Exploring the context and meaning of expatriation: a sensemaking approach

Abstract

Sensemaking is a collaborative and on-going process through which organizational members create shared awareness and meaning out of ambiguous or uncertain situations. From a sensemaking perspective, this study explores how employees build an expatriation shared-meaning, generate expectations, form a decision of staying or leaving, enact expatriation success and ultimately assess expatriation value. Data from a case study within the retail sector were collected, using a qualitative approach. Although small scaled by design, this qualitative case study shows how the sensemaking theory helps understand the concept and value of expatriation. This paper contributes to the expatriation and sensemaking theories by exposing how expatriation shared meaning drives attitudes, expectations and motives toward expatriation, and how international workers enact expatriation success, thus influencing their willingness to relocate. Implications for IHRM theory and practice are also discussed.

Keywords: expatriation, international assignment, sensemaking, shared-meaning, IHRM

Introduction

The expansion of activity and academic interest in the field of International Human Resource Management (IHRM) has done much to develop present knowledge on the issue of global staffing. Many progresses have been made on the organizational motives to use expatriates (Dickmann, Doherty, Mills and Brewster, 2008; Edstrom and Galbraith, 1997; Harzing, 2000; 2001) and the challenges associated with expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment and adjustment outcomes (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk, 2005; Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Shay and Baack, 2004). Yet, as the field continues developing, there are increasing calls to study other forms of international mobility, and to further explore the link between organizations' strategy and IHRM outcomes (Bonache, Brewster and Suutari, 2001; Bonache, Brewster, Suutari and Petra de Saá, 2010; Collings, Scullion and Dowling, 2009). Some potential directions for the field have been suggested (Bonache et al., 2010; Caligiuri and Colakoglu, 2007; Collings et al., 2009), including: (1) expanding the research object – from classic expatriation to other forms of international assignments (e.g. frequent travelling, self-initiated expatriation, short-term assignments, commuting, and virtual working); (2) shifting the epistemological direction – from an objectivist ontological and epistemological view towards a constructionist approach, which envisions international assignments as something collectively created and constructed; (3) focusing the heterogeneity among international assignments, featuring the contexts in which they are embedded; (4) directing efforts to do more process-oriented research within work on global staffing and expatriation literature; and (5) employing new theoretical approaches to reframe old questions and generate new insights.

In sum, to further extend the research on expatriation, it is helpful to posit new questions, such as the meaning and value of expatriation for stakeholders involved;

adopt new methodological approaches that help build a more nuanced and detailed picture of expatriation, through the use of qualitative methods including case studies and narratives; and study new contexts, including new regions and new industries.

On the basis of these suggestions, this paper explores the concept of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) in understanding the meaning and value of expatriation. Data from a case study within the retail sector were collected, using a qualitative approach. By tackling these less studied questions and theoretical framework, this study adds to the existing knowledge of IHRM and expatriation, and offers empirical insights, which enrich the field. Although small scaled by design, this qualitative case study shows how the sensemaking theory helps understand the concept and value of expatriation, how shared meaning drives attitudes, expectations and motives toward expatriation, and how international workers enact expatriation success.

Expatriation

Traditionally, expatriation has been defined as a temporary displacement to a different country during which expatriates are expected to attain business goals. The distinction made by Inkson, Arthur, Pringle and Barry (1997) between expatriate assignment (EA) and overseas experience (OE) is still useful to distinguish expatriation from other forms of corporate and individual international mobility. Expatriation is a corporate initiative that differs from other corporate assignments, such as frequent travelling, short-term assignments, commuter assignments, and virtual working, essentially for its longer-term relationship, which justifies the move of partner and family (Bonache et al., 2010; Meyskens, Von Glinow, Werther and Clarke, 2009). Expatriation also differs from other mobility initiatives, such as self-initiated expatriation and migration, essentially because it is grounded in the company.

While international mobility can assume multiple forms, which may evolve over time and even overlap (e.g., someone may initiate a short-term assignment and become a long-term emigrant), this study focuses solely expatriation. Expatriation is herein defined as a company assignment initiative, through which the employing organization displaces an employee to another country, on a long-term but temporary basis, where he or she is expected to accomplish pre-defined business goals, such as searching for local market opportunities, launch a host subsidiary, share business knowledge, control, or simply fill a local skill gap.

Expatriation involves new challenges and usually provides the opportunity for the development of personal and professional competencies (e.g. Kohonen, 2004; Mäkelä and Suutari, 2009), including financial incentives (Tornikoski, 2011; Warneke and Schneider, 2011), and career implications (e.g. Benson and Pattie, 2008; Dickmann and Harris, 2005; Jokinen, 2010; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004; Stahl, Chua, Caligiuri, Cerdin and Taniguchi, 2009). Of the studies that have explicitly addressed motivations to go abroad, most have taken an individual motivational approach (see Brett and Stroh, 1995; Haines III, Saba and Choquette, 2008; Hippler 2009; Pinto, Cabral-Cardoso and Werther, 2012), or a career related approach (see Dickmann et al., 2008; Riusala and Suutari, 2000; Suutari, 2003); while others have compared corporate expatriates' motivations with the motivations of other populations, such as self-initiated expatriates (e.g. Doherty, Dickmann and Mills, 2011) and students (e.g. Doherty, Dickmann and Mills, 2010). Although there is considerable information on the motivations of corporate expatriates, there are still opportunities for further research, including the exploration of the decision-making process and how sensemaking unfolds this process. The extent to which corporate employees are aware of the organizational motives to expatriate is likely to shape their sensemaking process, their own motivations and

expectations about expatriation and thereafter, their decision to relocate. Previous expatriation literature has also suggested that pre-departure preparation may foster anticipatory adjustment and therefore influence expatriation success (Black et al., 1991; Zimmermann, Holman and Sparrow, 2003). However, the adoption of a sensemaking approach, highlights the idea that anticipatory and in-country adjustment are nothing more than "frozen schemes" (Glanz, Williams and Hoeksema, 2001), and expatriation is likely to start, in the mind of corporate employees, much before the acceptance of an assignment. Likewise, expatriation expectations and employees' willingness to relocate are likely to be influenced by the organizational context and meaning of expatriation, which is enlightened by a sensemaking approach. For instance Doherty and Dickmann (2009) provided an empirical illustration of the symbolic capital associated with traditional international assignments. Through a case study approach, they showed that in the firm studied, international experience was considered essential to business development and career progression. Such organizational context moulded the organizational policies and practices related with the international assignments, which shaped their symbolic capital and the perceptions of their economic utility. Expatriates' expectations and perception of the benefits of an international assignment were rooted in the organizational context, and in the recognition of others, which show that expatriation careers are also symbolically constructed.

