



## Chapter 1

# Trip Report

### Day 1 - Friday 17 October

Friday 17 October was the day that our group left for South Africa. We were scheduled to fly Emirates from Düsseldorf to Dubai, and then to Johannesburg. Our first flight was supposed to leave at 21:05, but due to a technical failure with the flight controls the plane was unable to take off, so we had to get off and try again the following morning. The initial grumpiness that took possession of our group quickly faded when we entered the hotel that Emirates had arranged for us. This was the Maritim hotel next to the airport in Düsseldorf and it boasted luxury beyond imagination. That night, some people paid a visit to bars in the city center, while others raided the mini-bars of their hotel rooms and went for a midnight swim in the hotel's indoor pool.

### Day 2 - Saturday 18 October

The next morning, after a good breakfast, we were ready for the second try. This time all went well and we arrived in Dubai in the evening. Because of our initial delay we were unable to catch our connecting flight so once again we had to sleep in a hotel. Though not as luxurious as the hotel in Düsseldorf, we really enjoyed our stay because all this trouble with our flights meant that we had time to spend a day in Dubai! That evening, some of us went to the city center to look for a bar (a can of beer at the hotel cost 5 Euros!) but to our disappointment we found none. It became clear to us that society in the Arab Emirates is strongly influenced by Islam and that alcohol is a bit of a taboo. We returned to the hotel and decided to have a drink there anyway. A side note to our parents: from this story you might suspect that we are alcoholics. This is not the case. We just require a regular intake of alcohol in order to think clearly.

### Day 3 - Sunday 19 October

After having breakfast at the hotel we went on a guided tour in a van to see some of Dubai. This is a good opportunity for me to tell you a couple of things about Dubai. At the time of our stay the temperature was about 35°C (26°C at night) with very high humidity. During summer the temperatures rise even more, so needless to say that the climate is very tough for us Dutch guys. Luckily, Dubai is wealthy enough that it can afford equipping virtually every building and vehicle with air conditioning. This does not only include

hotels, offices and public buildings, but bus stops as well.

As you probably know, Dubai is expanding at an incredible rate. Most of the city's (very impressive!) skyscrapers are still under construction. The skyline is characterized by mile after mile of huge buildings, surrounded by construction cranes. In fact, it has been calculated that about 2/3 of all the world's cranes are positioned in Dubai. The freshly constructed buildings include Burj Dubai (the world's tallest building), Burj al Arab (the world's only 7-star hotel) and a huge indoor skiing hall where the temperature is kept at a constant 4°C. As if that isn't enough, the city of Dubai has been creating artificial islands that connect to the shoreline. Palm Jumeirah, the palm-like island, is the most well-known one.

After our tour of Dubai, we went back to the airport to catch our flight to Johannesburg. It was evening when we arrived and our driver, Melvin, was waiting for us. That is to say: he was waiting for about four people. Because of a misinterpretation he didn't know that we were so large a group. After quickly arranging another van, improvising for a bit, and driving to and fro a couple of times, we all managed to arrive at our hostel in Pretoria (called North-South Backpackers) after midnight. We sat outside for some time and enjoyed the mild spring air, saturated with the delightful smell of Jacaranda blossom (beautiful purple-blossomed trees).

Because we had lost one day in Dubai, we had to skip the first day of our original schedule, which consisted of a tour of Johannesburg and a visit to the Apartheidmuseum.

#### **Day 4 – Monday 20 October**

On Monday we were invited to the University of Pretoria where Frans van Heerden welcomed us. Two students, Chantal and Kobie, gave us a tour of the university campus, including the Van Tilburg museum that keeps a collection of mainly antique Dutch furniture and household items. We had lunch at a restaurant on campus. After seeing the university library and music center we were driven to the Union Building in Pretoria where the government is located. This building was constructed in 1913 and symbolizes the union of the South African people, expressed as two symmetrical wings that represent the Afrikaans and English language. On the horizon, on a hilltop, we could see the Voortrekker Monument, erected as a remembrance to the Great Trek of 1830.

That afternoon we had our first formal session with three teachers and two students of the University of Pretoria. Every research group presented their work so far and afterwards we had a discussion. The most important result of this session was the fact that our views of South Africa's cultural diversity did not correspond to reality. We all thought that "black vs. white" created tension in South Africa's society, but it appeared that the topic of culture and ethnicity is much more subtle.

