Planetary internships and cultural diversity

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Introduction

Of many academic curricula internships have become an integral part. This is indicative of the general development of universities into institutes not so much of higher learning, but much more of applied science. In general, universities do not have this role anymore of being the sensors of future trends and imperatives. They are not anymore the testing grounds and the deliberation arena's on how the future should be molded. They have become practical, serving the needs of industrial society. But look how immediately after this practical turn the needs of industrial society prove to be much more than just practical material needs. Our problem, the problem of present-day society is not so much that we have to work efficiently, of course we must. But much more pressing has become the urge to work together, to cooperate. Much more pressing also has become the urge that young people grow to their full potential and are indeed capable of cooperating effectively, investing in their work all the capacities which constitute them as human beings and being human. Suddenly institutes of higher learning are confronted with the question, not only what they teach their students, but also how they train and educate them as capable professionals and full human beings. Internships urge this question upon institutions of higher learning. Internships function as turning points from applied science to training of human capacities.

This is the development I want to explore in this contribution. To that end I will describe the role of internships at the technical University Delft in general, but with a focus on the internships in developing countries in which I am involved as internship coordinator and supervisor. These internships require from students that they do not only apply in practical situations what they have learned, but much more that they are capable of dealing with the social environment in which their technological expertise is meant to function. In development contexts, in addition, they also have to deal with communication across cultural differences and barriers. I will explain what kind of preparation they receive in order to do this, and how I apply the grammatical method of Rosenstock-Huessy in the preparation and supervision of these internships. I will end with some deliberations (and questions) on how this might be reinforced and taken further and extended.

Practical internships

In the Dutch society there is a clear demarcation line (although it also constitutes a continuing process) indicating the transition from critical learning to practical learning. After 1982 and in response to and an economic crisis budgets were cut and academic curricula were shortened to only four years, with an exception for the engineering sciences, which kept a duration of five years (and also there was an exception for the medical sciences as well as theology - one could ask why these…). This was done with strong support from the employers who were - in reaction to the 70s - fed up with all those critical and arrogant employees who entered their companies with a critical attitude and new everything better. They felt, that they could train them better and mold them according to the requirements, necessities and practical interests of their organizations. At the same time the already growing influence of labor organizations on university curricula was reinforced once more and along these lines having internships as part of the curricula became more the rule than the exception. But this peak point so to say of universities turning into institutes of practical learning, turning all sciences, including the humanities, into practical tools, has been highly ambiguous from the beginning. At first glance it might seem as if the students were teached to apply the scientific knowledge as a tool to solve practical problems, and of course that is often how these internships have been sold. But at the same time and often hidden to the proponents of those internships, they also served the goal of molding the students into the social environment of their future work, i.e. to socialize them. They should fit into the existing professional habits and codes of behavior of their future jobs. With this silently another learning goal was introduced, which goes beyond academic science as such, i.e. socialization and personal development.

Although in the beginning this was done implicitly and almost unnoticeable, the lack of proper socialization, the lack of proper capabilities and capacities to do the job, primarily bad communicative skills, urged the institutions of higher learning to give more explicit attention to these aspects of internship experiences. This movement, together with the lack of adequate behavioral capacities for many students, has grown to such an extent that in many vocational but also higher learning institutes competencies have become the central focus of learning. The term competences is indicative of keeping the middle ground between knowledge and human qualities. A person is competent, when he can apply his knowledge effectively, but even more competent if he or she can do that in a socially appropriate way, which involves all

kinds of human qualities like: being able to listen to somebody else, finding the right moment to speak and be silent, going along or taking a stand, being able to perform, etc. In many curricula students are required to upkeep a personal learning log, and keep the records of what they want to learn in respect to strong and weak points in their social behavior (like to be too uncertain, too direct, too shy or arrogant etc.). What I want to point out is that this type of learning already goes wide beyond academic learning, although it still is incorporated in it as the dominant discourse. But behind that veil implicitly or explicitly much more is going on than meets the academic eye.

