RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Meaning of Career: A Study of Indian Mobile Knowledge Workers in Tokyo

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ABSTRACT

The context in which individuals develop their careers and the meaning they attach to the different activities in which they engage are regarded as key elements in understanding self managed careers. The boundaryless and protean career concepts have made valuable contributions to explain such careers, but the sources of meaning driving self managed international careers are still largely unexplored. In order to address the position, and taking a qualitative approach, 22 Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo were interviewed. Based on the most salient themes of their stories, four groups were identified: Bridge Builders, IT Missionaries, Japan Adoptees and Global Workers. The differences between the groups suggest that international careers are driven by diverse meanings, beyond organisational needs and economic opportunities. The most salient observations are: (1) the role of non work goals in future planning, (2) the emotional attachment to the host country, and (3) the personal strategies of international movements. Implications of the role of meanings in related career concepts are discussed. For HR practice, the findings suggest that understanding the individual meanings can help retain key employees by accommodating for non work goals, and manage employments of shorter length. Finally, hiring foreigners in the host country seems to have positive outcomes for individuals, in terms of enhanced autonomy to manage internationally their careers pursuing what is meaningful to them.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, increasing attention has been placed on self managed careers along paths other than the linear progression of responsibility and pay in the organisation (Baruch 2004). The 'protean career' and 'the boundaryless career' are the two most influential concepts relating to such careers. The 'protean career' argues that being self driven and moving in consonance with one's own values is necessary for continuous personal transformation and to achieve psychological success (Hall 2004, Hall & Chandler 2005, Sargent & Domberger 2007). In such terms, protean career actors constantly revaluate their relationship with the organisation (Hall 2002). This stance versus the organisation is also reflected in the 'boundaryless career' which emphasises freedom and agency, and is in short, anything, but the traditional career designed by the organisation (Arthur & Rousseau 1996, Cadin, Bailly-Bender & de Saint-Giniez 2000, Sullivan & Arthur 2006). Boundaryless careers can trespass physical boundaries (e.g., organisational or national boundaries) and psychological boundaries (e.g., defying organisational norms for personal reasons) (Sullivan & Arthur 2006, Peiperl & Jonsen 2007). Individuals combining the characteristics of both protean and boundaryless careers are suggested to be in the best position to adapt to changing contexts and achieve psychological success (Briscoe & Hall 2006).

Being the alternative to organisational careers, the boundaryless and protean career concepts refer to a wide range of possible careers. For that reason, clean categorisations between 'new' and 'traditional' careers (e.g., Dowd & Kaplan 2005) have been criticised in favour of constructionist approaches (Cohen, et al. 2004, Young & Collin 2004). Recently, dimensions for both concepts have been defined, leading to a typology that has begun to be used in empirical research (Briscoe & Hall 2006, Segers, Inceoglu, et al. In Press). Other researchers have focused instead on explanatory models for self managed careers. The kaleidoscope career model (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005, Sullivan & Mainiero 2007) suggests that careers, especially in the case of women, reflect the changing priorities of *'Challenge', 'Balance'* and *'Authenticity'* during one's life course. The relationships and context of the individual are seen as playing a major role in such changes. In the case of knowledge workers, Eaton and Bailyn (2000) conclude

also that non work aspects should be considered in the study of careers: "To look at careers without taking all these intersections into account across the lifespan is to miss what is experienced by the professionals we interviewed as most central to them." (2000: 194). Thus, the study of the context and the activities most meaningful for the individual seem to be a suitable strategy in order to differentiate and understand diversity in self managed careers.

The purpose of this study is to set a base on which to understand diversity among international careers by focusing on the careers of Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo. In this article, the term international careers refers to careers that cross a national boundary, including interorganisational mobility. In order to understand different career behaviours, subjective perceptions about one's career are the focus of study. The first part of the article reviews existing literature on different types of international careers, as well as previous research on the topic. The second part describes the methodology and the third part presents the results, a description of the four different types of identified careers. At the end of the paper, the discussion focuses on three points: (1) the role of non work goals in future planning, (2) the emotional attachment to the host country, and (3) the personal strategies of international movements. The conclusions summarise the most relevant findings.

The Individual Perspective in International Careers

Research on international careers is still limited, but contributions from different fields reveal a strong diversity of shapes, objectives and dynamics driving such careers. Peiperl and Jonsen (2007) in their analysis of "global careers" (p.351) conclude that the demand for global professionals will continue to grow and will be met with a decreasing number of company sponsored expatriates and increasing numbers of "...local executives with global skills and perspectives..." and "...self propelled globally mobile professionals (global citizens)." (p.362). International careers inside and across organisational structures are then significant and complementary. Relevant literature from both types of international careers is now summarised, focusing on the individual perspective and context.

International Assignees

International assignees, or expatriates, are employees sent to work abroad by their employers, and have received ample attention from researchers. However, most research on international assignees has been done from the organisational viewpoint, and for that reason, the subjective perspective and interorganisational mobility have received less attention. Consequently, the image of international assignees traditionally has a connotation of strong commitment with the company. Nevertheless, recent findings of expatriates considering individual career issues or work life balance challenge the stereotype (Hyder & Lovblad 2007 for a review, Dickmann, Doherty, Mills & Brewster 2008). Indeed, especially among research samples from the United States of America (U.S.) and Europe, there is evidence that international assignees tend to see the international assignment as a positive event 'per se,' even when career perspectives within the company upon repatriation may not be clear. This finding has been attributed to openness towards changing organisations, suggesting that boundaryless principles apply as well to international careers (Tung 1998, Stahl, Miller & Tung 2002, Stahl & Cerdin 2004, Bossard & Peterson 2005). Interorganisational mobility of expatriates has traditionally been studied only as 'turnover' (e.g., Takeuchi, Marinova, Lepak & Liu 2005), but recently, recruitment of already expatriated employees is suggested to be a strategy potentially beneficial for organisations (Banai & Harry 2004, McKenna & Richardson 2007). But, the individual perspective of international assignees and the contexts leading to interorganisational mobility abroad are not yet well understood.

