



**TURUN  
YLIOPISTO**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU

# Expatriate Networking and Knowledge Sharing

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Leena Salminen





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# **EXPATRIATE NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

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The originality of this publication has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

ISBN 978-952-02-0350-4 (PRINT)  
ISBN 978-952-02-0351-1 (PDF)  
ISSN 0082-6987 (Print)  
ISSN 2343-3191 (Online)  
Painosalama, Turku, Finland 2025

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Faculty of Education

Department of Teacher Education

Educational Sciences

LEENA SALMINEN: Expatriate Networking and Knowledge Sharing

Doctoral Dissertation, 139 pp.

Doctoral Programme on Learning, Teaching and Learning Environments

Research

October 2025

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on expatriates' assignments. How have they realized knowledge exchange? What kind of networking ties have they been able to build while living in the host country? How have they been able to utilize what they learned after their return, and how did the expatriate experience change their later work career?

The theoretical background section of the thesis consists of three main areas: socio-cultural perspective on learning, particularly regarding knowledge exchange and expertise development, expatriate research, and expatriates' personal network ties (referred to also as "ego-centric networks").

Two surveys, before (n=104) and after (n=63) the assignment, were used in gathering the data. In addition, ego-centric network interviews (n=16) were conducted three times during the assignment, and an open-ended delayed email survey (n=11) was conducted. Consequently, a mixed method approach was applied. Ego-centric network data focused on social contact construction, whereas pre- and post-questionnaires targeted to analyze themes of general interest in expatriate and repatriate process, such as individual level attributes of participants, background information of company level practices, knowledge sharing aims, effect of local culture, and repatriation experiences. The delayed open-ended questionnaire was sent to the participants that took part in ego-centric network data gathering, twenty years after the research started. The aim of the delayed measure was to investigate later career development and the experienced effects of the expatriate period on their life after the assignment.

The company, Nokia, where this research study was carried out, is a big international, Finnish-based company. The expatriates in the present study left for an international assignment between the years 2000 and 2001. Host countries were Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, United Kingdom and United States.

According to the results, expatriate assignment enabled the participants' learning experiences which improves their personal characteristics and human capital. Learning and development outcomes seemed to be more personal than professional in nature.

The results indicate firstly that the respondents showed high satisfaction in reaching the targets at work, secondly, cultural effects were even stronger than expected. As conclusion, the repatriate phase was a positive experience for the

respondents. It was beneficial for them, both at work and in their personal life. The expatriates mainly agreed that they are willing to share their knowledge and expertise gained during the assignment, although everyone was not satisfied after returning to their home country. The transfer of knowledge after returning was not optimally organized. Every fifth respondent commented that the company was not interested in their new knowledge, or not supporting in searching for a new position.

The findings of the delayed measure showed that effective networking during the assignment gave the best qualifications for successful work in international and global environments after the assignment.

**KEYWORDS:** Expatriates, networking, knowledge sharing, social network analysis, ego-centric networks, repatriation, mixed methods

## TURUN YLIOPISTO

Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta

Opettajankoulutuslaitos

Kasvatustieteet

LEENA SALMINEN: Ulkomaan komennuksella olleiden verkostoituminen ja tiedon jakaminen

Väitöskirja, 139 s.

Oppimisen, opetuksen ja oppimisympäristöjen tutkimuksen tohtoriohjelma  
Lokakuu 2025

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja keskittyy ulkomaankomennuksella oleviin henkilöihin (ekspatriatteihin). Miten tiedonvaihto on toteutunut? Millaisia verkostosuhteita he ovat onnistuneet rakentamaan? Kuinka he ovat pystyneet hyödyntämään oppimaansa paluunsa jälkeen, ja miten ulkomailla vietetty aika on vaikuttanut heidän myöhempiin elämäänsä?

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys rakentuu seuraavista keskeisistä osa-alueista: sosiokulttuurinen näkökulma oppimiseen, erityisesti tiedonvaihdon ja asiantuntijuuden kehittymisen näkökulmasta, ulkomaan komennuksiin liittyvä tutkimus sekä komennuksella olevien henkilöiden verkostosuhteiden tutkimus (ego-keskeiset verkostot).

Tutkimusaineisto on kerätty kahden kyselyn avulla ennen komennusta (n=104) ja sen jälkeen (n=63), ego-keskeisten verkostojen haastatteluilla (n=16, kolme kertaa komennuksen aikana) sekä avoimella seurantakysymyksellä sähköpostitse (n=11). Näin ollen tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään monimenetelmällistä lähestymistapaa. Ego-keskeisten verkostojen aineistot keskittyvät sosiaalisten kontaktien rakentumiseen, kun taas ennen ja jälkeen komennuksen tehtyjen kyselyjen avulla analysoidaan yleisesti komennus- ja paluuprosessiin liittyviä teemoja, kuten osallistujien yksilöllisiä ominaisuuksia, yritystason käytäntöjä, tiedonjakamisen tavoitteita, paikallisen kulttuurin vaikutusta sekä kotiinpaluuprosessia. Avoin seurantakysymys lähetettiin niille osallistujille, jotka osallistuivat ego-keskeisen verkoston tiedonkeruuseen, kaksikymmentä vuotta tutkimuksen aloittamisen jälkeen. Sen tarkoituksena oli selvittää komennuksella olleiden urakehitystä ja komennuksen vaikutuksia heidän elämäänsä sen jälkeen.

Tutkimuksen kohteena ollut yritys, Nokia, on suuri kansainvälinen, Suomessa pääkonttoriaan pitävä yritys. Tässä tutkimuksessa mukana olleet lähtivät kansainväliselle komennukselle vuosina 2000–2001. Isäntämaita olivat Brasilia, Kanada, Kiina, Tanska, Saksa, Unkari, Hongkong, Italia, Japani, Malesia, Singapore, Etelä-Korea, Iso-Britannia ja Yhdysvallat.

Tulosten mukaan ulkomaankomennus tarjosi osallistujille erityisesti oppimiskokemuksia, jotka kehittivät heidän henkilökohtaisia ominaisuuksiaan ja inhimillistä pääomaansa. Oppimisen ja kehittymisen tulokset näyttäytyivät enemmän henkilökohtaisina kokemuksina kuin ammatillisena etenemisenä.

Organisaatiotason vaikutusten osalta tulokset osoittavat ensinnäkin, että vastaajat olivat erittäin tyytyväisiä työssään saavutettuihin tavoitteisiin, ja toiseksi, kulttuurivaikutus oli odotettua voimakkaampi. Paluuvaiheen osalta komennus koettiin yleisesti positiivisena kokemuksena. Se hyödytti vastaajien koko elämänkaarta sekä työssä että yksityiselämässä. Komennuksella olleet olivat pääosin halukkaita jakamaan komennuksen aikana hankkimaansa tietoa ja asiantuntemusta, vaikka kaikki eivät olleet tyytyväisiä paluunsa jälkeiseen tilanteeseen kotimaassa. Joka viides vastaaja kommentoi, ettei yritys ollut kiinnostunut heidän uudesta osaamisestaan tai tukenut uuden työtehtävän etsimisessä.

Kaksikymmentä vuotta myöhemmin lähetetyn avoimen seurantakysymyksen vastaukset osoittivat, että tehokas verkostoituminen komennuksen aikana tuotti valmiudet työskennellä erilaisissa tehtävissä kansainvälisessä tai globaalissa ympäristössä komennuksen jälkeen.

ASIASANAT: ulkomaan komennukset, verkostoituminen, tiedonjakaminen, sosiaalisten verkostojen analyysi, ego-keskeiset verkostot, komennukselta paluu, monimenetelmäinen tutkimus

# Acknowledgements

Networking and knowledge sharing in a global company were topic that I was interested in while working at Nokia. There, my motivation to understand and learn the terms and notions of learning rose. – I heard words which I didn't understand, and it made me curious. That was my reason for starting my university studies at the Faculty of Education.

This research study started in Naantali market place in June, 2000. I had just finalized my master's studies and had no plans to continue to doctoral studies. Suddenly I met my Professor Erno Lehtinen and he asked me when I would start my doctoral studies. Without Erno Lehtinen I would never have even thought that one day I could be a Doctor of Education.

I am very grateful to Nokia for getting the chance to execute the empirical part of this study in their great company. Without that support I would not have been able to get such a large sample of expatriates to participate in my study and being an employee myself also helped to understand the company culture and environment where these expatriates lived. I want to thank all these participants and especially those persons who participated in the network analysis group.

Many people have supported me during these years at the university. First of all, my warmest thanks go to my supervisors, Professor Erno Lehtinen and Docent Tuire Palonen for support, comments, patience and faith in me. Sometimes I felt that I was an eternal student, but Tuire, without your endless support I would not have been able to conclude these studies. I am grateful for that forever.

I also want to thank statistician Eero Laakkonen for his valuable advice concerning statistical analyses, Anne Niemimäki, Jenni Kankaanpää and Sanna Niukko for assistance in practical matters and many teachers during all these years. The Faculty of Education at the University of Turku has also supported these studies financially, for which I am thankful.

The examiners of my work are Professor Andreas Rausch at the University of Mannheim and Professor Emeritus Matti Vartiainen at Aalto University, I want to thank them for their valuable and constructive comments.

During my studies at the University of Turku I have made very special friends from my student colleagues Tuulikki, Ritva, Kirsi, Pipsa, Jaana and Sari. We started

our studies at the Faculty of Education in 1994 and have ever since then met regularly every year for over 30 years. My warmest thanks to you all for friendship and support with these studies over the years.

Like I said in the beginning, I would have never thought that one day I could be a Doctor of Education. My late parents believed in education, and they wanted to get education for their children even though they themselves did not have such possibility. They would be very happy for me. They gave my life a good foundation and always believed in me, for which I am very grateful.

Lastly, I want to give my loving thanks to my dear son Mikael. You were born and have grown up during these years. We have learned together and taught each other. Thank you. It has been fantastic to follow your growth and path of your academic studies. Your diligence and intelligence combined with your many interests will take you even further in your career path. I hope that this academic achievement will inspire you. This book is dedicated to you Mikael.

Korvenranta, Rymättylä, June 2025  
*Leena Salminen*

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# 1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on expatriates and their networking and knowledge sharing during international assignment. This research study started during the beginning of this century. At that time, the researched company was an enormous global company, with around 60 000 employees all over the world. The mobile device business was rapidly growing, offering many opportunities to its employees. The globalisation trend had led to a significant increase in cross-cultural actions increasing the number of expatriate assignments. Conducting business overseas requires specially trained employees and a deep understanding of the local cultures, business dynamics, legal environments and workforce diversity. Expatriates also face numerous challenges associated with adjusting to working and living in culturally diverse countries. The importance of knowledge as a source of competitive advantage in multinational enterprises has long been acknowledged in literature (Kogut & Zander, 1993; Rugman & Verbeke, 2001; Zeng et al., 2018; Dahms, 2019). Expatriates have the distinct potential to bring specific skills, knowledge and network linkages from other parts of the enterprise (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016).

Earlier expatriate research concentrated most on expatriates' selection, adjustment and coping mechanisms, cultural factors, and success of the assignment (Tung, 1998; Kraimer et al., 2016). Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) have provided a comprehensive theoretical framework of international adjustment. Their model consists of anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment factors. Expatriates' networking and knowledge sharing forms a complex research design, where the Black et. al model has been the core of the theoretical part in the present study. That model has been modified here to cover the whole expatriation process, up until and including the repatriation phase. Adjustment in the host country is a key factor when thinking about networking and knowledge sharing during the assignment process. While the research has exclusively focused on the individuals in managing the adaptation process, there has truly been little research on the nature of international work itself, and compensation or performance management of expatriates.

During recent decades, the focus has been on the last part of the assignment – return to the home unit and adjustment in the home unit, i.e., repatriation.

Repatriation has shown some problematic features, which is a reason solutions and explanations are sought, both from the employee and company points of view. According to the literature, the situation is contradictory: expatriates view their international assignment as a source of personal development and a potential vehicle for future advancement; but on the other hand, repatriation is associated with unmet expectations, feelings of being unvalued and concerns about their future career.

Black and his colleagues (1992) have also formed a model of repatriation adjustment. They claim that repatriation adjustment and organisational commitment are important in understanding functional and dysfunctional turnover or retention among repatriates.

Kraimer and her colleagues (2016) argue that we do not really know why companies are not doing more to facilitate the repatriation process and retain these valuable employees. Career issues are often a source of repatriate dissatisfaction.

Expatriates' career paths are an extraordinarily under investigated area of expatriate research. There have been only a few studies concentrating on the career outcomes of international experience during the past 20 years according to Kraimer et al. (2016). Suutari's & Brewster's study (2003) is one of the few longitudinal studies of 53 Finnish expatriates, where they tracked expatriates through to repatriation. Their results showed that international experience is good for an individual's career and valued on the external labour market. They found that if companies do not carefully manage the repatriation process, the investment in international experience may be lost. Similar results were found in the present study.

Social network analysis is not a formal theory, but it is a strategy for investigating social structures. It can be applied in many fields to study collaboration structures and other forms of social interaction networks. Analysing social networks can help people understand how to share professional knowledge in an efficient way and to evaluate the performance of individuals, groups or the entire social network. This thesis work followed ego-centric, i.e., personal network theory terms and approaches, focusing on expatriates, and their connections to other individuals. In this study, the focus has been on networking with work-related contacts during assignment. According to Lin (1983), social resources, such as social, instrumental or emotional support, that are embedded in a person's social network are particularly important for an individual's psychological well-being. Wang argues (2002) that they, therefore, also influence expatriate performance.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Background to expatriate networking and success factors

This thesis work focuses on expatriates' assignments: how they have experienced their stay in the host country, how knowledge exchange has been realised, types of networking ties they have been able to build while living in the host country, how they have been able to utilise what they learned after their return and how the time spent abroad changed their later life.

An expatriate can be defined as an employee of a parent company who is transferred for a particular amount of time (from several months to several years) to work in a branch of an international company located abroad (Banerjee et al., 2012; Gupta et al., 2012). In other words, multinational companies dispatch expatriates to a foreign country to work and live to complete a specific assignment, and then typically they are repatriated back to their home country (Kraimer et al., 2016). In literature, expatriates are further classified into three sub-categories based on their national origin, relative to that of the parent company: *Parent-company nationals* are expatriates who are from the home country of the company; *third-country nationals* are those immigrants who are from some other country (for example, those who are transferred between sub units); and the third group, *inpatriates*, are employees from foreign sub units who are assigned to work in the parent country (Shaffer et al., 1999). In this thesis, the target group concerns parent-company nationals.

The globalisation trend has led to a significant increase in cross-cultural actions with a growing number of expatriates. According to a research report by Finaccord (2018), the total number of expatriates worldwide amounted to around 66.2 million in 2017. This figure has grown at a compound annual rate of 5.8% since 2013, given that there were around 52.8 million expatriates in that year. By 2021, Finaccord forecasts that the number will reach around 87.5 million.

Conducting overseas business requires specially trained employees and a deep understanding of the local cultures, business dynamics, legal environments and workforce diversity. Expatriates face numerous challenges associated with adjusting to working and living in culturally diverse countries (Haile & White, 2019), although the importance of knowledge as a source of competitive advantage in multinational

enterprises has long been acknowledged in the literature (Kogut & Zander, 1993; Rugman & Verbeke, 2001; Zeng et al., 2018; Dahms, 2019). For instance, the international human resource management literature indicates that the use of expatriates in key senior management positions facilitates knowledge sharing from the subsidiary to the rest of the multinational enterprise network (Chang et al., 2012; Harzing et al., 2015). Expatriates have the distinct potential to bring specific skills, knowledge, and network linkages from other parts of the multinational enterprise and beyond to the subsidiary (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016; Dahms, 2019; Sun & Hong, 2022). Knowledge sharing can be bidirectional, expatriates and host country nationals can be both senders and receivers of knowledge (Hsu et al., 2022). Learning has become a strategic factor for global competitiveness in knowledge society, with its emphasis on knowledge building, in the international labour market (Gilbert, 2005; Lytras & Sicilia, 2005). Workplace learning is a key part of the process, driven by the impact of changes in skills demands, technologies and people's relationships and roles within various organisations and communities (Manuti et al., 2015). Black et al. (1991) have provided a comprehensive theoretical framework of international adjustment. Their model consists of anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment factors. Anticipatory factors include individual and organisational factors, such as cross-cultural training and selection criteria. In-country adjustment factors include individual, job-related, organisation culture and socialisation, and non-work factors. All these factors affect the mode and degree of adjustment.

Individual-level experiences, job-related aims, and cultural variety in the work organisations have presumably all influenced network relationships and collaboration during assignment, which is at the centre of the present study. Non-work factors, such as adjustment to local culture and family adjustment, have their own impact on the overall satisfaction of the assignment, as well as on network relations. Learning, knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing are expected to be associated with target setting, the expatriate period and the repatriation phase, giving structure to this thesis work.

Earlier expatriate research concentrated mainly on expatriate adjustment and coping mechanisms, cultural factors, and the success of the assignment (Tung, 1998; Kraimer et al., 2016). During the recent decades, the focus seems to be on the last part of assignment – return to the home unit and adjustment in the home unit, i.e., repatriation. Repatriation has shown some problematic features, which is a reason for why solutions and explanations are sought, both from the employee's and company's points of view (Banerjee et al., 2012; Kraimer et. al., 2016; Haile & White, 2019).

The theoretical background section of this thesis work consists of the following main areas: 1) socio-cultural perspective on learning, particularly regarding

knowledge exchange and expertise development, 2) expatriate research and 3) expatriates' personal network ties (referred to also as "ego-centric networks", Ofem et al., 2012).

## 2.2 Social nature of knowing – socio-cultural perspective to learning and expertise

The bodies of knowledge that have been built up in history, science, or literature are all social products in the sense that researchers have contributed to the construction of these bodies of knowledge over long periods of time. Social processes, such as discussion, argument, debate, criticism, publication, collaboration or teamwork, have been employed then. That means that every society is socially determined (Phillips & Soltis, 2004).

Generally, all activities of any domain are framed by its culture. Their meaning and purpose are socially constructed through negotiations among present and past members. Embedding circumstances efficiently provide essential parts of knowledge structure and meaning (Brown et al., 1989). Appreciating the collective nature of knowledge is especially important in an age when almost every field changes too much or too fast for one individual to master. Complex problem solving requires multiple perspectives. Colleagues are needed to complement and develop the individual expert's work (Wenger et al., 2002). Billett (2001a) talks about pathways of participation in social practice and refers to expertise-located social practice as a relationship between what has to be known (e.g., the norms, procedures and concepts) and the knower (the individual) as a dynamic relationship. Individuals secure that expertise is ongoing via interaction and relations within social practices, such as in workplaces.

The socio-cultural paradigm in psychology started from Soviet researcher Lev Vygotsky. He was aware of the social nature of learning and stressed that much of what people learn they learn from others. Particularly, he emphasised the importance of "psychological tools", such as concepts, signs, numbers and artefacts, that humans use to build a view of the world around them (Phillips & Soltis, 2004).

In the socio-cultural tradition, the Vygotskian influence has been remarkable. Generally, various perspectives and analyses levels can be divided into individual, collective, and community level. For example, Swedish psychologist Roger Säljö represents the individual level, seeing human learning through communicational and socio-historical lenses. According to him, knowledge arises from interaction between people before it becomes part of an individual's mindset and action (Säljö, 2001).

The salient argument in socio-cultural learning theories is that knowledge creation and learning are fundamentally social phenomena that cannot be separated

from their social, cultural, or historical frameworks; this principle is often referred to as contextual or situational learning (Tynjälä, 1999, 2013; Eraut, 2000, 2007; Billett, 2001a, 2001b; Fuller & Unwin, 2003). Therefore, social interaction has an essential role as a part of the learning process, and culture is the starting point for it (Heikkilä, 2006). Consequently, socio-cultural theory holds that the organisation and construction of knowledge are socially and culturally constituted (Billett, 2001a).

According to van der Zwet et al. (2011), socio-cultural learning perspectives rely on a two-way relationship between individual learning and culture. Socio-cultural theory treats knowledge as dependent on the knower and the cultural conditions under which it is developed and applied (Mann et al., 2011).

Moreover, social and cultural needs are, therefore, embedded in distinct lines of development within social practice. Social practice is seen as a premise for expertise, arising through participation, “knowing in practice”. Consequently, socio-cultural perspective emphasises the relationship between social practice and the mind (Billett, 2001a).

The socio-cultural pathway to expertise may be seen as a trajectory towards the goal of participating fully, through engagement in tasks of increasing accountability. Over time, participation leads to the acquisition of “skilful knowledge” but also to the facility to engage successfully in the discourse, norms and practices of the particular social practice (Engeström & Middleton, 1996). For this reason, socio-cultural perspective underlines learning through problem solving in goal-directed activities. It specifically acknowledges the contributions of a more “experienced other” in assisting learner development (Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978).

## Workplaces as learning environments and expertise development

Within recent decades, there has been radical economic, social and cultural changes in working life: the establishment of the knowledge society, emphasis on knowledge building, fast-moving working contexts, international labour market and rapidly changing requirements for competencies and skills that have become part of the strategic capability of the company (Manuti et al., 2015), or any working organisation. Research on workplace learning has considerably increased during this period as a consequence of changes and has contributed to redefining what learning means in a workplace context (Manuti et al., 2015; Billett, 2000; Illeris, 2003; Jacobs & Parks, 2009; Tynjälä, 2013). Learning is no longer limited to formal activities in classroom environments, and work or careers are no longer static and predetermined entities (Manuti et al., 2015). Collin (2002) notes that ‘learning is seen as a natural aspect of everyday work and work itself is seen as a rich source of learning’ (p. 133).

The learning processes and reflection are mentioned as basic elements and, further, non-intentional and non-routine nature and tacit dimensions (Polanyi, 1967)

of learning are taken as important factors and contexts. Many scholars see informal learning as both a 'practice' and an emerging new learning 'paradigm' (Beckett & Hager, 2000; Boud & Middleton, 2003; Hager, 2004a, 2004b; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Eraut (2000, 2004, 2007) has pointed out that informal learning is typically unconscious; learning is mainly associated outside formal education and training. Eraut identifies three types of informal learning: (1) implicit, (2) reactive and (3) deliberate learning (Eraut, 2004). Implicit learning refers to the unconscious processes, whereas reactive learning often indicates an intentional effort to learn, or at least previous experiences or prior knowledge are reflected when reacting to the situation at hand. Deliberate informal learning refers to situations with a clear aim toward learning or other work-related goals, being thus close to the study at hand (Tynjälä, 2013; Eraut, 2004).

Informal learning has further been associated with critical situations of needs embedded in practice as part of an actual work setting. In these situations, learning can arise although it was not the primary goal of the activity but activated, for example, by an existing problematic situation that requires resolution (Manuti et al., 2015).

Billett (1999, 2002), in turn, argues against making a distinction between formal and informal learning for two reasons. First, informal learning positions workplace learning as 'ad hoc' and, thus, inferior to the learning processes within formal educational institutions; and second, workplaces are, in fact, highly structured environments for learning: in workplaces, there are intentions for work practice and structured goal-directed activities (Billett, 2000, 2002). Instead, Billett (2014) favours a more focused analysis of the structures, norms, values, and practices in the workplace that concretely grant opportunities for participation and learning. Similarly, the concept of networked expertise by Hakkarainen et al. (2004) refers to competencies that arise from social interaction, knowledge sharing and collective problem solving.

An expatriate's main mission might be expressed as sharing tacit understanding between the home and host countries. Tacit understanding seems to be one of the reasons the expatriate system exists. Brown and Duguid (2001) argue that tacit knowledge is required to make explicit knowledge usefully tradable or mobile. Knowledge is mediated via social interaction, and then tacit knowledge plays a critical role. According to Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), sharing tacit knowledge requires interaction and informal learning processes, such as storytelling, conversation and coaching.

The acquisition of these skills from various life experiences is often tacit in nature and, therefore, individuals do not necessarily recognise that they have gained anything valuable. However, Evans' and Kersch's data show that these previously acquired tacit skills often become a central part of the learning process when

deployed and developed in new learning and workplace environments (Evans & Kersch, 2004). Tacit skills from different life experiences can also be very important to expatriates in private life while living abroad. Eraut and his research group achieved the same results in their study (Eraut, 2000). Their test subjects were aware that they had implicitly learned to do many things which formed part of their job, but they could not easily describe their personal knowledge and know-how (Eraut, 2000).

### Expertise and situational knowledge

The nature of expertise has been studied in many professional fields, for example, among teachers, musicians, in the field of medicine, physics, radiology, computer programming, social sciences, sports, and chess (Berliner, 2001; Chi et al., 1988; Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996; Ericsson, 2006; Ropo, 2004). Understanding the local nature of expertise is essential for the contextual and situational nature of knowing, referred to the socio-cultural knowledge part earlier in this thesis.

In addition to locality of knowledge, Gobet (2015) stresses the difficulty of defining expertise. He has divided the definitions into five categories. First, one may highlight expert know-how (i.e., procedural knowledge) that is an important aspect of some fields of expertise, for example in sports. More declarative knowledge is a more typical element in some other domains, for example in history and philosophy. Second, one can use the amount of experience in defining expertise, such as the amount of time spent on the domain. Some evidence regarding the correlation between length or duration of experience and level of expertise shows the correlation is rather weak. Goal-directed, intensive practice, “deliberate practice”, is one of the well-known terms in expertise literature (Ericsson, 2006) for better understanding the relation between duration of professional career and expertise (level of performance), for example in the domains of music and sports (Gobet, 2015). Third, expertise has also been characterised as fluid, automatic behaviour without any conscious control (e.g., Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). Gobet (2015) claims that seeing expertise from automatization processes is consistent with many domains, but there are exceptions, too. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993), it is the opposite way: real experts solve difficult problems with the possibility of making mistakes, but expand their knowledge along the way. The fourth way to define expertise is to use official titles, such as diplomas or professional certificates. This approach has several weaknesses. Diplomas often relate to declarative knowledge that is not necessarily the same as procedural knowledge, being one of the problems. Gobet gives an example for this from medical practice: the theoretical knowledge acquired in medical schools and the kind of clinical knowledge used in practice. They are not equal. The fifth way to define expertise is familiar from research in sociology, where

social aspects linked to expertise are recognised, sometimes with the argument that expertise does not really exist. It is rather a label given by society or other legitimised groups to some individuals (Gobet, 2015).

In the field of professional learning, rapid changes in working life and social conditions of information societies have put pressure on redefining expertise. Expectations and demands have been targeted especially toward experts in contemporary companies. According to Tynjälä (1999), professional expertise requires an ability to think critically, reflect one's own thoughts and actions, as well as problem-solving, communication, cooperation and continuous learning skills. Eteläpelto and Collin (2004) argue that because of the changes taking place in working life, the required expertise has been characterised using a variety of concepts. Desirable expertise has been characterised by using concepts of adaptive, reflective, creative, innovative and expansive expertise, to characterise the general nature of professional expertise needed in modern companies.

According to Billett (2001a), expertise is more related to particular social practices than has been reported in earlier research. "The old school cognitive view focuses on capacities, such as cognitive structures, processes and memory, while the situational view emphasizes interactional systems that include individuals as participants interacting with others, artefacts and objects that comprise the social practice" (Billett, 2001a, 14.) Working life has had a trend toward teamwork, process work, open communication and continuous learning. Similarly, many communication tools, such as e-mail, intranet and other electronic tools change the world of work and represent the artefacts, which comprise the social practice in varying contexts.

Billett (2001a) further argues that domain specificity is essential for demanding thinking and acting, such as non-routine problem solving in everyday work activities. Expertise is domain-specific phenomena. For outsiders, it is difficult to understand expert language if they come from different functions representing different fields of expertise. Still, they may be recognised as experts in the same organisation, with reliable sources of knowledge, technique or skill, like the definition of expertise describes. Therefore, expertise often originates from technical or process knowledge, or skills to use a particular technical tool, system or programme. Moreover, content of expertise typically comprises confidential information or knowledge, which is not allowed to be delivered to outsiders.

Brown et al. (1989) argue that knowledge is situated, being in part of a product or activity, context or culture, in which it is developed and used. The circumstances under which knowledge is created, developed and deployed cannot be separated from learning processes and cognition. Situations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity, demonstrating why activity is an integral part of what

is learned and can be stated that learning and cognition are fundamentally situated (Brown et al., 1989).

According to Billett (2001a) “individuals’ interactions and negotiations within the social practice, and their ability to maintain their participation, represent an ongoing and evolving process. Individuals acting in social practice construct domains of knowledge; the construction of these domains is also mediated by their personal histories (e.g., their existing knowledge) and by the access to the activities of the particular social practice(s)” (Billett, 2001a, 14.)

Qualities of expertise as situated phenomena constitute only one side of the interdependent relationship required for knowing at work. How individuals act in social practice, how they fully participate, and how they construct their domain of knowledge depends on the individual. Therefore, the other dimension of the interdependence or inter-psychological process is how individuals participate and construct knowledge (Billett, 2001a).

Brown et al. (1989) give an example of how conceptual knowledge can be considered as a set of tools. They share several features with knowledge: these tools can be fully understood only through use. According to Brown et al. (1989) “it is not possible to use a tool appropriately without understanding the community or culture in which it is used. Conceptual tools similarly reflect the cumulative wisdom of the culture in which they are used, and the thinking and experience of the individuals” (Brown et al., 1989, 33.) To learn to use the tools as practitioners use them, one must enter that community and its culture. Thus, learning is a process of enculturation.

### Summary of socio-cultural perspective to learning and expertise

To summarise, the socio-cultural approach to learning and expertise tries particularly to explain how people learn from each other and with each other, in interaction with other human beings. During recent decades, workplace learning studies have formed a solid basis for understanding learning at work, as an informal, incidental but also an intentional or planned practice. This has changed the way professional expertise is seen. Only some decades ago, individual expert abilities were based on the amount of specific knowledge that had accumulated during their professional life or career. Recent approaches have, instead, stressed varying circumstances, rich practice, experience, deliberate training and participatory processes as a part of expertise development. Expertise has been seen more as a property of a community than of an individual expert. Inside the socio-cultural approach, therefore, cognitive aspects and social and cultural dimensions are seen as an integrated entity. The research on social nature of knowledge and knowledge sharing is important when we try to understand how knowledge is moving in big companies between headquarters and remote parts of the company (e.g. Bissani et al., 2024) which is one of the core issues of this study.

In the following section, this more general approach toward learning at work will be narrowed down, the focus being on expatriate research areas, such as how forthcoming expatriates are selected and trained. Moreover, the repatriation process, which refers to the later transition when returning to the home country after assignment, will be reviewed.

