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Creative Integration

A CASE STUDY OF CULTURAL
LEARNING FROM ESTONIA



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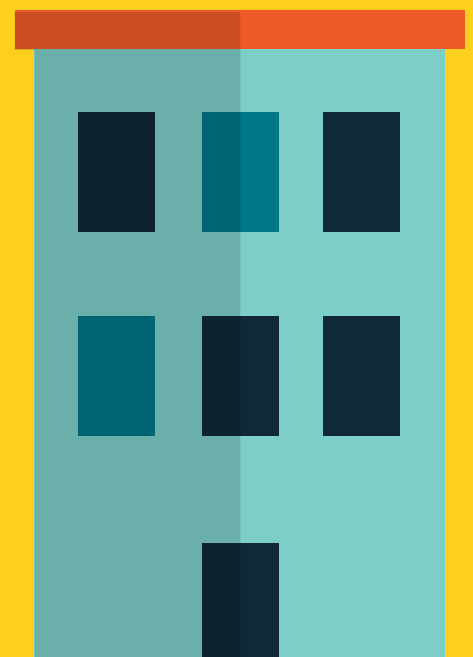
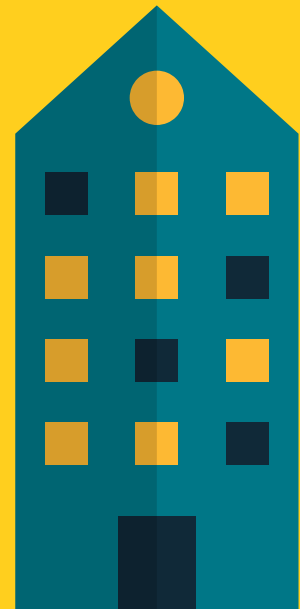
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WELCOME TO THIS INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL INTEGRATION!

This guide is useful for adult educational organisations and adult educators who would like to learn more about how to facilitate integration for migrants that is creative and multi-dimensional. It is based on insights from a real cultural integration programme in Tallinn, Estonia.



Introduction: a new era of movement

Increasing numbers of people are moving to new countries. This might be for various reasons, such as a new job or because they are no longer able to stay in their home country.



We often hear that newcomers to a country should integrate. But this is a complicated process that involves a lot of learning.



There are many people involved in this learning process, from newcomers themselves, to local people and not forgetting organisations and governments. Adult education organisations are crucial in helping newcomers learn about the culture of their new home. This guide is about cultural learning for integration, an area that can be neglected by governmental policy. It could come alongside language learning and supplement it. We should also keep in mind that migration is complicated and there different groups of people involved who have various needs.



Case Study: The Culture Step Programme

Culture Step is a cultural integration project based in Tallinn, Estonia. It was designed to help migrants learn about Estonian culture through various trips, activities and tours. It was facilitated by the Estonian Institute with money provided by the Estonian government.



This programme provided participants with a more intimate knowledge of elements of Estonian culture. The following are a selection of their events.

Trips

- A trip to Tartu for the Finno-urgic festival
- A journey through the forest at Laheema National Park
- A walk through an Estonian bog to collect mushrooms
- A tour of an Estonian bread factory

Museum Visits

- The museum of architecture and design
- The Estonian museum of theatre and music
- Historic towers of Tallinn tour at Kiek in de K ok fortifications museum
- The Estonian National Museum in Tartu
- The Estonian open air museum



Other Events

- An Estonian hand-bell concert
- Estonishing Evenings events – discussions about local architecture, integration and social and cultural issues.
- A visit to the Estonian parliament
- Estonian movie viewings



Every country is different, and this programme was designed around Estonian culture. What activities might be adapted for your country? What would you add?

What can we learn from Culture Step?

Critical reflections from my blog

I was in the privileged position to be able to attend many of the events on the Culture Step programme. I am an adult educator from the UK and I made a blog about my experiences and perspectives of Culture Step. I have collected some critical reflections that can help us think about the learning that happens on such a programme.

Flexibility

“The Culture Step programme is providing different kinds of learning opportunities for participants than they may usually find in the formal space of a classroom, or in their workplace.”



Culture step is a flexible programme that allows participants to choose which events to attend, based around their interests and schedule. This is important to adults who may be working or have various commitments. It gives participants freedom in choosing what they want to learn and when they want to do it. It pushes the boundaries of our traditional understandings of adult education and can even appeal to those who do not like formal classroom settings. When I combined this more non-formal learning with more formal learning, like learning the Estonian language, I found that I developed a much more intimate knowledge of Estonia.

