UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

MASTER'S THESIS

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES: AN ANALYSIS OF MOTIVES FOR EXPATRIATION AND ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGES

Ljubljana, December 2015   MAJA MEGLIČ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

i

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

The world of business is a constantly changing environment and globalization is becoming one of the most necessary strategies, especially for bigger organizations. Due to the rapid internationalization of business, there is more and more need to manage global operations and also to expatriate staff worldwide, so international assignments have become an integral part of any internationally minded organization (Altman & Baruch, 2012). In the past, the discussion surrounding multinational global companies and their international human resources transfers was mainly about sending expatriates from headquarters to the local subsidiaries, as this was the most common method of carrying out international transfers (McCaughey & Bruning, 2005; Welch, 2003). But as multinational companies become aware of the high costs that traditional expatriation represents, combined with a constantly changing economic environment, evolving markets, and domestic skills shortage in certain professions, international recruitment has become a necessity for many companies. Therefore, more and more international and multinational companies have started looking for alternatives to traditional expatriation and have started hiring international experts and specialists from abroad and from outside of their organizations, to bring their knowledge and expertise into those organizations.

In discussions on international experts and specialists being hired from outside of an organization, the general term "expatriate" is still commonly used, as it defines "people living/working in countries other than their home country" (McKenna & Richardson, 2007). However, in seeking to define international experts and specialists that move abroad outside existing organizations on their own initiation, we come across many different terms such as "international employee," "international professional," "foreign talent," "global talent," "mobile expert," "mobile professional," "international skilled professional," and even "highly skilled migrant." The final term used today, "self-initiated expatriate" or "self-initiated expatriation," first appeared in the literature in 2008 and was later also agreed among experts researching that field at a symposium at the Academy of Management Meeting in 2010 (Doherty, Richardson, & Thorn, 2013b).

It is further interesting to understand what drives those individuals to decide to go, to leave the safe environment of their current job and home country behind and embark towards new challenges. The reasons and motivations have been better researched in the field of traditionally assigned expatriates (e.g. Fish & Wood, 1997; Brett & Stroh, 1995; Dickmann, Doherty, Mills, & Brewster, 2008), but among expatriates that initiate expatriation by themselves, studies are limited. The existing literature and studies were done mainly in two directions. The first includes research

done in the field of academic self-initiated expatriates (Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2002, 2006), while the other major stream is comprised of comparisons of reasons and motives for expatriation among traditionally assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates (Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011). This clearly indicates that there are not many studies on the motivation of self-initiated expatriates available devoted to exploring the motives of self-initiated expatriates (hereinafter SIE) in the corporate world (i.e., not those who aim for academic careers, but those who end up being employed in corporations).

Once an SIE arrives in a new environment, the adjustment process (Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999) begins. Through this process, which lasts not only for the first few months but the first few years, there are many challenges that one needs to face and overcome—something that as a self-initiated expatriate I know very well. Accordingly, I am interested in what major challenges SIEs face, and surprisingly, there is almost nothing written on this topic in the existing literature, not even in the literature on traditional expatriation. What we mainly find instead are studies about various aspects and dimensions of adjustment, the adjustment process, and adjustment factors, but basically nothing is available on the challenges themselves. Given this, one part of this thesis will be focused on exploring such challenges and highlighting them. The adjustment process for an SIE can be very easy and smooth, with few challenges and problems, or it can be a very rough and tough journey, causing a lot of stress and frustration to the individual. So, the third subject of the thesis will be exploring what so-called adjustment factors ease or hinder the adjustment process of an SIE. As the basis for this part, a framework for cross-cultural adjustment, as defined by Black, Mendenhall and Oddoou (1991), will be used and adjusted to the specifics of self-initiated expatriates.

The thesis addresses and explores the more and more common phenomenon of experts moving abroad towards new career challenges and opportunities on their own initiative. Accordingly, one of the

The goals of the thesis are 1) to explore the SIEs' main motives for expatriation, 2) to understand the challenges they face while adjusting to the new country and settling down, and 3) to find out what adjustment factors ease or hinder their adjustment main **purposes** is to define the key criteria that define an SIE, as there is a thin line between self-initiated expatriates, migrants, traditional expatriates and other types of otherwise internationally mobile professionals. Moreover, the purpose is to see what drives their decision of expatriation and in how many cases it is an independently arising opportunity of an offer that triggers their decision process to expatriate. If the opportunity of an offer is not the main driver, I am interested to research what other motives trigger them to search for such opportunities by

expatriating to a new country. As there is basically nothing written about the challenges these individuals face after they arrive in the new country, one of the purposes of this study is also to highlight their main challenges and further see, what factors ease or hinder their adjustment to the new environment. Currently, we find in the existing literature many separate articles about experts that have relocated abroad on their own initiative, some focusing on only definition of the term (Doherty, Richardson, Thorn, 2013b), others comparing self-initiated expatriation to traditional expatriation (Biemann & Andresen, 2010; Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010), and still others exploring similar phenomena in an academic environment (e.g. Selmer & Lauring, 2011), but there seems to have been no research done that focuses overall on this sub-group of expatriates within a corporate environment and does not compare them to traditional expatriates. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to present in one paper a summarized and comprehensive account of SIEs in the corporate world, their motives, their adjustment challenges, and the factors that ease their adjustment, and in this way to contribute to the limited existing literature on this topic.to the new environment. Furthermore, additional goals of this thesis include giving some recommendations to the companies hiring SIEs on a frequent basis about how to act to guarantee the better adjustment of the SIEs, and giving some recommendations to the SIEs before their move, as I strongly believe knowing more about what is awaiting them would help them to face many of the challenges they will be facing.

The research part of the thesis will explore the following three main research questions:

1. What is the **key trigger** that **drives the initial decision** for SIEs to **move abroad**?

2. What are the **most common adjustment-related challenges** experienced by SIEs while adjusting to the new environment?

3. Which **adjustment factors ease** and accordingly positively influence the adjustment of SIEs to the new environment?

To answer these research questions, a **qualitative** framework will be used instead of a quantitative one, as qualitative methods are based on information that is expressed with words, opinions and feelings. In addition, with these methods the researcher is able to understand the problem more in detail (Patton, 2005). Qualitative research methods include various types of interviewing, archival research, and participants' observation (Myers & Avison, 2002). For the thesis I have selected interviewing as the most suitable method, because I will be trying to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of SIE. Interviewing is a conversational practice, where the

knowledge is gathered through the interaction between researcher and interviewee. Various types of interviews are possible (Russell, 2006), ranging from informal interviews (1) and unstructured interactions (2) to semi-structured situations (3) and highly formal interactions with interviewees (4).

I have selected semi-structured interviews as the main method for this study, as they allow in-depth discussions with candidates who share their stories and experiences. Semi-structured interviews, which are also called "in-depth interviews," are a scheduled activity and are the best way of interviewing for cases in which the researcher will not have more than one chance to interview someone (Russell, 2006). Fourteen such semi-structured interviews were completed to conduct this study. As some topics covered by the interviews are very personal and sensitive and accordingly not every individual was able or willing to share such experiences out loud, especially when audio-taped, some of the data in the beginning phase were also gathered through informal interviews (Russell, 2006).

This thesis is divided into two main parts, the first part being an overview of past studies and existing literature on the major constructs and second part, where we focus on concrete research. The first part is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter the terminology around the topic of expatriation is presented, defining the term "self-initiated expatriates" and placing it between other two constructs of internationally mobile individuals, "traditionally assigned expatriates" and "migrants," as the line between these constructs is quite blurred. The chapter is concluded by listing key criteria that define when an internationally mobile individual is considered as a self-initiated expatriate. In the second chapter I concentrate on exploring what past studies found out about the motives that drive self-initiated expatriates to decide to move abroad. Here I discuss the initial key trigger for an SIE's decision to expatriate and present my own categorization of motives, as identified by previous research, which forms the basis for the research part that follows. The last and third chapter of the first part focuses on the topic of the adjustment of self-initiated expatriates. I start this chapter by presenting the term "cross-cultural adjustment" in the context of expatriation literature, what it means when an SIE is well adjusted or maladjusted, and I proceed by presenting three different aspects of cross-cultural adjustment: work, general and integration-related. I describe the adjustment process that one undergoes after relocation and then address the most common adjustment challenges of self-initiated expatriates as identified by past studies. I finish the chapter by developing my own model of adjustment factors for self-initiated expatriates that serves as the basis for further research on what adjustment factors ease the adjustment of SIEs.

The second or empirical part of this thesis is divided into four chapters. In chapter four I present my methodology and research instruments, beginning with a concrete

elaboration of three research questions, and I proceed with a description of the research design, namely the sample and the procedure. This is followed by an analysis of the research results per each research question in chapter five. In chapter six, I discuss the most surprising research results and summarize key contributions of this study, concluding the chapter by identifying possible implications for the practice of companies, but also for self-initiated expatriates. The final chapter of the thesis discusses research limitations and gives indications for further research. I end the thesis by summarizing the conclusions.

1   A TYPOLOGY OF EXPATRIATES

1.1   Various types of internationally mobile individuals

Prior to this decade, international mobility happened mainly through expatriation assignments (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010) and expatriation was mainly dominated by expatriates, sent by their employers to foreign subsidiaries or headquarters, where the entire expatriation process was initiated and coordinated entirely by the organization (Altman & Baruch, 2002). The main reasons for sending managers abroad were to assure knowledge transfer, to facilitate communications between HQ and subsidiaries, and to develop new business opportunities. Various terms are used in the literature for this type of expatriates, which for a long time has been the only one studied. In the 1980s and 1990s, the most frequently used term was the general term "expatriates," as there was basically only one form of expatriates being researched. Later, especially in the last decade, when other types of expatriates were identified, terms like "organizational expatriates" (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009), "company backed expatriates" (Doherty et al., 2011) and "assigned expatriates" (Biemann & Andresen, 2010; Mo & Jian-ming, 2010) appeared in order to identify divisions in the traditional group of expatriates. Since the relocation of members of this traditional group is fully initiated by their current organization, meaning the organization that assigns them to the international position, I use the term "traditionally assigned" expatriates and expatriation throughout this thesis for this type of expatriates and expatriation. Traditionally assigned expatriates are well studied (e.g. Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003).

The traditional type of expatriation represents many challenges for multinational organizations. In their discussion on the changing patterns of global staffers, Collings, Scullion, and Morley (2007) outline the following major challenges of traditional expatriation: they claim there are fewer and fewer experienced and competent global managers willing to relocate, while on the other end, there are more and more emerging and rapidly growing markets, such as China, India and

Eastern Europe, which increasingly require managers with specific knowledge on how to successfully do business in those specific markets. These two factors—lack of experienced managers willing to relocate and higher demand in new emerging markets—have lead to a shortage of appropriate managers who can be sent as expatriates on international assignments. One further major challenge for the continued use of traditional expatriate assignments is the costs associated with them. As Selmer (2001) estimated, such costs amount to between three and five times an assignee's home salary, which represents a big investment for a corporation when return on investment is not always guaranteed. Another key challenge that multinational corporations are facing when using traditional expatriates for their assignments is the task of managing and evaluating the performance of expatriates on their international assignments, especially as high costs are linked to their relocation. Last but not least, Collings et al. (2007) also emphasized the changing nature of careers in the international context, seeing a shift from the traditional career developed within the organisation to the more "boundary-less" individual career, allowing individuals to take more control over their own career planning and development.

Due to all of the above, and in keeping with Collings et al. (2007), research in this field recognises the growing use of alternatives to international assignments. Throughout the literature two major groups of alternatives to traditionally assigned expatriation are recognized: long-term alternatives (1), where expatriates still relocate abroad and the long term perspective remains, as in case of traditionally assigned expatriation; and short-term alternatives (2), which are a total alternative to long-term assignments (Figure 1).

Short-term alternatives (1) to traditionally assigned expatriation arose as a consequence of changes in the global economy, resulting in a decrease in the cost of intercontinental travel. The following alternatives are common: short term international assignments, frequent flyer assignments, commuter and rotational assignments, and virtual teams (Collings et al., 2007. However, further discussion of these options is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Figure 1. Alternatives to traditionally assigned expatriates
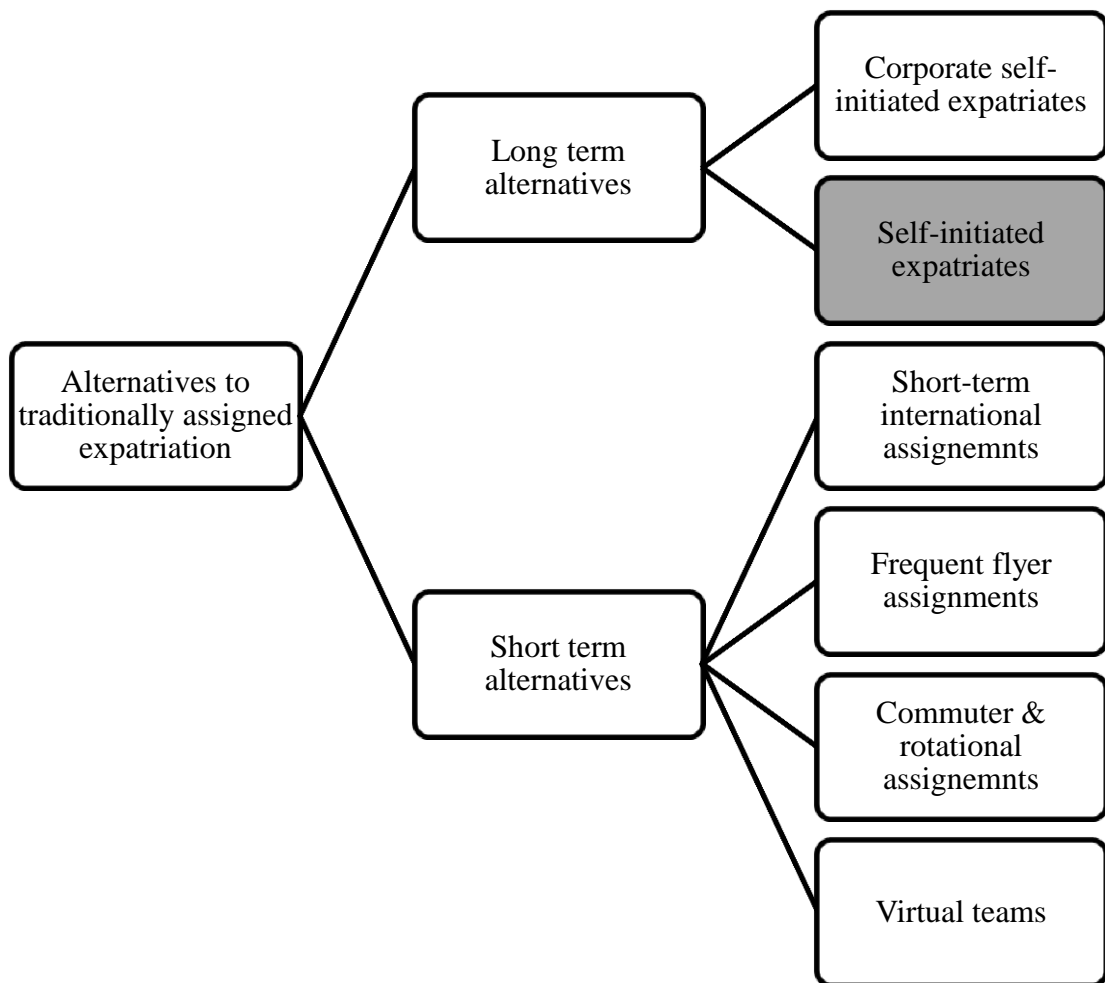
It is the long-term alternatives (2) to traditionally assigned expatriation that are of interest for this thesis. Within this group, two sub-groups of expatriates are identified, and common to both types is that the expatriates initiate the relocation by themselves. The first type, which are still very close to traditional expatriates, are the so-called corporate self-initiated expatriates. Altman and Baruch (2012) arrived at this term through their research of expatriates in a large international bank. These expatriates are still sent on an assignment by the organization, i.e. their employer, just as traditionally assigned expatriates—hence the term "corporate" in their name; the major difference is that they initiate their relocation by themselves, which explains the second part of the term definition, "self-initiated" (Altman & Baruch, 2012). The other type of expatriate also initiates their move and relocation abroad by themselves, but unlike the corporate self-initiated expatriates, they search for a new job opportunity outside of their existing organization (Doherty et al., 2011). The

literature defines them as self-initiated expatriates and they represent the main focus of this thesis.

Three is one other type of internationally mobile individuals that should be mentioned: migrants. Mentioning migration in the context of international mobility and expatriation is very important, as there is a thin line between migration and self-initiated expatriation, since they both happen based on the self-initiation of the individual and since in both cases the individual moves abroad for a longer period of time and might even stay in the host country. Given this, I point out the main differentiators between these terms in one of the following subchapters.

1.2 Self-initiated expatriates - the definition and evolution of the term

Based on the article of Altman and Baruch (2012) it is clear that more and more individuals seek to fulfil their needs for personal learning, development, and growth, and unfortunately this might not always be possible within the organization that someone is currently employed in or within one's home country. This in combination with the adventurous spirit of some individuals and the fact that international assignments that are triggered by the organization are in most cases reserved for more experienced and senior managers, as Biemann and Andresen (2010) found in their research of German managers, it is a normal consequence that some employees go in search on their own for international experiences and decide to move. Such individuals who choose to leave their homeland to live or work in another country, usually for a long period of time, are, as per Vance (2005) defined them, **self-initiated expatriates**. According to Tharenou (2010), self-initiated expatriation conventionally refers to the people who geographically move without organisational support and also find and maintain their own employment.

Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, and Barry (1997) were the first to describe alternative international experiences not initiated by organizations. They named them "self-initiated foreign work experiences." The self-initiated foreign worker is an individual who voluntarily relocates on his or her own initiative, independently from any employer and without any organizational help, and is hired under a local, host-country contract. Suutari and Brewster (2000) also explored the phenomenon of individuals who chose to live and work outside their country of origin without the support of an organization and arrived at the concept of "self-initiated foreign experiences" (SIFE). In the years to follow, terminology got further developed. Several designations were developed for professionals who expatriate without organizational sponsorship: "self-selecting expatriates" (Richardson & McKenna, 2002), "self-directed expatriates" (Richardson and Mallon, 2005) and "independent internationally mobile professionals" (McKenna and Richardson, 2007). The final

term used today, "self-initiated" expatriates and expatriation, first appeared in the literature in 2008 and was later also agreed among experts at a symposium at the Academy of Management Meeting in 2010. The term has remained fairly constant and predominant in the literature since then (Doherty et al., 2013b).

When scanning the literature on self-initiated expatriates and expatriation, it becomes clear that this is a very new stream within the field of international mobility, as the research on this topic started appearing only in the last ten years. Prior to that, the majority of literature and research was done in a field of traditionally assigned expatriates (e.g. Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003; Black, 1988; Brett & Stroh, 1995).

1.3 Self-initiated expatriates versus other types of internationally mobile individuals

The term of self-initiated expatriate is particularly close to the two other forms of internationally mobile individuals: traditionally assigned expatriates (hereinafter TAEs) and migrants. Therefore I find it important to identify the key differentiating factors of SIEs, TAEs, and migrants.

1.3.1 Self-initiated expatriates versus traditionally assigned expatriates

The aim of this part is not to search for various differences or similarities in the characteristics of SIEs and TAEs, but to list and define only those key differentiators that distinguish SIEs from the group of TAEs. In studying the literature, I can summarize past findings by listing the following six (6) key differentiators based on which an individual can be considered an SIE or TAE:

- **Initiative (1).** In the case of TAEs, the initiative for international assignment arises through their existing organization, while SIEs relocate to a foreign country on their own initiative and voluntarily (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010).

- **The maintenance of existing employment or the seeking of new employment (2).** TAEs move into an affiliate of the same organization in another country, while SIEs leave their existing organization and find a new employer abroad (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010).

- **Funding and organizational assistance (3).** When TAEs are sent on international assignments by an organization, they are entitled to expatriation packages that cover the expenses of relocation. The organization provides them with a relocation package, which covers not only the move itself but also costs related to the resettling of their

family. On the other hand, those who decide by themselves to expatriate usually save money to finance their move abroad (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010)

- **Intended duration of stay abroad (4).** TAEs leave their home countries to go on assignments abroad for a predefined period. Their assignments can last for a shorter or longer period of time, from a few to several years, but usually no longer than three or four (Ikson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry; 1997; Thorn, 2009). By contrast, SIEs usually do not have a predefined period in mind when they relocate (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010).

- **The type of employment contract (5).** Richardson and McKenna (2002) stressed that one of the main differentiators between SIEs and TAEs is the fact that SIEs are employed by host country organizations and companies and find themselves on local terms and conditions, while TAEs sign annexes on expatriation and their contract remains with the headquarters of the organization that sent them on assignment.

- **Foreseen repatriation (6).** TAEs will, in most cases, after their International assignment is complete, repatriate home and return to another position in the same organization with the hope that this international experience results in career development for the individual (Inkson et al., 1997). By contrast, as SIEs are hired as locals in the foreign country in a new organization, they do not repatriate to their home-country organizations. They decide themselves when and if they will return to their home country (Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010).

