Developing sustainability mindsets through reciprocal entrepreneurial internships: A Norwegian - South African partnership
Examples from INTPART and UTFORSK Internship programs

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Presentation – content and structure

- The Partnership: Norway and South Africa + projects (Intpart + Utforsk)
- Theory and Aims: Reciprocal Internship programs
- Research findings from one co-authored publication on SA student's cross-cultural, entrepreneurial experiences in Bergen, Norway
- Preliminary research findings: Two students' reflective cross-cultural entrepreneurial journeys:
- Paleesha: Intpart Alumni student experience and learning through internship programme + Current work/projects and reflections

Partnership Norway – South Africa, 5 Universities

- Long-term partnership between 3 Norwegian and 2 South African universities; Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Nord University the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, and Stellenbosch University and University of Pretoria.
- Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), Incubators are also partners.
- **AIMS: Engaged Scholarship, Third mission, Entrepreneurial University.**
- Research collaboration, co-authored publications on entrepreneurship education (Sanord project), 2015/16.
- INTPART-project: *Developing entrepreneurial mind-sets across cultures: A Norway – South Africa collaboration* (2019 – March 2023). Reciprocal Internship programs, comparative research, Summer School, Special Issue in SAJESBM.
- UTFORSK project: *Norwegian - South African partnership for sustainable entrepreneurial internships (SUSTENTSHIP)* (March 2023-2026).
- **Aim:** Strengthen the partnership between universities and entrepreneurial ecosystem actors in Norway and South Africa to improve quality and relevance in education enhanced by comparative research.
- **Building internship programs around** 4 partner Universities.
- Develop **sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems** around the universities through interactive learning and comparative research.

Background – Theory and Aims – Internship programs

- Entrepreneurship is a strong engine of sustainable development worldwide
- Universities are urged to invest in cross-cultural experiences and equip students with adaptable and sustainability skillsets to collaborate across borders and cultures:
    - Scholars advocate deep learning to develop sustainability mindsets;
    - Encompassing experiential learning with real-life entrepreneurship;
    - Coping with uncertainty and ambiguity and interaction with the outside world;
    - Fostering students' entrepreneurial identity, self-awareness; and
    - Ethical sensitivity, changing from value-neutral to value-driven change agents.
- International entrepreneurship internship programs - develop students' entrepreneurial learning adaptability through cross-cultural learning.

Background – Theory and Aims

- Students perform entrepreneurial tasks with an entrepreneurial start-up team and interact with ecosystem actors in a foreign country.
- Cross-cultural learning - transformational personal development
  - expand the repertoire of entrepreneurial behaviors
  - cross-cultural competence – build networks, global citizens
  - may inspire future entrepreneurial ambitions

References:

- Pidduck, R. J. (2022). The entrepreneurial advantages of experiencing foreignness: leveraging shocks for capability clusters. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*.
- Hermes, J., & Rimanoczy, I. (2018). Deep learning for a sustainability mindset. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *16*(3), 460-467.
- Kubberød, E. and Pettersen, I. B. (2018a). Entrepreneurial identity matching through cross-cultural learning. UNIPED. Year 41, No.1-2018, p.54-67
- Pettersen, Kubberød, van der Lingen, and Neethling, (2023). Students' personal growth through an internship abroad: entrepreneurial learning through cross-cultural experience, accepted for publication in SAJESBM

Paper: Students' personal growth through an internship abroad: entrepreneurial learning through cross-cultural experience

- The paper explores how cross-cultural learning in entrepreneurship exchange programs can offer students unique personal learning possibilities and outcomes
- Merging insights from Morris (2020) 's understanding of experiential learning in *rich contexts* with entrepreneurship education (EE) (Pittaway and Thorpe, 2012) and cross-cultural learning theory (Pidduck, 2022)