A couple of students met with Frans van Heerden again to discuss their questionnaires with him. The group was rejoined at café "Springbok", a mostly Afrikaans café close to the campus, where they served Amstel, Heineken and Bavaria and where we could try our luck ordering our drinks in Dutch (with varying success I might add). That night we had dinner at a place called Herr Gunther's on Hatfield Square. Afterwards we took a taxi to the hostel and went to sleep.

Most of the time when we needed to go somewhere we ordered one or more taxis, not because we are lazy (which we are), but because of crime. Fortunately we didn't have any unpleasant encounters ourselves, but stories of armed robberies are numerous. This led to quite a discussion one night, when a couple of people wanted to go out for a drink, while Theo was having serious doubts about the group's safety. Even though our hostel was only two blocks away from the campus and Hatfield Square (where the bars are), walking there (as you might do in the Netherlands) was strongly discouraged.

## Day 5 - Tuesday 21 October

On Tuesday we were invited to attend a lecture by Marlene Holmner, professor at the Human Sciences faculty. We introduced ourselves to the South African students and told them for what purpose we were visiting South Africa. Both Marlene and her students were very kind and we were invited to attend the following lectures on Wednesday and Friday as well.

That afternoon we went to visit Sizanani Village. This is a missionary post in Bronkhorstspuit that serves as an HIV/AIDS clinic for the people who live in the surrounding townships. We were welcomed by Ricus Dullaert who told us everything about the current situation in the townships where he is active. We heard some truly shocking stories about the state of affairs concerning AIDS and the strenuous task that the Sizanani team has to face when trying to inform the people on HIV. The problem is that HIV is a major taboo and that people generally don't want to know whether they are infected. Even if they know they are, they won't easily admit it to the rest of the community.

Ricus also gave us a tour of the Cuddle Company. In this factory, local people (mostly women) produce stuffed animals that look like a crossbred between a zebra and a parrot and that are sold in the Netherlands. For every animal that is sold, another one is given to a child in one of the townships. Also, this company enables the employees to earn an income that is sufficient to support themselves, their children and a couple of family members.

Next, we took a short walk through the Sizanani Hospice. This is a place where terminally ill people are taken care of. Most of them are dying of AIDS. Lots of people who end up in the Hospice are never visited by their families. This once more signifies the shame and taboos that are connected with having HIV in South African (black) culture.

After this tour of the facilities of Sizanani Village, Ricus took us to a township called Dark City. It got its name from the fact that it has existed for a long time without electricity. In Dark City, we visited a center for food distribution among orphans. Needless to say, lots of children are orphans because their parents died of AIDS. We spoke with Johanna, who is a caretaker at the orphans' center. She told us that she herself is HIV-positive. She told that she had gotten HIV from her husband. Once she found out about her illness, Johanna gathered enough courage to go and visit the HIV clinic at Sizanani and thanks to the medication obtained there she is able to lead a normal life. Her husband was less accepting of Western medicine so he died eventually. In her community she was one of the first persons to come out and openly admit that she was HIV-positive. The people around her reacted with disgust and fear at first (she told that people literally avoided her in the street), but because of her efforts for the people of Dark City she is nowadays again accepted in their midst.

Late in the afternoon we returned to Pretoria where there was time for each individual research group to work on their subjects. We had dinner at a Chinese restaurant. That night at the Backpackers hostel we had a debriefing on the progress of the projects and we shared our experiences of that day. It was clear that our visit to Sizanani had made a deep impression on every one of the members of our group.

## **Day 6 - Wednesday 22 October**

We had breakfast on campus. At 10:00 we had an appointment at the Dutch Embassy in Pretoria. After a short central introduction, every research team had separate meetings with professionals invited by Mr. Cornelius Hacking, First Secretary Education. These meetings were very informative for all groups as they yielded a lot of valuable material for the research projects. We were pleased by the fact that the meeting at the embassy was very well arranged, and it was evident that all parties really enjoyed the discussion.

Back at the university we had the opportunity to work some more on our projects. Later that afternoon we attended another lecture by Marlene Holmner. A group of South African students presented their work on the "ICT-readiness" of Uganda. Afterwards we visited a room where students presented their Bachelor projects on ICT and graphical book design. We had dinner at Roman's Pizza.

