

UNDESTANDING THE BOUNDARYLESS NATURE OF GLOBAL CAREERS

Abstract

International careers are reported to represent a prototype of boundaryless career in which individuals frequently change their employers. It is thus important for companies to better understand the turnover among internationally experienced managers. The present study aims at increasing our understanding of 1) the elements of total compensation which the global careerists value, 2) the factors which have impacted their decisions to change employers or to reject job offers, and 3) the factors related to their future employer decisions. The results indicate that global careerists emphasize the role of non-financial aspects of their total compensation. A similar view appeared with regard to reasons for employer changes or refusal from job offers though also the importance of location and family-issues emerged. The results frame a view of dual nature of global careers: interesting career possibilities in international context while career problems often emerge in repatriation. Four drivers and four 'counterforces' impacting to the extent of boundarylessness of global careers are identified.

Key words: global careers, turnover, total compensation, expatriation, boundaryless career

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the globalization of business, companies face new challenges on the management of their human resources. It has been reported that the identification and development of talent on a global basis, and getting the right skills to where they are needed, are among key challenges of global HRM (Roberts et al., 1998). Overall, the increased, international competition for talent has led to growing interest toward talent management practices within MNCs (Sparrow et al, 2004). The key questions appears thus to be on how to attract and keep experienced international managers. This is crucial

since it has been widely discussed that companies have an increasing shortage of such managers (Harvey et al., 1999).

At the same time, international careers are reported to represent a prototype of boundaryless career in which individuals frequently change their employers and are thus not highly committed with their employers (Baruch et al., 2002; Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004). The evidence for this view has been drawn from the repatriation studies in which it has been reported that an extensive proportion of repatriates leave their employers after the assignment and even more of them seriously consider it (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). In order to develop effective talent management practices that attract and commit internationally oriented managers, there is a need to fully understand the preferences and employer-related career decision criteria of global careerists.

It can also be argued that when the expatriation research has mainly looked at careers after single assignments from the angle that expatriates return back to their domestic careers, the view of international careers may be biased. First, it has been criticized that overall boundaryless nature of new careers opposite to traditional careers have been overemphasized (Baruch 2006). Second, there has been increased interest in understanding so-called global careers (Suutari 2003; Cappellen and Janssens, 2005; Dickman & Harris, 2005; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007) which took place in a different career environment. This perspective builds on the notion that there are increasing amount of managers who have longer term international career involving multiple international assignments often in combination with short-term assignments

and/or internationally oriented jobs in the home country / corporate headquarters. The focus is thus on long-term careers of internationally mobile managers.

The emerging question is thus whether our understanding of boundaryless nature of international careers and the factors behind related employer change activity adequately captures the nature of such global careers. Is it possible that we have build too single-minded views on the nature of international careers when relying on evidence that is drawn from the repatriation context while, at the same time, around half of European expatriates have been reported to already have earlier international assignment experience (Stahl & Cerdin 2004; Jokinen et al., 2008). In the present paper, the focus is on individual perspective of such experienced global careerists themselves, i.e. the present paper aims to increase our understanding of what kind of issues global careerists value in their career related decision making, in particular in their decisions concerning job changes involving also an employer change.

In order to understand the career decisions of global careerists, the present paper adopts a total compensation perspective as a starting point. Typically the focus of research has been on expatriate's financial compensation (Bonache 2006) while total compensation perspective includes also the non-financial elements such as having an interesting job, breath of responsibilities, a strategic role in the organization, development opportunities and career possibilities. This approach provides broader view of issues that global careerists consider important in their career related decisions.

In the light of this, the first goal of the present study is to analyze the elements of total compensation that the global careerists value the most in their career- and employer-related decisions. Second, the focus is turned to actual career-related decision making situations that global careerists have faced recently: i.e. their decisions to change employer or to reject external job offer. This way it is possible to identify different factors that are related to the boundaryless nature of global careers. The qualitative approach enables us to raise up different key factors that global careerists report as reasons behind their employer changes, and thus to position the total compensation issues among the overall reasons for employer changes which take place in global career context. Third, the future career perspective is included also in order to reflect further the employer decisions of global careerists.

