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Nino is a research scientist in transport systems from Georgia with a strong focus on sustainable and inclusive mobility. She has contributed to projects such as Tbilisi's first bus rapid transit system, Cycling Masterplans for Tbilisi and Batumi, and multimodal development plans for Georgian cities. Pursuing further expertise, she completed a master's degree in Urban Studies and Planning from the University of Helsinki, where she conducted a commissioned thesis with VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland on automated shuttles in last-mile mobility solutions. This collaboration led her to continue working at VTT, where she is now actively engaged in activity-based modeling and traffic simulations. She aims to leverage data-driven insights and international best practices to improve transport systems – enhancing accessibility, resilience, and reliability – starting from her home country and reaching beyond.



Tbilisi, Georgia living in Helsinki, Finland



Transport systems can be considered inclusive only if...

... provides equally safe, accessible, and reliable opportunities to travel for everyone. Mobility is a basic need, it should not be treated as a privilege. However, the effectiveness of transport systems is often measured in misleading ways, focusing solely on the number of people transported, while overlooking the diversity of users and their lived experiences. In many cases, individuals are forced to rely on problematic transport systems not because their needs are met, but because they have no other option. This lack of choice can lead people to avoid using the system altogether when they can, in an effort to escape negative or unsafe experiences. A truly equitable transport system must pay attention to these dynamics, recognizing that inclusivity means more than access – it means dignity, safety, and the freedom to choose how and when to travel, for all users.

If I was in power of our transport systems, the first thing I would do is...


... act and share knowledge at the same time. Often, the need for improvement is clear, but deeply rooted misconceptions slow everything down. Even small changes can take forever to implement because people resist what they

don't understand. That's why I believe action speaks louder than discussion alone. For example, in a city with no cycling culture or where cycling is associated with only certain groups or weather conditions, it's hard for the average person to see the benefits. But if the city starts building a cycling network, people can actually experience what it feels like to cycle safely. That hands-on experience can shift perceptions far better than any campaign or policy on paper. Transport isn't something abstract – it's lived. And people need to feel the difference, not just be told about it.

How does the current situation for women or persons with disabilities in your city influence your work?


I chose to work in the field of urban transportation because I saw a huge potential to learn from past mistakes and help create a better, more inclusive future. That's why I decided to pursue both work and study opportunities in this field: to learn from global best practices and then leverage that knowledge to help remake my city – Tbilisi – into a place that works better for everyone.

This journey led me to Finland, where I've had endless opportunities to explore how cities can be designed for people with diverse needs.



I focus on traffic microsimulation to study the integration of automated vehicles into current transport systems. Alongside this, I explore activity-based modelling to better understand how changes in policy, infrastructure, or travel costs might affect people's travel behavior at a large scale – based on existing traffic data.

Additionally, I'm involved in analyzing traffic conflicts and last-mile mobility challenges, with the aim of improving safety for vulnerable road users and enhancing the effectiveness of public transport systems.



As part of my master's thesis, I investigated last-mile mobility issues through the lens of automated shuttle buses and tested a novel solution—a tram warning application designed to improve the integration of shuttles with existing public transport networks. You can find a short summary of thesis here: <https://nordicroads.com/tag/self-driving-buses/>

My work aligns with the
Hamburg Charter Principles!

Principle #8 Data, Transparency and Planning

Principle #7 Promoting of Electric Mobility

Principle #6 Empowered and Integrated Popular Transport

Now, every time I return home and use public transport in Tbilisi, it feels like an observational study – I pay attention to what works, what doesn't, and what could be improved. These experiences ground my research and keep me connected to real-life challenges.

It definitely influences my reality – I'm constantly trying to step into others' shoes, to better understand a range of mobility needs. Through that lens, I explore international solutions and reflect on how they can be adapted to the local context.

What's the main challenge that you face in your daily work?

My daily work involves a lot of experimentation, researching emerging mobility needs and their potential, especially in areas like electrification and automation. One of the main challenges I face is the tension between focusing on the future and recognizing the urgent problems in today's transport systems. Sometimes it's difficult to work on long-term solutions when you see how many immediate issues still need

attention. It can feel like you should be focusing on what already exists rather than what might come next. However, experimenting with future-oriented ideas also gives me a fresh lens to view the present. It encourages me to approach current challenges in more creative, non-traditional ways. In the end, that's what keeps me excited: working on ideas that haven't yet been fully explored but hold the potential to influence and improve our present reality.

Why is it important to listen to young people?

I believe young people are true drivers of change. They not only live fully in the present, but also play a key role in shaping the future. Listening to young people means gaining critical, often unbiased insights. They bring fresh ideas, unshaped by rigid mindsets or outdated trends. Their voices have the potential to spark real, meaningful change – not just in transport systems, but across all areas of society. Young people aren't afraid to be honest or to take action when they believe something needs to change.



Ultimately, it's young people who will live the longest with the decisions we make today. That's why it's essential to incorporate their bold ideas and perspectives when planning and imagining the needs of the future.

What would you tell other young people working in the transport field?

It's the best field to work in! The more you explore, the more it pulls you in – because transport is everywhere, it touches everyone, and it shapes the identity of places and the people who live there. Even small decisions can have a large-scale, long-lasting impact. That's what makes working in this field exciting, but it also brings with it a great sense of responsibility.

As we serve people, it's essential to share our knowledge with others. Instead of being outsiders talking about what we do, we can explain why we do it. That's how we raise awareness and bring attention to the topics we care about. And of course, we're role models – let's show everyone, by our example, what responsible travel choices really look like.