Self Initiated Expatriates

Research on international careers not based on international assignments is scarce, but reveals a very wide range of careers. Suutari and Brewster (2000) analysed a cross sectional group of Finnish working abroad and identified six different 'Self initiated expatriates' (or SEs): (1) Young opportunists who stay after studying in a foreign country; (2) Job seekers who look for higher paying opportunities abroad (see Carr, Inkson & Thorn 2005, for a suggestion of a general framework of factors influencing highly skilled labour when choosing to which country to migrate); (3) Officials who work in international organisations such as the EU; (4) Localised professionals who settled in a foreign country after an international assignment; (5) International professionals who have very specialised skills and go to where they find opportunities; and (6) Trailing spouses who work abroad following his or her spouse. The typology of Suutari and Brewster (2000) is based on the mechanisms that started the international careers, but one type may include multiple motivations. In addition, Richardson and McKenna (2002) identified four different motivations to go abroad among academic SEs who looked for a job abroad: explorer, looking for new experiences, refugee, escaping from unpleasant situations, mercenary, maximising earnings, and architect, moving abroad because of the nature of the research. These and other typologies (see also Banai & Harry 2004) combine initial motivations and mechanisms of international careers, but do not holistically explain differences in international career behaviours. The four fold typology of Conradson and Latham (2005: 160) on "...tertiary educated young New

Zealanders in London," groups' career behaviours, based on the priority given to career advancement or the search of new experiences. Indeed, the search for new experiences can be the origin of international careers. Among the numerous Australians and New Zealanders that go on an 'overseas experience', casual work to fund travel is common, but more career oriented behaviours have also been identified, leading to extension of stay (Inkson & Myers 2003) or to "never return" (Carr, Inkson & Thorn 2005: 392). International careers not sustained through international assignments comprise a very wide range of careers, but research is still scarce and scattered. The subjective perspective and the context are not yet sufficiently understood.

Internationally Mobile Knowledge Workers

'Knowledge worker' is a term usually employed to refer to individuals "...whose expertise, valued by organisations and as a source of competitive advantage, offers them access to rewarding jobs and careers." (Peiperl, Arthur, Goffee & Morris 2000: 123). Knowledge workers are a small part of the population, but are the most internationally mobile segment of the workforce and represent a growing percentage of international labour flows (Docquier & Marfouk 2006). Previous research about the careers of Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo (Agullo & Egawa 2006, 2007, Agullo, Zhao & Egawa 2007) found high international and interorganisational mobility in the subjects' careers, in line with other studies on knowledge workers (Findlay, Li, Jowett & Skeldon 1996, Iredale 2001, Meijering & van Hoven 2003, Raghuram 2004). However, a wide range of career behaviours was identified regarding both types of mobility. Moving to Tokyo is in most cases unexpected and directly related to their work, but the reasons to remain in Japan or not are more complex and consequence of their experiences (Agullo & Egawa 2006, Agullo, Zhao & Egawa 2007). Professional networks, market specific expertise (including in some cases the Japanese language), as well as the degree of emotional attachment to Japan, were found to play a significant role in the subjects' future planning. In the present article, the individual perspective is used as a base to make sense of such diversity among career behaviours through organisational and national boundaries.

METHODOLOGY

Site

According to the Japanese census of foreigners, the number of Indians in Japan has been rapidly growing during the last decade, from 6,343 in 1996 to 18,906 in 2006. Indian engineers have played an instrumental role growing at an even faster rate, from 383 to 3,279 over the same period. While the Indian community still represents less than one per cent of all foreigners in Japan, Indian engineers account for close to 15 per cent of the increase in foreign engineers from 1996 to 2006. Slightly over two thirds (67.8 per cent) of the increase of the Indian community since 1996, has concentrated in Tokyo and the neighbouring Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures.

Participants

The 22 subjects of the present study were found through participation and collaboration in events organised by social networks of Indian knowledge workers in the Tokyo area. One is based on a top university in India and the other based around a top Japanese university. A cricket team formed mainly by Indian IT engineers was the only leisure network approached. The choice of social networks over any organisational setting was motivated by the aim of including careers with interorganisational mobility (DeFilippi & Arthur 1996, Inkson 2006). After initial contact with the field, the following criteria were defined to select suitable subjects for the study: (1) Indian nationality: although that does not mean cultural homogeneity it ensures that subjects are under the same legal framework; (2) Three or more years of work experience in Japan (shorter stays were accepted if they included an interorganisational move); and (3) Work in IT or Financial companies. These are the most representative employments of Indian knowledge workers in Japan and are found to have high interorganisational mobility.

