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**Onderzoek naar de
interculturele ervaringen
van vrijwilligersreiziger
via AIESEC**

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Voorwoord

Voor u ligt mijn scriptie van de master Interculturele Communicatie. Drie jaar geleden kwam ik voor het eerst in aanraking met studenten met een andere culturele achtergrond tijdens mijn uitwisseling aan een Spaanse universiteit. Hier ontdekte ik mijn passie voor nieuwe landen en culturen. Na mijn uitwisseling heb ik heel wat tripjes binnen Europa gemaakt. Deze tripjes waren niet bijzonder door de mooie plekken of het fijne klimaat. Deze plekken waren bijzonder door de lokale mensen die me hun land en cultuur lieten zien, en de bijzondere vriendschap die hieruit voortvloeide. Tijdens deze tripjes is mijn nieuwsgierigheid naar interculturele communicatie geboren.

Deze nieuwsgierigheid heeft ertoe geleid dat ik afgelopen jaar koos voor een bestuursjaar bij AIESEC, een internationale studentenorganisatie. Mijn taak was het enthousiasmeren van Nederlandse studenten om internationale ervaring op te doen. Tijdens mijn tijd bij AIESEC heb ik studenten begeleid die deelnamen aan een vrijwilligersproject in het buitenland. De ontwikkeling die ik deze studenten heb zien doormaken, heeft mij geïnspireerd om deze scriptie te schrijven.

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Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek biedt inzicht in de interculturele ervaringen van vrijwilligersreizigers die deel hebben genomen aan een AIESEC-project in het buitenland. In het kader van dit onderzoek zijn de ervaringsverhalen van deze vrijwilligers geanalyseerd, rondom de onderzoeksvraag: *Wat beweren vrijwilligersreizigers in hun ervaringsverhalen ervaren en geleerd te hebben van hun AIESEC-project in het buitenland?* Ter beantwoording van deze onderzoeksvraag zijn twee thema's geanalyseerd. Allereerst is gekeken naar wat de vrijwilligersreizigers beweren ervaren te hebben door de sociale omgeving van de vrijwilligers tijdens het vrijwilligersproject te analyseren. Daarnaast is gekeken naar wat de vrijwilligersreizigers beweren geleerd te hebben door allereerst te kijken naar de verschillende fases (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012) die doorlopen zijn bij het ontwikkelen van interculturele competenties (IC's). Vervolgens is gekeken welke IC's van het *Global People Competency Framework* (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009) te herleiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen. Uit de ervaringsverhalen kwam naar voren dat er sprake is van *cloakroom communities* (Bauman, 2000), waardoor internationale vrijwilligers onderling een hechte band of vriendschap opbouwen tijdens het project. Daarnaast bleken de fase waarin de vrijwilligers gevoelens in kaart brengen en de fase waarin ze omgaan met verwarring, het vaakst te herkennen in de ervaringsverhalen. De IC's van het *Global People Competency Framework* die het vaakst herkend zijn in de ervaringsverhalen zijn respectievelijk *Anders denken*, *Informatie verzamelen*, *Verwelkomen van vreemden*, *Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context*, *Onderlinge belangstelling*, *Communicatie management*, *Leren van een andere taal*, *Avontuurlijkheid*, *Zelfbewustzijn*, *Flexibiliteit* en *Incasservermogen*. Ook de competenties *Zelfbewustzijn* en *Onafhankelijkheid* kwamen naar voren in de analyse. Ten slotte kwam uit de analyse naar voren dat veel ervaringsverhalen geschreven zijn vanuit een ethnocentrisch perspectief en veel vrijwilligers teleurgesteld waren in het project op basis van verwachtingen voorafgaand aan het project. AIESEC zou het ontwikkelen van IC's kunnen stimuleren door de vrijwilligersreizigers deskundig te begeleiden bij het reflecteren op de ontwikkelde competenties.

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1. Inleiding

Steeds meer studenten kiezen ervoor om internationale ervaring op te doen. Zo maakte in 2012-2013 een record aantal van 270.000 studenten gebruik van EU-beurzen om in het buitenland te studeren of stage te lopen (Europese Commissie, 2014). Ook cijfers van AIESEC, een internationale studentenorganisatie, tonen aan dat de interesse naar internationale projecten toeneemt. Zo groeit het aantal deelnemers aan professionele stages en vrijwilligersprojecten van AIESEC ieder jaar (AIESEC International, 2015). Tussen 2010 en 2015 kozen meer dan 114.500 studenten wereldwijd ervoor om internationale ervaring op te doen via AIESEC, waarvan 80% tijdens een vrijwilligersproject (AIESEC International, 2015). Ook cijfers van Elliot (in Wearing & Mc Gehee, 2013, p. 120) laten zien dat het aantal internationale vrijwilligersprojecten exponentieel gegroeid is in de afgelopen 20 jaar.

Het doen van vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland wordt ook wel vrijwilligerstoerisme genoemd. Onderzoek van Lough (2010) wijst uit dat vrijwilligersreizigers een hoge potentie hebben om interculturele competenties (IC's) te ontwikkelen doordat ze veel in contact komen met de lokale bevolking. IC's worden hierbij gedefinieerd als het vermogen om effectief en gepast te communiceren in interculturele situaties, voortbouwend op interculturele kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes (Deardorff, 2008). De maatschappelijke relevantie van deze IC's, schuilt in het feit dat het beheersen van IC's een voordeel oplevert op de arbeidsmarkt (Van de Ridder, 2014). In eerder onderzoek naar de verwerving van IC's bij vrijwilligersreizigers is gebruik gemaakt van een kwantitatieve vragenlijst (Lough, 2010; Scholte Lubberink, 2014). Deze studies hebben echter alleen de zelfinschatting van IC's bij vrijwilligersreizigers onderzocht. Het doel van dit onderzoek is het vergroten van het inzicht in wat vrijwilligers zelf aangeven ervaren en geleerd te hebben tijdens een vrijwilligersreis, en is een toevoeging aan het wetenschappelijke onderzoek naar vrijwilligerstoerisme. Hiervoor worden ervaringsverhalen geanalyseerd die vrijwilligersreizigers geschreven hebben bij terugkomst in Nederland. Hierbij staat de volgende onderzoeksvraag centraal:

Wat beweren vrijwilligersreizigers in hun ervaringsverhalen ervaren en geleerd te hebben van hun AIESEC-project in het buitenland?

Dit rapport bestaat uit acht hoofdstukken. In het volgende hoofdstuk wordt de context geschetst waarin dit onderzoek geschreven is. Vervolgens wordt de theoretische achtergrond van deze studie toegelicht in hoofdstuk 3. In het vierde hoofdstuk worden de hoofd- en deelvragen verder toegelicht, gevolgd door de methodische aanpak in hoofdstuk 5. De bevindingen van dit onderzoek worden besproken in hoofdstuk 6, waaruit vervolgens de conclusies van dit onderzoek herleid worden in hoofdstuk 7. In hoofdstuk 8 wordt er ten slotte een kritische blik geworpen op dit onderzoek, gevolgd door aanbevelingen voor vervolgonderzoek.

2. AIESEC

In dit hoofdstuk wordt de context geschetst waarin dit onderzoek geschreven is. In dit onderzoek worden de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers geanalyseerd die deel hebben genomen aan een vrijwilligersproject van AIESEC in het buitenland. AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales) is actief in 125 landen en entiteiten. AIESEC is vlak na de Tweede Wereldoorlog opgericht in 1948 door zes studenten uit verschillende landen met het doel om cultureel begrip te stimuleren door uitwisselingen voor studenten te faciliteren. In 2016 is AIESEC uitgegroeid tot 's werelds grootste jongerenorganisatie met meer dan 45.000 actieve leden (AIESEC International, 2015). AIESEC streeft naar '*Peace and Fulfillment of Humankind's Potential*', en daagt daarmee zowel haar bestuursleden als studenten die deelnemen aan de verschillende projecten uit om het beste in zichzelf naar boven te halen.

AIESEC The Netherlands is gevestigd in 11 universiteitssteden in Nederland en faciliteert zowel professionele stages als vrijwilligersprojecten in het buitenland. Het *Global Internship Programme* (afgekort GIP) bestaat uit stages van 3 tot 18 maanden bij een professionele organisatie in het buitenland. Deelnemers aan dit programma zitten vaak in de eindfase van hun studie en willen relevante werkervaring opdoen in het buitenland. Tussen 2010 en 2015 namen wereldwijd meer dan 23.000 studenten deel aan dit programma. Het *Global Community Development Programme* (afgekort GCDP) bestaat uit vrijwilligersprojecten in het buitenland van gemiddeld 6 tot 8 weken. Aan dit programma nemen studenten uit alle studiefases deel. Het grootste deel van de studenten neemt deel aan dit programma tijdens de zomervakantie. Tussen 2010 en 2015 namen wereldwijd meer dan 91.000 studenten deel aan het GCDP.

Na afloop van een project leveren de studenten een ervaringsverhaal in bij AIESEC. Deze ervaringsverhalen worden gebruikt als promotiemiddel voor studenten die erover nadenken om een AIESEC-project te gaan doen. In dit onderzoek zijn 30 ervaringsverhalen van het GCDP gebruikt die zijn geschreven tussen 2006-2012.

3. Theoretisch kader

In dit hoofdstuk wordt de theoretische achtergrond van dit onderzoek geschetst. Allereerst wordt de wetenschappelijke literatuur rondom het begrip vrijwilligerstoerisme (3.1) besproken, oftewel het doen van vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland. Deze vrijwilligersreizigers hebben een hoge potentie om Interculturele Competenties (IC's) te ontwikkelen door het vele contact met de lokale bevolking (Lough, 2010). Onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van IC's bij studenten wordt besproken in onderdeel 3.2, gevolgd door literatuur over de cultuurschok die vrijwilligersreizigers mogelijk ervaren naar aanleiding van het contact met de lokale bevolking (3.3). Vrijwilligersprojecten van AIESEC vinden vaak plaats in groepsverband. Literatuur over het vormen van tijdelijke groepen, zogenaamde *cloakroom communities*, wordt besproken in onderdeel 3.4. Onderzoek wijst uit dat enkel het contact met de lokale bevolking niet voldoende is om IC's te ontwikkelen (Lough, 2010). Paragraaf 3.5 wijdt uit over het belang van reflectie bij het ontwikkelen van IC's. Ten slotte wordt het begrip IC's verder toegelicht(3.6).

3.1 Vrijwilligerstoerisme

Steeds meer mensen kiezen ervoor om als vrijwilligerstoerist naar het buitenland te gaan, oftewel om vrijwilligerswerk te doen in het buitenland. Deze vrijwilligerstoerist wordt door Wearing (2001) gedefinieerd als:

"een toerist, die om verschillende redenen, een georganiseerde reis plant waarin ze vrijwilligerswerk verricht, zoals armen in de samenleving helpen en/of opvangen, werken aan onderhoud van de natuur of onderzoek verrichten naar sociale- of natuuraspecten in een leefomgeving" (vertaling van Scholte Lubberink, 2014. p. 8).

Zowel de industrie als het onderzoek rondom vrijwilligerstoerisme is volgens Elliott (2008, in Wearing & Mc Gehee, 2013) exponentieel gegroeid in de afgelopen 20 jaar. Volgens Wearing en Mc Gehee (2013) is er veel onderzoek gedaan naar vrijwilligerstoerisme. Zo is er gekeken naar de motivatie van reizigers om deel te nemen aan een vrijwilligersreis. Hierbij treedt er een spanningsveld op tussen altruïsme – iets doen voor een ander – en eigenbelang (Wearing & Mc Gehee, 2013). Dit eigenbelang is op te maken uit de redenen die Brown (2005) en Callahan en Thomas (2005) onderscheiden voor het deelnemen aan vrijwilligerstoerisme. Zij stellen dat deelnemers gemotiveerd zijn door de behoefte aan culturele onderdompeling, de mogelijkheid om een verschil te maken, het zoeken van kameraadschap en het verbinden met familie. Onderzoek van Wearing en Mc Gehee (2013) wijst uit dat de leeftijd van de deelnemers invloed heeft op de mate van altruïsme of eigenbelang. Zo stellen zij dat jongeren eerder deelnemen aan vrijwilligersreizen uit eigen belang dan ouderen. Dit zou te

maken kunnen hebben met het feit dat jonge vrijwilligers vaak op reis gaan tijdens een overgangperiode tussen studie en werk. De ervaringsverhalen die in deze studie geanalyseerd worden, zijn geschreven door jonge vrijwilligersreizigers die studeren, of net afgestudeerd zijn. Volgens Wearing en Mc Gehee (2013) zouden deze studenten dus eerder gemotiveerd zijn om deel te nemen aan een vrijwilligersreis uit eigenbelang.

Naast de motivatie van vrijwilligerstoeristen voorafgaand aan een reis, is er door Lough (2010) onderzoek gedaan naar de impact van een vrijwilligersreis op de deelnemers na afloop van een reis. Zo stelt hij dat internationale vrijwilligers de potentie hebben om Interculturele Competenties (IC's) te ontwikkelen doordat ze veel in contact staan met de lokale bevolking, oftewel de culturele onderdompeling groot is. Lough (2010) gebruikt de volgende definitie van Deardorff (2008) om IC's te operationaliseren:

“The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2008: 33; in Lough, 2010, 1-2).

Naast de culturele onderdompeling beschrijft Lough (2010) drie andere condities die een rol spelen bij het ontwikkelen van IC's, te weten reisduur, reflectie en wederkerig contact. Voor reisduur betekent dit dat vrijwilligers die langer deelnemen aan een project in het buitenland, hoger scoren op het gebied van IC's. Ook de mate waarin vrijwilligersreizigers reflecteren op hun ervaringen heeft invloed op de mate waarin ze IC's ontwikkelen. Lough (2010) stelt dat de reisduur van minder belang is voor de ontwikkeling van IC's wanneer vrijwilligers reflecteren op hun ervaringen. Een laatste conditie voor het ontwikkelen van IC's tijdens een vrijwilligersreis noemt Lough (2010) wederkerig contact. Hiermee doelt hij op de mate waarin de vrijwilligers en de lokale bevolking gedeelde doelen nastreven en relatief gelijk zijn. Het verband tussen wederkerig contact en de ontwikkeling van IC's bleek het sterkst aanwezig te zijn. Dit komt volgens Lough (2010) door het feit dat vrijwilligers met een paternalistische aanpak, of vrijwilligers die doelen nastreven die niet gedeeld worden door de lokale bevolking, per definitie geen IC's toepassen in de praktijk.

Voortbouwend op het onderzoek van Lough (2010) wordt in deze studie onderzoek gedaan naar vrijwilligersreizigers. Waar Lough (2010) echter gebruik maakt van een toetsende, kwantitatieve methode, staat er in deze studie een kwalitatieve aanpak centraal naar wat de vrijwilligers zelf aangeven ervaren en geleerd te hebben, waarbij de condities van Lough (2010) een rol zouden kunnen spelen.

3.2 Verwerving Interculturele Competenties (IC's)

Tijdens het contact met mensen van een andere cultuur kunnen IC's verworven worden. Holmes en O'Neill (2012) hebben onderzocht hoe deze IC's precies worden ontwikkeld bij studenten tijdens het

contact met een *cultural other*. Bij het operationaliseren van IC's, hanteren zij de volgende definitie van Spitzberg en Changnon (2009, p. 7):

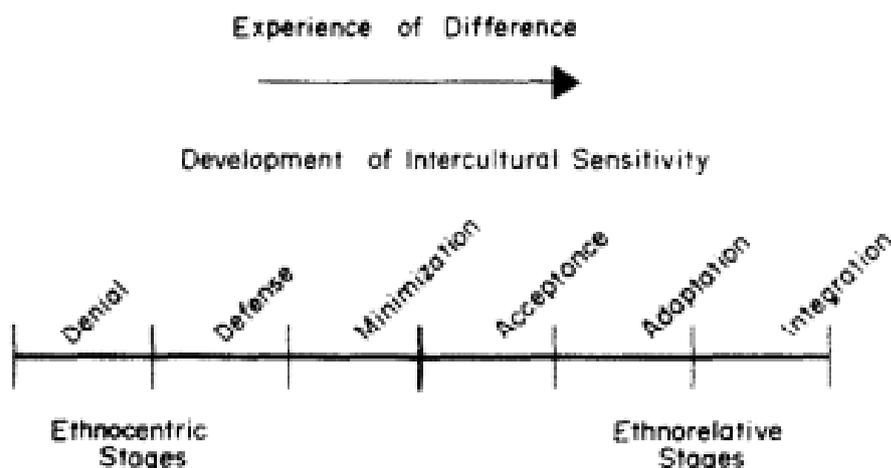
“The appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive and behavioral orientations to the world.”

In het onderzoek van Holmes en O'Neill (2012) zijn etnografische aantekeningen geanalyseerd van 35 studenten. Deze studenten werden over een periode van zes weken bloot gesteld aan een *cultural other*, oftewel een onbekende medestudent met een andere culturele achtergrond. Tijdens deze periode werd de studenten gevraagd om hun innerlijke gedachtes en ervaringen over het contact met de *cultural other* te beschrijven. Deze aanpak gaf studenten de kans om beter begrip te krijgen over iemand van een andere cultuur en hun eigen IC's te ontwikkelen en te evalueren. Met deze aanpak hoopten de onderzoekers de processen die onderliggend zijn aan het ontwikkelen van IC's te onthullen. De etnografische aantekeningen van de studenten zijn geschreven volgens het PEER-model dat vier verschillende fases beschrijft in het contact met een *cultural other*. De eerste fase is voorbereiding op het contact (Prepare), gevolgd door de daadwerkelijke interactie met de *cultural other* (Engage). Aansluitend werd de studenten gevraagd om deze interculturele ervaring te evalueren (Evaluate) om vervolgens te reflecteren op hun eigen interculturele ervaringen en competenties (Reflect). Op basis van dit onderzoek zijn de volgende 7 fases ontdekt van de ontwikkeling van IC's (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012):

1. Weerzin en angst (h)erkennen. Voorafgaand aan de ontmoeting gaven studenten aan op te zien of zelfs bang te zijn voor het contact met de *cultural other*.
2. Het denken in stereotypes. Voorafgaand aan de ontmoeting werd gebruik gemaakt van stereotypes om de verwachtingen ten opzichte van de *cultural other* te omschrijven.
3. Voorbijgaan aan stereotypes. Stereotypes werden ontkracht of weerlegd op basis van de interculturele ervaringen met de *cultural other*.
4. Gevoelens in kaart brengen. Studenten werden zich bewust van zowel hun eigen emoties als die van de *cultural other*.
5. Omgaan met verwarring. Het contact met de *cultural other* leidde vaak tot verwarring bij de studenten. Het omgaan met deze verwarring liet de studenten inzien hoeveel werk, tijd en moeite het hen had gekost en tot welke beloning dit had geleid.
6. Overgang van zelfgenoegzaamheid naar complexiteit. Studenten werden kritisch naar zichzelf toe door simplistische evaluaties van hun competenties van de hand te doen.
7. Grenzen (h)erkennen van competenties. Tijdens het contact met de *cultural other* werden de studenten zich bewust van de grenzen van hun competenties.

Een ander onderzoek dat verschillende fases beschrijft die doorlopen worden bij interculturele interactie, komt van Bennett (1986). Hij ontwikkelde het ‘*Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*’. Bennett (1986) spreekt niet van IC’s, maar van interculturele gevoeligheid. Het ontwikkelen van interculturele gevoeligheid vergemakkelijkt het omgaan met talige en culturele diversiteit. Hoe cultureel gevoeliger een persoon is, hoe minder hij/zij een nieuwe cultuur vanuit zijn of haar eigen cultuur bekijkt. Bennett (1986) onderscheidt hierin zes fases. De eerste drie fases bestaan uit *ontkenning*, *verdediging* en *minimalisering*. Deze eerste fases weerspiegelen een ethnocentrisch perspectief, wat inhoudt dat de andere cultuur beoordeeld wordt naar de normen en waarden van de eigen cultuur. Tijdens de laatste drie fases vindt er een verschuiving plaats naar een meer etnorelativistisch perspectief. Dit betekent dat de andere cultuur tijdens de *acceptatie*, *adaptatie* en *integratie* fases beoordeeld wordt vanuit de andere cultuur. De verschillende fases van Bennett (1986) zijn afgebeeld in figuur 1.

Figuur 1. Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986, p. 182)



Theorieën over het ontwikkelen van interculturele competenties (Holmes & O’Neill, 2012) en interculturele gevoeligheid (Bennett, 1986) zijn bruikbaar in deze studie om te achterhalen wat vrijwilligersreizigers aangeven ervaren en ontwikkeld te hebben omdat deze theorieën inzicht bieden in het proces dat doorlopen wordt bij het ontwikkelen van IC’s en interculturele gevoeligheid.

3.3 Cultuurschok

Tijdens het verrichten van vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland komen internationale vrijwilligers veel in contact met de lokale bevolking. Hierdoor zullen internationale vrijwilligers zich in meerdere of mindere mate moeten aanpassen aan de lokale cultuur. Bij het doorstaan van het proces van culturele aanpassing kunnen internationale vrijwilligers te maken krijgen met een cultuurschok. Deze

cultuurschok is volgens Berry (2006) een soort stress waar aanpassing aan verandering aan ten grondslag ligt (geciteerd in Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 152). Hoewel de symptomen per persoon en situatie verschillen, kan een cultuurschok leiden tot angst, depressie, frustratie, woede, zelfmedelijden en afzondering (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). In de literatuur zijn verschillende theorieën te vinden over het begrip cultuurshock. Het U-curve model van Oberg (1960) beschrijft vier fases die doorlopen worden tijdens langdurig verblijf in het buitenland. Deze fases noemt Oberg (1960) euforie, cultuurschok, acculturatie en balans. De eerste fase wordt voornamelijk getypeerd door enthousiasme over de nieuwe omgeving. Wanneer de eerste problemen zich voortdoen, breekt de fase van de cultuurschok aan. Tijdens de derde fase treedt aanpassing aan de nieuwe omgeving op. Uiteindelijk wordt er in de laatste fase een balans bereikt tussen aanpassing aan de nieuwe en behoud van de eigen cultuur. Zowel Holmes en O'Neill (2012), Bennett (1986) en Oberg (1960) spreken van een lineair proces dat uiteindelijk leidt tot het ontwikkelen van IC's, interculturele gevoeligheid of een balans tussen de eigen cultuur en de nieuwe cultuur.

3.4 *Cloakroom communities*

Tijdens een vrijwilligersproject in het buitenland kunnen deelnemers IC's en interculturele gevoeligheid ontwikkelen. De vrijwilligersprojecten van AIESEC in het buitenland vinden vaak in groepsverband plaats. Dit betekent dat meerdere internationale vrijwilligers tegelijk deelnemen aan een project in het buitenland. Bauman (2000) spreekt van *cloakroom communities* bij groepen die voor een bepaalde periode zijn samengebracht met een bepaald doel. Een *cloakroom community* gaat volgens Bauman (2000) op zoek naar veiligheid door een 'wij' te creëren waar ze zich achter kunnen verschuilen ten tijde van onzekerheid. Het analyseren van de sociale omgeving van de vrijwilligersreizigers biedt inzicht in wat de vrijwilligers in hun ervaringsverhalen beweren ervaren en geleerd te hebben.

3.5 *Reflectie*

Eerder is besproken dat er volgens Lough (2010) verschillende condities zijn die een rol spelen bij het ontwikkelen van IC's. Een van deze condities wordt door Lough (2010) 'reflectie onder begeleiding' genoemd. Hij stelt namelijk dat enkel het blootstellen aan een cultuur niet automatisch leidt tot IC's. Het reflecteren op een interculturele ervaring kan bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van IC's, met name wanneer dit onder begeleiding van een deskundige gebeurt. Wanneer vrijwilligersreizigers zonder begeleiding reflecteren op nieuwe ervaringen, kan dit juist leiden tot een versterking van ethnocentrische zienswijzen (Simpson, 2004, in Lough, 2010, p. 16).

Het reflecteren op een interculturele ervaring kan plaatsvinden via auto-etnografie. Deze methode biedt vrijwilligersreizigers de kans om te reflecteren op eigen gedrag en communicatie in de

interactie met de ander (Holmes & O'Neill, 2011). De auto-etnografische methode is een combinatie van autobiografie en etnografie. Schrijvers van een autobiografie maken met terugwerkende kracht een selectie van ervaringen uit het verleden (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Deze fragmenten hebben vaak een impact gehad op het leven van de auteur. Deze selectie is persoonsgebonden en subjectief, waardoor deze selectie aan fragmenten laat zien hoe de auteur omgaat met bepaalde situaties. Bij het schrijven van een etnografie staan de relaties, gedeelde normen en waarden en gedeelde ervaringen van een andere cultuur centraal. Het doel van een etnografie is het helpen van zowel deelnemers als buitenstaanders bij het begrijpen van een cultuur (MASO, 2001, in Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Hierbij wordt gebruik gemaakt van een participerende observatie, oftewel het tijdelijk deelnemen aan een cultuur. De auto-etnografische methode heeft kenmerken van beide methodes. Zo wordt er bij deze methode een selectie gemaakt van impactvolle momenten uit het leven van de auteur tijdens het deelnemen aan een bepaalde cultuur. Deze methode van onderzoek gaat echter voorbij aan het vertellen van een eigen verhaal doordat ervaringen geanalyseerd en afgezet worden tegen bestaande literatuur.

In deze studie staan ervaringsverhalen centraal met auto-etnografische kenmerken. In deze ervaringsverhalen beschrijven de vrijwilligers wat ze ervaren en geleerd hebben tijdens hun project in het buitenland.

3.6 Interculturele Competenties (IC's)

In deze paragraaf wordt het begrip interculturele competenties (IC's) geoperationaliseerd. Twee definities van IC's zijn eerder besproken. Zo omschrijft Deardorff (2008) IC's als het vermogen om effectief en gepast te communiceren in interculturele situaties, voortbouwend op interculturele kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes. Spitzberg en Changnon (2009) definiëren IC's als het gepast en effectief beheren van interactie tussen mensen die in meer of mindere mate verschillende of uiteenlopende affectieve, cognitieve en behavioristische oriëntaties op de wereld representeren. Beide definities bestaan uit elementen die Byram (1997) onderverdeelt in kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes. Hier voegt Byram (1997) het vierde element bewustzijn aan toe. Met het element kennis verwijst Byram (1997) naar kennis over gebruiken en praktijken van andere culturen. Byram (1997) noemt twee soorten vaardigheden die belangrijk zijn in interculturele communicatie. Zo is het belangrijk om informatie te vergaren in interactie, om deze vervolgens te kunnen interpreteren. Het element attitude bestaat uit nieuwsgierigheid en openheid ten opzichte van andere culturen. Het laatste element, bewustzijn, wordt door Byram (1997) omschreven als het vermogen om zowel de eigen als de andere cultuur kritisch te kunnen evalueren. Kennis, vaardigheden, attitudes en bewustzijn zijn volgens Byram (1997) de vier elementen die een individu intercultureel competent kunnen maken. Deze elementen zijn echter vrij abstract. Om een analyse te kunnen uitvoeren van de

verschillende IC's die te herleiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers, is het nuttig om deze onder te verdelen in concrete categorieën. Spencer-Oatey en Stadler (2009) hebben het *Global People Competency Framework (GPCF)* ontwikkeld, dat inzicht geeft in de competenties die nodig zijn voor effectieve interculturele interactie. Deze lijst aan competenties is opgesteld naar aanleiding van interculturele interactie tussen Britse en Chinese medewerkers in een professionele context. Van Maele, Vassilicos en Spencer-Oatey (2013) toonden aan dat het GPCF ook toepasbaar is binnen het onderwijs. Zo toonden zij aan dat het *GPCF* begrijpelijk, relevant en toepasbaar wordt geacht door studenten. Hierdoor kan het *GPCF* gebruikt worden voor zowel reflectie als verbalisatie van de specifieke vaardigheden en competenties die ontwikkeld zijn in het buitenland (Messelink, Van Maele & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). In deze studie wordt het *Global People Competency Framework* ingezet om uit de ervaringsverhalen te herleiden wat studenten zelf aangeven ervaren en geleerd te hebben. Het *GPCF* wordt afgebeeld in tabel 1 en bestaat uit vier categorieën: Kennis & Ideeën, Communicatie, Relaties en Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & Karaktereigenschappen. Deze categorieën worden kort toegelicht.

De categorie 'Kennis & Ideeën' bestaat allereerst uit de competentie *Informatie verzamelen*. Hierbij gaat het om de interesse die studenten hebben om informatie te verzamelen over andere culturen en de verschillende strategieën die ingezet worden om deze informatie te verkrijgen. De tweede competentie, *Anders denken*, draait om openheid voor nieuwe kennis en ideeën. De competentie *Doelgerichtheid* heeft te maken met een focus op zowel de eigen doelen als de doelen van de ander. *Coöperatieve oplossingen* heeft ten slotte betrekking op het stimuleren en faciliteren van oplossingen in het voordeel van beide partijen.

De categorie 'Communicatie' bestaat uit zeven competenties. De competentie *Communicatie management* draait om het beheersen van gepaste communicatie. Andere competenties zijn het *Leren van een andere taal* en het *Aanpassen van eigen taalgebruik aan het taalniveau van de ander*. Ook *Actief luisteren* en het *Afstemmen van indirecte betekenissen* vallen binnen de categorie 'Communicatie', gevolgd door het *Opbouwen van gedeelde kennis en vertrouwen* tussen de gesprekspartners. De laatste competentie binnen deze categorie is *Stilistische flexibiliteit*, oftewel het beheren van verschillende communicatiestijlen.

