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Coaching Expatriates

The Practice and Potential of Expatriate Coaching
for European Executives in China

This work has been accepted by the faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Kassel as a thesis for acquiring the academic degree of Doktor der Philosophie (Dr. phil.).

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**FOR THOSE WHO GIVE
AND THOSE WHO TAKE
CHANCES!**

IN ORDER TO FILL THE SUBSEQUENT PAGES, I BUILT UP A NETWORK OF MORE THAN
100 PEOPLE IN THE 32 LOCATIONS LISTED BELOW. IN MANIFOLD WAYS,
THESE PEOPLE HELPED ME TRACE AND EVALUATE CHANCES, SEIZE CHANCES,
AND GROW BY THOSE I JUMPED AT.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ADMINISTRATIVE, EMOTIONAL, AND CONTENT-RELATED SUPPORT
AND FOR LETTING ME EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF INTERCULTURAL SYNERGY FIRST-HAND.

AMSTERDAM · BEIJING · BERLIN · BOGOTA · BRUSSELS · CHANGZHOU · COLOGNE ·
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SHANGHAI · STUTTGART · SUZHOU · SYDNEY · VIENNA · WOLFSBURG · WUXI ·

Contents

Contents	vii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	xii
List of Figures	xiii
List of Tables	xiv
‘Coaching Expatriates’ – Deutsche Kurzfassung	xv
1 Introducing ‘Coaching Expatriates’	1
2 Setting the Frame	5
2.1 Illustrating International Assignments.....	6
2.1.1 Differentiating Types of International Assignments.....	6
2.1.2 Highlighting Expatriations	8
2.2 Approaching Culture.....	10
2.2.1 Peering Through the Culture Lens.....	10
2.2.2 Characterizing Culture Clash	13
2.2.3 Weighing the Impact of Culture on Management.....	16
2.2.4 Identifying Intercultural Competence	17
3 Shaping the Focus.....	22
3.1 Picturing Expatriations	23
3.1.1 Going Abroad: Tasks and Temptations	23
3.1.2 Tapping A Hot Topic: Assignment Failure	25
3.1.3 Securing Sojourner Success: Calculation or Coincidence?....	27
3.1.4 Selecting Sojourners: Theory vs. Practice	30
3.2 Facing Expatriate Challenges	32
3.2.1 Balancing Professional and Private Life	33
3.2.2 Losing and Establishing Social Networks	36
3.2.3 Acculturating	37
3.2.4 Seeing Partners and Family Struggle.....	39
3.2.5 Communicating Across Cultures	42
3.2.6 Leading Abroad	44

3.2.7 Repatriating.....	46
3.3 Presenting Expatriate Support Measures	48
3.3.1 Enlightening Expatriate Support Measures	48
3.3.1.1 Relocation Services	50
3.3.1.2 Look & See Trips.....	50
3.3.1.3 Briefings	50
3.3.1.4 Language Trainings	51
3.3.1.5 Intercultural Trainings	52
3.3.1.6 Overlaps	56
3.3.1.7 Mentoring	57
3.3.1.8 Repatriation Activities.....	59
3.3.2 Reviewing Expatriate Support Measures	60
3.3.2.1 Classifying Support Measures	61
3.3.2.2 Talking Support: Does Theory Equal Practice?.....	64
3.4 Visualizing Coaching.....	66
3.4.1 Shedding Light on the 'Chameleon Affair'.....	66
3.4.1.1 The Term 'Coaching': An Etymological Perspective .	66
3.4.1.2 The Development of Coaching	67
3.4.1.3 Coaching Booms: Why?	70
3.4.1.4 Definitions of Coaching	71
3.4.1.5 Demarcation From Related Forms of Consultation ..	74
3.4.2 Tracing the Key Players	76
3.4.2.1 The Coach: Roles, Profiles, Concepts, and Tasks	76
3.4.2.2 The Client: Target Groups and Demands.....	81
3.4.2.3 The Organization: A Possible Third Player.....	82
3.4.2.4 Characteristics of the Coaching Relationship	82
3.4.3 Specifying the Consultation Format.....	84
3.4.3.1 The Process.....	84
3.4.3.2 The Settings.....	86
3.4.3.3 The Goals	88
3.4.3.4 The Methods	88
3.4.4 Evaluating Coaching	89

