting bicycle commuting and the initiative would then be handled by the HR
department—with perhaps some cooperation with CSR—and then depending on the case, executive level would be taking part in decision-making. The CSR representative for company C made a clear indication that the influence of an individual is limited, rank matters, but above them there is the lack of knowledge of benefits:

_If there will be enough initiatives or then the person doing the initiative is sufficiently high ranking then the issue will be looked into for sure. But then it is required that there would be some studies on how bicycle commuting benefits the company._

The CSR representative in the pilot interview mentioned that these kinds of things usually require that someone would drive the cause and would “push it through”. The HR representative of company F made a valuable point about the adverse effect a “champion” could have:

_F (HR): I doubt that they [the active cyclists] are trying to ‘force-feed’ it to anyone. We have, for instance, this guy who comes to work from Kerava (~30km one way), but I don’t think he is trying to encourage others, because that can easily be experienced as some kind of pressuring and that is something we definitely want to avoid._

The representative of company H seemed to be an archetype of a champion but then again he is the CEO of the company:

_H (CEO): In our concern [that is Scandinavian] people had taken part on Vätternrundan many years before we Finns took part... In Finland I was the ‘motor’ because I had ridden already before. I thought it would be a great thing if we had a team from here._

There were some comments supporting the idea that a champion can improve the implementation and sustenance of support for bicycle commuting. Perhaps the proposition is not confirmed in that sense that the implementation and sustenance is not _dependent_ on a champion. A champion can have a positive effect as the driving “motor” for the cause, but there is a risk of slipping from inspiring to pressuring.
5.14  **P14. Increasing bicycle commuting strengthens an organization’s resources from many perspectives.**

Each representative approached this issue from the human resources perspective. In all cases, the initial response was that bicycle commuting can strengthen the organization through improving the wellness of the staff. It is interesting to note that even the representative for the company H, which seemed to have most committed support, reacted immediately with realism by stating that “I would not exaggerate its impact”.

On the basis of the comments, the proposition is questionable for the “many perspectives” part. For the respondents it can still first and foremost have a strengthening effect on employee wellness. The perception is that it is a possible HR benefit and there are no other resources that come to question in the same extent.

5.15  **The Future**

Many respondents indicated that in the future there might be more attention paid to bicycle commuting, but that currently it was not topical. The positive outlook may naturally be affected by the position of the respondents as CSR and HR people. It was interesting that many statements indicated some sort of higher order hierarchy related to an issue like supporting bicycle commuting: there were many statements with the idea that “we are not that far yet”—it is seen a sort of fine-tuning.

This mentality is also visible in the comment by company H representative in connection with the 8th proposition: “The way it goes is that this is the frosting on the cake”. Company H seemed to have the most serious support for bicycle commuting with racing bicycles as company bicycles, so it seems that this company has had the time, resources and interest to do the fine-tuning, and that the company still acknowledges that it really is a question of fine-tuning.
6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the study adds to our knowledge, how it changes our sense of the topic (Silverman, 2010:66); in other words, what is the role of bicycle commuting on the basis of this study. When you think about adding to knowledge, the discussion might not strike you as highly groundbreaking. However as discussed already in the introduction chapter, bicycle commuting is an under researched area in general and even more so in the organizational context. So the purpose of the thesis has been from the very beginning to do ground laying research instead of groundbreaking one; in the field of bicycle commuting, there is room for elementary research that makes some basic reflections of the role of bicycle commuting.

In this chapter I will answer the research questions. Firstly, I will discuss the role of bicycle commuting as perceived by the organizations’ CSR and HR representatives. I will also attempt to determine if there is a visible difference in the way each representative group views bicycle commuting, i.e. if CSR representatives view it differently than HR representatives. Secondly, I will discuss some of the challenges of supporting bicycle commuting that emerged in the interviews. By doing this, I will attempt to answer the research question on why support for bicycle commuting is still so scarce.

6.1 Perceived role of bicycle commuting

- Research question 1: How do organizations’ CSR and HR representatives perceive the role of bicycle commuting?

The role the CSR and HR representatives perceive bicycle commuting to have varies from nearly nonexistent to an equal measure among others. The most common mentality seems to be to consider it to have a role as one component of a whole. This is what I will call the component role. The whole on the other hand, is primarily seen to be the total employee wellness program and secondarily the policy towards environmentalism. Due to its component role, it was quite rare that bicycle commuting in particular and as an isolated issue would have been discussed at length in the case companies.
The indication to some psychological role bicycle commuting could have was an interesting finding. Regarding proposition seven (For organizations, bicycle commuting is foremost related to managing employee wellness), the type 1 companies indicated that bicycle commuting may be good for the workplace atmosphere on the whole, wellness in general and for we-spirit. These are naturally extensions of employee wellness, but nevertheless they are good examples of the fact that employee wellness is not only an issue about physical fitness.

Throughout the empirical research process from preliminary company contacts to the interview with the most committed company (company H), there were comments about bicycle commuting being a personal matter. In practice, bicycle commuting takes place between the place of residence and the place of work, and in principle on the commute there happens a transition from the free-time person to the work person. According to company G, this transition is however becoming obsolete as working time and free time get more intertwined. This indicates a trend that the employers’ actions affect the employees on their free time and on their commute increasingly.

However, the commute remains a sort of meshed gray area within work-life balance, where the employer is responsible for the employees insurance-wise, yet the employer cannot pressure on the choice of transport. The difference between encouraging and pressuring is something that remains an element of the role of bicycle commuting, and it is something that needs to be duly noted if a company desires to increase the amount of bicycle commuters.

6.2 Difference in perception: CSR and HR representatives

- Research question 1.1: How do the CSR representatives perceive the linkage between bicycle commuting and CSR?

- Research question 1.2: How do the HR representatives perceive the linkage between bicycle commuting and HR?

The interviews did not really provide evidence on the basis of which you could state that there is a difference in how CSR representatives relate to bicycle commuting
compared to how HR representatives relate to it. There was perhaps some indication that the CSR representatives reflected on bicycle commuting more from the environmental perspective, but still all the representatives regardless of department found that the linkage to employee wellness was clearer than the linkage to environmentalism.

Unfortunately, the larger companies in the sample did not have any particular bicycle commuter programs and the smaller companies that had, did not have separate CSR and HR departments. Due to this reason and the reason that bicycle commuter programs are a rather new and rare phenomenon in general, the relationship between it and the two departments remains somewhat inconclusive from the theoretical point of view.

6.3 Challenges of supporting bicycle commuting

- Research question 2: Why is explicit and serious support for bicycle commuting still so scarce?

Through the course of the interviews, I got comments on the basis of which I was able to evaluate the propositions that helped determining the role of bicycle commuting. In addition to that, I got comments that seemed to address certain topics that were found challenging about bicycle commuting. In this section, I will discuss these challenges.

6.3.1 The corporation challenge

Many of the type 3 and 2 companies, which were big companies on the Finnish scale, seemed to have a problem with their size and geographical dispersion when it came to supporting bicycle commuting. Although the purpose of this thesis was to focus on bicycle commuting in the Helsinki-region, you can easily understand that companies should not discriminate on the level of support between different locations. Instead they have to look at the whole and try to find equal ways to treat their employees independent of the location of their office.

For instance regarding **facilities in different offices**, it was pointed out that the level of services a company can provide its employees can vary depending on the office. The
CSR representative of company D pointed out the company has 60 places of business in Finland, and it:

*is trying to harmonize practices among offices so that they would not be totally local, but it is very difficult to make detailed rules because conditions can vary among offices...It means balancing between what policies are common and what can be offered locally... At times we are prisoners of our size in that we have to define policies and compromises that suit everyone.*

The above comment also addresses the challenge of **centralization vs. decentralization** in making the policies. Also the CSR representative for company B pointed out that bicycle commuting is not an agenda of any department and that there is no central way to manage it; there may be many different policies in different offices and she can only speak on behalf of the headquarters where she herself is situated. The HR representative of company D had similar concerns but she also seemed to realize the fact that the challenge was not that overwhelming:

*I’m only a local HR representative but all transactional HR issues like company cars are managed centrally in Tampere. The question would be how to organize it there and how to fit it to the current work load... Someone would have to manage the contracts with the service provider and all. But maybe it would not be that difficult after all.*

There were also some indications of a **rigid organizational culture** as the HR representative of company D was contemplating:

*I wonder if we are somehow so conservative. Sure, the average age in our company is high, or somewhat high, and there is no young generation promoting an issue like this.*

Another issue that varies from location to another yet seems to affect policies in all locations is the fact that some offices are more remote, and hence the **average distance to cycle** becomes too long.
Also, the HR representative of company F pointed out that in case of a large corporation the monitoring maybe regarded as very difficult since the amount of employees is big. The case with company F is that it provides kilometer allowance which the employee reports to his superior once a month. This is another issue the corporation needs to consider; does it want to construct a complex monitoring system to make sure nobody takes advantage of the support or will it go down the road of company F and rely on a system built on trust towards the employee that he will not give a fraudulent report.

These are examples of the issues large corporations need to consider when thinking of launching a bicycle commuter program. When defining policies, they need to consider the facilities and length of commutes in different locations; they need to figure out the administration from the perspective of making it localized or centralized; the companies need to consider their organizational culture and determine if bicycle commuting can flourish in their particular company and what the specific measures are that fit their culture; and finally they need to take a stance on how they want to relate to monitoring the use of the support.

6.3.2 The equality challenge

This challenge is closely related to the corporation challenge in that the bigger the company, the more varied the staff and the conditions. For instance, the CSR representative of company E pointed out that with 20 000 thousand employees all over Finland organizing something like a company bicycle is very difficult from the point of view of equality:

> There is an equality-challenge in that if there are people who simply cannot, for one reason or another, cycle to work then how equal is the support? How can you support it so that those who cannot cycle are not treated in an unfair manner?

Also the HR representative of company B had similar concerns:

> By nature, these are the kind of things that if we [in the headquarters] make this kind of a policy, then other companies in our group want it too, and it can mean different things... All in all, we strive to the fact that people would have equal opportunities regardless of their company and location.
The type 1 companies were all rather small and had addressed the equality issue by way of offering a couple of choices for the staff. Company F has an array of fitness bonuses where the employees surely find something that inspires them. Company G had three mutually exclusive choices regarding commuting, in that the employees can choose between (1) lease bicycle, (2) public transport subsidized by 25% by the employer and (3) car park. Furthermore, company G addressed employee wellness by offering either a negotiated deal in the local fitness center or exercise coupons. Also company H has exercise coupons for those that would rather train in some other way than commuting by bicycle.

Furthermore, company F and H had explicitly defined the policy so that they knew they could not please everyone yet they felt it was worth it to support exercise:

F (HR): *We have all these fitness bonuses and they are not totally equal to everybody, so early on we have done the policy that since we cannot in any way be 100% equal towards every employee we choose the least worst option, meaning that we provide the opportunity to people even though it is not totally equal because otherwise we cannot provide anything to anyone, which is the other option.*

H (CEO): *Equality is always an issue. But I will settle for the fact that this is something we offer everyone and people take it or then they don’t. It’s their decision.*

Firstly, the fact that you can fashion a selection of opportunities for the staff reduces the problem of inequality. Secondly, this kind of realistic mindset where you accept certain discomfort, which is inevitable in any case, projects respectable commitment to something the companies value. I cannot see any reason why these two ways to fight the inequality challenge would only work in small companies like type 1 companies. I am confident that the large corporations can learn from this mentality and apply it to their own policies.
6.3.3 The measurement challenge

An often shared challenge seemed to be that the representatives felt there was not enough evidence to show that it pays off to support bicycle commuting. The HR representative of company B put it as follows:

*The executives need everything in euros. No matter what you present them, the better you can show how much money it makes or saves and to be able to argue in monetary terms what the benefits are the easier it is to sell the idea in companies.*

Nearly all representatives felt that measuring the benefits is very difficult, and that there would need to be more research on the issue to convince decision makers in organizations. The most notable challenge is that it is difficult to isolate bicycle commuting as a factor, so proving causality is very difficult.

