Consequences of Employee Relocation in Global Teams

A multi-stakeholder perspective

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ABSTRACT

Title Consequences of employee relocation in global teams – A multi-stakeholder perspective

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Background Global teams are considered an emerging topic in the international management literature. Empirical studies conducted in this field include studies on trust, communication, team relationships, conflicts over distance and leadership. Also, the topic of employee relocation has been extensively researched in the international management literature. Despite the fact that relocations in global teams occur in practices, both topics have yet to be researched together. This paper intends to fill this research gap and study both topics together.

Aim This paper aims to investigate the consequences of employee relocation in global teams using a multi-stakeholder perspective.

Methodology A qualitative study was conducted with eight individuals working in the same global company which operates in the financial services industry and is headquartered in London, UK. Out of the eight participants, five worked in the same global team. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate the consequences of relocation in global teams from different perspectives.

Findings A thematic analysis of the data revealed four main categories of relocation consequences that are acknowledged across the different stakeholders interviewed for this study: work redistribution, resource management, vulnerable team relationships and shift in communication. Despite a common acknowledgement of the consequences, the study showed that discrepancies between the stakeholders’ views on the consequences affected the way the team handled them. By contextualising the results around a role, the multi-stakeholder perspective exposed different scopes of awareness on the impacts of the relocation consequences. This inferred that individuals showed a certain level of subjectivity influencing their scope of awareness on the impacts of the consequences of relocations.

Keywords Global teams, employee relocation, diversity, geographical dispersion, consequences of relocations, awareness on the impact of consequences.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Two years of studies in the master’s programme Strategy and Management in International Organisations (SMIO) at Linköping University, this is what this thesis represents. Two years of highs and lows, ups and downs, of hard work, of valuable learnings and many enjoyable moments. Two years spent alongside great individuals that helped us along the way, made us grow and ultimately contributed to the accomplishment of this thesis.

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We truly believe that what made our experience at Linköping University so special is the people we shared it with. Therefore, we would like to address special thanks to the teachers of the SMIO programme and our fellow SMIO students. Thank you all for making this journey memorable. We wish you all the very best for your future.

We would like to express a tremendous thanks to our families and friends for believing in us and supporting us not only during this two-year master’s programme, but throughout the entire time of our studies.

Writing this paper has been an enriching and challenging experience and we are proud of us for going through this unique journey together. Hopefully, this thesis embodies all the time, reflections and efforts we put into it.

We hope you find our work interesting and insightful to read.

Linköping, August 12th, 2019
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

alt. alternatively
APAC Asia Pacific
ed. edition
eds. editor(s)
e.g. exempli gratia (for example)
et al. et alii / et aliae / et alia (and others)
esp. especially
etc. et cetera (and so on)
HR human resource
ibid. ibidem (in the same place)
IBT international business traveller
i.e. id est (in other words)
IHRM international human resource management
SMIO Strategy and Management in International Organisations
UK United Kingdom
US / USA United States of America
1 INTRODUCTION

It was a regular weekday in London, but Hendricks decided to go to work earlier than usual. For the past few weeks, business in Asia Pacific (APAC) had been booming; his company’s salespeople kept signing clients, growing the APAC operations exponentially. In such instances, recently onboarded clients were assigned to specific touch points within the company to help them along their journey. In this case, the touch points within the company was the team of analysts in Hong Kong. However, the pace of growth and the increasing number of clients exceeded the capacity of the team to efficiently serve all the new clients.

As the work was carried out in a different location but essentially the same, the ad hoc solution found was to provide the APAC team with additional manpower from London. Hendricks volunteered to do so, balancing working with the European and Asian clients. Because of the time difference, Hendricks had to start his day much earlier than his colleagues in London for him to be able to work and communicate with his colleagues in Asia. This solution worked for some time, but as the number of clients in Asia kept rising and their demands became more thorough, Hendricks and his colleagues became to feel overwhelmed. A sustainable solution had to be found fast or the company would risk losing business in Asia. Hendricks’ managers discussed two options; first hiring locally. From their experience, new hires took between four to eight months before being able to work on their own as the job requires the analyst to have both technical skills and a good understanding of the industry. Given the urgency of the situation, this idea was discarded. The second option was to relocate a good performer to Asia. The management realised that this solution would certainly cost more than hiring locally, however it would permit to mitigate the risk of losses and handle the business growth in Asia.

Quickly, Hendricks communicated his desire to be relocated in Asia to his manager and after going through the formal application, selection and approval processes, it was official! Hendricks would leave the London team to join his colleagues in Asia. His leaving date had just been confirmed and now it was time for the final preparations. As Hendricks progressed through the preparations, he started to discover unforeseen and unfolding consequences resulting from his relocation.
1.1 BACKGROUND

To some extent, most people working in multinational companies can relate to Hendricks. Whether because they experienced a relocation, or they occasionally or permanently work and interact with people from different cultures and located elsewhere. The latter has been made possible with the rise of the internet which affected individuals, organisations and societies by increasing their connectivity regardless of their geographical location. However, alongside the rise of the internet, the interlinkage between countries throughout the world has increased the flow of people and goods travelling across borders (Gupta et al., 2008). Scholars have embodied the changes such as the ones highlighted above under one phenomenon, globalisation.

The interlinkage between countries across the world has extended to other actors, such as global companies who significantly benefit from the globalisation phenomenon. In defining global companies, Gupta et al. (2008) refer to what they called the Corporate Globality which can be broken down into four sections: globalization of market presence, globalization of supply chain, globalization of capital base and globalization of corporate mindset. The authors argue that for a company to be considered global, they must be more or less global along each of the above characteristics (ibid.).

![Figure 1: Assessing corporate globality (based on Gupta et al., 2008, p. 9).](image)

Globalisation can be seen as a contributing factor to the rise of global companies, and, it can be argued that globalisation as a whole, thus the rise of global companies is bolstered by technological advances. Thomas Friedman’s flat world theory argument (2005) revolves around
the undenying fact that in addition to countries and organisations, people are more connected with one another. Such connectivity supported by the internet allows people located across the globe to communicate and share knowledge with each other. The increased connectivity is also argued to have changed market dynamics (ibid.). The increased connectivity has permitted companies to develop new platforms for collaboration and to improve taking advantage of the optimal locations for the activities of their value chains, hence become global (Friedman, 2005; Gupta et al., 2008).

By way of prolonging the previous arguments, scholars have also discussed the competitiveness of global companies in a global environment, more specifically the questions on how to remain global and what challenges arise from being global. Being present in multiple countries requires an understanding of different markets and identifying the various aspects of the company that necessitate adaptation or changes in order to be successful locally (Gupta et al., 2008). Furthermore, adapting locally can mean adapting to customer needs, responding differently to competitors and complying to the demands of the host governments (ibid.). With the intention to find solutions to these global challenges, scholars have discussed global strategies, some revolving around the fact that global companies must strive to exploit different markets for inputs and outputs (Ghoshal, 1987). Nonetheless, a presence in a plurality of markets also exposes global companies to risks such as macroeconomic risks, competitive risks, political risks and resources risks (ibid.).

By operating in a plurality of markets, global companies equip themselves with the ability to share costs and resources across markets, which, however, requires seamless interactions across markets (ibid.). In these advantages lies the challenge of efficiently coordinating multiple markets simultaneously. In order to successfully share resources and costs across markets, global companies must have a high level of integration among the markets they operate in (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989). However, being globally integrated might result in a lower level of responsiveness in local markets (ibid.). This in the end becomes a balancing act between two extremes that are considered by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) as equally important in order to be globally successful.

In this context, global companies have developed additional strategies in order to find the right balance between being globally integrated and locally responsive. The rise of the internet in addition to the increased connectivity has permitted the creation of common platforms where individuals, organisations and countries can interact and exchange information regardless of
their locations and time zones (Friedman, 2005). For global companies, the above also stands, inferring that it has significantly bettered the speed of communication across markets. This can be further extended by arguing that the rise of the internet and the increased connectivity have incrementally reduced the challenges pertaining to global integration across markets (ibid.). In bettering the communication across markets, the increased connectivity has also created new ways for collaboration of business lines across borders within the same global company. These collaborations being a potential pathway to balance being globally integrated and locally responsive are nowadays illustrated in global teams (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001).

1.2 FRAME OF RESEARCH

The previous section aimed to provide a background on the context in which global teams operate. The main focus of this thesis is to understand the consequences of relocations for employees such as Hendricks, working in a global team and relocating from one location to another, within the same global team and company. This aim can be extended to explicitly identify what type of consequences are triggered and how the different perspectives on the consequences affect the way global teams decide to handle them. This research takes into consideration the team as a whole and all the different local units which form the global team. The authors consider the consequences of relocation as focal points and expand the analysis to understanding the dynamics between different perspectives on consequences and their effects on the team.

Global teams have the equivalent of approximately twenty years of research in which studies placed global teams in a specific research context. Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) conducted research on the importance and the creation of trust in global teams. Joshi et al. (2002) used a network analysis to investigate the creation and management of conflicts occurring over distance in global teams. Krebs et al. (2006) studied global teams in the context of communication and the impact of group members dissimilarity on the development of trust. Magnus (2009, 2011) elaborated the concept of social complexity in global teams, trying to understand the different behaviours and interactions between disparate individuals in global teams. Zander and Butler (2012) focused their research on the role of leaders and what type of leadership style would be the most effective in global teams.
Among the numerous researches conducted on global teams, there seemed to be a lack of studies done on employee relocation in global teams. Albeit, both authors of this thesis witnessed cases in practice relocation of employees working in global teams, and from their relocations unfolding consequences. Following the identification of this gap in the literature, the authors of this thesis decided to study employee relocation in the context of global teams. The authors realise that the uniqueness of the research limits the scope of replicability and applicability of its findings. However, it is believed that these findings will add to the current body of research and will enrich the field of global teams by adding another perspective, that of employee relocation.

As the global team and the employee relocation literatures have yet to be investigated together, the authors of this thesis strive to use the consequences of relocations as a bridge between both fields of research. Therefore, in an aim to address the gap identified between global teams and employee relocations, the following research question was formulated:

What are the consequences of employee relocations in global teams?

And the following sub-questions:

How do the different stakeholders of global teams perceive those consequences?

How do the different perspectives on those consequences affect the way the team handle them?
1.3 Thesis Outline

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of this paper. The thesis outline highlights each chapter of this paper and provides further information on the content of the specific chapters.

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<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>This chapter introduces the paper by starting with the story of a fictional character working in a global team and on the verge of being relocated. The chapter then moves on with the background which elaborates on how global teams came to be and concludes with presenting the frame of research for this thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literature review</td>
<td>Following the introduction and the establishment of the frame of research, the paper continues with the literature review. This chapter is divided into two sections: global teams and employee relocation. The first section outlines current theoretical understandings and contrast different views and definitions of global teams to further dive in the most characterising aspects of global teams. Furthermore, a review of recent literature on leadership in global teams explains the role of leaders and which competencies the literature suggests global team leaders should possess in order to be successful. The second section introduces the different understandings of employee relocation practices within academia and closer defines the term employee relocation for the further use in this paper. In addition, the reasoning behind executing employee relocations is briefly explained. The chapter then closes with a summary of the literature review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodology</td>
<td>The literature review is followed by the methodology chapter which emphasises on how the study was conducted and what was the reasoning behind the methodological choices made by the authors. In this regard, this chapter presents the research strategy, design and data. The latter elaborates on the sample which depicts ten interviews of eight professionals working in the financial services industry and in the same global company. This chapter proceeds with presenting how the data was collected and structured around three different perspectives: individual, manager and co-worker. The data was further analysed by conducting a thematic analysis involving the identification of themes and subthemes. Finally, this chapter concludes with the research quality considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Analysis</td>
<td>This chapter takes the proposed research questions as a starting point and elaborates on the gathered data. With the aim to answer the research questions, this chapter is structured similarly to how the empirical data was collected and structured as presented in the previous methodology chapter. For each theme or subtheme that describe the possible consequences of relocations in global teams, the empirical data is presented from an individual, manager and co-worker perspective. Those three perspectives work in this sense as subsections for the four presented consequences and thereby help to structure this chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discussion</td>
<td>The discussion connects to the previous analysis chapter by and summarises its findings. The discussion then delves into their meaning and relevance and finally, discusses the findings in relation to the relevant literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conclusion</td>
<td>This chapter of this thesis concludes the results of this thesis in terms of academic contributions and practical recommendations. This chapter then addresses the limitations of this research before suggesting possible areas for further research.</td>
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Table 1: Thesis outline.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned in the previous chapter (see chapter 1.2) numerous empirical studies have been conducted on global teams, each placing global teams in a specific context. A gap between global teams and employee relocation has been found and from this gap, the authors formulated research questions around the consequences of relocations in global teams. As both topics have been previously researched separately, this thesis will use each of them as main pillars of the literature review in order to contextualise the frame of this research within the theory. Consequently, this chapter will aim to support this research by providing a theoretical understanding of both topics and by presenting the arguments made by previous researchers. The literature review will be divided into two sections: first, global teams and second, employee relocation. As a conclusion to this chapter, global teams and employee relocation will be discussed by using the arguments and views elaborated throughout the literature review.

2.1 GLOBAL TEAMS

The rise of global teams can be granted to the phenomenon of globalisation which also paved the way for global companies (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Friedman, 2005; Gupta et. al, 2008). This chapter strives to define global teams from a theoretical perspective, present their most defining characteristics and elaborate on the role of leaders.

2.1.1 Defining global teams

Traditionally, when discussing teams, the general understanding describes a group of people working together in the same physical location (Krebs et al., 2006). However as introduced by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) in their study, the developments in communication and technology have allowed the formation of teams working virtually from different geographical locations and communicate electronically (Friedman, 2005). Marquardt and Horvath (2001) define global teams as a group of people of different nationalities working together across different time zones, cultures and markets on the same projects. In mentioning the different time zones, the authors acknowledge the need for working across distance. They further argue that thanks to the technological advances, global teams can carry their work both face to face and virtually. This argument correlates with Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) who put an emphasis on the work being
done virtually because of the distance between the team members. Technology permits members of global teams to be connected with one another and work at different times of the day and from different locations simultaneously (Friedman, 2005; Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). It can be argued that the above definition by Marquardt and Horvath (2001) highlights two important aspects of global teams, *geographical dispersion* and *diversity*.

Those aspects are also found in Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn (2006) definition who argue that global teams are characterised by a heterogeneity of dimensions and a dispersed working environment. This definition further acknowledges the geographical dispersion between the team members. Moreover, in mentioning a heterogeneity of dimensions, it can be argued that such dimensions could be cultures, countries or languages (ibid.). Those multiple dimension could be attributed to the diversity. Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn’s (2006) definition also agrees with Marquardt and Horvath’s (2001) definition and reinforces diversity and geographical dispersion as important aspects of global teams. Those aspects are also found in Magnus’s (2011) definition who argued that global teams are characterised by members from different cultural backgrounds and geographically dispersed, working together and rarely meeting face to face. It can be interpreted that the reason behind the lack of face to face meetings are the costs of travel and the physical distance separating the team members (ibid.). Magnus’s (2011) definition also resonates with the above definitions of Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn (2006) as well as Marquardt and Horvath (2001).