1.3.2 Self-initiated expatriation versus migration

It was Al Ariss (2010) who in 2010 compared the constructs of SIE and migration and found that the differences between a "migrant" and an "SIE" in the literature are blurred, as both constructs are used in the literature to refer to individuals undertaking an international career experience. According to the article of Al Ariss (2010), we can define two key differentiators that distinguish these terms:

- **The forced or chosen nature of the move (1).** Al Ariss (2010) found that in case of migration, individuals **relocate out of necessity** more than out of the choice to travel to another country, whereas SIEs decide on the move based on their free choice.

- **The period of foreign stay (2).** When it comes to the period of the relocation, migrants usually migrate with the objective of finding permanent jobs abroad, especially in more developed economies (Carr, Ikson, & Thorn, 2005), with the goal of permanently staying in the new country. On the other hand, as per Agullo and Egawa (2009), in case of SIEs there is more temporariness in their choice, and they often relocate with no definite time-frame in mind.

1.4 Key criteria defining self-initiated expatriation

Based on the above-defined key differentiators, the following criteria determine whether a certain internationally mobile individual is an SIE. This is especially important since it gives clear guidelines for determining the sample for this study in part two. An internationally mobile individual can be considered an SIE when it fulfils the following key criteria:

- the initiative for relocation must come from the individual herself or himself (Doherty et al., 2013b) and not from the organization;

- the SIE changes employers, and does not relocate within an existing organization to its local affiliate;

- the SIE finances the relocation and the move herself or himself and is offered neither a traditional expatriation package nor organizational support;

- the duration of the move is not pre-defined and the intent of the stay is not permanent;

- the SIE is employed on the terms of a local contract; and

- the SIE has moved voluntarily, based on her or his own free choice, meaning the nature of the move is not forced as in the case of migrants (Al Ariss, 2010).

2 MOTIVATION OF SIEs FOR THE SELF-EXPATRIATION

Reasons and motivation among SIEs for their decisions to embark towards new challenges abroad can be various, and this is not a well-researched topic in the literature on SIE (Selmer & Lauring, 2011). More research has been done on the motives for expatriation in the field of traditionally assigned expatriates (e.g. Fish & Wood, 1997; Brett & Stroh, 1995; Dickmann et al., 2008) and in the field of academic SIE (Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2002, 2003, 2006), with the other major being comprised of studies done as comparisons of reasons and motives for expatriation of traditionally assigned expatriates and SIEs (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, Doherty et al., 2011).

This leads us to the fact not many studies have been done on the motivation of SIEs solely through an exploration of motives of SIE in the corporate world (i.e. not those who aim for academic careers, but SIEs who end up being employed in corporations). Therefore the aim of this part of the thesis is to fill this gap in the research: to scan the available literature and research on the motives of SIEs and academic SIEs to relocate, and to present a summary of all the factors and motives

that drive SIEs to relocate abroad. This will prepare the groundwork to search, in the research part of this study, for the most common among those reasons and motives.

2.1 Chronological literature review on the reasons for expatriation

Going back to the beginnings of the research on SIE, we see that the first authors to research self-initiated overseas experiences found in their study of young New Zealanders that the major driver for relocation was the need for adventure and the drive to experience other cultures (desire for exploration), rather than career development (Ikson et al., 1997).

Some years later, a similar study was carried out in Europe by Suutari and Brewster (2000) that researched Finish people who relocated abroad. Even though the focus of this study was not solely the motives for relocation, they focused their research on assignments that were based on the individuals' own initiative. The study was devised as a comparison between traditionally assigned expatriates and SIEs. They found seven (7) different motives for expatriation and ranked the relative impact of those motives on the decision to expatriate: personal Interest in developing international experience (1, i.e. the highest impact), search for new experiences (2), professional development (3), career progress (4), economic benefits (5), employer initiative (in cases of expatriation initiated by a new employer) (6), and poor employment situation (7).

In the years to follow, Richardson and McKenna (2002, 2003, 2006) and Richardson and Mallon (2005) did several studies in the field of motivation among SIEs in the academic sphere and identified five different categories of reasons for relocating abroad: adventure and travelling (1), search for a life change and / or escape (2), family reasons (3), financial incentives (4) and career-related reasons (5).

In recent years, another groups of researchers (Doherty et al., 2011) executed a study on the motivations for the expatriation among expatriates who were members of the web portal Expatica.com. Like the one by Suutari and Brewster (2000), the study was conducted as a comparison of reasons and motivations for relocation of the two subgroups of expatriates: company-backed ones (as they call traditionally assigned expatriates) and SIEs. They listed 38 possible factors, resulting from previous studies, that could impact both groups of expatriates to decide to expatriate, and they grouped them into eight main categories: location (1), career (2), foreign experience (3), host (4), family benefits (5), home-host relations (6), personal relationships (7), and push factors (8). Not all of the listed 38 motives are relevant to SIE for the following reasons: either they are not related to the initial decision to move abroad (e.g. "expected length of stay", "pre-departure preparations"), or they

are more related to the decision of where to move (e.g. "host culture", "reputation of host country being open to foreigners"), which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Accordingly, I took the following 20 motives from this research, and considered categorizing them as in figure 3 in chapter 2.3 (sorted according to how strong they influenced the SIE's decision to move): desire for adventure (1), confidence in one's ability to work or live abroad (to prove it to oneself) (2), to see the world (3), the professional challenge of working abroad (4), the potential for skills development (5), the desire to live in the host country, city, or other location (6), the impact on one's career (7), the opportunity to improve one's language skills (8), personal financial impact (9), to have a better balance between work and social life (10), personal financial impact (11), potential role availability after work abroad (12), poor employment situation at home (13), personal safety (14), being with or near loved one(s) (15), the desire to gain distance from a problem (16), better opportunities for one's family (17), the ability to support one's family better abroad (18), health reasons (19) and the desire to follow friends (20).

Further grouping of these identified factors in a few major groups will follow in chapter 2.3, but first it is important to point out the motive of **"employer initiative,"** as identified by Suutari and Brewster (2000).

2.2 The initial trigger for an SIE to decide to move abroad

Suutari and Brewster (2000) listed "employer initiative" as a possible motive for SIEs to move abroad. Doherty et al. (2011) also identified "the job you were offered" as one of the many possible motives to move abroad (according to the definition of SIE, such a job offer must come from an outside employer and not from the existing organization). Richardson and McKenna (2002, 2006) do not list such a job offer as a motive for an SIE to move, but they do indirectly discuss it in their studies. In their 2002 study, the majority of SIEs had the feeling of being very proactive, as they had to independently search for new job opportunities. Richardson and McKenna came across the same outcome about the importance of self-initiative in their qualitative study of British academics a few years later, showing that individual proactivity was equally as significant to the decision to go as the desire for adventure, the desire for life-change, and benefit to the family (Richardson & McKenna, 2006).

On the other hand, as per the findings of Richardson and Mallon (2005), the majority of academic SIEs in their study encountered the opportunity unexpectedly without their having specifically looked for a position abroad. Especially those academic SIEs that already had one expatriate experience behind them indicated that "serendipity" had played a major role, meaning that opportunities had in a way

popped up rather than being the result of a concrete plan (Richardson & Mallon, 2005).

I find this question of pro-active behaviour or serendipity the first and most important question in analysing the motives for SIE to relocate. It is the question of whether an unexpected job opportunity (from a new potential employer) was what triggered an SIE's initial thinking process to move abroad or there were any other motives driving SIEs to start searching for the opportunity on their own. I name this reason for SIEs to decide to move an "unexpected job opportunity." In my opinion, it does not belong on the list of all possible motives for relocation. It is rather a question of the initial trigger (Figure 2).

Suutari and Brewster (2000) named it "employer initiative," but I do not find this term the most appropriate, as it resembles too much the initiative of the current employer. In case of the process of SIE, as defined in the first chapter of this thesis, initiative must come either from the SIE herself or himself or from another employer—the SIE never moves within the current organization. Accordingly, I find "unexpected job opportunity" to be a better term.

Figure 2. Initial trigger for the SIE to expatriate
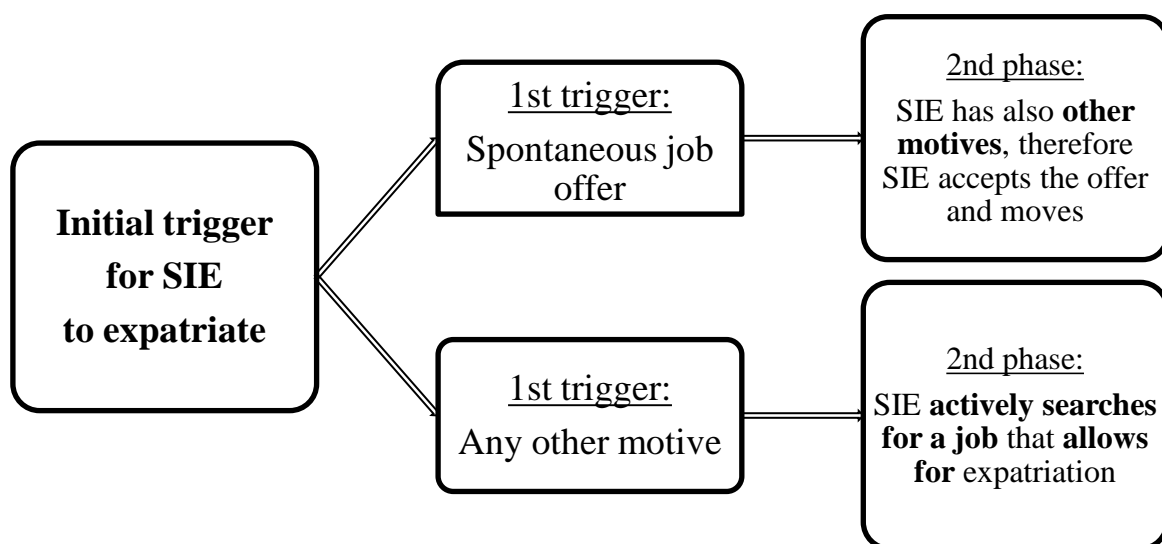
2.3   Other motives for SIEs to relocate

As shown by figure 2, and as presented in the chronological review of past research in 2.1, there are many other motives besides an unexpected job opportunity that can either motivate SIEs to move abroad or support their decisions when triggered by an

unexpected job opportunity. Accordingly, I believe it is important to present an accurate categorization of SIEs' motives to move abroad, as in the figure 3 below. I have decided on this categorization for several reasons: 1) some motives were found in many studies, while others appeared in few studies or only one study; 2) in existing studies various researchers group those motives differently; and 3) there is no existing categorization that would encompass so broad a spectrum of SIEs' motives for expatriation.

Figure 3. Overview of own categorization of motives for SIEs to relocate
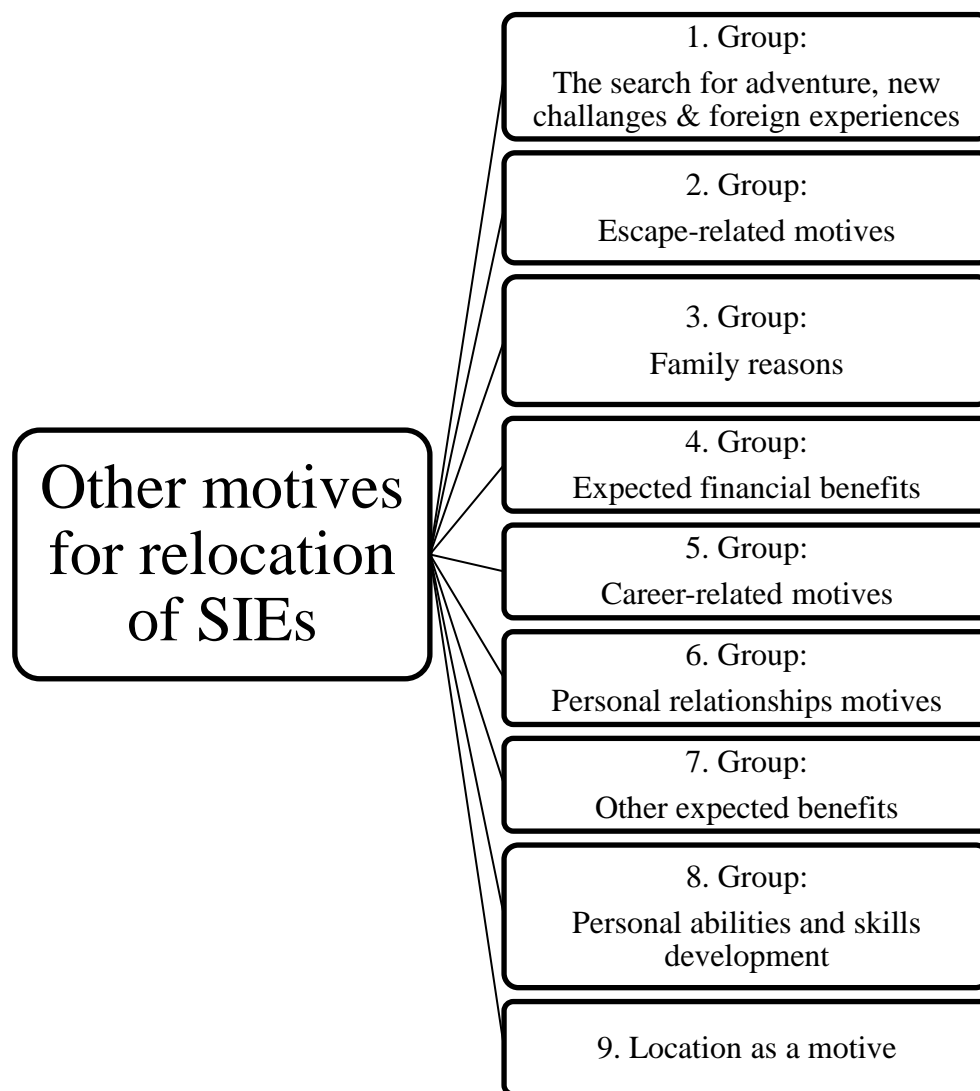
2.3.1 First group: The search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experiences

In all the articles reviewed in chapter 2.1, researchers identify motives that can be grouped into this category. Both Ikson et al. (1997) and Doherty et al. (2011) talk

about "the need (desire) for adventure" (1). Ikson et al. (1997) further identify the "reason to experience other cultures" (2).

Richardson and Mallon (2005) identify three main motives that relate to this group: "desire to see more of the world" (3) in a way that cannot be experienced during travels and holidays (this motive is also mentioned in Doherty et al., 2011), "looking for new experiences" (4) that happen when SIEs do not have everything they are used to around them (also in Suutari & Brewster, 2000), and "desire for a new challenge or for an adventure" (5). They grouped their three motives under the category "expatriate to experience adventure and travelling." They found that these three motives were the most common reasons across different studies and various types of participants, regardless of sex, parenthood status, age; all equally indicated "adventure" as a main reason to expatriate (Richardson & Mallon, 2005). In addition to these motives, Suutari and Brewster (2000) identified the last motive, "personal interest to develop international experience" (6). Table 1 shows all the motives of past studies that fall into this first group and how often were they identified by each major study.

Table 1. First group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & Mallon, 2005	Doherty et al., 2011
First group: Search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experiences	Need (desire) for adventure (1)	x		x	x
	Desire to experience other cultures (2)	x			
	Desire to see more of the world (3)			x	x
	Search for new experiences (4)		x	x	
	Desire for a new challenge (5)			x	
	Personal interest to develop international experience (6)		x		

2.3.2 Second group: Escape-related motives

Different authors name the group of motives related to escaping from one's negative situation(s) at home differently: Richardson and Mallon (2005) call it "expatriating for life change," while Doherty et al. (2011) use the designation "push factors."

16

Motives categorized in this group can be linked to negative job related issues like "escape from a negative work situation" (1) (Richardson & Mallon, 2005) or "poor employment situation at home" (2) (Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Doherty et al., 2011), or to any other negative experience. Richardson and Mallon (2005) further identified "escape from perceived boredom with the home country" (3), "escape from difficult personal relationships" (4), and "escape from any other experience they associated with life back home" (Richardson & Mallon, 2005). Doherty et al. (2011) grouped all those escape motives into one and named it "to distant yourself from a problem." I find this expression too common to replace all "escape" motives, but in my opinion it is a good designation for what Richardson and Mallon (2005) identified as "escape from any other experience they associated with life back home." Therefore, as a fifth motive in this group, I include "to distant yourself from any other problem at home" (5). As Richardon and Mallon found, more than half of the participants of their 2005 study mentioned desired life change (6) as a decision for their expatriation. Thus this can be another motive for relocation.

By contrast, the study of Doherty et al. (2011) did not stress the importance of push factors, but nevertheless they do call for additional exploration in this field, especially on self-initiated expatriates.

Table 2. The second group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & Mallon, 2005	Doherty et al., 2011
Second group: Escape	Escape from a negative work situation (1)			x	
	Poor employment situation at home (2)		x		x
	Escape from perceived boredom with the home country (3)			x	
	Escape from difficult personal relationships (4)			x	
	To distant yourself from any other problem at home (5)			x	x
	To experience change in one's life (6)			x	

2.3.3   Third group: Family-related motives

Among studies reviewed in chapter 2.1, only the studies of Richardson and Mallon (2005) and Doherty et al. (2011) identified motives related to family. Richardson and Mallon (2005) group those motives into the category "family reasons" and say that family-related motives played a strong role in deciding to relocate. Academic SIEs said they moved in order "to do what is best for the entire family" (1) and "for children to be able to experience other cultures" (2). One participant in the study (Richardson and Mallon, 2005) explained that she had a distant aunt that moved abroad and always had so many great stories to tell, which encouraged her to follow; based on this, the researcher identified the motive "role model of a distant family member, linked to childhood memories" (3).

Doherty et al. (2011) designate this category as "family benefits" and focus on the benefits that working abroad would bring to the whole family. They identify the following two motives: "better opportunities for the whole family" (which in my opinion is "to do what is best for the entire family" differently stated, and therefore not a separate motive) and "ability to support one's family better abroad," which would in my opinion better fit the next group of motives, which concerns financial benefits.

At this point I also want to stress that this group of motives can relate only to those SIEs who have a family when they decide to relocate. To single SIEs only the third motive within this group might be relevant.

Table 3. Third group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & Mallon, 2005	Doherty et al., 2011
Third group: Family-related motives	To do what is best for entire family (1)			x	x
	For children to be able to experience other cultures (2)			x	
	Role model of a distant family member, linked to childhood memories (3)			x	

2.3.4 Fourth group: Expected financial benefits

Suutari and Brewster (2000) talk about "economic benefits" in general, while Richardson and McKenna (2002) identify as "financial motives" "the opportunity to earn and to save a large amount of money" as well as "money being an issue after marriage and/or after having children." In their research they find that these motives were not among the main motives for interviewed candidates, as only three out of 30 expressed them as a driver of their desire to relocate.

It is important at this stage to understand that those who did not mention this group as a motive for relocating still saw their international experience very positively mainly because it improved their financial situation (Richardson and McKenna, 2002). Doherty et al. (2011) discuss "personal financial impact." They categorize this motive under "career," but in my opinion it belongs in this group, as it clearly indicates financial impact. Her other motive, "ability to support one's family better abroad," which she groups under "family benefits," is in my opinion also strongly linked to financial benefits and is only differentiated from "personal financial impact" in that it relates to the whole family. It simply depends whether an SIE is single or married (or living with a partner) and is or is not having children when deciding on expatriation. Since it seems to me that all the motives identified by various authors are more or less synonymous for each other, I combine them into only one reason as a part of this group.

Table 4. Fourth group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & McKenna, 2002	Doherty et al., 2011
Fourth group: Expected financial benefits	Expected financial benefits for oneself or the family		x	x	x

2.3.5 Fifth group: Career-related motives

In the next category of motives for relocating abroad we can group motives related to career development and to doing what is best for one's future career. Virtually all researchers mentioned in chapter 2.1 except for Ikson et al. (1997) came across those motives in their studies. Suutari and Brewster (2000) identified the motive "to move for professional development" (1) (approximating what Doherty et al. (2011)

called "potential for skills development") and another very common one, "to move due to career progress." Richardson and her colleagues (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Richardson and Mallon, 2005) placed more detailed motives into this group. According to their findings, academic SIEs moved "to build one's career" (2) or due to a "desire to enhance career prospects" (3). Further, they identified the "intention to do the right thing for being promoted," which parallels what Doherty et al. (2011) called relocating due to a "potential role available after your work abroad" (4). Another motive is similar in the findings of both researchers: what Richardson and McKenna (2002) call "presumption that expatriation might do the career some good," Doherty et al. (2011) designate as "impact on the career" (5). The last motive that Doherty and her colleagues (Doherty et al., 2011) group into "career-related" motives is the "professional challenge of working abroad" (6).

In the studies of Richardson and her colleagues (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Richardson and Mallon, 2005), career reasons were not among the most common motives prompting academic SIEs to move, but as Doherty et al. suggest in their recent article (2013), it is important not to overlook the extent to which career opportunities actually remain the necessary dimension for the relocation of SIEs, as it is actually career competencies, skills, and experiences that allow and support this type of international mobility (Doherty et al., 2013a). At the end of the day, being able to secure employment is the key for SIEs to relocate. They conclude that career opportunities might not be the primary driver for the relocation of SIEs, but they definitely do constitute what allows for self-expatriation to become a reality (Doherty et al., 2013a).