Although every company could not be able to measure the benefits of their particular program, it would promote the cause to have a **large scale case study** in a large company here in Finland. Like suggested by the CSR representative of company C, there should be two large control groups in the study with the other one commuting by bicycle and the other not. This kind of study would be rather difficult to implement, but once done it could provide a point of reference to the other interested companies.

Another approach to the issue is measuring the environmental benefits. Some representatives thought that it might be easier to prove the cause and effect relationship between bicycle commuting and emissions:

E (CSR): *I think it could be a good idea, from the environmental perspective which I represent, that in each company there would be more transparency in the level of emissions released during commutes. Companies would then acknowledge it and be able to make comparison with their overall level of emissions. I think they could be surprised how big of an impact there is. Then bicycling would perhaps be seen as a better thing.*
6.3.4 The practical challenge

For companies, it is important to have all the required information and tools in one neat package: they need the information on the benefits and the information on how to implement the support. The CSR representative of company C pointed out that there needs to be similar instructions as with company cars:

*You would need some ready-made practices for the support. Like the practices you have for company cars, so that it would be a natural part of the company operations, so that giving the support would be easier.*

In order to tackle this challenge, some sort of a manual might be useful. Regarding lease bicycles, Bike Planet is at the moment the only service provider in the Helsinki region and they do have the basic information on their website. However, the lease bicycle is not the only option so there would need to be a more comprehensive tool that would cover all the relevant issues including for example:

1. The currently known benefits
2. Presentation of all different support measures and their implementation
3. Legal matters
4. Payroll and taxation

6.3.5 The attitude challenge

Some representatives made comments that indicated that we need some kind of an attitude change. The CSR representative of company A mentioned that this may be a thing that is related to “the spirit of the time” in that in different times different things are seen valuable. In a way connected to this was the comment by the HR representative of company F who thought that companies usually do not adopt new things very quickly:

*I guess you need time... So that it becomes more common and there will be more experience. I guess that many companies don’t want to be the pioneers, but that they rather listen to what other companies have done and how it has worked out.*
Another approach was that the way people think needs to change towards more openness:

D (HR): What is required? A broad mind, creativity. You need to see things from a different perspective, from the perspective of different people.

The representative of company H had a very to-the-point opinion on how people in Finland see bicycling:

In Finland, many still see the bicycle as a toy, in that grandmas and children ride for amusement. You can see it in the way they have built the bicycle lanes; often when you’re going from A to B it is difficult to find a sensible route. Bicycling should gain status as a noteworthy option as a vehicle.

There is some work to do—and time that has to pass—to have a more positive and serious attitude towards bicycling and especially towards using bicycle as a functional vehicle comparable to the car. A generation change and increased knowledge brought on by research may help, but it also seems we need some marketing.

6.3.6 The low-profile challenge

There seems to be a niche for increased marketing on behalf of bicycle commuting since many representatives pointed out that one of the reasons for little support for bicycle commuting is the fact that companies have not realized the potential:

A (CSR): It is not that there would be any specific reason for not supporting it; there hardly is anything negative about it, but maybe the question is that the possibility or potential has not been discovered.

E (CSR): Perhaps employers have not realized to do this kind of an investment calculation that would focus on how much you could save on costs related to parking and leasing cars by investing in bicycle facilities. There are quite a lot of costs related to employees who commute by car, so if you could open up those costs then perhaps even small investments in bicycling would start to make sense.
G (HR): *I doubt that it has occurred to many companies that bicycle commuting could be an option. Perhaps they could consider what its role is compared to other measures that are done for the sake of employee wellness. After all, it is a less known area, but I don’t know how many employers come to think of it at all... I wish that every employer would at least look into it because I think that this is one of those opportunities where both parties win.*

The comments show that the potential of bicycle commuting needs to be put into a form that companies can appreciate. This means high profile testimonials by well-known companies and more discussion about the topic in the press.

Although the lease bicycle is not the culmination of support, it has a lot of potential for those commuters who just want to ride the bicycle and not bother at all with the maintenance. For this reason, it would be called for to have some more competition in the lease bicycle market as there is only one service provider at the moment, and it seems it has enough customers not to focus on marketing:

F (HR): *I think that at the moment there is a sort of quiet life going on, in that at some point bicycle commuting was in some way in the headlines—and I think it was during the time Bike Planet started the business—but at the moment it is very quiet, in that there is not really anyone marketing it.*

While there should be more marketing and competition for lease bicycle service providers, you can see that there are other possibilities even for those cases where the employer decides that providing the bicycle is the way the company wants to support bicycle commuting. The representative of company H pointed out that you do not need to outsource leasing the bicycles but you can do it in-house:

G (CEO): *The thing I’m skeptical about in a lease bike is that it is not that cheap. Not for the employer or the employee... I do think the lease bicycle is a bit problematic. It is not that affordable for the employee...it is not worth leasing a basic bicycle... We actually stumbled upon the fact that we can—that it makes sense for the company to buy company bikes and offer them to the employees.*
This option is what I call a company bicycle. In section 6.3.4 The practical challenge, I suggested a manual for the companies interested in launching a bicycle commuter program. A comparison of the lease bicycle and the company bicycle would be a natural section of that manual. The comparison would need to include all the differences ranging from managing the bicycle fleet, the financials and the suitability to different kinds of staff.

7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will conclude the study by firstly summarizing the findings and the discussion and then by making conclusions on the implications the study has. The implications of the study will be discussed from the perspective of managers, employees and the society at large. Finally I will present some ideas for future research.

7.1 Summary of the findings and the discussion

On the basis of this study, Finnish companies have a rather neutral attitude towards supporting bicycle commuting. It is seen as a good thing from many perspectives, but the prevailing conception is that it is the employee’s personal choice and the role of the organization is rather limited. It is very rare that companies would have made any public or internal statements or policies regarding bicycle commuting. Furthermore, any possible policies in large companies are not centralized, but there may be some local practices for it in group subsidiaries: the companies are missing “the official seal on the deal”. On the basis of the interviews, bicycle commuters have access to proper facilities in large Finnish companies including parking, locker rooms and showers; although secure bicycle parking seems to be the least well managed facility among the others.

The nature of bicycle commuting as a support activity came up often and for this reason I found that at best bicycle commuter programs have a component role: they represent one fraction of a whole with the whole being most often an employee wellness program and secondarily a company environmental program. The closer you get to the core business of a company, the smaller the role of a bicycle commuter program becomes. No matter how small the role, there were close to zero objections to the claim that bicycle commuting is a win-win arrangement. The only concerns that came up were
possible accidents that have an adverse repercussion both for the individual and the employer. However, the prevailing opinion was that there are many instances that benefit from bicycle commuting.

As is common nowadays, the case companies had high appreciation of sustainable development and they did wish for their employees to share the appreciation. The component role bicycle commuting was found to have in employee wellness seemed to diminish when talking about the higher order issue of sustainable development. The hierarchy of the concepts became visible in the perceived role of bicycle commuting. The mentality towards bicycle commuting as a conveyor of commitment to sustainable development was slightly skeptical. Even though the companies clearly appreciated sustainable development and employees that commit to it, they did not endorse the idea that commuting by bicycle exhibits commitment to sustainable development—as was mentioned “I don’t think that people think that big”.

One of the aims of this thesis was to find out whether companies perceive concrete benefits from supporting bicycle commuting. This aspiration was from the one hand averted by the fact that it turned out that large Finnish companies do not have direct support for bicycle commuting and from the other hand by the fact that those that did have direct support did not have follow-up for the impacts. Only one company had made follow-up and concluded that its fitness bonuses, which comprise a handful of measures in addition to kilometer allowance for bicycle commuters, in general generated four euros for each invested euro as reduced sick leaves. However, this figure was only a cross-sectional estimate by the managers and therefore not a scientific finding. The hard evidence for the impact of bicycle commuting in Finnish companies thus remains unproved.

Related to the matter of potential benefit to the employer was the question of what the motives of the employer are to support bicycle commuting or what the motives might be if the employer started to support it. The themes of employee wellness and environmentalism where the natural motives mentioned by the representatives, but nearly all of them admitted straight away or after some probing that the company has or would have business benefits on the background. In this respect, supporting bicycle commuting is an issue where the idea of responsibilization seems to apply. This on the
other hand gives rise to discussion on the relationship between the employer and the employee and on how sincerely the companies care for their staff. The employer’s stance towards the staff as having intrinsic versus instrumental value is an ethical discussion that an issue like bicycle commuting also touches upon.

On the basis of the study, there are six main challenges for supporting bicycle commuting. The first one is that even though large companies would like to do it, they seem to struggle with the tools of implementation: they feel that they are “prisoners of their size”. The second challenge is that companies struggle with making the support equal in the eyes of those employees who do not wish to commute by bicycle for one reason or another. The third challenge is the tendency of executives wanting everything in euro-terms, whereas the measurement of the benefit of a bicycle commuter program is very difficult. The fourth challenge is the companies’ preference to have ready-made solutions and that they would need clear practical guidelines on how to go about supporting bicycle commuting in their particular organization. The fifth challenge is that the attitude towards bicycling remains slightly belittling and impaired by narrow-mindedness. The sixth and final challenge is that bicycle commuting has a somewhat low profile that does not make justice for its potential.

In Finland, bicycle commuting still concerns only a minority and the Finnish companies seem not to have realized the potential of supporting bicycle commuting to the fullest. It is not uncommon for companies to regard bicycle commuting as a personal matter, which it undoubtedly is at the very core. However, I cannot help but feel that it is partly an excuse for not making the effort to look into the matter and see what opportunities it might hold. On the other hand, many of the case companies of this study indicated that they are not so far in their development so as to having gotten around to an issue like supporting bicycle commuting. By nature, it is a question of fine-tuning and it is “the frosting on the cake”, but fortunately many companies seemed to have interest in keeping the issue a possibility in that they might bring it up on their agenda in the future.

At the moment in Finland, the discussion about the shortage of employees has been focused on our short careers. One of the main points made by each political party before the recent parliamentary elections in April was that we need to lengthen the careers not
by having mechanical increase in the retirement age but by lengthening the work ability of the work force so that they remain in good shape until the currently set retirement age. The problem was seen to be the fact that for health reasons the employees are too often and in too big numbers retiring for a disability pension and for this reason our national economy suffers with the current demographics. All parties called for preventive measures that increase the work ability of the work force with investments in employee wellness on the top of the list. By large, bicycle commuting has a clear and easy-to-utilize preventive impact on health problems, which corresponds to the idea of viewing bicycle commuting as low-hanging fruit. Supporting bicycle commuting seems like a custom-made solution for the labor shortage Finland is facing—among other measures as a component of the whole of course.

7.2 Implications for managers

One of the issues repeated in many interviews was the perception that companies have overlooked the potential of supporting bicycle commuting, in that they have not realized to think about an issue like bicycle commuting as a value-adding function. This is perhaps the most important implication for managers in Finnish companies; it might benefit them to take some time and look into the multifaceted possibilities of bicycle commuting.

The main reasons for this problem of overlooking the potential are perhaps the two last challenges identified in the previous chapter: the attitude challenge and the low-profile challenge. All development projects in organizations require that the management and the staff have an agreeable attitude towards the project and have the relevant information and understanding. Supporting bicycle commuting is no exception; in order for organizations to be interested in it, it needs to be popular. The required attitude change and increased marketing are society-wide issues that need time and effort from many parties. For their part, companies can participate by bestowing some additional attention to bicycle commuting.

The first step is to start discussing. In companies that have separate HR and CSR managers, the most natural way is for them to start discussing with each other. I dare to say that it is rather easy to see the fundamental features of bicycle commuting that touch
upon both managers, and that compared to many other organizational issues, striking a discussion about bicycle commuting is not very formidable; it is a topic which you can approach by chatting over lunch.