## 2.3 Expatriate and repatriate research

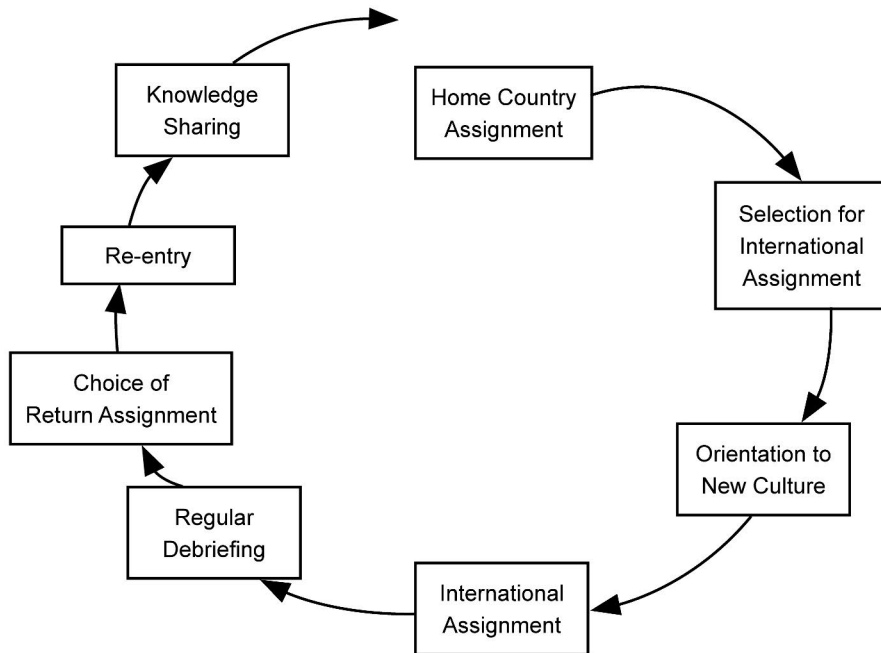
### Key areas of expatriate research

Research on expatriates, or sojourners or immigrants, as they are also called in the literature, (Church, 1982; Searle & Ward, 1990; Sappinen, 1992; and Takeuchi et al., 2002, among others) has been very vivid in business economics and psychological research during recent decades. The number of expatriate studies has increased along with the number of expatriates themselves. The first studies are already from the 1960s, “classics” although are from the 1980s (Black, Mendenhall, Church). Much of the published literature on expatriation has focused on the selection, training and adjustment. Out of the many factors that affect the success of international assignments, cross-cultural adjustment has probably received the most attention from researchers (Shaffer et al., 1999; Lessle et al., 2020). Many studies have targeted expatriate process failures, a part of the adjustment studies. Research in the areas of expatriate satisfaction with international assignments, and the effect of assignment on their subsequent career advancement, has increased. Only limited research was earlier done concerning the interaction between expatriates and the host-country nationals (Tung, 1998), but during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this research track has grown in published papers. Repatriation is a new research area that has increased during this millennium. The influence of organisational culture to repatriate knowledge sharing has still been rare (Burmeister & Deller, 2017).

Geographically, a majority of the studies has focused on expatriates coming from the United States of America. Recently, a growing number of studies get its target group from expatriates from European countries, such as Germany, Austria, Spain and Scandinavia – including many Finnish expatriate studies. Many of the host country studies report situations in Asian countries, such as China, Japan and Indonesia.

Increasing attention can be seen toward methodological rigor, representing studies that specifically address the question of to whom the term ‘expatriate’ applies, and the associated boundary conditions, distinguishing ‘business expatriate’ from others who relocate internationally, such as migrants, students and self-initiated expatriates (Andersen, 2021).

Berthoin Antal (2001) has described the whole expatriation cycle in the following way (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Expatriation cycle, Berthoin Antal, 2001, 78.

Figure 1 shows the phases that the expatriation cycle consists of, starting from the home country position and entering the repatriation phase. This cycle highlights the selection process and orientation to a new culture that includes cross-cultural training, the effect of culture and adjustment to the new country and environment. The repatriation phase includes seeking the new position and knowledge sharing. In addition to the above-mentioned research areas - what happens during the assignment - earlier studies have focused on the expatriates' target setting and performance management, learning targets and learning outcomes, and their life outside of work in the host country. Networking in the new country has been studied less.

In the following section, the main findings of previous empirical research are reviewed.

## Reasons for an assignment

The reasons companies send their employees abroad are varied, such as control or expertise development. Expatriates are also expected to facilitate entry into new markets or to develop international management competencies. In companies and business fields, there are diverse and varying policies for international assignments.

Employees may see an assignment as an opportunity for many positive outcomes: personal development, acquiring new skills, living in a foreign country, advancing in their career and getting better income than in their home country (Stahl et al., 2002).

## Selection for expatriate positions

Wang (2002) claims that the previous overseas experience has traditionally been used as the primary selection criterion for expatriate positions (Goldberg, 1966; Natani, 1974, as cited in Wang, 2002) – without taking into consideration the quantity, quality or location of the assignment. Presumably, expatriation increases cultural awareness and knowledge to some extent. A large, dense, diverse, close and frequent personal network is expected to increase the positive impact of the earlier assignment experience on expatriates' psychological well-being (Wang, 2002).

Technical job-related experience and technical job skills have been shown to be the two most important criteria used in selecting candidates for overseas positions according to Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991). Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) described American companies' selection criteria as "technical expertise" or "having a successful track record".

Earlier research has emphasised the characteristics of individuals' technical skills necessary to succeed and, to a lesser degree, upon the external environmental differences between the domestic and foreign cultures (Harvey, 1996). During selection, the "toughness" of the culture of the country where the expatriate will be assigned should be taken into consideration: data which are gathered from the coming host country's political, legal, socioeconomic, business and cultural systems should be compared to those systems which exist currently in the home country (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

Suutari, Raharjo and Riikkilä (2002) argue that expatriates need to be sensitive to cross-cultural differences and be able to adjust their style to fit the situation, which should be taken into consideration as a part of selection procedure, to choose the candidates that are flexible, sensitive to cross-cultural variation and have good interpersonal skills. Expatriate managers can be trained to face cross-cultural differences before the assignment. There are numbers of different variables when selecting managers for foreign assignments, such as the following: 1. technical competence and past performance, 2. environmental adaptability, 3. personality

traits, 4. spouse/family issues and 5. motivation/desire to undertake a foreign assignment (Harvey, 1996, 103).

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985, 40) have categorised the individual skills needed as follows:

1. Self-dimension: Encompasses skills that enable the expatriate to maintain mental health, psychological well-being, self-efficacy and effective stress management
2. Relationship dimension: Constitutes the array of skills necessary for the fostering of relationships with host nationals
3. Perception dimension: Entails the cognitive abilities that allow the expatriate to correctly perceive and evaluate the host environment and its actors.

The vast majority of expatriates have traditionally been men, although the number of female expatriates has grown during the last decades. Until the late 1980s, only five per cent of American expatriates, one per cent of Japanese and nine per cent of Finnish expatriates were women (Caligiuri & Tung, 1999). In Nordic countries, the figures of female expatriates have traditionally been higher than, for example, in the United States. Tung (1998) reported that there appears to be a slow but steady increase everywhere in the number of female expatriates. A 1996 US Conference Board survey found that the United-States-based multinational companies anticipate 20 per cent of their expatriates to be women by 2010 (Harvey, 1996). Since then, the situation has not greatly changed. In 2013, Global Relocation Trends stated that approximately 23 per cent of international assignees worldwide were women, but other statistics companies, like Mercer and Maurer, noted that the figure was closer to 13 per cent (Varma, 2016).

The limited representation of female expatriates has been explained primarily by lack of female talent in those functions where assignments are available. The second reason is the prejudices of host-country nationals, and the third is the lack of interest shown by females in global assignments due to personal reasons (Kollinger, 2005). From a career development point of view this under-representation of women in expatriate assignments is significant, since international experience is seen as a requisite for promotion to the top management positions (Caligiuri & Tung, 1999).

### Local culture, company culture and expatriates

Expatriates must have several different types of skills and talents to be able to survive in a foreign culture. Torbiorn (1982) has found that cultural novelty has its largest impact on expatriates during the first two years on assignment, after which the effect of cultural novelty diminishes somewhat.

According to Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), the ability to understand why foreigners behave the way they do is important in adjusting to an unfamiliar cultural environment. The previous research shows that people from different cultures often misinterpret each other's behaviours, because they have not learned cultural differences in their perceptions and evaluations of social behaviours. Most expatriates in Tung's study (1998) believed that it was important to select and choose better elements of both home and host countries to perform effectively abroad. Many also thought that they have to be both attracted to and knowledgeable about the host country's culture. Further, many of them perceived it to be very important to adapt unilaterally to the norms of the host country most of the time (Tung, 1998). Little over 50 per cent of the expatriates in Tung's (1998) study confessed that when they were abroad, they tended to socialise more with other people who came from similar cultural backgrounds, for example with other expatriates. The tendency to form similar relationships stems from greater ease of communication, trust and a common perspective toward life and the world in general. Tung refers here to Ibarra's notion of "homophily", indicating that people tend to associate with those who are like themselves (Ibarra, 1993).

The greater the degree of cultural distance is, the more likely an individual is to experience socio-cultural adjustment problems (Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Searle & Ward, 1990). The reason behind this is that individuals who are more culturally distant are likely to have fewer culturally appropriate skills for negotiating everyday situations. Cultural distance is also implicitly related to stress and coping models, since the transition between more distant cultures may entail greater life changes and engender more stress (Searle & Ward, 1990). Consequently, the bigger the difference between the two environments, the bigger is the need for a more adaptable, culturally flexible expatriate (Harvey, 1996). Mendenhall and Oddou talk about cultural "toughness", where some countries' cultures seem to be more difficult to adapt to than others (Black et al., 1991). How well the expatriate adjusts to his or her overseas experience seems to be partially related to the country of assignment (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

According to Torbiorn (1982), there is no big difference in adjustment between females and males regarding Swedish expatriates. Some cultures, though, may be extra "culturally-tough" for women, because they have a "male-dominated" value system within those cultures (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). Searle and Ward (1990) argued that the personality traits may also interact with culture-specific characteristics of the host environment when predicting psychological adjustment. Some people might have a better "cultural fit", meaning that the more closely the individual's personality traits are to host culture norms, the more adaptable those traits may be (Searle & Ward, 1990).

Black and Mendenhall (1990) argue that pre-departure training, especially cross-cultural training, has an important role in international adjustment. Cross-cultural

training provides individuals with useful information that reduces the uncertainty associated with the coming assignment and forms more accurate and realistic expectations about living and working in the prospective host country (Black et al., 1991). There is earlier evidence on the positive impact of cross-cultural training for expatriates' satisfaction and adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990). According to Takeuchi, Wang and Marinova (2005), earlier international experience in the same cultural area seems to be helpful in understanding the cultural values and appropriate behaviours and reduces the workplace strain during a subsequent assignment.

Global companies need to have a global company culture, and it has a direct impact on the selection of expatriates (Harvey, 1996). Expatriates act as company culture and value models in the host country and transfer the company culture from one country to another. According to Berthoin Antal (2001), organisational culture needs to support learning and innovation and decrease fears of lost power and stolen ideas when employees are sharing knowledge openly. Ismail (2015) states that relationship qualities between expatriates and host-country nationals are vital for knowledge transfer purposes, and they can achieve this through strong social capital. Social capital refers to the links, shared values, vision and understanding in any organisation that enables employees and groups to trust one another and work together via mutual social networks (Ismail, 2015).

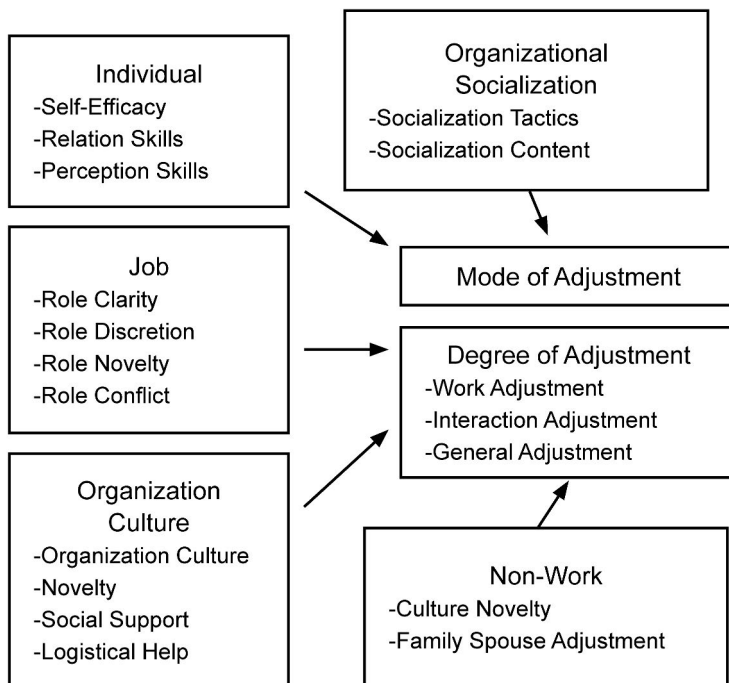
### Adjustment and coping mechanisms during assignment

It is difficult to define the term "adjustment" based on earlier research. What does it constitute and how does it change over time? Adaptation, acculturation, accommodation and adjustment have sometimes been used as synonyms. Also, numerous variables have been used as indices of "adjustment": acceptance of host culture, satisfaction, feelings of acceptance, coping with everyday activities, mood states and acquisition of culturally appropriate behaviour and skills (Searle & Ward, 1990). Kauppinen (1993) states that there are limitations in cross-cultural adjustment research, since so many studies have been done only via the mailed survey technique. According to him, more qualitative research methods should, therefore, be used. To conclude, the term "adjustment" includes both psychological dimension (feelings of well-being and satisfaction) as well as a socio-cultural component (ability to fit in and negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture) according to Searle & Ward (1990).

An expatriate assignment can be an experience and affliction at the same time. According to Black et al. (1991) moving to a foreign country might involve changes in the job profile and the local work culture in which responsibilities are executed; "it can also involve dealing with unfamiliar norms related to the general culture, business practices, living conditions, weather, food, health care, daily customs, political systems and even facing a foreign language daily" (Black et al., 1991, 292.)

Scholarly attention to international adjustment has increased during recent decades because of the significant rate and costs of failed international assignments. Research has shown that especially Americans failed in their overseas assignment; expatriates returned from their assignments earlier than expected and caused huge premature return costs for the company (Black et al., 1991; Harvey, 1996). Other countries, for example European countries, Asia and Australia, have experienced failure rates that are well beyond those of United-States-based expatriates. In big companies, the reason for the high failure rate is poor selection of candidates (Harvey, 1996). It is obvious that a main cause of cross-cultural assignment failure is the stress and uncertainty, which the expatriate faces in the new country and culture (Wang, 2002).

Because of the problems with adjustment and effectiveness, the main field of expatriate research has concentrated on expatriate adjustment since the late 1970s. One of the best-known models of adjustment – the model of international adjustment – is the Black, Mendenhall and Oddou model (1991, 303). There, the dimensions and determinants of adjustment to international assignments are described in the following categories: 1. adjustment to work, 2. adjustment to interacting with individuals in the foreign country and 3. general adjustment to foreign culture (Figure 2 below).



**Figure 2.** Framework of international adjustment, Black, Mendenhall and Oddou 1991, 303 (modified).

Figure 2. shows the factors that affect the expatriate's adjustment in a foreign country. Many researchers have used this model and further developed it, for example Shaffer, Harrison and Gilley in 1999. There are also various definitions regarding expatriate adjustment. All of them agree that expatriate assignment is a stressful event and adjustment is needed to reduce the amount of stress (Wang, 2002). Even though the employees are assessed, tested and introduced for local environments before assignment, there is still no training to "be an expatriate". Only a few of these people in Wang's research group had earlier experience; most of them left like "settlers", with open eyes but very limited experience of the coming country, states Wang (2002).

According to Wang (2002), psychological well-being is a very important indicator of expatriate adjustment. It has a strong predicting effect on expatriate performance and mediates the effects of other factors on expatriate performance. Ryff (1989) has defined psychological well-being as the positive functioning of an individual. According to her, psychological well-being has six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with other people, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Wang (2002) has interpreted it so that expatriates' higher psychological well-being means having a better sense of the local environment, better self-confidence, established personal relationships with others in the local country and clarity of personal goals and career development (Wang, 2002, 324). Wang also argues that other factors, such as cultural, organisational, family and interpersonal levels, influence expatriate performance via the mediating effects of psychological well-being.

Black (1990) has also studied expatriate interaction frequency with host-country national friends, home national friends and social groups. Black found that frequency with host-country national friends helped the expatriates' adjustment to the local culture (Black, 1990).

Takeuchi (2010) concludes in his review that expatriate adjustment research is still predominantly 'expatriate-centric' and neglects other stakeholders, such as host-country nationals.

### Adjustment factors

Wang (2002) argues that many important factors predict cross-cultural adjustment: 1. cultural distance, i.e., *cultural factor*, 2. human resources practices, including compensation and benefits, selection, training and role characteristics, i.e., *organisational factors* and 3. personality, demographic characteristics and family issues, i.e., *individual factors* (Black & Mendenhall, 1989; Black et al., 1991; Tung, 1998, among others).

**Cultural factor**, meaning cultural distance here, predicts cross-cultural adjustment according to Wang (2002). According to Black (1990, 1991), the more individuals interact with host nationals, the more information they will receive about what is appropriate and what is not in the host culture. Black has found a positive relationship between the percentage of time spent with host people and general cross-cultural adjustment. Perceptual skills also provide a significant means of understanding the local culture: the better perceptual skills, the easier it is for expatriates to understand and correctly interpret the host culture.

First-time expatriates may need more support from managers and colleagues; those who have previous expatriation experience may be better able to withstand high levels of cultural novelty (Shaffer et al., 1999). Experience from a previous assignment is important in adjustment: those who are first-timers on assignment rely more on their supervisor and home office support. Those who have more experience tend to rely more on on-site management rather than the home office (Shaffer et al., 1999). Expatriates' previous overseas work experience has been reported to be related to work adjustment for expatriates, but not to the general adjustment (Black et al., 1991).

Mao and Chen (2015) argue that expatriates' overseas time orientation influences their willingness for cultural adaptation in two ways: the longer they expect to stay in the host country, the more effort they may invest in building ties with host-country nationals; and the less embedded they become with their home country and the longer they expect to stay overseas in different countries, the less effort they may invest in adapting to a specific national culture, and the less embedded with any particular country.

Social learning approaches acknowledge the importance of interpersonal relationships, specifying that friendships with host nationals are crucial for learning the skills of a new culture. Hosts are able to assist in social skills learning, although most foreigners are on the periphery of society and have few opportunities for learning the norms. Even though increased contacts with host nationals would make participation and skills development much easier, research has shown that there used to be only little interaction between sojourners and host nationals (Searle & Ward, 1990). The local language has an important role in adjustment. According to Shaffer et al. (1999), expatriate adjustment can be weaker if they are not fluent in the host country's language. Lack of fluency may cause them to rely more on support from spouses or managers. In turn, qualification of local language and earlier experience in international assignments seems to aid adjustment (Shaffer et al., 1999). Host-country language fluency has been indicated as more important for the interaction adjustment of technical expatriates than for those who are in managerial positions. That may indicate the important role that technicians have in the knowledge transfer

to host country nationals; in that case, language training is critical (Shaffer et al., 1999).

The best way to handle cultural adjustment, according to Black and Mendenhall (1990), is cross-cultural training that has a positive impact on cross-cultural effectiveness, as it helps individuals to rapidly adjust to the new country and culture, thus increasing effectivity. Many studies have focused on the relationship between cross-cultural training and performance, and most of them report a link in there (Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

**Organisational factors**, such as a company's human resources policies and practices, are key issues regarding cross-cultural adjustment in a new country. According to Wang (2002), selection criteria and practices must be clear and fair, compensation and benefits designed for the country of destination, cross-cultural training needed for both the expatriate and family members, and the new role clarified as soon as possible. The importance of repatriation grows during the assignment, even if it was not regarded as important at the beginning and might, therefore, be overlooked by companies (Wang, 2002).

Role clarity and role discretion associate positively with international adjustment, especially work adjustment (Black et al., 1991). The company's common policies can reduce the expatriates' uncertainty and stress in the new position. This is why it is essential to train employees who leave to go abroad. Lack of familiarity in corporate policies may reduce productivity and satisfaction in the expatriate position (Harvey, 1996). Several empirical studies have examined the link between organisational support practices and the success of repatriate knowledge transfer. The results have shown that these correlate (Burmeister & Deller, 2017; Peltokorpi et al., 2022).

**Individual factors** are key in terms of cross-cultural adjustment. According to the literature, non-work factors seem to provide a key role in explaining the expatriates' satisfaction with international assignments (Bonache, 2005). Early expatriation research has shown that adjustment has a critical antecedent of performance, and key elements of adjustment are family-related issues. International assignment is a big change for the family and work life of the expatriate, especially for the expatriates who are married or in a committed relationship (Lazarova et al., 2010). Before assignment, both spouses very often have their own job and career, relatives, friends, colleagues, and other community contacts in the home country. Regarding incomes, the expatriate may be the only earner in the family in the new country. The expatriate's partner may take care of the household, stay at home, and have lost their own job and career, financial independence and family support in the home country. If the couple has children, new challenges might arise with schooling or loss of friends (Lazarova et al., 2010).

An increasing number of studies have been executed to examine the role of spouses during international assignments (Takeuchi et al., 2005; Black et al., 1991). The spouse or family members have a significant role in the expatriates' adjustment: spouse adjustment has been indicated as a significant predictor of expatriate adjustment. Although an expatriate might have the necessary skills for successful international adjustment, the assignment may be interrupted if the spouse or any family members have difficulties (Black et al., 1991). In their study, Arthur and Bennett (1995) found that the family situation was rated in the expatriate study as the most important contributor to a successful international assignment. Their study included altogether 338 international assignees from 45 multinational companies, 17 of the assignees were Finnish. The substantial effects estimated in Van der Laken's, van Engen's, van Veldhoven's and Paauwe's (2019) study indicated that family support, particularly by the spouse, is an equally important antecedent for expatriates' work performance as the daily assistance provided by peers and mentors.

The influence of a spouse's attitudes and behaviours can have an either positive or negative influence on an expatriate's adjustment. Positive if support is provided, and negative if stress is transmitted by the spouse. Many studies indicate a positive influence on expatriates (Takeuchi et al., 2005). According to Shaffer et al. (1999), culture novelty hindered general adjustment, while spouse adjustment helped it. The impacts of both non-work inputs on general adjustment far exceeded any other factors. Culture novelty and spouse adjustment have shown universal impact on adjustment, regardless of the expatriate's experience, language fluency or position in the organisation (Shaffer et al., 1999).

According to Takeuchi et al. (2005), in a survey of over 35 000 expatriates, 59 per cent of expatriates had children with them during international assignment. In that study, children seemed to increase the amount of workplace strain that the expatriates felt because of the family-to-work conflict.

Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus (2016) claim that non-work factors should also be examined, because they still affect company goals by affecting expatriate adjustment, although outside an organisation's influence. The knowledge of these factors will pay off for the companies; for example, correctly identifying the source of adaptation issues avoids unnecessary investments (Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016).

### Coping mechanisms abroad

According to Tung (1998, 133), expatriates have many different coping mechanisms in use for stress and strain when working abroad (in order of favour): 1. learning more about the host country, including language, sightseeing, 2. socialising with host nationals, 3. spending more time with one's family, 4. communicating with family

and friends back home, 5. socialising with other expatriates, 6. occupied with sports and athletic activities, 7. keeping busy with work all of the time and 8. engaging in stress-relief activities.

Most of the expatriates want to socialise with local people, although expatriates with children have shown more eagerness to socialise with other expatriates. Similarly, the expatriates who were based in Asia and the developing countries felt the same. This finding may be associated with “homophily”, the tendency to socialise with similar people as oneself (Ibarra, 1993). According to van Bakel (2019), expatriate literature generally suggests that expatriate contact with host-country nationals could have many benefits, but expatriates themselves often do not capitalise on this contact. Typically, there is little contact between expatriates and host-country nationals; expatriates often remain in what is called the expatriate bubble. In many countries, they have more expatriate friends than friends from the host country, and they turn to other expatriates because they are in the same situation or from the same national background (van Bakel, 2019).

Males have shown to rely on sports and athletic activities as coping mechanisms, even more in less developed countries due to the limited social circles. Further, expatriates have reported that they keep in contact with family members and friends in their home country, women and single expatriates more than others. In turn, more experienced expatriates with many international assignments used this mechanism less (Tung, 1998).

In Tung’s study (1998), the respondents were very eager to learn the local language, history and culture of the country. A frequently used mechanism for coping with isolation was to spend more time with one’s family. Those who lived with somebody used the mechanism naturally more as well as those who had children. Some people kept themselves busy with work all the time to cope with isolation (Tung, 1998). Regarding Finnish expatriates, and based on earlier studies, the failure rates are on a very low level, only 1-2 per cent. For Finnish expatriates, the main reason for premature returns has been adjustment problems of the family or of the expatriate (Kauppinen, 1994).

## Target setting and performance management

Researchers have not been consistent in defining expatriates’ effectiveness. Multinational companies have varying systems in defining accomplishment of assignment targets, attrition rates or increased revenues. Only a few companies have systems to track the outcomes and attribute them to individual assignees (Shaffer et al., 2006).

In many studies, the following three dimensions have been employed for the study design: adjustment, withdrawal cognitions and job performance. Only recently

have there been studies on the personal requirements for expatriate effectiveness (Shaffer et al., 2006). There are only a few studies available covering expatriate performance management, although expatriates can play a critical role in the global success of a company. There are open questions in performance management areas, such as the following: Should performance goals be set by the sending company/manager or by the receiving party? How should expatriate training and development matters be dealt with during the assignment? Is there the same performance management system available in both countries? (Tahvanainen, 2000).

Caligiuri (1997, 123) has developed a four-dimensional model to conceptualise expatriate performance: 1) technical performance, 2) contextual/prosocial performance, 3) contextual/managerial performance and 4) expatriate-specific performance. *Technical performance* includes the expatriate's performance in his or her specific expertise area (for example, starting an operation, training the host country employees in new technologies). *Contextual or prosocial performance* is related to the expatriate's commitment to the organisation and present position, motivation, dedication and maintenance of personal discipline. *Contextual/managerial performance* regards factors like maintaining good working relationships, training local employees, representing the company outside the company and communicating effectively. *Expatriate-specific performance* consists of transferring information and cross-cultural knowledge, establishing good relationships with local employees and fostering commitment to the organisation (Wang, 2002). Managers can play an important role in knowledge transfer regards, as they are responsible for explaining the organisational objectives that guide the subordinate's behaviour (Berthoin Antal, 2001). Bucher, Burmeister, Orland and Deller (2022) found that empowering leadership facilitated repatriation knowledge transfer via the perceived trustworthiness of domestic co-workers (Bucher et al., 2022).

Tahvanainen (2000, 269) has examined expatriates' performance management in Nokia Telecommunications. According to her, the performance of different types of expatriates in various situations should not be managed similarly in a target setting. The following groups are recognised: 1. top managers, 2. middle managers, 3. business establishers, 4. customer project employees and 5. R&D project personnel. Research and development project expatriate performance management is different than, for example, customer projects according to Tahvanainen (2000). The biggest difference is that R&D employees are physically closer to their manager, most often at the same site, and R&D projects are internal to the company. These projects are usually well-planned, and ongoing feedback is given regularly. Typically, communication of specific performance goals happened in weekly or bi-weekly project meetings. It means that uncertainty faced by R&D-project expatriates is lower than in other groups (Tahvanainen, 2000).

## Success factors

Tung has defined (1998) expatriate success as an ability to accomplish corporate goals or objectives. In her study, success measures were based on self-report, the mean score of which being high (4,23 in a 5-point scale), in attaining corporate goals and objectives during assignment (Tung, 1998). Caligiuri and Tung have continued (1999) examining the success rate differences between male and female expatriate employees (n=98 expatriates from a US-based multinational organisation). They used three separate dimensions to measure the success of expatriate assignments: premature termination, cross-cultural adjustment and actual job performance during the assignment, a method that was in Caligiuri's and Tung's study called supervisor-rated performance. Cross-cultural adjustment was surveyed from the expatriate him- or herself, and the actual job performance was enquired about from the expatriate's line manager with a separate questionnaire. Caligiuri's and Tung's research (1999) suggests that female and male expatriates can perform equally well in international assignments, regardless of the host country's predisposition to women. According to Lineham and Scullion (2002), networking might be especially important for female managers who are returning to their home country. They do not necessarily have mentors. Managerial women may also be less integrated into organisational networks than men. Women's work-related networks are especially important from a career development point of view (Lineham & Scullion, 2002). Commitment to the company was also an important factor when thinking about satisfaction; in Tung's study (1998), there was a positive correlation between organisational tenure and satisfaction with expatriation.

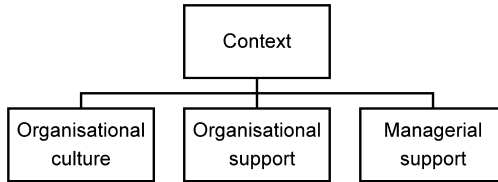
## Repatriation and knowledge sharing

In the present study, knowledge sharing is examined from two point of views: from the host-country perspective, i.e., how the expatriate is transferring knowledge from the home country to the host country; and second, from the repatriation perspective, i.e., how the expatriate is transferring knowledge from the host country to the home country. Repatriation refers to the phase when an expatriate returns to the home country from assignment.

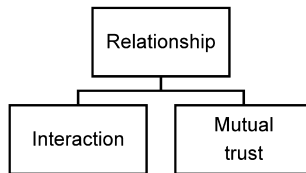
Repatriation knowledge sharing is quite a new research area among expatriate studies. Burmeister and Deller (2017) have prepared a comprehensive study of repatriation knowledge transfer literature between the years 2000 and 2015. It shows that the first remarkable study was executed in 2000 by Berthoin Antal. Since then, scholars have developed conceptual models of repatriate knowledge transfer and examined successful knowledge transfers. There has been very limited quantitative research on repatriation knowledge transfer, although it has grown in numbers during

the last decade. Burmeister and Deller (2017) have described the framework of repatriate knowledge transfer in the following way (see Figure 3):

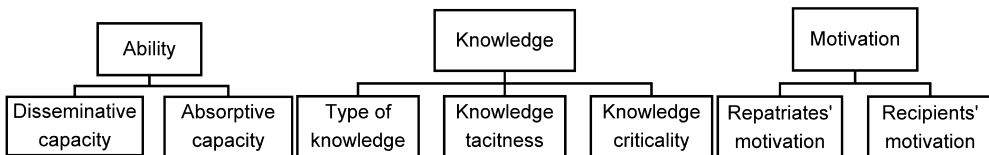
**Organisation**



**Dyad**



**Individual**



**Figure 3.** Multilevel framework of repatriate knowledge transfer, Burmeister and Deller 2017, 35.

Burmeister and Deller (2017) have divided the variables influencing repatriate knowledge transfer into three levels: individual, dyadic and organisational, following general knowledge transfer principles. In Figure 3, the organisational level includes the context where the expatriate operates. The dyadic level refers to the relationships where knowledge transfers take place, and which is strongly related to trust between two persons. The individual level contains the individual’s capacity to distribute and receive knowledge, knowledge types and motivational factors during repatriation. Motivation refers here to the repatriate’s motivation to transfer knowledge to the home country, and recipients’ motivation refers to the home-country employee motivation

to receive the repatriate's knowledge (Burmeister & Deller, 2017). Theoretical background on repatriate knowledge sharing is most often knowledge creation (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) or the organisational learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990) approach according to Burmeister's and Deller's review. There are other theoretical approaches mentioned, like social resource theory, social capital theory and communication theory (Burmeister & Deller, 2017).

### Obstacles to repatriation knowledge sharing

International assignments are both challenging and complex for organisations (Shaffer et al., 2006). Repatriate knowledge represents a valuable organisational resource, but its sharing upon return to the home work unit is a difficult process that often fails (Bucher et al., 2022).