RQ: What are the individual learning opportunities and outcomes of rich cross-cultural learning experiences for students in terms of 1) ***personal growth*** *(Who am I, Where am I going), and 2)* ***future entrepreneurial ambitions*** *(Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy)?*

Method and research context

- Research approach phenomenology and qualitative
- Explore students' cross-cultural entrepreneurial journeys – unique lived experiences
- The internship program is situated in Bergen, the second largest city in Norway
- Performs tasks in a startup - in a team and immersed in the entrepreneurial ecosystem
- The internship program is run by Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in close collaboration with entrepreneurial ecosystem actors

Data collection and analysis

- Data was collected through two reflective sessions during the 3-month internship, functioning as a semi structured interview, conducted in a group (5 international students)
  - The first reflective session: early cultural difference encounters as well as work tasks and experiences were captured.
  - The second reflective session: personal growth through mastery and entrepreneurial self- efficacy, entrepreneurial learning and any critical incidents that challenged them to response and act/experiment
- Each interview (2 hours) was recorded with the consent of the respondent and transcribed, 4 researchers engage in coding and thematic analysis

Results – Empirical analysis

Learning about the entrepreneurial culture through the cross-cultural experience

- The students experienced the foreignness of an international internship from day one – in the internship team and by performing challenging and novel entrepreneurial tasks
- The immediate experience of cultural and entrepreneurial immersion imposed a *pragmatic active experimentation* learning on the students, followed by a *critical reflective observation* and a *contextual-specific abstract conceptualization*
- The experience of foreignness induced various degrees of self-image chocks, resulting in introspection of own self-image and identity, comparing with own culture and society, and developing entrepreneurial capabilities, ESE and identities.
- Big C's: Institutional trust, clusters, social norms underlying collaboration
- *What I've most enjoyed is how the cofounders have transferred their passion of the start up to the rest of the organization. We all come together as a team for the general wellbeing of the organization. Right after this meeting - I'm attending the career fair and I'm not attending it as a student, but as a representative of the company*. (Zandile)

Results – Empirical analysis

Embracing uncertainty and developing entrepreneurial capabilities

- Challenging and novel tasks developing their knowledge base
- Worked both independently and interactive in teams, having mentors available for questions
- The close collaboration and team orientation in the internships lowered the negative emotions of handling uncertainty and ambiguity in the entrepreneurial process
- The students gradually developed entrepreneurial capabilities and adopted the dominant social norms of working entrepreneurially – together.
- *The work tasks are characterized by uncertainty, but I can cope because I have the team support. Embracing uncertainty, forces you to go a little bit out of your comfort zone and I think I learn so much more. Sometimes we would get tasks and I don't really know what I'm supposed to do, but then we just end up jumping in - and then once we started it becomes clearer, like what direction are we supposed to go. And this is when you can also bring in your creativity and develop new skills.* (Magda)

Results – Empirical analysis

Transformational learning through self-image shocks

- All students faced to varying degrees ‘self-image shocks’ and went through a transformative learning experience during the internships
- Novel tasks, challenged the students and pushed them outside their comfort zone
- Stimulated a critical introspection about themselves, increasing self-awareness and developing an understanding of how things work, what they could do (capabilities, ESE) and who they has transformed as a person (self-image)
- The cross-cultural experience triggered a personal transformation and change in self-image
- Deep personal reflections about their personal identity,’ Who am I’ (Value Image) and ‘Where am I going’ (Trajectory Image)
- *I think I have grown, particularly in the situation of teamwork. I've learned to be a bit more of a team player, which - in retrospect - I needed to. I often consider myself a little bit of a Lone Wolf. I have run off with tasks by myself or felt I work better on my own. Sitting down with everyone and speak would frustrate me in the past, slowing down the process as I could do things faster - just by myself. In SA I've been taught all my life that it's you alone and you got to run with it. No one’s going to support you. Now, I have learned to sit with people and really consider their perspectives, I've learned to be part of a team. (George)*

Results – Empirical analysis

Can I become a future entrepreneur?