Indeed, in all three definitions, diversity and distance are represented. Moreover, Magnus (2011) contributes to the previous definitions by emphasising on the lack of face to face meetings, implying that the team members mainly carry their work virtually (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). Still, the lack of face to face meetings can be granted to the geographical dispersion between the team members. In the same line of thoughts, Zander and Butler (2012) define global teams as teams operating in a dispersed and virtual environment and characterised by a cultural, national and linguistic heterogeneity. Like their peers, Zander and Butler (2012) also reflect diversity and geographical dispersion as aspects defining global teams. Those aspects are carried along in Butler et al.’s (2018) definition who assert that global teams are composed of individuals from different national backgrounds who carry most of their work virtually. This definition also resonates with the previous definitions in reflecting diversity and geographical dispersion (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Krebs et al., 2006; Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2006; Magnus, 2011; Zander and Butler 2012).
The above definitions cover a large time period from 1998 with Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) to 2018 with Butler et al. (2018). It seems in all definitions two aspects are represented. First, the geographical dispersion and the fact that all members of global teams are not in the same physical space. The latter has also been reflected through the virtual aspect of the work environment in which global teams operate. It can be argued that the geographical dispersion extends to a lack of face to face meetings and therefore, communication would mainly be done virtually (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Krebs et al., 2006). Second, diversity seems to be a recurring aspect reflected in the definitions of global teams. This aspect seems to start from the team members who amongst them show a certain level of diversity through nationalities, languages and cultural backgrounds (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2006; Magnus, 2011; Zander and Butler 2012; Butler et al., 2018). Furthermore, diversity extends to the different countries, cultures, values and norms in which the team members are located (ibid.).

Building on the above definitions, it is safe to assert that diversity and geographical dispersion characterise global teams. The latter has been reflected in the above definitions through the work being carried virtually, arguably because of the distance (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Krebs et al., 2006). Therefore, the argument that team members are interconnected through mutual projects or tasks can also be made (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). Arguably, that interconnectedness goes beyond the local units located in the different markets and unites all the team members under the same global team.

![Figure 2: Visualisation of a global team.](image)
Figure 2 is a visualisation of a global team created by the authors of this thesis following the understanding from the previous definitions. The outer bolded circle represents the global team. Within this circle, the different rectangles represent the different locations within the global team. The distance between each rectangle aims to represent the geographical dispersion between each location. The different colours of the individuals within each rectangle aims to represent the diversity and the differences between the individuals in the global team. Finally, the red lines linking all the locations together aims to represent the interconnectedness between each location. Having identified diversity and geographical dispersion has the main aspects characterising global teams, the paper will now turn its focus discussing in further details diversity and geographical dispersion before continuing on leadership in global teams.

2.1.2 Diversity

As discussed in the preceding section, one aspect characterising global teams is diversity (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2006; Magnus, 2011.; Zander and Butler 2012; Butler et al., 2018). Diversity infers several subsequent aspects separating the team members such as cultures, nationalities or languages. When looking at the plurality of cultures represented in them, global teams and multicultural teams can see as similar. Stahl et al. (2010) define multicultural teams as a group of individuals from different cultures working in a team on joint projects or ventures. The similarities between this definition and the ones from the previous section of this paper support the argument that global teams can be viewed as multicultural teams. When discussing culturally diverse teams, scholars concluded that diversity is both an advantage and a disadvantage, and that cultural differences between team members are both an asset and a liability (DiStefano and Maznevski, 2000; Mannix and Neale, 2005; Stahl et al., 2010; Williams and O’Reilly, 1998). Cultural differences have been thoroughly investigated in the literature by authors such as Hofstede (2001). As a consequence, the word culture can be understood differently depending on one’s perspective. This research will maintain a rather simplistic definition and will view culture as a way of acting, thinking and living, shared by different individuals as a part of a group, passed on throughout the generations (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001).

Scholars in the field of international management commonly agree on the fact that culture strongly influences the way individuals behave, think and communicate (ibid.). In the context of culturally diverse teams, culture has the potential to become a strong asset (Adler and
Graham, 1989; Bhagat et al., 2002; House et al., 2004; Leung et al., 2005). In contexts where cultural diversity is represented internally with multiple cultures interacting with each other, Stahl et al. (2010) argued that it enables an access to a better and more diverse pool of information, knowledge and opportunities. This in turn could be argued to better the problem-solving abilities of the team as it will benefit from various perspectives and points of views. In the same line of thoughts, Marquardt and Horvath (2001) argue that diversity in global teams can better the way local units will respond to local issues. As all local units are connected as part of the global team, the authors argued that the feedback on the local issues will increase the ability of the team to solve problems, learn, adapt to the different customer needs and innovate globally. This view is shared by other authors who argued that the plurality of experiences, perceptions, thinking and approaches to solving problems increases the creativity of multicultural teams (Mannix and Neale, 2005; Stevens et al., 2008).

Cultural diversity does not only present advantages; one general disadvantage discussed by scholars is the difficulty of managing different cultures and individuals (Stahl et al., 2010; Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). Various authors have argued that differences between separate individuals have led to cultural clashes and frictions and sometimes incompatibilities (Shenkar et al., 2008; Stahl and Voigt, 2008). This can be explained to the fact that each individual believes their perception and reality is the right one and that their culture which has been shaped from birth through values, norms, thinking, acting and doing is the only rational one (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). When facing a new culture at first, every individual will only be able to refer to their own, and the differences between their culture and the new one would lead to seeing the other culture as strange (ibid.).

This behavioural pattern relates to the social identity theory. The social identity theory argues that through the need of avoiding uncertainty, individuals are motivated to identify themselves with groups (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000). Furthermore, the social identity theory argues that through identifying themselves into groups, individuals create group identities (Stahl et al., 2010). In turn, individuals create affinities to their group identities through common attitudes and shared beliefs which ultimately strengthen the boundaries of the group (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000). Group identities could be assimilated with cultures as individuals tend to identify to similar individuals sharing the same culture, beliefs or speaking the same language (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). As argued by Stahl et al., (2010), in the context of multicultural teams, the social identity theory can help understand the root of conflicts between different individuals. Indeed, individuals could form group identities around their cultures, and it could be argued
that the lack of identification to other cultures or group identities could lead to incompatibilities or conflicts (Shenkar et al., 2008; Stahl and Voigt, 2008).

Put in the context of global teams, the above argument could be translated as a lack of cohesion between different locations as a result of different cultures working together. This argument correlates with Joshi et al. (2002) who posit that in multicultural teams, cultural differences could be avenues of conflicts. The authors argue that every team is subject to interpersonal conflicts, conflicts stemming from the workflow within a team. This is supported by the fact that different cultures differ in their ways of working, communicating and making decisions (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, it can be argued that cultural diversity can be an avenue for conflicts in global teams when considering that dispersed team members identifying with different cultures work collaboratively on joint projects and ventures (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Joshi et al., 2002; Stahl et al., 2010; Magnus, 2011; Zander and Butler, 2012; Butler et al., 2018). Joshi et al. (2002) argued that a pathway to resolving conflicts could be through communication between team members, however, the settings in which global teams are restrict the opportunity of face to face interactions (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Krebs et al., 2006).

The prevalence of diversity in global teams is represented through the different individuals from different countries working together. Acknowledging these differences paves the way to realising that they can be sources of conflicts. Another way to look at the above could be from a relationship point of view. This is especially interesting in the context of relocations in global teams. Building on the preceding arguments pertaining to diversity, the assumption could be made that in the context of a relocation, (i.e. an individual leaving a location and culture to join a new one) adjustments and adaptations might be required on both the professional and the personal level. From this perspective, diversity gains in relevance in the discussion of relocation in global teams. The next section will now focus on explaining the second aspect characterising global teams, geographical dispersion.

2.1.3 Geographical dispersion

Global teams are characterised by having a plurality of regional teams which in turn means that the team members are forced to work over distance (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2006; Magnus, 2011.; Zander and Butler 2012; Butler et al., 2018). Authors
such as Friedman (2005) or Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) argue that the challenges resulting from working across distance and from different time zones are attenuated by technology. However, as argued by Marquardt and Horvath (2001), when translated into communication, distance remains a challenge for dispersed teams. Because of distance, global teams are restricted to certain communication channels to interact with fellow team members. Distance is also represented in the lack of face to face communication, meaning that team members mainly rely on computer mediated communication channels (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Krebs et al., 2006). Although those modes of communication are argued by Marquardt and Horvath (2001) to be extremely important to maintain a relationship between the individuals, they are also argued by Krebs et al., (2006) to convey less social emotional information and to be more task oriented.

Further to the above arguments and by way of challenging Marquardt and Horvath’s (2001) argument, Bordia (1997) argued that computer mediated communication disfavoured and slowed the development of relationships between individuals. The above argument can be challenged by Walther’s (1996) theory on social information processing which argues that in fact, computer mediated communication does not differ much from face to face communication when looking at its capacity to exchange social information. However, they differ in the rate of information exchanged. In this view, Walther (1996) recognises that less social information is conveyed in computer mediated communication because of its lack of non-verbal clues observable in face to face communication. Joshi et al. (2002) complement this argument by adding the time factor and posits that over time, individuals start to develop relationships with one another and ultimately adapt to the mode of communication. Similarly, a study by Carte and Chidambaram (2005) provided evidence that technology has the potential to improve the cohesion, performances and reduce conflicts in culturally diverse teams.

In this context, the differences between face to face communication and computer mediated communication will reduce significantly and relationships between individuals can be created and maintained (Walther, 1996; Joshi et al., 2002; Carte and Chidambaram, 2005). Although Bordia’s (1997) argument on computer mediated communication channels slowing the creation of relationship between individuals stands, as discussed by Walther (1996), Joshi et al. (2002) and Carte and Chidambaram (2005), time will eventually help to develop, maintain relationships, and reduce conflicts between individuals.

In global teams, communication is mainly carried electronically, the above discussion has highlighted the importance of computer mediated communication channels in maintaining
relationships between team members. However, communication alone does not unify a global team. In order to do so, a leader’s input is crucial. The next section will therefore emphasise on the role of leaders in global teams.

2.1.4 Leading global teams

Leadership in teams has a significant importance in the leadership literature. Zaccaro and Marks (1999) expose their views on the importance of leadership in teams by stressing that without one, teams would be unfocused, unclear and without a direction. Compared to managing a collocated team, leaders of global teams must manage individuals from different cultures working in different time zones and different geographical locations (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). This requires more effort and commitment from global team leaders. Further to the preceding point, leaders of global teams must lead and manage from distance, providing direction on issues, overseeing the development of projects, ensuring that deadlines are met and providing feedback (Zander and Butler 2012). The different time zones and lack of overlapping working hours between some locations might affect the efforts on improving the communication across the team locations and leading the team as a whole (ibid.).

Global teams are represented through multiple geographical locations all working towards the same corporate objectives. Leaders must therefore become liaisons and bridges between the locations and within the organisation (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). However, before being the bridge between the locations and the organisation, leaders must be able to maintain the communication between all the locations and keep global team interconnected. Zander and Butler (2012) stress that global team leaders must inspire a sense of community across the team members in regard to the team. They extend their argument by addressing the need for personal connections between the leaders and the team members. This connection would be the premise for creating trust and establishing a relationship with individuals working in different geographical locations (ibid.). This is discussed in the literature as the global team leaders having a role of boundary spanners (ibid).

Boundary spanning has been identified as a prominent leadership competency in the multicultural and global team literature (Hajro and Pudelko, 2010). Boundary spanning has been argued to be one of the most important competencies for successful managers in global settings (Wiesenfeld and Hewlin, 2003). Zander and Butler (2012) posit that for managers to
be effective boundary spanners, they must first identify with the groups or subgroups represented in their global teams, which will help to create a synergy between those groups. The above reinforces the argument that communication is a prominent factor significantly influencing whether a global team will be well-functioning or not, as communication connects individuals together in such a setting. The authors also recognise the importance of communication in global teams but emphasise on the role of the manager. They argue that in global teams, managers must take the stand of bridge makers and facilitate the communication between the locations. They assert that in addition to boundary spanners, bridge making should be an essential part of what global team leaders should strive to achieve in order to leverage the potential of their teams (ibid.). Lau and Murnighan (1998) affirm that bridge making does not suffice, and global team leaders should strive to go beyond the boundaries and act as blenders consolidating the individuals together. This argument suggests that global team managers must identify with the individuals forming the team in order to be efficient blender uniting the locations of the global team.

This argument resonates with Zander and Butler (2012) view on the leadership needing to connect with the team members. Global team leaders should strive to develop and maintain a quality relationship with the team members (Zander and Butler, 2012). This is also expressed by Pittinsky (2010) who urges global team leaders to develop quality relationships with all the individuals in the teams, not just co-located ones. Such leadership is defined as people-oriented leadership (Pittinsky, 2010; Zander and Butler, 2012). The concepts of people-oriented leadership, boundary spanners, bridge makers and blenders all provide indications on how global team leaders can improve the communication in their teams, connect individuals together and lead their teams.

The first section of this chapter introduced global teams and identified two characterising aspects. From both aspects, subsequent factors such as the cultural differences, the relationships and communication between individuals were further discussed. The section on leadership presented arguments stressing global team leaders to become boundary spanners, bridge makers and blenders by connecting the team members and uniting them.

As mentioned in the previous sections of the thesis, this research aims to associate two distinct fields of research in order to support the study and provide answers to the research questions. Having discussed global teams, their characterising features and their leadership, the following will now continue onto the second part of the literature review, employee relocation.
2.2 EMPLOYEE RELOCATION

After having established a theoretical understanding of global teams, the following sections of this chapter will shift the focus of the paper towards clarifying the practice of employee relocation from a theoretical point of view. Due to the circumstance that different terminologies are used to describe a whole variety of relocation practices that have emerged until today (Scullion et al., 2007), misunderstandings can easily arise when referring to the term relocation without providing a more detailed definition. The following therefore aims to outline the different understandings of employee relocation practices and to closer define employee relocation for the further use in this paper as well as to briefly explain the reasoning behind executing employee relocations.

2.2.1 Definition and terminologies

From a theoretical perspective, the study of employee relocation has been closely related to the aspect of global staffing, i.e. filling key positions in headquarters and subsidiaries with home, host and third country nationals (Scullion and Collings, 2006). Academic discussions regarding global staffing have then led to the emergence of a field of research more focused on investigating the issue of relocations itself (Festing et al., 2013). The process of assigning employees to different geographical locations, especially within global companies has received major academic attention from researchers in the field of international human resource management (IHRM) since the late 1980s (ibid.). During the nearly 30 years of advancements in the IHRM literature, research has become increasingly diverse as well as the scope of the field has broadened (Scullion et al., 2007).