Table 5. Fifth group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & McKenna, 2002	Doherty et al., 2011
Fifth group: Career	To move for professional development (1)		x		x
	To build one's career (2)			x	
	Desire to enhance career prospects (3)			x	
	Potential role available after your work abroad (4)			x	x
	Impact on career (5)			x	x
	Professional challenge of working abroad (6)				x

2.3.6 Sixth Group: Personal relationships motives

Doherty at al. (2011) identify another category of motives and name them "personal relationships." Into this group they place items related to social and partner ties such as "to be with/near the loved person" or "following friends." According to her research, this group of factors was not of the greatest importance to SIEs as a reason to relocate.

Table 6. Sixth group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & Mallon, 2005	Doherty et al., 2011
Sixth group: Personal relationships	To be with/near the loved person (1)				x
	Following friends (2)				x

2.3.7 Seventh group: Motives related to other expected benefits

Into this group of reasons to expatriate I place motives that from my perspective all relate to the other benefits that living abroad would bring to an SIE (and to his or her family), but that are not related to financial benefits, the third group of possible motives. It was mainly Doherty et al. (2011) who identified some of the motives that I place in this group: "balance between work and social life" (1), "personal safety" (2), and "for health reason" (3). Another motive that can be linked to this group is "search for better personal (and / or professional) life" (4). According to Richardson and McKenna (2002), this was a general feeling among academic SIEs who explained their reasons for expatriation.

Table 7. Seventh group of other motives that encourage SIEs to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & McKenna, 2002	Doherty et al., 2011
Seventh group: Other expected benefits	Balance between work and social life (1)				x
	Personal safety (2)				x
	For health reasons (3)				x
	Search for a better personal life (4)			x	

2.3.8 Eighth group: Motives linked to personal skills and abilities

In my opinion, the following three motives, as identified by Doherty et al. (2011), belong together in this group of motives: "confidence in one's ability to work/live abroad" (1) and "potential for skills development" (2), which in my opinion is not necessarily linked only to one's career, as Doherty and her colleagues categorized it, since it can pertain to other skills such as "independence" or "surviving on my own in a foreign environment" that one would want to develop. In addition, the motive "opportunity to improve one's language skills" (3) belongs in my opinion to this group.

Table 8. Eighth group of other motives that encourage SIE to expatriate

	Motive	Ikson et al., 1997	Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Richardson & McKenna, 2002	Doherty et al., 2011
Eighth group: Personal skills and abilities	Confidence in one's ability to work/live abroad (1)				x
	Potential for skills development (2)		x		x
	Opportunity to improve one's language skills (3)				x

2.3.9 The desire to live in a particular place

Instead of belonging to a group of motives, the last motive stands on its own. None of the researchers identified any motives linked to location in their studies, with the exception of Doherty et al. (2011). They list several motives linked either to location, host country, or host culture; however, in my opinion, for the majority of those motives, Doherty et al. (2011) are concerned with why SIEs moved to a certain location or country as opposed to anywhere else (e.g. "one's ability to adapt to host country," "reputation of host country being open to foreigners," and "prestige of working in the host country") and not with the question of what triggered the move in the first place. I do think, however, that there is one motive among those identified by Doherty et al. (2011) that can really trigger the decision to relocate: the "desire to live in the host country / city / location" along the lines of "I have decided to move, because I have simply always wanted to live in New York."

3   THE ADJUSTMENT OF SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES

3.1   Expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and the adjustment of SIEs

Black (1988) writes that the term "expatriate adjustment" is synonymous with acculturation, cross-cultural adjustment, and international adjustment, which concern expatriate psychological comfort and the process of gaining familiarity with various aspects of a foreign environment. Takeuchi et al. (2005) expand this description of expatriate adjustment as the degree of ease or difficulty expatriates have with various issues related to life and work in a new host environment. As Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) summarize in their literature review, cross-cultural adjustment, as a time-related process, involves the reduction of uncertainty and change through which expatriates begin to feel more comfortable with the new culture. They are able to reduce uncertainty by either imitating or learning appropriate local behaviours and to start harmonizing with the culture of the new environment. Selmer (1999) defines adjustment in terms of socio-cultural factors in achieving effectiveness in interpersonal exchange with host country nationals.

Cross-cultural adjustment is one of the primary outcomes of an international assignment. Positive adjustment further influences the sense of achievement in terms of job satisfaction, job performance, and the completion of the international assignment (Ramalu, Wei, & Rose, 2011). Therefore, in order to be happy and satisfied with the job, perform well, and be effective in both business and social situations, people working in international environment need to find a way to cope with difficulties raised by cultural differences (Briscoe, Schuler, & Claus, 2009).

Expatriate cross-cultural adjustment has many consequences for individuals themselves, but also for the organizations sending expatriates on international assignment or hiring those who move abroad on their own initiative. It has therefore become an important research interest in international business and many studies have been done in this field, yet a vast majority of the studies in the field of expatriate adjustment have focused on traditionally assigned expatriates (e.g. Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al., 1991; Hechanova et al., 2003; Bhaskar-Shirinivas et al., 2005).

Even though there are notable differences among various sub-groups of expatriates, especially between traditionally assigned expatriates and SIEs, SIEs are seldom distinguished from TAEs in the literature on adjustment (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009), and past studies have assumed that the adjustment process is the same for all expatriates. This has led to the emergence of a gap in the literature on how SIEs adjust to their new environment. Especially since the number of SIEs is constantly increasing and they form larger group on the global labour market than traditionally assigned expatriates, there is indeed a need to explore how groups of SIEs adjust to the new host environment (Alshammari, 2012).

Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) were some of the first to include SIEs in a study of expatriate adjustment. They explored differences in the adjustment of TAEs (in their study they name TAEs "Organizational Expatriates") and SIEs. They found from their research in Japan that SIEs adjust better in a host country than expatriates assigned by their employer. Some years later, Alshamari (2012) performed a study in Saudi universities on how marital status and previous experience influence the adjustment of SIEs. I write more about this study in later subchapters that explore the role of various factors on the adjustment of SIEs.

Culturally adjusted expatriates are open to the new culture and the new environment and are therefore able to add new behaviours, norms, and rules to the foundation provided by their home cultures (Church, 1982). On the other hand, maladjusted expatriates tend to experience anxiety towards the host culture, even to the extent that they may believe that host country nationals are plotting against them and making their life difficult for them (Richards, 1996). Limited adjustment to the host culture has various negative work-related consequences for the expatriate. Failure to adjust will result in poor job performance and low levels of satisfaction (Naumann, 1993). In the worst case, if the expatriate fails to adjust, he or she might prematurely return home or even leave the organization (Harzing, 1995). Maruyama (1992) also argues that if expatriates fail to adjust to the new host environment, their level of cultural insensitivity, indifference, and ignorance will increase even further. Munton and West (1995) elaborate the unhappy feelings of expatriates about their circumstances in their discussion of expatriate maladjustment.

The failure to adjust to the foreign environment has been identified as one of the most important reasons for unsuccessful expatriation (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). According to Hechanova et al. (2003), such unsuccessful international assignments directly affect the ability of the organization to attract new and retain existing qualified candidates. The effect of the failed adjustment on the individual can also be enormous. It not only impacts an expatriate from a psychological perspective, but also usually causes poor self-esteem, negatively impacts the expatriate's spouse and family, and engenders a negative attitude toward future international experience (Black et al., 1999).

3.2 The dimensions and process of expatriate adjustment

There are two groups of literature in which cross cultural adjustment is discussed. Acculturation literature (e.g. Searle & Ward, 1990) identifies facets of psychological, socio-cultural, and work adjustment, while expatriate adjustment literature (e.g., Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991) proposes three different aspects of adjustment: adjustment to the general environment, to work, and to interaction with host country nationals.

According to Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005), the adjustment model proposed by Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) is the most influential and the most often-cited theoretical basis of expatriate experiences and adjustment, and as such also the most often used model for the research into the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates. According to this model, the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates has three different aspects: adjustment to work or "work adjustment," "general adjustment" to the foreign country, and adjustment to interactions with host country nationals or "interaction adjustment."

Work adjustment pertains to the degree to which one adapts to new job tasks, roles, and environment, and is related to different work values, expectations, and standards (Black and Stephens, 1989). General adjustment deals with overall adjustment to living in a foreign land and pertains to the psychological comfort that an expatriate experiences with the challenges of living in the host cultural environment and adjusting to its culture. It is comprised of factors such as adjustment to the weather, the food, healthcare, housing, and living conditions (Black and Stephens, 1989). Interaction adjustment is related to the psychological comfort of an expatriate when he or she is dealing or interacting with host country nationals at work and in non-work situations (Black & Stephens, 1989) and is related to the different communication styles and interpersonal communications that expatriates experience when interacting with the host country nationals. It is suggested that interaction adjustment is the most difficult of the three types of adjustment. According to

Adelman (1988), well-functioning social relationships with host country nationals are very important predictors of cross-cultural adjustment. He assets that, when living in foreign countries, social links form a very important part of adjustment because they provide emotional support to expatriates dealing with the stress and anxiety that is a part of every foreign experience.

The above three dimensions of the expatriate adjustment experience have been confirmed in several studies and many of them empirically examined all three (Bhaskar-Shirinivas et al., 2005; Thomas & Lazarova, 2006; Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010).

The process of expatriate adjustment is a time-bound process. Different researchers have researched the procedure of expatriate adjustment in order to clarify the steps of acculturation (Alshammari, 2012). The U-curve of the cross-cultural adjustment process is one of the most popular models and is based on the work of Lysgaard (1955). It consists of four phases that describe the process of cross-cultural adjustment of expatriate employees or sojourners. Alshammari (2012) performs a helpful overview in his article about adjustment of SIEs in Saudi universities. The process is as follows: the honeymoon is the first phase and starts with the arrival of the individual into the new environment and culture. It lasts during the first few weeks up to two months. It is the phase characterised by all the new and interesting aspects of the new surroundings of the individual. After the honeymoon, the second phase begins. It is called culture shock and is characterized by frustration and lack of sufficient understanding of the new environment, the host nation, and its people (Adler, 1986). In the third stage, adjustment begins. It is the period when an individual can gradually perform the norms and values of the host culture (Harris & Moran, 1989). Finally, in the last phase, the individual begins to behave properly, meaning he is able to act effectively in the new culture and becomes adjusted to the new environment (Oberg, 1960).

3.3 Adjustment challenges

There is not a lot written in the existing literature about the adjustment challenges that either traditionally assigned or self-initiated expatriates would face after moving abroad. The majority of research has tended to focus on an expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment itself in addition to adjustment factors that influence (either by hindering or enhancing) that cultural adjustment.

Only two studies exist to my knowledge on the topic of adjustment challenges, both conducted in an Asian context: a case study on the cross-cultural challenges of expatriates in Malaysia (Tahir & Ismail, 2007) and a study of adjustment challenges

of Finnish expatriates in China (Merilainen, 2008). The main findings of both studies are presented further below.

Despite the lack of studies, it is important to raise awareness about the kinds of adjustment challenges SIEs face and how they influence SIEs during their adjustment process. This is important especially as overcoming all these adjustment challenges adds to stress SIEs are already facing after the move into the new environment, influencing their well-being. Furthermore, as already mentioned in the first sub-chapter of this section, SIEs are one of the fastest growing categories of globally mobile professionals (Myers & Pringle, 2005), and since there are more and more companies hiring SIEs, those companies are unaware of the responsibilities towards SIEs that hiring them represents.

One study of the adjustment challenges of Finnish expatriates in China (Merilainen, 2008) is based on interviews of five expatriates only, but it nevertheless gives a insight into their adjustment challenges. Merilainen finds 18 different adjustment challenges that the interviewed Finns have to face in adjusting to Chinese culture and groups them into 8 factor groups according to the theory of adjustment factors used by Black et al. (1991). The most common challenges, mentioned by at least 2 out of five expatriates, pertain to difficulties with the language (1), the novelty of the culture and environment (2), psychological symptoms resulting from culture shock (3), different communication styles (4), different business and management culture (5), lack of cross-cultural training and preparation for the assignment (6), hard work (7), lack of leisure time (8), spouse and family adjustment (9), the novelty of tasks (10), lack of logistical support in matters such as housing and the schooling of children (11), and long-term orientation of the adjustment process (12). One of the outcomes of the study is also that most challenges emerge outside the work environment.

The results of a study conducted in Malaysia (Tahir & Ismail, 2007) imply similar adjustment challenges arising from the process of overcoming cultural differences. Tahir and Ismail synthesize the most common challenges from semi-structured interviews with 16 expatriates working in Malaysia for at least six months. The attitude of locals (1) is related to difficulties in understanding the indirect and non-confrontational behavior of locals and their misconceptions of "white people." Challenges linked to different customs and religion (2) include difficulties in understanding the dress code of the locals and the need to be very cautious with religious issues. Other challenges can be grouped as difficulties in addressing locals by name according to appropriate social status (3). Female expatriates faced many challenges linked to gender issues in expatriation (4): that is, preconceived ideas about western women expatriates. The next group of adjustment challenges is not related to cultural differences, but to adjusting to working habits of locals (5), and is

comprised of difficulties in complying with the working pace and a high level of bureaucracy that hinders job implementation. Last but not least, expatriates in this study also indicate that adjusting to the new environment is further challenging due to the lack of (unavailability of) a structured cross-cultural training program (6).

3.4 Factors influencing the adjustment of SIEs

A review of the literature reveals various categorizations of factors impacting expatriate adjustment, but all of them relate to traditionally assigned expatriates, and so far no comprehensive model has been found that outlines the adjustment of SIEs. All categorizations of factors impacting expatriate adjustment are based on the model for traditional expatriates of Black et al. (1991).

3.4.1 Adjustment factors of the model by Black et al.

Black et al. (1991) have identified various sets of factors that influence all three facets of adjustment: work, interaction and general adjustment (as described in 3.2). In their model, the factors influencing the adjustment process are divided into the anticipatory or pre-assignment period (pre-assignment adjustment) and the in-country period (in-country adjustment); proper levels of pre-assignment adjustment will influence the later phase of in-country adjustment.

3.4.2 Developing a model of cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs

The model of Black et al. (1991) can be expanded, since many authors find further factors influencing expatriate adjustment. Additionally, the aim of this study is to focus on factors influencing the adjustment of SIEs in particular. Due to these two facts, what follows is a short description of the model by Black et al. (1991) with an explanation of how certain parts of their model shall be adapted to better fit the specifics of SIE. As a result, at the end of this subchapter, my own model of cross-cultural adjustment for SIE is presented. Factors of the model of cross-cultural adjustment I have developed for SIE are described in more details in the next subchapter.

Looking first into the pre-assignment period of the model, we need to stress that for SIEs it is typical to initiate and find the challenge by themselves and outside of any existing organization. Accordingly, there is no cross-cultural training being organized for them by their employing organization before they embark, and neither are they part of any internal organizational process involving selection mechanisms and criteria within the organization where they work. Therefore those two factors cannot be part of the model for cross-cultural adjustment for SIE. Shaffer and his

colleagues (Shaffer et al., 1999) adjusted the model of Black et al. (1991) by no longer splitting factors into two phases. As their model already excludes aspects related to cross-cultural training and mechanisms and criteria for selection, their model can form a sound basis for a model of cross-cultural adjustment for SIEs.

Individual factors; To the three individual factors as defined by Black et al. (1991) - self-efficacy, relational skills, and perception skills - we can add two further factors that Shaffer et al. (1999) consider a part of individual factors: "previous assignments" and "language fluency."

Job factors; SIEs start new jobs in a new environment in the same way as traditionally assigned expatriates do, therefore in the case of job factors, I see no need to adjust the model. Also Shaffer et al. (1999) did not adjust or modify the model of Black et al. (1991).

Organizational factors; Related to this group of factors, there are three factors that should be discussed, whether or not they form a part of this group of factors in the cross-cultural adjustment model for SIE: social support, logistical support and mentoring. As for social support (1), according to Johnson, Kristof-Brown, van Vianen, de Pater and Klein (2003), expatriates are able to receive needed social support from other sources outside the organization (e.g. from other expatriates from other countries outside of the organization). Therefore, I further distinguish social support within and outside the organization, and I group social support outside the organization into the last group of factors, called "other factors." When it comes to logistical support (2), in keeping with the definition of SIE, it is usually not the case that an SIE would have logistical support from his or her new employer, so this factor should not form a part of the model of cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs. However, I myself had such support as an SIE from a new employer when relocating. Accordingly, I include this factor in the empirical study to see whether other SIEs receive such support as well and whether it is justified for this factor to be part of the model of cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs. Mentoring (3) is another factor that Black et al. (1991) did not include in their model, but other authors do say that it influences expatriate adjustment. As an example, Erbacher, Netto and Espana (2006) say that general assistance in terms of mentoring and counselling is another sort of possible organizational support that organizations can offer to expatriates. Given this, I add this factor to the model of factors impacting the adjustment of SIEs.

Non-work or other factors; I find the "non-work" wording for this group of factors to be not the most appropriate way to describe the factors belonging to this group. I find "other" factors or "environment-related" and "situation-related" much better

terms to name this last group of factors and I accordingly use them in this thesis. Social support from outside the organization (1) is a factor that I add to the last group of factors influencing the adjustment of SIE. As for family and spouse adjustment, it is normal that the majority of past research focuses on the influence of spouse and family adjustment to expatriate adjustment, as the majority of past research in the field of expatriate adjustment was done among TAEs who are usually older, in senior positions, supposedly married, and relocating with family (Brewster & Suutari, 2000). However, many SIEs are younger (Suutari & Brewster, 2000) than TAEs, meaning many could be single when relocating. Therefore I split this factor into two factors, marital status (2) and family and spouse adjustment (3). Finally, culture novelty (4) describes how TAEs and SIEs are exposed in relocation to new cultures. In order not to mix this factor with the "organization culture novelty" factor, I will use term "country culture novelty."

As a product of the above discussion, which is based on the framework by Black et al. (1991), I propose in figure 4 an adapted model of factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs.

Figure 4. Model of cross-cultural adjustment for SIE

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┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│  II. Job factors (4):   │   │ III. Organizational factors (4): │
│  Role clarity (1)       │   │ Organization culture novelty (1) │
│  Role discretion (1)    │   │ Social support within organization │
│  Role novelty (1)       │   │              (1,2,3)             │
│  Role conflict (1)      │   │ Logistical support (2,3)         │
│                         │   │ Mentoring (1,2,3)                │
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II. Job factors (4):
Role clarity (1)
Role discretion (1)
Role novelty (1)
Role conflict (1)

III. Organizational factors (4):
Organization culture novelty (1)
Social support within organization (1,2,3)
Logistical support (2,3)
Mentoring (1,2,3)

IV. Other factors (4):
Social support outside organization (2,3)
Marital status (1,2,3)
Family and spouse adjustment (1,2,3)
Country culture novelty (2,3)

I. Individual factors (5):
Self-efficacy (1,2,3)
Relational & perceptual skills (1,2,3)
Cultural sensibility (2,3)
Previous assignments (1,2,3)
Language fluency (1,2,3)

Adjustment of SIE
1 - **Work** Adjustment
2 - **General** Adjustment
3 - **Interaction** adjustment

Source: Author's own presentation, adapted based on Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M., & Oddou G., Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: An integration of multiple theoretical perspectives, 1991.

3.4.3   Factors influencing the general and interaction adjustment of SIEs

Following Individual factors are influencing the general and interaction adjustment of SIEs:

Self-efficacy (1); Self-efficacy is conceptualized as a person's belief in her or his own ability to succeed in the enactment of a specific task (Bandura, 2012). The concept of self-efficacy explains how individuals' perceptions about their ability to achieve certain tasks motivate them to achieve their objectives at the work place and in personal life (Bhatti, Sundram, & Hoe 2012). Expatriates with high self-efficacy levels may take initiative to solve problems and handle critical situations during

international assignments, which may help them to adjust to the host country's cultural practices (Bhatti et al., 2012).

Relational and perceptual skills (2); In the majority of studies, we read that relational and perceptual skills are difficult to measure (Shaffer et al., 1999), which explains why there is no research, to my knowledge, that would confirm a correlation between those skills and easier expatriate adjustment. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) propose, that the better an individual's relational skills, the easier it is to interact with host nationals, and similarly that the greater a person's perceptual skills, the easier it is for an expatriate to reduce uncertainty by understanding, correctly interpreting, and determining what is appropriate and inappropriate in the host culture. Among these skills, the authors list willingness to communicate, cultural flexibility and social orientation.

Cultural sensibility (3); Chen and Starosta (2000) define cultural sensibility as an individual ability to develop positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behaviour and intercultural communication. If expatriates are able to positively perceive the cultural differences, this might help them to adjust to the host country and build a better relationship and understanding with host country nationals. Claus, Lungu and Bhattacharjee (2011) suggest that expatriate cultural sensibility helps expatriates to deal with complexity of multiple cultures and to develop a global mind-set.