3.5 Connecting Coaching and Culture: Coaching ^{Culture}	91
3.5.1 Exploring Coaching ^{Culture}	93
3.5.2 Comparing Coaching ^{Culture} & Co: Differences, Twilight Zones, and Synergy Effects	101
4 Researching Expatriate Coaching	105
4.1 Defining the Research Question	106
4.2 Portraying the Research Design	111
4.2.1 Characterizing the Qualitative Research Approach.....	112
4.2.2 Outlining the Data Collection Methods	120
4.2.2.1 Case Selection through Gradual Sampling	121
4.2.2.2 Problem-Centered Interviews	123
4.2.2.3 Special Case: PCIs with Experts	128
4.2.3 Depicting the Data Analysis Methods.....	131
4.2.3.1 Global Analysis	133
4.2.3.2 Circular Deconstruction.....	136
4.3 Describing the Research Process	140
4.3.1 Getting Prepared	140
4.3.1.1 Approaching Interview Partners	140
4.3.1.2 Constructing Interview Guides	144
4.3.2 Collecting Data.....	146
4.3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews.....	147
4.3.2.2 Interviewer-Interviewee Relation	152
4.3.3 Processing Data	155
4.3.4 Analyzing Data	155
4.4 Reflecting the Research Design and Process	163
5 Presenting the Research Results	167
5.1 Research Results – Interviews with HR Professionals	168
5.1.1 Characterization of HR Interview Partners.....	168
5.1.2 Diverging Approaches to Expatriations and Expatriates.....	169
5.1.2.1 Expatriation Approach and Practice – HR Interview Subgroup O	170
5.1.2.2 Expatriation Approach and Practice – HR Interview Subgroup E	174

5.1.2.3	Expatriation Approach and Practice – HR Interview Subgroup E+	177
5.1.3	The Practice and Potential of Expatriate Coaching	185
5.2	Research Results – Interviews with Expatriates.....	187
5.2.1	Characterization of Expatriate Interview Partners.....	187
5.2.2	Introduction to Expatriate Challenges and Support Measures.....	188
5.2.2.1	Expatriates' Understanding of Challenges	189
5.2.2.2	Expatriates' Experience with Support Measures....	195
5.2.2.3	Expatriates' Support Wish List – Improvement in Three Areas	199
5.2.3	The Practice of Expatriate Coaching	202
5.2.3.1	Occasions and Characteristics	203
5.2.3.2	Experienced Inhibition Thresholds and Barriers	205
5.2.3.3	Imagined Reasons for the Limited Request of Expatriate Coaching.....	206
5.2.3.4	Demands on Expatriate Coaches	207
5.2.4	The Potential of Expatriate Coaching	209
5.2.4.1	Experienced Potential of Expatriate Coaching	209
5.2.4.2	Coached Expatriates on Expatriate Coaching's Additionally Expected Benefits	212
5.2.4.3	Non-Coached Expatriates on Expatriate Coaching's Imagined Benefits	213
5.3	Research Results – Interviews with Expatriate Coaches.....	216
5.3.1	Characterization of Coach Interview Partners	216
5.3.2	The Demand for Expatriate Coaching	217
5.3.2.1	Initiators of Expatriate Coaching	218
5.3.2.2	Occasions Triggering the Request for Expatriate Coaching	219
5.3.2.3	Motives for Expatriate Coaching Requests	221
5.3.2.4	Inhibition Thresholds and Barriers to Expatriate Coaching	223
5.3.3	The Practice of Expatriate Coaching	226
5.3.3.1	Types of Expatriate Coaching Application	227
5.3.3.2	Specificities of Expatriate Coaching Practice.....	231

5.3.4 The Potential of Expatriate Coaching	236
5.3.4.1 Ten Benefits of Expatriate Coaching.....	236
5.3.4.2 Limitations of Expatriate Coaching.....	244
5.3.4.3 Untapped Expatriate Coaching Potential	245
6 Discussing the Research Findings	248
6.1 Discussing the Practice of Expatriate Coaching	249
6.1.1 The Application of Expatriate Coaching during the Assignment Life Cycle	249
6.1.2 Expatriate Coaching: By Whom, Why, When, and What It Is Asked For	251
6.1.3 Design, Methods and Topics of Expatriate Coaching – Proximity to Coaching in a National Context	256
6.1.4 Specificities Worth Noting: Particularities of the Expatriate Coaching Practice	259
6.1.4.1 Efforts Towards Intercultural Competence	259
6.1.4.2 Overcoming the Distance between Coach and Coachee	264
6.1.5 Inhibition Thresholds and Barriers to Expatriate Coaching .	268
6.1.6 Coach Equals Coach? Special Demands on Expatriate Coaches	270
6.2 Discussing the Potential of Expatriate Coaching.....	273
6.2.1 Talking Benefits: Favorable Effects of Expatriate Coaching	273
6.2.1.1 Benefits Resulting from the Inherent Characteristics of Coaching	274
6.2.1.2 Benefits Resulting from the Suitability of Coaching to Enhance Intercultural Competence....	281
6.2.2 The Limitations of Expatriate Coaching: About Unfulfilled Preconditions and Sheer Inadequacy	283
7 Implications from the Research for the Future of Expatriate Coaching	286
8 Conclusion and Outlook	292
Appendices	296
References	306