What can we learn from Culture Step?

Local Knowledge

“It was interesting to see that the interior of one of the buildings is apparently built in the expressionist style of architecture. This means that it has many unusual features, most notably zig zags and diagonal lines are used a lot. Annleena, who showed us around told us that these angles are meant to represent the many angles that the politicians should consider when thinking about issues in parliament.”

From the Estonian Parliament



Culture step is formed around the local expertise of the people who work at the Estonian institute and other institutions involved with the programme. It formed partnerships between various organisations in order to facilitate learning and recruited local volunteers to help run events.

What can we learn from Culture Step?

Building diverse communities



“The museum also has a second permanent exhibition called Echo of the Urals, which is devoted entirely to the history of the Finno-Urgic people. It was a wonderful experience to see that Estonia is treasuring these traditions and languages... I think this understanding is a very important part of my journey of learning about Estonian culture. It shows that to really understand Estonian culture, we have to realise that there are multiple cultures that are relevant and related.”

From the Finno-Urgic festival at the Estonian National Museum

The programme also helps to build communities through these events and social media groups. This means that friendships can be formed between participants and volunteers. Building these connections can be very important in helping newcomers feel welcome in a new country.



What can we learn from Culture Step?

Participatory learning

“This event is a great example of adult learning that can be bottom up, and be beneficial for participants and wider society. These Estonishing Evening events have made a start in creating a dialogue and building communication between wider sections of the community living in Estonia.”

