

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort.

The spoken word shall prevail.

"Are you a boundary spanner?" - UIIN asked me...

Well, am I actually a boundary spanner? That depends on how you define a "Boundary Spanner", what is meant by that.

If you dig into the means, it says to break down, overcome or get around boundaries, shifting borders. If you are convinced of something and want to put it into reality it, and even strong boundaries cannot prevent you from doing it. If the driving force is greater than the braking force, if you are convinced of something and "know it", but others here do not believe it ...

Do you know the "**NO Sayers**"? I know many; because saying no is by far the easiest thing to do, free of work and free of responsibility, avoiding risks ... I think many of those who are sitting on the floors of administrations and public authorities belong to the group of "No Sayers". Administrators, controllers, B-Managers, timid, avoiders ...: "Hey I got an idea, what do you think about ...?" ... But what do you receive as answers:

- No, it is not possible!
- No, we do not have the means for that!
- No money!
- No, that never works!
- Anyone could come ...

When I served as a **member of the rector board** of my university, we developed a new campus; we took over an old listed barracks of the mounted military and transformed it into an innovative creative university location. But a **library** was missing; if you want a campus, you need a library. But there was no room, no space for it. The public administration planners in charge thought we should build the library under the roof; the buildings must not be changed. But under the roof it was much too small and narrow and hot in summer and cold in winter ...

There were students and lecturers from our department of architecture demonstrating and making concepts and making entries and going on strike; they wanted a library where you could read and learn in a bright and positive way. The authorities said no, that's not possible.

At some point, after many protests and demonstrations, something moved and after much back and forth, they agreed on a concept and it was realised. The department of architecture also took over the construction management. It has become really beautiful:



Whenever I see this library, I think of this story and I become aware of **5 essential qualities** that the students and lecturers of architecture had and that ultimately made them truly successful boundary spanners: Moral courage, resilience, visionary, enthusiasm - but also humour/exhaustive celebration.

I certainly do not (!) want to compete with them; but let's see if I am a bit of a boundary spanner if these criteria are applied.

An organisation like a university always requires moral courage when it wants to make a difference. At our institute, one of my favourite sayings is hanging right in the entrance: "Everyone said that's not possible! But then someone came along who didn't know that and simply did it."

Now that I've learned - among other also from the library example - how to do Boundary Spanning, I've realised a dream and founded an institute on the topics that drive and fascinate me. And with the institute, I've made myself somewhat independent of the university's budget, because we raise our own money as third-party funding from industry and thus have "free funds" - to counteract the "no sayers". That's why I was always able to make decisions myself that I didn't have to obtain formal approval for. When in doubt, I sometimes acted according to the moth "**It is much easier to get forgiveness than permission**". That sometimes made me popular with some people who are responsible for the success of the university, and the people who have to pay attention to the processes and regulations in such an organisation started having a problem with me - and I with them. That sometimes required a bit of the "moral courage"; but finally success proves you right.

With my **resilience**, on the other hand, it is not so far off. I really suffer a lot when I fail, when applications are rejected, when grants are not awarded ... so much work and so little reward; on the contrary, someone else kicks you in the knees from behind! I often asked myself "Why are you doing all this?, can't you just be like the others are and go through the months and years without that pain?" But then I had the role models right in front of my eyes, in my team, who were once really successful competitive athletes: Todd was a professional in Australian football, Sue was Mexican tennis champion, Carolin has a closet full of gold medals in military riding, Neele played hockey in the national league, Balzhan danced professional ballet in Kazakhstan ... and

these people taught me that you can only succeed if you don't let yourself be impressed by setbacks and injuries - I learned a lot from them. "If you fall down, get up, fix your little crown and move on!" It is sometimes hard to bear, but when success comes, it far outweighs the setbacks. And without setbacks it is not realistic. Every athlete can tell about it, and every researcher or anyone who works at UBC.

Yes, you have to be **visionary**! Otherwise nobody knows where you want to go, not even you yourself. And you have to create and share the vision with others - and make it as ambitious as possible, but still seem achievable. There are great visions, such as anchoring the university in its region with hundreds of projects and developing relationships full of trust between the many SMEs and the professors, and I had the vision that with our approach here we can moderate, show the benefits for both sides, bring people on an equal footing. We developed and provided (visionary) tools for this purpose ... and it worked. Sic!

And these visions must find their way into reality through enthusiasm. Only if we are passionate about something, only if we develop passion do we overcome our limits and move forward. And enthusiasm has two dimensions, active and passive enthusiasm.

Last but not least, it is important to have **fun** at and in work, to challenge oneself with joy, to face situations with **humour** and to **celebrate** success extensively and well. That was the easiest ...

And in all this must be most authentic; be yourself, radiate that. If you are not authentic and credible, people notice this immediately and let go of you. Then it won't work out ... I am so happy and grateful that I had such a great team and such great people to work with. About 40 people from all over the world, from South America to Africa, from Asia to Europe - and here from Finland to Portugal - ; although I now know that these many cultures, personalities and approaches to the solution have played a considerable part in enabling me to break down many borders.

So, am I now a boundary spanner? Maybe a little bit ... and I am proud of this little bit; proud that we have achieved so much, that we have really been able to change the world a bit, that many in universities and industry in so many countries around the world have been able to benefit from our knowledge and our projects. Those at your own Uni often don't know anything about it; but what the heck - we do know and we look at ourselves in the mirror every day. Thanks to all those I met and those I was allowed to work with!

You have to fight this phalanx of "No Sayers", but not by fighting it; it only builds up resistance and leads to war. But by circumventing it, undermining it, seeking comrades-in-arms and supporters, creating facts. It is easier to get forgiveness than permission.

But the **story of the library** is not over yet.

The library has won several awards; architecture prizes, design prizes, prizes for innovative teaching and learning environments.

