



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Sanna Orbinski

Returning home:

A study on individual and organizational aspects affecting repatriate
knowledge transfer

The School of Marketing and Communication

INTB3990, Master's Thesis

International Business

Vaasa 2019

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**The School of Communication and Marketing**

Author: Sanna Orbinski
Title of Thesis: Returning home: A study on individual and organizational aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer
Degree: Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration
Programme: Master's Degree Programme in International Business
Supervisor: Vesa Suutari
Year: 2019 **Number of Pages:** 121

ABSTRACT:

During their expatriation assignments, repatriates have often gained skills and knowledge that can be beneficial to their company after their return. Gathering and sharing this knowledge can be referred to as repatriate knowledge transfer also known as RKT. Though RKT can be beneficial for a company battling in a global business environment, RKT is not researched extensively. Additionally, companies often tend to overlook the value repatriate knowledge can offer for them.

Prior studies have argued that both organizational and individual level aspects affect RKT. Individual level aspects consists of ability and motivation. Organizational level aspects include career management, repatriation support, organizational culture and managerial attitudes. Moreover, prior studies have argued that RKT often depends on repatriates' own motivation and efforts to actively find and utilize RKT opportunities. Organizational level aspects can enhance repatriates' ability and motivation to engage in RKT. The aim of this thesis is to gain more information regarding what aspects affect RKT and how it can be enhanced.

A qualitative research is conducted with nine repatriates, who all work in the same Finnish company. The results indicate that RKT is not actively practiced in the company. Additionally, it is found that repatriate support practices are not actively utilized in the company. The results highlight that repatriates' ability to engage in RKT is tightly connected to the position or role they have in the organization. However, regardless of the current state of repatriation support practices in the company, a majority of the repatriates appear to be motivated to engage in RKT. Instead, the lack of suitable knowledge sharing platform and a clear need for knowledge, which originates from the company itself, appear to have a greater impact on why RKT has not been an active part of the company's functions.

Key words: repatriation, repatriate knowledge transfer, knowledge management, knowledge sharing, human resource management

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Defining key terms	8
1.2	Research question	9
1.3	Structure of this thesis	10
2	Repatriation	11
2.1	Repatriation adjustment	12
2.2	Antecedent factors related to repatriate adjustment	14
2.3	Repatriation support	16
2.3.1	Re-entry training	17
2.3.2	Mentoring	19
2.3.3	Career management	20
2.4	Repatriation turnover	21
3	Repatriate knowledge transfer	25
3.1	Knowledge management and organizational learning	27
3.2	Knowledge transfer process	29
3.2.1	Characteristics of knowledge	30
3.2.2	Social context and social capital	32
3.2.3	Organizational context	34
3.3	Knowledge transfer process models	36
3.4	Transferring repatriate knowledge	38
3.5	Individual aspects in repatriate knowledge transfer	42
3.5.1	Ability	42
3.5.2	Motivation	44
3.6	Organizational level aspects in repatriate knowledge transfer	45
3.7	Summary of theoretical learnings	50
4	Empirical research	51
4.1	Research method	51
4.2	Data collection and analysis	52

4.3	Quality of research	54
4.4	Interviewees	57
5	Results	59
5.1	Repatriate knowledge	59
5.1.1	Personal utilization of knowledge after repatriation	60
5.1.2	Transferring knowledge to others after repatriation	62
5.1.3	Repatriate knowledge transfer situations	65
5.2	Individual aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer	67
5.2.1	Ability	67
5.2.2	Motivation	73
5.2.3	Commitment to the organization	78
5.3	Organizational aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer	79
5.3.1	Valuation of repatriate knowledge in the company	80
5.3.2	Managerial and co-workers' attitudes towards repatriate knowledge transfer	83
5.3.3	Organizational culture	86
5.3.4	Repatriation process and support	88
5.3.5	Career planning	89
5.3.6	Human resource management and repatriate knowledge transfer	91
5.4	Repatriates' recommendations for improvements	93
6	Discussion	98
6.1	Discussion of results	98
6.2	Implications for practice	106
6.3	Limitations of the study and future research	108
7	References	109

Tables

Table 1.	Interview themes.	53
Table 2.	Information about participants.	58

1 Introduction

The growing globalization has made the different corners of the world more accessible for companies seeking to gain international presence. Multinational companies often view expatriation assignment as a leadership development tool. This is done in order to further develop the individuals' international knowledge. (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). Furthermore, it has been argued that due to the rapidly increasing globalization, the importance of international assignments has gained more attention and more focus has been given to the different benefits they bring along (Knocke & Schuster, 2017).

The rapid expansion of globalization and movability of the workforce has forced companies to focus on how they fill their key positions with talented and qualified individuals. Recruiting and maintaining talents appears to be the new trend word among companies, who wish to increase their competitiveness. (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Tarique and Schuler (2010) have argued that the most significant development among the international human resource management (IHRM) is the increased focus on the effective management of those individuals, who have a considerably amount of human capital. Similarly, Riusala and Suutari (2000) have proposed that growing amount of focus in the research area has shifted to international human resource management, of which both expatriation and repatriation represent.

Expatriates are an important resource for international companies. Therefore, companies are often willing to invest in them significantly in order to ensure that the entire expatriation assignment is smooth and efficient. As expatriation is generally a short-term solution, lasting up to three to five years, organizations often expect that expatriates return to their original home country. This is referred as repatriation. However, repatriation is often overlooked due to the general assumption that as the expatriate is returning to their home country, where they are familiar with the culture and customs, there is no need to invest in the return process. Coincidentally, studies have proposed that

repatriation process may in some cases be even more challenging than expatriation process. (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007) While repatriation is the natural occurrence of expatriation, in academic literature repatriation is studied less than expatriation (Riusala et al., 2000; Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012).

Moreover, Furuya, Stevens, Bird, Oddou, & Mendenhall (2009) have argued that the majority of repatriation research has focused on the re-entry adjustment issues. The knowledge that repatriates have gained during their expatriation assignment and the strategic advantage it brings to the organization, is often overlooked (Oddou, Osland, & Blakeney, 2009). The focus on repatriate knowledge transfer has only recently manifested due to increase need for individuals with global knowledge. (Furuya et al., 2009; Stanek, 2000).

Many prior studies have proposed that repatriates have gained a wide set of skills, abilities and knowledge during their expatriation assignment, which could benefit the whole company and bring competitive advantage (Oddou, Szkudlarek, Osland, Deller, Blakeney & Furuya, 2013; Hocking, Brown, & Harzing, 2007). Additionally, in their research, Harzing, Pudelko and Reiche (2016) propose that companies could further improve their global business operations if they were able to extract the knowledge that these repatriates have, and further distribute it for the whole organization to use. This leads to the main topic of this thesis, repatriate knowledge transfer (RKT).

Repatriate knowledge transfer consist of two different parts. The first part is related to retaining the repatriates after their expatriate assignment had ended. The second part of repatriate knowledge transfer is about encouraging repatriates to share their knowledge within the company. (Davoine, Barmeyer, & Rossi, 2018). Oddou et al. (2013) have proposed that both individual and organizational aspects affect repatriate knowledge transfer. According to them, individual aspects consist of repatriates' ability and motivation. Organizational aspects consist of support provided for repatriates, other

people's attitudes towards RKT and organizational culture. Additionally, repatriates commitment to their organization acts as one of the main enforcers for their willingness to engage in RKT. (Oddou et al., 2013).

Furthermore, studies have shown that organizational support is connected to transferring repatriate knowledge (Oddou et al., 2009). However, Jayasekara and Takahashi (2014) have argued that there does not exist much empirical research on how organizational support practices during the repatriation process are connected to the repatriates' post-assignment behavior, including the knowledge transfer. Despite its importance, repatriate knowledge transfer is not yet studied much (Burmeister & Deller, 2016). Therefore, there is a need for further studies regarding repatriate knowledge transfer.

1.1 Defining key terms

There are two different types of expatriates: self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates. Self-initiated expatriates do not stay in the foreign country for a pre-determined time. In other words, self-initiated expatriates might stay as long as they want. Self-initiated expatriates are not sent by their companies. Instead, they choose to go by their own free will. However, assigned expatriates are sent by their companies and they do not need to search for a new job. Assigned expatriates usually also have pre-determined goals and missions, which they are sent out to complete. They usually stay for a pre-determined time and thus are expected to return once their mission has been completed. (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014).

Similarly, repatriate is an expatriate who has returned to their home organization. Thus, repatriation is a natural occurrence of expatriation, where the expatriate who has lived abroad returns to their home organization. (Szkudlarek & Sumpter, 2015). Expatriation

cycle can be studied from three different stages: prior the expatriation, during the expatriation and post the expatriation process (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). This thesis focuses on repatriates. Therefore, the focus is on post expatriation process.

Knowledge transfer, as the term suggests, is about transferring knowledge. Knowledge transfer can be defined as a process, through which different organizational actors can both exchange and receive knowledge. In order for knowledge transfer to take a place, a difference must exist between the existing knowledge and the transferable knowledge. (van Wijk, Jansen, & Lyles, 2008). Lazarova and Tarique (2005) have defined repatriate knowledge transfer as reverse knowledge transfer, where repatriates bring back to their home organization the knowledge they have acquired during their assignment.

1.2 Research question

Oddou et al. (2009) have argued that transferring repatriate knowledge is often difficult, due to the challenging nature of repatriate knowledge. Transferring repatriate knowledge requires that both the repatriates themselves are motivated and interested in sharing it, and that the organization is willing to put effort in RKT. Additionally, prior studies have established that as the companies are often unaware of the strategic benefits that repatriate knowledge brings, a majority of the responsibility to transfer repatriate knowledge is on the repatriates themselves. (Oddou et al., 2009; Oddou et al., 2013).

Oddou et al. (2013) have argued that both individual and organizational level aspects affect RKT. Therefore, in this thesis, repatriate knowledge transfer is studied via individual and organizational aspects. Individual aspects include repatriates' ability and motivation to engage in RKT as well as their commitment to the company. Organizational

aspects include support provided for repatriates, organizational culture and repatriates' employees' and co-workers' attitudes towards RKT.

Repatriate knowledge transfer will be studied from two different levels; hence the research question is as follows:

What individual and organizational level aspects affect repatriate knowledge transfer?

Through this research question, this thesis aims to gain more insight regarding different individual and organizational aspects that may affect RKT. This topic is chosen because there are not many studies done on RKT and how different organizational and individual level aspects can affect it (Furuya et al., 2009). Therefore, this thesis aims to give more information regarding this topic in the context of Finnish repatriates.

1.3 Structure of this thesis

This thesis is divided in six main sections, introduction being the first one. The second section discusses repatriation more in depth. Repatriate adjustment alongside repatriation support practices and repatriate turnover intent are discussed. These build a foundation for understanding the different aspects behind repatriate knowledge transfer. The third section focuses on repatriate knowledge transfer. The section starts by discussing the general knowledge transfer theories- Afterwards, the focus turns on repatriate knowledge transfer and the added challenges it introduces. Individual level and organizational level aspects are discussed as the main elements for a successful repatriate knowledge transfer. In the fourth section, empirical research method is discussed. The data is presented in the fifth section. Lastly, the results are discussed in the sixth section.

2 Repatriation

Repatriation, also known as re-entry, occurs when an expatriate return to their home country after their assignment (Szkudlarek et al., 2015). Therefore, repatriation is a natural continuation of expatriation. Though one may consider repatriation as reverse expatriation, the challenges included in repatriation differ greatly from those included in expatriation. For example, Sussman (2001) argues that there are notable cognitive differences among repatriation and expatriation.

However, both in the international research area and in everyday business practices, repatriation is often neglected (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005). In the early stages of the expatriation practices, repatriation was viewed as a non-problematic occurrence. Furthermore, the potential repatriation issues were seen as individual matters that were a part of the repatriates' personal life and thus, were not connected to the work life and the company. However, studies have identified that repatriation is a challenging process (Gregersen & Black, 1996).

Though expatriates can create competitive advantage for multinational companies, it should also be noted that expatriation is very expensive. For example, Reynolds (1997) has stated that expatriates cost from 2 to 5 times more than the average employee, who is located in their home country. On the other hand, repatriates have often gained valuable knowledge during their expatriation (Hocking et al., 2007). Furthermore, Lazarova et al. (2001) argue that this first-hand experience in the foreign culture has greatly increased repatriate's understanding of the local market atmosphere. Hence, from a company's point of view, investing in repatriation should be beneficial. However, majority of repatriates are dissatisfied with the repatriation process, which furthermore correlates with the percentage of repatriates who leave the company shortly after their return to the home country. (Black et al., 1992).

2.1 Repatriation adjustment

Repatriate adjustment is not a simple manner of an individual merely returning to their home after a long journey. Instead, during their time abroad, both their home country, the company and the repatriates themselves have changed. After their return, repatriates are faced with the changed environment, which may cause them to experience reverse culture shock. (Black, 1992). Therefore, Brewster and Suutari (2005) have suggested that the repatriation process should be started early. Additionally, Furuya, Stevens, Oddou, Bird, & Mendenhall (2007) have proposed that repatriates ability to self-adjust back into the environment is the primary expectation for knowledge transfer to occur. Hence, it is important to understand the multilevel-phenomenon that repatriation adjustment is.

Repatriation adjustment is divided into two categories: anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment. Anticipatory adjustment refers to those adjustments that occur prior to the repatriation process, while in-country adjustment refers to those that take place after the relocation. (Black, 1992). Furthermore, prior studies have identified various aspects that may affect repatriation adjustment. These issues include the time spent abroad, initial expatriation adjustment, country of origin and repatriation environment (Sussman, 2001).

Moreover, Sussman (2001) argues that repatriates are often unprepared when it comes to the challenges included in the repatriation adjustment. This can be seen to origin from the individual's underlying expectations that returning to one's home country is merely a simple process. Hence, repatriates may be unprepared to manage both the psychological challenges and the discomfort, which are associated with repatriation. Furthermore, the repatriate's personal support group, which includes close family and friends, may also often be unprepared to both understand and support the repatriate during the critical time, which may reflect negatively on the repatriation process (Martin, 1984).

The emotional aspect of the repatriation process is connected to the reverse culture shock and sadness regarding expatriation coming to the end. Prior studies have indicated that up to 70 % of the repatriates experience some level of psychological distress during the repatriation process. The behavioral aspect is connected to the repatriate having to re-adapt to the home-country's cultural and behavioral norms. The behavioral aspect of the repatriation process is often highlighted with growing frustration from both the repatriates and their colleagues, as the repatriate has to re-learn the home-organization's social norms. Often, repatriates are unaware of how their behavior differs from their actions before their expatriation assignment and they are often heavily affected by their colleagues' negative reactions. (Szkudlarek et al., 2015).

Reverse culture shock occurs as a result of disconnection between the repatriate's expectations regarding the repatriation process and the reality (Black et al., 1992). Moreover, it has been argued that it takes up to one and a half year for the repatriate to fully re-adjust to the home country's culture (Black et al., 1991). Notable changes that have occurred in the home country during the expatriation assignment as well the overall length of the assignment are connected to increased reverse culture shock. (Sussman, 2001; Black et al., 1992).

In their study on Spanish expatriates, Vidal, Valle, Aragón, & Brewster (2007) found that repatriation adjustment occurs in stages. They continue by arguing that time should be considered as one of the aspects that affect repatriate adjustment. Two separate times were considered in their study: 2 month and 9 months after returning to the home country. According to their results, the repatriates' adjustment to the work is strongly connected to the amount of time after returning home. There was a strong indication that at two months mark, the adjustment affected their work performance. Additionally, the nine months mark was also linked to with satisfaction. Moreover, if repatriates experienced that they were not adjusted to their work within the first nine months, they were more likely to leave the organization and pursue new roles. (Vidal et al., 2007).

2.2 Antecedent factors related to repatriate adjustment

Black et al. (1991) have created a framework, where repatriation adjustment consists of three facets: adjustment to work, adjustment to interacting with home nationals, and lastly, adjustment to both the general environment and the culture. Besides these three facets, there are four different categories of antecedent variables. These four categories are as follows: individual variables, job variables, organization variables and non-work variables. Individual variables refer to person's attitudes, values, needs and characteristics. Job variables are tasks and characteristics of one's job. Organization variables are those characteristics of the home country's organization. Non-work variables include repatriate's friends, family and general environment. (Black et al., 1991; Macdonald et al., 2005).

Various studies have suggested that the length of the expatriation assignment can influence the repatriation process (Black et al., 1991; Vidal et al., 2007). The longer the expatriation process has lasted, the more challenging the repatriation process might be. Additionally, potential significant changes may have occurred in the home country during the expatriation assignment, creating additional difficulties for repatriation adjustment. (Black et al., 1991). Repatriates' family and other interpersonal relationships may also have changed drastically during the assignment (Suutari & Välimaa, 2002).

Individual variables are connected to anticipatory expectations. Black et al. (1992) suggest that the anticipatory changes often focus mainly on cognitive adjustments. Most important anticipatory expectations focus on interactions with others, work and general adjustment to the home country's environment. In this case, repatriates would often create and modify their expectations regarding their new job at the home country, how to interact with others and how the environment would react on certain behaviors (Black et al., 1992).

If situations occur according to the repatriate's anticipatory expectations, the element of surprise might be eliminated, hence reducing uncertainty in the situation. Therefore, it can be argued that creating these anticipatory expectations can in part enhance the overall preparedness of the repatriation process. (Black et al., 1992). Moreover, it is important to note that probably not all perceived changes are accurate. When living and working abroad, the repatriates have also changed themselves. These changes are referred to as psychological changes. At times, repatriate themselves might be unaware of these changes, hence perceiving them as an indicator of the home country's changes. (MacDonald et al. 2005).

According to Black et al. (1992), non-work variables include the dissimilarity between the repatriate's home country and the prior host country. Furthermore, three non-work variables that repatriates should consider prior and during the repatriation process have been identified. These non-work variables are as follows: cultural distance, decrease in social status and spousal adjustment. (Black et al., 1992).

Gregersen and Stroh (1997) argue that during their assignment in a host country, repatriates were continuously surrounded with the host country's cultural norms, values and behavior. Upon returning home, the host country's aforementioned aspects act as the latest cultural referral point for repatriates. Therefore, it can be argued that the similarities and differences between these two countries are related to the repatriation adjustment. Furthermore, in their study, Black et al. (1992) found that non-work variables can affect work adjustment. For example, loss of social status is negatively connected to work adjustment while housing arrangements are positively connected to work adjustment.

While job variables are connected to the individual's tasks and characteristics of the person's job, organization variables include the whole organization. Black et al. (1992) argue that maintaining a regular contact with the home country's organization might benefit in creating more accurate expectations, hence decreasing the uncertainty associated

with repatriation. This is mainly because frequent communication enables greater information flow among the organization and the expatriate. (Black et al., 1992). As MacDonald et al. (2005) have argued, due to the modern, improved technology maintaining communication flow between repatriates and the home country organization is easier than before. Communication tools, that allow SMTP/SIP/VOIP such as, skype, emails and telephone, act as a link between repatriates and home country organizations.

However, regular visits in the home country and frequent contact with organization are not necessarily enough to give the repatriate realistic expectations. Black et al. (1992) suggest that re-entry training might be a viable tool, through which the repatriate is able to form expectations that correspond to the current organizational situation. Re-entry training will be discussed more in-depth later in this section. Other organizational variables include the relationship between the mentor and the expatriate. Black et al. (1992) suggest that maintain a good relationship with expatriate's mentor can positively influence the repatriation adjustment. The importance of mentoring will be discussed further later in this section.

2.3 Repatriation support

In this thesis, organizational support carries from the repatriation section to the repatriate knowledge transfer section. Perceived organizational support (POS) can be defined as the extent of individual's beliefs regarding how much their organization values their contributions to the organization and cares about their mental and physical well-being. A higher POS is connected to a higher commitment. (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). In addition, Furuya et al. (2007) have proposed that via organizational practices and policies that provide support both repatriate adjustment and repatriate knowledge transfer, the company can show its appreciation for repatriates, thus motivating them to engage in RKT.

The following section will discuss organizational support in the context of repatriation. Mentoring and training are brought up as a form of organizational support in repatriation. While it is important to acknowledge that there are other ways how organizations can aid repatriation process, such as housing and spousal re-adjustment, they are not deemed as relevant in the context of this thesis. Hence, they won't be discussed further. Later on in the knowledge transfer section, organizational support will be studied in the context of repatriate knowledge transfer.

2.3.1 Re-entry training

Martin and Harrell (2004) argue that re-entry transition is a multi-faced phenomenon, where repatriates' emotions, behavior and cognition all play an important part. Jassawalla, Connelly, & Slojkowski (2004) have proposed that repatriates view training as a form of organizational support, which increases their overall motivation and stratification with the process. Though the concept of re-entry training has been introduced relatively early on, interestingly prior studies suggest that there is a clear lack of support from the organizational perspective. Less than third of the companies offer support and training for their repatriates. (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008).