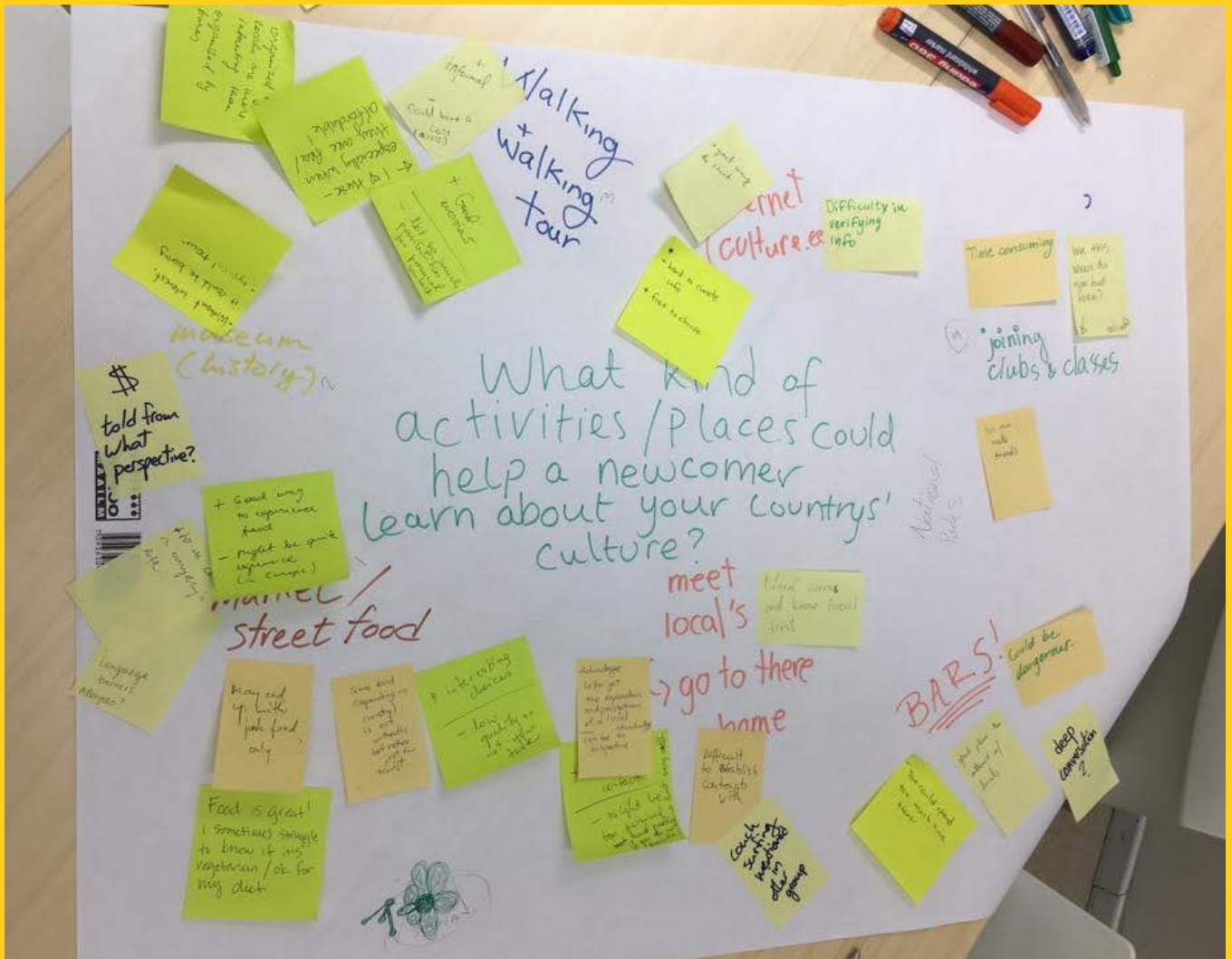
From an Estonishing Evening event



Letting participants get involved with discussions and dialogue means that they are able to have a say in what they learn. Estonishing Evenings, a partner of the Culture Step programme offer events in English for foreigners living in Estonia to discuss local issues with Estonians. The events' organisers are all local Estonians that have all lived in other countries and want to help people from various countries feel able to engage with local issues.

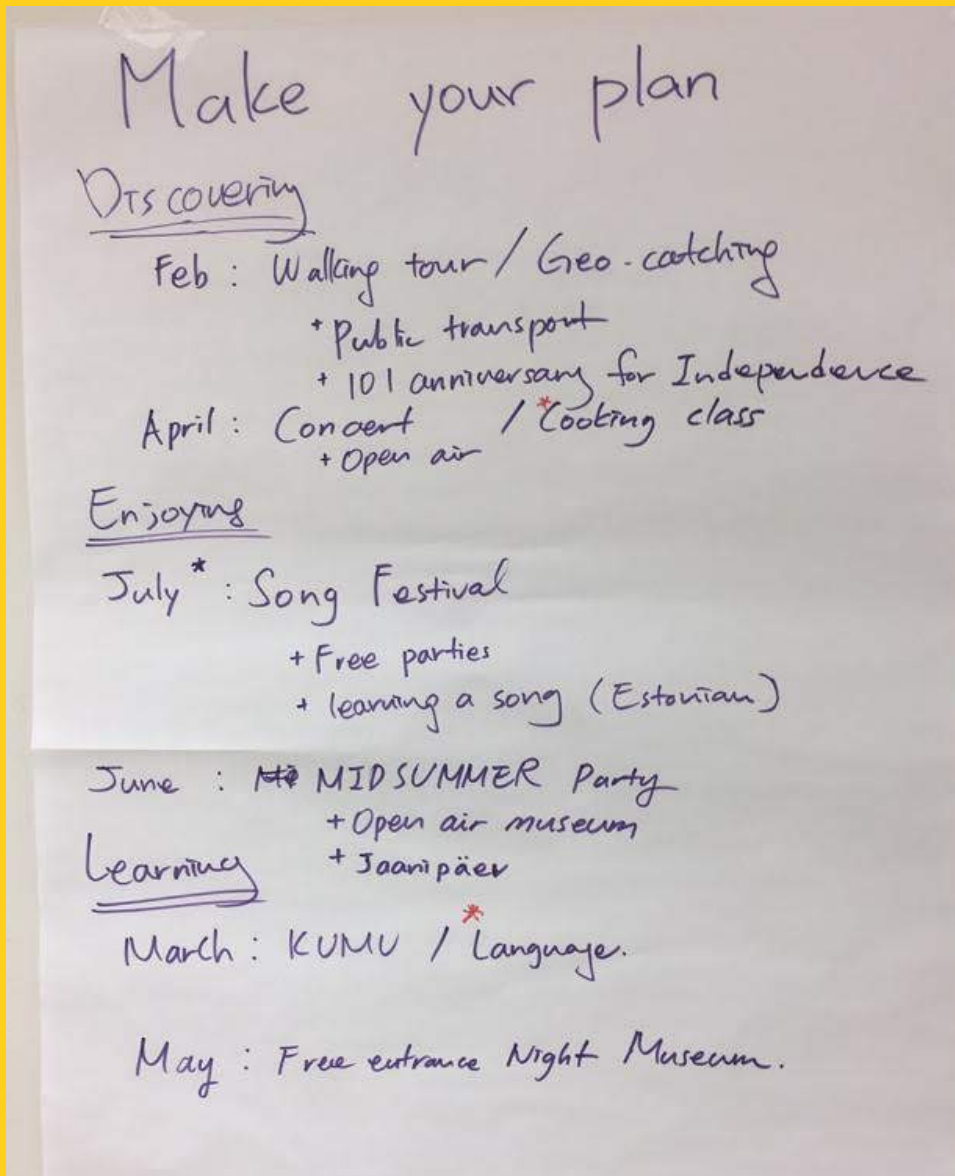
Insights from the wider community

My colleagues and I ran a participatory workshop on cultural integration at Tallinn University in December 2018 with adult educators from Estonia, the USA, Columbia, Costa Rica, Brazil, Greece, Taiwan, South Korea and the UK.



