The Challenge of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

The Case of Expatriates on International Assignments between Africa and Sweden

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Daniel Garcia Mayor

Erika Beil

Linköping, 25th of May 2018
[This Page is Intentionally Left Blank]
“What is the same? Nothing.”
(Interviewee 7 about the differences between Swedish and Ghanaian business culture)

“There is nothing that’s right or wrong, it’s just different.”
(Interviewee 4 about cultural differences)
Abstract
Multinational business is in a constant search for opportunities. The present globalization processes that the world is immersed in, supported by technological, social, economic and cultural advances, is allowing markets to interact in new ways. In that manner, markets with lower previous relevance for European companies are emerging as promising markets for the upcoming years, as it is the case for Africa. Even though trading and business connections between Europe and Africa has existed centuries ago, the economical predictions for European business in Africa appear more promising than ever.

This new set of business opportunities towards the African markets, come together with a new set of challenges. Africa’s characteristic heterogeneity presents an issue for the replication of the same techniques of leadership, communication and way of structure used in Europe, or more specific, in Sweden. This research study places its focus on Swedish companies with employees on international assignments between Sweden and different African markets. In order to help to understand how to improve the performance of the expatriates, the researchers analyzed what variables affect cross-cultural adjustment. As a starting point served the Framework of International Adjustment by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991).

The findings show that the model of International Adjustment of Black, et al., (1991) is still mostly valid. Nonetheless, through the data analysis, researchers identified several issues discordant with the previous mentioned model. Therefore, an updated framework was developed, aggregating the identified differences and improvements to the original framework. In the same way, researchers formulate a set of recommendations for the companies aiming to improve the cross-cultural adjustment of their expatriates.

Keywords: International assignments, expatriates, cross-cultural adjustment
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Concept Definition

Acculturation: “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149)

NOTE: In the present study, ‘Acculturation’ is utilized as a synonym for ‘Cross-cultural Adjustment’.

Adjustment: The term describes an individual’s psychological comfort with a new setting. Three different facets of adjustment may be distinguished, which are the adjustment to the general environment, to work, and to the interaction with host nationals (Black, 1988).

Cross-cultural: “involving two or more different cultures and their ideas and customs” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018a).

Culture Shock: “culture shock is a disorientating experience of suddenly finding that the perspectives, behaviors and experience of an individual or group or whole society are not shared by others.” (Furham, 2012, p. 11)

Expatriate: An ‘expatriate’, or short ‘expat’, is a person residing outside one’s country of origin. The term is often applied to employees transferred to another country by their company (Castree, Rogers & Kitchin, 2013).

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Is the value for the totality of the serviced produced and the finished goods produced inside a country during a set period of time, normally a year. GDP is also used as a measurement for the nation’s overall economic activity (Investopedia, 2018).

Inpatriate*: An ‘inpatriate’ is a host-country or third-country national, which gets transferred to the home/domestic organization of a company (Harvey, 1993).
International assignment: An organization or company sends employees from the home country to another country for work and business operations at overseas offices or companies, and these employees are called expatriates. (Naito, 2017)

Sub-Saharan: Relates to the part of the African continent which is south to the Sahara Desert (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018b).

*NOTE: In the following, the term ‘expatriate’ is utilized to describe both expatriates and inpatriates. However, at times only the term ‘inpatriate’ is used, to emphasize that only this group is meant.
**Abbreviations**

*CCT* - Cross-cultural Training
*CFO* - Chief Financial Officer
*GDP* - Gross Domestic Product
*HR* - Human Resources
*HQ* - Headquarter
*IA* - International Assignment
*IDV* - Individualism versus Collectivism
*IND* - Indulgence versus Restraint
*LTO* - Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Orientation
*MAS* - Masculinity versus Femininity
*MD* - Managing Director
*MNC* - Multinational Corporation
*MNE* – Multinational Enterprise
*PDI* - Power Distance Index
*RnD* - Research and Development
*UAI* - Uncertainty Avoidance Index
1. Introduction

This chapter aims at familiarizing the reader with the topic, and to point out the research gap leading to the research questions of this study. Thus, it is structured as follows: First, the problem background is explained, addressing the issue of increasing globalization, the rising importance of the African market and the lack of a specific business strategy for Africa. Second, the theoretical background is explained, including the challenge of cross-cultural communication, specifics of the African business culture, and the ‘Framework of Cross-cultural Adjustment’ by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991). After, the purpose of this study is explained (Ch.1.3), leading to the research question (Ch. 1.4). Fifth, the African market and its rising importance is discussed more in detail. Lastly, the structure of the paper is outlined.

1.1 Problem Background

The increasing globalization led to a business environment, which is more competitive, complex, dynamic and uncertain than ever before, and forces managers to acquire the skills to work and compete in a global world (Thomas & Inkson, 2009). There are at least three forces of globalization. First, the rising interconnectedness of the world enhances more and more international trade and the emergence of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs). Moreover, it creates the possibility to locate business anywhere in the world. The second force of globalization is the rising importance and volume of human migration, and the third one is the communication and information technologies, with which time and distance can be transcended (Ibid.). The globalization affects everyone and involves a rising number of relationships and interactions with people from different cultures. In that manner, effective interaction across cultures is a requirement for everyone in today’s global environment. Even though various barriers, such as trade, travel, and information exchange can be crossed, cultural boundaries are often overlooked, since culture is to a great extent, invisible. Because of that, there is a high potential for misunderstandings and failure of communication in interactions with different cultures (Ibid.). In the following, an example of a Swedish manager preparing to go to Ghana for an expatriate opportunity is presented. One took a cross-cultural training, where one learnt that in Ghana, people read a watch the other way around. In that manner, 12:00 is for them 6:00; 6:00 is 0:00; and 9:00 is 3:00 (Interviewee 6). Not knowing this beforehand could have led to serious misunderstandings.
**Rising importance of African market**

Several studies have been conducted, which show the increasing importance of the African market for foreign investments, due to its growth in population, buying power, and demand (e.g. Drammeh, Karlsson. 2017; Gebauer, Haldimann, Saul. 2016). The African Economic Outlook (2017) shows an improvement regarding social, economic and governance indicators for 2017 and 2018 in Africa. In the same way, there are other indicators which show the mayor potential of Africa as a market, especially in the Eastern part, in the upcoming years. As an example, the Eastern region of Africa will experience the highest population growth in the world, growing not only in size but also in purchasing power due to a bigger middle class implying higher spending patterns (Business in Sweden, 2017). According to Business in Sweden (2017), Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya will be the top performances in HDI and GDP growth in the region. This is influenced by the level of difficulty of doing business in Africa, which, according to recent predictions, will decrease in the upcoming years, with Rwanda as the top performing country (Ibid.). The improvement in this indicator takes into account several factors, such as lower bureaucracy needed in Rwanda to get permits, the more reliable electricity supply in Kenia, or the lower time needed to acquire construction permits in Tanzania among others (Ibid.). The increasing importance of the African market for foreign investments suggests that the number of International Assignment (IA) between Europe and Africa will rise in the upcoming years.

**Lack of specific strategy for Africa**

Even though years have passed, in which Multinational Corporation (MNC) have gained broader knowledge in global strategies, there are specific areas where improvement is needed. In that manner, MNCs nowadays might be facing problems concerning the adaptation of international strategies to different markets or regions. For instance, the lack of a specific strategy for the African market by German companies may be detected. In specific, Africa is viewed as a third market for used products, and the sales to the region are organized via an EMEA (Europe-Middle East-Africa) structure (Gebauer, Haldimann & Saul, 2016). Thus, the same strategy is utilized for the regions of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. However, a more specific strategy would be required meet the opportunities and risks of the rising African market (Ibid.). Even though the mentioned source refers to German companies, it is possible that Swedish companies might follow a similar pattern in their Africa strategy.
Additionally, the focus of expansion strategies of Swedish companies has been on China in the past years (Drammeh & Karlsson, 2017). Therefore, there could be a lack of strategies adapted to the African market. However, this could be a challenge, due to the high diversity of the African continent compared to China, despite the fact that a similar number of people live in both regions. To compare, there are 1.2 billion people living in Africa (Worldometer, 2017a), and 1.4 billion people in China (Worldometer, 2017b). Nevertheless, China is one country, while Africa consists of 54 countries (Worldometer, 2017c), and numerous different languages and cultures. The high diversity of the African continent demonstrates that it could be challenging to adapt to its diverse cultures. Thus, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of them, to be able to conduct business there successfully.

1.2 Theoretical Background

Through the above mentioned acceleration of globalization, companies are faced with fundamental, strategic challenges. One of the main dilemmas of doing business internationally is the trade-off between a globally-standardized strategy, and local differentiation. In that manner, a global strategy sees the world as one single market, and has advantages, such as access to scale economies in manufacturing, marketing, and product development (Grant, 2010). However, local differences have a great influence on customer preference (Ibid.).

Business success depends on the ability of a company to form relationships to business partners, suppliers and customers, especially in foreign markets. Through those relationships, networks may be established, and access to local market knowledge could be gained (Holm, Eriksson & Johanson, 1996). However, the ability to form relationships is highly dependent on one’s ability to deal effectively with cross-cultural issues (Thomas & Inkson, 2009).

Especially challenging is the communication between cultures, which are very different from each other. In that manner, the home and host cultures of an expatriate, for instance, Sweden, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa could be compared along the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (see Ch. 2.1.2). Figure 1 shows the big discrepancy between the culture of Sweden, and the cultures of the African countries, which could be an indicator for the need to support an outgoing expatriate’s cross-cultural adjustment.
In the following, some examples of how Scandinavian and African business cultures may differ are presented.

Management and Culture
Management is influenced by culture, and there exist distinct management principles in different cultures (Zander, 1997; Zander & Butler, 2010). For instance, employees in the Scandinavian countries expect their leaders to empower and to coach them, while they do not require a lot of supervision and review, compared to other countries (Zander, 1997). In turn, there are some African management principles foreigners might not comprehend at first. For example, the group has a high significance, implying that feedback is always directed to the group, and not to individuals (Amoako-Agyei, 2009). Moreover, conflicts are kept to a minimum, and mutual respect and maintaining peace is of fundamental importance. Apart from that, personal relationships between the business partners are highly valued, meaning that they would take time before the business to get to know each other (Ibid.). Another aspect concerns the relationship between age and authority, which demands to show respect and humility to elders, independent of their title (Ibid.).
The previous examples of possible differences between Scandinavian and African business cultures point again to the need to develop a strategy to support cross-cultural adjustment. In the following paragraph, the Framework of International Adjustment by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991) is presented, on which the present study is based on.

**The Framework of International Adjustment**

The framework aims at pointing out that there are different elements influencing international adjustment. Moreover, it shows that international adjustment consists of different ‘degrees’, which are areas in which one can adjust. Apart from that, it distinguishes between factors that influence anticipatory adjustment, and factors that determine the in-country adjustment of an expatriate (Black et al, 1991). A detailed examination of it, and of all of its elements is presented in chapter 2.3.

![Figure 2 - Framework of International Adjustment](image)

*(Black, Mendehall & Oddou, 1991, p. 303)*
1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate why cross-cultural adjustment needs to be supported, to examine which factors influence it and to give recommendations to companies on how to support their expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment. To do so, the researchers focus on Swedish companies with IA between the African and the Swedish market.

Moreover, the thesis aims at contributing to the research area of international adjustment by reviewing the Framework of International Adjustment of Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991) with the collected data and providing an updated version of it.

1.4 Research Questions

How can Swedish companies support the cross-cultural adjustment of their expatriates on international assignments between Sweden and Africa?

In order to break down the research question, researchers formulated three sub-questions aiming to cover all the aspects included. Following a why-which-how structure, each sub-question builds on the previous one, providing the reader with a broader understanding. In that manner, the first sub question aims at pointing out the research gap, and thus, the need to further explore the chosen topic. The answer to the second sub question should demonstrate the overall areas in which improvement is needed. Based on the defined areas, the third sub question should deliver concrete recommendations for companies on how to improve the aspects of those areas.

Sub-questions:

1. Why does cross-cultural adjustment need to be improved?

2. Which factors can Swedish companies address to support cross-cultural adjustment?

3. How can Swedish companies modify those factors to support cross-cultural adjustment?
1.5 Africa

Since the purpose of this thesis is to bring understanding towards cross-cultural adjustment, the researchers selected two Swedish companies which faced this issue towards African markets. Acknowledging that Africa consist of 54 countries, there was a limitation for the researchers to find companies willing to collaborate in all the countries. Nonetheless, the researchers decided to focus on the African countries where the employees interviewed from Company 1 and 2 were having their experience working abroad. The countries covered in the interviews for Company 1 were Ghana, Kenya and South Africa and for Company 2, Tunisia.

In order to gain simplicity, the researchers use the term of “Africa” or “Africans” in general to refer to the different countries mentioned in the previous paragraph. The intention is to avoid repetition of the names of all the countries. The researchers acknowledge the different cultures, behaviors and beliefs that conform Africa and its countries, as the idea of a homogeneous conception of the Africa’s culture is inaccurate (Darley and Blankson, 2008).

In the following, various economic indicators of Africa are presented, with the objective to demonstrate the relevance of the African markets in the upcoming years.

Africa is a region with growing potential for business. Sweden have had trading relations with countries in Africa for several decades. For instance, the share of Swedish exports to Africa by 1950 was 3.6% of the total of exports (Wohlgemuth, 2002).

Even though Africa’s economic growth had a slowdown in 2016, most of the non-commodity exporting countries in Africa kept a positive growth. Predictions suggested a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 4.3% for 2018, after a growth of 2.2% in 2016 and 3.4% in 2017 (African Economic Outlook, 2017). The GDP growth for 2017-2018 in Africa resulted from an improvement in the domestic demand and the commodity prices (African Economic Outlook, 2017). In the same way, an improvement in the business environment, higher diversification and a better macroeconomic management will ensure a positive tendency in the Africa’s growth in 2017-2018. Regarding the macroeconomic perspective by the African regions, East Africa is in lead with a 5.3% GDP growth in 2016 followed by North Africa (3.0%), Southern Africa (1.1%), Central Africa (0.8%) and West Africa (0.4%) (African Economic Outlook, 2017). In the following, the economic outlook of the African countries treated in the thesis is presented.
**Ghana**
Ghana has achieved significant steps towards democracy during the last two decades, winning the public trust (The World Bank, 2018b). 2016 was a difficult year for Ghana, which was overcome by 2017, improving the fiscal debt from 9.3% in 2016 to a 6% in 2017 of GDP (Ibid.). The most recent numbers show an improvement of the Ghana’s economy from a growth of 3.6% in 2016 to an 8.5% in 2017, driven by the oil and mining sector (Ibid.).

**Kenya**
Over the last decade, Kenya has seen relevant improvements in sustainable economic growth, political environment and social development due to successful reforms (The World Bank, 2018c). Nonetheless, Kenya still faces challenges towards inequality, level of poverty, climate change and volatility of the economy to internal and external strong effects (Ibid.). Kenya’s growth reached 5.8% during 2016, positioning it as one of the Sub-Sahara fastest growing economies (Ibid.). Kenya’s GDP growth predictions establish an increase to a 5.8% in 2018 and a 6.1% in 2019 (Ibid.). Thanks to a highly skilled workforce, improved infrastructure resources, a youthful population and its key role in the East Africa region, Kenya counts with the potential to become one of Africa’s most success development processes (Ibid.).

**South Africa**
South Africa political transition has been one of most inspiring during the last century, where the African National Congress (ANC) party, has been ruling since 1994 (The World Bank, 2018d). Since the transition in the 1990s South Africa has advance towards the improvement of the wellbeing of its citizens, but the speed is slow and there is still much to achieve (Ibid.). The economy in South Africa expanded a 1.3% during 2017 and the growth predictions for 2018 is of a 1.4% (Ibid.). South Africa has a powerful role in Southern Africa’s GDP, being responsible for more than half of it, precisely the 60%, followed by Angola (20%), Zambia (4.2%) or Mozambique (2.9%) among others (Business in Sweden, 2016). In relation with Sweden, South Africa is the biggest market for Sweden in all Africa counting with close to 60 Swedish companies with a local establishment in South Africa, for example, Ericsson, ABB, SKF or Volvo among others (Ibid.).

**Tunisia**
Tunisia’s growth during the post-revolution period keeps weak despite a small acceleration during 2017 (The World Bank, 2018a). The political and security environment in the North Africa and
Middle East, social insecurity and political transition have had a negative impact in the Tunisian economy. Tunisian economy grew 1.9% during 2017 (Ibid.).

**Bright Economic Outlook for Africa**

As explained above, some of Africa’s countries and in general Africa as a continent, represent interesting entrepreneur opportunities for new investments and for expanding existing businesses. The reasons supporting this statement are collected by the African Economic Outlook (2017), done by the African Development Bank, the OECD and the United Nations Development Program. Some of them are:

- The labor force in Africa will receive 29 million of workers every year from 2015 to 2030
- Industrialization is a hot topic in the political agenda in Africa. At least 26 countries are carrying out industrialization policies in 2017. Industrialization will incentivize job creation, an increase in the productivity and innovation.
- The manufacturing sector in Africa has still room for improvement and growth. Compared with other developed regions, the manufacturing sector is still small (11% of GDP) as it is showed in Table 1.

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<td>Agriculture</td>
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*Note: The sector shares do not add up to 100% as several sectors are not included in the table (quarrying and mining including oil, construction, electricity, gas, and water). Sources: AfDB Statistics Department; World Bank (2017).*

*Table 1 - Sector shares of gross domestic product in world regions, 2014/2015*

*African Economic Outlook 2017, p. 164)*

- New technologies can play an important role in the African industrialization process. These new technologies will allow new sectors to appear. As an example, Nairobi, Lagos or Cape
Town are emerging as hubs for global startups with specially strength in sectors as renewable energies or financial technology.

In conclusion, all the aspects and future predictions mentioned in this chapter, outline many of the interesting traits of creating or expanding businesses in Africa. Nonetheless, Africa is a vast region conformed by many countries where not all of them share the same positive future perspectives, even though the general prediction is clearly positive.

1.6 Structure

This paper is divided in seven chapters. The first chapter serves as a starting point for the researchers to introduce the reader to the problem background (Ch. 1.1) and theoretical background (Ch. 1.2). Moreover, it presents the purpose of the thesis (Ch. 1.3) and the research questions (Ch. 1.4). To finish the chapter, there is a brief introduction of the African continent and the African countries which are mentioned in this paper (Ch. 1.5).

The second chapter covers the theory part. In this section, three main points are explained; the concept of culture (Ch. 2.1), of cross-cultural adjustment (Ch. 2.2) and the ‘Framework of International Adjustment’ (Ch. 2.3) by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991). This last part is analyzed in depth, as this framework serves as basis for this study. In that manner, all of the elements of the framework are examined in detail.

The scientific method conforms the third chapter. In this chapter the pre-understandings of the researchers are outlined (Ch. 3.1) as well as the ontology (Ch. 3.2) and epistemology (Ch. 3.3) of the paper. The chapter continues by explaining the reasoning behind the choice of deductive versus inductive theory (Ch. 3.4), the research strategy (Ch. 3.5) and research design (Ch. 3.6). Overall, the theoretical part of the methodology is explained.

Chapter number four is the practical method. The researchers explain aspects of the research as the sampling (Ch. 4.1), the interview guide (Ch. 4.2) and the data collection (Ch. 4.3) and data analysis (Ch. 4.4). The chapter finishes with the ethical considerations (Ch. 4.5). Thus, chapter four is the practical counterpart of chapter three, and explains, amongst others, concrete actions taken by the researchers to collect and analyze the data.
The fifth chapter covers the findings part. In this section researchers explain the findings obtained through the data collection. The findings are divided into two parts, one for each company, Company 1 (Ch. 5.1) and Company 2 (Ch. 5.2). Moreover, they are structured according to the sequence of an expatriate’s journey: Experiences before the IA, experiences during the IA and conclusions.

The sixth chapter is the discussion, where the researchers combine the theory with the findings, aiming at creating knowledge that helps to understand the cross-cultural processes better, and to develop concrete suggestions for companies to support their expatriate’s cross-cultural adjustment. In specific, the updated Framework of International Adjustment is presented there, and the chapter is structured according to its elements.

The final and seventh chapter is the conclusion, where the researchers outline the most important findings and recommendations for the research and for the companies. It is divided into general conclusions (7.1), theoretical contributions (Ch. 7.2), practical contributions (Ch. 7.3), limitations (Ch. 7.4) and further research (Ch. 7.5).
2. Theory

This chapter outlines relevant literature and theories the present study is based on. First, the concept of culture is discussed. The second subchapter explores the topic of cross-cultural adjustment, including the stages an expatriate goes through, when relocating to another country. Lastly, the Framework of International Adjustment is explained in detail.

2.1 Culture

This chapter aims at creating a foundation for the understanding of the concept of culture. In chapter 2.1.1, Hofstede’s definition of culture is presented. Defining this concept is fundamental to further analyze and compare the different cultures of home and host countries of the expatriates. Thus, in chapter 2.1.2, the cultural dimensions by Hofstede are explained, and Sweden is compared to the African countries of Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. The selection of those countries is based on the home and host countries of the expatriates interviewed in the present study. However, one relevant country is missing (Tunisia), since the scores of its cultural dimension were not available online. The comparison of the mentioned countries is relevant to demonstrate that the Swedish and African cultures are very different from each other, and that the cross-cultural adjustment may indeed be a challenge for an expatriate moving between those countries. Consequently, it points out the need for improving the company support for cross-cultural adjustment provided to the expatriates and addresses sub-research question one: “Why does cross-cultural adjustment need to be improved?”.

2.1.1 Definition of culture

Hofstede’s definition views culture as a collective mental programming “that we share with other members of our nation, region, or group but not with members of other nations, regions, or groups.” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 76). To deepen the understanding of the concept of culture, it results valuable to distinguish it from human nature and personality, even though it is controversial, where the exact borders lie (see figure 3) (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Human nature is common to all humans, thus, it is universal, and inherited in the genes. Personality is based on characteristics, which are partly inherited through the genes, and partly modified through culture and individual experiences. It is a concept that is specific to an individual person. In turn, culture is specific to a group or category, and is learned through the social environment, and not inherited through the genes (Ibid.).
2.1.2 Cultural dimensions

Six cultural dimensions were defined, along which a country may be analyzed. A cultural dimension may be defined as “an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures.” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 31) Each dimension is rated along a scale from 0 to 100, with 100 as the highest score. However, it is important to keep in mind that the scores of the dimensions are relative, since in Hofstede’s opinion, culture may only be used meaningfully in comparison (Hofstede, 1983).

The dimensions include the Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) (Hofstede. 2018a). The figure below compares the host countries of the expatriates of Company 1 with their home country, Sweden, along those cultural dimensions. Apart from that, Sweden is the host country of the expatriates of Company 2 coming from Tunisia. As mentioned before, scores for Tunisia were not available.
The dimension of PDI indicates to which degree the “less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2018b). Thus, a high-power distance shows that a hierarchical order of the society is accepted, while in countries with low power distance, people aim for an equal power distribution. The figure above indicates that Ghana and Kenya have a very high-power distance index, while Sweden and South Africa have lower scores.

Regarding the second dimension, ‘Individualism’ expresses a society, in which each person is expected to take care of oneself and one’s immediate family. In turn, collectivism relates to a society in which one may expect from relatives and other groups to take care of them in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede, 1983). The figure shows that, in Ghana and Kenya, people’s self-image is defined with regards to the “we”, while South Africa and Sweden are rather individualistic societies, and people’s self-image is defined concerning the “I”.

The dimension of MAS distinguishes between societies with a preference for heroism, achievement, material rewards for success, and assertiveness (Masculine societies), from societies, which value modesty, cooperation, caring for the weak, and quality of life (Feminine
Regarding the compared countries, the figure indicates that Sweden is an extremely feminine society with only 5 points. Ghana is also rather feminine, but Kenya and South Africa tend more to the masculine side.

UAI presents how uncomfortable a society is with ambiguity and uncertainty, and to which degree they attempt to control the future, or “just let it happen” (Hofstede, 2018b). In that manner, the societies of Ghana, and Kenya are rather uncomfortable with uncertainty. South Africa’s score is very close to them, but Sweden has a lower index, which shows that the Swedish society feels more comfortable with uncertainty.

The fifth dimension LTO, shows if a society rather focuses on the future (long-term orientation), and values thrift, persistence and the ability to adapt, or on the past and the present (short-term orientation), and values tradition (Hofstede, 2018b). The figure above shows that the Ghanaian society is very short-term oriented, South Africa is rather short-term, and Sweden rather long-term oriented. For Kenya, there are no scores available on this dimension.

The IND dimension indicates if a society “allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun” (Hofstede, 2018b) (Indulgence), or if the gratification of those needs is regulated by strict norms (Restraint) (Hofstede, 2018b). Ghana, South Africa and Sweden have a tendency to indulgence, while there are no scores available for Kenya.

The chapter has shown that the Swedish culture and the culture of the mentioned African countries have significant differences. Therefore, expatriates going on IA between Sweden and Africa require support to manage their cross-cultural adjustment. The concept of cross-cultural adjustment is explained in the following sub-chapter (2.2 Cross-cultural Adjustment).

2.2 Cross-cultural Adjustment

To be able to explain how companies can support their expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment, it results valuable to define the terms. In that manner, ‘cross-cultural’ means “involving two or more different cultures and their ideas and customs” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018a). ‘Adjustment’ means one’s psychological comfort with a new setting (Black. 1988). Thus, cross-cultural
adjustment may be viewed as the process of “getting comfortable” with living and working in a culture different from one’s home culture.

Several researchers have found certain stages one goes through, when adjusting to a new culture (Oberg, 2006; Thomas & Inkson, 2003). It results beneficial to present those stages, in order to create a deeper understanding of the findings of the present study. In that manner, Oberg (2006) defined four distinct stages, which are called the ‘Honeymoon stage’, the ‘Crisis’, the ‘Recovery’, and the ‘Adjustment’. In that manner, during the honeymoon stage, an expatriate is full of excitement and curiosity about the new environment, while having superficial, but friendly contacts to the locals (Oberg, 2006, cit. by Gertsen, 1990). During the crisis, or culture shock, one might feel frustration, rejection, anger, or anxiety. After that, in the recovery stage, the expatriate gradually resolves the crisis, by getting to know the language and culture of the host country. In the last stage, the adjustment, one may accept and even appreciate the cultural differences, even though there might still occur a feeling of anxiety at times (Ibid.). However, similar models have been criticized for being overgeneralized, for instance, because not every expatriate starts their stay abroad with a phase of excitement (Becker, 1968).

An addition to Oberg’s model was developed by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), who stated that a returning expatriate may go through all of the mentioned stages again, when returning to the home country. In figure 4, both models are combined, and the expatriate’s mood in relation to the time spent in the host and the home country is visualized.

![Figure 4 - The Stages of Cross-Cultural Adjustment](image)

*(Makmuri, 2012, based on Oberg, 1960 and Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963)*
Another model of cross-cultural adjustment was developed by Thomas and Inkson (2003) and includes five different stages. First, the expatriate displays reactivity to external stimuli, and does not appreciate differences between home and host culture. Second, one recognizes the host culture’s motivations and norms. Third, one realizes that variations exist, and starts to understand why certain behaviors occur. At stage four, the expatriate interacts almost without an effort with the other culture, and there is less need to analyze situations. Lastly, one adjusts automatically to situations, and people from the other culture, based on recognizing changing cues (Thomas & Inkson, 2003).

In this chapter, cross-cultural adjustment and the possible stages of it were discussed. To understand that the concept is, amongst others, dependent on time spent abroad, is crucial for a subsequent comprehension of the challenges an expatriate might face. Moreover, it puts the present study’s findings, which are discussed in chapter five, into context.

2.3 The Framework of International Adjustment

In their Framework of International Adjustment, Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991) defined different factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment of an expatriate (see figure 2). They divided international adjustment into ‘anticipatory adjustment’, which occurs before going abroad, and ‘in-country adjustment’, which happens in the host country. Both types of international adjustment are influenced by several factors, all of which are supposed to determine an expatriates’ mode of adjustment. The three different degrees of adjustment are influenced by different factors, as indicated by the numbers in the framework, and as explained later (Ch. 2.3.4: Degree of Adjustment).
The following chapters discuss all of the elements of the framework in detail. In that manner, chapter 2.3.1 treats the factors influencing anticipatory adjustment. Chapter 2.3.2 regards the factors influencing in-country adjustment. Lastly, chapter 2.3.3 explains mode of adjustment, and chapter 2.3.4 degree of adjustment.

2.3.1 Anticipatory Adjustment

The anticipatory adjustment is influenced by certain individual factors, which are ‘training’ (Ch. 2.3.1.1) and ‘previous experience’ (Ch. 2.3.1.2), that lead to ‘accurate expectations’ (2.3.2.3). The organizational factors influencing the anticipatory adjustment are the ‘selection mechanisms and criteria’ (2.3.1.4). All of those elements are presented in the following.