The traditional understanding of international employee relocations or international assignments in the IHRM literature refers to the transfer of well-socialised employees (often executives) from the headquarters to the organisation’s subsidiary in order to support the process of global integration (Pucik et al., 2017). In addition to the transfer of individuals from headquarters to subsidiaries referred to as expatriation, a growing awareness for impatriation, i.e. the transfer of subsidiary employees to the headquarters of the global company, has developed in research and academia in recent years (Collings et al., 2009).
Apart from the conventional expatriate assignments and the more modern inpatriate assignments, a variety of other emerging types of international relocation practices could have been identified in recent years (Evans et al., 2011). Those emerging alternative forms of employee transfers differ however in various aspects from the rather traditional understanding (Pucik et al., 2017). The advancements in technology, global mobility and travel infrastructure have enabled or at least supported their emergence during the recent years (Evans et al., 2011). The variety of alternative forms of international employee relocations include short-term assignments, rotational assignments, virtual assignments, international commuter assignments, and business travellers just to name a few (Scullion et al., 2007). The table below presents a few of the many emerging alternatives and their respective terminology in more detail. Especially in regard to the terminology, it needs to be mentioned that the terms used within academia, across different industries and among practitioners differ from each other as well as they overlap in certain instances (e.g. international commuter assignments and international business travellers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Further literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-initiated assignments</strong></td>
<td>Individuals that relocate without being sent by a specific company that works on local contracts and without a guarantee of continuous employment on return to the home country.</td>
<td>Suutari and Brewster, 2000 Cerdin and Selmer, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International commuter assignments</strong></td>
<td>Individuals that commute across borders weekly or bi-weekly to work at locations abroad, but remain settled in the home country, esp. within Europe (e.g. between Munich and Zurich).</td>
<td>Mayrhofer and Brewster, 1997 Mayrhofer and Scullion, 2002 Stahl et al., 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rotational assignments</strong></td>
<td>Individuals that relocate to another location for a short term and set durations with a break in the home country afterwards, esp. in the oil and gas industry.</td>
<td>Baker and Ciuk, 2015 Valk and Hannon, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Virtual assignments</strong></td>
<td>Individuals that manage their tasks and responsibilities abroad virtually while remaining settled in their home country or elsewhere.</td>
<td>Welch et al., 2003 Hertel et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International business travellers (IBT; also referred to as ‘frequent flyer’)</td>
<td>Individuals that travel and communicate regularly in between host and home locations, while remaining settled in their home country.</td>
<td>Welch and Worm, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent transfers</td>
<td>Individuals that undergo the process of localisation during the time of expatriation and remain abroad under local terms of employment instead of returning to their home country.</td>
<td>Collings et al., 2008; Tait et al., 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Overview of relocation terminologies (based on Evans et al., 2011; Pucik et al., 2017; Scullion et al., 2007 and Collings et al., 2014).

Especially these more recent and emerging short-term alternatives to the rather traditional long-term assignments underline the change that the field of international employee relocations has undergone in recent years (Collings et al., 2014). It has been observed that global companies re-evaluate their practices of how to staff their locations across the globe due to the ongoing changes within international business, but also because global companies are dealing with “continued concerns over expatriate adjustment and failure and the difficulty of managing the performance of such assignees.” (Scullion et al., 2007, p. 314).

As discussed to this point, today’s global companies utilise a wide variety of different forms and types of international relocation practices. Especially the newly emerging alternatives to the conventional long-term expatriate assignments are becoming increasingly context-specific. In that sense, one can no longer refer to relocations, expatriation/impatriation or international assignments as one specific and clear-cut type of relocation practice. The reason being that practitioners as well as academia face a wider variety of alternatives in the field of international relocation practices now as compared to the establishment of the IHRM field in the early 1980s (Collings et al., 2014).

Due to the existence of various, increasingly-context specific and oftentimes overlapping definitions and terms used for employee relocation practices, the authors of this paper decided to closer define employee relocation for the further use in this paper. In the following, the term employee relocation (alt. relocation) will be used to describe the practice of physically transferring or relocating an individual of an organisation, in this context an employee of a global company, from one location (home/former location/office) to another location (host/new location/office). The organisation or company has in this sense already an established presence.
in the respective locations, e.g. in form of a physical office. The relocating individual or employee is further continuously employed by the company during the whole time of the relocation as well as she or he remains working in the same global teams as before the relocation. For simplicity, no differentiation between the direction of the transfer (i.e. from headquarters to subsidiary or the other way around) is made. The minimum duration of the transfer is also not specifically defined, but the relocation is defined as being open-ended.

The sole purpose of this definition is to provide certain boundaries for understanding the chosen term throughout this paper and to avoid misunderstandings when referring to employee relocation in the following chapters. The chosen term and definition clearly overlap with certain definitions and terms as presented above, as they stand in line with the common understandings of employee relocation practices in academia.

2.2.2 The rationale behind employee relocation

The idea of geographically relocating people within an organisation is not a modern idea, as the use of relocated individuals can be traced back to the ancient Roman Empire (Evans et al., 2011). Over the years, research was able to identify multiple motives for the use of relocations which can overlap with one another (ibid.).

The first reason behind transferring, especially parent country employees to subsidiaries (traditional view: oftentimes located in developing countries), is that managers on different organisational levels are sent out to maintain control over the subsidiary. This is also referred to as organisational development (Edström and Galbraith, 1977; Pucik et al., 2017). By doing so, the practice of employee relocation enables a form of centralised control even over widely dispersed organisations and can therefore be seen as a tool for global integration (Pucik et al., 2017).

Another reason for international transfers is to fill local positions in the subsidiary, especially with technical specialists and expertise which in these cases cannot be hired locally in the respective country of the subsidiary (Edström and Galbraith, 1977).

The third motive includes developing managers by exposing young to middle aged candidates to international experience. In this case, organisations strive to support their employees’
development and the acquisition of international experience (Edström and Galbraith, 1977; Pucik et al., 2017).

The three motives of filling local positions, organisational development and developing managers can further be differentiated by Pucik’s (1992) distinction between demand-driven and learning-driven employee relocations which could later be empirically verified by Stahl et al. (2009). By following this distinction, the first two motives can be classified as demand-driven assignments and the third one as learning-driven (Pucik et al., 2017). As mentioned earlier, the traditional understanding of employee relocation refers to the process of transferring home country employees mainly from the headquarters to the respective subsidiaries to enable global integration. In that regard, these traditional relocations would qualify as demand-driven, while more modern understandings of relocations, especially with regards to training and acquiring international experience would be classified as learning-driven.

In accordance with the different motives behind expatriations, the duration of the assignments differs between short-term assignments (often less than one year) and long-term assignments (often two to four years) (ibid.). The framework displayed in Figure 3 below provides an overview of the different relocation purposes in relation to the different durations of the assignment.

![Figure 3: Purpose of expatriation, demand-driven vs. learning-driven (based on Pucik et al., 2017, p. 84).](image-url)
In the framework, the rather traditional use of employee relocation to achieve global integration by control and knowledge or value transfer as described above, is labelled as corporate agency. According to Pucik et al. (2017), the corporate agency-role of the relocated individual is the major reason for past and current relocations, even though less dominant in recent years.

The role of the relocated employee as a problem solver on the other hand has become more demanded especially in recent years, as the need for short-term problem-solving or start-up support has been increasing (ibid.). In this role, the length of the assignment is nowadays not necessarily limited to the traditional understanding of short-term, i.e. less than one year, but it can be extended if the need is ongoing (ibid.).

In the context of competence development (long-term) and building experience (short-term) which refers to the rationale of developing managers as described above, today’s organisations are experiencing “an increasing need to develop global coordination capabilities.” (Pucik et al., 2017, p. 84). Therefore, the purpose of enabling individual learning and development differs heavily from the traditional understanding of global integration which includes spreading core corporate values and ensuring control over distance (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the global integration and control rationale behind international relocations remain the most common according to Brookfield’s Global Mobility Trend Survey (2015) (Pucik et al., 2017). Only the rather traditional motive of filling local positions with the help of international relocation practices is experiencing a decreasing demand in recent years due to improved professional capabilities in the locations of subsidiaries which allow for specialised local hires instead of relocations (ibid.).

As presented, there has not only been a changing understanding of the practice of international employee relocations but also a slight change in the motives for utilising these practices. It may even be more accurate to say that the constantly changing environment of international business leads to global organisations using relocation practices slightly differently from one to another based on the different needs and motives. Nevertheless, it needs to be emphasised again that the motives for executing relocations – out of which, the motive of international integration remains the most common – can overlap with each other (Evans et al., 2011).
2.3 Summary of the Literature Review

In reiteration to the introductory chapter of this thesis (see chapter 1.2), the choice to associate global teams with employee relocation resulted from the identification of a gap between global team and employee relocation in the literature, despite its occurrence in practice. As benchmarking and confirming theory with practice would not be possible in this case, the authors of this thesis decided to cover the two theoretical fields - global teams and employee relocations – separately and consider the previous chapter as a support for this research.

The global team literature seems to agree on the fact that global teams are entities that regroup diverse individuals working jointly and virtually on projects or ventures over distance, while being under the same team (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Maloney and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2006; Magnus, 2011; Zander and Butler 2012; Butler et al., 2018). As shown, figure 2 (see chapter 2.1.1) illustrates the composition of a global team, based on the various definitions collected from the theory, and recalls the two main aspects characterising global teams, diversity and geographical dispersion. This figure also depicts different individuals located in different locations being interconnected with one another. This infers a certain level of communication is maintained among the team members.

The example of Hendricks in the introduction gave insights on a situation where an employee working in a global team would relocate from one location to another. The situation in this example correlates to some extent with the aforementioned development on employee relocation. Indeed, as shown in the previous section, different rationales behind relocations exist such as filling positions in the subsidiaries (Edström and Galbraith, 1977) or fulfilling the need for organisation development, control and global integration in dispersed organisations (Pucik et al., 2017). These motives for relocations can be classified as demand-driven assignment as per Pucik (1992).

To some extent, Hendricks’ case links the global team and the employee relocation literature. The information provided in the introduction infers that the relocation will be a demand-driven assignment which will take place in a dispersed team (moving from London to Hong Kong). Although Hendricks’ case is fictional, it also infers that the consequences of the relocation arise as the departure date approaches.

The insights gathered from the literature on both global teams and employee relocations can potentially be bridged with the real cases of relocations in global teams. A similar method has
been used by the authors of this thesis – the use of both fields of research and empirical evidence from the study of relocations in global teams – to answer the research questions and shed light on the consequences of relocations in global teams. Having introduced in the previous chapters of this thesis the frame and theoretical fields of research, the focus will now turn on the method used to process, analyse and interpret the empirical elements gathered from real life cases of employee relocations in global teams.
3 METHODOLOGY

While the previous chapter presented the literature review as a theoretical basis for this paper, this chapter will now focus on explaining the scientific method used for the research and will describe the research process. Therefore, the research strategy applied, and the research design chosen will be presented. Afterwards it will be explained how the empirical data for this research project was gained before describing how the data was further processed and analysed. At the end of this chapter ethical aspects and research quality consideration such as validity and reliability will be addressed.

3.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Based on the circumstance that the practice of employee relocation has not previously been studied in the context of global teams, the character of this study can be described as rather explorative. Due to this and the study being led by the research questions, it was decided to follow a qualitative research strategy since qualitative research aims to build knowledge about human experience in the social world by qualitative inquiry, i.e. by “understanding, describing, explaining, unravelling, illuminating, chronicling and documenting social life” (Leavy, 2014, p. 1). In the process of studying social life and the “complex relationships between, within, and among people and groups” (ibid., p. 1) qualitative research aims to explore, understand and explain social life by using what Geertz (1973) refers to as “thick descriptions” (Leavy, 2014).

Those descriptions rely on qualitative data that according to Ghosh and Chopra (2003) oftentimes is of descriptive character or which can be classified by type (Lancaster, 2005), ranging from text-based material to images or even artefacts (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Quantitative data in contrast is of numerical character or can be expressed by a certain numerical value (Ghosh and Chopra, 2003). Because of that, quantitative data is seen as more suitable to investigate phenomenon that can be clearly quantified and measured (Lancaster, 2005).

Since employee relocations in global teams impose a certain change to the team (i.e. one team member relocating to a different location) the investigation of possible consequences is seen to be hardly quantifiable and measurable in terms of numerical values. Working with descriptive data that was gained from qualitative research on the other hand was assessed more suitable for the aim of this study.
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In terms of research design which refers to the framework of how data was collected and analysed (Bryman and Bell, 2015), the outcome of this thesis is based on a case study, investigating three cases of employee relocations in one selected organisation.

Even though the data was collected at only two different points in time due to time limitations, the case study shows characteristics of a longitudinal case study since the focus of the research lied on investigating how the situation developed over time (ibid.). In a coherent manner the semi-structured interviews conducted aim at studying the whole process of employee relocations. The interviewees were therefore also asked to refer to events that were back in time in order to gain data concerning the entire process and a longer period of time.

This reasoning stands in line with the research questions as this thesis tries to shed light on the possible consequences of employee relocations in global teams which may or may not unfold along the process of transferring team members to different locations. Furthermore, the goal of investigating how different stakeholders of the team perceive those possible consequences and how the team handles them is believed to be a rather complex process that requires the detailed and intensive analysis of a case study design (ibid.).

3.3 RESEARCH DATA

The following will explain how the sample for this research was selected, in which way the data was collected and how the data was analysed.

3.3.1 Sampling

Considering the selection of a suitable sample for this thesis, one can refer to a sample as “a selection of individuals drawn from the target or parent population which is intended to reflect this population’s characteristics in all significant respects” (Brewerton and Millward, 2001, p. 120). In this regard the research questions of this thesis already narrow down the sampling frame as it requires possible candidates for this study to be involved in or associated with the context of global teams and employee relocations. For practical reasons and due to time constraints, it was therefore decided to apply purposive sampling which is a type of non-
probability sampling and to select the individuals based on an underlying belonging to a particular group (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). This means in this case that the individuals belong to an organisation that utilises global teams and that executes relocations within those.

The sample selected for this research consists of eight individuals from a London-based company which are involved in a global team as well as the relocation processes of global team members. All individuals are employees of Company X, a London-based multinational in the financial services industry which operates as a data vendor and thereby helps its clients in their decision making. As of today, the company employs approximately 14,000 people in different offices and locations around the world in order to serve its around 50,000 customers in over 140 countries.

The company selected qualified for the research due to its global presence, its organisational set up which includes the use of globally dispersed teams and the fact that employee relocations have already been carried out within their global teams.

3.3.2 Data collection

The primary data for this thesis was gained by conducting ten semi-structured interviews with the selected sample of eight individuals employed at Company X. The method of conducting semi-structured interviews was applied, because it allows for a certain flexibility during the interview but simultaneously ensures that the interview stays within previously determined boundaries regarding the topics and issues addressed (Lancaster, 2005). Moreover, using semi-structured interviews offers “much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee” (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 286). Furthermore, allowing the interviewees to clarify their responses and thereby providing more in-depth explanations was seen as a major aspect to probe in more depth (Brewerton and Millward, 2001).

The interview guides

For conducting the ten different semi-structured interviews with the eight selected interviewees, different interview guides were prepared in order to account for the different perspectives of the individuals, their involvement in the global team during the relocation processes as well as
their ability to provide sufficient answers. In this process, also the different positions, roles and functions of the interviewees within the company were considered.

Since the research focus was specified from investigating employee relocations exclusively towards trying to understand what consequences these relocations have on global teams, the interviews were conducted in two consecutive rounds. Therefore, the description of the interview guides and their application during the interviews will be structured accordingly. For a better understanding, an overview is provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round of interview</th>
<th>Focus of the research</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Employee relocations</td>
<td>Interviewee A (head of department)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee B (senior lead/MD)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee C (divisional COO)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee D (HR-advisor)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee E (analyst)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee F (analyst)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee G (analyst)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Employee relocations in global teams and their possible consequences</td>
<td>Interviewee E (analyst)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee F (analyst)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee H (director)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Overview of the conducted interviews.

The first round of interviews involved interviewing three managers on different executive levels (A: head of department, B: senior lead/managing director, C: COO of a division), one HR-advisor (D) as well as three employees in a global team (E, F and G). From these three individuals, two (E and F) were already relocated to their new location while one individual (G) was in the stage of negotiating and preparing for an upcoming relocation.