- Being immersed and being capable of performing entrepreneurially in a vibrant and competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem in a foreign country, did also stimulate to reflections about becoming an entrepreneur in the future.
- *I have developed confidence of my skills and knowledge in the entrepreneurial environment, which I really appreciate, and have become accustomed to uncertainty and risk. I can deal with uncertainty a bit more now and can rather just go with the flow and learn to identify what risks and uncertainties are acceptable and which risks and uncertainties need to be addressed. After this internship I've realized that I would and can undertake an entrepreneurial venture in the future, perhaps not only by myself, but with other people as well.* (Magda)
- *Initially I started my master's to grow in my professional career as a rail engineer, but I have now learned to apply theory and analysis tools from my master's in an entrepreneurial setting. And I have learned to cope in terms of risks and uncertainty. I've always had business ideas, but always shied away from exploring them. But now I can see myself as an entrepreneur. From this experience I have more zeal dealing with uncertainty and risk.* (Zandile)

Findings and Conclusions

- The collectivism, through teamwork and collaborative norms, contributed to building students' self-esteem and to overcome uncertainty and ambiguity in the entrepreneurial process.
- The sense of being worth and becoming more confident in the foreign startup enhanced their entrepreneurial learning capabilities.
- Performing challenging entrepreneurial tasks individually and together with the team, stimulating their own creativity and skills, and developed their entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE)
- Personal growth took place by embracing both the Norwegian and South African cultures and identifying new opportunities by building on the students' diverse background.
- Being part of a vibrant entrepreneurial environment had a positive effect on the students' entrepreneurial identity aspirations, wanting to become a future entrepreneur

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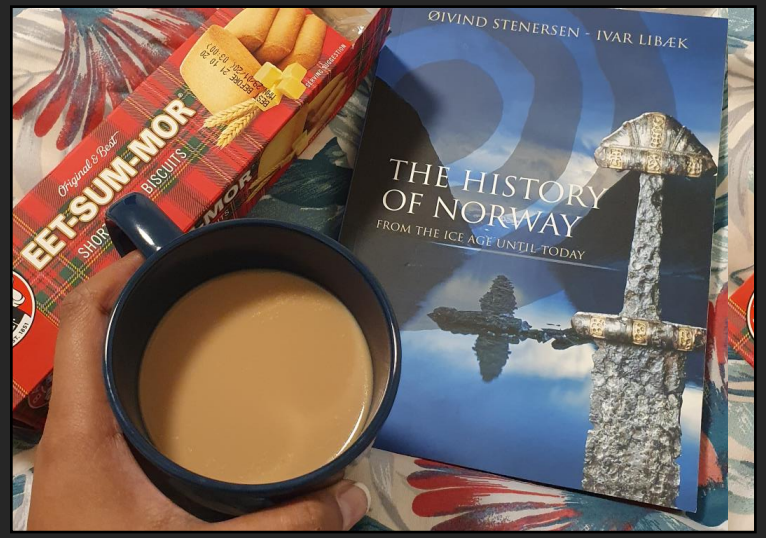
Reciprocal internship programs, Bergen and Pretoria
Student reflections, examples from 2 students, cohort 2023

SA student, internship in Bergen

- **Theme:** *How experiencing a new cultural context impact the development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy*
- *Uncertainty avoidance*: Introspection of own cultural values, practices and embracing new behavioural norms– Embracing Uncertainty
- *Power distance*: learning about lower power distance cultures and practices, embracing the new culture, enhancing collaboration and innovation
- *Collectivism*: Collectivistic Norwegian culture in teamwork – valuing collective rewards (vs individual)
- All behavioural experimentation/adoptions of new cultural practice influenced positively development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