All sorts of training on the job have also become part and parcel of the daily functioning of organizations. Communication and cooperation in this respect are keywords. Some of these training modules concentrate on different psychological types to deal with, other training courses focus on authenticity and open communication in order to make cooperation more easy and there are also many feel-good trainings, in which the participants may not learn much, but are well entertained during a few days far away from their jobs, which may promote a good atmosphere and better teamwork. The focus of most of these training courses is on making energy free among the participants in order to better deal with the requirements of the job and of the organization. Mutual understanding, jobs which give a sense of self-fulfillment, open communication, all these more or less serve this same goal. The problem of present-day organizations is not so much that people have to work, but that people have to work together, have to cooperate. But by and large these trainings make energy free which is spent on already given goals. Organizations do feel the necessity to have their members learn to work together, they do not yet see the necessity of having their members pose the question: work together on what? Where do we come from, where do we go?

Intercultural internships

In comparison with the general state of the art of internships and training modules the development towards intercultural internships means - or can mean - taking things a step further. Students like the adventure of going to a faraway country with a totally different culture. It also gives them a sense of being the primary responsible person for the project they have to work on, without direct supervision and interference from their teachers. In addition, they can show that they can really make a contribution to the improvement of living circumstances in developing countries. Nevertheless, they have to cope with often difficult circumstances and very different cultural habits, codes of behavior and values. This takes

some thorough preparation. And this preparation does not only involve anymore communicative abilities, but also sensitivity and training in dealing with cultural differences. These cultural differences appear in the different attitudes, norms and values, characteristics and qualities of the people involved. But these cultural differences, which appear in the social space of communication, also have a time dimension in that they are culturally informed and directly or indirectly rooted in more or less religious traditions. The spatial perspective (cultural differences and human qualities/types) turns into a time perspective (different traditions and histories).

On top of this the students on internships now have to prioritize these different cultural values according to time and circumstances in their projects. This introduces the future dimension. I will give some examples how these cultural differences and related traditions show up in different projects the students are involved in and I will show that this historical perspective also calls for a sense of urgency, or what Rosenstock-Huessy would call listening to the right imperative in order to make the right choice between the different priorities. But before I go into that let me further illustrate the step further this preparation for intercultural internships takes as compared to the usual training in communication. The usual training in communication can be described as in figure 1.

Inside: communication

Outside: effective cooperation

Fig.1.
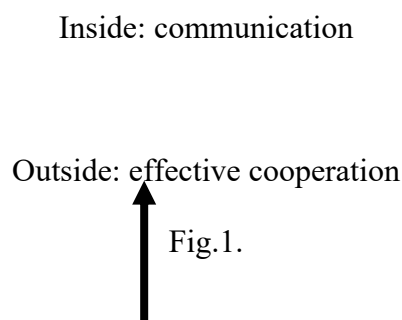
For effective cooperation the different stakeholders in the process need to communicate. Usually communication trainings help the staff of a given organization to have more commitment to each other, listen better, take the different contributions from each other into account etc., all in order to have a bigger impact on the realities of the outside world in terms of results and production.

Cultural differences, however, cannot anymore be reduced to coincidental different characteristics of different persons, but they need a larger time perspective. In addition it is necessary to sort out which cultural code should at which point in time receive priority. This can be illustrated in the following figure (figure 2).

Inside: communication

History, tradition, values   Imperatives, priorities

Outside: effective cooperation

Fig. 2.