2.3.1.1 Individual: Training

Cross-cultural training (CCT) may be “defined as any formalized intervention designed to increase the knowledge and skills of international assignees to live and work effectively in an unfamiliar environment.” (Parkinson & Morley, 2006, p. 118)
Reasons for and against CCT

There are various reasons companies have mentioned for not providing cross-cultural training (CCT) to their expatriates (Mendehall, Dunbar & Oddou, 1987), such as the disbelief in its effectiveness, due to its intangibility, the short time between selection and start of the IA, or the impression that the stay abroad is too short to justify the investment (Gertsen, 1990; Tung, 1981).

However, other studies confirm the positive impact of CCT on the development of the competencies an expatriate needs to work abroad (Tung, 1981; Parkinson & Morley, 2006). In that manner, CCT may foster one’s productivity and effectiveness working abroad, for instance, by enabling to motivate local employees (Kohls & Brussow, 1995).

The objective of CCT is to enable the expatriate to handle the professional and personal change, and to manage their responsibilities in a foreign environment (Bennett, Aston & Colquhoun, 2000). Overall, it should help the participants feel comfortable working and living in the host country and enhance them to comprehend and acknowledge different cultural perspectives (Caligiuri, Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). In short, after the CCT, an expatriate should be enabled to manage cultural differences (Bennett et al., 2000), and to adjust to the other culture (Caligiuri et al., 2005). However, a complete behavioral adjustment, or ‘going native’, is not the ideal state, since the initial objective of sending expatriates is to transfer knowledge, and with it, culture, from the headquarter to the subsidiary. Thus, the expatriate may face the dilemma of adjustment to the local culture, and at the same time transferring the company’s global values to the subsidiary (Gertsen, 1990).

Regarding the content, the training should cover the three key dimensions of an expatriate’s acculturation, which are the ‘self-orientation’, the ‘others-orientation’, and the ‘perceptual orientation’ (Mendehall et al., 1987). A more detailed explanation is provided in Ch. 2.3.2.1. about the characteristics of the Individual influencing adjustment.

Types of cross-cultural training

There are three different approaches for CCT, which are ‘information-giving’, ‘affective’, and ‘immersion’ (Mendehall et al., 1987), all of which may be observed in figure 6. In that manner, the information-giving, or ‘cognitive’ approach is a non-participative method, in which the expatriates receive knowledge about the foreign environment (Ibid.). This could include information about the area and the culture, recommendations for media about the topic (e.g. books), or basic language
training (Ibid.). The idea behind this type of CCT is that knowledge could increase empathy, which then could facilitate the cross-cultural adjustment. However, cultural differences have numerous facets, and it results difficult to convey all of them in a training of this type (Tung, 1981). Additionally, more knowledge about a culture does not necessarily lead to positive attitudes towards it, and does not always affect behaviors (Gertsen, 1990).

In turn, the affective approach to CCT seeks to evoke affective reactions, with the objective to enable the participant to deal with critical situations, and gain cultural insights (Brislin, 1979). Apart from that, it aims at making the expatriate more flexible in one's attitude and identify and accept unfamiliar values or modes of behavior (Tung, 1981). This approach may include role playing activities, cases, training to reduce stress, and moderate language training (Mendehall et al., 1987).

Lastly, the immersion, also called ‘behavioral’ or ‘experiential’ approach, is a variation of the affective approach, which uses methods such as simulations, assessment centers, field experiences, and extensive language training (Ibid.). The objective of this type of CCT is specifically to adjust to the communication style of the host country, and to provide the prerequisites to form positive relationships with the locals (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005).

All in all, an in-depth CCT would combine all three approaches (Mendehall et al., 1987). Especially experiential elements are important to include in CCT, to strengthen one's ability to identify culturally appropriate behaviors and execute them (Sit, Mak & Neill, 2017), and in developing self-efficacy and persistence in doing so (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005). However, there is no training program, which can be claimed as the best in all cases, but the choice of which methods to utilize depends on different factors (Tung, 1981), which are discussed later in this chapter. Thus, a contingency approach for CCT should be used (Ibid.).

Another categorization of CCT was developed by Gertsen (1990), who distinguishes between conventional and experimental training methods, and between the focus on culture in general, or on one culture in specific. Similar to the cognitive approach mentioned before, the conventional training method is unidirectional and focused on transmitting relevant information. In turn, the experimental method provides, like the affective and experiential approach, hands-on training and simulations (Gertsen, 1990). Moreover, if CCT is focused on culture in general, it aims at making participants more sensible, and acceptant of cultural differences that may arise. The focus on a
specific culture in a CCT attempts to prepare for working and living in the host country (Ibid.). If combined, the two categorizations discussed form four distinct ways of CCT, which may be observed in figure 5 (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the CCT would be limited, if only one type of training would be utilized. Therefore, a multidimensional approach, addressing culture specific and culture general topics, and using cognitive and experiential methods is said to be ideal (Bennett, 1986).

![Figure 5 - Types of Cross-cultural Training](Gertsen, 1990, p. 354)
**Contingency approach for cross-cultural training**

As mentioned before, a contingency approach should be adopted for CCT (Tung, 1981), meaning that the CCT should be adapted to the specific context of the IA. In that manner, different factors are to be considered. In figure 6 the relationship between the length of the IA, the degree of integration into the host culture, the length of the CCT, the training approach, and the rigor of the training is displayed. The degree of integration necessary for the IA expresses the “level of cultural fluency the expatriate will need to be successful.” (Mendehall et al., 1987) As indicated in figure 6, as the necessary degree of integration rises, the length and depth of the CTT increases. Similarly, the length of the IA raises the required time and depth of CTT (Ibid.).

![Figure 6 - Factors Determining Cross-cultural Training](image)

Training for family

Another factor is that, when an expatriate takes one’s family to the host country, they should be given CCT as well, since they may even encounter more difficulties when relocating (Parkinson & Morley, 2006). This is due to the fact that, especially the partner, needs to break with the continuity and structure of one’s life, which could be an issue for a couple (Linehan & Scullion, 2001). While the expatriate, upon arrival, has a structured support system, and defined responsibilities in one’s new work role, families often face an unstructured transition into the host country, and are more directly exposed to the local environment (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Therefore, the risk of failure to adjust might be higher for families than for the expatriate (Parkinson & Morley, 2006).

2.3.1.2 Individual: Previous Experience

Several researchers have found a positive correlation between previous overseas experience and general cross-cultural adjustment (Bandura, 1997; Church, 1982; Okpara & Kabongo, 2011; Windiarti, Ferris & Berryman, 2014), even though a culture shock could still happen (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1964). Reasons for that could be an increased ability to adapt to a new environment, and to anticipate problems related to working in international teams (Windiarti et al., 2014). Apart from that, international experiences provide opportunities to improve various skills, such as intercultural communication (Okpara & Kabongo, 2011). However, others only found a positive correlation between previous experience and work adjustment, but not adjustment in general (Black, 1988). Not only international business experience, but also non-work experience, like travelling or studying abroad, may result beneficial. In that manner, one may learn about other cultures through observation or direct contact, and gain experience in adjusting to foreign cultures, which could be useful in future international experiences (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, prior international experience may have led to the development of certain cognitive frameworks, by integrating different experiences, which then leads to a deeper understanding of people, events, and roles (Fiske & Taylor, 2016). Consequently, this may aid the cross-cultural adjustment. Apart from this, previous cross-cultural experience may also have an effect on the efficiency of CCT (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). Thus, those who have not worked internationally before are likely to have a higher need for CCT than those who have previous international experience (Bandura, 1997; Church, 1982).

Nevertheless, studies have shown that the quality and the nature of the prior international experience play an important role in determining its effect on cross-cultural adjustment in later IA
(e.g. Amir, 1969; Basu & Ames, 1970). For instance, intercultural contact does not always help to reduce prejudices, but it depends if it has been favorable (e.g. equal status of groups; social climate in favor of intergroup contact, contact pleasant or rewarding) or unfavorable (contact produces competition; contact unpleasant, involuntary, tension laden, when members are in state of frustration) (Amir, 1969). Regarding the length of the international experience, it has only a small impact on adjustment (Black, 1988), compared to quality of the experience.

2.3.1.3 Individual: Accurate Expectations

The previously explained aspects of previous experience and training are likely to aid an expatriate to form accurate expectations about different aspects of one’s experience abroad (Black et al., 1991). Those factors include the daily life and the culture in the host country, the host-country nationals, the job, and the organizational culture (Black, 1988; Bochner, 1982). Consequently, there is a reduction of uncertainty related to one’s experience abroad, which benefits one’s anticipatory adjustment. Later, the expatriate is likely to experience a decreased number of surprises and related to that, few negative affective reactions, which could lead to a culture shock. Additionally, the person may display more suitable attitudes and behaviors, and adjust easier to the new culture, than someone with inaccurate expectations about one’s stay abroad (Black et al., 1991).

2.3.1.4 Organization: Selection Mechanisms and Criteria

Almost no study regarding expatriate adjustment and effectiveness has been carry out before the late 1970s (Black et al., 1991). Nonetheless, as for any other new open position, overseas opportunities have the need of a selection processes. Tung (1981) was one the firsts scholars who pointed out the need for research on overseas selection processes, since so far, only an enumeration of the main criteria needed had been done. There was a lack of a framework which would put together all that personal qualifications, giving them context and analyzing the overall selection process. In addition to this, Tung (1981) pointed out the need for a tailored framework rather than a general one to apply in different kinds of overseas opportunities.

The criteria to look into when selecting a candidate for an experience abroad, affects the amount of success of that assignment and have been researched by numerous scholars (Tung, 1981; Mendehall & Oddou, 1985; Oddou & Mendehall, 1984; Abe & Wiseman, 1983).
Regarding selection processes for overseas assignments, there has been a clear trend for managers and HR personnel to focus on the technical competence (Mendehall et al., 1987). Doing this, firms have overlook other relevant criteria for overseas assignments (Ibid.). As an example, the idea behind this approach is shortly summarize by a response to a study done by Baker and Ivancevich:

"Managing [a] company is a scientific art. The executive accomplishing the task in New York can surely perform as adequately in Hong Kong" (Baker & Ivancevich, 1971, p. 40).

This has been present as a line of thinking where “domestic equals overseas performance” when selecting personnel (Mendehall & Oddou, 1985). This approach has been noted by many studies in U.S. MNCs (Baker & Ivancevich, 1971; Tung, 1981; Mendehall and Oddou, 1985). In contrary, Black et al., (1991) pointed out the substantial differences existing between cross-cultural and domestic adjustment. Therefore, scholars agreed on a need for a more comprehensive selection processes, where other cross-cultural aspects will be considered (Mendehall et al., 1987).

As mentioned before, there has been a trend among firms to understand two concepts which might have led to lower efficiency in international assignments. First, too much focus on technical competence and second, to view the domestic performance equal as the overseas performance. Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991) pointed out the relevance of an improvement in the selection process and its outcomes:

“Individuals who have been selected based on a wide array of relevant criteria will experience easier and quicker cross-cultural adjustment compared to individuals who have been selected on the basis of only job-related criteria.” (Black, Mendehall & Oddou, 1991, p.307)

In the same direction, Mendehall and Oddou (1985) identified four dimensions as components of expatriate adjustment (self-oriented, others-oriented, perceptual dimension (see Ch. 2.3.2.1 Individual) and cultural-toughness dimension (see Ch. 2.3.2.5.6 Culture Novelty)). They pointed out that expatriate acculturation is a multidimensional process and therefore, selection processes should be adapted from one-dimensional to multi-dimensional. Trying to bring light into this topic, first steps were done by Hays (1974), who differentiate four different types of international assignments (Structure Reproducer, Troubleshooter, Operational Element and Chief Executive Officer). The classification was based on the different characteristics (Job Ability Factors,
Relational Abilities and Family Situation) that the expat would need to have to best fit into each one of them. In the same way, different criteria would be needed to search for in the recruitment processes depending on the group that the overseas opportunity belonged to (Ibid.). A further explanation of personality traits and soft skills which may favor cross-cultural adjustment may be found in chapter 2.3.2.1: Individual.

Many authors have work towards a clearer understanding of this topic, but critics regarding a need of a higher consensus exist. Mendehall and Oddou (1985) pointed out that the two basic problems of expatriate training and selection were a poor understanding of the relevant variables of expatriate acculturation and the poor use of expatriates’ selection and training methods. Arthur and Bennett (1995) claimed that more than five decades on research about selection processes of expatriates have not been successful on clearly point out what is multinational firms should be training or selecting for. As the authors mentioned (Ibid.) this might be the initial reason why the perception of training is seen as an ineffective tool exist among managers. The problem of unclear selection processes has an economic relevance for firms as the difference in cost and profit between an employee who performs great or poorly, is greater for expatriates than it is for domestic employees (Mol, 2007).

2.3.2 In-country Adjustment

The in-country adjustment is influenced by five groups of factors, which are ‘Individual’ (Ch. 2.3.2.1), ‘Organization Socialization’ (Ch. 2.3.2.2), ‘Job’ (Ch. 2.3.2.3), ‘Organization Culture’ (Ch. 2.3.2.4) and ‘Nonwork’ (Ch. 2.3.2.5). Those elements and their sub-elements are discussed in the following.

2.3.2.1 Individual

Several researchers have found empirical evidence for the influence of personality on cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Salgado & Bastida, 2017; Ward, Leong & Low, 2004). In that manner, certain personality traits favor cross-cultural adjustment, such as a high level of openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, while others, such as neuroticism, may hinder it (Ward et al., 2004). Especially sociability, a facet of extraversion, appears to benefit an expatriate’s adjustment. A high level of sociability is related to confidently managing self-presentation, feeling secure in new social situations, and having good social skills, all of which may benefit building interpersonal relationships, and handling cross-cultural differences (Salgado & Bastida, 2017).
**Cultural intelligence**

There are different ways of overcoming cultural differences, such as expecting others to adapt, or attempting to learn everything about the other culture. However, none of those ways is as sustainable as becoming more cultural intelligent, which may facilitate each future cultural challenge. Cultural intelligent individuals are flexible and skilled in understanding different cultures, in updating current knowledge through constant interactions with it, and in adapting own behavior to the new culture. It consists of three parts: First, knowledge about culture in general and how it may affect behavior, second, mindfulness, meaning to be attentive and reflective in interaction with a new culture, and third, to have cross-cultural skills, enabling to choose the appropriate behavior in various intercultural situations (Thomas & Inkson, 2009).

Regarding cross-cultural adjustment, there are three important dimensions: The ‘self-orientation’, the ‘others-orientation’, and the ‘perceptual-orientation’ (Mendehall et al., 1987), which are displayed in table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Factor 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Factor 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Factor 3</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SELF-ORIENTATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>OTHERS-ORIENTATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>PERCEPTUAL-ORIENTATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Reduction</td>
<td>Relationship Skills</td>
<td>Flexible Attributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement Substitution</td>
<td>Willingness to Communicate</td>
<td>Broad Category Width</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Mobility</td>
<td>Non-Verbal Communication</td>
<td>High Tolerance for Ambiguity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Competence</td>
<td>Respect for Others</td>
<td>Being Non-judgemental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dealing with Alienation</td>
<td>Empathy for Others</td>
<td>Being Open-Minded</td>
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<td>Dealing with Isolation</td>
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<td>Field-Independence</td>
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<td>Realistic Expectations prior to departure</td>
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*Table 2 - Three Dimensions of Expatriate Acculturation*

*(Mendehall, Dunbar & Oddou, 1987, p. 333)*

Those three aspects are explored in the following sub-chapters. In that manner, ‘Self-Orientation’ is treated as ‘Self-efficacy’ in the Framework of International Adjustment and discussed in chapter 2.3.2.1.1. The ‘Relation Skills’ from the framework are one aspect of the “Others-Orientation” presented in the figure above and are presented in chapter 2.3.2.1.2. Lastly, the “Perceptual-Orientation” is treated as “Perception Skills” and are explained in chapter 2.3.2.1.3.
2.3.2.1.1 Self-efficacy

The term ‘self-efficacy’ may be defined as the “skills that enable the expatriate to maintain mental health, psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and effective stress management” (Black et al., 1991, p. 294). When being confronted with a situation abroad, one must handle it in one way or another. If the behavior was appropriate in the context, it should have favorable consequences; if not, the reaction may prove unsuccessful. This way, the individual selects step by step the successful ways of behavior, while the unsuccessful ones are discarded (Bandura, 1977). In that manner, people with high self-efficacy skills are likely to be persistent in adapting new behaviors in the host country, even though they may at times evoke negative reactions (Black et al., 1991). In the following, some actions expatriates with high self-efficacy may take, when they move abroad, are outlined.

Reinforcement substitution

‘Reinforcement substitution’ relates to the replacement of certain aspects of the life in the home country, with other aspects in the host country (David, 1976). Those aspects may include activities, which relate, for instance, to music, sports, cuisine, or family. However, each culture values different aspects. For instance, an American expatriate could at home prefer steak and baseball, while in the host country, he may learn to enjoy fish, and soccer instead. In general, expatriates, who find substitutes for their original preferences abroad, are likely to adjust more easily to the new culture, than others (Mendehall & Oddou, 1985).

Stress reduction

The transition into a new, unfamiliar environment is likely to cause stress, and anxiety in the expatriate (Byrnes, 1966). Thus, learning to deal with stress is an important step in the process of adjusting to a new culture (Ratiu, 1983). In that manner, it is crucial to find strategies to deal with stress, such as meditating, or writing a diary. To occasionally withdraw oneself from the environment allows the expatriate to adjust step by step to the host culture, and to reduce the likelihood of a culture shock (Ibid.).

2.3.2.1.3 Relation Skills

Relation skills refer to the “array of skills necessary for the fostering of relationships with host nationals” (Black et al., 1991, p. 294). Close relationships to the host nationals may provide the expatriates with guidance through the complexity of the new culture, including information and feedback on enacting appropriate behaviors, which may reduce the uncertainty related to the
unknown environment (Mendehall & Oddou, 1985). Apart from that, expatriates with meaningful relationships to the host nationals tend to display a high satisfaction rate regarding social interactions, friendship, and intimacy (Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman, 1978). Thus, a high percentage of time spent with host nationals is likely to support an expatriate’s general cross-cultural adjustment (Black, 1988).

2.3.2.1.3 Perception Skills

Perception skills are the “cognitive abilities that allow the expatriate to correctly perceive and evaluate the host environment and its actors.” (Black et al., 1991, p. 294). In that manner, an individual with high perceptual skills may easily comprehend appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the host country, the reasons behind it, and make predictions about future behaviors, which may reduce the uncertainty related to it (Black et al., 1991). Furthermore, a non-judgmental and non-evaluative manner of interpreting the behavior of host nationals is crucial to aid cross-cultural adjustment, since it is necessary for a clear information transmission and the formation of interpersonal relationships with them (Ruben & Kealy, 1979). In that manner, less-rigid evaluations about the reasons behind other people’s behaviors (Detweiler, 1975), and the ability to constantly update perceptions (Ratiu, 1983) may further aid cross-cultural adjustment.

2.3.2.2 Job

The element of ‘Job’ relates to the work role an expatriate assumes in the host country, and is divided into ‘Role Clarity’, ‘Role Discretion’, ‘Role Novelty’ and ‘Role Conflict’.

2.3.2.2.1 Role Clarity

Having an organizational role, which is clearly defined, is thought to reduce the uncertainty related to the work situation, and thus, facilitate the work adjustment (Black, 1988; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987), while role ambiguity could be a source of stress at work (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964).

2.3.2.2.2 Role Discretion

‘Role discretion’ or ‘role flexibility’ means the degree to which there is the opportunity to change the elements of a work role and relationships between them. This may refer to the definition of goals, the decision of how to achieve them, their timing, and the patterns of interpersonal communications around it (Nicholson, 1984). Thus, the scope for role development is limited by the degree of role discretion. Low-discretion roles are, for example, machine-paced operations,
and are learnt through replication or absorption, while high discretion roles could be entrepreneurial management roles, which require more exploration (Ibid.). Therefore, role discretion may facilitate the application of past behaviors in the new role, since it is possible to adapt it to own habits and abilities, which may turn it more predictable and familiar, and facilitate the transition (Karasek, 1979). Consequently, uncertainty in the new environment may be reduced, which may facilitate the adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Nicholson, 1984).

2.3.2.2.3 Role Novelty

‘Role Novelty’ refers to the way or degree in which the previous role is different from the current one, which can lead to an increase of the uncertainty related with the job and therefore, affect the way it is performed (Black et al., 1991). In consequence, the higher the job novelty, the higher the uncertainty experienced, meaning, a more difficult adjustment process (Black, 1988). Additionally, Pinder and Schroeder (1987) found that the bigger the difference between the previous and the current job, the more time it will require for the employee to reach a proficiency level after the new reallocation. Nicholson (1984) analyze situations of high and low role novelty, explaining that under high novelty, a person might be forced (due to the significant different situation) to create some personal development in order to adjust. This personal development will not be a requisite in transfers where is a low degree of novelty, as the employee will be able to replicate working and social structures from the previous position (Ibid.).

2.3.2.2.4 Role Conflict

‘Role Conflict’ emerges when in a new position there are differences between what is expected and what the employee expects, which leads to an increase of the uncertainty level (Black et al., 1991). These conflicting signals are expected to increase uncertainty and impede a proper adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). Ashforth (mentioned in Lengnick-Hall, 2001) points out that in the past people experienced less changes in their role with longer stable periods between them (Ibid.). Now, employees suffer shorter periods of stability and a higher number of role changes (Ibid.). Therefore, it is of key interest to understand this process as it has become more and more common (Ibid.).

2.3.2.3 Organization Culture

The ‘Organization Culture’ also influences an expatriate’s in-country adjustment, and is divided into ‘Organization Culture Novelty’, ‘Social Support’ and ‘Logistical Help’. 
2.3.2.3.1 Organization Culture Novelty

As mentioned before, job novelty increases the uncertainty regarding the job role of the employee, but organization culture novelty, might increase the uncertainty around the job environment (Mendehall & Oddou, 1985). The organizational culture novelty explains that the greater the difference between the organization culture of the sending organization and the hosting, the more difficult will be the adjustment process (Black et al., 1991). In the same way, the greater the difference, the greater the uncertainty the employee might have to suffer in the new job position and environment (Ibid.).

2.3.2.3.2 Social Support

Support, as Walter and Marks define it, is a "physical, emotional, or symbolic contribution to individuals increasing their net stockpile of emotional capacity to cope with change" (1981, p. 91). The cultural support is the help for the newcomers from the personnel (co-workers and managers) with cultural knowledge and information regarding what is common in the receiving organization (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987). This helps to lower the level of uncertainty (Ibid.) which as mentioned previously, helps during the adjustment process.

2.3.2.3.3 Logistical Help

If the company is able to help the newcomers with logistical issues, such as housing, transport, schools for the kids or security, the level of uncertainty might significantly decrease (Baker & Ivancevich, 1971; Tung, 1988). The relation of logistical help has more to do with issues related with the aspects of the non-work environment rather than with the work itself and therefore, it has more connection with the general adjustment than with the work adjustment (Black et al., 1991).

2.3.2.4 Organization Socialization Tactics and Content

‘Organization socialization’ is a process in which one acquires the social knowledge (e.g. behaviors, perspectives) and skills to fulfill an organizational role. Its objective is to aid to set a focus, get used to routine activities, and reflect on how the own behavior is viewed by others (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

The tactics of organization socialization refer to the way an organization structures the experience of a newcomer in the transition between different roles (Van Maanen, 1978). They may be selected consciously by the management (e.g. official apprenticeship) or unconsciously (on-the-job training, trial and error), but either way, the organization socialization always takes place,
when an individual changes role in an organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The socialization tactics can be classified along six dimensions: collective vs. individual; formal vs. informal; sequential vs. random; fixed vs. variable; serial vs. disjunctive; and investiture vs. divestiture (Ibid.). The decision on which tactic to choose depends on various factors, such as if the transition is between functional or hierarchical boundaries, and the objective of the socialization, since the information communicated during the process may determine the mode of adjustment (Ibid.) Apart from this, the ‘Organization Socialization Content’ depends on the ‘Organization Socialization Tactics’ explained before (Ibid.) and is therefore not explained in detail.

2.3.2.5 Nonwork

The aspect of ‘Non-work’ is divided into ‘Culture Novelty’ and ‘Family-Spouse Adjustment’, which are presented below.

2.3.2.5.6 Culture Novelty

As Mendehall and Oddou (1985) pointed out, there is a connection between how easy the expatriate will adapt and the country of destination in relation with his or her nationality. There is a well argued relation between nationality, social interaction and the general adjustment (Church, 1982). Therefore, it is relevant to define the concept of ‘culture novelty’, which explains that the higher the difference between the sending country and the hosting country, the more likely it will be that the expatriate will experience more difficulties during the international adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Church (1982) refers to this concept as ‘cultural distance’. It is assumed that adjustment would be more difficult, if the home and the host country are very different from each other (Beck, 1963). As Mendehall and Oddou (1986) express it, if home and host culture are very different, the ‘cultural toughness’ is higher, which makes it more difficult to adapt. For example, an American expatriate may find it easier to adapt to the culture of Australia, than the culture of Kenya, because the US and Australia have a bigger ‘cultural overlap’, than the US and Kenya (Mendehall & Oddou, 1986).

2.3.2.5.7 Family/Spouse Adjustment

Another relevant aspect from the nonwork adjustment is the ‘Family/Spouse Adjustment’. Even though the candidate for an assignment abroad has the right set of skills and knowledge, this overseas assignment might fail if the adjustment of the family or the spouse to the new environment fails (Black et al., 1991). In fact, problems in the adjustment of the spouse or family,
is the first cause of overseas assignment failure among US expatriates, as Tung (1981) points out. As Scullion and Brewster (2006) mention, family-spouse failure to adjust is also the first cause for expatriate failure among European expatriates (see table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The inability of spouse to adjust</td>
<td>1 Inability to cope with larger overseas responsibility</td>
<td>1 The inability of the spouse to adjust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Manager’s inability to adjust</td>
<td>2 Difficulties with new environment</td>
<td>2 Other family problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Other family problems</td>
<td>3 Personal or emotional problems</td>
<td>3 Concerns over re-entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Manager’s personal or emotional maturity</td>
<td>4 Lack of technical skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Inability to cope with larger overseas responsibility</td>
<td>5 Inability of spouse to adjust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3 - Reasons for Expatriate Failure (in descending order of importance)

(Scullion & Brewster, 2006, p. 62)

2.3.3 Mode of Adjustment

The ‘mode of adjustment’ describes the way an individual adapts to the change of a work role (Nicholson, 1984). In that manner, there are two distinct modes of adjustment, the active and the reactive one. In case of the active one, the individual would change the environment to fit one’s own needs and abilities. Conversely, an individual could change oneself to match the new environment, which is called the reactive mode of adjustment (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). To specify the topic even more, Nicholson (1984) developed a matrix (see figure 7), identifying four distinct adjustment modes. First, adjusting without modifying oneself or the environment is called ‘replication’. Second, ‘absorption’ takes place, if one changes oneself, but not the environment. If the situation is being changed, but not oneself, it is ‘determination’, and if both the environment and the individual change, it is ‘exploration’ (Ibid.). Which mode of adjustment is being applied depends highly on the job characteristics defined before. For instance, a work role with low role discretion would lead to a mode of adjustment focused on changing the environment, and not the
individual. In turn, high role novelty could lead to a mode of adjustment, which changes aspects of the individual (Ibid.).

![Figure 7 - Matrix of Modes of Adjustment](Nicholson, 1984, p. 175)

2.3.4 Degree of Adjustment

The ‘degree of adjustment’ describes three different aspects of the cross-cultural adjustment of an expatriate, which concerns work, interactions, and the general adjustment (Black, 1988). Therefore, each aspect of cross-cultural adjustment has different antecedents, meaning distinct factors that may influence it (Black & Gregersen, 1991). In that manner, all aspects are influenced by the individual’s skills (self-efficacy, relation skills, perception skills), and the family-spouse adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Apart from that, there are elements of the framework, which influence only one or two degrees of adjustment. Those elements, together with a definition of each degree of adjustment, are provided below.
**Work Adjustment**
The work adjustment includes all job-related factors, such as individual performance, responsibilities, and supervision (Black, 1988). According to the Framework of International Adjustment (Black et al., 1991), this type of adjustment is influenced by the characteristics of the new work role (clarity, discretion, novelty, conflict), the organization culture novelty, and the social support from the company (Ibid.).

**Interaction Adjustment**
The interaction adjustment refers to a relational adaptation, including interactions with host nationals (Black, 1988), and is influenced by the logistical help provided by the company, and the culture novelty (Black et al., 1991).