Previous expatriate experience (4); Previous experience helps individuals to learn from past mistakes and to improve their future lives (Bhatti et al., 2012). In addition, past experience may guide one in performing different tasks and handling different critical situations. Bhatti et al. write that learning from past mistakes and practicing certain sets of activities to achieve certain goals may help an individual to improve his or her work and family life. Black et al. (1991) suggest that, with previous international assignment experience, expatriates develop relocation skills that may allow them to adjust to the new assignment by reducing uncertainties associated with the move. Expatriates with previous international assignment experience are likely to have gone through trial-and-error processes of discarding ineffective coping strategies and retaining effective ones. This further means that previous experience may influence how an expatriate adjusts to the host environment by allowing her or him to ignore what did not work in the past and to concentrate on what did. Shaffer et al. (1999) find that experience in previous international assignments has significant influence on adjustment in general. Alshammari (2012) discusses the role of previous international experience in relation to the adjustment of SIEs. He questions the influence of previous work experience on SIEs' cultural interaction and work adjustment and finds that there is no significant relationship between the previous job held and the cultural, interaction or work adjustment. In other words, SIEs with or without previous international experience did not change

results in a statistically significant way, which is indeed a surprising finding, especially as the majority of previous studies show different results. He suggests that the explanation for these results might be found in the complexity of cross-cultural adjustment.

Language fluency (5); Nicholson and Imaizumi (1993) say that fluency in the host country language facilitates expatriate adjustment by equipping individuals with more effective communications and perceptual skills. They further say that the closer the interaction a TAE has with host-country nationals and the longer the assignment is, the more in-depth the language training of expatriates should be. In the case of SIEs, the situation is somewhat different, as there is no pre-assignment language training, but it would be interesting to see in how many cases SIEs are offered language training by their new organization upon their arrival.

Among organizational factors it is apparent that organizational culture novelty influences work adjustment only. Therefore we exclude it from the detailed description below, as the focus of this study is factors influencing the general and interaction aspects of SIE adjustment.

Social support within organization (1); As mentioned in sub-chapter 3.4.2, social support can come from both outside the organization and inside the organization. Toh and Denisi (2005) define organizational support for expatriates in terms of informational support, cooperation, and emotional support, and explain that informational support helps expatriates understand the host country culture, cooperation support facilitates work adjustment, and emotional support facilitates interaction adjustment and reduces the level of stress for expatriates. Social support within the organization can come from new colleagues, whether they themselves are expatriates or host-country locals. Additionally, the organization can provide to expatriates clear information on what to do and what not to do, which is even more important in cases when the novelty of the organisational culture of the host country subsidiary is high (Konanahalli, Oyedele, von Meding, Spillane, & Coates, 2012). Shaffer et al. (1999) find that social support is a positive predictor of expatriate adjustment. Also, according to Toh and Denisi (2005), all three kinds of organizational support (informational, co-operational, and emotional) facilitate expatriate adjustment.

Logistical support (2); As relocation to a new and unfamiliar environment is a very **stressful event** for an individual, everything that can ease this process of relocation is more than welcome. Organisational support on the logistical front is essential as it helps to reduce the amount of time expatriates spend on these issues (Aycan, 1997), not to mention stress related to them. It includes matters such as visas, work permits, housing, school for expatriate children, and medical insurance. It is provided either

by the organization employing the expatriate or by a special external organization hired by the employer. Such support facilitates the adjustment to the new work set-up (Aycan, 1997).

Mentoring (3); The purpose of mentoring is to help to reduce any uncertainty associated with the new environment and culture and to make the expatriate feel more comfortable with his or her new work group. Additionally it helps expatriates to more easily assimilate into the host culture (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002). According to Volard, Francis and Wagner (1988), a mentor is an individual who provides assistance in learning and understanding the culture of the assigned country. They see mentoring as an additional aspect of social support. As mentors can also be host nationals, SIEs who are mentored not only adjust to work more quickly but also start interacting effectively with locals.

Last group, influencing the general and interaction aspects of SIE adjustment is the group of other factors:

Social support outside of the organization (1); Social support outside of the organization can come from either other expatriates from other countries who have been in the country for a longer time or host nationals that the SIE meets in the new country outside of the work environment. It might also come from a family already living in the new country. Studies suggest that social support has a positive impact on the ability of expatriates to adapt to the new environment (Brewster and Scullion, 1997). If expatriates are unable or unwilling to form social relationships, this will most likely lead to loneliness characterized by boredom and alienation (Weiss, 1973).

Marital status (2); Alshammari (2012) studied the role of marital status on the adjustment among SIEs at Saudi universities and his study did not indicate any significant difference between three types of SIE ("married with family," "married without family," and "single") and their cultural adjustment. According to Morley and Flynn (2003), single expatriates adjust better to work than married people.

Family and spouse adjustment (3); Family and spouse adjustment refers to the psychological comfort experienced by the spouse and children (Shaffer et al., 1999). This type of adjustment is very important, as a child's maladjustment to the new host nation negatively affects the sojourner's own adjustment (Bhatti et al., 2012). Some previous studies indicate that the inability for the spouse or family to adjust to the new environment is one of the most common reasons for failure among TAEs (Black and Stephens, 1989; Harvey, 1985).

Country cultural novelty (4); Cultural novelty can be defined as perceived distance between the host and home cultures (Shaffer et al., 1999) or as the extent of cultural differences between the home and the host country (Shenkar, 2001); it can also be likened to cultural toughness (Konanahalli et al., 2012). Several authors (Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Stening, 1979) argue that the cultural novelty of the host country can increase expatriates' uncertainty; it can increase the level of expatriates' doubts and accordingly present the expatriates with adjustment difficulties.

4   METHODOLOGY

4.1   Research questions and research framework

The research part of this thesis is structured such that it follows the three main research questions defined at the beginning of the thesis:

1.   What is the key trigger that drives the initial decision for an SIE to move abroad?

2.   What are the most common adjustment-related challenges experienced by SIE while adjusting to the new environment?

3.   Which adjustment factors ease and accordingly positively influence the adjustment of SIEs to the new environment?

To answer these research questions, a qualitative framework was used instead of a quantitative one, as qualitative methods are based on information that is expressed with words, opinions and feelings (Patton, 2005). In addition, with this method, the researcher tries to understand the problem in more detail (Walliman, 2006).

Qualitative research methods include various types of interviewing, archival research, and participants' observation (Myers and Avison, 2002). For this study, interviewing was selected as the most suitable method, because we are trying to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of SIE, SIEs' motives for expatriation, and in particular the challenges they face while adjusting, since this field in SIE literature has hardly been researched. It is a conversational practice wherein knowledge is gathered through the interaction between researcher and interviewee or respondent (Given, 2008). Various types of interviews are possible (Russell, 2006), from informal interviews (1) and unstructured interactions (2) to semi-structured situations (3) and highly formal interactions with interviewees (4).

I have selected semi-structured interviews as the main method for this study, combined partially with the informal interviews in some phases in order to further gather or confirm more personal and sensitive data, as some topics covered by the research (adjustment challenges, escape from unpleasant situation at home) are very personal and sensitive and accordingly not every individual is able or willing to share such experiences out loud, especially when recorded on audio.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the main method because they allow in-depth discussions with candidates who share their stories and experiences. Semi-structured interviews, also called "in-depth interviews," are a scheduled activity. They are the best way of interviewing for situations in which the researcher does not have more than one chance to interview someone. They have much of the "freewheeling" quality of unstructured interviewing and are open ended, but are based on the use of an interview guide, a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a certain order (Russell, 2006). Semi-structured interviewing demonstrates that the researcher is in full in control of what he or she wants from an interview but also allows the freedom to follow new leads to both the researcher and interviewee (Russell, 2006).

Informal interviews are characterized by a complete lack of structure or control. In this type of interview, the researcher tries to remember the conversations that he or she heard during the course of a day. Accordingly, informal interviews require constant notetaking and daily sessions behind a computer based on memory that result in a kind of "field notes" (Russell, 2006). This method is usually chosen at the beginning of participant observation fieldwork, when the researcher is settling in, but can also be used throughout ethnographic fieldwork to uncover new topics of interest that might have otherwise been overlooked (Russell, 2006). With this type of interview, the researcher needs to remember a lot. The researcher needs dive into private corners a lot and to be able to note things down. A lot of deception is also needed so people do not realize that they are being studied. Informal research also can and should be combined with more structured methods, when and if circumstances allow it (Russell, 2006).

4.2 Research design

4.2.1 Sample

For the interviews, 14 candidates were selected who were self-initiated expatriates at the time of the interview. 12 of them work in the corporate sector, while two candidates work for one of the European institutions. Of the two candidates working for European institutions, one is a friend and the other volunteered for the interview

after my post in a social media group. Other candidates that participated in the interview work in the headquarters of an international telecommunication company that provides services to mobile network operators worldwide. This organisation provided me the list of all non-Belgian employees, with details on gender, country of origin, job title and period working for the company. As only the non-Belgian employees working for headquarters were listed, this automatically excludes any potentially traditionally assigned expatriates from consideration as candidates.

Furthermore, in order to be sure that the candidates do fall under the category of self-initiated expatriates and not migrants, sojourners, or international students who stayed in the country after their studies, a short pre-selection interview was carried out to check the key criteria for SIEs as defined in chapter one. Additionally, in order to have as representative sample as possible, some other facts were also taken into consideration:

- SIEs who were selected had to be expatriated for more than a year, guaranteeing the possibility of better exploring their adjustment challenges and adjustment process;

- SIEs were chosen so that approximately half of the candidates spoke one of the national languages, enabling an exploration of the influence of "language fluency" on their adjustment challenges;

- their origin was taken into consideration so that approximately half of the candidates came from neighbouring countries or from Europe and the other half from further away, enabling an analysis of the influence of "cultural novelty" on their adjustment challenges;

- their marital or personal relationship status was considered so that approximately half of the candidates were either married, moving with family or with a partner, or following a partner, and half were single and moving alone, allowing an analysis of differences in adjustment for those of different relationship statuses.

One other major criterion was personal judgement. I selected candidates who I believed would be willing to open up and share their stories in more depth. Russell (2006) clearly states that not everyone who volunteers to be interviewed is a good respondent.

The complete sample includes individuals of a variety of origins; eight come from neighbouring countries (4) or other countries in the European Union (4) and six come from other continents or other countries outside of Europe (e.g. Russia). There were eight women and six men, the majority of whom were in their thirties. Six of them spoke one of the national languages when they arrived, and five of these spoke it as their native language or very fluently. Five of the interviewees relocated while

single, while the others either were married, moved with family, moved with a partner, or followed their partner to the host country. Details of the sample are presented in appendix A.

4.2.2 Procedure

All the interviews were arranged in advance and took place face-to-face in the area of Brussels. They were held either at the interviewee's work place, in the privacy of meeting rooms, or at the researcher's home, in order to assure privacy and to eliminate any external noise and interruptions. They took between 30 and 90 mins, depending mainly on how freely candidates were willing to share their stories and how much depth they were willing to go into. They were all recorded on audio and later transcribed by a transcriptionist.

All interviewees were informed about the purpose of this research and gave their consent to use the data in my Master's thesis. Anonymity was promised to all interviewees and therefore no names, countries of origin, or similar personal data are mentioned in this thesis. The interviews were split into four main parts. The first part was conducted with five questions with the intention to re-confirm that the candidate is a self-initiated expatriate and to gather some general information about them (e.g. country of origin, age, marital status), and was followed by the other three parts exploring the three research questions (see interview protocol in appendix B).

5 RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND ITS FINDINGS

5.1 Motivation for the self-expatriation of SIEs

5.1.1 Initial trigger for first expatriation as SIEs

Past research, as presented in the chapter two, does not make any distinction between the motives for first expatriation as SIEs and subsequent relocations to new countries. As I am interested into the initial trigger for the first expatriation of SIEs, I will do so. This will allow me to explore the first research of the thesis, the question of the key initial trigger for the expatriation of SIEs (is it an unexpected job opportunity from a new employer abroad, and if not, what are other most common motivation factors that motivate an individual to start searching for opportunities abroad). I consider the answers of only those interviewees who left home as SIEs when they moved abroad for the first time. Out of 14 interviewees who were SIEs at the time of the interview, ten moved as SIEs when they left their home country for

the first time. The other four became SIEs later, with their second move; when they originally left their home country, they either left as flex-patriates, having been sent on various projects, as self-initiated corporate expatriates (i.e., they moved abroad themselves, were employed on local contracts, and stayed under the umbrella of the same organization), or decided to leave a stable and well paying job behind in order to do an international MBA abroad and then later moved as SIEs to another country, as one of them explains: *"I knew it would be very difficult to find a job abroad just like that, so I thought studying abroad first would be a good step that would ease my process of finding a job that would allow me to live abroad."* Accordingly, in order to explore the question of key initial trigger for SIE expatriation, we can consider answers of only those 10 SIEs who moved as SIEs when they left their home country. A detailed analysis of how many interviewees can be considered to have answered this question is presented in table 2 in appendix C.

Out of those ten SIEs, three received an unexpected job opportunity that triggered their decision to move abroad, while the majority, the other seven SIEs, had other motives to move abroad and only then searched for the job opportunity that would allow them to live abroad (Figure 5). All of them had taken a proactive approach to finding a job that would allow their expatriation. Two of them explain their story as follows: *"It's not very easy to stay in India and find a job in Europe... it took me six to eight months to find the best opportunity I could..."* The other says: *"It really took me a year, from the moment I took a decision, to the point where I also found the job, agreed on the job, and signed a contract. And it was a long and not an easy process. A long process of thinking on where, and what could I do and where could I find something, where would someone want me. I didn't know where to start and where to search. I still remember applying for jobs that would never fit to my profile... it took quite a while to figure out... I remember it was not an easy year when the all search was going on."*

Figure 5. Analysis of initial trigger for SIEs to expatriate
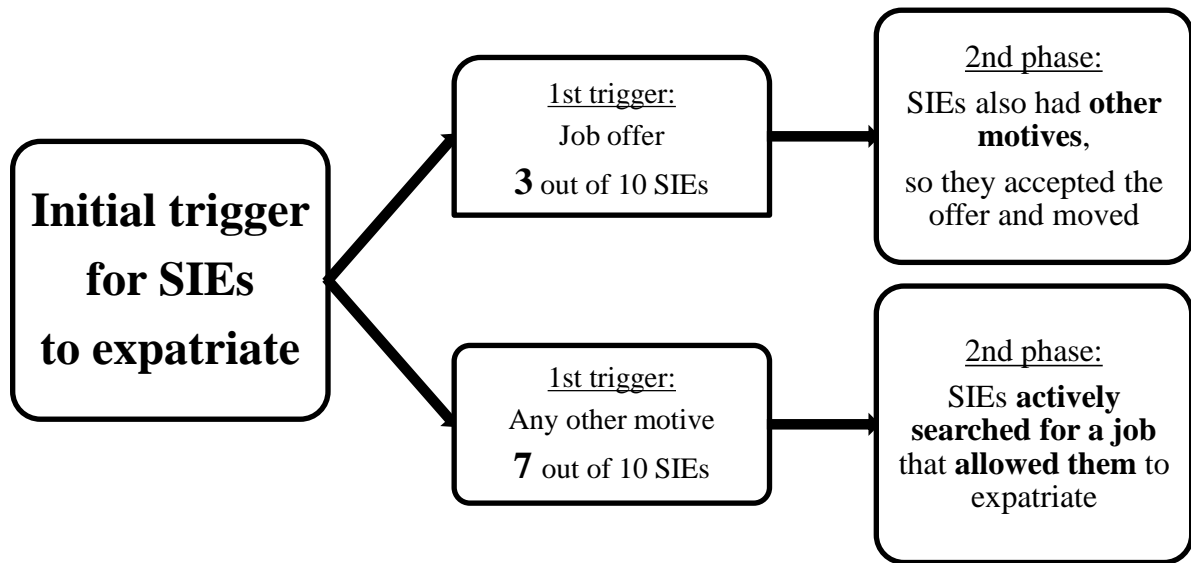
Analysis of past research further shows that just an "unexpected job opportunity" is not enough to motivate those 3 SIEs that received one to relocate abroad. All of them who received an unexpected job opportunity also had other reasons that influenced their decision. This is how one of them explains his story: *"So I received an email offering me the position… They found me through the university… they selected people on the IT course and then they contact them directly through an agency… So was more or less all done for me.. I had it in my head that I would like to move abroad…. First was the thought to move abroad but I have done nothing to find a job abroad. But this job offer came early enough..."* This same SIE then talks about the other reasons that he had the idea of moving abroad on his mind: *"both of my parents have lived abroad, worked abroad. My grandparents also lived and worked abroad, my sister lived and worked abroad. I think everyone would have been a bit disappointed if I hadn't done something abroad. And for myself of course."* Another SIE who had a job offered to him shares his path: *"I knew what was it to live abroad, so it was an opportunity to live abroad with the family. But we are not deep involved in the search like 'oh, we want to live abroad.' It was more the opportunity that triggered the decision. I took the decision also thinking that for the kids would have been interesting to have another culture, to see something else more than Paris… to have more friends coming from all over the world."* And he further reconfirms, *"Yes exactly, it was the opportunity first, and then 'ok why not.'"* An overview of other reasons for these three SIEs is presented in more detail in table 4 in appendix C.

5.1.2 Other motives driving SIEs to first expatriation

An analysis of the motives of the seven SIEs who had additional motives (and a job offer) to expatriate shows that almost all of them (6) had more than one motive that triggered the decision to expatriate. An SIE who moved due to family and financial motives explains: *"I was looking for a job in which I would get paid well, but will be able to spend more time with my family as well…while having well paid job that involves less travelling in India is not possible."* The other SIE explains the combination of her motives like this: *"…this feeling of living abroad, of seeing different places and exploring other cultures… but also to have more independent life… and I thought it would be easier to find a boyfriend abroad… I didn't want to have a Slovenian boyfriend because I thought they were all boring."*

The majority of other motives identified in the literature were found, except for those that fit into "improving personal abilities and skills" and those that are linked to "location" itself as the reason for expatriation. SIEs would choose Brussels, for example, due to various reasons like proximity to home, similarity of the culture, and prior knowledge of the city, but for none of the interviewees was the primary reason to leave their home country the fact that they always wanted to live in Belgium or Brussels. The most common motives driving the interviewees to find an opportunity abroad belong to the group "search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experience" (3 SIEs had this motive). This is how two of them explain this motive for expatriation: *"So already quite early I felt a certain drive for moving abroad, having that experience of living abroad… when I was around 23 I wanted to go and study abroad, but I never really took a decision… so I wanted to have this experience in my life, I wanted to tick that box."* Another young SIE explains: *"I would say in terms of personal development, financial opportunities, abroad is much more attractive than Ukraine, but for me there were no reason why I would want to leave Ukraine. Was more that I wanted to live in another country."* What is interesting to see is that all SIEs whose motives to expatriate are linked to the search for adventure, new challenges, and foreign experience were single or without family at the time of their first expatriation as SIEs. All other motives (except the search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experience) were equally (2 SIEs had this particular motive) represented and are further in more details presented in a table 5 of appendix C). Statements of SIEs explaining their motives for expatriation are below.

Two SIEs mention that they moved abroad also in order to move away from an unpleasant situation at home or in a home country (escape-related motive): *"I had good career.. but was very stressful, I wasn't happy.. I though of the idea of new life… I had a tough personal period…I was having really hard time, I found myself like I wasn't happy at all, so coming here was a relief to breath, to start something*

new from scratch.." The other SIE describes this as following: *" When you are in your 20s you really don't want to live with your family.. especially if you don't have such a perfect relationship… also I wanted really to get out of this Slovene mentality… it was like getting away from… it felt it was limiting, claustrophobic, it was like a dead end for me. Feeling of not belonging there, nobody could understand me.*" An SIE whose motivation to expatriate was linked to family reasons remembers his motivation as follows: *"the trigger was really a comfort reason to raise a kid,"* which can also be linked to other expected benefits. Two SIEs who mentioned motives linked to expected financial benefits did not have this motive as a primary one; instead it was linked to another motive. This is how they share their point of view on this motive: *"I was looking for a job in which I would get paid well, but will be able to spend more time with my family as well."* The other SIE replies to the question of why she wanted to live in another country as follows: *"To have a better career development, which would give me a bigger international network, bigger financial input…"* In her answer we immediately also see motives linked to career. Last but not least, two SIEs also had motives linked to personal relationships: *"…my boyfriend at that time was living here."* The other SIE also replies clearly to the question of why she moved to Belgium: *"to join my boyfriend."* Detailed analysis of all motives with quotes of all SIEs is presented in table 5 in appendix C.

In addition to the above motives, there were three new motives identified; it was not possible to group them into any other group of motives previously defined by the literature. One SIE describes her trigger to expatriate as an SIE by saying, *"It was actually an inner drive…it felt like an invisible force, that I never could explain, but it was always there, and in a certain moment I just said 'ok'… I cannot describe it differently, an invisible force, something pulling me…"* The other motive not belonging to any of the groups was described by one SIE as follows: *"so it was like an opportunity to be more independent, to have a more independent life"* and *" I thought it would be easier to find a boyfriend abroad, I didn't want to have a Slovenian boyfriend because I though they were all boring."*

Among the interviewees there were three individuals who expatriated from their home country as SIEs and also moved again later, still as SIEs. It was interesting to compare their motives for first expatriation as SIEs to their motives for subsequent relocations to other countries. This comparison shows, that the motives for further relocation are usually different from those of the initial expatriation as SIEs. A more detailed overview of those differences, with concrete quotes of the three SIEs, is presented in table 6 of appendix C.