Many researchers have emphasised that repatriate knowledge is often tacit and thus difficult to transfer. Even though expatriates acquire valuable knowledge during assignment, knowledge transfer often fails when they return to their home country and home unit. Burmeister, Lazarova and Deller (2018) have found several reasons for repatriate knowledge transfer failures and created suggestions to improve the situation. They emphasise the dyadic nature of repatriate knowledge transfer and state that one should not only focus on repatriates. They talk about repatriates' "disseminative capacity" and the domestic employees' "absorptive capacity" when studying repatriates as knowledge senders, and domestic employees as knowledge recipients on the repatriate knowledge transfer process (Burmeister et al., 2018).

The repatriation practices are also considered to have an effect on the ability and motivation of repatriates to transfer knowledge (Berthoin Antal, 2001; Furuya et al., 2009; Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; Oddou et al., 2013). The job to which the expatriate will return is also an essential factor according to the literature. When the position is not related to the job the employee had abroad, the opportunity to share the knowledge acquired during the expatriation is lower (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; Oddou et al., 2013). Another factor the literature highlights as determinant of the repatriates' knowledge sharing is how much the company values the international experience and the knowledge and skills they have acquired abroad (Berthoin Antal, 2001; Furuya et al., 2009; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005; Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; Oddou et al., 2013). Nery-Kjerfve and McLean (2012) claim that repatriates will be more willing to share their knowledge when they feel valued by the organisation and are seen by others as valuable reservoirs of knowledge.

Burmeister et al. (2018) suggest that the companies should try to influence individuals' disseminative and absorptive capacity by targeted practices and training. The company could, for example, increase the receptiveness of domestic employees by using the internal communications mechanisms to publish the type and value of

the repatriate's international knowledge. Reiche (2011) has stated that repatriates who have personal links to local employees at both headquarters and foreign subsidiaries can act as boundary spanners, thereby facilitating knowledge flows to headquarters. Organisations should also create structured meeting practices, where repatriates can share what they have learned abroad. The teachability of repatriates' knowledge should also be taken into consideration: that kind of knowledge can often be tacit in nature so, e.g., new question techniques or shadowing could be used. If domestic employees' international experience is limited, the company could offer awareness training about the value of repatriate knowledge (Burmeister et al., 2018).

### Problems during repatriation phase

Most of the expatriates in Tung's (1998) study (409 expatriates in 51 countries) were satisfied with their assignment, i.e., overall expatriation (mean 4,1 in a 5-point scale). When the same respondents were asked about repatriation, most of them were rather unsatisfied (mean= 2,6, in a 5-point scale). The reason for this discrepancy might be that expatriates value the experience itself and the opportunities it brings for their personal development and career enhancement. Those expatriates who were promised a promotion already upon leaving were more satisfied than those who did not get that kind of a promise (Tung, 1998).

It has been shown that international assignments do not always have a positive impact on those repatriates who stay in the same organisation (Bonache, 2005). Bonache has defined *career* as a sequence of work-related experiences and attitudes during one's work lifespan. When someone is leaving for an expatriate assignment, many of the professional contacts in the home country might disappear, and it can harm their career development. According to Podolny and Baron (1997), social networks have positive effects on career advancement, especially on upward mobility. According to Wittig-Berman and Beutell (2009), there are high costs associated with expatriate failure and repatriate turnover. Wang (2002) reported that expatriate failure causes a high level of loss to the employer and may result in loss of market share or hurt the reputation of the company.

According to Tung (1998), the biggest reason for high levels of dissatisfaction with repatriation was job insecurity or inadequate advancement opportunities when returning to the home country. Only seven per cent out of 409 respondents were guaranteed a promotion at home upon successful completion of an international assignment. The high level of dissatisfaction upon return can cause problems for the company. It can lead to high turnover. For example, American expatriates had a high risk to leave the company during the first year after repatriation: 74 % informed to consider leaving their employer. In Tung's study, the expatriates reported that most companies did not pay enough attention to their repatriation policies or programmes

(Tung, 1998). A great number of German expatriates see their international assignment as an opportunity for personal and professional development and career advancement even though they have faced the problems with poor company policies in career management (Stahl et al., 2002). These findings support the notion of “boundaryless careers”, which was first introduced by Arthur and Rousseau in 1996. A boundaryless career is managed by the employee, not the company, and it is characterised more by inter-organisational mobility than the traditional career (Bonache, 2005). It demands flexibility, mobility, networking, developing knowledge and taking care of one’s own career, and thus an expatriate assignment might give good prerequisites for it.

### Summary of expatriate and repatriate research

According to earlier studies, expatriates see their assignment as an opportunity for many positive outcomes, such as personal development, acquiring new skills or language qualifications, the possibility to live in a foreign country and experience the culture, and advancing in their career. Many different factors affect expatriates’ adjustment in a foreign country. Pre-departure training, especially cross-cultural training, has an important role in international adjustment. Cross-cultural training provides individuals with useful information that reduces the uncertainty associated with the coming assignment and forms more accurate and realistic expectations about living and working in the prospective host country.

Work-related target settings in the host country vary. Expatriates tend to score high on the success of the assignment as a whole or reaching their targets. Personal targets before the assignments varied. Some targets have been, for example, developing personal attributes, acquiring new skills and knowledge, or language qualifications. Expatriates have not been so successful in all sectors, like work-related targets. The biggest reason for the high level of dissatisfaction with repatriation was job insecurity or inadequate advancement opportunities when returning to the home country. Many expatriates felt that they did not get enough support from the company in finding the next position when returning to their home country, and many of them felt that they could not make enough use of what they had learned during assignment. They could be critical of their company’s repatriation practice, but the expatriates were still satisfied with the opportunities the overseas experience brought for their personality development and enrichment of their personal lives. The planning and selection of the position to which the expatriate will return is probably the most important factor that will determine how much of the learning that was gained during the assignment can be used during the return to the home country.

There are many obstacles to repatriation knowledge sharing. Knowledge gained during assignment may not transfer when the expatriates return to their home unit.

Repatriate knowledge is often tacit and more difficult to share. Expatriates acquired a wealth of different kinds of knowledge (declarative, procedural, conditional, axiomatic and relational knowledge) that could be used for organisational learning, including the rich culture-specific knowledge and new ideas and skills that could be adapted to home-country practices. According to previous studies, the companies did not stimulate the transition of expatriate knowledge and, therefore, it remained invisible.

To summarise, expatriates have high expectations for the assignment: it can be a good experience or an affliction for them. Many problems have been reported in literature, such as family and social tensions, frustrating career implications, lack of respect for acquired skills, loss of status and reverse culture shock when returning to the home country. Assignees who adapted too well to the host country may experience a more severe culture shock upon returning to their home country. Research has recently focused on the companies and their repatriation practices. Improvement ideas have been given to improve the repatriation phase, including the costs that ineffective repatriation causes to the company.

Knowledge sharing and networking practices are the main targets in the present study, but the selection procedure of expatriates, cultural adjustment, target setting, performance and repatriation are also in focus. Repatriation is especially connected to the success of knowledge sharing. The following figure shows the main expatriate research areas of the study (Figure 4 below).

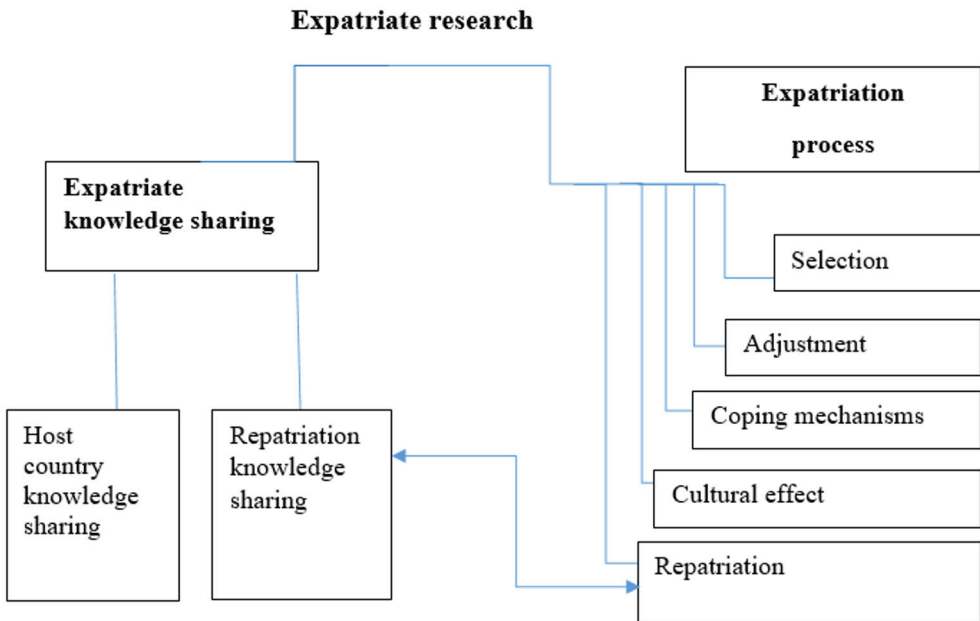


Figure 4. The main expatriate research areas of the study.

## 2.4 Network research

The use of social network analysis (SNA) started in the late 1970s and has since become very popular. A social network is a structure of two components, actors and relations, and these components are common to most network definitions (Knoke & Yang, 2008). Social networks operate on many levels, from families up to the level of nations. They play a critical role in determining the way problems are solved, organisations are run, markets evolve and the degree to which individuals succeed in achieving their goals (Abbasi et al., 2011). In general, the benefit of analysing social networks is that it can help people understand how to share professional knowledge in an efficient way and to evaluate the performance of individuals, groups or the entire social network (Abbasi et al., 2010).

Otte and Rousseau (2002) argue that social network analysis is not a formal theory but a strategy for investigating social structures. It can be applied in many fields to study collaboration structures and other forms of social interaction networks. Wetherell, Plakans and Wellman (1994) have described SNA saying that it conceptualises social structure as a network with ties connecting members and channelling resources. It also focuses on the characteristics of ties rather than on the characteristics of the individuals, and it views communities as ‘personal communities’, by which they mean networks of individual relations that people create, maintain and use in their daily lives. According to the literature, social network analysis looks at social relationships in terms of network theory, consists of nodes, represents actors within the network and ties (or links), which represent relationships between the actors. These relationships provide, for example, advice or information (Otte & Rousseau, 2002). The nodes can be people, teams, departments, nations or any other type of active entity according to Ofem, Floyd, Borgatti, Caulkins and Jordan (2012).

A social network is thus a constituent of two or more actors (individuals) who are connected through one or more relationships, such as providing advice, information and so on. Analysis of social networks is usually conducted by using the socio-centric approach, i.e., the whole network or the ego-centric approach, i.e., the ego-centric networks (Chung et al., 2005).

Ego networks are comprised of a focal actor (called the ego) and the people to whom the ego is directly connected. These people to whom the ego is connected are referred to as “alters” (Prell, 2012).

These two different traditions of SNA are based on two distinct historical traditions. In the latter, the network of one person is analysed, the node of interest is the ego, and its immediate neighbours are the alters (Abbasi et al., 2010; Carolan, 2014). This thesis work follows the ego-centric network theory terms and approaches, focusing on expatriates and their connections to other individuals. This selected approach may answer questions regarding the impact of network ties on an

individual actor's behaviour and to identify which types of ties are most or least significant to individual network members (Pataraiia et al., 2014).

In organisational research, a distinction is commonly made between formal and informal network structure. A formal network is composed of a set of formally specified relationships between managers and subordinates and among representatives of functionally differentiated groups, who must interact to accomplish an organisationally defined task. Informal networks involve more freely chosen patterns of interaction, where the content may be work related, social or a combination of both (Ibarra, 1993). Ego-centric network analysis typically focuses on network characteristics, such as size, diversity, density, frequency and strength of ties among others. These private network characteristics are also interacting with other factors, such as cultural, organisational and individual factors, which are identified in expatriate literature and predict expatriates' psychological well-being according to Wang (2002).

Network literature further distinguishes instrumental network ties and expressive contacts that primarily provide friendship and social support (Ibarra, 1993). Instrumental ties arise in the course of work role performance and involve the exchange of job-related resources, including information, expertise, professional advice, political access and material resources. Peer relationships can be seen as a critical source of instrumental support and developmental advice (Ibarra, 1993, 59). Expressive network relationships involve the exchange of friendship and social support, and they are characterised by higher levels of closeness and trust than those that are exclusively instrumental (Krackhardt, 1990; Ibarra, 1993).

### The importance of networking to social support and well-being

According to Lin (1983), social resources, such as social, instrumental or emotional support, that are embedded in social networks are very important for individuals' psychological well-being. Wang argues (2002) that they, therefore, also influence expatriate performance. A lack of initiative to establish a new social network in the new host country results in a small personal network size and hinders the maintenance of psychological well-being. When entering a new country, psychological well-being may be threatened by the uncertainty of the new local environment.

The network ties transfer either social support or social strain among the partners in the network. Social support can be emotional, instrumental, informational and feedback support (House et al., 1988). Emotional support includes trust, concern and affection, providing esteem and listening. Regarding instrumental support, expatriates presumably need support with the unfamiliar local conditions – help from local people or expatriate peers in local work customs, bureaucracy, etc. According

to House et al. (1988), informational support means providing a person with information that the person can use in coping with personal or environmental problems (Wang, 2002). In the case of expatriates, informational support means information about local culture, local customs and other information that can reduce the uncertainty that expatriates feel in a foreign country. Feedback support is a kind of evaluation, which keeps expatriates on the right track in terms of working and living in the local environment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991).

Research on social networks has shown that social support from co-worker networks influences job satisfaction (Hurlbert, 1991). According to Tung (1998), expatriates tend to interact more with other expatriates, because they have language- and culture-related problems with the local people. Unfortunately, interaction with locals is then limited for their adjustment (Tung, 1998). The local people have access to various local resources, being able to provide more and better social, informational and instrumental support (Wang, 2002). According to Bonache (2005), there is so little interaction with the local peers that expatriates miss an opportunity to learn about the host country's culture.

The results in Li's study (2009) showed that a larger social network, composed of host nationals and with more frequent contacts with host nationals, tended to give the expatriate more social support. According to Li, the closeness of host national networks was positively related to both the exchange of cultural information and social support. Furthermore, expatriates receiving more cultural information reported higher job performance, and expatriates experiencing more social support showed higher levels of job performance and job satisfaction according to Li (2009). Fahr, Bartol, Shapiro and Shin (2010, 17) argue that "expatriates' adjustment in the host country depends on both their motivation and ability to seek support relationships with the right actors, as well as their success in persuading the actors they contact to act as support providers".

On the other hand, the peer expatriates are important sources for emotional and feedback support, since expatriates can together share their positive and negative experiences. According to Wang (2002), the ideal cultural diversity with a mix of locals and expatriate peers would be best for improving expatriates' psychological well-being. When expatriates enter a foreign country and culture, their previous network in a way "fades" away - their home country network remains but maybe changes - and they will form new networks in the new country. According to Li (2009), developing and maintaining a network requires a significant amount of time and effort. An expatriate with a very large network may not have enough time to develop many close relationships and experience frequent interactions.

Particularly under conditions of uncertainty, for example under unknown circumstances and a foreign environment, individuals are more likely to network with people who have similar personal attributes as they have themselves.

Restricting network interaction to similar others, however, reduces access to information from different parts of the organisation or community. At the same time, it may strengthen group cohesion (Ibarra, 1993). That explains why expatriates tend to socialise with each other during assignment, covering also free-time activities with other expatriates living in the neighbourhood.

Although people tend to feel more comfortable interacting with similar others, the results of Li's study (2009) suggest that organisations should create more opportunities, such as internal social events and orientation sessions, for expatriates to socialise with host nationals. Not all expatriates socialise with other expatriates. Harvey (2008) has studied social networks of highly skilled migrants, British and Indian scientists in Boston. He argues that they do not tend to use expatriate social networks. Harvey demonstrates that wider differences in cultural norms to the indigenous population, homogeneity within a migrant group and length of time spent in the US are not the only factors that affect the participation of highly skilled migrants in expatriate social networks. Other factors, such as the size of an expatriate group, the annual flow of migrants to a region as well as the propensity of expatriates to participate in indigenous social networks, will also affect the extent to which they participate in these networks (Harvey, 2008).

Agha-Alikhani (2016) has executed one of the first studies to address social network embeddedness and social support systems of globally mobile employees by using social network analysis. Agha-Alikhani (2016) investigated self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates and compared their similarities and differences in networking. The findings show that there are differences in structural terms as well as in the composition of the networks. While the networks of self-initiated expatriates tend to be bigger in size, assigned expatriates' networks tend to be denser. In terms of the composition, traditional expatriates do have more ties with colleagues that are in the same company, while the self-initiated group is more closely embedded within their occupation, with ties to colleagues worldwide (Agha-Alikhani, 2016).

Another important approach to network ties regards homogeneity versus diversity of the network ties. Diversity is defined as social heterogeneity, for example, how many kinds of actors exist in the network. Diversity may be divided based on cultural features: for example, to what extent the expatriates' network comprises local host contacts and peers, gender diversity, and relationship diversity, such as a variety of different contacts, like friends, managers, colleagues, family members and relatives (Wang, 2002). Homophily refers to the degree to which individuals are similar in identity to those people with whom they are interacting (Marsden, 1988). Interpersonal similarity seems to increase networking between those individuals, since it increases ease of communication, improves predictability of behaviour and fosters relationships of trust and reciprocity (Kanter, 1977). People

who work in the same department or who have similar jobs tend to share similar ways of viewing the world, and this feature facilitates their interaction.

According to Tamarit, Cuesta, Dunbar and Sanchez (2018), immigrants tend to use and preserve their native languages and traditions and form a support network for their members. One of the main mechanisms for the formation of these communities is that the individuals already settled in the hosting location serve as links for those who are coming, and so facilitate the integration of the newcomers in the host country, for example in terms of professional and housing opportunities. Based on the results of Li's study (2009), the ability to speak the local language is an important skill, which facilitates interaction with local people and provides access to cultural information. Hence, the provision of language skills training should be a priority for international organisations according to Li (2009). Black (1990) has also studied expatriate interaction frequency with host-country national friends, home national friends and social groups. Black found that frequency with host-country national friends helped expatriates' adjustment to the local culture (Black, 1990).

Much of what happens in organisations is only partially related to the organisational chart: interaction networks are indispensable to both organisational functioning and individual effectiveness according to Ibarra (1993). Network literature has emphasised the instrumental benefits of weak ties. Weak ties are the channels through which socially distant ideas, influences or information reaches the individual, whereas strong ties bond similar people together. Thus, information obtained through strong ties is more likely to be redundant (Granovetter, 1973; Krackhardt, 1990). Expatriates usually represent home companies when acting as managers or coordinators in host companies. These positions tend to have high role conflict, ambiguity and overload, since they have to meet the interests of both home and host-country organisations (Tung, 1998). With large network size, expatriates may feel they have more control over these dysfunctional role characteristics (Wang, 2002).

Brown and Duguid (2001) argue that as accounts of social networks and occupational communities indicate, both are likely to have more in common with their peers in other organisations than with many of the other employees in their own. Focus on the organisation as a cultural unit thus tends to over-determine the contribution of often quite distant structures to groups of people with quite distinct practices (Brown & Duguid, 2001).

Pustovit (2020) has identified which types of individuals are in the best position to facilitate expatriate adjustment. He suggests that expatriates would most benefit from forming connections with host country nationals (HCN) who have the highest centrality, that is, having the most connections in a network. Pustovit has also introduced a novel approach on how parent companies can guide the development of ties between expatriates and HCNs with the use of social network methodology.

According to Pustovit (2020) embeddedness, or possession of many links or connections, is associated with advantages for all employees (Wasserman & Faust, 1994); embeddedness may be of particular benefit to expatriates due to the substantial differences in the magnitude and concentration of changes inherent during relocation, and the greater number of impediments to adjustment and integration that expatriates face (Harrison et al., 2004). Employees who have the most connections in a network have the most access to information, receive important information before others do and benefit most from colleagues' experience and perceptions (Ahuja et al., 2003). Having access to many different sources, central individuals best understand the norms and expectations in the network, which is not the type of information that would be available to individuals with a sparse network and few connections (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Embeddedness can allow expatriates to attain key information about their new roles. The more connections an expatriate has, the higher his or her capacity to gain access to valuable knowledge (Pustovit, 2020). Being connected to a highly central individual who is highly embedded, expatriates are more likely to become embedded themselves and less likely to terminate their assignments early as a result (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012).

Li (2009) argues that there might be other factors, such as personality or level of ability, that influence an expatriate's social network development and perception of cultural information and social support. Bruning, Sonbar and Wang (2012) have studied expatriates in China and found that expatriate extraversion is positively related to overall performance; and host-country national colleagues are negatively associated with general adjustment, but positively with overall performance. Yet China is ranked number one as the country presenting the greatest number of difficulties for expatriates and has the highest rate of assignment failure (Bruning et al., 2012).

### Networking during repatriation phase

Expatriates might face reverse culture shock while returning back to their home country, which can hinder an employee's adjustment to the home culture and to the home-country organisation (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012). During assignment, expatriates and their families assimilate the overseas culture. The experience of living and working abroad often alters mental maps and changes behavioural routines. It might create difficulties for readjustment to the home culture (Stroh et al., 2000).

In the workplace, expatriate employees lose contact with the day-to-day operations of their organisations and contact with the social network of colleagues and supervisors in the domestic organisation (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Lineham

& Scullion, 2002). Upon return, those social ties need to be re-established, and new technologies and procedures need to be relearned. Expatriates and their families often take from six months to one year to readjust back to the daily operation of their organisations and to their home country cultures according to Lineham and Scullion (2002). The repatriation phase causes more acute problems for female expatriates according to Lineham and Scullion (2002). Women often suffer major personal and professional stresses during the repatriation phase, because they often assist with the reintegration of the family to the home culture. Female executives are still a minority among the expatriate population; their repatriation phase is often yet more difficult because of the limited network of colleagues to rely on upon re-entry (Lineham & Scullion, 2002). Oddou et al. (2009) argued that repatriation knowledge is a knowledge creation process that is intermediated by a resocialisation process of repatriates. Knowledge sharing will only occur when expatriates feel valued by the organisation and are seen by others as valuable reservoirs of knowledge. Recognition will allow repatriates to be more willing to share their knowledge with others and will allow other members of the organisation to be more open to absorb their knowledge. Corporations can assist this process by promoting feedback-seeking behaviours and social networks to facilitate the reintegration of repatriates to the organisation (Crowne, 2009).

### Summary of expatriate networks

Personal, i.e. ego-centric, network analysis focuses on individuals and their connections. When expatriates enter a foreign country and culture, their previous network in their home country remains but maybe changes, and expatriates form new networks in the host country.

Social network analysis can be applied in many fields to study collaboration structures and other forms of social interaction networks; analysing social networks assists people in understanding how to share knowledge in an efficient way, and at the same time to evaluate the performance of individuals. Social resources, such as social, instrumental or emotional support, are very important for individuals' psychological well-being and, therefore, they influence expatriate performance and job satisfaction. Expatriates tend to socialise with other expatriates, because of the same kind of culture, values, language and situation, though the ideal cultural diversity with a mix of locals and expatriate peers would be best for improving expatriates' psychological well-being.

Individuals are more likely to network with people who have similar personal attributes as they have themselves. Restricting network interaction to similar others, however, reduces access to information from different parts of the organisation or community. The ability to speak the local language is an important skill, which

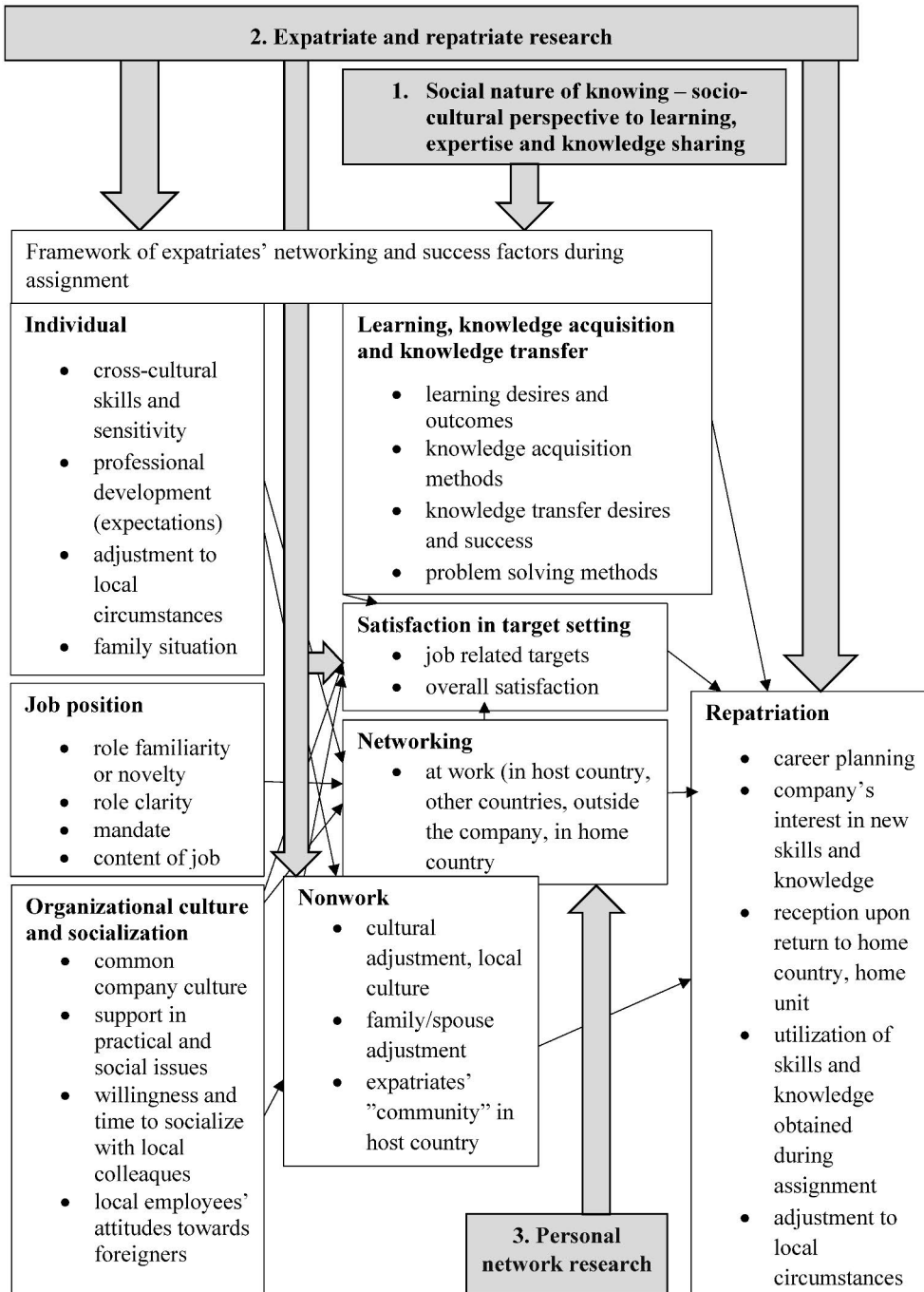
facilitates interaction with local people and provides access to cultural information. Much of what happens in organisations is only partially related to the organisational chart; according to Pustovit (2020) employees who have the most connections in a network have the most access to information, receive important information before others do and benefit most from colleagues' experience and perceptions. Central individuals understand best the norms and expectations in the networks. It is not the type of information that would be available to individuals with a sparse network and few connections. The more connections an expatriate has, the higher his or her capacity to gain access to valuable knowledge is (Pustovit, 2020). There might be other factors, such as personality or level of ability, that influence an expatriate's social network development and perception of cultural information and social support.

According to previous studies, the length of assignment affects the amount of networking in the host country, and the amount of networking in the home country correlates to the amount of networking in the host country. Gender influences the amount of networking: men have bigger work-related networks, and they are networking more in the host country. Managerial women may also be less integrated in organisational networks than men. Women's work-related networks are especially important from a career development point of view. Networking in the host country influences the results and targets achieved during assignment.

Knowledge sharing will occur when expatriates feel valued by the organisation and are seen by others as valuable reservoirs of knowledge. Recognition increases repatriates' willingness to share their knowledge and other members of the home organisation to be more open to absorb their knowledge. Companies can assist this process to facilitate the reintegration of repatriates to the organisation. Expatriates networks have a significant impact on knowledge sharing while returning home. One of the main targets of the assignment is knowledge sharing between home and host units. That can mean knowledge sharing from the home unit to the host unit or vice versa. Returning home might also cause adjustment problems; expatriates might face reverse culture shock while returning to their home country, which can hinder an employee's adjustment to the home culture and to the home-country organisation.

## 2.5 Conclusion of the theoretical part

As a summary of the whole theoretical part, the main theoretical sections – 1. social nature of knowing – socio-cultural perspective to learning and expertise, 2. expatriate and repatriate research and 3. personal network research – are connected to the framework of research design of the present study in the following way (Figure 5 below).



**Figure 5.** Framework of expatriates' networking, knowledge sharing and success factors during assignment (modified according to Black, Mendenhall and Oddou 1991, 303), complemented with theoretical aspects of the present study, indicated with the thick arrow.

The first theoretical part of the present study - social nature of knowing – socio-cultural perspective to learning and expertise – is connected to the framework's section Learning, knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing, which is reviewed from a socio-cultural perspective. The more general approach toward learning at work has been narrowed down, the focus being on expatriate research areas. In this part of the frame, interest is particularly paid to the individual level of learning, situational learning and networks as a part of more general organisational learning.

The second part of the theoretical aspects of the present study – expatriate and repatriate research – includes the framework's areas Individual success factors, Position related issues, Organisational culture and socialisation, Non-work adjustment, Satisfaction to assignment, and Repatriation phase. Expatriates see their assignment as an opportunity for many positive outcomes, but many different factors affect expatriates' adjustment in a foreign country, as the framework shows. Expatriates tend to score high on the success of the assignment, but according to earlier research, the biggest reason for the high level of dissatisfaction with repatriation was job insecurity or inadequate advancement opportunities when returning to the home country. Previous studies show that there are many obstacles to repatriation knowledge sharing. In this part of the frame, interest is particularly paid to the success factors and repatriation phase.

The third part of the present study's theoretical aspect is personal network research, which is reviewed from the personal network research perspective. In the framework and this study, networking at work is examined from different perspectives: in the host country, in other countries, outside the company and the home country. Personal network analysis focuses on individuals and their connections. Ego-centric network analysis is used in the present study. According to previous studies, networking influences expatriates' results during assignment. Length of assignment and gender seem to influence the amount of networking during assignment. In this part of the frame, interest is particularly paid to what kind of networking ties expatriates have been able to build while living in the host country.

To sum up the theoretical part of my study, individual level experiences, job related aims and cultural variety in the work organisations have all presumably influenced network relationships and collaboration during the assignment, which is at the centre of the present study. Non-work factors, such as adjustment to local culture and family adjustment, have their own impact on overall satisfaction of the assignment, as well as on network relations. Learning, knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing are expected to be associated with target setting, the expatriate period and repatriation phase. In the following section, the research questions are defined.