**General Adjustment**
The general adjustment concerns the life conditions in the host country (Black, 1988), and is determined by the logistical help provided by the company, and the culture novelty (Black et al., 1991).
3. Scientific Method

This chapter shows the scientific method of the study. First, the pre-understandings regarding the research question and topic are discussed to demonstrate self-awareness and to examine possible bias that could affect the study and its outcomes. Second, the philosophical aspects of our thesis are discussed, covering the epistemology and ontology. Lastly, the research method, strategy, and design are presented. Overall, chapter three focuses on the theory behind the applied methodology.

3.1 Our Pre-understandings

A pre-understanding is an internal set of thoughts and feelings which comes into play when thinking about a specific topic or person (Gadamer, 2004). It is important to clarify the pre-understandings of the authors as they have impact the topic selection and the way to explain and defend it. Therefore, being more aware of pre-understandings and pre-assumptions, openness can be gain (Nyström and Dahlberg, 2001). Failing to do so, the conclusions could be affected and even biased, having as an outcome a mere reflection of the ideas that were previously in the author’s knowledge (Ibid.). There are two different kinds of pre-understanding, first hand and second hand (Gummesson, 2000). First hand pre-understanding refers to the own personal experience of an individual (Ibid.). Second hand pre-understanding is based over theoretical experiences from others and acquired through lectures, books or scientific papers for example (Ibid.). In the following paragraphs the pre-understandings of the authors are contextualized.

The authors of this master thesis, Erika Beil and Daniel García Mayor, are two students of the master’s program of “Business Administration – Strategy and Management in International Organisations” at Linköping University. For the elaboration of this thesis, they have put together their knowledge, expertise and background, together with their first and second-hand pre-understandings in the following. After, it is explained how these factors have influenced the topic selection and the decision making of this thesis.

I, Erika, grew up in Germany, and have travelled, lived, studied and worked in various countries across the globe. In specific, I spent nine months in Australia, six months in Mexico, two months in Turkey, two months in Poland, and, so far, 1,5 years in Sweden. In all of those experiences, I met people from very different cultures, which has helped me to improve my intercultural
knowledge and communication skills, but also the awareness about characteristics of my own culture. Before I went abroad, I had a very ethnocentric worldview, judging other cultures by the standards and values of my own culture. This has changed completely in the past years, as I have gained a much broader horizon, and an open-minded attitude towards others. Because of my stays abroad, I can comprehend what challenges an expatriate may go through, even though working in another country for several years may be a different experience than studying or travelling somewhere for just a few months. However, therefore I am very interested in the factors that could support an expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment. Regarding my second-hand pre-understandings, I attended lectures and seminars with content related to international business and read several articles and books about it. I have never worked for any of the companies interviewed in this research, nor do I know any of their existing organizational norms.

I, Daniel, was born and raised in Madrid, Spain, where my first-hand pre-understandings started to get shaped. During my bachelor I did an Erasmus exchange program of one year to Linköping, Sweden. There I lived in a multicultural context with university students from all over the world which expanded greatly my cultural diversity. In addition, one year after I got into a Master program in Business Administration which was characterized by the cultural diversity due to the numerous nationalities represented among the students. I have been involved in the student organization AIESEC where I got to work and cooperate with different national divisions, learning about multicultural aspects in a more working environment. During this period working in AIESEC I got to cooperate with one of the companies treated in this thesis. My second-hand pre-understandings come from being a Business student and started at my bachelor in the University of Alcalá de Henares in Madrid. They grew during my Master program at Linköping University. During this master I took courses that provided me with theoretical knowledge regarding business culture, international management and related topics. These first hand and second-hand pre-understandings have influenced me to be more interested in multicultural issues regarding the business environment and how to deal with them from management perspective.

We, Erika and Daniel, have different social and personal backgrounds but similar academic trajectories and equal interest in multicultural aspects of nowadays business environment. From our experience working with other students from different nationalities in the two previous years of our master plus the academic knowledge gained on this area, arises our interest to make our thesis on this topic. The interest on the African market was a sum of our previous personal interests plus theoretical knowledge received during our master as for example during the course
of *Contemporary International Management Paradoxes*. Due to our studies in Sweden and the knowledge acquired regarding the growth potential for Africa in the upcoming years, we decided to analyze expatriates and inpatriates in the Swedish-African market. Therefore, we are conscious of that our first and second-hand pre-understanding can bias our research question, decision making and conclusions of our thesis. Consequently, we have effort to be as objective as possible. In the same way, our second-hand pre-understandings have also helped us to improve our analytical and reasoning skills and to avoid bias from any argument or logical deduction from our research.

### 3.2 Ontology

It has been long recognized that the knowledge produced from practice and from science belong to different types (Van de Ven, 2007). Even further distinctions have been done by scholars, each showing different epistemology (the method to do something) and ontology (the truth about something) (Ibid.). Overall, the distinction between science and practice does not mean that they represent opposite perspectives, rather than they can be complementary of each other (Ibid.).

Ontology can be seen through different perspectives, as for example, through objectivism or through constructionism (Bryman & Bell, 2011), also called social constructionism (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Objectivism refers to the existence of an object reality regardless the human perception of it (Ibid.). In other words, every single person is aware of the same type of reality because there is only one common reality for everyone (Ibid.). Research questions under a objectivism perspective focus on how external aspects as values or traditions, are acquired by people. In contrary, constructionism in an ontology perspective which establish that social phenomena are social constructions, followed by social actor which give shape to the social realities (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this case, research questions from a constructionist perspective, has their focus on how traditions and values, rather than being something external, interfere with culture in a constant and complex changing process affected by social stakeholders (Ibid.).

The division between objectivism or subjectivism (social constructionism), can be exemplified as if the objectivism would see the culture of a specific organization as something it “has” (Saunders et al., 2012). In contrary, the subjectivism would understand the business culture as something that the company “is”. Therefore, the ontological standpoint of this thesis is from a social
constructionism of subjective perspective. The authors understand that the different people who are be interviewed in this thesis, have different opinions and perspectives of similar situations. The reason of that is because culture and social aspects are determined and constructed by the people themselves with their way of life, actions and values. In conclusion, the research structure, approach and interviews are affected by this subjectivism approach.

3.3 Epistemology

The epistemology is what is labeled as acceptable knowledge within a field of study (Saunders et al., 2012, p.112). There are four categories where the sources of knowledge can be placed into: intuitive, authoritarian, logical and empirical knowledge (Dudovskiy, 2016). In the case of intuitive knowledge, reflects the relation between feelings and knowledge as the case of intuition or faith in relation with facts (Ibid.). Authoritarian knowledge has to do with all that knowledge that has been acquired from academic papers and books (Ibid.). Through logical reasoning is how logical knowledge can be learned (Ibid.). Empirical knowledge is the one obtained through a construction of facts that have been shown (Ibid.). In this thesis, the four of these sources have been used. In order to interpret the data and to carry out the interviews, intuitive knowledge was used. Authoritarian knowledge is the most present source of knowledge, obtained from the articles and books consulted and referenced in this thesis. The logical source of knowledge has been used in the interviews and in the analysis and findings of the thesis. In last place, empirical knowledge is used to extract the conclusions of this thesis.

There are four branches in the epistemology when it comes to aspects of what is accepted as knowledge, which are positivism, empirical realism, critical realism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2012).

Positivism is the philosophical research approach which only the phenomena that can be observed can provide credible data and facts (Van de Ven, 2007). Researchers influenced by this philosophical current prefer “working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalizations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists” (Saunders et al., 2012, p.113). Because of the characteristics of this approach, and our interest on the relevance of the human aspect, the positivism branch of epistemology is not used.
Realism is a movement where it is believed that there is an independent mind reality and that theories are able to reflect partial areas of the reality (Van de Ven, 2007, p.39). In core, realism explains that the truth is what can be seen and felt through our senses and that objects exist regardless of the awareness of humans might have of them in their consciousness (Saunders et al., 2012). Empirical realism explains that “what you see is what you get”, our senses reflects the world accurately (Ibid.). Critical realism explains that our senses provide us what imagines of things in the world, but not the things in a direct way (Ibid.) Realism, empirical and critical, are not used as an epistemology approach in this thesis due to its great focus on facts in different situations, lacking on the approach in humans and culture which have a more subjective perception.

Interpretivism is the approach where the researchers obtain knowledge from subjective meanings and social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2012). The core deals with the specifics of human behavior and the subjective aspects that motivate that behaviors in different situations. It is of great relevance for the researcher to be able to analyze the social construct, understand the different players and be aware of the differences between the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This epistemology approach is the one selected for this thesis because its definition is the closer one to the way this thesis is intended to perform. The interpretivism approach, allows to focus in what is intended to study, human behaviors and their differences under different cultural situations. It is helpful as it was needed to ask questions regarding culture, ethical problems and leadership issues. It is of key relevance to carry out interviews where interviewees can talk freely about our questions, allowing the researchers to understand and analyze the human side of the issues.

3.4 Inductive vs. Deductive Theory

In order to decide on the style of the research, it is important to decide between using an inductive or a deductive approach. Deductive approach is when from an already known theory a new research is developed, followed by the designing of a strategy to check if the hypothesis is right or not (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Deductive process has a specific set of characteristics. First, there is a search to explain causal relationship between variables (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 125). A second characteristic is the need of control to permit the test of the hypothesis and a structured methodology to facilitate replication (Ibid.). The third one, is that concepts need to be operationalized, so it will be possible to measure them quantitatively (Ibid.). In last place, an
important characteristic of a deduction approach is generalization. In order to be able to generalize about aspect of the social human behavior, is needed to select a sufficient big in size sample (Ibid.).

Inductive approach takes place when data is collected first and researchers create a theory from the result obtained from the data analysis (Saunders et al., 2012). The inductive approach tends to take special care for the context where the phenomena under analysis takes place, therefore a small sample used to be more appropriate in this case (Ibid.). Therefore, researchers who practice this approach are more likely to use qualitative data rather than quantitative (Ibid.). In order to obtain a conclusion, the researcher try to look for patterns that have been found in the analysis of the phenomena and from there, a new theory which answers the research question is created.

This paper includes a mix of inductive and deductive approach. Researchers make use of the deductive approach when from a pre-existing framework (Framework of International Adjustment of Black, Mendehall and Oddou, 1991), they design this research and the interview guideline. In the same way, researchers also make use of the inductive approach during of the process of analyzing the data collected from the interviews and in the creation of the new updated framework. Researchers believe that the combination of inductive and deductive approach might provide this paper with the best approach for the desired results.

3.5 Research Strategy

*Why a qualitative study?*

There are two different ways of conducting research, which are fundamentally different in several aspects. Those ways are quantitative and qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In the present study, a qualitative approach was selected, due to various reasons.

First, qualitative studies make it possible to see the environment and events through the eyes of the people, who are being studied. Therefore, the social world described, for instance, through interviews, is interpreted, and shown from the perspective of the participant (Ibid.). Regarding the present thesis, the topic of cross-cultural adjustment is something very personal, which each person may interpret and value differently. Thus, for the data collection it is crucial to capture each
person’s own reflections on the social world. However, this fact led several researchers to criticize qualitative studies, which is explained later (Ibid.).

The second reason to select a qualitative study is that this approach allows to provide a lot of detail about the context of a participant, in order to provide a deeper understanding of one’s social behavior, values, and other. Nevertheless, it also entails the risk of the researchers becoming too focused on details and losing sight of the overall picture (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Third, qualitative studies permit the researchers to view activities of an organization, or individuals as dynamic over time. This makes it possible to comprehend how past activities influence the present (Pettigrew, 1997). Concerning the present study, it is valuable to see how certain activities performed by the company, or the individual, in the past, influence one’s cross-cultural adjustment.

Finally, a qualitative approach was chosen, due to its flexibility, and low level of structure, which avoids the imposition of predetermined formats on the results. Apart from that, it allows to include aspects, which did not primarily occur to the researcher, but are of high importance for the studied persons. Overall, researchers have the freedom to change the direction of their study fairly easy, compared to quantitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

**Critique of qualitative studies**

As mentioned earlier, qualitative studies aim to view the world from the perspective of one specific subject. However, this entails the risk of the study becoming too subjective, and impressionistic. In specific, the results are determined by the researchers’ opinion on which aspects are important, and on the personal relationship between researcher, and subjects (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The mentioned risk leads to another point, which is the lack of transparency about what was being done, and how results were found. Since it is subjective, and often non-transparent, it can be difficult to replicate a qualitative study.

Additionally, it may result challenging to generalize the findings of a qualitative study (Ibid.). In the present study, the interview participants are very diverse, regarding origin, position, industry, and other factors, which imposes difficulties to the definition of a population, and the generalizability. Nevertheless, results of qualitative studies are rather inclined to generalize to theory, instead of populations (Mitchell, 1983).
3.6 Research Design: Variance Study

There are two different models, which may be used to investigate certain questions in social research, which are ‘variance models’ and ‘process models’. Typically, variance models aim to answer questions such as: “What are antecedents or consequences of an issue?” In that manner, they state a causal conditional proposition, which may express the relationship between certain causes and effects (Van de Ven, 2007). In turn, process research questions may be formulated the following way: “How does the issue emerge, grow, develop, or terminate over time?” Thus, they focus on the change of a certain issue over time (Ibid.). In the present study, the researchers decided to undertake a variance research study, due to the fact that its objective is to examine the causes (e.g. training, previous experience) of cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates, and inpatriates (the effect). In the following, the variance study research plan is outlined.

What is the causal conditional proposition or question?

Since the research question is “How can Swedish companies support the cross-cultural adjustment of their expatriates on international assignments between Sweden and Africa?”, the focus of the study is on identifying the factors, which influence one’s cross-cultural adjustment. The starting point for it is the ‘Framework of International Adjustment’ by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991), which suggests seven different categories of factors, which influence the degree, and the mode of adjustment. After collecting the empirical data, the aim is to verify the relevance of those categories, and, if necessary, to change some of the elements, or their meaning. Because more than 25 years have passed since the creation of the framework, it is reasonable to suspect that other factors might have become important for cross-cultural adjustment. Moreover, the present study puts the framework into the specific context of IA between Sweden and Africa.

For whom & for what is the study being conducted?

The third sub question of the research reveals the objective of the study: “How can Swedish companies modify those factors to support cross-cultural adjustment?” In specific, it aims at giving various recommendations, or guidelines to companies with expatriates, to support their cross-cultural adjustment.

What is the unit of analysis and the unit of observation?

The ‘unit of analysis’ are the entities, which are being studied (Van de Ven, 2007). In the present thesis, those are the factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment. Since they are not directly
observable, the unit of observation differs from the unit of analysis. In that manner, the ‘unit of observation’ refers to an entity, from which information about the unit of analysis can be gained (Ibid.). Here, the unit of observation are the people being interviewed.

**What is the variance research model?**

As previously mentioned, the ‘Framework of International Adjustment’ by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991) is used as a starting point for the study. In that manner, the ‘Mode of Adjustment’ and ‘Degree of Adjustment’ are the dependent variables, while the seven categories influencing it are the independent variables.

**How to probe (not prove) causation?**

There are different meanings of causation, which could be ‘essentialist’ or ‘probabilist’. In that manner, essentialists claim that causation needs the proof that the independent variable X is the full cause of the dependent variable Y. In contrast, probabilists do not presume that X is the only cause of Y (Van de Ven, 2007), because most phenomena are hard to isolate (Bhaskar, 1975), and effects are usually influenced by different factors, than those stated in the hypothesis (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Nevertheless, there are ways of “inferring a causal relationship between variables” (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 167). One may be to look at the direction of influence from cause to effect. However, it is often difficult to determine the direction, or temporal order, in which cause and effect appeared (Van de Ven, 2007). Another way to prove causation is to eliminate alternative explanations for a link between variables. Therefore, the most plausible extraneous factors, which may have confounded the causal link in the relationship, should be identified, and controlled (Ibid.).

**What criteria are used to select units, constructs, observations, & settings?**

In the present study, the population are Swedish companies, who receive inpatriates from African countries, or send Swedish expatriates to Africa.

Apart from this, a study consists of a restricted range of units, constructs, observations, and settings (Van de Ven, 2007). Regarding the units, the present study includes only individuals, who gave their consent to take part in the study and were accessible. Concerning the constructs, the study focuses mainly on the elements of the Framework of International Adjustment. Moreover, the study is based on 11 interviews, which may be seen as the range of observations. The settings of the interviews were dependent on the geographical distance between the researchers and the
interviewees. Therefore, six of them were conducted in person, and five via WhatsApp or Skype. The time was set according to the researcher’s and interviewee’s availability.

**How many cases should be included in the sample?**
To answer this question, several considerations should be taken into account, such as the heterogeneity of the population, the number of breakdowns desired in data analysis and the resource availability (Singleton and Straits, 2005, p. 140). Due to time and resource constraints, only a limited sample of 11 cases could be included in the present study. However, to increase validity, a bigger and more diverse sample would result beneficial (see Chapter 7.5: Limitations).

**What is the frame of reference of measures, and how to measure variables?**
When answering questions, respondents apply a certain cognitive filter, which is called a ‘frame of reference’ (Van de Ven & Ferry. 1980). For instance, the characteristics of the setting the respondent is exposed to may influence one’s answers (Van de Ven. 2007). Therefore, in the present study, the researchers aim at creating a similar interview setting for all participants. However, due to geographical distance to the interviewees, some interviews are held in person, and some via online technologies, which may influence the outcome. Moreover, the questions may be altered between the interviews, upon detecting flaws in the questionnaire, which may additionally influence the answers. Apart from this, the respondent’s prior experiences, and one’s position and hierarchical level proofed to have a systematic influence on the outcome (Ibid.). Therefore, the respondents of this study have various backgrounds. Apart from this, situational factors, or personality traits, may have an unsystematic influence on the frame of reference a person applies. Nevertheless, this is expected to be normally distributed among the sample, and is not considered, when looking at the overall results (Ibid.). Taking into consideration the possible systematic and unsystematic biases the respondents could be confronted with, the variables are measured by conducting qualitative interviews.

**What procedures to follow in data collection?**
The data was collected using the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. A detailed description may be found in chapter 4.3.

**What techniques should be used to analyze and interpret the data?**
For the analysis of this thesis, the approach described by Saunders et al., (2012) is followed This approach established that first it is needed to find out categories to fill in with the large amount of
qualitative data. Second, is needed to go through the sources and apply the previous selected categories into the information extracted from them. Next step requires to create analytical data from the main topics or categories identified in the integrated data gathered in advance. Then, having as a base the key patterns founded through the data, it is needed to create theories above them. Lastly, is needed to develop a conclusion with the intention to verify the previous theory.

What are the threats to validity of study findings?

The ‘validity’ is defined as the approximate truth of a knowledge claim of a causal relationship, which is based on evidence that it is correct (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). ‘Internal validity’ concerns the question if the change in the independent variables cause the change in the dependent variable (Van de Ven, 2007). In the present study, internal validity could be threatened, due to the fact that cross-cultural adjustment is influenced by various factors, and it results problematic to determine the extent of influence of each of the factors.

‘External validity’ refers to the generalizability of the results to the intended population (Van de Ven, 2007). Possible threats are “not knowing what treatment caused the effect when multiple treatments are used” (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 190), and generalizing findings to other people, organizations, or settings than those treated in the study (Van de Ven, 2007). As mentioned above, it may result difficult to determine precisely, which of the “treatments” (here: elements of Framework of International Adjustment) caused the effect of cross-cultural adjustment. Apart from that, generalizing the findings to all Swedish companies with IA between Sweden and Africa could threaten the external validity.

‘Construct validity’ means that the results of the research model generalize to the theory (Van de Ven, 2007). Threats to the construct validity of the present study could be the mono-method bias, since only interviewing is used to measure the variables.
4. Practical method

While chapter three discussed the theory behind this study’s methodology, in this chapter, the practical method of this paper is covered. This means that it is explained what was done in practice to gain the results of this paper. First, researchers explain the sampling of the research. Second, the interview guide used is introduced. Third, the areas of data collection and data analysis are described. Fourth and lastly, the researchers look into the ethical considerations.

4.1 Sampling

In some cases, it might be possible to collect information or data from most of the population. However, one should not assume that getting data from a smaller sample will provide worse data than from a census (Saunders et al., 2012). Sample can be an alternative for census in some cases as when researchers do not have the required time or resources to obtain data from the entire population targeted (Ibid.).

The samplings techniques can be grouped in two blocks; probability or representative sampling and non-probability or judgmental sampling (Saunders et al., 2012). "Probability sampling is defined as a selected sample which is randomly chosen, where each sample in the population has an equal chance of being selected" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.187). In turn, non-probability sampling is defined as a selected sample that is not randomly chosen. It gives some samples a higher chance of being selected than others (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this thesis, the criteria for sampling which fits better is non-probability sampling. This is because our interviewees or sample, are selected according to a set of criteria (see Ch. 3.6: Research Design) and not by random choice.

NOTE: In the next paragraphs, a brief introduction of the companies which appear in this thesis is introduced. In order to keep the anonymous aspect of them, the information provided is not always exact, rather approximate. In the same way, references have been erased. Nonetheless, the information and data have been only collected from their homepages.

4.1.1 Company 1

Company 1 is a Swedish company in the automotive industry. During 2017, Company 1 achieved a net sales result over 100,000 million of SEK and an operating income over 10,000 million SEK.
Company 1 counted with around 50,000 employees during 2017 and was present in more than 100 countries all over the world.

4.1.2 Company 2

Company 2 is an IT company producing software for the automotive industry. It is part of Company 2 Group, which counts with subsidiaries in most of the automobile producing countries. Company 2 Group was founded 30 years ago, groups more than 20 companies present in 15 countries and counts with 3000 employees. During 2016 Company 2 Group produced a turnover higher than 400 million of Euros.

4.2 The Interview Guide

The interview guide of this study contains information about the purpose of it, what the information is going to be used for, and the questions to be asked, divided into different categories. Its theoretical foundation is the ‘Framework of International Adjustment’ by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991). Apart from the literature, the categories of questions utilized were based on discussions with our advisor, and on our previous experiences with the topic. All of that gave the interviews purpose and direction (Saunders et al., 2012).

The questions and categories were adapted according to the role of the interviewee in the process of expatriation and if applicable the length of their stay abroad, and the home and host country. Thus, two main interview guidelines were used, one for expatriates and inpatriates, and one for others, who either organize the process of sending or receiving expatriates, or who work with them directly, while they are abroad (see table 4). Nevertheless, at times, questions were adapted based on the knowledge we previously had about the interviewee, for instance, their home and host country, positions, or length of stay abroad. The interview guides may be found in Appendix 1. Table 5 delivers an overview of which interviewees belong to which company, and their respective positions.
Both interview guides start with an introduction of the objective of the interview, and what the information collected will be used for. After, the interviewees were asked if they wish to be anonymous, and if it is alright to record the interview. Then the ‘facesheet information’ was
collected. In the present study, it included the position of the interviewee, how long one had this position, and one’s previous international experience. Facesheet information helps to put the responses of the interviewee into context (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

This was followed by a few general questions about the topic, aimed at gaining a general overview of one’s experience, and finding out what is important for the interviewee, by asking open questions, and limiting the answers as few as possible.

Afterwards, the interview went through the categories of questions mentioned before. The order of questions followed the phases of an international assignment (selection-preparation-time abroad). It is important that the order appears logical to the interviewees (Saunders et al., 2012). At the end, there was a set of concluding questions, giving the interviewee the opportunity to add information not covered before, and to give feedback or further advice to the interviewers.

The interview guide was sent to the interviewees before the interview. Doing so provides the interviewees with the opportunity to prepare for the interview and gives information on which information the interviewer is interested in, thus, it supported reliability and validity of the interview (Saunders et al., 2012). Apart from that, it is important that the questions are formulated in a comprehensible way (Ibid.), therefore, straightforward formulations were used, and specialist terms avoided.

4.3 Data Collection

There are several ways of collecting data when conducting a qualitative study. One way is to conduct ‘research interviews’, which are purposeful conversations between at least two people (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Research interviews can be further classified into structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. In structured interviews, questionnaires are used, and usually there is a certain timeframe to answer each question. Moreover, there is little interaction between the interview partners, and the interviews are conducted the same way each time. In turn, unstructured interviews are informal, in the sense that no predetermined questionnaire is used (Saunders et al., 2016). In the present study, semi-structured interviews are utilized. They are characterized by having certain categories, and key questions, that should be covered, but their application and order may vary in each interview (Saunders et al., 2016). There are several reasons for selecting this type of interview for the study.
First, it provides the researchers with the opportunity to ‘probe’ certain answers the respondents may give, for example, by adding details, or by explaining aspects further, which adds depth and significance to the collected data. Apart from that, it may open up other aspects, which the researchers did not previously think of. Another reason for selecting semi-structured interviews is the complexity, and open-endedness of the questions asked, which could be limited if another method would be used (Ibid.).

4.3.1 How the Companies Were Contacted

First, a list of companies was created. It was divided into Swedish, German, and Spanish companies, since the focus of the research was still open at that stage. It included the name of the company, the name of the contact person and one’s email and phone (if applicable), the company’s web address, and the status of the contact (not contacted; contacted via email/phone/LinkedIn; reply received). Second, numerous emails were sent to the email addresses collected earlier, and some phone calls to the headquarters of the companies were made. However, the response rate was very limited. Apart from that, selected people were contacted on LinkedIn, as well as a former colleague, who currently works in Company 1 in Sweden. Through LinkedIn, one interview with Interviewee 3, a former expatriate of Company 1, who worked in South Africa, was scheduled. Through the colleague, the interviews with Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 7, both current expatriates of Company 1 in West Africa, with Interviewee 4, expatriate in South Africa, and with Interviewee 5, Global Mobility Coordinator in Company 1 Sweden, were scheduled. After each interview, the interviewees were asked if they would recommend someone else to interview, which is how the contact to Interviewee 1, expatriate in East Africa, and Interviewee 2, expatriate in South Africa, was established. Additionally, at the ‘Rekryteringsmässan 2018’ at Creative in Mjärdevi, Linköping, the contact to Interviewee 11, HR Manager of Company 2 Nordic, could be set up. He agreed to work with us and scheduled all the interviews with the employees of Company 2 Nordic and Company 2 Tunisia. Moreover, contacts were collected at the LARM fair at Linköping’s university, but no interviews resulted from that.

4.3.2 How the Interviews Were Conducted

The interviews were conducted between the 26th of February and the 23rd of March 2018. Each interview was audio recorded. Advantages of audio-recording an interview is that one can focus
on asking questions and listening, that one can go back to the interview, when analyzing the data, to have accurate and unbiased information, and the possibility to use direct quotes (Saunders et al., 2012). In contrast, it may also make the respondents more reluctant to share information, and technical problems could occur (Ibid.). During the interview, one person usually took care of the recording, and taking notes, while the other one was asking the questions.

Seven interviews were conducted in a personal visit, four via Skype, and one via WhatsApp. Phone interviews have the advantage of lower costs compared to face-to-face interviews, the speed of data collection, and the accessibility (Saunders et al., 2012), which made it possible to interview expatriates living far away. The table below shows the interviewees, their company, the position, the medium, the date and the duration of the interview record.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
<th>Company &amp; position</th>
<th>Medium of interview</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Duration of interview record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Company 1 East Africa: MD</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>5th of March 2018</td>
<td>00:57:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Company 1 South Africa: R&amp;D Manager</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>26th of February 2018</td>
<td>00:40:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Formerly: Company 1 South Africa: CFO Director Finance &amp; Administration</td>
<td>In a personal visit</td>
<td>1st of March 2018</td>
<td>01:42:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Company 1 South Africa: Sales Operations Manager</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>28th of February 2018</td>
<td>00:52:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>Company 1 Sweden: Junior Global Mobility Specialist, Global Assignments</td>
<td>In a personal visit</td>
<td>1st of March 2018</td>
<td>Interview was around 01:00:00 (no recording)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>Company 1 West Africa: MD</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>23rd of March 2018</td>
<td>01:14:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 7</td>
<td>Company 1 West Africa: CFO</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>27th of February 2018</td>
<td>00:59:33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is potentially complex to analyze. Thus, there is the need to summarize and structure into categories to allow a better understanding of it making easier to provide and answer for the research question (Saunders et al., 2012). Nonetheless, as it is mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2015) qualitative data is not possible to be analyzed directly as there is not clear or set rules on how to do it regarding its subjective characteristics.

Regarding the analysis of the data of this thesis, after the interviews were done and recorded, summaries were prepared in order to have in a written form all information from the conversations. First, researchers listened to the audios and wrote down in a document all the information. The intention of it was to collect every line of information and quotes ordered according to different topics.

