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Country: Finland

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Reflection on my experience
and learning



Reflective Journal

- This Reflective Journal is a useful means for your **professional development**. Please take a moment to reflect personally on the programme and write a few lines every day on your thoughts.
- Possible areas of reflection: my *professional development* today, *cultural understanding*, *participation* in and understanding of *debates*, *talks*, *visits to schools*, *sharing of expertise* and building of *future partnerships* (**Diss** emination Strategies), *European Dimension*, etc.

Sunday 19.3.2023:

- I travelled with my college Balbina Käki, because our principal, who was supposed to travel with me, was too busy to travel anywhere just then. We started our journey already on Saturday evening in Helsinki where we stayed one night because we had very early morning flight from Helsinki. We made some plans and hopes for our excursion and learned a little bit different things like using Klappid and so on.
- On Sunday we flew to Keflavik and got very easily to the bus and to the Reykjavik. We couldn't get our apartment so early so we just left our luggage there and went to the city for a lunch. We ate fish of course, because it was local food and I am a home economics teacher. I always want to get known the locals foods and pastries. We also visited Hallgrimskirkja and saw the whole town bright and beautiful. Reykjavik is a very colourfull city, we would like to have some of that to our hometown too.
- After sightseeing we walked to the university. It is always easier to perseive the city, if you walk and follow the map. At Univeristy we met our new friends from 20 countries and we got some information about our course, the Structured Educational Visit to Schools & Training Seminars in Iceland.
- On the way back to the city centrum and our apartment we visited in food store and find out that Iceland is a very expensive country.



Monday 20.3.2023 morning

- We visited in the School of education-University of Iceland to hear about the education system in Iceland.
- We have a lot of similarities in our school system than in Iceland; children start school at the same age and graduate when they are 15 or 16 and during that time (called elementary school) they have same curriculum, maybe some differences between schools. Schools are mostly run and founded by the community, teachers have a university education, and they work quite autonomously. We don't have any school inspectors in Finland, like in Iceland and most of the European countries.
- The most interesting and inspirational is the national curriculum which is based on 6 fundamental 5 pillars
 1. Literacy in the widest sense
 2. Education towards sustainability
 3. Health and welfare
 4. Democracy and human rights
 5. Equality
 6. Creativity
- We got some tools for reflection on learning and educational encounters
- We also got some information of the field learning