5.1.3 Escape-related motives

What I find very interesting is that escape-related motives are very much present throughout all the moves of all SIEs interviewed, no matter whether they expatriated for the first time from their home country as SIEs or initially left their home country either as flex-patriates, as international students, or as self-initiated corporate expatriates and only later became SIEs with subsequent move(s). We find the presence of this motive in the case of 64% of interviewees (9 out of 14 interviewees), which I find a surprising outcome. Detailed analysis of this motive is shown in table 7 in appendix C, but here are some concrete statements. A French SIE who initially moved as a self-initiated corporate expatriate, answers the question of why he moved from France in this way: *"Change!.. getting out of my comfort zone, I was tired of France…"* He further adds: *"to unchain myself from the family…"* A guy who leaves home to do an MBA abroad and later becomes an SIE shares his story as follows: *"I was fed up by that time. It was a lot of work. I wanted to change my career, I wanted to renovate my life, and I wanted to do something different… When I was there I had a girlfriend in Mexico, and I was kind of about to get married and I escaped."*

5.2 Adjustment challenges of SIEs

Analyzing and grouping the most common challenges of adjustment to the new life and environment resulted in 20 different challenges that SIEs face, out of which 14 are common to at least 2 SIEs and six are specific to an individual situation (e.g. challenges linked to delivery of a child). All challenges and their ranking are also presented in table 8 in appendix C.

For almost all SIEs - 11 out of 14 - who participated in the research, one of the biggest challenges was adjusting to the **weather conditions (1)** in Belgium, which we can see illustrated by various SIEs' statements: *"The only thing I underestimated was the weather… when we saw winter.. that was difficult for us.";* *"I think weather was and has been the only big challenge in my move."* and *"it was quite a shock, because it was very grey and humid. I am really sensitive to weather, so it was a big shock."*

The next most common challenge is linked to **loneliness** and the fact that SIEs are on their own and are not able to talk to anyone about the problems and issues they face (2). Seven out of 14 SIEs stress this challenge, and all of those who mention this challenge moved abroad without family or a partner. One SIE describes this: *"The biggest challenge was just feeling completely alone, on your own. Alone. So coming home in the evenings on your own. It's a lonely existence. It's a very lonely*

existence." Others say: *"wow that was really one of the worst times in my life, really bad time. Totally alone, totally like isolated, nobody was taking care of me."*

The next most common group of challenges, faced by almost half of SIEs, was linked to the **cultural differences (3)** themselves. Six out of the 14 interviewed were annoyed by cultural differences that can be further grouped into five sub-groups. Cultural differences linked to the environment (I) is the first such subgroup; five SIEs talk about such challenges: *"So my street was just full of garbage, and I still remember…. even after six, eight months…i just couldn't get used to that. I was just annoyed. … so coming from [the country this SIE used to live in] to here, where everything is grayish and half done… just trashy and dog shit all over."* The other SIE says something similar: *"The mere fact that you cannot walk quietly in the street and do window shopping because you might fall into one of the holes in the pavement of Belgian streets… for me it was out of the range that I would have assigned to a Western European country."* The next most common in this group of challenges are the challenges linked to poor service in restaurants and supermarkets (II). Three SIEs struggle with this; one of them notes: *"I have to queue 10 minutes, and once I am in front I see a beautiful blonde lady, and when I ask if can I have a tea, the feeling is almost like that I am telling her 'sorry if I am making you work,' because she doesn't want to. She's unfriendly, totally unfriendly, and you feel like sh… And you feel like that when you go to have lunch, or have dinner, or when you have to go to the dry cleaning…every single service in the city sucks, and this is something I cannot support."* Three SIEs also struggle with cultural differences expressed in the daily habits of people (III), saying *"I think that is the people. Is the culture of being very close, and rude… and aggressiveness and self-importance of people, that is really that presents my biggest challenge to get used to. Or to overcome."* Several (3) SIEs also struggle with cultural differences linked to apartments (IV); one SIE says: *"So the apartments, they were quite old fashioned and they asked a lot of money for them. There were small cultural differences, like they like to put tiles in their apartments… and everything was so cold. I had a single glazed window, no proper heating and stuff like that. So it was a bit of a cultural shock then".* Last group of challenges within this group are linked to daily routine (V). A woman of Latin origin explains: *"The moving to Belgium was more difficult, because here you need to plan. Everything, the social aspect, how things work, everything is much more distant, a bit colder or independent. So … that was a little bit more difficult for me. Being Latin in which we are very much social, warm, we find any excuse to have a party, to talk forever…for example at home my parents would have the key to my house and they can come whenever they want. But here the space are very much private, contained, you need to plan in advance, you need to make appointment for everything. And this for me was tough, cold….."*

For five out of 14 SIEs, one of the main challenges was the fact that **they did not speak the foreign language (4)**. This is how they explain: *"In Belgium it is all in French, but I was not so familiar with this bureaucratic French, so it was also a bit hard."* The other SIE replies to the question of how it was not being able to speak local language in this way: *"It was terrible…when you want to complain in the shop about the bad service…and you don't even know how to explain. And also to organize yourself for your daily life. At the commune for example they don't speak any other language, they are militant francophone."*

Three different types of challenges remain that were mentioned by four out of 14 SIEs. One such challenge is that of **changing every aspect of one's life**, of pressing, so to speak, the "reset" button and starting life from scratch (5). One SIE explains this as follows: *"People usually in life, they maybe move just apartment, some people they just brake up in their relationship, some people, they just go into another town, so they move just environment, but it's still the same country, the same language, they still know what numbers to dial, if they need something. Some people just move a job, everything else stays the same. What we do, especially if we don't move within the company umbrella, we basically cut everything, every single pillar of our lives. So you go into the new environment, new country, new language area, new city. You leave friends behind, and family…. Everything is new so there is nothing that is the same as you had before, and the only basis that you have it's you."*

The next challenge is linked to **lack of support in finding an apartment and otherwise settling down (6).** One SIE states: *"the biggest challenge… it was not only in the office the coldness of the people, but also trying to find an apartment the first two weeks. The company doesn't give you the right support as an expat, not knowing the language, not knowing how things work. Not knowing where everything is. They don't give the right support to get properly settled. … I was getting an email from HR, after 3 weeks saying that 'look we are not longer gonna pay for your stay in the hotel, you are gonna have to move out' and this is when I didn't find a suitable apartment and I had to every evening leave work, jump on the bus with my Google maps and go to look at an apartment that I set up with a new owner, and just running all over the place not knowing anything, not knowing anywhere, not knowing anyone. Terrible."*

The next most common challenges are linked to **having no friends** and the fact that it is difficult to make friends, as it takes effort and energy (7). One SIE, on the question of how he met new friends, replies: *"It was hard, very hard… so my aim was to meet five people. And I found them after eight months… I was going out, going out. And travelling by own. I was talking with people in the train, in the bus, in the bar, in the park, asking for email, asking for Facebook, trying to connect,*

trying to push. It's s exhausting… And you have to develop friends, because it's not like ok, now we are friends. It takes time, time, time, and effort."

The eighth most common challenge is linked to information overload (even for very simple things) and administrative procedures and tasks to deal with simultaneously (8) (e.g. finding an apartment, and in parallel dealing with the administration, sorting out electricity, etc.). One woman who moved by herself explains this as follows: *"it's not easy, it's often frustrating, because you often struggle with a lot of stuff at the same of time. There's tons of new information that you get, from simple things that to everyone usually seems easy…just where to go to the market, how to arrange electricity, where is the post office, what is the French name for this and that… everything is new when you come. Your brain really needs to process a lot of information, so you end up being just tired from simple stuff. That for me was a challenge."*

Next are challenges that represent a struggle for two SIEs. I list them briefly with at least one quote confirming each. One SIE felt pressure from HR to settle down (9) (see previous quote). Two ladies, both from cultures where family ties are important, talk about the challenge of being away from family and leaving parents behind at home (10): *"But my biggest worry was my mother… she's living in Madrid alone…. So I was worried to leave my mum alone. I feel really guilty. So for me this was really hard. I felt really guilty."*

Among the pool of interviewees there were two SIEs who moved with family; both mention challenges related to the adjustment of their wives (11). For one couple, it was not easy for the spouse to find a job as they expected; the other spouse does not work and misses her family.

What is a surprising outcome is the challenge linked to processing of all the new inspirations one encounters (12) due to meeting people from so many different countries and backgrounds. One woman describes it this way: *"I felt a little victim of all these influences, of everything that is different. So it's a huge sort of avalanche of different influences, inspirations, that comes over you, that can kind of flee you away sometimes."* The other explains, *"going away from your own environment…you suddenly see tons of opportunity, you have this sense of freedom, of choice. You suddenly have the feeling if I can do this I can do whatever. You suddenly see tons of things around you that you have never noticed before…. i simply got lost in that huge 'store' of choices! I very often felt like a small kid coming to the huge store of toys or candies…just being overwhelmed by all opportunities, and things you can do, different lifestyles, different people, what they do, and the fact that there's much more to the world."*

Last but not least among challenges mentioned by at least two interviewees is the challenge of lack of social support in the organization (13). One SIE talks about it in the following way: *"on the first place I try to find friends in the office, and the people they wouldn't even talk to you. You say hello, good morning and they wouldn't answer...within my first couple of days, there was a department event and normally I think I am very sociable, really talkative, really friendly, and so as a new girl I made it to my point of duty to go around, to talk with people, and to introduce myself...and it went very well that night. But the following day no one spoke to me. At all, at all. I would be passing someone, I would give a smile and say 'hello' and they would not respond. Literally not respond."*

Six other challenges were identified through the study. I consider those challenges only mentioned by one SIE to be very personal and related to the individual situation. One SIE who was joining her partner who had moved earlier names the challenge of building her own network outside that of her partner (15). An SIE whose wife was about to deliver just a few months after the move talks about the challenges linked to the delivery of the child (16), like finding a doctor and a hospital, making medical insurance claims, etc. For another SIE who had never lived by herself, living on her own for the first time (17) represents a challenge. For a woman who moved to Belgium because her partner lived here, not finding a job immediately (18) represented a challenge. For another SIE, the first few weeks when she was living with other people (19) before moving into her own apartment were challenging, while for another SIE not having a valid driving licence (due to different regulations) and not being able to drive around (20) also represented a big challenge.

5.3   Adjustment factors easing the adjustment process of SIEs

5.3.1   Adjustment factors from the model of SIE cross-cultural adjustment

According to the results of this study, the following adjustment factors ease the adjustment process of SIEs.

Individual factor "**Language fluency";** Four out of 14 SIEs interviewed were fluent in the language of the country they moved to, three had some basic knowledge, and the other seven did not speak the local language. The fluent four all had a much easier time adjusting and faced far fewer obstacles. An SIE who was fluent in French says, "*so everything that had to do with settling down, like arranging electricity supplier, paying bills, registration at the commune etc. for me it was extremely easy, because I never felt this language barrier. So I was more then comfortable."* Another one says, "*The language of course. It makes massive, massive change. It's much easier..."* On the other hand, those who did not speak the

local language very often in the interviews mentions that this posed a struggle when adjusting to the new environment: *"in Austria, even though my German wasn't fluent, I could understand and read… so reading specification in the market, asking some basic question, where do I find this and that…. just searching on the Internet. It was easier. And if you don't speak the language, you are more dependent on help."* Another SIE answers the question of how it was not speaking the language in this way: *"Terrible…it was not so good. So I made a big effort to learn French."* From this we can conclude that speaking the local language does make the adjustment process easier and thus the adjustment factor of "language fluency" **does ease** the adjustment of SIEs.

Organizational factor "Social support within organization"; Of the 14 SIEs interviewed, 2 moved here without a job as they were following a partner, while among the remaining 12 only 2 felt that they were lacking social support within their organization. For those two SIEs, it seemed that the fact that they did not have this social support within organization represented quite a frustration. One SIE describes her experience like this: *"on the first place I try to find friends in the office, and the people they wouldn't even talk you. You say 'hello, good morning'… and they wouldn't answer...within my first couple of days, there was a department event and normally I think I am very sociable, really talkative, really friendly, and so as a new girl I made it to my point of duty to go around, to talk with people, and to introduce myself...and it went very well that night. But the following day no one spoke to me. At all, at all. I would be passing someone, I would give a smile and say 'hello' and they would not respond. Literally not respond."* Another SIE talks about the positive influence of social support within the organization like this: *"There was another colleague that we spent quite a lot of time together, because we started on the first day, so we were in the same situation from the beginning. So that was good. There were few colleagues who were quite open, my manager was very open. And helpful. Ok more during the office time but still."* It is indeed in the organization where an SIE first starts searching for social contacts and can get first practical tips from other expatriates about settling down, which confirms the experience of another SIE: *"First friends were in the organization. I remember the next day after I came there was this guy from another department that also moved from India few months before us. So he was there to receive us, and to help us. He was the first guy I knew through a common friend. So that was a good thing that we had at that point."* Accordingly we can conclude that getting (or not getting) such social support within the organization does either hinder or enable the adjustment process of an SIE.

Organizational factor "Logistical support"; The majority of SIEs (10 out of 14) participating in this study received certain logistical support from their organization (of the other four, two moved to follow their partner and only later found a job). From the answers we get from SIE, the fact that the organization provides logistical

support does positively help with adjustment. We can see this in the answer given by one SIE: "*But otherwise the integration was quite simple. First of all because due to relocation service, even if it was not perfect. But that was really helping us, at least to avoid a lot of paper work to do…*" At the same time, when speaking with SIEs about logistical support it also becomes clear, that even though companies do provide such logistical support, more could usually be done. Some SIEs express themselves as follows: "*But on the other side relocation agency was not so reactive. They could have been more reactive. Especially when you arrive, you have plenty of questions and you would like to have your answer right now. But the answers take some time to come. So this was a bit stressing…*" and "*Because HR thinks that helping you to move your stuff from a country to another is enough…if they find you a flat is enough…, but then what, you are in your flat and then?*"

Other factor "Social support outside of organization"; The majority of SIEs (10 out of 14) who participated in the research had some sort of social support outside the organization, either by knowing some people from before, having a family member here, or having a partner already here, and most of them describe this as being welcome and helpful in the first few months in a new country. One SIE who moved here to join her partner here explains it in this way: "*…You come into a life, and although you want to build your own life and circle, at the beginning everything was beautiful….it's perfect! You have a home… You have a group already…because of different circumstances he was with a Spanish delegation, so 90% of his friends are Spanish, a coincidence! So for me I come to a group that is Spanish, I talk the same language, the same culture, it's amazing! It's easy!*" A British SIE describes meeting people outside the office like this: "*it was quite a few people from university back home, similar age, other people who came from the UK with a kind of similar background. So we were a kind of group, going out here and there...There was a guy, it was a contractor, and I used to hang around with. We lived close, we were quite similar people. So we probably meet up somewhere, go to a bar, and then perhaps arrange or bump into somebody else. It was also quite effortless.*" On the other hand, a majority of SIEs who did not know any people outside of the office, or even if they did, did not get much support from them, talk about this fact with bitterness: "*…so I arrived here, and two classmates from Spain, one Belgian and one Philippine, they are married. I have seen them two times in two years…so it really doesn't count. They didn't help at all.*" Another SIE had a similar experience: "*…and the thing was that all the friends with whom I shared things like hiking, they stayed in Luxemburg, so suddenly I was only with people who wanted to sit around, have a coffee or a drink, and going to the cinema, all very 'city' activities. So I felt very alone.*" This clearly indicates that this factor also eases or hinders adjustment of SIEs.

Other factor "Marital status"; Six out of 14 SIEs were single when relocating abroad, while the other eight were either unmarried but in stable relationships or married. In the stories SIEs tell about their adjustment challenges and experiences, we can see that both groups face very different challenges. An SIE who was single when he relocated abroad for the first time but had a partner the second time compares the experiences in this way: *"I would say it's easier to move by yourself or with someone, it's just very different. Moving with someone pushes you a lot to move fast, in whatever. Because you have to look after someone else as well... When you are two you can talk about things ...When you move by yourself you can get stuff organized, have fun and enjoy the country but when you move with someone you can talk, share feelings and impressions...There is bad side and good side in both..."* Nevertheless, it soon becomes clear that the six SIEs who were married or in relationships when they relocated abroad (no matter whether they followed their partner abroad or relocated together), had a "gentler" adjustment process, with far fewer frustrations than those who moved abroad by themselves. The stories I heard from those who were married or moving with or following partners never contain the difficulties of the stories from single SIEs. This is also confirmed by the fact that challenges linked to loneliness and the fact that SIEs are on their own and not able to talk to anyone about the problems and issues they face was ranked as the second most common challenge. Basically all SIEs face this challenge. Further statements of single SIEs reveal what kind of experience this is: *"And there is no one you can rely on, there is no partner at home that when you are down pulls you up, and when he or she is down you pull him up and you kind of go though this together...it's you and you have to rely on, you depend on yourself."* Accordingly, we can clearly conclude that marital status does influence the ease of the adjustment process.

Other factor "Family and /or spouse adjustment"; As mentioned above, eight out of 14 SIEs moved while married or having a partner, out of which only three also had children at the time of their relocation. Those with children do not directly mention difficulties or challenges due to the maladjustment of kids to the new environment, mainly as in all cases the children were quite young. One SIE describes how his daughter became accustomed to the new environment: *"For my daughter it was pretty much ok, because she has nothing to compare, as she's three now. For her I think it has been the most comfortable, because she's just getting everything new."* But two out of the eight who moved while married or having a partner do mention the adjustment challenges of their partners. Especially one SIE whose wife does not work in the host country talks about the fact that this relocation is not the easiest for her: *"for my wife it was not that easy, it was a little difficult for her... I think she misses her family more, because she sees less people than me... also for her it was more difficult because she doesn't work and she just didn't have the reason to get out of the house."* Accordingly, we can say that the ability of spouses or family members to adjust to the new environment **does influence the**

adjustment process of SIEs. We can confirm this with the statement of an SIE whose wife did not feel comfortable where they were, which triggered them to move again closer to her family: *"Because the second time I had also to follow the desires of my wife, because she feels much better in French speaking country (being French herself). So we lived together one year in Australia. And for her to cope day-to-day with English, was not working. So the situation was a bit difficult. Here everything is easier. Here she can cope easily with all the painful stuff to get done."*

Other factor "Cultural novelty"; For the majority of SIEs interviewed (10 out of 14), the Belgian environment was new and different from a cultural novelty point of view. This was not the case only for SIEs coming from other continents such as Mexico or India, but also for SIEs coming from other European countries such as Slovenia or Austria. Through the interviews it is clearly seen that the cultural novelty of the new environment has a big influence on the ease of the adjustment process. SIEs coming from neighbouring countries, especially those from France (as France has a culture very similar to that of Brussels) all had an easy adjustment process: *"...for French guy going to Brussels, is one of the easiest thing... when you come from France you have the vision of Brussels like ok, like if you go to another part of France."* Another French SIE moving to Brussels from Paris said the same: *"...comparing expatriation from Paris to Belgium ... is like expatriation for dummies, it's like level 0 of expatriation because is very easy. Short distance, no language barriers, the systems are quite similar. So yeah, really everything is alike. And then when you are here for a long time you notice the small differences, in language, in habits of people, in culture and so on. But it's very small details. I'm sure that if I move from Paris to South of France I would experience the same cultural differences. They are as numerous than moving from Paris to Brussels. So that's not, is not that challenging."*

By contrast, SIEs from different cultures talk about cultural differences as follows. A woman from another European country describes her first weeks in this way: *"I have to say, it was quite a shock. I had imagined Brussels as the capital of Europe, it must be in my view a glorious city... But it was a big surprise that it wasn't at all the case. The mere fact that you cannot walk quietly in the street and do window shopping because you might fall into one of the holes in the pavement of Belgian streets... it was, for me it was out of the range that I would have assigned to a Western European country..."* An SIE from further away describes her observation of the cultural differences even more dramatically: *"Dirty, dirty and dirty again in the city center where I finally found an apartment in Ixelles. Dirt, dog mess everywhere, people spitting in the street, that I am not used to. I mean, back home people spit on the street, but they spit in the corner, or...they don't spit right in the sidewalk were people are walking.... a guy almost spit on my one morning. I also found it very annoying that they would fine you if you not recycle properly, but they*

don't fine the people who are not picking up after their dogs. There is some kind of disconnect. On top of that, another thing, eating out or buying food in the supermarket, how people just use their hands to pick up everything, handling money and using the same hand to take the food without gloves… it's so non-hygienic."