In their study, Littrell and Salas (2005) found indications that the most accomplished cross-cultural training programs utilized high turnover rate, resulting from a poor repatriation, as an evaluation method. Therefore, the aforementioned researchers argue that expatriation process can only be viewed as successful if the repatriation process was also a success. Moreover, Hyder and Lövblad (2007) have argued that both repatriate trainings and support are necessary tools through which repatriates are able combat issues they face during repatriation. According to Black and Mendenhall's (1990) theory, re-entry training should focus on work adjustment, interactions with home-country nationals and general conditions. Moreover, focusing on these aforementioned aspects may help the repatriate to create realistic anticipatory expectations (Black et al., 1992).

Researchers have different views regarding the timing of optimal re-entry training. Researchers supporting post repatriation re-entry training claim that potential experiences and changes that occur during the repatriation should be included in the re-entry training process. (Cox, 2004; Szkudlarek et al., 2015). However, it appears that majority of the researchers argue that training should take a place prior the repatriation process (Szkudlarek et al., 2015). Similarly, both individual training and group training have their own supporters among the researchers. Naturally, in a group re-entry training, repatriates are able to discuss and share their experiences among their peers, who have encountered similar things. Moreover, group re-entry training may be positively connected to employee commitment. Additionally, it has been proposed that as repatriates often feel disconnected from their local home co-workers, a group re-entry training may pose a good alternative for connecting repatriates to the organization. (Szkudlarek et al., 2015).

In their study, Szkudlarek et al. (2015) found that re-entry training often focuses on reviewing the repatriate's international experience and the skills they have developed during this time. A successful re-entry training should provide tools for repatriates to implement their new skills and knowledge to their current position. (Szkudlarek et al., 2015). Furthermore, Greer & Stiles (2016) have stated that both pre-departure and post-arrival trainings are crucial as they have direct impact on the skills and expertise through, which a successful adaptation to the work environment in the new location is achieved.

However, studies have found indications that repatriates do not necessarily always value re-entry training (Chang, 2005; Osman-Gani, 2001). According to Greer et al. (2016), the lack of interest for training indicates that both organizations as well as repatriates view post-experience training as less important than pre-experience training. If the repatriate does not view training as a desirable method, training can cause a rift between the organization and the repatriate. (Vidal et al., 2007). Lastly, it has been argued that repatriate's personality is directly connected to the re-entry training process. Studies propose

that repatriates, who are more proactive are more likely to conduct their own research regarding the repatriation process, maintaining a positive outlook regarding re-entry and actively work towards their own re-entry process. This positive approach may further be utilized in the repatriation re-entry training process. (Szkudlarek et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Mentoring

Black et al. (1992) defined a mentor as an individual, who is responsible of maintaining the contact with an expatriate during their stay abroad. MacDonald et al. (2005) state that potential mentors can range from co-workers and managers to human resource personnel. Mentors can aid individuals both during their expatriation and repatriation adjustment and they often act as the key link in maintaining communication between the expatriate and the home country organization. Furthermore, a mentor is generally responsible of informing expatriates of the important organizational changes that occur during the expatriation. Additionally, mentors can even aid with networking, by providing contacts and information of the host country. During repatriation process, mentors can aid with career management and the overall repatriation adjustment process. (Black et al., 1992; MacDonald et al., 2005).

However, interestingly, Vidal et al. (2007) found a negative connection between mentoring and repatriation adjustment. On the other hand, the aforementioned authors suggested that the negative relation could be explained by poorly executed mentoring program as well as whether or not mentoring lasted all through from the expatriation to the repatriation process. At times, repatriates do not view mentoring as a necessary support function in order to fulfil their personal career goals. (Vidal et al., 2007).

2.3.3 Career management

Feldman and Thomas (1992) have argued that the relationship between expatriation and its influence on career path is not studied enough. Moreover, it has also been proposed that expatriation may affect negatively on individual's career path. On the other hand, it has also been proposed that international career can open new career paths. (Riusala et al., 2000). Furthermore, Feldman et al. (1992) argue that individual's own influence on their career path is often neglected in academic research. Expatriation can offer chances and experiences for individual growth, which may further open new career paths. These new career paths may encourage the employees to consider leaving the company (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002). Moreover, studies have also established that these repatriates may in some cases actually quit their job in the company due to unsuccessful repatriation (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004).

Career management can be understood as a more evolved version of career planning. Career management is emphasized by giving more attention to the employees' individual career goal while still ensuring that companies can meet their goals. Career management can provide repatriates with tools to better understand their own core competencies and what is required from them in order to advance their own career. Moreover, career management is connected to maintaining realistic work expectations. (MacDonald et al., 2005).

In their study, Marquardt and Sofo (1999) found that in order to enhance the repatriates' motivation and overall attitude, more focus should be placed on efficient career management. They continue by stating that the repatriates' career plan should be developed around their expatriate experience, in a way that their expatriation can further enhance their career and allow them to meet their personal career goals. Planned career development can be utilized to achieve career management objectives. Through planning, it is easier to maintain a better overview of the repatriate's own personal career objectives

and how they are aligned with the overall organizational objectives. Additionally, it can be used in mapping repatriate's competencies, including language knowledge and cross-cultural interaction knowledge. (MacDonald et al., 2005). Moreover, companies can assure to repatriates that after their expatriation assignment, they have a certain position to return to (Feldman et al., 1992).

However, it should be noted that even when an expatriate has performed excellently during their assignment, this does not necessarily reflect on how they will perform after repatriation. Additionally, it is important to remember that while an expatriate might be satisfied with their career during their assignments, it does not necessarily mean that they are satisfied with it after returning to their home country. (Brewster, Bonache, Cerdin, & Suutari, 2014). Therefore, defining what a good expatriation process is, is highly personal and challenging. Additionally, organizations and repatriates may have differing views on what makes repatriation successful. Repatriates themselves might consider their expatriation assignment successful, when they are gaining advanced career opportunities, opportunity for further development, higher salary and status (Yan, Zhu, & Hall, 2002). However, from the organizational point of view, repatriation is typically seen as successful when they are able to retain the repatriate. (Lazarova et al., 2007).

2.4 Repatriation turnover

As mentioned earlier, Reynolds (1997) states that expatriates cost to the organization, 2 to 5 times more than home country workers. Therefore, it can be argued that expatriates are one of the most expensive human resource investments for the organization. It has been further proposed that in order for the expatriates to be profitable for the organization, it is essential to retain them after the expatriate assignment is over. (Vidal et al., 2007). Therefore, discussing about repatriation turnover is essential.

Greer et al. (2016) state that while poor re-integration may cause repatriates to feel resentment towards the company, there are multiple other reasons that may cause repatriates to be wary of the repatriation process. These reasons include, hostile behavior from co-workers, lack of promotion, existing stigmas regarding repatriation from former repatriates, limited career path options as well as reverse culture shock and potential demotion. Moreover, prior studies have proposed that repatriate's are often unprepared to the distress caused by the repatriation process (Sussman, 2001).

During their expatriation assignment, expatriates typically have a larger autonomy and a higher position, which allows them more control in decision making than what they do upon returning home (Vidal et al., 2007). Additionally, repatriates may also feel that companies do not value their foreign experiences. In his study, Peltonen (1997) stated that around 60 % of the repatriates felt that companies undervalued the experiences they gained during their time abroad. Losing the autonomy, which the expatriate had during their abroad assignment may also cause negative feelings and act as a factor for repatriate to leave the company (Lazarova et al., 2001).

In addition, Sussman (2001) found evidence, which strongly supported that discomfort during the repatriation process often results in repatriates leaving the organization. The study continues by pointing out that repatriates often misinterpret the general discomfort, which is caused by the process, as a result of the organization's actions. Therefore, repatriates often assume that by changing their job, they are able to relieve their discomfort. (Sussman, 2001). Based on the aforementioned findings, it can be argued that repatriates often lack tools to mentally process the challenges, which are included in the repatriation process.

Moreover, it has been argued that the lack of organizational support and coaching are reflected in increased repatriation turn-over rate (Lazarova et al., 2001). The lack of mentoring and organizational coaching can be due to the fact that companies often do not

fully comprehend the challenges that are included in the repatriation processes (MacDonald et al., 2005). Instead, it appears that companies tend to assume that repatriates are able to adjust back to their previous roles without any further issues.

Repatriates often view international assignments as a hindrance to their career development. Roughly 20 to 30 % of repatriates regard that the international assignment had a positive impact on their career. Previous studies have indicated that approximately 10 to 25 % of repatriates leave the organization within the year of returning home. (Riusala et al., 2000). Furthermore, Kim and McLean (2012) argue that between 20 and 50 per cent of repatriates quit their job in the organization within the first three years of return. Additionally, in their study on Finnish expatriates, Suutari and Brewster (2003), found that even if expatriates chose to stay employed in the same organization, more than half of them had considered leaving the organization. Moreover, in case the repatriate decides to leave the company, they often remain in the same industry. Hence, from a company's perspective, they transfer to the competitor (Vidal et al., 2007). Therefore, focusing on how to retain repatriates is one of the core interests in order for RKT to occur.

Prior studies have identified multiple underlying issues that are linked to employees' turnover intentions. One of these is the perceived employment opportunities and the amount of potential promotions. Additionally the level of perceived autonomy and control can affect repatriates' turnover intentions. Potential alternative job opportunities can also act as a catalyst for employee turnover. The employees' own commitment to the organization plays an important role, when considering the possibility of leaving the organization. For example, a highly committed employee is more willing to overlook more issues than an employee, who does not share the company's values and goals. (Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999).

Additionally, prior studies suggest that there is a connection between repatriation training and repatriation turnover. For example, it has been proposed that providing prior re-

entry training that is embedded with personal career management, may prevent repatriates from searching other career options. Therefore, partly decreasing the repatriate turnover rate. Additionally, feeling that the organization values the experiences and knowledge they have gained during the expatriate assignment does decrease their turnover intent. Therefore, it can be argued that organizational support functions and career management may aid in helping repatriates to stay within the same organization (Lazarova et al., 2001; Feldaman et al., 1992). In their study on Taiwanese repatriates, Lee and Liu (2007) found that a higher level of perceived repatriate adjustment and commitment is connected to them staying in the company.

Lastly, it has been argued that person-organization fit affects the employees' attitudes towards their work as well as their work behavior. Work attitudes include such factors as employee engagement, job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Work behavior includes both employees' performance as well as their intent to turnover. (Chen, Sparrow, & Cooper, 2016). Moreover, it has been argued that person- organization fit has an important role in retaining employees. However, it is important to note that attitudes towards the organization have changed during the past decade. There is no longer the deep, mutual connection and trust between the employee and the organization. Hence, individuals are more prone to seek alternative career paths and positions outside their current organization. (Tarique et al. 2010).

3 Repatriate knowledge transfer

This chapter discusses repatriate knowledge transfer. Knowledge transfer is not an unknown topic in expatriation literature. In fact, there are multiple studies done on expatriate knowledge transfer with the foreign subsidiary. Moreover, it can be argued that knowledge transfer should be an integrated part of all strategic expatriation assignments. (Smale & Suutari, 2007, pp.261). However, in this thesis the focus is on repatriate knowledge transfer, where the knowledge transfer will occur after repatriates have already returned to their home country. This, as Furuya et al. (2009) have argued, is a relatively less studied focus area.

In organizations, knowledge transfer can be defined as a process, through which different organizational actors, such as teams, units or even organizations, can both exchange and receive as well as be influenced by other's experiences and knowledge. Knowledge transfer requires differentiation in the integrated knowledge. Hence, it occurs during changes in either the knowledge base or the performance. (van Wijk et al., 2008). In other words, for the transfer to be possible, new knowledge that the receiving unit does not possess, must exist.

Besides differentiated knowledge, knowledge transfer also requires willingness between parties. Knowledge transfer is believed to occur when there is a fit between the individual's willingness to transfer knowledge and the organization's readiness to receive the knowledge. (Lazarova et al., 2005). Moreover, knowledge transfer appears as changes in the receiver unit's knowledge or performance. Logically, knowledge transfer can therefore be measured in the organization by measuring the changes in either knowledge or performance. Additionally, it is possible to measure knowledge transfer by assessing changes that have occurred in the recipient unit. (Argote, Ingram, Levine, & Moreland, 2000a)

In his research, Reiche (2012) has identified two separate knowledge benefits. The first one is more individual focused, where the focal point is on host-unit knowledge, which may benefit the individual repatriate upon their return. The second main knowledge benefit Reiche (2012) has identified, is more focused on the organizational viewpoint. In this, the focal point is on knowledge transfer to co-workers, which in the long run may benefit the whole organization. Furthermore, prior studies have found that engaging in knowledge transfer is connected to increased performance and innovation (van Wijk et al., 2008). Moreover, knowledge transfer in organizational units can lead into an improved cooperation among the units and increased mutual learning (Tsai, 2001).

As it can be seen, there are various reasons why RKT can be beneficial for the organization. Firstly, there is a positive correlation between international assignments and increased innovation. Secondly, RKT promotes communication between the parent company and its subsidiaries. Thirdly, it has been argued that RKT can even improve overall corporate financial performance. (Oddou et al., 2009). Moreover, in their study, Oddou et al. (2013) argue that during their assignment, repatriates have created a network position for themselves. Network position is further connected to repatriates' future ability to manage international tasks, as they already have established existing contacts. (Oddou et al., 2013).

As Kamoche (1997) has stated, expatriation offers the assignees an opportunity to accumulate new knowledge from abroad. Upon returning home, these repatriates are then presented with the possibility of transferring and applying this knowledge in the organization. However, Lazarova et al. (2005) have pointed out that this repatriate knowledge is not automatically gathered and applied in the company. First of all, due to its nature, repatriate knowledge is difficult to gather. Additionally, repatriates and the company may have different goals, and the company or the repatriate might not see repatriate knowledge as a tool for further developing their competencies. (Lazarova et al., 2005).

While the focus in this thesis is more on the organizational benefits, it is important to acknowledge how the knowledge gained during the expatriation assignment also has an individual perspective. Furthermore, this gained knowledge or how it is received in the organization may result on certain behaviors upon returning. For example, this may be reflected in their willingness to apply for new positions either within the company or outside it, as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.1 Knowledge management and organizational learning

More and more organizations engage in knowledge management as a mean to utilize knowledge that already exists within the organization as well as to distribute it to their external stakeholders. Moreover, it has been argued that for knowledge management to enhance the organizations' performance, it needs to be integrated into the organization's strategic goals. (Rubenstein-Montano, Liebowitz, Buchwalter, McCaw, Newman & Rebeck, 2001). Alavi and Leidner (1999) have proposed that organizations are developing information systems, which are utilized for both sharing and integrating knowledge.

When discussing about knowledge transfer, the subject matter of organizational learning naturally arises. Organizational learning can be understood as transferring knowledge amongst the different organizational units. It is important to understand that organizational learning requires a shared social connection, where these different organizational units are connected one another. Therefore, it can be argued that organizational learning is built upon these interunit links and network sharing, through which new opportunities can be found. (Tsai, 2001).

Each one of the organizational units have their own specialized knowledge. Organizational units also possess the capabilities to learn from each other. Therefore, this spe-

cialized knowledge could be further transferred to other units within the same organization. (Huber, 1991). Furthermore, Tsai (2001) has argued that in comparison to a more standard, hierarchical organizational structure, connecting different organizational units together creates a more flexible ground for knowledge sharing.

However, Tsai (2001) has additionally argued that not all organizational units are able to learn from every other units within the same organization. For example, a unit may wish to have access to a certain knowledge, but cannot receive it. Similarly, though the knowledge may be available to the unit, they might be unable to utilize it due to not having the skills to absorb and use it in their own activities. Moreover, different units require different matters in order to absorb knowledge from other units. Organizational units require both external access as well as internal capabilities in order to be able to learn from each other. Therefore, each one of the organizational units differ from one another due to their access to knowledge and their skills to learn from others. Hence, not all units benefit equally through inter organizational learning. (Tsai, 2001).

Network positions are directly connected to the unit's ability to access knowledge that is crucial for developing new ideas or innovations. By having a central position in an inter-organization network, units are able access external knowledge. Therefore, the unit's position in the network also reflects its overall position in the organization. (Tsai, 2001). Based on this, it can be argued that selecting repatriates from these central units, would create most possibilities for inter-organizational knowledge transfer.

Knowledge in organizations resides in multiple different repositories. This creates additional challenges in trying to assess organizational knowledge transfer. (Argote et al., 2000a). According to Walsh and Ungson (1991), there are five different repositories: (1) individual members, (2) organizational structures and roles, (3) the organizational standard operation procedures and practices, (4) organizational culture, and (5) the physical structure of the workplace. In order to measure knowledge transfer as changes in

knowledge, it is essential to capture changes in knowledge in each one the aforementioned repositories. (Walsh et al.,1991).

According to Argote et al. (2000a) knowledge repositories have a dual role in the knowledge transfer and they change as knowledge transfer occurs. Therefore, changes in the repositories also reflects changes in knowledge. However, at the same time, these repositories also affect the overall knowledge transfer process as well as its results. Moreover, the state of an organization's current absorptive capacity, which is based on the already existing knowledge, affects how well it is able to assimilate new knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

3.2 Knowledge transfer process

Researchers have argued that knowledge transfer between different units in the same organization is easier than knowledge transfer between different organizations (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). In this study, the focus is on assigned expatriates, who have returned home. Therefore, the discussion will revolve around knowledge transfer within the same organization.

It has been argued that ambiguity is the most important factor in organizational knowledge transfer. Knowledge ambiguity refers to the uncertainty of what the knowledge components are, where they originate from and how they will act together. (van Wijk et al., 2008). Reed and DeFilippi (1990) argue that knowledge ambiguity is a result of uncertainty, tacitness and complexity, which are inherited components of the knowledge being transferred.

Because of its nature, knowledge ambiguity is related to creating differentiation from competitors. Moreover, ambiguity makes it more difficult for other companies to steal

and use the knowledge themselves. However, ambiguity makes it also more difficult to transfer knowledge within the organization itself. (Coff, Coff, & Eastvold, 2006). The more ambiguous knowledge is, the more time it will require to both teach and learn it. Therefore, van Wjik et al. (2008) have argued that knowledge ambiguity is negatively connected to organizational knowledge transfer.

In their study, van Wjik et al. (2008) have identified three different knowledge antecedents that are most commonly used in knowledge transfer literature. These antecedents are knowledge characteristics, network characteristics and organizational characteristics. Knowledge transfer process can also be understood via stickiness factors, where the challenges encountered in the process also consider the effects of including an additional factor, a repatriate. There are four stickiness factors: characteristics of knowledge, social context, organizational context and relationship context. (Smale et al., 2007, pp. 262). As it can be seen, stickiness factors share similar components with the aforementioned knowledge antecedents. In this model, stickiness refers to how challenging the expatriate views the knowledge transfer process.

3.2.1 Characteristics of knowledge

There are two types of knowledge: tacit and explicit. Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that can be documented and structured. In other words, explicit knowledge can be referred as visible knowledge. Because its nature, explicit knowledge is easily transferable. On the other hand, tacit knowledge refers to knowledge that cannot be documented easily. Tacit knowledge can also be understood as silent knowledge as it exists mainly in the individual's brain. It is displayed in one's behavior and perception. Because of its nature, tacit knowledge is more challenging to transfer than explicit knowledge. (Nonaka, 1994).

According to Simonin (1999), the term tacitness originates from an observation that proposes that people often know more than they tell. In other words, tacit knowledge can be understood as a mere tip of a visible iceberg, where majority of what is known remains hidden beneath the surface. Moreover, tacitness can also be understood as a set of skills, which are acquired by doing. This knowledge is often implicit and non-codifiable. Because of its nature, tacit knowledge is often connected to increased ambiguity in knowledge transfer. (Reed et al., 1990). Similarly, Nonaka (1994) has defined tacit knowledge as something deeply personal, which cannot be neither communicated nor shared with others easily. He continues by stating that tacit knowledge is hidden deep within one's actions and it reflects in one's involvement in the content at hand.

It is important to note that majority of knowledge that is acquired in organizations is often tacit and not easily articulated (Nonaka, 1994). Furthermore, tacit knowledge is generally viewed as more valuable to organizations than explicit knowledge. This is most likely because explicit knowledge is codifiable and teachable. Thus, it can be easily transferred to other members in the organization. (Lazarova et al., 2005). Similarly, the more tacit the knowledge, the harder and slower its transfer is going to be. In a study done by Zander and Kogut (1995), it was found out that the more codifiable and teachable the knowledge is, the faster it will be transferred from knowledge holder to knowledge receiver. It can be argued that due to the nature of expatriation, most of the knowledge gained during these assignments is tacit knowledge. Therefore, transferring this knowledge is often difficult.

Kogut and Zander (1993) have evaluated the degree of tacitness via codifiability. According to them, perceived codifiability measures the level of which the particular knowledge can be presented in an explicit, documented form. On the other hand, teachability refers to how difficult it is to teach the knowledge to others, whilst complexity is related to the manifestation of critical and interacting elements within the knowledge, which makes it more challenging to separate and measure (Smale et al., 2007, pp. 263).