Overall, the sensemaking theory constitutes a comprehensive framework through which expatriation experience and worth can be further explored. Therefore, this paper explores the concept of sensemaking, examines its central features, and attempts to uncover how sensemaking can be used to expose the value and meaning of expatriation in the study context.

Sensemaking

According to Weick (1995), sensemaking is a central concept to understand organizations because it is a collaborative and on-going process through which organizational members create shared awareness and meaning out of ambiguous or uncertain situations.

To distinguish the concept from other competing constructs, Weick proposed some basic moments to describe the process of sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). First, sensemaking starts from chaos and disruptive events. It starts with individuals becoming aware of new issues and differences (e.g. a foreign venture). It is this initial step, which is influenced by life experience, training and previous organizational involvement that guide subsequent actions. For instance, the employee noticing the company is investing out of the country, may become aware of firm's international initiatives and co-workers experience abroad. Second, sensemaking involves categorization and labelling: observed events and cues are named and categorized, in a way that aid future actions. At this stage, categories are prototypical and likely to alter (Weick et al., 2005). For instance, in case of expatriation, employees may become aware of the existence of different forms of international assignments within the firm, some temporary and short-term, and others involving longer term displacements. These categories are further used to interpret and sort the information and guide employees' attitudes and actions about international duties. Third, sensemaking involves retrospection, which occurs when people rationalize and name their actions (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking is an unfolding process, which means people often label an event or action (e.g. expatriation), without fully capturing what is on-going. Certainly the 'meaning' of expatriation fully extends beyond the label, though this initial labelling carries already a symbolic meaning (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009).

Fourth, sensemaking connects abstractions with actions: is about 'presumption' (Weick et al., 2005, p. 412). It is through the language and construction of narratives that people understand what they think. This enactment applied to the expatriation context means it is through action and reflection that people understand and organize their international experience. Fifth, sensemaking is a social and systemic activity, influenced by many interpersonal variables. As sensemaking is contextualized and unfolds gradually from interactions, this means that information and knowledge on expatriation is not just in the heads of expatriates, but it is disseminated through the organization, including home and host co-workers. Sixth, sensemaking is acted out: talk leads to action, which in turn leads to talk, in an iterative and sequential flux (Weick et al., 2005). This means that expatriates (and colleagues) make sense of the international experience by acting reflexively: they first use their existing frameworks to subsequently test new interpretations and new frameworks. Finally, sensemaking involves 'symbolically encoded representations' (Weick et al., 2005, p. 413), taking place in interactive communications. As in any context, during expatriation, tacit knowledge is iteratively made explicit and ordered through language and communication. Expatriates try to create meaning (of themselves, the events and others), from how others create meaning of events, in an interdependent interactive process.

In sum, the conceptualization of expatriation as a sensemaking process draws more on the contextual factors influencing it than on individual characteristics. Overall, this approach favours plausibility over accuracy (Weick, 1995; Weick et al, 2005), in the accounting of events, which directs expatriation research to a more process-oriented view.

Despite the fact that Black et al. (1991) have incorporated Louis model (Louis, 1980) and sensemaking theory into the interpretation of role transitions and the

description of expatriation adjustment, not much subsequent research has followed this approach. In their work on sensemaking in expatriation, Glanz et al. (2001) reframed previous contributions to propose a hypothetical model relating sensemaking with expatriates' acculturation responses, such as adjustment, satisfaction with the assignment, and further willingness to relocate. In this conceptual framework, the expatriation sensemaking process encompasses four main inputs: broad individual characteristics, past experience, influence of others, and local interpretation schemes. These inputs are then mediated by a 'sense of coherence' and 'sociocultural brokerage' to operationalize the expatriation sensemaking concept (Glanz et al., 2001, p. 104). In accordance with this model, past experience is a key component of the sensemaking process within a firm, influencing others and shaping company expatriation shared scheme. Thus, a corporate employee who sees difficulties and problems affecting expatriates and/or repatriates colleagues may be making sense for himself about the interest and value of expatriation, thus decreasing his or her expectations and willingness to relocate. Inversely, corporate employees who see potential difficulties and problems being overcome by assignees, and being supported by organizational policies and practices, will make sense for themselves about the interest and value of expatriation, which will influence their expectations, their willingness to relocate, and ultimately might enact their future expatriation success. Under a sensemaking approach, expatriation is a dynamic process: cues are used to construct expatriation frameworks and cognitive representations, and these frameworks provide cues for further action. In this continuous process, outputs are just snapshot moments (Glanz et al, 2001; Weick, 1995), which can be depicted and explored.

From the same background, Kelly and Morley (2011) developed a model of repatriation sensemaking, which includes triggers and inputs of repatriation

sensemaking, and a description of the repatriation sensemaking process and its outcomes. Triggers of repatriation sensemaking include change, contrast, and surprise, while inputs comprise past experience, personal characteristics, local interpretation schemes and the influence of others (Kelly and Morley, 2011). In returning home, repatriates face a number of changes, which are personally perceived, contrasted, and are a source of surprise. The information from others, together with the possession of personal resources, such as self-efficacy and relational skills, the experience in relocating, and the integration into the dominant corporate code of conduct, facilitate the repatriation sensemaking process. When this sensemaking process is disrupted, because the changes undergone during the assignment altered the expatriate identification and commitment with the company, and his/her ability to make sense of the experience, negative outcomes might arise, such as lack of well-being, dissatisfaction, withdrawal cognitions and turnover.