The second step for the managers is to consider the current facilities: is bicycle parking safe and convenient? Are the locker rooms and showers agreeable? With regard to this step, it would be justifiable to map out the employees’ opinions and desires. Often HR and CSR managers have authority over a certain budget so depending on the organization they could independently cater to issues starting from proper cleaning and maintenance of facilities to providing company towels and shower products and so forth. This kind of low-level financial investment in the existing facilities does not require much of the company but sends a strong signal to the staff. Before engaging in investing in new facilities, it makes sense to increase the utilization rate of the existing ones.

The third step is communication. The simpler part of communication is making sure that the information about the facilities is easily available to the employees. Bulletin boards, monthly meetings and the intranet etc. provide ready-made media where information can be conveyed. Paying attention to communicating about the facilities is also important in the induction of new employees, during which discussing the method of commuting is quite standard. When discussing the possibilities the employee has, the person inducting should mention the facilities the company provides for bicycle commuting as an equal topic alongside the parking lot for cars and the location of the bus stop. For those new employees interested in bicycle commuting, the facilities should be shown as a part of the tour around the house. The more complicated part of the communication is the inspirational communication: verbal encouragement to commute by bicycle. Giving information about the facilities implies that the issue is important to the company, but the question of why it is important is addressed with inspirational communication; its purpose is to convince the staff that it has value to commute by bicycle. Successful inspirational communication is a form of art and the way in which it should be done depends highly on the organization. One advice for doing this is to use top management commitment. Top managers can express their commitment on the level of speech, but also by commuting by bicycle themselves and thereby leading by
example—a method mentioned in the interviews. In this connection it is, however, important to bear in mind the risk of engaging in pressuring the staff on a matter that is by nature completely voluntary.

The fourth step is to consider larger-scale investments. The rationale here is that with the right attitude and will, companies can increase bicycle commuting comparably much without large-scale investments if they commit to the first three steps. However, sometimes it is only the high-level financial commitment that works: it concretizes the support. The actual content of this step is once again very dependent on the case. Allowing to shower and change on working time, building a locked and sheltered bicycle storage, paying kilometer allowance or providing a bicycle are all options whose suitability depends on many factors such as office location, building infrastructure and staff preferences.

7.3 Implications for employees

The employees are in a key position when it comes to increasing bicycle commuting. As was often times mentioned in the study, commuting by bicycle is a personal choice. Bicycle commuting can only increase if the individuals want to do it; be it a physical or mental motive they need to feel that they benefit from commuting by bicycle. There is a variety of factors outside the organizational context affecting the will to commute by bicycle, but in this study the focus has obviously been on the organizational context.

The previous section dealt with the implications to managers, which represented how the organization can reach out to the employees. However because of the nature of bicycle commuting as a personal matter, organizations can only do so much; interaction between the individual and the organization is needed. On the basis of the interviews, it seems that the employees can have an important impact as initiative makers and silent encouragers.

It is quite natural that companies do not push an issue that is a personal matter, so there needs to be demand from the employees. Regarding the decision-making process, all the companies of this study reported that anyone could do an initiative for a support measure for bicycle commuting. People seem to be increasingly health conscious and
environmentally conscious so starting to commute by bicycle would be a very natural act. The benefits of bicycle commuting are rather compelling, so finding out about it and trying it would very likely bring about new bicycle commuters. Developing the desire to commute by bicycle, on the other hand, would aid the employees to see the opportunities for improvement on the organizations part, and thereby they could make sound initiatives.

In a couple of interviews, the respondents brought up the idea that employees can inspire their peers to commute by bicycle with a sort of positive pressure. The idea was that if an employee registers that his peer is commuting by bicycle over a long period of time, he might be inspired to start doing it too. This is how employees can function as silent encouragers for their peers. Outside the peer context, managers can also act as silent encouragers but then it extends to leading by example.

7.4 Implications for policy makers

In the interviews, the planning of bicycle lanes received some criticism as a deterrent for commuting by bicycle, so city planning departments should naturally continue working towards a more bicycle friendly city infrastructure. Safe and convenient routing for bicycle lanes is likely to increase the amount of cyclists. More cyclists mean fewer cars and fewer severe bicycle accidents. This is quite noteworthy since the accidents represent perhaps the most notable disadvantage of bicycle commuting.

In general, politicians should give added consideration to bicycle commuting as a preventive measure to lengthen work careers and as a means to decrease public health care costs. Introducing road tolls is one viable option to try to direct people on the saddle instead of the car seat, but it goes again via stick and not carrot. Perhaps the government could somehow support companies to support bicycle commuting.

Taxation is one of the most efficient tools in this respect. For instance, the government could grant some additional deduction in corporate taxation for companies that engage in such responsible investment as supporting bicycle commuting. Also regarding the employees’ personal taxation, the government should look into making the lease bicycle tax-free income. Alternatively, the government could allow citizens to deduct the
purchase of a bicycle in their personal taxation for instance every four years. Decreasing the value added tax of bicycles is another way to go. However, the first thing to do would be that the government would finance a large scale study on the benefits of bicycle commuting. Then on the basis of the results, it should do investment calculation on what kind of incentives to introduce.

7.5 Future research

In the case companies, bicycle commuting is primarily seen as a part of employee wellness and secondarily as a part of environmentalism. However, there were some indications of more psychological dimensions like workplace atmosphere and we-spirit. One future aspect to studying bicycle commuting in an organizational context would be to approach from some sort of a psychological or identity angle.

This study was not able to make a clear distinction between the perceptions of CSR and HR representatives about the linkage of bicycle commuting to their respective fields. Due to the nature of bicycle commuting having a linkage to both departments, it would be interesting to have a clearer study on how each department views bicycle commuting and how the perceptions differ.

For reasons of focusing the study, this thesis was delimited to the perspective of the management. Individual behavior does have an important role in an issue like bicycle commuting. The behavior and perspective of the employees is an interesting and relevant yet also an under-researched topic, so having a separate study for that perspective in Finnish companies would complement our knowledge of the topic.

It seems that the result of the Dutch study that found that bicycle commuters have one sick day less per year (TNO, 2009) has not had a large impact here in Finland. Meanwhile, the hard evidence is exactly what the companies are craving. What is needed above all is a large scale case study in a Finnish company. There are challenges related to measurement, but they are not insuperable. With proper measurement technique it is very likely that the positive effect of bicycle commuting in an organizational context can be proved. Furthermore, this study would help with the
companies anxiety of not wanting to be the pioneers but rather see and hear what other companies have done and how they have benefitted.
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Interview guide

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<td></td>
<td>- Organizations value employees who commute by bicycle.</td>
<td>7. How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting shows the employee’s commitment to sustainable development?</td>
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<td>8. What do you think it means to your company that bicycle commuting takes place outside the workplace and working time?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employee Wellness Programs</strong></td>
<td>- For organizations, bicycle commuter programs are foremost related to managing employee wellness</td>
<td>9. Do you see your bicycle commuter program as a part of some larger entity in your organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- For organizations, bicycle commuter programs are important elements in managing employee wellness.</td>
<td>10. In what ways does your organization promote the well-being of its employees?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>11. How would you characterize the role of bicycle commuting among your other employee wellness measures?</td>
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<td>12. How would you characterize the cooperation of employee wellness and CSR in your company?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. Do the physical benefits of commuting by bicycle help in some particular tasks of your employees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value Chain Perspective</strong></td>
<td>- Organizations perceive concrete benefits from deploying bicycle</td>
<td>14. Have you done follow-up on the benefits of bicycle commuting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **commuter programs.** | **15. IF YES, what are your experiences on:**  
- The benefits of bicycle commuter programs are, however, difficult to measure.  
**OR**  
16. IF NO, how would you imagine increasing bicycle commuting to affect the following areas:  
- Absenteeism  
- Expenses  
- Turnover  
- Performance  
- Changes in organizational culture  
- Corporate image?  
17. Do you think it pays off for an organization to make financial investment in supporting bicycle commuting?  
18. What would you say about organizing follow-up for the potential benefits and tracing the benefits to increased bicycling?  
19. What would you say are the main motives in your organization for supporting bicycle commuting? *Ultimate motive*  
20. How long have the different measures of support been used?  
21. How popular bicycle commuting is in your company?  
22. How does the decision-making work regarding a program like a bicycle commuter program? Who makes the initiative and who the final decision?  
23. IF THERE IS SUPPORT: Where did the idea of supporting bicycle commuting in your company come from?  
24. IF THERE IS NO SUPPORT: Has someone in your company raised the issue of bicycle commuting and wished for support measures?  
25. Are there some individuals in your company that are known for commuting by bicycle? Are they trying to promote bicycling?  
26. How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting incentives strengthen the organization’s resources in many different ways?  
27. What is problematic with supporting bicycle commuting if

| **“Hidden agendas”** |  
- Organizations support bicycle commuting as an effort to be considerate employers, but they also expect to benefit in ways beyond altruism.  
19. What would you say are the main motives in your organization for supporting bicycle commuting? *Ultimate motive*  
20. How long have the different measures of support been used?  
21. How popular bicycle commuting is in your company?  
22. How does the decision-making work regarding a program like a bicycle commuter program? Who makes the initiative and who the final decision?  
23. IF THERE IS SUPPORT: Where did the idea of supporting bicycle commuting in your company come from?  
24. IF THERE IS NO SUPPORT: Has someone in your company raised the issue of bicycle commuting and wished for support measures?  
25. Are there some individuals in your company that are known for commuting by bicycle? Are they trying to promote bicycling?  
26. How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting incentives strengthen the organization’s resources in many different ways?  
27. What is problematic with supporting bicycle commuting if

| **Institutionalization** |  
- Bicycle commuting still concerns a minority of employees.  
- The implementation and sustenance of bicycle commuter programs is dependent on some individual “champions”.  
20. How long have the different measures of support been used?  
21. How popular bicycle commuting is in your company?  
22. How does the decision-making work regarding a program like a bicycle commuter program? Who makes the initiative and who the final decision?  
23. IF THERE IS SUPPORT: Where did the idea of supporting bicycle commuting in your company come from?  
24. IF THERE IS NO SUPPORT: Has someone in your company raised the issue of bicycle commuting and wished for support measures?  
25. Are there some individuals in your company that are known for commuting by bicycle? Are they trying to promote bicycling?  
26. How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting incentives strengthen the organization’s resources in many different ways?  
27. What is problematic with supporting bicycle commuting if

| **Organizational Framework** |  
- Increasing bicycle commuting strengthens an organization’s resources from many perspectives.  
26. How would you comment on the claim that bicycle commuting incentives strengthen the organization’s resources in many different ways?  
27. What is problematic with supporting bicycle commuting if

| **Ending** |  
27. What is problematic with supporting bicycle commuting if
<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>What is the future of supporting bicycle commuting in your organization?</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>What is required that Finnish companies would relate to bicycle commuting in a more serious manner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>What is your message to companies that do not have support measures for bicycle commuting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. Guide for Preliminary Company Contacts

1st Round—Mapping out the extant support measures

To the switch:
- I’m doing research for my master’s thesis and I would like to speak to a person who is responsible for employee wellness in your company.

To the person responsible for employee wellness:
1. I’m doing research for my master’s thesis on employee wellness and more precisely on bicycle commuting, and now I’m looking for interviewees for my study.
2. Are you the person who can best speak about bicycle commuting in your company?
3. How does your company support bicycle commuting?
   a. Do you have direct support measures like lease bicycles or support for maintaining one’s own bicycle?
   b. Do you have facilities like showers, locker rooms and locked or otherwise safe storage areas for employees’ bicycles?
   c. Have you done recent investments in these facilities in order to have more bicycle commuters?

After the 1st round, division of companies into:
A) those that have some direct measures in the form of a locked storage area for bicycles
B) those that do not really have any measures other than showers and locker rooms

2nd Round—Contacting the CSR person

To the switch:
- I’m doing research for my master’s thesis on CSR and I would like to speak to a person in charge of CSR in your company.