3.2.2 Social context and social capital

Knowledge transfer does not occur in isolation. Instead, both organizational and nation-wide factors affect knowledge transfer processes. These national factors include regulatory, normative and cognitive aspects. Some scholars have argued that cultural distance between the host country and the home country play an important role in the cross-cultural knowledge transfer. (Smale et al., 2007, pp. 263-264)

It has been argued that social capital is one of the main motivations behind repatriate originated knowledge transfer (Reiche, 2012). Moreover, social capital can be viewed either from a public or an individual perspective. In the public perspective, social capital can be utilized to benefit the whole organization, whilst in the individual perspective it benefits the repatriates themselves. (Liu & Shaffer, 2005).

In the van Wijk et al.'s (2008) knowledge antecedents' model, social capital is studied from the perspective of network characteristics. It consist of social situations that are an inseparable part of human relationships. Social capital can be studied from three different components: structural, relational and cognitive capital. Structural capital focuses on the relationship structures. Hence, it studies relationship configurations and patterns as well as linkages to other companies and other units. Prior studies have argued that the amount of these relations with other companies and other units is directly connected to the increased amount of relevant knowledge that is accessible. (van Wijk et al. 2008).

While the number of relations creates an access to new knowledge, it has often been argued that a centralized position within these relationships is required in order for this knowledge to be utilized well. Moreover, it has been argued that central units, or members from those units, are able to access more easily the knowledge actors, who act as gatekeepers for knowledge. Hence, a central network position is often associated with increased knowledge transfer. (van Wijk et al., 2008). Based on this, repatriates who are

from centralized units should have a better access to knowledge and be better equipped with the possibilities of transferring this knowledge further.

Cognitive capital is the second social capital dimension. Shared visions and systems are essential elements in cognitive capital, as they both are connected to increased mutual understanding and play a factor in relationship bonding. Moreover, both factors are connected to enhanced organizational knowledge transfer. Cultural distance is another focal point of cognitive capital. It has been argued that the more distance there is between the home country and the host country, the more difficulties there will be in obtaining relevant knowledge. (van Wijk et al., 2008).

The third dimension of social capital is relational capital, where the focus is on the relationships themselves as well as the actions that are an essential part of these relationships. The main components of relational capital are the strength of the relationship and mutual trust. (van Wijk et al., 2008). The more repatriates and knowledge recipients are given opportunities to interact with each other building trust, the higher quality the knowledge transfer is going to be (Huang, Chiu, & Lu, 2013). Therefore, based on prior studies as well as the evident importance of trust, more focus should be given in maintaining a frequent contact between the repatriate and the home organization. This further highlights the importance organizational support has in RKT.

As it can be seen, social capital is one of the main elements that enables knowledge transfer between repatriates and their organizations. Additionally, social capital can be viewed from two different perspectives: private good and public good. In the private good viewpoint, the social capital benefits the individual actor while in the public good perspective, the focus is on social capital that benefits the whole organization. Prior research suggests that increased trust is related to transferring both tacit and strategic knowledge. Moreover, it has been argued that the closeness of the relationship between

the knowledge sender, in this case the repatriate, and the receivers is connected to enhanced innovation and knowledge transfer. (Reiche, 2012).

Trust plays an important part in repatriates' willingness to share their knowledge. According to Argote, McEvily, and Reagans (2003), the level of trust between the knowledge sender and receiver, is directly connected to the quality and amount of knowledge sharing, knowledge screening and knowledge disclosure. Moreover, it has been argued that if repatriates trust their organization, they are more motivated to engage in knowledge sharing (Lazarova et al., 2005). Similarly, Oddou et al. (2013) found that trust is an essential component of knowledge transfer. In their research, they found that repatriates who worked in a team, where there were members with whom they had a prior relationship, were more likely to be seen as a credible knowledge source.

Alongside with organizational trust, prior research has found indications that power is connected to repatriates' willingness to take part in knowledge transfer. The more power repatriates have upon returning home, the more likely it is that they will engage in repatriate knowledge transfer. (Lazarova et al., 2005). Power appears to be related to repatriate career management and their position in the organization upon their return.

3.2.3 Organizational context

Researchers have differing opinions regarding organizational characteristics that affect knowledge transfer processes. For example, age of the organization is one of the organizational characteristics that has diverged opinions in academic field. It has been argued that the organization's age is negatively connected to its ability to learn and adapt to new information and methods (Cyert & March, 1963). Hence, Frost, Birkinshaw, & Ensign (2002) have argued that younger organizations have an advantage in knowledge transfer. However, other studies have proposed that age does not affect organizational learning (Gray & Meister, 2004; Yli-Renko, Autio, & Sapienza, 2001). van Wjik et al. (2008) have

argued that while age does not matter in external knowledge transfer, it does appear to affect units' ability to engage in knowledge transfer. They continue by stating that older units are more accustomed in their own roles and become more self-sufficient, which causes them to experience difficulties when transferring knowledge within the same organization.

There is also another organizational characteristic that has an impact on knowledge transfer. This is the organizations absorptive capacity. Absorptive capacity can be defined as an organization's ability to recognize, assimilate and apply new knowledge. (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Moreover, it has been argued that this absorptive capacity is directly connected to the difficulty of the knowledge transfer process (Minbaeva, Pedersen, Björkman, Fey, & Park, 2003). Absorptive capacity can be divided in four stages: acquisition, assimilation, transformation and exploitation. (Cohen et al., 1990).

Acquisition is connected to the company's ability to both identify and acquire external knowledge. Assimilation refers to those routines that the company follows in order to be able to process, understand and examine the external knowledge. Transformation refers to the company's ability to both develop and refine processes that are used in combining the acquired new external knowledge with the already existing one. Lastly, exploitation is connected to creating routines that allow the company to leverage, refine and extend their knowledge by incorporating it as a part of their own functions. (Zahra & George, 2002). Moreover, it has been proposed that absorptive capacity is connected to the amount of knowledge the organizations' units are able to learn (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000).

Alongside with the absorptive capacity, organizational culture can have either a positive or a negative effect on knowledge transfer. It has been argued that incompatibility between the organizational cultures can have a negative influence on the knowledge trans-

fer process. (Bhagat, Kedia, Harveston, & Triandis, 2002). Therefore, it has been proposed that knowledge transfer in international organizations can be maximized by creating and sustaining an atmosphere that promotes repatriates' motivation to share the knowledge they have accumulated during their assignment. This can be achieved by offering repatriates potential career paths that are aligned with their personal career development aspirations. (Lazarova et al., 2005).

3.3 Knowledge transfer process models

There are no existing models that depict repatriate knowledge transfer processes. Instead, researchers often decide to use the process models from traditional knowledge transfer literature. (Burmeister, Deller, Osland, Szkudlarek, Oddou & Blakeney, 2015). Therefore, a few of these models will be discussed next. These models act as basis for mapping the knowledge transfer process in this thesis.

According to one of the more popular models by Szulanski (1996), there are four phases in knowledge transfer: initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration. Initiation consist of all the decisions that lead to the actual transfer process. These decisions include finding an opportunity for new knowledge, determining the scope of transfer as well as assessing the possible costs involved in the transfer process. The amount of trust between the knowledge transfer parties and the perceived value of the knowledge are factors in making the initiation phase easier. (Szulanski, 1996). Naturally, the challenges during this phase are related to how easy it is to find the opportunity to engage in knowledge transfer and whether or not the sender decides to act on it (Szulanski, 2000).

The second phase, implementation, consists of the knowledge flow between the sender and the recipient. During this phase, it is important that the transferred knowledge meets each recipients needs in the most efficient manner while fitting in the recipients'

context (Szulanski, 1996). The ease of the implementation phase is connected to how challenging it is to bridge the communication gap between the knowledge sender and the receiver. Poor coordination among the knowledge sender and the receiver may also cause issues during the implementation phase. While issues related to poor coordination can be at least partly solved through planning, its effectiveness depends on the quality of the relationship between the parties. (Szulanski, 2000).

Ramp-up is the third phase following the implementation. Ramp-up starts when the recipient begins to use the knowledge they have acquired during the previous phase. During this phase, the recipient's performance should improve as a result of the transferred knowledge. (Szulanski, 1996). The issues that may arise during ramp-up phase are related to the unexpected problems that occur as the recipients begin to use this new knowledge. In addition, the ease of solving these arising unexpected problems is connected to the eventfulness of this phase. The later these unexpected problems occur during this ramp-up phase, the harder their solving is going to be. (Szulanski, 2000).

Integration is the last phase, where the application of the knowledge becomes a routinized function of the practice at hand. This results in these new practices becoming institutionalized. (Szulanski, 1996). The potential issues in this phase are related to how much effort is required to remove the obstacles that prevent the new practices becoming fully institutionalized. Moreover, it has been suggested that organizations may have their own pace, when knowledge transfer could occur naturally. If the pace of transfer is too fast, the proposed changes may never be fully implemented. On the other hand, if the pace is too slow, these changes may become institutionalized, making it more difficult to change them in the future. (Szulanski, 2000).

Kwan and Cheung (2006) have proposed an alternative four phased model for knowledge transfer processes. The phases in this model are following: motivation, matching, imple-

mentation and retention. In this model, the initiation phase is combined from two different phases: motivation and matching. The model also combines both ramp-up and implementation in one phase, implementation. However, the retention phase is relatively similar to the Szulanski's (1996) integration phase. Kwan et al. (2006) have argued that motivation and matching have notable differences and driving forces, hence studying them from under one phase, initiation, is too limited. Therefore, this section will later discuss repatriates' motivation to engage in knowledge transfer.

3.4 Transferring repatriate knowledge

As it has been discussed throughout this thesis, during their international assignments repatriates have gained both knowledge and skills that can aid in creating a competitive advantage. While not only gaining specific knowledge about the culture, they have also gained tacit skills and knowledge. These skills and knowledge include global mindset, language and management capabilities alongside with a global network. (Burmeister et al., 2016).

Berthoin-Antal, Stroot, & Willems (2000) have identified five different types of knowledge that expatriates have gained while abroad. The first one is knowledge about what, which includes understanding customers preferences. The second is knowledge about why, which consist of understanding how cultural differences affect cross-cultural understanding. The third is knowledge about how, which is connected to repatriates' management skills. The fourth one is knowledge about when, which consist of understanding how timing affects different things. The fifth one is knowledge about who, which consist of the social networks repatriates have gained during their time abroad. (Berthoin-Antal et al., 2000).

Oddou et al. (2009) have described repatriate knowledge as thick, complex, highly contextual, silent and related to understanding the cognitive dimensions of silent knowledge. Repatriate knowledge can be categorized into the following four categories: cognitive, relational, attitudinal and behavioral. Cognitive knowledge is related to broader perspective, while relational knowledge consists of social networks. Attitudinal knowledge is related to tolerating differences, whilst behavioral knowledge is combined from both intercultural and management skills. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that not all repatriate knowledge is essential for improved organizational performance. However, it has been argued that only a few companies are able to distinguish between essential and unnecessary knowledge. (Oddou et al., 2009).

According to Lazarova et al. (2005), there is a difference in what type of knowledge is valuable to an organization and what is not. They continue by arguing that when discussing repatriate knowledge, two characteristics should be considered. The first one is to consider whether the knowledge is tacit or explicit. The second important characteristic in international knowledge is understanding whether the knowledge is specific or generic. Both the tacitness and specificity of the knowledge are considered to be the factors that best define the value of the acquired knowledge. (Lazarova et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, prior studies have argued that harvesting this knowledge is not simple nor is it an automatic end-result of the expatriation assignment. There are various reasons, why knowledge transfer might not occur after repatriation. First of all, as it has been already discussed in this thesis, the tacitness of the acquired knowledge poses additional challenges. Additionally, the organization and the repatriate may not share similar views regarding the utilization of the knowledge as a basis for a competitive advantage. Repatriates may not necessarily benefit from sharing their knowledge with their organization. Instead, by applying their knowledge outside their organization, they might encounter more beneficial options, such as a new position in a different organization. On the other hand, organizations seek to keep the knowledge within its boundaries. Hence, there

might exist a contradiction between the organization's needs and the repatriate's wishes. (Lazarova et al., 2005).

According to Oddou et al. (2009), there is not much knowledge regarding the variables that affect RKT nor regarding the overall process. Moreover, they continue by stating prior studies have found that companies do not often neither manage the RKT process consciously nor do they view the information as strategic. Furthermore, organizations seldom have an active role in initializing RKT processes. Instead, repatriates often themselves initiate knowledge transfer.

Moreover, repatriate knowledge is difficult to transfer as it requires both persistence and effort. Because repatriate knowledge is often tacit knowledge, including having a broader mindset and cultural appreciation, repatriates themselves are not necessarily aware of the knowledge they have acquired during their assignment, which creates additional barriers in RKT process. (Oddou et al., 2009) . As a results, Oddou et al. (2013) have proposed that the repatriates' ability to transfer knowledge is an element that determines the overall success of RKT. Ability to transfer knowledge will be discussed further later on in this chapter.

Additionally, prior studies have established that knowledge receivers' own absorptive capacities also affect the transfer process (Burmeister, Lazarova, & Deller, 2018). Furthermore, some researchers have gone so far as to argue that the receivers' absorptive capacity determines the usefulness of knowledge transfer. This is because, without the receivers' ability to absorb knowledge, they cannot apply it in processes. Thus, rendering the knowledge useless. (Chang, Gong, & Peng, 2012). Therefore, knowledge receivers' ability to understand the importance of the transferred knowledge and how it is connected to their already existing knowledge as well as how they can apply it into their own work, is essential for a successful knowledge transfer. Moreover, the knowledge receivers own motivation and interest in the repatriate knowledge is essential factor for

them to put their own time and effort to seek and accept the knowledge. (Oddou et al., 2009; Burmeister et al., 2015).

Furthermore, prior studies have shown a connection between the recipients own international background and their ability to absorb the knowledge. It has been argued that recipients, who have done prior international assignments, are more easily able to absorb the repatriate knowledge as their own assignments may have helped them to develop a global mindset. Thus, they might be more open for repatriate's knowledge and might be more interested to seek it out. Additionally, via prior international assignments, the co-workers may share a more mutual cognitive ground, which makes absorbing the repatriate knowledge easier. (Burmeister et al., 2018).

Lazarova et al. (2005) have discussed of high-intensity, medium-intensity and low-intensity knowledge transfer tools. High-intensity tools have rich information processing mechanisms and they are mainly used in transferring knowledge that is highly tacit and/or specific. Moreover, high-intensity tools often include knowledge transfer in a team setting. These team settings may include assigning repatriates in teams that have strategic importance or assigning them as team leaders in groups with international activities. In turn, low-intensity knowledge tools can be used in transferring knowledge that is generic and non-tacit. These low-intensity tools contain less personal human interaction than the other two tools. (Lazarova et al., 2005). Presentations and lectures are good examples of these tools that can be used to transfer low-intensity knowledge in the organization. Medium-intensity tools are used with knowledge combinations that are between low-tacit knowledge and highly tacit-knowledge. Additionally, medium-intensity tools are suitable for knowledge that is located between generic and highly specific knowledge on the spectrum. These tools can be used to transfer knowledge both in a group setting as well as more individually. (Lazarova et al., 2005). For example, simulations, case study discussions and behavior modelling can all be used transferring medium-intensity information.

3.5 Individual aspects in repatriate knowledge transfer

It has been argued that there are two main elements that facilitate RKT. The first factor is related to repatriates' personal motivation and ability to engage in knowledge transfer as well as the process through which they conduct knowledge transfer. The second factor is related to the organization's effort to make it easier for repatriates to conduct knowledge transfer. However, it has been argued that other employees in the same unit do not often seek to initiate the knowledge transfer themselves. Therefore, it has been argued that the main responsibility in knowledge transfer is often on repatriates' shoulders. (Oddou et al., 2013). Therefore, studying the individual aspects and organizational aspects that can affect the RKT process are an essential part of this thesis. The individual aspects will be studied first, after which the focus shifts to the organizational factors.

3.5.1 Ability

In their repatriate knowledge model, Oddou et al. (2009) proposed that ability and motivation are the main individual level aspects affecting RKT. In their research they argued that repatriates' ability to engage in RKT consist of their expertise, social network, position power and position responsibilities. Oddou et al. (2009) define expertise as the degree of knowledge the repatriate has gained during their assignment. The amount of repatriate's expertise is connected to the higher probability of RKT.

Oddou et al. (2013) have proposed that repatriates' ability to initiate and conduct knowledge transfer can be divided into four segments. The first segment is related to having the right knowledge. The second segment is related to the right moment. It is important that the repatriate is able to identify when their knowledge can create additional benefits in their unit. Choosing to engage in knowledge transfer when their knowledge can benefit others is an essential factor in a successful knowledge transfer

process. The third segment is connected to having the right attitude regarding knowledge transfer. It is essential that repatriates remain positive regarding transferring their knowledge to the rest of their unit. (Oddou et al., 2013). For example, if a repatriate tries to actively engage in knowledge transfer with a member, who does not have a personal motivation in it, repatriate may feel discouraged to initiate further knowledge transfer with other members.

The last segment is related to having the right job positions, which has been discussed more in depth earlier in this thesis. Alongside with what was discussed prior in both this and the previous chapter, Oddou et al. (2013) propose that a higher and a more strategic position offers repatriates with more chances to engage in knowledge transfer. However, it is important to remember that knowledge transfer does not occur in solitude. Instead, it is a collaborative process, where repatriates only represent one factor. Watson and Hewett (2006) have argued that the ongoing process of knowledge transfer is tightly connected both to the knowledge senders' and receivers' motivation to engage in the transfer process.

Previous studies has found that repatriates' position in the organization upon their return is connected to their ability to engage in RKT (Berthoin-Antal, 2001). Oddou et al. (2009) refer this as position power. The importance of the position repatriates receive after their assignment has been discussed in the earlier chapter. Additionally, it has been proposed that there is a connection between RKT and repatriates' job position upon their return. A similar position with similar responsibilities is said to positively enhance repatriates' ability to engage in RKT. (Oddou et al., 2009). Job design will be further discussed in the organizational level aspects that can affect RKT.

Social networks can be defined as a collection of nodes and ties that represent a relationship amongst nodes (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). Repatriates' expertise is made known via the social networks they have managed to create (Oddou et al., 2009).

Social networks enforce knowledge transfer amongst its members. Prior researches have argued that especially tacit knowledge, which the majority of repatriate knowledge is, requires regular interactions in order to be transferred (Szulanski, 1996). Therefore, it can be argued that repatriates' ability to engage with other members is an essential factor in RKT (Oddou et al., 2009).

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, time is another essential matter in repatriates' ability to engage in RKT. As Lazarova et al. (2005) have stated, RKT requires both significant amount of time and effort. Therefore, it is essential that repatriates are willing to invest their own personal resources in RKT. Coincidentally, this means that repatriates both want to and have time to share their knowledge with their co-workers, instead of only focusing in their own work progress. (Burmeister et al., 2018).

3.5.2 Motivation

Prior studies have established that rewards are not necessarily essential factors in repatriates' motivation to engage in knowledge transfer. Instead, motivation appears to stem from their personal commitment to the organization and wanting it and its employees to succeed. Furthermore, repatriates may feel as if transferring the knowledge is one of their professional responsibilities. (Oddou et al., 2013). Another aspect of motivation is whether or not repatriates view their knowledge as a tool to boost their own benefits or do they see it as a way to promote the company's common good (Davoine et al., 2018).

Similarly, Burmeister et al. (2016) found that financial compensation does not necessarily reflect positively in RKT. Instead, it may even hinder RKT, as its positive influence wears off quickly. Additionally, they argue that repatriates are often personally interested in transferring their knowledge amongst their co-workers, hence they may even view financial compensations as offending. Instead of financial compensations, repatriates are more interested in other non-monetary rewards. These may be enhanced visibility,

recognition or a possibility to transfer their knowledge to a wider audience. (Burmeister et al., 2016). Repatriates' motivation to engage in RKT can be further enhanced by the organization's actions. According to Lazarova et al. (2005), the main reason why repatriates choose to engage in knowledge transfer process is connected to perceived organizational support. Similarly, Nery-Kjerfve & McLean (2012) have argued that repatriates, who feel valued by their company are more willing to engage in RKT. Therefore, organizational level aspects will be studied next.

3.6 Organizational level aspects in repatriate knowledge transfer

While repatriates have a large role in both initiating and conducting RKT, there are various ways how organizations can aid the RKT process. The first one is connected to perceived career and repatriate support (PCRS), which Reiche (2012) has defined as the extent of which the company offers them both imminent support after their arrival in the home organization and their long-term career development. He continues by arguing that this is positively connected to future career development as well as their abilities to engage in RKT. The study's findings indicated that there is a positive connection between repatriate and career support and enhanced repatriate knowledge transfer. (Reiche, 2012). Earlier in this thesis, mentoring was discussed as one the means through which organizations can aid the repatriation process.