There were many creative ideas for cultural integration developed. It showed that there are many different view points from around the world on this issue and that we need to consider a variety of perspectives when developing cultural integration programmes. It is certainly important to note that most of the people who were from outside Estonia strongly valued meeting local people and making friends. The Estonians were able to apply their local knowledge to come up with a variety of valuable ideas to help facilitate integration.

Insights from the wider community



We had a great discussion and it was useful to combine the perspectives of people from a variety of different countries. It is crucial that we include international perspectives when we are working to achieve inter-cultural understanding. Bridging the gap between locals and migrants is also important in helping integration, and this can be a part of cultural learning too.



Resources and further reading

This text has given a brief insight into one particular integration programme in Estonia. Sharing our knowledge and ideas about cultural learning can help lead to new understandings for programmes like this around the world.



- Visit Lauren's blog about Culture Step here:
<https://lozzybee.weebly.com/home/category/placement>
- Visit the culture step website here:
<https://estinst.ee/en/activities/culture-step/>

The final pages of this document show some generalised resources with some of the insights gained from this experience which may be useful for new migrants, locals and organisations. They could be used as flyers or as digital info-graphics.



TIPS FOR NEWCOMERS

Ideas for how to get to know a new culture

HISTORY

Knowing the past to understand the present



Visit museums and go on local walking tours to gain insights into the background of the place that you've moved to. Was the place occupied? Have they been influenced by war? Gain some understanding of what might be valued here!

FOOD AND DRINK

Eat your heart out



Getting to know local dishes can not only help you to understand the culture a little more, it's also a great conversation starter with local people! We eat food every day, and it says a lot about our culture.

MUSIC AND DANCE

Move to the beat of a new drum



Concerts, dance workshops and dance performances can help us to learn about how music influences this culture. If you hear some music in the street, stop and listen if you can!

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Getting to know you



Watching movies by local filmmakers and events that discuss local issues can be a great way to understand a new culture. Best of all, make friends with locals, they have the best insider knowledge and you can tell them all about your culture too!

PICK THE WAYS THAT WORK FOR YOU!



TIPS FOR LOCALS

How to make newcomers feel welcome and learn about your culture

FRIENDS

Reach out



Make an effort to get to know people from other cultures, especially newcomers, whether they be at work or people that you meet elsewhere. Ask them about their own culture, and tell them about yours! Organise chances to share food together!

LANGUAGES

Now you're speaking my language



Sign up to study another language and try to meet people who are speakers of that language. This will mean you can practice *and* meet people from other cultures!

EVENTS

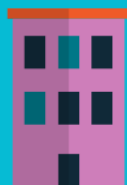
Get out of your comfort zone



Go to events that you might not usually go to, especially if they will have multi-cultural audiences. Try to find a concert of music from another country or an event in a different language.

APPROACH ORGANISATIONS

Let's get together



There are organisations that are designed to help migrants settle in your country. They are often looking for volunteers, or just participants for events that they run. Look for organisations in your area!

DO WHAT YOU CAN!



TIPS FOR ADULT EDUCATION ORGANISATIONS

Ways to help newcomers learn more about your culture

EVENTS

Getting together



Run events to help newcomers get to know the local culture through food, music, art, etc. It can be based on what your organisation specialises in! Allow opportunities for migrants to also teach you about their culture in exchange. Invite locals too!

FORM CONNECTIONS

Building bridges



Form connections with organisations that are working with migrants. Think about how your organisation can help enrich their programmes or introduce local knowledge.

LANGUAGES

Speaking to each other



Offer language classes or provide information about places that do. If you can, set up opportunities for language exchanges or local mentoring programmes.

TRIPS

Thinking outside the box



Remember that cultural learning goes far beyond the classroom. Organise trips to museums, exhibitions, concerts and shows. If you can, try to go outside and see the local nature too!

SHARE YOUR IDEAS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS