



Trailing Diversity

The multi-cultural dimension of our societies is expressed in many different ways and forms. The 'footprints' of other cultures are everywhere so that very often we don't even notice them. This activity allows participants to trail the signs of multi-culturalism and to take a new look at the social environment around them.

Issues addressed

- We live in an interdependent world: our countries are dependent on each other.
- In every society we find clues to the presence of different cultures.
- The relationship between different cultures and the recognition that their mutual influence on each other enriches both.

Aims

- To enable participants to identify the influences of other cultures on their own society and contributions they make.
- To value the influences positively.

Time

Part A: planning the activity: 30 minutes

Part B: trailing: 2 - 2 1/2 hours.

Part C: reporting back: 1 hour

Part D: the exhibition (Optional): If you are able to collect pictures, films, recordings etc. you will need to allow extra time for the preparation of the exhibition.

Group size

A minimum of 10 and a maximum of 25 people.

Preparation

- For part **A** you will need paper, pens and flip charts and markers of different colours.
- For part **B** the materials required will depend on the resources available. Ideally video recorders or cameras and tape recorders may be used. However, if these are not available, participants may simply make a list of the "footprints" that they came across.
- For part **D** if the participants are able to take photos or tape recordings you should arrange a space and time for these to be displayed and heard.

Instructions

Part A: Planning

1. Split the participants into groups with a maximum of six people per group.
2. Tell each group that they are to explore their local environment (village, city district, town) and look for "footprints" from other countries and cultures

and to make a list of their findings and document them through pictures, sound recordings, video, etc. (or simply make a list, if the groups are short of resources).

3. Brain-storm some of the areas where people might look for the “footprints”:

Gastronomy: foods and spices from other cultures which are now used in their own cooking, restaurants from abroad, drinks, etc.

Garments and fashion: clothes which originally came from other countries and cultures, shoes or clothes made abroad and imported, etc.

Music: Check the music programmes on FM radio stations. Listen for music from other countries in public places such as coffee bars, pubs and discos. Look out for any places, which specialise in music from certain areas or countries.

Mass media: compare different TV channels for foreign programmes incorporated into their schedules.

Language: words from the other countries, which we use in our daily lives.

Part B: Trailing

1. Ask the groups to plan a time during the next week when they can spend 2 hours exploring their environment (village, city district, town etc.) and look for “footprints” from other countries and cultures.

Part C: Presentation

1. Ask each group to present the conclusions of their research and make a brief summary of the things they found.
2. Help the participants prepare an exhibition with the documentation they made of the “footprints”. This will help them get a global vision of the collective work done during part B.

Debriefing and evaluation

The presentations should finish with a discussion. You can facilitate the evaluation with questions like:

- Were there any surprises?
- What is the significance of the fact that there are so many “footprints” from other countries and cultures around us?
- How do we value the fact that there is a growing knowledge about other cultures and societies, even when this knowledge is partial or very superficial?
- What does this knowledge bring us?
- What limits does it have?
- Would it be useful to increase it?
- How could we do that?
- Could you detect any patterns or trends in the ‘footprints’?
- Do more come from some countries rather than from others?
- Why is that?

Tips for the facilitator

It is very important that you motivate the groups so that they enjoy the activity. For example, you could stimulate people by comparing the research to a detective story, a voyage of discovery or an adventure.

It is also important to stress that the research is supposed to be a collective effort.

In the discussion try to draw out:

- That we live in an interdependent world and that our countries are dependent on each other. In every society we always find evidence of the presence of different cultures.
- The technological and communication revolution provides us with enormous possibilities for mutual exchange and knowledge.
- The relationship between different cultures and their mutual influence on each other enriches both.
- The contributions from each culture should be valued as such and not in the context of the country or society from which they originally come.

If possible, and if the participants agree, you may invite people from other countries or cultures (related to the findings) to visit the exhibition, for example a disk-jockey from a radio station, somebody from a local minority association, somebody working in a shop etc.

Suggestions for follow up

You might like to share your exhibition with others. Have an open evening and invite people from local groups and organisations.

It is easy to accept the things we like from other cultures such as food and drink, but often the people who come are not so welcome. What happens when your neighbours have different customs and habits and are not so easy to get on with? You can explore some of the issues in 'In our block' (page 93).

Alternatively, if you are interested in what may happen when different cultures meet, you might like to try the simulation game 'The island' (page 98).