No student, internship in Pretoria

- **Theme:** *Development of my entrepreneurial identity in South Africa*
- Increased awareness of *wealth gap and social issues*: created a personal drive for sustainable entrepreneurship
- Entrepreneurship as a tool to empower communities, enhance *inclusive ecosystems* and climate change
- Increased awareness of the transformative power of *genuine human relationships*, fostering trust, collaboration and collective action
- South African people's resilience, unity and spirit of Ubuntu
- Inspired to establish two ventures anchored in sustainable entrepreneurship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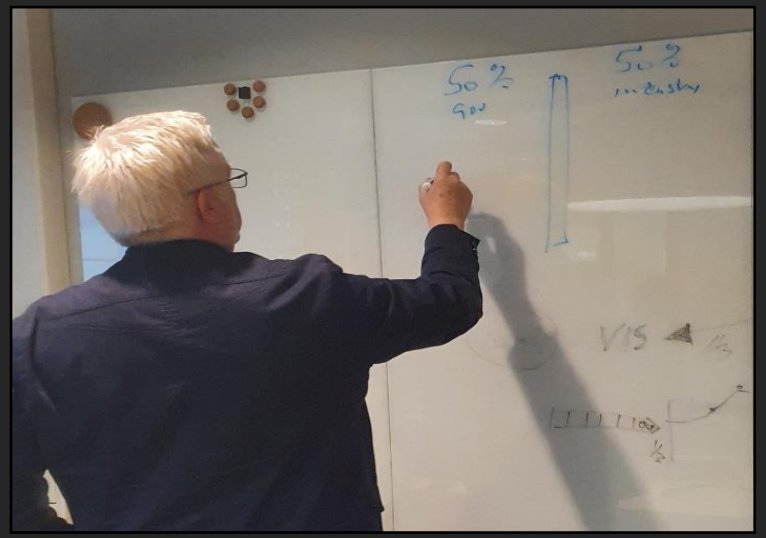

