



5 Career capital in international careers: Insights from-self-initiated and assigned expatriates

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ABSTRACT

In today's global knowledge economy, the worldwide demand for human talent is reinforcing international movement of workers and international careers. Global mobility leads to different career paths: the "classical" assigned expatriation where organizations suggest to move employees internationally, and self-initiated expatriation where employees take control of their own careers outside the confines of organizations by autonomously deciding on pursuing a career abroad. Using the career capital framework, the following research aims at understanding how these two categories of global careerists develop their skills and abilities (know-how), their work motivations and values (know-why) and build their social networks (know-whom). The following chapter uses a qualitative methodology and is based on 21 semi-structured interviews with a highly diverse sample of expatriates of various nationalities in different host-locations, across two employing organizations. Results show that expatriates have various experiences in developing their skill sets, their social capital, and in discovering themselves along with their inner motivations and aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

In today's global knowledge economy, the worldwide demand for human talent is reinforcing international movements of workers and, hence, international careers (Beaverstock, 2005). Expatriation or international mobility of employees represent an increasingly important human capital movement that consists of individuals who move and reside in a host country to perform a job in a specific legal context (Andresen et al., 2014). Expatriates are employees who live temporarily outside their country of birth or citizenship to deliver an organizational purpose by either being relocated to a country by their company as an assigned expatriate (AE), or by being recruited directly from the international labor market as a self-initiated expatriate (SIE) (Shaffer et al., 2012).

The total number of expatriates was estimated to be around 66.2 million in 2017, as per the latest available census on expatriates (Finaccord, 2018). These individuals underwent a career move in the hope of reaping the benefits of this decision. This trend in Human Resource Management raises the question of whether these assignments are worthwhile for employees. Therefore, researchers have shown an interest in studying expatriates' career capital (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008; Dickmann & Harris, 2005; Jokinen et al., 2008; Kirk, 2016; Mäkelä

et al., 2016; Yao et al., 2013). The following study contributes to the literature on career capital through a deeper understanding of the various ways in which expatriates develop their *skills and abilities*, their *motivations*, and their *social networks* (all three aspects of career capital).

This chapter addresses the career capital of assigned and self-initiated expatriates at the individual level through a qualitative study that was conducted in 2 multinational companies. After a condensed review of the literature on career capital, the construct serves as a lens to systematically illustrate the distinct processes that expatriates relate to when building career capital.

CAREER CAPITAL

Career capital consists of the assets that employees possess and can potentially offer to their employers (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). The career capital framework relies on the fact that an individual's key capital and input is knowledge. The literature on career capital distinguishes three types of knowledge: "know-how" that is, work-related skills and expertise directly needed to perform the job; "know-whom", the social capital and relational networks that can enhance one's career development; and "know-why", referring to values such as self-assurance and sense of purpose regarding the career choices made and commitment to the world of work (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). Know-why expresses the values and interests that impact their work identity (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). In other words, it takes an internal approach to careers, which is owned by the individual and is subjective (Stephens, 1994). These extensive know-why capabilities promote the learning process and expatriates' performance (Jokinen et al., 2008).

Research in international human resource management shows that there has been a diversification of forms of international work, resulting in multiple types of expatriates (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Selmer & Luring, 2011). The following section will present the different types of expatriates that are included in the present study to understand how they might differ in terms of career capital experiences.

Global mobility, types of international employees and career capital

International assignments are developing into complex forms (Mayerhofer et al., 2004) leading to different career paths (Collings et al., 2007). New types of expatriates do not fit into traditional conceptualizations of assigned expatriates (AE) or corporate expatriates or international assignees - employees sent abroad within the same international company - because the way new types of international employees are attracted, developed, compensated, and retained differs significantly from approaches used in the past (Shaffer et al., 2012). Self-initiated

expatriates (SIEs), for example, are characterized by taking control of their career outside the confines of the organization thereby abandoning corporate intervention and its relative security in favor of autonomy and flexibility (Shaffer et al., 2012). SIEs are further divided into “intra SIEs”, that is, global careerists who apply to internal vacancies and “inter SIEs” who are foreign hires (Andresen et al., 2014).