# 3 Research Questions

The aim of the study is to describe, analyse and explain how employees build networks in an unfamiliar environment. How much do they use their previous network, which factors are related to networking during and after the assignment, and how do networking activities influence expertise sharing? What kind of goals do they have for their personal development, what are the goals set for them by the company, and how do they succeed in achieving them?

What kind of obstacles for knowledge sharing do they have, and how does the repatriation phase go? How satisfied are the expatriates with the assignment, and what kind of suggestions for improvement have the participants noticed for the company?

To fulfil the research objectives, six research questions are set, personal networks of international assignees were surveyed and analysed, and one follow-up question executed to review their later career.

## Individual-level perspective on expatriate assignment

The first research question is focused on the individual level. The scope is on the whole assignment period, starting from the preparations and continuing until the end of the repatriation phase, to analyse what kind of plans and targets the expatriates set for their personal and professional development. According to previous studies (Stahl et al., 2002; Jokinen et al., 2008), employees see the assignment as an opportunity for personal development, acquiring new skills, living in a foreign country and advancing in their career. How did the participants evaluate the various success factors at the end of the assignment? Expatriates' learning strategies, knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing practices are studied from the perspective of workplace learning (Manuti et al., 2015; Billett, 2000; Tynjälä, 2013) and their experiences of knowledge acquisition and supporting knowledge sharing (Berthoin Antal, 2000, 2001; Burmeister & Deller, 2017) are reviewed.

- Q 1.** What are the individual-level effects of expatriate assignment?
  - 1a. How do the expatriates acquire knowledge and participate in knowledge sharing during the assignment?

- 1b. What kind of plans and targets for their personal development did the expatriates set for themselves before the assignment?
- 1c. How are the targets realised during the expatriate period?

### Transformation process in the host country: the expected and achieved results of the assignment from the organisation's perspective

The second research question concentrates on the participant's company goals, how the goals are defined and how the participants succeed in achieving them. The influence of local culture on knowledge sharing in the host country is reviewed from an organisational point of view. According to previous studies (Berthoin Antal, 2001; Furuya et al., 2009; Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; Oddou et al., 2013), sharing knowledge in a different culture and environment is not without problems. One research question concerns the obstacles the participants face in their knowledge-sharing processes.

- Q 2.** What are the organization-level effects in expatriate assignment?
- 2a. What kind of company goals do the expatriates have, and how do they manage to achieve them?
  - 2b. How does knowledge sharing succeed in the host country, and what kind of obstacles do expatriates face when sharing knowledge during the assignment?

### Repatriation - transformation process back to home organisation

The third research question concentrates on the repatriation process from the perspective of the company. Based on earlier research, repatriation is an important part of the whole assignment process, and it seems to be problematic in many ways for companies. According to previous studies, many expatriates are not satisfied for the repatriation phase (Black et al., 1992; Tung, 1998; Wang, 2002; Kraimer et. al., 2016; Haile & White, 2019).

In addition to that, a critical question is how the company might utilise the knowledge acquired by the expatriates during the assignment.

- Q 3.** How does the repatriation – transformation process back to home organisation – look like from the organisation's perspective?
- 3a. How satisfied are the expatriates with the assignment and repatriation period?

## Network perspective on assignment process - ego-centric network analysis level

The next research questions concentrate on networking - how the expatriates' networks develop during the assignment and what kind of factors are in connection with networking in the host country. According to previous studies (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Hurlbert, 1991; Tung, 1998; Wang, 2002; Bonache 2005), networking is related to social, informational and instrumental support that expatriates can receive during the assignment. The investigated network ties are work-related ties in the home and host countries, work-related ties in other countries the company operates in, work-related network ties outside the company and ties in private networks.

Network perspective to the assignment process – expatriates' personal networks during the assignment:

- Q 4.** Are the following factors related to networking in the country of assignment: the length of the assignment; networking in the home country; host country; cultural area; organisational function; position; gender?
- Q 5.** Is networking related to the achievement of goals?

## Expatriate assignment and later career path

The last question concerns the participants' career paths and their thoughts about the impact of the assignment in their later life. During the past decades, few studies have been published regarding the career outcomes of international experience (Stahl et al., 2002; Yan et al., 2002; Carpenter et al., 2001; Jokinen et al., 2008).

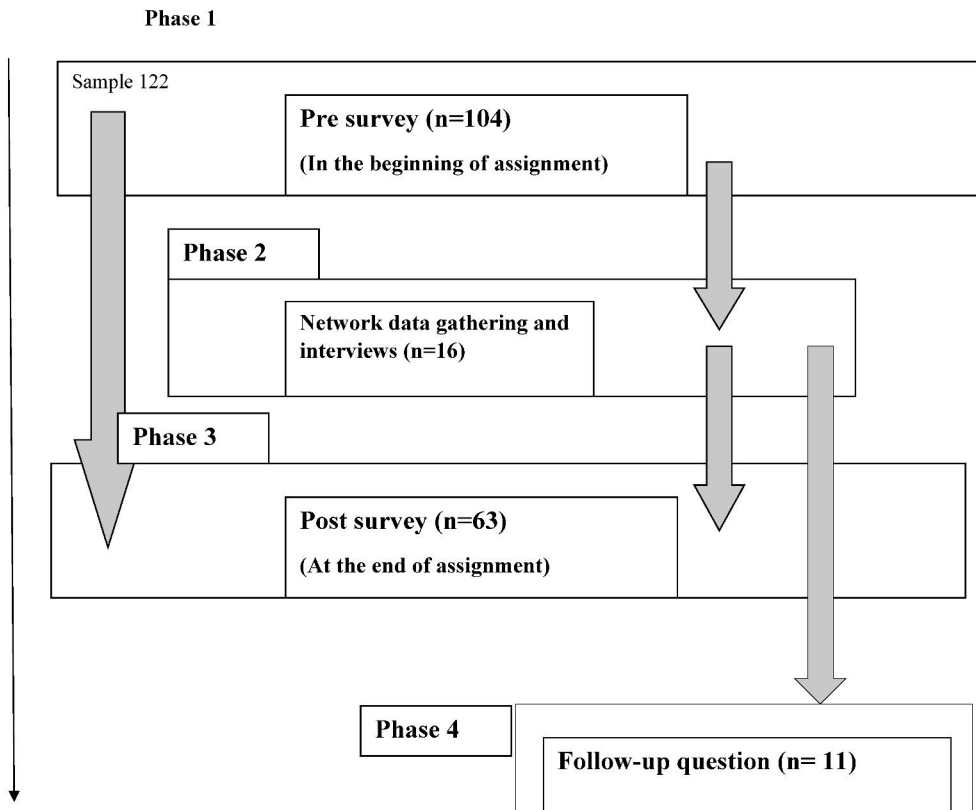
- Q 6.** What kind of affect the assignment had to the expatriates' later career?
- 6a. How do the expatriates see the influence of the assignment on their personal career path?
- 6b. What kind of network benefits did the participants report regarding the new network contacts gained during the assignment?

## 4 Method

### 4.1 Research process

The original research period started (year 0) when the first expatriates left for assignment, and it ended six years later (year 6) when the last participants finished their assignment, whether they returned to Finland, or not. During the first phase of the study (year 0), a pre-survey was sent with 104 responses returned. In the second phase (year 0 to year 6), ego-centric network data-gathering interviews (n=16) were started. In the third phase, the post-survey was sent to each participant after their assignment period ended. The expatriate processes lasted from 0,5 year to 5 years. The third phase ended in 2006. Altogether 63 persons answered the post-survey. The fourth phase, i.e., the follow-up question, was conducted to investigate how the assignment had influenced the participant's later work career.

In the following figure (Figure 6), the design of the research is presented:



**Figure 6.** Research design and data-gathering phases of expatriates' networking and knowledge sharing.

The data has been gathered for the research by using two surveys (before (n=104) and after (n=63) the assignment), ego-centric network interviews (n=16, three times during the assignment) and an open-ended follow-up email survey question (n=11). Consequently, a mixed method approach is utilised. Ego-centric network data have focused on social contact construction, whereas, pre- and post-questionnaires have been targeted to analyse themes of general interest in the expatriate and repatriate processes, such as individual-level attributes of participants, background information of company-level practices, knowledge sharing aims, the effects of local culture and repatriation. The follow-up, open-ended question was sent to the participants that took part in the ego-centric network data gathering, twenty years after the research was started, to investigate the expatriate's career development and assignment's effect on their life after the assignment. Various parts of the research process will be explained in detail next.

## 4.2 Research context and participants

Nokia, the company where this research study was carried out, is a big international, Finnish-based company. During the period of the data gathering, 2000-2006, Nokia had around 60 000 employees all over the world and operations in more than 120 countries. It was a global company, operating in the field of information technology. Most of these 60 000 Nokia employees worked in Finland – about 24 000 employees – Espoo being the location of headquarters. The main sites in Finland, in addition to Espoo, were Salo, Tampere and Oulu. The research subject group of the study was from one of the main business units.

According to Nokia strategy (2001), company culture has an important effect on its employees. Company culture can be seen as the glue that holds the employees together. In Nokia, there was a value-based company culture, meaning widely shared and firmly held values (Nokia, 2001).

To study expatriates’ personal networks regarding their size and structure, international assignees were surveyed and interviewed, and the data was later analysed based on the mixed method perspective. The expatriates in the present study belong to the category *parent country nationals*, Finland being their home country. They left for international assignment between the years 2000 and 2001. The host countries were Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, United Kingdom and United States. These countries were selected since they were the main countries the company sent expatriates to during the two years in which the data collection began. In many of these countries, Nokia had big units or sites, different operations, factories or research and development units providing a versatile and culturally varying research subject group, thereby allowing the possibility to study expatriate networking and adjustment processes in different environments. The host continents, instead of the countries due to anonymity reasons, are shown in the following table (see Table 1):

**Table 1.** The host continents of research group for pre-survey in the beginning of the study, n=104.

		Host continent		
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per Cent
Continent	Europe	29	27,9	27,9
	Asia	28	26,9	26,9
	Americas	47	45,2	45,2
	Total	104	100,0	100,0

Participants’ home units in Finland were the following: Salo 32, Tampere and Jyväskylä altogether 27, Oulu 29, Espoo and Helsinki altogether 16. Out of these

expatriates, fourteen (13,5 %) were women and ninety (86,5%) were men. The expatriates worked in different positions in their host country, most of them, 35 persons, in R&D-related positions. In managerial positions (Director or managerial position), there were 28 persons (27%), 18 of these respondents were in expert positions (17%). Positions can be seen in the following table (Table 2):

**Table 2.** Positions in host country, n= 104.

Position/function in host country		Total
Position or function in host country	R&D	35
	Sales/ Marketing	5
	Support function (Finance, IT, HR, Communication, Legal, Quality)	12
	Manager or Director	28
	Expert	18
	Operations or	
	Other	6
<b>Total</b>		104

Out of 104 participants, almost half (47 participants) had the same position in their host country as they had before the assignment in their home country. In the whole research group (n=104), there were 10 persons who left for the assignment straight from another assignment. In all, earlier experience from the host country varied a great deal in the group: 25 of them had no experience from the host country, 40 had visited the host country less than five times, 29 had visited there more than five times and 11 had lived earlier in the host country.

The expatriates' family situations during assignment were the following: 29 of them left alone for assignment, 25 with a spouse, and 50 left with family.

The participants were given an Identification Code (ID) by the researcher. The ID codes were defined with a certain logic, that cannot be revealed, to guarantee the anonymity of the participants.

### 4.3 Data gathering and measurement instruments

#### Phase 1, Pre-survey, at the beginning of the assignment

The empirical part of the research project started with a pre-survey. The company gave the names of those employees who left for an assignment on a monthly basis, and the first questionnaire was sent to them by electronic mail shortly after that. Participation was active and the questionnaires were normally received within one

week. If the participants did not return the questionnaire inside two weeks, which was the recommended timetable in the cover mail, a reminder was sent to them via e-mail. A maximum of two reminders were sent. During the research period, altogether 122 employees of the business unit left for an international assignment from Finland. Out of this group, altogether 104 answered the pre-survey questionnaire, the response rate being 85,2 %, which can be seen as a good response rate.

The pre-survey included questions concerning background information and expectations for the forthcoming assignment period (see Attachment 1). The purpose, goals and method of the study were explained to the participants in the cover letter of the form. The questions were divided under the following titles: 1. "Information related to your expatriate assignment", 2. "Questions related to your new job role" and 3. "Questions related to learning and knowledge sharing". Most of the questions were based on multiple choice questions alternatives. Only some of the questions were open-ended. Two Likert-type questions were used in the questionnaire. There were altogether 26 questions in the pre-survey form.

## Phase 2, Social network data gathering

Ego-centric network analysis methods were utilised to gather information about participants' network relationships during the assignment. The aim of the Social Network Analyses (SNA) was to elicit network contacts and how these changed during the assignments. The ego-centric network, also called the "personal network", represents one approach of SNA.

Barry Wellman defines the difference between whole network analysis and personal network analysis as follows:

*"Personal network analysis views a social network as one person's set of connections with others. Personal network analysis thus differs from the more common whole network analysis that views relationships among all network members in a bounded population. In personal network analysis, scholars are standing in the center of a person's world and analyzing who he or she is connected to and with what consequences."* (Wellman 2007, 111).

Participants for phase 2 were selected based on the following criteria: host country, home site, gender, job profile and position in which the person had worked before the assignment. The aim was to select as varying sample of expatriates as possible, representing different personal attributes and organisational locations. The participants were then asked if they voluntarily wanted to participate in the ego-centric network sub study.

Originally, 20 persons were selected for the network study, 15 men and 5 women. At the beginning, when the first interview and network analysis were agreed on, one of the candidates cancelled his participation. Later, during the process, two other persons discontinued the study, after the first network data gathering, and even more later; one participant left the company in the middle of assignment. Finally, thus, the sample consisted of 16 participants, 11 men and 5 women. In the end, the target was reached: a versatile group of participants, with different backgrounds and in various cultural areas, was recruited for the study.

All participants in the group were requested to define their network three times during the process: in the beginning, the middle and at the end of the assignment. These data-gathering points from here onward are referred to as waves 1, 2 and 3.

### Waves one through three of network data gathering

When the participants had agreed to join the network analysis group, a date was made to personally meet as many participants as possible and to gather the first-wave network data via interview. Some of the participants were on business trips or on holiday in Finland, and face-to-face meetings were organised at that time, if possible. In some cases, video conference tools were used. The first meeting mostly took place during the three first assignment months. All interviews were collected by me, myself, the main researcher of the study, which guaranteed a similar procedure in all interviews.

In ego-centric network studies, a name generator method has become standard to collect network data and delineate network characteristics and structure. Name generators were first introduced in the 1960s; they are administered through surveys or interviews (Marin & Hampton, 2007).

The ego-centric approach is in many ways simpler to execute than the whole network approach. In the ego network analysis, a sample of respondents (egos) are selected. The egos are then interviewed in a process that is known as name generator. It consists of a battery of network questions, such as “What are the names of some of the people you work with?”. These are typically open-ended questions (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010). When using a name generator, the interviewer asks respondents to name other people with whom they have a specific connection (referred to as “alters”) (Hogan et al., 2007). Participants are given one or a series of questions that elicit a list of network alters, such as those people with whom they discuss important matters or the people they visit (Marin & Hampton, 2007).

According to Marsden (2003) “name generators are used to measure ego-centric networks and are complex (survey) questions that make substantial demands on respondents and interviewers. They are, therefore, vulnerable to interviewer effects, which arise when interviewers administer questions differently in ways that affect

responses – for example, the number of names elicited” (Marsden, 2003,1). When utilising the name generator method, the researcher must be careful about the reliability and validity of the data gathering. If there are several interviewers in the study, the results might differ according to Eagle and Proeschold-Bell (2015) and Van Tilburg (1998). Their study underscores the importance for researchers to carefully consider the issues related to interviewer effects and survey design when implementing the name generator to study the overall size of a respondent's social network (Eagle & Proeschold-Bell, 2015). The size of the ego-centric network has been indicated here as a total number of the expatriate’s local or home partners (colleagues, family members, friends, etc.) and work-related contacts in all countries mentioned during the interview. A large personal network in the host country is expected to show the expatriate’s networking effect in the host country. Having a large host country network, one knows where to get support when needed. The informational and instrumental support received via network ties increases the expatriate’s presumable environmental mastery, personal growth and autonomy (Wang, 2002).

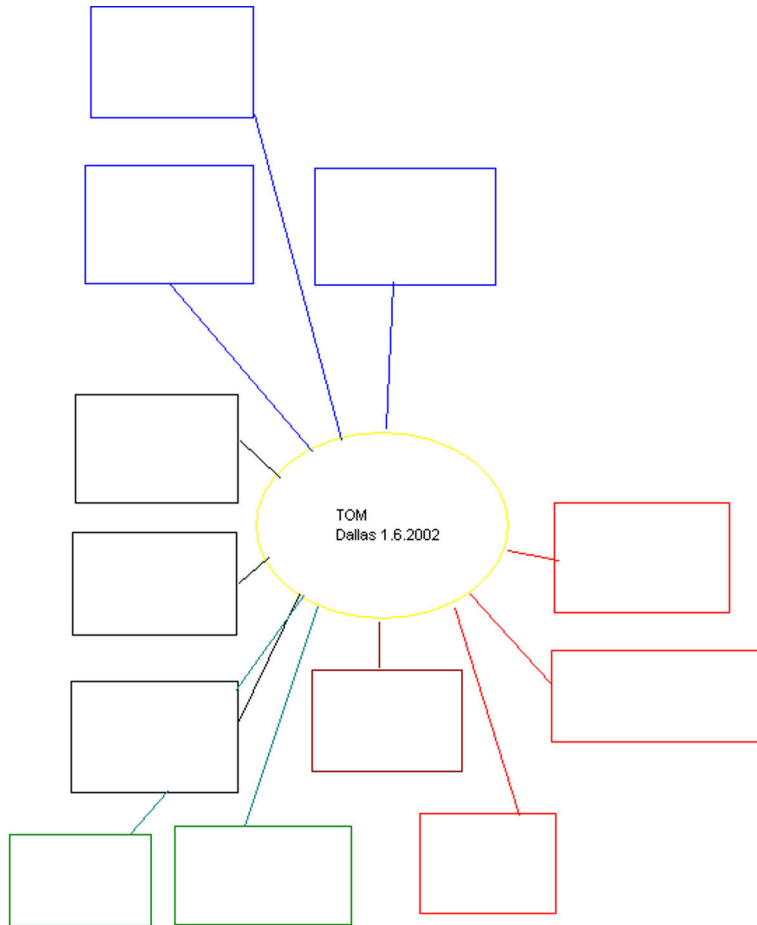
Hogan et al. (2007) have described an interview-based data-collection procedure for SNA, designed to aid gathering information about the people known by a respondent and reduce problems with data integrity and respondent burden. That procedure, a participant-aided network diagram, is an extension of traditional name generators. Such a diagram can be produced through computer-assisted programs for interviewing and low technology, i.e., paper (Hogan et al., 2007).

The phases of defining and drawing personal networks in the present study followed these exactly defined steps: 1) the researcher first explained the idea of an ego-centric network and 2) then presented the different sectors of a network and the colours that referred to those in the drawing. The aim was 3) to name those persons in the respondent’s personal network who were important, from an information-sharing perspective, during the assignment: persons from whom the respondent aimed to receive some kind of information or to whom he or she will deliver information. The presupposition was that the personal network consisted of the following five sectors (in brackets the colours used in the drawings are shown):

1. Work-related contacts in the home country (= in Finland) – colour black
2. Work-related contacts in host country – colour blue
3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in –colour brown
4. Contacts outside the company – colour green
5. Private network – colour red

Respondents were asked to give their network members' names in whichever order they preferred. In the category "Work-related contacts in the home country" (i.e., Finland"), for example, the previous line manager, colleagues, secretary and many other work-related contacts were referred to. In the category "Work-related contacts in the host country", for example, the manager and colleagues in the new country, such as the secretary and other team and project members. The next category, "Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in", included Nokia employees in other countries than the host or home countries. The first category, which included contacts outside the company, was "Contacts outside Nokia". Examples in this category could be previous colleagues in previous companies, colleagues in the same business or branch, contacts at schools or universities, teachers, consultants, trainees, etc. The last category to recall was the private (social) network: people who are your family members, relatives, friends, neighbours, day-care people, teachers, cleaning staff, etc. – people with whom you deal with during your free time.

At the same time, when the respondent was recalling their ego-centric network members, the researcher drew a picture of the network according to what the participating expatriate told. The researcher had only paper and pencil, no ready-made pictures were shown. Participants could start from which sector or contact they wanted and continue in any direction that was easiest for them. The researcher was actively asking about their contacts, trying to help them remember all the important areas or persons, but at the same time, being systematic and keeping the sessions as similar as possible. The aim was to keep reliability at a high level by doing so. Confidentiality was guaranteed so that no surnames were mentioned during the interviews, and the respondents could also change the names, or, for example, use nicknames or pseudo names if they wanted to do so, without telling the researcher. Most important for the procedure was that respondents knew who they were talking about, to remember their replies, also during the upcoming data-gathering waves. At the beginning of the interview, the network was empty (see an imaginary draft):



**Figure 7.** An example of document used during interviews.

In the centre of the drawing, there is the person him- or herself (ego), and in the boxes, there are alters which the person has mentioned. Between ego and alters there are lines to help the visualisation procedure. When the whole network was described and produced, the respondent was asked to name the so-called “vital links” from the picture: those persons who were critical from their well-being point-of-view – and without whom they themselves were not able to manage well during the assignment. The vital links were later written with capital letters in the picture. It took, on average, one hour for each participant to finish the drawings of the first network. After the meeting, the drawing was written up and sent to each participant's e-mail to let them check and comment on their drawing. Corrections were made via e-mail, if needed.

During the data-gathering sessions, all participants were also interviewed. All interviews were recorded. The aim of the questions presented during the interviews

was to check the information produced and to support the drawing procedure. Background information of the participants in the network study group, given in pre-survey, was also checked during the first network data-gathering interview (wave one). The full process of generating names, diagram layout and in-depth discussions about the network took 1-1,5 hours for each interviewee. The time spent depended mainly on the respondent's motivation to produce information and how big the reported network was.

The second-wave network data-gathering interview was conducted approximately in the middle of the assignment. The timing was estimated according to how long the contract was planned to be, based on what was agreed on before the assignment started. The second network data-gathering wave was performed in the following way: the participant first reviewed the first network drawing that was sent by email to him/her with the instructions (see attachment 3), to correct it, if needed. After this, a telephone conversation was arranged between respondent and researcher, where possible changes to the first-wave network drawing were reported, and the reasons for these, as well as the background information. It was important to check the agreement dates concerning the expatriate period during the conversation, since there were many changes in the contracts. Otherwise, the researcher had not caught all the information needed for the research arrangements. After the conversation, the respondent sent the changes made via e-mail. In some cases, the conversation was executed electronically via e-mail, not verbally. All discussions were recorded. The instructions sent with the network picture are enclosed (see Attachment 3).

The third network data-gathering session was held in a face-to-face meeting, if possible. For some participants it was not, if they had already moved to a new country. During the third network data-gathering session, each participant's ego-centric network was reviewed once more. Thus, during the third wave, the second ego-centric drawing was given to the participant, and a request was made to fill in the latest changes in the respondents' network ties to it. After the third-wave meeting, the drawing was once more written up and sent back by e-mail for final checking. Moreover, the participant's overall situation at the end of assignment was discussed during the third-wave data-gathering session.

### Post-Survey, at the end of the assignment

During the first research period, September 2000 – December 2001, altogether 104 expatriates participated in the study and filled in the pre-survey questionnaire. The expatriates normally have a two-years contract, but there was some variation in the length of the contracts. When an expatriate returned to the home country (or continued with another assignment in the next host country), the post-survey was

sent to him or her via e-mail. This return period (phase 3) took place from August 2001 to December 2006. The post-survey questionnaire was sent to 100 persons, of which 63 answered (response rate being 63%). Four persons out of the preliminary 104 respondents left the company before the post-survey was sent to them, or their assignment was postponed for some reason. A maximum of two reminders were sent to respondents.

The questions in the post-survey were similar to the pre-survey questions. The main purpose of the post-survey was to follow up on the possible changes during the assignment and to get the expatriates' own evaluation of their whole assignment period. Most of the questions were multiple choice alternatives, as in the pre-survey; five questions were open-ended, and there were altogether four Likert-type questions (see Attachment 2). The post-survey consisted of a total of 16 questions. Answering the post-survey took about 15 minutes. Respondents returned their replies to the post-survey via e-mail.

#### Phase 4, the open-ended follow-up question

Twenty years after starting this research, in February 2023, one follow-up, open-ended question was set to find out what kind of consequences the assignment had on the participants' career path and later working life. The question, including three parts, was sent to all participants of the network study: What kind of a position are you holding at present? How would you define the effect of the previously mentioned expatriate assignment on your personal career path? What was the effect of the new network contacts, which were gained during the expatriate period, on your career?

The 16 participants of the original network study were searched via LinkedIn service, and all other possible ways, with the results that 13 participants out of 16 were found and contacted via LinkedIn. Eleven of them answered the request to report about their present situation and what happened after their expatriate stay. During the past 20 years, Nokia has faced big changes, and the business unit under study had completely ceased its operations. The changes affected all the participants, especially those who had stayed at Nokia.

## 4.4 Statistical analyses and visualisations

A mixed methods approach was employed to get a versatile understanding of the results produced along complex research design. Further, in addition to qualitative data gathered via interviews and ego-centric data, traditional statistical methods, such as descriptive measures, cluster analysis and McNemar's pair test, were utilised in the analysis.

### McNemar's pair test

The pre-survey consisted of nine and the post-survey of seven open-ended questions. The analysis of the open-ended questions was executed by classifying the obtained data to question-specific subcategories. Frequencies of the responses in different subcategories were compared to each other. Responses were also investigated separately to discover individual circumstances and opinions. The results were presented by frequencies. McNemar's pair test is a non-parametric test for *paired* nominal data, and it assesses the dependence of categorical data that are matched or paired (Pembury Smith & Ruxton, 2020). It was chosen to analyse the pre- and post-surveys results. Comparing the two dependent variables on the sample, a change from the initial measurement to the final measurement can be analysed (Tähtinen et al., 2020). In this study, McNemar's pair tests were executed for those 63 persons, who had responded to both, pre- and post-survey.

### Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis is a method which can be used for classifying multivariate data into subgroups. By organising multivariate data into such subgroups, clustering can help reveal the characteristics of any structure or patterns present (Everitt et al., 2011). In the present study, cluster analysis was conducted to find groups of the expatriates' networks based on similarities. Hierarchical cluster analysis was used to classify the expatriates into different "types" or groups, based on the size, changes and structure of their ego-centric network during the assignment in data-gathering waves 1-3. The variables employed for this purpose were as follows: 1. the sum of the last work-related network ties, 2. the sum of newly established work-related ties and 3. the sum of lost work-related ties. Hierarchical cluster analysis is especially suitable for small samples according to Tähtinen et al. (2020), as is the case in this study.

The sum of the above-mentioned ties consisted of work-related contacts (present ties, new ties and lost ties) in the home country, the host country, in other countries the company operates in, and work-related network ties outside Nokia, across the three network data-gathering waves, if applicable. To clarify, the same network ties between the ego and alters were summed up more than once regarding the sum of the present ties, if they were mentioned in many drawings. The sum of the last work-related ties indicated the end point of the final number of network ties. For 11 participants, it was the third-wave result, and for five participants, with a shorter stay in the host country, it was the second-wave result.

The participants' private (social) networks, in turn, consisted of their contacts to family members in the host and home countries, friends, neighbours, language and school teachers, kindergarten staff, landlords and local authorities, among others.

## Ego-centric network map visualisations

Visualisations of network maps were created with the Vennmaker 2.0.3 program to produce an overview of each participant's network. Vennmaker is an actor-centred interactive network mapping tool, which is designed for SNA. Each map contains sectors that were used to allocate the network actors to five previously mentioned categories: 1. work-related contacts in the home country, black sector, 2. work-related contacts in the host country, blue sector, 3. work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, brown sector, 4. work-related contacts outside Nokia, green sector and 5. private (social) network ties, red sector.

# 5 Results

In the present thesis, the target is to describe, analyse and explain how expatriates build their ego-centric networks in a new environment, how much they use their previous network ties, how networking influences expertise sharing, how cultural change affects knowledge sharing and personal networks, and how the repatriation phase is experienced by the expatriates themselves. Six research questions were set. To answer the questions presented below, personal networks of international assignees were interviewed, surveyed and analysed. The following paragraphs review all six research questions and discuss the results.

## 5.1 Individual-level effects in expatriate assignment

The first research question concentrates on an expatriate's individual perspective during the whole assignment period, starting from the selection and preparation time before the assignment and ending in the repatriation phase at the end of assignment. The study focused particularly on two sub questions:

How do the expatriates acquire knowledge and participate in knowledge sharing during the assignment? What kind of plans and targets for their personal development did the expatriates set for themselves before the assignment? How are the targets realised during the expatriate period? The results in this paragraph are based on pre- and post-surveys.

### Leaving for assignment

According to the expatriates, the main criteria in their selection for an expatriate position originated from their work experience, type of expertise and personal attributes. Educational background and cultural factors (for example, language qualifications) were not at the top of the selection criteria according to them.

Further, the participants were asked how they had prepared themselves for the assignment. Altogether 87 respondents out of 104 had visited their new office, and 68 of them had got to know the new organisation and personnel. Sixty respondents had become familiar with the local culture before the assignment by acquiring information about it in advance. Only 29 respondents had attended a cross-cultural

induction meeting organised by the company. Eleven expatriates reported that they had not made any preparations for the assignment. To sum up, most of them had somehow prepared themselves for the assignment, many of them in a number of ways. Participants’ family situations varied. Of the expatriates, 29 left alone for assignment, 25 with spouse and 49 with family.

Almost half (47, n=104) of the participants had the same position in the host country as before assignment in the home country at the beginning of the assignment. Many of the participants (25 of 63 who replied to the post-survey) reported at the end that their position changed somehow during the assignment. At the beginning of the assignment, there were 57 participants who had defined their targets for the new job and 47 who did not do so. In all, there were 10 persons who had left for the assignment straight from another assignment.

### Managing problem situations during assignment

Participants were asked what kind of support they would use in the new position when dealing with problematic situations. The comparison on how the participants responded before (n=104) and after (n=63) the assignment is found here (see Table 3):

**Table 3.** How expatriates evaluated their ability to manage problem situations in the host country, at the beginning (n= 104) and after the assignment (n=63), number of alternatives chosen.

How expatriates planned to manage problematic situations in new country			How expatriates solved problematic situations during assignment		
At the beginning of Assignment	Respondents		At the end of Assignment	Respondents	
	n=104	Per cent		n=63	Per cent
1. I will ask help from own manager	57	21,5%	1. I asked help from own manager	24	17,4%
2. I know who to contact in problematic situations	76	28,7%	2. I knew who to contact in problematic situations	50	<b>36,2%</b>
3. I know well who is an expert in which area	28	10,6%	3. I knew well who is an expert in which area	18	13,0%
4. I will seek info from the intranet	39	14,7%	4. I sought info from the intranet	11	<b>8,0</b>
5. I will use my home country network	65	24,5%	5. I used my home country network	35	25,4%
Nominations total	265	100,00%		138	100,00%

When comparing the evaluations given before and after the assignment, it can be seen that the following two alternatives differed most: the respondents knew better than they expected who to contact and who is an expert in which area; but on the contrary, intranet usage was less than they thought. For the other alternatives, the differences were not big. Good meta knowledge, i.e., knowing to whom to turn to, was the strongest help in the host country of the alternatives mentioned in the post-survey.