Monday afternoon 20.3.2023

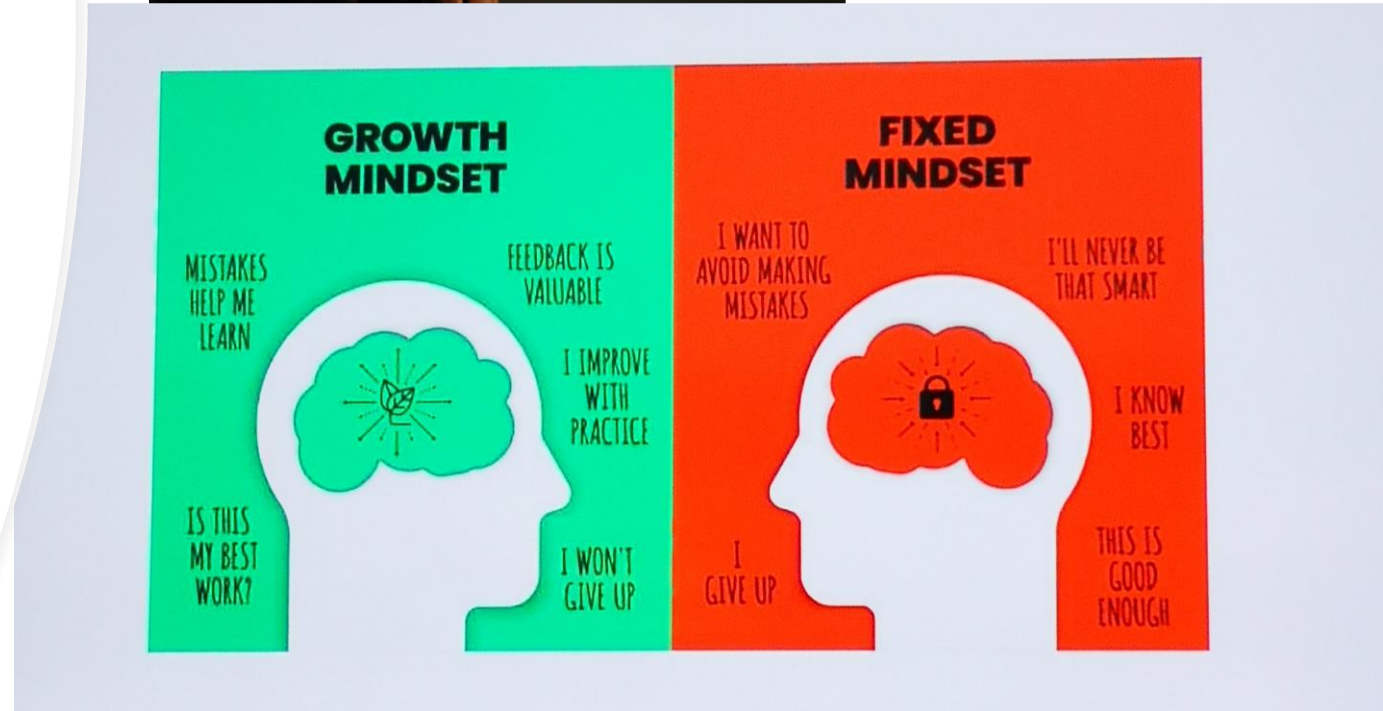
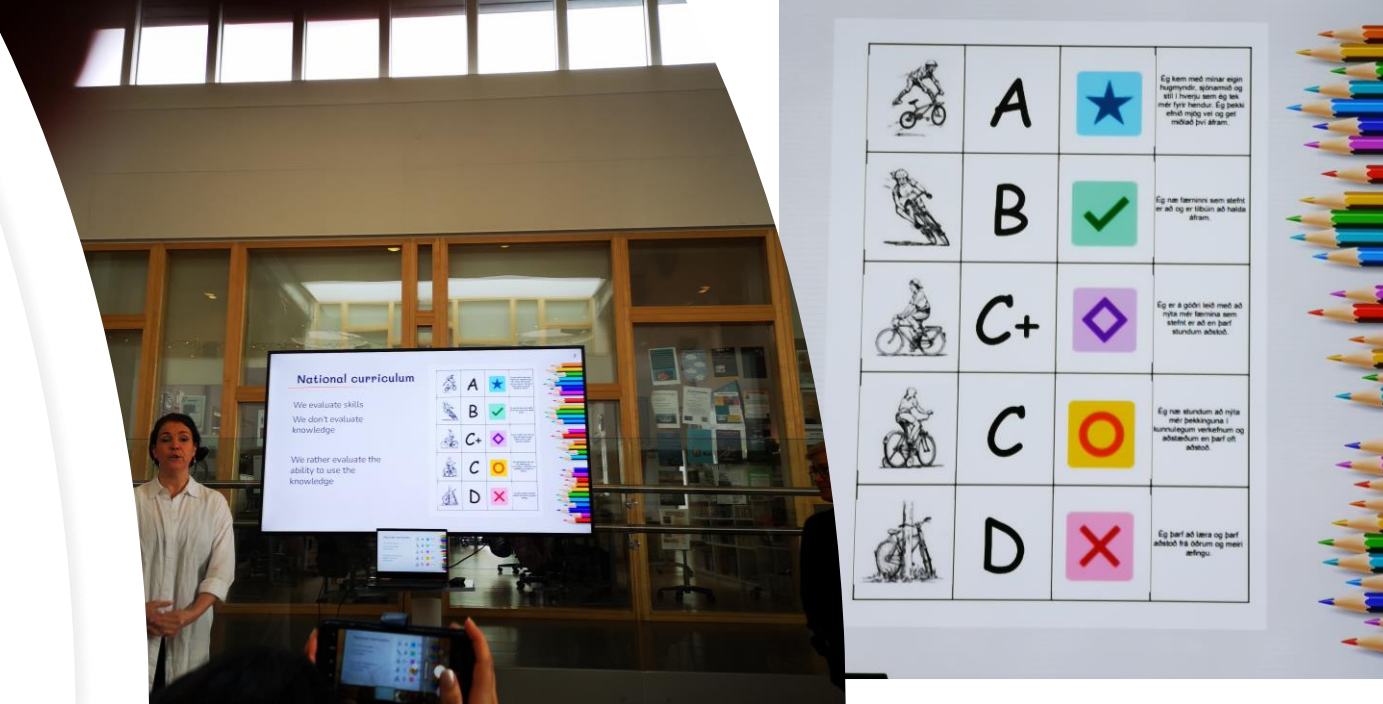
- Monday afternoon we had a **field learning project I** by the footsteps of the early Viking settlers among the geological wonders of the Iceland. We had a very good guide, I can't remember her name, but she was so good to tell us stories, sagas, history, geology....just name it. (Actually, the National museum on Wednesday seemed too flat after she was told everything so vividly and excitingly.)
- We visited first in the Gullfoss waterfall, which was icy, cold but awesome place to visit.
- Then we went to the geysire area, and it was so unprecedented experience... wau, never had I seen anything so powerfull and impressive!
- But that was not all. I saw a document on tv at home before I left of the first set of parliament.... it was a great surprise that we had opportunity to visit in that place for real. Very impressive place. It was also great to see and relive two tectonic plates in the same area. They diverge 2 cm per year and now the valley is almost 6 km wide.