As expatriates have different international work experiences depending on their employment conditions and history, their career capital experiences vary as well (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008; Suutari & Makela, 2007). Companies where AEs and SIEs co-exist create an “organizational hierarchy” where corporate expatriates with full packages are treated as elites of higher strategic value compared to self-initiated expatriates, possibly creating challenges for the latter in terms of career advancement (McNulty et al., 2015).

The responsibility that organizations have towards traditional expatriates in providing them with a safety net that will support their career capital development does not apply in the case of SIEs. In their work drawing on both research and practice, Collings et al. (2011) highlight the importance of organizational support before, during and after international assignments in creating better outcomes for organizations and individuals alike. Moreover, adjustment also has an important role for career capital accumulation of expatriates (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009). Since corporate expatriates have more organizational support and internal social capital resources than SIEs, their adjustment might be facilitated, possibly leading to better career capital gains. In that respect, Dickmann et al. (2016) have found that AEs benefited more than SIEs from their experiences abroad, with a more positive impact on their career capital. Jokinen et al. (2008) earlier found that expatriation benefited SIEs (and AEs equally) in all the aspects of their know-how and know-why. As for know-whom, SIEs benefited as well but they gained significantly less than assigned expatriates. Rodriguez and Scurry (2014) examine career capital of SIEs in the highly regulated Qatari context to find that macro-level factors are limiting the impact of individual efforts for career capital development.

The previous sections have summarized recent findings about the career capital of different types of international assignees. In the following section, it will be explained how the career capital experiences of expatriates are to be explored under different circumstances (with and without the support of their employing organizations in their decision to move geographically).

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this chapter is to examine the career capital experiences of self-initiated and assigned expatriates (AEs). Only two previous studies compared their career capital. Both were quantitative pieces based on a Finnish sample (Dickmann et al., 2016; Jokinen et al., 2008). The present study, by contrast, is qualitative, exploratory and will use an international sample with various nationalities. The research question that will be addressed in two organizations is: How do career capital experiences of assigned expatriates, and self-initiated expatriates vary?

Two multinational organizations were chosen: one in the energy industry and the other is in the fast moving consumer goods industry. Multinational companies were selected because this is where international mobility programs and global recruitments are most highly developed. Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with expatriates: eight SIEs, eleven AEs and two current AEs who started their careers as SIEs. The interview protocol was developed following a thorough literature review that identified all major aspects of career capital. The presence of an interview guide ensured that all topics were covered and established a framework for comparisons across participants during data analysis. Four different types of questions were integrated in the instrument: Essential questions around the main research area, extra questions covering the same topics as the essential questions but with a different wording to check for the consistency of answers, throw-away questions such as demographic questions that are not situated at the core of the topic but help pacing and structuring the interview, and finally probing questions that encourage the respondent to elaborate on a previous question (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Interviews were all conducted via Zoom due to the numerous geographical locations of the participants. A consent form was signed by each participant allowing for the conversation to be recorded. As soon as the interview was completed, the automatic transcription was generated on Zoom. The automated transcriptions were then fully rechecked for corrections and completions. Purposive sampling was used because premeditated criteria were given to members of a human-resources team, who helped in identifying both assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates across headquarters and subsidiaries. Reaching self-initiated expatriates was done through regular talent management teams, while reaching assigned expatriates was done through global mobility teams. The technique of heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling was chosen to capture various experiences from SIEs and AEs males and females, from different nationalities, professions, and age categories, working in different host countries of the case organizations.

	Industry	Gender	Category	Home country	Host country
1	Company 1	F	Intra-company SIE	Brazil	Finland
2	Company 1	F	Intra-company SIE	Pakistan	UAE
3	Company 1	M	Intra-company SIE	South Africa	Finland
4	Company 1	F	Inter-company SIE	Italy	Finland
5	Company 1	M	Inter-company SIE	South Africa	Finland
6	Company 1	M	SIE & AE	Canada/Romania	USA
7	Company 1	M	SIE & AE	Australia	Norway
8	Company 1	M	AE	Netherlands	China
9	Company 1	M	AE	Brazil	Paraguay
10	Company 1	M	AE	Finland	France
11	Company 1	M	AE	France	China
12	Company 1	M	AE	Finland	Singapore
13	Company 1	M	AE	Germany	China
14	Company 2	M	AE	Lebanon	France
15	Company 2	M	AE	Lebanon	France
16	Company 2	M	AE	France	USA
17	Company 2	M	AE	Syria	France
18	Company 2	F	AE	Brazil/UK	France
19	Company 2	F	Intra-company SIE	Lebanon	Canada
20	Company 2	F	Intra-company SIE	Lebanon	England
21	Company 2	M	Intra-company SIE	Canada/Kuwait	France

