Reflection 1 - Applying principles of sustainability to create viable systems

A sustainable system is one that can continue existing indefinitely, in harmony with all dimensions at all levels it interfaces with or relates to. However, realistically very few systems are that sustainable, but they all do try their best to apply as many principles of sustainability as possible. Recounting my own experience interning at ArvandTech Pvt Ltd, a computer refurbishing warehouse, I had to opportunity to spearhead the creation of a sustainable daily operations system for their establishment.

In my time working there for almost two months, I spent a month under the guidance of two fellow UTS interns who had been working there for the past six months. I spent the remainder of my time paying forward my guidance to a couple other fellow UTS interns who joined after me. As part of the guidance that I was given the employer asked the interns before me to draft and hand down a rough User Manual for operations around the warehouse. I was primarily tasked by the employer to draft a mobile app for their company, but as soon as the senior interns left, I could barely find time to work on the app development since I was running the daily warehouse operations. This quickly boiled down to the employer handing me down another task to streamline the operation workflow with minimal input from the employer himself who would supervise the warehouse operations in the little time he was present around the warehouse every day. From here on began the development of a sustainable system for any individual or group running the warehouse, to manage, track and follow up on all the warehouse activities. The senior interns had left leaving me absolutely no time for any app development, the warehouse was essentially under my command and the interns joined after under my guidance.

At first, a sudden trickle down of all this responsibility seemed like a lot to take in, but within a few days I realised that at this pace and in this scenario app development to the scale that was being asked from me would not be possible. Developing a system to streamline the daily operations seemed like means to fix up the mess that the warehouse was left in as well as reduce some burden off my shoulders. Feeling in charge and knowing everything that went in and out of the warehouse gave me a sense of control not just over the operations but also the interns and event the company, given the employer wasn't around and gave us almost unrestricted access to everything. What seemed like such a load to begin with was soon realised into a much more positive experience of literally running the warehouse with next to no supervision.

Running operations at the warehouse involved a variety of different skills, some I was good at and others I adapted to and am so grateful for long term. Planning out tasks for yourself, others (interns) and even the employer (what was needed in the warehouse) was one of the daily tasks in the system that I mapped out, and all the said planning was done in the last working hour every day, so everyone had a task to address every morning. Guiding interns after just a month in the place was a tough task along with interfacing with all the customers walking into the store for purchases and follow ups given my introvert behaviour prior to the internship. Eventually with no other option and being the only person being held accountable, I did step up to the task as well as manage to train those who joined after me.

Reflecting on my experience I did learn a significant amount from that experience even though the entire time I felt the work there was keeping me from the app development that I so wanted to pursue instead. When the daily operations fell under my domain, I assessed the current state of things and couldn't think of a way to reduce my load as things were. I started with suggestions to the employer about organising the inventory for the warehouse. The suggestion was appreciated and

led to me taking the initiative to organise the mess the warehouse was in, planning out tasks for everyone working that day, to logging the wide variety of computer parts and equipment lying around the warehouse which we'd go looking for all over when an order was placed. For the following weeks I spent a significant amount of time streamlining their operations in a sustainable manner, keeping a log of everything was happening and translating the previous records in a way that was easy to understand and would make sense outright.

What I failed to understand early on was that in this case as many others, what the employer was asking for wasn't something what he wanted or could support the development of. Eventually leading me to my own conclusions influenced by multiple after hours chats with the employer which quite frankly lasted longer than he was present in the warehouse the entire day. Among the multiple workplace ethics lessons, people skills, leadership skills, time management, and organisational skills I learned in my time there, the most important lesson I learnt it that as an employee its one's own task to assess the employers needs and provide them with it before they ask for it rather than them telling you what they require because often times what they may ask you to do is not what they really require.