**Cross-cultural Journal – Alexandra Hoffait**

*PART 1*

The things I was the most surprised about Fins when I arrived in Finland are their shyness, their ability to follow rules and their love for saunas.

When I arrived in Finland, I did not know a thing about the country except that the education was the best in Europe. This is the reason why I decided to spend my Erasmus here : I would get to experience by myself the Finish education, and I would get the chance to discover a new country at the same time.

So when I arrived in my room in Jämeräntäival 1, I thought I would become friend with the 9 other people I share my floor and my kitchen with ! But this never happened. I can consider myself lucky if I get a « Hei » from my Finish nieghbors when I cross them in the hallway. They use the kitchen only for cooking, and when they are done they run into their room to eat alone. From what I heard in class, I don’t think they do that because they are unfriendly but only because they are shy and they are not used to small talks. They like to have time for themselves and this is probably also the reason why I see so much people eating alone in the cafetaria for lunch. It was surpising when I arrived, but when I think about it I think that I can understand them : it can be nice to have some time to think about our ideas. I think that everyone needs it, but in my home country we just don’t take this time to think alone in public ! But why not, after all…

The ability Fins have to follow the rules was also very surprising ! I have never seen that much people paying for the public transportation for example. People pay even when the drivers doesn’t check. The buses are always on time, the city is clean… I never feel unsafe, even when I walk alone at nigh or when I use my IPhone in a public place. I come from Brussels, Belgium and I would never take out my IPhone in the metro or walk alone in the street at night ! I would be too afraid to get assaulted. It is very nice to feel safe here, especially in a capital. It is also nice to know that if we lose something, we will have a good chance to get it back !

Finally, the love of Fins for the sauna is very surprising. I had never been to a sauna before, and here when you go on holiday it is almost more important to have a sauna than a kitchen in the house you rent. Fins go to the sauna whenever they have a chance to go and they don’t hesitate to get naked in public. I feel very uncomfortable to get naked and I find it quite strange to see so shy people getting naked in front of each oter just like that !

PART 2

When I arrived in Finland, I had to get my keys at the AYY office. When I arrived, there was one student busy at the desk and one that seemed to be waiting in the room, but very far away from the desk. I waited for the first student to leave the desk and I wasn’t sure if the other one was in the line so I looked at him and as he was not reacting, I said « Hello » to the lady at the desk. But both of them looked at me as if I was coming from the moon and didn’t say anything. The student eventually went to the desk and I understood that he was actually in the « line ». When he left, I said « Hello » again to the lady but she ignored me. I was not sure what to do so I went around the room and I found a paper on the wall saying that we needed to get a number to get in the line. I found the machine, took the number and the lady looked at me with a big smile and told my number. Afterwards, she was very friendly.

I was at first surprised to see how people get in a line in Finland. They always stay very far from each other and we never know if they are in the line or not. Here, I realized later that the student was standing far because he had his number, but even for example in the fastfoods we never know who is in the line.

In this situation, I was also amazed how they remained silent and didn’t tell me what to do when I entered the room. I was clearly a stranger, saying Hello in English and standing in the AYY office on the 2nd of January, and nobody helped me before I got my number. I didn’t understand why they seemed so unfriendly before I got my number, and so friendly after. Now that I know better, I understant that it was probably because they were shy. I should have ask for help more clearly and everything would have been fine ☺

Finally, I didn’t understant why she needed me to get a number givent that I was the only one in the line. It is probably because they are very strict about the rules !