Procedure

The 22 subjects were interviewed to elicit their personal perspective through their stories. Career stories have been used in similar exploratory studies of complex careers (Arthur, et al. 1999, see also replication study of Cadin, Bailly-Bender & deSaint-Giniez 2000). However, there is no such study on international careers of knowledge workers. In order to explore, rather than test hypotheses, this article follows the philosophy of 'The Discovery of the Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Qualitative methods have been argued to be more suitable than quantitative designs to understand the complexity of factors involved in overseas work experiences (Osland 1995, Kohonen 2004, Bossard & Peterson 2005, Crowley-Henry 2007). Career research on the subjective perspective has also favoured qualitative methodologies in front of quantitative ones (Cochran 1990a, Savickas 2002, Cohen, Duberley & Mallon 2004, El-Sawad 2005, Patton & McMahon 2006, Suutari & Mäkelä 2007).

A total of 22 interviews were scheduled to the convenience of the subjects between September 2006 and June 2007. Each interview lasted about one hour. The interviews were intentionally flexible in order and the questions open ended. With consent of the subjects each of the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In some instances the subjects were contacted again by email or telephone to confirm unclear aspects of the given information.

Measures

The general structure and several questions were adapted from the protocol used by Arthur, et al. (1999), but modifications where introduced to adapt to the particular context of the subjects. Table 1 shows the modified protocol. To the 'classic' questions to elicit the basic variables and employment progression (section 1, 2 and 4), more emphasis was added on international mobility (section 3) and social life in Japan (section 8 and 9). Sections five, six, and seven aimed at eliciting the most subjective aspects regarding their careers.

Table 1 Interview protocol sections

Basic personal information:	Age, civil status, children
Experience in India:	Academic background and jobs in India
Arrival to Japan:	Reasons and initial plans
Jobs in Japan:	Experiences in each company and reasons behind each change
Points of no change:	Moments in which they thought seriously about changing jobs but did not
Future planning:	Eventual return, remigration
General questions on career:	Subjective view about one's career
General questions on Japan:	Perceptions on the country
Social networks:	How they got to know people in Japan and how they extended their social circles

Analysis

Career stories have been suggested to be particularly useful to explore the individual construction of meaning, as individuals reveal their values and goals through the goals they strive to attain (Patton 2000). The analysis of the stories was based on the more salient themes of each story. Themes have been defined by Kaufman (1986) as "… cognitive areas of meaning with symbolic force, which explain, unify and give substance to their perceptions of who they are and how they see themselves participating in social life." (p.25). The analysis of themes of an interview to understand the individual perspective of career is also supported by Savickas (2002). In his view, "…themes interpret past facts to make them fit present needs. Themes illuminate what experience alone cannot; they convey a message that supports present goals and shapes the future." (Savickas 2002: 189). The underling themes of career stories are the base of Schein's (1978) career anchors. In the present article the context in which subjects developed their careers favoured a 'ground up' approach.

The analysis of the stories aimed at integrating the different themes in a way that sensitively narrates the subjects "own story" (Savickas 2002: 190). Along the lines of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss 1967), the analysis focused on the underlying themes of the stories. Focusing on these themes, similar cases were grouped, sometimes breaking larger groups into smaller groups when consistent differences were found, and grouping smaller groups if enough common elements allowed. The process was aided with the qualitative data analysis (QDA) software 'MaxQDA 2007'. While such an approach may raise questions of reliability, the constant comparative method is designed for "creative generation of theory" (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 103). Team analysis based on coding schemes allow for a quantification for inter rater reliability, but at the same time the coding schemes are based in a given set of categories and act as a conceptual grid limiting the development of new ideas (Atkinson 1992, Silverman 2005).

After several iterations with all 22 transcripts, four main groups were consolidated and suitable metaphors that shared with the subjects the most important characteristics were chosen to represent each group. These four identified groups were nominated 1) Bridge Builder, 2) IT Missionary, 3) Japan Adoptee, and 4) Global Worker. By

labelling each of the four groups with a human image as a metaphor, the aim was to summarise them with a vivid image that was easy to understand. The use of metaphor in scientific fields has historically been seen in negative terms, only as "...temporary aids to be got rid of as soon as possible." (Døving 1996:186). However, the use of metaphors in the career literature is vast, even among researchers that do not openly embrace them (Inkson 2002). Metaphors are part of the normal language and human thought, which are used to understand complex realities in terms of something more familiar. In order to illustrate the diversity and similarities found among the stories of the Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo, their stories are grouped around the four labelled metaphors, which share the most salient themes of the subjects of each group.

RESULTS

Subjects' Characteristics

All 22 subjects were male. That was not intentional, but merely reflects the overwhelming male majority among Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo (this is a general trend caused by the geographic mobility requirements of IT, see Raghuram 2004). Regarding the marital status, at the time of the interview nine subjects were married, with the distribution of ages and periods of stay in Japan as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Demographics % (N=22)

Item	Value	%
	< 25	0
	25-30	18.2
	30-34	31.8
Age (years)	35-39	18.2
	40-44	13.6
	> 44	18.2
	< 3	4.5
	3-4	9.1
Stay in Japan (years)	5-9	40.9
	10-14	31.8
	> 14	13.6

Regarding the educational background, 10 of the respondents have a bachelor's degree, 11 of them have a master's, and one of subject has a Ph.D. In their first job in Japan 16 of the subjects worked as software engineers, while five were business developers and one as a recruiter. Reasons for migrating to Japan, 13 subjects were sent from India by their companies and five applied to jobs based in Japan. From the other four cases, one was sent to Japan from another country, one came for an internship, and two came as part of their studies. Five cases relocated out of Japan and later returned to the Japanese mainland.