To the person responsible for CSR:
1. I’m doing research for my master’s thesis on CSR and more precisely on bicycle commuting, and now I’m looking for interviewees for my study.
2. Are you the person who can best speak about CSR and its connection to bicycle commuting in your company?
3. The purpose of my study is to understand the perceptions the people responsible for CSR have about bicycle commuting.
4. I would really appreciate if you took part and gave me an interview. It takes about 45 minutes and we can do it in person or over the phone. I can send you the questions beforehand.
### Appendix 3. Table of case companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Interview method</th>
<th>Size in Finland</th>
<th>HQ location</th>
<th>Support for bicycle commuting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot (CSR)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Thousands of employees Many offices around Finland</td>
<td>Outside city center</td>
<td>In the headquarters: Bicycle parking Showers Lockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (CSR)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Thousands of employees Many offices around Finland</td>
<td>City center</td>
<td>In the headquarters: Bicycle parking Showers Lockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (CSR and HR)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Thousands of employees Many offices around Finland</td>
<td>City center</td>
<td>In the headquarters: Bicycle parking Showers Lockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (CSR)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Thousands of employees Many offices around Finland</td>
<td>Outside city center</td>
<td>In the headquarters: Locked bicycle parking Showers Lockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (CSR and HR)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Thousands of employees Many offices around Finland</td>
<td>City center</td>
<td>In the headquarters: Locked bicycle parking Showers Lockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (CSR)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Thousands of employees Many offices around Finland</td>
<td>Outside city center</td>
<td>In the headquarters: Recent investment in sheltered bicycle parking Company bicycle helmets Sporadic campaigns Discounts for equipment Showers Lockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (HR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>~100 employees Many offices around Finland.</td>
<td>Outside city center</td>
<td>In all offices: Kilometer allowance Bicycle parking Showers Lockers Also: An array of fitness bonuses for different sports, zero absences, smoking cessation etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G (HR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>120 employees. One office in Helsinki city center</td>
<td>City center</td>
<td>Lease bicycles Showers Lockers Locked parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H (CEO)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>15 employees One office outside the city</td>
<td>Outside city center</td>
<td>Company bicycles Showers Lockers Locked parking Dryer for clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4. Compilation of interview responses

P1. Companies have an increasingly positive attitude towards bicycle commuting.

Pilot (CSR): Neutral attitude. It is not a very central issue.

A (CSR): There is no strong public support for it. The support could be related to supplying the employee with the bike... Another thing could be having some promotion campaign, but neither has been done... There is no organization-level interest towards it.

B (CSR): Difficult to answer on a group-level, but perhaps you could say that [the attitude is] neutral. Supporting bicycle commuting has not really been topical and we have not had any notable discussions about it. It is more like a personal choice for every employee to decide on how to commute.

B (HR): It is difficult to comment on that [attitude] since I do not really know if we support it... I have not encountered that we would support it, at least not on a group-level, maybe some of our subsidiaries... Basically I do not see why we could not support it. We have not done any policies against it or in favor of it. In general, we have a positive attitude towards supporting all kind of exercise, but I do not know that we would have taken a stance towards bicycle commuting separately.

C (CSR): It is a great thing from the perspective of the environment and the well-being of the individual, but as a company we do not have any specific attitude towards it. Every employee has the freedom to choose how they commute and doing it by bicycle is one good option.

D (CSR): We do discuss it regularly. It is on the agenda of the employee wellness committee and we discuss how it functions in our company... If eventually the situation presents itself that supporting it is in line with other definition of policy, then I do not see that it would be impossible to commit to it. But at the moment it works so that we encourage exercise in general and make it possible to commute by bicycle; we have showers and locker rooms, but what is missing is a kind of “official seal on the deal”... We regard it normal that we provide it [locked bicycle parking] and then locker rooms and showers.

D (HR): Basically we don’t support bicycling per se, but the issue is often discussed in the occupational safety and health committee. We have been harmonizing our HR-processes throughout Finland and on this forum we have concluded that we won’t do it [introduce lease...}
bicycles] at least yet... So far we haven’t considered it to be a sensible investment for our company. We have a rather small number of active bicycle commuters and they might get excited about this momentarily, but then the interest dies down like with many other things. We have feared that the same pattern takes place as with culture coupons, exercise coupons and exercise events etc. where it is the same small group that is active, and eventually it dies down... We do relate to it positively... If people want to exercise in the mornings and in the evenings it is a good thing.

E (CSR): In practical matters we really try to support it, in that we try to provide facilities that do not make it impossible, but I think we are constrained by the fact that we are geographically so dispersed and have so many employees. So for instance a company bicycle is not really a feasible issue. Actually quite many people already have a bicycle, so I have not really understood the value of the company bicycle. We also have had campaigns... We had a month-long cycling campaign... that required internet access and registration. You input your daily kilometers and you were able to see who had ridden the most and then there were prizes... In our perks, we have negotiated a deal with one of the biggest Finnish bicycle retailers—one that covers nearly all of Finland since we have to consider equality—that our staff gets discount from bicycles and equipment.

F (HR): We have a positive attitude towards it. We encourage and support bicycle commuting.

G (HR): We are in that sense very active that we arrange employee wellness days where we choose certain topics as themes. Last year, well before summer, we arranged with Bike Planet an event where they hauled bicycles to our office in a truck, and we [the HR] reminded our employees of this perk and urged them to go and see the event. We have instructions [for the company bike] in intranet, but nevertheless every year when the season begins we remind our employees that we have this and that this is a good thing: go and get yours. We’re doing the same in May this year but Bike Planet no longer has a truck which has been a liked feature among the employees, because it is a different thing to go to the shop in Itäkeskus or so than to have the bikes delivered to the office. But anyway this year our intention is also to get Bike Planet here in the cafeteria or lobby where they can do some marketing and remind people to take advantage of this. Another thing is that when a new employee starts we go through these issues and give the opportunity to this right from the start. I think nowadays this is the kind of thing that you use to compete [for good employees] also.

H (CEO): The company bicycle sort of started with our company team taking part in Vätternrundan (a long-distance bicycle race) in Sweden, and actually the ones in our company that have a company bike have a racing bicycle, which is kind of special. I don’t think other companies have
this. We had a rule that if you took part in Vätternrundan 2009 the limit [for the bicycle] was 1500 euros and if not then it was 1000 euros... Only the ones who participated took a bicycle... In a way it is quite special, in that it has developed so that we support workplace fitness and it has developed pretty much around Vätternrundan. We also participate in many other cycling events, but it has not really increased every day exercise as much as I hoped... I must say though that most of us are sales people and need car during the day.

**P2. Organizations have high appreciation of sustainable development.**

Pilot (CSR): The company has a task force to deal with sustainable development. Investor ANALYSTS have ranked the company high in terms of sustainable development. The company has a high environmental impact due to its industry, so the MAIN focus of sustainable development is there, and for instance the social perspective is secondary. ALTHOUGH THE PERSPECTIVE IS NEVERTHELESS PRESENT—MAINLY IN TERMS OF CONSIDERING THE SCANDINAVIAN LEGISLATION IN A PROPER WAY.

A (CSR): *We have a very serious stance towards sustainable development. Our environmental vision is that our company is the safest and most environmentally friendly choice for our customers and the society, which reflects the fact that in our sector, we want to be a company that takes into account the issues of responsibility and environmental concerns.*

B (CSR): *We talk about social responsibility and it is a strategic dimension to us, so we do invest in it very much. It is present in our strategy, values, leadership style and everyday operations.*

B (HR): *It is a very important issue to us from many different perspectives. Responsibility is a part of our strategy and values.*

C (CSR): *It is quite natural to relate to it [sustainable development] positively. In our business operations we constantly think of how we could better support sustainable development. What we find especially important is energy conservation, optimizing the use of energy and economical energy production, so energy efficiency and sustainable development are issues in which we pay a lot of attention to in our business.*

D (CSR): *It is a part of the company mission [shows an illustration on the computer on how sustainable development is a central theme in the company].*
D (HR): Indeed, it [sustainable development] is the word of the day. We relate to it very seriously and we work hard for it.

E (CSR): A couple of years ago we added in our strategy... that our operations deal with handling important information and material flows in the society, and the operations have to be based on sustainable development. So it is written down in our strategy, which is naturally a rather good sign in that it is then visible in our strategic communication, and it is a natural extension of what we do.

F (HR): For our part, we try to maintain the earth available also for the future generations. Also, we take a strong role in, for instance, wind power projects and participate gladly. In addition to Finland, our company has taken part in building wind power in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden. Furthermore, a portion of our company cars are hybrids and so forth, so we do strive to influence and support sustainable development.

G (HR): We have a positive attitude [towards sustainable development], and I think that this company bicycle is one these things, but the other one is the commuter coupon. Our office is in the city center and a large portion of the employees walk, cycle or use public transport to commute. Also, we highlight the fact that we cannot—and at the moment don’t need to—increase the amount of parking spaces [for cars] and thereby we want to direct our employees towards using other means of transport. Asking about other issues than commuting that are relevant to sustainable development: We highlight employee wellness very much nowadays... We provide our employees opportunities for exercise: in addition to exercise coupons, we offer a membership to a gym, we offer the opportunity to play badminton and floor ball etc.

H (CEO): We do consider it to be an important issue. Many of our products that we provide the industry with are related to saving raw material like water or energy... so it is a part of our strategy. We think that environmental challenges and requirements increase, and it is not only about ‘going green’, but the price of water and energy are constantly rising, so in the future there will be more demand for the kind of technology that saves water and energy.

**P3. Organizations regard bicycle commuting as an extension of their CSR.**

Pilot (CSR): If there was support for bicycle commuting, it could be seen as one small perspective to sustainable development. In a way, it means reducing CO2 emissions so it is acting against climate change on a small scale, but from the perspective of the emissions from the company production it is very small. If the company tried to promote bicycle commuting, there would be a high risk of being accused of greenwash.
A (CSR): In general, there is a correlation between the two, in that bicycling reduces CO2 emissions, but in our company the relationship is not very highlighted since bicycle commuting is not supported very strongly.

B (CSR): In our company, bicycle commuting has not been discussed as a part of responsibility. We have discussed and determined policies on company cars and business travel, but we have not taken a stance on bicycle commuting as a part of responsibility.

B (HR): I cannot really say anything about this. As far as I know, in our company there is no [connection].

C (CSR): Bicycle commuting is not focal when we think about sustainable development.

D (CSR): We have not done any definition of policy regarding this matter... In a way it is connected to it, but at the moment it is mostly an HR issue, in other words an employee wellness issue... In reality it is not that notable of a part of it, but I want to keep it as a part nevertheless.

D (HR): It is a small crumb as a part of the whole. I can’t see a deeper wisdom in it, but it is surely a part of it... There has been a lot of discussion regarding the fact that we give more support to car commuters than users of public transport, so maybe this could be a part of that in that we would start to support users of public transport and these lifestyle exercisers in a way that was comparable to the support we give to car commuters. We have parking spaces—expensive parking spaces—and then company cars etc.

E (CSR): Sustainable development includes environmental responsibility which in turn includes some sort of role for how our employees commute, and one way to decrease this emission-creating operation is that people would use less-polluting ways to commute. In this scenario, bicycle commuting becomes an important option... In our environmental strategy... we focus on how... we can firstly reduce the environmental impact of our own operations and secondly that of our customers... The environmental impact of our employees’ commuting is big, but that of our actual business operations is bigger and is hence more central. But from the perspective of the individual... and the environmental aspect of his work, the things he can do is to recycle his waste correctly and come to work in some sensible way... and to turn off the lights when he goes home, but he cannot do much more. In this context, the role of commuting by bicycle is elevated, and we see that we have to try to offer opportunities to make informed choices. And bicycle commuting is
not the only choice here; there are all these car pool and car sharing things and public transportation that are considered when we for instance build new buildings etc.

