A CROSS-CULTURAL JOURNAL

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**A.    What have you learned about Finnish lifestyle, culture, history, society, communication etc.**

Before coming to Finland I did not know anything about Finnish History other than that they were ruled by both Sweden and Russia at some point in time. Although I am from Germany I didn't knew that Finland collaborated with Germany against Russia in the second world war. I found it really interesting to see that Finland supported Nazi-Germany for their own motives. Opposite to Germany, which wanted to dominate the European continent, Finland just wanted to stay independent from Russia and gain their lost regions back.

Finns respect the personal space and freedom of each other very much. In a Bus they try to avoid sitting next to someone, in classes they do not try to introduce themselves to you and become friends. They leave you a lot of space and if you need help or want to know someone better you really have to ask. That was really difficult for me to get used to. For example I had to get a heavy package into the bus and really struggled, but nobody offered to help. At home it is normal to offer your help, if you see someone struggling to carry something or searching for the right way. From my point of view it seems impolite but I understand that they simply do not want to interfere into your personal space.

The amount of Trust and the obedience to rules that is present in Finnish society really surprised me. I never saw someone controlling if you have a ticket in the bus. In public transport in Germany there are controls very often, because a lot of people do not buy a ticket when using the bus or the metro. They also pay very high taxes. But unlike in Germany where a lot of people try to find illegal ways to avoid paying taxes, in Finland they see what is paid by their taxes and then accept that they have to pay.

**B.    You observation /description and opinion / analysis on some event you saw**

**Recycling**

Finns are really strict in recycling. They have not only paper, organic waste and plastic bins like in most cities in Germany, but Paper, cardboard, metal, burnable waste etc. .

It needs a lot of time to get used to the way Finns separate their trash. But I think it is a really good thing to do and obviously it works here. In Karlsruhe, the city I am living in Germany, we only separate between organic waste and recycling waste. All the recycling waste is sorted later by companies with huge machines. The reason for doing so is that not all people do sort correctly when they have a paper and a plastic bin or even more. It is cheaper for the city to use just one bin for all the waste that can be somehow recycled and sort it themselves, than having different bins and still have to control if the trash is sorted correctly. I suppose in Finland they do not have to control the separated trash because the people obey the rules of trash separation more strictly than they do in Germany or maybe the cities trust the people more to separate it right.

**Greeting**

When you come to a class Finns do not greet you, even if you know them and talked to them a few times. They also do not say good bye but just leave. When you meet someone you are sharing a course with somewhere they do not greet you, even though they recognise you.

This behaviour was very disturbing for me. At first I found it really rude not to be greeted. When I come to class and sit down next to someone I normally say "Hei" but a lot of people just do not repeat the greeting and just ignore me. This was even more weird for me because the classes are so small, so that you can easily recognise the people. I do understand that they want to keep their personal space and maybe do not want to interact but only to follow the lecture, but still for me it seems kind of rude.