### Expatriates' learning strategies and problem solving at work before and after the assignment

Out of 104 respondents, 85 reported at the beginning of the assignment (in the pre-survey) that they expected to learn or solve problems by discussing with their colleagues or manager. Of 104 respondents, 75 had expectations toward learning as a part of their everyday work. Reading books, articles or other written material was mentioned only by 23 respondents and attending training or courses by 21 respondents. Formal training (self-studying, e.g., external studies outside company) was mentioned by only 16 respondents.

Based on what was reported in pre- and post-surveys, participants' learning strategies did not greatly change during assignment. Only reading books or other written material and attending training courses were reported to be on a lower level after the assignment compared to the time before it. Their learning strategy emphasised thus mostly informal learning and problem solving that happened in interaction with colleagues or managers in their everyday work. During the assignment, expatriates' knowledge-acquisition methods thus included communication with colleagues and managers, and on-the-job-learning. The participants did not favour formal studies abroad (see the exact numbers in Figure 8).

Knowledge-acquisition method	Sum
1. By attending courses or training	7
2. Some other way	11
3. By attending introduction meetings	11
4. By reading handbooks, manuals and instructions	14
5. Intranet	15
6. Via internal communications	17
7. By discussing with colleagues about company's previous operations and history	30
8. By asking from manager	32
9. By asking from colleagues	49

**Figure 8.** Expatriates' knowledge-acquisition methods at the end of assignment, in post-survey, numbers of alternatives chosen, n=63.

According to the results of pre- and post-surveys, the best way for knowledge acquisition was asking advice from colleagues or managers. Altogether, 53 out of the 63 respondents had used more than one method to facilitate their knowledge-acquisition process.

### Support for knowledge sharing during the expatriate assignment

Participants were further asked how they could support the knowledge-transfer process and organisational learning in the host country during their assignment. This question was one of the open questions. Therefore, the answers varied quite a bit. The nominations produced by the participants were separated into five different categories, (see Table 4.)

**Table 4.** Knowledge sharing and organisational learning during expatriate assignment, pre-survey (n= 104), number of nominations in open-ended question.

#### How to support knowledge sharing and organisational learning during expatriate assignment

1. I will be open, easy to approach and active in acquiring and sharing knowledge	54
2. I will place my experience at the organisation's disposal	71
3. I will network in the host country (with expert teams, other units inside Nokia, experts outside Nokia) and use both new and old networks efficiently in knowledge sharing both ways, from old to new network and vice versa	37
4. In managerial work: I will organise training and information sessions for subordinates, encourage them to learn new things and set learning goals for them	22
5. I will give support in problem-solving situations to colleagues and/or subordinates	14

Most of the participants (71 answers) had taken into consideration that they could support the knowledge-sharing process by placing their experience in the organisation during the assignment. In addition to professional competences, this category includes comments about Finnish work and life culture, the “Nokia way” of working and transferring knowledge to successors in a host country. The Nokia way of working referred to a value-based leadership style in the company. CEO Jorma Ollila made the following statement about the Nokia way already in 1996:

*“Throughout our change process during the past years, our corporate culture and the Nokia Values have provided us with an important internal point of reference, linking the different parts of the company into a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts. As we go along, we will continue to seek new ways to develop our internal culture. We will also ascertain that they are perceived and*

*appreciated by our customers and partners as “the Nokia Way”. This is a joint team effort in which all the Nokia employees take part”* (Nokia Annual Report, 1996, 8).

The participants’ selection criteria also supported knowledge sharing: there were 87 respondents who answered that according to their own estimate, they were selected for assignment because of work experience, which they saw as an important contribution during the assignment.

### Experiences in supporting knowledge sharing and organisational learning

According to the post-survey, the respondents saw that they had succeeded quite well in supporting organisational learning with their expertise (mean 3,89; SD 1,064; scale 1–5).

Expertise sharing was reported to take place in the same way as they learned new subjects by themselves, acquired knowledge and solved problems: via on-the-job-learning, talking to colleagues or managers and gaining knowledge by solving problems. It was reported to be similar when trying to transfer expertise: they worked with the local people and taught them, for example, processes, technical knowledge, networking and, especially, the Nokia way of working. Informal learning methods were emphasised both in individual and organisational knowledge sharing. It was a positive outcome, which they reached in supporting organisational learning and knowledge transfer, even though so many of them had changes (25 persons) in their job profile during the assignment, and because almost half of them did not have clear targets at the beginning of the assignment.

During their free time, respondents did not often socialise with the local people either. There were again many reasons for that: expatriates generally live in their own areas in most of the countries where the participants were located. They had their own separate areas or houses where neighbours were also expatriates from their own or other international companies. Very often, the Nordic countries’ expatriates live in the same areas. It was also typical that expatriates helped each other with different kinds of problems (for example, repairing a car), and so they did not “need” the local people’s help. Another reason for limited networking was the income level: local people have much lower income levels than expatriates have. Expatriates’ family members though were better in networking locally, since they had contacts outside home during the daytime (school, teachers, kindergarten, etc.). So, all these reasons influenced their knowledge transfer and networking. If they had been familiarising more with the local culture and local people, networking would have increased and thus the knowledge transfer could have been easier for them.

In any case, a majority of the respondents, 58 out of 63, felt that (s)he had succeeded quite well or very well in reaching targets which were set for the assignment. They were personally satisfied with their work in the host country. How the local employees felt about the expertise transfer cannot be verified, since the present study concentrated only on the expatriates, not on local employees' or on managers' view. How much the local people learned from these participants and what they learned cannot be verified in the present study.

### Professional and other development during assignment

In addition to transferring knowledge to the host country, expatriates also had their own development and learning goals during assignment. These development goals were both professional and personal. Out of these 104 expatriates, 87 persons were wondering at the beginning of the assignment how to cope with this task in a foreign country, different culture, international environment - especially when 64 of them had very little experience with the new country. It shows that they were considering the cultural factors that affected both work and private life in the host country. Professionally, there was a desire to learn new content inside their own expertise area, depending on the participant's position, such as technical knowledge, product and marketing knowledge and process knowledge were all mentioned.

Another important personal learning goal was to develop personal skills and characteristics (52 answers). That goal consists of many different factors and characteristics, such as stress tolerance, patience, decision making, flexibility, efficiency and humbleness. These attributes seemed to be connected to the first goal – to cope with the new culture and environment. The new environment required different approaches in professional and private life.

### What expatriates learned during assignment

Respondents felt that they had learned a lot of different things during their years abroad. This was an open question, and similar questions were in both surveys, at the beginning and at the end of the assignment, to follow-up the development during assignment. Answers were quite varied. There were first answers in 15 different classes, then the answers were separated into four main categories, which can be seen in following table (percentage of realisation in brackets):

**Table 5.** Respondents' learning aims for the expatriate phase, (at the beginning n= 104 and at the end n=63), number of nominations.

Learning or development goal	At the beginning (nominations)	%	At the end (nominations)	%
<b>Category 1. Cross-cultural qualifications</b>		35,2		33,3
1. to act in a foreign culture and work environment (n=63)	51	22,5	42	21,5
2. to cope and operate in an international environment (n=63)	16	7,0	12	6,2
3. to survive in a different environment (n=63)	13	5,7	11	5,6
<b>Category 2. Personal attributes</b>		25,6		37,5
1. to develop personal attributes (e.g., openness, patience, flexibility, effectiveness, humbleness, etc.) (n=63)	14	6,2	33	16,9
2. interpersonal skills, networking (n=63)	14	6,2	28	14,4
3. language qualifications (n=63)	30	13,2	12	6,2
<b>Category 3. Professional knowledge and skills in own expertise area</b>		32,3		25,1
1. product or marketing knowledge (n=63)	14	6,2	15	7,7
2. new methods (n=63)	14	6,2	10	5,1
3. technical knowledge (n=62)	12	5,3	9	4,6
4. to increase expertise in own area (n=63)	20	8,8	6	3,1
5. process knowledge (n=62)	11	4,8	5	2,5
6. new knowledge and skills outside own expertise area (n=63)	2	1	4	2,1
<b>Category 4. Other things (e.g., leadership skills, knowledge about company's operations, hobbies)</b>		7		4,1
1. leadership skills (n=63)	8	3,5	4	2,1
2. to see how company's other business units operate (n=63)	7	3,1	3	1,5
3. new hobbies (n=63)	1	0,4	1	0,5
Total	227	100%	195	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that the participants left for assignment specially to learn two things: to act in a foreign culture and work environment and the language qualifications. Professional learning outcomes were not on top of their expectations. What they really learned was acting in a foreign culture and work

environment, personal attributes, interpersonal skills and networking. They failed to improve their language qualifications as well as they had expected, only 12 people mentioned that. Professional learning and expertise did not grow as expected either. When using McNemar's pair test, the significance level ( $p$ ) was below 0,05, and the null hypothesis was rejected with the following four alternatives: develop personal attributes ( $p=,002$ ), interpersonal skills and networking ( $p=,014$ ), language qualifications ( $p=,004$ ) and increase expertise in own area ( $p=,001$ ).

Personal attributes, interpersonal skills and networking developed better than expected, whereas language qualifications and expertise in one's own area came true worse than expected. With all other eleven alternatives (new methods, technical knowledge, product or marketing knowledge, survive in a different environment, to cope and operate in an international environment, leadership skills, seeing how the company's other business units operate, new knowledge and skills outside one's own expertise area, process knowledge and new hobbies) the null hypothesis was retained in McNemar's pair test. To sum, no change happened under these eleven alternatives during the assignment.

In summation, it seems that the learning and development outcomes seem to be more personal than professional in nature. According to the results, the expatriate assignment has especially given respondents learning which improved their personal characteristics and human capital. Human capital is the economic value of a person's abilities and the qualities of the employees that influence productivity. Examples of human capital include the education, technical training or problem-solving skills that a person offers to a company (Schultz, 1961). How much this learning will benefit the company depends on the possibilities given to the expatriates to use their new human capital.

### Know-how expatriates wanted to transfer to the new work unit

Expatriates had different tasks they planned to accomplish during the assignment. When they were asked what they were going to share with their new organisation, the following factors were mentioned: 1. Technical knowledge, 2. Expertise, experience, 3. Product knowledge, 4. Company's way of working, 5. Use of expert network, communication skills, 6. Quality and process knowledge and 7. Problem solving, decision making. Category 4, the "Company's way of working" includes many different factors: company culture, values, leadership, organisational knowledge, new ways of working, Finnish way of thinking, leadership and culture, business knowledge, global way of working and teamwork. Category 5, "Use of expert network, communication skills", in turn includes networking, communications, negotiations skills and information seeking. The answers to this

question were divided into the above-mentioned categories, and the nominations can be seen in Table 6 below:

**Table 6.** What expatriates wanted to transfer to the new team in the host country during assignment, number of nominations at the beginning (n= 104) and at the end (n=63) of assignment.

<b>What expatriates wanted to transfer to the new team in the host country during assignment, and what they transferred</b>	<b>At the beginning of assignment, n=104</b>	<b>At the end of assignment, n= 63</b>
1. Technical knowledge	28	28
2. My expertise, experience	38	38
3. Product knowledge	17	17
4. Company's way of working, company culture, values, leadership, organisational knowledge	68	82
5. Use of expert network, communications skills	22	22
6. Quality and process knowledge	24	25
7. Problem solving, decision making	20	20
Nominations total	217	232

Clearly the biggest group of answers belonged to the category “company’s way of working, culture, values, leadership, organisational knowledge”: 84% out of 104 persons reported things from this category. The company in question had a strong company culture, and it was values-based led – that can be seen in these answers. Some of the participants were thinking about the Finnish culture and way of working and transferring some of it to the new unit. The second biggest thing they wanted to share was their expertise and experience (55%). Because a large part of these people worked in research and development (R&D)-related positions, technical knowledge, quality and process knowledge were the third biggest learning outcomes expatriates wanted to transfer (42% and 39%). The other three categories were mentioned less, between 23-31%.

Participants were able to transfer and teach many things to the host country organisation. At the end of the assignment, 38 out of 63 felt that they had transferred their expertise and experience. Many respondents (36) felt that they had been able to transfer the company’s way of working and cultural factors to their host organisation. Many of them were able to transfer technical knowledge (28). When comparing the results to the expectations, the outcomes do not differ a lot. When using McNemar’s pair test, the significance level (p) was not below 0,05 in any of the knowledge-

sharing pairs, which means that the null hypothesis was retained. In other words, the participants were able to transfer the things they wanted to the host unit.

**The main findings** for the first research problem (regarding knowledge sharing, the organisation's learning, and plans and realisation of the targets for their personal development) showed that their learning processes were embedded as a part of informal practices, such as problem-solving situations in everyday work, together with their colleagues and managers. The best way for knowledge acquisition was asking advice from colleagues or managers. Organisational meta-knowing, i.e., to know whom to go for advice, was easier than the respondents expected; whereas they utilised less organisational formal facilities, such as intranet, than planned at the beginning of the assignment.

Second, expatriates' learning and development outcomes seem to be personal rather than professional or organisational. Almost half of the expatriates did not even have the organisational targets defined by the company before they left for the assignment. Yet, most of them effectively prepared themselves for the assignment, often in many ways. According to the expatriates' own evaluation, the goals related to their personal attributes, interpersonal skills and networking were better reached than expected. Language qualifications and expertise in one's own professional area, in turn, were not fulfilled as planned. Third, as expected, expatriates showed special interest in acting in a foreign culture and work environment. Cultural aspects were as well tied to company culture (values, processes, practices), the "Nokia way", and being representative of Finnish cultural habits and practices. The most frequently mentioned targets nominated for the assignment were related to company culture. In general, the importance of cross-cultural qualifications was high up in the respondents' priorities. Yet, during their free time, they did not typically socialise with the local people. Instead, in most countries, they lived in their own areas, or in houses with other expatriate neighbours from international companies. The respondents' family situations varied. Every fourth person left alone for the assignment and, similarly, every fourth person left with a spouse. Half of the respondents travelled to the host country with their family, having more reasons to be connected to the new country's surroundings.

To conclude, it seems that cultural invasion was difficult for some of the expatriates and this probably influenced the knowledge-sharing processes. Expatriates' expectations of the local culture have presumably had a remarkable influence on their daily life.

## 5.2 Organisational-level effects in expatriate assignment

The second research question concentrates on knowledge sharing in the host country from an organisational point of view:

What are the organization-level effects in expatriate assignment? What kind of company goals do the expatriates have, and how do they manage to achieve them? How does knowledge sharing succeed in the host country, and what kind of obstacles do expatriates face when sharing knowledge during the assignment?

### Expatriates' roles and responsibilities

The respondents' work positions in their host country varied. Most of them worked in project teams inside the company, 30 of 104 respondents worked mainly with customers or other people outside Nokia. Altogether 22 of 104 respondents worked mainly alone in their new position, the majority of respondents (82 of 104) acted as advisors in their own expertise area. Responsibility in the new position varied: three respondents said that they got clear instructions from their manager for the assignment, every fourth respondent (25%, n=104 %) reported that their work was planned in team or project meetings, and the rest of the respondents reported that they had to plan and evaluate their own work independently, without any support from the organisation.

### Company goals

A bit more than half of the respondents (57, n=104) had the targets defined by the company for the assignment before they left for the host country. For the other participants, targets were defined later, during the assignment. Targets were supposed to guide the knowledge-sharing process in the host country. In the next list, the typical goals are presented, categorised under sub themes (respondent's ID is shown in brackets):

#### Establishing a new unit or organisation

- *Ramping up this new organisation in the USA (2/209)*
- *Establishing a new research group and managing the projects (3/309)*
- *Establishing a packing department (18/810)*
- *Establishing a new testing laboratory and get it working in a coherent way with other laboratories abroad (27/512)*
- *Target is to build up a well-functioning certification testing organisation and utilise the experience from Finland (75/207)*

- *To establish a well-functioning organisation and build up a communication network between the host country and the company's other units (94/1101)*

#### Localisation of new organisational and management practices

- *Achieving the local targets and localisation of the management (15/510)*
- *Select and train a local colleague to continue my work here (23/112)*
- *Implement the same kind of organisation here as in Finland (26/412)*

#### Expertise sharing

- *Acting as an expert (30/201)*
- *Be responsible for testing of projects and transfer my knowledge to the local employees (38/1001)*
- *Relocate the official system testing to Beijing and transfer the know-how there from Salo (76/307)*

#### Process development

- *Developing processes (28/612)*
- *Establishing own team and training it (50/104)*
- *Work should be carried out with local resources, but following global processes (63/705)*
- *I am supposed to build up a model which fits into the local work culture (87/309)*

The list of the goals indicates a large variety. Most goals seem to include knowledge exchange or building up a new part of the organisation.

### Success in goals from an organisational perspective

In the post-survey, the participants were asked how well they reached their targets during the assignment. The mean value of the evaluation showed a high level of satisfaction with small variance (Mean 3,37; SD 0,607; n=63; scale 1-4), especially as every fourth respondent changed their work role during the assignment.

### Effect of local culture

Participants were asked at the beginning of the assignment how they estimated the effect of local culture regarding both their work and personal lives in the new country. Since most of the respondents did not have much prior experience in the new country, it was interesting to see how their expectations and the real situation met in the cultural change. In Table 7, the answers in the pre- and post-surveys are shown.

**Table 7.** Effect of local culture on work and personal matters in pre- and post- surveys.

At the beginning of the assignment (n=104)		Frequency	Per cent	At the end of the assignment (n=63)		Frequency	Per cent
Effect of local culture	not at all	0	0	Effect of local culture	not at all	0	0
	very little	6	5,8		very little	6	9,5
	a little	34	32,7		a little	14	22,2
	quite much	42	40,4		quite much	24	38,1
	very much	22	21,2		very much	19	30,2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

None of the respondents in the pre- or post-survey saw cultural influences an irrelevant factor. Instead, the strength of the influence of local culture was evaluated as high, even stronger at the end of the assignment.

### Obstacles for knowledge sharing

Different kinds of obstacles for knowledge-sharing processes were found during the assignment. In the post-survey, there was an open-ended question to trace the problems: “Which were the main obstacles to hinder the expertise transfer during your assignment from you to the local organisation, and from the local organisation to you”? Responses for the question were classified into six categories based on their content, presented in the following list. Some respondents mentioned more than one obstacle.

1. Lack of time or resources (e.g., constant hurry, too little resources, too short assignment)
2. Problems with the organisation’s functionality (e.g., organisational changes, no experience in project work, no cooperation)
3. Local staff’s resistance to change and attitudes towards foreigners (e.g., local attitude towards foreigners, suspicious, lack of openness, cultural differences, local language qualifications)
4. Indistinctness with job description and responsibility area (too little responsibility, no experience in the job, no clear job description, too many changes with one’s own position)
5. Problems with language and communications
6. No obstacles

According to the results, there were three main obstacle areas: local staff’s resistance to change and attitude towards foreigners (24 nominations), lack of

resources (14 nominations), and problems with organisation's functionality (13 nominations). Problems with communication and ambiguities in the content and responsibilities of the job description were both mentioned by 7 of 63 respondents.

Altogether 14 respondents mentioned more than one obstacle. There were 9 respondents who had not met any obstacles in knowledge sharing. If there was no resistance to change and a negative attitude towards foreigners, it did not cause obstacles to knowledge transfer.

Based on responses presented in the earlier paragraph, it seems probable that there was too little time for language training, which can be one reason the expatriates had such limited contact with the local people. According to Shaffer et al. (1999), knowing the language facilitates contact with local people. Further, contacts with local people increase knowledge of the culture, which in turn may decrease the resistance to change.

**The main findings** for research question two, regarding organisation-level effects, indicate the following: first, that the respondents showed high satisfaction in reaching the targets at work; second, the cultural effect was even stronger than expected; and third, the biggest obstacles for knowledge sharing, according to the respondents, were the local staff's resistance to change and their attitude towards foreigners, lack of time and other resources, and problems with the organisation's functionality.

### 5.3 Repatriation from the organisation's perspective – transformation process back to home organisation

The third research question concentrates on the repatriation process from the company's perspective, from the target-setting point of view and trying to take into consideration how the company might utilise the knowledge that expatriates acquired during the assignment. How does the repatriation – transformation process back to home organisation – look like from the organisation's perspective? How satisfied are the expatriates with the assignment and repatriation period? The results given in the following paragraph are based on the pre- and post-surveys and the interviews.

At the end of the assignment, the respondents were asked to evaluate both the satisfaction for the work-related matters and the assessment for the whole assignment period. The aim was to get an overall evaluation. The respondents reported high values for success in achieving their targets. The results regarding work-related targets were biased toward the positive end of the scale (scale 1-4: mean 3,37; SD ,607; n=63). The respondents reported high values in target achievement, even though many of them also reported that the company did not appreciate or take into

consideration their new knowledge and experience from the assignment. Similar results have been found in other research studies: for example, Tung (1998) used self-reported measures of success. In her study, the mean score of success was 4,23, success in attaining corporate goals and objectives during assignment (mean scores based on 5 points scale, 5= to a large extent).

Regarding the work-related target accomplishment, 27 of 63 respondents reported that the targets were very successfully reached, and 31 of 63 respondents had reached their targets quite successfully. Only four respondents of 63 answered “average” satisfaction level, and no one reported a “below average” result. Only one respondent out of 63 reported that there was no target setting at all. No gender difference was found in evaluation, which is expected in the case of a high mean value and small variance.

Another question was asked about overall satisfaction for the whole expatriation period. The results followed a similar line as for the work-related targets. Even 35 of 63 respondents were very satisfied with the assignment, and 24 of 63 respondents were quite satisfied. There were three of 63 respondents who reported a neutral response (not satisfied or dissatisfied) and only one respondent of 63 was quite dissatisfied with the assignment. According to the results (mean of overall satisfaction being 4,48; SD ,669 n=63; scale 1-5; 1=very dissatisfied), the participants were satisfied with their achievements at work and with the assignment as a whole (94% n=63 being quite or very satisfied) – both with the work and private sides of their expatriate period. The overall rating for satisfaction of the whole assignment period correlates, according to Spearman’s correlation test ( $r = ,251$ ;  $p = 0,048$ ;  $n = 63$ ), to success in supporting organisational learning and expertise sharing during the assignment.

### The value of the assignment seen at the repatriation phase

At the end of the assignment, in the post-survey, the participants were asked about the value of their assignment for them and how they were going to utilise their new knowledge and skills in their later career and life. More than one-third of them (24 of 63 respondents) were going to act as experts regarding the host-country-specific matters, such as knowledge sharing about cultural and practical factors. Every second respondent (31 of 63) planned to share their knowledge via the daily work. Every fourth respondent said, in turn, that they could benefit from the assignment both in their future career and in their personal life.

Of 63 respondents, 13 criticised the company, notifying that nobody was interested in their experience or knowledge after the assignment. It was difficult for them to find a position in the home office. Some of the respondents even had to return to their previous job with previous conditions. Quite a few, altogether 11 of

63, did not want to return home: some of them continued in the host country, on a local agreement, whereas some continued to another country as an expatriate again. Some of the respondents changed their employer and continued working abroad.

As a conclusion to the repatriate phase, the assignment was seen as a positive experience for the respondents: it benefited their whole life cycle, both at work and in their personal life. Some of the respondents were very pleased with the possibility to work and live abroad with their family. Their positive expressions regarding learning or development especially concerned the personal characteristics during the assignment. The assignment seemed to be beneficial in many ways, even though the criticism was not very positive toward the company during the repatriation phase. This result is in line with earlier studies. Most of the expatriates in Tung's study (409 expatriates in 51 countries) were satisfied with their assignment (overall expatriation): mean 4.1 (mean scores based on 5-point scale, 5= to a large extent). When the same respondents were asked about repatriation, most of them were dissatisfied, (mean= 2,61 on a 1-5 scale). According to Tung (1998), the discrepancy might be because the respondents valued their assignment as an experience and the opportunities it brought for their personal development and career enhancement, even though that might happen in another company. Also, Bonache (2005) and Bonache & Brewster (2001) have stated that international assignments do not always bring positive impacts for those repatriates who stay in the same organisation. The high level of dissatisfaction upon return can cause problems in the company, leading to high turnover.

To conclude, the expatriates mainly agreed that they are willing to share their knowledge and expertise gained during the assignment, although not everyone was satisfied after returning to their home country. Every fifth respondent commented that the company was not interested in their new knowledge, or not supportive in searching for a new position. Instead, they expected the company to offer them a position to utilise their cross-cultural learnings, knowledge of the specific culture and language qualification.

The repatriation process, as such, got criticism from the respondents. According to them, the target setting for the assignment and follow-up should have been planned better. One respondent suggested that the managers should be trained for the expatriate process to be better able to take care of it as well as to make use of its profits for the company. The whole expatriate process brought such development that it was a positive outcome for many participants; professionally, not everyone was satisfied, for example due to too little time for language training during the assignment. Six respondents of 63 did not want to come back home. They stayed in the host country by local agreement.

## 5.4 Network perspective to the assignment process – expatriates' personal networks during the assignment

The fourth and fifth research questions focused on the expatriates' personal networks: Are the following factors related to networking in the country of assignment: the length of the assignment; networking in the home country; host country; cultural area; organisational function; position; gender? Is networking related to the achievement of goals?

The aim is to examine how the number of the network ties varied in the home and host countries, in work and private sectors during the assignment; how local and enterprise culture and family relationships affected the changes found, and how the network ties related in knowledge transfer regards. The results in the following chapter are based on ego-centric network analyses and visualisations.

### Expatriates' network size and its variation

Altogether 16 participants (11 men, 5 females) participated in the network analysis study. Eleven participants sent the information regarding their network contacts three times (when the duration of the assignment lasted at least 1,5 years), and five participants sent their network contacts twice (when the duration of the assignment took less than 1,5 years). The participants (n=16) worked in the following seven countries: Brazil, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and United States.

To study the ego-centric (personal) networks, the participants were asked to name who had been important for them from an information-sharing perspective during the assignment, i.e., from whom they had received information or to whom they had delivered information regarding their work. The presupposition was that the personal network consisted of the following five sectors: 1. work-related network ties in home country (= in Finland), 2. work-related network ties in host country, 3. work-related network ties in other countries the company operates in, 4. work-related network ties outside the company and 5. private network ties.

There was a variation in the size of the personal networks already from the beginning of the assignment. The table below (see Table 8) shows the size of the participants' personal networks, measured as a number of the contacts in each sector. The network size shows each participant's alters: the numbers are summed up from each measurement point (network 1, network 2 and network 3). The size of the whole network is the sum of all three networks, which means that the same persons might have been counted more than once. Five participants had shorter assignments, and for the reason, only two networks due to the shorter time for data gathering.

**Table 8.** The size of personal networks, all measurement points, number of vital links and their change (n= 16).

ID	Gender 1=male, 2=female	Size of ntw 1	Size of ntw 2	Size of ntw 3	Mean	Number of vital ties, first measu- rement	Number of changes, vital ties	Change type (W=work related, P= private)	Net Change of Vital Ties
44/602	1	25	25	n/a	25	11	0	0	0
104/3121	1	29	34	n/a	31,5	2	0	0	0
40/202	1	32	32	27	30,3	6	4	W,P	0
49/103	1	42	37	31	36,7	9	5	W,P	-1
69/406	1	42	119	136	99	5	3	W,P	-1
80/108	1	43	75	459	192,3	13	0	0	0
45/702	1	52	88	81	73,7	5	0	0	0
102/1121	1	54	59	77	63,3	14	1	W	-1
103/2121	1	64	77	89	76,7	7	1	W	-1
87/3091	1	66	75	61	67,3	7	0	0	0
70/506	1	86	76	n/a	81	15	2	W,P	2
52/304	2	28	38	43	36,3	5	6	W,P	4
68/306	2	29	61	71	53,7	11	4	W,P	2
54/504	2	30	35	51	38,7	17	2	W,P	-2
60/405	2	31	55	n/a	43	7	4	P	4
43/502	2	55	29	n/a	42	14	0	0	0
<b>Mean value by measurement points</b>		<b>44,3</b>	<b>57,2</b>	<b>102,4</b>	<b>61,9</b>	<b>9,4</b>			
<b>SD</b>		<b>17,35</b>	<b>26,39</b>	<b>122,16</b>					

n/a= not applicable; W=Work related, P= Private

The participants were asked to name the “vital links” during the assignment, meaning those persons who were critical from the expatriates’ well-being point-of-view and without whom they themselves were not able to manage well during the assignment. In the results, the vital links seem to be quite stable, on average the respondents had 9,4 vital links in the first measurement. Women have more vital links (mean 10,8) than men (mean 8,7) according to the first measurement. There were only minor changes during the assignment. In work-related contacts, some changes took place between line managers or colleagues; whereas regarding the private network ties, the changes happened mostly with friends who were at the same time in the host country as expatriates.

### Personal networks and cluster analysis

A hierarchical cluster analysis was applied to classify the participants’ network ties based on the size of their network and how much the number of ties changed during the assignment. A cluster analysis was conducted for work-related ties (in the home country, in the host country, in other countries the company operates in, and work-related network ties outside the company). The changes were calculated as new and lost network ties during the assignment in data-gathering waves 1-3.

A hierarchical cluster analysis was applied with the method of furthest neighbour and measure interval Squared Euclidean Distance. The variables used were the following: All last networks’ work-related ties together; All increases of work-related ties together, measurement phases 1-3; and All decreases of work-related ties together, measurement phases 1-3. With this method, three clusters were found. They were named as Moderate networkers (Cluster 1), Effective networkers (Cluster 2), and Scarce networks (Cluster 3). The means of the work-related contacts by clusters can be seen in the following table (Table 9):

**Table 9.** Means of work-related contacts by cluster variables.

Cluster	Variables		
	All work-related network ties at last measurement point together	All increases together, work-related ties	All decreases together, work-related ties
1 Moderate networkers	27,5	18,75	-9,75
2 Effective networkers	50,4	29,2	-23,6
3 Scarce networks	15,6	2,8	-12,4

The participants’ private networks, in turn, consisted of their contacts to the family members in the host and home countries, friends, neighbours, language and

school teachers, kindergarten staff, landlords and local authorities, among others. Altogether 14 participants' information regarding their social ties is available for further analysis, since two participants' data were not detailed enough for dyad-level analysis, as the information given did not include individuals but groups.

## Network visualisations

Network maps were created with the Vennmaker 2.0.3 program to produce an overview of the tie structure. Each map contains sectors that were used to allocate the persons (alters) mentioned during the interviews regarding the personal networks in five previously mentioned categories: 1. work-related contacts in the home country (black), 2. work-related contacts in the host country (blue), 3. work-related contacts in other countries where the company operates (brown), 4. work-related contacts outside the company (green) and 5. private network (red).

Ego, at the centre of the pie chart, represents the expatriate him or herself. The network actors (alters) are shown as other white circles. In all work-related network dimensions, the gender of alters is indicated, but not for ego themselves, to guarantee anonymity of the participants. In private networks, family members, neighbours or friends were not indicated in detail to protect their anonymity. Similarly, private network ties do not always present individuals, but they can be groups, such as "own family". The sizes of the white circles have a special meaning: the bigger the circle, the more important actor for the expatriate.

In the following visualisations the participants' ID codes cannot be revealed, to guarantee anonymity and privacy of the participants.