2. THE BOUNDARYLESS NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL CAREER

In order to understand the nature of international careers, we rely on two related career research traditions: 1) studies on short-term career impacts after repatriation, and 2) studies on more long-term global careers. These research perspectives provide us with a more holistic view on what we know about boundaryless nature of international careers.

Research on expatriation from international career perspective focused on understanding the repatriation challenges the expatriates face and short-term career impacts of single assignments (Baruch et al., 2002; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004) – assuming that such careers take place in the home country after repatriation. The key message is that employee turnover after the assignments is a major challenges for MNCs due to the

lack of suitable jobs with high enough autonomy, responsibility, role discretion (Linehan and O'Sullivan 2003) or any kind of clear career direction (Dickman and Harris 2005), in addition to overall repatriation adjustment challenges expatriates and their families face (Baruch et al., 2002).

As an outcome, international assignments increase both a manager's willingness to change employers and post-assignment turnover rates (Baruch et al., 2002; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2001; Suutari and Brewster, 2003; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004). Repatriation problems together with positive development and personal growth experiences abroad create push factors for searching better career possibilities in external job markets (Hyder and Lovblad 2007). Boundaryless careers seem to have become a prototype for international managers (Bossard and Peterson, 2005; Stahl et al., 2002). The main limitation of such traditional studies is the short-term focus, i.e. ignorance of more long-term career impacts of international assignments (e.g. Bolino, 2007). Second, the focus has been on retention rates which are seen as failures from corporate perspective. The question of whether international assignment is actually a good career move from the perspective of an individual – even when not for the sending organization – remains open (Yan et al., 2002).

Besides looking at the impacts of single international assignments, there is an increasing interest in taking a wider view toward international careers through *global career perspective*. For example, studies indicate that 40 – 60 % of European expatriates have also earlier international assignment experience (Stahl & Cerdin 2004; Jokinen et al., 2008) – among self-initiated expatriates the figure may be even 70%

(Cerdin & Le Pardneux, 2009). It seems that increasing number of international managers and professionals select to work in international career context over longer term. As an outcome, the nature of global careers have started to gain more interest lately (Suutari 2003; Cappellen and Janssens, 2005; Dickman & Harris, 2005; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). The present study focuses on this particular group of internationally very experienced global careerists, who have various, long-term, international work experiences from several countries (Suutari and Mäkelä, 2007). Their career tracks thus indicate that they are committed to operating in global career context in a long term.

The factors that lead individuals toward global careers may include negative experiences such as discussed in repatriation context above, i.e. people end up accepting new international assignment in which their international experience and competences are better valued than in their home employers (Caligiuri et al, 1998). The expatriates may also have positive global career experiences of rich and interesting work environments for managers who enjoy cultural diversity and search few new experiences, challenges and development opportunities in their work (Suutari 2003; Bossard and Peterson 2005) or they may value the life style benefits often offered such as increased level of compensation, better living environments or lower costs of living.

In the light of these developments, it can be questioned whether our understanding of boundaryless nature of international careers with related career problems is valid also within this kind of global career context. For example, a group of global careerists interviewed by Suutari (2003) reported that they had faced a good international job

market situation instead of having career problems. In order to increase our understanding of the boundaryless nature of global careers, the present study analyses what kind of factors explain the employer-related decisions the global careerists make during their careers. This is done through total compensation perspective which is discussed next. It provides a broad theoretical framework for understanding what global careerists value and what kind of factors are related with turnover. As an outcome, this perspective also offers views on what organizations should offer to global careerists in order to attract and retain them.

2.1 Total compensation approach on understanding turnover of global careerists

Based on the literature review on total rewards, total compensation package includes two main types of components: financial components and non-financial components. The financial components include elements such as fixed pay, flexible pay, insurance and international allowances. The fixed pay corresponds to the compensation where the amount and payment is guaranteed (gross salary). The flexible pay includes variable pay and deferred income. Variable pay refers to compensation whose amount varies or distribution is uncertain (e.g. performance-related pay and bonuses). When the composition of these compensation components may be similar to the one of national compensation package, the composition of the remaining components of the total compensation package usually differs in international assignment context.