Tuesday 21.3.2023 morning

- In the morning we visited in the **Saemundarskoli** School, which is located in the eastern part of Reykjavik. It is a primary school, and it looks still quite new, even if it was built in 2011.
- The facilities are very spacious, the classrooms contain all students in groups and give a lot of freedom to do work and projects. Teachers are working together, almost always two in the classroom.
- We got a very good lecture about the school's values and operating models. It was very impressive and interesting.

They don't give any numbers but colours and they support pupils and guide them to take responsibility of their own studies. I also liked the growth mindset- system they use everywhere in the school. These things I would like to bring to my own classroom and school in Finland.

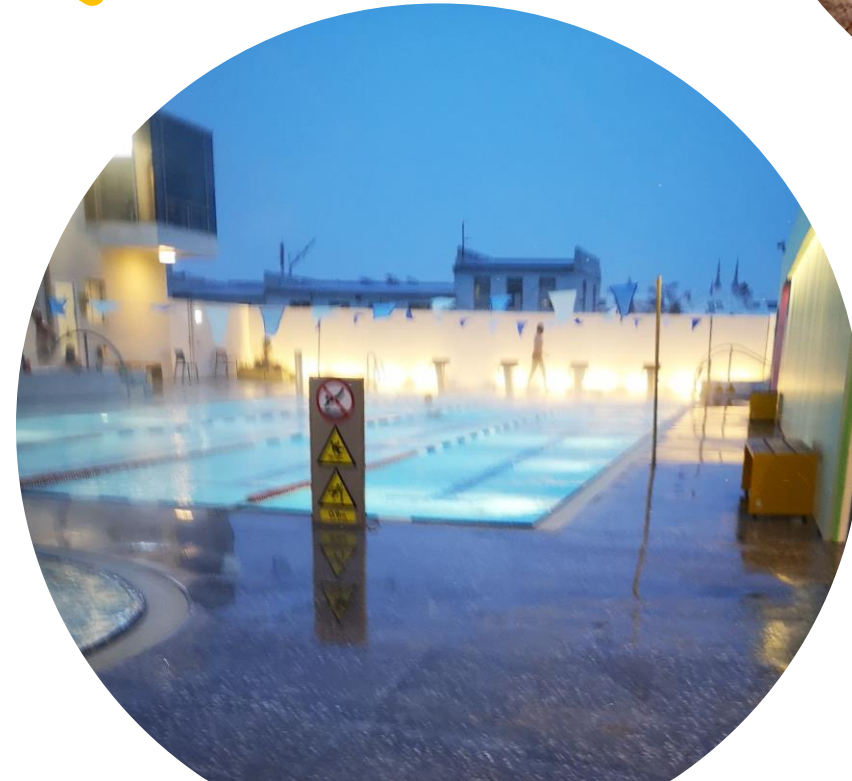


Tuesday afternoon and evening 21.3.2023

After visiting in the school we had some lunch, local lamb soup inside the bread. Then we worked together with our group and made our own slide ready for Saturday. In the evening we went to the Sundhöll swimmingpool and met a Finnish couple there. It was snowing and the geothermal heat was relaxing us well.