## Descriptions of clusters in work-related personal networks

### *Cluster 1, "Moderate networkers"*

Cluster one has four members, all women, working in different functions and positions: three in R&D-related positions and one in Sales and Marketing. Members in cluster one had the longest assignments (mean 2,5 years, SD ,913), compared to members in other clusters. Two of the Moderate networkers had family with them, and two left for assignment with their spouse.

All Moderate networkers had medium-sized networks at the beginning of the assignment (mean 29,5; SD 1,732; all network ties); two of them had contacts in other countries where the company operated, and two had contacts outside the company. On average, they had 59,3 work-related ties across all measurement points.

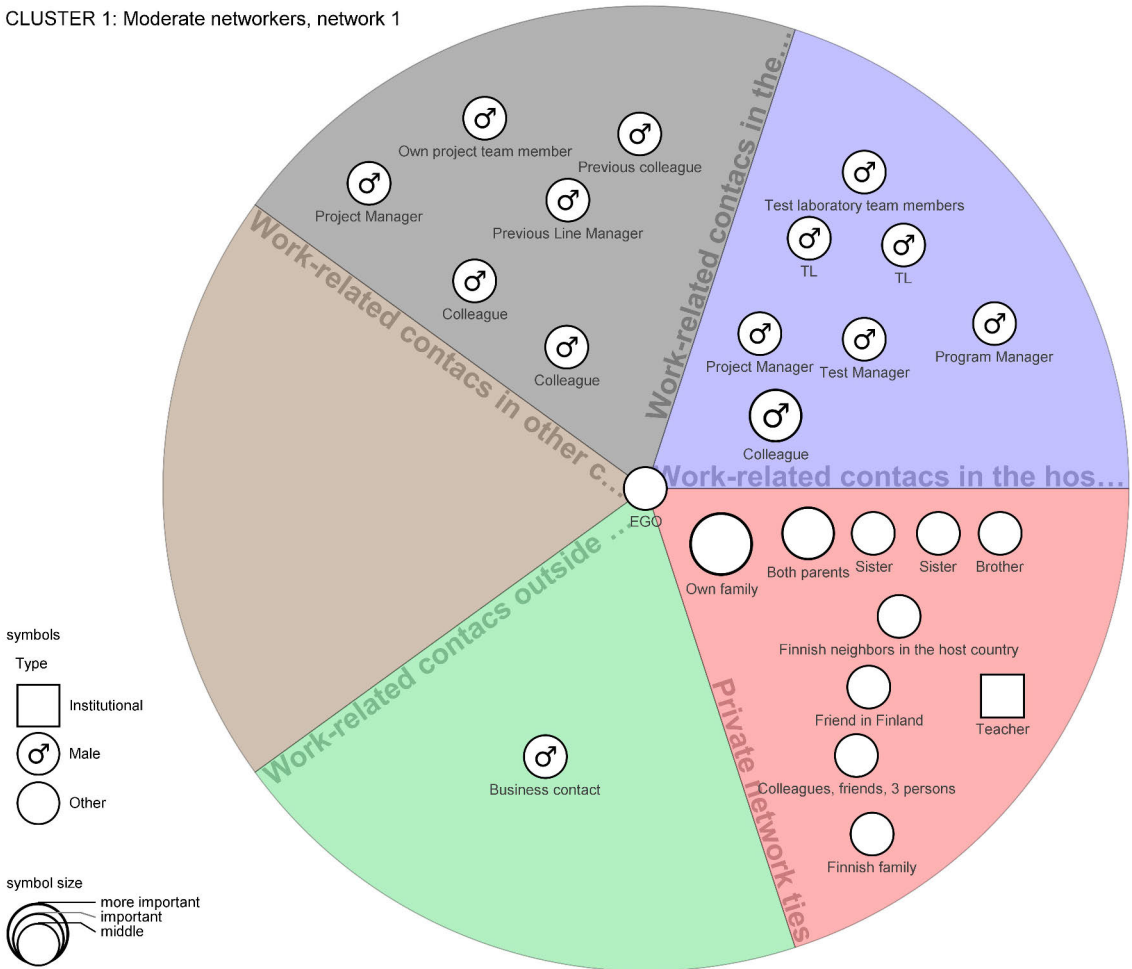
During their assignment, Moderate networkers gained an average of 22,1 new work-related ties and lost 9,8. At the end, all four cluster members had network ties in other countries where the company had a location. There was only one person who

did not have any work-related ties outside the company. Moderate networkers had many ties in the private sector (mean 59,3 ties, all three measurement points together). They were gaining, on average, 13,8 new ties and losing no ties in their private network during the whole assignment. The personal network size of the Moderate networkers did not differ based on their organisational work function.

Next, a network visualisation of one representative in cluster one will be presented. The three network maps show how the participant's network looked at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the assignment, which lasted longer than an average assignment, altogether 3,5 years.

At the beginning, the participant's work-related network in the home country consisted of a rather small number of ties, only six contacts. In the host country, there were somewhat more ties, seven contacts, one of which was reported to be very important. Further, the participant had one work-related contact outside the company but no work-related contacts in other countries where the company operated (see Figure 9a).

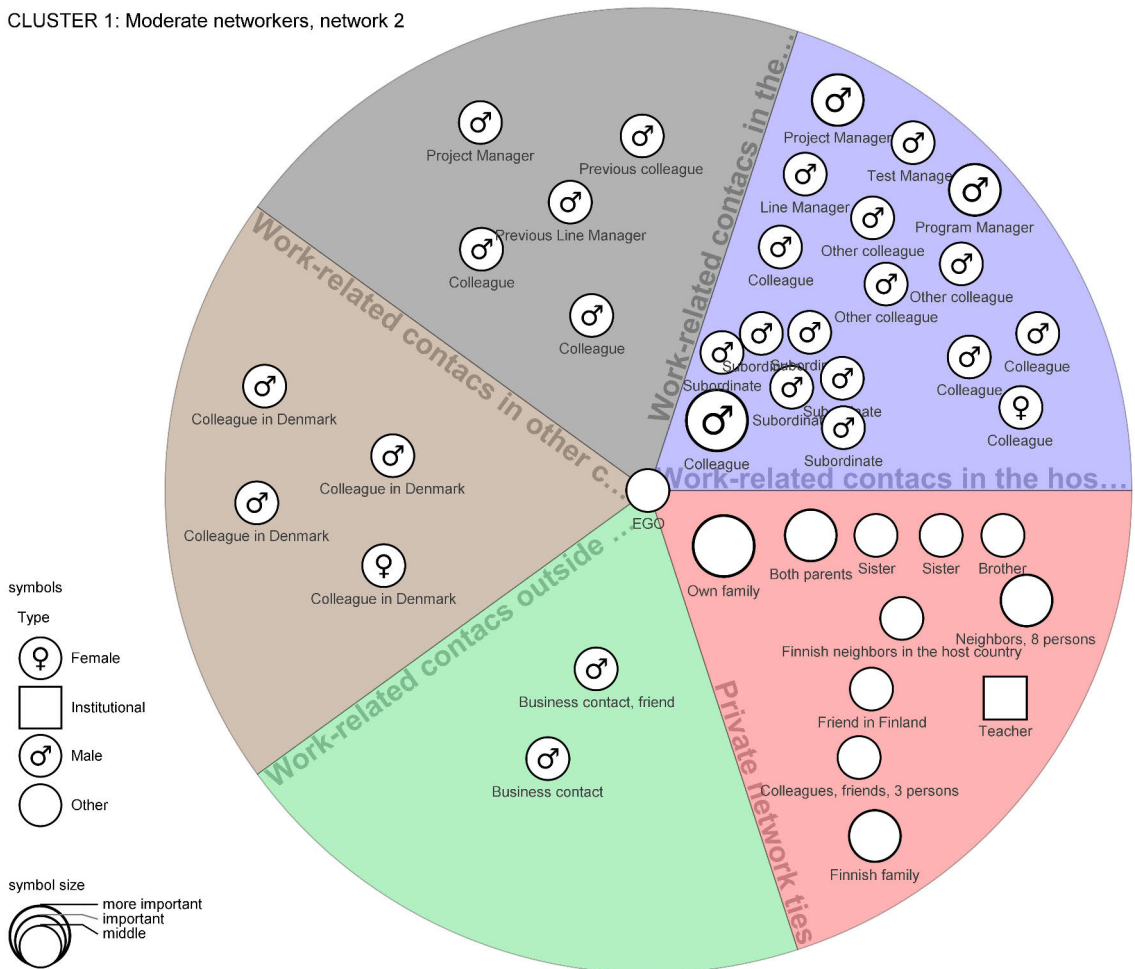
CLUSTER 1: Moderate networkers, network 1



**Figure 9a.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Moderate networker's ties. First data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries inside Nokia, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

In the middle of the assignment, the participant's network had grown with eleven new work-related contacts in the host country, three of which were reported to be very important. Four new contacts in other operating countries were gained, and one new work-related contact outside the company was established. The number of work-related contacts in the home country was rather stable, only one contact was lost (see Figure 9b).

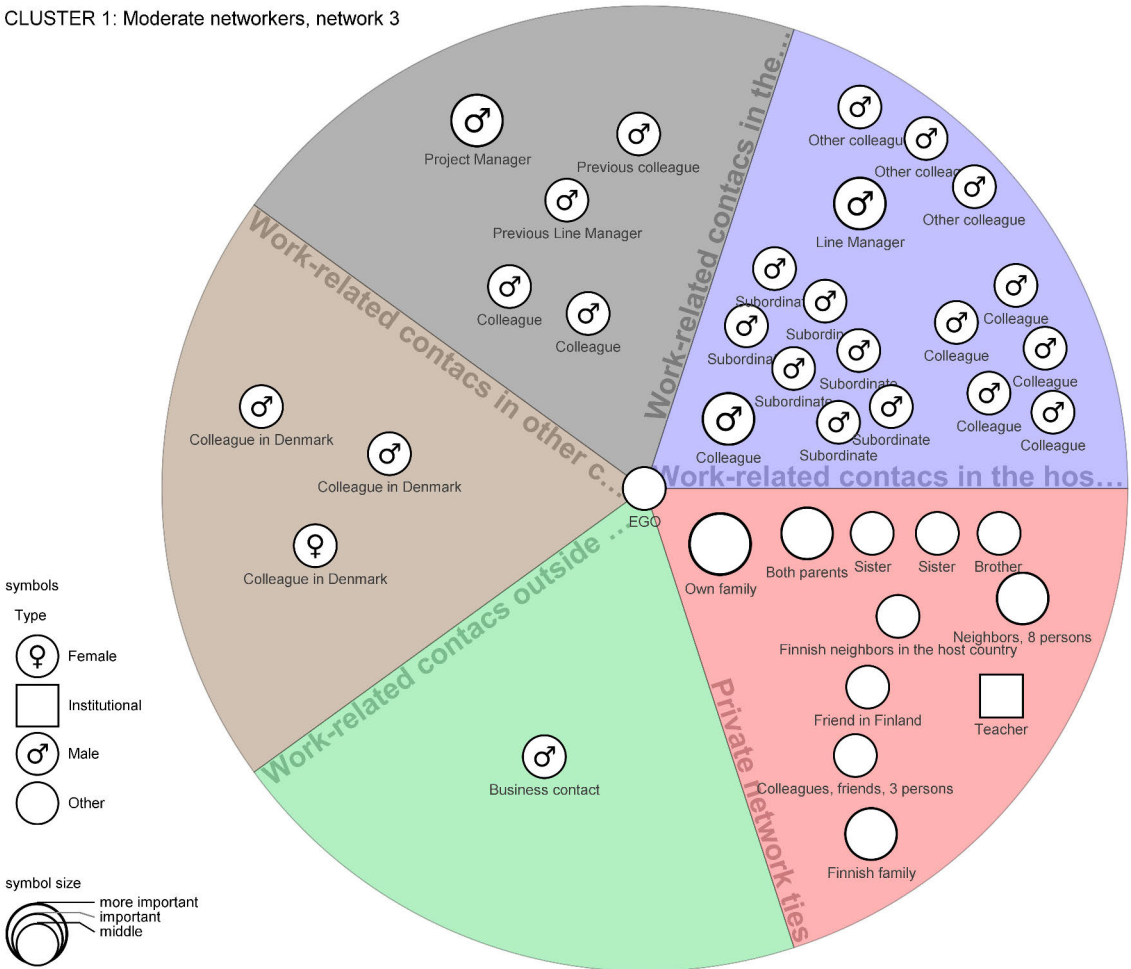
CLUSTER 1: Moderate networkers, network 2



**Figure 9b.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Moderate networker’s ties. Second data gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

At the end of the assignment, there were few changes; almost all work-related contacts were unchanged. Altogether three contacts were lost: one from the host country network, one from other countries the company operates in and one outside the company. In all, the participant had a stable private network across all data gathering waves. The network grew mainly with neighbours in the host country (see Figure 9c).

CLUSTER 1: Moderate networkers, network 3



**Figure 9c.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Moderate networker's ties. Third data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

To sum up, the participant networked moderately in the host country (26 new work-related ties and 13 lost ties), with only a small turnover in the network. The participant gained two new work-related vital links during the assignment. A decent network size and small turnover rate was a typical feature for all Moderate networkers in Cluster 1.

**Cluster 2, "Effective networkers" with high turnover in their contacts**

The cluster of Effective networkers had five members, all males. The length of their assignment varied between 1,5 and 3 years, (mean 2,2 years, SD ,758) under

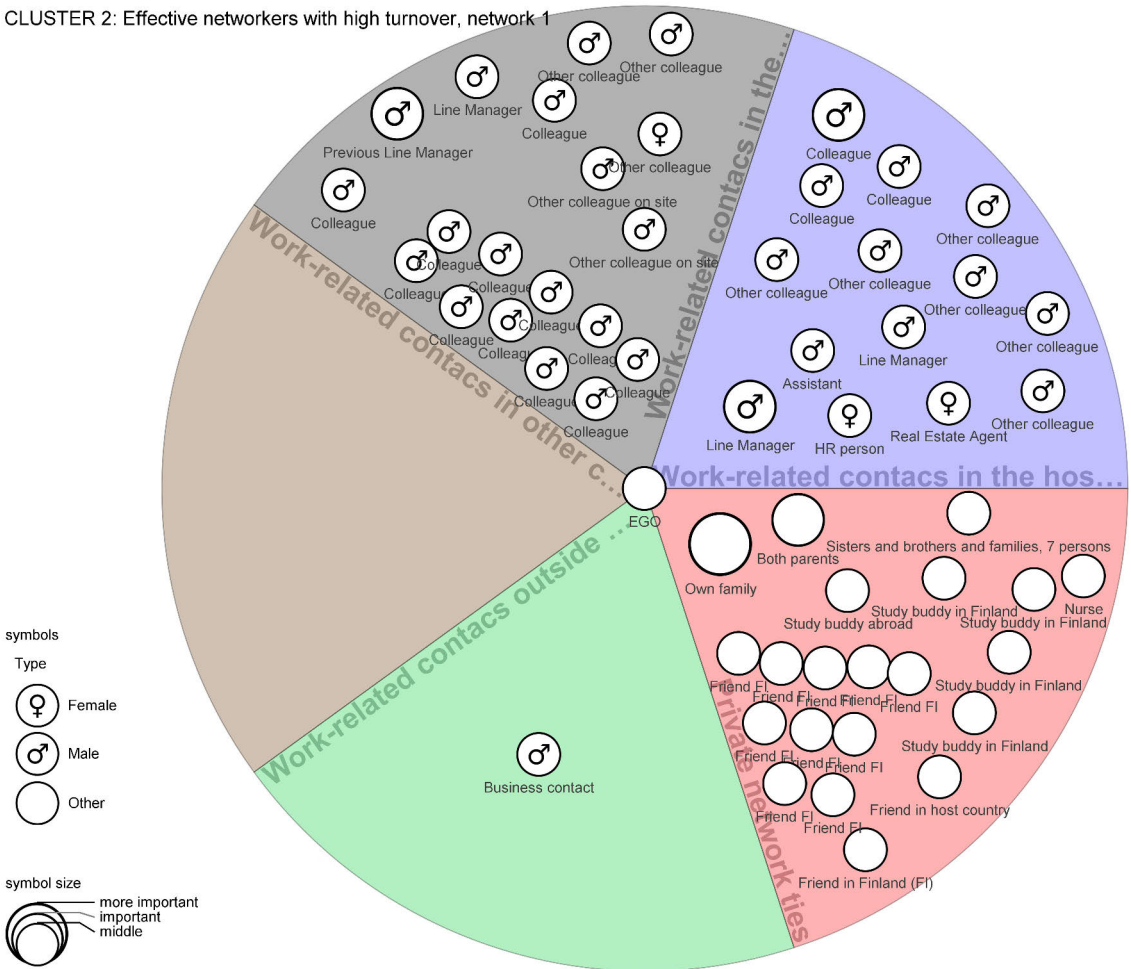
different organisational functions and positions. Three participants worked in R&D positions, one in Operations and one in a Support function. Four Cluster 2 members left for assignment with family and one with spouse.

The Effective networkers had the biggest networks already from the beginning of their assignment (mean 54, all work-related ties, first measurement point). In addition, there was one participant who had contacts in other countries where the company operated and outside the company, one who had contacts outside the company and three participants had contacts in those other countries where the company operated. On average, Effective networkers had 134,8 (SD 25,1) work-related network ties in sum across all measurement points regarding work-related network ties. Many of the Effective networkers' ties were established inside the company, mainly in the host and home countries. During their assignment, on average 29,2 new work-related network ties were established, and 23,6 ties were lost. Thus, the turnover rate was high up in the number of their work-related network ties. They all gained new ties in other countries, and one of them had work-related ties outside the company.

Effective networkers were stable in their private network ties; during the assignment, they kept the ties they had. Consequently, the number of Effective networkers' all-network ties was biggest at the end of assignment as well (mean 77 network ties, SD 5,45). The results do not show any difference between the home and host countries or for which organisational function the participants worked for. However, participants for Cluster 2 come mainly from the R&D function.

The following three charts illustrate how personal network ties have been changed for a representative of Cluster 2 members, Effective networkers. At the beginning of the assignment, the representative of Cluster 2 had a high number of work-related network contacts (19 ties in the home country, one of which was reported to be very important). In the host country, the number of work-related ties was similarly high (14 ties, among which two important contacts). In addition, there was one work-related contact outside the company (see Figure 10a).

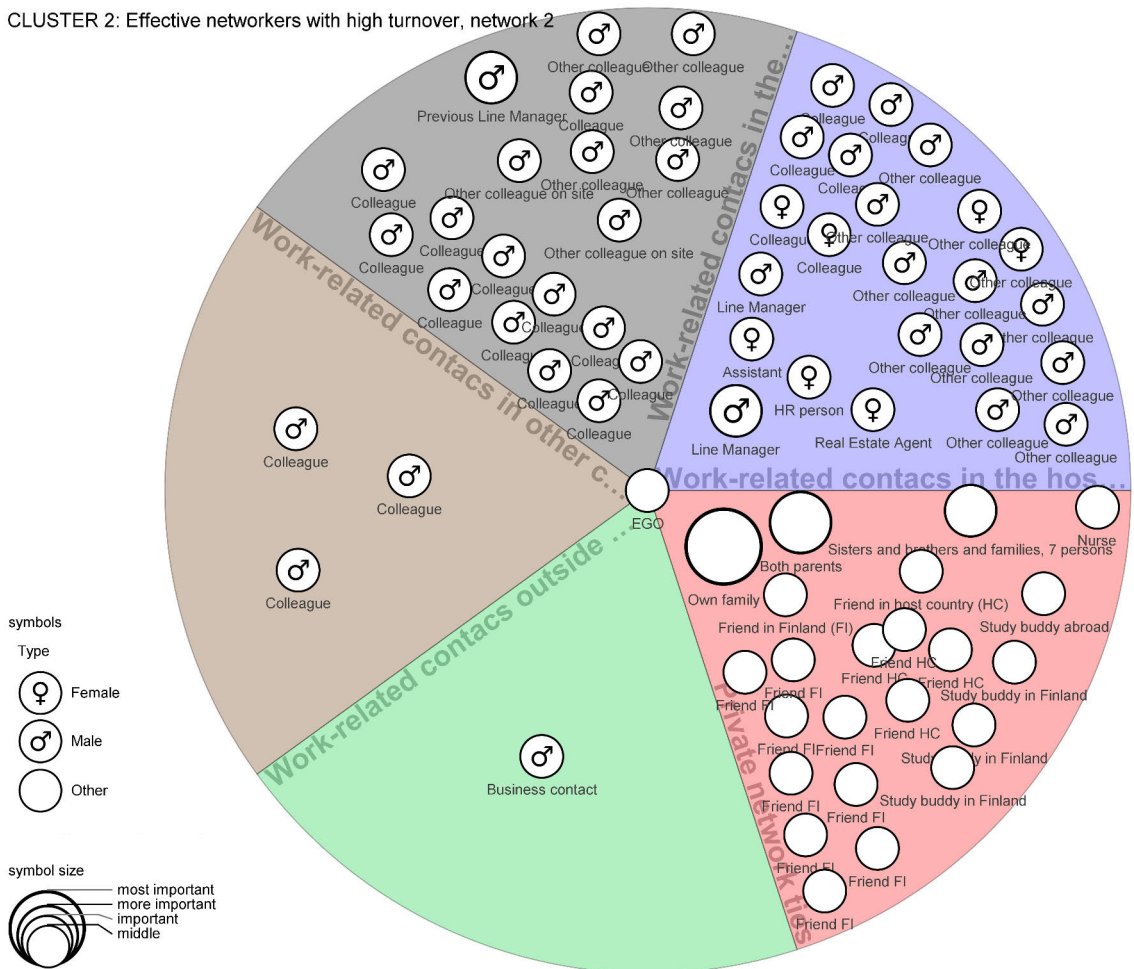
CLUSTER 2: Effective networkers with high turnover, network 1



**Figure 10a.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Effective networker's ties. First data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

In the middle of the assignment, the number of work-related contacts in the host country had increased with nine new mentions and one contact in the home country. One contact was nominated as important in both the home and host countries. Further, three contacts in other operating countries were made and one outside the company (see Figure 10b).

CLUSTER 2: Effective networkers with high turnover, network 2

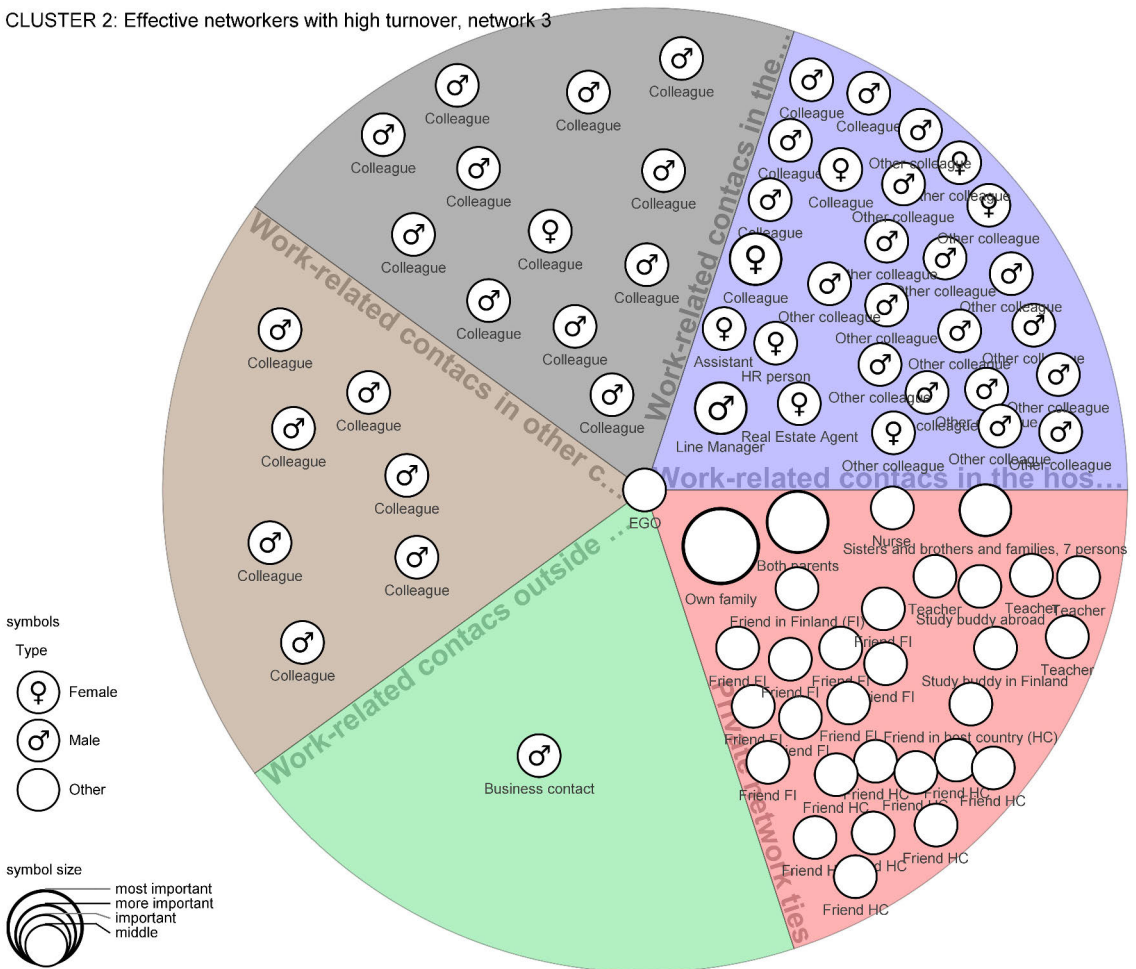


**Figure 10b.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Effective networker's ties. Second data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

Eight home-country, work-related contacts had been lost toward the end of the assignment (see Figure 10c). In turn, five new ties were established in the host country, with no change in the two important contacts. Further, four new contacts got started in other operating countries and one outside the company. In addition, there was a high and even growing number of private ties that consisted of friends in the home and host countries, likewise family members and other relatives. The length of the assignment for the Effective networker representative was 3 years (see Figure 10c).

To sum up, networking was active with 39 work-related new ties during the assignment. At the same time, 29 ties were lost. The participant lost one work-related vital link during the assignment. These features were typical to all other representatives in Cluster 2, Effective networkers with a high turnover in the network rate.

CLUSTER 2: Effective networkers with high turnover, network 3



**Figure 10c.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Effective networker's ties. Third data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

### *Cluster 3, "Expatriates with scarce networks"*

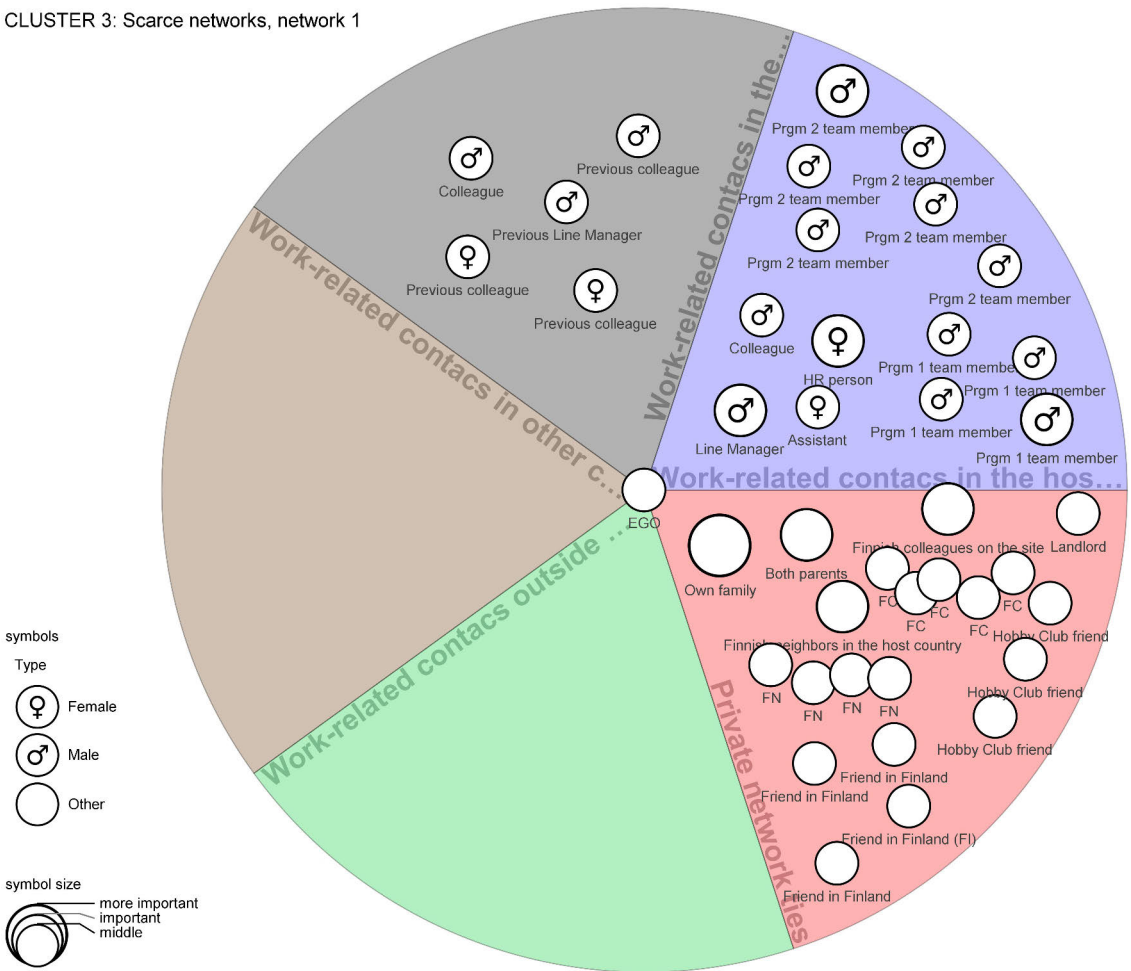
In Cluster 3, there were five expatriates with scarce networks, one woman and four men. The length of their assignment was shortest compared to other clusters (mean 1,6, SD 1,193). Some participants had only one-year contracts, so the assignment was planned to be short; whereas some returned earlier than expected for different reasons. Members in Cluster 3 worked for various functions and positions, one in each function: R&D, Sales and Marketing, Operations, Sourcing and Support Function. Two Cluster 3 members left to go abroad alone and three with family.

At the beginning of the assignment, the size of personal networks was medium rather than small (all work-related ties together, first measurement point, mean 23,2 SD 8,89), but the number of ties decreased during the expatriate period. On average, the members in Cluster 3 had 42,8 (SD 17,41) work-related ties across all measurement points, but the number of ties decreased toward the end of the assignment (mean 15,6 work-related ties in network 3). The situation was similar all through the expatriate period so that two members of the five had work-related network ties in other countries and one outside the company. Only some ties (mean 2,8, SD 2,94) were established during the stay, and even more were lost (mean -12,4, SD 12,89).

The private ties for expatriates with scarce networks were also few. To conclude, the short length of the assignment seems to influence the number of new ties, although it does not explain the number of lost ties. Presumably, there are other explanations for the small network size, too. Respondents' criteria to report the ties may differ, as well their willingness to maintain ties.