Table 4: Basic information on participants

FINDINGS

Common know-how characteristics of SIEs and AEs

All expatriates, self-initiated and assigned alike, had developed common core skills and knowledge, such as cross-cultural knowledge or cultural sensitivity that, for instance, helped them in negotiations or in exchanges with internal and external stakeholders, ranging from colleagues to clients. Data from the interviews show that *cross-cultural knowledge* is by far the most apparent skill all expatriates gain, as the following verbatim quote suggests: “I think you learn to look at things differently. You understand what other people don’t understand. For example, the decision making in China - there’s not really a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and the language as such doesn’t really have a ‘no’ and ‘yes’. They have, I think, six or seven ways to say ‘yes’ and, also even more ways to say ‘no’ but there’s no ‘yes’ or ‘no’ like in English. Nobody in Europe can judge if it’s a ‘no’ or ‘yes’.” The cultural intelligence that international employees develop, is what promoted their *marketability* in their future jobs and gave them an edge compared to other employees. The following Canadian participant shows awareness of this value and uses it to promote his international *employability*. Reflecting on his past corporate secondment in Japan, he stated: “I think it's cultural sensitivity in the context of under-

standing why colleagues and how colleagues and customers or partners from different countries act. So, I think that's actually a very *valuable* career skillset to be able, especially as a lawyer, who's involved in a lot of negotiations, to be able to have insight into the mindset and motivations of the party you're negotiating with... It's partially, the reason I am in my current job.”

Know-how of AEs

A first characteristic of AEs in our sample is their dedication to learn the *local language* of their hosts. Assigned expatriation is often an opportunity to learn a new language or improve one's level in a foreign language, which will serve AEs future career development: “I am a Portuguese speaker, I came to Paraguay, I was speaking up Portunol, you know, it's a Spanish with Portuguese mix. I was not speaking very well, Spanish. I'm using the opportunity that I am in Paraguay to better speak Spanish. In Paraguay, it's good to develop my career you know, and it's going well. Now, I'm a better Spanish speaker.”

Second, international assignees have shown *proactivity* in their desire to learn: “It's your responsibility to ask all the questions, don't expect everybody to give everything to you on a silver plate...So they (locals) will try to help us, good, they can, but be prepared to ask.”

Third, through their international assignments, AEs develop their *global competence* such as the knowledge of the company's worldwide business structure (Caligiuri & Di Santo, 2001). They develop their *organizational knowledge* about international organizations, understanding, for example, the organization of the headquarters as compared to the subsidiaries. As one participant pointed out: “From a professional point of view, I got a much better understanding of how working life is for people in the network offices, you know, there are things that are quite obvious to me here in Finland or seems like you know, maybe not some big deal, but can be more difficult in a network office.” SIEs lack this broad view of the organization unless they are intra SIEs.

Finally, AEs are sometimes sent to open new subsidiaries, promoting their *autonomy*, and accelerating their careers. In one of the cases, the assigned expatriate was sent to open a branch on his own in Paraguay and lacked the support of all the functions: “I'm developing a lot. I'm understanding much more about the company business, how to lead one company and to enhance the knowledge, it's really nice...To be honest, it was a really really good opportunity to grow. For me, as I'm working alone from Paraguay and leading 100% of the business of the country, it's developed me too much. I'm learning too much because when I was working in Brazil with 500 people to support me you know from different areas: HR, business sales, it's easy. In Paraguay, I need to look for 100% of the business.”