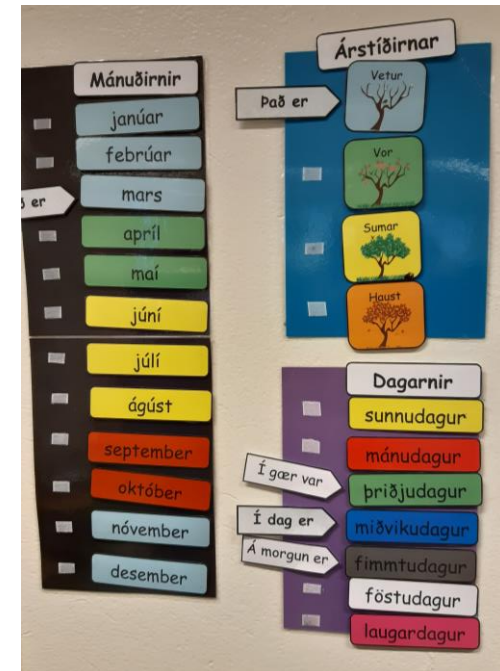
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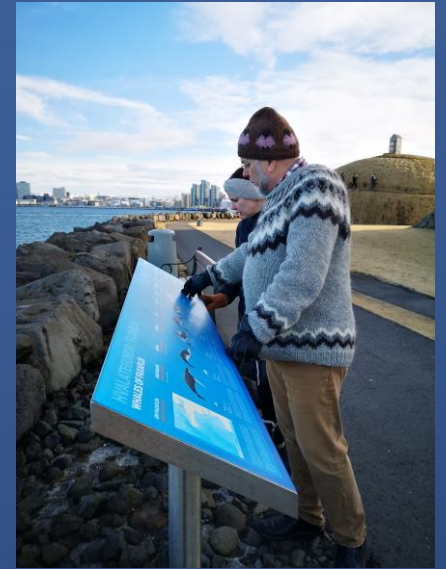
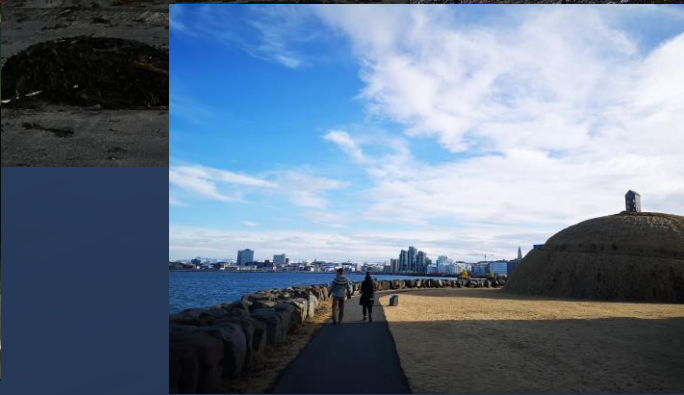
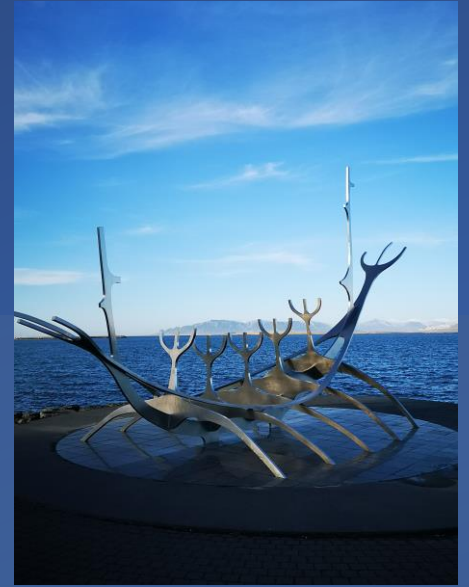
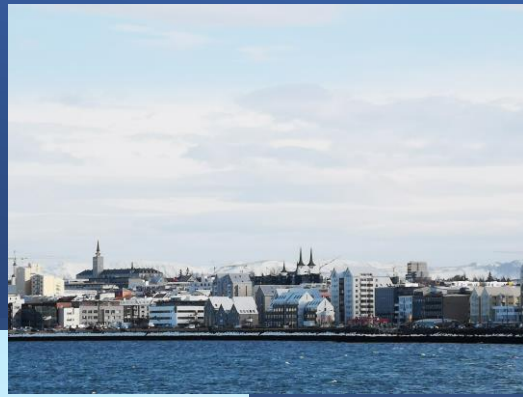
- learned to use Klappid and public transport.
- found a great bakery!
- tasted lamb.(And I am a vegetarian...)
- had a experienco of geothermal heat water in the pool.
- Coworked with or new friends from Liethuenia and Greece.