By this time, some of our students had discovered the entertainment that Hatfield Square has to offer. This square is mostly visited by students and it can be really fun in the evening. Some of the guys made a point of going to Hatfield Square whenever they could. The preferred bar was Herr Gunther's, the favorite drink was called PK (a mix of Tequila, Stroh rum and Absinthe - basically rocket fuel) and the waitress of choice was an attractive blonde by the name of Nicole. Now, especially Nicole was (quite literally) a "hot" topic among the guys during our stay in South Africa!

## **Day 7 - Thursday 23 October**

The day started with breakfast on campus again. The fact that we had breakfast or lunch on campus so often (at a place called Burgundy's), was not due to our lack of creativity. It was simply that the food was so good! The people that run the Radboud University's restaurant can really learn a thing or two from their South African colleagues! But I digress...

After breakfast we attended a couple of presentations at the university's Gender Institute by Joan Fairhurst, Rory du Plessis and Marinda Maree. They spoke about the role of ICT in South Africa, the meaning of technology and gender inequality in exact sciences, respectively. Afterwards we were taken on another tour of the campus. We visited the "camera obscura" and a jazz concert by music students in the music center. We had lunch (again at Burgundy's) together with Joan, Rory and Marina.

That afternoon all the research groups went their separate ways. Some had scheduled appointments that would benefit their individual research topics. Others used the time to work out their notes, etcetera. We all had dinner at Roman's Pizza again.

Later that evening, the party-lovin' people went to Hatfield Square because they had an appointment with Nicole, the sex symbol I mentioned earlier. They returned late that night, but having spent a couple of hours in the presence of the lady that blew their minds,

they were still wide awake. In fact, they woke up half the hostel with their enthusiasm. Things were said that I cannot in good conscience reproduce here because that would make the girlfriends of the respective persons very jealous... and rightly so!

## **Day 8 – Friday 24 October**

Guess where we had breakfast? Right, Burgundy's!

In the afternoon we went to the Innovation Hub. This is a project funded by the government that assists people in setting up their own companies. For example, a lot of people who have freshly graduated from university have all the necessary technical skills needed to run their business, but they lack the financial knowledge. The Innovation Hub then guides these young entrepreneurs and supplies them with office space, meeting rooms, and all kinds of services. Once a business has grown "mature" it leaves the Hub and settles either on the Hub's technical campus or at another location. Unfortunately we arrived late at the Innovation Hub because of a miscommunication. Therefore we did not really have time for an extended tour that was to include some discussions with people working for their own company within the Hub.

Afterwards a visit was paid to Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. This was a great opportunity for us to grab some souvenirs for ourselves and for the people back home. We had dinner at a truly chic and expensive (by South African standards, not to ours) restaurant. After filling our stomachs with delicious food and our minds with guilty pleasure, we returned to the hostel. There, we individually discussed progress with Theo and set some early guidelines for the research papers. Everyone stayed at the Backpackers Hostel and we enjoyed a game of pool and a couple of Black Labels (our favorite brand of beer during our stay).

## **Day 9 – Saturday 25 October**

The events of this day need a bit of introduction. In 2006 the Faculty of Computer Science of the Radboud University celebrated its 25th anniversary. To the staff, it seemed like a good idea to give away a present instead of receiving one. This idea was carried out and the decision was made to invest in a project led by Johannes Skosana. Johannes lives in Kwaggafontein, a major township in South Africa, and at the time he was leading a small ICT-center there that provided the community with basic ICT-services and education. With help from the Radboud University Johannes was able to further realize his plans and the ICT-center (called Tholulwazi) has expanded since and is still much appreciated by the people of Kwaggafontein.

On Saturday 25 October we were invited by Johannes to come and visit Tholulwazi, which on that day celebrated its fourth anniversary. The ICT-center consists of two rooms that contain a total of about 15 computers, a fax, a copier, an internet connection and so on. For a small fee, people can send e-mails, make copies of their documents, etcetera. In addition, Johannes provides basic computer courses for the community. These include typing and word processing.

When we arrived in Kwaggafontein some people were busy setting up and decorating a large tent next to the ICT-center. This was the place where the official ceremony was to be held. The time until the festivities started was spent by going to the mall to buy food for the weekend. Going to the supermarket might not sound incredibly interesting, but in this

case it was. I estimate that we were the only white people in a range of several kilometers among thousands of blacks. This led to quite amusing situations: people shouting and greeting us, children stopping to stare and giggle at us... After getting all the necessary errands we returned to Tholulwazi where the ceremony was about to start.