F (HR): Supporting bicycle commuting is one part [of sustainable development] and it was partly the reason when we were thinking about it. Naturally, we want to support people to choose a bike over a car for the commute.

G (HR): We have a positive attitude [towards sustainable development], and I think that this company bicycle is one these things.

H (CEO): I see that bicycle commuting strengthens our brand, environmentally friendly brand. That is one of the intentions. Because of this, I would have hoped that the participation had been wider. Now it has focused on racing, which is kind of funny.

P4. Organizations regard bicycle commuting as a win-win arrangement

Pilot (CSR): The employee benefits since his condition improves and thereby also the employer benefits.

A (CSR): The group of instances that benefit from bicycle commuting is large. The individual benefits from increased fitness, the society from reduced pollution and increased fitness of its people, and also the employer benefits in for of reduced sick leaves and heightened vitality of the employee.

B (CSR): I do not think that it is bad for anyone… It has a favorable effect on well-being and on the other hand if you exchange car to a bicycle for the commute it has a reducing effect on CO2 emissions… Increasing fitness of the employee does benefit the employer as well; a healthy employee is a better, a more productive employee. At least for us as a responsible company it could not be a negative thing that we could reduce environmental impacts.

B (HR): Foremost it is the individual that benefits as a way to maintain well-being, but in the long term, if we think that the staff takes care of their well-being then of course the company benefits also in that we have less sick leaves and employees who can cope better. Also when it comes to the issue of carbon footprint, the society benefits from the perspective of pollution reduction, and in the long run [the society], actually benefits from more well-being citizens.

C (CSR): The individual benefits from bicycle commuting from the perspective of well-being brought by lifestyle exercise. Since it increases health and especially if you can prove that it
reduces absences then the employer benefits from bicycle commuting. Naturally, the environment and the society benefit in that there is less pollution and congestion in the traffic.

D (CSR): I think the foremost beneficiaries are the individuals... through wellness. From the perspective of emissions, it is in reality not necessarily a very notable factor in our company in the big picture...

D (HR): I guess it is the individuals who benefit primarily. Your condition improves and your mind is alert, but then there are risks like accidents etc. that are from the employer’s perspective a negative thing. If something goes wrong, the damages can be double compared to an accident in a car... I would say that if the employee is well the employer also benefits in part.

E (CSR): I think both the employee and the employer benefit... The employee benefits from the perspective of increased fitness and the employer from the perspective that it is an investment in employee wellness and health. And of course if we could calculate how much emissions are released in our commutes, we could say that it is an absolute benefit for the environment.

F (HR): In our case it is clearly both the employee and the employer [who benefit]. And well, if you think on a wider scale the entire earth [laughs], but when thinking from the perspective of the employer it is both the employer and the employee.

G (HR): I think that all parties involved... Firstly, the employee benefits... but also the employer in a different way. In my opinion it’s really one of those “win-win” things.

H (CEO): A lot of people benefit. Naturally the individual himself promotes his health and alertness... There are less traffic jams and pollution. I can’t see any disadvantages... The company benefits in that our employees are in good condition; they work better and we have less sick leaves.

P5. Organizations value employees who adhere to sustainable development.

Pilot (CSR): Instead of settling for hoping, the company requires that the employees act according to laws and regulations. The company does hope that the employees understand the issues taught about energy efficiency.

A (CSR): It is encouraged that everyone respects sustainability in their daily work by optimizing the environmental effects of their tasks by for instance paying attention to issues like energy consumption.
B (CSR): Since responsibility is a part of our business, leadership and values, we do of course hope that it [responsibility] would be visible in everyone’s work in some way. Naturally it varies how much and in what way it is present… As a part of our HR study, we do in fact measure it also… Basically, we map out how well the staff thinks our company performs in—if I remember the forming correctly—environmental and responsibility issues.

B (HR): We have these guidebooks for responsible behavior, and we talk about it quite much and make it visible in different ways and concrete in practice; we hope that all of our employees would relate to it as we do as a company.

C (CSR): We apply a set of responsible principles that include for instance that responsibility is a part of our operations on all levels, so every employee has to take responsibility for sustainable development—socially, economically and from the perspective of the natural environment as well.

D (CSR): We do deal with these issues regularly and we have for instance the WWF Green Office certificate… I think that if we try to encourage our staff, for instance, to recycle or commute by walking or cycling then they perhaps learn a way of thinking that makes them do more informed decisions in other contexts as well.

D (HR): Naturally, we hope they are positive towards it, in that they participate and support common values.

E (CSR): It says in our environmental strategy that in order for it to function our staff has to internalize these issues, and in this bicycle commuting can have a symbolic meaning… Concrete measures like keeping issues related to bicycle commuting topical in our company strengthen the message that the employer is thinking about these issues and that these are things anyone can do and they are not that complex.

F (HR): Naturally, we hope that they relate positively [to sustainable development] … There is nothing more special to it, but like for instance with this procedure [of supporting bicycle commuting] we try to engage the employees.

G (HR): I think the average age among our staff is something like 31 or 32… so let’s say that I think we have such a young staff that sustainable development is a key word. I think that nowadays it is a very important thing to young people.
H (CEO): I was just going through our HR manual, so let’s see how we comment on this issue in it (takes out the manual). We state that ‘the largest environmental impacts are related to travelling and material and energy consumption in the office... When choosing the mode of transport, we consider environmentalism. In choosing company cars, environmentalism is an important criterion’ so we have a CO2 limit for cars, ‘we encourage employees to commute by walking, cycling or by public transport’... so this is what we state, and it is the practice also; our actions support this.

P6. Organizations value employees who commute by bicycle.

Pilot (CSR): The company does not relate differently to employees that commute by bicycle than to employees that do not. Locally, the way in which bicycle commuters are related to may vary but the respondent cannot have knowledge of that.

A (CSR): Bicycle commuting is not a factor on the basis of which valuation of employees would vary, but still there could be more encouragement towards the cyclists... like participating in the costs or organizing a campaign.

B (CSR): Perhaps in the level of the business units it is known who commute by bicycle but it does not affect anything. It is everyone’s own business how they commute, as long as they do commute.

C (CSR): There is no difference in it. We cannot differentiate between our employees on the basis of how they commute; equality is also a key issue here. Some of the tasks of our employees require commuting by car, so we cannot valuate people on the basis of commuting.

E (CSR): We cannot discriminate on the basis of how people commute... I do not think you could do that... What we can do is to encourage like we did with a competition we had where people were able to get a prize on the basis the of amount of days commuted by bicycle. One thing is that... you can get kilometer allowance if you for instance go meet a client by your own car... and according to the law you can give this allowance for trips done on other vehicles... and I think bicycle is one of them, so you can get kilometer allowances for bicycle.

My interview questions addressing this issue were perhaps not formulated in the best possible way. At first, I was asking in a quite vague manner how companies relate to bicycle commuters compared to non-bicycle commuters. Naturally, companies would not discriminate on the basis of an issue like this—or on the basis of any other issue for that matter. What I was aiming for with this question was to try to get some comments on whether bicycle commuters are somehow seen more sustainable development –oriented than non-bicycle commuters. As the interviews proceeded, I
ventured different ways to ask about this and finally I was asking the respondents to comment on the claim that bicycling to work shows commitment to sustainable development. The comments below are triggered by this modified way of questioning.

B (HR): *In principle yes it does... Some people can have this ideology whereas some people couple it with wellness, in that they want to engage in lifestyle exercise. There are sort of two sides to this.*

D (CSR): *It depends on the motive the employee has for commuting by bicycle. It may be that he is an athlete and that it is a part of a way of life, or then he wants to demonstrate that he does not want to use a car... You can question that who actually does it because they want to act in favor of the environment. It may well be that some people care squat about the environment and they just cycle for the sake of achievement.*

D (HR): *I cannot really see the connection. I don’t think that people think that big... Perhaps the younger generation; some of them think a bit greener and more ecologically, but I can’t really say, I doubt it.*

F (HR): *I’m sure that this is the case for many and it is the motive for bicycling, but I do think that for many the greater motive is the personal fitness and the benefit they can gain from that.*

G (HR): *No because I think you can show that commitment in different ways... I think it is one way you can show the commitment, but you can do it many different ways.*

H (CEO): *I think it shows responsibility.*

**P7. For organizations, bicycle commuting is foremost related to managing employee wellness**

(Later on in the interview, the respondents were asked about cooperation between CSR and HR, and the responses thereto are presented here after the response to the main questions to this proposition.)

Pilot (CSR): *It would be a part of employee wellness. Asking about cooperation: There is not much cooperation between the two.*

A (CSR): *If there WERE, I am using a conditional here, some support measures for bicycle commuting it would be a part of employee wellness. It is a question of lifestyle exercise, and we do support our employee’s efforts to do physical exercise on their free time and take care of their health, so supporting bicycle commuting would be a part of that... And on the other hand... bicycle commuting can be seen as a part of sustainable development from the environmental aspect...*
kind of an issue is mostly a decision of HR, but on the other hand if there was some sort of a campaign for energy efficiency and bicycle commuting would be handled as on factor then it could be an issue of the environmental department… There are these different kinds of “tubes” in organizations and sometimes the issues to be handled should flow differently from the way the “tubes” are structured, but usually the discussion between the “tubes” do take place and then solutions are found. Asking about cooperation: I am working with environmental management in the entity of CSR, which also includes… human resource issues, so you cannot really talk about cooperation: they are more like synonyms.

B (CSR): It could be a part of employee wellness, management of employee wellness, or then on the other hand it could be approached from the environmental aspect and be coupled with business travel and use of company cars and be mentioned alongside them… I think it is more an issue of the HR department, but it is worth noting here again that the business unit level HR issues are not managed by the group HR department… So the actual objectives, support measures and follow-ups are managed by the business unit HR. Asking about cooperation: In our departments, the division of tasks is quite clear. In CSR, we manage the employee wellness reporting, public reporting, and that employee wellness is represented in our wider responsibility program. However, everyday leadership, planning of leadership models and follow-up are tasks of HR like all the other issues that are tightly linked to the staff… These are closely linked areas and we are in constant cooperation and we let each other know what is happening on our own turfs. Our HR director is a member of the CSR steering group, which is the highest decision-making instance when it comes to questions of CSR.

B (HR): I guess it would be primarily a part of our employee wellness program. Asking about cooperation: It is very good… We have cooperated and I have been keeping them [CSR department] posted since this systematic employee wellness is very new to our company, but so far during these first steps we have found some connections.

C (CSR): You can see it [bicycle commuting] to be connected to employee wellness, in that you could think about supporting it since there is support for other kind of exercise that takes place outside working time as well. Through employee wellness, you can link it to our social responsibility. Asking about cooperation: Well this [CSR] is kind of no man’s land and there are many people who are responsible for it and there are many perspectives to it… But especially from the social aspect, our objective is the physical and mental well-being of the staff. Employee wellness is an essential part of our CSR.
D (CSR): We do not have any support for it per se, but foremost it is a part of employee wellness and other exercise; it has not been categorized separately. But in a way you can approach it from two different directions in our company... If you look at the different emissions we have, all of these actions that, for instance, reduce the use of cars reduce our company’s emissions. You can look at this from that perspective and not only from the perspective of employee wellness; it is a two-sided issue... We do think about these things also amongst us sustainable development people. As an issue it is comparable to recycling, paper consumption, and for instance the fact that do we use porcelain or paper cups or biodegradable paper cups, or that we do encourage public transport or carpooling—it is a part of the discussion, but we are not yet there that there would actually be a project for it. Time will tell from which side it will eventually emerge. Asking about cooperation: In HR, they deal with social responsibility and we cooperate with them... Economic responsibility resides in the financial department and then we [in sustainable development] have a team that is looking at the total entity.

D (HR): It would be connected to these employee wellness projects and then to the Green Office certificate we have—I guess it supports this way of thinking. Asking about cooperation: There is not that much concrete [cooperation].