Moreover, Reiche (2012) states that prior studies have found that perceived organizational support is connected to repatriates' re-adjustment, their commitment to their organization and their intentions to leave the organization. Furthermore, as it was discussed earlier in this thesis, commitment to organization is related to both repatriates' turnover intentions as well as their willingness to initiate knowledge transfer process.

Lazarova et al. (2005) have argued that in order for companies to utilize their repatriates' knowledge, it is essential that the companies can both create and enforce motivation for the repatriates to share their knowledge. They continue by stating that repatriate's motivation to share their knowledge is tied to the career development opportunities, which are provided for them and how well they meet the repatriate's personal wishes. Similarly, Reiche (2012) argues that career and repatriation support is one of the most important forms of organizational support. According to Burmeister et al. (2016), there are three elements that should be taken into a consideration in job design. The first element is to involve the repatriate in finding a suitable position for them. The second important element in job design is matching the knowledge they have gained during their assignment. The study indicated that repatriates found it easier to adjust in a position, which contained overlapping with their previous position they held during their expatriation assignment. (Burmeister et al., 2016).

The third important element in job design revolves around a well-structured search process for a suitable position for each repatriate. Companies tend not to allocate enough time to find a new position for repatriates. In Burmeister et al.'s (2016) study, the interviewees stated that they preferred if the search for their new position would begin 6 to 12 months prior returning to their home country. They continue by stating that a slow uptake in begin the search for a new position was connected to increased uncertainty from the repatriates' part. (Burmeister et al., 2016). Similarly, Lazarova et al. (2007) suggest that career development practices, where repatriates' international career plans are taken into consideration, are connected to enhancing RKT. Repatriate career management and their turnover intent were discussed more in depth earlier in this thesis.

Allocating repatriates in strategic positions is connected to enhanced repatriate knowledge transfer. However, companies are often unaware of repatriates' strategic importance. Additionally, companies do not necessarily have a clear vision of the skills and knowledge repatriates have accumulated. Perhaps, companies even lack the motivation

to utilize repatriates' global knowledge in their business practices. All of these factors play a role in why repatriates may not find a position that would enable them to capitalize their skills. As a result, RKT may suffer or remains non-existent. (Oddou et al., 2013). Moreover, most companies do not view repatriate knowledge as a valuable tool or something that can provide them with a competitive edge. In some cases, repatriate knowledge can even be seen as an unwanted information (Oddou et al., 2009). Similarly, Berthoin-Antal (2001), states that the biggest issue in RKT process is that companies do not assigning repatriates in proper roles upon their return.

Studies have shown that also other organizational support practices alongside career management, are connected to repatriates' willingness to share their knowledge. Lazarov et al. (2005) have argued that it is important that companies can show their reciprocity for repatriates. They continued by suggesting that organizations can create an inter-organizational platform for repatriates' to share their knowledge. Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty's (2008) findings support the aforementioned by arguing that international and local support practices are positively connected to increased motivation and ability to share international knowledge amongst both local and international staff. Tools for knowledge sharing were discussed further earlier in this chapter.

Similarly, in her research Berthoin-Antal (2001) found that a lack of organizational interest regarding RKT alongside with un-organized information exchange processes were connected to decreased RKT as well as overall poor organizational learning. In addition to poor communication platforms and interest, the study found that if the parent organization did not have a global mindset, nor did it have a desire to become a true multinational enterprise, RKT was not seen as essential part of repatriation. (Berthoin-Antal, 2001).

In their research, Burmeister et al. (2016) report that training can be positively connected with RKT. For example, administrative reintegration briefings appear to be positively connected to RKT. These administrative reintegration briefings are used to gather feedback regarding the support practices that were offered to the repatriates during their expatriation assignment as well as offering information regarding the repatriation process. The aforementioned study found that the repatriates were mainly offered administrative organizational support. Moreover, knowledge transfer related organizational support practices, such as knowledge-transfer related to training or knowledge-transfer debriefings, were least available to repatriates. (Burmeister et al., 2016).

Similarly, Burmeister et al.'s (2016) study found a positive correlation between intercultural reintegration training and RKT. Intercultural reintegration training was used to aid repatriates to reintegrate more easily. However, they found that this training was only offered if the assignment had lasted over two years and the cultural distance between the countries was considered as significant. Lastly, knowledge-related debriefings are also positively connected to RKT. These were used to increase transparency regarding the type of and nature of repatriate's knowledge. Therefore, based upon this, it would be possible to identify the potential areas, where their knowledge could be applied. (Burmeister et al., 2016).

Internal communication is another important factor in RKT. Hansen (1999) has proposed that the quality of the relationship between the knowledge sender and the recipient is positively connected to knowledge transfer behavior. Additionally, maintaining communication throughout the expatriation assignment alongside with promoting the knowledge repatriate has acquired during their assignment are essential factors in RKT (Burmeister et al., 2016). Yet, while frequent communication with the home work unit is important, repatriates may still feel as if they are outsiders and their knowledge and experiences are not valued by others. Additionally, organizational changes that have occurred during repatriates' assignments may cause a distance between the home unit and

the repatriate as repatriates often feel that they have to re-learn how to be a part of their home organization. (Oddou et al., 2013).

As repatriates need to re-engage into their current position and with their co-workers, prior studies have argued that interaction opportunities can further enable mutual understanding and thinking process between repatriates and their co-workers. Hence, creating a shared cognitive field amongst them, further enhancing RKT. (Burmeister et al., 2018). Therefore, creating opportunities for interaction between repatriates and their co-workers can positively enhance the knowledge transfer process. (Oddou et al., 2009).

Managers' attitudes towards repatriates' knowledge can affect the transfer process either positively or negatively. It has been argued that managers' interest in repatriates' knowledge is directly connected to how the rest of the team views this knowledge. If managers both understand how this knowledge can benefit the work unit and value it, their actions can further promote knowledge transfer. For example, managers can allow repatriates to take an active part in strategic meetings, where they are able to utilize their experience and knowledge. Managers can also create an open learning environment, where repatriates' knowledge is both valued and welcomed. Furthermore, in an open environment, knowledge transfer may occur almost automatically as open communication enables the ease of knowledge transfer. (Oddou et al., 2013).

Lastly, it has been argued that a larger attention should be given to RKT in performance appraisal. Otherwise, a repatriate may view knowledge transfer as an additional factor on top of their own work, which may cause conflicts. (Bonache et al., 2008). However, in their study Burmeister et al. (2016) found that hard appraisal criteria may not create best results as all repatriation experiences are unique. Instead, they suggest a softer appraisal approach, where RKT would be included.

3.7 Summary of theoretical learnings

For RKT to occur, it is required that repatriates are able to adapt back into their organization. Therefore, the first theoretical section discussed repatriation process and adjustment from a more general perspective. At the same time it created a foundation for understanding the complexity of repatriation and the influence repatriates can have on their organization. The repatriation chapter focused on the complexity of returning home as well as re-adjusting back into the home organization. Mentoring, training and communication were mentioned as positive factors that enabled both repatriates' adjustment and their POS.

The second theoretical section discussed repatriate knowledge transfer. The chapter began by discussing knowledge management and different aspects related to general knowledge transfer. The knowledge transfer process models were also discussed. These discussions created a foundation for understanding repatriate knowledge transfer. In the second half of this section, the focus turned on repatriate knowledge transfer. The potential value of repatriate knowledge was highlighted. RKT was discussed from the perspective of both the individual and the organizational aspects.

The individual aspects consisted of motivation and ability. Based on the prior literature, repatriates' own motivation to engage in RKT was seen as one of the main aspects in initiating RKT. Repatriates ability to engage in RKT consisted of their own individual skills to find relevant RKT opportunities. The organizational aspects consisted of mentoring, suitable job position, opportunities and sharing platforms for RKT, internal communication, organizational support and manager' and co-worker's attitudes. Next, the focus is turned to the empirical study.

4 Empirical research

This section focuses on empirical research. The chosen research method is discussed first, after which, the data collection and analysis are described. This is followed by presenting the interview themes and question. Afterwards, the quality of the research is discussed. Lastly, this section present more detailed information regarding the participants.

4.1 Research method

The chosen empirical approach is a qualitative research. Due to the nature of business research, qualitative research is a viable option. This is because business studies often focus on human interactions and behavior as well as organizations as a whole. Human related matters are constantly changing and occur differently in each setting, hence isolating them for inspection is often difficult. Moreover, while numbers can offer information regarding various factors in organizations, studying how people view the issues on an individual level is a good way to enlighten the everyday aspect of organizational life. (Greener, 2008, pp. 80). In this research, the focus is on repatriates own experiences, hence qualitative study allows more in depth approach to the subject.

Quantitative research requires more data in order to offer valid results than what a qualitative study requires. As Furuya et al. (2009) have argued, repatriate knowledge is a relatively less studied field in research. Moreover, prior studies, which were discussed in the earlier sections, have found that organizations do not often invest much time and resource in repatriation and RKT. Therefore, considering the scope of this thesis, qualitative research is more likely to offer more valid responses than what a quantitative approach would. Additionally, repatriate knowledge transfer can be seen as a complex and dynamic research topic. Hence, a qualitative approach may offer more flexibility regarding the subject matter. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, pp. 328).

The success of knowledge transfer will be studied from repatriates' perspective. One of the main reasons for this is the overarching focus on the repatriation cycle and the knowledge transfer. Additionally, while it is possible to study the success of knowledge transfer from the recipients' point of view, it has been argued that knowledge receivers do not necessarily realize that they have acquired new knowledge or cannot identify the source of this new knowledge (Argote & Ingram, 2000b). Therefore, it is logical to study the phenomenon from repatriates' point of view.

4.2 Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interview is chosen as the data collection method in this thesis. A semi-structured interview utilizes pre-determined themes and questions. However, these themes and questions may change from one interview to another to better gather relevant information. Furthermore, the questions may be presented in a different order depending on the flow of the interview. Additional questions may also arise depending on the context. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 320). As it can be seen, semi-structured interviews are affected by human interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. In semi-structured interviews, it is essential to understand the interviewees' explanations and meanings. Therefore, attentive listening is a core element when conducting these interviews. (Saunders et al. 2009, pp. 334).

There are a few reasons why this method is chosen. First of all, interviews are one of the main qualitative data collection methods. (Greener, 2008, pp. 81). Secondly, based on its inter-active nature, semi-structured interviews present an opportunity to acquire knowledge that may not have been found and collected in a more structured data collection method (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 324). Developing the themes and questions for the interview is a crucial step in a qualitative research. Open questions offer the in-

interviewee a chance to define and describe the phenomenon. It also encourages the respondent to provide an extensive and developmental answer that may then be used to reveal attitudes or obtain facts. Probing questions are used to expand responses that pose a significant value from the research question's point of view. While they can be worded similarly to open questions, probing questions present a certain direction or a defined focus. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 337-338). This research utilizes a mixture of open and probing questions. The interviews were structured in five main interview themes, which were studied through sub-questions, as presented below. Through these questions, it is possible to gain information on different individual level and organizational level antecedents that may affect RKT.

Table 1. Interview themes.

1. Discuss your expatriation assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job - Location - Length - Type of knowledge acquired during your assignment
2. Discuss RKT from your experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - utilizing your knowledge after return - What type of knowledge have you been able to transfer - What kind of expectations did you have regarding knowledge transfer prior your return
3. Based on your own experience, discuss elements that interact with RKT process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive - Negative
4. How/ what individual level aspects affect RKT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability - Commitment - Motivation
5. How/ what organizational level aspects affect RKT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational support and involvement - Career planning - Managerial attitude - Co-workers attitudes - Internal communication - Performance management - Others

The data collection process began by approaching the company representative via e-mail. Afterwards, the topic and the scope of the study was discussed more in-depth with them

via telephone. During the phone call, the research questions and the interview themes were discussed. The company sent out an inquiry to participate in this thesis via their internal communication platform. Five participants responded to this inquiry, agreeing to participate in this study. The other four participants were reached personally via the author's personal contacts inside the company. The interviews took place during late April and early May in 2019.

These interviews were conducted in one-on-one situations, either in Finnish or in English based on the interviewees' personal preferences. A brief summary of the topic was presented to the interviewees before the actual interview in order for them to have time to familiarize themselves with the topic. To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, they are referred to as person A, person B and so on. Around one hour was reserved for each interview. The overall approximate length of one interview was around fifty-five to sixty minutes. Two of the interviews were held over the phone, while the other seven interviews were conducted in a face-to-face situation. A permission to record the interview was asked from all participants in advance and all of the nine participants gave their permission to record the interviews. Each interview was transcribed shortly after the interview was conducted. After transcribing all nine interviews, interviews held in Finnish were then translated into English. Quotations from these interviews were then organized in an additional document according to the interview themes and questions. From this, it was possible to see each participant's answer to each topic, making it easier to see re-emerging themes.

4.3 Quality of research

The quality of research can be studied via reliability and validity. Reliability refers to consistency and repeatability. A reliable research is auditable. In other words, the research must be transparent and clear. If others were to conduct the same research, they would

receive the same results. (Greener 2008, pp. 37). Therefore, reliability can be understood via three questions. The first question is whether or not the chosen method will deliver the same results on other occasions as well. The second question is will others reach the same observations. The third question revolves around transparency on how the observations were made from the original data. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 156).

Due to its nature, semi-structured interviews as a data collection method may cause reliability issues. One of the main issues in a qualitative method is the interviewer bias, where the interviewer's either verbal or non-verbal behavior affects how the interviewee may answer to the questions. Additionally, the quality and the value of the answers may be connected to the interviewers' ability to create a trusting atmosphere between them and the interviewee as well as their professionalism. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp.326). Furthermore, as with any research, there is always the possibility that the respondents may be lying or otherwise withholding information. Moreover, due to its human interaction element, interviews can be seen as a more intrusive data collection method than online questionnaires. Hence, respondents may feel the need to give a better opinion of either the organization or of themselves. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 327).

Validity refers to how well the empirical research actually measures or represents what it was originally meant to describe or measure. Selecting a viable research method and utilizing a wide variety of concepts to explain meanings, are a form of validity in empirical research. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 157). Issues related to the validity of a research are mainly related to whether or not the researcher actually sees what they think they are seeing (Flick, 2009, pp. 387). Concerning validity, three errors may occur. The first type of error is related to seeing a relation in a place, where it does not exist. The second type of error is about rejecting a relation, when it does exist. Lastly, the third type of error is to ask wrong question. (Kirk et al., 1986, pp. 29-30). While reliability and validity are

related to both quantitative and qualitative research, it has been argued that in a qualitative research, additional care should be invested to ensure the validity of the research (Flick, 2009, pp. 387).

It should be noted that reliability can be achieved without validity. Both validity and reliability are based on the idea of objective truth and reality. Moreover, it can be argued that all research should aim for objectivity. Objectivity refers to a consistency of a meaning. This can be achieved, when two or more researches reach the same conclusion independently by analyzing the same data. (Kirk & Miller, 1986, pp.20; Flick, 2009, pp. 391).

The reliability of interview data can be increased by practicing interviewing beforehand and by studying how to conduct a proper interview from research method books. Additionally, the questions for following interviews can be improved or new questions can be added, based on the first interview. (Flick, 2009, pp. 386). In this thesis, all these aforementioned methods were done in order to increase the reliability of the interview data. Additionally, reliability was increased via creating solid and clear interview themes that were formed based on prior researches discussed in the theoretical section.

In a qualitative study based on interview themes, the quality of research can be enhanced by creating a good frame for interviews. Additionally, creating potential follow-up questions in order to gain more insight into a certain theme can increase the quality of the research. Furthermore, the quality can be improved by ensuring that the technical aspects, in this case the recording, function as intended. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, pp.184-185). All of the above discussed matters were conducted in this thesis in order to raise the quality of the research.

4.4 Interviewees

Nine people were interviewed: seven of them were male and two were female. Eight out of the nine participants were born and raised in Finland. One of the participants is born abroad, but has lived in Finland over a decade and thus, is well adapted to the country. The interviews were held either in Finnish or in English. Seven of the nine interviews were done in Finnish, while two were done in English. Quotations from person D and person G are direct quotes as those interviews were done in English. The quotations from person A, person B, person C, person E, person F, person H and person I are translated from Finnish.

Each participant had a higher educational background. Two participants had a background in business studies while the rest had a technical studies background. All of the interviewees worked in the same company, but each one of them are in a different positions. The company wishes to remain anonymous. However, a short description is provided for context. The company in question is a Finnish multinational company that excels both in marine and in energy markets. The company has employees in several European, Asian and American countries.

Eight out of the nine people interviewed went abroad with an expatriate contract. One person went abroad with a local contract. While this person did not have an expatriate contract, they returned to the same company after their local contract ended. Hence, they were deemed to qualify in participating this study. Moreover, during the interviews, it turned out that many of the people interviewed believed that in the company's future more people will be send abroad with local contracts instead of expatriate contracts due to financial reasons. This topic will be discussed more in the results section.

All nine of the interviewed repatriates had stayed abroad at least for two years. Furthermore, in order for providing enough time for RKT to occur, it was required that at least three to six months had passed since their return. Additional information can be found from the table below. In this thesis, all participants are referred using they pronoun to ensure their gender anonymity.

Table 2. Information about participants

PERSON	LENGTH (YEARS)	LOCATION	RETURN
A	1+5	Brazil, China, Korea	2018
B	2+1	China, Singapore	2018
C	2	China	2018
D	2	China	2018
E	2+1	Africa	2018
F	5	China	2015
G	2	Singapore	2014
H	3.5	Singapore	2018
I	2	Singapore	2018

5 Results

The empirical research was described in the previous section. In this section, the research data is presented. The knowledge that repatriates have gained during their assignment and how they have been able to use it after their return is discussed first. This is followed by presenting whether or not repatriates have been able to transfer their knowledge to others and in what situation RKT had typically occurred. Afterwards, the results for both individual and organizational level aspects are presented. Lastly, repatriates recommendations for future improvements are presented.

5.1 Repatriate knowledge

Before discussing about the individual and organizational level aspects that may affect repatriate knowledge transfer, the result for repatriate knowledge are first presented. This allows to gain more understanding about different types of knowledge repatriates have gained during their assignments, creating a base for understanding the knowledge transfer in their case. Based on the interviews, it appears that during their assignments repatriates have gained two different types of knowledge. One type can be understood as a professional knowledge, while the other can be seen as gaining a deeper understanding of the culture they were in, as indicated by the quotations below.

“It’s two particular field of knowledge that I acquired. One is about doing business in China, to understand Chinese culture, business culture and to understand Chinese economy. [...].Then, another field of knowledge was particularly because it was a joint venture in a foreign country. [...]. So, it was sort of a small, stand-alone company. And running that company from end to end as financially was sort of like a small CFO role. [...]. So, the amount of knowledge that I learned there, I would not have learned if I had worked here for about ten years.”(person D, repatriate from China)

“You’ll learn more about the culture than what you would if you only travelled there for a few weeks. [...]. That kind of things you’ll start to understand only after you’re somewhere longer. [...]. When you live the same day-today life as them, you’ll start to understand things differently.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

All nine participant argued that they were able to form new networks, as shown from the quotations below.

“Well, of course, in a professional sense, it taught me a lot and I got lot of contact even from Finland. I got brand new contacts in Finland, even from different parts of the company, like from operations and from maintenance. Not just Finnish contacts, but also foreign contact. I reckon that they can be useful even in the future.”(person E, repatriate from Africa)

Additionally, many argued that their assignment helped them to broaden their perspectives.

“During the time I lived in Singapore, I was much closer to the customer. So, I actually gained a lot of knowledge in working closely with customers and more experience from the front line sales, and gained some perspective that comes with that.”(person G, repatriate from Singapore)

5.1.1 Personal utilization of knowledge after repatriation

All nine participants argued that they had been able to use the knowledge they had gained during their assignment after their return. Some participants have a position that enabled them to use their knowledge more than others.

“Yes, it has been useful for me. I have all those contacts. And what I was doing over there, it was very different from what I’m doing over here, so it did increase my know-how.”(person E, repatriate from Africa)

Some repatriates argued that while they have been able to use some parts of the knowledge they gained during their assignment, their current position limits their ability to fully utilize their knowledge.

“Yes and no. Of course, as I was kind of like in front lines over there, and now I am more in back office concerning the production lines, so it has not been perhaps in everyday matters. But perhaps the most important has been both the internal and cliental networks.” (person B, repatriate from China)

“Well, I say that I have gotten to use a part of that as I work with process development. And, when you learn the culture and the language, it aids with the Chinese subordinates even after. But, my ability to stand pressure and the larger project, that sort of side, yet remains to be utilized. I could do more.” (person F, repatriate from China)

On the other hand, there were also individuals, who have returned during times, when the company was going through major organizational changes. According to them, the organizational instability has impacted negatively on their ability to utilize their knowledge to its full capacity.

“Well I think that every time I have returned, I return to a moment that is not a normal moment. But I returned to a brand-new organization, under a brand-new boss. I had just started everything and there was a rush to move forward. So, perhaps not in the scale in which I could have used, I have not used. But perhaps the plan was that the knowledge I have gathered, would be what I could use in my current position in future.” (person A, repatriate from China)

It should also be noted that repatriates' own activity can affect their ability to utilize their knowledge. For example, repatriates can actively apply and search for positions that enable them to utilize their skills.