Know-how of SIEs

Know-how experiences of intra SIEs were further divided depending on the direction and nature of the company move. For instance, expatriates going from small to bigger subsidiaries or to headquarters realized how under-skilled they were: “And I think when you're in Lebanon, we do everything but we don't do it in depth. When it comes to going into details ... we do not have the skills. So when I moved to the UK, I think that was a big shock, because I remember I was so pissed because I got a downgrade, obviously from my job in Lebanon.”

Common know-whom characteristics of SIEs and AEs

All participants (n=21) developed their social networks during their expatriation. SIEs and AEs shared some similar characteristics in that regard. First, they both connect with other expatriates or with people with some international exposure as one corporate expatriate expressed: “One pattern I've noticed is, when I am an expat in a country, I tend to gravitate towards other expats to make friends with other expats and the reason for that is because of the *shared experience*, because they have a *similar mindset*. It's often hard to make friends with *locals* who don't have that broader international experience, who don't understand what it means to live in a different country...I relate more to people with some form of international experience, whether they're from the US and have gone abroad and come back or they've come from somewhere else”. Indeed, shared experiences and values around internationalization formed the basis for the relationships. Similarly, the divergence in interests prevented the development of *relationships with locals*: “There was a misalignment I think between my hobbies my interests and their hobbies and interests and what they spend their time doing”. Another reason mentioned by another AE is “you know, you're always *temporary*. So you don't connect too much with the local people”. SIEs also found difficulty in forming relationships with locals and host country nationals “Even though I've been here three years, I can comfortably tell you I have only one Finnish friend.”

Second, all expatriates started their relationship building in the receiving countries through culturally similar communities, as shared by this SIE “My close friends are Brazilians. There is this group on Facebook: Brazilians in Finland. And I joined that group just to see how it is before my move. And I posted a question there. And she contacted me... And then she added me in this WhatsApp group with a lot of Brazilians...And then I met another Brazilian. She was very supportive. We basically talk to each other every day”. Even if AEs have some pre-existing connections at work, they still rely on *national communities* for their personal networking : “Typically, you start by becoming a member of a Dutch community...We had a very good example, by the way, when we started in 2004, in

Shanghai, most of our friends were Dutch 80%, when we gave our farewell party in 2011, there was only one Dutch couple, and the rest were all foreign nationals.”

Third, all expatriates highlighted the importance of *proactivity* in developing their social network. A SIE shared her keys and tactics for growing a network of Finnish people, who are rather reserved, the key is: “to be proactive. You know, do the first move, like invite for a coffee, invite for lunch”. An AE commented similarly: “You realize after some months, yeah, but if I'm not going out there myself, it will not come to me.”

Know-whom of AEs

Assigned expatriates, especially when they are in management positions, focus a lot on their working relationships with *customers*, to the extent of considering customers as their friends. When asked about his friends, this expatriate in Paraguay said: “Friend? No, no, no, I don't have friends in Paraguay. My friends are my customers, you know that we try to increase the relationship with customers every week”.

Although AEs were never asked about the impact that their social networks had on their lives abroad, themes around work-related *outcomes* of social capital arose in their discussions. Social capital affected their performance, their problem solving at work, their exposure and ultimately their reputation within the company. Moreover, development of feelings of safety or feelings like “*outsiders*” in the host countries will result depending on the relationships developed.

Local social networks were found to be very useful in supporting AEs in their *work performance* abroad as this German assigned expatriate highlighted. Indeed, he mentioned the importance of *guanxi*, relationships and social networks as they are named in China. It is often seen as a key characteristic of the highly collective Chinese society where harmony between group members is valued and where following group norms is key (Yao, 2014): “In China it's very easy, it's all about relationships, so in China if you have a *guanxi* with one person, this, you will have forever, so you can reach a good performance by building really good relationships... it's all very normal, it's just to take some effort towards one person and he will support you back.”

Moreover, they use their local social network to solve problems they are not knowledgeable about: “Don't believe that you are sitting on all the answers. You need to have your network around you and use that network to solve the problems for you because you are the alien in that country, you are not the one who knows exactly, you're always a little bit outside”. Indeed, when it comes to describing assigned expatriates' feelings in host countries communities, they expressed feeling *outsiders* or even aliens.