E (CSR): I think it [supporting bicycle commuting] has begun in the area of employee wellness and then the environmental aspect came into play when we started to examine more closely the environmental impact of our operations. So it is connected to environmental issues, but it is still more linked with employee wellness and HR... It has quite much of practical linkages with areas like purchasing—giving the kilometer allowance—...and then in real estate management where we allocate space for parking lots, bicycle parking, showers and locker rooms. Asking about cooperation: One part of CSR is social responsibility, which we divide into societal responsibility and staff responsibility, which includes employee wellness. There are interesting interfaces there, and bicycle commuting is one good example of how environmental and employee wellness issues can be connected; you can create messages that support both.

F (HR): We use it to support employee wellness or actually the workplace atmosphere on the whole. All of these fitness bonuses have a great impact on it and on the commitment of the individuals. Asking about cooperation: I would say that we are only taking the first steps with combining these two. Of course these fitness bonuses have CSR influences, but perhaps you could say that we haven’t really realized it enough ourselves and haven’t yet taken advantage of it.
G (HR): I think in our case it is related to employee wellness. We have our company health care and so on, and the lease bicycle is side by side with them. Perhaps we no longer talk about employee wellness but wellness in general and as a whole... The younger the people the more their working time and free time are intertwined. Your activities on your free time affect, in some way at least, your wellness in the office and vice versa. They walk hand in hand nowadays. Asking about cooperation: Perhaps we don’t really have any concrete [cooperation].

H (CEO): [The order] is employee wellness, environment and then this we-spirit... Even though it is only three or four of us out of 15 that participate in Vätternrundan, all the preparations, chit chat and all that that revolves around it does promote a certain we-spirit. But perhaps it is a bit too extreme, in that many people cannot do it. It is after all 300 kilometers.

P8. For organizations, bicycle commuting is an important element in managing employee wellness.

A (CSR): Supporting bicycle commuting could be an equal measure in promoting employee wellness along with the measures we have now... but there is not really any strong or public support for it. It is not that there would be any specific reason for not supporting it; there hardly is anything negative about it, but maybe the question is that the possibility or potential has not been discovered.

B (CSR): We have recruited an employee wellness manager who, for the first time, will look at employee wellness as a whole on the group level, and we are developing a leadership model for employee wellness, which would apply to all countries and business units... I must admit that I cannot see it [bicycle commuting] as being very high on the agenda among them [other employee wellness measures]. After all, it takes place outside working time and it makes sense that the employer focuses on what happens on working time, that it makes sure that the workplace is safe, healthy and that the indoor air, ergonomics, relations between people and stress levels are in order... But we do have these rehabilitation courses that stem from the fact that we cannot separate a person into a working person and a free-time person... So in the setting of the objectives it is taken that the person does promote his health on his free-time too, so this [bicycle commuting] could be a sort of borderline case in that it does not really take place on working time but not really on free-time either... Seeing to that the facilities are acceptable to work in is the employer’s duty and all this supporting of exercise comes after that.

B (HR): We have a rather extensive employee wellness program. One part of it is called ‘supporting exercise’ whose share of the entire program is—how would I say—one fifth. This
[supporting bicycle commuting] would be an even smaller subsection of that share, so rather small in relation to the whole.

C (CSR): It is not a central measure [among other wellness measures] ... I would say that it [supporting bicycle commuting] is a rather small matter, in that it is not written down anywhere. Naturally, we do encourage people to do it, but we find it to be a personal matter.

D (CSR): I guess the idea is that even if we would start to support bicycle commuting more, it would not increase a lot. We have done some enquiries before, but there has not really been enough interest for it... This goes to that area [of employee wellness] that I would not go too deep in it, so that I will not tell stuff that is flat out wrong. I have my view, but I am not active part of it [working with employee wellness].

D (HR): At the moment [the role is] almost zero, but there could be potential though. It is a quite good idea to start supporting it, and people have asked me for it many times, but I can’t just start buying them [bicycles]...

E (CSR): It is there among the others. There are a lot of measures that are related to well-being at work and lengthening the careers.

F (HR): The fitness bonuses in general have an important role [among the employee wellness measures] and bicycle commuting is a part of them. By itself, it is perhaps not that big of a deal, but the fitness bonus system on the whole is very important to us... I must admit that we invest a lot in physical well-being and in individuals’ good physical condition, which then again according to studies affects the psychological side a lot, however that is not all there is to employee wellness. There are issues like competence management, in that we train people and improve their professional ability. We develop the management in general and all that.

G (HR): I see that it is on the same level [with the other measures] ... It has as big a role as these exercise coupons and others we provide to support our employees exercise. Supporting bicycle commuting is as important. Sometimes we don’t have time to go to the gym or somewhere else, so in this way you can get the exercise already during the commute.

H (CEO): The most important thing is to have a sane workplace where things are well taken care of in a sensible manner; It cannot be replaced by something like this [supporting bicycle commuting] ... The way it goes is that this is the frosting on the cake... I would not exaggerate its role, but it is a good thing if you are able to provide it.
P9. Organizations perceive concrete benefits from deploying bicycle commuter programs.

Pilot (CSR): For companies, it pays off to engage in supporting bicycle commuting if you can prove that it improves physical condition and if you can prove that it reduces sick leaves.

A (CSR):
- You could say that they are reduced when fitness is increased.
- Correlation with staff turnover is unlikely
- Positive correlation with performance
- Supporting bicycle commuting would fit our organizational culture... but I do not know if it would change anything in our culture... Our culture already has a high appreciation of environmental values... but maybe in some company where the appreciation is not that high increased support for bicycle commuting could set off a change towards a more environmentally friendly culture.
- Positive correlation with image
- In my opinion, it would pay off [to support bicycle commuting]

B (CSR):
- Impossible to comment on the effect [on sick leaves] before there was actually a project on it where it would be measured. In theory, there should be a negative correlation, but proving the causality is very difficult. There are so many things that affect the number of sick leaves.
- The same thing with staff turnover, or actually it is even more difficult. There are so many things affecting it that I do not really think [that bicycle commuting has an effect on staff turnover]. The ease of commuting with your vehicle of choice may of course be a big issue for some people, but it is totally dependent on the individual.
- In theory it should improve performance, but I do not know how efficient a form of exercise it is and how you could show that the change is in fact due to transferring from another form of exercise to bicycling.
- It is difficult to imagine any radical changes in organizational culture. I think we have so many other ways to support exercise that adding this one thing would hardly change the employees’ view of the employer.
It might have a positive effect on employer image, however. At least I do not think it would do any harm. I do not know if it would have a big effect, but perhaps it would be an OK addition to employer image.

It is impossible to say [if it pays off to invest in supporting bicycle commuting] before there would have been a concrete project where it was measured.

B (HR):

There may be an impact in the long run. From the top of my head—this may be a bit prejudiced—I’m thinking that the ones who commute by bicycle are the ones that are quite fit to begin with and they are actively interested in exercising. The question is, how to encourage those who are not that active exercisers to start riding bicycles.

I don’t think [that there is an impact on employee turnover] ... There might be an impact on employer image if bicycle commuting was supported ... I think that [in recruitment] it might have some role as one factor among others in how we take care of our employees’ well-being in general and what kind of policies we have overall. I don’t know how much this [supporting bicycle commuting] would affect as a single, isolated factor.

In principal there could be [effect on employee performance]. Don’t people say that fit employees cope better?

There might be some small effects [on organizational culture]. Maybe I would see it as a part of a whole—what kind of a culture we have in general in supporting employee wellness. Bicycling could be a part of the whole and the whole would have some effect.

[The effects on company image] would depend on how we managed to communicate the fact that we support bicycling and that our staff is enthusiastic about cycling. Naturally, if these things can be managed well, there may be an effect.

No one has actually presented me with any calculations on what the—in a way—efficiency coefficient is; what kind of changes and results can be attained by this? However, in general I think that it pays off to invest in supporting employee exercise... So if your study will show that we can benefit financially then it is worth investing in (laughter).

C (CSR):
If you ask my personal opinion then I believe that it [increasing bicycle commuting] decreases absences.

I do not think it [increasing bicycle commuting] has an effect on it [staff turnover].

It probably improves employee performance.

I do not believe that there would be changes in organizational culture or atmosphere. It is so that the people who exercise do it anyway be it bicycle commuting or something else and their impact on the organizational culture exists already, so I do not think there would be any effects.

Probably it would have a positive effect on company image.

If we talk about large enough masses of people, the financial benefits of supporting bicycle commuting surely outweigh the costs. Then you would have to do it somehow in an organized manner like Pekkaniska did, so that the advantages would be enough. After all, you have to take into account that you cannot force everyone to do it, and you cannot expect it from everyone.

**D (CSR):**

In theory, it is a logical inference. This is not our company’s statement, but personally I do think it effects.

I think there is some connection. It depends on the person, although in general younger generations do have different values. For some people the fact that a company shows interest towards an issue like this can be a sign that the company wants to look at things with fresh eyes and not just stick with the old.

Compared with sitting in a car in the traffic jam... you get fresh air and exercise—it starts you up for the day at the office, if the distance is not something like 30 km. Then you could be a bit tired instead.

I think any change has some effect on organizational culture, but I do not think that as an isolated thing it would have a big effect... It could work as a change among other changes.

Perhaps it could affect [the company image] from the recruitment point of view as one small factor among others. But I do not think it could have a negative effect.

This is what we have done, we have mapped out if it pays off to start supporting it, and so far it has seemed that it does not.

**D (HR):**
Accidents... Accidents is the first thing that comes to my mind; a lot of sick leaves and costs. That’s my initial reaction, but still why not, if your condition and health improve it is a good thing. Just as anything that supports your physics. But the first thing that comes to mind is the risk of accidents.

No [effect on employee turnover]

It is the same thing as with the absences: there are the accidents. But still if your physics improve, your performance improves. I think there is... I also commuted by bicycle when I was younger and still had the energy; the mind was more alert and I felt energetic, but also I was sweating.

Well, now that the young generation is rolling in maybe this could bring some added dynamism, why not. I don’t think it’s impossible. But it is difficult to pinpoint something that would show here. This is a very conservative community. But yes, these kind of small things do have... there could be some added “laid-back” atmosphere. Our CEO changed not more than a couple of months ago, so now we have a very “true human” in the house, in that he is very humane and values perhaps this kind of stuff in different way than the previous one.

Maybe there could be some added youthfulness and trendiness [in the image] ... If you think about our other stakeholders like our customers and so, then I don’t think there would be anything. I could see it more as a part of our employer image.

When thinking about this building, [investing in bicycle commuting] would mean transferring income to a small group. I think it would place the others in an unequal position in that people would say ‘What do we get? We aren’t into bicycling. Something to us as well.’ I would not do it in this building just like that.

E (CSR):

I guess there is some theory stating that fitter and more active people have less sick leaves, but is it then a cause or an effect, are the people that are already healthy the ones that start bicycling? I guess there are some studies on how this goes... On the other hand, I have had to take sick leave because I have been involved in bicycle accidents, so personally I have had a negative effect.

I will not bother to imagine anything about it [effect on turnover]. I have no information about it.

If it is about what I imagine, maybe you can imagine that there is a positive effect [on performance], but unfortunately I have not read any studies on it so I do not
know and we do not have any studies done in-house... I believe that there is some positive effect, but it is hardly an all-out solution

- I think that maybe for instance the competition we had showed how people got excited on different levels of the organization; our financial director cycled to work a distance of 30 kilometers because of his competitive nature. So of course if people on the executive level start to commute by bicycle it has an effect. I know that some executives have come to work by bicycle and parked the bike in their personal parking space in the executive parking lot, so that the other executives can see. Then you will have comments like “So you came by bicycle, didn’t you?” It means leading by example and it is an easily observable way to concretize the commitment, so in that way it can affect organizational culture and atmosphere.
- It can easily affect it [company image].
- I would like to believe that this was the case, but I am afraid that the challenge is that there are not enough figures to show that it pays off.