De categorie 'Relaties' bestaat uit vier competenties. De eerste competentie heeft betrekking op het *Verwelkomen van vreemden*. De volgende competentie draait om het *Opbouwen van zowel een vriendschappelijke als professionele verstandhouding*. De derde competentie bestaat uit *Gevoel voor sociale en professionele context*. De laatste competentie *Onderlinge belangstelling* draait om het inschatten van de communicatieve voorkeuren van de ander.

De laatste categorie bestaat uit zeven competenties. De competentie *Avontuurlijkheid* draait om het op zoek gaan naar uitdagingen. De tweede competentie is het *Zelfbewustzijn* van eigen

communicatie en gedrag. Het accepteren van verschillende communicatie en gedragingen van anderen, oftewel het *Acceptatievermogen*, is de vierde competentie. De competentie *Flexibiliteit* heeft betrekking op het kunnen aanpassen van eigen gedrag en communicatie. Met *Vastberadenheid* wordt bedoeld op het bezitten van duidelijke innerlijke doelen, innerlijke stabiliteit en toewijding. De competentie *Stressbestendigheid* betekent het omgaan met stress, onzekerheid en andere uitdagingen. De laatste competentie draait om het kunnen omgaan met tegenslagen, oftewel het *Incasseringsvermogen*.

Tabel 1: Selectie Global People Competency Framework (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009)

Kennis & Ideeën	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informatie verzamelen • Anders denken • Doelgerichtheid • Coöperatieve oplossingen
Communicatie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicatie Management • Leren van een andere taal • Aanpassen taalgebruik aan taalniveau van de gesprekspartner • Actief luisteren • Afstemmen van indirecte betekenissen • Opbouwen gedeelde kennis en vertrouwen • Stilistische flexibiliteit
Relaties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verwelkomen van vreemden • Opbouwen van een verstandhouding • Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context • Onderlinge belangstelling
Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & karaktereigenschappen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avontuurlijkheid • Zelfbewustzijn • Acceptatievermogen • Flexibiliteit • Vastberadenheid • Stressbestendigheid • Incasseringsvermogen

In dit hoofdstuk is de theoretische achtergrond geschetst van dit onderzoek. Zo zijn er theorieën besproken rondom vrijwilligerstoerisme, oftewel het doen van vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland. Deze vrijwilligersreizigers hebben een hoge potentie om Interculturele Competenties (IC's) te ontwikkelen door het vele contact met de lokale bevolking (Lough, 2010). Onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van IC's bij studenten is ook besproken in dit hoofdstuk (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012). Daarnaast is literatuur besproken rondom de begrippen cultuurschok, (Berry, 2006 in Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Oberg, 1960), *cloakroom communities* (Bauman, 2000) en auto-etnografie (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Ten slotte zijn de verschillende IC's geoperationaliseerd aan de hand van het *Global People Competency Framework* (Spencer-Oatey en Stadler, 2009). Op basis van deze theorieën zijn de hoofd- en deelvragen opgesteld en zijn de ervaringsverhalen geanalyseerd. In het volgende hoofdstuk worden de onderzoeksvragen verder toegelicht.

4. Onderzoeksvraag en deelvragen

Uit cijfers van AIESEC International blijkt dat het aantal deelnemers van vrijwilligersprojecten in het buitenland jaarlijks toeneemt. Ook het onderzoek naar vrijwilligerstoerisme is gestegen (Elliot, 2008 in Wearing & Mc Gehee, 2013). Onderzoek van Lough (2010) wijst uit dat vrijwilligersreizigers een hoge potentie hebben om interculturele competenties (IC's) te ontwikkelen doordat ze veel in contact komen met de lokale bevolking. IC's worden hierbij gedefinieerd als het vermogen om effectief en gepast te communiceren in interculturele situaties, voortbouwend op interculturele kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes (Deardorff, 2008). Het doel van dit onderzoek is het vergroten van het inzicht in wat vrijwilligers zelf aangeven ervaren en geleerd te hebben tijdens een vrijwilligersreis. Hiervoor worden ervaringsverhalen geanalyseerd die vrijwilligersreizigers geschreven hebben bij terugkomst in Nederland. Hierbij staat de volgende onderzoeksvraag centraal:

Wat beweren vrijwilligersreizigers in hun ervaringsverhalen ervaren en geleerd te hebben van hun AIESEC-project in het buitenland?

Op basis van een eerste analyse van de ervaringsverhalen zijn twee thema's geselecteerd voor verdere analyse. De sociale omgeving van de vrijwilligersreizigers in het buitenland vormt een eerste thema en biedt inzicht in wat de vrijwilligers beweren ervaren te hebben. Zo kwam uit de eerste analyse naar voren dat de AIESEC-projecten vaak in groepsverband plaatsvinden. Dit betekent dat er meerdere internationale vrijwilligers aanwezig zijn tijdens een AIESEC-project. Groepen die voor een bepaalde periode met een bepaald doel samen zijn gebracht, noemt Bauman (2000) *cloakroom communities*. Deelvraag 1 is opgesteld om meer inzicht te verkrijgen in de sociale omgeving van de vrijwilligersreizigers:

Deelvraag 1: In hoeverre blijkt in de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers sprake te zijn van cloakroom communities tijdens een AIESEC-project in het buitenland?

Het tweede thema dat naar voren kwam uit een eerste analyse van de ervaringsverhalen heeft betrekking op wat de vrijwilligers beweren geleerd te hebben, oftewel welke (interculturele) competenties af te leiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen. Binnen dit thema zijn deelvragen 2 en 3 opgesteld. Om meer inzicht te krijgen in de fases die de vrijwilligersreizigers doorlopen lijken te hebben bij het verwerven van interculturele competenties, is deelvraag 2 opgesteld:

Deelvraag 2: In hoeverre komen de verschillende fases van Holmes & O'Neill (2012) omtrent de ontwikkeling van interculturele competenties tijdens een AIESECproject in het buitenland naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers?

Om meer inzicht te krijgen in welke (interculturele) competenties de vrijwilligersreizigers ontwikkeld lijken te hebben, is deelvraag 3 opgesteld.:

Deelvraag 3: In hoeverre blijkt er in de ervaringsverhalen sprake te zijn van ontwikkelde (interculturele) competenties bij vrijwilligersreizigers na afloop van een AIESEC-project in het buitenland?

Door te kijken naar de sociale omgeving van de vrijwilligersreizigers tijdens hun project, de verschillende fases die doorlopen worden bij het ontwikkelen van interculturele competenties en de (interculturele) competenties die te herleiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen, kan in kaart worden gebracht wat de vrijwilligersreizigers in hun ervaringsverhalen beweren ervaren en geleerd te hebben.

5. Methode

In dit hoofdstuk wordt de methodologische aanpak van deze studie toegelicht en verantwoord. In dit kwalitatieve onderzoek is gebruik gemaakt van een inhoudsanalyse, waarbij ervaringsverhalen die verkregen zijn via AIESEC centraal staan. Deze verhalen zijn geschreven door studenten na afloop van een vrijwilligersproject in het buitenland. In deze verhalen beschrijven de vrijwilligers de ervaringen die ze op hebben gedaan tijdens het AIESEC-project. De ervaringen van deelnemers worden door AIESEC gebruikt als promotiemiddel en zijn beschikbaar voor studenten die interesse hebben om via AIESEC naar het buitenland te gaan.

5.1 Materiaal

Het materiaal dat in dit onderzoek geanalyseerd is, bestaat uit 120 ervaringsverhalen die verkregen zijn via AIESEC Nijmegen en geschreven zijn tussen 2006 en 2012. In totaal zijn 30 ervaringsverhalen geselecteerd. De selectiecriteria die hierbij gehanteerd zijn worden besproken in paragraaf 5.3. Vanwege de persoonlijke aard van de verhalen, zijn deze geanonimiseerd.

5.2 Respondenten

De 30 geselecteerde verhalen zijn geschreven door 11 mannen en 19 vrouwen die via AIESEC Nijmegen een vrijwilligersproject hebben gedaan in het buitenland. Het gaat hierbij om studenten of recent afgestudeerden met een vermoedelijke leeftijd tussen de 18 en 24 jaar. Vanwege het internationale karakter van AIESEC zijn bijna alle verhalen in het Engels geschreven, met uitzondering van twee Nederlandse verhalen. De nationaliteit van de auteurs is onbekend, hoewel AIESEC Nijmegen enkel studenten begeleidt die ingeschreven staan aan een Nederlandse Universiteit. Dit betekent dat de nationaliteit van de auteurs vermoedelijk Nederlands is.

Zoals af te lezen is in tabel 2 vonden de projecten plaats in Azië, Zuid-Amerika en Afrika. Binnen de categorie 'overige landen' vallen alle landen waar één ervaringsverhaal betrekking op heeft: Brazilië, Ghana, Kenia, Marokko, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Oeganda, Sri Lanka en Vietnam.

Tabel 2. Overzicht bestemmingen ervaringsverhalen

Bestemming	Aantal respondenten ($N = 30$)
Indonesië	5
China	5
India	4
Maleisië	4
Egypte	2
Overige landen	10

In tabel 3 is de reisduur van de verschillende projecten afgebeeld. Deze varieert tussen de 5 en 12 weken. Bij 7 ervaringsverhalen ontbreekt exacte informatie over de reisduur van de respondenten. Er kan echter aangenomen worden dat deze projecten tussen de 5 en 12 weken geduurd hebben, omdat deze tijdsduur gebruikelijk is voor AIESEC-projecten.

Tabel 3. Overzicht reisduur ervaringsverhalen

Reisduur	Aantal respondenten ($N = 30$)
5 weken	1
6 tot 8 weken	6
8 tot 10 weken	7
10 tot 12 weken	9
Onbekend	7

Het merendeel van de verhalen, te weten 22 verhalen, is in opdracht van AIESEC geschreven volgens eenzelfde indeling. Verhalen die volgens deze indeling geschreven zijn, beginnen met informatie over het project en over de samenwerking met AIESEC. Vervolgens wordt er ingegaan op de lokale cultuur en de persoonlijke impact die het project heeft gehad op de respondent. Afsluitend wordt gevraagd of de vrijwilligers een AIESEC-project zouden aanraden. Verhalen die niet volgens deze indeling geschreven zijn, zijn geselecteerd op de voorwaarde dat er genoeg informatie wordt gegeven over de persoonlijke impact die het project heeft gehad op de respondent. De auteurs van deze verhalen waren namelijk vrij om de inhoud van de ervaringverhalen in te vullen.

5.3 Procedure

In dit onderzoek is gebruikt gemaakt van een inhoudsanalyse. Deze analyse vond plaats in drie fases. De eerste fase bestond uit het selecteren van de ervaringsverhalen. Uit een totaal van 120 verhalen zijn 30 ervaringsverhalen geselecteerd. Deze selectie heeft plaatsgevonden op basis van verschillende criteria. Allereerst is ervoor gekozen om alleen de verhalen te selecteren die betrekking hadden op vrijwilligersreizen. Professionele stages met een langere duur zijn niet meegenomen in het onderzoek vanwege het verschil in de projecten. Professionele stages vinden namelijk plaats bij een bedrijf in het buitenland voor een duur van minimaal 6 maanden. Vrijwilligersprojecten daarentegen duren meestal 6-12 weken en vinden plaats bij een NGO in het buitenland. Een ander verschil is het feit dat professionele stages vaak commercieel van aard zijn, waar het bij vrijwilligersprojecten vaak draait om liefdadigheid. Naast het soort project is er ook gekeken naar de kwaliteit van de verhalen en de bruikbaarheid voor dit onderzoek. Hierbij draait het om de mate waarin er gereflecteerd wordt op de ervaringen en persoonlijke impact die het project heeft gehad

op de deelnemer. Hoe meer dit naar voren kwam in de verhalen, hoe bruikbaar deze verhalen werden geacht voor dit onderzoek.

De tweede fase van de analyse bestond uit een conventionele inhoudsanalyse (Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, Sarah & Shannon, 2005), waarbij de verschillende thema's voor de analyse zijn opgesteld. Bij een conventionele inhoudsanalyse worden de thema's niet voorafgaand aan de analyse, maar op basis van de gevonden fragmenten opgesteld. Deze methode wordt ook wel inductieve codering genoemd (Dörnyei, 2007). In deze fase van de analyse werden de 30 ervaringsverhalen één voor een doorgenomen waarbij opvallende uitspraken zijn gemarkeerd. Uit deze inductieve analyse kwamen twee thema's naar voren die de grote lijn weergeven van de ervaringsverhalen. Een eerste thema had betrekking op het feit dat in veel ervaringsverhalen naar voren kwam dat de vrijwilligers vaak samen werkten en/of woonden met andere internationale vrijwilligers. Daarnaast viel op dat de vrijwilligers aangaven verschillende ervaringen opgedaan te hebben en verschillende competenties ontwikkeld te hebben.

Een derde fase bestond uit een gerichte inhoudsanalyse waarbij literatuur rondom de twee hoofdthema's is geselecteerd (Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, Sarah & Shannon, 2005). Op basis van de theorieën uit deze literatuur zijn drie categorieën voor de analyse opgesteld. Dit wordt ook wel een deductieve methode genoemd (Dörnyei, 2007). Een eerste categorie die geanalyseerd werd in dit onderzoek had betrekking op de sociale omgeving van de vrijwilligers. Uit de verhalen kwam naar voren dat er vaak samen werd gewerkt en/of gewoond met andere internationale vrijwilligers. Literatuur van Bauman (2000) rondom *Cloackroom Communities* is hiervoor gebruikt bij het analyseren van deze categorie. Een tweede categorie sloot aan bij het ontwikkelen van competenties door vrijwilligersreizigers. Uit de literatuur blijkt dat verschillende fases onderscheiden kunnen worden bij het ontwikkelen van interculturele competenties (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012). Bij het analyseren van de ervaringsverhalen is gekeken naar de mate waarin deze fases te herleiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen. De laatste categorie had betrekking op de ontwikkelde interculturele competenties die af te leiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen. Een categorisering van deze competenties is ontwikkeld op basis van het *Global People Competency Framework* (Spencer-Oatey en Stadler, 2009). In totaal zijn 175 fragmenten gecodeerd binnen deze drie categorieën. Enkele fragmenten zijn vanwege overlap binnen meerdere categorieën ondergebracht.

De methodische keuzes van deze studie zijn toegelicht en verantwoord. In het volgende hoofdstuk worden de bevindingen van deze studie gepresenteerd.

6. Resultaten

In dit hoofdstuk worden de belangrijkste bevindingen allereerst gepresenteerd per deelvraag. In paragraaf 6.4 worden overige bevindingen besproken.

6.1 Deelvraag 1

In hoeverre blijkt in de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers sprake te zijn van cloakroom communities tijdens een AIESEC-project in het buitenland?

Uit een eerste analyse van de ervaringsverhalen kwam naar voren dat veel vrijwilligersreizigers schrijven over de andere internationale vrijwilligers die ze ontmoet hebben tijdens hun verblijf in het buitenland. Het gaat hierbij voornamelijk om vrijwilligers met een andere nationale achtergrond. De nationaliteiten van de vrijwilligers verschillen enorm. Ook wordt er in twee gevallen gesproken over andere Nederlandse vrijwilligers die ze ontmoet hebben. Deze medevrijwilligers ontmoetten ze ofwel tijdens het project, ofwel tijdens AIESEC-activiteiten. Doordat ieder AIESEC-kantoor vrij is in het organiseren van activiteiten, verschillen deze per stad. Voorbeelden van activiteiten zijn bijvoorbeeld welkomstactiviteiten, culturele activiteiten en feesten. Zoals uit verhaal 15 blijkt:

Citaat 1: Voorbeeld van de verschillende nationaliteiten – Ervaringsverhaal 15

“(…) I met a lot of other AIESEC’ers from all over the world. I went on trips with people from Japan, Slovakia, Czech-Republic, Vietnam, the Netherlands, Canada, Ivory Coast, Argentina, Venezuela, Kenya, Germany and Australia. (..) I met all these people through AIESEC, and they made my stay in Kenya unforgettable.”

In het eerste citaat komt naar voren dat het contact met medevrijwilligers een onvergetelijke indruk heeft gemaakt. In acht verhalen wordt gesproken van een hechte band of vriendschap die ze ontwikkeld hebben met medevrijwilligers van AIESEC. Het creëren van een sterke band wordt in twee ervaringsverhalen verklaard vanuit het feit dat de vrijwilligersreizigers veel dingen samen doen, bijvoorbeeld het deelnemen aan activiteiten. In het volgende citaat wordt dit geïllustreerd:

Citaat 2: Voorbeeld van een sterke band met medevrijwilligers – Ervaringsverhaal 5

“In addition to learning huge life lessons, I also made a whole bunch of international friends, whom I still talk to regularly. Living, eating and working together really creates a strong bond.”

Naast het delen van positieve ervaringen, kwam uit acht ervaringsverhalen naar voren dat vrijwilligersreizigers ook problemen met elkaar konden delen. Hierbij gaat het bijvoorbeeld om

onervarenheid met de lokale cultuur of werkgerelateerde problemen die zich voordeden tijdens het project. In ervaringsverhaal 7 spreekt de vrijwilliger van een cultuurschok die overheerste, waardoor de groep internationale vrijwilligers heel close met elkaar werd. Citaat 3 laat dit fragment zien.

Citaat 3: Voorbeeld delen cultuurschok – Ervaringsverhaal 7

“Met een groep van 17 exchange studenten zijn we de woestijn ingegaan om daar te kamperen en sandboarden, dat was echt een once in a lifetime-ervaring. Daarnaast was de groep van AIESEC exchange studenten ontzettend hecht, omdat de meesten niet wisten wat ze overkwam en de cultuurschok overheerste. (..) Doordat iedereen zo ontheemd was werd de groep heel close, en dat was een hele bijzondere ervaring”

Naast het contact met andere internationale vrijwilligers, wordt het contact met de lokale AIESEC-bestuursleden besproken in twee ervaringsverhalen. Hierbij wordt er gesproken van een ‘AIESEC-cultuur’. Deze wordt in één van de verhalen omschreven als ‘één grote familie’. Uit een ander ervaringsverhaal kwam naar voren dat de vrijwilliger verrast was door het enthousiasme en de ambitie van de lokale AIESEC-bestuursleden. Dit fragment wordt weergegeven in citaat 4:

Citaat 4: Voorbeeld AIESEC-cultuur – Ervaringsverhaal 17

“Not only did we get to know the Muslim culture, we also got sucked in the AIESEC culture. (..) I had to get used to their devotion, and the fact that they feel that joining AIESEC is the most life changing choice they have ever made. And off course to all the sharing, and dancing and teambuilding. “

Uit de analyse komt naar voren dat vrijwilligersreizigers tijdens een AIESEC-project in aanraking komen met andere vrijwilligers met een andere nationaliteit. Ook komt er in de ervaringsverhalen naar voren dat internationale vrijwilligers onderling een hechte band of vriendschap opbouwen. Als reden hiervoor noemen de vrijwilligers het feit dat ze gezamenlijk deelnemen aan allerlei activiteiten. Daarnaast kunnen internationale vrijwilligers problemen met elkaar delen. Hierbij gaat het zowel om werkgerelateerde problemen als om persoonlijke problemen, zoals het ervaren van een cultuurschok. Ten slotte kwam uit de analyse naar voren dat er gesproken wordt van een AIESEC-cultuur. Deze AIESEC-cultuur wordt omschreven als één grote familie die gekenmerkt wordt door enthousiasme en ambitie.

6.2 Deelvraag 2

In hoeverre komen de verschillende fases van Holmes en O’Neill (2012) omtrent de ontwikkeling van interculturele competenties tijdens een AIESEC-project in het buitenland naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers?

Uit de documentanalyse kwam naar voren dat niet alle fases van Holmes en O’Neill (2012) af te leiden waren uit de ervaringsverhalen. Tabel 4 laat zien hoe vaak de verschillende fases te herkennen waren in de ervaringsverhalen.

Tabel 4. Overzicht frequenties fases (Holmes en O’Neill, 2012)

Fase	Frequentie
1: Weerzin en angst (h)erkennen	3
2: Denken in stereotypes	0
3: Voorbijgaan aan stereotypes	8
4: Gevoelens in kaart brengen	14
5: Omgaan met verwarring	13
6: Overgang van zelfgenoegzaamheid naar complexiteit	0
7: Grenzen (h)erkennen van competenties	5

De eerste fase van Holmes en O’Neill (2012) vindt plaats voorafgaand aan een project, wanneer studenten aangeven op te zien of zelfs bang te zijn voor het contact met de *cultural other*. Deze fase zou herkend kunnen worden in de ervaringsverhalen wanneer de vrijwilligersreizigers spreken over weerzin en angst voor aanvang van het project. Deze fase werd in drie fragmenten herkend. Zo geeft de vrijwilliger in ervaringsverhaal 22 aan niet te weten wat hij of zij kon verwachten, gepaard met nervositeit en enthousiasme: *“So I went to Senegal for two months, not completely sure what to expect, a bit nervous, but also really excited.”*

De tweede fase van Holmes en O’Neill (2012) heeft betrekking op het inventariseren van stereotypes voorafgaand aan een culturele ontmoeting. In de ervaringsverhalen is dit niet naar voren gekomen. Wel zijn stereotypes in de ervaringsverhalen benoemd wanneer deze ontkracht of weerlegd werden op basis van de ervaringen van de deelnemers tijdens het project. Uit citaat 5 valt op te maken dat de auteur verwacht had dat Oeganda arm en onveilig zou zijn en dat er sprake zou zijn van meer ellende. De realiteit bleek echter anders te zijn. Dit voorbijgaan aan stereotypes hangt samen met de derde fase van Holmes en O’Neill (2012) en viel acht keer te ontdekken in de ervaringsverhalen.

Citaat 5: Voorbeeld fase 3 – Ervaringsverhaal 25

“I expected Uganda to be more poor, unsafe and I expected more misery, but the reality seemed to be different. (...) People are very friendly, open and welcoming. Regardless the poverty, people seem to be happy and more satisfied than people here in the Netherlands.”

De vierde fase wordt door Holmes en O’Neill (2012) beschreven als de fase waarin bewustwording optreedt van zowel de eigen emoties als die van de *cultural other*. In de ervaringsverhalen werden in totaal veertien fragmenten gevonden waarin de auteurs de emoties omschreven van zichzelf of van de ander. Deze fase was het vaakst te herkennen in de ervaringverhalen die geanalyseerd zijn. In citaat 6 omschrijft de vrijwilligersreiziger manieren om Chinese mensen op hun gemak te stellen. Ook waarschuwt hij of zij voor onderwerpen die niet gepast zijn, in dit geval de politiek. In acht verhalen werden manieren omschreven om de lokale bevolking op hun gemak te stellen, terwijl in drie verhalen gewaarschuwd werd voor gedrag dat niet op prijs werd gesteld door de lokale cultuur.

Citaat 6: Voorbeeld fase 4 – Ervaringsverhaal 2

“When you are in China, you should show interest in the Chinese culture when you talk to Chinese people. That will make them very happy and they start to talk back to you without being shy anymore. They love it when you know something about China. That certainly is a way to start a conversation. After that they will ask you things about your country for example. Do not talk about politics at all, it still is sensitive there. Avoid any topics which are politically influenced.”

In de ervaringsverhalen zijn dertien fragmenten naar voren gekomen waarin het omgaan met verwarring omschreven werd. Deze momenten van verwarring laten zien welke tegenslagen de vrijwilligers hebben doorstaan en hoe ze hiermee om zijn gegaan. Holmes en O’Neill (2012) plaatsen het omgaan met verwarring binnen de vijfde fase. De tegenslagen die beschreven worden in de ervaringsverhalen hadden bijvoorbeeld te maken met werkgerelateerde tegenslagen. In zeven van de dertien fragmenten wordt echter van verwarring gesproken die gecategoriseerd zou kunnen worden als een cultuurschok. Citaat 7 laat deze verwarring bij de auteur zien:

Citaat 7: Voorbeeld fase 5 – Ervaringsverhaal 10

“The first few weeks I really had to get used to everything. Everything is just different in India: the weather, the people, the traffic, the food. And you’re always an attraction; everyone is looking at you, coming to talk to you, wanna take photos of you. Sometimes I was just freaking out! After some time I could handle it better; I knew how to deal with people, what the prices were, and I really had the feeling I was going home when I came back from work. “

De zesde fase waarin studenten voorbij gingen aan simplistische zelfevaluaties is niet terug gevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Wel zijn fragmenten gevonden waarin de vrijwilligers kritisch reflecteren op hun eigen competenties. Deze laatste fase is vijf keer teruggevonden en geïllustreerd in citaat 8.

Citaat 8: Voorbeeld fase 7 – Ervaringsverhaal 23

“I don’t think my internship really changed me, maybe I am a less shy or less unsure: everything I have to do now in the Netherlands is less frightening or excited than going on my own to a country I didn’t know. And the ‘go with the flow life’ was what I already liked and did before (a bit), and what I still do, or at least try.”

Uit de analyse kwam naar voren dat de vierde fase, oftewel het in kaart brengen van gevoelens, het vaakst te herleiden was uit de ervaringsverhalen. Zo is deze fase veertien keer geanalyseerd, gevolgd door de vijfde fase, oftewel het omgaan met verwarring, die dertien keer is teruggevonden. De derde fase, het voorbijgaan aan stereotypes, is acht keer teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Verder is opgemerkt dat fase 2, het denken in stereotypes, en fase 6, de overgang van zelfgenoegzaamheid naar complexiteit, niet geanalyseerd zijn in de ervaringsverhalen.

6.3 Deelvraag 3

In hoeverre blijkt er in de ervaringsverhalen sprake te zijn van ontwikkelde (interculturele) competenties bij vrijwilligersreizigers na afloop van een AIESEC-project in het buitenland?

In dit onderdeel wordt gekeken naar de mate waarin de competenties van het *Global People Competency Framework* (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009) af te leiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen. Alle competenties die minstens vijf keer zijn afgeleid uit de ervaringsverhalen worden allereerst besproken per categorie. Vervolgens worden de competenties die niet of zelden zijn herleid uit de ervaringsverhalen genoemd. Ten slotte worden competenties genoemd die naar voren zijn gekomen uit de ervaringsverhalen, maar niet binnen het *Global People Competency Framework* geplaatst kunnen worden.

6.3.1 Kennis & Ideeën

Het eerste onderdeel van het *Global People Competency Framework* is de categorie 'Kennis & Ideeën'. Tabel 5 laat de meest voorkomende competenties en bijbehorende frequentie zien waarin deze geanalyseerd zijn in de ervaringsverhalen.

Tabel 5. Overzicht frequentie competenties 'Kennis & Ideeën'

Competentie	Frequentie
Informatie verzamelen	15
Anders denken	16

Informatie verzamelen

De eerste competentie, *Informatie verzamelen*, bestaat uit twee onderdelen. Het eerste onderdeel wordt omschreven als 'aware of the need to gather information about unfamiliar cultures and interested to do so'. Dit onderdeel werd 2 keer teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Zo wordt in ervaringsverhaal 19 letterlijk het belang van voorbereiding genoemd: "*It's important to prepare yourself because than it doesn't all come as such a shock.*" Het tweede onderdeel van de competentie *Informatie verzamelen* wordt omschreven als: 'uses a range of strategies to gather relevant information'. Uit de ervaringsverhalen bleek dat de vrijwilligersreizigers verschillende strategieën toepasten om relevante informatie te verzamelen. Zo werd het raadplegen van een culturele informant eenmaal genoemd. Het observeren van de lokale bevolking werd vijf keer genoemd. Daarnaast werd het praten en discussiëren met de lokale bevolking in twee ervaringsverhalen genoemd. Citaat 9 geeft een voorbeeld van een vrijwilliger die informatie verzamelde door middel van observatie.

Citaat 9: Voorbeeld van onderdeel 2 'Informatie verzamelen' – Ervaringsverhaal 10

“Also communicating with the teachers is not easy, because most of them don't speak English very well. But just by observing I learned a lot too. I saw how teachers and children interact, how they teach, and most of the time I did understand what the class was about.”

Anders denken

De competentie *Anders denken* is opgebouwd uit vijf onderdelen. De vier die naar voren zijn gekomen uit de analyse worden hier besproken. Het onderdeel dat in totaal elf keer geanalyseerd is, wordt omschreven als 'challenges conventional thinking'. Uit deze fragmenten blijkt de vrijwilliger nieuwe inzichten te hebben opgedaan. Vijf vrijwilligersreizigers geven aan dat ze naar aanleiding van hun vrijwilligersreis een hogere waardering hebben gekregen voor de omstandigheden in Nederland. Daarnaast kwam in drie ervaringsverhalen naar voren dat de vrijwilligersreizigers een kritische blik wierpen op hun eigen cultuur. Zo kwam in ervaringsverhaal 19 naar voren: *“What is also great about Malaysia is that all kinds of cultures and religions are living peacefully together in one country. I definitely think the Netherlands could learn something from that.”*

Het onderdeel 'seeks new insights and ways of understanding issues' komt in totaal drie keer voor in de ervaringsverhalen en heeft betrekking op fragmenten waarin vrijwilligersreizigers nieuwe inzichten opdoen. Zo kwam in ervaringsverhaal 2 naar voren dat de vrijwilligersreiziger nieuwe inzichten heeft opgedaan over de manier waarop andere culturen tegen de wereld aankijken en problemen oplossen. Dit fragment wordt afgebeeld in citaat 10.