The individuals mentioned above were grouped based on their role and function within the organisation into Decision Maker (i.e. executives involved in the line of approval for an employee relocation as well as responsible for managing a global team), HR (i.e. experts from the HR department which support the relocation process within the global team) and Individuals (i.e. the actual employee that got relocated or is bound for a relocation within a global team).
Based on the three different groups of interviewees, three different interview guides for the semi-structured interviews were drafted. In this process, specific focus was put on how the individuals were involved in the relocation, i.e. either in the decision-making and approval process (for Decision Maker), the supporting tasks throughout the relocation process (for HR) or relocating to another location as a member of the global team (for Individual). Since the three interview guides varied slightly in terms of perspective investigated, the table below provides more details on which specific aspects were covered in which particular interview guide. All three interview guides can also be found in the appendix (see appendix 1-3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview group</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Aspects covered in the interview guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Maker (DM)</td>
<td>Interviewee A (head of department)</td>
<td>● Warm-up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee B (senior lead/MD)</td>
<td>● Types of assignments, motives and expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interviewee C (divisional COO)</td>
<td>● Assessment and control</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Decision-making process</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Concluding remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Interviewee D (HR-advisor)</td>
<td>● Warm-up questions</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>● Preparation process</td>
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<td>● During the assignment</td>
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<td>● Re-entry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● HR responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Concluding remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual (I)</td>
<td>Interviewee E (analyst)</td>
<td>● Warm-up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee F (analyst)</td>
<td>● Motivation/ reasons</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee G (analyst)</td>
<td>● Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Application/ selection/ opportunity/ negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Preparation/ making the move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Relationship over distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Concluding remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Details of the interview guides for the first interview round.

After having conducted the first round of interviews and while analysing the data (see chapter 3.3.3), the focus of the research was specified from investigating the process of employee relocations exclusively towards researching what possible consequences these relocations have on global teams and the respective stakeholders. It was therefore decided to conduct further
interviews in a second round with a stronger focus on the stakeholders’ interplay within the global team especially before, during and after the relocation of a team member.

According to Bryman and Bell (2015) the nature of qualitative research which involves the iterative process of data collection, data analysis as well as conceptual and theoretical work oftentimes lead to a specification of the research questions that requires the collection of further data. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to conduct additional interviews after having specified the research questions. This follows the below outline of a qualitative research process (Figure 4) as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015).

![Outline of the main steps of qualitative research](image)

Figure 4: Outline of the main steps of qualitative research (based on Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 395).

In order to do so, two previous participants (E and F) were contacted again for a second interview, as they both work in a global team and they both have experienced their own relocation as well as the relocation of a co-worker. To be more specific, participant E relocated from an office based in Chicago to an office based in London in which participant F was working at the time. Several months later, participant F relocated from the London office to an
office located in Singapore. Throughout both relocations, the two participants (E and F) were part of the same global team. This means that both individuals were able to depict their experiences from the perspective of a co-worker as well as from the point of view of the individual that experienced the process of relocating to another location within the global team.

To complete the co-worker-perspective on employee relocations in global teams, another individual (H), working in the company’s Chicago office was selected for an interview as well. This selection was based on the fact that participant H was already working in the Chicago office when participant E was hired and started to work there. Furthermore, participant H was able to witness the relocation of participant E from the Chicago office to the London office.

Since all three interviewees had experienced the relocation process of co-workers and/or their own relocation, the interview guides were organised based on the different relocations. The major focus points for all three interviews during the second round remained however on the themes and sub-themes which were identified in the analysis of the data from the first round of interviews. Those themes included among others the pre-departure preparations, the redistribution of tasks and responsibilities before relocating, the consequences for the co-workers of the person leaving, how the transition and relocation process took place as well as how the integration into the new location took place and how the teams interplay evolved over time. The table below highlights in which way the participants of the second interview round were able to provide their insights on the relocation of another team member as well as which aspects were covered in the respective interview guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Experienced relocation</th>
<th>Aspects covered in the interview guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee H (director)</td>
<td>• Interviewee E relocating from Chicago to London</td>
<td>Interviewee E leaving the Chicago office:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• pre-departure preparations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• redistribution of tasks and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• introduction to new tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• implications on the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• integration in London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned previously, the respective interview guides differ slightly due to the different perspectives that each participant was able to provide and based on the particular relocations that they experienced. All interview guides from the second interview round can also be found in the appendix (see appendix 3-6).
While conducting the interviews with a slightly different focus in two consecutive rounds it needs to be emphasised for a better understanding of the interrelations of all interviewees that all interviewees were part of the same global team except for Interviewee C, D and G.

**Conducting the interviews**

After having established the contact with the eight selected interviewees, specific time slots of roughly one hour were scheduled. This seemed most reasonable because most interviewees preferred having pre-scheduled time slots during their workdays which required the authors to adhere to the interviewees’ daily work schedules.

Since all interviewees were located across the globe and outside of Sweden, a face-to-face meeting with the interviewees was not possible. Therefore, the video conferencing tool Microsoft Teams was used to conduct all ten interviews. In this process, solely audio communication was used for the great majority of interviews, only in two out of ten interviews the authors were able to see the interviewee during the interview.

The ten interviews took place in two consecutive rounds between March 21st, April 16th and on May 2nd, 2019. The length of the ten interviews ranged from 24 to 50 minutes and all interviews were audio- and in two cases even video-recorded. This had the advantage that the authors could focus exclusively on conducting the interview itself and taking notes during the interview. The two tables below provide the specific details about all ten interviews of the two consecutive interview rounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
<th>Company, Position and Location during interview</th>
<th>Medium used for interview</th>
<th>Date and time of interview</th>
<th>Duration of interview record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee A</td>
<td>Company X, Head of Department, Chicago</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-03-25 15:02 UTC</td>
<td>00:43:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee B</td>
<td>Company X, Senior Lead/MD, London</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (video and audio)</td>
<td>2019-03-21 14:04 UTC</td>
<td>00:50:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee C</strong></td>
<td>Company X, COO of a Division, London</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-04-16 13:07 UTC</td>
<td>00:37:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee D</strong></td>
<td>Company X, HR-advisor, Switzerland</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-03-25 10:01 UTC</td>
<td>00:42:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee E</strong></td>
<td>Company X, Analyst, London</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-03-21 11:00 UTC</td>
<td>00:32:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee F</strong></td>
<td>Company X, Analyst, Singapore</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-03-21 07:05 UTC</td>
<td>00:43:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee G</strong></td>
<td>Company X, Analyst, London</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-03-25 11:04 UTC</td>
<td>00:24:13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Details of the first interview round.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name of Interviewee</strong></th>
<th><strong>Company, Position and Location during interview</strong></th>
<th><strong>Medium used for interview</strong></th>
<th><strong>Date of interview</strong></th>
<th><strong>Duration of interview record</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee H</strong></td>
<td>Company X, Director, Chicago</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (video and audio)</td>
<td>2019-05-02 15:35 UTC</td>
<td>00:35:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee E</strong></td>
<td>Company X, Analyst, London</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-05-02 18:03 UTC</td>
<td>00:31:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee F</strong></td>
<td>Company X, Analyst, Singapore</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams (only audio)</td>
<td>2019-05-02 08:02 UTC</td>
<td>00:32:06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Details of the second interview round.

All ten interviews were conducted in English as the interviewees and authors were either native speakers or fluent in English so that language barriers did not hinder either party in the process. Although every audio or video recording was transcribed once the interview was conducted, the files were kept allowing a possible proof-listening of the interviews at a later point in time.
3.3.3 Data analysis

The qualitative data that was gained from the ten interviews conducted was further processed and analysed by the help of a thematic analysis which involves the identification of themes and sub-themes (Ryan and Bernhard, 2003). This process of discovering themes and sub-themes is also referred to as open coding (ibid.), qualitative analysis (Berelson, 1952) or latent coding (Shapiro and Markoff, 1997). Themes or the lower hierarchy form of sub-themes in this sense can be described as “abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects” (Ryan and Bernhard, 2003, p. 87). There are also referred to as categories, codes, labels, expressions, incidents, segments and many more, as the actual terminology remains still up to academic debate (Ryan and Bernhard, 2003). They can nevertheless be identified by applying certain scrutiny techniques such as carefully looking for repetitions, transitions, similarities and differences as well as theory-related material (ibid.). During that process, the material needs to be worked through and processed several times in order to ensure reliable and viable results from this analysis strategy (Saldaña, 2014).

Therefore, the transcripts did undergo several rounds of reading and screening in which chunks of texts were identified and selected as patterns, themes and sub-themes that were assessed as an appropriate basis for the analysis later in this thesis. In this process, the authors printed out the transcripts of the interviews and worked with highlighters of different colours and an own colour code as well as thematic codes which were noted down next to the transcripts. This was seen as a suitable way of organising and structuring the process of identifying themes in the material and to prevent losing the overview of the themes already identified.

Due to the specification of the research questions as described in the previous chapter on data collection, the analysis process took place in two consecutive rounds. In this process, the analysis of the material gained in the first round of interviews resulted in themes and sub-themes that were used for the interview guides in the second round of interviews. This second round took place at a later point in time (see chapter 3.3.2) and therefore the material gained from this was analysed in a second round of analysis.

After several rounds of alternately working through the available material, the identified themes were collected and organised with the help of Microsoft Excel, which allowed both authors to work simultaneously. During this process it was ensured that the themes were labelled with
distinctive headlines and that the text chunks in which the theme was identified as well as the respective interviewee of the statement was listed right next to it. This was done in order to prevent the loss of context, the respective interviewee of the statement and their distinct perspective. The latter was deemed especially helpful for the analysis as it involves considering the different perspectives on employee relocations in a global team context.

During the data analysis, the three distinctive perspectives of *individuals* (i.e. employees experiencing the relocation), *managers* (i.e. managers executing or involved in executing the relocation and/or in managing the global team) and *co-workers* (i.e. employees who work alongside an individual that had been relocated) could have been identified. It further became clear that all three perspectives showed particular views, opinions and areas of awareness regarding the consequences of relocation in global teams. Therefore, the following analysis chapter will present the outcomes of the data analysis according to each perspective and the discussion chapter after that will further discuss the aspect of perspectives in more detail.

### 3.4 Research Quality Considerations

In comparison to working with quantitative data and its specific techniques for analysis, researchers who work with qualitative data are deemed to have “very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 2 qtd. in Lancaster, 2005). Due to that, it is necessary to make sure that the interpretation of the qualitative data provides valid and reliable results (Lancaster, 2005). The following therefore addresses the criteria of validity, reliability as well as ethical aspects regarding this thesis in a transparent and self-reflective way as an effort to allow for a proper evaluation of the quality of this research.

#### 3.4.1 Validity

The criterion of validity refers to how appropriate the selected research method actually describes or measures what is under study and is therefore one vital aspect for evaluating the quality of the research (Lancaster, 2005). Since validity is a rather complex aspect that needs to be evaluated in the context of the selected research method, different dimensions of validity
such as content validity, construct validity, statistical validity as well as internal and external validity have been established in research (ibid.).

In the case of this thesis which is based on qualitative data gained from semi-structured interviews, it is hardly possible to assess dimensions such as construct or statistical validity which have been developed within the field of quantitative research (Trent and Cho, 2014; Lancaster, 2005). Nevertheless, internal and external validity as well as alternative criteria for evaluating qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) such as credibility (which refers to internal validity) and transferability (which refers to external validity) can be applied to this type of study (Trent and Cho, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2015).

The aspect of internal validity or respectively credibility was supported by conducting interviews with multiple individuals in a similar position or context and thereby gaining several accounts of the same event or process. This means in the case of this thesis that e.g. three analysts provided insights regarding their own relocation as well as relocations of their co-workers. Multiple co-workers in turn were also able to account for the relocation of the previously mentioned analysts.

In terms of external validity or respectively the transferability of results it can be said that even though the context of the study can be described as quite unique, the data gained allowed for rich and detailed accounts of the cases under study which in turn offers others the chance to assess the possible transferability of results (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Apart from that, the selected sample of eight individuals, due to a limited timeframe, reduces the transferability of the results across other organisations and industries. This however represents one of the disadvantages that qualitative research has compared to quantitative research, especially when utilising (single)-case studies or by using data from a small sample (ibid.; Lancaster, 2005).

### 3.4.2 Reliability

The criterion of reliability refers to the ability of the selected research method to produce the same results in a case of replication (Lancaster, 2005). This requirement is especially hard to meet by qualitative research methods as they assume a dynamic reality and uncontrolled observation of the social reality (Oakley, 1999). Therefore, the external reliability of this study is limited by the fact that the investigated cases of employee relocations in global teams have
already happened and that the process of the organisation executing these relocations cannot be repeated in the exact same setting and with the same preconditions. It is however very likely that the participating interviewees would refer in a similar way to the overall process of relocations and how they took place within the global teams of Company X even at a later point in time.

The internal reliability on the other hand was supported by the fact that both authors of this thesis were in constant exchange about what they observed and heard as well as they agreed in the process of identifying themes and sub-themes during the data analysis. This inter-observer consistency (Bryman and Bell, 2015) could especially be ensured during the data analysis as both researchers worked independently on the material gained and drew very similar outcomes in terms of themes and sub-themes identified from this process. During the research process, clear documentation of the decisions made ensured that the other party was able to follow how the outcomes were achieved so that the authors were able to audit each other. This approach stands in clear line with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their alternative evaluation categories refer to as dependability, the parallel to reliability in qualitative research (Trent and Cho, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2015).

3.4.3 Ethical aspects

When addressing the ethical aspects of this research it can be stated that strong emphasis was put on ensuring the participants’ as well as the organisation’s confidentiality. Therefore, all interviewees as well as the company involved were treated anonymously and no personal data such as names, surnames, addresses and age were disclosed. Only information necessary for this research such as the individuals’ occupations, office locations and interrelations were disclosed for a better understanding of the cases under investigation as well as for presenting the context of the findings. The information regarding the organisations involved such as the industry and office locations were provided to support the reasoning behind the choice of the sample selected and to provide contextual information. To ensure the anonymity of the company, all figures of Company X were presented as approximates.

Apart from this, all participating interviewees were explicitly informed about the purpose and aim of this research before participating in this study. Furthermore, all participants were asked for their informed consent to being interviewed and audio and/or video recorded and to
participate in this study overall. This stands in line with common guidelines across various research fields that prevent the involvement of other people without their knowledge or consent as well as withholding the actual aim and nature of the research from the participants (Brewerton and Millward, 2001).
4 ANALYSIS

This chapter builds upon the information presented in the previous chapter and will analyse the empirical data gathered from the two rounds of semi-structured interviews. By doing so, it is the authors aim to relate to the research questions (see chapter 1.2) and provide adequate answers. The chapter structures the results around the following categories of consequences, which were recurring themes identified throughout the thematic analysis: work redistribution, resource management, vulnerable team relationships and shift in communication. Furthermore, three perspectives are provided on each category of consequences, the individual perspective (i.e. the employee experiencing a relocation), the manager perspective (i.e. the manager executing or involved in executing the relocation and/or managing the global team) and the co-worker perspective (i.e. the employee working alongside an individual that had been relocated).

4.1 WORK REDISTRIBUTION

This first section of the analysis focuses on the redistribution of work as a consequence of a relocation in a global team. Individuals in global teams work on joint projects and ventures. Evidence from the empirical data revealed that when a person is relocated, that person has to redistribute and transition her/his work to other colleagues in the home location. This section will present different perspectives on this consequence of relocation.

Individual perspective

While conducting the second round of interviews, it became clear that the work redistribution and transfer of responsibilities are important parts of the relocations of individuals that leave their home office to join a new one. This consequence was acknowledged and usually handled prior to the departure. This can be seen in the interview quotes below:

“So, before I left, I sat down with Interviewee E to, kind of; go through all the clients and also all the clients that I was the primary analyst for in Europe. And we assigned them to someone else within the team. So, we went: “One client there, one client there”, and we also kind of reshuffled the assignment of the clients for the rest, just to make it a bit more fair for the whole team.”