In sum, these models have proposed a sensemaking approach to understand the meaning of expatriation and repatriation, which emphasize the importance of context and its interplay with social cognitions. Yet, empirical evidence on expatriation-repatriation sensemaking is scarce. One of the few exceptions is the work of Kohonen (2004), who investigated the impact of international experience on expatriates' identities. Based on the narratives of four Finnish expatriates, she found that their international experience influenced their identities, which were perceived and reflected in their narratives. Further, expatriation was perceived as a significant experience that opened new opportunities for self-awareness, development, and self-knowledge. As a result of this self-exploration, and self-construction process, some expatriates developed new management competencies, while others went through cultural identity changes.

The paucity of research suggests the need for a sensemaking approach to further understand the meaning of expatriation in context. Therefore, on conceptual grounds (Glanz et al., 2001; Kelly and Morley 2011; Weick, 1995; Wrzesniewski, Dutton and Debebe, 2003), the underlying assumptions of the present study are:

(1) The experience and relationship with others (especially international co-workers) is a key contribution to individual and collective sensemaking, providing the cues used to form an expatriation representation;

(2) Previous expatriation experiences within the company form the basis of this sensemaking process, which means that the histories and accounts of expatriates and repatriates are integrated into a collective expatriation shared-meaning;

(3) This shared meaning and expatriation sensemaking process colour other employees' expectations and motivations about expatriation, shape their willingness to go abroad, and ultimately enact future expatriation success.

Exploring the context and meaning of expatriation: the research focus

The strain and rewards derived from an expatriation depend much on the context, including corporate HR policy and support (Kraimer, Wayne and Jaworski, 2001; Yavas and Bodur, 1999); organizational culture (Pinto, Cabral-Cardoso and Werther, 2011); and home-host companies' relationships (Ferner, Quintanilla and Varul, 2001; Mäkelä, and Suutari, 2009; Osland and Osland, 2005; Quintanilla and Ferner, 2003). From a sensemaking perspective, the context, and notably the organizational environment is key, influencing how employees form a shared meaning (*what is an expatriation?*), generate expectations (*what are the company goals and my motivations?*), form a decision of staying or leaving (*what should I do?*), and ultimately weigh the value of expatriation and recommend it to others (*what is the worth of an expatriation?*).

Previous international experiences within the company form the basis of this sensemaking process, which in turn shall affect employees' expectations, motivations and willingness to relocate. This influence depends much on the accounts of actual expatriates and repatriates, who have a more comprehensive view of the international experience, including a more refined opinion of corporate policies, especially about the role and importance of expatriation (Haslberger, Brewster and Hippler, 2012). If repatriates do not leave and remain in the company after the assignment, they will be a source of valuable information (either explicit or tacit), which certainly influence the opinion of others and their willingness to go abroad. While previous repatriation research has focused the career challenges related with repatriation adjustment and subsequent turnover (see Haslberger et al., 2012, for a review), less interest has been directed to the potential socialization effect among corporate employees who potentially may (or may not) relocate, by the histories and accounts of these repatriated colleagues.

In short, we propose that prior expatriation-repatriation experiences within the firm contribute to employees' sensemaking, influencing the meaning of expatriation, the expectations generated toward relocation, the willingness to go abroad and the value attributed to an international assignment. Thus, on the grounds of the sensemaking theory, this paper asks:

- How corporate employees go through a sensemaking process regarding expatriation? What is the meaning of expatriation (in context)?
- What are the expectations (in context)? What are the motivations for an expatriation?
- How is the decision-process?
- What should people do (in context)?
- What is the worth of expatriation (in context)?

To pursue this sensemaking approach we followed the experience of a multinational (MNC) within the retail sector. The present study is exploratory because it attempts to uncover the cognitive representations associated with expatriation, in particular, the attitudes, expectations and value credited to expatriation, and how this shared meaning enact expatriation success.

Method

This research focus a single organization, to better apprehend both the organizational context and the individual circumstances within which the expatriation takes place and the context to which repatriates return. This approach reduces cross-cultural biases and assists the analysis and interpretation of the individual assignees' perceptions and cognitive representations. Although the adoption of a case-study methodology precludes the results' generalization, it has the advantage of providing a more contextualized and detailed picture of expatriation. The dynamic nature of sensemaking advises the use of multiple techniques, such as self-reporting and storytelling (Glanz et al., 2001; Weick, 1995), used in this study. Overall, data were collected through documentation analysis, field observation and semi-structured interviews. While there was an interview guide, all participants expressed their own view as informally and spontaneously as possible. To assure consistency, all interviews were conducted and transcribed by the second author. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to all research participants.

The case organization

The case organization is a Portuguese retail MNC, which provides a distinctive context for the study of expatriation. The company is present in 41 countries and employs over 43.000 employees worldwide (December 2011). The company was founded in 1959 and

started the first international venture in 1989. Since the 90's the company has achieved a sustainable international growth. During this decade, the company invested heavily in the Brazilian market, where it attained the third position in the ranking of the Brazilian food retailers. Despite this growth, the company divested from this market in 2005, selling its Brazilian subsidiary to one of the largest MNC retailer, in the world. As per the year of 2011, the company reached 3,327 million euros of total revenues.

Its business strategy is founded on values of ethics and trust, ambition, and constant challenge, which are reinforced through meritocracy and people readiness to change. The company stresses the importance of being an international leading player, excelling in all activities and establishing long-term partnerships in 'growth geographies' and mature markets. The company is best positioned to explore business opportunities in some growth areas where already is, such as Brazil, Spain, other Mediterranean countries and Eastern Europe; while searching for opportunities in other markets.

Research participants

At the time of data collection, the firm employed 1,771 (44%) workers outside Portugal, of which 1.569 were in Spain, 147 in Brazil and 55 in China. According to company database, only 16 employees were expatriates. A non-probability sampling method was used to target these expatriates, together with corporate repatriates (who had returned from an international assignment within the previous 18 months), and domestic employees recently invited for an expatriation. The final data set comprises 13 participants, who were interviewed: four expatriates, five repatriates, and four domestic employees invited to relocate but still waiting the final call. The participants' age ranged from 28 to 51 years old and all had college education. Of the interviewees, 11 were

male and 10 were married. All were born in Portugal and hold the Portuguese nationality. The main destination countries were Brazil and Spain, while Turkey and Angola are the anticipated destinations for three of the invited domestic employees. The average assignment duration was 33 months, ranging from a minimum of 24 to a maximum of 38 months. At the time of the interview, all participants occupied middle and top management positions, and were working for the company for 14 years, on average (Appendix 1 details sample characteristics).