“Where I am now and what I do now, yes, I have been able to utilize my knowledge quite well. I feel like I have had a lot to give in my position. But, is it because of the company or is it more due to my own activity and plus coincidence that this has

happened? So, I wouldn't necessarily give that much credit for the company about that." (person C, repatriate from China)

It is interesting to notice that most have been able to use at least some parts of the knowledge they gained during their assignments. Additionally, it appears that the timing of the repatriation and the current organizational situation can affect repatriates' ability to use their knowledge. Furthermore, as it can be seen from these quotations, many repatriates referred to their current position when discussing whether or not they have been able to utilize their knowledge after the assignment. All of these above findings are similar to those discussed in the theoretical section.

5.1.2 Transferring knowledge to others after repatriation

In order to understand the different processes that have taken a place during repatriate knowledge transfer and how it can be improved, it is essential to first understand if the people interviewed have been able to engage in knowledge transfer with others. The repatriates interviewed in this study had varying answers to whether or not they have been able to transfer their knowledge to other people.

One of the most common themes was that the repatriates did not think that their knowledge was something that could be easily transferred to other people. The main reasons why the repatriates felt like it was difficult to transfer their knowledge to others is due to the knowledge being more about personal experiences and gaining another perspective. Furthermore, many argued that in order for someone to learn what they have learned, it is necessary for them to experience it.

"The knowledge I gained, that was more like getting a different perspective and seeing how the front line sales works, more than what we do in the back office. And I think that that kind of knowledge is difficult to transfer, because it is very much personal experience and like seeing things from another angle. And I think

you have to experience that to be able to learn it.”(person G, repatriate from Singapore)

“It’s pretty difficult. Especially these cultural differences, you cannot just tell them to someone else in a way that they’d learn them instantly. But, perhaps it would be possible to advice and help others. [...]. But, I don’t think it’s possible to transfer those things directly to somebody just by telling them.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

Some repatriates claimed that the current organizational set-up as well as their position has made it more difficult for them to engage in RKT.

“Partly I have been able to and partly I haven’t been. [...]. Perhaps, it would have been easier if I would have returned to the same position I had before I went to Asia.” (person B, repatriate from China)

“I think it’s different when you go out and you do somethings completely different. Then it’s easier to do knowledge transfer, when you get something concrete and you have learned. But when you do the same thing over there and over here, then I think it’s difficult to transfer the knowledge.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

However, some repatriates argued that they had been able to provide knowledge about how certain things are done in the country they were assigned in or give another perspective. In addition, they argued that they have been able to aid others via their networks as well as by offering cultural understanding.

“In back office sales they have like a certain stubbornness and they’re sure about their own way of working. But when you gain more experience from the other side of the coin, and you can understand that. And that’s something that I try to bring back and I try to tell to people when I’m working with them and trying to make them to look at things from another point of view also.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

“When we’re working with our Chinese suppliers and customers, I’ve been able to give advice to my own team and lead the process. I know how to act and how not to, what should be done in what situation.” (person C, repatriate from China)

One participant, person D, had been unable to engage in knowledge transfer due to their current arrangements, where they do not have any local team members. When asked why they have not been able to engage in knowledge transfer with other people, person D said that for knowledge transfer to occur, it requires somebody who has the knowledge and somebody who requires the knowledge. However, identifying this need can be difficult for a repatriate as can be seen from the statements below.

“I cannot just stop someone on the corridor and say that ‘hey, do you want to listen about China’. That would not work. So, you have to have a sort of a forum or you have to have some kind of platform, where you can go and talk. And somebody has to interest about, it's not for me to push it out.” (person D, repatriate from China)

Repatriates also argued that they hoped that there would have been a more structural mean through which the knowledge would have been collected, as shown below. Additionally, some of those who have been able to engage in RKT argued that it has been mainly due to their own activity and the organization has not tried to actively encourage it.

“In a way, there could have been a more structured mean to share the learnings. Most people just ask like how was it in China to what I say, it went fine, I learned a lot. But the knowledge transfer stays on that level.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“[...]. In a way it has been a coincidence. It has been just my own personal activity and own effort. There hasn't been any plan behind it. Just pure coincidence.” (person C, repatriate from China)

Repatriates were also asked how well they had been able to maintain communication while abroad. All participants argued that the communication flow between the home organization and them had decreased during their assignment and they were not up-to-date of the latest organizational events occurring back home. Otherwise, no notable issues related to RKT emerged concerning maintaining communication.

5.1.3 Repatriate knowledge transfer situations

This study aims to gain more understanding regarding the situations where RKT typically occurs. By understanding what the most common situations are and where repatriates typically engage in RKT, it is possible to gain more insight in how RKT could be improved. Based on the data, one of the most common RKT situations occur during normal work settings. These include, such as, meetings and developing current practices alongside with their team members. Additionally, casual settings, like coffee table discussions, provide another common opportunity for RKT.

“I think it has mainly been through our practice development. And then it has also been casual coffee table conversations. Actually, if there has been larger workshops, where there are people from various sections and as whole and we think how we could do things smarter, then those have been pretty good situations for knowledge transfer. [...]. And, sometimes people come up to ask me about the culture and so forth. But, mainly it has been just casual.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“Mostly in meetings. And then if there has been a problem that we have tried to solve together. It has been a part of daily work life. It does make it easier for day to day business, if you’re able to find a common note, it makes it easier for everybody.”(person E, repatriate from Africa)

It should be mentioned that the amount of RKT situations that occur during everyday business settings, are varying from team to team. Therefore, some repatriates may have had more opportunities, where it has been natural to transfer their knowledge than others. Additionally, while many people may be interested in learning more from repatriates, they may not necessarily feel comfortable in approaching them. Therefore, it could be beneficial for RKT to occur in a natural setting. It is also worth noting that only one repatriate had taken part in a workshop, where they were able to share their knowledge with others.

“It could be better to find a natural way to share the knowledge, where it could be easier to share information. I suppose that many people would like to know, but they do nothing in order to ask from repatriates about these things. Or they might not even know that you have been somewhere.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“We [the company] organized this workshop, where they needed global knowledge from each units. So, I was invited there and I like brought there the knowledge we needed this year and in future.” (person A, repatriate from China)

Additionally, in the interviews it was proposed that from the perspective of knowledge receiver, a video would be one of the best knowledge transfer tools.

“If you think about the knowledge receiver and in what would be the easiest way to share the information packet, I would say a video. So, if it would be possible to create a video packet based on the information that has been collected. An educational packet that is not too long and where there could be different levels.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

However, there were also alternative views presented regarding RKT situations. One participant, person D argues that while they have been engaging in discussion regarding their experiences during their expatriation assignment, they do not consider this to be knowledge transfer. Instead, they consider these occurrences to be something akin to storytelling and argue that knowledge transfer for them means that the person who receives the knowledge is then able to utilize it.

“To me knowledge transfer is that if you need something, and you take the knowledge and you do something with it. And my colleagues are in no contact with China. So, if I tell them, they don't use it for the benefit of the company in anyway. It's just storytelling.” (person D, repatriate from China)

None of the nine individuals interviewed had utilized presentations, videos or other means as knowledge transfer tools. However, as shown from the above quotations, some repatriates have been in meetings, where they have been able to share knowledge in a natural business setting. Additionally, some participants argue that their co-workers

have been approaching them via emails when they have required some specific knowledge. Furthermore, another quite reoccurring situation for RKT was in a causal setting. This causal setting could be talking with co-workers during lunch or while on a coffee break.

5.2 Individual aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer

In the theoretical section, three main individual aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer were discussed. These are ability, motivation and commitment to the organization. Next, the result for individual aspects that can affect repatriate knowledge transfer are presented.

5.2.1 Ability

Based on the interviews, there appear to be three reoccurring themes that can affect repatriates' ability to engage in RKT. These are position, time and the ability to identify where the need for the knowledge is.

Position

In the theoretical section it was discussed that one of the main reasons why expatriates may choose to embark on their assignments is due to its potential effect on advancing their careers. In this thesis, the data indicates that there is a positive connection between expatriate assignments and career development. Many of the participants argued that they believe that their current position is due to their expatriation assignment.

"I think it gave a boost for my career that I wasn't afraid of taking risks, and went there for three years. And when you do your work well, I think it does give some

rewards and you can further your career even in your home country.” (person E, repatriate from Africa)

“I see that I was chosen to this position because of my experience and knowledge due to my expatriation assignment. So, I see it that knowledge transfer is going to happen sporadically as we move forward with these subjects.” (person A, repatriate from China)

However, there was one individual who argued that in their own personal belief, expatriation assignment does not add any additional value on one’s career development prospects.

“The expatriation experience doesn’t really add any positive effect. [...]. There really isn’t any guarantee about the position you receive after you return, and expatriation doesn’t add any value.” (person C, repatriate from China)

As discussed in the theoretical section, previous studies have found that the repatriate’s position is directly related to their ability to engage in RKT (Berthoin-Antal, 2001; Oddou et al., 2009). According to them, if the repatriate is in a higher position or in an expert role, they have more authority through which to enforce the RKT process. This thesis supports these previous studies via similar findings. For instance, some repatriates had received a position that according to their own personal views enabled them to engage in RKT more easily.

“I have a pretty good position to transfer knowledge in this organization.” (person A, repatriate from China)

“I managed to move on, take another step in my career and in that position now I have more of a, let's say, clear responsibility to transfer knowledge. Because, [...] when I came back, I was on the same level as my colleagues. And then it was difficult to transfer knowledge like this unless you have a clear role that you're supposed to.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

On the other hand, there were also participants, whose current position has negatively affected their ability to engage in RKT.

“If I had a more operational role in the sales management, then I would have almost daily chances to utilize my knowledge. But at this moment, it’s like pushing with a string, because there are no clear responsibilities of who sells and who’s leading as everything is split into nine groups.” (person B, repatriate from China)

It is important to note that repatriates’ own activity in searching and applying for new positions after their assignment has ended, plays an essential role in finding the new position. Moreover, repatriates’ own activity in searching for a suitable position can affect their ability to engage in RKT.

“I think it depends quite a lot of the individual, are they actively applying for open positions that are better or how they want to change their career. I don’t think that a better position is just given to them automatically.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

“Perhaps I have also sought and entered into positions, in which I knew that I had something to give and I could be of help.” (person C, repatriate from China)

This data provides similar findings to those presented in the theoretical section, where repatriates position is connected to their ability to engage in RKT. There are a few potential explanations for this. One may be related to their co-workers attitudes’, where they are not receptive to what can be perceived as foreign knowledge that comes from someone on the same level. The other factor may be that repatriates feel like they do not have a clear responsibility to share their knowledge with others who are on the same level. Additionally, the lack of authority and clear role might also affect negatively on finding opportunities for RKT.

“Because, the organization and all were the same. The team with was on the same level as me. I didn’t have people beneath me who I could teach or coach. So, some

kind of forum and then a meeting or opportunity to give a presentation or something like that. Or then just an outspoken role in the group that I'm able to help with this and this, because I have this knowledge.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

“It’s very important how you’re being received when you return and what position you’ll have. If you get just some basic level position that a freshly graduated person could do, then it feels as if you and your experiences are being underestimated.” (person F, repatriate from China)

Seven out of the nine repatriates interviewed returned in a position, which they did not have prior their assignment. Additionally, majority argued that their team members had changed during their time abroad. However, these factors did not appear to have a notable effect on repatriates’ ability to engage in RKT.

Time

Prior studies have argued that RKT might suffer if repatriates do not have enough time to find situations where to engage in it (Burmeister et al., 2018; Lazarova et al. 2005). Hence, available time to engage in RKT is another individual level aspect included in this thesis. Based on the interviews, some of the participating repatriates argued that there could have been more time allocated for engaging in RKT.

“There are times, when we’re so busy that it’s impossible to think about anything else besides our own job. But, it changes constantly and I don’t think that most people have that much pressure all the time. But, I reckon it may partly affect it.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

“Perhaps, we should slow down. When I just think about, it feels that I have time. But, when I think about my calendar, it’s pretty full. So, perhaps we should organize a slower day for it.” (person F, repatriate from China)

However, there was also a different perspective amongst the participants, where it is seen that the lack of RKT has not been due to time limitations. Instead, it has been due to repatriates not having been aware of RKT and that it would be expected from them.

“I don't think it is lack of time. I think it's more that, in my case at least, it was more that it was not really spoken a lot of. And nobody ever said that it was expected of me that I would transfer my knowledge.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

Additionally, some argued that the current organizational set-up has had a larger negative impact on their ability to engage in RKT than time.

“Well, in that sense, what was done, it wasn't due to lack of time. Instead, it's more about due to there being so many moving factors.” (person B, repatriate from China)

However, unlike prior studies had suggested, time did not play as important role in enforcing RKT as what was expected. Additionally, it appears that while time may affect how actively repatriates are able to engage in RKT, if repatriates are unaware of its existence, the relevance of time becomes less important. Therefore, it should be discussed more widely amongst repatriates that RKT is something that is expected from them.

Attitude

Oddou et al. (2013) have proposed that having the right attitude is essential part of repatriates' ability to engage in RKT situations. A majority of the participants claimed to be open towards sharing their knowledge with others.

“I have a coaching attitude and I want to help my own team members to go forward. I suppose, my thirst for knowledge is so deep that I'd like to be able to share it to others when they're interested.”

While a majority of the participants claim that they are open for sharing their knowledge with others, there were also arguments that it has been challenging for them to initiate these RKT situations frequently due to a fear of being labelled and risking to be isolated from their peers.

“If you’re constantly trying to speak about your time abroad like ‘hey, I was in France for three years, let me talk about it’. Then, there’s a chance that you end up with a negative stigma and others will think that’s all you’re ever going to talk about. I think that’s especially notable in Finnish culture. And for that reason repatriates aim to avoid getting that stigma.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

Additionally, there were some participants, who argued that they do not think that other people truly value their knowledge. This rift between repatriates’ knowledge and how they perceive its role in their organization, may affect negatively on their attitude to continue finding new RKT situations.

“Well, I mean that I, myself, know what I know now and what I can do. I know what I know, but there are only few in this company who know what I do know. And they don’t know what they don’t know. And in that kind of situation, they don’t respect it, because if they haven’t seen it they have difficulties in comprehending it.”(person C, repatriate from China)

Identifying the need

Identifying the need appears to be a combination of Oddou et al.’s (2013) having the right moment for knowledge transfer and having the right knowledge, which are argued to be connected to an increase of RKT situations. In order to identify the need, repatriates need to know the correct situation and possess the correct knowledge for it. However, most participants argued that they had not been able to engage in RKT due to not knowing where the need for their knowledge is. Additionally, some argued that in order for them to engage in RKT, it is necessary that someone needs their knowledge.

“I don’t know where the need is, with whom I should share knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to see a clear need, before you can call to someone and say that ‘I’ve knowledge regarding this.’” (person A, repatriate from China)

In addition, the participating repatriates claim that there is a lack of tools through which they can engage in RKT.

“There is no platform at this moment to share that knowledge based on the repatriation. At least, I haven't been involved in any in the last one and half year. [...]. That is something that human resource department should create. There might be a platform, where some people might have been providing lectures and supporting. I have heard of such cases. But, probably it's just that for my case, I haven't been contacted. So, it might also be so.” (person D, repatriate from China)

Furthermore, it was proposed that as the company in question is large and has activities in many countries, HR should act as a link for finding those project where repatriates’ knowledge would be useful.

“The company as a whole needs to realize itself what type of knowledge should be transferred, and through the HR, the company knows who has been to which countries. So, perhaps there should be some kind of link through HR, when a new project is starting, which requires a specific type of knowledge from a certain country. Then, HR could contact these repatriates and organize for example a workshop or something like that. [...]. I see that it’s the company’s responsibility to know those people that could give information to those projects, because as an individual you cannot possibly know all the projects that are happening.” (person A, repatriate from China)

5.2.2 Motivation

In the theoretical section it was discussed that repatriates’ own motivation is directly connected to their activity in searching situations for RKT (Oddou et al., 2013). Therefore, the participants’ motivation to engage in RKT is one of the key areas of interest in this thesis. Eight out of the nine participants claimed that they were motivated to engage in RKT.

“Absolutely, I mean I like to sort of, if you get knowledge, it doesn't have any value unless you share it with someone. So yeah, I would be absolutely happy to go and support or provide help whoever needs it. That's not a problem.” (person D, repatriate from China)

However, there were many issues that have affected their ability to engage in RKT besides their motivation. One of these is related both to the organizational structure and repatriate's position.

“Yes and it of course partly depends of the organizational set-up what we have today. [...]. Well, at least, in my case, it depends of the position I have as well as my workload.” (person B, repatriate from China)

In addition, while they might be motivated to share their knowledge with others, some participants contemplated that they do not think that the demand for repatriate knowledge and the supply of that knowledge match up.

“But, there is no problem with my motivation to tell those stories, but [...] I don't think that demand and supply meet in that way.” (person A, repatriate from China)

In addition to clear need for knowledge as well as repatriates' position and organizational structure that supports RKT, personal positive experiences may also encourage repatriates to share their knowledge.

“Perhaps, it's because my experiences and what I learned was positive. I don't know if it would be that nice to share, if it would have been negative. But because mine are positive, it's nice to share them with others.” (person E, repatriate from Africa)

Based on the data, repatriates believed that if others around them would actively indicate that they are interested in their knowledge, they would be more motivated to share it.

“If people show that they’re actually interested, like ‘hey, you have something from what the rest of us could learn something of’. So, the interest regarding the knowledge is a huge motivational factor. I’d gladly help, if somebody asks me or if there’s an individual who’s interested in it.” (person F, repatriate from China)

The data proposes that repatriates found it easier engage in RKT with those, who they are already familiar with. Additionally, most participants claimed that with those who they are not familiar with, they expect them to approach and show their interest. These results are aligned with those of Argote et al. (2003) that argue the higher the level of trust is between repatriates and knowledge receivers, the more likely it is that knowledge transfer will occur.

“[...] Yes, I can bring knowledge to those close to me and who I knew before I went, it is easy to bring them knowledge. But then again, to new people, you don’t just go suddenly tell them that this is how things are. So, if it is a new person, then I suppose one is waiting for them to ask, but if they’re familiar, then it’s easy to just discuss these things even at a dining table.” (person A, repatriate form China)

“Yes, I suppose it’s so. It’s quite normal that the threshold is lower if the person is someone you know and then the knowledge starts to move more quickly. If that person is not familiar, then it takes time to build trust and all that, which I suppose is one requirement for knowledge transfer and communication.” (person C, repatriate from China)

Additionally, prior studies have proposed that if repatriates consider RKT as a part of their professional duty, they are more active in searching for RKT opportunities (Oddou et al., 2013). Hence, the participants in this study were also asked if they think that RKT is a part of repatriates’ professional duty. The results were mixed, with some repatriates arguing that the RKT should be considered as their duty.

“Yes, that is true. I mean if the organization doesn't provide any tools or expect that this would happen, then for sure it's up to each individual to do it.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

“I think it should be and I suppose it is the repatriate’s responsibility, but if the supervisor is not excited and interested, what does it help, how can they utilize the information the repatriate has? [...]. Therefore, HR should as a third party and see if the repatriate has come in an optimal position from the company’s perspective. And if not, then they could give some advice that the repatriate could apply for something else or they could put them in some high-potential list.” (person B, repatriate from China)

“Yes, I think so. Because if I have an answer to a particular problem, then I think it’s my duty to teach others. After all, it’s easier when everything is right, and the other people will also learn from it.” (person E, repatriate from Africa)

However, there were also those, who argued that they do not consider it to be a part of their professional responsibilities since it was not discussed prior to their expatriation assignment.

“I don’t necessarily think of it as a duty. But, if it had been a part of the discussion from the beginning, when we were initially talking about this assignment that it’s a part of repatriation. Then, suppose the situation would be different.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

Furthermore, the data proposes that engaging in RKT can make repatriates feel more valuable to the company after their return, which in turn may motivate them to engage in it.

“I think it would be good. I think it would give the repatriate sort of meaning and make him or her feel bit more useful back.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

While a majority of the people interviewed in this thesis argued that they had a high motivation to engage in RKT, there can also be cases where repatriates do not have elevated motivation to engage in RKT situations. For example, person H does not have a high motivation to search for potential situations for RKT. Instead, they argue that the initiative for it should come from somewhere else. This is due to person H not wanting to come off to their co-workers as someone who only talks about their time abroad.

"I don't have motivation to pursue or organize knowledge transfer situations spontaneously. Instead, it should come from somewhere. I guess it's partly because I don't want to become just someone who always talks about Singapore and how things were there." (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

Interestingly, while repatriate knowledge transfer has not necessarily occurred significantly amongst those who were interviewed, majority of them claimed that they have a high motivation themselves to engage in RKT. Furthermore, based on the data, elevated motivation alone is not enough to encourage RKT to happen. For example, it appears that there should be a clear need for their knowledge. Moreover, determining this need should come from the organization itself. Furthermore, even though repatriates may consider engaging in RKT as a part of their duty, if their boss does not show any interest regarding their knowledge, then it can decrease their motivation to seek out opportunities for it.