5.3.2 Adjustment factors for which positive influence on the adjustment of SIE was not identified

Individual factor "Previous expatriate experience"; The majority of SIEs (12 out of 14) had some sort of previous "living abroad" experience, but not necessarily an expatriate one. One SIE lived abroad a lot with his family as a child, one studied in Belgium for 18 months while in university, and another SIE travelled a lot as a short-term flex-patriate within a previous organization before relocating as an SIE. Of these 12 who had previous abroad experience, six SIEs had concrete expatriate experience, either as SIEs or TAEs. And in conversation with the SIEs who had previous expatriate experience, we see that the fact of having been an expatriate before did not really make the adjustment process easier, as would be expected. For example, a woman who had lived as a TAE in various countries before moving to Belgium had gone through one of the most difficult adjustment phases after arriving here in Belgium. It is this woman who answers the question, "How were your first six months here in Belgium?" by saying, *"It was terrible. Terrible."* It is also this woman who replies to the question of how she was coping with the situation and if she had searched for help in this way: *"with wine, no kidding. I used to buy a bottle every night. I stopped at the Delhaize (local grocery market) on my way home and I would buy a bottle of wine every single evening and I would drink the wine."* Another woman who had moved abroad as an SIE before moving to Brussels also struggled a lot adjusting to the new environment and her new life. She explains her struggle by comparing the two expatriations: *"I knew it will not be easy, as I moved by myself already once before. I knew the first months will be tough, will be a struggle, with apartment, sorting out all the papers, administrative things one needs to do, furnishing my apartment and so on. So in my mind I was ready to the fact that it will be difficult. But still, after some months I would expect the life to 'pick up,' but it just didn't happen. It was hell, something, that after having moved abroad before, I would never expect."*

We would expect that those SIEs with no prior expatriate experience would struggle the most with adjusting to the new environment, either due to culture shock or due to the newness of everything, the need to tackle many challenges, or the lack of friends close by. But when analysing the answers, we see that for the 2 SIEs who had no previous 'abroad' experience, moving abroad as an SIE and adjusting to the new environment and to the new life abroad seems rather easy. One who moved to Belgium after university and had never lived abroad before explains: *"it was good, it*

was exciting. First time I ever lived in an apartment just by myself…So it was nice to have my own space.... The first time I had any disposable income, of any amount. It was also nice as there was a group of people with similar background, who moved in the same time… so for going out etc. Surrounded by quite young people. At the time there was a big IT project with people from university, with the similar age, who were living abroad. So this was good."

When analysing adjustment factors, the main purpose is to see which of those factors **ease** the adjustment of an SIE to the new environment. It is indeed a given fact that every experience one has influences one's future life, and it would be therefore also expected that any sort of previous expatriate or living abroad experience **would ease** the process of adjustment during self-initiated expatriation. But as we see above, this is not necessarily the case. Analysis of the interviews produced different results: SIEs with previous expatriate experience do not necessarily more easily adjust to the new environment; first-time SIEs do adjust to the new environment more easily, with far less struggle and far fewer challenges. Based on this, we cannot conclude that previous expatriate experience eases the adjustment process.

Organizational factor "Mentoring"; Only one SIE interviewed in this study was assigned a mentor after her move; according to her, it did ease her first months' adjustment to the new environment, even though her mentor was there mainly for work-related mentoring: *"for the city there is nothing. But for the workplace there is mentors that are assigned to you and they meet you regularly; it's mainly related to work matters, but you immediately have a person to talk to, so you can ask I need to go there, how do I get there or whatever. You can ask about subscriptions, some private matters also."* None of other SIEs were assigned mentor by their organization, but many SIEs reply positively to the question of whether mentoring or a similar program of support by the organization would ease their integration. Several statements indicate this: *"I think they could implement a special buddy system, which would be supported by expats who were previously relocated. So in this way the company wouldn't need to invest too many resources. But of course they need to make some kind of plan, maybe showing around the city a little bit, introducing to some main expats events so the person doesn't need to depend on this buddy, or on the company, but get integrated faster."* Based on the statement of the SIE who received such support and the expressed desires of many SIEs for mentoring, we can conclude that "mentoring" as a factor would ease the adjustment of SIEs, but further research about this factor would be needed.

5.3.3 Newly identified adjustment factors

Distance from home, the possibility of travelling home easily, and gradual relocation; This study makes apparent that for SIEs who are from a neighbouring country—three out of the 14 SIEs interviewed were—and who are thereby in a position to travel back home very easily and often did so (on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis), the adjustment process was much easier than in cases when the SIE comes from a distant country, requiring him or her essentially to leave the homeland completely behind. The SIEs from neighbouring countries describe their first months as follows: *"Also Paris - Brussels is really close drive, 3 hours drive, that was quite quick. So I think, generally speaking the integration was quit easy for us. Quite smooth."* Another confirms this: *"For the first four months I was alone... I was working the all week, and I was spending the weekends in Paris...It was good because it was a good way for me to invest more time to the company and to prepare everything for the arrival of my family."* The SIE who first moved as an SIE to Vienna describes her experience in this way: *"As Vienna is like four hours drive away from Ljubljana, I basically moved gradually. I had a company car, I was traveling every Friday back to Ljubljana, and every Monday back to Vienna. Home wasn't too far away. So I was kind of just working in Vienna, and was partially still living in Slovenia. So that move really happened gradually. Every weekend I would take a big bag of stuff, and move my personal belongings, step by step... I established my base and my home in a term of the first year, gradually.... In Austria it was kind of a second home, I had a basis of friends and family in Slovenia, and my base of friends in Vienna. So two home towns, two home countries, two basis, two social networks, easy travel...every birthday, whatever celebration, whatever the reasons, I could be wherever I wanted."* Accordingly, we conclude that "distance from home, the possibility of travelling home easily, and gradual relocation" do ease the adjustment process of SIEs and positively influence the integration phase; this factor can therefore be added to the model of cross-cultural adjustment for SIE.

Expectations; During interviews I came across the fact that the ease of the adjustment process also had a lot to do with what expectations an SIE has developed about living abroad and the process of moving there. Those expecting for it to be easy or expecting a lot of support from the organization had a more difficult adjustment process than those with low expectations or none whatsoever. Seven out of 14 SIEs mention expectations related to concrete experiences. A woman with previous experience abroad as a TAE explains: *"I don't know if maybe expectations also play the role here, because I expected the company to be a lot more supportive. Of course I quickly realized that it wasn't coming..."* Another woman with one prior SIE experience also speaks about expectations: *"I knew what to expect as I moved before. So you kind of fight through the first 3 or 4 months, it gets very tough, but you don't think to crash. I was really fighting through quite well...finding the*

apartment, furnishing the apartment, sorting everything out…electricity, Internet, register in the commune, you know, everything that needs to be done. But what was funny was that after the 5 months, when I already thought 'ok, now I am done, I am settled, now it's time to enjoy...' then the big crises began...and hit me out of nowhere. I would never expect that based on the previous move I have done." She continues, *"There is a bigger cultural difference that I wasn't expecting... something that I was also not expecting is that you have to put effort, a lot of it actually, into making friends, into finding friends, especially if you wanna find them outside the office environment."* She concludes by saying, *"You know it's funny. You would expect going through one experience for the second time, it would be easier...but that wasn't the case..."* Another SIE says, *"At the end I noticed it's a very different atmosphere, so in the end you have to adapt more than you expect in the beginning."* Another SIE describing his last relocation experience as nothing too difficult tells his story in this way: *"Moving from Australia, moving back, I knew what would be like. I was expecting something not that easy. So getting to the commune, or things like social security, it's always a bit painful… But this time it was more a game. Seriously. It was a bit painful but it was ok."* Another SIE who moved twice also talks about expectations: *"It was much easier. Also the other experiences taught me to have my expectations at a quite low level, and usually I felt more happy just because my expectations were at a lower level than they deserved to be."* According to these accounts, we can add this factor as a new factor that has an impact on the adjustment experience of SIEs to the new environment.

Current emotional stability, mental stability, and stage in life; While interviewing SIEs, I came across another interesting finding—the fact that the smoothness of the adjustment process depends also on the general state of mind and stage in life of an individual. SIEs who have a stable personal life at the time of the move, whether happy and single (one SIE) or in a stable relationship (9 SIEs), have a much more peaceful and calm adjustment phase after arriving in the new environment. In total, 10 of 14 SIEs interviewed were in this stage when they moved, and none of them describes the adjustment phase and experience of first months (or year(s)) as being as tough, rough and challenging as the other 4 SIEs, who moved after a bigger life changes, such as after a breakup with a partner. Four SIEs who struggled intensely openly share their struggles in interviews; all four of them moved after a breakup with their partner or after another major life change (e.g. after being abroad for many years by themselves).
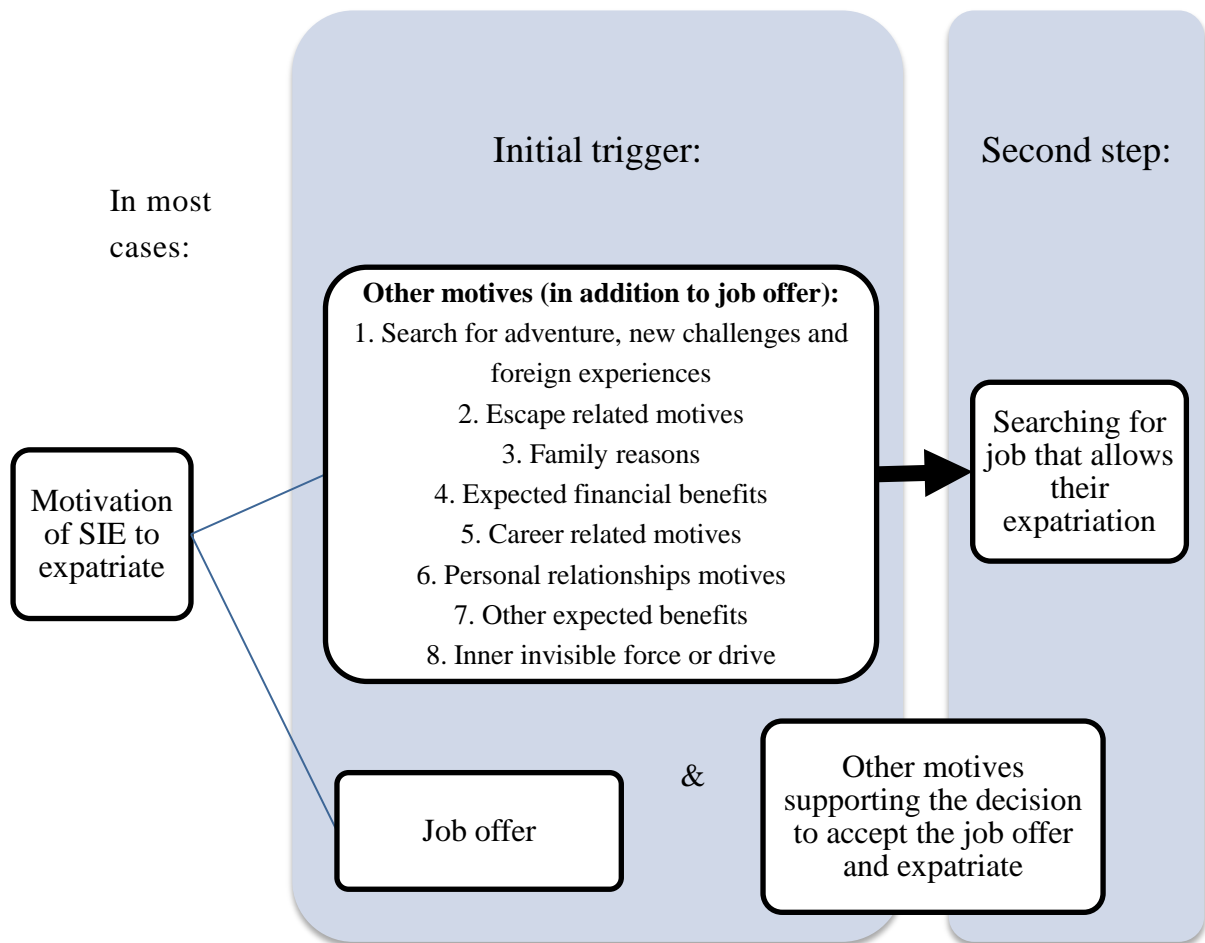
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6 MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SIEs AND COMPANIES

6.1 Initial triggers and motives for the expatriation of SIEs

To the first research question, concerning the key trigger that drives the initial decision for SIEs to expatriate as well as their motives for expatriation, this study shows that in the majority of cases it is not an unexpected job opportunity from a new employer. In most cases SIEs first have other motives that drive them to expatriation and then they search for a job opportunity; this confirms the previous findings of Richardson and McKenna (2002, 2006) about the pro-active approach that many SIEs have to take to find a job opportunity that allows for their expatriation. Nevertheless, this study also confirms the previous findings of Suutari and Brewster (2000) that for some SIEs the trigger for expatriation can also be the initiative of an employer, or better, an "unexpected job opportunity," as I call this potential trigger. The most common motive of SIEs in this study is the "search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experience," as identified also in many previous studies (Richardson & McKenna, 2002, 2003, 2006, Richardson & Mallon, 2005); however, the majority of other motives identified by previous research are also identified as almost equally present as drivers of expatriation. The overall summary of results answering this first research question can be seen in figure 6.

There are three additional outcomes of this research that confirm previous research. First, self-initiated expatriation is in many cases a continuous process, meaning that many SIEs do move further as SIEs again and that while doing so their motives for further expatriation change (Richardson, 2008). Second, an individual who expatriates can be a different "type" of expatriate throughout his or her expatriation experience. He or she can first expatriate as a flex-patriate, as a self-initiated corporate expatriate, or as international MBA student, and only later become an SIE, even though motives for initial expatriation are in similar, especially as the initiative comes from the individual himself or herself. Third, the search for a new life and the escape motive identified by Richardson and McKenna (2006) are very much present in many expatriates' stories, not only those initially expatriating as SIEs but also as flex-patriates, international MBA degree seekers, or serial SIEs.

Figure 6. Summary of other motives triggering SIEs' decision for expatriation

Initial trigger:

Second step:

In most cases:

Motivation of SIE to expatriate

Other motives (in addition to job offer):
1. Search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experiences
2. Escape related motives
3. Family reasons
4. Expected financial benefits
5. Career related motives
6. Personal relationships motives
7. Other expected benefits
8. Inner invisible force or drive

Searching for job that allows their expatriation

Job offer

&

Other motives supporting the decision to accept the job offer and expatriate

This study also brings some new contributions to the academic field of SIE. Research shows us that for the majority of SIEs it is a combination of more than just one motive that triggers an individual to expatriate as an SIE. This is something that previous research has not especially stressed. Furthermore, in cases when an unexpected job opportunity is what triggers SIEs to start thinking about the process of expatriation, this motive is not the sole motive and SIEs have other motives that support the decision to accept the offer and expatriate (2). In this study we also encounter three newly identified motives for SIEs to expatriate: an "inner invisible drive that has been present for years," "the opportunity for a more independent life" and "better possibilities to find a partner abroad" (3). Last but not least, one of the main contributions of this study is also a summary of all possible motives from every past study, including a new grouping of every possible motive, as shown in the theoretical part of this thesis (4).

6.2　Most common adjustment challenges

In response to the second research question of this thesis, concerning the most common adjustment-related challenges experienced by SIEs, this study produces a rather long list of 14 challenges (as presented in a table 9 below), demonstrating that adjustment to a new environment is everything but easy.

Table 9. Most common adjustment challenges

Challenge	Number of SIEs
Weather	11
Feeling alone, lonely, on your own, having no friends or company, not being able to talk to anyone about problems and issues	7
Various cultural differences	6
Not speaking the language or only at a basic level	5
The fact one changes every aspect of its life, presses the "reset" button, starts a new life from scratch	4
Lack of support in finding an apartment and getting settled	4
Difficulty making friends and the effort and energy needed to do so	4
Information overload (even for very simple things) and many administrative tasks to deal with simultaneously (apartment, doctor, administration, paperwork, selling old apartment, electricity, other arrangements)	3
Pressure to settle down (to find an apartment quickly, to move out of the hotel in three weeks)	2
Distance from family, leaving "parents" behind	2
Understanding how the new company is organized	2
Spouse adjustment (Underestimated difficulty of finding employment, unemployed spouse)	2
Process new inspirations from meeting people from many different countries and backgrounds	2
Lack of social support in the organization	2

For SIEs in this study the greatest challenge is to adapt to weather and climate conditions, which I find very surprising. No previous studies (Merilainen, 2008; Tahir & Ismail, 2007) indicate this challenge. There are only three SIEs that did not struggle with the weather conditions of Belgium: two from Paris and one from the UK who is used to an even greyer and more rainy climate. It is a very interesting outcome that weather and climate can influence people and their well-being to that

extent. Even when I, as an SIE, was choosing a location to move to, I never thought about the weather and how this could impact my well-being. Furthermore, the second most common challenge, "feeling alone and lonely, on one's own, having no one to talk to about the problems and issues one is facing" is not common to the results of any previously concluded research. This is not as much of a surprise, as it is a known fact that in the majority of cases, TAEs move in a later stage of their careers and usually with their families. The fact that within this study this challenge was ranked so high is not surprising, as singles who struggled with this challenge represented half of the pool of interviewees. When comparing the results of this research with previous findings, we need to stress that both previous studies (Merilainen, 2008; Tahir & Ismail, 2007) were conducted in a different (Asian) environment and not among SIEs, but among traditionally assigned expatriates who moved within the organization umbrella. Accordingly, it is not problematic that the results of this research are quite different to the results of the other two.

The next four groups of challenges identified by this study are common to the results of previous research (Merilainen, 2008; Tahir & Ismail, 2007). They were overcoming cultural differences linked mainly to environment, people, service, and hygiene; challenges due to not speaking the local language; lack of logistic support from the organization (linked to housing and settling down; and challenges to spousal and children's adjustment. It is worth noting that the challenges linked to overcoming cultural differences in environment, service, hygiene, people and other differences of a daily life and routine was the most and second most common in both previous studies (Merilainen, 2008; Tahir & Ismail, 2007) while in ours it is ranked as only the third most common challenge. This is not surprising since three out of 14 SIEs in our research come from neighbouring countries and another five from other European countries or the UK. What I do find surprising, however, is that even for many SIEs from other European countries, for whom we would not expect cultural differences to be as big, there was still considerable struggle with these challenges.

Quite a few challenges identified in this study are not identified by any previous study. Of these I would like to highlight those that I find very interesting and also important for SIEs and companies that hire SIEs. Some of them are related to the better support that companies could offer to SIEs: challenges due to Lack of support with finding an apartment and settling down, challenges due to lack of social support in the organization, and pressure by the organization to settle down (to find an apartment in the same day, to move out of the hotel in 3 weeks). Others are linked to personal challenges that neither individuals planning expatriation nor local host colleagues would think of: challenges linked to the fact that one changes every aspect of one's life, the difficulty of making friends, and another very surprising one, information overload (even for very simple things) or the number of administrative tasks that must be dealt with simultaneously. Last but not least, two

SIEs also mentioned challenges linked to processing all the new inspirations that come over one after meeting people from many different countries and backgrounds.

As in the study of Merilainen (2008), some SIEs mentioned "combating psychological symptoms resulting from culture shock," which in my opinion is not only a challenge, as Merilainen (2008) puts it, but also a result of trying to overcome adjustment challenges. It should be noted that it is very common that expatriation on one's own initiative, where the support is less than in the case of traditionally assigned expatriation, impacts SIEs rather heavily; some SIEs participating in this study went through genuinely hard times and through long stages of depression.

A major contribution of this study in terms of adjustment challenges is definitely the fact, that it is the first study with a major focus on the adjustment challenges of SIEs, given that a similar study has never been conducted. Furthermore, it results in a long list of challenges that SIEs face, and this should raise awareness among academic circles, but also help to raise awareness among companies that hire SIEs. Additionally, it points out many surprising challenges that many individuals who have never lived abroad or are just planning to do so would never think of. Finally, we see that the majority of challenges are linked to the outside environment, while challenges linked to adjustment to the organization are almost non-existent.

The study shows that each SIE who moves abroad faces some sort of challenges when trying to settle into the new environment and that this fact should not be underestimated. What type of challenges they face very much depends on each individual, as there is a range of factors (analyzed in chapter 5.3) influencing the process of adjustment.

6.3   Adjustment factors that ease the adjustment of SIEs

In the third part of the study, we are interested in an answer to the question of what adjustment factors ease and enable the general and interaction adjustment of SIEs in their new environment. As a basis for our research we use the model of Black et al. (1991) and Shaffer et al. (1999) and adapt it to the situation of SIEs, as presented in chapter 3.4.3. We narrow the number of factors down to nine, excluding five factors that do not influence general and interaction adjustment (only work adjustment) as well as three individual factors that would require a complexity exceeding the scope of this study to explore. The study shows that a majority of the factors studied (seven of nine) do help SIEs to cope with adjustment challenges and accordingly positively influence their general and interaction adjustment, corroborating previous studies in this field (Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993; Shaffer et al., 1999; Toh &

Denisi, 2005). For the factors "previous expatriate experience" and "mentoring," a positive influence is not found. The results of the study are presented in figure 7.