The interview was considered the most adequate approach to explore individual cognitive representations on expatriation. Thus, the 13 in-depth interviews were conducted by the second author, between March and July 2011. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese: eight were face-to-face and five were telephone interviews. All interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and content analysed. The interview protocol covered a wide range of topics related to the expatriation, such as the context and antecedents of the expatriation, motives to relocate, expatriation expectations, expatriation assessment (before and after the expatriation, when applicable), and willingness to relocate. Also included were questions on demographic data.

Data analysis

The interview material was collected, transcribed and content-analysed in Portuguese. To preserve data integrity, the direct quotations used were translated into English by one of the authors, fluent in both languages, and back translated into Portuguese by another researcher. When differences were found, the process was double checked and revised as needed.

Transcripts' content analysis was conducted following a four steps procedure, to prevent interpretation and classification bias. The first step involved data preparation to

assure all cases were used in the analysis. The second step defined the rules applicable to content analysis: the paragraph was selected as the unit of context and the theme was used as the unit of analysis. The third step regards data coding procedures: first, categorization followed a hierarchical coding scheme. Thematic categories were first mapped based on the literature, and later, categories were added or reframed in accordance with the findings from iterative reading. Finally, the fourth step addresses data interpretation, adopting both quantitative and qualitative approaches: theme and co-occurrences were identified and quantified for frequency of occurrence. This thematic analysis helped in the extraction of comments from interviews, used to illustrate research findings. The software NVivo 9 was used to assist in the analysis.

In addition to the interviews, an extensive field observation was also conducted by one of the authors, which helped gain a general understanding of the context of international expansion inherent to the case organization.

Research findings

To address the research questions through data analysis, five themes are presented. These are the themes which better illustrate and contribute to the understanding of the sensemaking process among research participants. These themes are:

- Theme 1: What is the meaning of expatriation (in context)?
- Theme 2: What are the expectations (in context)?
- Theme 3: How is the decision-process?
- Theme 4: What should people do (in context)?
- Theme 5: What is the worth of expatriation (in context)?

Theme 1: What is the meaning of expatriation (in context)?

To analyse the meaning of expatriation in the organization studied, were considered the perceptions of interviewed managers according to their situation (e.g. being an invited domestic worker, an expatriate, or a repatriate), highlighting their retrospective accounts about the beginning and continuance of the assignment. Also data were gathered on the sources of this information.

For these individuals, two sources of meaning were relevant: from within the company (e.g. top managers and co-workers); and from outside (e.g. friends and relatives). Overall, three themes were common in the perceptions of all interviewees regarding expatriation. First, emerged the idea that an expatriation depends much on the destination: "*one thing is to go to a country that we know of, and we have more or less an idea of how it works... (…) but Angola, India, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, etc…, which are countries that we need to face because that's where the business opportunities are… I mean, people cannot go "blind fully", because these countries are very different from ours, have many other issues that we are not used to…"* (Invited manager to Angola).

Second, emerged the reference that an expatriation entails determination and effort to adjust, which can be hard depending on the destination: *"it is the whole process of adjustment, we like it or not… We live in a peaceful country without security problems, (so) when we have to spend time with these basic concerns, clearly that affects our work"* (Expatriate in Spain).

Third, emerged the common conviction that an expatriation is more than a career step because it accrues professional and personal self-development: *"I think I wanted to have this experience, because it adds value… I think it opens up the mind... I think we won it!"* (Repatriate from Brazil).

These representations are shared among research participants and form the basis of a collective expatriation shared-meaning. In terms of differences in the meaning of expatriation, Table 1 outlines the main findings, reported in accordance with participants' situation.

Insert Table 1 about here

Within this organization, invited workers were concerned with the assignment and its potential risks, as stressed by one invited manager to Angola: *"the company, throughout its history, has made a series of bets in new businesses, and not all have been successful or successful enough to endure. That is, there have been some bets that have not been as good, or as positive, or as successfully as others (...). But this does not mean that it may happen again…"* Yet, this concern is not echoed by expatriates and repatriates, who outlined the risk of return instead: *"today the return of expatriates is a problem (…), even when the internationalization process is successful, when they return home they may not find the structure or an appropriate job…"* (Repatriate from Spain).

Among the invited workers also emerged the perception that an expatriation is a career opportunity, which entails risk but also gratitude: *"I consider it a career development and I know that, once again, to take a step forward, I have to prove that I deserve to be on the role that I was entrusted."* (Invited manager to Turkey). Likewise, another manager invited to Angola, considered expatriation so critical to the success of the company international growth that claims it should be mandatory: *"nowadays no professional can afford not aiming an international career (…) in fact no company should employ people who are not available for an international career! It makes no*

sense, within a global market, to employ people who just want to remain where they are. They simply don't add value to the company".

In summary, the meaning of expatriation in this organization is constructed by the people involved, either directly or indirectly, through the influence and interaction with others, inside and outside the company. Constructed frameworks reveal a collective shared-meaning of expatriation voicing the idea that it is a corporate venture, which depends on the destination country, demands individual effort, and entails professional and personal self-development. As expected, this sensemaking process is embedded in past experiences, which raised pre-departure perceptions of uncertainty and risk, but outstretched the conviction that the company can leverage expatriation success: *"I think (international success) has more to do with the company, which is prepared to pursue any challenge, than to the fact that it failed the operation in Brazil... I think (success) has more to do with the attributes of this company."*

Theme 2: What are the expectations (in context)?

The expectations about expatriation were explored as the subjective perceptions held by the interviewees about the company goals to use international assignments, and their own personal motives to work abroad.

On the company motives to use expatriation, there is consensus along the idea that international assignments are core to the company investments abroad, and expatriation is a fundamental cornerstone of its international growth. The company needs the involvement of *its best*, which was reflected among the motivations to go abroad: *"it is the connection with the company. Look, we work for this company (we) do not work for another one! And we enjoy working for this company and this company is internationalizing, so..."* (Invited manager to Turkey).