In other words: effective cooperation across cultural differences takes the operation of the full cross of reality. In order to effectively cooperate (outside), communication is necessary (inside) about different historically constituted values constituting human behavior (past) and having a feeling of timing for the right priority at a given place and time (future). The needs of the outside world have to be supplemented and corrected by the necessities and imperatives of the future. The important thing is not so much that this approach to intercultural internships "proves" that Rosenstock-Huessy is right or that the cross of reality is applicable to these internships. What is important about it lies in the fact that orientation on past and future becomes an unavoidable necessity also for effective cooperation. This is extremely important, because it shows that orientation on past and future, the full cross of reality, is becoming indispensable in order to get the work done. Our industrial society has a long tradition of blinding off this broader perspective of human orientation and destination. Slowly during the last 40 or 50 years the communicative dimension, claiming respect and valuing each other's contributions, has become indispensable for effective cooperation. The intercultural debate forces us to make the historical dimension (values) and the future dimension (imperatives and priorities) an indispensable part of such communication. In this process slowly but surely labor organizations are becoming integrated into the full time perspective of the human race, thereby translating religious history into social history. The so-called secularization in which spiritual orientations, organized in separate church institutions apart from labor organizations, are slowly disappearing, turns out to be a form of socialization as well. The socialization of secularized society requires the orientation by the spirit (tradition plus imperatives) as an indispensable precondition for effective labor.

Already the setup of these internships gives a perspective on this development. Most of the students participate in an internship as part of a minor of half a year during their bachelor

study. In this half year minor they are prepared during a period of three months for these internships by following courses on the history of development policies, intercultural communication and project management including a business plan. I myself teach a course on "communication and cultural diversity" in which I present the present debate on intercultural communication from a time perspective inspired by Rosenstock-Huessy. Role games and interpretation of practical cases are an integral part of this course. The intercultural debate in the Netherlands, but to a high degree also outside, has been framed by two sociologists from Dutch origin, Hofstede and Trompenaars[1], who did a lot of research on cultural differences. Putting their work together would give us the following list of cultural differences as a sort of rough grid to which they subject to all different cultures. This list is the following:

- High versus low *power distance* (mental gap felt when dealing with people from other social ranks or strata)

- Individualism versus *collectivism* (focus lying primarily on individual or group/family responsibilities)

- High versus low *uncertainty avoidance* when dealing with novel unknown situations challenge or threat

- Masculinity versus *femininity* (performance orientation and strong gender differences versus care orientation and weak gender differences)

- Short- versus long-term *orientation* (time horizon utilized for making decisions).

- Universalist versus *particularist cultures* (are cases judged more on their contents and substantial merits or on who is implicated and personal affiliations?)

- Neutral versus *affective cultures* (are emotional neutrality and analytical rationality or the intuition of primary feelings held in higher esteem when making choices and judging cases?)

- Specific versus *diffuse cultures* (do people generally tend to separate roles from persons or are they inextricably intertwined?)

- Achievement versus *ascription oriented cultures* (are people mostly evaluated by what they have performed/achieved in life as an individual or by their family, tribal, educational or professional background?)

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[1] Hofstede, Geert (1997): *Cultures and Organizations; Software of the Mind*, Mc Graw Hill, New York); Trompenaars, F, and Hampden-Turner, C., (1999) *Riding the Waves of Culture*, London, Brealey.

- Sequential versus *synchronic cultures* (are people more comfortable with doing tasks in a sequential manner or by taking on several activities in parallel?)

- Voluntarist or internally controlled versus *fatalist or externally controlled cultures* (do people feel they can intervene in and control their environment or do they feel subjected to its contingencies?)[2]

As most sociologists do, Hofstede and Trompenaars as well do not have much attention for history and tradition. They find these cultural differences as a matter of fact in space. What I teach the students is the fact that these differences in space can only be understood if they are referred back to long-lasting histories which are not easy to change, either tribal or imperial cultures or a combination of both in addition to the Western deviation, which pushed back tribal anti-imperial organization by creating space for free association of individuals apart from family loyalties and state authorities.[3] Cultures with in imperial or tribal background often have high power distance, strong collectivism, they are particularistic (treating people on the basis of trust relations and not on the basis of universal rules and rules) ascription oriented (status based on age and position, not on achievement) etc. Where a developed civil society is lacking and tribal traditions are strong, like in Africa, collectivist groups based on tribal loyalties, but also political loyalties, clientele systems or patronage systems, organized by selective trust hamper open collaboration and competition, thereby also standing in the way of effective economic development.