Furthermore, assigned expatriates benefited from their corporate social resources in the home country as well, as stated by the following in Japan: “Additionally, I still had contact with my partners in the law firm in New York, so there were work-related issues where I needed to get their advice or something like that, they were always available.”

Finally, another outcome of the social capital development is *exposure*. In fact, global assignments also provided great visibility in front of top management “Working as an expat in the region gives you a far bigger exposure than to sit in an office in Holland...and especially Shanghai, is of course very popular with our high management...if you want to grow, you need to be exposed”.

Know-whom of SIEs

The entire social capital conversation with SIEs brought up different themes and took a personal rather than professional turn. When they move abroad, SIEs leave behind their social network at home without having clear visibility about their return, so they arrive to the host country with a deficit in their social capital or a *social capital loss*: “I have zero friends. Back home, I had a lot of friends...I had to give up all my friends”. The social adaptation was hence difficult “I came to Finland and it was a really tough time, I had basically no social life”.

Moreover, they could not develop close relationships with colleagues and no one mentioned business partners or customers, like AEs did. SIEs struggled to form friendships with their colleagues such as this Lebanese in Canada: “I would say more *acquaintances*, like you will go have a drink or something. But they wouldn't be the ones that I would call if I have a trouble.” and of a Brazilian SIE in Finland “And I have my colleagues from my work, but it's more like a *work relationship*”. One of the reasons for that is the language barrier “But they were all Finnish and they were like really Finnish...Well, few of them struggled to speak English.”

Some SIEs' move is motivated by the wish to follow and join a spouse or *partner*. The partner's social network then becomes part of the expatriate's social network: “We have a broad friend group. So, it's my girlfriend, her friends, some other friends of ours... Well through my girlfriend mostly”. Others have met their partners, who were from the host countries, once they arrived, which facilitated their socialization process: “And like I said, I have my friends, I have my partner, my partner is Canadian, another way to embrace the culture”.

Common know-why characteristics of SIEs and AEs

Expatriation is also a journey to *introspection* and knowledge of oneself as this SIE maintained: “You learn a lot about yourself really, so you put yourself in

a position that you would never put yourself in, otherwise you will never get the chance to discover things about yourself, how you can cope for example, with I don't know, moving" or as put by this AE: "Sometimes, living alone makes you know yourself better". The foreign stay also contributed to *resilience*, *confidence* and *personal growth*. Resilience boosted the expatriates' self confidence in his own abilities as the following AE (and previous SIE) and global mover who has accumulated back to back professional experiences across the world declares as the main personal learning: "It's being able to be thrown in a bunch of different environments and kind of learn that you can thrive there, so it's making these changes, sometimes quite drastic changes and the fact that they work out in the end, I think that's really beneficial from a resilience perspective, it really increased my confidence in my own abilities."

Know-why of AEs

One of the findings is that the expatriation decision of AEs goes beyond their own career benefits and involves other family members. For some corporate expatriates, moving countries means that the trailing spouses will have to lose their current jobs; therefore, there is no real financial benefit, such as the following participant expressed: "Rather, the only thing we win is the experience for my son. As a seventeen-year-old to live abroad and study in an international school. I think that will open up his mind a lot. I think that it's a huge benefit for him".

It was clearly stated by an assigned expatriate that his experience in China proved his ethnocentrism or belief that his country is superior to other ethnic groups (Pocovnicu & Vasilache, 2012), to be wrong. He evolved and recognized the effect that his background might have on his own views. As he put it: "Be humble, don't be the world champion when you come, you don't know anything. That's good to remember...Don't believe that you know, just because you have read or seen it, or this is how it works in Finland or North Europe or Europe. The same thing can work in a different way in this country and in this culture". In that sense, this AE have developed *cultural humility*, which is defined as "an interpersonal characteristic that emerges in social contexts that connotes (a) a manifested willingness to view oneself accurately, (b) a displayed appreciation of others' strengths and contributions, and (c) teachability" (Owens et al., 2013, p. 1518). The construct of cultural humility has been placed under the "know why" sub-entity as the scale item "Recognizing the effect of your own cultural background on your thinking and behaviour" developed by Jokinen (2008) shows that cultural awareness can fall under know-why.