Appendix 1 shows a summary of the background characteristics of each case and basic measurements of their employment history in Japan. Cases are listed along the four groups that will be now introduced for quick reference and comparison. The objective measurements of their background and employment history complement the nature of their story, which is the base of the typology.

Metaphors

In the following section, the four groups identified will be presented: Bridge Builder (three subjects), IT Missionary (eight subjects), Japan Adoptees (four subjects), and Global Workers (seven subjects).

Bridge Builder (Three Subjects)

The three subjects of this group were labelled Bridge Builders because of the primary role that the construction and maintenance of social networks take in their careers. Such activities were found to provide them with psychological fulfilment and increase their commitment to Japan.

Case 1 has combined his work in Japan with bridge building for 30 years: "I was the first Indian to join there, but I came in July, I founded this association in August.". The aim of the association is to: "Increase friendship and fellowship in the Indian community.". The activities related with this association or others in which he participates are an integral part of his professional life: "I make it very clear that this is my style of life, and [the companies where I worked] are happy with that.". While he never planned to stay such a long time in Japan, he concedes, "I'm passionate for this country.".

Case 2 has worked in five companies during the ten years he has been in Japan. In comparison, his active participation in social networks over time has been more continuous over time and takes even priority over opportunities incompatible with it: "[the] long term commitment, long term plan I have, is the India-Japan aspect. So for that reason, even if something interesting comes in a third country, I will be reluctant.". Concretely, about the future he says: "I would like to work in a very broad spectrum of business, officials, business facilitation. What I've been doing through IT, alumni relations. These meetings have been fun, something along these lines.". His participation in social networks provides him psychological satisfaction, facilitating his extension of stay in Japan.

The story of Case 3 has leadership in networks also as a salient theme. He leads a cricket team of Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo he started ten years ago when the Indian community was still very small. The social networks also played a decisive role when he started his own company in Japan: "...by this time I had enough contacts in the industry, so I decided to do something in my own. So I started contacting my friends for business.". In the near future, he has no plans of relocating.

The three stories share a commitment to articulate social networks that support the Indian community and contribute back to India. What makes these networks especially important is the fact that they take place abroad and were started from zero. By maintaining and nurturing such networks, their attachment to Japan has increased. The Bridge Builder metaphor embodies the leadership in facilitating the connection between Indians in Japan to help one another. The employment history measurements of the three cases are very different, and yet they share the commitment in leading Indian social networks they built. The long time they have spent in Japan seems more a consequence than a cause of their bridge building activities, since they started early after arrival. The fulfilment in developing vigorous social networks has contributed and structured the way they developed their career and plan over time.

IT Missionary (Eight Subjects)

The eight subjects of this group were labelled IT Missionaries because they combine dedication contributing towards others (especially those back in India) and emotional attachment to Japan. Two subgroups of four subjects each were identified based on the way in which they sought to contribute. Subjects of Balance for contribution emphasised the need for balance in their life so that they can make an impact on others. The subjects of Improving the world through IT seek to contribute back through their work; they feel part of a large project to develop India (and make Japan more competitive) rather than just pursuing their own career development.

Balance for Contribution (Four Subjects)

The four subjects in this group have actively rejected higher paying offers to change companies in order to keep the present work life balance and be able to make a change in other people's life. They have the lowest rate of interorganisational change of all groups and they enjoy their life in Japan; those who plan to leave want to return 'home' in India, but not remigrate.

Case 4 has been in the same company through his entire career. That is not due to lack of other opportunities, but to be able to contribute: "Certainly if I moved to other banks I would be earning two times more salary or three times more salary. Twice I almost joined other companies, but my people talked to me. [...] The work is similar anywhere else, but in one place if you know more people you can get more things done.". Contribution outside the

work place is especially important in his career behaviour "I think a good sustainable career goal to ensure life long pursuit of enhanced capability and capacity to do things for others. [...] I spend a good part of non-work time in community work, which is possible as I continue to keep a steady work place which promotes community work as well.".

Case 5 has worked in three companies in Japan, but the only voluntary move was when he was called back to India after nine years. He left the company without any other offer at hand, but because of his conscious decision to remain in Japan. Through the years, he has supported activities of fellow Indians in Japan and now devotes part of his free time to help others through his participation in an association. Case 6, like Case 4, prioritises a balanced lifestyle "...sometimes, what [head-hunters] offer is very 'oishii' (tempting) but I'm not expecting that for my life.". He values helping fellow Indians cope with the cultural differences and plans having a balanced lifestyle when he returns to India: "If you pursue a career as an engineer I think it is very difficult to be an Indian family person.". Case 7 shares career stability with the rest of the group: "[offers] do come in, but I don't see a reason for me to leave.". He prioritises the human side of "work in teams" and finds Japan a "wonderful place...", but after eight years he wants to "...go back home.". In all four cases, helping others (Indians in India, Indians in Japan, or 'others' regardless of nationality) constitutes a meaningful activity they prioritise over material achievements. The commitment, rather than with company goals, seems to be with a balanced lifestyle that allows them to contribute to others inside and outside the company.

Improving the World through IT (Four Subjects)

The four subjects of this subgroup of IT Missionaries have very diverse work histories. Nevertheless, they all share now an entrepreneur mentality as they run companies (own or else) which rely in one way or another in IT engineers in India. The four subjects perceive their work as an activity with benefit, both for India and Japan; they are improving the world through IT.