Previous literature and related scarce empirical research on expatriate compensation point out the important role of allowances in expatriate financial compensation (Guzzo,

Noonan and Elron, 1994; Suutari and Tornikoski, 2001). Such allowances refer to payments that are typically used to bridge the gap between reasonable expenditure in the home and the host country (Torrington 1994), to cover the costs of moving overseas, and to motivate the individual to make such a career move. It includes typically an overseas premium, a cost of living allowance, housing allowance, hardship allowance, home-leave allowance and dual-career allowance, and the like the insurances provided by the organization may cover expatriate's assignment-, travel-, health-, life-, accident-, retirement, and unemployment, but also the family members' who move with the expatriate.

As far as the non-financial components are concerned, the present study focuses on communal and intangible rewards. These are rewards related to the work itself – the intrinsic rewards. They include, for instance, having a meaningful role and / or large scope of responsibilities, getting recognition, and having strategic role in the organization. They also include personal rewards related to the work environment and the fact of working overseas such as perceived rewards linked to social- and professional- status opportunities or work-life balance. By bringing in such non-financial rewards, the total compensation view allows a broader view on what kind of elements the individuals value and how they weight them when making career- and employer- related decisions. When aiming to retain or attract key talent in global career context, the total compensation perspective offers a new, broader perspective than traditional compensation perspective. No earlier research could be found on how such total compensation elements impact employer related decision making of global

careerists – neither in the level of compensation preferences nor in the level of actual employer decisions. Next, the methods of the study are presented.

3. METHODOLOGY

We adopted a qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews with 20 Finnish managers with a global career, defined as having had three or more international assignments during the course of their working life which was seen to indicate a more long-term orientation toward global careers. The sample was derived from a larger quantitative survey among Finnish business graduates currently on expatriate assignment. Twenty interviews were conducted during the April and May 2008. Since the respondents were located all around the world, the interviews were carried out via telephone.

The respondents represented a variety of industries. The majority of global careerists (n=15) were males though there were also females (n=5). 15 of them had also children. 25 % of them had three international assignments behind, 30 %, and 45 % had had five or more international work experiences during their career. Their assignment locations covered 13 countries and four continents.

Table 1. International career related information

	Amount of employers (n)	Countries and lengths of assignments
1	8	Thailand (4); Thailand(3); Switzerland (7->)

2	4	Italy (2); Italy (2); Taiwan (5); Italy (2); Hong Kong (2->)
3	14	South Africa (1); Australia (2); Japan (1); Germany (9->)
4	4	Vietnam (1,5); Africa (1); USA (2); Chile (11->)
5	1	China (3); Norway (4); Spain (4); India (2,5)
6	3	UK (2); Belgium (3); Thailand (4); UK (5,5); Thailand (2,5 ->)
7	4	USA (5); Brazil (4); China (1); Brazil (2->)
8	6	UK (1,5); USA (3); Netherlands (6); Czech (2->)
9	2	Germany (4); Singapore (2); Germany (10->)
10	6	South Africa (3), USA (5); Belgium (2); France (); Belgium (9->)
11	3	Philippines (2); Thailand (1,5); Japan (3,5); Dubai (3->)
12	7	USA (13); UK (1); France (1); Italy (1); Russia (5); Spain (1-2?); Denmark (1-2?); Greece (1-2?); USA (2->)
13		Switzerland (4); France (1); USA (2); Central Europe (2); China (4->)
14	1	Portugal (2,5); Italy (2); Morocco (2,5)
15	7	Africa (4); Hong Kong (3); Netherlands (7->)
16	5	Saudi-Arabia (4); Kenya (5); Egypt (5); Jordan (3); Syria (3->)
17	8	USA (2); UK (1); Sweden (3->)
18	7	Germany (3); Taiwan (3); Germany (3); China (1); Germany (4->)
19	2	Germany (9); UK (5); USA (10); Germany (2);
20	5	Barbados (2); Nepal (?); Uganda (?); Kambodza (?); Belgium (9->)

The interviews lasted between 33 and 132 minutes, resulting in an extensive database of word-by-word interview transcripts for analysis. The interviews were all conducted in Finnish, and the verbatim quotations were translated into English by the authors. The interview data was content analyzed using replication logic. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used in order to bring out underlying patterns and relationships. First, the interviewees gave a detailed account of their previous career paths and current

assignments. Second, they were asked about their total compensation preferences during their global career. Third, the respondents were interviewed about concrete career related decisions to change employer or reject an external job offer. Finally, they were asked for their future career plans concerning possible employer changes in international context and their possible plans to repatriate back to the home country.