In the following visualisations, one representative of Cluster 3 is described in detail. The first chart shows a small personal network composition already at the beginning of the assignment with five work-related network ties in the home country. In the host country, the participant had a slightly bigger network with fourteen contacts, of which four were reported to be important. This participant had no work-related contact outside the company and no work-related contacts in the company's other operating countries.

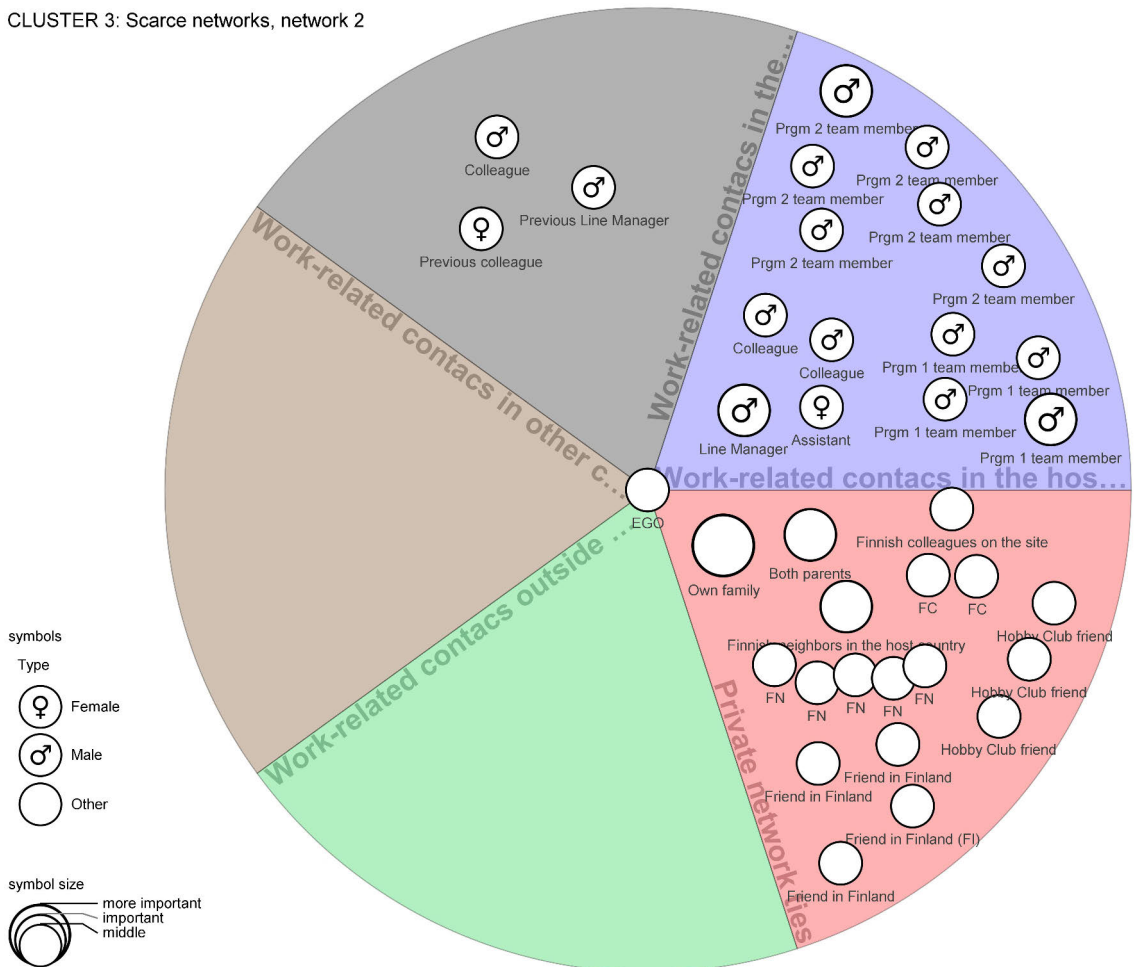
CLUSTER 3: Scarce networks, network 1



**Figure 11a.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Scarce networker's ties. First data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

In the middle of the assignment, the participant had not gained more work-related contacts in the host country. The contacts were reported to be important ones. Until the second data-gathering point, the participant had lost almost half of the earlier work-related contacts in the home country. No contacts in the company's other operating countries or outside the company were made.

## CLUSTER 3: Scarce networks, network 2

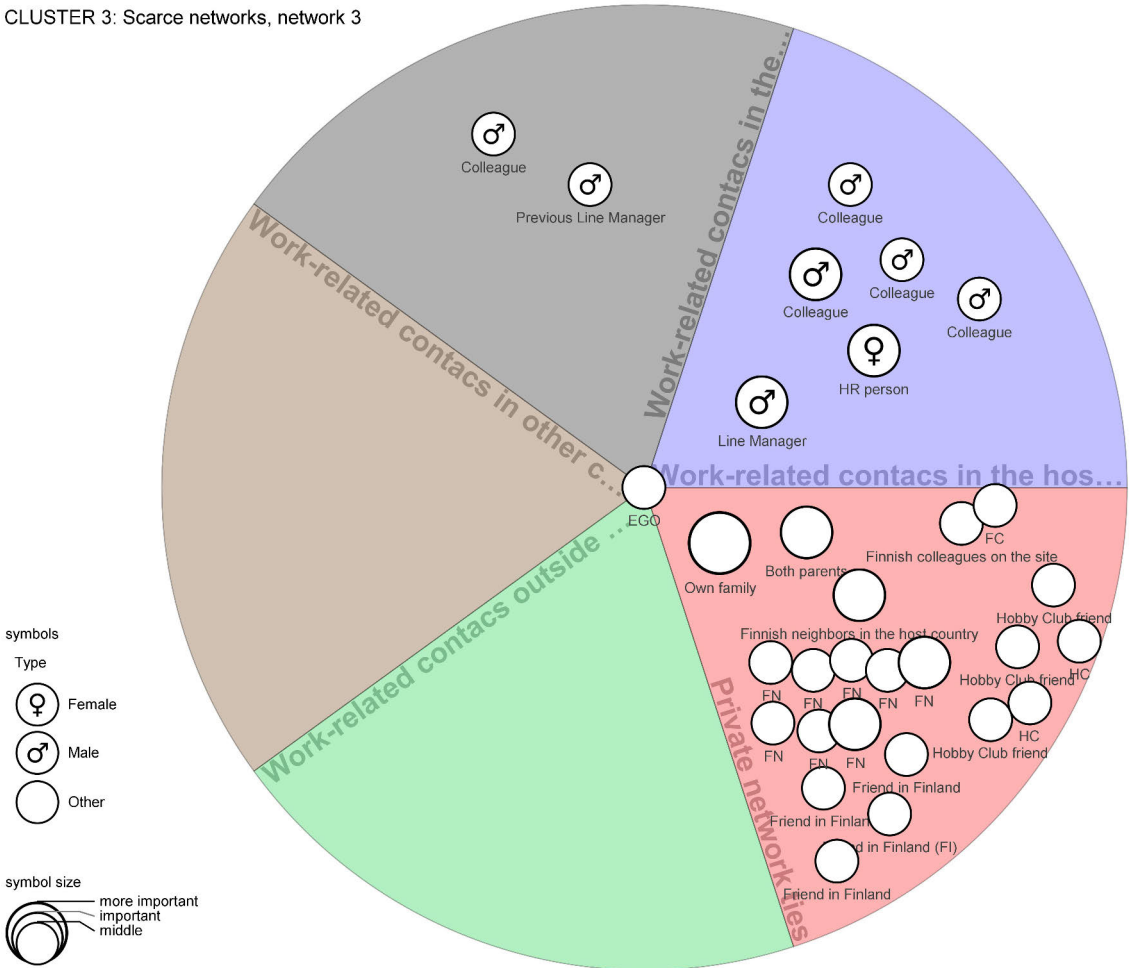


**Figure 11b.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Scarce networker's ties. Second data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

To sum up, at the beginning of the assignment, the expatriate with a scarce network had a medium-sized, work-related network (19 work-related ties), which was close to a moderate networkers' number at the beginning of the assignment; but toward the end, the number of ties decreased. Only some (7) work-related new ties were reported during the whole assignment. The participant gained one new work-related and two private vital links during the assignment. At the same time, the participant lost 28 work-related ties. This was typical for representatives in the scarce network cluster, the members of which had the least work-related ties during the assignment compared to other clusters.

The participant with a scarce work-related network had, though, a quite big and stable private network that consisted of many Finnish neighbours and colleagues in the host country and participants of a hobby club in addition to family members. The length of the assignment was two years.

CLUSTER 3: Scarce networks, network 3



**Figure 11c.** Vennmaker visualisation of one Scarce networker's ties. Third data-gathering phase. Categories: 1. Work-related contacts in the home country, Black sector, 2. Work-related contacts in the host country, Blue sector, 3. Work-related contacts in other countries the company operates in, Brown sector, 4. Work-related contacts outside Nokia, Green sector and 5. Private (personal) network ties, Red sector.

## 5.5 Follow-up question, regarding expatriates' later career path

The last research question focused on the long term consequences of the expatriate period. How do the expatriates see the influence of the assignment on their personal career path? What kind of network benefits did the participants report regarding the new network contacts gained during the assignment?

The results of the follow-up question are organised according to the following themes: work in international/global environment after assignment, transitions and career paths, career development, experienced networking impact, profession-specific skills and experience and repatriation. These themes made the core of the follow-up survey question. The length of the responses varied because of several explanations, one of them indicating the richness of the transitions and changes during one's later work career. Further, the results and conclusions are presented for each cluster separately.

### Cluster 1 Moderate networkers

Typical for representatives in the moderate networkers' cluster was that the participants steadily established new ties and successfully kept the earlier gained ties. The assignment duration for members in Cluster 1 was long, and they had medium-sized networks at the beginning of the assignment.

The respondents in Cluster 1 had varying experiences regarding **international careers and career development**. According to two respondents, their expatriate period did not have a remarkable influence on their career in general, even though the expatriate assignment was appreciated in the company. One respondent returned to the previous position which he/she left and did not see any positive impact that the assignment had on his/her career development. Two other respondents had more positive experiences. They both had worked in international positions after their assignment. One respondent commented that the decision to stay on a local agreement in the host country after the assignment was remarkable from a future career point of view, both from personal and professional perspectives. The respondent did not return to Finland but stayed in the host country on a local agreement.

*During the assignment, I found a new interest area and direction for my career. I was able to utilise my previous experience and leadership skills, and my professional profile was visible in my new position. When the home company finished operations in the host country, I had found my place in a local environment and did not want to return to my home country anymore. (ID 68/306)*

**Transitions reported by the Moderate networkers** may be divided into vertical and horizontal transitions. Vertical career transition means getting a promotion and horizontal is creating value for you and your company by increasing your knowledge. These were fairly equally mentioned. The following statement referred to vertical transition:

*Moving abroad was a new, exciting experience but also kind of scary, and we wanted to make sure that both of us have a secure job in Finland after the assignment. (ID 68/306)*

Another participant commented on the horizontal transition:

*In between, I did other work as well, but I went back to my favourite job. (ID 52/304)*

**Experiences with networking impacts** were also diverse in Cluster 1. Networking impact during the assignment was rather neutrally explained. Nothing negative was reported, but networking did not promote remarkable career development either. Two respondents commented that even if networking during the assignment itself did not promote their career, being employed by the company did – *“I ended up, with the help of my previous Nokia colleague, in my present position and firm” (ID 68/306)*. The participant who stayed abroad after the assignment commented as follows:

*My network in Finland has decreased a lot during these years abroad, and it might be a problem if I would return to my home country in the future. (ID 68/306)*

**Impact of assignment for profession-specific skills** were mentioned in a positive tone among the Moderate networkers of Cluster 1. One participant commented that *“This experience was very rich for me, it grew me professionally very much; so from that perspective, it had an effect on my career development” (ID 54/504)*. Another stated that *“This assignment had a significant effect on my personal and professional development” (ID 68/306)*. The respondents further said that their language qualifications improved during assignment, as expected, like some other special skills.

*Language qualifications and cross-cultural knowledge, which were acquired during assignment, have had a big effect on the later success in work life (ID 54/504). Cross-functional and international leadership knowledge was an asset*

*in the local company after assignment... My knowledge and competences, which were learned in the home country, were appreciated in the host country, and I got the possibility to grow my competences in new areas. My cross-functional and international leadership skills were valuable when applying for a new position in another company. (ID 68/306)*

**Repatriation** was seen as a problematic phase for some Cluster 1 respondents.

*The assignment did not have a positive impact on my career development. When I returned, I had to seek a new position, like a new applicant, since the whole organisation had totally changed. (ID 52/304)*

Another respondent had considered repatriation already before the assignment.

*Before we left for assignment, we wanted to be sure that we'll have a position in the home unit when we come back. We also wanted to continue our expatriate contract for one additional year, but it was not possible for the company. That's why we took a risk and stayed with a local contract in the host country – and we're still there. (ID 68/306)*

To sum up, despite some difficulties distinguishing what benefits were caused by working for the company and the assignment itself, most statements from the Moderate networkers were coherent in respect to their personal benefits gained during the assignment.

## Cluster 2 Effective networkers with high turnover

Effective networkers had a high number of network ties, inside the company, both in the host country and home country. The average length of their assignment was over two years. During the assignment they gained plenty of new work-related network ties but also lost them. Thus, they had a big turnover rate in their work-related network ties established in many countries where the company operated. Although they did not get many new private ties during their stay, they kept the old ones. All participants in this cluster were men.

One respondent commented in the follow-up survey question that the assignment had greatly influenced their life and later career.

*Without this assignment, my career would have been very different, and most probably I would not have been able to achieve all these dreams that I could*

*with the help of the company and assignment (living in many countries, different cultures, working with truly global teams). (ID 103/2121)*

**Work in an international or global environment** after the assignment was typical for respondents coming from Cluster 2, Effective networkers. In some cases, they had left for one or more new expatriate assignments in different countries and continents (e.g., Africa) after the first assignment. Some of them returned to Finland at times and then returned abroad again “*to learn new things*”, as ID 45/702 commented. “*When the opportunity arose to leave, I didn’t think about it for a second*” (ID 103/2121), commented another participant.

The members of Cluster 2 reported **transitions** in their careers, mergers and acquisitions, termination of contracts or companies. New positions were at least in some cases found via Nokia networks. One respondent had acquired a new education and later found a position in another technological area. Another respondent, who had earlier worked in R&D positions, had to face the big change in Nokia – which faded away his core competence. In this situation, the expatriate assignment helped in the transition from an expert to a managerial position. The experience gained at Nokia has continuously been helpful under his present international employer.

**Transitions** for Effective networkers with high turnover in their network relations seem to have been more vertical than horizontal. The respondents had worked in different countries, companies and fields or domains, creating an international career for themselves, with many different career aspirations and successions earned. One respondent commented that as the world is global, he cannot see any particular significance in a nation or state where the work happens to be done. “*The opportunities offered by the work are equally useful everywhere*”, commented the respondent (ID 70/506).

An international career has caused demands on the respondents’ families but also interesting possibilities. During their assignment the respondents of Cluster 2 all gained new ties in other countries where the company operated. Obviously, this helped them find international positions, and changes took place smoothly when the opportunities were found.

**Experience and network impact** during the assignment was reported to be remarkable for the Cluster 2 members. They commented that the contacts gained during the assignment have helped them find new challenges.

*Contacts and friendships that were created 20 years ago are still alive and have made networking much easier. (ID 103/2121)*

Similarly, in Cluster 1, one respondent commented that networking activities during the assignment as such did not greatly support his career development, but the network ties coming through Nokia have been useful.

Cluster 2 respondents estimated that the **impact of profession-specific skills and experience** gained during the assignment was helpful. One respondent reported that the benefits of the assignment materialised through their personal expertise. Another respondent said that he had especially gained personal competences and knowledge: experience and understanding of different cultures, people and processes, language qualifications, trust in one's own competences and better stress management in problematic situations, and finally, understanding of the difficulty of technology transfer.

Cluster 2 members also faced problems during their **repatriation** period. One of them told that the assignment discontinued earlier than expected because of the decision made by the company. Although a couple of years later he left for another assignment, and repatriation from the second assignment went well.

One participant commented that, in fact, the first assignment ended after 21 years. He had faced the repatriation problems caused by changes in the company and adjustment problems with family. After three years in the host country, he had signed a local contract. Later, after two years, Nokia sent him for a new two-year expatriate assignment in India. The first attempt to return to the home country failed and, therefore, the respondent returned abroad.

*We felt like outsiders in our home country, and adjustment to local circumstances with family was difficult. There was no problem at work, but the everyday life of a family with children was challenging. After ten years, we made another attempt and returned to our home country. The children are older but adjustment outside work is still a bit challenging for us. (ID 103/2121)*

One respondent had faced challenges for a couple of months when returning to the home country, as his old position no longer existed. Later, everything went smoothly, and he was satisfied with the way the company operated. Regarding how knowledge sharing between various work units and countries took place, speculations were provided:

*Transfer of knowledge and experience is not so easy when communication and terminologies do not meet. It demands a lot of time and discussion between people to transfer understanding and details. (ID 70/506)*

To sum up, most respondents in Cluster 2 stated that the assignment had had a significant impact on their later career. Most transitions were more vertical than horizontal.

### Cluster 3 Expatriates with Scarce networks

At the beginning of the assignment, the expatriates with scarce networks had medium-sized networks. However, their network ties decreased during the expatriate period. Further, the social ties toward their private life were also few. The length of their assignment was shortest, compared to the other clusters, only a bit more than one year.

After the assignment, some respondents coming from Cluster 3 had worked abroad, likewise reported by respondents in the other clusters. One of the two respondents that had worked abroad, commented that the expatriate phase was a turning point to his/her career development.

*The assignment changed my life entirely, I would not have believed that somebody will call me and ask to work in new projects in China. (ID 49/103)*

Another respondent commented:

*The assignment made it easier to buy a one-way ticket and leave to go abroad after consultations in the home country ... the assignment gave better capabilities to work later in a very multinational team, and also some additional prestige or trust in the eyes of some others. (ID 104/3121)*

One of the respondents had **transitioned** from a job in the operational function to the R&D function, and after that to an IT Manager position outside the company, in the public sector. In the home country, a rich variety of training was participated in after the assignment, which supported the transition to a new position or field after the employment in Nokia. One respondent continued to work in the same kind of position later in the home country and again abroad later.

**Experience and network impact created during the assignment** was reported by one respondent after returning to the home unit; their manager recruited him/her to be part of the manager's own team. The duration of his/her assignment was only one year, and he/she reported him/herself as a slow networker – “as a basic introvert”, establishing only a very small number of network ties.

**Some challenges regarding Repatriation** were reported by Cluster 3 members, similarly to other clusters. One of the respondents faced uncertainties while trying to find a new position in the home country, as the previous position did not exist

anymore. After a short period of uncertainty, a new position was found. Due to a failure or mistake by the company, some weeks of unemployment were experienced, after which a successful career outside Nokia began. Another respondent did not have any problems or “cultural shock” during the repatriation phase (ID 104/3121). Working permanently abroad was experienced later by the respondent.

To sum up, the assignment was mainly a positive experience for expatriates with scarce networks (Cluster 3). Their **transitions** seemed to be more horizontal and leading to various fields, creating a strong base for the later career path. One respondent agreed with the positive effect on career: “*it was easier to make the decision to work abroad many years after assignment*” (ID 40/202), he/she commented after nine years’ employment abroad in two countries.

### Conclusion of follow-up question in clusters 1–3

Altogether seven of eleven respondents had worked abroad after their assignment, for shorter or longer periods. Consequently, it was related with their efforts to have an international career, as one of the possible other factors which can promote one’s career. Vertical transitions after the assignment were experienced by two of the three respondents. Not surprisingly, the respondents classified as effective networkers with a high turnover rate in their social ties, i.e., Cluster 2 members, had, in most cases, spent their later working years in international tasks, under many companies. Their responses to the follow-up questions were, maybe for this reason, also longer and richer than responses from the other two clusters.

Also, two respondents who were not included in the clusters, because their data was not detailed enough, were networking effectively during assignment, and they both had big networks at the end of the assignment. They both had plenty of contacts inside the company, and especially many contacts in the host and the home countries. The turnover rate was high in the number of their work-related network ties. They gained new ties in other countries and work-related ties outside the company. Their private networks were stable; during the assignment they kept the ties they had. Both respondents commented that the expatriate assignment had a remarkable effect on their later career. One of them stated:

*The experience of working with different people and cultures, in a global environment in general, opened the doors when I started looking for new jobs at the end of the assignment. Similarly, the work role during the assignment brought a new insight into one’s own career dreams.* (ID 69/406)

One continued working abroad in international companies, having vertical transitions, and the other one returned to Finland, having horizontal transitions in global companies.

The sample of the present study is too small to make any comparison between genders; it is also not the focus of this thesis work. However, it is worth saying that all members in Cluster 2 with a high number of network ties were males, but at the same time four members of five in Cluster 3 with scarce networks were also males. Almost all women belonged to Cluster 1, moderate networkers.

Further, the follow-up question provides us with evidence of the important contribution of the assignment regarding the respondents' later career paths, in international or other positions. As a critical comment, one must remember that several respondents said that it is hard to distinguish the impact of the assignment itself, and working at Nokia in general. The data gathering was carried out during the years when Nokia was among the leading companies in its field. On the other hand, the follow-up question included the time when there were many changes in the company and a high number of employees had to leave the company. This may have influenced on the willingness or must for transitions, that is, to change jobs. The assignment further changed, in most cases, the direction of the expatriates' private lives, though private life was not a special focus of this study.

It is not possible to over generalise about the results, as the number of participants is very small. However, based on visualisations and the follow-up question, the organisational function (R&D, Sales and Marketing, Sourcing, Operations, Administration) did not influence how the participants succeeded with their network efforts, how they experienced their possibilities for knowledge sharing, or what kind of transitions they had in their later career path. Ethical issues caused some limitations on how many functions or any content-related information can be presented in the Results. For the same reasons, it is not possible to compare cultural environments or host countries to each other.

Next, the implications of the thesis and the theoretical and practical contributions of the thesis are discussed. To conclude, a summary of the thesis, thoughts and suggestions for future research are presented.

## 6 Discussion

According to the results, expatriate assignment has given participants especially learning which improves their personal characteristics and human capital, the learning and development outcomes seem to be more personal than professional in nature. Regarding organization-level effects, the results indicate firstly that the respondents showed high satisfaction in reaching the targets at work, secondly, cultural effect was even stronger than expected. As a conclusion to the repatriate phase, the assignment was seen as a positive experience for the respondents: it benefited their whole life cycle, both at work and in their personal life. The expatriates mainly agreed that they are willing to share their knowledge and expertise gained during the assignment, although everyone was not satisfied after returning to their home country. Every fifth respondent commented that the company was not interested in their new knowledge, or not supporting in searching a new position.

The findings of the delayed question showed that effective networking during assignment gave the best qualifications for work in international or global environment after the assignment.

The research process consisted of mixed methods: two surveys, ego-centric network analyses and the follow-up questions were used. Networking has been studied with network analyses and interviews, pre- and post-questionnaires have been used to analyse background information, knowledge sharing, effect of local culture and repatriation. One follow-up question was sent to investigate the expatriate's career development and the assignment's effect on their life after the assignment. In this longitudinal part of the study, the same individuals were followed twenty years after the beginning. The research questions were set according to five different research areas to examine the assignment from different perspectives: from the individual's and organization's perspectives, repatriation from the organisation's perspective, from the network, and from the career path perspective.

The first area concentrated on the expatriate's individual perspective during the whole assignment period, starting from the selection and preparation time before the assignment and ending in the repatriation phase at the end of assignment. One of the aims of the study was to investigate how individuals experienced the assignment, their expectations before assignment and evaluation of the whole expatriate period.

The findings of the empirical study support earlier studies: the participants wanted to learn to act in a foreign culture and work environment, enhance language qualifications and increase expertise in their own area (Stahl et al., 2002; Jokinen et al., 2008). These findings also confirm that the expatriates were overall satisfied with the assignment, which supports the findings of earlier research (Tung, 1998). Not all of them were satisfied during the repatriation phase though: some of them commented that the “company was not interested in their new knowledge,” or the “company should have offered them a position where they could have utilised their cross-cultural learnings, knowledge of the specific culture and language qualification.” This result supports earlier research (Black et al., 1992; Kraimer et al., 2016; Banerjee et al., 2012; Haile & White, 2019).

This thesis also investigated which barriers of success exist in knowledge sharing. According to the results, there were three main obstacle areas: the local staff’s resistance to change and attitude towards foreigners, lack of resources and problems with the organisation’s functionality. However, not all respondents reported experiencing obstacles. These findings support earlier research studies (Berthoin Antal, 2001; Furuya et al., 2009; Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; Oddou et al., 2013).

The repatriation process from the company’s perspective was examined starting from the target setting and ending in considering how the company could utilise the knowledge that expatriates acquired during assignment. The results confirm the importance of understanding the local culture. Cross-cultural training might be an inseparable part of the expatriate process, since it might add cultural awareness. This result is in line with earlier research, which states that cross-cultural training helps to adapt to a foreign country (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al., 1991; Searle & Ward, 1990; Wang, 2002).

According to several earlier studies (Black et al., 1992; Tung, 1998; Wang, 2002; Kraimer et al., 2016; Haile & White, 2019), many expatriates are not satisfied with the repatriation phase and these findings confirm that result. In the present study, participants were especially dissatisfied with career development. Career planning after assignment should also be part of the expatriate and repatriate process; now, participants felt that they had to take care of finding a new position themselves after assignment in the home country or return to their previous position with the same conditions as before assignment.

The findings of the study indicate that participants who were networking more with the host country work contacts were reaching their work-related targets. This result is supported by Wang’s study (2002) that showed a connection between expatriates’ well-being and performance. The results showed that if the assignment is short, the network size and change percentage are smaller; and if the assignment lasts longer, the size and change percentage are bigger. According to the results of

the network analysis, there seems to be a correlation between the number of networking ties in the home and host countries. Those participants who had small networks in their home country networked only a little in the host country; and those participants who had big networks in their home country networked a lot in the host country. Gender seems to affect networking. On average, women in this study had smaller networks than men, and men were networking more already from the beginning in the new country. Variation among males was bigger than for females; males had both the biggest and the smallest networks. Men were especially good in networking with work-related contacts in the host country. This finding is supported by earlier research, but the research group was so small that these results cannot be generalised.

As part of the study, 20 years after the network analyses (n=11), there was a possibility to reassess the participants' situation and assignment's effect on their later career. One three-part longitudinal follow-up question was set to discover how the participants defined the effect of the assignment on their personal career path and what the effect was of the new network contacts, which were gained during the expatriate period, on their career. Results of the follow-up question were reviewed according to the same clusters, which were defined earlier in connection to the network analyses. The participants were divided into three clusters: "Moderate networkers, Effective networkers with high turnover, and Expatriates with Scarce networks." The results of the follow-up question showed that Moderate networkers' networking during assignment did not promote their career, but networking during the employment did. Transitions in this cluster were divided into two parts – half of the respondents experienced vertical transitions and the other half horizontal transitions in their careers.

Effective networkers with a high turnover commented that the experience and impact of networking during assignment has been remarkable for their career. They gained a lot of new contacts during the assignment period, and these contacts have helped them find new challenges. Transitions in their later career seemed to be more vertical than horizontal.

The assignment was a positive experience also for expatriates with scarce networks. Transitions were more horizontal than vertical for them during their later career. Their networks were smaller than in other clusters, but still they commented that the assignment created a solid foundation for their later career.

The findings of the follow-up question showed that effective networking during assignment gave the best qualifications for work in an international or global environment after the assignment, which has been typical for the Effective networkers according to these findings.

To summarise the follow-up questions, the participants felt that the assignment had a great impact on their subsequent careers and lives. This result is in line with

the Suutari & Brewster (2003) findings: they argued that although many expatriates had left their earlier employer, they remained satisfied with their international experience.

Social network analysis proved to be an efficient tool for my study. Social network embeddedness and social support systems of globally mobile employees, as part of a mixed-methods design were well intertwined like some earlier studies have suggested (Agha-Alikhani, 2016; Palonen 2022; Pustovit, 2020). SNA highlights the importance of both individual agency and structural constraints in shaping individuals' social networks (Kilduff & Brass, 2010). Expatriates' social networks are shaped by individual, organizational and host-country contexts, each playing an important role in facilitating or constraining relationship development (Mao & Shen, 2015). According to a well-cited review (Kilduff & Brass, 2010) the leading ideas at the heart of the organizational social network research program include: an emphasis on relations between actors, the embeddedness of exchange in social relations, the assumption that dyadic relationships do not occur in isolation; and the belief that social network connections matter in terms of outcomes to both actors and groups of actors across a range of indicators. (Kilduff & Brass, 2010). All of these elements were present in this study.

## Ethical considerations

This study has been particularly sensitive from two approaches. First, I have collected very personal information from the participants' personal lives, such as the social ties to their closest family members, relatives, friends and colleagues. Second, the context of the study was an international company with its' security rules and norms. Without being a member of this work community, and thus being aware of the limits of what can or cannot be done, it had been difficult if not impossible, to gather the data and report the results of the research.

Therefore, ethical issues were particularly important in data gathering, like always when doing research with people's personal information and experiences (Li, 2019). Next, I elaborate on some details in this regard.

The participants were well informed about the research during every phase of the study. The analyses of the data and results were reported in such a manner that the anonymity and privacy of the participants was secured. Doing this, careful planning was a corner stone for all decisions made. A significant problem is related to ethical concerns, especially the use of names in network data gathering. When collecting data for the network analyses with the name generator method (n=16), each participant was guided to use pseudonyms so that only they knew the real identities behind the pseudonyms. In the results, each participant's private networks were presented on a group level, e.g. "family members", so that the individuals were

no recognisable. Had this not been done, the expatriates with or without children, or reporting the exact number of their children, would have provided information that was too detailed. When producing and publishing personal life stories with visuals, there are risks in harming the persons involved in the stories (Hakanurmi, 2022). The same risk was recognised while working with network analyses.

For survey data, there were further problems when nominating the participants' host country. Therefore, no country information can be coupled to any other piece of information, such as functions or work positions, to keep the data unrecognisable. Unfortunately, much useful information was lost by the cost of being careful and ethical with data security. All 104 participants who replied to the first survey worked in the same sub-unit of the company. In the next phase, the participants of the network analysis group (n=16), were selected by their host countries, organisational function and work positions, to create as much diversity in the data as possible. The network study group was not informed of the other participants. So, it was not possible to discuss the study with anyone else.

While using the ego-centric approach, defining only egos and alters (not alters' tie to other alters), we did not encounter the problem of the socio-centric approach, where Palonen (2022) refers to the following: Even though the names and other attributes of respondents are anonymised, one cannot easily hide the structural embeddedness of a single person if the results are utilised by the organisation or given to participants.

Further, organisational matters needed to be taken into consideration. Agneessens and Labianca (2022) mention their concern on how to offer advice to the organisation without violating organisational members' confidentiality and ethical concerns, while providing useful and ethically sensitive feedback to the organisation. Borgatti and Molina (2005) share the same concern in organisational network research, where the researcher reports results to directors. In the present study, this concern did not create a problem, since so much time has passed that the company is no longer the same company it was during the empirical part of the study. In a sense, this solved many problems from an organisational point of view. The partly non-planned circumstances caused by the delayed and prolonged research process, thus solved many problems.