Citaat 10: Voorbeeld nieuwe inzichten – Ervaringsverhaal 2

“I have learned some things from the Chinese culture and also from the cultures of the other trainees. The way they look at the world, the way they handle with problems. It is completely different. I have learned to approach life in some other ways now and I know that the world is not that small.”

De laatste twee onderdelen van de competentie *Anders denken* zijn beide eenmaal geanalyseerd in de ervaringsverhalen. Zo kan het onderdeel 'open to new ideas' herleid worden uit een uitspraak in ervaringsverhaal 17 waarin de vrijwilligersreiziger aangeeft de regels van een Moslim cultuur niet als nadeel te zien, maar als een kans om een exclusief kijkje te nemen in een verfijnde en ontwikkelde cultuur. Het onderdeel 'regularly updates and modifies opinions in the light of new information or evidence' is te herkennen in ervaringsverhaal 5 waarin de vrijwilliger Chinese mensen omschrijft als verlegen en ongeorganiseerd, maar ook als open-minded, warm en vlijtig. Bovendien geeft de vrijwilliger aan dat er hierbij geen sprake is van 'beter of slechter'.

6.3.2 Communicatie

Voor het thema 'Communicatie' zijn twee competenties naar voren gekomen uit de analyse van de ervaringsverhalen. Tabel 6 laat zien hoe vaak de meest voorkomende competenties zijn geanalyseerd.

Tabel 6. Overzicht frequentie competenties thema 'Communicatie'

Competentie	Frequentie
Communicatie management	5
Leren van een andere taal	5

Communicatie management

De eerste competentie *Communicatie management* bestaat uit vijf onderdelen, waarvan er twee zijn teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Deze worden hier besproken. Het eerste onderdeel dat vier maal is teruggevonden in de tekst wordt omschreven als 'choose modes of communication that suit the particular communicative purpose'. In ervaringsverhaal 14 stelt de vrijwilliger geleerd te hebben om minder direct te zijn in de communicatie met de lokale bevolking in Indonesië. Door minder direct te zijn, kiest hij of zij voor een passende communicatiestijl. Dit fragment wordt afgebeeld in citaat 11.

Citaat 11: Voorbeeld passende communicatiestijl – Ervaringsverhaal 14

“One of the most important things that I have learned is to be less direct to people and that Indonesian people say one thing but mean another.”

Ook werd het onderdeel 'takes steps to deal with communication problems' van de competentie *Communicatie management* teruggevonden in verhaal 27. In dit fragment beschrijft de vrijwilliger een situatie waarin zich een communicatie probleem voor deed. Uit dit fragment, afgebeeld in citaat 12, blijkt dat de vrijwilliger actie ondernam door tekst en uitleg te geven aan de gesprekspartners om zo het communicatie probleem te verhelpen.

Citaat 12: Voorbeeld actie ondernemen bij problemen – Ervaringsverhaal 27

“During one of the meetings I became very serious concerning the days and time me and the trainees were supposed to work. This was different from the way the local organization – AIESEC Xiamen University - and the other trainees would deal with this subject and some of them were a little intimidated because of my way of addressing the subject. Once I was aware of the problem I explained to them this kind of meetings are dealt with some formality in the country and region I come from..”

Leren van een andere taal

De tweede competentie genaamd *Leren van een andere taal* bestaat uit drie onderdelen, waarvan er twee naar voren zijn gekomen uit de analyse van de ervaringsverhalen. Een van deze onderdelen wordt omschreven als ‘confident in ability to pick up and use foreign languages’, en is gevonden in ervaringsverhaal 14. In dit fragment vertelt de vrijwilliger dat ze de basisprincipes van de lokale taal leerde om te kunnen onderhandelen met verkopers. Het onderdeel dat het vaakst te herkennen was in de verhalen is ‘motivated to learn and use other languages, and willing to invest time and effort in this’. Voor dit onderdeel werden vier fragmenten gevonden waarin de vrijwilligers vertellen over de vaardigheden die ze ontwikkeld hebben in een andere taal. Zo komt in ervaringsverhaal 20 naar voren dat de vrijwilliger gesprekken leerde voeren in het Frans, en op die manier ook meer te weten kwam over de Franse cultuur en de Franse manier van communiceren: *“I learned to have a conversation in French and with that comes the culture of how French people communicate.”*

6.3.3 Relaties

Tabel 7 laat de drie competenties van het thema ‘Relaties’ zien die minstens vijf keer af te leiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen.

Tabel 7. Overzicht frequentie competenties Relaties

Competentie	Frequentie
Verwelkomen van vreemden	12
Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context	7
Onderlinge belangstelling	6

Verwelkomen van vreemden

De eerste competentie *Verwelkomen van vreemden* bestaat uit drie onderdelen. Het onderdeel ‘pro-active in approaching and meeting new people’ is eenmaal gevonden in ervaringsverhaal 25 waarin de vrijwilliger vertelt dat ze na haar project bij andere AIESEC-trainees langs is gegaan. Dit was voor haar een goede manier om veilig te reizen en verschillende mensen en culturen te leren kennen. Een tweede onderdeel, ‘interested in people with different experiences and backgrounds’ kwam drie keer naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen. Zo zegt de vrijwilliger in ervaringsverhaal 26 er veel plezier aan beleefd te hebben om te leren van de verschillen en overeenkomsten met mensen van een andere cultuur. Dit fragment wordt afgebeeld in citaat 13.

Citaat 13: Voorbeeld interesse in mensen van andere culturen – Ervaringsverhaal 26

“Albeit sometimes frustrating, I especially enjoyed it a lot to interact with people from a different culture and to learn about our differences and similarities.”

In acht verhalen kwam naar voren dat de vrijwilligers mensen hebben leren kennen met een andere culturele achtergrond en veel internationale vrienden hebben gemaakt. Daarnaast vertelt een van de vrijwilligers over een korte romance. Deze bevindingen sluiten aan bij onderdeel 'builds a wide and diverse network of friends and acquaintances'. Zo wordt er in ervaringsverhaal 26 omschreven: *"We had a lot of fun together and despite the cultural differences we became quite close."*

Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context

De competentie *Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context* bestaat uit drie onderdelen, die alle drie zijn teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Zo kwam het eerste onderdeel naar voren in ervaringsverhaal 26, waarin de vrijwilliger uitlegt dat Vietnamese studenten minder onafhankelijk zijn dan Westerse studenten en het daarom normaal is voor deze studenten om op tijd thuis te moeten zijn. Dit fragment illustreert het onderdeel 'understands how given role relationships operate in different contexts, and the rights and obligations associated with them'. Het volgende onderdeel wordt omschreven als 'understand how decisions are made in given contexts' en komt ook naar voren in ervaringsverhaal 26. Hier legt de vrijwilliger uit dat mensen in Vietnam de meningen van anderen, met name van familie, altijd in overweging nemen bij het nemen van een besluit. Het volledige fragment is afgebeeld in citaat 14.

Citaat 14: Voorbeeld begrip besluitvorming

"Vietnamese people are collectivistic, which means that the group is more important than the individual. In everyday life, it means people will always consider the opinion of family, peers and society before taking a decision."

Het laatste onderdeel van de competentie *Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context* wordt omschreven als 'pays attention to hierarchy and power relations, and how they may influence behaviour in different contexts'. Dit kwam vijf keer voor in de ervaringsverhalen en was af te leiden uit de adviezen die de vrijwilligers gaven om correct om te gaan met de lokale bevolking. Zo wordt twee keer genoemd dat het belangrijk gevonden wordt in de lokale cultuur om respect te tonen voor mensen die ouder zijn. Zo komt in ervaringsverhaal 2 naar voren: *"Respect is very important in their culture, respect for someone who knows it better (more experience) than or is older than you"*. In een ander verhaal werd uitgelegd hoe men zich het beste kan kleden en gedragen ten tijde van de ramadan. Ten slotte wordt genoemd dat het belangrijk is om altijd vriendelijk te blijven en mensen te bedanken wanneer ze je helpen of iets aan je verkopen.

Onderlinge belangstelling

De laatste competentie, genaamd *Onderlinge belangstelling*, bestaat uit twee onderdelen. Het eerste onderdeel komt vier keer naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen en wordt omschreven als ‘pays attention to people’s personal sensitivities and avoids making them ‘lose face’’. In de bijbehorende fragmenten geven de vrijwilligers communicatie adviezen over hoe voorkomen kan worden dat de lokale bevolking zich beledigd voelt. Zo werd in twee fragmenten genoemd dat politiek geen goed gespreksonderwerp is, omdat het gevoelig ligt bij de lokale bevolking. In twee andere fragmenten wordt uitgelegd dat de lokale cultuur conflictvermijdend is, waardoor het uiten van kritiek lastig is. Een van deze fragmenten is afgebeeld in citaat 15.

Citaat 15: Voorbeeld advies om lokale bevolking niet te beledigen– Ervaringsverhaal 26

“They find it difficult to express what they feel and think and they avoid being critical as it might make someone lose face in front of others. In result, one of the difficulties I experienced was that the Vietnamese students asked the international interns for feedback, but we felt we had to be careful in giving critique.”

Het tweede onderdeel ‘encourages and builds people up by complimenting them appropriately and ‘giving them face’’ is twee keer naar voren gekomen. In deze twee fragmenten worden adviezen gegeven over hoe de lokale bevolking het best op haar gemak kan worden gesteld. Zo kwam er in een fragment naar voren dat het respect van de Chinese bevolking gewonnen kan worden door te eten met stokjes. In een ander fragment wordt uitgelegd dat het tonen van interesse in de Chinese cultuur een goede manier is om de lokale bevolking op haar gemak te stellen en een gesprek te beginnen. Dit fragment wordt afgebeeld in Citaat 16.

Citaat 16: Voorbeeld advies op gemak stellen lokale bevolking – Ervaringsverhaal 2

“When you are in China, you should show interest in the Chinese culture when you talk to Chinese people. That will make them very happy and they start to talk back to you without being shy anymore. They love it when you know something about China. That certainly is a way to start a conversation. Then they will ask you things about your country for example.”

6.3.4 Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & karaktereigenschappen

Van het laatste thema 'Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & karaktereigenschappen' zijn vier competenties vijf keer afgeleid uit de ervaringsverhalen. Deze worden afgebeeld in tabel 8.

Tabel 8. Overzicht frequentie competenties 'Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & karaktereigenschappen'

Competentie	Frequentie
Avontuurlijkheid	5
Zelfbewustzijn	5
Flexibiliteit	5
Incasseringsvermogen	5

Avontuurlijkheid

De eerste competentie *Avontuurlijkheid* bestaat uit drie onderdelen. Twee van de drie onderdelen zijn teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Het onderdeel dat tweemaal voorkomt in de ervaringsverhalen is 'ready to seek out variety, change and stimulations in his/her life', en kan afgeleid worden uit het feit dat de vrijwilligers aangeven meer interesse te hebben gekregen in reizen. Het tweede onderdeel is 'pushes self into uncomfortable and ambiguous situations from which s/he can learn'. Dit onderdeel is drie keer terug gevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Zo vertelt de vrijwilligers in ervaringsverhaal 3 uit zijn of haar comfort zone te zijn gestapt, waarbij grenzen zijn verlegd. In een ander fragment worden de verschillen met de Westerse wereld besproken en de schoonheid die schuilt in het ontdekken van cultuurverschillen. In ervaringsverhaal 1 komt naar voren dat de vrijwilliger er bewust voor koos om iets te doen dat tegen zijn of haar gevoel in ging, om zichzelf op deze manier uit te dagen: *"Before I left my friends were surprised that I wanted to go abroad. I am always attached to the things I do and it takes some time for me to adapt to big changes. This was exactly the reason that I wanted to go!"*

Zelfbewustzijn

De tweede competentie genaamd *Zelfbewustzijn* bestaat uit twee onderdelen, die beide geanalyseerd zijn. Het onderdeel 'sensitive to how his/her communication and behavior is interpreted by others' kwam twee keer naar voren. In beide fragmenten zeggen de vrijwilligers bewust te zijn geworden van hun eigen directheid. Het tweede onderdeel 'conscious that his/her behavior may be strange and/or difficult for others to understand or accept' kwam drie keer naar voren. In een van de fragmenten wordt een situatie beschreven waarin de vrijwilliger discussies voert over de Arabische taal en cultuur in een Marokkaanse klas. Hierbij geeft de vrijwilliger aan dat de Marokkaanse leerlingen zijn gedachtes hierover hilarisch vonden. Twee andere fragmenten gaan

over het onbegrip bij de lokale bevolking over het religieus besef van de vrijwilligers, zoals in verhaal 21: *“Of course it was very difficult for them to understand how someone will only attend church once a year or only pray during Ramadan but they accepted it in the end.”*

Flexibiliteit

De competentie *Flexibiliteit* bestaat uit vier onderdelen. De volgende drie zijn hiervan teruggevonden. Onderdeel ‘copies other people’s behaviour/communication in order to fit in or make others feel more comfortable’ werd eenmaal terug gevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. In dit fragment zegt de vrijwilliger dat het belangrijk is om bepaalde sociale gewoontes over te nemen, zoals het begroeten van mensen die je al kent met een kus. Twee andere onderdelen kwamen beide twee keer naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen. Zo werd het onderdeel ‘willing to learn a wide range of behaviour and communications patterns’ teruggevonden in fragmenten waarin de vrijwilligers aangeven welke lokale gedragingen of communicatie strategieën ze over hebben genomen. Citaat 17 illustreert een van deze fragmenten.

Citaat 17: Voorbeeld overgenomen gedrag of communicatiestrategieën – Ervaringsverhaal 4

“The most important sentence for me to remember was ‘when in China, do as the Chinese do’. This made it more easy for me to adapt to the Chinese way of living.”

Het derde onderdeel ‘adapts behavior and modifies judgments to suit the circumstances’ werd teruggevonden in fragmenten waarin de vrijwilligers een proces van gewenning omschreven. Zo komt in ervaringsverhaal 10 naar voren: *“After some time I could handle it better; I knew how to deal with people, what the prices were, and I really had the feeling I was going home when I came back from work.”*

Incasservermogen

De laatste competentie is *Incasservermogen* en bestaat uit vier onderdelen, waarvan er twee naar voren zijn gekomen in de analyse. Het onderdeel ‘not easily embarrassed by social gaffes’ kwam eenmaal naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen. In dit fragment zegt de vrijwilliger geleerd te hebben om te improviseren tijdens presentaties en het woord ‘paniek’ niet langer te kennen. Het onderdeel dat het vaakst naar voren kwam, wordt omschreven als ‘has optimistic outlook and bounces back quickly after setbacks’. Dit onderdeel werd vier keer geanalyseerd in fragmenten waarin de vrijwilligers omschrijven hoe ze omgaan met tegenslagen. In ervaringsverhaal 18 vertelt de vrijwilliger dat zijn of haar project na twee weken al afgelopen bleek te zijn, en stelt: *“Hopefully these cases don’t happen so much, but if they do.. well just stay positive and make the best out of it!”*

6.3.4 Competenties van het *GPCF* die niet of zelden zijn herleid uit de ervaringsverhalen

In deze paragraaf wordt een korte uiteenzetting gegeven van competenties van het *Global People Competency Framework* die niet of zelden zijn teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen.

Tabel 9. Overzicht frequenties competenties die niet of zelden zijn herleid

Categorie	Competentie	Frequentie
Kennis & Ideeën	• Doelgerichtheid	0
	• Coöperatieve oplossingen	1
Communicatie	• Aanpassen taalgebruik aan taalniveau van de gesprekspartner	0
	• Actief luisteren	0
	• Afstemmen van indirecte betekenissen	1
	• Gedeelde kennis en vertrouwen opbouwen	0
	• Stilistische flexibiliteit	0
Relaties	• Opbouwen van een verstandhouding	1
Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & Karaktereigenschappen	• Acceptatievermogen	4
	• Vastberadenheid	1
	• Stressbestendigheid	4

Zoals af te lezen uit tabel 9 zijn binnen de categorie ‘Kennis & Ideeën’ twee competenties niet of zelden geanalyseerd, te weten *Doelgerichtheid* en *Coöperatieve oplossingen*. Voor de categorie ‘Communicatie’ zijn dit *Aanpassen taalgebruik aan taalniveau van de gesprekspartner*, *Actief luisteren*, *Afstemmen van indirecte betekenissen*, *Opbouwen van gedeelde kennis en vertrouwen* en *Stilistische flexibiliteit*. Binnen de categorie ‘Relaties’ is de competentie *Opbouwen van een verstandhouding* slechts eenmaal geanalyseerd. Voor de categorie ‘Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & Karaktereigenschappen’ zijn dit *Acceptatievermogen*, *Vastberadenheid* en *Stressbestendigheid*.

6.3.5 Overige competenties

Naast de competenties van het *Global People Competency Framework*, zijn een aantal andere competenties naar voren gekomen uit de ervaringsverhalen die niet onder het *GPCF* geschaard kunnen worden. Tabel 10 geeft hier een overzicht van.

Tabel 10. Overzicht frequentie overige competenties

Competentie	Frequentie
Zelfbewustzijn	13
Onafhankelijkheid	11
Professionele vaardigheden:	5

Er zijn dertien fragmenten gevonden waaruit blijkt dat de vrijwilligersreizigers zelfbewuster zijn geworden. In tegenstelling tot de competentie *Zelfbewustzijn* van het *Global People Competency Framework* gaat het in deze fragmenten niet om het bewust zijn van eigen gedrag en communicatie in interactie met een *cultural other*, maar om zelfkennis in het algemeen. Zo beschrijft de vrijwilliger in ervaringsverhaal 1 dat hij of zij zichzelf beter heeft leren kennen en inzicht heeft gekregen in wat hij of zij interessant vindt op professioneel vlak: *“Furthermore, it is really clear to me what I want to do now thanks to this experience, since I graduated university and I have to find a job.”*

Ten slotte komt uit de ervaringsverhalen naar voren dat de vrijwilligersreizigers inzicht hebben gekregen in hun sterke en zwakke kanten, zoals in ervaringsverhaal 8: *“I learned a lot about myself, like who I am, what are my strengths and what are my weaknesses.”*

Een tweede competentie die naar voren kwam uit de ervaringsverhalen heeft te maken met *Onafhankelijkheid*. In totaal zes fragmenten noemen de vrijwilligersreizigers het feit dat ze onafhankelijker zijn geworden door hun reis, zoals in ervaringsverhaal 14: *“Moreover it made me more independent. I found out that I can take care of myself and that I am less naïve than I thought”*

In de ervaringsverhalen worden ten slotte verschillende professionele vaardigheden genoemd. Zo komt het *Leren presenteren* vier keer naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen. Het leren van *Educatieve vaardigheden* wordt tweemaal genoemd in de ervaringsverhalen. Vaardigheden als *Improviseren*, *Organiseren van seminars*, *Netwerken* en *het Benaderen van sponsors* worden ook genoemd in ervaringsverhalen. Citaat 18 laat een voorbeeld zien:

Citaat 18: Voorbeeld professionele vaardigheden – Ervaringsverhaal 8

“I learned professional skills, like giving presentations, going out for sponsorships, organizing seminars and a lot more”

6.4 Overige bevindingen

Tijdens het analyseren van de ervaringsverhalen zijn vijftien fragmenten gevonden die geschreven zijn vanuit een ethnocentrisch perspectief. In deze fragmenten wordt de lokale cultuur beschreven vanuit het perspectief van de eigen cultuur. Dit leidt ertoe dat de lokale cultuur omschreven wordt als inferieur aan de eigen cultuur. Om deze ethnocentrische ondertoon te illustreren, zijn fragmenten van ervaringsverhaal 13 en 26 weergegeven. In ervaringsverhaal 13 stelt de vrijwilliger dat het lokale AIESEC-kantoor professioneler zou kunnen zijn. Dit maakt hij of zij op uit het feit dat de activiteiten op de korte termijn worden georganiseerd, of worden uitgesteld. Daarnaast zijn de werkzaamheden van de vrijwilligers niet toereikend waardoor ze veel vrije tijd hadden. Door te stellen dat hij of zij de werkwijze onprofessioneel vindt, hecht hij of zij hier een waardeoordeel aan. Bovendien zijn de maatstaven van professionaliteit die hij of zij hanteert opgesteld vanuit een Westers, en daardoor ethnocentrisch perspectief. Voor het gehele fragment, zie citaat 19.

Citaat 19: Voorbeeld ethnocentrisch perspectief – Ervaringsverhaal 13

“The level of professionalism was fine, but they can do better. Not all Aiesec members can speak good English and they organize things very late or delay activities, because they arranged it too late. Also the jobs for the trainees were not covering the whole week. I had a lot of free time and it is difficult to arrange things for the project, because Indonesian people hardly speak any English.”

Ook verhaal 26 is geschreven met een ethnocentrische ondertoon. Zo schrijft de vrijwilliger dat de vergaderingen niet altijd efficiënt waren doordat de Vietnamese cultuur anders is dan de Westerse cultuur. Hiermee geeft de vrijwilliger een causaal verband aan tussen het anders zijn dan de Westerse cultuur en het inefficiënt zijn. Het gehele fragment is weergegeven in citaat 20.

Citaat 20: Voorbeeld ethnocentrisch perspectief – Ervaringsverhaal 26

“These meetings weren’t always efficient, since the working culture of the Vietnamese people is quite different from the Western culture. The Vietnamese students were very enthusiastic and the project appeared to be well organized, but in actual practice this wasn’t always the case.”

Niet alle verhalen zijn echter geschreven vanuit een ethnocentrisch perspectief. Zo stelt de vrijwilliger in ervaringsverhaal 5 dat er veel verschillen zijn tussen Nederland en China, maar dat China daardoor niet beter of slechter is. Hoewel hij stelt dat de meeste Chinezen verlegen en niet zo georganiseerd zijn, zijn ze volgens hem of haar ook open-minded, warm en ijverig. Het hele fragment wordt afgebeeld in citaat 21.

Citaat 21: Voorbeeld etnorelativistisch perspectief – Ervaringsverhaal 5

“China is very different from Holland, but that doesn’t make it better or worse. Whereas Dutch people are usually very direct and efficient, most Chinese people are shy and not that well-organized. However, they are also open-minded, warm and hardworking.”

Bij het uitvoeren van de analyses kwam ook naar voren dat er in veel verhalen gereflecteerd wordt op de verwachtingen die de deelnemers hadden voordat ze naar het buitenland vertrokken. Vaak ging het hierbij om de verwachtingen met betrekking tot het project. Zo kwam in 12 verhalen naar voren dat er vooraf hogere verwachtingen waren met betrekking tot het project of de samenwerking met AIESEC. Hoewel de vrijwilligers aangeven dat ze hogere verwachtingen hadden ten opzichte van het project, raadden alle vrijwilligers een AIESEC-project aan. Zij stellen dat alle positieve ervaringen en leermomenten zwaarder wegen dan de tegenvallers met betrekking tot het project. Vrijwel alle vrijwilligers zijn enthousiast over AIESEC als organisatie en het avontuur dat ze beleefd hebben.

7. Conclusie

In dit hoofdstuk wordt antwoord gegeven op de hoofdvraag en bijbehorende deelvragen. De centrale vraag in dit onderzoek luidde:

Wat beweren vrijwilligersreizigers ervaren en geleerd te hebben van hun AIESEC-project in het buitenland in hun ervaringsverhalen?

7.1 Deelvraag 1

De eerste deelvraag luidde: *“In hoeverre blijkt in de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers sprake te zijn van cloakroom communities tijdens een AIESEC-project in het buitenland?”* Uit de resultaten kwam naar voren dat de internationale vrijwilligers onderling een hechte band of vriendschap opbouwen doordat ze gezamenlijk deelnemen aan allerlei activiteiten en zowel werkgerelateerde als persoonlijke problemen met elkaar kunnen delen. Ook is in de analyse naar voren gekomen dat deze persoonlijke problemen gerelateerd kunnen zijn aan een cultuurschok. Eerder hebben we gezien dat deze cultuurschok het best gedefinieerd kan worden als een soort aanpassingsstress (Berry, 2006), dat zich kenmerkt door symptomen als angst, depressie, frustratie, woede, zelfmedelijden en afzondering (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Uit de analyse kwam naar voren dat het delen van deze gevoelens kan leiden tot een hechte band of vriendschap. Dit sluit aan bij de theorie van Bauman over *cloakroom communities* waarin hij stelt dat een ‘wij’ gecreëerd wordt ten tijde van onzekerheid. Het kampen met een cultuurschok is een voorbeeld van een situatie waarin een vrijwilliger te maken krijgt met onzekerheid. Zo bleek uit de verhalen dat de vrijwilligers bijvoorbeeld moesten leren omgaan met een onbekende cultuur, onbekend eten, onbekende mensen en een onbekend klimaat. Uit de verhalen kwam naar voren dat ze in deze onzekere situaties naar andere vrijwilligersreizigers toe trokken die hetzelfde ervoeren. Volgens Bauman (2000) kan het creëren van een ‘wij’ ervoor zorgen dat men zich veilig voelt in onzekere situaties. Dit wordt bevestigd in de ervaringsverhalen, waarvan citaat 22 een voorbeeld is.

Citaat 22: Voorbeeld cloackroom community – Ervaringsverhaal 7

“Doordat iedereen zo ontheemd was werd de groep heel close, en dat was een hele bijzondere ervaring.”

Kortom, er is sprake van een *cloakroom community* bij vrijwilligersreizigers die onderling een hechte band of vriendschap opbouwen en zo een ‘wij’ creëren die veiligheid kan bieden bij het ervaren van een cultuurschok.

7.2 Deelvraag 2

Holmes en O'Neill (2012) hebben fases ontwikkeld die doorlopen worden bij het ontwikkelen van interculturele competenties. De tweede deelvraag heeft betrekking op deze fases en luidde: *'In hoeverre komen de verschillende fases van Holmes & O'Neill (2012) omtrent de ontwikkeling van interculturele competenties (IC's) tijdens een AIESEC-project in het buitenland naar voren in de ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers?'* Uit de analyse kwam naar voren dat de vierde en de vijfde fase van Holmes en O'Neill (2012) het vaakst teruggevonden zijn in de ervaringsverhalen. Het gaat hierbij om de fases waarin de vrijwilligers gevoelens in kaart brengen en omgaan met verwarring. Het feit dat deze fases het vaakst zijn teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen kan verklaard worden door het feit dat de vrijwilligersreizigers zich in de 'evaluate' fase van het PEER-model bevinden, oftewel de fase waarin Holmes en O'Neill (2012) de studenten vroegen om hun interculturele ervaring te evalueren. Fragmenten rondom het in kaart brengen van gevoelens evalueren de omgang met de lokale bevolking, en fragmenten waarin periodes van verwarring geëvalueerd worden, hebben bijvoorbeeld betrekking op het omgaan met een cultuurschok. Het omgaan met een cultuurschok past dus binnen de vijfde fase van Holmes en O'Neill (2012). Ook de fase waarin voorbijgegaan wordt aan stereotypes is een aantal keer herkend in de ervaringsverhalen. Tijdens deze fase weerleggen de vrijwilligers de stereotypes die ze voorafgaand aan hun reis hadden.

De fases die niet geanalyseerd zijn, hebben betrekking op het denken in stereotypes (fase 2) en de overgang van zelfgenoegzaamheid naar complexiteit (fase 6). Het feit dat de tweede fase niet teruggevonden is in de ervaringsverhalen kan verklaard worden vanuit het feit dat deze fase plaatsvindt voorafgaand aan een reis. Holmes en O'Neill (2012) vroegen de studenten namelijk om de stereotypes te inventariseren die ze hadden, voorafgaand aan het contact met een *cultural other*. Deze fase komt dus niet terug in de ervaringsverhalen vanwege het feit dat deze na afloop van de vrijwilligersreis geschreven zijn. Ook de zesde fase, de overgang van zelfgenoegzaamheid naar complexiteit, is niet teruggevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Tijdens deze fase worden studenten kritisch naar zichzelf toe, door simplistische evaluaties van hun IC's van de hand te doen. Holmes en O'Neill (2012) vroegen de studenten om hun eigen IC's te evalueren, en hier later op te reflecteren. Tijdens deze evaluatie en reflectie keken de studenten kritisch naar de mate waarin ze IC's ontwikkeld hadden. Uit deze evaluatie en reflectie werd vervolgens door Holmes en O'Neill (2012) de zesde fase herkend, genaamd van zelfgenoegzaamheid naar complexiteit. Het feit dat deze fase niet teruggevonden is in de ervaringsverhalen kan verklaard worden doordat de studenten hun IC's niet evalueren en hier niet op reflecteren. Wel omschrijven veel studenten de persoonlijke impact die het project op ze heeft gehad, en wat ze geleerd hebben. Hierbij wordt hen echter niet gevraagd om kritisch te kijken naar de competenties die ze noemen.

7.3 Deelvraag 3

Om te ontdekken welke interculturele competenties de vrijwilligersreizigers beweren ontwikkeld te hebben, is een analyse uitgevoerd naar de mate waarin de competenties van het *Global People Competency Framework* te herleiden zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen. Hierbij hoorde deelvraag 3: “*In hoeverre blijkt er in de ervaringsverhalen sprake te zijn van ontwikkelde (interculturele) competenties bij vrijwilligersreizigers na afloop van een AIESEC-project in het buitenland?*” Tabel 11 geeft competenties weer die minimaal 5 keer geanalyseerd zijn weer per categorie.