Some examples of planetary internships

Egypt

One of my students, Amir Mahran,[4] went to Egypt within the framework of a master thesis study. He himself had an Egyptian background and, as it appeared at the exam, he was even a pious Muslim: right after his examination and some drinks (no alcohol) it was prayer time and the whole family spread carpets and bent for prayer, at least the males. Nevertheless,

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[2] It would be very instructive to relate this list of sociological differences to the social history of Rosenstock-Huessy and the cross of reality. I did this in *Leven in Organisatie, ethiek, communicatie, spiritualiteit*; Skandalon, Vught, www.skandalon.nl. The book is waiting for an English-language publisher.

[3] Wiarda, Howard J., (2003): *Civil Society -- the American model and third world development*, University of Massachusetts; Stackhouse, M.L., (1984), *Creeds, Society and Human Rights, Study in Three Cultures*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan

[4] Mahran, A., (2007) *Cross-Cultural Collaboration in Arabic Construction Projects; an exploration in claims, conflicts and delay,* Master Thesis

he was raised in the Netherlands, spoke fluently Dutch, and as part of his study on architecture he paid a visit to Egypt and saw that in building procedures and habits things were done quite differently over there. During his stay back home in Egypt he was called "the Dutchman" by some of his colleagues, because they could identify him by means of his fast walking rhythm. Real Egyptians wouldn't walk like that. By talking to the people on the work he discovered, that in general the engineers were from foreign, Western, companies, to which the projects had been entrusted, but that the subcontractors and workers mostly were Egyptians. His impression was that many cultural misunderstandings caused delays in delivery of the projects and made costs increase. This is what he wanted to study in his master thesis, in order to prevent it. He did an extensive literature study on cultural differences. As part of that he went for two months to Egypt to visit projects, follow the management of those projects, talk to people and observe how things were dealt with.

From his extensive study on the literature about intercultural communication and cultural differences he came up with four characteristics that stood out. These were: differences in time orientation, in the concept of negotiation, hierarchies and protocols, and dealing with conflicts. As to differences in time orientation he mentioned a project with a timeframe of two months, which was considered to be very short. The Egyptian project manager however did not worry about it. The Egyptians generally are synchronic in dealing with time, doing things in an unorganized way. Often this type of behavior fails to make the deadline. In return Egyptian contractors became irritated by the sequential time management of Dutch engineers on this project. For instance, a request of the local engineer to a Dutch engineer to look into a technical specification he needed, was postponed, because the Dutch engineer first had to finish his own assignment. In an Egyptian office constantly people are walking in and out, asking questions etc. The Dutch, by contrast, are used to e-mailing. The negotiation style of the Arabs relies more on establishing personal relationships of trust, whereas the Dutch engineers are more formal and tend to put the matters on which there is difference on the table explicitly. This may prepare the ground for conflicts, but the Dutch engineers in turn would try to gain confidence by making small concessions in the beginning of the negotiation process. If there is disagreement or dissatisfaction about a specific course of events, the collectivist attitude of the Arabs tries to avoid making a point of it. If materials delivered for instance do not meet the specifications they may give a hint that something is not okay, but they will not make explicit that something has gone wrong, and they try to avoid and postpone the conflict. But in the end, if it is unavoidable because things go wrong, then

often the conflict is not manageable anymore. In addition, the bureaucracy and hierarchical relationships can be a nuisance in getting things done. People need to be treated respectfully or otherwise they can seriously hinder the ongoing work on the project. In one case municipal inspectors came by making a lot of fuss on particular details which in their opinion were not in order, but the project manager, who sensed that they wanted to make trouble, invited them in, treated them as aristocrats, but at the same time mentioned the name of some high official inside their municipal service as a friend of his. The inspectors left the site respectfully and everybody turned to his business.

