Report from the 15th Bridging anges international conference.

During September 9-13, the 15th Annual Conference was held in Estonian National Museum, Tartu, Estonia. The conference brought together Time Travel specialists and those interested in Time Travel (TT) in order to discuss best practices and to share experiences. Delegates of the conference came from Hungary, South Africa, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, Sweden and Estonia.

The topic of the conference, "FREEDOM to/in Time Travel", explored the questions: does this method give us the freedom to talk about problematic or taboo topics in modern society and can we contribute to our society by doing so?

During two conference days, best practices were discussed and stories of experiences were exchanged. The question of how to deal with different problems in society using the TT method was adressed. Examples were given including the Integration Project in Finland, TT to the year 2068 in Sweden and an example on how to fight against gender-based violence in Tanzania. And much more. The discussions were sharp, enjoyable and lively.

The keynote speakers focused on different perspectives of freedom and heritage.
Marten Kaevats from the Government Office of Estonia focused his presentation on the possibilities of the digital society. He explored the topics of creating safe sharing spaces for new ideas and the benefits that can be gained in applying the already existing technologies at the global level.
Merilin Piipuu (right photo) from the Estonian Cultural Ministry was discussing the meaning of freedom and asked: Can we put freedom into a museum?
The process of transforming the Museum of Occupations to the Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom was presented as an example.
Johanna Björkholm from the National Expert Committee of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Finland focused on intangible cultural heritage. Citing on the recent Unesco convention for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage. She emphasised on two aspects – knowing how and knowing what so as to gain a practical knowledge of the traditional culture and increase awareness of it.

The Time Travel event on the second day of the conference, took us back to the year 1869, some months before the first Song Festival took place in Tartu. The peasants of Erastvere manor came together to talk about how to plan the trip to Tartu and discuss why women are not welcome to perform in the public event. The journalists, couriers, pastors and schoolteachers from abroad joined them, as their task was to write about the local culture.

The post-conference study trip took us to Setomaa – a land rich with history. Where, after the Second World War, some of the Seto people were living in Estonia and the others lived in the Russian side. Seto people are famous for their colourful national clothes and the noteworthy silver jewellery of Seto women. They are also known for the Seto leelo – a multi-tone singing tradition. In 2009, UNESCO added the Seto leelo to the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
On top of that, one member of the group – Pernilla Lundström, the birthday girl - was dressed up as Seto at the Obinitsa Museum, wearing all the wonderful silver jewellery. Also, the local women demonstrated how the Seto leelo sounds.

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