Know-why of SIEs

With very little social support at the beginning, the careers of SIEs take a big toll on them and put some pressure on their minds: “Being alone, in some sense, your career becomes everything...So that was what, I think I struggled with in the beginning, it is that my career took such a big part of my life”. Moreover, self-initiated expatriation enabled some *self-realization* that would otherwise have never been possible in the home country: whether it is on a financial aspect “Since I'm here, I've managed to buy a house and I've managed to buy a new hybrid car, you know, things that I would never be able to afford, then I'm not just saying that the money makes, you know, the world go round, but the quality of life ... like you have everything you need here that you need to be happy... in South Africa, it was very different” or on a career development aspect “I mean, at my age, most probably in Italy, I will not be able to do all the things that I had been doing and that I'm doing, so I'm very grateful in that respect, and I really like this work culture. And this may be the main reason why I'm staying really”.

Finally, it improved self-confidence. According to an ex-self-initiated expatriate and current corporate expatriate “probably I wouldn't have had the courage to self-initiated move, had I not gone for a corporate sponsored expat experience first, so that was kind of the gateway for me, it gave me the *confidence* in my ability to operate in a new country in a partially supported way”.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore career capital experiences of assigned and self-initiated expatriates in the two chosen organizations, pointing out commonalities and areas of divergence pertaining to know-how, know-whom and know-why. Unlike prior studies (Dickmann et al., 2016; Jokinen et al., 2008), this chapter did not aim at quantifying career capital or at measuring who out of the SIEs or AEs gained more capital. Rather the objective was to explore the themes that would emerge in the career conversations and observe how two categories of expatriates perceive and reflect on their experiences through the career capital lens. The results of the study support earlier findings about the benefits of expatriation towards career capital development of SIEs and AEs (Dickmann et al., 2016; Jokinen et al., 2008). International experiences shaped individuals' lives in different aspects, developing their skills, affecting their personal and professional relationships and their work and life motivations.

All interviewed expatriates benefited from the acquisition of cross-cultural skills involving communication, negotiation or language skills, and improving their marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2016). The findings support previous claims by Jokinen et al. (2008) and Dickmann et al. (2016) where AEs reported significantly

more development in the area of organizational knowledge. In fact, the discussions around skills showed that AEs and intra SIEs always had their sending organizational entity as a frame of reference or as a benchmark, therefore this helped in the development of their *global competence* and acquisition of worldwide knowledge of the company business, because they would link and compare different geographical entities. They could also compare and evaluate their own skills' level in the hosting and sending countries, only to find that they were under-skilled when moving to bigger entities. In line with previous findings by Suutari and Maakela (2007), results showed that lack of support, was repeatedly mentioned by assigned expatriates who had moved from headquarters to subsidiaries as a driver or catalyst for their learning experience and their autonomy. Future studies could research if AEs do feel under-skilled (like the above-mentioned intra-SIE) when moving from small to leading subsidiaries or if their moves are better prepared since they are thoroughly planned by human resources teams.

Regarding know-whom, findings have shown that both AEs and SIEs preferred to socialize with internationals rather than locals, and started their socialization process by targeting their national communities in the host country hence relying first and foremost on *bonding social capital* - connections within a group that shares similarities (Claridge, 2018). Moreover, they were all very proactive in building their social networks. Proactive resource acquisition tactics refer to the self-initiated behaviours that individuals engage in to gain work-related information (know how) and establish working relationships (know whom) (Ren et al., 2014). Proactivity in relationship building, originates from the boundaryless mindset of expats, that provides them with an intrinsic motivation to forming interpersonal ties (Zhao et al., 2020).