Tabel 11. Meest voorkomende competenties en frequenties per categorie

Categorie	Competentie	Frequentie
Kennis & Ideeën	• Informatie verzamelen	15
	• Anders denken	16
Communicatie	• Communicatie Management	5
	• Taal leren	5
Relaties	• Verwelkomen van vreemden	12
	• Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context	7
	• Onderlinge belangstelling	6
Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & Karaktereigenschappen	• Avontuurlijkheid	5
	• Zelfbewustzijn	5
	• Flexibiliteit	5
	• Incasseringsvermogen	5

Kennis & Ideeën

Binnen deze categorie zijn de competenties *Informatie verzamelen* en *Anders denken* het vaakst geanalyseerd. Een verklaring hiervoor is het feit dat deze competenties relevant zijn bij het verblijven in een nieuw land. Wanneer een vrijwilliger de competentie *Informatie Verzamelen* ontwikkeld heeft, ziet degene de noodzaak in van het verzamelen van informatie, en past degene daar verschillende strategieën op toe zoals het raadplegen van een culturele informant en het observeren van de lokale cultuur. De competentie *Anders denken* werd ontwikkeld bij de vrijwilligers door middel van nieuwe inzichten en het veranderen van eerdere inzichten op basis van nieuwe informatie. Competenties die niet geanalyseerd zijn binnen deze categorie hebben betrekking op het in kaart brengen van zowel de eigen doelen als de doelen van een *cultural other* (*Doelgerichtheid*) en het nastreven van gedeelde doelen (*Coöperatieve oplossingen*).

Communicatie

Binnen de categorie 'Communicatie' zijn de geselecteerde competentie *Communicatie management* en *het Leren van een andere taal* beide vijf keer geanalyseerd in de ervaringsverhalen. De competentie *Communicatie Management bestaat* uit het toepassen van een gepaste communicatiestijl en het oplossen van communicatieproblemen. De competentie *Leren van een andere taal* kwam terug in de ervaringsverhalen wanneer vrijwilligers aangaven zelfverzekerd en gemotiveerd te zijn bij het gebruiken van een nieuwe taal. Het feit dat andere communicatieve competenties niet geanalyseerd zijn in de ervaringsverhalen kan verklaard worden vanuit het feit dat deze competenties enkel herkend kunnen worden uit menselijke interactie. Aangezien ervaringsverhalen geschreven zijn door één persoon en dus geen communicatieve interactie weergeven, zijn de competenties *Aanpassen taalgebruik aan taalniveau van de gesprekspartner*, *Actief luisteren*, *Opbouwen van gedeelde kennis en vertrouwen* en *Stilistische flexibiliteit* niet geanalyseerd. De competentie *Afstemmen van indirecte betekenissen* is één keer geanalyseerd in een ervaringsverhaal waarin een vrijwilligersreiziger uitlegt dat Chinese mensen een indirecte manier van ja en nee hanteren, zonder de woorden letterlijk te gebruiken.

Relaties

Van de categorie 'Relaties' zijn drie competenties het vaakst naar voren gekomen in de analyse. Zo werd de competentie *Verwelkomen van vreemden* geanalyseerd wanneer de vrijwilligersreizigers aangaven geïnteresseerd en proactief te zijn bij het ontmoeten van nieuwe mensen en een groot netwerk aan internationale vrienden opgebouwd te hebben. Een verklaring hiervoor is het feit dat eerdere bevindingen hebben aangetoond dat er vaak sprake is van *cloakroom communities* bij deelnemers aan vrijwilligersreizen via AIESEC. De competentie *Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context* is herkend in fragmenten waaruit bleek dat de vrijwilligers begrepen hoe de mensen zich tot elkaar verhouden en beslissingen gemaakt worden binnen een bepaalde context met bepaalde hiërarchie en machtsverhoudingen. De competentie *Onderlinge belangstelling* is herkend wanneer bleek dat de vrijwilliger geleerd heeft welke dingen wel of niet op prijs worden gesteld door de lokale bevolking.

Persoonlijke kwaliteiten & Karaktereigenschappen

Binnen deze categorie zijn de competenties *Avontuurlijkheid*, *Zelfbewustzijn*, *Flexibiliteit* en *Incasservermogen* het vaakst geanalyseerd in de ervaringsverhalen. *Avontuurlijkheid* wordt gekenmerkt door het verlangen naar verandering en oncomfortabele situaties die leerzaam zijn. De competentie *Zelfbewustzijn* is geanalyseerd wanneer de vrijwilliger beseft hoe eigen gedrag en communicatiewijze geïnterpreteerd werden door anderen, en begreep dat dit moeilijk te begrijpen

was voor de ander. *Flexibiliteit* betekent het kunnen aanpassen aan verschillende omstandigheden zowel in communicatie als gedrag. *Incasseringsvermogen* ten slotte werd geanalyseerd wanneer de vrijwilligers zich niet gemakkelijk uit het veld lieten slaan en niet bang waren voor ongemakkelijke situaties.

Overige competenties

Overige competenties die geanalyseerd zijn naast de competenties van het GPCF, zijn *Zelfbewustzijn* en *Onafhankelijkheid*. Hoewel het GPCF ook *Zelfbewustzijn* noemt, gaat het hier niet om *Zelfbewustzijn* over eigen gedrag en communicatie. *Zelfbewustzijn* in deze context heeft te maken met het inzicht in de eigen professionele interesse en sterke en zwakke punten. Ten slotte is de competentie *Onafhankelijkheid* geanalyseerd wanneer vrijwilligers aangaven dat ze door de vrijwilligersreis onafhankelijker waren geworden. Het feit dat deze competenties herleid zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen kan verklaard worden vanuit het feit dat de vrijwilligers relatief jong zijn, en in de meeste gevallen voor het eerst een verre individuele reis maken. De leeftijd en levensfase van de vrijwilligers zou kunnen verklaren dat ze zich zelfbewuster en onafhankelijker voelen na een vrijwilligersproject in het buitenland.

7.4 Overige bevindingen

Etnocentrisme

Bij het analyseren van de ervaringsverhalen valt op dat de helft van de verhalen geschreven zijn vanuit een etnocentrisch perspectief. Zo wordt de lokale cultuur beschreven vanuit het perspectief van de eigen cultuur. Dit leidt ertoe dat de lokale cultuur omschreven wordt als inferieur aan de eigen cultuur. Dit sluit aan bij het *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* van Bennett (1986). Dit model bestaat uit een totaal van zes fases, waarbij de eerste drie fases gekenmerkt worden door een etnocentrisch perspectief. Pas in de laatste drie fases spreekt Bennet (1986) van een etnorelativistisch perspectief, wat betekent dat de andere cultuur beoordeeld wordt vanuit de andere cultuur. Op basis van de ervaringsverhalen kan gesteld worden dat de vrijwilligersreizigers zich nog in een etnocentrisch stadium bevinden. Hoewel IC's en interculturele gevoeligheid niet hetzelfde zijn, hangen ze wel met elkaar samen. Zowel het intercultureel competent als het intercultureel gevoelig zijn vergemakkelijkt het communiceren met mensen van de lokale cultuur bij vrijwilligersreizen in het buitenland. Het feit dat de verhalen geschreven zijn vanuit een etnocentrisch perspectief, zou te maken kunnen hebben met de reisduur van de vrijwilligers. Lough (2010) stelt namelijk dat vrijwilligersreizen van een paar weken of maanden te kort kan zijn om tot significante veranderingen te komen. Het belang van reisduur neemt volgens Lough (2010) echter af, wanneer er gereflecteerd wordt op de ervaringen onder begeleiding. Deze begeleiding moet volgens Lough

(2010) uitgevoerd worden door deskundigen. Uit de ervaringsverhalen komt niet naar voren dat de vrijwilligersreizigers deskundige begeleiding hebben gehad. Volgens Lough (2010) zou dit een verklaring kunnen zijn voor de ethnocentrische ondertoon in de ervaringsverhalen.

Naast reisduur en reflectie noemt Lough (2010) een andere conditie die van belang is bij het ontwikkelen van interculturele competentie. Deze conditie noemt hij wederkerig contact. Hiermee doelt hij op de mate waarin de vrijwilligers en de lokale bevolking gedeelde doelen nastreven en relatief gelijk zijn. Wanneer de vrijwilligers geen gedeelde doelen met de lokale bevolking nastreven, passen ze per definitie geen IC's toe in de praktijk. Uit eerdere bevindingen bleek dat de competenties *Doelgerichtheid* en *Coöperatieve oplossingen* zelden of nooit zijn terug gevonden in de ervaringsverhalen. Wanneer de competentie *Doelgerichtheid* ontwikkeld zou zijn, zouden de vrijwilligersreizigers gefocust zijn op zowel de eigen doelen als de doelen van de ander. Hier hangt de competentie *Coöperatieve Oplossingen* mee samen omdat hierbij oplossingen gestimuleerd worden die in het voordeel zijn van beide partijen. Het feit dat deze competenties niet herleid zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen kan een verklaring zijn voor de ethnocentristische ondertoon in de ervaringsverhalen.

Verwachtingen

Een laatste opvallendheid is het feit dat twaalf vrijwilligers aangeven teleurgesteld te zijn in het project. De verwachtingen die de vrijwilligers voorafgaand aan het project hadden, werden niet waargemaakt. Dit zou verklaard kunnen worden vanuit het feit dat de vrijwilligers een ethnocentrisch perspectief hanteren, waardoor het project beoordeeld wordt naar Nederlandse maatstaven. Het feit dat veel projecten tegenvielen, zou ook aan de verwachtingen kunnen liggen die AIESEC schept bij de vrijwilligers. Wanneer AIESEC andere of lagere verwachtingen zou hebben geschept, zouden wellicht minder vrijwilligers teleurgesteld zijn geweest in het project.

7.5 Beantwoording hoofdvraag

Het doel van dit onderzoek is het vergroten van het inzicht in wat vrijwilligers zelf aangeven ervaren en geleerd te hebben tijdens een vrijwilligersreis. Voor wat betreft de ervaringen van de vrijwilligersreizigers kan geconcludeerd worden dat er meerdere internationale vrijwilligers tegelijk deelnemen aan een project in het buitenland. Onder deze vrijwilligers wordt een hechte band of vriendschap opgebouwd doordat ze gezamenlijk deelnemen aan activiteiten en zowel werkgerelateerde als persoonlijke problemen kunnen delen.

Daarnaast waren verschillende fases van Holmes en O'Neill (2012) te herkennen in de ervaringsverhalen die doorlopen worden bij het ontwikkelen van IC's. De fases waarin de vrijwilligers

gevoelens in kaart brengen en omgaan met verwarring kwamen het vaakst naar voren in de analyse. Deze fases bieden inzicht in het leerproces dat de vrijwilliger doorlopen hebben tijdens hun reis.

Ook de IC's die naar voren kwamen uit de ervaringsverhalen, bieden inzicht in wat de vrijwilligersreizigers geleerd hebben tijdens hun reis. De IC's die het vaakst geanalyseerd zijn in de ervaringsverhalen zijn *Informatie verzamelen*, *Anders denken*, *Communicatie management*, *Leren van een andere taal*, *Verwelkomen van vreemden*, *Gevoel voor sociale/professionele context*, *Onderlinge belangstelling*, *Avontuurlijkheid*, *Flexibiliteit*, *Zelfbewustzijn* en *Incasservermogen*. Daarnaast kwamen de competenties *Zelfbewustzijn* en *Onafhankelijkheid* naar voren.

Een ander inzicht is verkregen door de constatering dat veel ervaringsverhalen geschreven zijn vanuit een ethnocentrisch perspectief. Het feit dat de competenties *Doelgerichtheid* en *Coöperatieve oplossingen* niet herleid zijn uit de ervaringsverhalen kan hier een verklaring voor zijn. Ook de relatief korte reisduur zou de ethnocentrische ondertoon van de verhalen kunnen verklaren. Bovendien kan uit de ervaringsverhalen niet opgemaakt worden of ze deskundige begeleiding hebben gehad bij het reflecteren op hun ervaringen. Ten slotte zijn de vrijwilligers relatief jong en is het voor de meeste een eerste verre en individuele reis.

Ten slotte viel op dat veel vrijwilligers teleurgesteld waren in de kwaliteit van het project op basis van verwachtingen voorafgaand aan het project. Ondanks de teleurstellingen waren alle vrijwilligers blij met de ervaringen die ze opgedaan hebben tijdens hun AIESEC-project. Alle vrijwilligers zouden een AIESEC-project dan ook aanraden aan andere studenten.

AIESEC heeft als doelstelling het stimuleren van cultureel begrip en het uitdagen van mensen om het beste in zichzelf naar boven te halen. Cultureel begrip kan worden bereikt wanneer de deelnemers aan AIESEC-projecten interculturele competenties en interculturele sensitiviteit ontwikkelen. Dit kan gestimuleerd worden door reflectie onder deskundige begeleiding. Het deskundig begeleiden van vrijwilligersreizigers bij het reflecteren op hun ervaringen en ontwikkelde (interculturele) competenties zou AIESEC kunnen helpen om zowel cultureel begrip te stimuleren als mensen uit te dagen om het beste in zichzelf naar boven te halen.

8. Discussie

In dit hoofdstuk wordt er allereerst kritisch gereflecteerd op het onderzoek. Vervolgens worden aanbevelingen gedaan voor verder onderzoek.

8.1 Kritische reflectie onderzoek

Het analyseren van ervaringsverhalen van vrijwilligersreizigers die deel hebben genomen aan een AIESEC-project in het buitenland is een geschikte methode gebleken voor onderzoek naar de ervaringen en leermomenten van vrijwilligersreizigers. Toch moet er een kritische blik geworpen worden op dit onderzoek. Allereerst zijn slechts 30 verhalen geanalyseerd, waardoor de resultaten uit dit onderzoek niet gegeneraliseerd kunnen worden voor alle deelnemers aan AIESEC-projecten of alle vrijwilligersreizigers in het algemeen. Bovendien is dit onderzoek gebaseerd op ervaringsverhalen die geschreven zijn voor promotiedoeleinden. Het feit dat deze verhalen geschreven zijn met als doel het enthousiasmeren van andere studenten die erover nadenken om deel te nemen aan een AIESEC-project, kan van invloed zijn geweest op de uiteindelijke inhoud van de verhalen. Ook zijn de verhalen na afloop van de vrijwilligersreis geschreven. Dit betekent dat deze verhalen geen exacte weerspiegeling zijn van alle ervaringen en leermomenten die de vrijwilligers hebben doorgemaakt. Het feit dat andere ervaringen en leermomenten niet genoemd worden, betekent namelijk niet dat deze niet plaats hebben gevonden. Wel zou gesteld kunnen worden dat de ervaringen en leermomenten die beschreven worden, de vrijwilligers het meest bij zijn gebleven. Het feit dat de verhalen na afloop zijn geschreven heeft ook tot gevolg dat de gekozen literatuur van Holmes en O'Neill (2012) niet volledig aansluit, omdat deze theorieën zijn gebaseerd op aantekeningen vooraf, tijdens en na interculturele interactie. Bovendien vragen Holmes en O'Neill (2012) de respondenten specifiek om hun interculturele competenties te evalueren en hierop te reflecteren. De auteurs van de ervaringsverhalen zijn hier niet specifiek naar gevraagd. Dit kan tot gevolg hebben dat bepaalde fases niet beschreven worden, bijvoorbeeld omdat ze onbewust plaatsvinden. Ook het *Global People Competency Framework* (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009) sluit niet volledig aan, omdat in deze studie enerzijds geen competenties afgeleid konden worden uit communicatieve interactie en anderzijds competenties gevonden zijn die niet aansluiten bij het GPCF.

Het feit dat de ervaringsverhalen niet geschreven zijn voor onderzoeksdoeleinden zou gezien kunnen worden als een voordeel. Hierdoor waren de auteurs van de ervaringsverhalen zich niet bewust van het doel van het onderzoek. De interpretatie van de ervaringsverhalen is echter onderhevig aan de subjectieve interpretatie van de onderzoeker (Dörnyei, 2007). Hierbij kan de reiservaring en culturele achtergrond van de onderzoeker een rol hebben gespeeld. Dit had voorkomen kunnen worden door een tweede beoordelaar in te schakelen bij het coderen van de

fragmenten. Daarnaast zou het feit dat geen sociale interactie heeft plaatsgevonden tussen de onderzoeker en de vrijwilligers, ervoor hebben kunnen zorgen dat de onderzoeker een objectievere blik heeft kunnen werpen op de data. Hierdoor had de onderzoeker echter niet de mogelijkheid om aanvullende informatie te verkrijgen.

8.2 Aanbevelingen vervolgonderzoek

Door de relatief korte reisduur hebben de vrijwilligers een beperkte ontwikkeling doorgemaakt. Verder onderzoek naar vrijwilligersreizen met een langere reisduur zou uit moeten wijzen welke ontwikkeling vrijwilligersreizigers doormaken tijdens een langer verblijf in het buitenland. Bovendien is niet duidelijk of de vrijwilligersreizigers in deze studie begeleid zijn bij het reflecteren op hun ervaringen. Vervolgonderzoek naar het begeleiden van deelnemers aan AIESEC-projecten in het buitenland zou uit kunnen wijzen of deskundige begeleiding door AIESEC leidt tot een verdere ontwikkeling van interculturele competenties. Ook zou er in nader onderzoek gebruik gemaakt kunnen worden van aanvullende interviews of vragenlijsten. Uit deze aanvullende interviews zou informatie naar voren kunnen komen over de achterliggende oorzaken van de bevindingen. Door middel van een vragenlijst kan ten slotte onderzoek gedaan worden naar de zelfinschatting van de vrijwilligers op het gebied van interculturele competenties, waardoor de ontwikkelde competenties beter in beeld kunnen worden gebracht. In dit onderzoek wordt namelijk enkel een beeld geschetst van de ontwikkelde competenties op basis van de interpretatie van de onderzoeker bij het analyseren van de ervaringsverhalen.

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Bijlage 1: Ervaringsverhalen

Ervaringsverhaal 1

About the job

I went to Santa Cruz do Sul to work with several NGOs. Together with two girls from the United States we worked with three NGOs. Our goal was to help them with structural or organizational problems. In practice this meant that we spend two to three weeks looking around and participating in the NGOs to see what we could do to help them. The three NGOs we worked with were:

- Recycling company: They separate the garbage collected in the city and sell the recyclable materials. We helped them restructure their financial administration and create an overview over their processes.
- CMDM: This is an office that helps women who are suffering from domestic violence. We helped them with creating an Excel file to archive all the data from the women.
- Projeta Alegria e Esperança: Children from the poor neighborhoods come to this project one afternoon in the week to participate in several workshops (e.g. English, music, arts). We provided a structured approach for English classes.

It took a while before we could really start these projects, because it was difficult to find out what the NGOs needed our help for. Since they did not know what we could do, it took a lot of initiative from our side. At the beginning, the language barrier made everything more difficult. Luckily we learned the language pretty fast. The culture within these NGOs is not comparable to Dutch organizations. It is not so rigid and structured, but the work they do is really important for the society. It is difficult to make appointments, but when you get used to the culture it is not a problem anymore.

About AIESEC

Before my traineeship my student coach supported me really good. She helped me finding a traineeship and contacting the LCs abroad. During my traineeship she regularly contacted me to check if everything was alright.

The LC in Santa Cruz do Sul was very helpful and committed. They arranged a host family for me where I could stay for 12 weeks, this was fantastic! The first weeks of my stay in Brazil I had Portuguese class with some of the AIESEC members and we had a lot of parties together. When I had a problem, for example with my visa, they immediately made sure everything was arranged. After 12 weeks with them I can say that some of them truly became my friends!

About the culture

The culture in Brazil is great. The people are really helpful, open, and interested in other cultures. There are some social habits within the culture (like always giving a kiss when you see someone you know) and it is important to adapt to their habits.

Brazil is known to be unsafe in certain areas. There were no moments that I felt unsafe, but you have to be alert. Don't walk on the streets and show off all your expensive jewelry, cameras, etcetera. Make sure you know what neighborhoods in your city you should not enter, because there are big differences between the neighborhoods. The nature in Brazil is beautiful, there is a lot to see and a lot of places to travel to. When you go to Brazil, you should certainly schedule some time for this!

Personal impact

For me this experience was great. I learned a lot about other cultures, about working in these areas, and about myself. Before I left my friends were surprised that I wanted to go abroad. I am always attached to the things I do and it takes some time for me to adapt to big changes. This was exactly the reason that I wanted to go! My time abroad increased my confidence in myself a lot and showed me that I can handle a lot of things on my own. Besides that it showed me that I can work with a lot of different people and that I really like to meet new people.

The experience did not change me into another person, but it made me more aware of the world around me. More than before I left I want to travel and see new places. Furthermore, it is really clear to me what I want to do now thanks to this experience, since I graduated university and I have to find a job. Above all, I realize now that I really love Holland.

The expectations I had beforehand regarding to the traineeship were not correct, but this was mostly due to an incorrect description of the traineeship from the host LC. The NGOs where we went to work did not exactly know what we were supposed to do and did not know that we were supposed to help with organizational problems. After all we managed to execute projects in line with our expectations, but this was thanks to our own initiatives. Besides this I actually had no expectations at all. I think that is the best way to handle this experience.

Will you recommend an AIESEC traineeship?

The experience abroad with an AIESEC traineeship is irreplaceable. If you like to meet new people, learn about other cultures and challenge yourself; AIESEC is a perfect organization for you. The support you get from your home country and the country you will visit is great. They helped me with everything necessary to go to Brazil, live in Brazil, and go home again. The advantage of AIESEC is that you meet a lot of other trainees and the local members of AIESEC. You will never feel alone!

Ervaringsverhaal 2

My name is - and I went on an internship with AIESEC to Hangzhou in China. This is just a small part of the story and it is just to inform you how it is there. To know the whole story I just advice you to go on the same internship in the same beautiful city.

I was an English teacher for New Oriental in Hangzhou, which is in China. My work was, as you probably know, teaching English to children who were between 16 and 18 years old. I had to teach three different classes who were all in the same age category.

First I had to teach the first class for 10 straight days, after that I had some free days. The children went home and new children arrived who formed my second class. Again I taught them English for 10 straight days before I deserved some free days. This was the same with the third class and after the third class my time was over and I went back home.

In class I only practiced oral English with them, so no theory. Of course, when they did not understand something I would explain it with the help of theory. The reason why I did oral is because the Chinese children are very good in studying the English language but speaking it is very difficult for them. So to improve their English speaking ability I did all kind of language games with them. It is important you motivate the children to speak English, they should have fun but at the same time they need to learn something. If I couldn't motivate them to speak English, I would often provoke them to do so. When I provoked them they would have a discussion in English with me.

The working culture was very relaxed; we worked with children so we would have a lot of fun. Plus the Chinese people of New Oriental were always very helpful and nice people. When we had a problem they would help us and make sure the problem would be solved. I can only say good things about the people of New Oriental.

There were also other trainees working with me and they came from different countries. We exchanged ideas about how to teach children and often we would help each other in class with a specific game. For example when I played the American national anthem, I asked the American trainee to come in class and sing along with the American flag. Or when I tried to explain the UK and Ireland to the children, I made sure my Irish co-worker was in class so she could help me. She talked about Ireland and the children loved her and her story.

AIESEC helped me a lot before the traineeship and they even called me to make sure I arrived there. I have nothing to say about AIESEC because it all went so smoothly. There were no problems and they communicated very clearly and good with me. My student coach helped me a lot and was always available to answer my questions. I did not have contact with the AIESEC Hangzhou during the traineeship because we had to work each day. When we had free days I went to travel in China, but the people who stayed in Hangzhou, and did activities with AIESEC, were very happy with AIESEC Hangzhou.

Every day in China you will be surprised by something or by someone. It is completely a different country and world. The culture, the language, the animals and the food are just some of the things who were very different from my own country. But it is a beautiful country. The people are awesome and when you understand the culture when you live with them for a week.

Respect is very important in their culture, respect for someone who knows it better (more experience) than or is older than you. The Chinese children have a lot of respect for their teachers, they didn't even give a high five because apparently it is uncommon to touch the teacher. Plus they first stand up and then answer your question when you ask them something. The school culture is totally different from the European.

On the street they would always watch you because they don't see a foreigner often in Hangzhou but they are very shy and will not say anything to you. When you ask people on the street for directions, they really will try to help you. When they don't know, they will ask other people on the street for the directions. They are very helpful.

When you are in China, you should show interest in the Chinese culture when you talk to Chinese people. That will make them very happy and they start to talk back to you without being shy anymore. They love it when you know something about China. That certainly is a way to start a conversation. After that they will ask you things about your country for example.

Do not talk about politics at all, it still is sensitive there. Avoid any topics which are politically influenced.

China certainly changed me. I have learned some things from the Chinese culture and also from the cultures of the other trainees. The way they look at the world, the way they handle with problems. It is completely different. I have learned to approach life in some other ways now and I know that the world is not that small. They often say globalization made the world a small village, but that is not true. The world is neither a village nor a city, it is more a big universe.

I did not expect my stay would be that great. It was just too good. The work was awesome, the people I met were awesome and China is awesome. I was expecting to deserve a cold beer after work but instead I got something way better. I traveled in my spare time in China and I saw some fantastic places like Shanghai and Hong Kong. I seriously wanted to stay in China, but I know for sure I will go back.

I recommend this internship to everyone, I actually recommend everyone to go on an internship with AIESEC. You will have a story to tell when you get back home (if you want to go home).

If you want more information, please email me:

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Ervaringsverhaal 3

About the job

My internship was about teaching younger students (12-13) about sustainable development. I taught on average two hours a day. There were around 50 children in a class so I reached around 500 children a week. Before we started teaching we got a very intensive training. The materials we got were developed to teach 16 year olds. Like I said: my students were a lot younger so their English was very poor and we had to come up with more creative teaching methods like drawing and showing movies. The working culture was good. Most of the teachers were eager to help us out when language problems arose. Some of them were a massive fan of the project where others were not that fond of it. There participated 6 other trainees in the project and two of them (a Dutch guy and a Canadian girl) lived with me on the same campus.

About AIESEC

Overall AIESEC (UIBE) did a good job! Their enthusiasm made up for the miscommunication and troubles. From the beginning they were very helpful and nice but despite all the good intentions some promises made on forehand could not be held which led to some tensions. However, we managed to talk about the problems and misunderstandings and most of us adapted their expectations whereas AIESEC tried to solve some of the problems (not very successful) Their communication was very poor most of the time (also between the AIESEC members). Another thing that I find not very professional was that they hadn't checked out the school where we stayed. They only confirmed our stay by phone. Although this may sound as a demotivating story, overall they compensated with good intentions! I felt immediately at home at the AIESEC office in Beijing and I think that is really important!

About the culture

Do not talk about Tibet or Taiwan. The safest thing is not to talk about politics at all, actually. Chinese people have economic growth as their main goal and as long as the economy is booming the average Chinese person will not complain about politics. It is also way to dangerous to criticize the government. For the more superficial things: be aware of the crowdedness (at least in Beijing) and try to set your mind to it because it can be overwhelming sometimes. For the rest, just enjoy the ancient Chinese history in combination with full speed development. It is an interesting time to go to China! Most of all: don't worry too much. Chinese do everything last minute and make a lot of trouble for nothing. Most of the time it works out eventually. I think the Chinese people are very friendly and nice. However, sometimes it was a little bit intimidating to be stared at all the time.

Personal Impact

This project made a big impact on me. However, right now it is hard to say what the impact of the project will be in the long run. I expect that the project has changed me for life (in a good way ;)) but right now it is very hard to come up with examples in *which* way it has changed me. I do expect it to affect the choices

I will make in the future, and I have a feeling that my personality has slightly changed together with my view on the western world. But like I said: hard to tell since the whole experience is so young! In the classrooms I developed my presentation, improvisation and language skills. If I ever have to do a presentation and the computer doesn't work? No problem! I can deal with it! I did it before.. I entertained fifty children during computer crashes and the word 'panic' is erased from my vocabulary. I also enjoyed talking to the teachers and living in the school. When you live in the school you get the chance to watch the school-system closely. The differences between the western school system and the Chinese system are stunning.

Overall, I had a very good experience in China. For me, personally, it was good to step out of my comfort zone. I have pushed my boundaries by coming to China and I'm glad I did it. Living in a different country with a language you don't speak, signs you can't read, different food and crowded subways and buses can be intimidating and challenging. However, it is also awesome and full of surprises! I will never be the globe trotter type, and as expected on forehand I still enjoy my comfortable western life-style. But I did learn a lot about myself, about china, and about the world! I made some friends for life and will be traveling more in the future!

Will you recommend a traineeship?

Yes!! For sure!

Ervaringsverhaal 4

The reason for me to join AIESEC for a summer internship was that I wanted to spend my summer in a different way this year. I wanted to make myself useful for others who need it, wanted to experience a different culture and wished to have a unforgettable experience.

All of these goals have been reached; the seven weeks I spend in China have been incredible!

There is so much to tell about my experience, because I arrived in a totally different and interesting world with many new impressions. I could write for pages and pages, but I'll try to put my most important findings on only two sheets of paper.