F (HR):

The company has done follow-up on sick leaves.

- It is based on the decrease in sick leaves. It estimates how much it would cost if we had as much sick leaves as usually in this industry and therefore would have to have considerably more employees.
  - The estimate by company executives: Every invested euro generates four euros as increased work ability and satisfaction.
- We have noticed that these fitness bonuses have committed our staff to the company, in that employee turnover is very low, so I would imagine that supporting bicycle commuting has the same effect... Many think that since there is no system like this in other companies they are not interested in applying elsewhere.
- If you go ahead and pedal to work in the morning in the fresh air, I would imagine that the day goes a lot better.
- I’ve been planning some event for the ‘Cycle to work day’ in May... Like in last autumn we took part in the Midnight Run and had a sauna evening later on, so maybe you could do some similar event around bicycling for the whole company. We gladly organize these events for running or other sports and then have a sauna night or a party afterwards instead of just having a party... there is a positive pressure
when you see that your colleagues go for a run or cycle to work and you witness it day after day.

- It definitely has [a positive effect on company image]. I would say that if we took the same amount we use for the fitness bonuses in a year and spent it on a television advertisement campaign it would not have nearly the same effect.
- According to our experience [it is worth it]. I’m talking about the other fitness bonuses we have since we don’t have that much experience from bicycle commuting yet.

G (HR):

No consistent follow-up on impacts.

- I cannot really give you a straight answer, in that in our company I have not seen a direct impact, however we have invested a lot in well-being last year and this year too. I can imagine that those two are linked, and if a company starts to think what they can do to their absence rates then this can be one option.
- Yes, the leasing period can do it [laughter]. If you think that the leasing period is 24 months then if you decide to take the company bike you commit. Of course it does not mean that you are nailed to the floor; you can always get out. But anyway it is a perk that is not as popular as it could be, and I think it is a perk worth bringing forth.
- If I think about myself, I think there is [an impact on performance]... We have a lot of people who also do other work out in the morning and then hit the showers and get to work. I guess it is a comparable thing. But I think there is an effect. Personally, I go for a jog with my dog in the morning, and it must have some effect on my performance. I’m a bit more awake once I get to work.
- I think it creates some sense of community... After all when the person next to you takes advantage of this possibility, you start to think yourself that maybe there is some potential... Furthermore, it increases the way in which we as a company—our employees—relate to sustainable development. After all for young employees it is an important topic and therefore also to us, the employer.
- [For the company image] it does very good [laughter]. I do believe that it benefits already from us—the staff—acknowledging it [that there are company bikes], and it does tell a lot.
It is worth it. The benefits are bigger [than the costs]... [Company bike] concretizes the support.

H (CEO):

No consistent follow-up on impacts.

A sufficient exercise in general for sure has an impact... The atmosphere in the workplace has a bigger impact on absences than some individual factor.

I do believe that the fact that in our HR manual we have quite many things that we offer and other don’t has its own impact. It is the package on the whole that you can offer.

I’m sure there is [positive impact on performance].

Perhaps it is not on a large enough scale to say that it really has an impact [on organizational culture]. But perhaps from my own perspective as the CEO I do believe that it sets a good example that you try to stay fit. I’m sure it is contagious that you take part in cycling events and so forth.

There is clearly [a positive impact on company image], and we have tried to take advantage of it. We have company jerseys in company colors, so that if you take part in some race you wear a company shirt.

It is worth it [to invest in supporting bicycle commuting].

P10. The benefits of bicycle commuter programs are, however, difficult to measure.

A (CSR): The thing with this is—like often in business—that eventually you get a figure below the line, but you cannot really distinguish what exactly made the figure good or bad, for instance if something changes in employee well-being it is difficult to say that it is due to some isolated factor. I think tracing the benefits is difficult; it is difficult to prove cause and effect.

B (CSR): Measuring the cause and effect of these kinds of things is very difficult even with a large sample, and often if you try to measure it, the result is that there are so many factors that it is impossible to conclude anything. You cannot really measure the effect of increased fitness on working performance... Maybe in environmental issues it would be easier, in that you could map out the CO2 emissions of commuting and then introduce a support program for bicycle commuting, and then see how many changed from car to bicycle. For that the measurability is a bit better. Of course there are some complications like considering how many quit bicycle commuting at some
point etc. but of course it would tell us something if we had even one figure on the grams of decreased CO2 emissions.

B (HR): This is a big challenge because in general it can be very challenging to try to determine what the benefits of the employee wellness program are as a whole and even more so on the level of an individual part of the program. I think the same applies to this bicycle commuting; determining what is a result of the bicycling and not some other factor is very difficult... We still do it [the employee wellness program] since we know that on the whole it has an impact, but it is really difficult to try to measure the effect of an individual factor.

C (CSR): Perhaps you could do it by having a couple of control groups out of which the other would commute by bicycle and the other not. The sample should be rather large and then you could monitor the benefits and you could trace it back to bicycling in particular and not to some other factor.

D (CSR): It is quite difficult... since I would say that everything affects everything else.

D (HR): It would be quite difficult to do concretely; how would you do it in practice? Would you monitor the development of the employees’ health and absences or... Well perhaps you could find some cause and effect relationship in the long run, but it would nevertheless be quite difficult.

E (CSR): If there was enough data to do the business case—like with any other investment in sustainable development—there would be a great market for it... There are many ways you could try to measure it, one of them being measuring sick leaves. On the other hand, you could measure it as reputation or so, and that could be visible even to customers or then it could be manifested as better supply of employees if they find the company better since it supports bicycling. Maybe you could do business cases like these... I think it could be a good idea, from the environmental perspective which I represent, that in each company there would be more transparency in the level of emissions released during commutes. Companies would then acknowledge it and be able to make comparison with their overall level of emissions. I think they could be surprised how big of an impact there is. Then bicycling would perhaps been seen as a good thing. Another thing related to costs of commutes is that parking spaces are just given out, and the employees do not have to pay anything for them, but the employer has to suffer the cost. Perhaps employers have not realized to do this kind of an investment calculation that would focus on how much you could save on costs related to parking and leasing cars by investing in bicycle facilities. There are quite a lot of costs related to employees who commute by car, so if you could open up those costs then perhaps even
small investments in bicycling would start to make sense... These are quite company-bound facts... but I think that you could do it through emission calculations; if emission calculations are taken seriously and you think about issues that are within the jurisdiction of the company then commutes become relevant and there come the cars and their costs. In the end of the day, the amount of euros play a big part.

F (HR): We have not developed any kind of measurement system. You could say that regarding the fitness bonuses the measurement is not that systematic in other respects than sick leaves, where they clearly have an impact, but we don’t, for instance, arrange any yearly fitness testing. It is of course possible that someday we will do that... With regard to the fitness bonuses, we do emphasize the fact that it is a personal choice to participate and the way in which you participate and what you want to achieve with it.

G (HR): It would be good if you could [trace the benefits to cycling]... I guess you could trace them in a concrete manner if there was a larger mass. The proportion of cyclists is still so small that you cannot really make direct conclusions.

H (CEO): In a small company like this—compared to the precise measuring of big companies—it [the measurement of benefits] is more implicit... I don’t really think you can do it. You cannot separate the role of cycling in it. But I have thought about it sometimes that you could count the kilometers you commute and see how much you reduce kilometers driven by car. If you think that there were 10 % less cars in the mornings, it would look totally different... And it would be totally possible to get the 10 % out if you thought a bit differently. I think it doesn’t make any sense if you have a job where you spend the entire day and then you drive there and back by car when you could take the public transportation.

P11. Organizations support bicycle commuting as an effort to be considerate employers, but they also expect to benefit in ways beyond altruism.

(After initial responses the interviewee’s were asked if there was any “ultimate” motive behind the motives listed.)

A (CSR): I think the motives would be to support employee well-being and then to maintain our environmentally friendly image. **Ultimate motive:** Employee well-being is important. Employees cost a lot of money and sick leaves are expensive; human resources are a large cost in a company. The better the fitness and vitality of the employees the better the input they give to the company...
Image-wise in the society we are known... as an environmentally friendly option... so this [supporting bicycle commuting] would be a part of that.

B (CSR): It would be the perspectives of employee wellness, employer image and decreasing the environmental impact of commutes. Ultimate motive: The ultimate motive might be responsibility, or how would I crystallize it: to make profit in a responsible manner... Naturally we strive for business benefits, but responsibly.

B (HR): If we did support it, it would be because environmental responsibility and development of personal fitness. Ultimate motive: Both of these in a way aim at—how would I put it—development of corporate responsibility image and thereby makes us more attractive to investors... And of course for potential employees.

C (CSR): Probably it would come from employee wellness so that we would support it like the other forms of exercise that take place outside working time, because I do not think that in our company the number of participants, at least here in Finland, could be so high that we could make an environmental argument about it. Ultimate motive: A healthier staff has the energy to work better.

D (CSR): I see that it is employee wellness but also the emission reduction. Ultimate motive: Responsibility in general.

D (HR): Increasing well-being of course... And of course boosting green values and ecological thinking, which is a current topic in our company and our values. Ultimate motive: So that people would feel better and work more. It’s that simple.

E (CSR): There is the employee wellness aspect and then the other is the fact that if we more closely start to calculate and think about what we could do about the environmental issues then commutes will be the second issue on the agenda after dealing with our vehicles and real estate, so it is quite high up there on the list. Ultimate motive: General will towards sustainable development.

F (HR): From one hand, we want to support and encourage our employees to exercise and take care of themselves, but I must admit that the employer has his own interest in that when the employees are in good condition there are less sick leaves, which is very good for the company. Furthermore, you can think that the employees have more energy at work when they are not totally out of shape... Also, here we want to emphasize the fact that we want to support our employees to retire in good health. It is a long-term objective towards which we want to encourage. Ultimate motive: They are there too [the business benefits], it is a mutual benefit.
G (HR): Employee wellness is one. Of course like for many companies and individuals today, there is the sustainable development. That is the second. We have our office in the city center, and we gladly direct our employees to use other means of transport than car. **Ultimate motive:** I believe that we want to focus on the well-being of our staff and on the values that we know our staff appreciates. I don’t know if there is any other red thread behind there.

H (CEO): Employee wellness and then company image from the environmental point of view, but also from the point of view of responsibility and the idea that it is a modern way and the way of forerunners. **Ultimate motive:** Social responsibility.

**P12. Bicycle commuting still concerns a minority of employees.**

Pilot (CSR): There is no information about the number of cyclists and most likely there has never been any study about in the company.

A (CSR): There are no statistics about it, so I do not really know how popular it is… I cannot really see the bicycle park from here, but I guess there are not many bicycles there… but I do not think very many of our employees live here in the center of Helsinki where our office is.

B (CSR): I have no idea [about how popular bicycle commuting is]… There are no statistics... The only thing we monitor is the use of company cars… I do not think anyone in our unit is currently actively commuting by bicycle. [If company B had more support, the popularity of bicycle commuting] could increase. It depends on what the support would be. Perhaps providing bicycle parking and lockers is not enough to mobilize large masses, but perhaps a company bicycle could encourage some people. It is difficult to say.

B (HR): I cannot say [how popular it is] on a group level. Earlier I used to work outside Ring III in one of our subsidiaries and there we had some of these active cyclists. But on a group level I cannot give an estimate or here in the city either. You could imagine that there would be more cyclists here since getting around by car is more challenging—at least finding a parking space.

C (CSR): There are no statistics here in Finland. It is very dependent on the country also, in that you could probably say that zero people commute by bicycle in Russia whereas in Denmark the proportion of cyclists may be very high.

D (CSR): I heard that there are about 5-6 active bicycle commuters in this building where we have about 140 employees.
D (HR): I would say that we have a handful [of bicycle commuters]... I think I’ve seen about five or six.