Wednesday 22.3.2023

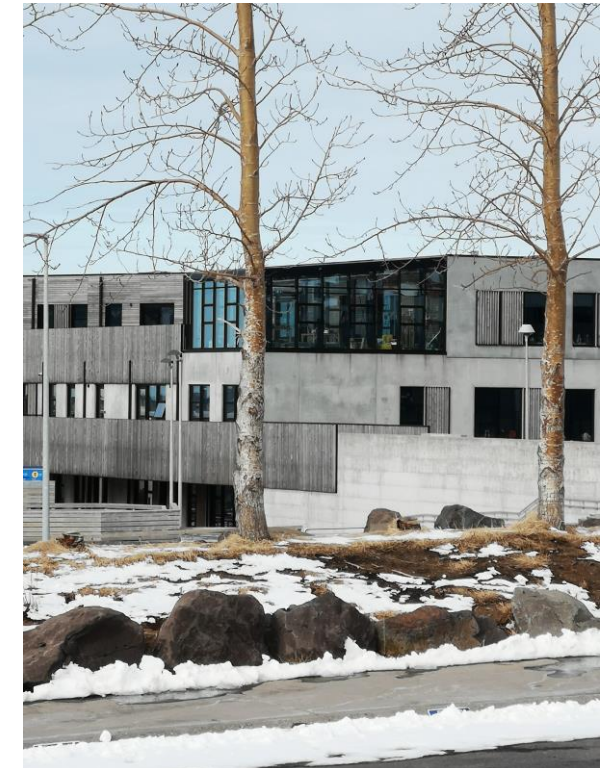
- We visited in the Háaleitisskóli, which was so near the centrum that we walked there. We had gret guides for the tour in the school. Two boys, who spoke very good english and were so polite and nice. They told us a lot of about studying in Iceland and we could visit almost everywhere in the schoolarea. That school was quite old, but still so light and spacious. In this school we noticed that they play chess a lot. They had chess tables in the liberary and we saw or guide to lose one game to a 8-year old boy.
- In this school we didn't get any lesson or guidance from teachers or headmaster, just walked with those two boys.
- After school we had a lunch meeting with part of our group and we made our reflection for Saturday together.
- In the afternoon we visited The National museum of Iceland (**Field learning project II**). It was nice to see all the staff but we had alread had so great lesson about Icelandic nation and history on our tour on Monday, that we just walked through the exhibits.
- We met a finnish woman in the museum cafe and had a good discussion with her. She is a formal teacher too. And can you believe that she was so nice that she and her Icelandic husband took us for a sightseeing tour by their car. We saw a light house, beach and the old harbour, which we wouldn't have seen without them. Sometimes it is easy to make new friends.