Second, a summary was done for each interview, where information was selected depending on the relevance regarding the topics of this thesis and where it was structured depending on a set of general topics.
Third, a final set of summaries was created homogenizing topics and structures among all interviews. In this final summary (see Appendix 2), the researchers decided to anonymize interviews and companies in order to defend the interests of the participants regarding possible sensible information. Therefore, in this last summary, information was adapted to an anonymous context. In addition, together with the summary, a graphic was created per interview serving as an outline of the core information of each topic. Topics were grouped in a color code to make the understanding of the information easier for the reader (see Appendix 2).

Fourth, a final graphic with the previous mentioned color code was created grouping all the interviews, doing one for each of the companies. In this two graphics, the researchers placed the main findings using the same topic structure. Doing so, readers are able to have a fast overview of all the general findings of the interviews for each company.

Fifth, once all the information from the interviews was analyzed and organized, the researchers started to outline the findings section into the thesis. The structure on the findings (see Ch. 5) followed the schema of the short summaries (see Appendix 2).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

**Issues related to gaining access to data**

‘Informed consent’ refers to the fact that the participant agrees to take part in a research project based on sufficient information, the possibility to ask questions, and the time to consider without pressure (Saunders et al., 2012). In the present study, the participants were fully informed about the research and its objective, as well as about the data collection, storage and usage.

Apart from that, it is crucial to not cause harm or intrude a participant’s privacy, which means that a participant has the right to not take part in the study, and to withdraw one’s agreement on a later stage. Moreover, it means that the researchers should not ask the participants to do something that may cause harm or would intrude their privacy. Additionally, once someone agreed to take part, the researchers should keep to the objectives of the study as decided before (Ibid.). In the present study, all participants agreed without deceit and upon their free will to take part and were not pressured into doing something that may have caused them harm or would intrude their privacy.
**Issues related to data collection**

Another aspect during data collection is to collect all data accurately and fully, and to avoid subjective selectivity (Saunders et al., 2012). All except of one interview were recorded completely, without selecting subjectively what to record. Regarding interview-based techniques to collect data, it is fundamental to avoid overzealous questioning and exercising pressure on the participant to respond. Moreover, the interview time should be convenient for the participant, and not at an unreasonable time. Apart from that, the discussion should not be prolonged, if it is clear that the interviewee has limited time (Ibid.). During the interviews, the interviewees were never pressured to respond, and it was clarified that it is fine to decline answering a question. Concerning the interview time, the respondents always had several times and dates to choose from and were also free to change it later.

**Issues related to analysis and reporting**

Remaining objective is crucial at this stage of the research. In specific, one should not be selective about which data to report, or misrepresent it (Saunders et al., 2012). Apart from that, anonymity should be guaranteed to those participants who wished for it, e.g. by not reporting data, which is clearly attributable to a certain person (Ibid.). In the present study, the interviews were summarized, meaning that there has been a certain level of selectivity on what to report. However, the researchers aimed at including all of the mayor aspects discussed during the interview, and to present them in an objective manner. Additionally, the summary of the interview was sent to the participants for approval before it was published.

Moreover, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, names of companies, exact numbers about the companies, names of the interviewees, personal and possessive pronouns, as well as terms like ‘wife’ or ‘husband’ pointing to a male or female were removed from the report. The companies were named ‘Company 1’ and ‘Company 2’, and the interviewees ‘Interviewee 1’ (similarly with Interviewee 2-11). This is to make the interviewees more open to let the researchers publish the information from the interview (Healey & Rawlinson, 1993).
5. Findings

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the conducted qualitative study. They are based on the interview summaries (see Appendix 2) and attempt to focus on the aspects influencing cross-cultural adjustment, which are relevant to two or more of the interviewees. Due to the fact that the contexts of Company 1 and Company 2 regarding IA are different from each other, the findings of both companies are presented separately from each other. In specific, Company 1 is much bigger than Company 2 (50,000 vs. 300 employees, see chapter 4.1). Moreover, the interviewed expatriates of Company 1 come from Sweden, and are all on long-term assignments (more than 16 months) in African countries, while the expatriates in Company 2 come from Tunisia and are abroad in Sweden for less than one month. Thus, chapter 5.1 presents the findings of Company 1, and chapter 5.2 the findings of Company 2. The numbers in brackets behind the presented findings point out which interviewees have mentioned it (Interviewee 1-11).

5.1 Findings Company 1

The findings of Company 1 are based on the interviews with Interviewee 1-7. All of them, except of Interviewee 5, are current or former Swedish expatriates working in Africa. Interviewee 5 works as Global Mobility Manager in Sweden and supports the expatriates of Company 1.

The findings are structured in the same way as the interview summaries, which is the chronological way of before the IA (5.1.1 Previous experience, 5.1.2 Selection, 5.1.3 Company Support, 5.1.4 Expectations), during the IA (5.1.5 Main Challenges, 5.1.6 Business Culture, 5.1.7 Non-work Life), and reflections and concluding thoughts (5.1.8 Lessons learnt).

5.1.1 Previous Experience

The interviews with employees of Company 1 have shown that four of them (1, 3, 6, 7) have already spend more than five years abroad, before their current IA started. Two of them have less than five years previous international experience (2, 4), and one employee working in the HQ of Company 1 in Sweden has not worked abroad yet (5).

Regarding the first group mentioned above, Interviewee 1 has spent two years in Iraq, five years in Tanzania, and six years in Peru, before the start of the current IA. One explained about going abroad: "If you started once, it’s in your blood". Interviewee 3 worked for four years in France,
before his more than three years long assignment in South Africa. Interviewee 6 has been working in Tanzania for three years, in Cameroon for five years, and in Belgium for three years before the current IA in Ghana. Lastly, before the current IA in Ghana, Interviewee 7 has worked in Luxembourg for two years, and in Iraq for 3.5 years, which made the adjustment to Ghana a “mild transition”. Moreover, Interviewee 7 had many courses on intercultural communication at university and was generally interested in people and culture.

From the second mentioned group, Interviewee 2 has previously spent six months working in the Netherlands, and Interviewee 4 has studied in Canada twice before coming to South Africa. From that, Interviewee 4 got to know the different phases of an experience abroad and gained a general understanding of cultural differences.

5.1.2 Selection

In Company 1 there is an official procedure, in which all the positions abroad should be advertised internally, so every employee can apply (7, 4). Nonetheless, many positions are offered unofficially (4), employees are asked directly or encouraged to apply, especially in senior positions (7, 3). As an example, Interviewee 2 was contacted directly for the position in Ghana. In turn, Interviewee 3 applied to the expatriate opportunity in South Africa, where one was accepted later.

Additionally, several interviewees shared a critical perspective towards Company 1 having a focus on technical skills during the selection processes, rather than on personality, soft skills or the ability to adapt (1, 4, 6). As the Interviewee 1 mentioned, “It is not always the most qualified who do the best job”. Furthermore, one explains that, for an expatriate position, one needs to be interested in other cultures, and be able to adapt: “Some people find it interesting and like it and learn new things, other people they are better doing business or working at home.”

Other interesting facts are that junior positions are often short term (5), and that, as a requisite for getting top position in Company 1, applicants need to have completed at least one long term IA (16-60 months) (5). Moreover, previous experience in Company 1 and in the host region are taken into account during the selection process for all expatriate positions (6).
5.1.3 Company Support

Regarding the support the expatriates receive, when moving to a new country, Company 1 supports them with all the logistics, such as the visa, housing, car, registration, and insurance, so that they are ready to work as soon as they arrive (1, 4, 7). The process runs very smooth and facilitates the transition (7).

Apart from the practicalities, outgoing expatriates get offered a cross-cultural training. Two of them took the training with their family or partner (2, 3), and two (3, 7) only took the training before their first IA, but not for the following ones. Only one of six expatriates interviewed felt prepared enough through previous stays abroad (4) and did not take any training. Regarding the effectivity of the training, Interviewee 6 acknowledged that it was good, because “you need someone who would push you to take the initiative.” Furthermore, Company 1 provides material to learn about the host country, such as a book about the local culture (7). However, Interviewee 7 remarked that it “can always be a shock, even if you have been informed about what to expect. You don't know before you have experienced it.” In that sense, Interviewee 1 thinks that cultural knowledge cannot be acquired through training, but it may work as an introduction.

Additionally, Company 1 offers their expatriates a pre-visit to the host country, to get a first impression of how life in the new country may look like (1, 2, 3, 4, 7). During those visits, which are around three to four days, the future expatriates and their families get the opportunity to look at schools and housing. Apart from that, the company helps their expatriates to get to know other expatriates in the region (4, 7).

Those processes are centrally managed by the Global Mobility department of Company 1 in Sweden. Apart from the mentioned services, they are responsible for salary calculation, contracts, briefings, social security, tax, an expectation setting talk before the assignment, and creating an assignment plan with personal development goals together with the expatriate. If the expatriate is going to a high or medium risk country (as determined by corporate security department), they receive a security training. Additionally, the Global Mobility department is responsible for initiating external providers, since they work with partner companies all over the world. For instance, the cross-cultural training is provided by “Better Business International”. Since many expatriates move with their partner, Company 1 works with an external company to offer a “Partner Support Program”, which is a customized coaching, assisting the partner of an expatriate with anything they wish to do during the time abroad (e.g. find a job, education, new hobbies).
During the whole time abroad, Company 1 is always there as a backup, in case something happens. For instance, there is a doctor dedicated to help expatriates (2). Apart from this, Company 1 pays one to two trips to the home country each year, for the medical insurance, rent, and schooling for the children (6).

Even though all of the expatriates had a positive experience regarding the support of Company 1, some of them criticized the lack of international experience and market knowledge of employees at the HQ responsible for expatriates (1, 6, 7): “They do not know much about the markets, (...) they are administrators, most of them never lived abroad themselves” (1). In that manner, it was mentioned that they can only provide knowledge they have researched on the internet, which may as well be done by the expatriates themselves (1). Thus, to receive relevant knowledge about the host culture, outgoing expatriates may rather speak to expatriates, who have been working, or are currently working in the region they are going to, because “experience is available” (1). Moreover, the support the Global Mobility department provides should be tailored to each expatriate. One example of an issue one had with the company was that the department said that it is not possible to take the furniture from Sweden to Ghana, since it will be destroyed by the humid climate. However, for the expatriate it was very important to take it, since it has a high emotional value, and one had lived in the area before, without having any issues with the humidity (6). This example shows the insufficient “field” knowledge of the Global Mobility department, and the need for a more customized support of the expatriates of Company 1. Another criticism regards the reintegration of returning expatriates into the Company 1 in Sweden. So far, it is up to their managers to reintegrate them, but there is a guarantee for them to come back, so they do not need to apply again (5). Nevertheless, relevant knowledge the expatriates gained during their time abroad often gets lost, since “they (Company 1) are really bad in finding positions that are appropriate for expatriates, that is something the company needs to work on.” (7).

5.1.4 Expectations

In the following, the previous expectations of the expatriates and the first impressions are presented. Regarding expectations gained from previous experience in a similar region, Interviewee 1 and 6 have worked in an African country, before their current IA. Therefore, they both had an accurate image of how it will be, and generally, expected it to be very different from Sweden. In turn, before his first IA in Tanzania, Interviewee 6 stated, that one was more afraid,
for instance, about illnesses, such as Malaria. Another example of Interviewee 6 shows the importance of having accurate expectations before going abroad: Since differences between Ghana and Sweden were expected, the transition was less of a shock. In turn, one went to work in Germany, and expected it to be like in Sweden. However, Interviewee 6 was shocked by the roughness in communication, and the formality in business. Thus, accurate expectations enable to avoid problems.

Interviewee 7 has worked in Iraq, which is very different from Sweden, before his current IA in Ghana. Therefore, it was less of a shock coming to Ghana. Overall, he was positively surprised that the city is so modern and developed, and that the business is so professional.

Interviewee 2 took the CCT before going abroad, which may have contributed to forming expectations. Thus, one expected it to be different. Moreover, one was concerned about the safety. However, one was positively surprised about the modern cities, and stated that it was not a difficult transition.

Interviewee 4 had experience studying abroad, and has worked with South Africa, while working in Sweden. Thus, one expected it to be different. However, it was still overwhelming, and frustrating at times. Interviewee 3 was concerned about the safety in South Africa, before going there, but apart from that, had no expectations.

All in all, the findings demonstrate that CCT and previous experience abroad contributes to forming accurate expectations. Moreover, having less or no expectations might avoid possible disappointments, and lead to a positive surprise. In turn, the example of Interviewee 6 having a culture shock because of inaccurate expectations about Germany demonstrates the importance of the expectations being accurate, and to not have too many expectations, since that could lead to negative surprises.

5.1.5 Main Challenges

Regarding the challenges of working abroad, three main interrelated issues could be identified, which are the adaptation, the cultural distance and the high level of frustration. With regards to the adaptation, Interviewee 1 explained that “you have to understand how things are done, and then try to adapt your leadership skills accordingly”, because “wherever you go, there (are) always certain differences from the experience you have. If you come from Sweden, you have to get
accustomed to the working situation, there will always be frustrations” (1). In the same way, Interviewee 7 expressed that moving to a new country will always be difficult, at least in the beginning, but “you have to understand people and adapt”. Interviewee 1 explained that “you cannot approach them (the locals) in the same way, you need to know who you are talking to and how to approach them and how to negotiate with them”. This is because “you realize that there are different ways of approaching people. Basics are the same. (...) I use to say: 80% is the same all over the work, (...) but then you have 20% differences which are very local, those are the ones you need to understand” (1).

However, the ease of adapting to a new culture depends also on how distant the home and the host culture are from each other (2, 7): “you realize that, for people in Sweden, Africa is mentally very far away”. In that manner, Swedes may have less problems talking to people from Australia, even though it is geographically further away (2).

Concerning the third main challenge:

“(…) the level of frustration and (…) stress is often higher when you are out on a contract, than when you are at home, because then you can’t rely as much on colleagues. (…) Being on a contract, the expectations are quite high so you do feel maybe more pressured and I think that it’s also a bit stressful for people that the general view from Sweden sometimes appears to be that we are out here drinking coffee just chilling, when in reality it’s really hard working, it’s longer hours and more situations to deal with, cause again, you can’t rely on the knowledge of the colleague to the same extent as in Sweden.” (Interviewee 4)

Overall, not being used to certain things might increase stress, and there are many things to get negative about (e.g. power not working, no water), but it depends on each person’s way to approach those challenges, and the own attitude (6). “Some people find this challenging, but other people they might find it very frustrating. (…) You cannot be a person who gets frustrated because things are not working the way you hope” (1). If you are not willing to accept and appreciate other ways to do things, you will get very frustrated (6), but if you adopt, it can be a very interesting work (1).
5.1.6 African Business Culture

Regarding information on business culture collected from the interviews, there have been observations shared among the interviewees present in different regions of Africa. The first one is the level of corruption when doing business and towards the official institutions (1, 4). As Interviewee 4 mentioned, “corruption is widespread and laws are arbitrary in contrast to the E.U”.

The second one is the need to adapt the company leadership style to the local context (1, 6, 7). As Interviewee 1 explained, “You realize that there are different ways of approaching people. Basics are the same. (...) I use to say: 80% is the same all over the work, basic principles (...), but then you have 20% differences which are very local, those are the ones you need to understand”. In the same way, Interviewee 7 pointed out, “this will not be like (Company 1) in Sweden (...) of course you have the (Company 1) core, but of course we will be influenced by the local culture, so we need to find the balance in the culture”. However, Interviewee 3 did not perceive a big difference regarding the professional work. One stated that there “might be a bigger difference to go to another company in Sweden than to go to another country with (Company 1).”

Apart from that, there are some aspects, which are specific to certain countries. In Ghana, the culture is characterized by being nice, humble and sensitive people (7). However, they easily get offended and are direct in expressing dissatisfaction, even concerning minor issues (6). Regarding South Africa, interviewees agree that exist a hierarchical structure, different from the flat structure present in Sweden (2, 3, 4). In addition, South Africans have different perceptions of time, planning and deadlines (2, 4, 7), “they live very much in the present” (2) or as Interviewee 7 mentioned, deadlines are often not respected, and people take their time. Lastly, South Africa business culture is also characterized by a lack of academic background among the workforce (2, 4). Instead, most of them started at a lower level (workshop) and have been promoted to management level after working in the company for some time (2). As a result, the expectations and level of knowledge differ, the level of professionalism is higher in Europe due to the higher level of education compared to South Africa (4).

5.1.7 Non-work Life

In relation with the non-work life aspects, interviewees shared a common idea towards family as a key player in the expatriate experience (1, 3, 5). Interviewee 3 explained the relevance of discussing with your family, if going to an expatriate opportunity, so everyone agrees. For him it
is clear that the family will affect the work performance: if they are unhappy, probably your expatriate opportunity will fail (3). When being single, one can decide by yourself, but the day you are family, it becomes a family decision (1). In relation with the family, interviewees agreed on the difficulties that partners might face to find a work in the new country (1, 5, 6), which could involve an income loss for the family, if the partner do not find a job (5). In some of the cases, the interviewees’ partners needed to resign from their jobs in Sweden in order to follow them to their new expatriate position in Africa (2, 5).

Another aspect of the non-work life is the friends. Among the interviewees in Company 1, most of them only had relation with other expatriates (1, 2, 3), but some also had local friends (4, 6). As Interviewee 1 pointed out, “Most of the Scandinavian expatriates spend their free time with other Scandinavian expatriates”. But in contrast, Interviewee 4 made a conscious effort to make local friends in South Africa choosing to live in a gated community without many expats and joined activities with locals. In the same way, for Interviewee 6, it was an evolution process. During Interviewee 6 first experience working abroad he made Swedish friends, since he found it easier to meet people from his own country. In his next opportunity abroad, Interviewee 6 started to make friends who were expatriates, but this time from other countries than Sweden. Finally, now living in Ghana, Interviewee 6 has more and more Ghanaian friends. Interviewee 6 is more used to the country and one finds less obstacles, so it has become more normal to have contact with locals. Interviewee 6 explained that doing it this way opens up a lot of things to you, you gain understanding in a different way.

5.1.8 Lessons learnt

During their time abroad, the expatriates became aware of the extent of social differences (4), and of cultural differences. In that manner, they learnt about the host culture, but also got to know more about their own culture (1, 4). Overall, they became more open-minded, since “when you have been only in Sweden, you might think that the way things are done in Sweden is the best, which might not be necessarily the case, when you have been abroad.” (1) In that manner “there are other ways of doing things, which is not necessarily wrong. So, you broaden your mind if you stay and work with other cultures, you get a much better understanding of the difficulties around the globe.” (1) Moreover, one should be humble and not judge others, since not everyone has gotten the same opportunities as we did: “You cannot judge people from a European perspective, you cannot expect people to function the same way as you do” (4). However, “even if people are very different, you still can work very well together. You just need to have patience and trying to
understand other people's situations and it will all be fine. You need to be a bit flexible, you cannot be too rigid”. (7)

Another advice is to not expect too much, since the expectations are often not met (4), and to be brave, because you will never be prepared enough (6). Moreover, it is important to understand that things will not be like home (7): “This will not be like (Company 1) in Sweden (...) of course you have the (Company 1) core, but of course we will be influenced by the local culture, so we need to find the balance in the culture”. (7) Therefore, it is important to invite people to discussions (4, 7), and to listen as much as possible: “you have to have big ears and a smaller mouth sometimes” (1). “I try to listen as much as possible, and I try to not talk too much myself. I try to give the word to some other person”, since “I’m not an expert of how things work in Ghana, their (the local's) input is crucial for us externals”. (7)

Overall, “You grow as an individual when you get to know other cultures and experience other people” (1), “if you have the possibility to go abroad sometime in the future, take it” (2). Working abroad is a constant learning process, “the more you get to know (the host country), the more you understand the little you know”. (1) However, “you need to enjoy that. If you do not, then do something else”. (1) Interviewee 7 said that it will be easier every time you go to a new place, because you have more references and the flexibility in your mind: it is like some kind of training. Moreover, Interviewee 6 remarked that “you need to learn not to be afraid - if you are afraid of everything, you will have a miserable life.”

5.2 Findings Company 2

The findings of Company 2 are based on the interviews with Interviewees 8-11. Interviewee 8 and 9 come from Tunisia and work in Sweden for a few weeks. Interviewee 10 also comes from Tunisia, but has permanently moved to Sweden with one’s family. Interviewee 11 is the HR Manager of Company 2, and responsible for organizing the visit of the Tunisians.

The findings are structured as follows: At the beginning, some general information on the practice of receiving expatriates from Tunisia is outlined (5.2.1). After that, the structure follows the chronological order of the interview summaries, which is before going abroad (5.2.2 Previous Experience, 5.2.3 Selection, 5.2.4 Expectations and Company support), during the time abroad
5.2.1 General

Concerning the advantages of having Tunisian engineers come to Sweden, there is the aspect of the improved communication in the team. Usually, the team working on a project needs to communicate over Skype or email. During their time in Sweden, the team members get to know each other and the project and can form the basis for working more productive in the future, when the Tunisians are back in their home country. Another advantage is that Tunisian engineers are cheaper than Swedish engineers (11).

Regarding the frequency of the Tunisians in-patriates going to Company 2, it depends on the production needs (11). During 2017, there were 4 visits with 2 to 3 Tunisian engineers per visit (11).

5.2.2 Previous Experience

The findings towards the previous experience working outside from their home country of the interviewees of Company 2 show that one of the interviewees had none (11), Interviewee 8, 9 and 10 have one 1 year or less. Both Interviewee 8 and 9 had their previous experiences working abroad in France, meanwhile Interviewee 10 had it in Sweden.

5.2.3 Selection

The selection of the Tunisian engineers to send to Sweden is based on their fluency in English, basic technical skills, and their willingness to travel (9). Apart from that, it depends on the business need, which, how many, and how long employees are sent to Sweden (9, 10). Nevertheless, a stay abroad motivates the employees, thus, the company tries to send all of them to Sweden (10). However, a tendency to send employees, who have previously been working in Sweden, has been observed (9, 11).

5.2.4 Expectations and Company Support

Regarding expectations, Interviewee 8 and 9, both coming from Tunisia to work in Sweden for a few weeks, did not expect a lot. Therefore, they were positively surprised about how well they were treated by their Swedish colleagues, and how professional the business works in Sweden.
The support received from Company 2 according to the interviewees had a lot to do with practicalities as accommodation, ID card, registration, work permit or airport pick up (8, 9, 11). As the HR Manager of Company 2 mentioned, “inpatriates are supported with practical and logistical issues as arranging accommodation, taxi pickups, administration or where to find things, such as a supermarket”. Company 2 also provided inpatriates with an introduction to the work context, the team and the country (8, 9, 11). In the case of Interviewee 9, “upon arrival, (HR) (...) introduced them to everything”. This was followed by team building activities (8).

5.2.5 Main Challenges

One of the main challenges addressed by the interviewees in Company 2 is facing a new environment (8, 9). For Interviewee 9, coming to Sweden was a complete change of the working context, with another culture and another religion. In the same way, is a challenge to be able to integrate a team with different nationalities, cultures and positions, and to adapt the leadership style accordingly (10). Another challenge for the inpatriates coming from Company 2 Tunisia was to fulfill the mission of their stay abroad, and to prove themselves as a good partner (8). Inpatriates shared an interest to bring the good practices learned in Sweden back to Tunisia (8, 9). This also represents a challenge, Interviewee 8 explained that there were many learning points, which can be brought back to the subsidiary of Company 2 in Tunisia. Learning points as the flat hierarchy, working on improving processes, instead of giving orders, having more direct contact with colleagues, and discussing problems directly with the manager (8). Lastly, Interviewee 11 mentioned the challenge of face the lack of communication, due to the missing face to face aspect, which creates bigger problems and the difficulty to hire Tunisians engineers due to bureaucracy (11).

5.2.6 Business culture in Sweden and Tunisia

The main difference between the business culture of Sweden and Tunisia is that in Sweden, companies are organized in a flat way, while in Tunisia, organizations are more hierarchical (8, 10). Thus, in Sweden, issues may be discussed directly with the responsible manager, and levels of hierarchy may be skipped, as long as the skipped person gets informed later. In turn, in Tunisia, it is not possible to do that, so that there need to be many interfaces when communicating (10). In general, in Sweden there is more direct contact with colleagues (8) in form of communication and feedback (9).
Another difference in the business cultures is that in Tunisia people work in a rather individual way and compete with each other, while in Sweden, the employees work as a team (10). In that manner, in Sweden, one receives more respect from the colleagues, and they share the pressure with each other (10), while in Tunisia, people want to see results, independent from personal issues (9). Moreover, family is first in Sweden, so employees leave work on time, while working overtime to complete a task in Tunisia is normal (8). Overall, Swedish managers are rather working on improving processes, instead of giving orders (8).

Regarding growing in the organization, in Tunisia, it goes automatically with time, and people are focused on going up the hierarchy to receive more money and prestige. Therefore, sometimes people are not suitable to be a manager, but are in this position anyway (10). In Sweden, one works in the position one likes, and the payment depends on one’s experience. In that manner, an engineer with a lot of working experience may earn more, than a manager with less experience (10).

The strong hierarchy in Tunisia has various negative effects. Often, the managers “own your work” and are “taking credit from your merits as theirs” (10). Therefore, they control tightly what their employees do, complain constantly, and are pushing tasks down the hierarchy (10). Additionally, they have 1-2 hour long meetings, with the purpose to collect information on what their employees are doing, to make a report to their managers. In turn, in Company 2 in Sweden, they have efficient 10-minute stand-up meetings with post-its, in which everyone can speak (10). Moreover, in Tunisia, there seems to be a lack of flexibility of the managers (8), which makes it hard for the returning engineers to implement the lessons learnt in Sweden (10).

5.2.7 Non-work Life

Since two of four interviewees of Company 2 are only in Sweden for a few weeks, and one is the Swedish HR Manager, in this section, the focus lays on Interviewee 10, who moved from Tunisia to Sweden permanently. For Interviewee 10, the most important thing is the family, which would also be the only reason one would move back to Tunisia, for instance, if a family member gets sick. While the kids were fine with moving to Sweden, the partner needed to leave the job in Tunisia, and needs to learn Swedish now to find a new job. Apart from that, it took a long time (8-9 months) to get the family to Sweden, due to bureaucracy, and technical problems (10).
5.2.8 Lessons learnt

The expatriates of Company 2 learnt that sometimes direct contact is needed and that it is time-consuming to only discuss matters through email or Skype (9). Moreover, they are eager to apply what they have learnt in Sweden, with regards to organization, efficiency, and standardized ways of working, overall, a culture of “doing things right”. Apart from this, Interviewee 9 was impressed of how Swedes communicate with people without judging them and tries to apply that in one’s own life as well. For the future, a more accurate expectation setting before going abroad would be appropriate, since sometimes, one may have false perceptions of how it will be in Sweden (10). Moreover, Interviewee 10 advises Tunisian engineers coming to Sweden to speak up and ask for help, since so far, when they do not know something, they try to fix it by themselves. In Tunisia, it is expected from an engineer, who has studied and worked, to have all the knowledge already, so they might feel ashamed of asking.
6. Discussion

This chapter covers the discussion part of the study. First, an overall introduction of the updated framework is explained. Second, the discussion part moves to analyze the first part of the framework, the Anticipatory Adjustment, covering the Individual aspects (training, previous experience and accurate expectations) and the Organization aspects. Third, this is followed by an analysis of the second part of the framework where the researchers analyze in first place the level 1 factors (Individual and Non-work) and in second place the level 2 factors (Job and Company Support).

6.1. Introduction of the updated Framework

After conducting the interviews, systematizing the findings, and comparing them to the Framework of International Adjustment of Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991), some issues emerged, which are discussed in the following. Based on those issues, an updated Framework of International Adjustment was developed, as displayed in figure 8. However, the basic idea of the framework, to divide anticipatory from in-country adjustment, and to have different elements influencing those types of adjustment, is acknowledged as valid. To visualize the changes, the original framework is displayed first, followed by the updates one.
Figure 2 - Framework of International Adjustment

(Black, Mendehall & Oddou, 1991, p. 303)

Figure 8 - Updated Framework of International Adjustment

*Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbered facet(s) of adjustment to which the specific variable is expected to relate.
**Anticipatory Adjustment**

Regarding the Anticipatory Adjustment, the original framework divides between the individual factors of training and previous experience, which lead to accurate expectations, and the selection mechanisms and criteria of the organization. Concerning the mentioned individual factors, in the original framework they appear as if they were having the same relevance in contributing to setting accurate expectations, and thus, to the anticipatory adjustment. However, the findings have shown that previous experience serves better as preparation for an IA than the training does. Most expatriate interviewees have stated that they learned a lot through previous experiences (1, 3, 4, 6, 7), and did not see the need of CCT anymore after their first experience abroad (1, 3, 4). Especially if one has worked in a similar country to the one is going to, the expectations of how it will be in the future host country tend to be relatively accurate (1, 6). Therefore, the relevance of the training depends on how much previous experience someone has: If an expatriate has a lot of previous experience, the training might not be as useful as for someone, who has never lived abroad before. Nevertheless, both training and experience contribute to set accurate expectations, similarly to the assumption of the original framework.