Case 8 has a clear vision: "...with India globally leading in software and Japan leading in hardware, just imagine these two countries coming together.". The vision is a cornerstone of his career plans: "I'm not working for a company in Roppongi like Merrill Lynch or Goldman Sachs, it's more about bringing of these two countries together.". He sees his effort as a part of a larger project: "We are training Infosys people ask [...] why do you want to create your own competitor? What I see is that there's a big market, [...] the idea is more about creating a big market, a lot of people who can speak Japanese.".

Case 9 co-founded a company to 'help small companies' in Japan to connect with 'niche players' partners of his company in India and other countries. Similarly, the company of Case 10 helps companies entering Japan, but also Japanese companies entering India. He participates in various networks with his experience and keeps a balanced lifestyle: "I am not so much under pressure. I chose what I want to do.".

Case 11 sees his work in IT as a contribution to the development of India, but aims even beyond that: "...now I'm employing 20-25 people in India, but they are all knowledge workers, all of them, well educated, IT people. My dream is to employ any people, also non-educated, opening a factory or so, that even people who could not go to school, but who are hard workers, get some opportunity.".

These four subjects in the group of Improving the world through IT are in charge of companies that rely on branches or partner companies in India for collaboration. While it is true that financial profit is an objective of their companies, they see their work more in terms of contribution towards the development of India, even beyond the IT industry. Both subgroups of IT Missionaries, Balance for contribution and Improving the world through IT share the strong meaning they attach to contribution and all developed an attachment to Japan. Those planning to leave, do so to return 'home' in India.

Japan Adoptees

The four subjects of Japan Adoptees share a strong attachment with Japan, a country that they have come to like as a place to live and work. They do not show special eagerness to return, neither need to remigrate. For this reason, they have been labelled Japan Adoptees. For instance, case 12 describes himself as: "...not quite a typical business man. [...] I'm more quite like an academic businessman, for me to keep learning about Japan is fascinating me, [...] I'm not just professionally engaged, but emotionally engaged.". To study Japan's economy has brought him to work in Japan and not to leave for other countries, even when his extended family asks him to: "Sometimes it is a bit tough, [...] but I like Japan. I have more liking for Japan than anyone in my family.". And case 13, like Case 12, has studied about Japan and appreciates all of its facets: "I never complain about Japanese people, I have friends who have exposed me to real and underworld business.". From this position, he tries to increase the understanding of Japan among fellow Indians: "The Indians I deal with, I always try to educate them about Japan.". Tow other cases are also aligned with the Adoptees framework, for example, case 14 has changed companies twice in Japan, moving from IT to more lucrative financial positions. His relationship with Japan started as a 'love at first sight': "...when I

came here in Tokyo I really liked this place, from the moment since I was here [...] I wanted to explore more of Tokyo.". His plans are "... not decided yet. Definitely it is either settling in Japan or in India.". And case 15 came like Case 14 by chance, and afterwards changed companies three times increasingly extending his stay: "I didn't feel in need to look around, life was most comfortable [...] time went very fast." .

In the first two stories, subjects became attached through their studies in Japan on its economy and policies. For them Japan is a natural choice after their studies. In the other two stories, the attachment began after they came to work in Japan. They are open to work challenges and new experiences and could change companies, but remigration to third countries seems unlikely.

Global Workers (Seven Subjects)

The seven subjects of this group were labelled Global Workers because of the weak emotional attachment to Japan (thinking more in 'global' terms) and because of their career centred perspective on their experiences and future planning. For example, case 16 has increasingly extended his stay in Japan through jobs in four companies: "Wherever I go I will not get much value. In Japan I understand the market.". Japan is for him a workplace "I never cared about social aspects, because as a professional you come in the morning and leave in the evening.". After eight years in Japan, he plans to remigrate to ensure a good education for his children. And case 17 is similarly career centred, changing company twice in Japan moving from IT to finance: "...there's the common fact that investment banks pay fat packages [...]. They get the money from their employees' sweat, so I said, well, I don't mind doing that.". His commitment to Japan is rather weak: "[I'm] not really looking forward to increase my Japanese skills.". The same is reflected in his career choices: "I wanted to be in an international company, so that if I want to move between countries, I don't have to change companies.".

Case 18 is the clearest case of Global Worker: "I'm not now looking now [for offers in India], because the career path that I have here now, it is quite different that the India can offer me. That's why I want to stay a couple more years and then move to some other place." Very similar is Case 19: "...to be very frank, I don't see India as the kind of environment I want, the job I want, and the kind of money I want.". He describes Japan as a good workplace for Global Workers: "it's a hard path to take, but the fruits are also big, so the efforts are bound to be given.".

Case 20 includes more factors in his argument, but equally centred: "...believe me, the money in Japan is a lot more than in the US. The quality of life there is probably better, but Tokyo is a financial hub, the only other city comparable is New York, or London, but then... the other issue you face is the visa situation.". Being in Japan for seven years, though, has not translated into attachment to Japan: "So if you ask me why I'm not learning Japanese language, it's because I'm not planning to stay here, long term." "I like Japan, but given an option, I would move to Europe tomorrow." .