In addition, all nine of the interviewed repatriates argued that repatriate knowledge is important for the company, giving various reasons. One of these reasons is that it can aid in offering a new perspective

"Yes, in my opinion it is. Because, we all have so many things that can be learned from. [...]. If, we all come from the same school with similar backgrounds, then we have a very narrow view of the world. Those who have lived and worked abroad could possibly bring something new to the table." (person F, repatriate from China)

On the other hand, it was argued that while RKT is important, knowledge transfer does not occur merely because it is considered as important. Furthermore, it should be noted that knowledge transfer is related to the environment. Hence, it needs to be valued by the whole community, as shown from quotation below.

"Yes, but I don't think it's that simple that knowledge just transfers. It's about the environment, it's about the way of doing business. It's about all that, starting from if there's respect. It's about how, should I say, the whole system has been built so

that knowledge transfer is natural and a part of the whole community.” (person C, repatriate from China)

Additionally, it was argued that as expatriates are expensive for the company, there should be a way through which the company could utilize this knowledge.

“The company should be able to utilize that knowledge or experience, because sending expatriated abroad for three years is a heavy financial investment. But of course, the other question is how much of it can be used, as the business environment changes constantly.” (person B, repatriate from China)

On the other hand, while the participating repatriates consider RKT to be important, it is essential to remember that repatriate’s knowledge is based solely on their own experiences. Therefore, the knowledge receiver also has a responsibility to evaluate the knowledge critically.

“You have to be able to bring that understanding that what we are telling you is just a snapshot of what we have learned or what we understand.[...]. So, you have to have a broader mind when you listen to it.” (person D, repatriate from China)

5.2.3 Commitment to the organization

In the theoretical section it was proposed that repatriates’ commitment to the organization can affect their motivation to engage in RKT (Oddou et al., 2013). Quite a few repatriates claimed that they were committed to their company. There were various reasons behind their commitment to the company. One of the reasons that appears to affect repatriates’ commitment is related to their assignment having been a successful experience. Additionally, the time they have spent in the company can also affect positively on their commitment to it.

“I have been quite satisfied actually. [...]. I suppose it helped quite a lot that I knew three to four months prior my return, where I’m assigned. I was able to get to know their situation, what are their focal areas and sort of be a part of them beforehand.

[...]. There are so many new things, so it has been pretty interesting that I got to learn something new and not only do the same old things that I already knew how to do.” (person A, repatriate from China)

“Yes, I would say it is on the positive side, yes. Especially, after my expatriation assignment was a successful experience.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“I have been here for twenty five years, I don’t think I’m leaving here” (person B, repatriate from China)

However, there were also those, who argued that initially after returning, they were not completely committed to the company and argued that they had considered leaving the company after their assignment.

“Well, it has decreased. Or should I say that I have never really been naïve, but now it has become quite clear and my trust for the company has also gotten a blow. No, I don’t trust that anybody does anything. In this company, everybody has to stand up for themselves, nobody does it for you.” (person C, repatriate from China)

“This position opened up so suddenly. I wasn’t really planning on returning to Finland or even staying in this company. So, I was searching open positions globally. And I was thinking that I would not return here. But now that I’m here, I think it is actually quite nice to be here.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

However, all repatriates argued that their commitment did not affect either positively or negatively on their motivation to engage in RKT. Instead, commitment appears to have affected more on their turn-over intentions, which were discussed earlier.

5.3 Organizational aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer

Next, the result regarding organizational aspects affecting repatriate knowledge transfer are presented.

5.3.1 Valuation of repatriate knowledge in the company

Based on the theoretical section, if the organization sees RKT as an important factor, they are more likely to invest in it and ensure that it occurs at various organizational levels. According to the interviews, majority of the participants felt like their company does not value repatriates and does not actively aim to gather their knowledge.

“I didn't fill any forms, I didn't fill in any of the reports of what happened in China, or I didn't provide anything to the company. So, if I look at from my perspective, I think the company is not interested about repatriation knowledge transfer, from solely looking at my experience.” (person D, repatriate from China)

“No, not really. I cannot really say that the company has shown much interest. It has been more on the ground level. Besides, the companies don't really ask about these things, it's the people who do.” (person E, repatriate from Africa)

It should be noted that right after their return, repatriates may feel like their company does not value them, companies may show their appreciation later through various means, one of them being a promotion.

“I hope they do now. When I came back, I felt they did not. Not in the beginning at least. It was at least what I felt then. But now thinking back, I have also been promoted to a new position much thanks to the fact that I was on this assignment. So now, few years later, I can think back and see that they do, or they did in my case.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

Additionally, there were arguments that the company has many things undergoing at once, which may cause the company to pay less attention to RKT. Moreover, it was proposed that the company might not even fully realize RKT's potential.

“So many things are going on here that perhaps they don't get to be excited about all of that or they don't have time. [...]. But there are so many projects and things are moving so fast that perhaps they don't even realize they could ask.” (person A, repatriate from China)

However, although the company has not shown interest regarding their knowledge, one participant argued that they do know the company organizes workshops for repatriates. However, it appears that these are not frequent as only one participant has been to one of them and none of the others have been aware of them.

“I have heard that one of my colleague went to a workshop, where he gave a lecture about what happened in China. So, that's why I'm hesitant to say that the company is not interested. It could be that I'm the only one who has not been contacted or they probably do it but not for everyone. Probably they every now and then they organize some kind of a workshop and then they pick one or two to give that knowledge. So, it could be like that.” (person D, repatriate from China)

It was also brought forward during the interviews that one of the potential reasons why RKT has not actively occurred in the company is because there is not any systematic mean to collect the said knowledge. Additionally, it was argued that RKT should be clearly defined and promoted by the organization. Otherwise, it will likely have lower priority.

“At least in this company's case, there hasn't even been any effort to gather this knowledge in a systematic manner.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

“Our company is very process orientated, so it should be defined that it needs to be done. And it should be between the superior and the subordinate. Perhaps HR could be part of it. But it needs to be defined, because we all have our own jobs like one fifty [%], so if you just don't give it enough time and it's so low in the priority list, it won't be done.” (person B, repatriate from China)

Even if the company as a whole has not shown interest regarding repatriate knowledge, some participants argued that the units, where they work at and their co-workers value their knowledge.

“Difficult to say for the company as a whole. But, I mean the organization that I'm part of has, I would say, definitely shown that they understand and appreciate and

also have rewarded me with this opportunity to use the knowledge.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

“For operational sales that stayed in Asia it has been important, because in a way they have gotten one more person who knows and understands how business is conducted there.” (person B, repatriate from China)

Furthermore, there were arguments that when companies start to understand how much talent they have in-house, the organizational atmosphere will become more open for RKT.

“I think it will be more in focus, when companies notice that ‘hey, we don’t always have to ask consults to help us, because we have so many talented people in house’. Perhaps, we’ll go to a more open direction. [...]. Perhaps, organizations will change and people seek out more information as long as they know who might have it.” (person F, repatriate from China)

Additionally, the data proposes that if the company does not actively show that they are interested in repatriate knowledge, repatriates may start to feel like they do not have to share knowledge with anybody, because it is not something that is expected from them.

“If people notice you, so that it’s not just being pushed aside and forgotten. And suddenly, it’s as if you’ve never even been abroad. For example, [...] if the company doesn’t think at all how they could improve things and what your co-workers might be able to learn from you and you could be able to share with them. Then, you’ll soon start to feel that you don’t have to share anything, because the company is not interested.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“I felt that I have all this new experience, but nobody seemed to care. If somebody would have cared, I would have gladly shared.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

As it can be seen from the above comments, all of the repatriates argued that the company has not shown interest in their knowledge. A few proposed that as it had been a few years since their return, the system may be currently more developed. However,

there were also those who had return during the past year and had not experienced any interest in their knowledge. Based on this, it can be argued that repatriate knowledge is not actively collected in the company.

5.3.2 Managerial and co-workers' attitudes towards repatriate knowledge transfer

In the theoretical section it was discussed that repatriates' supervisors' or their co-workers' attitudes towards them and RKT, can impact how easy it is for them to engage in RKT (Oddou et al., 2013). Most participants felt that their bosses valued their knowledge. Moreover, in some cases, their bosses have had an active role during their repatriation process.

“Yes, I think that he took me under his wings because we are this global team [...] so there needs to be someone who knows people and can communicate with them. [...] So, I think he was pleased with my experience from aboard.” (person A, repatriate from China)

“Yes. They have recommended me to share my knowledge. After all, we're all in this together. [...]. They have been quite expecting it actually, because I have a lot to share that might interest somebody. After all, what I learned over there was quite different, so it's quite nice to share knowledge here. Because, when you're in another culture, it does offer another perspective on things.” (person E, repatriate from Africa)

In some cases, the repatriates' bosses have been on a prior international assignments themselves. Hence, they might have even deeper understanding and appreciation for repatriate knowledge. This is aligned with previous Burmeister et al.'s (2018) research.

“He values that quite a lot that I also can relate to the same level, because his understanding is better than other people who have never been to work in Asia. So, he himself was studying in Japan, he was working in Singapore. [...]. That helped us to be able to bond in the same way and acting the same way.” (person D, repatriate from China)

Some repatriates worked closely during their assignment with their current boss. Hence, their current boss might have a better understanding of their knowledge and what value they can bring to the table.

“The business development and sales manager I was working closely with when I was in Singapore, he is now my boss. So, he also recognized the things I had learned during that time, when he hired me for this current position.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

Some repatriates have had several different bosses. Additionally, some bosses might expect them to automatically include their knowledge to the task at hand, without any further discussion.

“I’ve had quite a few bosses after I returned. But, the atmosphere is much more open now than right after I came back. Not only they ask me more about these things than before, but also in the beginning it was in a way expected that I’d include my knowhow in the task I was doing at that time. But nobody came to ask me if I had some advice or thoughts or what I had learned.” (person F, repatriate from China)

However, it is important to note that even if the repatriate’s boss values their knowledge, this does not necessarily result in active RKT.

“Certainly, yes, I have felt that it has been valued. Besides, the whole organization benefits from increased knowledge. But that doesn’t automatically mean that we’d actively go around spreading that knowledge.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

As it can be seen from the above statements, many repatriates felt that their bosses have been supportive regarding their new knowledge. If the repatriates’ bosses have had their own prior expatriation assignment, they might be even more open regarding the repatriates’ knowledge. Furthermore, they might even encourage the repatriate to engage in

RKT. However, there was more divergence amongst co-workers' attitudes. Some repatriates argued that they feel like their co-workers do indeed value their knowledge.

"I'm very pleased with the people I work with and their attitude towards my sales knowledge." (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

Some repatriates argued that while their direct team members value their knowledge, the other teams, with whom they collaborate with do not necessarily place much value on it. If the repatriate is seen as an outsider, this might negatively affect their ability to engage in RKT situations. These are similar to Oddou et al.'s (2013) findings.

"Yes, because they see the networks I have built over there, and what customers wish and so forth. The bigger problem is [...] these who are not directly in my group but are like in a collateral organization, they do not necessarily see it and they don't know where I left from three years ago." (person B, repatriate from China)

"We have this culture, where the Norway's team has pretty much lived solely in its own bubble. They haven't shared that much information or they don't trust the rest of the organization. [...]. I have seen that respect pretty much depends on the nationality." (person C, repatriate from China)

Additionally, based on the interviews, some repatriates argued that in the beginning they felt like an outsider and the information flow with the rest of their team was not necessarily that good.

"I say, now that I have gotten inside that group, the knowledge flows well. But, when there was this repatriation and the stage, where the knowledge is gathered, it didn't exactly happen. I have experienced that I have a lot to give in that group, and it works now that I have gotten over the first, horrible experience, where I was like outside of the door." (person C, repatriate from China)

"In the beginning it felt like there was a phase, where they were wondering if I was still the same guy as before I left or if I had changed a lot. But that was only for a short while, like a new get-to-know period." (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

5.3.3 Organizational culture

In the theoretical section, it was mentioned that organizational culture can either aid in knowledge transfer or hinder it (Bhagat et al. 2002). In this study the focus is on understanding if the organizational culture supports RKT. Organizational culture in the focus company was studied from the participating repatriates' perspective. Some repatriates argued that the company has become more open during the past few years as a result of wider digitalization. Furthermore, due to the more open atmosphere, they felt like the company might be more open to improving RKT.

“We are more open than a few years ago. Digitalization has brought a more open atmosphere. Before, we were more in our own cubicle and thought of our own KPI and our own advantages. Now, I reckon that it would be a good time to advance these types of things.” (person F, repatriate from China)

Quite a few repatriates argued that the organizational culture does support knowledge transfer. Additionally, many felt like the company is transparent, making it easier to approach others in case they need to know something.

“Yes. Of course, there are individuals that are not so open, but I would say yes, the organization as a whole is. I have a feeling that it's something that is very open doored in this organization.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

“Well, I think it's quite transparent. At least, we organize different happenings and knowledge transfer sessions. And in case you're wondering about something, you can always ask anything from anybody. So it's not like we try to hide anything.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

However, there were also repatriates, who felt that the organizational culture does not necessarily support RKT. Furthermore, it was proposed in the interviews that these issues stem from the organization being divided into too many smaller sections that have

their own individual goals, which they focus on. This in turn, may make them lose the focus of the whole company's overall goals.

"I think that knowledge transfer as whole has always been done well in this company. But the repatriation process and gathering that knowledge and that whole process, well frankly speaking, sucks." (person C, repatriate from Singapore)

"I'd say there should be better knowledge transfer. Of course, there is a challenge as the company is large and the information has to trickle from the top downwards. I think that the knowledge travels quite well from the top to a certain level, but then it might stay there." (person I, repatriate from China)

It was also proposed that the organizational culture itself does not hinder their ability to engage in RKT. Instead, the greater issue is in identifying the need for knowledge and knowing who needs what.

"I mean the culture is not an issue. We have open-minded people, we have good listeners, smart people working for us. So, the knowledge transfer is not an issue. But it's just the identifying the need by the organization, telling it to HR and then HR should connect this need versus who can fulfil that need." (person D, repatriate from China)

As can be seen from the statements above, there are mixed opinions regarding the company's organizational culture and how it effects on knowledge transfer. According to the above statements, it appears that while the organizational culture has changed focus during the past few years, it does not necessarily have a negative impact on knowledge transfer. Furthermore, some repatriates argued that the recent increase in digitalization has improved access to knowledge. Additionally, it was argued that organizational culture itself does not hinder repatriate knowledge transfer. Instead, it was argued that a bigger issue that RKT faces, is related to identifying the need for knowledge.

5.3.4 Repatriation process and support

Prior studies have often proposed that repatriation is a difficult process and companies often underestimate the many challenges included in it (Sussman, 2001). Majority of the participating repatriates admitted that repatriation process was challenging for them. Some repatriates even argued that it is the most difficult aspect of the whole expatriation assignment.

“The return is the most difficult part. When you move abroad, everything is so new and interesting. There are new things to learn. But, when you come back, you might feel that people focus too much on little things and you’ll feel as if you were a foreigner in your own country.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“[...] When you go there, you’re prepared. You know that you’re going into a new culture and a new place. But, when you come back to Finland, you’ll expect that you’re returning to where you were before and everything around you is as before. [...] Instead, everything is evolving, people live their lives and everything changes. In the end, it’s not that easy to go back to that community you had before.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

However, there were also those who argued that they did not face any difficulties during their repatriation process.

“I don’t consider the return being very difficult at all. And the return itself did not affect negatively on this knowledge transfer. It has been more that we didn’t even actively try to do that [knowledge transfer].” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

“I was so long abroad that I wanted to come back to Finland, so there really wasn’t any problems with adjustment.” (person A, repatriate from China)

In addition to clarifying if repatriates considered their return to be difficult, they were also asked if they had received support from the company. Based on the interviews, majority of the participants had not received any organizational support after their return.

“I don’t remember receiving any support. But that may be due to the fact that I came here back as an old-timer and knew how things work around here.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

“Not really. [...]. I would have assumed that the company would have had a more systematic process of doing things when people come back. For example, a discussion with your own team. When I came back, I wasn’t that sure what to do.” (person H, repatriate from China)

In the theory section it was proposed that training may have a positive influence when repatriates adapt back into their home country (Burmeister et al. 2016). However, none of the individuals interviewed for this thesis received training. This finding is similar to what Black et al. (1992) have proposed that organizations do not often provide support for the returning employees. What is notable is that the result in this study indicate a similar situation even decades later. Therefore, the collected data in this thesis cannot support nor dismiss that training in repatriation might be beneficial. The lack of training may be due to the organizational practices not yet supporting repatriation. As the organizational practices develop, more data regarding trainings influence in RKT may arise. This leaves a gap for future studies. However, interestingly eight out of the nine people interviewed were offered training prior expatriation. The one person who did not receive training went abroad with a local contract instead of an expatriate contract.

5.3.5 Career planning

In the theoretical section it was discussed that providing career planning support for repatriates is one way how organizations can support repatriation process (Burmeister et al., 2016). In this study, none of the nine individuals interviewed received career planning upon their return. However, for many their expatriation assignment was a part of their personal career plan. Furthermore, eight out of the nine people interviewed felt that the expatriation was an important factor in advancing their career.

Some argued that RKT and repatriates are not necessarily highly ranked amongst others. To combat this, the participants recommend that the company should encourage people to seek out new positions. Additionally, it was argued that the company should focus more on planning expatriates careers' even before their assignment ends

"The company should encourage more job rotation and value more those, who do that as it also takes courage to leave one's own position. And when you come back, it should give you some kind of advantage and there should be more career planning involved." (person C, repatriate from China)

"If you're given a better position, where you're able to use your knowledge daily that would be an ideal situation. Perhaps, the company should aim to map out people's career plan so that if they're sent abroad to take care of large projects, then when they come back, there'd be a plan to utilize their skills." (person F, repatriate from China)

While most repatriates felt that the company should offer more support and a clear career path for repatriates, it was also proposed that their performance abroad should be taken more in to a consideration when placing them in new roles. For example, if the repatriate has had a good performance while abroad, it should have a positive impact on the role they receive after their return.

"I mean, the company should provide more care and a planned-out route for them, when they come back, a place guaranteed or so based on their performance whilst abroad. [...]. But, if the person has done an expected job and doing what was sort of expected of you, then when he returns there should be a position. And HR should take a more proactive role to seek it out." (person D, repatriate from China)

Furthermore, there were arguments that a poor career planning during repatriation process affects negatively on the trust between the company and the repatriate.

"Yeah, I think it's the biggest issue. If it would be done well, then there would be trust, which would create a foundation for communication, upon which these procedures can be built on. Then there would be trust and focus. Now, the energy goes

too much into other things. It kind of waters down the whole thing.” (person C, repatriate from China)

Moreover, some repatriates did not have a position after their assignment had ended nor was there any clarity about what their position would be. Additionally, it is indicated that the inability to place repatriates in a suitable position after their return can have a negative effect on them. Even if repatriates end up receiving a position, the process may have left them feeling invaluable.

“There really wasn’t any career planning, where somebody would look over that you have done that and you knew how to do that before, this you have just learned how to do, and this here could be suitable position for you. As an employee seeking a new position, that experience was really humiliating.” (person C, repatriate from China)

“For a while, I did not have a designated position, it was only two to three months. That period was a little bit down sided. But still, my previous boss and current boss they have made sure that I have a contract. But that experience could have been better.” (person D, repatriate from China)

5.3.6 Human resource management and repatriate knowledge transfer

Throughout the interviews, HR’s role in supporting RKT was brought up by the repatriates several times. There was a common consensus amongst the participating repatriates that HR should have a greater role during the repatriation process. This may include acting as a contact person and aiding during the return process.

“As you’re returning, they should give you support and send you a message a few months before you actually come back to inquire your current situation and if you need help with moving back or are your work matters in order.” (person F, repatriate from China)

Based on the interviews, repatriates argued that HR could support both the repatriation process and RKT by holding return interviews. In addition to HR, it was recommended

that repatriates' superiors should also take part in the interview. Additionally, it was mentioned that these return interviews should occur a few months after the actual return, in order to give repatriates time to re-adjust.

"Surely superior should be part of it, but perhaps also HR should be a part of it, to present the HR process and what works and what doesn't. But perhaps, a proper face-to-face briefing would be a good tool. But not as soon as you have returned, instead it should be held after a couple of months, because when you're moving back it's really a busy time." (person B, repatriate from China)

Additionally, based on the interviews, repatriates argue that HR should evaluate properly different positions for repatriates, and then based on their knowledge and skills, decide where to place them.

"There should be some special treatment for those who leave. Not only from a juridical perspective when they move back, but it should also include career planning. The HR department should be active when the assignment is coming close to an end. They should search and think through various alternative options. And then the repatriate would also know that when they return, they have a position." (person C, repatriate from China)

Many argued that HR should actively ensure that RKT occurs. For example, it was argued that as HR has the widest perspective, they have the best tools to understand what kind of knowledge the company needs.