Regarding the organizational factor of selection, the findings have shown its relevance to the anticipatory adjustment. However, the process has been criticized for not focusing enough on soft skills, but only on technical skills. Thus, the new framework makes clear that both aspects should be included in the process.

**In-country Adjustment**

In the original framework, five groups of elements (Individual, Organization Socialization, Job, Organization Culture, Non-Work), which appeared to influence the adjustment to the same extent, were presented. However, according to the findings, certain elements are more relevant than others, which is why the new framework consists of two levels of relevance. The ‘Level 1’ factors were found to be most relevant to the cross-cultural adjustment of an expatriate. Surprisingly, none of those elements is directly related to the work. In that manner, Level 1 includes the category ‘Individual’, consisting of the same elements as in the original framework (Self-Efficacy, Relation Skills, Perception Skills). Apart from this, ‘Non-work’ is a part of the Level 1 factors, including Culture Novelty and Family-Spouse Adjustment.

Concerning the ‘Level 2’ factors, they include elements, which are less relevant to the cross-cultural adjustment of an expatriate, than the Level 1 elements. Apart from this, they are related
to the new work and the company. Level 2 consists of the elements ‘Job’ and ‘Company Support’. The element Job focuses on the novelty of the work role and the business culture, while Company Support regards practical things the company helps the expatriate with.

Regarding Job, it is a fusion of two blocks of elements from the original framework: Job and Organization Culture. However, from the original category Job, only one out of four elements was used for the new framework, which is Role Novelty. The other factors (Role Clarity, Role Discretion, Role Conflict) did not result as crucial to the cross-cultural adjustment in the collected data. In that manner, the respondents in the interviews focused on other aspects, which they found more relevant. Therefore, those three elements were left out in the updated framework. The block of Organization Culture originally consisted of Organization Culture Novelty, Social Support, and Logistical Help. The findings showed that all those elements are relevant to cross-cultural adjustment, and thus, they are all included. Nevertheless, Organization Culture Novelty is part of the block of Job, since it regards the new business environment. In turn, social Support and Logistical Help are now constituting the new category of Company Support, because of their focus on practicalities. The term ‘Logistical Help’ was changed to ‘Logistical Support’, since the term ‘support’ seemed to point more to a professional and structured way of service than the term ‘help’. Apart from this, ‘Organization Socialization’ was left out, since the data did not demonstrate enough importance to have a separate point for it.

Moreover, the ‘Degree of Adjustment’ was renamed to ‘Area of Adjustment’, since this term fits better to the findings of the present study and might avoid confusion. Apart from this, two areas of adjustment were defined, which are ‘Non-Work Adjustment’ and ‘Work Adjustment’. The separation of those results valuable, since the work adjustment is believed to happen quicker than the non-work adjustment. This is due to the findings that there might be less cultural differences in business, than in other areas of life (see Ch. 5.1.6 African Business Culture). Apart from this, the family might face bigger challenges of adjustment than the expatriate, since the expatriate has a structured support system at work, while the family needs is exposed to the host culture more directly (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Apart from that, the ‘Mode of Adjustment’ was removed in the updated framework, because it did not occur as highly relevant in the collected data.
6.2 Anticipatory Adjustment

This section looks into the Anticipatory Adjustment. Anticipatory Adjustment in divided in two areas. First the chapter covers the individual aspect and afterwards, it moves into the organization aspect.

6.2.1 Individual

The individual aspect of the Anticipatory Adjustment goes into analyzing the Training, the Previous Experience and Accurate expectations. The concept of Training is divided between the Effectiveness of CCT, Dimensions of CCT, Approaches to CCT, Tailor training of expatriates and the Training for family. Moreover, it includes the briefings provided by the Global Mobility department to the outgoing expatriates. It is part of the training section, since it also helps preparing the expatriates by giving information.

6.2.1.1 Training

As mentioned in the theory chapter “Individual: Training” (Ch. 2.3.1.1), CCT is meant to support expatriates in managing the change, cultural differences, and adjusting to the new culture. Overall, it should enable them to feel comfortable living and working in the new environment (Caligiuri et al., 2005). Nevertheless, findings from the interviewees put into question the effectiveness of CCT. In that manner, Interviewee 6 explained that CCT may be good for the first time going abroad to feel more prepared, but the experience one needs to work efficiently in the host country takes years to acquire. In the same way, Interviewee 7 pointed out that cultural knowledge cannot be acquired through training, but that it could work as an introduction. Apart from that, one says that you never know how it will be in the host country, before you have experienced it.

Thus, overall it may be said that CCT could be beneficial as an introduction to the host country, but it could not prepare an expatriate completely. However, the effectiveness of CCT may be related to the previous experience of an expatriate. In that regard, it might be more useful for someone, who has never lived abroad, than for experienced expatriates. The reason for that is that going abroad is “like some kind of training” (Interviewee 7). In that manner, Interviewee 4 pointed out that, during the first stays abroad in Canada, one gained awareness of cultural differences, and the phases one goes through, when living abroad. Therefore, one did not see
the necessity of taking the CCT. However, the effectiveness of CCT may also be related to the content of the CCT.

**Dimensions of CCT**

According to the theory, CCT should include three dimensions, which are the self-orientation, the others-orientation, and the perceptual orientation (Mendehall et al., 1987). The findings point to some CCT provided by Company 1, which include the self-orientation, in case they covered the general challenges of living abroad, also for the family, and/or how the Swedish culture is perceived by foreigners.

Other CCT completed by the expatriates interviewed focus on the others-orientation, which should transmit knowledge to build relationships to the host nationals. This kind of CCT focused on information about the host culture in specific. Lastly, the perceptual orientation includes adapting a non-judgmental and non-evaluative manner of interpreting the behavior of host nationals (Ruben & Kealy, 1979), and making less-rigid evaluations about the reasons behind other people’s behaviors (Detweiler, 1975), and the ability to constantly update perceptions (Ratiu, 1983). Even though, in theory, this dimension should be part of the CCT, the findings point to it as a skill that expatriates learnt, while being abroad, rather than something that can be acquired through training (e.g. Interviewee 4, 7).

**Approaches to CCT**

Apart from that, the chapter “Individual: Training” (Ch. 2.3.1.1) explained different approaches for CCT. Those approaches include the ‘information-giving’, ‘affective’, and ‘immersion’ approach (Mendehall et al., 1987), as well as he focuses on culture in general, or on one culture in specific (Gertsen, 1990). Moreover, an effective and efficient training is supposed to consist of a combination of different approaches (Bennett, 1986). In that manner, Company 1 focused mostly on the information-giving approach in its CCT, by providing information about host (Interviewee 6) or home (Interviewee 2) country or challenges of expatriates in general (Interviewee 7). Moreover, additional material on the host culture was frequently provided by the company (e.g. Interviewee 7).

In conclusion, the CCT of Company 1 could be criticized for only applying one approach, which is the information-giving one, and combining it either with culture-specific, or a culture-general information. It is problematic, since human experiences and cultural differences have too many
facets to be able to transmit it through this type of training (Tung, 1981). However, the knowledge acquired through this CCT could be an introduction to the new culture, but one needs to keep in mind, that the information acquired there is not complete, and that there still might be surprises. Apart from that, the combination of the mentioned approach with an affective or immersion approach to CCT could result beneficial to the anticipatory adjustment of an expatriate. The reason for that is that it could make an expatriate more flexible in one’s attitude and enable to identify and accept unfamiliar values or modes of behavior (Tung, 1981). Moreover, it may enable to adjust communication styles specifically to the local culture, in order to be able to form relationships to the locals (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). Even though there are certain ways of improving Company 1’s CCT, the costs and benefits of it need to be considered.

**Tailor training to expatriates**

As explained in the theory, CCT should be adapted to the situation of each expatriate. Nevertheless, it might be difficult to implement. In that manner, the expatriate’s previous experience abroad should be considered. Company 1 does that by making the CCT optional, so that the expatriate can take it, if one feels it is necessary. In that manner, the interviewed expatriates with previous experience abroad did usually not take it (Interviewee 4), or only before the first IA, but not for the following ones (3, 7). Another consideration would be to offer different kinds of training, depending on one’s previous experience. In that manner, someone, who has never lived abroad, could benefit from a CCT, which is generally about the concept of culture, and the challenges of an expatriate. In turn, expatriates, who have lived in other countries, than the future host country, may be offered a training specifically about the culture of the country they are going to. The reason for this is that they may already have a general understanding of cultural differences, and be more aware of their own culture, than those who have never been abroad for a longer period of time.

Not only the previous experience of an expatriate, but also the length of one stay abroad should play a role in determining the type of CCT one should receive. According to the model of Mendehall, Dunbar & Oddou (1987) (see Ch. 2.3.1.1: Individual: Training), for a stay of one month or less, the CCT information-giving approach should be applied, while longer stays should use the affective, or immersion approach to CCT. The findings have shown that the expatriates of Company 1 all stay for more than a year abroad, which, theoretically, would point to the immersion approach of CCT as most beneficial. In turn, the expatriates of Company 2 do not receive CCT before or during their stay abroad. However, upon arrival, they are getting informed about practical
issues regarding their stay, and exchange knowledge about culture with their colleagues in an informal way. The expatriates of Company 2 usually stay for one month or less. Therefore, the information-giving approach is indeed useful. Nevertheless, the practical information could be complemented by briefings about the culture, the area, and basic language training.

**Training for family**

As mentioned in the theory, the family of an expatriate should receive CCT, if they are moving to the host country, too. However, the challenges for them are different, since the expatriate has a structured transition with defined responsibilities at work, but for the partner, it is often unstructured (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Therefore, expatriate families sometimes need more time to adjust to the new culture than the expatriate (Interviewee 3). Due to the mentioned differences, the family of an expatriate needs a different kind of training, than the expatriate. From the interviews, it resulted that Interviewee 2’s partner took a CCT as well, but in a different group. Interviewee 3 also did a CCT with the family before the first IA.

**Briefings by Global Mobility Department**

Apart from that, outgoing expatriates often have a briefing with the Global Mobility Department. However, this practice was criticized by mentioning that it is only information they have researched on the internet, rather than something they have experienced (Interviewee 1). To overcome this issue, the company tries to establish contacts between future and current expatriates in a specific host country to exchange first-hand information.

Apart from this, the briefings and information given by employees of the Global Mobility department could be improved by sending them abroad themselves. That way, they could be enabled to comprehend the challenges of living and working abroad in a more profound way and acquire market knowledge. Nevertheless, to fully comprehend the challenges, and to gather profound market knowledge, an experience abroad of several years would be required, which may not be possible, or wished by all of the employees. Apart from that, a stay abroad in one country, will not give them knowledge about the market, or living and working in other countries. Thus, it would not improve the way they assist outgoing expatriates going to other markets, than those they have been to.

Another option would be to hire people for the Global Mobility Department, who have been working abroad before, especially if they were on an IA for Company 1. This might be beneficial,
because they could assist outgoing expatriates with the knowledge they have gained during their experiences abroad and share their market expertise with them. Other than that, expatriates could assist the Global Mobility Department by giving them advice and sharing their knowledge with them. In all cases, it would be valuable to find a way to integrate the knowledge and skills the expatriates have gained during their time abroad.

6.2.1.2 Previous experience

In the chapter “Individual: Previous Experience” (Ch. 2.3.1.2), various research supporting the positive correlation between previous overseas experience and cross-cultural adjustment was presented. The findings of the interviews confirm this theory. All expatriates of Company 1 had previous experience living abroad: Either they had completed other IA in Company 1 (Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 6, 7) or they have studied abroad (Interviewee 4). One of them also took university courses on intercultural communication (Interviewee 7), which also contributes to prepare for stays abroad, and is therefore listed here. The benefits of those previous experiences are presented in the following.

Overall, one grows as a person, when going abroad, and getting to know other cultures and people (Interviewee 1, 7). One of the most crucial learning points gained from those experiences is that one cannot just apply one’s own values in another country, since the cultures, challenges people face, and (educational) opportunities people have are different (Interviewee 3, 4). Therefore, it is fundamental to adapt a non-judgmental approach, be humble, and learn to verbalize knowledge, since it may not be understood the same way by other cultures (Interviewee 4). In that manner, Interviewee 1 stated that, when only working in the home country, one might think that this is the best way of doing things. In turn, one learnt to understand and appreciate other ways of doing things, which broaden one’s mind, and transmitted a better understanding of challenges around the globe. Apart from understanding the host culture, an experience abroad raises the awareness of one’s own culture (Interviewee 2, 4, 6).

A common lesson learnt by experienced expatriates is to be open-minded (Interviewee 2, 4, 7), to understand that things will be different, and to listen and discuss with the locals to gain a deeper understanding of the host culture. However, working abroad is a constant learning process, and the more one learns, the more one understands the depth of the subject, and how little one knows. Thus, an expatriate should be aware that understanding the host culture may take a lot of time.
Overall, one should not expect or prepare too much, since one never knows for sure, before one has experienced it (Interviewee 7).

Another aspect is that through an experience abroad, one could gain the awareness of the stages one might go through during the IA (Interviewee 4).

To sum up, through previous experiences abroad, expatriates learned to be non-judgmental, and open-minded, which could be categorized as an increased ability to adapt to a new environment. Moreover, the awareness of the stages of an IA may aid to anticipate problems one might face when going abroad.

Apart from this, Interviewee 7 stated that it will be easier every time one goes abroad, since one has more references and the flexibility in one’s mind. One describes previous overseas experience as “some kind of training”. This coincides with the theory, stating that previous experiences lead to the development of certain cognitive frameworks, supporting the understanding of events, people, and roles (see Ch. 2.3.1.2: Individual: Previous Experience).

The lessons learnt by the interviewed expatriates demonstrate that actual experience abroad is more valuable for setting accurate expectations about the future IA, and therefore, for anticipatory adjustment, than CCT. Moreover, experience abroad enables to acquire certain cross-cultural skills, for instance, communicating with different cultures, or being open-minded, which may later facilitate the in-country adjustment in future experiences abroad. In turn, CCT with an information-giving approach, involves receiving information about the home or host culture, or the challenges of an expatriate. This approach was criticized for not being able to cover all aspects a stay abroad could involve (see chapter 2.3.1.1: Individual: Training). However, the relevance of CCT to the adjustment depends on the extent of previous experience abroad. In that manner, if one did not have previous experience abroad, CCT could be more beneficial, than for someone, who has been abroad before.

Even though several benefits of previous experience were mentioned, its effect on cross-cultural adjustment is determined by its quality and nature. In that manner, expatriates of Company 2 have previously been working in France, were they faced racism and prejudices. Because of the negative previous experiences, they were concerned about going on another experience abroad,
and worried about how the people in the host country would view them. However, the adjustment to Sweden was easier, since they felt accepted and welcomed from the beginning.

6.2.1.3 Accurate expectations

According to the theory (see Ch. 2.3.1.3: Individual: Accurate Expectations), previous experience and training support an outgoing expatriate in forming accurate expectations about living and working in the host country. Consequently, one may experience fewer surprises, and there is a decreased likelihood of experiencing a culture shock.

Overall, previous experience, especially of working in a country similar to the one an expatriate is going to, is positively correlated to the anticipatory adjustment. Nevertheless, also experience working abroad in other countries, and CCT may contribute to develop intercultural communication skills, making the transition easier, and to form expectations about the future life. Generally, it is crucial to expect that it will be different in the new country, not to expect too much, and to be open-minded. The example of Interviewee 6, who got a culture shock in Germany, demonstrated that, even if a host country seems similar to one’s home country, it can be a shock. Therefore, having accurate expectations before going abroad is crucial, to not get negatively surprised. Apart from that, even if one expected it to be different, there could still be frustrations at times. If one is conscious about that, it may be easier to deal with it, and keep a positive attitude.

6.2.2 Organization: Selection

As explained in the theory (Ch. 2.3.1.4: Organization: Selection Mechanisms and Criteria), selection processes have suffered from a well-known trend by managers and HR personnel, giving too much focus to technical competences when recruiting (Mendehall et al., 1987). After more than five decades researching about selection processes of expatriates, there is not a clear understanding among the researchers towards what MNCs should be selecting for (Arthur and Bennett, 1995). Therefore, firms have overlook relevant criteria when recruiting for overseas assignments (Mendehall et al., 1987).

From the interviews conducted in Company 1 (Ch 5.1.2: Selection), several interviewees have expressed a similar opinion to what has been explained in the previous paragraph. Interviewees 1, 4 and 6 had critical opinions towards the overseas assignments selection processes in Company 1. The mentioned interviewees agreed on a focus in technical skills rather than in personality, soft skills or how capable candidates where to adapt (Ch 5.1.2: Selection).
Interviewee 1 went against the idea of “domestic equals overseas performance” when one said, “You can be a very good professional working in England or Germany, that doesn't necessarily mean that you will be a good person in Africa. And vice versa”. Therefore, a selection focus mainly based on technical skills will not be efficient on covering aspects as the ability of the candidate to adapt or his or her potential ability to fit in the new working and social environment. As Interviewee 1 mentioned, “It is not always the most qualified who do the best job”.

Another area where interviewees showed a critical approach towards Company 1 practices was in relation with the informality showed in some selection processes. Interviewees 2, 3, 4 and 7 made reference to this unofficial way of contacting and selecting the candidates without following the official selection process (internal open application). Candidates are contacted directly and, in some cases, also offered directly the position.

In conclusion, as academics point out and the interviewees confirm, there is a clear focus on technical skills when recruiting for overseas positions. There exists a trend of putting soft skills and adaptability capabilities as not relevant aspect when recruiting for expatriates’ positions. Doing so, this could lead to a more complicated cross-cultural adjustment processes and consequently, a worst overseas assignment performance.

6.3 In-country Adjustment

In-country adjustment chapter in divided in level 1 and level 2 factors.

6.3.1 Level 1 factors

The level 1 factors cover two concepts; the Individual and the Non-work aspect.

6.3.1.1 Individual

The aspects that are relevant for into the individual context of the in-country adjustment are divided in three general aspects; self-efficacy, relation skills and perception skills.

**Self-efficacy**

As explained before (Ch. 2.3.2.1.2: Self-efficacy), Self-efficacy refers to a person’s ability to maintain a psychological well-being and effective stress management (Black et al., 1991). In this way, expatriates with a high self-efficacy, when confronted when challenging situations abroad,
they will potentially have more chances to be successful. High self-efficacy skills allow, in this case expatriates, to persist in adapt to new ways to do things working abroad even though obtaining sometimes negative outcomes or results (Ibid.).

Findings support the self-efficacy concept. Interviewee 4 explained that “even though (...) the level of frustration and (...) stress is often higher when you are out on a contract than when you are at home, because then you can’t rely as much on colleagues, (...) being on a contract the expectations are quite high, so you do feel maybe more pressured”. Therefore, there is a higher stress level over expatriates which need to be handle in the best way possible. Interviewee 1 said, “you cannot be a person who gets frustrated because things are not working the way you hope”. In relation, Interviewee 6 points out that the challenges to face are strongly related with the way you approach them, in other words, with your attitude towards them. If as an expatriate you are not willing to acknowledge and appreciate different ways to do things, your frustration will grow higher (Interviewee 6).

As mentioned before, self-efficacy is highly valued among expatriates (Ch. 2.3.2.1.1). As mentioned before, working overseas place expatriates frequently into situations where the level of stress is high. Having a good stress management and self-efficacy, leads to higher potential of being successful, rather than failing or quitting in IA goals.

Relation skills
As covered in the theory section (Ch. 2.3.2.1.3: Relation Skills), the skills that allow expatriates to grow relationships with the local people are called relation skills (Black et al., 1991). Having a close relation with the locals, provide expatriate with an advantage towards understand the new culture and social behaviors, reducing the uncertainty level of the new working, cultural and social context (Mendehall & Oddou. 1985). As Interviewee 7 explained, the relationships with the locals are very important. In a cultural business context, it allows you to understand that meetings take more time and implies more discussion not just about the business, rather about other topics. One mentioned, even if people is different, “you just need to have patience and trying to understand other people's situations and it will all be fine. You need to be a bit flexible, you cannot be too rigid”.

Relation skills also refers to how expatriates having meaningful relationships to the locals can significantly increase the satisfaction level towards social interactions, friendship, and intimacy
(Hammer et al., 1978). The expatriates’ general cross-cultural adjustment can be improved by expatriates sharing a significant amount of time building relationships with locals (Black, 1988). This is supported in the findings when, for example, Interviewee 6 explain the evolutionary process in terms of the relationship with the locals that one experienced. In the first experience abroad Interviewee 6 had, one’s friends were Swedish as it was easier to relate to them. Interviewee 6 tried to change this is the upcoming assignments and now in Ghana, one has more and more friends. As one expressed, now there seem to be less obstacles in the country and making local friends has become easier. “It (having local friends) opens up a lot of things to you, you gain understanding in a different way” (Interviewee 6). In the same way, Interviewee 4 understand social life outside the work as a key aspect and therefore, one made a conscious effort to make friends in one’s host country, South Africa. Interviewee 7 sums up to this believe when saying “I’m not an expert of how things work in Ghana, their input is crucial for us externals”.

Relation skills are a key aspect when working abroad in a IA. The cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates will be potentially improved, when spending time with host nationals, allowing them to understand easier their new cultural, working and social environment.

**Perception skills**

As seen in the chapter on “Perception Skills” (Ch. 2.3.2.1.3), perception skills, are the cognitive abilities which make possible for expatriates to understand the new host environment and the characters involved in it (Black et al., 1991). To be able to create less-rigid evaluations about the way in that other people behave (Detweiler, 1975) and to be able to update perceptions (Ratiu, 1983) may support the process of cross-cultural adjustment.

Related to the problem with rigid evaluations mentioned in the previous paragraph, Interviewee 4 said, “you cannot judge people from a European perspective, you cannot expect people to function the same way as you do”. In the findings section, Interviewee 7 makes visible this perception skills when one talked about the business culture. “This will not be like (Company 1) in Sweden (...) of course you have the (Company 1) core, but of course we will be influenced by the local culture, so we need to find the balance in the culture”. In the same way, Interviewee 2 shows these set of skills when acknowledging how deadlines and planification does not work in the same way in South Africa, as “they live very much in the present”. Another aspect where perception skills are visible is in the way expatriates raise awareness towards their own culture, allowing them to have a better perception of themselves in the host environment.
Self-efficacy, relation and perception skills conform a set of aspects of the individual, which may help them as an expatriate, since having these traits potentially reduces the problems during the cross-cultural process at the same time as it will improve the outcome results of the expatriate’s IA.

6.3.1.2 Non-work

The non-work chapter starts defining Culture Novelty and moves on to explain the Family-Spouse Adjustment concept.

6.3.1.2.1 Culture Novelty

The theory of culture novelty (Ch 2.3.2.5.6: Culture Novelty) connects how easily an expatriate can adapt with how culturally different are his or her country with the country of destination (Mendehall & Oddou, 1985). The higher the difference, the most difficult for the expatriate to adjust to the new cultural environment. This concept of cultural novelty is connected with the concept of cultural distance. As explained in the chapter 2.3.2.5.6, cultural distance explains that cultural adjustment will be more difficult if the home and host country culture are very different (Beck, 1963) or are perceived very different (Mendehall & Oddou, 1986).

From the interviews conducted with several expatriates, they acknowledge the cultural differences between home and host country. Interviewee 7 expressed that moving to a new country will always be difficult, at least in the beginning, but “you have to understand people and adapt”. In the same way, Interviewee 7 explained that in comparison with the Swedish culture, Ghanaians easily get offended and are direct in expressing dissatisfaction, even concerning minor issues. Nonetheless, some of them (Interviewee 1 and 7), mentioned a learning process throughout the previous experiences abroad. This allowed them to adapt faster to the differences between home and host culture. As Interviewee 7 explained, it will be easier every time you go to a new place, because you have more references and the flexibility in your mind; it is kind of like a training.

In other words, culture novelty has a negative impact in cross-cultural adjustment when the home and host cultures are very different. Nonetheless, moving from country A to country B, which have great culture novelty, will not be the same for expatriates with different backgrounds. The more number of successful experiences working abroad an expatriate have had, the less perception of culture novelty he or she will experience during the cross-cultural adjustment process.
6.3.1.2.2 Family-Spouse Adjustment

As explained in the theory (Ch 2.3.2.5.7: Family/Spouse Adjustment), a difficult adaptation by the family or the spouse into the new cultural environment can lead to a failure of the overseas assignment (Black et al., 1991). In the same way, Interviewees 1, 3 and 5 expressed that family plays a key role in the successful adjustment process. Interviewee 3 even mentioned that if the family does not adapt, it is likely that the overseas assignment will fail. As mentioned in the theory, problems in the adjustment of the spouse or family, is the first cause of overseas assignment failure among US expatriates (Tung, 1981). In Ch. 2.3.1.1, is explained that the risk of failure to adjust might be higher for families than for the expatriate (Parkinson & Morley, 2006). Therefore there exist a need to include the family and partner or spouse into the CCT for a potentially more beneficial cross-cultural training.

The theory towards family-spouse adjustment has been confirmed by the findings from the interviews. The relevant role of the family during the adjustment process of the expatriates is a well understood aspect by academics as well as by the HR managers and the expatriates themselves. As a clarification, what have been observed through the analysis of the data is that the family-spouse adjustment, as well as the culture novelty, have a higher level of relevance than other in-country adjustment factors (job and company support).

6.3.2 Level 2 factors

The level 2 factors are confirmed by the Job and the Company Support aspects. Company Support is divided between Logistical Support and Social Support.

6.3.2.1 Job

In the Framework of International Adjustment of Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991), as a variable of in-country adjustment, Job appeared divided by four types of roles; role clarity, role novelty, role discretion and role conflict. From the interviews carried out by the researchers, there has been not enough data to confirm a relevance impact of three of these roles (role clarity, role discretion and role conflict) into the Job aspect of the in-country adjustment. Apart from this, the aspect of Organization Culture Novelty is included in this chapter since it is highly connected to the Role Novelty according to the findings.
**Role Novelty**

Role Novelty, as explained in Ch. 2.3.2.2.3: Role Novelty, refers to the degree in which a new job role differs from the previous one, which can evolve in an increase of the uncertainty affecting a proper adjustment (Black et al., 1991). As Nicholson (1984) explained, persons under situations of high role novelty, might be forced to create some personal development in order to adjust. As Interviewee 1 mentioned, “you have to understand how things are done, and then try to adapt your leadership skills accordingly”. Therefore, the uncertainty will increase when the role novelty is big, making the expatriate face more difficulties to go through the cross-cultural adjustment (Black, 1988).

**Organization Culture Novelty**

Another relevant feature into the Job aspect, is the Organization Culture Novelty. In the theory chapter 2.3.2.3.1: Organization Culture Novelty, it is defined as the degree of difference between the former organization and the new one (Mendehall & Oddou, 1985). In the case of Company 1, the organization culture novelty for expatriates is lower as it would be going to any other company in an African country. As Interviewee 2 explained, the business culture in Company 1 in South Africa, is in between the business culture in South Africa and in Sweden, since it is a Swedish company. Regarding Company 2 Sweden and Tunisia, even though they belong to the same group, the organization culture novelty is evident. As an example, Interviewee 8 and 10, agree about the main difference between the business culture of Sweden and Tunisia is that in Sweden, companies are organized in a flat way, while in Tunisia, organizations are more hierarchical. To sum up, the greater the difference between the organization cultures of home and host culture, the more uncertainty one suffers in the new working environment, and the cross-cultural adjustment might be more difficult (Black et al., 1991).

6.3.2.2 Company support

**Logistical Support**

In chapter 2.3.2.3.3: Logistical Help, it was stated that, if a company provides logistical support to their expatriates, the uncertainty related to going abroad would be decreased. Company 1 and 2 provide their expatriates with numerous services regarding logistics (see Ch. 5.1.3 and 5.2.4), which enables them to focus on their work, and be productive immediately. Therefore, opposite to the statement of the theory that logistical support is more related to the general, than to the work adjustment, our findings demonstrate that it is closely related. Overall, the findings confirm
that logistical support for the company reduces uncertainty and aids the cross-cultural adjustment of the expatriates.