4. FINDINGS

The results of the study are reported in three sections. The first one reports findings on the total compensation preferences of global careerists. The second section reports findings on concrete decision making situations. Finally, the future career views of global careerists are analyzed.

Total compensation preferences of global careerists

The results on total compensation preferences are summarized in the Table 2 and discussed thereafter.

Table 2. The total compensation elements which the global careerists value the most.

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- A) High level of challenge and related development possibilities
 - B) High level of autonomy
 - C) Meaningfulness and importance of the job
 - D) International nature of job

E) Total level of compensation and life style it offers

From the interviews it became clear that the factors related to non-financial elements of total compensation were stressed over the financial compensation. Global careerists emphasized that the nature of job and job environment is what they value and thus non-financial factors had not been in key role when they had selected such career. Several key themes came up during interviews. First, there was a strong orientation among global careerists on searching for new challenges which lead to continuous development possibilities. It was also stressed that within international context one can utilize and develop further the skills that one has developed through international experiences to a larger extent than what would be possible in domestic setting – the fact that has often been reported as a problem in repatriation studies (see e.g. Doherty et al., 2007):

“It is about having new tasks and learning new issues; facing new challenges, it is nice to do something new and different. Most rewarding issue is that you learn continuously something new.”

The second job-related factor which was emphasized during interviews concerned the high level of autonomy that the managers were having and enjoying (see also Stroh and Gregersen 1998; Boies and Rothstein, 2002). High level of autonomy is related to factors such as the senior positions the respondents hold, long distance from the HQs and related to that, from their own supervisors. As an outcome, the managers were allowed to operate in an autonomous manner since not much supervision was received from the HQs where people were not familiar with the local circumstances. In cases

where the respondents operated in less developed country contexts, they couldn't rely neither HQ nor the locals.

“What motivates me is pretty much having this kind of work with challenges and freedom to do the job independently. These issues are really important to me.”

Besides developmental opportunities and autonomy, also the importance of having a meaningful, strategic job in which one can clearly make an impact appears to be important for global careerists:

“I think that the most important is that you like your job - it has to mean something to you and you must have the possibility of having an impact ... it is a strategic kind of work in which you change things and develop those further.”

Fourth, the fact of being able to work within international environments was clearly among key factors that were perceived as important and personally rewarding (see also Suutari 2003). Besides of being able to have a cross-cultural flavor in the work, the respondent stressed that they value the richness of experiences they are facing and the possibility of seeing different kinds of countries when moving across borders.

“My career has been really varying. I have liked really much the fact of being in different countries and being involved with different kinds of people. It rewards you very well – how to say – to be an international person, to be able to see the world.”

As discussed already above, the non-financial factors were clearly dominating above the financial compensation as a motivational issue in career decisions of global careerists. This was nicely summarized by one of the interviewees:

"I have a challenging job with a high level of responsibility. There is as much autonomy as I want; that has been a very important motivational factor to me. I have a very meaningful and important position in the organization. I am not here for the money."

At the same time, it is necessary still to understand that financial issues do appear to play a role in the career decision making of global careerists. The order of importance just appears to be such that first of all the non-financial issues form the basis for decision making and only when the job is interesting and challenging enough, the monetary issues are brought on the table. It was also pointed out that besides the total level of compensation one has to take into account what kind of standard of living one can achieve through certain level of compensation in certain context:

Also the compensation issues, benefits and insurances have to be adequate – these are sort of self-evident issues ... The compensation is one motivator, i.e. it is typically economically more rewarding (to work abroad), but it has never been a primary motivator. It has been the possibility of learning something new and getting into new cultures."