— Interviewee F
“(…) in that last month was more about trying to transition my clients to other analysts within the team introduce them to the key contacts and then if there's any projects to complete, complete them.”

— Interviewee E

In the instances of Interviewee E and F, the work redistribution entailed for them to manage and handle the reallocation of work to their colleagues and to ensure that the transition would be seamless. It seemed that the workload one would have to transition to others would impact the redistribution. However, the process of redistributing the work happened in a similar manner, during a face to face meeting.

“So my workload as far as US clients to transition away was not that great I guess I can say that. So it was pretty easy to have one on one sessions with the analysts that would take an account away just have the session with them and discuss the details of the client you know what who they are, who are the contacts, what does it take to huh...yeah, maintain the client in a business as usual status and you know what are the open projects or where the uh I say nuances to the client.”

— Interviewee E

“We had actually, at the weekly team meeting that we had, we just said to everyone that, I told everyone that there is gonna be a new analyst assignment and then I've sent everyone the list with the new clients that they're covering and then told them to let us know when to have some meetings to go through the requirements of this client.”

— Interviewee F

From the above quotes one can assume that although the redistribution was carried and managed by the individuals relocating, this process involved more people, including the co-workers who were given additional work. Foreseeing how the co-workers would react to receiving more work was a rather hard task, however, the individuals relocating were able to assess their colleagues’ reaction. Moreover, they were the pilot of the redistribution and they knew the nature of their work. Their co-workers did not necessarily know as much as they did, therefore an adaptation period was needed for the co-workers.

“Some smoother than others. We had a few drawbacks (...) So, whenever you're new to some certain processes and everything, it takes you longer to do things, so I think the team was busy or it was less, let's say, I don't want to use the word “sufficient”, but the things
were done mmh, let's say, slower, but I'm not saying this in a bad way, because it's normal. Things were done slower than before, so some clients did start complaining and so on.”

— Interviewee F

In most cases, once a relocation was approved, the word spread around the team and the team members were made aware of a colleague leaving the office to join another office. As a consequence, the knowledge that the leaving individuals would need to transition their work over to the remaining co-workers would also spread accordingly.

“(…) but it was kind of already known for some time right so it wasn't like at the start of December, oh by the way you will have more accounts to cover, it was kind of already anticipated that with my move there would be more accounts to cover with less analyst.”

— Interviewee E

Like any teams, global teams work under the supervision of managers and executives. In the case of relocations, they are the ones assessing whether or not moving an individual away would be beneficial for the team. As they are involved in the process, the assumption that their involvement would also extend to handling the consequences of the relocation such as the redistribution of work could also be made. However, when asked about their managers’ involvement in this process, the interviewees’ opinions differed slightly, leaning towards a perception of a low level of involvement.

“(…) I think, it would have been much better if the management would be assigning the tasks instead of, let’s say me in that case.”

— Interviewee F

“(…) with some accounts for I already knew I had support from other analysts it was kind of an unspoken agreement that they would be receiving those clients so a little bit of both I guess, but more so just, you know, my direct manager was going to try to transition the clients away.”

— Interviewee E

In the above quote, Interviewee F expressed the low level of involvement of the management in handling of the work redistribution prior to the relocation. When referring to the same situation, Interviewee E acknowledged the involvement of his manager who worked alongside him during the work redistribution. Apart from the last two quotes, the individual perspective
on the work redistribution seemed to be consistent on the fact that it happened prior the departure, how it happened, the inclusion of the co-workers in the process and the involvement of the management in this task. As mentioned, the consequence affected employees other than the one relocating, and so the next part of this section will cover the co-worker perspective on this consequence of relocation.

Co-worker perspective

The empirical data showed that the work redistribution as a consequence of a relocation impacted more individuals than the one relocating. The data on the individual perspective showed that the individual relocating mainly handled this process prior to the relocation. That process included the co-workers who expected more work after being made aware of that a colleague would relocate.

“(…) know they knew that she was moving away so. You know, we all were in conversations to determine the account coverage. (...) We really had to act fast, and determine the coverage but Uh. I guess personally, I already knew that it was going to come soon. And so I think we had already somewhat made a contingency plan of how that would play out professionally right with clients will I cover and what should we do with others.”

— Interviewee E as co-worker

“And then from a secondary standpoint, it would have been the other analysts in the US who would have ended up picking up those accounts that were being reassigned (...).”

— Interviewee H

This process, from a co-worker perspective also seemed consistent with the individual perspective. In the above quote, Interviewee E described a situation where the process was rather inclusive and the co-worker who expected more work, worked alongside the individual relocating. This is showed further in the quotes below:

“I mean that one again was more of the same or like we had to determine. uh account coverage (...).”

— Interviewee E as co-worker
“I mean for me, it just meant additional work so uh it like this time around, it does mean that you know, I had to take some time away from my work to help with the transitions.”

— Interviewee E as co-worker

In acknowledging that this process included more than just the individual relocating, the co-workers also suggested that the manager was involved. The data collected from the co-workers gave new insights on the involvement of the management in this process. It gave the indication on the involvement being more related to determining how the redistribution should happen.

“So, at that point in time Interviewee B would have worked with Interviewee E and Interviewee F to determine which of his current US clients would be moving with him to London so to speak as well as which of those would be potentially redistributed to others.”

— Interviewee H

“But obviously those decisions would have been made between Interviewee E, Interviewee B and Interviewee F, so there would have been an orderly process put in place to communicate that to those clients as well as to facilitate the transition.”

— Interviewee H

The above quotes show a slight difference between the individual and the co-worker perspective on the management’s involvement in the work redistribution. However, the relocations were done from one office to another, it could be assumed that both the co-workers in the home and the host office would be implicated to some extent.

“We did have to make sure for few of the clients, we had to ask US team to be a bit more proactive in taking on Interviewee E’s US clients, because they just left the answers to be answered by Interviewee E. So, we had to kind of remind them that it's actually, Interviewee E is not on the account anymore.”

— Interviewee F as co-worker

As shown in the above quote from Interviewee F who was a co-worker in the office where Interviewee E relocated, the transition of work responsibilities could be intricate and if not properly done, the individual relocating could find himself handling work for both the home and the host office simultaneously. As a consequence, the co-workers in the host office could ultimately be affected as they would not fully benefit from their newly arrived colleagues. In this situation, the manager’s involvement would be expected in order to resolve the issue.
“I did ask Interviewee B, because Interviewee B was the time Interviewee E’s manager and he was also managing the other US analysts who took over Interviewee E’s clients. So, obviously it was easier for him to reach out to those analysts in US and tell them to pick up Interviewee E’s work.”

— Interviewee F as co-worker

Both the co-worker and the individual perspectives were consistent in their views on the process of redistributing the work being inclusive of other team members. The data on the co-worker perspective showed that in situations where an employee was relocating, the co-workers knew and expected to get more work. However, both perspectives differed slightly on the involvement of the management in this process, the co-worker’s quotes displayed more information on the management being more involved than the individual perspective’s quotes.

**Manager perspective**

The views on the management’s involvement in work redistribution seemed to differ slightly between the individual and the co-workers. Regardless of that discrepancy, the empirical data collected from the interviews of the managers showed clear evidence of an acknowledgement of that consequence of a relocation. The data collected from the co-worker perspective regarding work redistribution showed that in fact, the latter affected the team members in the home office but also potentially the team members in the host office. This seemed to be acknowledged by the managers. They seemed to view work redistribution as a task happening while transitioning which did not necessarily stops when the employee had physically left the home office.

“When the analyst moved to London he was still working with some US clients but he had to move away from those because he had to focus on the UK and EU clients that was an impact.”

— Interviewee B

While acknowledging that the redistribution of work should happen, perhaps while transitioning, managers seemed to see the relocation and the redistribution not only from the individual’s perspective, but also from the home office perspective.
“For the team that's losing it, I think, it's usually a question of a transference of responsibility. So, it's very important that responsibility is transferred or that the new employee retains some responsibility post transition for some period of time. Otherwise, you leave the local, the team that's losing the individual, you leave them in a position of vulnerability, because they may not be fully aware of what the departing individual was doing or responsible for.”

— Interviewee A

The above quote showed the importance of ensuring an effortless transition not only for the individual relocating but also for the home office who would ultimately have to reorganise before and after the relocation. Having an employee relocating from one office to another could also be seen as a resource drain from one office and a resource gain in another office.

“And so, you know, there's a scramble to cover their work. Even if there is a transfer of knowledge, they're still certainly an increase in work for the rest of the team.”

— Interviewee A

In discussing the home office being recourse drained, managers also considered the adaptation of the co-worker who would be the one carrying on the work that was left by the employee relocating.

“(…) because of that resource drains we had to absorb his accounts into the existing staff which was painful but that was something that we got through. We expect from the other team members to step up in those situations.”

— Interviewee B

From the manager perspective, we received the information that the redistribution went beyond the individual relocating and the co-workers getting more work and potentially affected the home office as a whole. In those instances, further reorganisations were necessary.

“It was a redistribution of work and people have to be flexible, we were also starting to retrain individuals that were supporting other products to support new products.”

— Interviewee B

Work redistribution was acknowledged as a consequence of relocation from all the different perspectives. All perspectives seemed to agree on the fact that it was inclusive, and it went
beyond the individual relocating. However, when it should happen and the extent to which each perspective saw the impacts of the redistribution of work differed. Indeed, it seemed from an individual and co-worker perspective, it should happen prior to the relocation and both only saw the individual and the affected co-workers involved in the process. Contrarily, the manager perspective suggested that the redistribution of work could happen while transitioning. This discrepancy could result from the fact that only the managers seemed to consider the office as a whole in the redistribution of tasks and especially the resource drain. The stakes on this consequence differed significantly between the manager perspective and the other perspectives. By having different stakes in that consequence, the perspectives on the process differed. Arguably, this could explain why individuals and co-workers would see the redistribution of work as happening prior to the relocation and the managers as happening while relocating, as for them the relocation went as far as affecting the home office as a whole.

Conclusively, the misalignment on the understanding of the stakes of relocating an individual affected the perceptions on this consequence of relocations and how it was handled. Indeed, the research showed, individuals expected work to be redistributed prior to the relocation and when this was not the case, they reached out to the managers to speed up the process. By considering the office as a whole, managers saw the redistribution of work as being done while transitioning, perhaps as a way of ensuring that the home office was fully prepared to take on the new responsibilities.

4.2 Resource Management

Resource management was the second consequence of relocations identified while analysing the data. This consequence can be seen as a continuity of the manager perspective on work redistribution as it considers the status of the team as being depleted of resources. Only two perspectives will be presented in this section, the co-worker perspective and the manager perspective. Understandably, during their interviews, the individuals relocating did not show much concern on this consequence of their relocation.
Co-worker perspective

Co-workers were stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by the relocation of individuals in their teams. As presented in the previous section on work redistribution, they were the ones expected to step up and carry on the work their leaving colleague was responsible for. As alluded in the manager perspective on work redistribution, when a relocation happened, the home office as a whole would be affected. In that sense, the co-workers became indirectly affected by the relocation. This has been reflected on in the interviews:

“I mean, it, it affected us just because it meant that there was 1 less person and somebody that was senior and new accounts so that obviously just means that we lose. Uh a good amount of knowledge (...)”
— Interviewee E as co-worker

“There would be ramifications with regard to the issues that we're talking about across the Chicago team, because anytime you're short on resources, whether it be in London, whether it be in New York, whether it be in India. Obviously, it's going to impact everyone.”
— Interviewee H

“Lack of resources will impact everyone across the board, Naperville, New York, London, India etc.”
— Interviewee H

The above quotes reinforced the fact that relocations had consequences on the home office as a whole as they would be depleted of a resource. That depletion would be translated in a resource shortage, first for the home office. However, as all the locations of a global teams worked together and are interconnected, the effects of the resource shortage would expand to other locations. This was especially shown in the quote by Interviewee H. In relocation cases, a shortage of resources created an imbalance in the home office which extended to the team as a whole. The views on resource relocations across the co-worker perspective seemed to be consistent.
Manager perspective

The consequence of managing the resources in relocations had also been identified by the managers. Their interviews suggested a way of resolving a resource shortage is the replacement of resources in the home office.

“Well, one team would be one person down. So, it depends whether they need that person. Often, they do, those people need to be replaced, because they were doing certain types of work.”

— Interviewee C

The extent to which this solution would be efficient is arguable. In their interviews, managers agreed on the fact that when an office or a region was depleted in resources, a solution had to be found. However, depending on the position, a simple replacement could suffice in solving the issue.

“One is, you can backfill the position with a new employee for the old location, but even when you do that, there's still a requirement to train that individual and get them, you know, in. No matter what, that person is going to be less experienced than the departing team member. So, there's gotta be, there's going to be a transition (...).”

— Interviewee A

The individuals relocating were often highly qualified and top performing employees. Consequently, they were highly valuable to their team members in terms of work capabilities and knowledge. Once an individual left, they took those capabilities and knowledge with them. The replacement of that individual as a solution would suffice in filling a vacant position. However, in many cases, this new person would need time to adapt and become efficient. Certainly, this learning time would vary depending on the individual, however, during this time, the team members would still be forced to handle the work of their departed colleague while training and helping the new employee settle in a new position. This extends the scope of that consequence of employee relocation. Both the co-workers and the managers acknowledged this consequence, the former realised that the office and potentially the global team as a whole could be affected while the latter emphasised mitigating unfolding issues resulting from a resource shortage. For this consequence, both perspectives were complementary in the way that they
provided different information, therefore not affecting the way this consequence would be dealt with.

Work redistribution and resource management are consequences of relocations that can potentially be tied together. From the interviews, it remains unclear whether those consequences started to appear prior to or post the relocation, especially in the case of work redistribution. The next sections will present the remaining two categories relocation consequences that were identified while analysing the empirical data, both appearing after the relocation.

4.3 VULNERABLE TEAM RELATIONSHIPS

Apart from the redistribution of work and resource management within the global team, the changing relationships among team members made up a third consequence identified in the analysis of the interviews.

Individual perspective

From the perspective of the relocating individual, a change in relationships with former coworkers and the former office was not immediately perceived after being relocated, but to some extent expected.

“I think also maybe I will notice that more when the time goes by. But for now, I think because we had good relations and everything, so it didn't change much with four months. But I am sure that it will be once I'm here for a year or two. I think it's not possible to remain on the same level.”

— Interviewee F

To be more concrete, the changes in relationships and the distance were perceived by missing out on certain minor discussions or by not entirely being involved in the chain of communication at it was the case in the home location. As those minor discussions were oftentimes made rather informally within the headquarters, the relocated employee in the subsidiary overseas missed out on those. These instances then brought the relocated individual to the conclusion that the relationship with the home base was affected by the distance.
“I think it's definitely affected. Because, for example, it's always, (...) you know how this is as well, being remote. It's always nicer to sit there to be, I don't know, in touch with the team even small things sometimes come up. (...) because when I was now here in London two weeks ago, I got to know the things that, when emails were coming, and that I was thinking the guys were actually discussing among themselves.” — Interviewee F

This feeling of missing out and thereby not feeling as part of the team was perceived negatively by the relocated individual.

“Obviously personally it's also not that nice, because you don't feel like you are part of the team, which is always a good feeling.” — Interviewee F

In contrast to that stands the view of Interviewee E who relocated from an US subsidiary to the headquarters and due to overlapping time zones could still keep up the level of communication with the former location.

“We are a global team and between London and Chicago there are a lot of overlapping hours so I am still in contact with them consistently. We talk every day and discuss different items.” — Interviewee E

Thereby the change in team relationships was perceived minor and rather in terms of how certain team members communicate with each other.