About the job

The project I joined was called 'Dare to Dream'. It entails that children of Chinese migrant workers in rural areas, who often don't have that much money to spend, are enabled to tell their dreams, which also will be fulfilled. In Changsha, the project was performed by a group of +/- 25 students; local volunteers and foreign trainees. For me, the job consisted of being a teacher on two different schools for migrant children, for two weeks each. After a training in which we learned about teaching and prepared our lessons, we went to the schools. We learned the children English and everyday discussed a different topic with them, like about emotion management, communication, occupation or self-recognition. We not only used theory, but also games, songs and sports to teach them something, but most of all to give them two amazing weeks. At the first school, we totally succeeded in this. When we had to say goodbye to the children, they felt emotional and told us they would miss us so much. At such a moment, it was very special for me to realize that the project and the work we did on the school meant so much for those children and we could really contribute.

After the two times two weeks of teaching, we were supposed to organize a photo-exhibition in which we would show people and organizations back in the city Changsha the situation of those children and raise money to fulfil their dreams. Due to circumstances, this part of the project has unfortunately been cancelled. The result of this was that we had some free time at the end of the project, which we used to travel (not a bad alternative!).

About AIESEC

AIESEC is a world-wide organization led by motivated students. Although every AIESECer is willing to make the things they organize to a great success, this unfortunately is not always the case, as I got to know during my internship.

From AIESEC Nijmegen, the support during the preparation of my internship and the provision of information has been great. Everything was clear on forehand and my coach could answer all questions I had.

For AIESEC Changsha on the other hand, I had the idea that events and happenings often went more quick than the OC team could handle. Although all members were very motivated to organize the

project, to me their level of professionalism could have been much higher. On forehand we received a lot of information and tight schedules about our activities. However, many different problems occurred during the traineeship, with which the OC team but also we as trainees had to deal with. There were many changes in the schedule and some of the activities which were promised to us were cancelled. The OC team also was no champion in communicating with us about changes in the schedule or things and problems which occurred: we often heard about this 'via via' from local volunteers or the other trainees, or we received information too late or not at all. This has been frustrating to me in the beginning, and challenged my flexibility and adaptability quite a lot. After a few weeks of experiencing this, I accepted this way of organizing (maybe a typical Chinese way of doing?) and as the group of trainees together, we strived to get as much clear information as possible from the OC team and make the best out of it.

About culture

The most important sentence for me to remember was 'when in China, do as the Chinese do'. This made it more easy for me to adapt to the Chinese way of living, but I also gained more respect from Chinese people, for example when I refused to use a fork or spoon and just used chopsticks. Finally, by doing this, I also got to know more about Chinese culture. The fact that I was staying with a host family was like a present to me. Although I did not always had that much privacy, I was very glad to experience the day-to-day life of Chinese people and to be part of their family as well.

Things you take for granted in the Netherlands are sometimes totally different in China. Like breakfast: you would expect to receive some bread or cereals, but in China breakfast consists mostly of rice or noodles with vegetables, some meat or an egg. A toilet in the Netherlands is something you can sit on. In China, often a hole in the ground is enough to be called toilet. These things might be a bit disappointing if you're faced with them at first, but take some time to get used to it and soon you'll consider those things as normal, just like the Chinese do.

I have seen so many new and different things compared to what we are used to in the Netherlands. While sightseeing, it was mainly interesting to see the many temples from different religions (Buddhist, Taoist). While walking in the streets of Changsha and the villages in which the migrant children schools were located, it was interesting to see the way people live and eat, which products are sold in supermarket, how Chinese students go out, how women practice Tai Chi in parks and old men play cards or drink tea. But it was also shocking to see the great differences between the relative wealth in the city and the poverty people have to face in the rural area.

Personal impact

Although the project turned out to be somewhat disappointing and less of a learning possibility as I hoped it to be, I learned quite a lot on other levels. First of all about the different cultures of not only or visiting country China, but also from the countries of the other trainees. I also learned to deal with the unexpected circumstances we faced, poor levels of accommodation, differences in ways of communicating and organizing between different people and cultures, collaborate closely together and finally I learned to enjoy my time no matter what happened.

By seeing the circumstances in which people sometimes have to live, I respect those people for how they do it, but it also made me feel grateful and it made me realize how lucky we should be to live in this country. The expectations I had on forehand about my stay in china were so much different in reality; I could have never imagined it before. But I must say, the real experience over all has been so much better than I have ever expected.

So, although there were some bad moments, the many great moments will be the ones I will remember and the problems I faced I learned from and they made me stronger. That's why I would recommend everyone to involve in the AIESEC experience and start a traineeship!

Ervaringsverhaal 5

In the spring of 2011 I decided to go on a summer internship with AIESEC. Although the experience is still very recent, I already know that it was one of the best decisions I have ever made. After searching through the database for a few weeks, I stumbled upon an internship that seemed perfect in a lot of ways. The project was situated in Guangzhou, one of the biggest cities in China, and it was about raising as well as enhancing multicultural awareness. Some days later I had an interview with a Chinese girl on Skype, and I got accepted. The preparations for my great adventure could finally begin!

I had to take care of a lot of things before I could set off to China – ranging from getting vaccines and buying a plane ticket to applying for a visa and mentally preparing myself for a gigantic culture shock. Luckily I had my AIESEC coach, who helped me by providing all sorts of useful information. On the 3rd of July the time had finally come for me to say goodbye to my family and friends and start the 24 hour trip to Guangzhou. It's hard to describe what it was like to set foot in China, but I will try anyway. I have never felt so exhausted, wrecked, mature and independent – all at the same time. It was a breathtaking experience, one of those experiences that everyone should have at least once in their life.

Although my arrival was close to midnight, there was still an AIESEC member waiting for me inside the airport. He was really nice and took me to the trainee house, where I met some of my fellow trainees. I was very happy to finally meet them, but I was also a bit shocked by the apartment. It was small, dirty and extremely crowded: 12 people had to share 2 tiny bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and 1 living room. Fortunately we were all on the same page, so it wasn't that bad. It all took some getting used to, but in the end we found ways to make it work.

This basically characterizes the entire internship: it was up to us to make the best out of it. The AIESEC (SYSU) members were all very welcoming and enthusiastic, but I got the feeling that most of them didn't really know what they were doing. We decided to talk to our team leader, who did her best to make our stay more comfortable. After our talk, things got a lot better. Overall, the AIESEC (SYSU) team did a good job. What they lacked in experience, they made up for in enthusiasm and genuine interest. We all shared a positive attitude, which turned the internship into a great success.

Our job included organizing workshops, multicultural courses, English corners and global villages. We organized over 25 multicultural activities in the Museum of the Mausoleum of the Nanyue King, Guangzhou Library and 3 different communities in Guangzhou. We were asked to present our own culture in these activities, with themes such as music, history and festivals. Our audience consisted of students, children and adults, who were all fascinated by our cultures and eager to learn about them. In exchange, they showed us Chinese culture in general and Cantonese culture in particular. But it didn't end there: thanks to my friends' presentations, I also got introduced to Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, Russia and Malaysia. This broad cultural exchange was definitely one of the best parts of the internship.

It was especially mesmerizing to absorb the Chinese culture - with all its good and 'bad' traits. If you decide to go to China (which would be a great decision!), it's best to keep an open mind at all times. I ate crazy food, had relatively hard living conditions and got stared at constantly. But I also

met the most amazing people, saw a beautiful country and learned a lot about myself. Obviously, China is very different from Holland, but that doesn't make it better or worse. Whereas Dutch people are usually very direct and efficient, most Chinese people are shy and not that well-organized. However, they are also open-minded, warm and hardworking. Their way of life made me look at my own life with new eyes. I had to deal with a big culture shock, but it was worth every second of it.

In addition to learning huge life lessons, I also made a whole bunch of international friends, whom I still talk to regularly. Living, eating and working together really creates a strong bond. We went to Hong Kong together, climbed mountains, drifted, saw all of the touristic places and clubs that Guangzhou had to offer, etcetera. If you are still not sure about going to China, or whatever country for that matter, I can only say this: stop hesitating and just go for it! Of course you will come across unexpected situations, but dealing with them will only make you a stronger person. For me, it has been one of the best experiences in my life. I hope it will be just as great – or even better – for you!

Ervaringsverhaal 6

When I boarded my plane at Frankfurt International Airport I didn't know yet what to expect from my internship in Alexandria, Egypt ... and actually I just didn't want to know it. I just wanted to do something in the Middle East, something I usually don't do at home in Germany or Holland. Meeting new people, hoping for some new experience, some moments, some situations that would make me grow. I got all of it.

When I left the airplane in nighttime Cairo, the first Mediterranean experience was the fact that it was still amazingly warm outside; the second experience was a whole bunch of taxi drivers in the arrivals hall that stubbornly tried to get me in their taxis. "You need taxi?", "Very cheap taxi, most cheap!" Too much after hours of being terrified by every little wind that shook the plane. Fortunately, I didn't have to take one of the cabs. Instead, two charming Egyptian AIESEC girls picked me up and drove me to the main bus station. Sitting in the bus I could admire some army vehicles that pointed their machine guns at the bus, I had a nice chat with an Egyptian guy who lived in Alexandria and finally fell asleep.

In Alex I was immediately picked up by Mina (who is not a girl despite the name) and his friend. The latter was driving the car in which I had my first – and certainly not my last – lesson in Egyptian traffic. The car speeded through the night, jumped when hitting some bump on the road and finally stopped in front of my new apartment building. Inside the flat I met my roommates: a guy from Ghana, one from Cameroon and the boy in the bed close to mine was from India/Britain. Quite international, cool!, I thought and kind of died in the moment that my back touched the bed. That's how I came to Alex.

The next day, Mina, who was my service manager, showed me around a little. He taught me how to read the route map of the tram, how to drive to my work place and where to get some good food. In the city: burning sun, thousands of archaic black-yellow Lada taxis; cars are honking like hell and driving around pedestrians crossing the road; men are sitting on chairs and just watching; leaking air-conditionings all around. We walk on the sidewalk until it becomes impossible because of dropping water from the ACs, a construction site, cars that are parked in a weird way, because of coffee houses occupying the whole space or for whatever reason. When I close my eyes now, the first things about Egypt that pop up in my mind are still leaking ACs and Lada taxis.

People are sitting in front of coffee houses smoking shisha and drinking tea or coffee from small glasses. You see masses of kiosks and small shops. Outside people are selling pita bread and Arabic sweets of all kinds. During my first days in Alexandria I was overwhelmed by the enormous amount of new input, all the noise, colors, aromas; and everywhere cars and people ... and that's pretty relaxed compared to Cairo. You have to learn how to cross the roads safely. You need to figure out which falafel and shwarma places are okay (good taste and no diarrhea), how not to pay too much in a cab (give money, close door, run) and how to use the tram, for instance jumping inside when it's already driving.

A lot of things are totally different in Egypt, for example the rhythm of the people. Egyptians start their day rather late, seem to work all day long (often late in the night) and begin to enjoy their leisure time when proper Europeans would already head for their beds. Sometimes I saw little

children swimming in one of the bays at the seafront in the middle of the night. And you get the impression that there are people around you *always* and *everywhere*. I can still not imagine that Egyptians do actually sleep from time to time. The city is always full of life. I kind of, let's say, adapted to this rhythm, this lifestyle between chilling out with coffee, tea, shisha, backgammon on the one hand and always being outside, moving, meeting people, talking, working on the other hand – a sort of relaxed action all the time.

Usually I slept around 3 or 4 hours per night. Got up between 7 and 8, no time for shower or breakfast. Headed to the Montessori preschool by tram or cab (Coldplay in my ears, Red Bull in my hands). Taught children (3 to 6 years of age) some English: shapes, colors, numbers etc. Played with them outside (I teased them with the garden hose when they were in the pool, played ball with them, chased them around as a "lion"). Got some Nescafe from the kiosk during my break. Read a story to the kids afterwards (me in English, one of the Egyptian women did the translation). Left the school at 3 or 4. Got a kushary (national food in Egypt) at the tram station and perhaps a juice or an asab (national drink) on the other side. Went home, fell on my bed, stopped thinking and moving.

The leisure activity after my little nap was different every day – but always activity. Often one of the AIESEC guys picked us (me and my roommates) up in his car and we drove anywhere: welcoming new interns, going to the beach, hanging out in shisha places, going to a concert, having pool parties, going to a pub and dancing Egyptian style – loads of things. There was hardly a day without any kind of activity, be it partying, be it hanging out or whatever. Our AIESEC group grew constantly. People from Brazil, Russia, Poland, Germany, Holland, Mexico, England, India, Greece and so forth ... and of course all the Egyptian AIESEC guys that were always fun and active, always available, always driving us around, showing us cool places, talking, laughing and just having a good time.

After such a day (hardly a day without meeting new people or experiencing something new) I directly fell asleep. Then, after 4 hours I got up again and went to work to the Montessori school and so on. There was a period during that 7 people inhabited our flat (absolute maximum 6 people). One toilet, one shower, one washing machine. Sometimes toilet and shower didn't work (the toilets in KFC and Hardee's always worked though), the washing machine gave you electric shocks and made rust stain on your clothes. Some of the children at the school drove me insane. Sweating plus extreme air-conditioning got me a cold and fever. And this constant lack of sleep!

In some moments everything seemed so challenging that I thought I couldn't go on like that for 7 weeks. But I did. And when the wheels of my plane touched the ground in Frankfurt after almost 2 months in Alexandria, there was a moment in which I just couldn't look forward to my more convenient circumstances back in Holland. Why? Because outside I saw Europe and I knew already what I would miss: sitting on the concrete blocks at the seafront watching the sunset or the waves of the Mediterranean in the night; having shisha, beer, coffee with a good friend outside a coffee house; speeding through the night with 4 or 5 people in the back of the car taken by the music; being hugged and just liked by the children in the school; having so many first conversations with people from all around the globe; riding on a camel towards the pyramids; people just beginning to chat with you on the street; not knowing what I'll do and where I'll end up tomorrow ... and so much more.

Ervaringsverhaal 7

Voordat ik naar Egypte vertrok had ik eigenlijk geen idee wat ik daar aan zou treffen. Mensen reageerden heel verdeeld als ik vertelde dat ik tien weken in Cairo ging werken; sommigen hadden goede ervaringen met Egypte – zij het wel vooral met kustplaatsen zoals Sharm el Sheikh en Hurghada – anderen vroegen me of ik gek was geworden. Toegegeven, naar Egypte gaan vlak na de “revolutie” en tijdens de naweeën van de Arabische Lente was enigszins riskant, maar mijn avontuurlijke kant trok wel richting die kant van de wereld en toen ik een project vond bij een mensenrechtenorganisatie was de keuze snel gemaakt.

Niets wat iemand me hier had kunnen vertellen had me voor kunnen bereiden op wat ik aantrof toen ik in Cairo kwam. De verhalen dat Egypte zo modern en progressief is zijn alleen maar aannemelijk als je het vergelijkt met andere Arabische en Afrikaanse landen. Zes van mijn zeven huisgenoten moesten huilen toen zij voor het eerst in ons tweekamerappartement aankwamen. Het toilet werkte niet, dus doortrekken ging met een emmer, de woonkamer en slaapkamer lagen vol met matrasjes terwijl de insecten over de grond en het plafond liepen, in de keuken leek wel een bom ingeslagen. Halverwege mijn verblijf daar hadden we een plaag van bed-wansen en toen we het meisje van AIESEC belde waar wij contact mee hadden zei ze: “dat heeft iedereen hier, spuit maar wat insecticide.” Toen ik dit op mijn stage tegen mijn bazin vertelde zei ze: “belachelijk dat jullie denken dat een meisje jullie contactpersoon is, die krijgt niets voor elkaar.” Ik ben uitgescholden, bespuugd, vastgehouden, en achtervolgd. Mijn huisgenootjes zijn beroofd, gearresteerd vanwege spionage en aangerand in de metro.

Ondanks dit alles heb ik ook goede herinneringen aan Egypte. Met een groep van 17 exchange studenten zijn we de woestijn in gegaan om daar te kamperen en sandboarden, dat was echt een once in a lifetime-ervaring. Aan de kust, vooral in Dahab, kon je gewoon in je bikini de zee in (iets wat bijvoorbeeld in Alexandrië niet kon), en ’s avonds als de stad en de mensen afkoelden was Cairo vaak wel leuk en totaal verschillend van alles wat ik ooit gezien heb. Daarnaast was de groep van AIESEC exchange studenten ontzettend hecht, omdat de meesten niet wisten wat ze overkwam en de cultuurshock overheerste. ’s Avonds zaten we dan buiten thee te drinken bij een café waarvan de eigenaar goed om kon gaan met westerse meisjes. Doordat iedereen zo ontheemd was werd de groep heel close, en dat was een hele bijzondere ervaring.

AIESEC Egypte is verschrikkelijk slecht georganiseerd ook al blijkt dat bij de eerste contacten totaal niet zo te zijn. Ze reageren snel op mails zolang je niet in Egypte bent, ze hebben goede verhalen over de projecten, etc. Toen we eenmaal daar waren en het merendeel van de stages niet bleek te bestaan waren ze minder bereikbaar. Toen mijn huisgenootjes op Tahrir Square opgepakt werden omdat ze spionnen zouden zijn was er ook niemand van AIESEC te bereiken en moest ik een advocaat van het kantoor waar ik werkte om hulp vragen.

Ik ben blij dat ik gegaan ben en dat ik dit heb meegemaakt, maar ik denk dat het voor anderen die naar Egypte gaan belangrijk is dat ze beter geïnformeerd gaan. Dit is op het moment ook lastig omdat de situatie zo verandert in dat gebied, maar ik ben van veel dingen echt geschrokken.

Ondanks dit alles ben ik erg blij dat ik gegaan ben en dit heb meegemaakt.

Ervaringsverhaal 8

About the job

I spent the summer of 2012 in Ghana, and stayed there for six weeks. I went for the GCDP named 'AFRITOUR' which was located at the LC KNUST, in Kumasi, the second biggest city of Ghana.

When I arrived, the whole group (about 30 interns from different projects, and 5 local AIESEC'ers) went for a tour through whole Ghana for ten days, which I will be talking about later.

The AFRITOUR project was about promoting tourism in Ghana and developing a strategic plan for the local tourism. The project consisted of several stages, with different little projects in it. The first phase of the project consisted of organizing a seminar for students from different local schools, which would last for a whole day, with the goal of teaching the students about the business opportunities that currently exist regarding the tourism and tourist sites. The members of the AFRITOUR project, which were about 10 at the time I was there (considering there were new people coming and other people leaving again, so the numbers varied), had the task of arranging a location for the seminar, selecting and informing students, take care of transport and arrange sponsorships in the form of food and drinks. Also the transportation costs were to be in the form of sponsorship. Finally some guest speakers for the seminar had to be taken care of. After the seminar, a report had to be written about the process with some recommendations for improvements for the next time a seminar would be held. After this, the second phase started, which consisted of developing a booklet about the tourism in Ghana, based on our experiences from the 10-day tour. The goal was to present the booklet to ten different schools in Kumasi to teach the students about the tourism and the opportunities there were regarding this. Our tasks consisted of writing and editing the booklet, searching information about the tourist sites and contact information about accommodations, restaurants etc, to put in the booklet. After finishing the booklet, we had to look for sponsorships in the form of money to produce the booklets. Schools had to be contacted to ask if they were interested in participating in the project. Also we were busy making a webpage about the tour and the tourism. The working culture was really good, there was a good atmosphere and enough time for questions or free time. Although our project manager wasn't always there or came late sometimes (which is a part of the culture of Ghana though), working with him was really nice and we learned a lot from him.

About AIESEC

In overall, my impression of AIESEC is really good. Before I went to Ghana, they gave me all the information and support I needed or asked for. They helped me with legal issues, but also with culture, accommodation, visa etc. During my internship, the local AIESEC members at the LC were helpful and kind. When I arrived at the airport, someone was waiting for me to pick me up and help me change my money. The local AIESEC'ers lived with all the interns from the different projects in one house and were always there for us. They showed us around, helped with the projects and all other things needed. Over time, they became really good friends, people you can really trust upon. They were open for suggestions and organized regularly meetings where they asked if people had

improvement points or things they want to see differently. With regard to the projects, they were really professional and were most helpful when for example interns had problems with local people, like managers, caused by different understandings because of cultural differences.

AIESEC KNUST provided enough opportunity to get to know all the other interns, from all the projects, because we lived in the same house, but also because of the nights we went to a bar for example and presentation nights, where every country had to give a presentation about his/her country. Also the ten day tour at the beginning organized by the LC was a success, when we went to see all the tourist sites through the country and got to know everybody really good. It was organized good and efficient, although you have to take into account some cultural differences.

About the culture

The culture of Ghana is really special and beautiful. Everybody you meet is nice to you and always willing to help. Of course there are some exceptions, which I personally haven't met though. Ghanaians are incredibly warm, friendly, hardworking, welcoming, and with a great sense of humour. No matter what their circumstances are, they are always laughing and are genuinely interested in you. One time, I was sitting in a little bus with a woman with a baby on her lap next to me. The baby was smiling at me and the next moment she put the baby on my lap. You won't see such things in Europe, and this little example shows their genuine nature; they trust you with their children and are not scared of someone having bad intentions. Something you really have to get used to, is the touchy nature of the Ghanaians. When you walk by, they often call 'obruni' to you, which means 'white person', and touching or grabbing your arm. There is no harm in this, they don't mean it bad, but it can look intrusive and a little too much to handle sometimes, especially when you're in a crowded place like a market and everybody wants to touch you and show you their stuff or want to talk to you.

With regard to religion, almost everybody believes in something, with the biggest part being Christian. There is also a relative big part of Muslims. People often go to the church, with the church services sometimes being really intense. In Ghana, people find it difficult to understand if foreigners come and say they don't believe in anything. Often when they asked me about my religion and I told them I don't believe in anything, I got long and hard discussions about the reason why not and with them trying to convince me that I have to believe or have to be a Christian. In the end I decided to tell them I was a Christian when they asked me, just to avoid these discussions and save my time. However, they were never hostile to me.

Besides the advice of not telling them if you are an Atheist, another advice is to wear appropriate clothes which don't show too much skin, not everybody will appreciate this, especially the older generation. In the big cities however, western influences are more integrated and people don't care what you're wearing. Also people believe in nice manners and friendliness to everyone, so make sure you always thank someone when they help you or sell you something for example. Another thing you have to take into account is the relaxing nature of the Ghanaians, which by Western people can sometimes be seen as 'lazy'. You can have an appointment with a manager, just to find out that he is not around and you have to come back tomorrow. Also it is not rare for someone to show up an hour too late, or not showing up at all. Agreements you make with organizations can be 'forgotten' the

next day or changed. It can be difficult and frustrating, however, you have to deal with this; it's the 'Ghanaian way of living'.

With regard to the things that you can see in Ghana, there is much to tell. During the ten day tour, we saw a big part of Ghana and visited a lot of tourist sites. In Ghana, you find amazing national parks with wild animals, crocodile farms, slave castles, monkey parks, cute little villages on the water, beautiful waterfalls, mountains to hike, nature sites, lakes, banana farms and a lot more.

Personal Impact

During my internship, I learned a lot. I learned professional skills, like giving presentations, going out for sponsorships, organizing seminars and a lot more. On the personal level, I learned a lot about myself, like who I am, what are my strengths and what are my weaknesses. I learned how I function in a group, but also how I function on my own. Overall, my stay has made me much more independent and stronger, because you are there on your own. Of course there are all the other interns and local AIESEC'ers, but you are without your family and friends to help you or do things for you. My stay has changed me in a big way. I learned to appreciate what I have at home more, and deal with a culture that is totally different from your own. I became much more independent, stronger and self-confident.

Overall, my six weeks stay in Ghana was an amazing experience which I had never imagined it would this much fun. I expected to have a good time, but my real experiences transcended my expectations a lot. It was one of the best times of my life which I will always remember, and I can recommend everybody to go to Ghana for a GCDP.

If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Ervaringsverhaal 9

✓ About the job

I worked in a NGO which committed itself to educate marginalized children not only with actual education but also with lifeskills and expression skills through arts. Hereby they were trying to create children which could create a self-sustaining environment for themselves; it would be difficult to achieve this by the children themselves because their parents were too poor to pay for the tuition fees at schools.

The NGO was called ROPIO Foundation and has about 20 volunteering Indian 'employees' with ages ranging between 19 and 30. Further there were 5 interns from AIESEC in my time over there. Their nationalities were Egyptian, Chinese (2), Taiwanese and me as the Dutch man. We had a very diversified team of AIESEC interns, but we had a real good connection between each other and had much fun!

ROPIO Foundation had an office and a shelter in which the children we helped could stay. Here they could hang out with their friends, eat, sleep and most importantly study.

The president and the vice-president of the NGO were really involved in getting us (the AIESEC interns) the best experience we could get. So they accompanied us in our first week about the whereabouts in Delhi so we could live there independently. Further they organised hangouts, parties and dinners for us. So in our first weeks we never really felt alone. This was good for me in my first week because the LC of Delhi IIT almost gave me no attention and I was the first intern of a new draft. So for the first 4 days there were no EP's for me to hang out with around my hotel. Fortunately I had my colleagues and I met many other interesting persons in my first week.

In short what I did: we intensively worked towards a big event we were organizing: The National children's parliament in which children from all over Delhi could reach their voices and concerns about socially sensible topics to politicians. My role herein was in short raising funds and increasing the amount of children that would visit the event.

✓ About AIESEC DELHI IIT

The level of professionalism was quite low at this LC. There were no good agreements with the hotels of almost every EP I met and nobody was satisfied with the hygiene and space of the room. I had to share a 2 person bed with 2 other EP's. Further f.i. Wifi and a fixed amount of rent was agreed, but none of this was true. It was always fighting and negotiating with the hotel owner about the rent.

My EP manager was very helpful through calls and SMS's but I saw her only after 4 weeks in Delhi. She did quite a good job in all the logistic preparation for me, but when there was trouble you noticed they (the EP managers of Delhi IIT) were actually little youngsters as they were too unexperienced to fix them properly (in exception of a few EP-managers). The LC was moderately involved with the EP's as we saw some people from AIESEC dropping by in our first weeks, but this was only once or twice a week. Further they organised two hangouts with them and all the EP's.

As far as my reception concerns; I was not picked up from the airport and had to call my EP-manager from where to go from the airport. This first culture shock at the airport was something I had to go through with all alone.

The best thing this LC did was putting me together with 30 other EP's from all over the world in two hotels almost next to each other. This was so great, we turned into one big group of friends and went travelling, partying, dining and just chilling together. We had the feeling like: 'we are in this together'. Real friendships were, and for me even a short romance, created during this period. This was really, next to travelling, the best part of my experience. As I am still in touch with many EP's I met there.

✓ **About the culture**

There is so much to see and experience in India. The main experience is to see how the Hindu religion is flowing through the life of people within India and affects the lifestyle of the society. The habits of people here, the importance of music, the historic legacy (architecture), the crowdedness, the food, the lack of hygiene, the cultural values. It is all so different from what we experience in the Western world, that you feel like you are on a new planet. That is why you have to visit this country because there is so much beauty to see in the difference between cultures. Be aware that everybody is struggling to make a living in India, as also the great group of poor people. That is why Western people are an attractive target to cheat on with transactions.

✓ **Personal Impact**

As I was designated to myself in a third-world country, as I went by myself, I got to know myself better. As I was faced upon many unfamiliar situations, that I would never face in the Netherlands and had to respond adequately to these situations I developed my personality further and hereby I also learned more about myself. In this way my experience in India has given me a growth on personal level and has therefore changed me. Further also my flexibility and adaptability has grown as I have enriched my cultural perspective through my experience here.

✓ **Will you recommend a traineeship?**

I would 100% recommend a traineeship in India. As you make sure you are surrounded by other EP's (the great benefit of AIESEC), or at least are not alone, you are going to have a great experience and see the beauty of this country.

Ervaringsverhaal 10

For my traineeship I have been to Jaipur, India. I have been working there for three months at Prayas, Centre for Special education and Vocational training.

The job

Prayas has 4 schools: 3 integrated schools and 1 special school. I worked at the special school most of the time. I observed in all the different classes and tried to help the teachers. I helped the children painting, counting and with some English words. But because of the language barrier it is hard. I don't speak Hindi, and the children don't speak English. Also communicating with the teachers is not easy, because most of them don't speak English very well. But just by observing I learned a lot too. I saw how teachers and children interact, how they teach, and most of the time I did understand what the class was about.

I also worked at one of the integrated schools for a few weeks. I observed and I have been teaching there as well. Although I'm not a teacher, I do have a lot of knowledge about the development of children and I've worked at schools in the Netherlands as well. I tried to teach them English in an interactive way; with some games, let them talk about things in their own life, talk about things they just read, etc. And at the same time I tried to teach them some social skills as well; talk about how they feel in certain situations and how to deal with other people for example. I had a great time teaching here, the children are all very enthusiastic and motivated!. They were also very interested in my life in India and in the Netherlands, so we had chats about that too. And because their English was quite good, it was easier to communicate than at the special school, so I felt I could do more there.

After about 6 weeks, summer holidays started so the schools closed. In that period orphans came to the school, so they could get taught there. In the orphanage they didn't really get education, so now in summer they came to the school to learn about different things and play some games as well. I helped teaching and playing with them as much as I could. You could really see they missed some basic skills, being raised without parents. And they were not used to people caring about them, so they were happy with any attention they got.