Different kind of insurances and basic allowances were seen as important but at the same time as pretty self-evident parts of the contracts and thus those were not seen as motivational elements at all. It was also pointed out that compensation issues such as allowances are important from the family perspective since those facilitate the adjustment of the family through offering high enough standard of living. Next, the focus is turned to actual career decisions that global careerists had made.

Retention: factors explaining employer decisions

The reasons behind the career decisions concerning possible employer changes were approached from two closely related perspectives: a) what were the reasons behind latest employer change, and b) what were the reasons behind the latest refusal from external job offer. The key findings concerning the reasons behind employer changes are presented in Table 3 and discussed thereafter.

Table 3. Reasons behind previous employer change.

1. External push factors

- A) Business restructurings (e.g. mergers and acquisitions)
- C) Periodical nature of contracts
- D) External job offers from networks (social capital)

2. Motivational factors from total compensation perspective

- A) Task Type
 - B) Organization type
 - C) Location
 - D) Financial compensation
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In the analysis of the qualitative data it appeared that reasons coming from both external environment and internal motivations and thus capturing total compensation perspective were reported. External reasons appeared even stronger than individual motivations as reasons behind employer changes. Three groups of such external push factors appeared. The most common reason for employer change was organizational restructuring like merger or acquisition which had impacted the employer. Restructuring had led to either job change either internally or then had lead to turnover (e.g. employee resigning due to change or employee fired when the job disappeared). However, in many cases the job remained about the same though the name of the employer had changed.

"I started in July but then there was a merger already in October and I lost my job. But I found a new job there before I left to Spain on a project for the UN... When I began working in Sweden, it started to look like wherever I went, there is an immediate restructuring. This job disappeared in half a year during which the organization was reorganized. I still stayed in the same unit in Sweden."

The second factor that could be seen as an external factor impacting employer change activity was related to concerned the external job offers that global careerists received through their networks (Mäkelä 2007, Mäkelä & Suutari 2009). The respondents described that they had actually been really passive in looking for external jobs but they were many times offered such jobs. As an outcome, the employer changes related very often to actions that followed such offers coming from their networks or from headhunters:

"Opportunities have just appeared. I hadn't been very consciously looking for those, but instead those appeared as an outcome of meeting someone from my previous

jobs ... I have met huge amounts of interesting people and partly due to my travels and the people I met, these new possibilities have opened to me."

The third driver toward job and possible employer change comes from the nature of international posts, i.e. typically those are project type jobs or expatriate assignments which are meant to have a periodical nature. If those are expanded over longer period or made permanent, the negotiations on changing to local contracts are opened due to the basic premise that after e.g. 5 years most MNCs are not willing to continue with expatriate terms. In that way, global careerists are frequently facing the question of what will follow in their career and thus external possibilities may also be considered:

"I now have a time frame of two years to make decisions about my next job (due to my job contract): whether to continue with this employer, whether to continue in the same location or whether to leave somewhere else. "

Besides these external drivers toward considering external employer options as well, the internal motivations for retention appeared. In line with the discussion on major motivators among global careerists reported above, the job type appeared also here as the most important reason for employer changes. The factors stressed already earlier, i.e. challenges and related learning possibilities, high level of autonomy and meaningfulness of the work, were again discussed. These job-related factors were so closely connected in the expatriates' stories concerning their actual decision making situations that those were now treated as one group. Also the fact of being able to utilize and develop further the competences, which they had developed during international career, was stressed.

A new factor which emerged to the list of factors impacting on career decision making was the type of the employer organization. It emerged clearly that global careerists had interest toward bigger and global organizations which were seen to value their expertise the most and thus to offer the best career possibilities in the long run.

“Our company was not this big or global enough that there would be a huge amount or other possibilities in future (while the situation was the opposite in the new firm).”

The fourth factor which appeared from the data was related to location of the assignment. The argumentation had different logics: some stressed the general interest toward getting experience from new location, some had preference toward certain specific location, while some wanted to avoid or get out from certain locations. Also family related concerns were closely involved in these concerns, thus again stressing the importance of WLB-concerns among global careerists (Shaffer & Harrison 2001; Suutari, 2003; Harris, 2004).