"They have the widest perspective as they're not focused only in their own organization. HR should also be a part of repatriation and offer a more active help during it." (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

There were also arguments that knowledge transfer requires structures in order for it to occur. Furthermore, it was argued that after confirming with the repatriate that they are willing to share their knowledge and experiences with others, HR should be the one to connect the knowledge provider and receiver together.

“Knowledge transfer is a process that requires two sides: someone who has the knowledge and some place, where the knowledge is needed. [...]. The organization should verify if that individual is willing to share that knowledge with a group or an organization that does business with those markets. It may be that they currently see only one side of the coin, so perhaps that person has something to give. [...]. But that requires that there is a plan or some kind of structured process, where the knowledge transfer can happen in a productive manner.” (person C, repatriate from China)

5.4 Repatriates’ recommendations for improvements

Each one of the nine participants provided their thought on how they personally would like to develop RKT in the future. This provides valuable information regarding what issues repatriates themselves consider to be essential in improving RKT. One of the most common recommendations was organizing a lessons learned session, where people could learn from repatriates regarding certain topics. Additionally, it was proposed that the company could organize workshops, where there would be multiple repatriates who have been in the same country, sharing their experiences, and providing a wider perspective.

“You cannot have one person saying, giving a lecture. That said, you have to have more than one person, so that you get more than one view. And then you are able to form your own view. [...]. So, when you organize a workshop, it should be like three people on the same topic. [...]. Then you get a more 360 view.” (person D, repatriate from China)

“Definitely if someone from the team has gone abroad, there should be a lessons learned session or a knowledge sharing session, where it would be possible for the repatriates to tell their experiences. And the rest of the team would also be able to ask questions from them. Because, it’s not always possible to know what might interest others, but if they can ask freely, then it typically becomes clear.”(person H, repatriate from Singapore)

Repatriates have also proposed that a de-briefing session should be held with repatriates. During this it would be possible to map out the repatriate's new skills and knowledge.

“Perhaps there should be a proper de-briefing session, where a workshop or a brainstorming session is held with the sending superior and the new superior, where what has been learned and what can be used from now on is being discussed.” (person B, repatriate from China)

“I'd say that after a while when you've come back, there should be a meeting with an HR representative, with whom you'd go through questions: what has been your own experience regarding knowledge transfer, is there something that could be improved, were you overall satisfied with your experience abroad and how things are going on here. So that you as a whole would be considered, not just your work. [...]. Mainly, it's about feeling that you are cared for and you're a valuable employee in that company.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

Additionally, as it can be seen from the quotations throughout this thesis, many of the participating repatriates felt that there is not a good place for them to share their knowledge. Therefore, it has been proposed to create a forum, where it would be possible to ask question from repatriates on different topics.

“Perhaps some kind of forum, similar to Facebook, an company's internal forum, where there could be a ask from an expatriate or something similar” (person A, repatriate from China)

Furthermore, it has been argued that a forum would function well with Finnish culture, where people may be too hesitant to approach strangers to ask them information.

“I don't know if people are perhaps too grumpy to ask advice from somebody who's aboard. [...]. So, over here it's a bit of a cultural way of things that you just won't go bother other people and ask things from them. But, therefore there should be some kind of forum, where it would be possibly to discuss more openly regarding this subject.” (person A, repatriate from China)

In addition to creating a forum, it was also suggested that the company could create a database, from where it would be possible to find out who has been where. Furthermore, this could aid in making the data collection process more organized, which was another recommendation.

“If there would be even just an excel sheet, where there’d be a list of the people who have been abroad and where they have been. Then, if you have something you want to ask, it would be possible to contact them personally.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

“Well, at this point, everything in this company depends on humans. And if the company wishes to utilize this knowledge, they need to create the means to do so. There should be a structured way of collecting the knowledge, and utilizing it and making sure that people are in correct places. And then, in the future the knowledge can be utilized better.” (person B, repatriate from China)

Some argued that the company should focus more on the whole repatriation process. Additionally, it was suggested that repatriates could benefit from having a contact person, who could support them during the repatriation process. Moreover, some mentioned that the current mentoring program could be expanded to include mentoring during the whole expatriation assignment.

“HR should be involved in repatriation. There could be someone, if not mentor, then at least someone who would look after you. And also with HR, it’s understandable that superiors and the focus change constantly, but now when we’re talking about person’s development and knowledge. I think, the company should be interested and should look after these people. So that the company could maximize the knowledge and gather it. So, there should be a contact person from HR early enough.” (person C, repatriate from China)

“Perhaps that type of mentoring could be included in our current mentoring program. There could be a list of individuals, who are abroad and what they could bring to the table. I don’t think that those who create mentoring programs know who have been abroad. Perhaps, HR has something going on behind the scenes, but at least I’m not aware of it.” (person F, repatriate from China)

As local contracts might become more desirable in the future, it was proposed that HR should also offer support for those, who have gone abroad with a local contract.

“I’d say it is really important if in the organization there’d be an individual, who helps those who go abroad on a local contract. There should be some kind of information packet made for them also, that would offer some help to them so that they’re not abandoned. Plus, when you come back there should be some kind of discussion meeting with HR, like what was your experience, how did it go and what they could do better in the future.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

RKT can also be improved by finding repatriates correct roles. However, it is important to note that finding the correct position does not necessarily have to mean a promotion. Instead, repatriates can be given a key user role, which would make it easier for them to initiate RKT situations.

“One way, of course is if, when moving back you get a promotion or something like that. But, it doesn’t have to be that. It can be that you get a certain role, like a key user or key person for some specific area that you have learned when you’ve been abroad, something like that. Or contact person for certain issues perhaps.” (person G, repatriate from Singapore)

Additionally, if RKT would become an integrated part of the overall repatriation process, this might in its own right already improve RKT in the company. Furthermore, some repatriates argued that if they had been aware that RKT is something that would be expected from them after their return, they would have tried to engage in it more.

“If it was like on a map that ‘hey, when you come back, you should organize some kind of session and share knowledge.” It would also be easier to remember, because when you come back, you have new responsibilities. In my opinion, if you don’t actively think about that you could help somebody, it will be easily forgotten.” (person F, repatriate from China)

“I think it would help a lot if it would be spoken of. It should be a part of this whole expatriation assignment. So, when you move back, an info sharing session will be organized. I think we lack that tiny push.” (person H, repatriate from Singapore)

Additionally, in order to make it easier for repatriates to know what they have learned, they might be encouraged to keep a journal, where they would write down things that they face during the first few months of their return.

“Somebody, who had been abroad before, told me once that make notes of the thoughts you have when you return, because after six months you won’t remember them anymore. So I have taken notes and that might be one reason why I remember differences between when you left and when you came back. From those it is possible to reflect on what you have learned.” (person I, repatriate from Singapore)

This section focused on presenting the data collected from the interviews. The results will be discussed further in the next section.

6 Discussion

In this section the data results will be discussed. This is followed by discussion on the implications for practice. Lastly, the limitations of the study alongside with recommendations for future research are discussed.

6.1 Discussion of results

Similarly to Suutari et al.'s (2002) findings, the results indicate that there is a strong satisfaction with expatriation assignments amongst Finnish repatriates. All nine of the interviewees argued that their expatriation assignment was successful and they were satisfied with it. Furthermore, many argued that they received plenty of support and information prior to their expatriation assignment. However, the real focus in this thesis is on repatriation process and RKT.

Similarly to Berthoin-Antal et al.'s (2000) findings, the results in this study indicate that there are two different types of knowledge that repatriates have gained during their assignment: professional knowledge and cultural knowledge. All nine participants argued that they had been able to use their knowledge after returning. Additionally, all nine of the participants argued that it was difficult to transfer the knowledge due to its tacit nature. These findings are similar to Oddou et al.'s (2009) findings. Moreover, akin to Oddou et al.'s (2009) findings, it appears that it can be difficult for repatriates to pinpoint exactly what are the new things they learned during their assignment. This is probably because with time, repatriate knowledge may grow to be an intangible part of the repatriate themselves. These factors may cause difficulties in transferring repatriate knowledge.

Many of the interviewed repatriates argued that the return process is more difficult than the expatriation process. Based on the interviews, there are a few potential factors that could affect positively the repatriation process. Similarly to Burmeister et al.'s (2016) findings, one is related to knowing their new role, before their assignment is ending, which appears to have a positive impact on the smoothness of the return process. Another factor that appears to have a positive effect is the timing of the return. Lastly, repatriates own attitude towards the whole expatriation and return process may affect how easy or difficult they experience the return process to be.

However, there were also participants, who considered their return process to be extremely unsuccessful. They argued that one of the main reasons was the fact that they did not have a position after their return. Additionally, there were multiple arguments that repatriates felt undervalued during their return process as they had gained new knowledge and skills, but this seemingly added nothing to their professional value after returning. This is similar to Peltonen's (1997) and Lazarova et al.'s (2001) results discussed in the theoretical section.

Only one third of the interviewed repatriates concluded that they had prior assumptions regarding either their overall return process or RKT. Most of the prior assumptions the participants had revolved around gaining a better position after their return. One of the main reason why repatriates may not have any prior assumptions regarding RKT could be due to them not being aware of the existence of RKT. If repatriates would be aware of the topic prior to their expatriation assignment, they might be more likely to form assumptions regarding it. Further studies could investigate this topic more.

Eight out of the nine repatriates who were interviewed argued that their expatriation assignment has boosted their career and argued they would not have been able to receive their current position without their expatriation assignment. These results are somewhat surprising as Riusala et al. (2000) have argued that the majority of repatriates

do not see that their assignment has boosted their careers. At the same time approximately one third of the participants argued having applied to other positions outside of the company. This is slightly less than what previous studies, like Suutari et al. (2003) have presented. However, it should be noted that the sample size is also smaller than in the aforementioned research. Additionally, it should be noted that receiving a better position is not guaranteed and perhaps the participants in this thesis had been luckier than their peers, who were not interviewed. Moreover, repatriates own activity appears to have a great impact on what kind of position they will receive after their return. Furthermore, some repatriates argued that they do not think that expatriation assignments offer any added value for one's career in the company.

Eight out of the nine people interviewed considered that they had been able to engage in RKT to some degree. However, the common consensus amongst the participants was that knowledge transfer was not re-occurring. Additionally, it was argued that not all apparent knowledge transfer is actual knowledge transfer. In order for the knowledge transfer to be beneficial for the company, the knowledge recipient should be able to utilize that knowledge in their own task. However, in this study, it is unclear how much the knowledge receivers have benefitted from repatriate knowledge as they were not interviewed.

Coincidentally, a majority argued that the most common RKT situation occur in a causal setting, for example over a lunch. Additionally, many had been approached via emails. Moreover, meetings provided another setting and opportunity for repatriates to engage in RKT. However, not all of the participating repatriates have had meetings, where they could have shared their knowledge with others. Therefore, it appears that the viability of meetings as a platform for RKT is connected to the repatriate's position. None of the more in-depth tools were actively used to transfer knowledge and only one repatriate had participated in a knowledge sharing workshop.

Oddou et al. (2013) have stated that repatriates ability to engage in RKT situations consist of position, attitude, having the right moment and having the right knowledge. Similarly to Oddou et al.'s (2013) findings, the results in this thesis indicate that the position is one of the main aspects that affects both the repatriation process and repatriates' ability to engage in RKT. Furthermore, position is one of the ways through which the company can show its appreciation to repatriates. Hence, the position repatriates receive after their return may also impact on their motivation to engage in RKT. Additionally, repatriates with a more central position in their networks had more opportunities to engage in RKT, as proposed by van Wijk et al. (2008). Additionally, those who had their own employees had had more opportunities for knowledge sharing, which is related to position power akin Oddou et al.'s (2009) arguments.

Interestingly, none of the interviewed repatriates had actively searched for situations where they could engage in RKT. Instead, based on the interviews, it appears that most of them expected the other party to approach them regarding their knowledge. This is completely opposite of Oddou et al.'s (2013) research, where it was argued that knowledge recipients do not often initiate RKT situations. Instead, Oddou et al. (2013) argued that repatriates themselves often act as an initiator for RKT.

There are a few potential issues that might explain this phenomenon. Firstly, some repatriates mentioned that they did not wish to alienate themselves from their co-workers by constantly sharing their experiences and knowledge. Because of this, they have chosen to wait for the other party to approach them with questions, hence initiating the RKT process. Additionally, some repatriates had difficulties in re-integrating back into their work groups. Many argued that they felt like an outsider, which made it more challenging for them to initiate RKT situations. Moreover, it can be argued that these issues have affected negatively on repatriates' ability to initiate knowledge transfer situations.

The second is related to their position. Some repatriates claimed that they felt like they did not have a clear role that included sharing their knowledge with their colleagues. However, after receiving a promotion, they argued that their current position has provided them with more opportunities and authority to engage in RKT. These arguments are similar to Lazarova et al.'s (2005) and Oddou et al.'s (2013) findings.

Lastly, the repatriates argued that as they do not know where the need for their knowledge is, they are unable to engage efficiently in RKT. Repatriates' ability identifying where their knowledge is needed appears to be a combination of Oddou et al.'s (2013) proposition of having the right knowledge and having the right moment. Repatriates claimed that one of the reasons, why they have not been able to engage in RKT is because they did not know where their knowledge is needed. Additionally, many argued that it is not their responsibility to identify where their knowledge could be utilized the best. Instead, it was argued that the need for repatriate knowledge should come from the organization itself.

As Oddou et al., (2009) and Burmeister et al. (2015) have proposed, the more motivated repatriates themselves are to engage in RKT, the more likely it is that RKT occurs actively. Interestingly, a majority of the repatriates interviewed considered themselves to be motivated to share their knowledge with others. However, all repatriates also agreed that they have not actively searched for RKT opportunities. There are a few potential reasons for this. For example, the repatriates themselves were not aware of the existence of RKT. In fact, all nine repatriates interviewed expressed that they learned about RKT for the first time from the email that was sent out to them, asking them to participate in this study. Hence, RKT has not been one of their prioritized focus points after their return.

Based on the interviews, there were a few re-emerging themes that appear to be positively connected to repatriates' motivation to engage in RKT. Firstly, repatriates' own per-

sonality appears to influence their motivation to engage in RKT situations either positively or negatively. It could be argued that this is related to their ability and having the right attitude, according to Oddou et al.'s (2013) discussions. Some argued that sharing knowledge with others is a part of their personality. This positive attitude could be positively connected to their ability and motivation to initiate RKT situations. On the other hand, some participants were more reluctant towards sharing their knowledge with others due to assuming that the knowledge receivers do not appreciate their knowledge. Additionally, the fear of being isolated from their peers due to sharing their knowledge, has in some cases, affected their attitude towards RKT.

Secondly, similarly to Burmeister et al.'s (2016) results, there were arguments that engaging and encouraging RKT is a way to make the repatriate feel more valuable for the company, which would positively affect their motivation. Lastly, some repatriates viewed engaging in RKT as a way to help the organization and their co-workers, which also affected positively on their motivation. This can be connected to their commitment to the company, as proposed by Oddou et al. (2013).

However, it should be noted that while a majority of the people interviewed stated that they are committed to the company yet as shown, none of them had been pro-active in finding and initiation knowledge transfer situations with others. Based on the data, there are a few reoccurring aspects that appear to have a positive effect on repatriates' commitment to the company. One such factor appears to be the successfulness of their expatriation assignment. Furthermore, receiving a position, where they can actively utilize their knowledge appears to have a positive impact on their commitment. Similarly, a few reasons for decreased commitment were also provide. These are a poor repatriation process and not feeling valued by the company.

Interestingly, all participants argued that considering other positions did not affect negatively on their motivation to transfer knowledge. Hence, it appears that regardless of

their commitment to the company, the participating repatriates view their knowledge as something that should be used to benefit the company as a whole. Additionally, based on these findings, it can be proposed that repatriates' commitment to their company does not necessarily reflect on their motivation to engage in RKT. One potential explanation could be that repatriates view their commitment to the company and their motivation to share knowledge as two different matters. Further studies may wish to explore this connection more in-depth.

Oddou et al. (2013) have stated that repatriates' bosses attitude is likely connected to how well their co-workers accept repatriate knowledge. All participating repatriates felt that their bosses value their knowledge and experiences. Some even argued that their bosses had directly encouraged them to share their knowledge with others. On the other hand, while the bosses appeared to show interest regarding repatriate knowledge, this does not necessarily lead to increased support or opportunities for RKT. Moreover, interestingly, repatriates co-workers had been more negative towards RKT. Some argued that their co-workers were reluctant to accept repatriate knowledge due to the belief that only their existing way of working was correct.

Many argued that while the organizational culture is open and supports general knowledge transfer quite well, it does not necessarily mean that it reflects positively on RKT. Instead, similarly to Oddou et al.'s (2009) results, repatriate knowledge appears to be relatively unorganized and underutilized in the company. This also reflects on the support provided for repatriates during their return. None of the participating repatriates had received organizational support, career planning, mentoring or re-entry training during their return process, which caused many to argue that they do not think that the company valued repatriates or their knowledge. Additionally, similarly to Burmeister et al.'s (2016) results, many argued that career planning was one of the most important means through which the company can support repatriation and knowledge transfer.

Similarly to Burmeister et al.'s (2016) results, repatriates argued that rather than monetary rewards, they hoped to have more visibility and feel more valued by the company. However, all repatriates felt that the company on a more strategic scale has not shown interest in their knowledge. Moreover, it appears that there are no platforms for knowledge sharing and that the knowledge gathering process had been unorganized and mainly non-existing. For example, none of the participating repatriates had been in return interviews, where their knowledge could have been assessed. While it is possible that the company has not by pure coincidence happened to show any interest regarding any of the participants' knowledge, this result still indicates that RKT practices are not actively used in the company. Combined with aforementioned, these aspects may have a negative effect on RKT and may explain why RKT has not occurred significantly amongst the participants.

To conclude, both individual level and organizational level aspects were studied from the perspective of RKT. In this study, the most important individual level aspect that affects repatriates' ability to engage in RKT appears to be related to the position. This might in part be a cultural factor as Finnish people may be too unassertive to engage in RKT unprompted. A position would offer a repatriate a certain degree of authority, via which they might be more assertive to share their knowledge with others. Similarly, in this study, the increased motivation has not lead to RKT situations. And even when repatriates may consider RKT as a part of their professional responsibilities, they shy away from initiating these situations. Moreover, repatriates appear to wait that the need for their knowledge comes directly from either the knowledge receiver or the company.

Therefore, it appears that organizational level aspects have a greater degree of effect in ensuring that RKT occurs in the focus company. Moreover, it appears that the lack of organizational support practices, such as knowledge sharing platforms or databases have affected negatively on repatriates' ability to share knowledge. Many argued that engaging in RKT would make them feel more valuable after their return and expressed that

RKT is something they hope would evolve in the company. Hence, by developing the organizational level aspects further to support RKT and ensuring the presence of RKT in the company, repatriates themselves might become more assertive in initiating RKT situations. This highlights the symbiotic relationship that the individual and organizational aspects have in RKT.

6.2 Implications for practice

The data from this thesis can be used to improve RKT practices in the focus company. Additionally, it offers tentative proposal how other companies may also improve their RKT functions. One of the main focal points is that discussions about RKT should be an integrated part of the whole expatriation assignment. Thus, repatriates would be aware that RKT is something that the company expects from them, and they would be more prepared for it. Including it in the expatriation assignment may also aid in repatriates becoming more pro-active in initiating and finding these situations.

Secondly, more attention should be paid to the position repatriates receive after their return. Position appears to be highly related to repatriates' abilities to engage in RKT. Furthermore, position can also indicate to the repatriate that the company values them. Therefore, career planning should be included as an essential part of the repatriation process. Not only does career planning offer support for repatriates, it also enables placing repatriates strategically in positions that benefit the company the most. Additionally, career planning can aid in increasing repatriates' commitment to the company. Moreover, career planning may be positively connected to how repatriates themselves perceive the amount of organizational support offered to them.

In addition to offering career planning, HR could have a more active role during the repatriation process. A return interview should be arranged between the repatriate and

HR. Depending on the case, the repatriate's current boss might also be included in it. The return interview could discuss repatriates' experiences regarding their expatriation assignment and their return process. Additionally, a return interview would offer a good opportunity to map out repatriates' new knowledge and skills. Based on the data, the return interview should occur a few months after the repatriate has returned to their home country. In the meantime, repatriates could be encouraged to keep a personal diary, where they could write down things that they have faced after their return. This could help them to better understand what they have learned. Furthermore, it could be beneficial for repatriation adjustment, if repatriates would be able to discuss about their experiences with fellow repatriates. Former repatriates could also be assigned as mentors for returning repatriates, to aid and support during the return process

One of the means to improve RKT would be to create knowledge sharing platforms, where it would be possible and easy for knowledge receivers to approach repatriates. Furthermore, companies may implement a more strategic knowledge gathering by creating a database, which would list the repatriates, where they have been, their current position and what might be consider as their expertise. Companies might also organize small workshops, where repatriates from a certain country could give knowledge sharing sessions for those who might need their knowledge. These workshops could also be used to offer training sessions for future expatriates going to the same country.