The working culture is really different from the Netherlands. School started always late, teachers didn't really seem to have a program what to teach and they 'prepared' their lessons when the children were already there. They always picked up their phone or sent text messages during school time and just walked in and out the classroom a lot. Everything is going slow. If they say something is gonna happen tomorrow, I won't happen before next week and maybe even later. And sometimes I just had the feeling people were doing nothing...I found that hard, especially in the beginning. After some time I got used to it and could handle it better.

AIESEC

I heard many complaints about AIESEC Jaipur, mainly about that they were just trying to get as many trainees as possible, not really thinking about if they could offer accommodation and people to look after them. Luckily I didn't have problems. I had a buddy that took care of me the first few days and I had a few people from AIESEC I could always count on.

But there were a few things I didn't find positive:

- In my TN-form it said that I could assist the teachers, advice them about the children. But the teachers hardly spoke any English, so that was really difficult. I could only communicate on a very basic level, which was a pity
- Like many trainees I just had to find my own way. I didn't get a real introduction or a job description. So it took some time to figure out how it all worked and what I wanted to do.
- I was a bit disappointed about the work during the summer holidays. Beforehand they said the orphanage children were coming and there would be dance-drama- and music workshops where we could help with. But we didn't see any of that happen. Also the community work wasn't really happening, but that would be one of the main activities during summer. They only went a few times. So I was glad the children were there, otherwise I would have been bored.

Culture

The Indian culture is very different from ours. I've been in Jaipur, Rajasthan, and that's about the only part of India I have seen. Rajasthan is known as being very conservative; woman are expected to wear long clothes, girls in Rajasthan are not allowed to go out after 8pm, and arranged marriages are daily reality. I found that everything in India is really double: you have great landscapes, wonderful temples and buildings, but on the other hand garbage is everywhere on the streets. I had troubles finding bins in Jaipur. Then there is a very rich nature, but many people are very poor. People are very nice and hospital, but there is a lot of harassment as well, especially at the touristic places. I was always very careful when I met people, cause in never really knew what they wanted from me. People are very religious, Hinduism is the most common religion. There are temples everywhere! It's all very different from our culture, in many ways, but I found it really interesting to be part of this culture for some time and learn more about it.

Personal Impact

The first few weeks I really had to get used to everything. Everything is just different in India: the weather, the people, the traffic, the food. And you're always an attraction; everyone is looking at you, coming to talk to you, wanna take photos of you. Sometimes I was just freaking out! After some time I could handle it better; I knew how to deal with people, what the prices were, and I really had the feeling I was going home when I came back from work.

Like every trainee in Jaipur, I had to adapt my expectations after I just started my traineeship. I realised I wouldn't be able to do as much as I wanted, and had to be happy with just little steps. I really learned a lot about myself; how I act and react in certain situations and because the

educational system was so different and I knew what I would change, I realised I have quite some knowledge about how to deal with special children. And living in a development country for a few months, made we realise how good we have it here. People here can complain so much, but in India that are all just luxury problems. And I really learned to appreciate the basic things I missed there like a good bed, a nice shower, a toilet that flushes.

Would I recommend a traineeship?

It took some time for me to get used to India and it's culture, and I never had so many frustrations being in another country as in India. But when I look back now, I have a good feeling about it. I mostly remember the positive things and I met nice people I'm still in touch with. And the kids at the school were great! I would have loved to take some home! ;) It was a very special experience that I will never forget and that I wouldn't want to miss!

Ervaringsverhaal 11

My name is -, I'm student International Economics at the Radboud University Nijmegen. I really liked my study but I perceived that I would like to practice all the things I learnt. I heard about AIESEC and I thought it would be a nice experience to do this in another country. This is how it started. At the 25th of April, I flew from Amsterdam to Jaipur, a city in the North of India with 2,3 million citizens.

Of course I read about India and the culture before I left, but when I arrived..... WOW! I couldn't believe this! It was really hot and everything was so different! People were sleeping on the streets, cows, pigs, camels and elephants were walking in the streets and the traffic was so chaotic! Unbelievable!

When I arrived at the airport of Jaipur some girls from AIESEC Jaipur picked me up. They brought me to my home where I would stay for the next three months. I stayed in a house with 15-20 other trainees from all over the world! I really liked that!! I worked in a textile firm and I was responsible for the marketing part. I didn't have that much expectations of the internship, because I heard from many people that you cannot compare an internship in India with an internship in Europe. But still, I was a bit disappointed in my internship. I had to send emails the whole day, but most of the time we didn't have internet. Sometimes I had to wait for internet for 4 or 5 hours. When I asked my colleagues what I could do, they answered with: 'relax.'. That's the mentality in India and sometimes it was hard for me to adapt myself to that attitude. I was the only trainee in this company, but I had really nice colleagues and that was the reason I liked my internship. They were very interested and we talked a lot about the differences between the Netherlands and India. For example, for them it was really strange that I'm not living with my parents anymore. I told them that it's quite normal to leave your parents when you're 18, but for them it was ridiculous. They thought that I don't love my parents because I don't live with them my whole life. For them the family is really important and they live all together in the same house. Those kind of differences were funny to discover.

With some flatmates or people from other 'AIESEC houses' I visited almost every weekend a city close to Jaipur: Udaipur, Jodhpur, Agra (with the famous Taj Mahal!), Pushkar and more beautiful cities. I really liked that part of my stay in India. We saw so many nice cities and I met so many people! Every Wednesday there was a dinner for all the AIESEC trainees organized by AIESEC Jaipur. That was always fun! There we talked about our experiences but we also made plans for the next weekend. I was quite happy with AIESEC Jaipur. They picked me up from the airport and if I had some questions I could always call them! Besides that, some of them visited our house quite often and that was always fun.

What about the culture? The culture is totally different from our culture, almost in every aspect haha! First of all the food. It's quite spicy, in the beginning I didn't like it at all. But after some week I

got used to the spices and I started to like to food! By the way, most of the people is vegetarian, so it was quite hard to find a “non-vegetarian” restaurant. I also perceived some differences in culture when we went out. In the Netherlands you take a drink in the disco and after a while you might go for a dance. But here it was totally different, when I entered the disco, everybody was dancing like crazy and really close to each other! Another noticeable thing is that I only saw men. I heard that most of the women are not allowed to go out when it’s dark. And last but not least the clothes. Some of the younger people are dressed like European people, with a jeans and a T-shirt. But most of them wore typical Indian clothes. With that I mean the very colourful kurti’s (kind of dress) and sari’s. At work I also had to wear Indian clothes. In the beginning it felt a bit strange, but after a while I really liked it, because the clothes are very lax which was practical with the heat.

A friend of mine was in India one year ago and I talked with her before my leave. So I had some expectations of the country. But as I said earlier, you know a lot about the country, but when you visit this country, everything is amazing, strange, beautiful and unexpected. For example I knew that people would stare at me because I’m white and blonde, but still, the first time when I walked through the streets on my own I couldn’t believe this. EVERYBODY was looking at me. So often people came to me to ask me to pose for a picture. That kind of things I knew before I left, but still it was really strange and had a big impact on me.

On personal level I learnt a lot. In first instance, my English is improved. I haven’t seen any Dutch girls or boys there, so I had to speak English all the time. But besides that, I learnt to be in a big group of strangers and how to find your place in that group. In the beginning it’s a bit strange to be between strangers, but they became my friends really quick. That’s quite logical, because you are all in the same situation and you have the same experience with the unkown culture, food, people and weather.

I really recommend you an internship in Jaipur. But, don’t expect too much from the internship. It’s a good opportunity to experience the work culture in India, but the level is not that high. But the culture is great!! I never regret my travel to India. I learnt so much and I made so many nice friends from all over the world! So, go for it!!

If you have some questions about my experience, you can always contact me at [-](#) or you can take a look at my travel diary: -

Ervaringsverhaal 12

1. About the job

From October 31st until December 22nd 2012 I stayed in Indonesia. First I did an internship arranged by AIESEC and afterwards I traveled around in Indonesia. This report will be focused on my experience related to the internship.

Indonesia

As I was almost graduated I wanted to go abroad before taking part of 'the working life'. About three months before departure I contacted AIESEC for an internship in Indonesia. I was already sure to go there since I am very interested in this beautiful country with a great variety in nature and culture. Besides that, due to the history of Indonesia I was very curious to see how the Dutch had influenced the Indonesian country.

Internship at Serdika Tutorial in Berastagi (North Sumatra)

Searching in the database of AIESEC resulted in some interesting internships. Most of them were global community internships which means that you will not be paid by working in a company but you will make a positive contribution to the foreign society on a voluntary basis. This is what I wanted to do, because I would like to get in touch with the local community and help them as far as I can.

I contacted a few possible internships. Only the internship at Serdika Tutorial responded. For this organization I was a tutor, a teacher in English, for about 20 children. The children had different ages (8-13 years old) and different skills. Next to their regular English lessons at school, they got extra lessons at Serdika Tutorial. Together with the owner of the school I taught the children every day during the week, about two of three hours a day for about six weeks. Unfortunately there were no other international interns.

In the end I can conclude that I have learned a lot. Although I only taught just a few hours a day, the rest of the day I spend playing with the children, helping the family with the establishment of a guest house, and doing some sightseeing around Berastagi. All these activities in combination with my experience as being a member of the family of

the owner, made it possible to learn the real Indonesian culture. Tourists staying at a four star hotel will definitely not experience what I did.

2. About AIESEC

Before my internship

Before going abroad I had a couple of meetings at the office of AIESEC. You will be tested by an interview whether you are 'capable enough' to go abroad. I think this is a relevant task of AIESEC because being an intern is very different from being a tourist visiting a particular country for just a few days.

Gabriëlle Rijkers was my student coach. She arranged my membership and in the end my contract with Serdika Tutorial. She is a helpful woman who responded quickly to my emails.

During my internship

During my internship Gabriëlle stayed updated by reading my blog. I almost didn't have any contact with AIESEC UI. A girl from there only contacted me once via Skype chat, while I was calling with my parents. I was a bit disappointed about that. I expected to meet other internal interns, organized by AIESEC UI. As Indonesia is a very big country with a lot of islands, I guess that there weren't any other interns around Berastagi.

3. About the culture

One of my goals was to learn the real Indonesian culture and by being part of an Indonesian family, I did. I stayed at family Ginting. This family consists of the parents, three brothers and one sister. One brother studied in Semarang and didn't stay at home. The sister Thalia was also the owner of Serdika Tutorial. I was very close with her and she taught me a lot of her culture.

Food

I ate lot rice, sometimes three times a day! Though in the beginning I needed to get used to the food: rice, noodles, and fish, all very spicy, in the end I really could appreciate the Nasi and Mie Goreng! Most of the time people in Indonesia eat with their right hand. This

is because they use their left hand at the toilet?! Moreover they don't mind making noises during eating, I stayed with a Christian family so they prayed for each meal.

Religion

Religion is a very important aspect of the Indonesian culture. Most of the people are Muslim. Just a few are Christian, and on Bali people are Hindus. Not believing in God is not an option. Sometimes I experienced difficulties in explaining my view of religion: they were very surprised that I do not go to the church that often.

Important to mention is the beautiful nature of Indonesia. I think that is one of the main reasons for the tourists to visit this country. Unfortunately I mentioned that the locals do not do anything about it to maintain this impressive nature. Two main problems I saw are the rubbish that is just thrown in the streets; and the high pollution due to all the cars, busses and the scooters.

In the end I can conclude that I like the Indonesian culture. The people are very helpful and kind, so I felt safe.

4. Personal impact

I have never been away from home for such a long period. Moreover I had never been somewhere outside of Europe. Therefore this was a great experience to me. I remembered when I landed at Schiphol Airport I was really proud of myself.

I learned to be more flexible. Being in an underdeveloped country means that you constantly need to adjust your (too high) expectations. Moreover people there are not as strictly and directly as we are. I needed to adjust myself to the particular situation at the time and not planning too much in advance.

Furthermore I learned that it is very important for me that there are people around me. I met a lot of different people with different backgrounds. I liked that very much, as long as I am not alone, because those were the only moments I realized I was far from home far from away my friends and family.

Besides that, I now better realize the differences in poverty around the world. Having warm water and a descent toilet and shower isn't that self-evident as one might think. I appreciate living in The Netherlands even more and on the other hand I hope I can help poor people in near the future.

5. Recommendations

I surely will recommend anyone to do an internship! You will not only learn a new country and the business related to your job, but you will also learn a lot about yourself which is very valuable

Ervaringsverhaal 13

About the job

The name of the project was P-box Aidstinguish. The traineeship was about giving HIV/AIDS education to senior high school students in Malang (East-Java), to improve their knowledge about HIV/AIDS and to involve young people in to the campaign. We organized different activities during the project for the Aiesec members, sponsors and for the senior high school students. We started with the learning activities for the Aiesec members; we invited speakers from NGO's and hospitals to explain more about HIV/AIDS. Another Dutch intern and I gave a presentation about HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands. Also an activity of the learning activities was a trip to Bali. We went to a NGO in Bali and they gave us some more information about their experiences, working strategy and we could ask questions. And of course we have seen a lot of nice things on Bali during our trip. After our trip we had an Opening conference for some students from the high schools, the sponsors and speakers of the learning activities. This opening conference was to start our project official and to explain about our program during the project. I helped with the presentations and to organize the opening conference. The most important part of the project was the High School Road Show. During the road show we visited five high schools in two weeks and gave different presentations and games about HIV/AIDS. At each school there were about 100 students who joined the road show. I had to give a presentation at each road show about HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands. We closed our project with the Red Ribbon Party; this party was for all the students of the senior high schools. Each high school had a music band, dance group, a wall mag team (they had to put information and their knowledge about HIV/AIDS on a big paper and decorate the paper) and an ambassador. The high schools had to compete with each other and they could win prices at the end. The purpose of the Red Ribbon Party was to make the students more aware of HIV/AIDS, to involve them in the campaign and of course to have fun.

During the project there were three other Dutch trainees and one trainee from Hong Kong, but every trainee was starting and leaving at a different date. The working culture was good, all the Aiesec members were very nice and kind, but their English was not very good. So there were a lot of miscommunications during the project and Indonesian people work slower and more ineffective. It was funny, every meeting was outside and we had to sit on the ground. There was a small Aiesec office with one chair and a computer. But a lot of people had there own laptop and there was an internet café nearby.

About Aiesec

The involvement of Aiesec in Malang was very good before the traineeship. They answered my emails and questions about the traineeship quickly. So I could arrange my traineeship in Malang in a short period. The reception of Aiesec was very good, they arranged an Aiesec buddy (she was helping and driving me everywhere), a very nice host family and explained more about Aiesec and the project in my preparation week.

The level of professionalism was fine, but they can do better. Not all Aiesec members can speak good English and they organize things very late or delay activities, because they arranged it to late. Also the jobs for the trainees were not covering the whole week. I had a lot of free time and it is difficult to arrange things for the project, because Indonesian people hardly speak any English. And a lot of presentations in the learning activities or other activities were in Bahasa Indonesia. But everybody was doing their best and they tried to involve me in every activity, so I had more work to do!

About the culture

I have seen and experienced a lot about the culture in Indonesia. During my time in Malang I stayed at a host family and they took me everywhere. It was a great experience, the culture is totally different. I have seen a wedding, funeral, did a lot of karaoke (they love that) and experienced a lot of other cultural things. There is a lot to see in this part of the world, it's difficult to describe it. Every island is so different and has their one traditional things and beliefs. The nature is really beautiful and the people in Indonesia are so kind and nice to everybody!

There are different religions in Indonesia, but the biggest group are Muslim. It was good to see and experience how they live there and to learn more about their traditional things and beliefs. It is important that you can adapt and respect them how they live. Their structure in this country is very different compared to the Netherlands. Indonesian people work a lot slower and work more ineffective than we are used to. Be patient, sometimes you can wait a long time to meet someone or arrange things.

Personal impact

I learned a lot during my stay in Indonesia. You meet a lot of new people and you are living in a totally different culture. I experienced a lot of the Indonesian culture and they invited me to many traditional things, this was a whole new experience for me and it was good to see how people are living in Indonesia. I learned things about myself and how to adapt in a different culture. The project was very nice to do and I learned to give more presentations in English and to give education to students. I feel more confident about that and it was a good feeling to make people more aware of HIV/AIDS. I don't know what I was really expecting before the traineeship, but the experience was great and I developed myself on different areas. I am very glad that I did this traineeship! If you get the chance, I definitely recommend a traineeship!

Ervaringsverhaal 14

This summer, I decided to exchange my life in the Netherlands for an AIESEC internship in Padang (West-Sumatra). I have spent there seven wonderful weeks in which I learned a lot. Before I went there my AIESEC coach from AIESEC Nijmegen guided me to find an internship. It took me just two weeks to find a perfect match with AIESEC Unand in Indonesia and from then on I had to take care of my VISA, vaccinations and ticket. During this process it was easy to contact my coach when I needed to, our cooperation was very successful. After my ready-to-leave conversation with my coach I was ready to leave the Netherlands.

Sunday the 4th of July I departed from Schiphol Amsterdam. It took me two days to get in Padang, and in the early morning of the 6th I had finally arrived. My host family picked me up from the airport. I lived in a beautiful pink house with a girl named Susan and her mom. They both took really good care of me: they had cleaned the whole house, helped me with the culture differences and made sure that I was able to travel with the public transport. Susan was also a member of AIESEC and she explained me a lot about Indonesia and their pretty strict Muslim culture. It was pretty cool that she joined me in our AIESEC project PBOX earthquake II, which was about getting donations, spreading donations and sharing knowledge about earthquake to the Padang people. We had lots of meetings with a group of 15 till 20 trainees, and did three amazing events. Unfortunately after three weeks this project ended, of which I wasn't informed, so this gave me lots of free time. Beside the earthquake project I had to work in an orphanage. The main reason to go there was to give the children love and attention and to learn them some basic English. It was great to work with the children, they were so excited when we arrived at the orphanage and were very eager to learn (as long as we played games haha). I really loved to go there and regret that AIESEC Unand didn't give me the opportunity to go quite often. This was because of meetings, the Ramadan and other activities. The Indonesian AIESEC people were very kind and really respected the work we did. By working with them we learned that Indonesian people don't use the aspect of time. Being 1,5 hours late is normal in Indonesia and waiting is a thing you do a lot there. Moreover during the meeting there wasn't much efficiency and in my opinion they didn't give all. Of course this is seen from my Dutch point of view and I regard it as one of the most important differences. These differences made it interesting to work with the Indonesian people but were on the other hand sometimes frustrating because I am used to work more and more efficient.

During my internship I had lots of contacts with the other (mainly Asian) trainees. We worked together, sang together at the Karaoke bar, tried the (very spicy) Indonesian food together and travelled together. Because of the fact that our project ended after three weeks I had lots of time to travel. I made two trips with other trainees to bounty beach Islands close to Padang, it was amazing to see such a beautiful environment and to be finally allowed to swim in the sea in your swimming suit! I also went to Bali for a week with a group of trainees. It was interesting to see the big differences between the very traditional Muslim culture of Padang and the touristic and Hindustan culture of Bali.

The Muslim culture of Padang is beautiful but very strict. Girls have to wear covered clothes and can't leave the house when it's dark. Since almost 90 percent of the inhabitants are Muslims I have learned a lot about their culture and religion. One of the most important things that I have learned is

to be less direct to people and that Indonesian people say one thing but mean another. Moreover you have to use your right hand to give things to people because the left hand is unclean. On top of that you have to show lots of respect to people elder than you. Finally women are in my opinion seen as weaker persons than men and they have to be protected. This was hard for me to get used to because I am raised very free and wasn't used to be watched and followed all the time. I loved the fact that after a few weeks I really got used to all this things and that I started to talk some basic things in Bahasa, the Indonesian language. Since I was able to count I could negotiate with every seller, which made me more and more independent.

During my internship I learned a lot. At first I learned that I am very good at adjusting myself to a whole new culture and environment without losing my personality. This made me able to deal with everything and made me confident in this country. Moreover it made me more independent. I found out that I can take care of myself and that I am less naïve than I thought I was. At last it made me realise that I on the one hand have a new hobby named 'travelling', but on the other hand I really respect my own culture more and especially my own family.

I can for sure recommend AIESEC as an organisation to go on an internship with. In the Netherlands I had all the support I needed from my coach. I also met other Dutch trainees that wanted to go abroad and learned in an meeting what a culture shock was. AIESEC in Indonesia took good care of me. They provided me a host family, I was picked up from the airport and the months before I went there they gave me the opportunity to ask lots of questions to make things sure. In the first week of my internship AIESEC Unand gave me an introduction for trainees about the earthquakes that happen there. During the internships they took the trainees on a trip by train to a beautiful beach, they invited us for Karaoke, learned us about the Ramadan and how to act during the Ramadan and they held sharing sessions and farewell parties for the people that left. Some of them also came to see me of at the airport when I left Indonesia. When I was back in the Netherlands I had a good evaluation conversation with a girl from AIESEC and I was able to go to have a drink with other trainees that went abroad.

These seven weeks last summer were a great experience for me which I will never forget. I am so glad to have learnt a lot from and meant a lot to the Indonesian people. If I had the possibility I would for sure try to join an AIESEC internship again, and otherwise I will always have beautiful memories of this internship.

Kind regards,

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If you like to contact me, send me an email: -

Ervaringsverhaal 15

My experience in Mathare slum, Nairobi, Kenya

by -

Political Sciences

Nijmegen University, the Netherlands

From September 25th 2011 to December 22nd I was in Kenya, doing my AIESEC internship. This three month period was the greatest time of my life so far, and in this story I will write about the experience I had. I will write this story from when I decided to join AIESEC, up to my last day in Kenya.

In May 2011 I decided I wanted to go on an AIESEC internship. I would have the first semester of 2011/2012 off, so in order to do something useful instead of staying home and just work, I thought it would be good to do something completely different. I went to an AIESEC meeting in Nijmegen but that meeting was not a great success: I was one of the just two persons visiting this meeting. But my mind was already made up, I wanted to join AIESEC. I joined in June, and started looking for Development Traineeships in sub-Saharan Africa. Why there? I do not really know, except that I always had an interest in this particular Area of the world. Secondly, Africa is a continent where I thought a DT could really make a difference to some people. I found a Traineeship in Nairobi, Kenya, and after a few e-mails there and back I was told I could come to Kenya. I was really excited! So for me the AIESEC website (www.myAIESEC.net) was really helpful, there were a lot of internships available in the period when I wanted to go, and it didn't take too long to find one that actually fit my profile and what I was looking for.

The Traineeship I was going to do was a Development Traineeship in Mathare, the second biggest slum in Kenya after Kibera. Mathare is often seen as the most dangerous slum in Nairobi, which frightened me a little bit. But I decided that, since I'm tall, white and blonde I would be kind of safe. If this was true had to be seen though. The Traineeship was a Global Community Development Exchange, with the Community Care Development Organisation. This involved teaching at Hilltop School, a private school housed in a church building, and my Traineeship would last just short of three months. My contact person in Kenya was Esther Kahuki, an Kenya student at United States International University (USIU). This university is the second biggest university in Nairobi, after the University of Nairobi (UN).

After I arrived in Nairobi (after a long, confusing and tiring journey) I spent the first week living in Esther's apartment. We had agreed I would stay in a host family, but the weekend before I arrived this family cancelled their invitation. Esther started looking for another family, which she found after a week: The family of Gloria 'Cheptoo', one of her friends. My first day working in the slums was Wednesday the 28th of September. Esther travelled with me to the slum, using a matatu. Matatus are little (usually Nissan or Toyota) vans which are allowed to fit up to 14 people. Usually these little vans are overcrowded, and one time I sat in one of these with 22 people! Anyway, Esther showed me how to get to the school, where she left me with the teacher and the principal. This was my first time ever in a slum, and it was very humbling to see what people had to live in and with what materials they made their homes. The school was made out of a wooden structure, paved with sheet-metal. This building was not too bad compared with the other structures I saw, although there was absolutely no ventilation. So when the sun was up at her highest point, the school would get boiling hot. In this school, which was about 50 meters square, were 62 children. Of these 62, about 30 were four years old or younger and another 20 were still too young to understand English well. I started teaching classes 4, 5, 6 and 7. Those four classes together consisted of about 12 children in total. As I said, there was one teacher, and one principal. The principal was called 'Madame' Joyce, and the teacher's name was Dour. I thought Dour was about 30 years old, but after we spoke for a while he told me he was actually 18, and had just finished school himself. He was born and raised in Mathare, and he hoped to become a licensed teacher to get a job outside of the slums. He made 2000 Kenyan Shillings a month with this job, which is about 18 Euros. This shocked me quite a bit, since he already paid 900 ksh for rent. Madame Joyce was the owner of the school, but she was also born and raised in the slums. She didn't really know how to run a school, so it was a bit chaotic.

I started to work, and the teacher told me to just begin. "How?" I asked. "Just get a book, start reading it out loud and give notes" was the teacher's response. So I started, and taught the children English.

After one week at the job I got a new colleague: Tyler Walker from Canada. He was an AISEC-intern just like me, and helped me teaching. We divided our tasks, he would teach class 4 and I would teach 5, 6 and 7. This way we would both be responsible for six children. Teacher Dour would take care of the smallest ones, since Tyler and me could not speak Swahili. This worked well, and for a while we ran the school pretty good. We taught English, Maths, Social Studies, Science and P.E. It was a lot of fun, and we played football with the kids, and we danced and sang with the smallest ones. It was amazing to see how the children who live in such poor circumstances can still have a good childhood.

After our first month the trouble began. Mr. Dour didn't get paid anymore. Especially since he already made almost no money at all this was a big blow for him. Joyce didn't have the money to pay his salary, and Joyce herself was in a lot of debt. So Mr. Dour decided to quit. Around that time Joyce was almost never in school anymore, and Tyler and me figured this was because of the debt she owned a lot of people. This created a very strange situation, where Tyler and me, two foreign interns, were the only adults in the school. We actually found out this worked pretty well, since we could run

the school the way we thought was best, and we gave some more responsibilities to the oldest children to help us out with the smallest ones. This was the best time in school for me, since we really felt like we did something important.

Now, in short, I want to describe some of the things we did in our weekends. Through Tyler I met a lot of other AIESEC'ers from all over the world. I went on trips with people from Japan, Slovakia, Czech-Republic, Vietnam, the Netherlands, Canada, Ivory Coast, Argentina, Venezuela, Kenya, Germany and Australia. We went rafting, bungeejumping, on safaris to mt. Kilimanjaro, we climbed a volcano, we slept in the jungle, we went to the coast, went snorkeling and way, way more. I met all these people through AIESEC, and they made my stay in Kenya unforgettable. I can recommend Kenya to everyone who is thinking about an Traineeship in that part of the world, although I was more positive about the people from the University of Nairobi then I was about the USIU. So that is something to look at before you do an internship. As for me personally, I learned I can make friends with people from all around the world, that I can teach and work with children and that I can stay in another country and make myself at home there. The stay in Kenya broadened my horizon, and this will definitely not be the last time I visit Africa. I recommend an AIESEC internship to everyone who wants to see parts of the world they would otherwise never see. It is one of the best ways to see a culture up close, and make yourself more flexible. This is where I end my story since it is already a bit too long, but not before I thank AIESEC for this wonderful opportunity.

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Nijmegen University

The Netherlands

Ervaringsverhaal 16

My job during these 6 weeks was to raise awareness about HIV in Malaysia. Therefore, I spent 6 weeks on the campus of Utara University Malaysia, close to the Thai border. I also travelled to Singapore and Thailand in advance to and after the end of the project.

Together with my group of 6 other interns (from Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Australia) and the support of 6 Malaysian students, I gave three workshops/talks about HIV to pupils around 16 years at schools (it was hard to get permission for the workshops because Malaysia is quite conservative and HIV a sensitive topic). Additionally, we did an awareness campaign on the campus and tried to promote safe sex among the Orang Asli (Malaysian natives) through games, talks, a condom demonstration and posters. Topics covered were: What is HIV? How is it spread? How can it be prevented? Getting tested and How to live with HIV.

Working in the team went very well. There was a really good atmosphere, because we each chose a special part to prepare and did the final presentation all together. Everybody wanted to get the best out of it and the different characters were matching quite well. We were supporting each other and accepting each other's strengths and weaknesses. The Malaysian AIESECERS supported us with the organisation, constant feedback and prepared us for the cultural differences we would meet (homosexuality is forbidden).

Besides the people in the RED Wave Project, I shared the dorm with the interns of another parallel project which was CUTE (Cultural Understanding Through Exchange). They were from Vietnam, Russia, Kazakhstan and Japan which made activities and talks together very interesting.

AIESEC people in general are kind of a big family, they are really open-minded, curious and extravert. You always get support and are welcomed if you come somewhere. You're integrated really fast because you get part of the life there directly, including freetime activities such as Go-cart, trips to important places, the local food and living. AIESEC in Malaysia is really professional, they take everything very serious and don't mind spending 8+ hours and really listening to each other during election meetings and stuff. Sometimes they were a bit chaotic concerning the planning of activities which could be a problem for people who are not so flexible, but it was kind of interesting, too and was compensated for through a lot of enthusiasm and improvisation.