Based on Louis (1980) expectations dimensions; and Caligiuri, Philips, Lazarova, Tarique and Burgi (2001) work, showing that the lack of information and clarity regarding the assignment influence initial expectations, three dimensions were added to the content analysis, to account for expatriation expectations. These dimensions are: information about the assignment, the focus of expectations, and expectations alignment, which are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

As it is outlined in Table 2, expatriates and repatriates agree in considering the information prior to the assignment sufficient. Only invited managers feel at ease with the information provided by the company, vis-à-vis personal matters: *"I have good indications of what I am expected to do there, and how I should do it, but in personal terms nothing was discussed yet."*

Regarding the focus of expectations, six categories emerged from data: three were common to all assignment situations (*e.g.,* destination project/role, host country and self-development), two were common to invited domestic employees and repatriates (*e.g.,* family and repatriation), and only the category 'anxiety' was mentioned by two invited assignees. Expectations regarding the destination project, the host country, and the repatriation process dominated the references of all interviewees. Invited managers were generally more unease, and some were anxious about the assignment: *"much is expected about the project - building something different, creating something new, creating an area of activity in Angola"*; *"on the other hand, I'll come back a better professional, even if I do not return for a better position, at least immediately, I believe I will be better prepared to progress"*; *"so, it is the belief that I'm*

going to learn a lot that feeds me." Concern for the consequences of the assignment on family members is also mentioned by invited domestic employees and repatriates: *"our ability to adapt as a family in a different environment, we will have to have that strength, and I'm also hoping to see that."*

Finally, regarding the (mis)alignment of expectations, one invited manager to Angola referred he did not hold expectations to prevent future disappointments: *"I'll tell you that now, when we are approaching the date, I think ... (…) I do not have many expectations ... I am looking for…, I will not have many expectations, neither good nor bad, you know? It is to be as open as possible, to receive information, to filter it, and wait for things to start, and then understand how I will 'play the ball' so to speak..."*

This management of expectations is also present among expatriates and repatriates, who mentioned several disappointments, mainly related with the repatriation process and their own self-development. The following statements illustrate these misalignments: *"I did not know that the market was so different from ours (…) the labour market is completely different from ours"* (Repatriate from Brazil); *"I expected the return to be easier (…) I've read several articles about it, even when repatriates say goodbye and leave the company, also friends... I saw it happen, but haven't thought it would happen to me, but it happened..."* (Repatriate from Brazil); *"professionally, I was waiting for a career path upon return that I hadn't. At that time, I asked myself "why I came?"* (Repatriate from Brazil).

In summary, these data suggest the management of expectations is more effective focusing the professional dimensions of the assignment (e.g. the destination project and role), than the aspects affecting personal and family life. Expectations are also better managed before the move than after the assignment.

Theme 3: How is the decision-process?

To understand the decision-process linked to the acceptance of expatriation, we ran an analysis of respondents' perceptions of the inputs and contextual factors influencing this decision.

For these individuals, the contextual triggers for the assignment were the firm business strategy coupled with employees' technical expertise and previous international experience: *"In accordance with my previous work experience in the company: I knew the brand, I knew the key players in this business, I knew all the business processes… It was much easier to relocate someone like me to launch the business and introduce the brand in the host market."* (Repatriate from Spain).

As a consequence, the expatriation was perceived as a natural role outcome for people holding management accountabilities in the company, even if it defied a long negotiation process: *"it was a corporate invitation, an invitation for… Well, my colleague who was posted in Spain had repatriated, the company needed someone in Spain, so the invitation come"* (Expatriate in Spain).

In summary, three key findings emerged from data. First, the company was perceived to place international assignments as part of its business strategy, and thereafter, the expatriation was seen as a role extension and a predictable outcome of the working-contract. Second, this role outcome was perceived as a positive cue, being presented as an appreciation of expertise, and communicated as a call. Third, this communication was meant to be distinctive, and thus the invitation was only target to those who could add value (to the project and the company). It is this presumption that the company needs *its best*, recognizes their expertize, and values their commitment, that makes the expatriation call undeniable: *"well, the invitation come from… the faith among us was so high, there is such a personal spirit of doing things right among all,*

from the president, to the vice-president, to the lower-level worker, that when we have to move to someplace, we move! And it is to suffer and to win!" (Expatriate in Spain).

Theme 4: What should people do (in context)?

Having explored the meaning of expatriation in the case organization, the expectations about the international assignments and the expatriation decision-process, this theme describes employees' willingness to relocate.

Among research participants, five managers were keen to relocate again, in part for the interest in leaving the home country, and for the conviction that expatriation is part of a manager's role in the company. On contrary, six managers were sceptical about accepting another assignment, which would depend on the fulfilment of three premises: the destination country, the expatriation package, and the family situation: *"when I say 'I would accept' depends on many things… (...) everything has a price"* (Repatriate from Brazil). Finally, two managers expressed their unwillingness to relocate in future: *"I think everyone has to do his share and I've done mine. I don't say 'no' to help launching another business for a few months, or mentor someone to go abroad, but going again to Brazil or Angola, certainly not!"* (Expatriate in Spain).

In summary, these observations suggest a shared ambivalence: on one hand expatriation is core to the company expansion and so managers consent to *hold its share*; on the other hand, expatriation is a deal with no immediate or guaranteed payoff that requires further thinking. The onus of this decision is on employees' shoulders, as was made explicit by one senior expatriate: *"I think that in such cases people have to… but depends on what, which country is, in which circumstances... For example, Angola, is a country that does not please, you know? So it depends..."*

Theme 5: What is the worth of expatriation (in context)?

This theme describes the references on the worth of an international assignment, through the view-point of invited workers (before leaving), expatriates, and repatriates. In particular, participants were asked about the worth of an expatriation and how they valued their present or last assignment.