Next the focus is turned to reverse situation, i.e. what have the reasons for staying with the present employer even when external job offers were received. Here six categories of reasons were identified (see Table 4).

Table 4. Reasons behind refusals from external job offers.

A) Family reasons

- B) Type of job
 - C) Type of company
 - D) Location
 - E) Compensation
 - F) Organizational commitment (good support and internal possibilities)
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With regard to the refusals of external job offers, the family reasons were often involved in decision making process - thus again stressing the importance of family perspective on global career context:

"During last two years I have received such offers that I have considered them more seriously, but I have ended up with the decision of staying with my current employer ... I have rejected some of these assignments due to family reasons"

In line with the findings above, the second factor behind job refusals concerned the type of the job offered. Again managers stressed such job-related factors to dominate in career decision making instead of financial issues:

"The salary and many benefits which they offered, the position at the managerial board and so on, not even that was enough - the nature of the job was such that I was not interested."

When the perspective here was about deciding to stay with the present employer even when external job offers were received, the interesting career alternatives offered by the present employer and the overall good treatment they had had within the company, were

raised up as a new theme. Such managers clearly communicated that they were highly committed with their employer organization and did not see any motivation toward employer change. It was also discussed that with regard to new employer you will never know beforehand what is the reality in that organization and thus more risks are involved in such decisions. Through international mobility and periodical nature of expatriate jobs the respondents had also been changing jobs and received new challenges and experiences without a need to change employer:

“It has been such a nice and rich working life that somehow you forget that you have worked for the same organization over 30 years. I count that each international assignment has been a new job so in that way this is my eighth job ... The job has been many-sided and challenging.”

In that way, the respondents report that they actually have had a good internal job market situation since new challenging international job have been available for these international experienced managers. Thus, the picture appears as very different in comparison to the picture of international careers drawn on the basis of repatriation experiences (e.g. Baruch et al, 2002; Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004).

I have received some job offers but those have not been attractive enough. I have been satisfied with how the company has taken care of issues, the kind of internal offers I have received and there has always been a good atmosphere. And new opportunities have appeared to me all the time.”

Also other company related factors appeared again here. In particular, the respondents had not been interested in accepting of smaller corporation since those were seen to involve more personal career risks in comparison with bigger, international corporations. As in the context of employer changes, the location related factors emerged also when the focus was on job rejections.

Though financial factors were not among top priorities here, it also became clear that in some cases also such factors had been related to the decisions on not to accept certain job offer:

"We thought about the offer with my wife, but the tasks and economical benefits were not such interesting that we would have left."

Future career perspective

When considering their future career interests, the respondents were first asked about the factors for which they could consider employer change in future. The summary of the results is presented in Table 5 and discussed there after. After that the focus is turned to the views of respondents considering accepting job offers from the home country, i.e. their view on possible repatriation.

Table 5. Factors that would motivate for employer change.

A) Task type

B) Organization type

C) Location of the assignment

D) Financial compensation

In line with previous sections, the job related factors were again strongly stressed when discussion about attractive future job offers. The discussion again circulated around already emerged themes such as new challenges and related development opportunities, high level of responsibility, autonomy, and international nature of job:

“I would like to have a job which involves more new challenge somehow, either so that I learn something concrete new, i.e. new tasks, or that I get more responsibility.”

Also the type of the organization appeared again as an important factor in career related considerations. In line with what was reported earlier, the global careerists were seen to prefer bigger, international organizations also in their future career since those were seen to offer them interesting and better career options:

“It would have to be located abroad and in this kind of bigger firm and involve international responsibilities”.

Also the location related preferences were again discussed as a factor involved in the decision making process when considering new tasks and employers. Some respondents had clearly decided the context they will work also in future while others were having several options they are willing to consider when looking for new experiences. The

location related interests where often combined with family-related issues that were again seen as important concern when deciding about future jobs.

"I would like to stay in this kind of job, but maybe in a bigger country ... I would still like to change the country, maybe go to Canada or Central Europe. My private life impacts on my decision a lot."