The stories of the following two subjects are slightly different. They share the weak attachment to Japan of the rest of the group and career considerations play the major role in their plans ahead. However, their career objectives are different from what they are doing now, which is rather a preparation to achieve their goals. For example, case 21 prioritised the quality of work of his first job in India ("the best period of my working life") over better paying offers from the US. Material rewards of coming to Japan are seen just as a vehicle to his goals: "I thought: if I go to [city in India] for the technical job, it will be more of the same, but if I go to a new place, at least I'll get the money. [...] and start my own business. That's still one of my long term plans.". As the rest of global workers, there is no strong commitment to Japan, even after a long time: "I just came [to Japan] to do my job and somehow it just went on and on, it just happened that I'm still here.". And case 22, like Case 21, is weakly attached to Japan in preparation for his career objective: "the real reason [to come to Japan] is that I wanted to learn the Japanese language [...] a good skill that would be very useful for my project.". However, learning the language does not lead to emotional attachment to the Japan: "It's not really attraction, since it is not very easy for a foreigner to live in Japan. [...] if I learn the language, it will take three or four years, then I can go back.".

For Global Workers, Japan is a place to work and does not extend much beyond that point. They are also work-centred, motivated by rewards and the challenges at work, although in cases like 21 and 22 their work in Japan is considered a preparation to for their goals.

Summary

The results show a variety of motivators and international mobility intentions between the four groups of knowledge workers, which are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Most salient themes of each group

Group	Most salient themes
Bridge Builders	Leadership in the development of social networks Strong attachment to life in Japan Diverse careers
IT Missionaries	Importance of contributing towards others Relatively low interorganisational mobility Some plan to return India for family, no remigration to third countries 'balance for contribution' → work life balance and help in free time 'improving the world through IT' → part of a larger project for developing India and globalising Japan
Japan Adoptees	Attachment to life in Japan Career centred No remigration plans to third countries
Global Workers	Japan as workplace Career centred Open to remigration to third countries

DISCUSSION

The diversity among the knowledge workers is the most basic finding of this study. Why such diversity has not been observed in other studies can be attributed to two reasons. One is that research on internationally mobile knowledge workers has focused on elements that make them different from other types of workers, such as lowly skilled labour (e.g., Findlay, et al. 1995). The other reason is the macro level frameworks used in research related to internationally mobile knowledge workers, such as brain drain (Docquier & Marfouk 2006), global cities (Ewers 2007), or the competition for talent (Koser & Salt 1997). The result is that 'knowledge worker' is tacitly understood as a uniform category that this study does not support. Based on the typology described in the results, three salient observations that challenge the uniform image of internationally mobile knowledge workers are presented.

The first salient observation is that non work goals play an important role in the future career planning of Bridge Builders, and IT Missionaries. The meaning that Bridge Builders attach to their networking activities plays an important role in their careers, as it provides a function through which they can reinforce their identity and help others around them. Similarly, IT Missionaries find especially meaningful being able to contribute towards others. However, sources of meaning other than material achievement and career opportunities are seldom quoted when talking about internationally mobile knowledge workers. The fact that Japan is a very large economy, but yet comparatively untapped in terms of IT outsourcing, contributes to the perception among IT Missionaries of being part of a larger project. More than other groups, IT Missionaries seem to relate to their work as a calling (Cochran 1990b, Hall & Chandler 2005), an engagement with work likely to be found among 'scientific diasporas' (Meyer & Brown 1999, Seguin, State, Singer & Daar 2006). The fact that subjects with shorter stays tend to be in the Global Worker group suggests that after years of experience non-work goals may become more important further material achievements.

The second salient observation of the study is that at least not all internationally mobile knowledge workers are 'neutral' to the place as it is suggested by the images of network citizen (Castells 2000), nomad worker (Beaverstock 2005) or some descriptions of Indian knowledge workers in Japan (Sawa & Minamino 2003). Three of the four groups presented, Bridge Builder, IT Missionary and especially Japan Adoptee, show that knowledge workers can become emotionally attached to a foreign country, pursuing their goals and achieving fulfilment. The attachment to Japan is implied in the activities of Bridge Builder and IT Missionaries, but it is also present for Japan Adoptees, who particularly enjoy the combination of job opportunities and lifestyle available for them in Japan. Thus, Japan means more than the 'work place' to them. Commitment to stay in a particular country may well be the case of the "localised professionals" who have a "...preference for the local environment." (Suutari & Brewster 2000: 431) or expatriates who "have 'failed' in terms of their employing organization...who prefer the autonomy and responsibility of the international itinerant work and lifestyle can provide." (Banai & Harry 2004: 102).

The third salient observation is that the accumulation of 'insider advantages' (Fischer & Malmberg 1998, 2001) encourages the continuation of career development in one location. Such perspective explains why even Global Workers, who show little attachment to Japan, may extend their stay for several years. A useful framework to see how the stay in a single foreign country can benefit career development are the three career competencies defined by DePhilippi and Arthur (1996): knowing how (career relevant skills and job related knowledge), knowing whom (career relevant networks and interfirm communication) and knowing why (career motivation, personal meaning and identification). The accumulation of location specific expertise and the networks developed (including headhunters) facilitate career advancement into higher paying and challenging positions, reinforcing their career motivation and facilitating further their stay. However, such positive feedback system may have its limitations. Case 20 (and to lower degree Case 17) shows how the lack of emotional attachment to the host country eventually may urge an international move. Context influences such as children's education can also be a force behind international moves, like in Case 16. The international movement of knowledge workers, then, is not something intrinsic of their

careers, but the result of competing forces. Organisations send their employees where they are needed, but individuals may eventually decide to stay in one location and self manage their careers. Such career shape is reflected in literature about "industry communities" (DePhilippi & Arthur 1996: 122) and "world cities" that concentrate opportunities for highly skilled labour (Findlay 1995: 518).