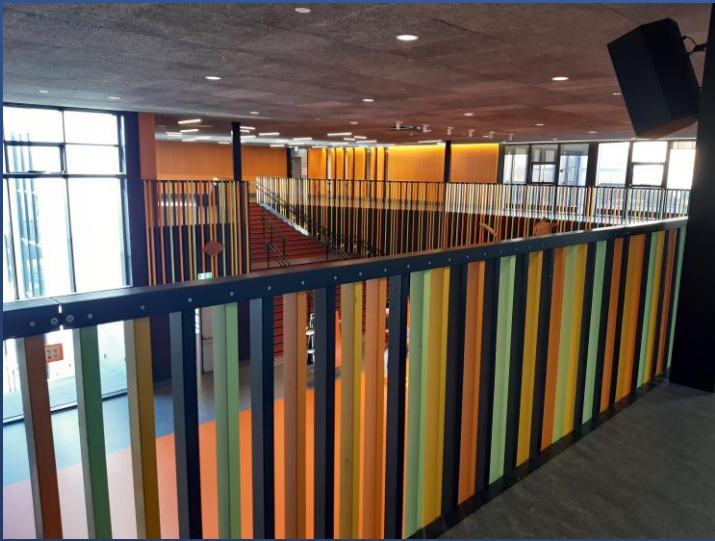




Thursday 23.3.2023

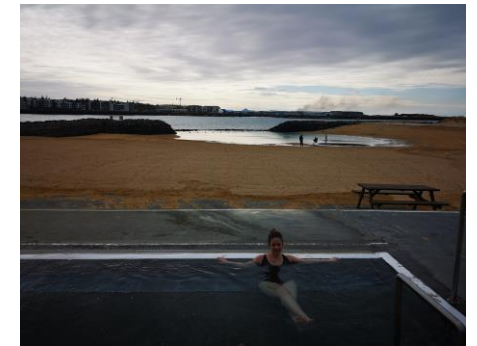
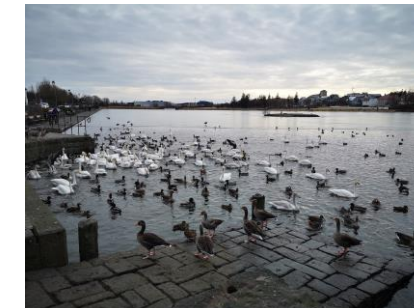
- We were tired and thought that this would be a little bit useless visit to a third school and it would take almost an hour to get there with two busses.... and then we saw an ugly concrete building. Oh no, I thought....
- But what a school! Wau! The best visit for sure. I could follow the home economics teacher for couple of hours, she told me so much. They have courses from the first grade till the 10th. So practically they have 10 years to learn those things I have to do in one year, because in Finland we have home economics only in 7th grade. Pupils can choose some extra courses on 8th and 9th grade, but it is not for everyone. I hope that in our new school, which will be ready maybe on 2028, is possible to teach all pupils from first to 9th grade.
- This school, **Helgafellsskóli**, was new school, only 4 years old. They could create their own curriculum from the beginning. Teachers had teams for teaching their groups. Normally 40 pupils and 2 teacher or 60 pupils and 3 teacher. They teach almost everything but the arts and crafts subjects, to their own group. Teachers plan everything together. They have a lot of projects, where they can place all the substances, also arts and crafts. Parents will be invited to the school 2-4 times per year to see what they have done. Pupils evaluate themselves and tell about that to their parents too. Teachers evaluate pupils too, and together with them. Teachers get to know their pupils well and you really saw and felt it in their classroom.
- There was a lot of practise I would love to bring to our school and curriculum. For me the best space at school was the greenhouse on the roof. I have my little garden in our school with some pupils, but this school on the mountains had a huge greenhouse! And just next to it there was balcony garden. What a great opportunity to grow vegetables and herbs for cooking and baking and learn a lot of gardening too.
- This school was great surprise for me and totally worth to visit!