The aforementioned tent was nicely decorated with all kinds of colored cloths and behind the microphone there was a long table with decorated chairs on which we, the guests of honor, were seated. The program started with an opening prayer and a couple of testimonies by people who had benefitted from the ICT-center in building a successful career. Many words of thanks were addressed to us, for the donations by our university had been a tremendous help in realizing and expanding Tholulwazi. The ceremony was split up into parts by short dramatic plays, performed by a local drama group. Even though these plays were in the language of the Ndebele, they were quite amusing to watch. In the end all members of our group received a present and we were invited to individually step up and thank the people gathered there for their generosity.

After the ceremony we enjoyed a local meal together with the other guests. Music was played, champagne bottles were opened and there was singing and dancing. Both our group and the South African people took the opportunity to join each other for pictures and we all had lots of fun! Late in the afternoon we returned to Pretoria. All members of our group were delighted to have been part of such a special occasion and I think that afternoon in Kwaggafontein is surely a day to remember.

That evening part of the group had dinner at an Indian restaurant, while others went off to Hatfield Square. That night the Pretoria Bulls played the Durban Sharks in the rugby finals. Even though the Bulls lost to the Sharks, the atmosphere on Hatfield Square was very friendly.

## **Day 10 – Sunday 26 October**

On this day we visited the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve near Johannesburg. At first we visited the cages where lions and cheetahs were held. We had the opportunity to enter one of these cages to go and pet either two or four months old white lions or a full-grown cheetah (I never knew that a cheetah could purr like a kitten!). Later that morning we attended a show about venomous snakes and a demonstration of a “cheetah run”. In order to keep their animals in shape the park’s staff has developed a mechanism that involves dragging a stuffed animal across the ground so that the cheetah can chase it. On this day, the cheetah didn’t really feel like running so it lazily jogged after its “prey” and that was it.

Next we went on a safari in a truck. We saw lions, wild dogs, rhinos, ostriches (which taste delicious when served with molten brie), wildebeests and springboks. We also went down the so-called Wonder Cave that had been used for rock mining. Some truly amazing stalagmites and stalactites have developed there over the ages. After a bit of off-road driving in our truck we returned to the exit.

Later that afternoon we paid a visit to Lesedi Village, a theme park where the history and customs of the native African tribes (Basotho, Ndebele, Pedi, Xhosa and Zulu) were presented. It also was an excellent opportunity to buy some souvenirs. We had dinner at Lesedi and then we returned home.

## **Day 11 – Monday 27 October**

We were picked up by Greg Masondo, headmaster of Vezulwazi Primary School. He took us to NAPTOSA (National Professional Teachers' Organization of South Africa - basically the teachers' union), of which he is a CEO. A presentation was given about NAPTOSA itself and its goals. Then we went to the township Mamelodi near Pretoria where we visited a primary school for children with learning disabilities. The children reacted very enthusiastically to our visit and it was really fun. After a short tour of the school we went to Greg's house where we had drinks. Greg's sister, who lives nearby, had prepared a delicious meal for the whole group so we had lunch there.

In the afternoon all research groups were able to work some more on their findings so far. We had dinner at Roman's Pizza (again!). We stayed at the Backpackers Hostel that evening to have drinks with the whole group, as it would be our last day in South Africa.

## **Day 12 – Tuesday 28 October**

On Tuesday we were invited to visit IBM in Johannesburg. The appointment was scheduled at 09:00, but because our driver once again miscalculated the number of persons in our group, we had to arrange a second van which arrived at IBM two hours late. There, Frank Hammer, IDC Executive, held a presentation about IBM and its business culture. Afterwards each research group had the opportunity to discuss some topics with IBM professionals, which was quite informative. After lunch we left for the airport in Johannesburg where we took our flight to Dubai. In Dubai we had to wait for a couple of hours before we could board our connecting flight to Düsseldorf. We went back to Nijmegen by train or by car.

This concludes the trip report on our visit to South Africa. I think it was an interesting experience for everyone and a fun one as well. Apart from arriving late a couple of times and the occasional diarrhea that struck some of our group members, everything went well. That is: except for Ebru, who left her camera in Kwaggafontein. Fortunately it only contained a couple of hundred pictures of herself, so as a group we didn't really miss out on any interesting stuff.