Implications for Theory

International careers, as the intranational sort, seem to show the same paradox identified by Anand, Peiperl and Arthur (2002): careers similar and idiosyncratic at the same time. The boundaryless and the protean career were developed to acknowledge and investigate individual career behaviours (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, Hall 2002). However, these concepts alone are not enough to explain the differences in career behaviour found by this study.

The boundaryless career is defined as the opposite of organisational careers, which is a very broad category. The careers of all the subjects of the survey could be categorised as boundaryless, and yet that would explain relatively little about their diversity. It could be argued that the careers of Case 4 or Case 6 are 'organisational' since they did not change companies in Japan. However, in turning down much higher paying offers it seems as though they are in fact rejecting "...existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons." one of the six meanings of the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau 1996: 6). In fluid labour markets such as IT and finance it increasingly seems that what they do (e.g., change employers or not change) or how they do it (e.g., networks of information outside the organisation) will be secondary to actually understanding why they do what they do.

The protean career explains non traditional career moves in terms of the individual search for psychological success, which can be best achieved by being self directed and values driven. However, there is certain ambiguity of what it means to be 'values driven,' since the concept is not restricted to any particular set of values. "Work with a contribution" and "work life balance." (Sargent & Domberger 2007: 549) are values often quoted in protean career studies, even in international cases (Crowley- Henry 2007). Nevertheless, pursuing 'material achievement' is normally absent from protean career studies, probably because it has connotations of 'traditional' career, from which the protean career presents itself as an alternative. Global workers of the study like the protean career describes seek to achieve psychological success being value directed and self driven. Their continuous search for learning and material achievement is what motivates their interorganisational moves. In summary, being values driven can lead to very diverse career behaviours, depending on which values are pursued. The protean career concept can be used to approach a very broad range of careers, but complementing with an analysis of the values provides an explanation to for many of the differences between protean careers. Pursuing work life balance, social contribution, or material achievement and learning are all possible values driving protean careers.

The classification in four groups presented in this study aims at providing understanding for international careers acknowledging the diversity among individual careers, and at the same time the underlying patterns. Two main aspects that structure the typology are the way subjects engage with their jobs, and how they relate to the context. The career anchors of Schein (1978) are based only on the first aspect. But, the relationship with the context is a fundamental element to understand the careers of the subjects. Indeed, the contextualist explanation of career (Young, Vallach & Collin 2002) emphasises the role of context as an inseparable element of career, which seems to be even more so in the case of international careers.

The four groups identified in this study could not have been predicted in advance. The reason is that the themes that differentiate the four groups are the result of the subject's experiences in Japan. The personal transformation associated with working abroad (Osland 1995, Hall, Zhu & Yan 2002), seems to influence subjects career choices. Cases attaching intense meaning to their stay in Japan and their role in developing India, for instance, resemble to what Cochran (1990b) refers as 'vocation', but this meaning can only be developed once the individual has starting working abroad and realises his or her full potential. The four groups identified, since they are identified after years of experience, can be expected to remain stable, like the career anchors and the career values (Schein 1978, Patton 2000). Summarising, even though stories describe the perceptions of a particular moment and future events may prompt changes in plans and behaviours, overall, stories provide more explanatory insight than objective instruments can provide (Cohen, et al. 2004). Concretely, the values and objectives they reveal offer a structure on which to base interpretations for international careers.

Implications for Practice

As knowledge intensive companies increasingly rely on their employees for competitive advantage (Södergren 2002). Understanding how employees see their own progression will be the key to their successful management. This study has shown a wide variety of individuals, with different speeds of interorganisational mobility and reasons for their behaviour. As Ng and Feldman (2007) suggest, from the organisational side, trying to retain all employees may not be possible or desirable, and thus, one of the major tasks of the HR department is to select which employees should be 'embedded' in the organisation. The study of Baruch and Peiperl (2000) shows how a large bank is already doing this distinction and managing top employees with more detailed assessments than the

rest of employees. Even a large IT company that had no organisational career management practices started doing so for key employees in order to bring some stability to the organisation (Baruch & Peiperl 2000).

The use of career stories aims at a better understanding of the individual by the organisation so that an effective 'partnership' can be established and continued over time (Inkson 2008: 277). Case 4 is an example of how the accommodation of non work goals can lead to long term employment. However, also shorter employment relationships can be more beneficial for employees and employers with the understanding that personal stories can provide. Alvesson (2000) suggests that in knowledge intensive companies, mutual loyalty between employee and employer can be maintained even after the employee leaves the organisation, leading to possible collaborations in the future. Indeed, Case 21 informed six months in advance of his intention of doing a master in the U.S. That allowed him to maintain good relations with the company and get a new position in the organisation when he returned to Japan. Case 22 switched investment banks, but returned one year later unsatisfied of the change. Interorganisational careers are not necessarily bad for the organisation if managed effectively. Lazarova and Taylor (2008) suggest a balance between a number of employees with interorganisational careers that ensure a continuous flow of fresh ideas and the accommodation of individual needs through internal mobility. The use of stories can help manage both types.