Although being an Egyptian himself, Amir proposed a twofold solution. Firstly, the Dutch engineers would have to understand the culture of the Egyptians in order not make a rude impression and operate more tactfully. But secondly, he felt that Egyptian culture needed a change in order to meet deadlines more efficiently, make internal criticism part of the process, make better plans in advance and stick to them. In order to reach this result more smoothly he suggested that the project managers should be more proactive, intervening in an early stage, making clear why particular procedures and deadlines are important and being more involved in communication about the process instead of assuming that things went okay until all of a sudden things went wrong.

Kenya

One of our master students, Max Tack, conducted a study in Kenya on strategic niche management and the impact of cultural characteristics on it.[5] He did an internship at Sunrays Solar, a medium-sized solar energy Company in Kenya and conducted many deep interviews about the present situation of solar energy in Kenya, its future prospects and especially the possibilities of strategic niche management. Strategic niche management aims at the creation of a protected environment to help a new technology to enter the market. It first entails creating *networks* of cooperation, secondly *learning processes* within those networks and thirdly stimulating *expectations* so that the new technology can be welcomed. Our student concentrated on the creation of networks, because already in this phase strategic niche management is difficult in Kenya. This is caused by the general lack of cooperation and because of a climate of selective trust. Specific cultural characteristics, which have a long tradition in tribal Africa, may explain the situation. In the first place in Kenya there is a strong

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[5] Tack, M., (2010), *Actor Network Development in Strategic Niche Management*; *Analysis in the field of Solar Energy in Kenya,* Master Thesis, TUDelft.

collectivist attitude, which means, that generally people are part of closed we groups. This can be the tribe or clan, or a patronage or clientele system, but also a company or a governmental organization or an NGO. There is competition, but no cooperation. The consequence of this attitude is that competing companies do not cooperate in efforts to enlarge the market, for instance by organizing an advertisement campaign together. In addition there is no cooperation within the sector to put in place regulations and agreements in order to maintain the quality of the products. Instead the sectoral organization has set high fees for membership, thereby making it difficult for new companies to enter the market. The lack of regulation, on the other hand, makes it easy for "crook companies" to spoil the market by selling bad products, which lie idle after a while. This is again detrimental to the reputation of solar energy in general, because the technology itself gets blamed instead of the bad organization and management. Secondly in Kenya there is strong *particularism*, which means that generally not rules but relationships are important and, in addition, affective relationships, like and dislike, preclude neutral and role dependent behavior. People of high status, or of the same group, or simply people who know each other and trust each other, receive a preferential treatment. This also affects the regulatory body of the government, which has been called into being recently. It is important to have access to high status government officials in order to keep the company going, because it is easy for the bureaucracy to create obstacles for companies for instance by postponing their license etc. This means that some big players, who are well related to politicians, actually control the market. Customers too find their way to companies via personal relationships. They do not trust a company, but they trust a person. If this person shifts to another company, his customers will follow. There is no anonymous trust like one can expect in a situation where everybody plays by the rules and treats everybody on an equal footing. Thirdly *status* usually is derived from the position within a company or group, not by achievement or by labor. Usually this also means that employees work on their status within the group and their relation with the boss more than concentrating on performance and on work and labor. Not much attention is given to maintain good relations with the users. In the fourth place *sequential* dealing with time, i.e. planning and looking forward, is not strongly developed. From their side users too do not bother about a maintenance contract. Of course it costs money and future days will take care of future problems. Apart from lack of cooperation and of networking between users and companies, there is also lack of cooperation with knowledge institutes.[6] There is strong *traditionalism*