**Social Support**

Apart from the logistics, Company 1 provides social support, by establishing contacts between current and future expatriates (Interviewee 4, 7). Regarding Company 2, the Swedish colleagues integrated their Tunisian colleagues well, had fika and after-work activities with them, and gave practical advice (Interviewee 8, 9). Social support enables the future and current expatriates to receive first-hand information about working and living in the host country, and further aids their cross-cultural adjustment. As stated in the theory (Ch. 2.3.2.3.2 Social Support), social support provided by the company lowers the level of uncertainty related to moving abroad, which was confirmed by the findings of this study.
7. Conclusions

The present chapter includes the main conclusions of the study. In that manner, chapter 7.1 summarizes the answers to the sub-research questions one and two, explaining why cross-cultural adjustment needs to be improved, and which aspects may be addressed by the companies. The following chapter points out the theoretical contributions (Ch. 7.2). After that, the answer of sub-research question three is summed up in chapter 7.3 in the form of practical recommendations for the companies on how to support their expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment. Lastly, the limitations of the study (Ch. 7.4) and suggestions for further research are explained (Ch. 7.5).

7.1 General Conclusions

The main question of this study was how Swedish companies can support the cross-cultural adjustment of their expatriates on international assignments between Sweden and Africa. To answer this question, three sub questions were formulated, and addressed in different chapters of this paper.

The first sub question “Why does cross-cultural adjustment need to be improved?” was discussed partly in the introduction, and partly in the theory part. In that manner, Africa was presented as an important future market, which may lead to a higher number of IA with Africa. Apart from that, it was mentioned that the focus of expansion strategies of Swedish companies in the past was on China (Drammeh & Karlsson, 2017). Therefore, a lack of strategies focusing on the African market could be possible (Ch. 1.1 & 1.6). Additionally, the comparison of countries along Hofstede’s cultural dimensions pointed out the high cultural distance between Sweden and African countries, which showed that cross-cultural adjustment is needed, when moving between the countries.

To answer the second sub question “Which factors can Swedish companies address to support cross-cultural adjustment?”, the interviews were conducted and analyzed (Ch. 5 & 6). The main finding regarding anticipatory adjustment is that previous experience is more relevant than cross-cultural training for setting accurate expectations. Apart from that, the selection criteria of expatriates should take more into consideration soft skills, and not only focus on technical competence. Regarding in-country adjustment, the most interesting finding is that non-work factors are more important than job-related aspects. In specific, the cross-cultural adjustment of
the spouse and the children plays a crucial role. Apart from that, the culture novelty influences the cross-cultural adjustment, since the cultural distance between countries determines how difficult it will be to adjust.

The last sub question of “How can Swedish companies modify those factors to support cross-cultural adjustment?” was addressed in chapter 6. The most important aspects of it are outlined in the chapter of “Practical Contributions” (7.3).

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

As explained in the introduction, even though Africa may be seen as a relevant market now and in the future, there is a lack of a concrete business strategy for Africa (Gebauer et al., 2016), especially in the area of HR. Apart from this, the aspect of culture and, in specific, cross-cultural adjustment, as a challenge for expatriates, gets underestimated quickly (Thomas & Inkson, 2009). Therefore, the present study aimed at identifying how Swedish companies can support their expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment in IA between Sweden and Africa. For that matter, the Framework of International Adjustment by Black, Mendehall and Oddou (1991) was used as a theoretical foundation. It shows the elements, which, in theory, should influence an expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment. Through interviews, the relevance of those aspects for expatriates was tested. The findings and discussion pointed to an update of the original framework. In specific, elements that did not seem relevant to the interviewees were removed, and the remaining ones were put into different levels of importance. Thus, the study provides new insights to the literature on cross-cultural adjustment, by putting the Framework of International Adjustment into the context of IA between Sweden and Africa and empirically testing the relevance of each of the elements. Furthermore, it contributes to the research on this topic by pointing out the factors that may be most relevant to cross-cultural adjustment and giving recommendations on how the companies may improve the support they provide to their expatriates.

7.3 Practical Contributions

In order to improve the performance of the companies present in this paper and to address the background problems (Ch. 1.1.), several practical recommendations are outlined. Those recommendations regard the international experience of the employees responsible for coordinating IA from Sweden, the training, and the selection of the expatriates.
Global Mobility Department

Based on findings of this paper, there is a need to improve the quality of the support that Company 1 expatriates receive from the Global Mobility Department. From the input received from the interviewees (Interviewee 1, 6, 7), the recommendation is to provide incentives for the employees of the Global Mobility Department to work abroad for a period of time. This way, they could be enabled to understand in firsthand the challenges which represent to work and live abroad, acquiring also deeper knowledge in the markets they work with.

As mentioned in the discussion (Ch. 6.2.1.1 Training), it would result valuable to find a way to integrate the expatriate’s knowledge, when they come back to work for Company 1 in Sweden. In that manner, the suggestions of having former expatriates working in the Global Mobility department, or having them as advisors for the mentioned department, were made.

Cross-cultural Training

In relation with the training, the recommendations are based in three areas; content, tailoring the training to the expatriate and training for the expatriate’s family. Regarding the content, a training should optimally combine different approaches (information-giving, affective, and immersion) (Mendehall et al., 1987). Company 1’s CCT is focused mainly on the information-giving approach. If Company 1 could improve the CCT to a combination of the three approaches, the outcome could result beneficial to the cross-cultural adjustment of an expatriate. Expatriates might see an improvement in their communication, especially with the host country locals, and improve the connection and relationships to them. Nonetheless, Company 1 needs to evaluate the cost and benefits for this improvement of the CCT, since the findings demonstrated a questionable effectivity of the training, especially if one has been abroad before. In relation to Company 2, the information-giving approach in the CCT given to the inpats due to their short stay (one month or less) is sufficient. However, this could be improved with an introduction to the Swedish culture, the area and a basic language training.

Regarding tailoring the training to the situation of the expatriate, it is important to look into previous experience, which may lead to an improvement in the cross-cultural adjustment. As outlined in the discussion, an expatriate with experience working abroad may find a training specifically about the culture of one’s host country more efficient than one about culture in general. In turn, someone without international experience could probably benefit from a general training about cultural differences and the challenges of an expatriate.
With respect to the family training, findings have pointed out the need for a CCT specialized for the spouse-family. It needs to be tailored because spouse and family face a different set of challenges than the expatriate (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Another argument to support the family-spouse training is the fact that among European and American expatriates, the failure of the family/spouse to adjust to the new culture is the main reason for expatriate failure (Scullion & Brewster, 2006).

**Selection**

Another practical implication for companies is an improvement of the selection processes. As mentioned in Chapter 2.3.1.4, there is a trend on selecting expatriates based on technical skills rather than soft skills or personality, even though these soft skills have a crucial relevance for the cross-cultural adjustment. Improving the selection processes increasing the relevance of searching for candidates with not only the right technical skills, but also the right soft skills and personality, will improve the cross-cultural adjustment process. In the same way, as mentioned in Chapter 6.2.2, the Company 1 official selection process (internal open application) is not always followed, rather candidates are contacted directly for a specific position. In order to make the process more clear and open, this practice should be avoided. Doing so, selection criteria should be explained and make easy to understand for applicants, achieving a higher level of transparency.

### 7.4 Limitations

Several limitations were faced during the construction of this research paper. The general limitations were related to resources and time constraints. The time constraints affected the researchers on having to set with two companies, which is a relatively small sample for the topic covered in this paper. Researchers limited time to present this paper establish the need for setting time for each of the phases of this thesis. The phase of looking for companies willing to cooperate had a set period of time, which together with the time of respond of the companies contacted, led to researches having two companies to conduct the interviews in. In the same way, due to the limited time to agree with the interviewees, conduct and analyze the data of interviews researchers establish an ideal goal of 10 interviews to carry out. This goal was overcome and 11 interviews were successfully done and analyzed. Having 10 interviews represent a limitation as researches have obtain the perspective of a country and its business culture from one or two
interviewees who are there. Furthermore, researchers interview only respondents from MNC and therefore, the findings and results may not be same relevant for medium-size or small companies.

Other time constraints made the researchers to do not deepen into areas as socio-political background of the African countries or language barriers among other. Doing so, might have provide this paper with a broader practical and empirical base in other to provide results. Researchers also had to face geographical and resources constraints as many of the interviewees were not living in Sweden as they are expatriates. These constraints did not allow researchers to travel to the specific countries to conduct face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the interviews were conducted via Skype or WhatsApp calls. This might have led to limitations due to missing visual aspects from the interviews.

7.5 Further Research

As explained in chapter 1.6 about Africa, it is an important future market, which points to the need of further research exploring the influence that culture has on business, and in specific, which factors influence the cross-cultural adjustment of an expatriate. In that manner, the study could be conducted again with more companies, companies from a different industry, or Swedish companies with expatriates in other African countries.

It would be possible that the factors identified as relevant to the cross-cultural adjustment of international assignees between Sweden and Africa are also relevant to expatriates moving between other countries. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare the findings of studies about IA between Sweden and Africa, with findings of studies of companies, which have expatriates with other home and host countries.

Regarding the Swedish expatriates of Company 1 working in Africa, the study focused on how Swedes view their host country. However, it may be beneficial to research on how their African colleagues perceive them.

Apart from this, the present study focused on updating the Framework of International Adjustment by removing elements and emphasizing the different levels of relevance of the remaining elements. However, it did not take into consideration the influence of other aspects on cross-cultural adjustment, such as the influence of new technologies, which facilitate keeping in touch
with family and friends in the home country. Future research could focus on that aspect, and possibly find other relevant factors.
LINK TO INTERVIEW AUDIOS (DRIVE FOLDER)
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AS1p8deAndhBA6dcMVhgF2d-gorA7NG6?usp=sharing

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II. Books


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Appendix 1: Interview Guides

Interview Guide Expatriates

Introduction
The objective of this interview to create a better comprehension of the challenges an expatriate may face during one’s international assignment (IA). All information collected during this interview will be utilized in our master thesis, and a summary of the interview will be sent to the respondent before it is published. Thank you for participating in this interview, we highly appreciate your contribution.

Informed consent
- Do you wish to be anonymous?
- Would it be alright to record the interview?

General information
- What is your position in the organization?
- Since when do you have this position?
- In which markets have you worked internationally, and for how long?

General overview
- Could you please tell us a bit about your experience abroad?
- What are the main challenges?
- What is the best thing about your experience abroad?

Before going abroad
- How did you get selected to go abroad? Is that the usual procedure? How are the employees selected to go abroad?
- How did your company support you in preparing for your stay abroad?
- What did you expect before your stay abroad? How far were these expectations met?

During your stay abroad
- Once you started your work in Africa, what was your first experience like?
- How would you describe the working environment/style of working in Africa compared to Sweden?
● What are important aspects of your experience abroad? (Could also be non-work related)
● How would you describe your relationship to the locals?
● Which phases (if any) did you go through during your time abroad?
● How did your family react?

*After your stay abroad*
● How did you experience coming back to Sweden?

Concluding questions
● What would you recommend a Swede going to work in Africa?
● Would you like to add something?
● Do you feel that there is anything else important we should have asked?
● Would you recommend us someone else to interview?
● Do you have any feedback for us?

*This category was only applied for Interviewee 3, the only expatriate who already returned to Sweden after one’s IA.
Interview Guide Others
(For interviewees organizing the IA process, or who work with the expatriates during their stay abroad)

Introduction
The objective of this interview to create a better comprehension of the challenges an expatriate may face during one’s international assignment (IA). All information collected during this interview will be utilized in our master thesis, and a summary of the interview will be sent to the respondent before it is published. Thank you for participating in this interview, we highly appreciate your contribution.

Informed consent
● Do you wish to be anonymous?
● Would it be alright if we would record the interview?

General information
● Could you please tell us a bit about your position?
● Since when do you have this position?

Examples
● What do you think are the main challenges for outgoing expatriates?
● Please describe the case of an expatriate you remember in specific.
● How would you define success or failure in an international assignment?

Selection of the candidates
● What kind of selection mechanisms and criteria does your company use to determine which employees to send abroad?

Preparing the expatriates
● How do prepare outgoing expatriates? (logistical support, training, …)

Support during the time abroad
● What kind of support do expatriates receive when they are abroad?
• How would you characterize the communication with the expatriates during the period of their international assignment?

*Returning expatriates*
• How do you reintegrate returning expatriates?

*Concluding questions*
• Would you like to add something?
• Do you feel that there is anything else important we should have asked?
• Would you recommend us someone else to interview?
• Do you have any feedback for us?
Appendix 2: Interview Summaries

COLOR CODE

Blue – General
Green – Before going abroad
Red – During experience abroad
Orange – Conclusions
I. Company 1

1. East Africa: Interviewee 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Home Country: Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Host Country: Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Position: Managing Director Company 1 East Africa since mid 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous experience</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Two years in Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Five years in Tanzania</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Six years in Peru</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Recruiters need to understand to look at other aspects than qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “It’s not always the most qualified who do the best job”.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company support</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Practicalities (visa, housing, car)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Critical towards company: “They do not know much about the markets, (...) they are administrators, most of them never lived abroad themselves”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opinion regarding cultural training: cultural knowledge cannot be acquired through training, but it could work as an introduction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. General

Interviewee 1 held the position of Managing Director Company 1 East Africa since mid-2013. One was positioned in Kenya five years ago with the assignment of set up a new company, having their own operations in Kenya and Tanzania, plus having agents in Uganda and Rwanda under their responsibility.

2. Before going abroad

2.1 Previous experience

Interviewee 1 first experience abroad was in Baghdad for a period of two years. It was followed by several other experiences working abroad in Tanzania (five years), Peru (six years) and Kenya.

Main challenges

- “Wherever you go, there (are) always certain differences from the experience you have. If you come from Sweden, you have to get accustomed to the working situation, there will always be frustrations”
- Need to adapt leaderships skills
- Patience as a crucial trait

Kenya business culture

- Followed the Company 1 leadership standards, but adapted them to the Kenyan environment in the best possible way.
- Things are not so smooth as hoped, the government or the system will do things in a different way from the one you wanted to.
- “You realize that there are different ways of approaching people. Basics are the same. As we are in the transport sector, I use to say: 80% is the same all over the work, basic principles about transport (...), but then you have 20% differences which are very local, those are the ones you need to understand”

Non-work life

- Family: It can be difficult for the partner as in some markets they cannot get the working permit and that can lead to problems.
- Relation with the locals: Not so much. “Most expats end up being with other expats (80-90%)”

Lessons learnt

- Growth as a person: “there are other ways of doing things, which is not necessarily wrong. So you broaden your mind if you stay and work with other cultures, you get a much better understanding of the difficulties around the globe.”
where Interviewee 1 currently is in one’s 5th year. Between working in Peru and Kenya, Interviewee 1 worked in Sweden for 10 years, where one was travelling most of the time.

### 2.2 Selection

The initial ambition of Interviewee 1 in Company 1 was to stay for two or three years and then move on, but one decided to stay, because of the opportunity to change and to experience different things, such as changing between divisions and departments.

For Interviewee 1, recruiters need to understand to look at other aspects than qualifications. Interviewee 1 mentioned as an example the case of people who have travelled a lot and like it, who are used to struggles and that things do not always work the way you think. In contrast, the people who have always stayed at home, might not be used to handle those things and it can be stressful. Interviewee 1 understood that “It’s not always the most qualified who do the best job”.

### 2.3 Company support

The support that Interviewee 1 received from Company 1 was mainly regarding practical aspects. From one’s experience, the people in charge of this at the company do not know very much, they give practical information which are things that you can find on the internet anyway. As Interviewee 1 mentioned, “they do not know much about the markets, (...) they are administrators, most of them never lived abroad themselves”.

Interviewee 1 believe that is important to always travel to the market you might be send before and to talk to the people who are living there: “be there and listen to others”. If Interviewee 1 would have to receive someone in Kenya now, one could instruct them “instead of talking to some HR person at the head office, because they usually don’t know”. Interviewee 1 would prefer that the new expatriates would talk to them, because they have the real information, such as how to prepare and about the practical things: “experience is available”.

Regarding cultural training, Interviewee 1 believes that a cultural knowledge cannot be acquired through training, but it could work as an introduction.
3. During the time abroad

3.1 The main challenges of one’s experience abroad

Regarding the challenges of working abroad, Interviewee 1 acknowledged that “wherever you go, there (are) always certain differences from the experience you have. If you come from Sweden, you have to get accustomed to the working situation, there will always be frustrations”. Interviewee 1 explained that “you have to understand how things are done, and then try to adapt your leadership skills accordingly”. As examples of these differences and referred in concrete to one’s actual position in Kenya, Interviewee 1 mentioned the importance of patience. Interviewee 1 even pointed out that, if you do not count with the trait of patience, you should not go to certain countries. Interviewee 1 explained that sometimes instructions are not understood and it is needed to double and triple check other people’s work. Interviewee 1 explained that to shout is not an option as it will not help, “therefore you have to have big ears and a smaller mouth sometimes”.

Interviewee 1 knew what it was about in Kenya, and even though there were had no major surprises, the experience was better than initially thought. Interviewee 1 is over sixty years now and has no desire to go back home to Sweden, once this job, Interviewee 1’s last, will be completed.

3.2 Kenya business culture

Regarding doing business in Africa, Interviewee 1 followed the Company 1 leadership standards, but adapted them to the Kenyan environment in the best possible way. Interviewee 1 mentioned that one characteristic of smaller markets as Kenya or Tanzania, is that you can make a difference. There you can make changes, create things and see things happening, rather than working in a big, stabilized company. In contrast, Interviewee 1 thinks that things are not so smooth as you might hope as the government or the system will do things in a different way from the one you wanted to. Therefore, “you cannot be a person who gets frustrated because things are not working the way you hope”. Under Interviewee 1 view, “Some people find this challenging, but other people they might find it very frustrating”, but if you adopt, it can be a very interesting work.

For Interviewee 1, it is of great importance to approach people in the right way and it is important to trust each other. Interviewee 1 explains that “you cannot approach them in the same way, you need to know who you are talking to and how to approach them and how to negotiate with them”.

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As Interviewee 1 mentioned, this is because “you realize that there are different ways of approaching people. Basics are the same. As we are in the transport sector, I use to say: 80% is the same all over the work, basic principles about transport (...), but then you have 20% differences which are very local, those are the ones you need to understand”. Therefore, Interviewee 1 remarks the relevance of finding a common way to understand each other when doing business.

3.3 Non-work life

During Interviewee 1 experience working abroad in Tanzania, one’s partner knew what to expect as Interviewee 1’s partner had been before there. For Interviewee 1’s daughter, who was 14-15 years old by that time, was a new world, new school, etc. There was a common agreement to take this opportunity among the members of Interviewee 1 family.

Interviewee 1 reflected about the impact of having a family when deciding on taking an experience working abroad. Interviewee 1 believed that being single you can decide by yourself, but the day you are family, it becomes a family decision. That was the reason why Interviewee 1 moved back to Sweden after Peru. Even though Interviewee 1 considered to go to Brazil, one’s daughter was just born and one wanted one’s to see one’s grandparents before they would pass away. Interviewee 1 also pointed out that it can be difficult for the partner as in some markets they cannot get the working permit and that can lead to problems. Interviewee 1 partner found a work in Kenya as Swedish teacher in a Swedish school.

Regarding Interviewee 1 relation with the locals, one adopted well to the new local social environment, nonetheless as one mentioned, “most expats end up being with other expats (80-90%)” not only from Sweden, but other expats from different nationalities. Interviewee 1 also mentioned that in one’s experience working abroad in Peru it was not like that as there were less expats. Interviewee 1 was invited to Peruvians houses, but under one’s perspective, in a more courtesy way, not as true friends.

For Interviewee 1, the process of working in an experience abroad is a constant learning process, which takes time. One addressed the problem of people who, with little experience abroad in a country, find themselves as experts of that land. As Interviewee 1 points out about one’s experience in China, “the more you get to know (China), the more you understand the little you know”. Interviewee 1 believes that the longer time being abroad the better you understand the
depth of the subject and how you learn by time, increasing your experience and probably becoming a better person. Overall, Interviewee 1 is clear when explaining that “you need to enjoy that. If you do not, then do something else”.

4. Conclusions
For Interviewee 1, some of the best aspects of one’s experience working abroad are the chance to live in and to learn from another culture and getting to know other people. The nice weather in Kenya was also a plus for Interviewee 1, which was “different from your daily grey life is Sweden”. As Interviewee 1 mentioned, “You grow as an individual when you get to know other cultures and experience other people”.

Interviewee 1 understood that, when you have been only in Sweden, you might think that the way things are done in Sweden is the best, which might not be necessarily the case, when you have been abroad. Interviewee 1 explained that “there are other ways of doing things, which is not necessarily wrong. So, you broaden your mind if you stay and work with other cultures, you get a much better understanding of the difficulties around the globe.”
2. South Africa

2.1 Interviewee 2

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<th>General</th>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Host Country:</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Position:</td>
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<tr>
<td>RnD Manager</td>
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<td>since 2015</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Previous experience</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Six months in</td>
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<td>Netherlands (PEP)</td>
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<th>Selection</th>
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<th>South Africa business culture</th>
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<td>- Hierachical structure</td>
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<td>- Lack of workforce with an</td>
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<td>academic background</td>
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<th>Non-work life</th>
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<td>- 99% men who work, while</td>
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<td>their wives stay at home.</td>
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<td>Most of the Scandinavian</td>
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<td>expatriates spend their</td>
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<td>free time with other</td>
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<td>Scandinavian expatriates.</td>
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1. General
Interviewee 2 has been RnD Manager for Company 1 South Africa for three years, since 2015.

As the best things of one’s experience working abroad Interviewee 2 pointed out the cheap, easy-going and friendly people of South Africa, where Interviewee 2 has not noticed the high crime rate too much. Interviewee 2 also remarked the increase in experience it has gave one, giving Interviewee 2 a broader perception, allowing one to look to Sweden in a different way.

2. Before going abroad
2.1 Previous experience
Before, one had previous experience working abroad for six months in Netherlands thanks to a program of Company 1.

2.2 Selection
Interviewee 2 selection process started from a conversation with one’s manager, as Interviewee 2 was looking for something different to do. Luckily, Company 1 was looking for more RnD managers to go abroad, so Interviewee 2 started to look at opportunities. One year after Interviewee 2 decided to choose the opportunity in South Africa. This process was not the common one. The normal process is based on a specific need or position, where people apply and get selected. Interviewee 2 mentioned that the trend is towards an open application process where everyone can apply.

Lessons learnt
• “You realize that, for people in Sweden, Africa is mentally very far away”. People have less problems talking to people from Australia, even though it’s geographically even more far away.

Advice to future expatriates
• Take the great experience to go to South Africa, it is easy to live in and easy to communicate with English. Expatriates need to be open and adopt to local conditions.

• “You realize that, for people in Sweden, Africa is mentally very far away”. People have less problems talking to people from Australia, even though it’s geographically even more far away.

• Take the great experience to go to South Africa, it is easy to live in and easy to communicate with English. Expatriates need to be open and adopt to local conditions.
2.3 Company support

Interviewee 2 explained the support received from Company 1 was organized and structured from the Global Mobility department in Sweden. Interviewee 2 received a cultural training, where one’s partner took part too, but in a different group, because the partner will experience different challenges. Part of this cultural training was based on the experiences from people from other countries coming to Sweden, which will raise awareness on them of the Swedish way to do things.

Interviewee 2 was also able to do a pre-visit before one’s experience working abroad started, for three to four days during November. Overall, Interviewee 2 expressed a positive feeling towards having the backup of Company 1, as one mentioned, “it feels quite safe to have a big company like Company 1 covering your back”.

3. During the time abroad

3.1 South Africa business culture

The most important differences between the culture business between Sweden and South Africa for Interviewee 2 are related with the planning, the deadlines and the hierarchical structure. As Interviewee 2 mentioned, in Sweden meetings are frequent and planned with a couple of weeks in advance. In South Africa, is the opposite, meetings are not frequent and people go directly to one’s office to talk about a problem in a more spontaneous approach, with no planification. In the same way, the concept of deadlines is much more flexible in South Africa, where often they are not respected. Interviewee 2 remarked the difficulties with planification in South Africa, as Interviewee 2 pointed out, “they live very much in the present”. Lastly, Interviewee 2 explained how in South Africa there is a clearer hierarchical structure, where the boss takes decisions quickly. The more quickly is seen as the better, even though some decisions need to be undone later. Nonetheless, Interviewee 2 pointed out that Company 1 in South Africa is in between the business culture in South Africa and in Sweden, since it is a Swedish company.

Regarding the workforce, Interviewee 2 pointed out that many South Africans do not have an academic background. Most of them have been promoted after working in workshops. In contrast, there is a more academic environment in business in Sweden, where most of the employees have university studies.
3.2 Non-work life

Interviewee 2 only came to South Africa with partner and children when they were already grownups. Interviewee 2 partner had to resign from one’s position at Ericsson after 30 years working there, but this was not a problem. Interviewee 2’s partner was already 60 years old and was not eager to continue working but preferred to play sports and enjoy the nice weather. Interviewee 2 mentioned that this is not the same situation for the friends of Interviewee 2 partner, who are other expatriate’s partners between 35-40 years old, and who are looking forward to go back to Sweden and work again.

Interviewee 2 describes the expat community in South Africa as 99% men who work, while their wives stay at home. Most of the Scandinavians expatriates spend their free time with other Scandinavian expatriates. They get together because they live in the same area, inside of gated communities. Interviewee 2 explained that one always takes the car, mainly for security reasons, meanwhile locals, with lower economic power, use the public transport, which is not the safest. In conclusion, there is a gap between social life and working life among the local South Africans and the expatriates working there.

4. Conclusions
4.1 Lessons learnt

Interviewee 2 identified that one’s perspective changed regarding countries that are very different from each other. As an example, Interviewee 2 said that “you realize that, for people in Sweden, Africa is mentally very far away”. People have less problems talking to people from Australia, even though it’s geographically even more far away.

Interviewee 2 mentioned how previous expectations of Africa did not meet what was found in South Africa. South Africa is not a true representative example of what most of parts of Africa might look like. Big towns in South Africa are much closer to the idea of cities as we know them in Europe. They count with good infrastructure and a lot of cars and business.

4.2 Advice

Interviewee 2 advice to new expatriates is to take the great experience to go to South Africa, it is easy to live in and easy to communicate with English. Expatriates need to be open and adopt to local conditions.
2.2 Interviewee 3

### General
- Home Country: Sweden
- Host Country: South Africa
- Position: CFO Director Finance & Administration

### Previous experience
- More than 1 year in France

### Selection
- Applied successfully to the position in SA
- In Company 1, all positions should be advertised except for the MD ones. Nonetheless, it is quite common to give or receive a recommendation to apply to a determined position where someone thinks you should apply.

### Company support
- Received a cultural training, also the family before France, not before SA.
- Pre-visit to the country before the start date with the family

### South Africa business culture
- Hierarchical organization
- Smaller division, more direct management
- Black Economic Empowerment has an effect on the business performance

### Non-work life
- Family: Important to agree with the family before going abroad on an expatriate experience. Family is a key player in your performance.
- They live in a closed community with mostly expats.
- Free time is not shared with local people in SA, it was in France
1. General

Interviewee 3 worked in Company 1 South Africa as responsible for Sub-Saharan Africa. Now works for VW, which is a part of Company 1.

The last experience abroad for Interviewee 3 and one’s family was in South Africa. From what they had heard before, they thought it would be dangerous and they were concern of some aspects. They lived in closed communities with around 200 houses where lived mostly expatriates and some rich black people. In difference with France, they did not share their free time with local people, rather with other colleagues.

South Africa society had immigration from Zimbabwe which has created and internal racism. Soccer in mainly the sport for black people, meanwhile cricket and rugby are mostly the ones of white people. There is still a lack of trust from the black community to the white people in South Africa. South Africans are focused on the present, they enjoy the moment, meanwhile, as mentioned, we are always planning.

2. Before going abroad

2.1 Previous experience

The first experience working abroad was in France, Interviewee 3 went with one’s son of 6 months, one’s daughter with 3 years and one’s partner. There was a small expatriate community which was mainly Swedish families working for the subsidiary in France. One of the first problems they faced was the language problem with French, not many people spoke English. The life there was nice, in a normal society, not in an expatriate community. The work adjustment was easier
than in private life. After this period, they moved to Sweden for more than 3 years until they went to South Africa for a new expatriate opportunity.

2.2 Selection

As Interviewee 3 explained, in Company 1 all positions should be advertised except for the MD ones. Nonetheless, is quite common to give or receive a recommendation to apply to a determined position where someone thinks that you should apply. This was the case for Interviewee 3 in France opportunity, but for South Africa, it was one who took the initiative. Interviewee 3 believes that one got selected because it was not a lot of competition, at least not with the right competence.

Interviewee 3 met one’s predecessor in Sweden in order to gather some information about the position and other aspects of the opportunity. Afterwards, Interviewee 3 went to an interview in Cape Town with two more persons. There is a policy in the company that tries to do not have just an expatriate alone in a foreign country, there should be at least 2 non-locals.