Hiring From the Already Expatriated

The careers of the subjects of this study reveal that a number of companies do hire foreigners already in the host country. While the concept of self expatriation has started to gather momentum (Suutari & Brewster 2000, Vance 2005), little research has actually been devoted to study this practice. Banai and Harry (2004) argue that hiring individuals with international careers would bring benefits in terms of cost, speed to deployment and fewer responsibilities towards the future benefits and career development of the individual. McKenna and Richardson (2007) suggest that hiring foreigners in host country can bring benefits for organisations in terms of: preparation, since they might have been already long enough in the host country; rewards, since they are hired locally; performance: since they already know the local context; and re-entry: no need for concern since is locally based. As the present study focused on the individual perspective, the analysis of benefits for the organisations where subjects were employed was out of the scope of this study. Nevertheless, subjects' stories suggest that for the individual, the practice of hiring foreigners already in the host country can bring very positive outcomes, as it allows them to manage their careers along what is most meaningful to them.

The present study has focused on the stories of the subjects from one particular point in time. It is expected that the classification of the subjects in the four groups will remain stable over time, but that should be confirmed by longitudinal studies. It seems that material achievement is more common in early career stages than later on, but what factors may trigger a change in priorities needs to be further researched. Longitudinal studies are also well suited to investigate another aspect not covered by the present study: the return to the home country and the meaning attached to such move. Chacko (2007) presents the stories of Indian returnees to the cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad, and finds among the motivations, career advancement, family reunion ("the pull of the roots", p.136) and the intention to make a change in the society. Thus, return to one's home country may hold different meanings for different people. Linking such meaning to the different groups presented would bring a more complete picture of the subjective side of knowledge workers' international careers.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the sample is small, and, therefore, conclusions may not allow for large generalisations. Future studies with larger samples will be useful to confirm whether the observations of this study can be applied to a larger scale and assess the representativeness of each type identified. Furthermore, larger samples will allow investigating if traditional variables such as family structure, time of stay or the objective career are correlated with the groups. With the current sample, family structure by itself does not seem to influence since there are married and single in all groups. Rather, how they incorporate their family roles with the rest of activities reflects in their overall career management. The time in Japan and the objective careers do show some weak trends with the four groups. Short stays are more common among Global Workers than in other groups and entrepreneurs seem to be overrepresented among IT Missionaries. Future studies should confirm such trends with larger samples.

CONCLUSION

Breaking the uniform image of internationally mobile knowledge workers, the analysis of the subjects' perceptions on their careers has shown diversity in the meaning they attach to their careers. Especially important elements defining diversity are 1) the role of non work goals in future planning, 2) the emotional attachment to the host country, and 3) the personal strategies of international movements. The differences between careers could not be described only with protean or boundaryless career concepts. The four fold typology presented (Bridge Builders, IT Missionaries, Japan Adoptees and Global Workers) is based on the most salient themes of the subjects' stories, reflecting their values and goals. Focusing in these aspects provides a base to acknowledge diversity while finding similarities among groups of stories. The originality of the present typology is the international context in which it is based, including elements such as the attachment to host country and non work goals.

Organisations can benefit from the deeper understanding that career stories provide. Accommodating employees' goals and motivations (even non work related) can be an effective way of retaining key employees. At the same time, stories can facilitate mutual understanding and future collaboration with more mobile employees. Furthermore, as self managed international careers increase, hiring foreigners already expatriated will become a readily available and potentially beneficial option for global staffing. The present study suggests that the practice is beneficial for the individuals as well, as it provides them with freedom to manage their careers according to what is meaningful for them.

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APPENDIX 1

Group	Case	Age group	Qual	Civil status	Arrival channel	Arrival age	Years in Japan	No. of companies in Japan	Average term employment years (SD)
	1	> 44	Master	Married	Sent	30-34	30	2	12.0 (2.8)
Bridge Builder	2	30-34	Master	Single	Application	20-24	10	5	2 (0.7)
	3	35-39	Bachelor	Married	Application	25-29	12	4	3 (2.1)
	4	40-44	Master	Married	Sent	25-29	14+2	1	14 (0)
	5	> 45	Master	Married	Sent	30-34	15	3	4.7 (2.8)
	6	30-34	Bachelor	Single	Sent	20-24	7	1	7 (0)
	7	25-29	Bachelor	Married	Sent	20-24	5	2	3 (2.1)
IT Missionaries	8	35-39	Bachelor	Married	Application	20-24	13	6	2.2 (0.9)
	9	> 44	Master	Married	Sent	25-29	17	4	3.5 (2.6)
	10	> 44	Master	Married	Sent	> 35	7	2	3.3 (1)
	11	30-34	Master	Married	Internship	20-24	10	3	2.7 (0.5)

Group	Case	Age group	Qual	Civil status	Arrival channel	Arrival age	Years in Japan	No. of companies in Japan	Average term employment years (SD)
	12	35-39	PhD	Married	Studies	20-24	10	2	2.3 (1.7)
Japan Adoptees	**13**	40-44	Master	Single	Studies	> 35	5	2	2.5 (2.1)
	14	30-34	Bachelor	Married	Sent	25-29	10	3	3.7 (3.5)
	15	30-34	Bachelor	Single	Application	20-24	9.5	4	2.4 (1.1)
	16	40-44	Bachelor	Married	Sent	30-34	8.5	3	2.7 (1.1)
	17	30-34	Bachelor	Married	Sent	20-24	7	4	1.8 (1.5)
	18	25-29	Master	Single	Sent	20-24	3.5	2	1.3 (0.3)
Global workers	**19**	25-29	Master	Single	Sent	20-24	2	2	1 (0)
	20	30-34	Master	Single	Application	20-39	7	4	1.5 (0.8)
	21	35-39	Master	Single	Sent	25-29	10	6	1.8 (0.6)
	22	25-29	Bachelor	Single	Sent	20-24	3	1	2 (0)