There's a lot to see in and around Malaysia. Different food, different people, different environment. Everything is extreme there. Either it's really hot and sunny or it's suddenly raining so hard you're standing in water till your ankles. Food could be very spicy. People are really really friendly and curious about everything around them. They love it if people try to speak their language. But if you get sick there, it will take some time to recover (Or at least this was the case for some of the interns, me included). You shouldn't be afraid of animals of all kinds, for you find monkeys, mosquitoes, bed bugs, bats, cockroaches. The landscape is beautiful, from really modern cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, lovely islands where everybody lives in wooden huts, the jungle and places in the countryside where nobody speaks English at all and everybody is staring at you. You have mountains, the sea, everything. And travelling around by bus or train is really easy and cheap.

The culture is really mixed, most people are either originally Malaysian (which means Muslim), Chinese or Indian. What you get are Chinatown and Little India in each bigger town, beautiful temples and mosques, food and traditions from all over Asia and even Africa.

Do's and don't's: Bring sun-lotion, stuff against mosquitos and probably against bed bugs if you want and you're travelling around and staying in hostels. Be prepared to take cold showers, use squat toilets and wash your clothes by hand. It makes things easier if you cover knees and shoulders, it's simply more respectful. Be open and except invitations, they don't like you refusing them. And bring tampons if you're female :-D.

Concerning personal development I learned a lot. I learned a bit of the Malaysian language and got a lot of training for my English skills. It's giving a great boost to your self-confidence to be responsible for oneself and do a lot of things you're usually not doing (like giving talks to a really big group of people or try to explain things besides the language barrier). You learn to see things differently and become more relaxed. Differences doesn't really matter, you can get along with nearly everyone and learn a lot if you're listening to the people you meet on your way. You learn to be responsible for yourself, to get along in a completely different culture, to make friends easily and to also to be alone sometimes and deal with problems yourself (such as the new backpack you just bought breaking on the second day).

Has the stay changed me? A little bit. It didn't change my whole personality and I'm still not a really outgoing person. You kind of fall back in your old routine really fast but you get to know what you are able to do and reach if you have and want to. It changes your way of thinking, you're becoming more open minded and prepared to accept differences.

I didn't really have clear expectations of my stay because it was quite spontaneous. I read a lot about the country and it's culture before I went there but I think the best way is not to have a lot of expectations but to see what's possible there.

I would definitely recommend to go on such an internship, yes. It doesn't change your whole life but it is definitely worth it. It's a great and completely different experience and I think it's good for everyone to broaden your horizon and get to know yourself a little better. And it's a lot of fun. (-, 21)

Ervaringsverhaal 17

While I am writing this, my traineeship is already so many months, moments and miles away that it is hard to imagine that it really happened. I look back at this incredible story in my head and ask myself how it changed or developed me. There is no doubt that a project in a country like this influences you, besides that I think everything influences you, but that is a different topic. You see, hear and learn things which you could never have predicted. You get to know people, overcome fears and end up in situations so different from home. All these experiences, they don't change you, they add up to the person you already are, making you a richer and more experienced human being. And I love that, even though you can not really let people around you see what is in your head, it is now a part of you, a part of you lifeline, a part in your history.

I did a HIV/AIDS Awareness project at the Utara University in Malaysia, the traineeship lasted five weeks. We worked in a team of six interns, all from other country's and different backgrounds. I think the team is a big part of why I thought the project was a success. We were a well organized, individually skilled, creative, equal minded and most of all fun team. The program was pretty busy, there was something to do for us almost every day. The hard thing with the program was that it changed almost every day, which was a little confusing sometimes, thanks to the teams flexibility it was never a big problem. There was a main focus, but besides that we had a lot of little assignments, which were not all as productive as I hoped. The main focus was giving workshops at high schools around the university. These were great, the feeling we got seeing the students really got the message is very fulfilling. Besides that we did ribbon selling, an exhibition at the university, a HIV-awareness day, field trips to a local village, visiting a CASP shelter home and Global Fiesta.

It the beginning we were always guided by one of the Malaysian team members, till we got to know our way around, and we could start plan things on our own. The team of Malaysian AIESEC students were extremely helpful and caring. They made sure we got to the right place, let us try the best food on campus, helped us with preparing the workshops and made us feel wanted and useful. Sometimes there were misunderstandings about what we could or could not do, which was quite hard to predict for us, and hard to understand that we couldn't for them. I really appreciate the fact that they were always there for us, keeping in mind that they were also fulltime studying. For instance that one Friday night we left campus with the whole group of interns and AIESEC'ers to drive to the hot springs two hours away. We stayed in the hot springs from midnight till five in the morning, we got back at the campus at 7, which was exactly the time the classes of the Malaysian students started again. They really put all their effort in making our internship as rich in experiences as possible.

We all knew it was a completely different world we would travel to. This does influence a lot in your lifestyle, way of dressing, eating and being in general. The state the University is situated in, is a Muslim state, which means we have to obey the Muslim rules for dressing and behaving. Long sleeves and pants, looking proper and no boy-girl touching what's however. Alcohol was not even a topic to think about. You could look at this as downsides of the Muslim way of living, or you can see it as a exclusive look in the inside of a very fine and developed culture, I prefer the second way of thinking. You can travel through a country and see a lot of beautiful sights without getting a bit of the culture, tourism kills cultures. But we got to know the way of living of students our own age in a country on the other side of the world, and even got to live it ourselves.

Not only did we get to know the Muslim culture, we also got sucked in the AIESEC culture. Because I am no AIESEC'er myself I could not have known that there was such a big overwhelming block of enthusiasm and ambition waiting for me. We did get to know a bit of the complex and confusing name and abbreviation structure when we had our first AIESEC preproject briefing, but no one could have prepared me for the real AIESEC experience. I had to get used to their devotion, and the fact that they feel that joining AIESEC is the most life changing choice they have ever made. And off course to all the sharing, and dancing and teambuilding. Everyone thinks it is a bit silly in the beginning, but you feel like a loser when you do not join, and than joining turns out to be really fun! Just stepping out of your judgmental body and making sure you leave your soul to get taking by the enthusiasm and vibrancy of the moment.

It is hard to think back to the expectations you had beforehand, the real experience has colored them. I did expect to be more focused on the workshops, but we only had the change to do three of them. I am not sure if it is the fault of the team or the not responsive schools, but they could have been more clear about the number of workshops. I do remember myself predicting this to be a very new experience. Besides eating Wok to Go once a month, I never really came in contact with the Asian culture. Exploring a new culture is like stepping into a whole different world you never knew existed. Other things are normal and your normal they don't know, you have to adapt to everything. I can never go back to not knowing, which I am happy about, because I would not have wanted to miss this. So yes, I do recommend a traineeship with AIESEC, but only when you are able to let go of some certainties and open up to new ones.

Ervaringsverhaal 18

Dear AIESEC'er

well since I am back in the Netherlands for about a month now I thought it was time to write a story about my stay in Asia. My name is -, and I am a 25 year old Business student. Since I had a semester free I wanted to do something useful with my time. Therefore I was looking for an internship and it did not take long before I found AIESEC.

Although my university is in Tilburg I decided to apply at the office in Nijmegen, because it was more convenient to go there. After a nice talk with the people working there I felt confident that I could find an internship here. It took me about two months before I found an internship. The job at hand was a two month internship with AIESEC in Johor Bahru (JB), Malaysia. So I had another three weeks to prepare myself. This was enough time for me. Since this would be my second time far away from home I was not nervous this time. Last time when I went to Australia I was 19 years old and more scared of the whole idea of going alone.

I arrived in Singapore on October 12th early in the morning. From there it was an hour by bus to get into the centre of JB. The people from AIESEC there picked me and another intern up and brought me to the intern house near the university. The other interns were already in the house.

These two months I would live together with two Japanese guys, a Korean guy, a girl from Norway and a Chinese girl from Canada. The two Japanese and me were doing the same project. The others came to JB for the HIV/AIDS project. After getting used to the heat and humidity and getting to know my roomies the AIESEC people informed me about the internship. This was the moment when the internship turned out to be a bit disappointing.

The project was called IDEA's 10. The main purpose was to hold a conference for more than a 100 students about social entrepreneurship. Besides that we were going to give some workshops at secondary schools. My expectations that I formed, from the job subscription they sent me, was to find sponsors, spokespersons and get participants. However all of this was already done and the only thing left was the conference itself and doing only two workshops. Most unfortunate for me the conference was the next Saturday. So I had a couple of days to make a presentation about social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands.

I felt pretty pissed off at first. This was not the reason why I came here and what would I be doing after this conference? Well after talking with my roomies, who felt pretty much the same as I did we decided just to make this experience together a good one. In the end it all turned out fine. One of the main reasons for me to go abroad was to learn about the Asian cultures. In these six weeks, that I stayed in JB, I got to spend a lot of time with the Malaysian, Indonesian and Chinese students and of course with my Japanese and Korean friends in the house. Also after leaving JB I still met up with the students in their hometowns throughout the country. I would never be able to do that if it wasn't for this internship with AIESEC. So personally I loved the students but business like I was a bit disappointed. The conference and workshops were very interesting and I learned a lot about social entrepreneurship from that. However the two weeks of work is nothing compared to the two months promised to me. It took them some time to find something else to do for me. However that

job was not really something for me and I decided to leave earlier than promised. Also it was unclear to me who initially was responsible for inviting the interns. There were so many people coming to me or sending me text messages that they were responsible for me, but none really cared about this internship being finished after two weeks.

Well I think because of this situation I got very close with the people in my house and we had a wonderful time together. I learned so much from them. Before I went to Asia I did not know much about the people and the culture except the stereotypical things. Now I've learned so much about their different habits, customs, values and lifestyle. If you are interested in learning these things then I would really recommend an internship with AIESEC. Hopefully these cases don't happen so much, but if they do.. well just stay positive and make the best out of it!

Yours sincerely,

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Ervaringsverhaal 19

In January of this year I started my journey to Kuala Lumpur. After a long but safe flight I finally arrived in Kuala Lumpur. The train took us to the Malaysian AIESEC-ers so they could bring us to our apartment. That apartment was our home for the next 6 weeks of internship. We were staying at the 17th floor so the view during sunrise and sunset was beautiful.

The most important part of our internship was about raising awareness about the topic of HIV/AIDS in Malaysia. The most interesting thing we had to do was conducting and facilitating workshops on HIV/AIDS education and awareness for children and students. Unfortunately HIV/AIDS is still a 'forbidden' topic to talk about, let alone, speak about it with students. For this reason most of the schools we contacted didn't want us to do the workshops so we could only facilitate 4 workshops. The workshops we **did** facilitate were great and you really feel like you've done something to help these students.

There were around 5 or 6 trainees working at this project during my time in Kuala Lumpur. We all shared the apartment.

AIESEC

The preparation here in the Netherlands was good and had definitely helped us to prepare ourselves for the journey to a very different continent. It's important to prepare yourself because than it doesn't all come as such a shock. Don't get to high expectations about everything because than it will only be better than you expected. The first week is very hard because you have to get used to different people, the food, the sometimes very dirty apartment and your roommates. But if you have the strength to make it through the first week, I know for sure that you will have a blast.

AIESEC Malaysia didn't do a lot to organize some activities for us so that we could meet interns other than our own roommates. It would be nice to have some dinner or to go out with other people who were staying in Kuala Lumpur. This is something they could work on for next time.

Culture

My stay in Malaysia was awesome. I got to know so many nice people from all over the world and we had so much fun travelling around the country and the rest of south-east Asia. I really recommend everyone to take enough time to travel after your traineeship because it's all so beautiful over there. You are there anyway, why not make the most out of it!? I visited Indonesia and Thailand and some parts of Malaysia. It was such a great adventure. There's so much to see and the travelling is very cheap, as well as the food (which is very very very nice!). I think that the Malaysian Island Langkawi,

is definitely worth a visit (but never go alone on a trip, for the reason why I would read my experience stories at waarbenij.nu).

What is also great about Malaysia is that all kinds of cultures and religions are living peacefully together in one country. I definitely think the Netherlands could learn something from that. On the other hand, when you're back in Holland you really appreciate the country more than you ever did for several reasons I will know for sure you will discover yourself when you're there.

Personal impact

Although I think that the internship wasn't very well organized (and believe me, we were quite pissed off sometimes) and I didn't learn a lot of things that have to do with my study, I had definitely learned a lot about myself. You're in a very different country, all by yourself and you have to be proactive, open-minded and flexible in order to make it all to a success. Although it is a quite short internship you'll return to Holland as a different person (in a good way). You might not believe it, but subscribe now and you'll find out it's really true. You're definitely going to have a good time.

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Email: -

Ervaringsverhaal 20

The Traineeship

It was a development traineeship and I worked as an English teacher on a school for extra classes and languages courses. My students were mainly high school students and beside those students I had people who wanted to improve their Business English. The groups of students were small about one to four students in one class. They were aged between seventeen and thirty. I prepared my own classes and had freedom in planning classes.

Usually I used my own books to make exercises and at some point I used for some classes the books the students brought with them. I worked approximately six hours a week and had three hours of French class. In my contract was written that I would work thirty hours, but this was not possible due to the lack of students.

I was the only intern in this company, but there were other teachers. I only taught the students with at least some basic knowledge of English. The students without any knowledge and the elementary school students there was an also Arabic speaking teacher.

We discussed in a natural way the Moroccan culture in class. Especially the Arabic language, traditions and religion. This happened naturally because these topics were interesting for me and my thoughts about it were hilarious for my students.

In the French classes the teacher used a French method and so we discussed the culture of France in this class. I learned to have a conversation in French and with that comes the culture of how French people communicate.

AIESEC

In Nijmegen I participated in a meeting and had guidance with my search for an appropriate internship. This organization is very professional and punctual.

My contact person, in Rabat, before and during the internship was Meriem Erraji. Before my leaving I received all sorts of information and reassurances that the local committee would organize evenings and trips. During my stay I found out that the local committee does do nothing useful for the interns.

The local committee has not organized one meeting for the internships or a trip. There was no level of professionalism. When I had made an appointment with members of the committee they would not follow up on that appointment.

When I arrived I was picked up at the airport and brought to a host family. The host family was not aware that I would come neither were the two Russian EPs living in that host family. The host family told me the first time that they met me that I was not allowed to live longer than two weeks there.

This was an uncomfortable welcome for me and thereby the LC did not organize a welcome party or so to meet other people.

After that the committee placed me and two Russian interns in an area which is dangerous for foreigners. The apartment we were supposed to live in was not furnished nor clean. Thereby we did not receive equipment or money to furnish the apartment and to clean it. In this area it was also not possible to walk over the streets safely during the day or night. We felt completely uncomfortable and also this area was far away from my work. Appointments we made with the LC to improve our situation were not kept. For example the committee promised us to deliver a refrigerator within one week and it has not been delivered at all.

Culture

The modern part of Morocco is a combination of the western world and the Arabic world. Religion is extremely important and everybody follows the Islam in some sort of way. I was in Rabat during the Ramadan and everybody follows the rules of Ramadan and all sorts of coffee shops and restaurants are closed during the day. It is very interesting to be in Morocco during the Ramadan and to have discussions with Moroccan people about the Islam. You will experience people who try to convert you. Moroccan people will ask you to dress appropriately when you go out during the Ramadan, but in other times of the year you can wear what you want. In the Ramadan it is better to not eat in the streets during the day, but it is not prohibited for foreigners.

A large part of the population is poor and there is only a small middle class and a small rich class. It is easy to get in contact with the rich class, because those people are used to travel to Europe and meet with foreigners and they are educated. Educated people speak Arabic, French and often also English. Poor people speak only Arabic and the middle class speaks often Arabic and French. It is possible to travel to Morocco with no knowledge of the French language but it is easier and better if you speak a little or more French.

Personal Impact

Before I left I had false assumptions about the local committee in Rabat. I found out that I was far better capable of enjoying myself and organizing things without the help of an organization in a foreign country. I learned that I am very good in managing myself in a culture that I didn't know. The stay was too short to change me, but I have experienced that I am capable of things that I didn't know I could.

I had some expectations, but I found out that having expectations is useless. It is useless because you can't expect what you will do and who will be there.

Ervaringsverhaal 21

I spent two wonderful months in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Before the departure I was in contact with the AIESEC president of Ilorin. He assisted me as much as possible. Whenever I had questions concerning the internship he replied right away. Most of the information I had to ask for myself but when asked for it I received whatever I demanded for. AIESEC Ilorin provided all the necessary materials for the visa application which is quite important when going to Nigeria because the Nigerian embassy requires a couple of documents. The Ilorin LCP gave me all the details about my job and the way I would be living in Nigeria. When I arrived in Nigeria I was welcomed very welcoming by the MC people at the airport in Lagos. All the people over there made me feel welcome and we went to a club straight from the airport. They took very well care of me during the first day. Ilorin is about 3.5 hours of a drive from Lagos which meant that the Ilorin LCP came to Lagos to pick me up. In a country such as Nigeria it would be quite difficult for interns to get to the internship on their own. I was very grateful that they picked me up from the airport and that the Ilorin LCP was going to Ilorin together with me. The reception at the airport and the party afterwards made the first day a very nice experience and a good start for the rest of the internship.

After arriving in Ilorin the LCP brought me to the house where I was staying for my internship. I was living together with my boss. For me this was very nice because he was a very young guy who became a very good friend. I think that it was very good that I was staying with a local person because that gave me a deeper insight into the local way of life. The accommodation was very comfortable for Nigerian standards. During the first couple of days I was introduced to the tasks that I had to perform during my internship. Of course Africa is a little bit less organised than Europe and in this same fashion was the introduction to my job. The organisation I worked with is called Santos Creations and is a non governmental management organisation focusing on improving the educational standard of Nigeria as well as providing young children with future prospects. Santos Creations is running three different projects. I was working on the Naija Youth Tours project which aims at educating young students about the tourism potential of Nigeria but especially of Kwara State. This education is achieved by taking the students on tours to different tourist sites within Kwara State. At first I was responsible for non-corporate marketing meaning that I had to visit schools and promote the tours. Later on I was also responsible for the planning of the tours including financial planning, search of information about the historic sites and site selection as well as the coordination of transportation and refreshments. After a couple of weeks my responsibility shifted to corporate marketing which was all about fund raising as well as meeting government officials in order to get their support for our program. The working culture in the organisation was very relaxed. My boss was the eldest person in the office with an age of 33 years meaning that everybody in the office was very young. In the beginning it was quite surprising that every one was so young but I enjoyed being around young people. The whole structure of the organisation was very unorganised which led to a lot of problems with different staffs. During my internship the staff size shrank from about 10 permanent staff to about three. There were a lot of problems with the salary of the employees but it didn't affect me. For the first month I was the only intern in the office but then a guy from Denmark joined the organisation and two weeks after he joined the organisation a girl from Honk Kong joined us. Both of them were as well staying in our boss's house.

The culture is of course very different from our culture. Ilorin is a mainly Islamic which also influences the life of the people. In general people in Nigeria are very religious no matter if they are Moslems or Christians. No matter the fact that they are very religious, I always had the

feeling that they are very open people and quite liberal. Of course it was very difficult for them to understand how some one will only attend church once a year or only pray during Ramadan but they accepted it in the end. Not just their way of believe is different but also their food. In the first couple of days I had little problems with the food because in general food in Nigeria is very spicy. About the different things one sees in Nigeria. I mean I could name so many things that are different but I guess most noticeable are the conditions of the streets and cars. I mean the streets are just really bad and the cars one sees driving around were driven in Europe like 20 years ago. Furthermore it is normal that one sees policemen standing on the street holding a machine gun in their hands but I got used to it right away.

Nigeria had a big impact on me especially because I enjoyed my time over there so much. When you switch on the TV in Europe and you see something about Africa you only see children who are almost starving, people living in clay huts and desert. One never gets to see the people running around with mobile phones that are a lot of time as good or even better than the once we use. We also never get to see the young people who go to a dance club and listen to the same kind of music as we do. My stay in Nigeria has definitely changed my opinion about Africa and also changed my view on world politics.

As you can probably see from my report I had a very wonderful time and I can only recommend Nigeria. It is not a country for everybody because it is very different from the rest of the world. A lot of people are poor and the crime rate is quite high. I heard of really bad stories before going to Nigeria but personally I did not have one bad experience which probably has to do with the fact that everyone took very well care of me. If a person is open minded and is willing to learn how to sit and wait then Nigeria is the right place to go. Time moves at a different pace in Nigeria which can be annoying at some points of time.

In general I can only recommend an AIESEC internship because it really offers the opportunity to learn more about another culture and maybe even about oneself. The internship was a very valuable experience in my life and I have kept a lot of unforgettable moments.

Ervaringsverhaal 22

The summer of 2010 was a great summer. I spend it in Senegal to do an AIESEC internship. I went to Dakar for the YES-project and to work at a NGO. The work was not completely what I expected from it, but I had the time of my life, mainly because of the people I met there. I can honestly say it was an amazing experience.

After my graduation I wanted to go abroad and do something useful. I came in contact with AIESEC and knew that this was the way I wanted to go abroad. Africa always fascinated me and through the database of AIESEC I came in contact with AIESEC Senegal. They had the YES-project, in which interns would help Senegalese students write business plans. This was the kind of project I wanted to do and which matched my study. I mailed with AIESEC Senegal to be sure that this was what I wanted and I became really enthusiastic about this internship. So I went to Senegal for two month, not completely sure what to expect, a bit nervous, but also really excited.

Members of AIESEC Senegal picked me up from the airport and showed me around town the first days. I could start my work for the YES-project and at the NGO right away. So I was quite busy the first weeks, but that was nice. I got to know the members of AIESEC and their families, ate traditional Senegalese food, but also hamburgers and fataya's, and went to clubs and beaches.

I really liked the combination of work and free time to explore Senegal. Because I was working with Senegalese people, I learned a lot about their way of working and their culture. That also made the internship great. The most amazing part of my internship was our trip to the south of Senegal. We went there with all the interns and the boss of the NGO. We saw the real life in Senegal, which made quite an impression. And we also became really good friends that week, which made it a special trip. We were with 5 interns in Dakar of whom three were from Holland and I really liked that there were more interns. We all arrived around the same time and worked together at the project at university or at the NGO. I am really glad that there were more interns who also encounter the same problems and experiences.

Off course not everything was perfect. I stayed at 3 different places in Dakar, including a small student room where I lived with two other persons. And also the work was not completely what I expected from it. We attended several meetings for the YES-project in which a teacher who spoke French gave lectures to the students. Partly due to the language barrier, we could not contribute much to these meetings. You have to speak French quite good if you go to Senegal. We were also supposed to give four trainings to the students, but in the end we only gave one presentation. The meetings were often cancelled or moved to a different day and the support from AIESEC Senegal for the YES-project was not great. I found it disappointing that I hardly could do anything for the YES-project, especially because that was the reason I went to Senegal. I was therefore glad I could do useful work for the NGO. Together with the other Dutch interns we wrote a business plan for the boss of the NGO, so he can start a business in selling products on solar energy.

Although the project was not what I expected from it, I'm really happy I went to Senegal. I learned a lot about the life in Senegal and the culture of the Senegalese people. Because I was living and working with the Senegalese people, I really got to see the live in Senegal. Life in Senegal can be more difficult than in Holland. There is a great difference between rich and poor in Senegal. Especially seeing the real poor people made a deep impression. But despite their problems the people keep smiling and retain their confidence in Allah. Faith, the Islam, is an important part of life for the people in Senegal, but also family is. Families in Senegal are large and the people don't have much privacy in the family. But the members of a family always support each other. I also found the hospitality of the people in Senegal amazing. People always are very nice and invite you to diner, no matter how little money they have. In general the people in Senegal take life more easy. They take more time for their family and friends and if something can not be done today, they will do it another day. This last part can be frustrating when you are used to the western working ethic. The people in Senegal just take life one day at a time and even the rain can be a reason to cancel an appointment.

As I said, I learned a lot in Senegal, but especially about people. In very short time I became real good friends with a lot of people. I met inspiring, funny and amazing people and these include both the Senegalese people I met and the other interns. These people made me feel at home in Dakar, although I was far away from everyone I knew and in a completely different surrounding. I found that the most amazing and important experience of my stay in Senegal. And I would therefore advise everybody to do something like this, especially if you have no idea what you are getting yourself into.

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(Feel free to contact me at -.)

Ervaringsverhaal 23

About the job

Aiesec Colombo South (Sri Lanka) organized the project 'E-guru Gedara', which was ment to improve English lessons at primary schools in rural areas in Sri Lanka. My task was teaching the children in grade one to five some basic English skills. The school offered me the oppurtunity to use their English books, but in my opinion the level was way to high for the children. So, I had to be creative to them, and I really liked it that the school gave me this freedom. For example, I created English songs about subjects they liked. Singing together with the children was, especially in the beginning, the only way to let them speak out loud English words. Beside using music, I've drawn lots of paintings to support my explanations and I devised some games like number-memory and alphabet-memory. The working culture at school was nice, and totally different from schools in The Netherlands. One of the teachers could speak a bit English, she helped me very well when I needed her. All the teachers smiled to me everyday, they brought me food. I think this was their way to show me that they appreciated me. I was the only foreign volunteer in the school, but two German girls were participating in the same project and worked at schools in the same erea.

About AIESEC

From the skype-interview untill departure to Sri Lanka the contact with AIESEC Colombo South was easy, professional and nice. They answered my emails very quickly and helped me to prepare my period in Sri Lanka. They promised me that I had the change to meet lots of other international students during the internship, for example during trips in the weekends. Actually, during the internship I didn't hear anything from AIESEC. I was really glad that a German student was living in the same host familiy, so that we could make some trips together. AIESEC didn't offer trips to all the international students, and invitations for international events like global village, were always sent last-minute. Mostly there wasn't an oppurtunity anymore to go. And I was told that the fee I had to pay was ment for the host-family (at least a part of it), but during the internship I found out that my family didn't get any mony from AIESEC. I couldn't fix the problem, but this is very unfair to the family, and to me.

About the culture

In Sri Lanka it's not usual to travel for fun, and at allon your own as a girl. Although the family with whom I stayed was living in a very 'peacefull' area, I was not allowed to walk out of the garden, or to go on my own to the small village near to the house. Ofcourse I understood that they wanted to protect me, but sometimes it was a bit annoying that the family was always worried about me. After some discussions with the family I was allowed to make a trip in the weekends together with the German girls, but we had to call ten times a day to tell them everything was ok. The people in the area I lived, are very religious. Buddism is everywhere presented. At school and in the familiy the praying-part seemed to be the most importent aspect of the day. But all the people I've met were totally 'open' to my religion and didn't expect me to pray with them. What I really like about Sri Lankan culture is the 'go with the flow' attitude. Nobody's was a hurry, everybody was smiling all the time and everbody was so helpfull to me. One thing: it's not so easy to learn their language.

Personal Impact

What I learned in this internship is that I like teaching, but that I am not a teacher. I already knew before that I don't want to become a teacher, but that I like the social intercourse with children and people totally different from me. In this internship my ideas and preferences about what I like and what I don't like (in educational settings) are confirmed. I don't think my internship really changed me, maybe I am a less shy or less unsure: everything I have to do now in the Netherlands is less frightening or excited than going on my own to a country I didn't know. And the 'go with the flow life' was what I already liked and did before (a bit), and what I still do, or at least try.

My expectations for this internship were not that different from my real experience, because I didn't have that concrete expectations. Before leaving I thought, we will see what will happen there and that's what I did. The only thing I didn't expect was that the English level at school was totally zero (AIESEC told me the level was higher). In the beginning I was a bit unsure about my English level, I thought it wasn't good enough. But fortunately, I was not really worrying about this, because that wasn't necessary at all.

Ervaringsverhaal 24

The Traineeship

In the summer of 2008 I participated in the African Young Entrepreneurs Project in Tanzania. This project aimed to develop Tanzanian young entrepreneurs through skill enhancement, theoretical and practical training, enabling them to create their own smart business start up plans. The idea behind this was to give students possibilities to access more opportunities for self-employment and promote the creation of micro enterprises in Tanzania.

Basically, my primary role in this project was to prepare and give lectures on entrepreneurship to students of the University of Dar Es Salaam. Fortunately, I was accompanied with three other AIESEC-trainees from Kenya, China and Lithuania. The diversity within this project team was really interesting, because we didn't share the same prior knowledge about teamwork and entrepreneurship.

To give a practical insight in what we actually did over there I will describe a typical week. We gave lectures on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The day before a lecture the team discussed the content of the next lecture and divided tasks among the trainees. The rest of the day all members of the team prepared their part of the next lecture separately. This wasn't a full day task, we spent approximately 4 to 5 hours a day on preparation. A lot of the time left though was spent on travelling to the University and back.

At the end of the project, I was pretty satisfied with the results. We started with a group of 45 students and ended up with 25 satisfied students, who said they learned a lot from us. More precisely, the most important thing we could provide them wasn't so much knowledge about entrepreneurship, but a different way of thinking about business and presenting themselves. The lectures they were used to, were very static without a lot of interaction between student and teacher. We, on the other hand, introduced ourselves as facilitators instead of teachers. We thought our main tasks were to provide learning materials, to lead discussions and to motivate the students to share their ideas in presentations. By using this methods I think we accomplished our goal to empower Tanzanian students.

The Country

To start with: I truly believe Tanzania is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. In order to convince you to share my opinion, I only want to say one thing: google Zanzibar, Ngorongoro Crater, Serengeti, Kilimanjaro, Lake Manyara, or just Tanzania.