Thursday afternoon

- After school visit we headed to the beach of Reykjavik called Nautholsvik Geothermal Beach. I visited Iceland first time during my formal school Erasmus project at 2017 . We didn't have opportunity to visit geothermal baths then, well we visited in Blue Lagoon but I wanted to see and experience those pools and places the local people use. So we choose one swimmingpool I told earlier, the Sunhöll, Beach with geothermal pools and Secret lagoon, which I show the last.
- On the way back to our apartment we tasted the happy marriage cake, which is very popular in Reykjavik.
- Some early birds had arrived or maybe they stayed the whole winter in those Geothermal warm places...





Friday 24.3.2023
Field learning project III
On Friday we headed to the
Iceland's South coast



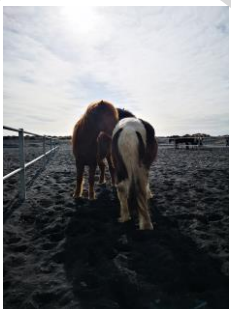
- First we visited in the **Solheimajökull glacier**. Here you can really understand what's the climate change does to our globe. It is so sad to know that the snout of the glacier was located 1794 m further in year 1930 than where it is today. I am a teacher but also an environmental educator and this visit was very important to me. I think that I can tell about climate change easier by showing pictures about this visit and telling what's going on in our beautiful glaciers.

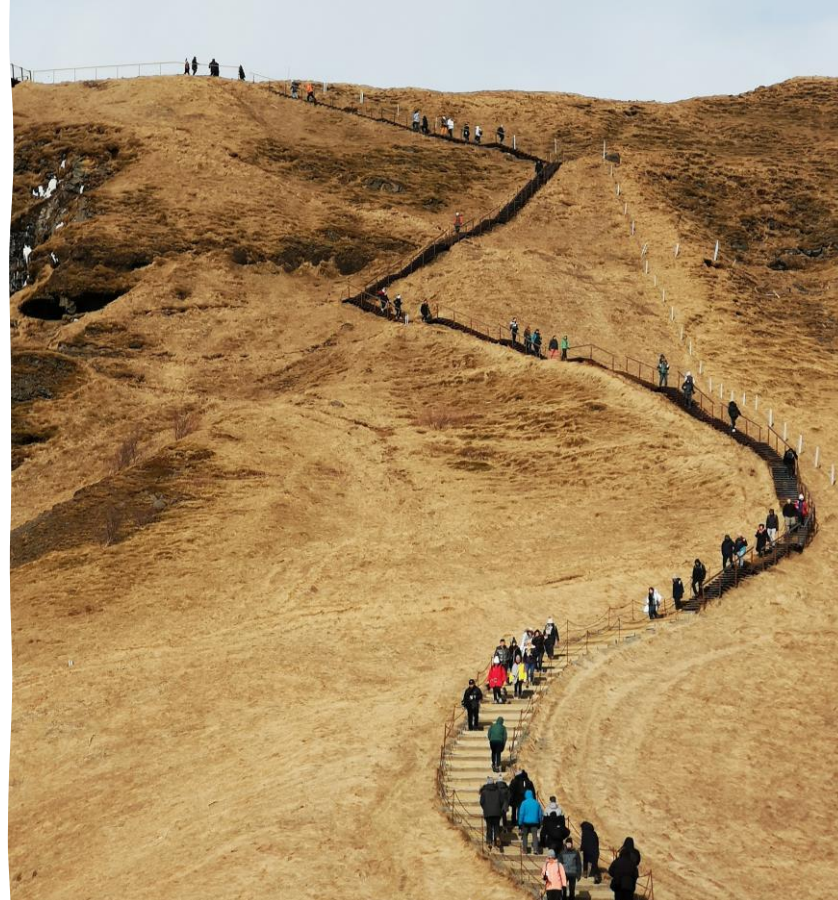




Reynisfjara Beach

- Next stop was in a little village Vik , where we had a lunch and visited in the first part of black beach and saw some Icelandic horses.
- Just after short drive we came to a beautiful black sand beach called Reynisfjara Beach.
- There was huge basalt columns, the Halsanefshellir Sea Cave, and large rock formations that rise out of the sea. We were told to be careful when visiting there, the waves can crash ashore unexpectedly. You should keep away from the shoreline, and avoid turning your back towards the waves. It was easy to me, because I saw a little boy fall from the force of the wave and his parents just run away from him...I was almost running to help but luckily he got up and walked away from the beach.