The repatriates were also asked how they believe the entire expatriation process might develop in the future. Many argued that in the future there will be less and less expatriates send abroad on assignments due to financial reasons. It was also speculated that local contracts will become increasingly more popular option due to their lesser cost. Therefore, this thesis recommends that companies should offer support also for those who return to the company after their local contact has ended.

6.3 Limitations of the study and future research

Due to semi-structured interview being chosen, the results cannot be used to create statistical generalizations for all companies. (Saunders et al. 2009, pp. 327). Additionally, as mentioned on several occasions, none of the participants were aware of the topic prior to receiving the invitation to participate in this thesis. This might have affected their answers and the apparent lack of RKT situations that have taken place after their return. Moreover, even though each person was provided a brief introduction to the topic prior to the interview, there is always a chance that they might not have fully understood what was asked from them.

The research was done only in one company. Hence, the results only reflect the situation in that particular company, while offering only some insight in how repatriation and RKT might be organized in similar Finnish companies. Moreover, the study was done from the repatriates' perspective. Hence, it does not reflect how the organization or the other employees are experiencing repatriates and RKT. Hence, future research may wish to study RKT also from the organizational and the knowledge receiver's perspective, in order to gain more understanding regarding different aspects that may affect it.

Future research may wish to focus more on understanding why repatriates who claim to be motivated to engage in RKT situations still wait for the knowledge receiver to approach them. Future research on this topic may also shed more light on if this is connected to culture. One potential way to research this could be by having participants from different countries and cultures. Additionally, future research may study how it would affect RKT if repatriates were aware of RKT prior to their expatriation assignments. This would require finding and approaching companies who have active RKT practices. Moreover, this might give a better insight in how companies have benefitted from repatriates and their knowledge in a longer term.

7 References

- Alavi, M., & Leidner, D. (1999). Knowledge Management Systems: Issues, Challenges, and Benefits. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 1(7), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.00107>
- Andresen, M., Bergdolt, F., Margenfeld, J., & Dickmann, M. (2014). Addressing international mobility confusion – developing definitions and differentiations for self-initiated and assigned expatriates as well as migrants. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(16), 2295–2318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.877058>
- Argote, L., & Ingram, P. (2000a). *Knowledge transfer: A basis for competitive advantage in firms*. <https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.2000.2893>
- Argote, L., & Ingram, P. (2000b). Knowledge Transfer: A Basis for Competitive Advantage in Firms. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82(1), 150–169. <https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.2000.2893>
- Argote, L., Ingram, P., Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (2000). Knowledge Transfer in Organizations: Learning from the Experience of Others. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.2000.2883>
- Argote, L., McEvily, B., & Reagans, R. (2003). Managing Knowledge in Organizations: An Integrative Framework and Review of Emerging Themes. *Management Science*, 49(4), 571–582. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.49.4.571.14424>
- Beechler, S., & Woodward, I. C. (2009). The global “war for talent.” *Journal of International Management*, 15(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2009.01.002>
- Berthoin-Antal, A. (2001). Expatriates’ Contributions to Organizational Learning¹. *Journal of General Management*, 26(4), 62–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030630700102600405>

- Berthoin-Antal, A., Stroo, I., & Willems, M. (2000). Drawing on the knowledge of returned expatriates for organizational learning. Case studies in German multinational companies. *Discussion Paper*, 1–49.
- Bhagat, R. S., Kedia, B. L., Harveston, P. D., & Triandis, H. C. (2002). Cultural Variations in the Cross-Border Transfer of Organizational Knowledge: An Integrative Framework. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(2), 204–221. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2002.6588000>
- Black, J. S. (1992). Coming Home: The -Relationship of Expatriate Expectations with Repatriation Adjustment and Job Performance. *Human Relations*, 45(2), 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679204500205>
- Black, J. S., Gregersen, H. B., & Mendenhall, M. E. (1992). Toward a Theoretical Framework of Repatriation Adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 23(4), 737–760. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490286>
- Black, J. S., & Mendenhall, M. (1990). Cross-Cultural Training Effectiveness: A Review and a Theoretical Framework for Future Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(1), 113–136. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1990.11591834>
- Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1991). Toward a Comprehensive Model of International Adjustment: An Integration of Multiple Theoretical Perspectives. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16(2), 291. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258863>
- Bonache, J., & Zárraga-Oberty, C. (2008). Determinants of the success of international assignees as knowledge transferors: A theoretical framework. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190701763743>
- Brass, D. J., Galaskiewicz, J., Greve, H. R., & Tsai, W. (2004). Taking Stock of Networks and Organizations: A Multilevel Perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(6), 795–817. <https://doi.org/10.5465/20159624>

- Brewster, C., Bonache, J., Cerdin, J.-L., & Suutari, V. (2014). Exploring expatriate outcomes. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(14), 1921–1937. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.870284>
- Brewster, C., & Suutari, V. (2005). Global HRM: Aspects of a research agenda. *Personnel Review*; *Farnborough*, 34(1), 5–21. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1108/00483480510571851>
- Burmeister, A., & Deller, J. (2016). A practical perspective on repatriate knowledge transfer: The influence of organizational support practices. *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, 4(1), 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-09-2015-0041>
- Burmeister, A., Deller, J., Osland, J., Szkudlarek, B., Oddou, G., & Blakeney, R. (2015). The micro-processes during repatriate knowledge transfer: The repatriates' perspective. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 19(4), 735–755. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-01-2015-0011>
- Burmeister, A., Lazarova, M. B., & Deller, J. (2018). Repatriate knowledge transfer: Antecedents and boundary conditions of a dyadic process. *Journal of World Business*, 53(6), 806–816. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2018.06.004>
- Chang, W.-W. (2005). Expatriate Training in International Nongovernmental Organizations: A Model for Research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 440–461. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305281035>
- Chang, Y.-Y., Gong, Y., & Peng, M. W. (2012). Expatriate Knowledge Transfer, Subsidiary Absorptive Capacity, and Subsidiary Performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(4), 927–948. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0985>
- Chen, P., Sparrow, P., & Cooper, C. (2016). The relationship between person-organization fit and job satisfaction. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 31(5), 946–959. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-08-2014-0236>

- Coff, R. W., Coff, D. C., & Eastvold, R. (2006). The Knowledge-Leveraging Paradox: How to Achieve Scale without Making Knowledge Imitable. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(2), 452–465. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.20208690>
- Cohen, W. M., & Levinthal, D. A. (1990). Absorptive Capacity: A New Perspective on Learning and Innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(1), 128–152. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393553>
- Cox, J. B. (2004). The role of communication, technology, and cultural identity in repatriation adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28(3), 201–219. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2004.06.005>
- Cyert, R. M., & March, J. G. (1963). *A behavioral theory of the firm*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Davoine, E., Barmeyer, C., & Rossi, C. (2018). Retaining Repatriate Knowledge at the Crossroads Between Global Knowledge Management and Global Talent Management. *Management International / International Management / Gestión Internacional*, 22, 142–154. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1062501ar>
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500–507. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.71.3.500>
- Feldman, D. C., & Thomas, D. C. (1992). Career Management Issues Facing Expatriates. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 23(2), 271–293. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490268>
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Frost, T. S., Birkinshaw, J. M., & Ensign, P. C. (2002). Centers of excellence in multinational corporations. *Strategic Management Journal*, 23(11), 997–1018. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.273>

- Furuya, N., Stevens, M. J., Bird, A., Oddou, G., & Mendenhall, M. (2009). Managing the learning and transfer of global management competence: Antecedents and outcomes of Japanese repatriation effectiveness. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 40(2), 200–215. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400416>
- Furuya, N., Stevens, M. J., Oddou, G., Bird, A., & Mendenhall, M. E. (2007). The effects of HR policies and repatriate self-adjustment on global competency transfer. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 45(1), 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1038411107073595>
- Gray, P. H., & Meister, D. B. (2004). Knowledge Sourcing Effectiveness. *Management Science*, 50(6), 821–834. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1030.0192>
- Greener, S. (2008). *Business research methods*.
- Greer, T. W., & Stiles, A. C. (2016). Using HRD to Support Repatriates: A Framework for Creating an Organization Development Strategy for Repatriation. *Human Resource Development Review*, 15(1), 101–122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484315626019>
- Gregersen, H. B., & Black, J. S. (1996). Multiple Commitments Upon Repatriation: The Japanese Experience. *Journal of Management*, 22(2), 209–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639602200202>
- Gregersen, H. B., & Stroh, L. K. (1997). Coming Home to the Arctic Cold: Antecedents to Finnish Expatriate and Spouse Repatriation Adjustment. *Personnel Psychology*, 50(3), 635–654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1997.tb00708.x>
- Gupta, A. K., & Govindarajan, V. (2000). Knowledge flows within multinational corporations. *Strategic Management Journal*, 21(4), 473–496. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(200004\)21:4<473::AID-SMJ84>3.0.CO;2-I](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(200004)21:4<473::AID-SMJ84>3.0.CO;2-I)

- Hansen, M. T. (1999). The Search-Transfer Problem: The Role of Weak Ties in Sharing Knowledge across Organization Subunits. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(1), 82–111. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2667032>
- Harzing, A.-W., Pudelko, M., & Sebastian Reiche, B. (2016). The Bridging Role of Expatriates and Inpatriates in Knowledge Transfer in Multinational Corporations. *Human Resource Management*, 55(4), 679–695. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21681>
- Hirsjärvi, S., & Hurme, H. (2000). *Tutkimushaastattelu: Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Hocking, J. B., Brown, M., & Harzing, A.-W. (2007). Balancing global and local strategic contexts: Expatriate knowledge transfer, applications, and learning within a transnational organization. *Human Resource Management*, 46(4), 513–533. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20180>
- Huang, M.-C., Chiu, Y.-P., & Lu, T.-C. (2013). Knowledge governance mechanisms and repatriate's knowledge sharing: The mediating roles of motivation and opportunity. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 17(5), 677–694. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-01-2013-0048>
- Huber, G. P. (1991). Organizational Learning: The Contributing Processes and the Literatures. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 88–115. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2.1.88>
- Hyder, A. S., & Lövblad, M. (2007). The repatriation process – a realistic approach. *Career Development International*, 12(3), 264–281. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430710745890>
- Inkpen, A. C., & Tsang, E. W. K. (2005). Social Capital, Networks, and Knowledge Transfer. *The Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 146–165. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159100>

- Jassawalla, A., Connelly, T., & Slojkowski, L. (2004). Issues of Effective Repatriation: A Model and Managerial Implications. *S.A.A. Advanced Management Journal*, 69(2), 38–46.
- Jayasekara, P., & Takahashi, Y. (2014). Improving post-assignment behavioral outcomes of expatriates. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 2(3), 298–316. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-01-2014-0002>
- Kamoche, K. (1997). Knowledge creation and learning in international HRM. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 8(2), 213–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585199700000049>
- Kim, S., & McLean, G. N. (2012). Global Talent Management: Necessity, Challenges, and the Roles of HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 14(4), 566–585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422312455610>
- Kirk, J., & Miller, M. (1986). *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985659>
- Knocke, J., & Schuster, T. (2017). Repatriation of international assignees. *Journal of Global Mobility; Bingley*, 5(3), 275–303. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1108/JGM-01-2017-0001>
- Kogut, B., & Zander, U. (1993). Knowledge of the Firm and the Evolutionary Theory of the Multinational Corporation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 24(4), 625–645. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490248>
- Kraimer, M. L., Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A., & Ren, H. (2012). No Place Like Home? An Identity Strain Perspective on Repatriate Turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(2), 399–420. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.0644>
- Kraimer, M. L., & Wayne, S. J. (2004). *An Examination of Perceived Organizational Support as a Multidimensional Construct in the Context of an Expatriate Assignment*. 30(2), 209–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jm.2003.01.001>

- Kwan, M. M., & Cheung, P.-K. (2006). The Knowledge Transfer Process: From Field Studies to Technology Development. *Journal of Database Management*, *17*(1), 16–32. <https://doi.org/10.4018/jdm.2006010102>
- Lazarova, M. B., & Cerdin, J.-L. (2007). Revisiting repatriation concerns: Organizational support versus career and contextual influences. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *38*(3), 404–429. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400273>
- Lazarova, M., & Caligiuri, P. (2001). Retaining repatriates: The role of organizational support practices. *Journal of World Business*, *36*(4), 389–401. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516\(01\)00063-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516(01)00063-3)
- Lazarova, M., & Tarique, I. (2005). Knowledge transfer upon repatriation. *Journal of World Business*, *40*(4), 361–373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2005.08.004>
- Lee, H.-W., & Liu, C.-H. (2007). An examination of factors affecting repatriates' turnover intentions. *International Journal of Manpower*, *28*(2), 122–134. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437720710747956>
- Littrell, L. N., & Salas, E. (2005). A Review of Cross-Cultural Training: Best Practices, Guidelines, and Research Needs. *Human Resource Development Review*, *4*(3), 305–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305278348>
- Liu, X., & Shaffer, M. A. (2005). An Investigation of Expatriate Adjustment and Performance: A Social Capital Perspective. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, *5*(3), 235–254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595805058411>
- MacDonald, S., & Arthur, N. (2005). Connecting career management to repatriation adjustment. *Career Development International*, *10*(2), 145–159. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430510588338>
- Marquardt, M., & Sofo, F. (1999). Preparing Human Resources for the Global Economy. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *1*(4), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/152342239900100403>

- Martin, J. N. (1984). The intercultural reentry: Conceptualization and directions for future research. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 8(2), 115–134. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(84\)90035-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(84)90035-X)
- Martin, J. N., & Harrell, T. (2004). Intercultural Reentry of Students and Professionals: Theory and Practice. In *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3rd ed., pp. 309–336). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231129>
- Minbaeva, D., Pedersen, T., Björkman, I., Fey, C. F., & Park, H. J. (2003). MNC knowledge transfer, subsidiary absorptive capacity, and HRM. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 34(6), 586–599. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400056>
- Nery-Kjerfve, T., & McLean, G. N. (2012). Repatriation of expatriate employees, knowledge transfer, and organizational learning. *European Journal of Training and Development; Limerick*, 36(6), 614–629. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1108/03090591211245512>
- Nonaka, I. (1994). A Dynamic Theory of Organizational Knowledge Creation. *Organization Science*, 5(1), 14–37. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.5.1.14>
- Oddou, G., Osland, J., & Blakeney, R. (2009). Repatriating knowledge: Variables influencing the “transfer” process. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 40(2), 181–199. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400402>
- Oddou, G., Szkudlarek, B., Osland, J. S., Deller, J., Blakeney, R., & Furuya, N. (2013). Repatriates as a Source of Competitive Advantage: How to manage knowledge transfer. *Organizational Dynamics*, 42(4), 257–266.
- Osman-Gani, A. (2001). Developing expatriates for the Asia-Pacific region: A comparative analysis of multinational enterprise managers from five countries across three continents. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 11(3), 213–235. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1532-1096\(200023\)11:3<213::AID-HRDQ2>3.0.CO;2-%23](https://doi.org/10.1002/1532-1096(200023)11:3<213::AID-HRDQ2>3.0.CO;2-%23)

- Osman-Gani, A. A. M., & Hyder, A. S. (2008). Repatriation readjustment of international managers. *Career Development International*, 13(5), 456–475. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430810891473>
- Peltonen, T. (1997). Facing the rankings from the past: A tournament perspective on repatriate career mobility. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 8(1), 106–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585199700000043>
- Reed, R., & DeFillippi, R. J. (1990). Causal Ambiguity, Barriers to Imitation, and Sustainable Competitive Advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(1), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1990.4308277>
- Reiche, B. S. (2012). Knowledge Benefits of Social Capital upon Repatriation: A Longitudinal Study of International Assignees: Knowledge Benefits of Social Capital on Repatriation. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(6), 1052–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01050.x>
- Reynolds, C. (1997). Expatriate compensation in historical perspective. *Journal of World Business*, 32(2), 118–132. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516\(97\)90003-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516(97)90003-1)
- Riusala, K., & Suutari, V. (2000). Expatriation and Careers: Perspectives of Expatriates and Spouses. *Career Development International*, 5(2), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430010318945>
- Rubenstein-Montano, B., Liebowitz, J., Buchwalter, J., McCaw, D., Newman, B., & Rebeck, K. (2001). A systems thinking framework for knowledge management. *Decision Support Systems*, 31(1), 5–16. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-9236\(00\)00116-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-9236(00)00116-0)
- Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students* (5th ed). New York: Prentice Hall.

- Simonin, B. L. (1999). Transfer of Marketing Know-How in International Strategic Alliances: An Empirical Investigation of the Role and Antecedents of Knowledge Ambiguity. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 30(3), 463–490. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490079>
- Smale, A., & Suutari, V. (2007). Hospitable or Hostile? Knowledge Transfer into the Russian Host Environment. In M. E. Domsch & T. Lidokhover (Eds.), *Human Resource Management in Russia* (pp. 259–290). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351156240-14>
- Stahl, G. K., Miller, E. L., & Tung, R. L. (2002). Toward the boundaryless career: A closer look at the expatriate career concept and the perceived implications of an international assignment. *Journal of World Business*, 37(3), 216–227. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516\(02\)00080-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516(02)00080-9)
- Stanek, M. B. (2000). The need for global managers: A business necessity. *Management Decision*, 38(4), 232–242. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740010326243>
- Sussman, N. M. (2001a). Repatriation transitions: Psychological preparedness, cultural identity, and attributions among American managers. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25(2), 109–123. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(00\)00046-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(00)00046-8)
- Sussman, N. M. (2001b). *Repatriation transitions: Psychological preparedness, cultural identity, and attributions among American managers*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767\(00\)00046-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767(00)00046-8)
- Suutari, V., & Brewster, C. (2003). Repatriation: Empirical evidence from a longitudinal study of careers and expectations among Finnish expatriates. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14, 1132–1151.
- Suutari, Vesa, & Välimaa, K. (2002). Antecedents of repatriation adjustment: New evidence from Finnish repatriates. *International Journal of Manpower; Bradford*, 23(7), 617–634. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1108/01437720210450798>

- Szkudlarek, B., & Sumpter, D. M. (2015). What, When, and with Whom? Investigating Expatriate Reentry Training with a Proximal Approach. *Human Resource Management, 54*(6), 1037–1057. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21647>
- Szulanski, G. (1996). Exploring internal stickiness: Impediments to the transfer of best practice within the firm. *Strategic Management Journal, 17*(S2), 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250171105>
- Szulanski, G. (2000). The Process of Knowledge Transfer: A Diachronic Analysis of Stickiness. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 82*(1), 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.2000.2884>
- Tarique, I., & Schuler, R. S. (2010). Global talent management: Literature review, integrative framework, and suggestions for further research. *Journal of World Business, 45*(2), 122–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2009.09.019>
- Tsai, W. (2001). Knowledge Transfer in Intraorganizational Networks: Effects of Network Position and Absorptive Capacity on Business Unit Innovation and Performance. *The Academy of Management Journal, 44*(5), 996–1004. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3069443>
- van Wijk, R., Jansen, J. J. P., & Lyles, M. A. (2008). Inter- and Intra-Organizational Knowledge Transfer: A Meta-Analytic Review and Assessment of its Antecedents and Consequences. *Journal of Management Studies, 45*(4), 830–853. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2008.00771.x>
- Vandenberg, R. J., & Nelson, J. B. (1999). Disaggregating the Motives Underlying Turnover Intentions: When Do Intentions Predict Turnover Behavior? *Human Relations, 52*(10), 1313–1336. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016964515185>
- Vidal, M. E. S., Valle, R. S., Aragón, M. I. B., & Brewster, C. (2007). Repatriation adjustment process of business employees: Evidence from Spanish workers. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 31*(3), 317–337. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2006.07.004>

- Walsh, J. P., & Ungson, G. R. (1991). Organizational memory. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 57–91. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1991.4278992>
- Watson, S., & Hewett, K. (2006). A Multi-Theoretical Model of Knowledge Transfer in Organizations: Determinants of Knowledge Contribution and Knowledge Reuse. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(2), 141–173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00586.x>
- Yan, A., Zhu, G., & Hall, D. T. (2002). International Assignments for Career Building: A Model of Agency Relationships and Psychological Contracts. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(3), 373–391. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2002.7389910>
- Yli-Renko, H., Autio, E., & Sapienza, H. J. (2001). Social capital, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge exploitation in young technology-based firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 22(6–7), 587–613. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.183>
- Zahra, S. A., & George, G. (2002). Absorptive Capacity: A Review, Reconceptualization, and Extension. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(2), 185–203. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2002.6587995>
- Zander, U., & Kogut, B. (1995). Knowledge and the Speed of the Transfer and Imitation of Organizational Capabilities: An Empirical Test. *Organization Science*, 6(1), 76–92. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.6.1.76>