Among respondents, there was a common perception of mixed outcomes. One interviewee commented how workload and work strain occupied his days: *"the amount of work and things that need to be treated is so great, that despite being a busy day, we arrive at night without noticing the day has passed"* (Expatriate in Spain); while other focused the separation from family: *"obviously being away from family is always a downside, but it doesn't affect me much, because (Spain) is a close culture."*

To a certain extent all interviewees expected and attained some added capital (e.g. financial, social, and symbolic) from expatriation: *"no one agrees to go abroad thinking on returning for worse (...) Having pursued the assignment in Angola, I do not expect to stay in Angola for long, (…), and therefore my expectation is to return, and obviously to come back for the better (…). For the best: in terms of career, in terms of position in the company, etc."* Yet, the worth of this accumulated capital was perceived to depend on the company: *"I thought (expatriation) would add value to my career, (...) I expected a career plan, which in my opinion did not exist. When I say 'a plan', is not only the money, which is obviously important but ... It is to say clearly: 'this went wrong for that …, and this ran well for this and this, so you'll have that'. I think there must be a relationship; which I think never existed, never worked, and therefore, that part was bad..."* (Repatriate from Brazil).

Overall, the value of expatriation for these managers is ruled by the organizational context, which is consistent with the expectations they held and the

shared-meaning of expatriation. The value of expatriation and its potential contributions to further personal development and career progression outside the firm, were absent from the comments. This 'company focus' is well reflected on the words of one invited manager: *"I am very involved with this project, and this involvement with the project also calls for my involvement with the company, and the experience and the challenge, and the professional growth that may arise therefrom. (...) What expectations do I have? I expect the company to be more consolidated in three years from now."*

Discussion and Conclusions

This study explored, from a sensemaking approach, how the organizational context and social interactions influence the meaning of expatriation. The empirical analysis focused five key themes: (1) the meaning of expatriation; (2) the expectations about expatriation; (3) the decision making process leading to the expatriation decision; (4) the willingness to expatriate; and (5) the worth of expatriation. Several interesting findings emerged from the analysis.

First, data from this case study show that an international assignment begins in the mind of each person much before the acceptance, and certainly before the move. The expatriation sensemaking unfolded from noticing cues (e.g. "*the company is investing abroad"*), from interpreting them (e.g. *"the company needed someone"),* and from labelling (e.g. *"so the invitation"*). Even if discrepancies and particularities persist among interviewed managers, a *shared-meaning of expatriation* emerged: built around the conviction that expatriation is a temporary company endeavour that entails effort in keeping with the challenges of the destination, and has ambiguous consequences that exceeds career outcomes. As shown, the locus of this expatriation knowledge was

spread in the company, across the managers involved in this research, but also emerging among workers who have never been abroad.

Second, the findings of this study show that international moves were determined by company changes and corporate investment decisions. Not much self-directedness was observed, which contradicts previous findings on the importance of an internationalism career anchor (Suutari and Taka, 2004), or a boundaryless career orientation (Suutari, Tornikoski and Mäkelä, 2012). Some managers did not hold anticipatory expectations either, which suggest they had no clear sense of what they aimed with the expatriation, nor had an unambiguous view of the next step.

Third, the decision process voiced by international managers' shows that organizational change and employees' commitment with the company were the main drivers of this decision. Many managers became expatriates without any aspiration or previous international experience, thus corroborating previous empirical evidence on global managers' career triggers (e.g. Cappellen and Janssens, 2010). Most managers entered into expatriation through a corporate invitation, which was perceived as a *call of duty* in credit for their technical and managerial expertise.

Fourth, sensemaking is also about action (Weick et al, 2005) that culminated with the unfolding of the assignment. In this firm, expatriation was more important to the company than to employees involved. As data show, there is a collective consent to *hold one share* to engage in the corporate venture of international growth, but reiteration is largely unwelcomed.

In accordance with the sensemaking approach, to *'make sense'* is to iteratively connect the abstraction with the action (Weick et al, 2005). It is connecting the meaning of expatriation with the action of being an expatriate. In this case, the retrospective rationalization of the action of *being an expatriate, who do not hold high expectations*

nor a personal aspiration to go abroad, set in motion a shared meaning of expatriation, which highlights company directedness'. Making sense of expatriation as a role requirement that is better off accepting, acts into making the expatriate a job holder, who is temporarily displaced to *hold its share*. In this context, expatriation success is enacted through the negotiation of assignment goals and corporate recognition, which in turn drives employees' willingness to relocate in future. In such a context, it is without surprise that managers do not hold long-term career plans abroad or outside the company, even when the assignment built the opportunity for skill development. In return for a corporate service, as during Portuguese discoveries, these *sailors* expected payment in the form of traditional career outcomes: compensation, promotion, and hierarchical recognition.

While these research findings are informative and advance our understanding of the context and meaning of expatriation, some limitations should be noted. First, data was collected from a single context and case organization. While this was considered relevant to this exploratory study, in which context is considered a relevant variable, it naturally precludes generalization and comparisons beyond the boundaries of this study. Second, the sample is small and was not selected to be representative, because it was aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of individual representations. However, the use of a single source of data (corporate employees), does not allow the exploration of other cognitive representations and comparisons notably with corporate representatives (e.g. HR and/or Top Managers). We have not explored the possibility of an iterative and mutual influence between organizational perspectives on expatriation, expressed by top management, and assignees' perceptions of expatriation, which would have completed our model. This can be accounted in future.

In spite of these limitations, this study contributes to the knowledge of expatriation and to the sensemaking theory in several ways. First, the use of a case study approach to expose the expatriation sensemaking process features the context in which expatriates were embedded, rather than their individual characteristics, thus shifting the direction of the expatriation research toward a more constructionist approach. Second, it provides empirical evidence that exposes the symbolic meaning of expatriation, thus corroborating previous findings (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). Yet, this study also revealed an enacted environment, in which plausible expatriation meanings were built, disseminated and replicated, nurturing expectations and actions. Taken together, the data illuminated several dimensions of sensemaking: the cues perceived as meaningful and not; the expectations held plausible or derogated; the decision-making commonly endorsed; and the worth of expatriation commonly recognised; thus extending the amount of empirical work, and enhancing the understanding of the sensemaking process.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, this study has also practical implications to organizations and IHRM. As shown, making sense of expatriation in a way that is desirable to and adequate to organizational goals has an impact on employees retrospective motivations, expectations toward future assignments, and willingness to go abroad, ultimately affecting the way employees enact expatriation success. To this purpose, Wong (2005) used the term collective myopia, "to describe the situation in which members of communities are able to make sense of the context in which they live, but are not able to monitor nor reflect on the institution as a whole, created by themselves" (p. 327). As suggested by our findings, this process engrains conformity by organizational members, which coerces reasoning and judgement, and leads to a close circle of reactive and incremental change (Wong, 2005). To change