AEs acknowledged the difficulty of getting close to locals yet highlighted the importance of this relationship with host-country nationals in their work performance, in solving problems, and as a support system in general as suggested by previous studies (Peltokorpi, 2020; Toh et al., 2012). Moreover, they stressed the importance of their corporate network in the home country. Finally, their assignments often gave them visibility and exposure to higher management especially when they were located in the headquarters or in strategic business hubs hence developing their *linking ties* - relations between individuals in different levels in a hierarchy (Claridge, 2018). This is how they linked their social capital to their symbolic capital, which is the perceived value of career capital, its value creation, recognition, transfer and utilisation (Bourdieu, 1986). Power, status and reputation, for example, are significant forms of symbolic capital, and they occur when a form of capital is recognized and accepted as legitimate, valuable and useful (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009; Yao, 2013). Finally, AEs felt as *outsiders* in their host

countries much like SIEs in Rodriguez and Scurry's study in the context of Qatar (2014).

The socialization experiences of SIEs were very different, with a much bigger focus on personal and private relationships as opposed to professional and corporate networking. They were first marked by a *loss* of social capital because, unlike AEs, SIEs do not have a lot of visibility regarding their return to their home countries, which made some of them lose their friendships, especially when their receiving countries were very distant from their home countries and when their trips back home were infrequent, especially when SIEs did not benefit from advantages such as return tickets to their homes, like AEs. Second, they struggled to break the formal barrier with colleagues and form friendships at work. Finally, SIEs often follow their spouses or partners, which is sometimes the reason behind their move. Others form romantic relationships with local nationals. In both situations, this process expands their social networks outside work. Corporate assignees, however, usually move with their families, therefore they cannot benefit from the pre-existing social capital of their partners.

A previous study (Jokinen et. al, 2008) found that SIEs developed their know-whom career capital less extensively than AEs. Our qualitative study cannot quantify social capital development but can report that the SIEs interviewed had more restricted professional connections whether with colleagues or with customers. They compensated for these limitations through personal non-work relationships. Jokinen's result (2008) could be attributed to the fact that their measure of know-whom focused heavily on professional network acquisition within the MNC "a four-item scale was used to measure the development of networking skills and social networks within the MNC" (p. 987). We suggest that know-whom should comprise a broader conceptualisation of social capital, including personal networks, to capture expatriates' social networks in all their variety, especially when studying SIEs.

Moreover, in this same study (Jokinen et. al, 2008), the highest developments for both SIEs and AEs were in relationships with people having influential power in the organization. In our findings, relationships with higher management and CEOs were specific to AEs' social development, especially when AEs were in strategic locations and roles, probably because they occupied higher positions.

Regarding know-why, global mobility provided SIEs and AEs with self-awareness, improved confidence, and self-esteem, leading to personal growth. Most importantly, SIEs realized career goals and life "dreams" they otherwise would not have achieved in their home countries. There is a global motivation for SIEs to move to the host country to realize and to pursue a certain quality of life, as opposed to a pure professional motivation for AEs. SIEs also adhere to local

values of the host countries, which is probably because they personally chose the destination country while for AEs, it is sometimes a pure business priority or need.

In conclusion, self-initiated expatriation may be rewarding through the acquisition of a very large and transferable spectrum of skills, a developed social network, especially among expatriates and most importantly a sense of accomplishment. The corporate expatriates have a more focused and industry specific set of skills, they keep on growing their pool of already existing corporate connections and keep on climbing the corporate ladder within the company. Whichever path is taken, the international experience has, without any exception in this study, been described as a very positive one.

The originality in this study lies in the inclusion of intra-company SIEs, individuals who initiate their expatriation in a foreign unit of their current employer (Andresen et al., 2014). It is true that they are considered in the SIE category because they are the decision makers behind their global mobility and that the know-why experiences that they expressed are in line with general SIE findings, however in terms of know-how, their experiences are very similar to those of AEs due to their previous professional experience with the same employer. It would be interesting for future studies to further research intra self-initiated expatriates and compare them with inter-company SIEs and AEs with regards to the different career capital aspects because of their special status. Moreover, two interviewees had combined both AE and SIE experiences and could reflect on both.

Of course, the findings of this study have their limitations, such as the small sample size but also the wide heterogeneity in the sample (home countries, host countries, job role, gender, career stage, duration of stay) that limits even further the possibility to draw generalizable conclusions; it exposes however a wide and rich array of experiences, showing how multiple factors and criteria shape each person's unique experience and career capital process, even within the same organization.

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