Interviewee 3 task in South Africa was to optimize and standardize processes from the subsidiary. Deciding that something might not be good for the local side, but for Company 1 as a whole, according to Interviewee 3, can make you feel very alone. As Interviewee 3 explained, the process of being an expatriate is based going from the headquarters, become local and bring the headquarters values there. Afterwards, you need to go back Sweden to become a Swedish again and repeat this process for new opportunities.

For Interviewee 3, the expatriate opportunity in France was like a training place for one’s next one in South Africa. Interviewee 3 enjoyed work more in South Africa as it was more challenging.

2.3 Company support

Interviewee 3 mentioned that Company 1 offered, as an option to do, a pre-visit with the family to the country, in order to take a look to the schools and the house where they will live after. Company 1 also provided expatriates with an optional training for the family. Interviewee 3 family did it before going to France, but not before South Africa, as Interviewee 3 explained, “because it’s the same thing”. Interviewee 3 became tutor in this training for future expatriates, so people could ask Interviewee 3 their doubts.
3. During the time abroad

3.1 South Africa business culture

As Interviewee 3 mentioned, the business culture in South Africa is hierarchical, as a manager you decide, you are respected. Employees tended to follow the orders fast, there is a short time for decision-execution in South Africa. Meanwhile, in Sweden, the style is more like floating around without deciding and everybody knows more or less, but at the end this system also works.

Interviewee 3 explained that Company 1 in Sweden counts with around 10,000 people, meanwhile in South Africa they had a small subsidiary, which worked more direct because managers could take more decisions. The management team in South Africa was formed by 4 expatriates and 1 black local, the HR manager. For Interviewee 3, another relevant aspect of doing business in South Africa is the system imposed by the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Business with public companies need to score in BEE, collecting points by for example, having black owners or managers, training black people, etc. Interviewee 3 pointed out how this system was introduced by Mandela with the idea to empower the black community, but the system is corrupt, and the results might not be the initially desired. Now some company action might be driven by the need of getting the points, rather than other reasons. 20 years ago, there was not so much educated black people in South Africa, now the numbers have improved, but still way lower from western countries. In addition, the corruption is an issue that affects companies and their performance in the country.

3.2 Non-work life

For Interviewee 3, it was important to discuss with one’s family before going to any expatriate opportunity, they did it before France and before South Africa. This is important because for Interviewee 3 is clear that your family will affect the way you perform at work and if they are unhappy, probably your expatriate opportunity will fail. For Interviewee 3’s kids, the adaptation was easy as they were still young. Interviewee 3 shared an advice received from an expatriate colleague, “when you are coming home, and you want to go out again, you should talk with your kids about next time, when we are moving and where we should go, so that, when the day is coming: ok, we are going to move”.

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4. Conclusions

4.1 Lessons learnt
As Interviewee 3 mentioned, the challenges and culture are different in different countries and you can't just take your own values and apply them.

Interviewee 3 explained that in the beginning of one's work everything is fun, you are appreciated, and you meet a lot of people, but when Interviewee 3 arrived home one was tired and wanted to relax. After some time, the work gets less exciting and the happiness decrease. Regarding the family, is the opposite curve, in the beginning is difficult to learn, to find things, hard to get a social network, but with time everything improves, and the family gets used to the changes.

4.2 Back to Sweden
Interviewee 3 applied to a position in Sweden from South Africa and lucky Interviewee 3 got it. Once back in Company 1 expected something else, but there is a bit of lack of interest. From Interviewee 3 perspective, this might lead to a waste of knowledge from people who has been working abroad, there are no HR people asking about our knowledge.

For Interviewee 3, it was easy to rejoin Company 1 in Sweden, but it was a bit more challenging for the family, as they are less flexible.
2.3 Interviewee 4

**General**
- Home Country: Sweden
- Host Country: South Africa
- Position: Sales Operations manager since 2.5 years

**Previous experience**
- 2 stays Canada
- 4 years working in Sweden with different cultures

**Selection**
- Going abroad part of individual development plan
- Working with South Africa, while in Sweden, good cooperation → position was offered, never advertised before
- Officially, all positions should be advertised, many of them are offered unofficially

**Company support**
- Practicalities (visa, housing, car)
- Security training
- Pre-visit to South Africa
- Help from current Swedish expatriates in SA

**Main challenges**
- Disparity between the educational opportunities of Sweden + SA → clear expectation setting and high task supervision necessary in SA
- High level of frustration, especially in the beginning
- Hard work: longer hours, cannot rely on colleagues as much as in home country

**South African business culture**
- Corruption
- Level of professionalism higher in Europe
- Withholding information as a way to stay relevant for the company
- Sceptic towards new ideas
- Saying ‘yes’ instead of ‘no’, hierarchy issue

**Non-work life**
- Social life outside work important
- Conscious effort to make South African friends
- Came alone, parents were very supportive
1. General
One works in a Swedish company in South Africa for 2.5 years, and for one year one is the Sales Operations Manager. The objective of the international assignment is to build the structure in the growing company, and to introduce standardized ways of working.

2. Before going abroad
2.1 Previous experience
The current assignment is one’s first working experience abroad. However, Interviewee 4 studied in Canada twice, from which one has learnt important lessons one could use, when going to South Africa. First, one gained awareness about the different phases one goes through during an experience abroad. Second, one got a general understanding of cultural differences. Therefore, one realized that there is the need to verbalize knowledge, since it may not be understood in the same way by other cultures, and because the common value ground differs from country to country. Thus, it is crucial to understand the own culture as well.

One joined the company in 2011 after graduation with the objective to work abroad. While working for the company in Sweden for four years, one already started to work in an international environment, and learnt a lot about cultural differences.

2.2 Selection of expatriates
Going abroad for a certain period of time was part of one’s development plan. When one started to work with South Africa, while one was still in Sweden, the cooperation went well and later one

Lessons learnt

- Awareness of the extent of social and cultural differences
- Learnt to rely on oneself and not on one’s colleagues
- Be open-minded, humble, don’t judge others
- Building confidence in people to ask for help and finding solutions together
- Helping others to grow and to become the most they can be
- Repeated education of employees
- Communicating a lot, verbalizing knowledge
- Handling conflict
- Different skills needed doing the same job working in different countries
- Do not expect too much, expectations often not met
- Keeping positive attitude
was offered the position in South Africa. However, the position was never advertised in Sweden. The position had been advertised locally but no good match had been found. The interviewee’s experience of the South African market in combination with the knowledge of factory processes made one a good match. The official way, however, is that every position should be advertised. Nevertheless, many of them are offered unofficially.

### 2.3 Company support

The company supported one with practicalities such as the visa, housing and a car. Additionally, one had a security training to get informed how to be cautious and conscious about what to do, while being abroad. Moreover, the company offered a pre-visit to South Africa, to see what it would be like. However, one never took the cross-cultural training, since it was a quick decision (only three to four months between the decision to go and the actual move to South Africa), one had previous international experience and one has been working with Africa before. When one arrived, an expatriate colleagues helped by giving advice, showing one around and inviting one to their family and to activities they did.

### 3. During the time abroad

#### 3.1 The main challenges of one’s experience abroad

The interviewee views the disparity between the educational opportunities of Sweden and South Africa as the main challenge, to find a way of dealing with that, and to figure out how to lead people in this environment. One states that South Africa, as the developed part of Africa, can look like Europe, but at the same time, a higher percentage of the local population have fewer educational opportunities than people in Western Europe may have. The Swedish educational system places emphasis on taking initiative, to think outside the box, and to be independent. Moreover, it is an egalitarian society. In turn, the South African society is characterized by its extreme history regarding the apartheid, and widespread poverty. Apart from this, one could observe structural racism, which was very shocking. Thus, South Africa has two extremes, and could be described as “the first world and the third world at the same time.”

As mentioned above, the fewer educational opportunities create various challenges in the working world. For instance, there may be the need to be clearer when setting expectations about what should be done as well as a higher level of task supervision. In one’s experience, this differs slightly when compared to Sweden.
All in all, it was a very positive and rewarding experience, “even though (...) the level of frustration and (...) stress is often higher when you are out on a contract than when you are at home, because then you can’t rely as much on colleagues, (...) being on a contract the expectations are quite high so you do feel maybe more pressured and I think that it’s also a bit stressful for people that the general view from Sweden sometimes appears to be that we are out here drinking coffee just chilling. When in reality it’s really hard working, it’s longer hours and more situations to deal with, cause again, you can’t rely on the knowledge of the colleague to the same extent as in Sweden.”

### 3.2 The business culture in South Africa

Regarding business in South Africa, corruption is widespread and laws are not always enforced, in contrast to Sweden, which is ranked very high by the UN world economic forum concerning the ease of doing business. Apart from this, the expectations and level of knowledge differ, and the level of professionalism is higher in Europe due to the higher level of education compared to South Africa. Additionally, Europeans are better in sharing information because there are stronger laws protecting the employee and a social security network, so they feel safer in their environment. In turn, in South Africa, withholding information was a way to stay relevant for the company. Thus, when one introduced standardized ways of storing common information, the employees were afraid that one is preparing to fire them. Moreover, one introduced to have all information in digital format, but the employees did not feel safe at first due to different reasons. First, in Sweden, people were trained on abstract things, and to accept new ideas, other than in South Africa. Second, one grew up with technology, but in South Africa many people cannot afford it. All in all, taking away information and making them use digital platforms has led to conflicts, but one managed to solve them, by communicating a lot and building up their confidence to ask for support if needed. The interviewee explained that in Europe, it might be enough to educate people once, but in South Africa, repeated education is needed. Since one arrived in South Africa, big improvements have been made, and the employees recognized that the work became easier with the new ways of working. Another thing to keep in mind when working in South Africa is that people say ‘yes’ if they mean ‘no’, since they do not want to challenge someone, who is perceived in a management position. Because of those differences in the business culture and since the things did not move as fast as one was used to, the work was frustrating at the beginning. However, one kept a positive attitude and looked at the progress made.
3.3 Non-work life
For one, it is very important to have a social life outside work, thus, one made a conscious effort to make South African friends. The interviewee described the South Africans as friendly and outgoing, and the common language made it even easier to meet them. Apart from that, most expatriates were older than one, one wanted to make friends of one’s own age and lifestyle and get to know South Africa. Therefore, one chose to live in a gated community without many expats and joined activities, such as sports and a quiz team. The interviewee also used online platforms to meet new people.

One’s parents were always encouraging to go abroad. However, they were worried about the security in South Africa, but nevertheless, they were supportive, because they knew it was what one wanted to do. So far, one is not planning to go back to Sweden.

4. Conclusions
4.1 Lessons learnt
During the time abroad, one became more aware of the extent of social differences. The interviewee improved the way of working with people and learnt to rely on oneself and not on one’s colleagues. Apart from this, Interviewee 4 helped the employees to find their strengths, became humbler and developed soft skills. Skills such as patience, building confidence in people so they feel they can come to you and you can help, finding solutions together, helping others to grow and become the most they can be and explaining. Additionally, one learnt how to have tough discussions with people, e.g. to explain what is working and what is not; to set expectations, and to handle conflict, e.g. if someone is not making an effort. Interviewee 4 concludes that one needs different skills doing the same job working in different countries.

4.2 Advice to future expatriates
Interviewee 4 recommends to be open-minded, and not expect too much, since expectations are often not met. Moreover, one should be aware that South Africa may look like Europe, but there are a lot of cultural differences. Apart from this, one should be humble and not judge others, since not everyone has gotten the same opportunities as we did: “You cannot judge people from a European perspective, you cannot expect people to function the same way as you do".
3. Sweden: Interviewee 5

**General**
- Home Country: Sweden
- Position: Junior Global Mobility Specialist for Global Assignments and XCM since November 2016
- Responsibilities: salary, contracts, briefings, social security, tax, expectation setting talk before assignments

**Selection**
- Senior positions: people get appointed or asked
- Top positions: one long term international assignment is mandatory
- Junior positions rather short term

**Preparation**
- Salary calculation
- Initiating external providers
- For high or medium risk countries (as determined by corporate security department, e.g. Brazil, Irak) a security training
- Cross-cultural training by BBI (Better Business International)
- Creating an assignment plan, in which the expatriate can set personal development goals for the time of the assignment.
Company support

- During the time abroad, the local HR is responsible, and there is a clear communication between HQ and HR department there.
- Depending on the number of expats in the country, they have an own mobility department (e.g. in Brazil).
- Communication with the expatriate occurs only if its needed, e.g. when they have questions, or any incidents occurred, but otherwise none

Family

- The family of an expatriate plays a big role: The reasons for an early ending of the international assignments are mostly family or performance.
- Possible income loss, because one partner might not be able to work in the new country
- Partner support program by a global provider, depending on what the expatriate’s partner wishes to do during their time abroad (e.g. work, education, make new friends/find social community), they receive support for it (e.g. help writing CV, get contacts to expat communities etc.), and it is a customized coaching/development program.

Returning expatriates

- Up to the manager to reintegrate returning expatriates. However, there is a guarantee to come back, they do not need to apply again, but only contact their manager before.
1. General

Interviewee 5 works as Junior Global Mobility Specialist for Global Assignments and XCM since November 2016. One’s responsibilities include salary, contracts, briefings, social security, tax and an expectation setting talk before the assignments.

Interviewee 5 sees cultural differences as the main challenge for outgoing expatriates. The reasons for an early ending of the international assignments are mostly family or performance. The interviewee sees a trend to have even more expatriates in the future.
2. Before sending expatriates abroad

2.1 Selection of the candidates
For the senior positions, the people are usually getting appointed or asked. Moreover, for top positions in Company 1, one long term international assignment is mandatory. The junior positions are rather short term, for instance, a ‘Short-term personal development’ for 4-6 months (see terminology below).

1.1 Preparing the expatriates
The preparation includes the salary calculation, initiating external providers, for high or medium risk countries (as determined by corporate security department, e.g. Brazil, Iraq), a security training, a cross-cultural training by BBI (Better Business International) and creating an assignment plan, in which the expatriate can set personal development goals for the time of the assignment.

3. During and after time abroad

3.1 Main challenges
Interviewee 5 sees cultural differences as the main challenge for outgoing expatriates.

3.2 Support during the time abroad
During the time abroad, the local HR is responsible, and there is a clear communication between HQ and HR department there. Depending on the number of expats in the country, they have an own mobility department (e.g. in Brazil). Communication with the expatriate occurs only if its needed, e.g. when they have questions, or any incidents occurred, but otherwise none.

3.3 Family
The family of an expatriate play a big role. There could be a possible income loss, because the partner might not be able to work in the new country. There is a partner support program by a global provider, depending on what the expatriate’s partner wishes to do during their time abroad (e.g. work, education, make new friends/find social community), they receive support for it (e.g. help writing CV, get contacts to expat communities etc.), and it is a customized coaching/development program.

The reasons for an early ending of the international assignments are mostly family or performance.
3.4 Returning expatriates
It’s up to the manager to reintegrate returning expatriates. However, there is a guarantee to come back, they do not need to apply again, but only contact their manager before.

4. Presentation on Global Mobility Department of Company 1 in Sweden
4.1 Global Mobility Department
They send expatriates from 29 nationalities to 48 countries. All assignments are centrally managed (e.g. tax, social security). They ensure compliance, managing risks and provide specialist advice (mainly to HR). Regarding the structure of the Mobility Department, there is the head of department and one’s secretary, 4 global mobility specialists, 1 junior specialist, 3 global mobility coordinators. Some operations are done by Company 1, others are outsourced. For instance, they work with ECA, which provide software for expatriate management and with another external provider for the culture and language training.

4.2 Terminology of stays abroad
- 0-3 months: business trip.
- All the following are recognized as international assignments (minimum stay: 4 months).
- 4-6 months: Short-term personal development, only for personal development, not business success or due to business need.
- 4-14 months: short term.
- 16-60 months: long term (most common).
- More than 60 months (5 years): Permanent.

4.3 Numbers (from the 1st of February 2018)
- 383 international assignments in total: 350 long term, 16 short term, 16 Personal Enhancement Program (PEP).
- 284 spouses, 373 children.
- 24% TCN (=Third country nationals).
- 27% Inbounds (coming to Sweden from another country).
- 47% Outbounds (going from Sweden to another country).
- Host countries: 102 Sweden, 28 Germany, 24 Thailand, 20 Brazil, 15 India, 15 China, 12 U.S.
- Home countries: 185 Sweden, 61 Germany, 40 Brazil, 16 Netherlands, 11 France, 10 U.K., 8 Argentina → 128 unique country combinations.
4. West Africa

4.1 Interviewee 6

General
- Home Country: Sweden
- Host Country: Ghana (West Africa)
- Position: Managing Director West Africa since 4 years

Previous experience
- Sweden (working with other countries)
- Tanzania, 3 years
- Cameroon, 5 years
- Belgium, 3 years

Selection
- Critical to the selection process in Company 1 focusing more on the abilities of someone to adapt and not so much on the technical skills
- Selected due to previous experience in Company 1 and the region for the expat position.

Company support
- Training before Tanzania
- Critical towards the HR department of Company 1
- Positive overall perspective of the support received
Interviewee 6 is the Company 1 Managing Director West Africa (in Accra - Ghana) and has had that position for the last four years. Interviewee 6 started the company. When Interviewee 6 arrived, there was no activity in West Africa, and now 55 people work there, with 20 countries in the Western region.

Interviewee 6’s best aspect of the international assignment is the possibility to see different worlds, in a completely different way from which a tourist can. It will change the way you see your own country afterwards.

Main challenges
- Not being used to certain things might increase stress, but with time and experience, big obstacles are not so big anymore
- If you are not willing to accept and appreciate other ways to do things you will get very frustrated.

Ghana business culture
- Intention to work in the "Company 1 way"
- Hierachical leadership
- Easy to offend employees in Ghana

Non-work life
- Family: Has got internationalized. Partner gave up career and found difficult to find new jobs in some countries they have been.
- Live in a gated-community with mostly people from Ghana, not many expats.
- Relationship with the locals: Evolution process from only Swedish friends to have local friends. Thanks to that you obtaining a different understanding (broader)

Lessons learnt
- Possibility to see different worlds, in a completely different way from which a tourist can. It will change the way you see your own country afterwards.

Advice to future expatriates
- Take the opportunity and to not be worried, because you will never be prepared enough.

1. General

Interviewee 6 is the Company 1 Managing Director West Africa (in Accra - Ghana) and has had that position for the last four years. Interviewee 6 started the company. When Interviewee 6 arrived, there was no activity in West Africa, and now 55 people work there, with 20 countries in the Western region.

Interviewee 6’s best aspect of the international assignment is the possibility to see different worlds, in a completely different way from which a tourist can. It will change the way you see your own country afterwards.
2. Before going abroad

2.1 Previous experience

Interviewee 6’s experience abroad is quite extended, more than half of one’s career has been done abroad. Interviewee 6 started working in Sweden, but was always in contact with other countries. Then one has been working in Tanzania, for three years, Cameroon, for 5 years, Belgium during three years, and Ghana during four years.

2.2 Selection of expatriates

From Interviewee 6’s perspective, the selection process of Company 1 can improve, focusing more on the abilities of someone to adapt and not so much on the technical skills. As an example, Interviewee 6 points out some aspects which are relevant apart from the technical knowledge. An expatriate needs to be able to adapt to a certain level, but not too much, to keep standards working. In other words, you need to find the balance between being flexible and being determined. Interviewee 6 explained that there is a tradition of sending someone to an experience working abroad who is good doing one’s job in Sweden.

In Interviewee 6’s own selection case, one had been working for Company 1 for many years and one had been working in the region before which helped Interviewee 6 to get the position. Interviewee 6 also noted that apart from one’s technical skills one was a good candidate due to other aspects, such as previous experience, contacts, etc.

2.3 Company support

Before Interviewee 6’s first experience working abroad in Tanzania, one received training, but in the next experiences abroad Interviewee 6 did not do it because one felt one did not need it. Interviewee 6 mentioned that the HR department in Sweden do not always know how actually working abroad is. Their training is good for the first time but the experience you need takes years to acquire. In the same way, Interviewee 6 pointed out that the support that the HR department gives should be tailored to each expat. Nonetheless, Interviewee 6 appreciated positively other aspects of the support one received as the medical insurance and school which without one would not have gone.

Interviewee 6 received cross-cultural training for one day, where one learned about practicalities and the Ghanaian culture. Interviewee 6 learned about the relevance of not isolating your partner, who might be alone at home, and what aspects can cause problems for both. Interviewee 6
believed that as someone who is going to work abroad, you need training and someone who would push you to take the initiative.

3. During the time abroad

3.1 The main challenges of one’s experience abroad
Interviewee 6 explained that the challenges to face have a lot to do with your way to approach them, your attitude. Not being used to certain things might increase stress, but with time and experience, big obstacles are not so big anymore. Interviewee 6 warned that if you are not willing to accept and appreciate other ways to do things you will get very frustrated. For instance, there are many things to get negative about (e.g. power not working, no water), but one needs to accept it.

When Interviewee 6 went to Tanzania, one’s first destination as expatriate, Interviewee 6 expected it to be very different from Sweden, which is why one did not get a big culture shock. The opposite occurred when Interviewee 6 went to Germany, where one expected it to be more similar to Sweden, than it actually was, which gave one a culture shock. In Ghana, Interviewee 6 mentioned that was not difficult to adapt as one had the experience from previous opportunities abroad, so it gets easier and easier to live in a new environment.

3.2 The business culture in Ghana
Interviewee 6 mentioned that Company 1, as a Swedish company in Ghana, makes people work in the “Company 1 way”, based on respecting the individual, quality, treating things with respect, and being customer focused. Nonetheless, in Sweden there exist a democratic leadership, while Ghana has a more hierarchical one. Interviewee 6 pointed out that Ghanaian employees can easily be offended if you are too direct or aggressive and doing so, people might lose confidence. As a conclusion, Interviewee 6 remarks that it is necessary to learn by mistake, speaking with people, meeting Ghanaians and learning from them. Study and read about it might be helpful too.

3.3 Non-work life
During the first experience working abroad going from Sweden to Tanzania, Interviewee 6 and one’s family, were more afraid, since they had a newly born baby. Years after Interviewee 6 whole family got internationalized, learning to appreciate other countries, cultures, etc. Interviewee 6 daughter is 23 years old and has lived in seven or eight different countries, one has a different scope to the one Interviewee 6 had at one’s same age. Interviewee 6 partner had to give up one’s
career and it has been difficult to find jobs in some countries where they have been. In conclusion, Interviewee 6 wanted to go abroad and one’s family supported Interviewee 6, now Interviewee 6’s kids and partner appreciate it more in other countries than in Sweden.

Interviewee 6 lives in a gated-community due to security reasons, where mainly people from Ghana live and not many expats. Interviewee 6 believes that Ghana is not a dangerous place.

During Interviewee 6 first experience working abroad one made Swedish friends, since one found it easier to meet people from one’s own country. In one next opportunity abroad, Interviewee 6 started to make friends who were expatriates, but this time from other countries than Sweden. Finally, now living in Ghana, Interviewee 6 has more and more Ghanaian friends. Interviewee 6 is more used to the country and one find less obstacles, so it has become more normal to have contact with locals. Interviewee 6 explained that doing so, it opens up a lot of things to you, you gain understanding in a different way.

4. Conclusions

Interviewee 6 encourage future expats to take the opportunity and to not be worried, because you will never be prepared enough.
4.2 Interviewee 7

**General**
- Home country: Sweden
- Host country: Ghana
- Position: CFO since 1.5 years

**Previous experience**
- University courses on intercultural communication
- 2 years working in Luxembourg
- 3.5 years working in Iraq

**Selection**
- Most expatriate advertised internally, all employees can apply
- Luxemburg: directly contacted + encouraged to apply
- Iraq: Applied officially, interview, but knew interviewer from before
- Ghana: directly contacted + asked to go to Ghana on short notice

**Company support**
- Iraq: pre-visit
- Luxemburg: training about culture and the challenges of expatriates in general
- Ghana: book about local culture + company arranged contact with current exatriate in the host country
- However, it “can always be a shock, even if you have been informed about what to expect. You don’t know before you have experienced it”.
- Logistics: registration, visa, insurance, apartment
- Company is managing it very well every time one goes abroad, have partners all over the world
- Problem of Company 1 is, however, that “they are really bad in finding positions that are appropriate for expatriates, that is something the company needs to work on
- Lack of experience of working abroad of the personnel managing expatriates in company in Sweden problematic
### Main challenges

- Always difficult moving abroad (at least in the beginning)
- It depends on how different home and host culture are from each other
- “You have to understand people and adapt”

### Ghanaian business culture

- “What is the same? Nothing.”
- Ghanaians sensitive, nice and humble people
- Direct in expressing dissatisfaction
- Different time perception
- Personal relationships important
- Being a manager more prestigious there than in Sweden
- To have patience, understand other people’s situations, need to be a bit flexible
- Listen as much as possible, not talk too much myself
- Remember that this will not be like Company 1 in Sweden

### Non-work life

- Good relationship to the locals
- "I’m not an expert of how things work in Ghana, their input is crucial for us externals”.
- Friends mainly expatriates
- Parents concerned, but supportive

### Advice to future expatriates

- Everyone should go to another country and meet other people, since you grow as a person.
- Be prepared, but not too much
- Always have an open-mind, otherwise it will be frustrating.
- Listen to people, invite them to discussions
- Understand that things will not be like home
- It will be easier every time you go to a new place, because you have more references and the flexibility in your mind: it is like some kind of training.

1. **General**

The interviewee works as the CFO for Company 1 West Africa in Accra, Ghana, for 1,5 years. One’s responsibilities include finance, purchasing, HR and legalities, all in all, the administrative areas of the company.
2. Before going abroad

2.1 Previous experience

In the past, Interviewee 7 has already worked in Luxembourg for 2 years, and in Iraq for 3.5 years. At university, Interviewee 7 had many courses about intercultural communication, and was interested in how people are and how cultures work.

The expectations before Luxemburg were quite accurate since Interviewee 7 was there before. Previously from Ghana, one thought “I have been to Iraq, going to Ghana, how difficult could it be?”, and was excited and wondering how it will be. The Ghanaians one describes as very friendly, and the life in Ghana was easier than one thought, since Accra is very modern and developed. Additionally, Interviewee 7 was positively surprised on a professional level. All in all, one needs to adapt on a personal level to the environment one is going to.

2.2 Selection of expatriates

The most expatriate positions within Company 1 are advertised internally and all employees can apply, which is also a way for the company to know who would be interested in going abroad. For Interviewee 7 experience in Luxemburg, one was directly contacted and encouraged to apply. After, one applied for the position in Iraq, but Interviewee 7 knew the manager one had the interview with, thus, one just checked if the interviewee was ready to go to a country like Iraq. Moreover, before the final decision, Interviewee 7 made a pre-visit to Iraq. Regarding one’s current position in Ghana, Interviewee 7 was directly contacted and asked to go to Ghana on short notice.

2.3 Company support

After a couple of months in Luxemburg, Interviewee 7 and two other expatriates got a training about culture and the challenges of expatriates in general. Additionally, Company 1 tries to put future expatriates in contact with other expatriates, who are already in the host country, especially, if the host country is very different from the home country. Thus, as preparation for Ghana, Interviewee 7 had lunch with the MD of Company 1 West Africa, who was in Sweden at that time. Moreover, Interviewee 7 got a book about the culture in Ghana.

The interviewee emphasized that, when living abroad, one gets flexible and open. In that manner, especially one’s stay in Iraq before one’s experience in Ghana prepared Interviewee 7. However,
it “can always be a shock, even if you have been informed about what to expect. You don't know before you have experienced it.”

Regarding the logistics, Company 1 helps with everything, such as registration, visa, insurance, and apartment, since they want someone who can be productive from day one. The interviewee had a handover with one’s predecessor, another man from Sweden, and they stayed in same apartment for 2-3 weeks. Interviewee 7 acknowledges that Company 1 is managing it very well every time one goes abroad, because they have partners all over the world and it is a smooth process. Interviewee 7 does not have to do much, just be there when they unpack. Alone would be much more difficult.

3. During the time abroad

3.1 The main challenges

Regarding the challenges of working and living abroad, one said that it is always difficult, at least in the beginning. However, it depends on where you go, if the culture is similar to what you are used to or completely different. For instance, in Iraq, a more direct way of communicating is needed than in Sweden. In that manner, one was told “Mr. Interviewee 7, you are too kind”. Interviewee 7 describes that, thanks to one’s previous experiences abroad, the adjustment to Ghana was a mild transition. In contrast to the rougher Arab management style, Ghanaians are more sensitive and could in many cases be intimidated by the Arabic approach. They are nice and humble people, but they are direct in expressing dissatisfaction. Thus, “you have to understand people and adapt”.

3.2 The business culture in Ghana compared to Sweden

“What is the same? Nothing.”

One of the main differences is the time perception. In that manner, deadlines are often not respected, and people take their time.