from this ‘single-loop’ to a ‘double-loop of organizational learning’ (Wong, 2005), organizations need to engage their members into a reflection process. As a consequence, HR policy and practices have to be tuned with corporate strategy and business goals; and up-dated. This involves awareness of new information and revision of interpretations; and doubting, which demands continuous generation of new meanings (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). The findings of this study suggest that in this case organization, power and decision-making regarding expatriation are perceived to be centralized, which is consistent with the finding of Cappellen and Janssens (2010). However, as the company expands, it should not underestimate the importance of negative cognitive evaluations about expatriation that persist and the arousal of discrepant expectations. As a result, HR policy and practices may be target to employees more driven by an internationalism career anchor (Suutari and Taka, 2004) or a boundaryless career orientation (Suutari et al., 2012), to increase employees’ proactivity and self-directedness regarding career management, thus lessening the load to reciprocate with an organizational hierarchical career.

References

Benson, G., and Pattie, M. (2008), 'Is expatriation good for my career? The impact of expatriate assignments on perceived and actual career outcomes,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 19(9), 1636–1653.

Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D. A., Shaffer, M. A., and Luk, D. M. (2005) 'Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions,' *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(2), 257-281.

Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M., and Oddou, G. (1991), 'Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: an integration of multiple theoretical perspectives,' *Academy of Management Review*, 16(2), 291-317.

Bonache, J., Brewster, C., and Suutari, V. (2001), 'Expatriation: a developing research agenda,' *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 43(1), 3-20.

Bonache, J., Brewster, C., Suutari, V., and de Saá, P. (2010), 'Expatriation: Traditional criticisms and international careers: Introducing the special issue,' *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 52(4), 263-274.

Brett, J., and Stroh, L. (1995), 'Willingness to relocate internationally,' *Human Resource Management*, 34(3), 405-424.

Caligiuri, P. M., and Colakoglu, S. (2007), 'A strategic contingency approach to expatriate assignment management,' *Human Resource Management Journal*, 17(4), 393-410.

Caligiuri, P. M., Philips, J., Lazarova, M., Tarique, I., and Burgi, P. (2001), 'The theory of met expectations applied to expatriate adjustment: the role of cross-cultural training,' *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(3), 357-372.

Cappellen, T., and Janssens, M. (2010), 'The career reality of global managers: an examination of career triggers,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(11), 1884 - 1910.

Collings, D., Scullion, H., and Dowling, P. (2009), 'Global staffing: a review and thematic research agenda,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(6), 1253 - 1272.

Dickmann, M., Doherty, N., Mills, T., and Brewster, C. (2008), 'Why do they go? Individual and corporate perspectives on the factors Influencing the decision to accept an international assignment,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(4), 731-751.

Dickmann, M., and Harris, H. (2005), 'Developing career capital for global careers: The role of international assignments,' *Journal of World Business*, 40(4), 399-408.

Doherty, N., and Dickmann, M. (2009), 'Exposing the symbolic capital of international assignments,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(2), 301 - 320.

Doherty, N., Dickmann, M., and Mills, T. (2010), 'Mobility attitudes and behaviours among young Europeans,' *Career Development International*, 15(4), 378-400.

Doherty, N., Dickmann, M., and Mills, T. (2011), 'Exploring the motives of company-backed and self-initiated expatriates,' T*he International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(3), 595-611.

Edstrom, A., and Galbraith, J. R. (1997), 'Transfer of Managers as a Coordination and Control Strategy in Multinational Organizations,' *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22(2), 248-263.

Ferner, A., Quintanilla, J., and Varul, M. Z. (2001), 'Country-of-origin effects, host-country effects, and the management of HR in multinationals: German companies in Britain and Spain,' *Journal of World Business*, 36(2), 107-127.

Glanz, L., Williams, R., and Hoeksema, L. (2001), 'Sensemaking in Expatriation - A Theoretical Basis,' *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 43(1), 101-119.

Haines III, V., Saba, T., and Choquette, E. (2008), 'Intrinsic motivation for an international assignment,' *International Journal of Manpower*, 29(5), 443-461.

Harzing, A. W. (2000), 'An empirical analysis and extension of the Bartlett and Ghoshal typology of multinational companies,' *Journal of International Business Studies*, 31(1), 101-120.

Harzing, A. W. (2001), 'Of bears, bumble-bees, and spiders: the role of expatriates in controlling foreign subsidiaries,' *Journal of World Business*, 36(4), 366-379.

Haslberger, A., Brewster, C., and Hippler, T. (2012), 'Repatriation and repatriation adjustment – individual and organisational perspectives', *In the 12th European Academy of Management Proceedings*.

Hippler, T. (2009), 'Why do they go? Empirical evidence of employees' motives for seeking or accepting relocation,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(6), 1381 - 1401.

Inkson, K., Arthur, M. B., Pringle, J., and Barry, S. (1997), 'Expatriate assignment versus overseas experience: contrasting models of international human resource development,' *Journal of World Business*, 32(4), 351-368.

Jokinen, T. (2010), 'Development of career capital through international assignments and its transferability to new contexts,' *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 52(4), 325-336.

Kelly, G., and Morley, M. J. (2011), 'On the value of cognitive sense-making theory in modelling the dynamics of international executive repatriation', in P. G. Benson, (ed.), *Emerging Themes in International Management of Human Resources*, New Mexico State University: Information Age Publishing, Inc., pp. 235-256.

Kohonen, E. (2004), 'Learning through narratives about the impact of international assignments on identity,' *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 34(3), 27-45.

Kraimer, M., Wayne, S., and Jaworski, R. (2001), 'Sources of support and expatriate performance: the mediating role of expatriate adjustment,' *Personnel Psychology*, 54(1), 71-99.

Louis, M. R. (1980), 'Surprise and Sense Making: What Newcomers Experience in Entering Unfamiliar Organizational Settings,' *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(2), 226-251.