In summation, this kind of a study, with information regarding personal relationships and their development during a long timeline, demands careful planning and high ethical standards. Trust is a necessary component expected between the participants and the researcher and, similarly, between the researcher and the company. Trust was earned through a jointly shared work environment and the same employer that supported the study by giving permission for this PhD thesis study. Presumably, it must have helped in achieving the high response rates, particularly in the first survey.

## Limitations

This study was carried out from an individual employee's viewpoint, not from the company's or the host country's staff. The research method, ego-centric network analysis, concentrates on the ego's network, not on the connections of the alters. The company's representatives, for example the expatriates' line managers or colleagues in their home or host country, were not interviewed. Host country colleagues and subordinates could have given essential information, especially about knowledge sharing: what kind of knowledge was received from the expatriates and was the transfer successful? During the repatriation phase, the same questions could have been asked in the home country. Target setting is another area that could have been reviewed by the expatriate's line managers in the home and host countries: how the targets were defined and how they were reached.

The sample of the whole study consisted of 104 expatriates. However, the network analysis group (n=16) was too small for the results to be generalised. For ethical reasons, the expatriates' private networks were presented on a general level so the persons cannot be identified. Conclusions from the differences between women's and men's career paths after the assignment cannot be reported, since the sample was too small. Their networking also cannot be commented on after the assignment.

The research company had strict rules on confidential matters, especially R&D-related information. This has been taken into consideration in this thesis: a confidentiality agreement was signed between the professor overseeing this thesis and the company. During the research period – and especially after the active period 2000-2006 – there were a lot of substantial changes in the company, as well as in the whole industry. Technological changes caused enormous economic changes in the IT business, and those influenced the company as well. These effects later also extended to those participants who still worked at the company, and the effects could be seen in their later career paths.

## The main conclusion and implications of the study

Based on the result two main claims of the thesis are as follows: In this study the organization's knowledge sharing is manifested in terms of the individual's skills and career development. The assignment was beneficial for the expatriates from their individual perspective, but not for the company. The organization was not able to use the knowledge gained by the expatriates.

Findings also showed that effective networking during assignment gave the best qualifications for work in international or global environment after the assignment.

How well the participants of this study succeeded during the assignment or how much they found added value for themselves or for their company was not asked

from their managers' point of view. The actions the company could take to improve the situation during the repatriation phase was reported by the participants themselves. Some implications for the company are suggested on the following list:

First, the organisational target setting for the assignments was reported to be unclear or even missing, at the beginning of the expatriate process, or even later. Had the targets been defined, it presumably would have facilitated the expatriates to orientate themselves to the forthcoming task. The target setting in the company has been changed after the data-gathering phase for this study in 2000-2001, when the participants left Finland.

Researchers of earlier studies have not been consistent in defining what expatriates' effectiveness means and how to measure it. Further, many multinational companies have various systems in defining accomplishment of the assignment targets. Only a few companies track the outcomes and attribute them to individual assignees (Shaffer et al., 2006). According to Tahvanainen (2000), only in a few studies is the expatriate's performance management covered. Expatriates may play a critical role in the global success of companies. Further, sending expatriates to host countries takes a lot of resources. Therefore, it would be important to manage their performance effectively. There are even more open questions regarding performance management, such as who should define the performance goals: the sending or the receiving party. One participant suggested that the expatriate's manager should be trained for the expatriate process to be better able to take care of it, as well as to make use of its profits for the company. This proposal is very noteworthy for any company.

Second, networking in a foreign country may be a way to gather potential and partly invisible benefits, in addition to knowledge sharing and expertise building. According to this study, most participants did not extensively network with local people or anyone outside Nokia. Obviously, it is one reason the language qualifications did not improve as much as expected. Based on what was found in this study, more networking, also with local people and experts from other companies, was beneficial, at least to the expatriates themselves.

Third, cultural awareness has been one focus of this study. If the expatriates were aware of the local culture, adjusting to the local environment was probably easier. The cross-cultural training, which was available for all participants of the study, should be obligatory to expatriates and even to their family members. This might facilitate adjustment from the beginning of the assignment. Cross-cultural training might be an inseparable part of the expatriate process, since it would add to cultural awareness. The best way to handle cultural adjustment is, according to Black and Mendenhall (1990), cross-cultural training that has a positive impact on cross-cultural effectiveness. They argue that the main reason for using cross-cultural training is to help individuals adjust to the new country and culture more rapidly to

be more effective in the new position. Many studies have focused on the relationship between cross-cultural training and performance, and most studies show a significant relationship between cross-cultural training and performance (Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

Fourth, the repatriation phase appeared to be a problem for some participants in this study. There was no career planning available after the assignment, which was a disappointment to some participants. They reported that they themselves had to find the position in Finland or return to the same position from which they left for the assignment. A better system for repatriation and career planning is needed, or at least, one person nominated for this task. It is expensive (salaries, allowances, housing costs, school fees, etc.) for the company to send someone to work abroad. To get profit from this investment, some benefit of the results was expected, such as learning and experience, which the expatriates bring to the home country.

Finally, according to this study, and in line with many earlier studies, the expatriates themselves seem to benefit more than their company, at least according to their own opinion. Therefore, it would be important to evaluate the international assignee policy and find out what benefits the companies could receive; that process should be evaluated as well. The company should somehow collect such learning outcomes of the expatriate process which give profit to the organisation's own use. Many researchers have emphasised that repatriating knowledge is often tacit and difficult to transfer, share or make visible. Even though expatriates acquire a lot of valuable knowledge during their assignment, knowledge sharing often fails when they return to their home unit.

## Future Research

The world has changed in many ways during the past 20 years, but in the expatriate-research context, some situations are still the same. For example, adjustment is still at the centre of expatriate research. Repatriation research has clearly increased during these years and expatriates' career development is a growing research area.

This dissertation was a long journey with expatriates, starting from the beginning of the century, ending in the 2020s. Its form as a longitudinal study in this context made it unusual, by using mixed methods, especially ego-centric network analysis. Research on expatriate networking has mostly been studied from the perspective of adjustment. In this study, their networking at work was examined from different perspectives, our interest being particularly in what kind of networking ties expatriates were able to build while living in the host country. By studying the networks of expatriates, we were able to find some classifying factors according to which the participants could be divided into clusters. Exploring these kinds of clusters through networking would be one interesting area of research in the future.

The company's opinion, via the help of managers or colleagues in the home or host country, was not asked in this research study. What the expatriates share with the host country staff and what they bring back to their home unit would be valuable information and benefit the company. One of the aims of the study was to find out how companies could support and enhance the success factors of expatriates in the future and some answers were found. This area needs to be investigated more in future studies. How much the local, host country employees learned from these participants and what they learned cannot be verified in this study. It would be beneficial to study the content and outcome of this kind of expertise transfer, especially for the company.

Longitudinal research on expatriates' career development - what happened to the expatriates after assignment - is under investigated until now and an interesting topic for future research. This thesis' value is in its interdisciplinary and longitudinal nature. There are few studies where expatriates' networking has been studied during assignment, and the effect on expatriate career paths have been investigated even less. These kinds of research studies are still rare, but hopefully this thesis will inspire new research.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire 1, at the beginning of assignment.

## KYSELYLOMAKE

Taustakartoitus

kesä 2001

Hyvä työtoveri!

Olen suorittamassa jatko-opintoja Turun yliopistossa kasvatustieteiden tiedekunnassa ja tarkoitukseni on tutkia asiantuntijuuden syntymistä verkostoituneessa organisaatiossa sekä organisaation oppimista. Teen tätä tutkimusta yhteistyössä Nokian kanssa ja tutkimusryhmäksi olen valinnut kaikki ulkomaankomennukselle Suomesta syksyn 2000 ja kesän 2001 välisenä aikana lähtevät Nokia Mobile Phonesin työntekijät.

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia sitä, miten ulkomaankomennukselle lähtevät vievät omaa asiantuntemustaan kohdemaahansa, miten he jakavat osaamistaan kohdemaassa, mitkä tekijät ovat vaikuttamassa paikallisesti sekä miten ulkomaan komennuksella hankittua uutta tietoa ja kokemusta hyödynnetään – tai voidaan hyödyntää – komennuksen jälkeen.

Tutkimus tehdään kolmessa osassa: ensimmäinen vaihe on tämä kaikille komennukselle lähteville sähköpostitse lähetettävä kyselylomake. Toisessa vaiheessa seurataan tämän kyselyn perusteella valittuja, muutamia henkilöitä, koko kahden vuoden komennuksen ajan tarkemmin. Tutkimusmenetelminä käytän mm. teemahaastatteluja, verkostoaalyyseja sekä kyselylomakkeita. Kolmannessa vaiheessa eli komennusvaiheen lopussa, kahden vuoden kuluttua, lähetän jälleen sähköpostitse kyselylomakkeen kaikille tutkimuksessa mukana olleille.

Tutkimukseni tavoitteena on saada vastauksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin, jotta voimme parantaa myös yrityksen käytäntöjä:

1. Miten komennukselle lähteviä voidaan valmentaa?
2. Komennuksella olleiden kokemukset asiantuntijuuden jakamisesta
3. Käytännön esteet kokemuksen ja asiantuntijuuden jakamiseen
4. Mitä takaisin palaava voisi tehdä uuden tiedon jakamiseksi ja miten organisaatio voisi hyödyntää komennuksen aikana syntynyttä uutta asiantuntijuutta?

Pyytäisin Sinua siis vastaamaan seuraavilla sivuilla oleviin kysymyksiin. Käsitellen kysymykset täysin luottamuksellisesti siten, että yksittäisiä vastaajia ei voida tunnistaa. Voit palauttaa lomakkeen minulle sähköpostitse tai halutessasi myös postitse.

Kiitän Sinua etukäteen arvokkaasta tuestasi! Vastaamalla kyselyyni annat arvokasta tukea myös yrityksemme käytäntöjen kehittämiseen. Siksi toivonkin, että voisit uhrata muutaman minuutin kalliista ajastasi! Jos sinulla on jotakin kysyttävää, vastaan mielelläni kysymyksiisi. Yhteystietoni löytyvät nimeni alapuolelta.

Terveisin  
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Pyytäisin Sinua vastaamaan seuraaviin kysymyksiin, jotka koskevat hiljattain alkanutta ulkomaan komennustasi. Joissakin kysymyksissä pyydän Sinulta sanallista vastausta, vaihtoehtokysymysten kohdalla merkitse rasti (X) niiden vaihtoehtojen/väittämien kohdalle, jotka parhaiten kuvaavat omaa näkemystäsi. **Vaihtoehtokysymyksissä voit rastittaa useammankin kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.**

## I ULKOMAAN KOMENNUKSEEN LIITTYVÄT TAUSTATIEDOT

1. Komennuksen alkamispäivämäärä: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Komennuksen kesto
 

_____	1 vuosi
_____	2 vuotta
_____	muu aika, mikä?
_____	_____
  
3. Kohdemaata ja -paikkakunta
 

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4. Työtehtäväsi ja lähtöpaikkakuntasi Suomessa lähtiessäsi (ennen komennusta):
 

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5. Työtehtävä kohdemaassa
 

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6. Mistä sait tiedon komennusmahdollisuudesta?
 

_____	esimieheltä
_____	intranetista
_____	kollegoilta
_____	muulla tavalla, miten?

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7. Lähditkö komennukselle
 

_____	yksin
_____	avo/aviopuolison kanssa
_____	perheen kanssa

8. Onko sinulla kohdemaastasi aiempaa kokemusta?  
\_\_\_ minulla ei ole aikaisempaa kokemusta kohdemaasta  
\_\_\_ olen käynyt kohdemaassa muutamana kerran (alle 5 kertaa)  
\_\_\_ olen käynyt kohdemaassa useampia kertoja (yli 5 kertaa)  
\_\_\_ olen asunut kohdemaassa aiemminkin
9. Miten olet valmistautunut tähän työkomennukseen?  
\_\_\_ olen tutustunut uuteen työpaikkaani vieraillemalla siellä  
\_\_\_ olen tutustunut uuteen organisaatioon ja henkilöstöön  
\_\_\_ olen tutustunut paikalliseen kulttuuriin ja hankkinut siitä tietoa etukäteen  
\_\_\_ olen osallistunut yrityksen järjestämään ko. maata koskevaan infotilaisuuteen  
\_\_\_ en ole tehnyt mitään erityisiä valmisteluja

## **II TYÖTEHTÄVÄÄN LIITTYVÄT KYSYMYKSET**

1. Minkälainen on uusi työtehtäväsi?  
\_\_\_ suunnittelutehtävä/tuotekehitys  
\_\_\_ myynti/markkinointitehtävä  
\_\_\_ tukitehtävä (finance, legal, human resources, quality, im, communications)  
\_\_\_ esimiestehtävä  
\_\_\_ asiantuntijatehtävä  
\_\_\_ yksikön johtotehtävä  
\_\_\_ tuotanto- tai muu suoritusasteen tehtävä  
\_\_\_ joku muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Minkä luulet olevan syyn siihen, että juuri sinut valittiin tähän kyseiseen komennustehtävään?  
\_\_\_ aiemman työkokemuksen perusteella  
\_\_\_ tähän tehtävään liittyvän asiantuntemukseni perusteella  
\_\_\_ koulutukseni perusteella  
\_\_\_ henkilökohtaisten ominaisuuksien vuoksi  
\_\_\_ kielitaitoni vuoksi  
\_\_\_ joku muu syy, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Onko sinulla uudessa tehtävässäsi selvästi määritellyt tavoitteet (koko komennustehtävän ajalle)?  
\_\_\_ kyllä  
\_\_\_ ei

4. Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen kyllä, niin voisitko kertoa tarkemmin minkälaiset tavoitteet kanssasi on sovittu (eli mitä komennuksen aikana pitäisi saavuttaa)? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Kuinka paljon uskot paikallisen kulttuurin vaikuttavan työn ja asioiden hoitoon komennusmaassa/tehtävässäsi?

\_\_\_ ei lainkaan  
 \_\_\_ hyvin vähän  
 \_\_\_ jonkin verran  
 \_\_\_ aika paljon  
 \_\_\_ erittäin paljon  
 \_\_\_ en osaa arvioida

6. Minkälainen verkosto Sinulla on ennen ulkomaan komennukselle lähtöä?

\_\_\_ olen ollut tekemisissä pääasiassa oman liiketoimintayksikköni työntekijöiden kanssa  
 \_\_\_ minulla on paljon kontakteja myös muiden liiketoimintayksiköiden työntekijöiden kanssa oman yksikköni lisäksi  
 \_\_\_ minulla on paljon yhteyksiä työpaikkani ulkopuolisiin oman alan ammattilaisiin  
 \_\_\_ osallistun säännöllisesti oman tiedonalueeni konferensseihin, tapaamisiin, messuille

7. Kuinka paljon uskot voivasi hyödyntää entistä, jo olemassa olevaa verkostoasi uudessa tehtävässäsi/kohdemaassasi?

\_\_\_ ei lainkaan  
 \_\_\_ hyvin vähän  
 \_\_\_ jonkin verran  
 \_\_\_ aika paljon  
 \_\_\_ erittäin paljon  
 \_\_\_ en osaa arvioida

8. Miten selvisit entisessä tehtävässäsi vastaan tulleissa ongelmatilanteissa?

\_\_\_ pyysin apua omalta esimieheltäni  
 \_\_\_ tiesin kenen puoleen kääntyä erilaisissa ongelmatilanteissa  
 \_\_\_ tiesin hyvin, kuka työpaikallani osaa mitään  
 \_\_\_ etsin tietoa yrityksen sisäisestä verkosta intranetista  
 \_\_\_ käytin apuna kotimaassa jo olevaa verkostoani

9. Miten aiot selvittää uudessa työssäsi vastaan tulevilla ongelmatilanteilla?  
\_\_\_ pyydän apua omalta esimieheltäni  
\_\_\_ tiedän kenen puoleen kääntyä erilaisissa ongelmatilanteissa  
\_\_\_ tiedän hyvin, kuka työpaikallani osaa mitään  
\_\_\_ etsin tietoa yrityksen sisäisestä verkosta intranetistä  
\_\_\_ käytän apuna kotimaassa jo olevaa verkostoani
10. Työskenteletkö uudessa tehtävässäsi pääasiassa  
\_\_\_ yksin  
\_\_\_ tiimeissä tai projektiryhmissä  
\_\_\_ samojen työtovereiden kanssa projektista tai hankkeesta toiseen  
\_\_\_ eri työtovereiden kanssa projektin tai hankkeen mukaan  
\_\_\_ vuorovaikutuksessa asiakkaiden tai muiden organisaationi ulkopuolisten  
\_\_\_ ihmisten kanssa
11. Minkälainen vastuu sinulla on uudessa työssäsi?  
\_\_\_ saan esimieheltäni tarkat ohjeet työtehtävieni suorittamiseen  
\_\_\_ joudun hyvin paljon itse suunnittelemaan ja arvioimaan työtäni  
\_\_\_ työni suunnittelu tapahtuu pääasiassa yhteisissä tiimi- tai  
\_\_\_ projektikokouksissa
12. Miten luonnehtisit uuden tehtäväsi sisältöä?  
\_\_\_ minulta tullaan kysymään neuvoa asiantuntemukseeni liittyvissä asioissa  
\_\_\_ joudun työssäni toimimaan monien eri alojen ammattilaisten kanssa  
\_\_\_ huomattava osa työstäni liittyy informaation ja tiedon etsimiseen  
\_\_\_ ja käsittelemiseen  
\_\_\_ työni liittyy muiden työntekijöiden opastamiseen ja neuvomiseen  
\_\_\_ työskentelen lähinnä yksin asiantuntija- tai sisäisen konsultin tehtävässä

### **III OPPIMISEEN JA TIETÄMYKSEN JAKAMISEEN LIITTYVÄT KYSYMYKSET**

1. Miten itse koet parhaiten oppivasi uusia asioita tai ratkaisevasi  
ongelmia työssäsi?  
\_\_\_ yksin tutkimalla kyseessä olevasta asiasta tarjolla olevaa kirjallisuutta,  
\_\_\_ julkaisuja ynnä muuta materiaalia  
\_\_\_ keskustelemalla työtovereiden tai esimiehen kanssa  
\_\_\_ käymällä kursseilla tai koulutuksessa  
\_\_\_ itseopiskelun avulla (esimerkiksi työn ohessa opiskelu, työn  
\_\_\_ ulkopuolinen opiskelu)  
\_\_\_ varsinaista työtä tekemällä
2. Mistä aiot uudessa tehtävässäsi hankkia työssäsi tarvittavan tiedon?  
\_\_\_ kysymällä työtovereiltani  
\_\_\_ käymällä perehdytystilaisuudessa  
\_\_\_ seuraamalla yrityksen sisäistä verkkoa intranetia  
\_\_\_ yrityksen sisäisen viestinnän kautta

- \_\_\_ lukemalla erilaisia käsikirjoja, manuaaleja ja ohjeistoja
- \_\_\_ keskustelemalla työtovereiden kanssa yksikön aiemmasta toiminnasta ja historiasta
- \_\_\_ käymällä koulutuksessa
- \_\_\_ muulla tavalla, millä?

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3. Miten määrittelisit termin ”oppiva organisaatio”?

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4. Miten Sinä voisit tukea tiedon jakamista ja organisaation oppimista komennustehtävässäsi?

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5. Listaa vielä kolme tärkeintä tekijää, jotka uskot/toivot oppivasi komennuksesi aikana?

1.

2.

3.

6. Entä mitkä ovat kolme tärkeintä asiantuntemukseesi liittyvää asiaa, jotka Sinä aiot viedä/opettaa uudelle työyhteisöllesi?

1.

2.

3.

**PALJON KIITOKSIA AVUSTASI JA ONNEA UUTEEN TEHTÄVÄÄSI!**

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire 2, at the end of assignment.

Hyvä työtoveri!

Olet ulkomaan komennuksesi alkuvaiheessa osallistunut tutkimukseeni, jonka tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten ulkomaankomennukselle lähtevät vievät omaa asiantuntemustaan kohdemaahansa, miten he jakavat osaamistaan kohdemaassa, mitkä tekijät ovat vaikuttamassa paikallisesti sekä miten ulkomaan komennuksella hankittua uutta tietoa ja kokemusta hyödynnetään – tai voidaan hyödyntää – komennuksen jälkeen.

Tutkimus liittyy jatko-opintoihini Turun yliopiston kasvatustieteiden tiedekunnassa, jossa tarkoitukseni on tutkia asiantuntijuuden syntymistä verkostoituneessa organisaatiossa sekä organisaation oppimista. Teen tätä tutkimusta yhteistyössä Nokian kanssa ja tutkimusryhmäksi oli valittu kaikki ulkomaankomennukselle Suomesta syksyn 2000 ja syksyn 2001 välisenä aikana lähtevät Nokia Mobile Phonesin työntekijät.

Tutkimus tehdään kolmessa osassa: ensimmäinen vaihe oli kaikille komennukselle lähteville sähköpostitse lähetetty kyselylomake (kysely 1), johon jo aiemmin vastasit. Toisessa vaiheessa seurataan tuon kyselyn perusteella valittuja, muutamia henkilöitä, koko komennuksen ajan tarkemmin. Tutkimusmenetelminä käytän mm. teemahaastatteluja, verkostoaanalyysia sekä kyselylomakkeita. Kolmannessa vaiheessa, eli komennusvaiheen lopussa, lähetän jälleen sähköpostitse kyselylomakkeen (kysely 2) kaikille tutkimuksessa mukana olleille.

Tutkimukseni tavoitteena on saada vastauksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin, jotta voimme parantaa myös yrityksen käytäntöjä:

1. Miten komennukselle lähteviä voidaan valmentaa?
2. Komennuksella olleiden kokemukset asiantuntijuuden jakamisesta
3. Käytännön esteet kokemuksen ja asiantuntijuuden jakamiseen
4. Mitä takaisin palaava voisi tehdä uuden tiedon jakamiseksi ja miten organisaatio voisi hyödyntää komennuksen aikana syntynyttä uutta asiantuntijuutta?

Pyytäisin Sinua siis vastaamaan seuraavilla sivuilla oleviin kysymyksiin. Käsittelen kysymykset täysin luottamuksellisesti siten, että yksittäisiä vastaajia ei voida tunnistaa. Voit palauttaa lomakkeen minulle sähköpostitse tai halutessasi myös postitse.

Kiitän Sinua etukäteen arvokkaasta tuestasi! Vastaamalla kyselyyni olet antanut arvokasta tukea myös yrityksemme käytäntöjen kehittämiseen. Siksi toivonkin, että voisit uhrata vielä muutaman minuutin kalliista ajastasi! Jos sinulla on jotakin kysyttävää, vastaan mielelläni kysymyksiisi. Yhteystietoni löytyvät nimeni alapuolelta.

Terveisin  
Leena Salminen

## KYSELY 2 – ULKOMAANKOMENNUKSEN PÄÄTTYESSÄ

Pyytäisin Sinua vastaamaan vielä seuraaviin kysymyksiin komennuksesi päättyttyä. Joissakin kysymyksissä pyydän Sinulta sanallista vastausta, vaihtoehtokysymyksissä merkitse rasti (X) niiden vaihtoehtojen/väittämien kohdalle, jotka parhaiten kuvaavat omaa näkemystäsi. Vaihtoehtokysymyksissä voit rastittaa useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.

### I ULKOMAAN KOMENNUKSEEN LIITTYVÄT TAUSTATIEDOT

1. Komennuksen päättymispäivämäärä: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Komennuksen kesto yhteensä \_\_\_\_\_ 1 vuosi  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 vuotta  
 \_\_\_\_\_ muu aika,  
 mikä? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Oliko työtehtäväsi sama koko komennuksen ajan vai tuliko siihen muutoksia? \_\_\_\_\_ kyllä  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ei  
 Jos ei sama, niin mikä oli tehtävänimikkeesi komennuksen päättyessä?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### II VERKOSTOITUMINEN KOMENNUKSEN AIKANA

4. Kuinka paljon huomasit paikallisen kulttuurin vaikuttavan työn ja asioiden hoitoon komennusmaassa/tehtävässasi?

- \_\_\_\_\_ ei lainkaan  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hyvin vähän  
 \_\_\_\_\_ jonkin verran  
 \_\_\_\_\_ aika paljon  
 \_\_\_\_\_ erittäin paljon  
 \_\_\_\_\_ en osaa arvioida

Jos vaikutusta oli, niin minkälaisissa asioissa se ilmeni?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Mikä oli mielestäsi perheen mukanaolon merkitys (jos sinulla oli perhe mukana) komennuksen aikana verkostoitumisen kannalta? Kuinka paljon perheen mukanaolo vaikutti yksityiselämän puolella verkostoitumisen määrään?

- \_\_\_\_\_ lisäsi verkostoitumista erittäin paljon  
 \_\_\_\_\_ lisäsi jonkin verran

- \_\_\_\_\_ vähensi jonkun verran  
\_\_\_\_\_ vähensi erittäin paljon  
\_\_\_\_\_ ei ollut merkitystä  
\_\_\_\_\_ minulla ei ollut perhettä mukana

6. Kuinka paljon pystyit komennuksen aikana hyödyntämään kotimaassa ollutta verkostoasi?

- \_\_\_\_\_ ei lainkaan  
\_\_\_\_\_ hyvin vähän  
\_\_\_\_\_ jonkin verran  
\_\_\_\_\_ aika paljon  
\_\_\_\_\_ erittäin paljon  
\_\_\_\_\_ en osaa arvioida

### **OPPIMISEEN JA TIEDON JAKAMISEEN LIITTYVÄT KYSYMYKSET**

7. Miten selvisit komennustehtävässasi vastaan tulleissa ongelmatilanteissa?

- \_\_\_\_\_ pyysin apua omalta esimieheltäni  
\_\_\_\_\_ tiesin kenen puoleen kääntyä erilaisissa ongelmatilanteissa  
\_\_\_\_\_ tiesin hyvin, kuka työpaikallani osaa mitään  
\_\_\_\_\_ etsin tietoa yrityksen sisäisestä verkosta intranetista  
\_\_\_\_\_ käytin apuna kotimaassa jo olevaa verkostoani

8. Millä tavalla koit parhaiten oppivasi uusia asioita tai ratkaisevasi ongelmia komennustehtävässasi?

- \_\_\_\_\_ yksin tutkimalla kyseessä olevasta asiasta tarjolla olevaa kirjallisuutta, julkaisuja, www- sivuja tai muuta materiaalia keskustelemalla työtovereiden tai esimiehen kanssa  
\_\_\_\_\_ käymällä kursseilla tai koulutuksessa  
\_\_\_\_\_ itseopiskelun avulla (esimerkiksi työn ohessa  
\_\_\_\_\_ opiskelu, työn ulkopuolinen opiskelu)  
\_\_\_\_\_ varsinaista työtä tekemällä

9. Mistä hankit komennustehtävässasi tarvittavan tiedon?

- \_\_\_\_\_ kysymällä esimieheltä  
\_\_\_\_\_ kysymällä työtovereiltani  
\_\_\_\_\_ käymällä perehdytystilaisuudessa seuraamalla yrityksen sisäistä verkkoa, intranetia  
\_\_\_\_\_ yrityksen sisäisen viestinnän kautta  
\_\_\_\_\_ lukemalla erilaisia käsikirjoja, manuaaleja ja ohjeistoja

\_\_\_\_\_ keskustelemalla työtovereiden kanssa yksikön  
aiemmasta toiminnasta ja  
historiasta  
\_\_\_\_\_ käymällä koulutuksessa  
\_\_\_\_\_ muulla tavalla, miten?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Miten Sinä mielestäsi pystyit/onnistuit tukemaan organisaation oppimista sekä siirtämään omaa asiantuntemustasi komennustehtäväsi aikana?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Mitkä olivat kolme tärkeintä asiaa, jotka opit komennuksesi aikana?

1.

2.

3.

12. Mitkä olivat kolme tärkeintä asiantuntemukseesi liittyvää asiaa, jotka pystyit viemään/opettamaan uudelle työyhteisöllesi komennusmaassa?

1.

2.

3.

13. Mitkä tekijät estivät asiantuntemuksen siirtoa komennuksesi aikana (sinulta paikallisen organisaation suuntaan, paikalliselta sinulle)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **IV KOKONAISARVIO KOMENNUKSESTA**

14. Miten hyvin pystyit mielestäsi saavuttamaan komennuksellesi asetetut tavoitteet?

- \_\_\_\_\_ erittäin hyvin
- \_\_\_\_\_ melko hyvin
- \_\_\_\_\_ keskinkertaisesti
- \_\_\_\_\_ melko huonosti
- \_\_\_\_\_ minulle ei ollut asetettu lainkaan tavoitteita

15. Jos arvioit koko komennusaikaasi, kuinka tyytyväinen olet siihen?

- \_\_\_\_\_ erittäin tyytyväinen
- \_\_\_\_\_ melko tyytyväinen
- \_\_\_\_\_ ei tyytyväinen eikä tyytymätön
- \_\_\_\_\_ melko tyytymätön
- \_\_\_\_\_ erittäin tyytymätön

16. Miten aiot tämän jälkeen jakaa komennuksella saamaasi uutta kokemusta ja asiantuntemusta kotimaahan palattuasi? Mitä organisaatio voisi/pitäisi tehdä hyödyntääkseen uutta osaamistasi?

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**Jos Sinulla on vielä muita kommentteja (komennuksesta tai tutkimuksestani), voit kirjoittaa niitä alla olevaan tilaan!**

**KIITOS VASTAUKSESTASI JA OSALLISTUMISESTASI TUTKIMUKSEENI!**

**Appendix 3. Instructions for checking the network map.**

*I am sending you here the checked version of your personal network which was defined in August, last year. Could you please check your network and update it to today's situation, keeping in mind the following instructions:*

- *think about those persons who are important for you from information sharing perspective (receiving or delivering information) at your present expatriate position, both work and private life*
- *at work related contacts please think about following groups:*
  1. *work related contacts in home country (=Finland)*
  2. *work related contacts in host country*
  3. *work related contacts in other country inside the company*
  4. *contacts outside the company (e.g. other companies, public organizations, consultants, schools, universities)*
- *in private network please think about the people who give you support (please remember also the vital links/persons who help you to carry on both abroad and in home country)*

*In the picture different sectors have been marked with following colors:*

*BLACK= WORK RELATED CONTACTS IN HOME COUNTRY*

*BLUE= WORK RELATED CONTACTS IN HOST COUNTRY*

*BROWN= WORK RELATED CONTACTS IN OTHER COUNTRY INSIDE COMPANY*

*GREEN= CONTACTS OUTSIDE COMPANY*

*RED= PRIVATE NETWORK*

*In addition to these, the VITAL LINKS have been marked with CAPITAL LETTERS (means the names of the persons).*

*Please make the corrections straight to the drawing or send them in text mode to me, so I will complete the drawing later. Feel free to choose the way that is most convenient for you.*

*After this I will send you this new version of your network for checking. And finally, I will contact you once again, before the end of your assignment. Then we will describe your network for third and last time. According to the information which I have received, your assignment will end 28.2.2003. If there would be any changes with that date, please inform me so that we can keep the network information updated!*

*Thank you once again for your help! I will wait for your comments. If you have anything to ask, please don't hesitate to contact me!*

*Best regards,*



**TURUN  
YLIOPISTO**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU

ISBN 978-952-02-0350-4 (PRINT)  
ISBN 978-952-02-0351-1 (PDF)  
ISSN 0082-6987 (Print)  
ISSN 2343-3191 (Online)