“It has changed a little bit the relationship, just the fact of picking up the phone or speaking through a platform is more important because in text a tone does not come through the way you want.” — Interviewee E

Based on the two different experiences it could be adopted that the way individuals were being included in the team’s communication and discussion processes influenced how the relationships within the team were evaluated by the individual. In this regard, the direction of relocation (either from headquarters to subsidiary or the other way around) seemed to influence how likely the individual would become aware of and involved in internal communication and
discussions. Another important aspect in this regard was the overlap of time zones across locations which dictated how difficult it would be for an individual team member to be part of the global team’s ongoing discourse. The aspect of communication will further be discussed in the following section with a stronger focus on issues such as time zone availability and information gaps as well as dealing with them.

Despite the different views on how the team relationships were perceived by the relocated individual, there was an agreement on the aspect that the redistribution of work and responsibilities (see chapter 4.1) had the potential of negatively influencing the coherence and relationships within the global team. Therefore, relocating individuals already anticipated that the process of redistribution of work and more workload for the co-workers in the former office could be perceived negatively by the remaining co-workers.

“Probably, it affected in a way. I wouldn’t say in a positive way (...) I do probably anticipate that some of the team members are not as happy with me, because in the end I was passing work to them, but because it wasn't my work anymore. (...) So, it’s obviously not a very pleasant interpersonal situation.”

— Interviewee F

“If they were unhappy with that, they didn't show it (...), it was kind of already anticipated that with my move there would be more accounts to cover with less analyst.”

— Interviewee E

Despite the difficult interpersonal situations caused by the transfer of work, this aspect did not lead to a complete disruption of team relationships. The aspect of distance between the former and the new location of the relocated individual played a role in this complex.

“Maybe for me it's a bit easier, because when you're in a different location it's easy just to send an email (...) and then focus on other things and forget about it. But I'm sure that when they got that email, they might have been: ‘Okay I have too much work and she's giving me more.’ But I can't say about them being angry at me, because obviously nobody escalated to me directly or raised this with me. But I'm sure that they weren't that happy.”

— Interviewee F

In connection with the findings from the work redistribution (see chapter 4.1) it could be concluded that the relocation of a team member required the redistribution of work within the
individual’s former office. This in turn oftentimes led to co-workers receiving additional tasks and responsibilities to take over as the office experienced a reduction of staff. Therefore, there was a potential risk that this negatively influenced the relationships within the team. This in connection with the aspects that the communication over distance and across different time zones became more difficult to realise, could be characterised as an additional strain for the team relationships.

**Co-worker perspective**

From a co-worker perspective, the already well-established team relationships from the time of being in the same location were perceived as helpful for the times of working together remotely and over distance.

“The fact that I already have an established relationship would help me work with Interviewee E. So, that was the case and is the case, because I started working with Interviewee E even more closely over the past year once interviewee E was in London”

— Interviewee H on the relocation of Interviewee E

Furthermore, receiving additional work caused by the relocation of the team member increased the collaboration within the global team and was therefore perceived as positive for the team relationships.

“So, I had a nice personal/professional relationship with E, but it really wasn’t surrounding business issues. The relationship grew significantly once I became involved in working with Interviewee E on the high touch clients and so I feel that the relationship grew both, personally and professionally with regard to our ability to interact with one another and to depend on one another.”

— Interviewee H on the relocation of Interviewee E

It could therefore be concluded that established relationships across team members before the relocation led co-workers to perceive the relocation and the work redistribution as a chance for an increased collaboration across the global team. This collaboration was further perceived as beneficial for the team relationships and negative feelings about receiving additional work, as anticipated by the relocated individuals, seemed to fade in the background and were not specifically addressed or raised.
Manager perspective

When it came to team relationships, the managers responsible for managing and leading the global team put a strong focus on ensuring the wellbeing of the team members as well as maintaining the relationships across locations. In this regard, not only the work perspective but also the personal life of the relocated employees played an important role.

“You want to make sure that the employee is doing okay (...) And that is very important, we also look to some extent at if the people are happy in their personal life because if they are unhappy in their personal life, it tends to spill on the work world, subconsciously.”

— Interviewee B

It was therefore necessary for the managers to check with all team members across the globe in order to support their work and relationships with each other, despite difficulties with time zones and the geographic distance.

“They need to feel some connection to their manager. We can monitor their work through projects and email but you still need face to face interactions to create and maintain a relationship. (...) As a manager you really have to put yourself out there and put in the extra hours in order to better manage your global employees.”

— Interviewee B

When it came to the decision-making and approval process on employee relocations, managers also sought downstream approval. Especially from co-workers and team members that were exposed to changes caused by the relocation.

“(...) in addition to upstream approvals, there’re downstream approvals that have to happen. Potential colleagues or team members from both the (...) exiting location and the entering location have to approve. Or at least be comfortable with it. And so, you have to make sure that you’re not leaving one location understaffed and that all the employees are comfortable with the timing and the plan (...) that employees are moving.”

— Interviewee A

In this process, possible aspects that could cause friction in the respective teams needed to be anticipated as well as mitigated by the managers to prevent possible risks to the future development of team relationships.
“If someone got moved to another location the most important thing for me (...) that it is seen as a positive thing and (...) there can be issues where if it's not feeling like that person's a good performer (...) if it doesn't feel like it's deserved, then that's more likely to cause you problems in the team and that's what I'd be most concerned about. It is making sure ‘if we're moving people we're moving the right people for the right reasons’ and that anyone else would be able to say: ‘Yeah good for that person, they've done a great job’ or ‘I completely understand why that person was selected’.”

— Interviewee C

In terms of possible friction and risks towards the development of team relationships, the manager perspective also considered the process of integrating the relocated individual into the new location. Here, the direction of the relocation (either from headquarters to subsidiary or the other way around) was regarded to be of importance. Especially in cases where individuals on a senior level were being relocated from the headquarters to subsidiary locations, possible initial friction in the receiving location were highlighted by Interviewee A.

“(...) in the new team, I think, there's often a risk of cultural-, I wouldn't say clashing, but what I have witnessed is that, if you're taking someone from a main office, a central office, like in the case of Company X, someone moving from New York or London to an area, where we have less of a presence, there's often some reservedness in the remote region. (...) you know, basically you've got people who are worried that somebody from 'corporate', somebody from the big office is coming into their little territory and going to disrupt it, right? (...) there's I think almost always reservations and misgiving in the local team about receiving the new people. (...) It's local teams get defensive when people from the main offices show up and start, you know, take a desk and start working. But I don't think that lasts for too long, you know, as long as the personalities are compatible and the business is more or less stable, that shouldn't be an ongoing issue. It might take a while depending on the seniority of the people who're moving, it might take longer to play out. So, I think, the more power and the more senior, the more powerful or senior the individual moving is, the more disruptive that change would be.”

— Interviewee A

This initial friction was however relativized by other managers as them being part of the normal team integration process and therefore not necessarily a reason for immediate managerial involvement.
“I think that's all normal. I think anytime you bring someone else into a team environment, there's that dynamic of the team welcoming them and that person getting to know how to work and operate with the team. So, I think that's just normal.”

— Interviewee C

Nevertheless, it could be concluded from the manager perspective that there were several possible risks of ending up with negatively evolving team relationships in the process of relocating employees within global teams across locations. As a result, there was an overall agreement among managers that the role of the manager in that regard lied in anticipating the possible risks that the relocation brought along, as well as mitigating those risks by maintaining an even closer relationship with all team members and by ensuring their wellbeing.

What can be learned from the previous analysis is that employee relocations within global teams triggered changes such as work redistributions, additional workload for co-workers as well as an increased collaboration of team members across the globe. These changes can be perceived differently across the team and its stakeholders. Relocated individuals on the one side assessed the additional workload given to their co-workers due to their own relocation as a potential risk for maintaining valuable team relationships. Their co-workers on the other hand viewed an increased collaboration as being beneficial for team coherence and for developing stronger relationships within the team. Regardless of how the changes triggered by a relocation were perceived, the mere act of moving individuals from one location to another was a disruption to the team setup in locations that in turn uprooted the local relationships. The aspect of distance further complicated maintaining former relationships over distance due to changes in how the team communicated (see chapter 4.4).

The managers in this context agree that their managerial role lied in anticipating the possible risks (e.g. perceived injustices in the selection and approval process as well as friction during the integration process in the new location) that the relocation brought along. Managers were further expected to mitigate those risks by maintaining an even closer relationship with all team members and by ensuring everybody's wellbeing.

Since all three perspectives showed complementary and similar concerns regarding how team relationships were being affected by relocations, there seemed to be agreement regarding this particular consequence. Therefore, how the different stakeholders handled this consequence did not seem to be particularly affected by opposing or contradicting views among individuals, co-workers and managers.
### 4.4 Shift in Communication

In close connection to how relocations implicate the team relationships in global teams stands the theme of communication, especially in regard to the aspect of geographic distance. The following will therefore explain what consequences in terms of communication arise from the relocation of team members.

**Individual perspective**

From the perspective of the relocated individual, there was a difference in how the communication with other team members was affected by the relocation. In instances where the relocation took place between locations which were already well integrated in the organisation’s existing communication chains, the perceived changes were rather minor.

> “In person it’s better to convey everything. But my manager comes frequently to London to visit and sit with us and ask us: ‘What do we need?’ or ‘What are you working on?’”
> — Interviewee E

This perception was however significantly different in cases where the differences in time zones made it difficult to communicate between locations during the respective local office hours.

> “(...) it’s very difficult to find the hours where you speak to US. It’s either always early morning for you or late afternoon, late evening for them or the other way around. So, it’s never during working hours that you’re able to catch them. So, for example I haven’t spoken to my manager who is in Naperville since last year. Just because it's difficult to coordinate and also, he works normal working hours and that's not possible then.”
> — Interviewee F

This further led to the issue of the relocated individuals missing out on crucial information or training which took place within the global team but at times which were outside of the local office hours. The issue then required extra effort such as being available at uncommon times or trying to catch up with the training and information that was missed at a later point in time.

> “So, we have the sales-tracking of the cases and I didn’t know, there were so many meetings organised, but they were organised at 10 p.m. on Friday for me, which was something that
I really don’t want to or can’t do. (...) So, sometimes I joined, sometimes I didn't and because of that, I didn't really know the system. So, when I was in London, I actually managed to catch up on what's happening and what we need to do with sales-tracking.”

— Interviewee F

This problem of not receiving information as previously in the home office further created an information gap, as not all team members at all locations were fully aware of the fact that some team members in different time zones were oftentimes missing out on crucial information.

“(…) you have a lot of the situations where there is a team in London just discussing things but you're far away and you're not there. But they don't really think of sending an email afterwards and updating you on this, because either they think it's not that important or they forget and so on. So, you do tend to miss a lot of things maybe important, maybe not, but there is a communication gap and that's with UK.”

— Interviewee F

This information gap in-between locations further required the individuals at locations which were not in the same time zone or reach of the headquarters to put in extra efforts in terms of actively following up on issues, asking for important information and scheduling specific catch-up meetings with co-workers and managers.

“(…) you need to, I think, much more chase other people and be a bit more inquisitive in getting information than just wait for the information to come to you. (...) I sort of tried to schedule for example regular catch ups with people (...) Because I know that if you say that you will do it and eventually you don’t unless you have something in your calendar that really reminds you and that should be firm there.”

— Interviewee F

Apart from the potential risk towards maintaining and further developing team relationships (see chapter 4.3), the change in communication could certainly lead to an information gap between locations so that parts of the team, especially those who were located in opposing time zones from the headquarters, ran into the danger of missing out on crucial information and training. This information gap and missing out on information was perceived by the individuals as affecting their work negatively as well as leading to less quality output.
“I would think that the main consequence is that sometimes because of that obviously my work might not be as good. (...) if the team can help each other and they discuss some issues, they figure out the problem much quicker. So, because of that maybe it takes more time to get somewhere and maybe as well (...) you give the service back to clients a bit, in less quality.”

— Interviewee F

From the individual perspective it could be concluded that the change in communication could lead to the problem of facing an information gap between locations and thereby having certain individuals less informed and trained as their co-workers in other locations. Apart from being a potential risk towards team relationships as discussed in the previous chapter, this in turn could negatively affect the work of less informed and trained individuals as well as it could lead to less quality output. This however depends on how the communication was affected by the relocation, as cases of facing major differences in times zones, which makes direct and simultaneous communication harder to achieve, could be described as rather rare and special.

Co-worker perspective

In agreement with the individual perspective, the co-worker perspective described the problem of dealing with different time zones. Additionally, not being in the same location and thereby not being able to directly collaborate or help one another was described as a major consequence of relocations, especially in terms of on-site training and skill development.

“(...) certainly training on-site with content experts, to not only bring an individual up to speed, hypothetically in India by an individual in Naperville, not only will be impacted by the fact that there is a time difference, but you're also going to be impacted, because you don't work with someone right next to you in a cubicle, where if there is an issue, there's not a time frame that limits the ability to interact so that the training can be impacted, because that individual cannot just go right across to the next cubicle and say: “hey this issue is something I'm dealing with, can you help me?”

— Interviewee H

This further supported the aspect mentioned from the individual perspective that described some cases of relocated individuals as being affected by the information gap and the fact that collaborating, problem-solving and receiving help from co-workers was harder to realise. Especially in comparison with team members and co-workers in the former location or in
locations that could more conveniently communicate with each other, the work output was perceived as being of less quality.

Manager perspective

Also, from the perspective of managers, the difficulty of facing different time zones across locations was seen to be a major issue in terms of maintaining close communication, reaching out to team members and ensuring global coordination. Despite the technological advancements and especially in terms of communication solutions, these aspects of managing global teams became more difficult over distance and in cases of incompatible time zones. Therefore, establishing regular meetings as well as adjusting working hours was necessary to ensure a minimum in communication across locations.

“That can be difficult, especially with time zone differences. (...) in some cases it's very useful to have regular scheduled meetings. (...) there are definitely times when the managers and leaders of respective teams have to, you know, make personal accommodations to their working hours. (...) if that means calls in the middle of the night that, you know, as a leader of teams, that are in disparate time zones, that just don't agree with each other, that means you have to adjust to those time zones. So, me personally, I have lots of calls with APAC during off-hours. Last week I had one at 10:00 p.m. on Monday, one at 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, one at 1:00 a.m. on Wednesday and that's not unusual.”

— Interviewee A

“As a manager you really have to put yourself out there and put in the extra hours in order to better manage your global employees.”

— Interviewee B

Formalising communication by scheduling specific virtual meetings and actively reaching out to certain locations, also during extra hours could become necessary from a manager point of view to prevent the danger of a breakdown in communication and ensuring global coordination across locations.

“If things get slow or things aren't going as well, that's when you usually see a breakdown in communication and a need for formalizing the communication, in order to make sure that things are happening. (...) there's always a risk that, you know, your remote businesses
can go a little rogue and decide to become more independent. And I've seen that in more mature businesses that have, you know, regional sort of departments or regional groups that operate much differently than other regions. However, I've witnessed in other teams that collaborate with my team, (...) two departments within the US sales team have been working very well together. Those same two departments in the APAC region have not been working well together. So, I don't know why that's the case. (...) It just shows a lack of, a kind of, coordination.”

— Interviewee A

From the perspective of the managers it could be concluded that their role of managing the global team became harder to fulfill in cases of incompatible time zones and a possible slowdown in communication from the side of the subsidiary. In order to ensure constant progress in remote subsidiaries and to regain control over the local operations as well as to maintain the global coordination of the overall business, managers could decide to formalise the communication across locations by scheduling regular meetings and emphasising on follow-up calls with the respective locations.

