*Cross-cultural journal*

*By: Mariano Orozco García*

1. **Finnish lifestyle, culture, history, society, communication, etc.**

“And that’s how the Finns break the ice” was a phrase that I listen in a sauna after one of the boys tell the story of the last sauna championship; story that I had heard in almost every sauna that I have been so far. It is funny, because if you are outdoors you can literally “break the ice” everywhere and because if you are not in a sauna (or its not alcohol involved) it is difficult to find a Finn starting a conversation out of the blue. I have to say that not talking to much or greeting everytime you see someone saves a lot of time.

It was difficult to me to adapt to the silence most of the times even when I knew it before arriving Finland. It took time but now that I notice that is excellent to concentrate, think and relax I really appreciate it.

In my home country I’m considered as a punctual person never arriving more than 10 minutes late. But in here sometimes being “on time” makes you lose the bus that arrive 2 min before the fixed time. Then, you have to wait 20 minutes for the next bus and that makes you been very late. It’s still hard for me to be that punctual, I’m always running all the time but at least now I know how fast I should run.

Events in Finland are very organized. I went to the Red Bull Chased Ice in Serena. The first time that I saw an event like that and hopefully not the last one. The organizers doesn’t have to create paths or give instructions of where to go. In that event I confirmed that Finns are to kind and attentive, one Finn who I had never seen before realized that I didn’t bring my gloves and offered me a plastic bag with a warm liquid inside for my fingers. And a girl that was in the group which somehow I finished was translating all the comments of the event for us into English. I have to say that is not the first time that a stranger offers me help or advice in Finland even if I don’t ask for it.

I had visited some art galleries in the Helsinki Art Walk. It is always interesting to see how the thoughts of a culture are shown though the artists. Fortunately all the artists were Finns. The beautiful nature and great landscapes was one of the recurrent themes at least in the works that I saw. I’m really impressed with that every time I’m outdoors and can keep watching it for literally hours.

Another think to mention from the art galleries was a video of a woman building a tower with candles and wooden sticks. The tower was always instable representing the idea of imperfection and risk. For me that idea is controversial considering that in Finland everything is close to perfect all the time. And the last remark from the galleries was the distribution of the HUUTO Jätkäsaari gallery. In the big room an exposition of paintings of the nature and in the small room, that seems to be inside the big one, a sophisticated exposition that merge philosophical ideas and technology. For me that shows the distribution of the city itself where the distance of nature and technology is just two doors. It’s incredible for me to be in the middle in the forest without problems in the reception of the signal in my cellphone.

Flavors are quite different for me I miss a lot of things. In here everything is really healthy. I don’t know how the cafeterias can manage to cook something healthy that taste good. Some days it could be nice to have more fat and less vegetables in my day but I have nothing to complain about it.

I love to walk in Helsinki and in Espoo, landscapes are just amazing. Not even cold stop me to continue walking. I really like the style of most of the Churches and Cathedrals. Buildings in general have this style that at the first look they seem to have nothing special to be honest but most of the times if you look carefully you will see that they have something that creates a harmony with its sounding, I don’t know how to explain it yet but somehow they fit in that space.

I like the classes and the school in general. And I’m eager to learn more about the crazy but funny teekkari culture. Until now I love sauna and sit-sit songs and certainly I will get more badges for my overall.

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

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| **Observation / Description** | **Opinion / Analysis** |
| No extra buses for events. | I went to Nuksio Park and to Serena for an ESN event and the Red Bull event respectively and in both situations the bus in the terminal was completely full that it had to skip some bus stops cause was impossible to pick up more people. I believe that could be a good option to have extra buses in the terminals for occasions like that. It’s normal that it happens sometimes. |
| The doors open in the opposite direction. | When I enter/exit to/from some place I’m always making the opposite movement it’s really funny. |
| Last bus is the best bus. | There’s always something to remember, from you sleeping and missing your stop or drunk people doing crazy things to a bus driver that takes another route. |
| You can find “the Fountain of Youth” in the basement. | There’s all kind of things for your house since basic and needed stuff to luxuries or entertainment that the previous tenants leave for you. If you don’t have something it’s always a good idea to search in the basement first because you can probably find it. |
| Some people are immune to cold. | It is incredible how few clothes some people have, even shorts or skirts are worn. Just when I started to think that I was getting used to the cold when I’m just using two layers of clothes instead of three. |
| I enter to the sauna at least 3 times a week. | I just love the sauna and I take every opportunity that I can to go to any sauna. It’s good for both, to relax and stay in silence or to party and know people (or sing unpronounceable songs if you’re in the campus). |