Figure 7. Factors that ease and thus positively impact the adjustment of SIEs
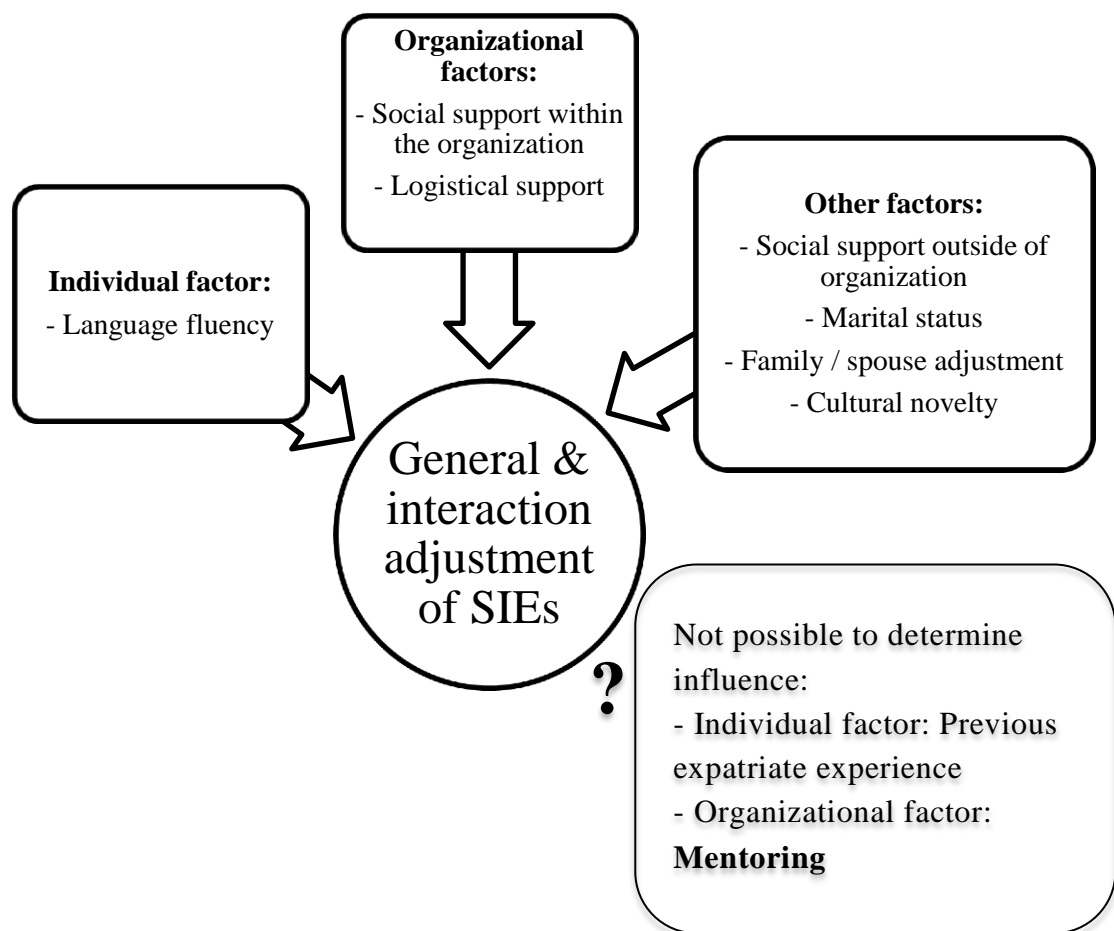
Of the factors that positively influence the adjustment of SIEs, it is important to stress the organizational factor of "logistical support." As the definition of SIE summarized in chapter 1.3.3 implies, and as existing literature suggests (Doherty et al., 2013a; Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010), SIEs are defined by the fact that they decide by themselves to expatriate and accordingly usually save money to finance their move abroad (Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010); therefore, they do not get logistical support from the organization. This study showed us differently. The majority of SIEs in this study were offered logistical support by their new employer (even if limited), indicating that this criterion for distinguishing SIE should be dropped from the definition, but also that self-initiated expatriation is a very broad category.

The influence of "mentoring" cannot be determined due to the fact that only one of the SIEs interviewed was offered a mentor by the organization. Based on the

experiences of that SIE, mentoring did help combat challenges and accordingly had a positive impact on adjustment, but one example is simply not enough to draw any conclusions. What is certainly an interesting outcome of the study is that it was not possible to determine a positive influence of the factor "previous expatriate experience," as at first glance it would be logical that those SIEs with previous expatriate experience would adjust more easily and with fewer challenges and frustrations. This outcome is also in line with the only previous study done in the field of previous international experience and SIE: Alshammari (2012) researched the role of previous international experience in relation to the adjustment of SIEs and found out that there was no significant relationship between previous jobs held and cultural adjustment, interaction adjustment or work adjustment, which is in contradiction to other earlier studies (Black et al., 1991; Shaffer et al., 1999) even though these other studies were conducted on traditionally assigned expatriation instead of SIE.

In addition, the study indicates three further factors that influence the general and interaction adjustment of SIEs: distance from home, the possibility of travelling home easily, and gradual relocation; expectations held by SIEs; and general state of mind and stage in life. Regarding the factor "distance from home, the possibility of travelling home easily, and gradual relocation," we see that SIEs from neighbouring countries who can travel home on weekends, keep existing social ties, and keep in touch with their familiar culture had less frustration while adjusting to the new environment. An interesting newly identified factor of this study is "SIE expectations." We have seen that expectations can play an important role, especially with those that have expatriated as SIEs before and thus expected an easy adjustment process, but in the end found themselves in major struggles and a more difficult adjustment process. Last but not least, the third newly identified factor is "current emotional stability, mental stability, and stage in life." The study shows that SIEs who moved abroad or expatriated for the second time after going through a major personal life change (e.g. a breakup with a partner) or who were going through a more challenging stage of life (e.g. feeling lonely due to a longer period of being single) struggled far more with adjustment to the new life and new environment. This corresponds to the findings of Phatak (1995), who claims that the following skills are all significantly related to expatriate adjustment: cultural empathy, adaptability, diplomacy, language ability, positive attitude, emotional stability, and maturity.

Another interesting observation of this study is that the ease of adjustment of an SIE is closely linked to previous experience, particularly the country referenced as a frame of comparison. Those who come from large and stressful cities who are used to lots of people and dirty streets and less order and systems found Brussels nice and easy to adjust to. Those who just came through a rough personal life chapter back

home felt relieved and happy that they could start fresh from zero. Finally, some who used to work much more before moving or were brought up in a demanding environment with lots of pressure found life in Brussels and Belgium very easy and thus had less struggle.

One last main contribution of this study to adjustment factors is the new model of cross-cultural adjustment for SIE, as presented in chapter 3.4.3, which links together the model of Black et al. (1991) and Shaffer at al (1999) and adapts it for the specifics of SIEs by taking into account that with them there is no pre-assignment period.

6.4   Implications for companies and for SIEs

As the growing research on SIE indicates, SIEs are becoming one of the fastest growing category of globally mobile professionals (Myers and Pringle, 2005), and as there are more and more companies hiring SIEs, the results of this study show that those companies might not always be aware of the responsibilities towards SIE that hiring them represents. As we have seen, SIEs often lack support from organizations who do not help them to minimize adjustment challenges and who even sometimes put pressure on SIEs to settle their living situations more quickly, adding to the already heavy load of adjustment challenges that SIEs face. Therefore, companies need to systematically approach hiring SIEs after they arrive and put in place a system that will ease not only their relocation but also later integration into society.

There emerge several concrete general recommendations to companies, especially if the number of SIEs remains high and if they continue to be hired on regular basis. Companies should consider having an employee within the HR department who has been an SIE himself or herself, since only someone who has walked in similar shoes understands the challenges that SIEs face. HR departments should ensure that SIEs are receiving replies to their questions, even if they cannot help with all the answers, at least to show SIEs that they are there to listen, that they care, since not receiving a reply further adds to the frustration in the initial weeks when many questions arise. Organizing cross-cultural training for other employees intended to increase their understanding of the benefits and challenges of working with colleagues from many different backgrounds would also help SIEs to be understood (e.g. why they are stressed, why they might be tired or frustrated in the initial weeks). Organizing "immersion" courses for SIEs, in which SIEs learn about the new culture they have arrived to, would be welcome as well. Within this training, SIEs could also learn about the adjustment process, how to treat their own expectations, and what challenges might await them throughout of the adjustment process. It would also give them an understanding that what is happening to them (information overload,

feelings of stress) is a normal part of the process. Such a course would also bring SIEs together where they could meet other SIEs and also share their stories, challenges, and frustrations. Additionally, this would help them overcome challenges linked to lack of support inside and outside their organization. To further help them to overcome challenges linked to lack of social support within the organization, organizations could organize mentoring networks, in which especially those SIEs who do not know people in the organization already would be paired with a "buddy" who is an SIE himself or herself and has been in the organization at least a year to help the newcomer by offering advice and answers (this would be especially important for introverts). As one interviewee of this study said, receiving a mentor within one's own department would help new SIEs gain information about the organization as well as other advice; while this is often done on an unofficial basis, it is not always done, as the study shows. Organizing a social gathering for SIEs and possibly also their families and children could also help them overcome challenges linked to spouse and family adjustment.

As we have seen, organizing effective and sufficient logistical support from the organization is also important. It needs to be sufficient, meaning that the SIE is given enough time to find an apartment, even if it takes no more than one "apartment search day." Also, the organization can use an outsourced agency to offer as much support regarding administrative tasks as possible (e.g. visas, visas for family members, information about insurance, registration at commune, arranging utilities, accommodations associated with renting an apartment, health care needs, pension setup, and opening a bank account). Companies should also think beyond the initial process of settling down and track the subsequent adjustment of SIEs by checking on them and asking about their additional adjustment needs (e.g. finding some first friends, orientation in the city, furnishing of apartment), especially after the so called honey-moon period, when the U-curve of the adjustment process starts going downwards. Last but not least, since the study confirms that speaking the language does help SIEs to overcome adjustment challenges and eases their adjustment, companies should encourage SIEs to take language courses and organize them if possible (perhaps in the second quarter after their arrival in order to avoid additional overload at the beginning).

We can also draw some implications for SIEs themselves, the main one being that they should search for and accept help if they find that the adjustment process is overwhelming. They should try to be extroverted and sociable, make an effort to meet new people, be proactive in going to social events, and try to find other SIEs that they could relate to and share their challenges with. Even though there is a lot of new information to process at the beginning, it is important for them to do their part to learn the local language, at least at the level of comprehension. They should be actively searching for events that connect other internationally mobile professionals

and expatriates. If possible, they should use the Internet to research the challenges they can expect before going on the journey of expatriation. However, it is often the case that one simply does not think at the beginning of pro-active actions such as searching the Internet, trying to meet people, and making new friends, since the organization is one's main environment, as I know from personal experience as an SIE. For this reason, getting the right kind of support and a sufficient amount of it within the organization in those first few months is very important.

7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND INDICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

One of the main research limitations is definitely the fact that the study was conducted as a qualitative study in which the size of the sample (14) does not allow for generalisations, especially since each and every individual is different and has a unique background and his or her own unique experiences. Nonetheless, the amount of data gathered is sufficient to provide in-depth insights into the reasons for expatriation as an SIE, the main challenges of adjustment to the new environment, and what factors ease the adjustment process. Nevertheless, it is recommended to further test the outcomes of this study with broader and larger samples of SIEs in various other corporations and regions, as this research was done more or less in a specific organizational environment of the private sector in Belgium only, and did not cover the broad range of SIEs worldwide.

Another limitation is linked to the sensitivity of adjustment challenges and motivation factors related to "escaping" from certain difficult situations at home (whether for emotional reasons, family reasons, or reasons related to a partner). These topics are very difficult and sensitive to speak about and not many people are very comfortable with sharing those insights fully and in detail since they are very personal and might often include negative emotions and unpleasant memories. I realised this especially because I have known many of the individuals who participated in the study for some years, and through socializing with them often I had other insights into their stories, but when I had them in front of the audio recorder, their stories sounded different. In addition, there is a lack of awareness, meaning many SIEs might not be willing to admit that they were facing challenges linked to more difficult situations and stress. The study also did not cover the influence of other three individual factors (self-efficacy, relational and perceptual skills, and cultural sensibility) that might influence the adjustment of SIEs. As not many past studies focused on these three individual factors, research focusing solely on them would be more than welcome. Phatak (1995) concludes that many other skills are significantly related to expatriate adjustment: cultural empathy,

adaptability, diplomacy, positive attitude, and maturity. This also calls for further research in this field.

Finally, further investigation would be welcome into the three newly identified factors that also influence the ease of adjustment of SIEs: distance from home, the possibility of travelling home easily, and gradual relocation; expectations held by SIEs; and general mental state and stage in life. One of the observations of this study is also that younger SIEs might have fewer challenges when adjusting, so an interesting additional study could also explore whether "age" as an adjustment factor could be added to the cross-cultural adjustment model for SIE that is presented in this thesis.

CONCLUSION

A summary of the main conclusions of this study can be divided into three parts, following the structure of the study. As for the SIEs' motivation for expatriation, the main conclusions are that the key trigger driving the initial decision for SIE to expatriate is usually a motive other than an unexpected job opportunity from a new employer, and that individuals who wish to expatriate themselves need to take a proactive approach for this to happen. The most common motive of SIEs in this study was the same as previously identified in many other studies (Richardson & McKenna, 2002, 2003, 2006; Richardson & Mallon, 2005): the "search for adventure, new challenges and foreign experiences." Many other motives were identified frequently as well, however: family reasons, expected financial benefits, career-related motives and motives linked to personal relationships. Furthermore, self-initiated expatriation is in many cases a continuous process in that many SIEs do move further as SIEs again and that while doing so their motives for further expatriation do change from those they had before (Richardson 2008). An individual who expatriates can go through different stages of expatriate experience; one can first expatriate as flexpatriate, as a self-initiated corporate expatriate, or as an international MBA student and only later become an SIE, or the other way around. The search for a new life and the motive of escape as identified by Richardson and McKenna (2006) are very much present in many expatriate stories. Usually a combination of more then just one motive triggers an individual to expatriate as an SIE. Last but not least, research has also resulted in three new motives for SIEs to expatriate, among which two are interesting to mention: "an inner invisible drive that was present through the years" and "the opportunity for a more independent life."

In view of the most common adjustment challenges, we can conclude that according to the fact that 14 common challenges were identified, adjustment to a new

environment is everything but easy for SIEs. This should not be underestimated either by companies hiring SIEs, or by those who are considering the path of self-initiated expatriation for the first time. The greatest challenge for SIEs in this research was adaptation to weather and climate. Next, especially for those moving abroad without a family or partner, the experience is very challenging due to feelings of loneliness and having no one to talk to about problems and issues one is facing, which effected some of the SIEs from this study rather dramatically. Other common challenges are linked to overcoming cultural differences that had to do with the environment, people, service, hygiene; the challenge of not speaking the local language; the lack of logistical support from the organization for housing and accommodation needs; and the challenges to adjustment experienced by spouses and children. Several surprising outcomes of the study include the challenge of changing one's life completely, pressing the "reset" button, and needing to start a new life from scratch; and the fact that it is challenging to make friends, which to most people seems simple but for an SIE can actually require an amount of effort and energy that non-expatriates would never imagine. What is important to keep in mind, especially for "soon-to-be" SIEs, is the challenge of information overload (including for very simple things) and the many administrative tasks that must be dealt with simultaneously. Besides the list of the most common challenges SIEs need to overcome, the study also showed that the whole process of expatriation impacts SIE rather heavily because support for SIEs is much less than in the case of traditionally assigned expatriates; some of the SIEs participating in this study went through genuinely rough times. To conclude, the majority of challenges of SIEs are usually linked to the outside environment, while challenges linked to adjustment to the organizational environment were basically non-existent.

The type of challenges any given SIE faces depends heavily on the individual and his or her personal situation, yet the majority of factors influencing general and integration adjustment researched in this study do ease the adjustment process: Language fluency, social support within the organization, logistical support, social support outside of the organization, marital status, family and spouse adjustment, and cultural novelty. SIEs usually receive no mentoring, so the influence of this factor was not possible to determine, but since it positively impacted the adjustment of one SIE, I believe it would ease the process, if offered. Research also resulted in three new factors that influence the general and interaction adjustment of SIEs: distance from home, the possibility of travelling home easily, and gradual relocation; SIE's expectations; and current emotional stability, mental stability, and stage in life. This last newly identified factor is in line with the findings of Phatak (1995), who claims that all the following skills are significantly related to expatriate adjustment: cultural empathy, adaptability, diplomacy, language ability, positive attitude, emotional stability, and maturity. Another interesting observation of this study is that the ease of adjustment of SIEs is significantly linked to the previous

experiences and things to which one is accustomed that one is comparing to the present situation. Last but not least, this study also shows that many SIEs are actually provided logistical by their new employers, which is in contradiction to a part of the definition in the existing literature (Doherty et al., 2013a; Mo & Jian-Ming, 2010).

In addition, the study suggests that companies who hire SIEs could always do more to ease the adjustment and positively influence the well-being of the new employees coming from abroad on their own initiative. Effective and sufficient logistical support is key, but should not be limited to finding an apartment or offering support for sorting out basic administrative needs. Companies should think much more comprehensively and also track the adjustment of SIEs after the end of the so-called honey-moon period, when the U-curve of the adjustment process starts to drop, and when their new SIE employees could use further help. Since speaking the local language does help SIEs overcome adjustment challenges, companies should encourage SIEs to take language courses and, if possible, organize them. Organizing "immersion" courses for SIEs wherein SIEs would learn about the new culture, how to handle their own expectations, and what challenges might await for them throughout the adjustment process would be more then welcome. The organization of a "buddy" or mentoring system is something that many of the participants of this study mentioned they would find very helpful as well. Both those initiatives would bring SIEs together, allow them to share their stories, challenges, and frustrations, and accordingly help them overcome challenges linked to lack of social support inside and outside their organizations. All these initiatives would not only positively influence SIEs' expatriation experience but also their ability to grasp the culture of their new country and, in the end, their happiness and well-being.

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APENDIXES

LIST OF APPENDIXES

LIST OF TABLES

Appendix A: Interview sample

Table 1. Interview Sample

SIE #	Gender	Country of origin	Time away from their country	Total time in Belgium	Previous expatriate / international experience	Speaking any national languages when arriving	Single / w family when expatria-ting as SIE
1	F	Slovenia	7 years	4 years	YES: Austria - 3 years	Yes: 1st time SIE No: 2nd time SIE	Single
2	F	Jamaica	8 years	4 years	Various short-term projects as TAE in 5 countries & 2 years in US as SIE	No	Single
3	M	France	4 years	4 years	NONE	**Yes**, native	w/ partner
4	F	Mexico	6 years	4 years	NONE (only as intl. student)	No	Followed **partner**
5	M	UK	11 years	11 years	NONE	NO (learned later)	Single
6	M	France	6 years	3 years	YES, as SI Corporate Expat	**Yes**, native	w/ partner
7	F	Spain	2 years	2 years	Not as expat, but lived abroad w/ family before	No	Followed **partner**
8	F	Russia	4 years	4 years	NONE (only as intl. student during university)	**Yes**, both lang.	Married, but moved alone
9	M	France	2 years	2 years	Yes, as TAE before 10 years	**Yes**, native	Moved w **family**
10	M	India	3 years	3 years	YES, as flexpat on short-term projects (up to 6 months)	**Yes**, only basic	Moved w **family**
11	M	Mexico	5 years	3 years	YES, as SIE for shorter term + as MBA student	No	Single
12	F	Ukraine	4 years	1,5 years	YES, as intl. student, + one move as SIE	No	In relationship, moved alone
13	F	Austria	10 years	10 years	NONE	No	Followed **partner**
14	F	Slovenia	7 years	5 years	Yes, as SIE (+ some intl. student projects)	**Yes**, in both cases as SIE	Single

Appendix B: Interview protocol

1 PRE-SCREENING

A few short questions are asked in order to see if the person can be considered an SIE and therefore qualifies to be interviewed:

P1. With your move, did you change employer or did you continue working for the same organization in a different office (KEY CRITERION).

P2. Did you decide by yourself to move to a foreign country and find a job and can you confirm that it was not your organization that offered you the new opportunity (SIE or TAE)?

P3. Was your contract an expat contract or were you employed on local conditions (SIE or TAE)?

P4. For how long did you plan to move? Did you move with the intention to stay abroad in this new location forever (SIE or migrant)?

P5. Did you move based on your free choice or because you had to (SIE or migrant)?

Also:

- Are you single or married with a family? Did you relocate with your family?

- Where do you come from?

- Do you speak the native language of the country?

2 MOTIVATION

Interview questions for the motivation part are divided into three parts:

I.   Main trigger? Unexpected job opportunity OR other reasons?

II.   Exploring other reasons to move

III.   Touching and exploring "push factors: distancing yourself from a problem"

I.   Main trigger? Unexpected job opportunity OR other reasons?

M1. What was the MAIN reason for your first move?

(Was it an "unexpected job opportunity" that found you and that triggered the thoughts about moving OR did you have your own reasons that were driving you to go and you then later searched for an opportunity, meaning you had to search for it with lots of initiative?)

A.) In case that the first trigger was an "unexpected job opportunity":

M2. How did it happen? Did the offer come by surprise?

Support questions to test if it really was the job offer that triggered the move or if the person first had other reasons and started asking around:

Support Q: Did you ever before think of moving abroad? You never thought of moving before? So the offer came by surprise and only afterwards you started thinking about moving abroad? Or did you ask around before or mention to some people that you would like to move and then the job was offered to you?

Once it is clarified that the first trigger was the "unexpected job opportunity," other factors probably influenced the decision. I assume that the job offer alone is not enough. There should be other motivators here. So I would further explore those other motives and then move to the same part of the interview that I would if it were not an "unexpected job opportunity" that triggered the move.

M3. What were the other reasons that supported your decision to take up the "unexpected job opportunity"?

II.   Exploring other reasons to move

B.) In case the first trigger is not an "unexpected job opportunity" and the individual decides to move due to other reasons and afterwards start searching for a job:

M4. What were the main reasons that you wanted to move abroad, decided to do so, and left your home country behind?