Overall, there was an agreement across the individual, co-worker and manager perspective that the relocation of team members into regions with incompatible time zones made it more difficult to maintain a solid communication across team members and locations. Especially the relocated individual and the manager perspective acknowledged that extra efforts from both sides (e.g. being available during non-office hours, scheduling and having specific catch-up meetings) were necessary to prevent the risk of developing an information gap between locations and thereby achieving less quality output. Additionally, ensuring that all team members received proper training, that everybody was taken care of and that help could be provided over geographic distance required extra efforts from everybody involved, individuals, co-workers as well as managers.

In terms of maintaining global integration and mitigating the potential risk of a slowdown in communication with certain locations, especially managers emphasised the formalisation of communication which was assessed as a necessary step of handling global communication in this context.

As shown in the previous analysis, all three perspectives showed agreement regarding how the communication among team members, as well as across locations, was being affected by relocations. Therefore, how the different stakeholders handled this consequence did not seem to be particularly affected by opposing or contradicting views among individuals, co-workers
and managers. Even though all parties agreed on the issue and despite the existence of modern communication technologies, the fact that global communication remained limited by aspects such as different time zone availability seemed to be forgotten in everyday business.
5 DISCUSSION

The previous analysis chapter gathered the empirical data and presented them in a way that brought more clarity on the consequences of relocations in global teams. This chapter will briefly summarise the findings presented in the analysis, delve into their meaning and relevance and finally, discuss them in relation to the relevant literature in the field. It needs to be mentioned that the findings will not be compared with each other, but rather used and interpreted together to highlight their meaning, relevance and relation to the theory.

5.1 RECAP OF THE ANALYSIS

Table 8 below summarises the findings from the previous chapter (see chapter 4) and presents them per consequence and per perspective before addressing how the consequences are handled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Individual perspective</th>
<th>Co-worker perspective</th>
<th>Manager perspective</th>
<th>Dealing with the consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Work redistribution | • important part of relocation  
| | • handled prior to departure  
| | • process also involves co-workers  
| | • adaption period for co-workers required  
| | • varying involvement of management  
| | • expected consequence of relocation  
| | • handled prior to relocation  
| | • inclusive process between individuals & co-workers  
| | • management involvement on how to distribute  
| | • transition can be intricate for relocated individual if not properly done  
| | • acknowledged consequence of relocation  
| | • happening while transitioning  
| | • importance of easy transition for individual & home office  
| | • resource drain & gain across locations  
| | • adaption period for co-workers  
| | • further reorganization maybe necessary  
| | • having different stakes on the issue translates into the different perspectives on the process  
| | • misalignment in understanding the stakes of relocations affects perception of the issue & how it is dealt with  
| | • individuals expected work redistribution prior to relocation & reached out to managers to speed up the process  
| Resource management | N/A  
| | • indirectly affected by relocation (taking over the work)  
| | • depletion of resources (home office)  
| | • effects of resource shortage will expand to other locations  
| | • replacement of resource in home office necessary  
| | • new hire/backfill needs time to adapt and become efficient  
| | • complementary views on the issue from co-workers and decision makers  
| | • how it is dealt with does not seem to be affected by opposing or contradicting views  

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A CONTINUATIVE EXPLANATION

The research was built around the intent of identifying consequences unfolding from employees relocating within their global teams. The analysis of the empirical data revealed overlapping patterns of ramifications discussed across the different stakeholders interviewed during the research.

The fact that the consequences presented in the analysis chapter were reflected across multiple perspectives indicates that there is a certain level of awareness on their impact among the stakeholders identified in this research. It is the common awareness of the impact of those consequences that led to delving into each of them separately. Therefore, the authors believe that the results are meaningful in two aspects. First, in identifying the overlapping patterns and categorising them into consequences. Second, in structuring the results around different perspectives. Structuring the results around different perspectives contextualises them around

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<th>Role of manager:</th>
<th>complementary yet similar concerns on the issue from all perspectives</th>
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<td>strong focus on ensuring wellbeing of team members &amp; maintaining relationships across locations</td>
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<td>risk of not feeling belonging to the team</td>
<td>downstream approval from implicated co-workers &amp; team members important before relocation</td>
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<td>how individuals are involved in team processes affects how team relationships are evaluated</td>
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<td>considering integration of relocated individual into new location</td>
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<td>change in communication can lead to information gap between locations: less informed &amp; trained individuals in certain locations that can lead to less quality output</td>
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<td>role of manager harder to fulfill:</td>
<td>managing global team becomes more difficult over distance &amp; in cases of incompatible time zones</td>
<td>agreement on the issue from all perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not being in the same location: difficult to directly collaborate or helping each other as consequence, esp. in terms of on-site training &amp; skill development</td>
<td>regular meetings &amp; adjustments to working hours necessary</td>
<td>how it is dealt with does not seem to be affected by opposing or contradicting views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaborating, problemsolving &amp; receiving help from co-workers harder to realize over distance</td>
<td>formalizing communication to prevent danger of communication breakdown &amp; to ensure global coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despite agreement on the issue, the aspect that different time zone availability cannot be offset by modern communication technology seems to be forgotten in everyday business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.2 A CONTINUATIVE EXPLANATION

The research was built around the intent of identifying consequences unfolding from employees relocating within their global teams. The analysis of the empirical data revealed overlapping patterns of ramifications discussed across the different stakeholders interviewed during the research.

The fact that the consequences presented in the analysis chapter were reflected across multiple perspectives indicates that there is a certain level of awareness on their impact among the stakeholders identified in this research. It is the common awareness of the impact of those consequences that led to delving into each of them separately. Therefore, the authors believe that the results are meaningful in two aspects. First, in identifying the overlapping patterns and categorising them into consequences. Second, in structuring the results around different perspectives. Structuring the results around different perspectives contextualises them around
a role and it further shows the limits of each perspective's awareness on the impact of the consequences.

The relocating individuals were the main actors of the relocation being the ones departing from an office and joining another. They were part of a team and interacted daily with their co-located team members, and frequently with their remaining team members (members of the global team, not in the same location). The overall data collected regarding the individual perspective showed a certain level of empathy towards the co-workers with whom they interact frequently. In other words, their scope of awareness on the impact of the consequences started with themselves and expanded to include their co-workers. Through navigating the consequences from an individual perspective, one can read in the empirical data an apprehension in regard to the relocation. Both, this level of empathy and apprehension explained the scope of awareness on the impact and the views of the individuals on the consequences of the relocation.

The co-workers were witnesses to the relocation of others; therefore, they did not show the same level of apprehension on the relocation. However, when looking at the consequences from their perspective, a greater level of empathy was displayed in comparison to the individuals. This is extended by the fact they collaborated and interacted frequently with the individual. Their level of empathy was greater certainly because they were in a position to see the relocation happening from an outsider standpoint. Moreover, they were also able to see which effects the relocation had on themselves and the rest of the team. Their outsider position in the relocation process and their level of empathy explained their scope of awareness on the impact and their views on the consequences of the relocation.

In a global team, the role of the manager is concerned with managing the different people working in different locations and across different time zones. To achieve this, they stoke to maintain communication with and between the locations and ensured the wellbeing of every member of the team. This in turn meant that their role entailed seeing the as a whole while considering each individual member. Therefore, when a relocation occurred, their scope of awareness did not change. They considered the individual relocating, the location which lost a resource and the location which gained a resource while maintaining the communication with and between all team members. Their position itself explained their scope of awareness on the impact and their views on the consequences of the relocation.
Figure 5: The scopes of awareness on the impact of relocation consequences.

Figure 5 created by the authors of this thesis illustrates each perspective’s awareness on the impact of the consequences in the cases of relocations in a global team. The outer bolded circle represents a global team which is composed of the three locations A, B and C. Each location is represented by individuals in different colours. The red links between the locations represent their interconnectedness. In the figure, the blue individual from Location A is relocating to Location C. This motion is represented by the blue arrow linking the individual to the Location C. The golden individual in the centre represents the manager of the global team. Each dotted circle represents the different awareness on the impact of the consequences of relocations. The blue dotted circle shows the relocating employee’s awareness on the impact of the consequences, the green dotted circle shows the co-worker’s awareness on the impact of the consequences and finally, the golden dotted circle shows the manager’s awareness on the impact of the consequences.

In addition to the previous chapter (see chapter 4) which elaborated in more detail on what are the consequences of relocations in global teams and the different perspectives were, the above development revealed another pathway to interpret the results. The differing perspectives suggested there might be ramifications on handling the consequences. Compared to this, similar
perspectives suggested an uneventful handling of the consequences. However, contextualising the perspectives around a role exposed different awareness on the impact of the consequences, regardless of the perspectives on the consequences. This in turn means that regardless of an agreement between the perspectives, each perspective will first show a varying level of subjectivity which will influence their scope of their awareness on the impact of the consequences of relocation. This will then subsequently affect their views on the consequences.

5.3 Resonance with the Literature

The findings of this research shed light on the different consequences of relocations in global teams and the layers of interpretations of those consequences from different perspectives. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this paper (see chapter 1.2), research on global teams and employee relocation have only been conducted separately before. Therefore, this research was not intentionally conducted with the aim of reaching findings which either confirm or refute the arguments made by previous researchers on employee relocations in global teams. It was intended to add a new perspective to the field of global teams by investigating the consequences of employee relocations in global teams. Therefore, by providing an understanding and a theoretical background on global teams and what characterises them, the literature reviewed can be rather viewed as a support for this research.

The literature review provided a rather detailed understanding on specific aspects of global teams such as the fact that they are characterised by diversity and geographical dispersion. In being located in different geographical locations, the literature acknowledged that global team members are mainly restricted to computer-mediated communication channels to interact with their team members located elsewhere. Further, in discussing the aspects of communication in global teams, the literature emphasised the prominence of technology in a virtual team setting and how impactful it is for a global team to function. Despite the support of technology, the literature also highlighted the lack of face to face communication as a consequence of the geographical dispersion between each location. This was extended to the impact of distance and virtual communication on the creation, development and nurturing of relationships between global team members.

In discussing leadership in global teams, the literature emphasised the level of effort that global team managers need to invest in managing their teams, especially in coordinating multiple
geographical locations working in different time zones. A solution to mitigating the impacts of the dispersion, as introduced in the literature, can be additional efforts from the managers to maintain the communication between the locations and team members. The latter is in line with the role of global team leaders portrayed in the literature as boundary spanners, bridge makers and blenders.

In many instances the collected empirical data resonated with the literature. Indeed, through the relocation, the empirical data acknowledged the multiple locations composing the global team and their geographical dispersion. The data also showed an agreement with the literature in regard to the communication in global teams being mainly conducted through computer mediated channels as a consequence of the distance. Still in the context of distance, the empirical data showed evidence of existing difficulties in bridging over time zones and negating the impact of the dispersion. Distance was seen similarly to the literature, as an undeniable factor which global teams strive to mitigate through the use of technology. As in the literature, the latter reinforced the importance of technology for the functioning of global teams. This was also reflected in the empirical data.

A change in relationships was identified as one of the consequences of relocations in global teams. This was also reflected in the empirical data as a consequence of both the distance and the overall communication being different than the previously experienced face to face communication. Again, in this aspect, the empirical data confirmed the points raised in the literature in regard to relationships, communication and distance in global teams.

Finally, the manager perspective confirmed the aspects of leadership in global teams raised in the literature. The managers interviewed in this research expressed the need to invest more efforts in managing a team that is dispersed in different locations and working in different time zones. In managing dispersed individuals, they stressed the importance of having a well-rounded communication flow in the team and aimed for avoiding a breakdown in communication. The empirical data and their scope of awareness on the impact of the consequences of relocations revealed that their heed is on the team as a whole, trying to consider each location and individual as well as maintaining the communication between them. The empirical data therefore provided evidence of the managers possessing leadership competencies such as the ones discussed in the literature.
Conclusively, the results of this research confirmed the arguments made by previous researchers on global teams and global team leaders. However, this research revealed an additional striking aspect of global teams not extensively discussed as a characterising aspect of global teams in the literature. In researching global teams and employee relocations with the aim of identifying the consequences of relocations, this research unveiled the prominence of interconnectedness between the locations of a global team. Interconnectedness can be understood as the fact that the team members are all part of one team despite being in different locations and that the nature of their work is highly similar but carried out in different locations. In this sense, interconnectedness can also be understood as the high level of collaboration between the team members and, more importantly, a high degree of communication between them. Although the extent of the interconnectedness was not the focal point of this research, it remained an important factor in understanding the consequences of relocations in global teams. Therefore, the authors of this thesis believe that an adjustment onto what defines and characterises global teams should be made to include interconnectedness.
6 CONCLUSION

In today’s increasingly globalised world, businesses face the challenge of keeping up with the ongoing interlinkage between countries and regions across the globe as well as the increased flow of goods and people across borders (Gupta et al., 2008). In the process of trying to master this challenge and to benefit from the world being global, several actors have decided to increase among other aspects, their size, presence and reach across multiple countries and regions (ibid.). Being a global company however entails the balancing act of simultaneously being globally integrated as well as locally responsive (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989).

In this context, the use of global teams, characterised by their team members being geographically dispersed across locations around the world as well as by being diverse, has become increasingly popular in recent years (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). Within global teams it has further become a practice to relocate employees for reasons such as filling local positions, developing managers as well as achieving global integration and maintaining control over distance (Pucik et al., 2017).

Since previous research has predominantly been studying global teams and employee relocations separately, the investigation of employee relocations in global teams has been neglected until now, despite its increasing occurrence in global companies across various industries. Therefore, this thesis has taken a first step into exploring the field of employee relocations in global teams by investigating possible consequences of relocations in global teams. Apart from that, this thesis sheds light on how different stakeholders of global teams perceive those consequences and in what way those different perspectives affected how the team deals with the consequences.

In order to do so, qualitative data was gained by conducting semi-structured interviews with (relocated) individuals, co-workers and managers of global teams from a London-based multinational in the financial services industry. The gained data was further analysed by conducting a thematic analysis, involving among other steps the identification of themes and sub-themes which provided the ground for the presentation and discussion of the findings.

Based on this research, the following will conclude the results of this thesis in terms of academic contributions and practical recommendations before addressing the limitations of this investigation as well as suggesting possible areas for further research.
6.1 ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Based on the circumstance that previous research has predominantly studied global teams and employee relocations separately, this research on employee relocations in global teams is a first approach of investigating both topics in combination.

Apart from confirming previous arguments in the field of global teams and in terms of academic contribution, this study was able to shed new light on what consequences employee relocations can have on global teams. In addition to that, it has been investigated how different stakeholders of a global team perceive these consequences and how dealing with them can be shaped by their different perspectives. Furthermore, the analysis of the gained data led the authors to argue for including the aspect of interconnectedness as a further aspect of defining and characterising global teams.

Based on the empirical data, it can be concluded that a relocation in a global team leads an individual to leave the former office in order to relocate to a new office. As a consequence, work in form of tasks and responsibilities needs to be redistributed and resources need to be managed as one location or office is depleted of a valuable resource while another office or location gains in resources. Furthermore, the relocation entails a shift in communication which entails the risk of creating an information gap between locations which in turn makes the role of the manager harder to fulfil. In close relation to that and as a fourth consequence, the previously established team relationships can be described as increasingly vulnerable due to the work redistributions, the increased risks of missing out on internal communication and not feeling belonging to the team, as well as the geographic distance and different time zone in some cases.

In regard to confirming previous arguments, it can be concluded that the findings of this study support earlier academic claims in the field of global teams-research that highlighted the importance of technology, communication, the role of the manager as bridge makers, the linkage between communication and team relationships.