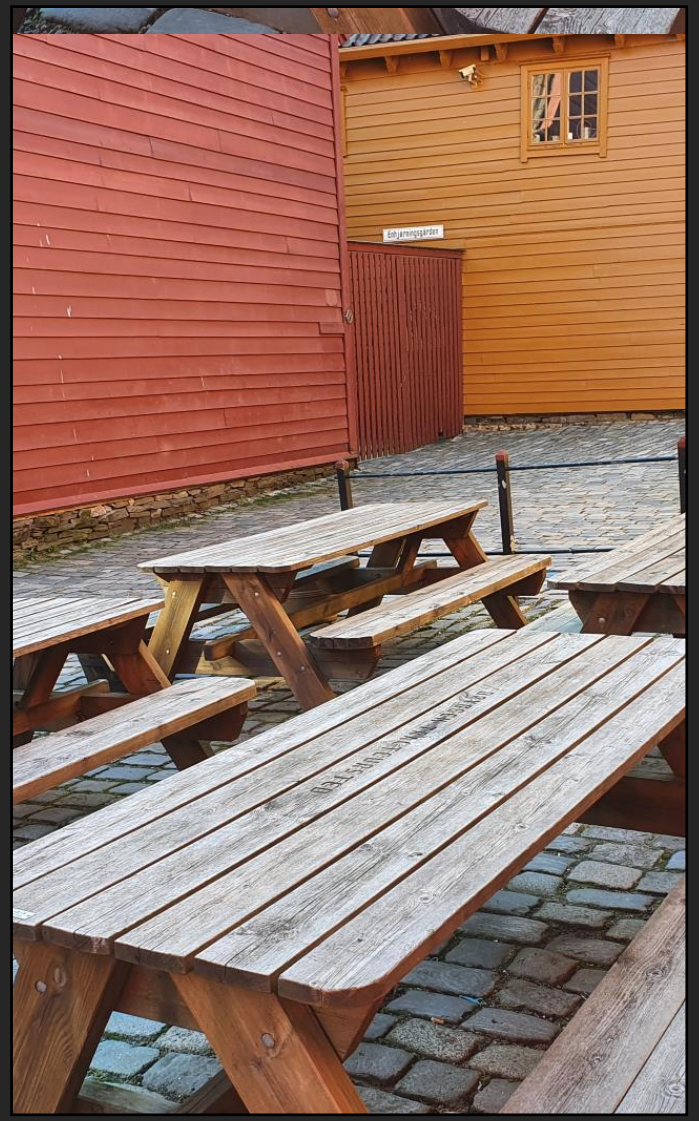

My learning experience during the exchange programme

In person and digital seminars and tasks

- Norwegian history
- Cluster programme
- Entrepreneurial learning
- Reflective writing
- Crossover innovation
- Clusters
- Innovation in the seafood industry
- Intrapreneurship
- Reflective essays were a new experience and helped crystalise concepts in my head.

GCE Ocean Technology

- Map out the cluster landscape in South Africa in order to identify areas of collaboration and opportunities.
- Map out the entrepreneurial “supporting” ecosystem in South Africa pertaining to the maritime industry.
- Coworking spaces foster networking and collaboration and is more organic.
- Collaboration is not clear cut and can be messy.
- Knowledge can sometimes be viewed as an asset.

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Translating the knowledge from the exchange programme to my current work context

Practical examples

- Connecting those in South Africa with those in Norway where I saw an opportunity for knowledge exchange or mutual benefit
- Saldanha Bay Innovation Campus

Subtle influences

- Developed a more opportunity focused mindset
- The world is smaller than we think
- Improved my confidence to make bold collaboration requests
- More open minded when it came to opportunities for collaboration

Utilising the networks made in Norway

The Saldanha bay Innovation Campus overview

Saldanha Bay Innovation Campus (SBIC), the nexus of marine and energy innovation, an initiative led by the Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone (SBIDZ) Freeport Saldanha

The **Saldanha bay Innovation Campus** aims to:

- Be a vibrant, **inclusive** and globally competitive innovation cluster & foster collaboration.
- Drive enhanced technology and **innovation** capabilities in the marine and energy sectors.
- **Empower** the Saldanha Bay region with Fourth Industrial Revolution skills and opportunities in the marine and energy sectors.

5 Dedicated programmes launched since 2020

Energy Transition	Drone and Data	Maritime	Schools programme	Smart Skills Centre
Green hydrogen *Green steel* *Clean energy*	*Drone Technology*	*Space based technology for maritime & shipping*	*STEM & Digital Skills capacitation* *Specifically focus on skills development to amplify the need for a workforce that can support an innovative marine and energy ecosystem*	

Providing key enabling infrastructure to further the impact potential across programmatic areas.

5 Priority Areas

Research development and innovation

Catalysing growth of local and regional innovations in Saldanha Bay through supporting sustainable research development and innovation across various programmes.

Clustering & Collaboration

Bringing together different ecosystem actors to build collaborative pathways that provide opportunities and entrench innovation that culminates in an efficient and effective networked ecosystem.

Entrepreneurial Support

Capacitating entrepreneurs to be thriving start-ups that serve the region of Saldanha Bay and respond to and meet market needs. This requires attracting innovative and emerging start-ups and entrepreneurs to the region.

Human Capital Development

Seek and grow localised talent that can feed into future-proofing the region by evoking curiosity in the local youth and attracting a talented pool of global leaders and innovators that will contribute towards the economic development of Saldanha Bay.

Advocacy

Contribute towards the discourse on the marine and energy sectors through meaningful, engaging public policy to provide an enabling environment for ecosystem actors to thrive.

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Reflections on factors that influence collaboration in innovation driven entrepreneurial ecosystems in Norway and South Africa

- Competition and collaboration within the same business cluster.
- The role of organisational culture in pursuing external collaborations.
- One sided collaboration vs two sided collaboration.
- The influence of trust in collaboration.
- Interorganisational networks within a specific political and social climate.
- Supportive structures to foster entrepreneurship.