Because I believe there has already been written a lot about Tanzania by other trainees, I just want to give you some important aspects out of my own experience:

1. The people are extremely friendly, sometimes even when they don't want anything from you.
2. Watch out with the food, most of it is fried to kill the bacteria's, but a Western stomach is not designed to eat that much fried food. Take advantage of all the fresh fruit and clean water the people sell on the streets in order to compensate this fried food.
3. Transportation is chaotic, but eventually you will even enjoy sharing a minivan with 50 people and you will know where to shout 'drop-off'.
4. Tanzania is pretty safe, but please be advised where to go and where not to go. Some parts of Tanzania are not that safe, especially at night.
5. Travel, as much as you can! Travelling around Tanzania is relatively easy and safe and there are too many amazing places to go.

AIESEC Tanzania

AIESEC Tanzania is a group of young, enthusiastic and very friendly people. On the other hand, there were some things I had to deal with. The first week after I arrived in Dar es Salam, it was not really clear for me what my tasks in the coming 12 weeks would be. When I finally knew my responsibilities, they were supposed to assist me and the other trainees in preparing the lectures and to help us with all the facilities we needed. This was not quite the case. In general, it is obvious that the Tanzanian/African way of working in a team is different from the Dutch/European way. You have to be able to cope with uncertainty, delays and undelivered promises, otherwise you will find it difficult to adjust in Tanzania.

Personal impact

This Development Traineeship with AIESEC changed me in a lot of different ways. I improved myself in organizing, presenting, networking and so on. But overall, I learned most about myself. Being far away from home, in a country that's totally different from my home country, has been really important for my personal development. I lived in a house with AIESEC'ers from China, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Lithuania, Canada, Switzerland and France. The strengths and weaknesses of each and every one of them inspired me to become a better person.

My final advice for future trainees would be: **'Be receptive to new ideas, new people and new experiences and you will definitely develop yourself in Tanzania!!'**

Ervaringsverhaal 25

For my internship I mainly worked in a governmental health centre. Besides consulting a doctor or a dentist, people could come to the health centre for Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT). When people come for an HIV test, there should be pre and post test counselling. This is to increase awareness about HIV and AIDS and in doing so prevent the spread of HIV. During my internship I was mainly involved in this pre and post test counselling. Besides that I worked in the laboratory for a few days, I visited the maternity, where I saw some deliveries and I did other small jobs in the health centre. Also I was allowed to do research to the impact of hearing the news of being HIV positive.

Against my expectations and ideas about working culture in Africa, people in the health centre worked hard, especially in the mornings when the waiting rooms were full of people! Care was provided to many people! However, in the afternoons the centre was always empty and employees were playing games or reading the newspaper. All together the work in the health centre could be more effective. Also there was a lot of registration in books, in which a lot of things seemed to be registered double.

During a part of my internship there were other trainees in the same organisation, although our tasks weren't always the same, it was nice to have some company who aren't experienced with the culture like I wasn't.

The role of AIESEC during my stay in Uganda

AIESEC is great in a way that it enables to discover a new part of the world in a safe context! At first it gives many connections to this new part of the world with the existence of the database. When facing problems in the matching process one can get help. I felt good by knowing that someone will pick me from the airport and the organization of accommodation. AIESEC Kyambogo introduced me to Kampala on my first day. After that there were many other interns who played an important role in getting familiar to the city during the first week. Unfortunately, there aren't many common activities. Interns had to organize things themselves if they wanted to do something. AIESEC Kyambogo didn't play a very active role in the guidance of the interns, but if I needed help I knew how to find them. Besides that, I relied on the 'experienced' interns and interns were hanging out together a lot of time, which was great!

After the AIESEC internship in Kampala, the acquired AIESEC network gave me the possibility to travel alone through East Africa. I had met some interns from Eldoret in Kenya and from Dar es salaam in Tanzania and I was able to visit them. Also I had met an intern from Canada, who was going to Nairobi to do another internship there, who I could visit too. In Nairobi, Dar es salaam and in Kigali (Rwanda) I could sleep in their AIESEC house for little money. It was a nice and safe way for me to travel, in which I met many people from each country and was able to discover their culture.

Culture in Uganda

When it comes to the country and the environment I had a totally different expectation. I expected a dry country, but found a very green, fertile and beautiful landscape! I understood why they call Uganda the pearl of Africa. Of course, it is nice to do a safari in one of the national parks (apparently they are even better in Kenya or Tanzania) when you are in Africa. Besides that, there are beautiful lakes like Lake Victoria and Lake Bunyoni. Also, you can visit the Nile and do rafting or climb the mountains.

I expected Uganda to be more poor, unsafe and I expected more misery, but the reality seemed to be different. I fell in love with Uganda during my stay. People are very friendly, open and welcoming. Regardless of the poverty, people seem to be happy and more satisfied than people here in the Netherlands. I loved the Ugandan music and dancing, and the passion and pride with which Ugandans spoke about their culture. Also I liked the way Ugandans live in the moment and keep hope in a better future, which they partly find in their religions. Religion plays an important role in Uganda and people are amazed when you tell them that you are not religious.

Ugandans live in a slower pace than we are used to in the Netherlands. They also don't take time as precise as we do here. This can result in waiting for 30 minutes or an hour, when you meet someone.

With respect to cultural differences, it's my experience that it is best to be yourself. Don't pretend to be different than you are (for example when it comes to religion), but at the same time you should be open and respectful to their culture.

Personal Impact

My AIESEC experience in Uganda has changed me very much. I am a very ambitious person and was always under pressure and trying to do as much as I could and the best as possible. In Uganda I was able to loosen this and to live in the moment. I engaged in (salsa) dancing a lot and became more open in this.

Doing an internship with AIESEC

I can definitely recommend to do an internship with AIESEC!!! Doing an internship makes one more open towards other cultures and gives another view on your own culture and habits. It increases understanding for people with another background.

Because of my long stay in Uganda I saw many interns come and go and I could see all of them change during their stay. They became more open and flexible. I think this will even make you more open and flexible when you are back in your home country.

During an internship you will not only get to know the culture of the country you are visiting, but you will also meet a lot of people from all over the world. Together with them you can explore a country and you will definitely have a great time you will never forget!

Ervaringsverhaal 26

During my development internship in Vietnam I was working in the Hope For Children project of AIESEC Foreign Trade University in Ho Chi Minh City (AIESEC FTU HCMC). This project has the mission to provide education (both English and General Knowledge) to underprivileged children and to act as a bridge between these children and society. The project is linked to a local NGO (Friends For Street Children) and is implemented in a couple of orphanages and development centres, where international students engage in activities and education, either with or without the help of a Vietnamese student.

A few times a week I was working in two schools for underprivileged children, Thang Long English and Vocational School en Anh Linh Free School. At Thang Long School I assisted the teacher in teaching English and at Anh Linh I taught English and General Knowledge, together with another intern and a Vietnamese student who could translate parts of our lessons. We were free to build our own content of the lessons, so every week we gathered to discuss what to teach the children.

Teaching the children was both exciting and exhausting. I really enjoyed educating the children and the children were very eager to learn, but the number of children was large and they were easily distracted. Keeping them focussed was a full-time job and communicating with the children was difficult because their level of English was insufficient. But in all it was a very satisfying experience.

Furthermore I was involved with the organisation of events and the support of external relations (promotion, partnership and sponsorship). Regularly there were meetings with the Vietnamese members of the team and with other interns in the project to discuss the events. These meetings weren't always efficient, since the working culture of the Vietnamese people is quite different from the Western culture. The Vietnamese students were very enthusiastic and the project appeared to be well organized, but in actual practice this wasn't always the case. I think this is because the Vietnamese culture is non-confrontational, which means they won't tell if they have a problem with something. They find it difficult to express what they feel and think and they avoid being critical as it might make someone lose face in front of others. In result, one of the difficulties I experienced was that the Vietnamese students asked the international interns for feedback, but we felt we had to be careful in giving critique.

There were about four other interns in our project and some more in other projects of AIESEC FTU HCMC. In the beginning I had to make some efforts to meet the other interns, since the intern introduction day of AIESEC was organised a couple of weeks after my arrival, but during my stay I met more and more interns and we did a lot together.

When I arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, I was picked up at the airport by my host and a lot of AIESEC members. This was a very nice first experience with AIESEC FTU HCMC. The AIESEC members were very interested, although their efforts to involve interns decreased over time. Once in a while there was an Intern Introduction Day organised, which was a good opportunity to meet other interns and members of the AIESEC team. Furthermore our project team planned a couple of integration

activities, but some of them were cancelled. Mostly the efforts for organizing activities came from the interns, but I can't really blame the Vietnamese students since they have to study a lot.

Furthermore I was really lucky with my host. She was a wonderful girl and she showed me a lot of Vietnam and their culture. She even took me to the house of her parents in her hometown, where we attended her uncle's wedding. An unforgettable experience! We had a lot of fun together and despite the cultural differences we became quite close.

Vietnam is a very interesting country. Not only the nature is beautiful, but also the people and their culture. After the horrors and damage of the Vietnam War, Vietnam is developing incredibly fast. Poverty has declined and economy, export and tourism are increasing. Nevertheless there is still a lot of respect for the Vietnamese culture, their customs and traditions. Vietnamese society and daily life are strongly influenced by these traditions, which originate from Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, animism and ancestor worship. In Vietnamese society this can be seen in the significance of the principle of yin and yang (all elements should be in harmony with each other), in the importance attached to education and respect for the elderly people and ancestors and in collectivism and the restraint of emotions. These are still very important values of the Vietnamese culture. Furthermore the Vietnamese culture is influenced by the French colonisation, by communism and -after the Vietnam War- by the western (American) culture. It's both funny and interesting to see how Confucianism, communism (Vietnam is still a Socialist Republic) and capitalism melt together in Vietnam.

In the interaction with Vietnamese people you have to be aware of some cultural differences. Vietnamese people are collectivistic, which means that the group is more important than the individual. In everyday life, it means people will always consider the opinion of family, peers and society before taking a decision. The notion of privacy is very different and food is often shared. Family is very important for the Vietnamese. Asking about family is a way of showing interest in someone. Vietnamese students often live with their parents until they get married (and sometimes even forever). When going out with your Vietnamese friends, don't be surprised when their parents expect them to be home at 10 A.M., as Vietnamese students are less independent than western students.

It's important to know that Vietnamese people try to save face at any time. As a result they are non-confrontational, meaning they won't tell you if they have a problem with you, because they don't want to hurt you. They won't tell you what not to do, but assume you should be aware of the basic ethical norms and acceptable behaviour. Due to the non-confrontational aspect of Vietnamese culture, Vietnamese people are more closed and hardly express what they feel and think in fear of making someone feel hurt. They hardly say no since they don't want to confront someone. Furthermore it is very important not to criticize people in front of others, as it will make them lose face in front of everybody.

Finally Vietnamese people are hospitable and mostly very friendly to foreigners. They are proud of their country and are very happy to help you discover their culture. The Vietnamese often do everything to make their guests happy.

I learned a lot from my internship in Vietnam. In the first place I learned to teach children, something I had never done before. It wasn't always easy but it felt very good to make a difference for these children. Besides, I got to know the Vietnamese culture quite well and I learned how to deal with cultural differences, both in a professional setting as in daily life. Albeit sometimes frustrating, I especially enjoyed it a lot to interact with people from a different culture and to learn about our differences and similarities. Furthermore I have become more independent, as I had to find my way in a city of 8 million people and had to ask a lot. Because of this I find it easier now to make contact with strangers and to undertake things all by myself. In conclusion, my internship was an amazing experience and I would definitely recommend a traineeship to everyone. And where to go then? Vietnam!

Ervaringsverhaal 27

1. THE JOB

During my two-month traineeship in Xiamen for the environmental project “Green Power Now @XMU” it was my responsibility to train a group of young students in presentation and communication skills in English for a regional competition on environmental protection and awareness. The working place included transportation to “Tong ‘an Middle School” in the outskirts of Xiamen City. Me and a group of four colleagues from the Philippines worked together with different teams to train a number of students. I was responsible for five different teams composed of five people each. My obligations included full-time commitment to the students’ training. First of all, I had to teach the students how to write a proposal for a project on environmental protection. In order to do this, I gathered with the groups I was assigned for brainstorming during the first two weeks. My job was to help them think of an environmental problem in their city or region and a proper and reliable way to solve it.

Once they decided the topic of their project, I had to guide them on how to write their project accordingly. Once this was accomplished, I received all their projects so as to give them feedback. This included mistakes in their use of English, contents and a correct structure of their project methodology. The final part of my job as a trainee included a short training on presentation and communication skills. I took special care in giving feedback the students’ pronunciation and speaking skills. The final part of the project was accomplished in teams, together with my trainee colleagues.

Finally, when the theoretical part of the job was finished it was time for the students’ presentations at the regional competition. The latter was held at a city-level and an important number of schools from Xiamen City participated in this competition. Members of local NGOs and the board members of AIESEC participated as the student judges. Fortunately for me, I was offered to be the official co-host of the competition along with a Chinese counterpart. It was a fairly formal event and we were required to wear formal attire during the competition.

Moreover, I was very happy to know one of the teams I trained won the official competition.

As a prize they would go to Shanghai to present their project at a national level and the opportunity to fund their initiative with the branch of Garnier in China.

2. Working Culture and Culture Shock(s)

In my first two weeks I had a strong culture shock. First of all, being Xiamen a small city not so used to being in touch with foreigners, I sometimes stood out of the crowd. This could make anybody feel stared at from the beginning of the experience. Even though this would later represent an advantage with the group of students I trained, at the beginning it required an extra effort to get accustomed to this particular situation.

During the first two days the organization and the trainees had two different meetings with reference to the project's main objectives and aims. It came as a surprise that Chinese are very informal regarding meetings and discussions. Unlike Europe, these events are taken less seriously and in a relatively relaxed fashion. During one of the meetings I became very serious concerning the days and time me and the trainees were supposed to work. This was different from the way the local organization – AIESEC Xiamen University - and the other trainees would deal with this subject and some of them were a little intimidated because of my way of addressing the subject. Once I was aware of the problem I explained to them this kind of meetings are dealt with some formality in the country and region I come from.

One of the other lessons I learnt during my internship was to treat straightforwardness more subtly. Apparently, this characteristic is something the Chinese are not used to. Being used to the Dutch and Spanish way of communicating – which I found out is very similar in saying exactly what is thought. The Chinese people I was in contact with had a very subtle but efficient way of saying “no” and “yes” without saying the actual words. I had to learn this when working with the students as well as when talking to my superiors in AIESEC Xiamen University.

To sum up, the working culture was in itself a bit of a culture shock. Even though the student groups I had to train and the local AIESEC organization were very helpful and solved

most of the trainees' doubts, there were aspects of the culture I was not used to being a foreigner. This was different for the other trainees, since most of them had already been to China and therefore used to be related to Chinese people.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a trainee I certainly recommend to go on an internship abroad. Being originally a South American student settled in Spain and currently enjoying an exchange period in the Netherlands, I have learnt the importance of going abroad for studies or work. Moreover, the farther you go the more you will learn. Even though the experience of being an alien to one's surroundings is not going to be pleasant or enjoyable at the beginning of being abroad, I can assure that going out of your country makes you see things differently. An internship abroad will not only add an additional skill to one's CV, but it will also entail a process of getting to know one's personality more thoroughly regarding strengths and weaknesses to improve. Finally, for those who are interested I wrote a blog in tumblr with the whole experience of being in China. I hope you enjoy it! And here are also some pictures from my internship period.

Ervaringsverhaal 28

studente orthopedagogiek, vertelt over haar stage in India

Okay! Daar stond ik dan voor het eerst van mijn leven trots en alleen op schiphol op weg naar India om Engelse les te gaan geven op een basisschool. Na mijn studie orthopedagogiek was ik toe aan een nieuwe uitdaging. In een land als India zou dat zeker gaan lukken.

Ik werd op het vliegveld opgewacht door het lokale AIESEC team en moest een kokosnoot op de grond kapot slaan als ritueel. Mijn eerste nachten in India heb ik alleen in de slaapkamer van Anurag geslapen, mijn AIESEC-buddy. De hele familie moest hierdoor in één bed slapen, maar dat is normaal daar, weet ik nu. De eerste dagen heb ik vooral achterop mijn buddy's brommer gezeten, terwijl hij vrouwen in sari's, koeien, auto's, riksja's en fietsers probeerde te vermijden. Ik had het gevoel dat de mensen op straat elk moment zouden

gaan zingen en dansen, omdat ik waarschijnlijk, voordat ik naar India ging, teveel Bollywood films gezien had. Ik vond alles geweldig. Ik was door AIESEC voorbereid op een cultuurschok, maar voelde me thuis hier en was volop aan het genieten.

Na een week ging ik bij mijn nieuwe Indiase familie wonen in een klein dorp. Ik voelde me er meteen thuis. Mijn leerproces ging

door, ik werd overal door mijn nieuwe-niet-engels-sprekende mommy mee naar toe genomen zodat de verkoopmannetjes mij niet zouden oplichten als ik de volgende keer alleen zou komen. Iedereen moest mij zien en bij iedereen moest ik weer eten, lachen en aardig doen.

"Cathleen: my mommy brother daughter son!" Dan knikte ik alsof ik het snapte en dan werd er weer verder geklets in Gujarati, de lokale taal. Het is totaal uitpuittend als je net in zo'n land bent en dan probeerde ik uit te leggen dat ik zo moe was door alle indrukken: een ander land, andere mensen, etc. Dan knikten ze met hun hoofd nee, zeiden ja en snapten het nog steeds niet. Die mensen daar zijn natuurlijk helemaal niet bezig met cultuurverschillen en andere dingen die mij juist wel opvielen! Ik vond het erg leuk om te merken dat na een tijd alles zo normaal werd, veel werd op een gegeven moment gewoon routine.

De school was veel groter en beter dan ik had gedacht! Er waren echte Engels

sprekende leraren, die daarvoor opgeleid waren. Ik moest meteen voor de klas gaan staan en les gaan geven. Euhm ja, ik had dus geen enkele ervaring hiermee... Na 3 maanden ben ik erachter gekomen dat lesgeven niet mijn ding is, tenminste niet op de manier waarop het er daar aan toe gaat. Het was een erg traditionele manier van lesgeven, zoals in Nederland 50 jaar geleden normaal was. Ik heb me uiteindelijk vooral beziggehouden met de probleemkinderen op school en hen in kleine groepjes lesgegeven. Dit was alleen niet zo gemakkelijk, omdat ze op school niet bekend waren met leerproblemen. Als kinderen zich misdragen in de klas, wordt er niet naar externe factoren gekeken die dit gedrag kunnen veroorzaken. Ik heb geprobeerd veel te veranderen op school, maar drie maanden is te kort hiervoor! Bovendien nemen ze van jou, als vrouw en buitenlandse, niks aan. Mijn grootste ergernis was de baas van de school, dit was helaas ook mijn Indiase vader. Hij besliste over alles wat er op school en thuis gebeurde. Als hij nee, zei was het ook nee, hij hoefde hier geen argumenten voor te geven. Dit leverde soms wel frustraties op. Gelukkig kon ik af en toe in het weekend ontsnappen aan mijn overbeschermende familie en ging ik de andere trainees opzoeken in de big city. Alleen in de trein joepie! Tempels bezoeken, lekker eten wat ik zelf wilde, lekker rondcrossen op brommers en geen "Cathleen, Cathleen wake up" 's morgens. Toch was het elke keer wel weer fijn om terug te gaan naar mijn familie.

Tijdens en na mijn traineeship heb ik veel van het land gezien. De woestijn, het groene zuiden, de romantische stranden, de Himalaya in het noorden, ga maar door. Het is super leuk om andere AIESEC trainees in je buurt te hebben die in hetzelfde schuitje zitten en waar je leuke tripjes mee kunt maken! Ik kan echt niet ophouden met praten over India en alles wat ik heb meegemaakt! Toen ik daar was heb ik wekelijks alles bijgehouden en op mijn weblog gezet, dus voor de mensen die er nog niet genoeg van hebben en meer willen weten: www.cathelijnelinders.waarbenijj.nu. Even een tip voor alle pedagogiekers die twifelen. Ga alsjeblieft gewoon weg, ga naar het buitenland en blijf zolang mogelijk weg. Voor je het weet ben je afgestudeerd, op zoek naar een baan en dan is het een stuk lastiger om zomaar weg te gaan!

Ervaringsverhaal 29

From 12 February till 4 May 2012 I did internships with AIESEC in Indonesia. My first project was in Jakarta. We (in total 8 EPs from all different countries) taught highschool students about HIV and aids. Very basis knowledge about how you can get HIV, how not and about discrimination. The local committee had arranged schools and meetings for us, but we had to make and prepare the presentation, discussion topics for the students and a fun game-with-learning-component (*photo*). The day after this presentation, we went back to the schools to help the students brainstorm about a project. The students themselves had to make a project so their fellow students would gain knowledge about HIV too. After a week and an half we came back to review their projects. Really fun to see how seriously they took the projects. The students made professionally edited movies (with complete script) or organized one-to-one sessions.

After the first project I went to the second city of the Indonesian island Java, Bandung. Over there I worked on my own for the NGO Rumah Cemara. This organization is founded by former drug addicts and HIV patients. They have the goal to fight against discrimination, help addicts to stop using drugs and support HIV patients in their daily struggle by going to the hospital with them, teach family about the do's and don'ts. Rumah Cemara has a football playfield near a poor neighbourhood (*photo*). Every Sunday the men and women of Rumah Cemara play against eachother and against the children of that neighbourhood. Besides having fun, football has also a teaching and therapy part. Rumah Cemera plays against 'healthy' teams and gives information about addiction and HIV afterwards. Football is a way for expressing themselves and a way to learn positive emotions. I talked a lot to the men in Rumah Cemara, trying to help them. Futhermore, I gave therapy session in the prison of Bandung.

The local committee in Jakarta was very good organized. There are two LC from two different universities, but they worked together on this project. From the very beginning I felt welcome. The day before the opening event, they organized a meeting (*photo*). They had an active Facebook group where everyone posted their evening and weekend plans. The LC was quite professional. After every meeting and every highschool they made time for an evaluation. When we gave feedback, they actually took that seriously.

'Our' LC and other LCs organized different trips to highlights in Java and helped us to organize trips ourselves. Thanks to that, I visited Yogyakarta (where are the most famous hindu and boeddhist temples of Indonesia), Green Canyon (amazing nature) and Pulau Tidung (a wonderful island near Jakarta).

The LC in Bandung was less professional. They too had a Facebook group, but that one was less active. The LC didn't organize trips, but thankfully I met another Dutch girl who did a project with AIESEC. We organized trips on our own. It's important to be active yourself and don't wait for other people. Sometimes a LC isn't as active as you hope. I got a lot of insider tips from the people of my project, so I had a great time after all.

The Indonesian culture is very very different from our own Western one. The majority is Muslim especially on Java. On Bali most people are hindu, which makes a big difference in the lifestyle, culture and daily habits of people. No waking up from a mosque in Bali! The biggest impact on the Indonesian life comes from religion. When I taught the students about HIV and aids, I couldn't talk about using condoms. I had to talk about having no sex at all. You need a very big change of mindset. Futhermore, Muslim girls are not wearing bikini's at the beach. They are fully dressed when they go into the water, so I did too (*photo*). Another big difference from the Netherlands is that you have to listen to your parents. It doesn't matter how old you are, if you live with them, you'll listen to them. My hostfamily in Jakarta was quite strict with curfews. It isn't possible to negotiate about that. Quite a difference!

Bali is hindu, like I said. I went five days to Bali with three other girls I met in the HIV project. We had so much fun sightseeing, going to bars and going to the beach.

Going to Indonesia is the most cool, fun and best thing I ever did. It was the best decision I made. I learned a lot about myself. I loved the cultural differences, experience living in a completely different country and the feeling of handling yourself alone without the help of family, boyfriend or friends. Not that I was all on my own, but the notion that I can take care of myself.

Going abroad with AIESEC gave me the opportunity to meet other students from all over the world, the opportunity to actually live in the home of an Indonesian family and the opportunity to travel around. Now, back home, I made a beautiful photo album, full of memories. And more. It was the first time in my life I truly experienced how difficult the life of some people is. They face so much trouble and I, spoiled Western girl only have tiny problems about empty phone batteries. I'm now a volunteer for Amnesty International and I'm going to be a volunteer for asylum seekers who want to practise their Dutch language skills. It's not that I changed in some holiness, but I have the feeling I have to do something with my experience abroad. It's not always possible to go abroad and help people over there, but sometimes it's more suitable to contribute closer to home.

I really recommend doing an internship with AIESEC. It's the best combination of doing something for people who need it, personal growth and last but not least, of travelling around the world and meeting people from different countries and cultures.

Open your eyes and enjoy what you'll see :)!

Ervaringsverhaal 30

In this story I will tell you about my experiences in Bogor as a primary teacher.

About the job

As a volunteer I applied for a project at Bosowa Bina Insani, a private Islamic school in Bogor. My job required me to teach English to the children. When I arrived, I was asked what grades I wanted to teach. I choose to teach primary children between the age of 6 – 10 years old. Because a lot of them couldn't speak a word of English there was always an Indonesian teacher present to translate some words in Bahasa Indonesia. My main class was an international class. Here I spent most of my time, which gave me the opportunity to bond with the children in that class.

The working culture at the school was quite relaxed. At least, for most of the teachers. Because while everyone had to work from 7 am until 4 pm, most of them only had 1 or 2 classes a day. They spent the rest of the day preparing for the upcoming class, listening to music, eating and talking. Me on the other hand had at least 4 classes every day. I didn't mind though, sitting around doing nothing slows down time if you ask me.

Most of the teachers and almost all of the children had never even seen a foreigner or, as they call it, 'bule'. In the beginning, children were scared to death. They were literally pointing at me, subsequently screaming and running away. It made me feel like an alien. Therefore I was very happy to have my roommate Berta, a Spanish girl with whom I could share my culture shock. There were also two German volunteers. One of them got sick in the second week. Unfortunately for him his experience consisted of seeing the inside of hospitals and dirty toilets.

About AIESEC

My student coach Leonie supported me before, during and after the whole project. Even when she wasn't in The Netherlands she kept in touch with me, which I really appreciate. The 'borrel' and preparation seminar before my departure were very helpful: the experiences of others made me feel much more at ease. Also, the man who gave the workshop at the seminar was very skilled.

Though the communication towards me was good, I do have to say that the communication between AIESEC affiliates should be much better. Apparently the rules to obtain a visa for Indonesia had changed: the embassy told me that I needed a so called Immigration Letter, which Indonesia should provide me. My contact person in Indonesia didn't quite know what to do, so he did nothing. When I turned to AIESEC The Netherlands I asked them if they could maybe contact AIESEC Indonesia or other students who had gone to Indonesia before. Perhaps they could tell where to get this Immigration letter. They sent a couple of emails to students but nothing came out of it. They told me it was out of their 'reach' and that I should arrange it with AIESEC Indonesia. Partly I get this, but partly I think they should have made more of an effort to contact AIESEC Indonesia, since I only have one contact over there.

Most AIESEC trainees in Indonesia were very dedicated to their jobs. One of them, Melinda, came to pick me up from the airport and accompanied me to my house. Also, when my visa was going to expire, she made sure to deliver it in time in Jakarta.

About the culture

What I noticed is that Java is so diverse. In Bogor the people were extremely Muslim. Here, I'd rather not walk alone on the streets (literally everyone is staring at you) and if I did I covered myself up, sometimes I even wore a veil. Furthermore, life over there is simple. People work, eat and sleep. In their spare time they go to the mall or, an Indonesian favourite, the karaoke bar. The Indonesian people I would describe as polite, shy and neutral. They certainly love food because they're eating all day. There was not a lot of variation in the food, which consisted of fried rice, fried noodles, meat, fried spicy snacks and cakes. Bogor doesn't present all of Java though. Jakarta was way more international. Here I could walk in European clothes. Also in other parts of Java like Thousand Islands, Bagan or Pangandaran the culture was very different. What I can say is that all of the Indonesian people want to be European. They all wanted to be friends with me for the sole fact that I was white. Certainly very interesting.

Personal impact

I'm so happy that I've had the chance to live this life in Bogor. I won't say it has always been easy because clearly it hasn't. Especially in the beginning I was confused and shocked by the culture shock. I also felt very dependent, because you can't get anywhere without the help of a local. This experience did make me stronger because I had to take care of myself, even when surrounded by an environment that was totally unknown to me.

The opportunity to live with a host family and to work with the locals is an invaluable experience. I've travelled for another 3 months after this project and while I absolutely loved the freedom of traveling, I didn't have the opportunity to get integrated in the culture of the country I visited. In Indonesia, I didn't really have much of a choice, which is in this case desirable.

The experience changed me because my world perspective changed. I know now how lucky I am to live in a hygienic European country. Also I came to appreciate the fact that in The Netherlands one can think and become whatever one wants. Especially the women in Indonesia can't. They will never escape the life they have, they will never see the world. We can. Therefore, I'm grateful.

Will you recommend a traineeship?

I would definitely recommend this traineeship to everyone who wants to change his or her perspective. One note though: you need to have a broad back. If you never soaked yourself before in a very different culture you WILL be shocked. This will lead to confusion, panic attacks, sometimes even paranoia. But when you think you're strong enough to handle the poor hygienic standards, the strange habits of people and the fact that everyone wants something from you, you WILL definitely have this unforgettable, amazing once in a lifetime experience.