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[6] This again is related to the lack of a well-developed civil society, see Kasfir, N. (1998), *Civil Society and*

which means that things remain as they are and as a consequence, even if there are problems, nobody takes the initiative and everybody is inclined to remain waiting. People recognize that there would be much benefit in having knowledge institutes like universities involved in the development of solar energy, if asked. But they are inclined to wait for the other (any other) party to start. Traditionalism and *fatalism* are closely connected. And collectivism prevents people to go against the group and start something new. *Creativity* means loneliness. Initiative too. In this regard also another cultural characteristic is involved, i.e. *uncertainty avoidance*. Facing uncertainty of course means to face an unknown future and often implies to go a lonely way forward into novelty. Generally people are inclined to avoid situations in which they do not know for certain how to deal with it. One might do something wrong. Generally the cultural characteristics summarized here and described by our master student in his interviews belong to closed in-group societies like tribal and agrarian societies, not to open markets and to open civil society oriented societies.

This leads to a situation in which it is difficult to implement strategic niche management, because the first step, network formation is slow. This in turn prevents learning experiences to take their course and finally this does not stimulate the increase of expectations. It is to be mentioned, however, that also in Kenya a continuous struggle is going on to create a more open society, open cooperation and anonymous trust. This struggle is going on both on the state level and on the level of society.

South Africa: The Ubuntu Company

The Ubuntu Company, better known as the Plakkies factory, was recently founded nearby the Durban townships in South Africa. This factory produces Plakkies, which is the "Afrikaanse" word for flip-flops. These fashionable as well as sustainable flip-flops have been launched on the Dutch market in May 2009 and became the Dutch summer hype of that year. Two students of the Delft University of Technology, Arnoud Rozendaal (Aerospace Engineering) and Michel Boerrigter (Industrial Design) together with Robert Baruch, board member of the Dutch non-profit organization KidsRights, set up from scratch a unique and socially responsible factory that manufactures Plakkies. The profits made by The Ubuntu Company are donated to local AIDS orphan projects supervised by KidsRights. Most of the

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Democracy in Africa, Critical Perspectives, Routledge, New York. Why there is a strong civil society in the West (and in different versions, the term *civil society* primarily pointing to the Anglo-Saxon context), finds its explanation in the work of Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution – Autobiography of Western Man*, Argo Books, New York (original 1938).

(female) workers of The Ubuntu Company are HIV infected and they receive medical treatment from The Ubuntu Company. Inspired by the local community that makes sandals out of worn tires, the sole of the Plakkies is made out of old car tires. Thanks to the Plakkies factory these tires are collected and re-used again. The Plakkies have a fashionable look. Arnoud Rozendaal also spent his internship to this initiative, traveling many times to and from South Africa.[7]

What started as an ambitious idea on paper, would grow in just one year to a modern factory in Durban South Africa. In February 2009 production started with an output of less then 10 Plakkies a day. Within only 4 months this factory evolved to production of 800 pairs a day and employs 70 underprivileged inhabitants from the Durban townships. After many years of unemployment this job brings back their dignity and gives them a chance to work on their future again. With the salary each employee on average takes care of himself and 10 others, thus 700 people are directly profiting from this factory!

On May 13, the Plakkies' market introduction was held on the busy Dam Square in the centre of Amsterdam, what was said to be the biggest launch of a new flip-flop brand ever on the Dutch market. The show was opened with a video message of the Minister of Development Cooperation Bert Koenders and the Minister of Economic Affairs Frank Heemskerk, as they opened the factory a day earlier.

Business model and management style

The Ubuntu Company has a unique business model, which creates a bridge between traditional and modern values.

The South African culture shows aspects of particularism as well as universalism. On one hand trust and personal relations play an important role, on the other hand due to its Apartheid history – in which ethnic inequalities were defined in strict rules - there is nowadays a strong want for equality, universalism and regulation. The rules of The Ubuntu Company are therefore permanently hung up in the production hall. Simple and clear rights and equality are underlined.

> "Employees have the following rights:
> - Right to be heard

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[7] Rozendaal, A. (2009), *The Ubuntu Company*, Internship Report; Kroesen, O and Rozendaal, A., (2010), *A Cross-Cultural Management System : The Ubuntu Company as Paradigm*, Int. J. Technology, Policy and Management, Vol. 10 no. 3 pp. 284-298.