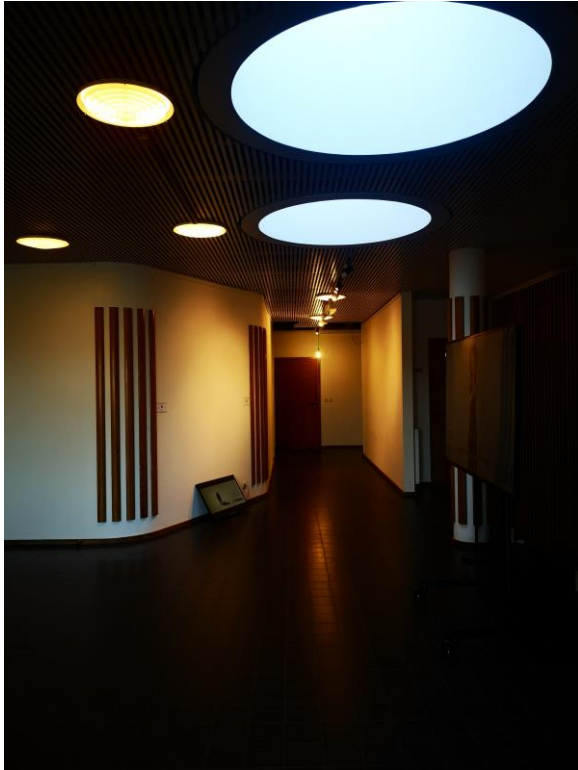
The waterfalls Skogafoss and Seljalandsfoss

- On the way back to Reykjavik we visited two...or actually several waterfalls. Biggest of them was Skogafoss which was beautiful and you could walk near to it's showering water mist...you needed to be carefull because the ground was covered by big icy pearls. The spring was a little bit late and everything was covered by ice. Next time I'm going to walk up to the hill too, now we didn't have time enough.
- Seljandafoss and other smaller waterfalls next to it would have needed much more time. Unfortunately we had only 20 minutes and in that time you could barely take a foto and walk back to the buss. I will certainly visit that place again. Beautiful place and again one example of the nature power. That was easily seen in every place we visited. The enormous forces of nature around us make us think about our smallness

Saturday 25.3.2023 Presentation, Certificates and optional studies

- On Saturday 25.3.2023 we had our last meeting with the whole course, all 130 participants and coordinators together. We had our presentation we had made with smaller groups and we got our certificates. I think I need more time to be able to take advantage of everything I have seen, experienced, learned and understood. This week has been so full of everything and I will certainly put what I have learned into use in my own work. The first thing I'm going to do is organize the photos and study the slides we went through in the lectures. I have already told my colleagues and my rector about those things and I hope that we can discuss them further later and hopefully learn something from Icelandic school system and sustainability.
- In the afternoon I still had an optional study of wool, yarns and dyeing. My Icelandic colleague and friend took us to the open plant dye studio, Hespera, where I learned about the old tradition of plant dyeing. I had to buy some beautiful dyed Lettlopi yarn for my knitting project.
- Then we visited in the mini mill Uppspuni. They make 100% Icelandic wool yarn from their own sheeps. There I learned how wool becomes a yarn. And now I would love to have my own sheep to have my own wool yarn. I have 2 dogs and I got some yarn of their fur and dyed and knitted a sweater of it but now I need to learn how to make the yarn by my self.
- Last place was the Secret lagoon. It is a man-made pool fed by naturally occurring hot springs located at **Hverahólmur**, the geothermal area next to the village of Flúðir in southern Iceland. It is the oldest pool in the country, and one of the most popular for locals and tourists alike. We were lucky because there was only 1 bus on the parking place when we went there. It was spacy enough to us and we relaxed there maybe one hour.
- Thank you all for this experience, I will go back to Iceland for sure! I still have a lot to learn and experience.
- Ps. Did you know that the Nordic house was designed by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto?

Alvar Aalto; The Nordic house



The Secret Lagoon



On the way back home

Hekla