Finally, the compensation related concerns were pointed out as a factor that has to be taken into account. Typically the perspective was again that compensation related issues are not the first motivational factors when thinking about career related changes, but in the end the, the compensation package has to be good enough to make such a career move.

"... some kind of challenging job in which you can learn new issues and in which the level of economical compensation would be adequate."

Next, the factors concerning the job back at home country were discussed in order to understand their experiences and views on repatriation. Such discussion was seen as important in order to be able to contrast their views on domestic and global career alternatives. In line with the picture given in literature, the expatriates started to talk about really different career realities in this context, i.e. they started to talk more about concerning the why they find it difficult to look for new jobs and employer organizations at home country. The reasons why the global careerists may not consider job offers from home country are summarized in Table 6 and discussed thereafter.

Table 6. Reasons for not considering job offers at home country.

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1. Lack of interesting and challenging jobs
 2. Global orientation
 3. Salary & status abroad
 4. Family reasons
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In line with the findings discussed earlier, the job-related factors were emphasized when thinking about possible future job back at home country. Here the angle was still totally different when thinking about discussions earlier: now the discussion reflected clearly a different kind of career environment that their earlier views on global career context. When earlier they discussed about the interesting nature of jobs in international context and also about the good availability of such jobs, here they started to discuss about the problems related to finding as interesting jobs at home country:

“I don’t think I would be able to find a very good and rewarding job there – I mean both from a financial and job type perspective. And I have accepted that.”

It was also pointed out that besides the fact that the nature of jobs is typically different at home country in comparison to expatriate positions, the repatriation challenges are caused by companies which are handling the repatriation process poorly, as widely discussed in repatriation literature (e.g. Doherty et al., 2007).

“Most organizations are not handling the repatriation issues well: in particular the kind of jobs people will do after coming back. In most cases those issues are

not taken care at all... When you are away ... the possibilities of getting promoted and getting career opportunities easily pass you."

The second key factor that global careerists saw as a problem if considering jobs at home country was their global orientation, i.e. they were so strongly committed with international aspect of their career that they wanted to exclude such jobs that had no international aspect (e.g. Suutari, 2003). That naturally reduced the amount of suitable jobs at home country:

"The international work is more interesting. It is really difficult for me to think that I would be working in a domestic context only."

The third theme which emerged from the data concerned again family-related reasons. Here family related concerns were sometimes hindering the repatriation in cases where for example spouses were foreign ones or the children were studying or working abroad. Sometimes the family reasons were in turn clearly supporting the decision to repatriate.

"There will be probably no reason to stay here after the assignment has been completed. Or if the children were willing to stay here for some reason, then it would of course be one option. Our girl will probably continue her studies here."

Finally, the compensation issues and related standard of living concerns appeared in the data. The typical concern was that due to extra allowances, taxation differences and cost of living differences, the international posts offer higher standard of living than domestic jobs:

"You realize that you cannot achieve the same standard of living as what you achieved abroad. The gap can be huge ... If you had a high status job abroad, you may have had a great apartment and when you come back you may just be able to get a small one... the biggest problem is that international assignments are rendered so attractive to make people leave."

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study aimed at increasing our understanding of 1) the elements of total compensation which the global careerists value in their career- and employer- related decision making, 2) the factors which have impacted their decisions to change employers or to reject external job offers, and 3) future careers considerations concerning the employer decisions of global careerists.

The results of the study indicate that the global careerists emphasized the role of non-financial aspects of their total compensation over the financial aspects. This finding is important when if corporations want to attract and retain such global careerists. The respondents clearly stressed the on-going development opportunities, meaningfulness and importance of job and high level of autonomy, i.e. the characteristics which have been also elsewhere reported to be typical characteristics of international jobs (e.g. Boies and Rothstein, 2002; Bossard and Peterson, 2005). They also highly valued the international aspect of their career environment as suggested also in earlier research among global careerists (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007) or expatriates and self-initiated expatriates (Cerdin and Pargneux, 2009). The financial aspects of compensation should

still be seen as important, but those came up as secondary motives. In particular, elements such as allowances and insurances were rather seen as self-evident parts of contracts.