Moreover, personal relationships are very important. Thus, it takes longer to conclude a deal, because you meet more times, have lots of discussion and talk about other things than only the business.
Apart from tone’s, as a white man in Africa, locals are often friendly, because many people think they can get something from you and that you have a lot of money. Being a manager is also more prestigious and respected than in Sweden, but it is not always based on acts and what you do. In that manner, people often make up their mind from what they see, and not always consider the facts.

Company 1 in Ghana has close to 60 employees, only 5 of which are expatriates. The teams are multinational, sometimes it is a problem to understand each other because of different behaviors or perceptions, but at the end, you find the way and adapt. “Even if people are very different, you still can work very well together. You just need to have patience and trying to understand other people’s situations and it will all be fine. You need to be a bit flexible, you cannot be too rigid”. In that regard, misunderstandings are handled in different ways: the British are straightforward, there would be a clash, then move on; in turn, the Ghanaians could be upset for a long time after a clash. How to solve tone’s kind of conflicts? “I try to listen as much as possible, and I try to not talk too much myself. I try to give the word to some other person.”

One needs to remember that “tone’s will not be like Company 1 in Sweden (...) of course you have Company 1 core, but of course we will be influenced by the local culture, so we need to find the balance in the culture”.

3.3 Non-work life
The interviewee says that one’s relationship to the locals is pretty good. However, some of them see one as a bit hard and pushy. Interviewee 7 is good at listening, since “I’m not an expert of how things work in Ghana, their input is crucial for us externals”. One’s friends are mainly expatriates, since they share common interests, habits and a similar financial situation, which determines who one meets.

The interviewee’s parents would have wanted Interviewee 7 to come back to Sweden and were concerned about the safety in Ghana. However, when they came to visit one, they saw how friendly the people are, they were excited and became more positive.
4. Conclusions

4.1 Advice to future expatriates

The interviewee states that everyone should go to another country and meet other people, since you grow as a person. One advises to be prepared, but not too much, and to always have an open-mind, otherwise it will be frustrating. Moreover, one should listen to people, invite them to discussions, and understand that things will not be like home. One says that it will be easier every time you go to a new place, because you have more references and the flexibility in your mind: it is like some kind of training.

4.2 Back to Sweden

The interviewee stated that one has been out for so long, that one starts to forget how it is in Sweden and starts thinking that Interviewee 7 could get a culture shock going back. However, Interviewee 7 is convinced that one will bring back added value due to one’s knowledge of the market. The problem of Company 1 Sweden is, however, that “they are really bad in finding positions that are appropriate for expatriates, that is something Company 1 needs to work on”. Apart from tone’s, one sees the lack of experience of working abroad of the personnel managing expatriates in Company 1 in Sweden as problematic. In that manner, it would be beneficial to make the employees at the headquarter understand how it works out in the market, for example, by sending them abroad for a short time.
5. Summary findings Company 1

**NOTE:** THE NUMBERS IN BRACKETS INDICATE WHICH INTERVIEWEE HAS MENTIONED THAT

(1, 2, 3) \rightarrow INTERVIEWEE 1, INTERVIEWEE 2, AND INTERVIEWEE 3 HAVE SAID THAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous experience</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No experience abroad (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less than 5 years abroad (2, 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More than five years abroad (1, 3, 6, 7)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Official way: Positions abroad advertised internally, everyone can apply</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reality: For many positions, people get asked directly, or are being encouraged to apply (especially senior positions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Junior positions: often short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For top positions in Company 1, one long term IA mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critique on selection process: focus on technical skills, rather than personality, soft skills, ability to adapt (1, 4, 6)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cross-cultural training (1, 2, 3, 6, 7) (with family/partner: 2,3), mostly before first IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-visit (1, 2, 3, 4, 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critique: lack of international experience and market knowledge of employees at HQ responsible for expatriates (6, 7) + reintegration of expatriates (3, 5, 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Global Mobility department: salary, contracts, briefings, social security, tax, expectation setting talk before assignments; Initiating external providers, e.g. BBI (Better Business International) for cross-cultural training; High- or medium risk countries: security training; creating assignment plan with personal development goals; partner support program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish contact to other expatriates in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Book about local culture (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main challenges

- Adaptation (of leadership skills) (1, 6, 7)
- Distance perception of culture (2, 7)
- High level of frustration (4)

African business culture

_Ghana, Kenya, South Africa_
- Corruption (1, 4)
- Adapt company leadership style locally (1, 6, 7)

_South Africa_
- Different perceptions of time, planning, and deadlines (2, 4, 7)
- Hierarchical structure (2, 3, 4)
- Disparity between educational opportunities between Sweden and SA, e.g. most SA employees do not have an academic background

_Ghana_
- Ghanaians easily offended, sensitive
- Nice, humble people
- Quick in expressing dissatisfaction

Non-work life

- Family plays a key role (3, 5)
- Friends: Only other expatriates (1, 2, 3); local friends (4, 6): broader perspective (6)
- Can be difficult for partner to find work (1, 5, 6); needed to resign from work (2, 5)

Lessons learnt

- Awareness of extent of social differences (4)
- Awareness of cultural differences (1, 4)
- Be brave, you will never be 100% prepared, there will always be difficulties (6, 7); culture shock can also occur when you have been informed of what to expect
- Be open-minded, be flexible, can’t apply to own values to other cultures (3, 4, 7)
- Stay positive (4)
- Communicate a lot (4, 7), especially listen (7)
- You grow as a person while abroad (1, 7)
II. Company 2

1. Inpatriates

1.1 Interviewee 8

- **General**
  - Home Country: Tunisia
  - Host Country: Sweden
  - Position: Team leader since 8 months

- **Previous experience**
  - Working in France for 3-4 months

- **Selection**
  - Interviews, select the candidates based on their technical skills

- **Company support**
  - Tunisians well-accepted and well-treated in Sweden
  - Easy orientation, access to everything they need
  - Well-equipped apartment with reasonable rent
  - Upon arrival: team building activities

- **Main challenges**
  - Employees of Company 2 Tunisia needs to prove themselves as a good partner for Company 2
  - New working environment: takes time to meet all the colleagues, build relationships, and get access to all the services
  - Accomplish mission of assignment
  - Bring the good practices back to Tunisia

- **Swedish and Tunisian business culture**
  - Tunisia: Lack of flexibility of the managers
  - Swedes sometimes have false perception of Africa, e.g. way of living
  - Flat hierarchy
  - Working on improving processes, instead of giving orders
  - Having more direct contact with colleagues
  - Discussing problems directly with the manager
  - Family is first in Sweden, while working overtime in Tunisia is normal
1. General
Interviewee 8 is team leader in Company 2 Tunisia for 8 months. Apart from one’s experience in Sweden, one has worked in France for 3-4 months before.

2. Before going abroad
2.1 Selection of expatriates
There are no rules for selection, but there are interviews, which select the candidates based on their technical skills. Company 2 Tunisia expects from their expatriates that they work and take it seriously.

2.2 Expectations before going abroad
The reality exceeded one’s expectations, since the Tunisians were well-accepted and well-treated in Sweden. Moreover, they had access to and could easily find everything. There is good public transport in Sweden, and a well-equipped apartment with reasonable rent. Upon arrival, there were team building activities, such as an afterwork dinner.

3. During experience abroad
3.1 The main challenges of experience abroad
One challenge experienced in France was the integration, since Tunisians have to change prejudices, and prove themselves, especially because they were confronted with racism and discrimination. Similarly, as a part of the Company 2 Group, the employees of need to prove themselves as a good partner for Company 2. Another challenge is the new working environment, since it takes time to meet all the colleagues, build relationships, and getting access to all the services. Moreover, since the mission is short term, there are some risks regarding social security. Overall, the challenge is always to accomplish the mission of the trip abroad, and to bring the good practices back to Tunisia.

3.2 Swedish and Tunisian business culture
The relationship between colleagues and the working environment needs to be improved in Tunisia, and there is a lack of flexibility of the managers, and sometimes the colleagues. In turn, Swedes sometimes have false perception of Africa, e.g. about transport, or the way of living.

There were many learning points, which can be brought back to Company 2 Tunisia, such as the flat hierarchy, working on improving processes, instead of giving orders, having more direct
contact with colleagues, and discussing problems directly with the manager. Apart from that, family is first in Sweden, while working overtime in Tunisia is normal. However, Company 2 has more budget than Company 2 Tunisia, and therefore more equipment, which makes the work easier. Since it is one’s first experience working in automotive, there were also many learning points on quality, which can be applied in Tunisia. Overall, the need to learn more about the Swedish culture was recognized.
### 1.2 Interviewee 9

#### General
- Home Country: Tunisia
- Host Country: Sweden
- Position: Software engineer since 7 months

#### Previous experience
- Graduation in 2016
- French company for 1 year
- Start in Company 2 in 2017 → 1 introduction month in Sweden: getting to know the context of the work, after: prepared to start the actual work in Tunisia

#### Selection
- If Company 2 needs engineers from Company 2 Tunisia: notify them, Company 2 Tunisia holds interviews with candidates
- Selection based on fluency in English, basic technical skills, willingness to travel
- Preference for employees, who have been working in Sweden before

#### Company support
- Before coming to Sweden: technical preparation for the most common tools used in the projects; information that it is project in automotive, and about the team
- Arrival: got shown around, introduction to country, sim cards
- Received advice from colleageaus on free time activities

#### Main challenges
- Complete change of one working context, other culture, religion
- Learning how to communicate with the Swedes, their values
- Adapting to weather
- Finding something to eat adequate to own food style

#### Swedish (business) culture
- Fika time as occasion to speak and exchange, to know what topics are common to talk about, and to get used to each other
- No language barrier, most people in Sweden speak English.
1. General
Interviewee 9 is a software engineer in Company 2 Tunisia for 7 months. When one started in the company, Interviewee 9 was sent to Sweden for one month to get to know the people, the environment, the project, how the processes work, and to learn about Swedish culture. It was the first time for Interviewee 9 working in automotive, with the Swedish culture, and speaking English daily. After one got to know the context of the working that introduction month, Interviewee 9 and one’s colleagues were prepared to start the actual work in Tunisia.

2. Before going abroad
2.1 Previous experiences
Interviewee 9 graduated in 2016 and worked for a French company for one year.

2.2 Selection of expatriates
When Company 2 needs engineers from its Company 2 Tunisia, they notify the company, and Company 2 Tunisia holds interviews with the candidates. After, they are selected based on fluency in English, basic technical skills, and their willingness to travel. Interviewee 9 observed a preference for employees, who have been working in Sweden before.

2.3 Company support before going abroad
Before coming to Sweden, Interviewee 9 got a technical preparation for the most common tools used in the projects, which was suggested by one’s supervisor. Apart from that, one only knew that it was a project in automotive, and the team one would work in.

3. During experience abroad
3.1 Company support upon arrival
Upon arrival, someone showed Interviewee 9 and one’s colleagues around, introduced them to everything, such as the transport, and got them sim cards. Other colleagues gave advice on what

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Learning points

- Culture of “doing things right”: organization, efficiency, standardized ways of working (e.g. using certain tools)
- directly communicating with colleagues, instead of doing double work
- Apply all of that back in Tunisia
- Communicating with people without judging them
to visit, where to eat, and where to do sports. Their team leader and the HR manager introduced them to the work context, the team and the country.

3.2 The main challenges of one’s experience in Sweden
For Interviewee 9 coming to Sweden was a complete change of one’s working context, with another culture and another religion. At first, Interviewee 9 did not know how to communicate with the Swedes, and about their values, but Interviewee 9 got to know one’s Swedish colleagues during fika. Fika time was an occasion to speak and exchange, to know what topics are common to talk about, and to get used to each other. Other challenges were adapting to the weather, and finding something to eat, which is adequate to the own food style. However, there was no language barrier, since most people in Sweden speak English.

3.3 Swedish (business) culture
Interviewee 9 recognized that Swedish people do not judge others by their look and had no prejudices in general, like it is the case in other European countries. Other than that, in Tunisia, many companies are modernizing now, but others are not up to date. In Sweden, there is a lot of human contact in form of communication and feedback, and a certain freedom in the way one works, for instance, holidays can also be taken in critical times. Generally, the team spirit is higher in Sweden and everyone is involved, while in Tunisia people rather work individually. Moreover, in Tunisia, people want to see results, independently from personal issues. Apart from that, French is commonly used in Company 2 Tunisian, since there are many French customers.

4. Conclusion
4.1 Learning points
During Interviewee 9’s time in Sweden, one got used to a certain standard, and a culture of “doing things right”. That includes organization, efficiency, standardized ways of working (e.g. using certain tools) and communicating with colleagues, instead of doing double the work. In that manner, one recognized that sometimes direct contact is needed and that it is time-consuming to only discuss matters through email or Skype. All of that, Interviewee 9 would like to apply back in Company 2 Tunisia. Apart from that, from the Swedes one learned to communicate with people without judging them.
2. Permanently in Sweden

2.1 Interviewee 10

**General**
- Home Country: Tunisia
- Host Country: Sweden
- Position: Sub-Project Leader for Test since 1 year

**Previous experience**
- Works for Company 2 since 2009 as a test engineer
  - 2012 and 2013: working Sweden for Company 2 (less than 3 months)

**Selection**
- First due to business need
  - Second, due to staying abroad motivates the employees --> try to send all of the 20 people working in Tunisia to Sweden
  - more complicated features: select the most experienced ones

**Company support**
- Invitation letter
- Work permit
- Accommodation
- ID card, registration
- Airport pick up
Main challenges

- Integrating a team with different nationalities, cultures, positions: adapting leadership style

Tunisian and Swedish business culture

**Tunisia**
- Hierarchical organizations many interfaces
- Growing in the organization: Tunisia: automatically with time
- Managers complaining constantly, pushing tasks down the hierarchy, getting better salary
- Competition at work, compare with others
- Tight control by managers
- Managers “own your work” and are “taking credit from your merits as theirs”
- 1-2 hour meetings
- Hard to implement lessons learnt in Sweden, due to hierarchy problems

**Sweden**
- Flat --> communication more direct
- Growing in the organization: work in position you like
- One receives more respect from colleagues, share pressure, family first; payment according to experience
- Sweden: no competition at work
- Efficiency: post-it meetings, 10-20 min

Non-work life

- Most important family
- Only reason for going back to Tunisia in future would be family
- Kids are fine with moving to Sweden; partner needed to leave job in Tunisia, learn Swedish to find a new job
- 8-9 months to get one’s family to Sweden (bureaucracy, technical problems)

Communication with Company 2 Tunisia

- Company 2 Tunisia often tries to hide problems
- Daily communication with the test engineers in Tunisia, mainly via Skype

Advice to future Tunisian expatriates

- Speak up and ask for help
- More accurate expectation setting
1. General
Interviewee 10 works for Company 2 since 2009 as a test engineer.

2. Before going abroad
2.1 Previous experience
During 2012, Interviewee 10 had the opportunity to come to Sweden for 1 month, and after stay 3 months as system engineer. After, one returned to Tunisia. In December 2013, Interviewee 10 worked as a test engineer in Tunisia when one heard about the need for someone in Sweden. One then returned to Sweden for 3 months as an unofficial team leader. Back in Tunisia, Interviewee 10 became the official team leader for a team of 8 employees. Since 2014, one worked in the test house in Tunisia for Company 2. During 2016, one had the first opportunity to come to Sweden, but, one could not come because of the family. In January 2017, Interviewee 10 discussed the idea again with one’s partner and they decided to come to Sweden. In Tunisia, one’s job was more technical, in Sweden, there are more meetings and a higher level of management. So far, Interviewee 10 spent one year in Sweden, and is sub-project leader for test now.

2.2 Selection of expatriates
First, it depends on the business need. Second, a stay abroad motivates the employees, therefore, they try to send all of the 20 people working in Tunisia to Sweden, if possible. However, for more complicated features, they would select the most experienced ones.

2.3 Company support
In 2017, Interviewee 10’s work permit for Sweden took only 1,5 months, and was arranged by the HR Manager, who selected a company to manage it. One also received accommodation and got help to get one’s ID card and to register. Moreover, the HR Manager picked Interviewee 10 up at the airport and send an invitation letter before one came.

3. During experience abroad
3.1 The main challenges
The main challenge for Interviewee 10 as a leader is to integrate a team with different nationalities (Pakistan, Serbia, Tunisia, Iraq, etc.), cultures and positions. Therefore, one learned how to adapt one’s leadership according to the person. For instance, some may prefer orders and a direct communication, others need a more friendly and indirect way.
3.2 Business culture in Sweden compared to Tunisia
In Tunisia, organizations are more hierarchical, while in Sweden, they are flat. Moreover, growing in the organization is very different. In Tunisia, it goes automatically with time, and is driven by the company’s needs, but in Sweden, you work in position you like. For instance, people who are older can be system engineers, or a 25 year old can be a manager.

Interviewee 10 acknowledges that in Sweden, one receives more respect from colleagues, they say thank you a lot and encourage you to do better. One states that there are various reasons for people to go abroad: the money, the experience (even for less money) and the opportunity to learn new things (e.g. a new technology). Interviewee 10 was well paid in Tunisia, but felt the organization did not show appreciation, despite working a lot. There, no one says thank you, but if one does a mistake, everyone will blame this person. Additionally, managers are complaining constantly.

In Tunisia, everyone is pushing tasks and, in general, pressure down, from manager to manager to employees. In Sweden, the employees share pressure, and there is more commitment to work. Interviewee 10 likes the work, sometimes one works at home for fun. One did that sometimes in Tunisia too, but no one cares there.

In general, Interviewee 10 says that in Sweden, there is no competition at work, rather you focus on yourself and create value for yourself. In that manner, you look at what you have achieved, set goals independently and change positions as you wish. In Tunisia, you compare yourself with others all the time regarding positions and salary, and you do not change the job role, but you just focus on going up in the hierarchy.

Another point is that in Tunisia, there is more pressure at work, than in Sweden. For instance, if one cannot reach a target in Tunisia, it is one’s problem, and this person needs to work extra hours to deliver on time. In Sweden, one can just say that one cannot reach a target, and it is fine, since the family comes first.

Thanks to the flat hierarchy in Sweden, the communication and the feedback is more direct, than in Tunisia, since the team leader has no power to tell someone what to do, but all are on the same level.
Apart from that, managers in Tunisia wish to control closely what their employees do, for instance, by being in cc with any contact they have with the customers, which makes the employees feel like the managers do not trust them. Therefore, they are forced to write formal emails, even though customer might be a friend. Interviewee 10 states that the managers “own your work” and are “taking credit from your merits as theirs”. Overall, one describes the Tunisian managers as delegating stupid tasks, taking credit for it, and getting a better salary. In turn, in Sweden, people are paid according to age and experience, so that a software developer could have double salary than project manager. Since the managers in Tunisia become manager by circumstances, e.g. due to a business need, or because they would like to get paid more, sometimes they are bad managers.

As a manager in Tunisia, Interviewee 10 removed the 1-2 hour meetings, and replaced them with stand-up meetings with post-its, which are only 10-20 min, where everyone speaks and says what they are doing. In contrast, Interviewee 10’s own manager had a meeting once a week to collect data to report to one’s manager. In Tunisia, it would be disrespectful to skip one level of hierarchy, which is why there are many interfaces. In Sweden, one just talks to the person you need to talk to and informs the person one skipped.

Another problem is that, in Tunisia, if engineers have a problem (e.g. lack of equipment), they say it, do nothing, and wait for someone else to solve the problem.

Overall, the Tunisian engineers, who have been to Sweden, learned a lot regarding the way of working there, but once they go back to Tunisia, they will suffer from hierarchy problems, which will make it difficult to implement the lessons learnt. The managers themselves do not go on international assignments.

3.3 Non-work life

Important aspects of one’s experience abroad

Regarding the work, Interviewee 10 likes to have the feeling that one has done a good job. In Sweden, one can feel progress every week. One likes that one can focus on the work itself and does not suffer from administration problems.

However, most important is the family. Interviewee 10 is not thinking about changing assignments/job position for the moment because one wants to achieve something before
thinking about it, one also wants to settle with one’s family before thinking about any proposal to change to another employer even though one feels connected to Company 2 (working at Company 2 Group for 9 years already). A reason for going back to Tunisia in future could be the family. If Interviewee 10’s or one’s partner’s parents get sick, they would return. From Tunisia, one does not miss anything, except of one’s family.

The Swedes
Interviewee 10 thinks that most Swedes are very shy and live in their own bubble. However, if one manages to break the wall, you can become good friends, but it takes time.

Family
The kids are fine with moving to Sweden, the childcare is very good in Sweden. They can play and have their friends here. Interviewee 10’s partner needed to leave one’s job in Tunisia and needs to learn Swedish to find a job now. One had to decide between one’s parents and one’s partner, which was a big decision. It then took 8-9 months to get the family to Sweden. Therefore, Interviewee 10 came first by oneself for a few months to check it out, then they decided if they will come or not. It was easy to come to Sweden for Interviewee 10, for others it sometimes takes a lot of time to get a work permit, and often they only get limited contracts. In that manner, it was complicated to bring the partner to Sweden. One’s partner first needed to wait 3 months to get the permit, then travel to Algeria for fingerprint and photo, because in Tunisia, they do not have the equipment to do that, even though there is a Swedish embassy in Tunisia. Then one went back to Tunisia and waited until they send the permits from Algeria to Tunisia. In contrast, in Sweden it took one week between fingerprint and getting the ID card.

In Tunisia, the relationship with family is different. They are very close, for example, Interviewee 10 calls one’s mother every day.

4. Conclusions
4.1 Communication with Company 2 Tunisia
In Company 2 Tunisian, they often try to hide problems and they are not clear with the workforce. It happened several times that, in the last moment, they say there is something which impacts Company 2’s performance. For instance, one team leader said on Friday that one will be out the whole next week. Usually, one should have said it one month before, because one knew it before,
and the company needs time to find a replacement. Apart from that, there is daily communication with the test engineers in Tunisia, mainly via Skype.

4.2 Advice for Tunisians
Interviewee 10 advises the Tunisian engineers coming to Sweden to speak up and ask for help. So far, they do not do it, but if they do not know how to solve a technical issue, they try to fix it by themselves. They are afraid to say they do not know something, after having studied, and gained experience as an engineer already. In Sweden people would be open about it and ask for training if they feel they need it.

Some of the Tunisian coming to Sweden would expect a very high salary, and a nice house, since the European tourists in Tunisia look rich. What they do not consider is that there is a high salary, but the living expenses are also high, so you spend it quickly. Therefore, a more accurate expectation setting before going to Sweden could be beneficial.
2.2 Interviewee 11

**General**
- Home Country: Sweden
- Position: HR Manager in Company 2 since September 2016

**Previous experience abroad**
- None

**Selection mechanism**
- Preference of choosing the engineers who have been in Sweden before

**Company support**
- Tunisians employees are supported with practical and logistical issues as arranging accommodation, taxi pickups, administration, etc.
- After the visit, Interviewee 11 tries to keep contact with them.

**Main challenges**
- Lack of communication, missing face to face aspect creating bigger problems
- Difficult to hire Tunisians engineers, due to bureaucracy

**Advantages**
- Cheaper than Swedish engineer
- Get to know each other in the teams so they will work better

**Frequency of the visits**
- Can change depending of the needs.
- During 2017, 4 visits with 2-3 Tunisian engineers per visit.
1. General
Interviewee 11 is HR manager in Company 2 since September 2016.

2 Before going abroad
2.1 Previous experience
Interviewee 11 has no experience working outside of Sweden.

2.2 Selection of expatriates
Interviewee 11 pointed out that there is a preference of choosing the engineers who have been in Sweden before.

2.3 Company support
As Interviewee 11 mentioned, the Tunisians employees are supported with practical and logistical issues as arranging accommodation, taxi pickups, administration or where to find things, such as a supermarket. They also travel in groups, which makes it easier for them.

As Interviewee 11 pointed out, there is not a direct contact with the company in Tunisia, the only contact is with their engineers before they will come to Sweden. Interviewee 11 explained that one tries to keep in touch with the Tunisian engineers who came to Company 2 in the past.

3. During experience abroad
3.1 The main challenges
For Interviewee 11, the main challenges emerge from the lack of communication, where the face to face aspect is missing. This leads to a lack of informal communication, which makes difficult to create personal relationships between the members of the team. Interviewee 11 explained that this might lead to problems solving small problems which can get bigger. Nonetheless, Interviewee 11 recognized that during the stay of the Tunisians employees in Sweden their time is 95% work and 5% getting to know the company.

Interviewee 11 mentioned one difficulty regarding hiring the Tunisians engineers. Due to the high bureaucracy of their country it would take from six to seven months to be able to have them at Company 2. Nonetheless, Interviewee 11 recognized that it could have a positive side as they would know the company and most of the processes already, so they will through a not so steep learning curve.
3.2 Advantages
From Interviewee 11 point of view one of the main benefit is that they are four times cheaper than a Swedish engineer. Nonetheless, Tunisians are skilled, good engineers and help a lot with the testing. In order to solve the problem which arise from the distance when working together between Tunisia and Sweden, Tunisian engineers come and get familiar with the team. Interviewee 11 believes that doing so, the groups get familiar to each other, what will help them to work better in the future, achieving synergies and bringing that positivity back to Tunisia.

3.3 Frequency of the visits
Interviewee 11 explained that numbers can change but as an example, during 2017, there were four to five visits from Company 2 Tunisia with two to three people arriving to Sweden per visit.
3. Summary findings Company 1

**NOTE:** **THE NUMBERS IN BRACKETS INDICATE WHICH INTERVIEWEE HAS MENTIONED THAT**

(1, 2, 3) --> **INTERVIEWEE 1, INTERVIEWEE 2, AND INTERVIEWEE 3 HAVE SAID THAT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Advantages of Tunisian engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cheaper than Swedish engineer (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Get to know each other in the teams so they will work better (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communication with Company 2 Tunisia</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Company 2 Tunisia often tries to hide problems (10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Daily communication with the test engineers in Tunisia, mainly via Skype (10)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>• During 2017, 4 visits with 2-3 Tunisian engineers per visit (11)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Working in France 3-4 months (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Working in France for 1 year (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2012, 2013: working in Sweden for Company 2 (&lt; 3 months)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- None (11)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Interviews, select the candidates based on their technical skills (8,9*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• (9) Selected depending on fluency in English, basic technical skills, and their willingness to travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Preference for employees, who have been working in Company 2 before (9, 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business need (9,10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stay abroad motivates the employees → Try to send all of the 20 people working in Tunisia to Sweden (10)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Company support</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Team building activities (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduction to work context, the team and the country (8,9,11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Practicalities (Accommodation, ID card, registration, work permit, airport pick up) (8, 10,11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Invitation letter (10)</td>
</tr>
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Main challenges

- Tunisians need to prove themselves as good partner for Company 2 (8)
- New environment (8,9)
- Accomplish mission (8)
- Bring good practices back to Tunisia (8, 9)
- Lack of communication, missing face to face aspect creating bigger problems (11)
- Difficult to hire Tunisians engineers, due to bureaucracy (11)
- Integrating a team with different nationalities, cultures, positions: adapting leadership style (10)

Swedish business culture

- Flat hierarchy (8)
- Working on improving processes, instead of giving orders (8)
- Having more direct contact with colleagues (8)
- Discussing problems directly with the manager (8)
- Family is first in Sweden, while working overtime in Tunisia is normal (8)
- Sweden teamwork. (9)
- No prejudices in general (9)
- A lot of human contact in form of communication and feedback (9)
- Flat → communication more direct (10)
- Growing in the organization: work in position you like (10)
- One receives more respect from colleagues, share pressure, family first; payment according to experience (10)
- Sweden: no competition at work (10)
- Efficiency: post-it meetings, 10-20 min (10)

Tunisian business culture

- Tunisia: Lack of flexibility of the managers (8)
- In Tunisia, people want to see results, independently from personal issues (9)
- Tunisia more work as an individual (9)
- Hierarchical organizations many interfaces (10)
- Growing in the organization: Tunisia: automatically with time (10)
- Managers complaining constantly, pushing tasks down the hierarchy, getting better salary (10)
- Competition at work, compare with others (10)
- Tight control by managers (10, 9)
- Managers “own your work” and are “taking credit from your merits as theirs” (10)
- 1-2 hour meetings (10)
- Hard to implement lessons learnt in Sweden, due to hierarchy problems (10)

Non-work life

- Most important family (10)
- Only reason for going back to Tunisia in future would be family (10)
- Kids are fine with moving to Sweden; partner needed to leave job in Tunisia, learn Swedish to find a new job (10)
- 8-9 months to get one’s family to Sweden (bureaucracy, technical problems) (10)
Lessons learnt

- Speak up and ask for help (10)
- More accurate expectation setting (10)
- Sometimes direct contact is needed and that it is time-consuming to only discuss matters through email or Skype (9)
- Interested in apply what was learned in Sweden into the Company 2 Tunisia (9)
- Learned to communicate with people without judging them. (9)