Below **some support questions** for each and every group of factors (except for "push" factors), in case the person does not open up:

Support Q1. Could you say it was also wish for adventure and new experiences, that triggered the move?

Support Q2. Where there any sort of family reasons behind the decision to move? If so, what were they?

Support Q3. Could you say that one of the most important reasons for you to relocate was the financial benefits that such relocation would bring?

Support Q4. Did you relocate in order to accelerate your career?

Support Q5. Were there any personal relationship reasons involved in your decision: for example, did you move to follow your partner, or did you want to create a new "love life" abroad?

Support Q6. Were there any expected personal benefits among the main reasons that triggered your move (like better personal safety, or better social security, health system or similar)?

Support Q7. Were there any other motives linked to personal development that triggered your move (like learning a foreign language, developing some personal skills)?

Support Q8. Were Belgium and Brussels as locations reasons for you to move abroad? Or was the location was chosen because of other motives (you found a job here, your partner lives here, etc.)

M5: So could you summarize the 2 to 5 most crucial reasons or drivers?

III.   Touching and exploring "push factors" or distancing oneself from a problem

It is worth commenting here that this is the most sensitive, the most interesting, and the least researched potential reason, as it is not easy to get deep into someone's feelings. I assume that it is present in most cases, but people do not like to share them or might not be aware of them.

M.Push 1. Can you remember what was going on in your private life or personal world in that time, when you were deciding to move? Was there any situation in your personal life that you had enough of and wanted to somehow "escape" from?

M.Push 2. How did you feel at that time?

M.Push 3. If you look back, could you say that you left because there was a personal situation at home that you wanted to distance yourself from, whether it be family-related or relationship related)?

M.Push 4. How is your relationship with your immediate family and do you think that subconsciously you somehow had to distance yourself from it?

3 ADJUSTMENT

The interview questions for the adjustment part are divided into two sections:

I.   How was the "adjustment" experience? Exploring the biggest challenges after the move and when adjusting to the new culture.

II.   Factors that influence the adjustment of SIEs. Which SIEs adjust better, faster, and more easily?

I. How was the "adjustment" experience? Exploring the biggest challenges after the move and when adjusting to the new culture.

A1. Looking back to the time of your move, can you remember how you personally experienced the move and the period afterward (the first few months or first year)? Was it easy, great, amazing, fun, stressful, emotional, or difficult?

A2. Overall, would you say it was a positive or a negative experience?

If it was negative:

A3. Why it was a negative or difficult experience?

A4. What was the biggest challenge? If needed, ask "what else?"

A5. What caused you the most stress?

A6. Did you like Brussels and Belgium? If not, what was this linked to? Why not? Was this also linked to the positive or negative experience you spoke of?

A7. Any other challenges?

Homesickness:

A9. Could you say that difficult times were linked to being homesick?

A10. How did "homesickness" show? (What did you miss the most?)

A11. At what times did you feel homesickness? (At the beginning or a later stage?)

A12. Did you realize it was homesickness?

Personal crisis:

A13. Did you experience any difficult times on a personal level during the move and in the period afterward (like a personal crisis)?

A14. Why did this happen and what was it mainly linked to?

A15. How long did it last?

Feelings of loneliness:

A16. Did you ever feel lonely inside?

A17. And if so, how did you cope with it (did you party non-stop, were you always meeting new people, or were you mainly staying at home)?

Coping with the above challenges (linked to social circle and network):

A18. How did you cope with adjustment challenges? Did you search for help?

A19. Could you go to anyone in the HR department to talk about this?

A20. Who helped you mainly with advice after your move, offered you help when you needed it in first few months? *(Was it people you knew from before, outside the organization, or new colleagues from the organization? Can you give concrete examples?)*

A21. Who did you or do you socialize with mainly? Who forms your social network and support circle?

- First 3 months

- After 1 year

- After 3+ years

A22. Did you know any other people who had other friends in the new country who were helping you out?

A23. Do you have any social network outside of organization?

A24. When did you start meeting people outside the organization?

A25. How? Was it easy or not?

A26. Where do you mainly meet friends and new people? Do you find friends easily?

II. Factors that influence the adjustment of SIEs. Which SIEs adjust better, faster, and more easily?

Previous assignment or expatriation experience (1)

A27. Is this your first relocation or did you relocate before?

A28. If you moved before, was the second or subsequent move easier or not really?

A29. Why or why not?

Language fluency (2)

Note: the goal here is to see if those who speak the language adjust easier and with lower stress levels.

A30. Do you speak either of the two languages? Do you speak it as a mother tongue or as a foreign language?

If they do speak it but not natively:

 - When and where did you learn the language?

 - Did the fact that you spoke or learned the language make adjusting easier, helping you to get by, to integrate, to adjust, to talk to people, or to run errands?

If they do not speak it:

- Do you think that if you had taken an intensive language course in the first six months that it would mean additional stress, or would it have been helpful, helping you to integrate faster?

- Do you think that, if you had spoken the language, you would have integrated easier and adjusted more quickly to the local culture?

Organizational (social) support within the organization (3)

A31. From where within the organization did you receive help and advice in the first six months?

A32. Did the organization do anything to provide social support within the organization (e.g. from colleagues or other expats?) Or did you find it by yourself?

A33. Were any social gatherings organized by the organization?

A34. What did your employer do to make the adjustment process easier?

A35. Was the support that you have received from your employer sufficient?

A36. What more would you need from the organization or new employer?

A37. Was there a department in the organization where you could go to ask for help?

Logistical support (4)

A38. What type of logistical support did you receive during the move and relocation process?

A39. Was it sufficient and what more would you need for that period to be easier for you?

Mentoring (5)

A40. Did you receive an "official" mentor in the organization in your first months who would show you around, help you, or give you tips and advice?

A41. If not, do you think the organization should organize this? Would it help you to ease the process of adjustment?

A42. If so, what kind of support or help did you receive from the mentor and was it useful?

Marital status (6)

Note: see whether singles have less or more stress when adjusting and whether they adjust faster or slower.

- A43. For singles: what were or are the biggest challenges to adjustment as a single person relocating on your own?

- A44. For married with or without children: what were or are the biggest challenges to adjustment when relocating with a family?

Family and Spouse Adjustment (7)

A45. How did your spouse and children adjust?

A46. If they had issues adjusting, how did that influence the whole adjustment process?

Cultural novelty (8)

A47. What is your nationality? How large do you consider the differences between your home country culture and this new culture to be?

A48. Was it from this perspective more difficult to adjust to Belgium? What was the biggest difference of the cultural dimension?

Appendix C: Research results and their detailed analysis

Table 2. Overview of all the moves of all interviewees

SIE #	Details about their 1st & other moves	1st move outside of the home country as SIE
1	1st move: as flexpat within same organization, various locations 2nd move: as SIE 3nd move: as SIE	/
2	1st move: as SIE 2nd move: as SIE	YES
3	1st move: as SIE	YES
4	1st move: career break as MBA student 2nd move: as SIE	/ even though the initiative for the move came from the individual
5	1st move: as SIE	YES
6	1st move: self-initiated corporate expatriate (within the organization, but on local contract, **initiated by himself**) 2nd move: as SIE	/ but still initiation for the move came from the individual
7	1st move: as SIE	YES
8	1st move: as SIE	YES
9	First few moves: as TAE in 3 countries for period of approx. 1 year for each assignment **10 years later:** as SIE, living in new country now for +18 months	YES
10	1st move: as SIE (before working on short-term projects (up to 6 months) abroad within one organization)	YES
11	1st move: as MBA student 2nd move: as SIE 3rd move: as SIE	/
12	1st move: as SIE 2nd move: as SIE	YES
13	1st move: as SIE	YES
14	1st move: as SIE 2nd move: as SIE	YES

Table 3. Key trigger for SIE to expatriate; unexpected job opportunity or other motives?

SIE #:	2	3	5	7	8	9	10	12	13	14
Unexpected job opportunity:			x		x	x				
Other motives:	x	x		x			x	x	x	x

Table 4. Other motives beside unexpected job opportunity

SIE #:	5	8	9
1. Search for adventure, new challenges & foreign experiences	"see the world in a different way… a bit of different culture"	"have the experience of living in another country… a bit of love for adventures… having something new in my life"	-
2. Escape-related motives	Also present – see below	-	-
3. Family reasons	"everyone in my family lived and worked abroad"	-	"an opportunity to live abroad with the family… for the kids would have been interesting to have another culture, to see something else as their home city"
4. Expected financial benefits	-	-	-
5. Career-related motives	-	"work for a big international organization… thinking about my future career"	-
6. Personal relationships motives	-	-	-
7. Other expected benefits	-	-	-
8. Group: Personal abilities and skills	"…that it brings some kind of growth as a person, broaden your horizons"	"developing myself, learning something new"	-
9. Location as a motive	-	-	-

Table 5. Other motives triggering SIEs' decision to expatriate

SIE #:	2	3	7	10	12	13	14
Combination of more motives	YES (2)	YES (3)	YES (2)	YES (3)	YES (3)	NO (only 1 motive)	YES (5)
1. Search for adventure, new challenges & foreign experience	"to have experience of living abroad"				"I wanted to live in another country"		"this feeling of living abroad, of seeing different places and explore other cultures"
2. Escape-related motives			Present				Present
3. Family reasons		"the trigger was really a comfort reason to raise a kid"		"… be able to spend more time **with my family** as well"			
4. Expected financial benefits				"I was looking for a job in which I **would get paid well,** but will be able to spend more time with my family as well"	"….which would give me bigger financial input"		

(table continues)

SIE #:	2	3	7	10	12	13	14
5. Career-related motives		"job I had was not fantastic..."			"to have a better career development… New opportunity in terms of professional development"		
6. Personal relationships motives			"my boyfriend at that time was living here"			"to join my boyfriend"	
7. Other expected benefits		"comfort reasons… (to move somewhere where life is more comfortable and less stressful as in Paris)"		Better work-private life balance "… be able to spend **more time** with my family as well (while still having well paid job that involves **less travelling,** which in India is not possible"			
8. Personal abilities and skills							

(table continues)

SIE #:	2	3	7	10	12	13	14
9. Location as a motive							
OTHER MOTIVES, REASONS	"Inner drive, like an invisible force"						"it just became clear that I want to live and work abroad" "to be more independent, to have more independent life" & " I though it would be easier to find a boyfriend abroad, I didn't want to have a Slovenian boyfriend because I though they were all boring

Table 6. Comparison of motives; 1st expatriation versus further relocations

SIE #:	2	12	14
1st move as SIE:	"to have experience of living abroad" "Inner drive, like an invisible force"	"I wanted to live in another country" "….which would give me bigger financial input" "to have a better career development… New opportunity in terms of professional development"	"it just became clear that I want to live and work abroad" "this feeling of living abroad, of seeing different places and explore other cultures" "I wanted really to get out of this Slovenia mentality… it was like getting away from… it felt it was limiting, claustrophobic, it was like a dead end for me. Feeling of not belonging there, nobody could understand me" "to be more independent, to have more independent life" & "I thought it would be easier to find a boyfriend abroad, I didn't want to have a Slovenian boyfriend because I though they were all boring"
2nd move as SIE:	"change on the personal level, so suddenly having the freedom to fly, to go anywhere" "Company I worked for was not challenging enough and I wanted to work for a particular other company" "I knew that further move would enrich me" "had also an unpleasant situation in that location – wasn't major reason, but was easier to leave"	"I decided that I want something that is a little more global… so I made a risk to try to apply somewhere else…" "Most of time my decisions are based on the company, so I decided to switch to the telecommunication"	"so after there was an opportunity to change unit… and I was accepted. And I knew that this position was based in Brussels, which for me was fine, because I wasn't planning to stay in Luxemburg…so I moved"

Table 7. Overview of escape-related motives

SIE #:	Overview of moves	Escape-related motives
1	1st move: as flex-patriate with organization 2nd move: as SIE 3rd move: as SIE	YES, When moved 1st time abroad, as flex-patriate
2	1st: SIE 2nd: SIE	YES When moved 2nd time as SIE
4	1st: career break for MBA 2nd: as SIE	YES
5	1st move: as SIE	YES "it can be some of that, it's just once in awhile to breathe some fresh air"
6	1st move: as Self-initiated Corporate Expat 2nd move: as SIE	YES " Change! getting out of my comfort zone, I was tired of France…" " to unchain myself from the family…"
7	1st move: as SIE	YES "I had good career…but was very stressful, I wasn't happy… I thought of the idea of new life… I had a tough personal period…I was having really hard time, I found myself like I wasn't happy at all, so coming here was a relief to breathe, to start something new from scratch…"
8	1st move: as SIE	YES, "having something new in my life"
11	1st move: to study (MBA abroad)	YES, "I wanted to renovate my life… When I was there I had a girlfriend, and I was …."
14	1st move: as SIE	YES, "When you are in your 20s you really don't want to live with your family… if you don't have such perfect relationship" Also "I wanted really to get out of this Slovenia mentality… it was like getting away from… it felt it was limiting, claustrophobic, it was like a dead end for me. Feeling of not belonging there, nobody could understand me"

Table 8. Most common adjustment challenges of SIEs

Challenge	Number of SIEs facing concrete challenge
Weather	11
Feeling **alone, lonely, on your own, having no friends** & company, not being able to talk to anyone about problems, issues	7
Cultural differences (various)	6
- **Environment** (dirty streets & city center, "rotten city", not maintained houses, simple differences like "no name of the street on each house number)	5
- Service & hygiene in restaurants, markets	3
- **Daily life routine & simple things one is used to** (e.g. planning in advance, making appointment everywhere, having different expectations because of previous home)	2
- **People** (cold, closed, distant, more space & pivacy)	3
- linked to **differences w apartment** (expensive, COLD, empty, no proper heating, etc…)	4
Not speaking the **language** or speaking it on a basic level	5
The fact that one **changes every aspect of one's life**, presses the "reset" button, starts a new life from scratch	4
Lack of support with finding apartment & settling down	4
Difficulty making friends (effort & energy needed)	4

(table continues)

Challenge	Number of SIEs facing concrete challenge
Tons of information to process (even for very simple things) & **many administration tasks to deal with at the same time** (apartment, doctor, administration, paperwork, selling one's old apartment, electricity)	3
Pressure to settle down (to find apt in that day, to move out of the hotel in 3 weeks)	2
Away from **family, leaving "parents" behind** at home and leaving them	2
To understand how new company was organized	2
Wife adjustment (For the wife to find a job (underestimated this), wife not working)	2
Process all those new inspirations, that come over one, due to meeting people from all over, from so many different countries and backgrounds (do I fit it?)	2
Lack of social support in the organization	2
Person specific: interviewee joined her partner and wanted to build own network outside the one of her partner	1
Family & situation specific: Things linked to the delivery of the child (doctor, refund, etc)	1
Personal specific: Living on his own for the 1st time	1
Situation specific: one moved to follow boyfriend but did not immediately have a job	1
Personal specific: as company didn't provide a hotel, lived for first few weeks with other people	1
Personal specific: Invalid driving licence, therefore not able to drive	1

Table 9. Adjustment factors that ease the adjustment process of SIEs

SIE # & their moves:	1 - 1st move as TAE, 2nd & 3rd move as SIE	2 - 1st move as SIE	2 - 2nd move as SIE	3 – one move as SIE	4 – moved as SIE, after studying abroad	5 – one move as SIE	6 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	7 – one move as SIE	8 – one move as SIE	9 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	10 – one move as SIE	11 – 1st move as SIE	11 – 2nd move as SIE	12 – 2moves as SIE	13 – one move as SIE	14 – 1st move as SIE, (2nd move as TAE)
Easy / difficult adjustment process	D	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	D	E	E/D	D	D	E	D	D
Previous expatriate experience	Yes	-	Yes	-	- But studied abroad	-	Yes	- But lived abroad a lot with family as child	- But studied in Belgium for 18 months	Yes; as TAE	- But working abroad as flexpat	-	Yes	Yes	- Except short assignment in embassy in Kenya	- But had previous study experience abroad
Language Fluency	-	Yes; Basic / inter.	-	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	- Some understanding)	-	Yes; Basics	-	-	Yes
Social support within organization	-	Yes; Knew some people	Yes; By manager	-	- Moved w/o a job	Yes	Yes	- Moved w/o job	Yes; Some	-	Yes; Indian colleague	- Moved w/o a job	Yes; A bit	Yes	Yes	-

(table continues)

SIE # & their moves:	1 - 1st move as TAE, 2nd & 3rd move as SIE	2 – 1st move as SIE	2 – 2nd move as SIE	3 – one move as SIE	4 – move as SIE, after studying abroad	5 – one move as SIE	6 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	7 – one move as SIE	8 – one move as SIE	9 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	10 – one move as SIE	11 – 1st move as SIE	11 – 2nd move as SIE	12 – 2moves as SIE	13 – one move as SIE	14 – 1st move as SIE, (2nd move as TAE)
Easy / difficult adjust-ment process	D	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	D	E	E/D	D	D	E	D	D
Logistical support	Yes; But lack of it	-	Yes; Basic	Yes	- Moved w/o job	Yes	Yes	- Moved w/o job	Yes	Yes	Yes	- Moved w/o a job	Yes But lack of it	-	-	Yes Allowa-nce
Mentoring	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Yes; Work related, but it still helped	-
Social support outside organiza-tion	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ; Many came at the same time	Yes; Moved w wife	Yes; BIG TIME: moved "into a life"	- Not really	Yes; Moved w/ family	- Only later some friends	Yes; Some friends	- Knew peo-ple, but were not of help	-	Yes; Thro-ugh her partner	Yes; Was staying with people she knew

SIE # & their moves:	1- 1st move as TAE, 2nd & 3rd move as SIE	2 – 1st move as SIE	2 – 2nd move as SIE	3 – one move as SIE	4 – move as SIE, after studying abroad	5 – one move as SIE	6 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	7 – one move as SIE	8 – one move as SIE	9 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	10 – one move as SIE	11 – 1st move as SIE	11 – 2nd move as SIE	12 – 2moves as SIE	13 – one move as SIE	14 – 1st move as SIE, (2nd move as TAE)
Easy / difficult adjustment process	D	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	D	E	E/D	D	D	E	D	D
Marital Status	S	In relationnship; but moved w/o partner	S	M	In relationship; moved in w/ partner	S	M	In relationship; moved in w/ partner	M; but moved w/o partner	M; moved w fam.	M; moved w wife	In relationship; moved in w/ partner	S	S	In relationship; moved in w/ partner	S
Family / Spouse adjustment	- Single	- Moved w/o partner	- Single	Spouse; She was at home at first and had time to organize things & spoke French	- Moved in w boyfriend, who was local	- Single	Spouse Was OK, she speaks local language	- Moved in w/ boyfriend, who lived here before	-	Spouse More difficult for spouse to find a job	Spouse Difficult, she is NOT working, no friends	- Moved to follow girl that was local	- Single	- Moved w/o partner	- SIE joined partner that was leaving here already	- Single

(table continues)

22

(continued)

SIE # & their moves:	1- 1st move as TAE, 2nd & 3rd move as SIE	2 - 1st move as SIE	2 - 2nd move as SIE	3 – one move as SIE	4 – move as SIE, after studying abroad	5 – one move as SIE	6 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	7 – one move as SIE	8 – one move as SIE	9 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	10 – one move as SIE	11 – 1st move as SIE	11 – 2nd move as SIE	12 – 2moves as SIE	13 – one move as SIE	14 – 1st move as SIE, (2nd move as TAE)
Easy / difficult adjustment process	D	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	D	E	E/D	D	D	E	D	D
Cultural novelty	Big; It is different from US	Small	Big	Small	Big	Small; Similar	Small	Rather big	Big	Small	Big	Big	Big	Big	Big	Big
Distance to home	Far	Neighbouring country	Further, Still EU	Neighbouring country	Far	Neighbouring country	Neighbouring country	Further, Still EU	Far	Neighbouring country	Far	Far	Far	Far	Further, still EU	Further, still EU
Expectations	Yes, but was more difficult	-	Yes, but was different	-	-	-	Yes, "Was expecting difficulty"	-	Yes, Played a role	Yes, "more than you'd expect"	-	-	Yes, Having a car	Lowered them	Yes, Different picture in mind – linked to city	Yes, expected not much life, but then nicely surprised

(table continues)

SIE # & their moves:	1- 1st move as TAE, 2nd & 3rd move as SIE	2- 1st move as SIE	2 - 2nd move as SIE	3 – one move as SIE	4 – move as SIE, after studying abroad	5 – one move as SIE	6 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	7 – one move as SIE	8 – one move as SIE	9 – 1st move as TAE, 2nd move as SIE	10 – one move as SIE	11 – 1st move as SIE	11 – 2nd move as SIE	12 – 2moves as SIE	13 – one move as SIE	14 – 1st move as SIE, (2nd move as TAE)
Easy / difficult adjust-ment process	D	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	D	E	E/D	D	D	E	D	D
State of mind & stage in your life (change)	Moved by herself after many years abroad on her own; **Nothing stable in life**	Stable relationship	Moved after a break up	Stable relationship	Stable relationship	NA	In a stable relationship	In a stable relationship, also leaving difficult period at home behind	Stable marriage	Stable relationship	Stable relationship	On/off undefined relationship	After break up	In stable and good relationship	In stable relationship	2nd move: after **break up**

24