- Right to cross examination
- Right to call witnesses
- Right of appeal…"

The particularistic attitude of South African culture often results in subordinating production to personal attention. A friend paying a visit means that – despite deadlines – the work stops and the visitor gets all attention. The consequence is discontinuity in production. On paper the consequences of transgressing the rules are severe:

"Desertion form the workplace →1st Offence: Dismissal"
Late for work →   1st Offence: written warning;
                                   2nd Offence: final written warning;
                                   3rd offence: Dismissal"
Sleeping on the job →   1st Offence: final warning;
                                   2nd Offence: Dismissal"

In theory this should lead to strict and equal treatment. In practice however many times the rules are offended. Sometimes people are late, then again somebody is not on the working place and such without permission. It's the daily dynamics. Thanks to the building up of bonds of loyalty between management and employees however this behaviour does not lead to neglect of the rules.

The management style of The Ubuntu Company is not only characterized by personal relationships, but also by authority. Tribal traditions require strong leadership. This is most strongly articulated with the Zulu. The Ubuntu Company employs mainly Zulu as 60% of the Durban population is of Zulu origin. This has been a warrior tribe with a very disciplined and hierarchical tribal tradition. The particularistic character of South African culture in addition requires a very personal style of leadership. The Production Manager – in command of the shop floor – is selected for and also trained in his capacity of building up bonds of loyalty with the employees. This creates more commitment. They feel they are more than only cogs in the machine. This is stimulating for the motivation and in the long-term it creates a company culture in which individuals are loyal to the community of the company.

Of primary importance in overcoming these obstacles to the creation of loyalty is the role of the Production Manager. It is essential, that in the first place he receives respect on the basis of his age. But in addition such respect should raise to a higher level on the basis of an

attitude of servant leadership[8]. He should be looked upon as somebody to learn from. He strives to a win-win situation, has a keen eye for his personnel, he still works when everybody is already going home, he provides meals and medical support if necessary. He is an example. He leads by serving. He doesn't merely receive respect because of his title or function, but on the basis of his behaviour, what he says and does. Such a bond of loyalty reaches its peak, if in turn the manager can ask something back from his employees, such as working longer in case of deadlines. It is this kind of management which is trained and exercised at The Ubuntu Company.

As it is the explicit goal to hand over The Ubuntu Company entirely to the South African population, it is important that from day one onwards a feeling of ownership is promoted. This is realized by means of the Work Council. The management involves the employees in the daily affairs by discussing issues like the length of pauses, milk on Friday or not etc. The employees are stimulated to give their own opinion. Because of the collectivist South African culture often people do not speak out individually, but give a group opinion. Nevertheless developing an individual judgment is essential also for discussing bigger issues with the employees in the future. For this reason a Suggestion Box is installed. It remained empty during the first months of production, like expected. But slowly employees start to depose ideas in it anonymously. These ideas vary from a new colour for the Plakkies to the proposal to have music on the shop floor. It is a first step and will eventually result in increasing loyalty as the employees have become owners.

Successful production requires close teamwork. Because of the large majority of Zulu people in Durban most of the employees belong to the same tribe. Nevertheless cooperation remains difficult, because everybody is from a different family and clan. From the first day onwards subgroups came into existence on the base of sub-ethnicity, Zulu became the first language and the rest had to adapt. Clans living on the hills felt superior to clans living in the valley. Colleagues may refuse to communicate in a different language. In order to remove the barriers between the subgroups The Ubuntu Company introduced uniform clothing, group bonuses and circulation of labor groups by workstations. By means of labour circulation the subgroups are split up and mixed.

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[8] Greenleaf, R. K. (1977) *Servant Leadership: a Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Paulist Press, New Jersey; Jaworski, J., Flowers, B.S. and Senge, P.M. (1996) *Synchronicity, The Inner Path of Leadership*, San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers.