Considering the study of perspectives, this study provides a first attempt in explaining the interplay of the stakeholders’ perspectives and how that affects how the consequences of relocations in global teams are dealt with.
Regarding the aspect of interconnectedness, the findings of this research suggest to include interconnectedness, i.e. high levels of collaboration and communication across team members and locations, in the defining aspects of global teams in addition to geographical dispersion and diversity.

6.2 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to recommendations for practitioners, a strong emphasis needs to be put on the word *acknowledgment*. Regarding the practice of relocating employees in global teams, the empirical data gained for this research suggested that despite the team and its stakeholders being aware of certain consequences of relocations, there are different perspectives on the impact of those consequences. This in turn leads to different views on how the team attempts to mitigate the consequences of the relocation. Therefore, this thesis recommends practitioners first to put more attention on acknowledging the consequences of relocations itself as well as on acknowledging that there are different perspectives on those across the team.

Acknowledging the consequences and the different perspectives includes also being aware of the multiple ways in which the consequences of relocations can affect not only certain individuals in the team, but also the team overall. The findings of this thesis revealed that, in some instances, certain consequences are bound to a high level of subjectivity which is a phenomenon that the team needs to be aware of, and that everybody in the team needs to balance out. Because of that, another practical recommendation from the authors’ side is that the organisation and its managers need to put more emphasis on how subjectively some consequences of relocation can be perceived in order to try to get the involved stakeholders to broaden their scope of awareness. Thereby, the global team, but also the organisation overall can become more resilient towards dealing with the consequences and in mitigating the possible risks of relocations within the team.

Apart from that, especially in everyday business, team members need to put more emphasis on acknowledging that, despite modern technology, certain aspects of working across locations cannot be offset yet. Aspects such as different time zones and geographic distance that influence how internal communication needs to be handled, which in turn can affect team relationships need to be considered in a global work setting. As witnessed in the case of Company X, these aspects are mostly known but not always considered when discussions are held informally in
the headquarters and crucial information does not always reach everybody in the team, especially the employees in locations with different time zones. To prevent this and further consequences from happening, one needs to bear in mind the particular aspects of working across locations and the situation of other team members across the globe.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

Even though this thesis was able to shed new light on the field of employee relocations in global teams, the choices made in the process of conducting this research also entailed certain limitations that will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

As already mentioned, while explaining the methodological aspects of this thesis, the context of this research can be described as rather specific. This is caused by the circumstance that the investigated organisation, Company X, a London-based multinational is a client-centric organisation. Because of that, it needs to be addressed that the investigated consequence of work redistribution - which to a great deal involves the reallocation of clients across analysts - is rather specific for an industry that predominantly operates client-centrically. The authors argue in this regards that to a certain extent, work redistribution would also be a consequence of relocations in non-client-centric businesses. They however acknowledge that for non-client-centric businesses, the behaviour of clients would not influence the work redistribution process as it might have been the case for Company X. Because of that, the generalisability and transferability of the findings presented might be partially limited by the characteristics of client-centric businesses.

Furthermore, the qualitative data for this thesis, gained by conducting ten semi-structured interviews, is based on a sample size of only eight interviewees, due to time and resource constraints. Even though the number was assessed as suitable because rich descriptions and valuable insights were provided, the significance of the results can still be questioned in terms of generalisability and transferability.

Finally, the scientific significance of results is limited by aspects such as the authors’ interpretation of the data and possibly subjective views of the interviewees, due to the nature of qualitative research. Even though measures such as ensuring a clear documentation of the research process and comparing the results of individually conducted interpretations of the data
to ensure inter-observer consistency were taken, the overall limitations of qualitative research must be considered.

6.4 Further research

Due to the circumstance that employee relocations and global teams have been studied separately until now, only limited attention has been granted to further investigating relocations in the context of global teams despite it being a practice in global companies. Therefore, apart from broadening the field of research and shedding light on the interplay of relocations and global teams, this rather explorative research can suggest possible areas for further research.

As previously mentioned, the sample size and the characteristics of client-centric organisations limit the ability to fully generalise the findings across various businesses and industries. A similar study with a larger sample size which could encompasses multiple organisations across different industries would therefore provide a suitable opportunity to support the current findings and broaden the field of research, including non-client-centric organisations.

Apart from the consequences that were analysed and discussed in-depth throughout this thesis, the analysis of the qualitative data also yielded insights which indicated that there might be at least one additional consequence of relocations in global teams. In close connection with what has already been investigated in the field of employee relocations, the findings suggest that the perceived identity of the relocating individual can change as part of the relocation process. The perceived identity seemed to either shift towards the new location or fluctuate in between locations during the relocation or as part of the integration process into the new location. Based on the data evidence, relocated individuals identify themselves either with the new location, the old location or even both. This depends on the relationship within the global team, the amount of work which require cross-border collaboration and to what extend the communication is affected by distance and different time zones. As the amount of data to fully qualify those findings is not sufficient and detailed enough, additional research needs to be conducted to further investigate what the authors would qualify as a first indication for the existence of additional consequences of relocations in global teams. Therefore, further research in the context of employee relocations in global teams is necessary to fully understand what ramifications the practice of relocations has on global teams.
Another important aspect which allows for further research is the aspect of interconnectedness. In the context of global teams, interconnectedness can be understood as the high level of collaboration and communication between the team members due to the fact that the team members are all part of one team despite being in different locations. As discussed in the previous chapter it can be argued that interconnectedness is a defining and characterising aspect of global teams. However, it remains for future research to further investigate the aspect of interconnectedness in global teams to strengthen the notion of this research and to investigate the extent of this particular aspect in global teams across multiple organisations in different industries.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Note: The following interview guides consist of main questions (indicated by the bullet points) as well as possible follow-up questions (indicated by brackets). Since the interviews, especially the first round, were conducted rather early in the research process, the terminology used differs from what has been used throughout the thesis. In this regard global assignments (alt. assignments) refer to what has previously (see chapter 2.2) been defined as employee relocation (alt. relocation).

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE – DECISION MAKER (1ST INTERVIEW ROUND)

Warm-up questions

● Can you please introduce yourself? Age, position and background?
● The journey leading to your current position?

Types of assignments, motives and expectations

● What is the reasoning behind a global assignment?
● Do you have different types of global assignments depending on the purpose?
● From a managerial point of view, what are the motives for global assignments?
(Do they vary depending of the type of global assignment?)
● Are there alternative ways to fulfil those motives rather than global assignments?
(How do you choose between those different alternatives?)
(Why global assignments if it’s the chosen option?)

● Who initiate the whole process and discussion around a potential global assignment?
● What are the expectations for a global assignment from a strategic point of view - operational point of view - and individual (going on the assignment) point of view?

Assessment and control

● How do you assess the suitability of a candidate pretending for a global assignment?
(What are the criteria you look for?)
(Does a failure to fulfil those criteria mean the person can’t go or is there an intent to get the person to a level worthy of going?)

(Does that depend on the type of assignment?)

- How do you assess and evaluate the success of a global assignment?

(What measures do you use to determine whether a global assignment is a success of not?)

(At what point in time do you assess the global assignment?)

(What are the areas/criteria that you particularly emphasise on when assessing a global assignment?)

- How do you maintain the relationship with the individual going on an assignment?
- How do you maintain control over distance?
- Centre of gravity around US and Europe for many reasons however, the team is global, do you feel like the other regions are not getting more attention given growing opportunities? (The vacant position in Singapore for a year)
- How does that affect the overall global development and strategy of the team?
- How could you remedy to that?

**Decision-making process**

- How many people are involved in the decision of approving the global assignment and the individual going to execute it?

(What are the factors influencing/affecting the decision?)

(To what extent does the firm’s global strategy influence the decision?)

- How do you deal with time in this process?

(Does time come as an issue?)

(How long does the decision-making process take?)

(What do you think are the reasons for this?)

- Are there consequences of an individual leaving a team to join another one?

(How do you manage and mitigate or prevent these consequences?)

(Does the depletion/addition of resources affect the teams? How?)
(How do you manage and mitigate or prevent these consequences?)

- What role does the re-entry of the employee play in the whole decision-making process?
- How many people are involved in the preparation and execution of the re-entry?
- What are the reasons for the low level of actions considering the business need and opportunities?

(Why not hire locally?)

**Concluding remarks**

- Asking possible follow-ups or other questions that are still open
- Thanking for the interview and the participation
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE – HR (1ST INTERVIEW ROUND)

Warm-up questions

- Can you please introduce yourself? Age, position and background?
- The journey leading to your current position?

Preparation process

- Could you please briefly describe from the HR perspective the process required for sending an employee on a global assignment?
- How and by whom is the planning and execution of a global assignment initiated?
- How do the candidates get assigned for a specific assignment and who is involved in that process?
- How does the candidate get prepared before, during and after the assignment?
(Who is involved in these processes?)
(How long does it take until a candidate departs on an assignment?)

- What arrangements are taken by the company for executing the transition/relocation?
- To what extent is HR handling the formalities around the move?
- How is the benefit structured for the person on assignment established?
(To what extent can the individual negotiate those?)

- To what extent does the individual’s life situation play into the preparations done by HR?

During the assignment

- How does HR maintain a relationship with the person on assignment?
- How does the communication with the person on assignment take place?
- How does HR ensure the wellbeing of the relocated person and improve the situation on site?
- How does HR support the person on assignment?
Re-entry

- What role does the re-entry process play from a HR perspective?
- How is the re-entry process prepared/arranged?

(When does the re-entry process start from a HR perspective?)
(Is time a determining factor in the re-entry process?)

- What are the important elements of a re-entry and how can HR approach those?

HR responsibility

- During an employee relocation, is there a transfer of responsibility regarding the employee’s HR representatives?

(How does that transfer happen?)
(How long does that transfer take?)
(Why do you have multiple HR representatives involved as opposed to having one carrying the whole relocation?)

Concluding remarks

- Asking possible follow-ups or other questions that are still open
- Thanking for the interview and the participation
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE – INDIVIDUAL (1ST INTERVIEW ROUND)

Warm-up questions

● Can you please introduce yourself? Age, position and background?
● The journey leading to your current position?

Motivation/ reasons

● What were your reasons for going on a global assignment?
● How would you describe the purpose of your assignment?

Expectations

● Can you please describe your expectations on the global assignment?
● How did these expectations develop during your time on the assignment?
● To what extent did the development of your expectations affect your work?

Application/ selection/ opportunity/ negotiation

● How did you get aware of the possibility of doing a global assignment?
(Was it an external/internal offer or did somebody approach you directly?)
(How did the application process go?)
(Who approached you and how did the offer look like?)
● How did the selection process take place?
(What were the major requirements?)
● What are the conditions of your assignment?
● Did you negotiate the conditions of your assignment?
(How and with whom?)
● How long did the overall process take from the idea of going on assignment to the departure?
**Preparation/ making the move**

- How did you personally prepare for your global assignment?
- How did you get prepared for the assignment by your company?
- Can you please describe how the actual relocation process took place?

**Relationship over distance**

- How and to what extent are you in contact with your home base while being on assignment?
  (Which people are you mostly in contact with? How are you in contact?)
- How have your touch points to the company changed while being on assignment?
  (Did you get new superiors, advisers, colleagues, responsibilities?)
- How do you deal with the distance to your home base?
  (To what extent was your work affected by you being abroad?)
- How did your relationship to your home base develop during your time on assignment?
  (How did you perceive the contact with your home base during the assignment?)
- To what extent have you been impacted by your new environment?
  (Which differences have you noticed compared to being in the home base?)
  (How did you perceive these differences?)

**Concluding remarks**

- Asking possible follow-ups or other questions that are still open
- Thanking for the interview and the participation
APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE – INTERVIEWEE H (2ND INTERVIEW ROUND)

Interviewee E leaving the Chicago office

- How did the team plan the relocation in terms of work redistribution?
- Was the management involved in the redistribution?

(If yes, how?)

- How did the redistribution of work impact your/your teammates’ work?
- Did you or your colleagues have a say in what tasks you were willing to take?
- Who introduced you to your new tasks?
- How did you perceive the redistribution of work and transition to your new tasks?
- How did your relationship with Interviewee E evolve?
- From your perspective, how do you think Interviewee E handled his transition from US tasks to London tasks?
- How did you perceive Interviewee E’s integration into the London team?

(Did you hear anything from Interviewee E in London about his integration process?)

- How was Interviewee E’s integration in the team when he joined as a new hire in Chicago?
- How long did it take until he felt comfortable?

Concluding questions

- When looking at the whole process, what do you think could be improved or changed?
- When you reflect on your current situation and the teams, what team do you identify to?
- Asking possible follow-ups or other questions that are still open
- Thanking for the interview and the participation
APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE – INTERVIEWEE E (2ND INTERVIEW ROUND)

Own departure from the Chicago office

● When you joined the Chicago office, how was your integration in the team?

● How long do you think it took for you to feel comfortable and fully integrated in the team?

● How did you plan the months leading to the departure to London work-wise?

● How did the preparation impact your work?

(Did you wait the last minute to make the necessary arrangements or did you plan the transition early?)

● How was the management implicated in the transition?

● How was your work allocated across the team?

● Who was in charge of bringing the colleagues up to speed with your tasks?

● How do you manage handing over your tasks to your colleagues?

● How did you perceive the transition for your colleagues?

● How did the relationship with your colleagues evolved in that time?

( Have you noticed any changes?)

Own arrival at the London office

● What were your expectations, relationship-wise?

● How long before departure did you talk or prepare with your colleagues in London?

● How did the transition between your US tasks and EMEA tasks go?

(How long did it take?)

(Did you get some support from other colleagues/management?)

● How did you experience your integration in the London team?

● How long did it take until you felt comfortable and integrated in the team?

(What made you feel that way?)
Interviewee F leaving the London office

- How did the team plan the move in terms of work redistribution?
- Was the management involved in the redistribution of work?

(If yes, how?)

- How did the redistribution of work impact your or your colleagues’ work?
- Did you or your colleagues have a say in what tasks you were willing to take?
- Who introduced you to your new tasks?
- How did you perceive the redistribution of work and the transition to your new tasks?
- How did your relationship with Interviewee F evolved during the redistribution/transition of work?
- From your perspective, how did you think Interviewee F handled her transition from London tasks to Singapore tasks?

Concluding questions

- When looking at the whole process, what do you think could be improved or changed?
- When you reflect on your current situation and the teams, what team do you identify to?
- Asking possible follow-ups or other questions that are still open
- Thanking for the interview and the participation
APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE – INTERVIEWEE F (2ND INTERVIEW ROUND)

Interviewee E arriving at the London office

- What was the team’s expectations on getting someone new (sb. like Interviewee E) in the team?
- How long before the arrival did you talk to/prepare with him?

(Was the management involved in this and how?)

- How did the transition of work, tasks and responsibilities go?
- Who was mainly involved in the transition?
- What is your opinion on how the transition went?
- From your perspective, how did you experience the integration of Interviewee E in the team?
- How long do you think it took for him to be comfortable?

Own departure from the London office

- How did preparing for your work transition impacted your work?

(Did you wait the last minute to make the necessary arrangements or did you plan the transition early?)

- How were your work/tasks allocated across the team?
- How was the management implicated in that process?
- Who was in charge of bringing the colleagues up to speed with the new tasks?

(If it was you, how did you manage that additional responsibility?)

- How did you perceive the transition for your colleagues?
- How did your relationship with your London colleagues evolved during that time?

Concluding questions

- When looking at the whole process of Interviewee E’s relocation and your relocation, what do you think could be improved or changed?
- When you reflect on your current situation and the teams, what team do you identify to?
- Asking possible follow-ups or other questions that are still open
- Thanking for the interview and the participation