E (CSR): I do not know how many commute. I assume it is the same as in Finland on average.

F (HR): There are tens of people who commute by bicycle here where we have about a hundred employees.

G (HR): There are about 1-5 company bike contracts made each year... In our company there are 120 employees, perhaps there are about 20 [bicycle commuters with company bikes]... I guess in addition to that there are those who commute by their own bicycle.

H (CEO): I would say that it is about three [that commute by bicycle out of 15]. I’m a bit disappointed. I was expecting a bit more. But it is pretty much the same than what happened with exercise coupons that only the active cyclists take a company bike.

P13. The implementation and sustenance of bicycle commuter programs is dependent on some individual “champions”.

Pilot (CSR): These things require that someone starts driving it forward: someone has to “push it through”.

A (CSR): These kinds of issues are usually brought forth by individuals, and then people in different levels of decision-making give thumbs up and the development of the program starts. I don’t know of any individuals who would actively commute by bicycle, especially now that January and February have been so cold.

B (CSR): Anyone could do the initiative... but the decision would probably be made by HR in cooperation with CSR and probably the real estate unit that would actually have to manage the facilities.

B (HR): There are ideas pouring in our department on many different kinds of things we, as the employer, should support, but unfortunately we cannot go along with every proposal. Many of the ideas well from individual interests, but some of them are feasible, desired by many and acceptable.

C (CSR): The initiative would have to be done to our HR department by any person who feels that this is an important issue. If there will be enough initiatives or then the person doing the initiative is sufficiently high ranking then the issue will be looked into for sure. But then it is required that there
would be some studies on how bicycle commuting benefits the company; how it improves employee wellness... There is no individual here [that would be known to commute by bicycle]. There is no person that would have come to mind when we were thinking about this question.

D (CSR): Individual people can do the initiatives and then we see if it is feasible... I do not think that you have to have a certain number of initiatives. Of course if the mentality was that something would have to happen immediately, I do not know how big of a “demonstration” there would have to be... I think the leading lawyer in our company commutes by bicycle, but I guess he is fine with the support as it is, in that I think he feels that he gladly commutes on his own bike without kilometer allowances or so.

D (HR): [The influence of a single employee] is quite small. [The title and position] unfortunately matter. If the CEO told me to do it, what else could I do than say “Let's get some bicycles!” This is the way it goes in an organization like this... Of course you can make an initiative and we have this occupational safety and health committee of six people who deal with these kinds of issues. We discuss and reflect on the advantages and disadvantages... I would perhaps be the one doing the final decision. It depends on the issue. There are issues that I have to discuss further with my superior... I would not know that they [the group of cyclists] had [tried to promote cycling].

E (CSR): I think people know the ones who cycle actively. And then of course the executives that cycle draw more attention... I guess they try to [encourage others] by leading by example. And if there is discussion about it in the intranet, for instance, then they participate. I have also asked these people for statements for negotiations with the real estate unit when I have been lobbying for some improvements.

F (HR): I doubt that they [the active cyclists] are trying to ‘force-feed’ it to anyone. We have, for instance, this guy who comes to work from Kerava (~30km one way), but I don’t think he is trying to encourage others, because that can easily be experienced as some kind of pressuring and that is something we definitely want to avoid... after all, there is a positive pressure when you see that your colleagues go for a run or cycle to work and you witness it day after day, week after week and month after month you slowly start to think ‘maybe I could do it too’.

G (HR): I cannot really say [where the idea for company bike came from]. I think it had a lot to do with the fact that we have a lot of young employees and a low average age that I think it is related to the values of sustainable development. I think it started from there.
H (CEO): In our concern [that is Scandinavian] people had taken part on Vätternrundan many years before we Finns took part... In Finland I was the ‘motor’ because I had ridden already before. I thought it would be a great thing if we had a team from here.

P14. Increasing bicycle commuting strengthens an organization’s resources.

Pilot (CSR): Viable statement: health leads to well-being and the better the condition the more innovative and energetic people are. It is a preventive measure from the perspective of work ability.

A (CSR): One resource is the staff—one of the most important resources—and bicycling develops and improves the well-being of the staff so you could say that it does strengthen.

B (CSR): In theory from the employee wellness perspective [it strengthens]. Getting people to exercise more and more diversely can hardly be a bad thing.

B (HR): Basically, our staff is one of our most valuable resources and it [commuting by bicycle] might strengthen it to some extent.

C (CSR): If you could prove that it decreases absences then it surely does strengthen the resources. But here I have no facts, I do not know if you can prove it. Personally I think that it is the case.

D (CSR): It has an impact on the individual and every individual has an impact on the organization; if the people are healthier their performance is better and therefore everything affects everything else...

D (HR): It strengthens the well-being and physique of our people so it strengthens our working... I cannot really provide any deeper wisdom for that.

E (CSR): It can well be true.

F (HR): I do think that when the physical condition of employees increases, it is a good thing from many perspectives.

G (HR): I see it from that perspective in general that employee wellness strengthens resources; I’m a sort of HR-auntie in that sense that I see it from that light. I cannot give any concrete examples, but as an issue it does strengthen.

H (CEO): I would not exaggerate its impact. In general the fact that people are physically fit supports the success of a company and the way we are doing.
The future

Pilot (CSR): “At least we will discuss it after this interview.” “One of these days I will march to the HR department and raise the issue up for discussion”

A (CSR): *I think it is an issue that will be taken into consideration in the future, and maybe we will see what we could do to activate it in a realistic manner... I think it is also an issue of some kind of a spirit of the time, in that the spirit of the time in a society can evolve so that there is a sort of enlightenment and people realize that this is an important and good thing.* After finishing: *I think this [discussion] may have left some marks in my memory so that it can be that I will think about these things a bit differently.*

B (CSR): *It is not on our agenda right now, but of course it does not mean that it could not be there ever. It can well appear there one day.*

B (HR): *I cannot really give a straight answer to this, but probably the future depends on how the world will develop and how big of a role environmental issues will gain. At the moment they are planning road tolls here in the city and all that, so I could imagine that even that could highlight supporting bicycle commuting... There has been a lot of research on the well-being of Finns and the findings have indicated that young generations are in a very bad shape. Usually you think that the older people are in a bad shape, but in reality in Finland the situation today seems to be that the younger you are the worse your condition is. From that perspective you could think that this kind of measures could help. You could make a sort of “Fit Finland” project.*

C (CSR): *I do not think that in the near future we will in any way actively work with any support measures, at least on a group-level—maybe in some country where the conditions within the country are more unified. Or then in some specific area you could start promoting it, but I do not see that on group-level there would be possibilities for active support... I can only see the option that we develop support that is comparable to support we give to other free-time exercise. Certainly we will not start giving bicycle commuters benefits that non-commuters could not get... Personally I hope that it would be an increasing trend.*

D (CSR): *The world is changing in a fast pace, but if we imagined that the change would be constant, then we would over and over again return to this issue and see at what point it rises on the agenda so that it becomes justifiable to support more... If the change is constant, then I think that the importance of this issue increases... We have an energy-efficiency program where we bit by
bit try to map out all of our operations to better see our carbon footprint, and in this way this issue will rise on the agenda. After we have tackled the bigger issues we will proceed to fine-tuning.

D (HR): It is not totally out of the question even though it would be challenging to launch [a bicycle commuter program]. It is possible at some point but not now... We would need to have more people around it so that it would be just transfer of income for the few. [We would need to see] that it inspired and got people to participate... [One thing that could help is] employee turnover. But like I said, we are headed in the right direction. [Another thing might be] if we realized that other companies are doing it. I guess projects like this get under way when things become trendy.

E (CSR): I think that during the last three years, bicycle commuting has increased in my office and in the Helsinki metropolitan area in general, so I think this is the trend in our company in the future as well. I think people have gone in to this kind of “mode”. Employees want to do it more and more and we try to support it, but I think it has developed so that we are trying to respond to the demand by for instance providing facilities.

F (HR): We are in the very beginning, but I think there is a future and that we will support bicycle commuting in the future also. Let’s see how this first year goes and whether our current system is good or if there is some way to improve it. However, we have never dropped any of these fitness bonuses, so I think this one will stick around as well.

G (HR): In the spring we once again start selling and marketing it. We will try to wake our employees—’how about it?’

H (CEO): I hope that it stays around and develops. Perhaps we’ll find some new ways to support it... Do we keep as a perk or do we fashion some financing system? Something like this.
## Appendix 5. Summary of evaluation of the propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Companies have an increasingly positive attitude towards bicycle commuting.</td>
<td>Partly confirmed: The attitude varies from neutral to positive depending on the case.</td>
<td>It is a great thing from the perspective of the environment and the wellbeing of the individual, but as a company we do not have any specific attitude towards it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Organizations have high appreciation of sustainable development.</td>
<td>Confirmed: The proposition is valid at least on the face value level.</td>
<td>It is a very important issue to us from many different perspectives. Responsibility is a part of our strategy and values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Organizations regard bicycle commuting as an extension of their CSR.</td>
<td>Partly confirmed: Valid only for companies with direct support.</td>
<td>1. As far as I know, in our company there is no [connection].</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Supporting bicycle commuting is one part of sustainable development[and it was partly the reason when we were thinking about it]</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Organizations regard bicycle commuting as a win-win arrangement.</td>
<td>Confirmed: All found multiple beneficiaries.</td>
<td>I think that all parties involved... Firstly, the employee benefits... but also the employer in a different way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organizations value employees who adhere to sustainable development.</td>
<td>Confirmed: No contradictory comments in the interviews.</td>
<td>We hope that all of our employees would relate to it as we do as a company.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Organizations value employees who commute by bicycle.</td>
<td>Partly confirmed: No indication of “special” value.</td>
<td>Bicycle commuting is not a factor on the basis of which valuation of employees would vary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. For organizations, bicycle commuting is foremost related to managing employee wellness.</td>
<td>Confirmed: Employee wellness is the primary issue.</td>
<td>It could be a part of employee wellness, management of employee wellness, or then on the other hand it could be approached from the environmental aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. For organizations, bicycle commuting is an important element in managing employee wellness.</td>
<td>Partly confirmed: The proposition is an exaggeration to some extent.</td>
<td>It is there among the others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Organizations perceive concrete benefits from deploying bicycle commuter programs.</td>
<td>Partly rejected: The representativest think it might add a little value in a component role, but they are not convinced by it. There is a lack of concrete evidence. One company reports less sick leaves thanks to a fitness bonus system, but it includes many other measures than just supporting bicycle commuting</td>
<td>I would like to believe that this was the case, but I am afraid that the challenge is that there are not enough figures to show that it pays off.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The benefits of bicycle commuter programs are, however, difficult to measure.</td>
<td>Confirmed: It is difficult to measure the benefits, but there are some methods that could be feasible to venture.</td>
<td>Measuring the cause and effect of these kinds of things is very difficult even with a large sample.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Organizations support bicycle commuting as an effort to be considerate employers, but they also expect to benefit in ways beyond altruism.</td>
<td>Confirmed: Nearly all respondents mentioned or admitted business interests.</td>
<td>I must admit that the employer has his own interest in that when the employees are in good condition there are less sick leaves, which is very good for the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Bicycle commuting is still a thing of the minority of employees.</td>
<td>Confirmed: There were no statistics and all the assumptions reported minority proportion.</td>
<td>I would say that we have a handful of bicycle commuters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The implementation and sustenance of bicycle commuter programs is dependent on some individual “champions”.</td>
<td>Partly confirmed: The dependence is questionable, but a champion most likely has a positive effect.</td>
<td>In Finland I was the 'motor'.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Increasing bicycle commuting strengthens an organization’s resources from many perspectives.</td>
<td>Partly confirmed: Bicycle commuting is seen to have potential to strengthen the company (only) through employee wellness.</td>
<td>Basically, our staff is one of our most valuable resources and it [commuting by bicycle] might strengthen it to some extent.</td>
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</tbody>
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