Summarizing, The Ubuntu Company tries to find a middle way between traditional and modern values. There is hierarchy, power distance and strong leadership, but there is also an open ear for the employees, a stimulus to express a personal judgment and to be involved as co-owner of the company. There is collectivism and tribal loyalty, and this is recognized, but there is also job circulation, learning processes overcoming tribal cleavages and building up of solidarity and loyalty, even pride: pride on the company they are part of and also pride because they are part of the realization of the promise of Mandela to create a unified South Africa. There is command and control, but there is also commitment and servant leadership, transparently communicating with the employees and building up lasting bonds of loyalty.

Servant leadership also comes to the fore in the role of the Dutch initiator, who still was a student in Aerospace Engineering, but who maintained daily contact with the Production Manager in South Africa. In his negotiations with third parties in South Africa itself he, being the younger person, even had to play a role subordinate to the Production Manager, whilst at the same time silently advising him, only for the sake of success not making him lose face and remaining in the background. Being on it every day, sometimes with clarity and pushing, other times with tact and patience - this in itself requires an attitude of servant leadership, in which leadership doesn't mean so much authority, but taking the initiative and doing the one thing necessary now, whatever it is.

Conclusion: about the practice and the preaching

At the end I would like to face the question, whether the examples which I mentioned really do practice the approach I preached in the first half of my contribution. Maybe they still fall short of the large perspectives evoked in that part. I would like to make three points. In the first place in the examples mentioned (and I could have mentioned many more) much more is going on than just having committed students doing something practical. Many work camps and international service exchange initiatives, which try to do something practical and help people abroad, forget or do not pay attention to the growth of young people participating in such initiatives to their full potential. There should be challenging tasks and participants should have opportunities to grow in responsibility, commitment and insight. What young people should be involved in is not only collective service, but also individual and personalizing responsibilities and challenges. They should not only work, but also be an actor in the process. When they come home they should not only have a personal experience of service and commitment and a sense of the suffering and misery in so many places in the

world, but they should also have become bigger than they were before both in terms of taking initiative and responsibility and also of being able to interpret their experiences within a larger framework. I think that is the minimum requirement of providing young people with international and intercultural experience. They should not be just planetary man in terms of being involved in faraway and different situations, but they should also become planetary human beings in terms of being acquainted with the manyfold and pluriform cultural achievements of all humanity.[9] That is point number one. Secondly, yes, these internships do for their part contribute to that goal. They do give students a sense of being uniquely challenged and responsible, they do give students the experience of different cultural characteristics and lifestyles, and values. They also "force" students to participate in the dialogue of all humanity about the priorities and imperatives of the moment which make us choose according to time and place for different values, cultural qualities etc. They learn to speak and become multilingual. They learn that such communication about cultural priorities is conditional to effective implementation of technology, like my examples show. Thirdly, no, these internships do not meet the requirements of the goals set in the first part of this contribution. Some students make it themselves to easy, they think they just help people and show that they can do something with their technological knowledge, they have a nice holiday-like experience of three months in a different context, they only go superficially into the complexities and sensitivities of dealing with another culture and another context and sometimes they actually always have remained at home in their own culture. Three months is only a short time. But even these students often discover in the end, that they would have done better or differently, had they been "better prepared" for the other culture in which they have to operate. They don't believe the books. They don't believe their teachers. But confronted with misunderstandings, failures, and even more confronted by the lack of receptiveness on the side of the other culture for the beautiful solutions they have in mind, they start to think. If there are technical options which the people do not accept, or cannot deal with, because of their cultural characteristics stand in the way, then somehow these differences need to be taken seriously. Some students will say: now I know what I can expect, I would do my internship next time in a totally different way. I would not be anymore as focused on my project as I have been, but I would work in communication with the people involved from the start.

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[9] These elements of historical perspective and personal growth were an integral part of the workcamps of Rosenstock-Huessy, but much less in present-day voluntary work service.