

Get to Know Finland is a valuable course to me- it is the first time I've ever learned history of a country apart from Russia, Britain, the USA and my home country. Although short, I do learn a lot stuff from this course. The Finnish lifestyle is the most interesting part, since it is so different from my own culture, and has its fascinating aspects. This kind of lifestyle is very Nordic, but Finns are even quieter. However this is the most confusing part to me (even the language is not a problem since most Finns speak perfect English): I'm from a high-context culture, so most of the time, saying nothing actually means A LOT. The less the person says, probably means the more he means silently, since in high-context language a lot of meanings are out of "guess". So far this is the strongest culture collision I've experienced. Another topic I found interesting is the Kalevala. I didn't know its name in Finnish before, but back in 2006, there was a Sino-Finnish cooperated film called "Jade Warrior" based on Kalevala, which was filmed in Finland and had a special splendid beauty. I was told it was based on Finnish epics, but now I know the name of the epic!

Observation/Description

In Finland, everyone earns relatively the same amount of money, and staffs from public services tend to earn a bit more. If one earns a lot, it also means he/she is going to pay high taxes.

Opinion/Analysis

Although my home country, China, has long been accused for being a "socialism" country, interestingly, on the contrary, quite many Chinese people would take Finland, as well as the other nordic countries, as examples of "democratic socialism". In Finland, the concept of welfare country is performed to the most, meaning there should be no very poor people, but no very rich people either, as the government balances incomes by taxes and lowest salary standard. I believe in countries like China and the United States, government tend to encourage private economies, and the society value and respect, or even worship private wealth, i.e. someone gains much wealth from his own business, instead of paying much tax to the country, he can be a millionaire of proud. I can't do a bold assertion, saying which mechanism is more efficient, especially in the current worldwide crisis, but in a more naive way, isn't lifestyle determined by economic status? That's somehow a reason for the peaceful nordic lifestyle. Compared to my country, where there are more competitions in economic activities, the anxiety has strongly affected people's daily life as well.