Maitlis, S., and Sonenshein, S. (2010), 'Sensemaking in Crisis and Change: Inspiration and Insights From Weick (1988),' *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(3), 551-580.

Mäkelä, K., and Suutari, V. (2009), 'Global careers: a social capital paradox,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(5), 992 - 1008.

Meyskens, M., Von Glinow, M., Werther, J., and Clarke, L. (2009), 'The paradox of international talent: alternative forms of international assignments,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(6), 1439 - 1450.

Osland, J., and Osland, A. (2005), 'Expatriate paradoxes and cultural involvement,' *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 35(4), 91-114.

Pinto, L. H., Cabral-Cardoso, C., and Werther, W. B. (2011), 'Why solidarity matters (and sociability doesn't): The effects of perceived organizational culture on

expatriation adjustment' *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 53(3), 377-389.

Pinto, L. H., Cabral-Cardoso, C., and Werther, W. B. (2012), 'Compelled to go abroad? Motives and outcomes of international assignments,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(11), 2295-2314.

Quintanilla, J., and Ferner, A. (2003), 'Multinationals and human resource management: between global convergence and national identity,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14(3), 363-368.

Riusala, K., and Suutari, V. (2000), 'Expatriation and careers: perspectives of expatriates and spouses,' *Career Development International*, 5(2), 81-90.

Shay, J., and Baack, S. (2004), 'Expatriate assignment, adjustment and effectiveness: an empirical examination of the big picture', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 35, 216-232.

Stahl, G. K., and Cerdin, J. L. (2004), 'Global careers in French and German multinationals corporations,' *Journal of Management Development*, 23(9), 885-902.

Stahl, G. K., Chua, C. H., Caligiuri, P., Cerdin, J., and Taniguchi, M. (2009), 'Predictors of turnover intentions in learning-driven and demand-driven international assignments: the role of repatriation concerns, satisfaction with company support, and perceived career advancement opportunities,' *Human Resource Management*, 48(1), 89-109.

Suutari, V. (2003), 'Global managers: career orientation, career tracks, life-style implications and career commitment,' *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 18(3), 185-207.

Suutari, V., and Taka, M. (2004), 'Career anchors of managers with global careers,' *Journal of Management Development*, 23(9), 833-847.

Suutari, V., Tornikoski, C., and Mäkelä, L. (2012), 'Career decision making of global careerists,' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(16), 3455-3478.

Tornikoski, C. (2011), 'Fostering expatriate affective commitment: a total reward perspective,' *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 18(2), 214-235.

Warneke, D., and Schneider, M. (2011), 'Expatriate compensation packages: what do employees prefer?' *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 18(2), 236-256.

Weick, K. E. (1995), *Sensemaking in Organizations. Foundations for Organizational Science,* United States of America: Sage Publications.

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., and Obstfeld, D. (2005), 'Organizing and the process of sensemaking,' *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409-421.

Wong, M. (2005), 'Organizational learning via expatriate managers: collective myopia as blocking mechanism,' *Organization Studies*, 26(3), 325-350.

Wrzesniewski, A. C., Dutton, J. E., and Debebe, G. (2003), 'Interpersonal sensemaking and the meaning of work,' *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, 25, 93-135.

Yavas, U., and Bodur, M. (1999), 'Correlates of adjustment: a study of expatriate managers in an emerging country,' *Management Decision*, 37(3), 267-278.

Zimmermann, A., Holman, D., and Sparrow, P. (2003), 'Unravelling adjustment mechanisms: adjustment of German expatriates to intercultural interactions, work, and living conditions in the People's Republic of China,' *Intercultural Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 3(1), 45-66.

Appendix 1. Sample demographics

Sample Demographics	**Invited Domestic Employee**		**Expatriate**		**Repatriate**	
	N	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**
Number of interviews	4	30.77%	4	30.77%	5	38.46%
Age						
Average; st. Deviation	41.0; 6.88		37.2; 6.90		38.8; 4.76	
[Min, Max]	[36, 51]		[28; 43]		[32; 45]	
Gender						
Male	4	100%	4	100%	3	60%
Female	0	0%	0	0%	2	40%
Marital status						
Married	4	100%	3	75%	3	60%
Unmarried	0	0%	1	25%	2	40%
Education						
High School	0	0%	1	25%	2	40%
College	4	100%	3	75%	3	60%
Tenure in the assignment (months)						
Average; st. Deviation			34.3; 4.99		31.4; 5.55	
[Min, Max]			[29; 38]		[24; 36]	
Seniority in the company						
Average; st. Deviation	16.5; 5.45		12.6; 7.86		11.8; 2.06	
[Min, Max]	[12; 24]		[4; 19]		[10; 14]	
With previous international experience	0		1		2	
Destination Country						
Angola	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%
Brazil	0	0%	0	0%	3	60%
Spain	1	25%	4	100%	2	40%
Turkey	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 1. The meaning of expatriation in context: differences between invited domestic employees, expatriates and repatriates

Meanings of Expatriation	**Before the Assignment**	**After the Assignment**
Invited Domestic Employee	• Expatriation depends on the company • Expatriation (in the actual context) involves high risks • Expatriation entails gratitude *"proving it is well deserved"* • Expatriation should be mandatory	• Not applicable
Expatriate	• Expatriation enhances professional and personal self-development	• It is through local immersion and action that expatriation can be assessed • Expatriation requires skill: adaptability and resilience
Repatriate	• Expatriation is not always good	• Expatriation is "*once in a lifetime"*

Table 2. The expectations about expatriation among invited domestic employees, expatriates and repatriates

Expectations about expatriation	Information about the assignment	Focus of expectations	Alignment of expectations
Invited Domestic Employee	• Insufficient, reflecting added uncertainty on personal matters	• Destination Project/Role • Host country • Repatriation • Self-development • Family • Anxiety	• No initial expectations
Expatriate	• Sufficient	• Destination Project/Role • Host country • Self-development	• Local reality aligned with initial expectations • Misalignment with host country expectations
Repatriate	• Sufficient	• Destination Project/Role • Host country • Repatriation • Self-development • Family	• Misalignment because of local unplanned changes • Misalignment with repatriation expectations • Misalignment with self-development expectations