When looking at factors which were related either with the earlier employer changes and refusals from job offers or with future plans to change an employer, a similar view appeared, i.e. non-financial aspect of total compensation were stressed. It was also found that in global career context, factors like location of the assignment and family-related concerns appeared as very important. The latter supports the view that family-related factors come very strongly to the decision-making situations in global career context (Baruch et al 2002; Harris 2004; Mäkelä & Suutari 2008). Also employer related factors appeared among key factors in career decision-making when global careerists saw that better career possibilities exits for them in bigger global organization which have wider range of operations across world. The results indicated also that employer changes were very commonly related to the factors which were outside the decision-making of the respondents, i.e. such changes were caused by external factors.

When analyzing cross-analyzing these findings from the boundaryless career perspective, several such factors which could be named as drivers toward boundaryless nature of global careers, could be identified. First identified driver was the *turbulence of international business environment* which was reflected in a high number of restructurings, mergers, acquisitions and divestments that the global careerists had experiences. The second driver toward boundaryless nature of careers came from the *cyclical nature of global careers*, i.e. often international contracts are for a limited

period and relate to project types of jobs. Thus, global careerists have to regularly face the question on what to do next in their careers. As an outcome also external options are typically considered.

The third driver toward boundaryless careers was the *extensive networks* the expatriates developed during their career involving a lot of mobility and thus the social capital. Through these networks, expatriates had received a lot of job offers in global career markets. The findings on the utilization of social networks gives further evidence of fact that social capital may bear significant influence in the course of global careers (Mäkelä 2007). At the same time, they may face a challenge that they are out of domestic networks due to long absence from the home country, thus having problems in finding interesting job on repatriation (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). The fourth driver behind the boundaryless nature of careers relates to issues most widely discussed in the literature (Linehan & O'Sullivan, 2003; Doherty et al., 2007), i.e. the *challenges in finding interesting and challenging enough jobs at home country*, and thus underutilization of developed skills after possible repatriation. This was combined with another repatriation challenge, i.e. the lower standard of living after repatriation due to extra compensation elements and often also lower living costs and level of taxation abroad. Global careerists reported also that repatriation management is typically still poorly managed.

However, these drivers were balanced with strong counter forces which reduced the employer change activity and thus boundaryless nature of global careers. First, it was reported that there were good *internal job possibilities in international context* when

one is flexible and has a positive attitude toward international mobility. In that way global careerists typically saw that they have good career possibilities involving access to interesting, challenging and autonomous jobs – issues which they considered the most important. Furthermore, they valued the global aspect in their work and the standard of living they were able to achieve through such career. This counter force was connected to another issue, i.e. global careerists that through their mobility they are all the time *facing new locations and different organizational units across world, and thus having new developmental experiences*. Thus the benefits of changing employers were not offering automatically more than changing positions and locations within the same employer.

The third counterforce was the high level of *organizational commitment if their career and assignments were well managed*. In international job markets the corporations appear to value their international competencies and thus they were offered new, interesting jobs with new development challenges. The situation appears thus as very different in comparison to repatriation context where companies appear not understand the value of international experiences and their relevance to domestic jobs.. Several respondents were overall satisfied with their treatment and corporate support they had received. As an outcome, the respondents reported they had been really passive in looking any new jobs. Also possible *risks involved with employer changes* were pointed out, i.e. it is difficult to know beforehand what kind of working environment and career realities one faces in a new organization. One example of possible risk situation concerned the type of employers, i.e. small corporations were seen as too risky

employers and better, long-term career possibilities were seen to exist within global organizations.

All in all, these comments clearly indicate the dual nature of global careers: interesting jobs and career possibilities available in international context while career problems often emerge if repatriation is considered. This is reflected also in the employer change activity which is seen as indication of boundaryless nature of international careers. Repatriation challenges easily lead to employer changes due to poor career views while in international context the situation is very different, i.e. clearly more career options and interesting jobs are available if one stays on global career track. Thus, global careers may not end up being as boundaryless as domestic careers in which single international assignment is often seen as a disruption to a career despite of development opportunities which such experiences are reported to involve.

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