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

cf.	confer, compare
e.g.	exempli gratia, for example
ed./eds.	editor/editors
et al.	et alii, and others
etc.	et cetera, and so forth
f./ff.	and the following page/and the following pages
i.e.	id est, that is
ibid.	ibidem, in the same place
n.d.	no date of publication given
qtd. in	quoted in
sic	reference to a verbatim quote of a misspelled word
vol.	volume
vs.	versus, against
AMH	Anna M. Herbolzheimer
HR/HRD	human resources/human resources development
ICT/ICTs	intercultural training/intercultural trainings
MNC/MNCs	multinational company/multinational companies
PCI/PCIs	problem-centered interview/problem-centered interviews

List of Figures

Figure 1: Professional-Private Life Tension	2
Figure 2: Setting the Frame	5
Figure 3: Types of International Assignments	7
Figure 4: Characteristics of Culture	11
Figure 5: Culture Puzzle	16
Figure 6: Intercultural Competence Dimensions	18
Figure 7: Complexity of Intercultural Competence	19
Figure 8: Shaping the Focus	22
Figure 9: Expatriate Assignment Life Cycle	32
Figure 10: Expatriation Hurdles	33
Figure 11: Adjustment Model	38
Figure 12: Impact of Culture on Leadership	44
Figure 13: Expatriate Support Measures	49
Figure 14: Reviewing Support Measures – Point in Time	62
Figure 15: Reviewing Support Measures – Duration	62
Figure 16: Reviewing Support Measures: Customization	63
Figure 17: Development of Coaching	68
Figure 18: Demands on Coaches	79
Figure 19: Coaching Contracts	84
Figure 20: Relationship of Coaching, Coaching ^{Culture} , and Expatriate Coaching	92
Figure 21: Intercultural Training – Coaching ^{Culture} Continuum	103
Figure 22: Development of the Research Question	106
Figure 23: Defining the Research Question	108
Figure 24: Framing the Research Question: Scope and Limitation	109
Figure 25: Research Design	111
Figure 26: Qualitative, Grounded Research Frame	113
Figure 27: Expert Interview Subgroups	169
Figure 28: Link between Expatriation Approach and Expatriate Coaching	186
Figure 29: Types of Expatriate Coaching Application	227
Figure 30: The Potential of Expatriate Coaching Types	237

List of Tables

Table 1: Intercultural Encounter	14
Table 2: Reasons for Expatriate Assignments	24
Table 3: Work-Life Balance – On Unacceptable Compromise	35
Table 4: Social Network – The Be-All and End-All.....	36
Table 5: Acculturation – Energy and Creativity Required.....	39
Table 6: Partner and Family Impact – Talking Expatriates’ Better Half	41
Table 7: Intercultural Communication – More Than Just a Different Language	43
Table 8: Leadership Abroad – Hong Kong Team Meeting.....	45
Table 9: Repatriation – Expatriates’ Business	47
Table 10: Intercultural Training Typology	53
Table 11: Terms for Coaching with Culture Focus	94
Table 12: Target Groups of Coaching ^{Culture}	97
Table 13: Occasions for Coaching ^{Culture}	98
Table 14: Goals of Coaching ^{Culture}	100
Table 15: Circular Deconstruction – The Synopsis of Central Categories.	138
Table 16: Distribution of Interview Characteristics	151

'Coaching Expatriates' – Deutsche Kurzfassung

Der Trend zur Globalisierung von Unternehmen hat große Veränderungen für die Theorie und Praxis wirtschaftlicher Zusammenarbeit und insbesondere auch für den Bereich der Personalpolitik mit sich gebracht. Während Organisationen mit internationaler Ausrichtung begonnen haben, ihre Unternehmensstrategien anzupassen oder Personalauswahlverfahren und Dienstverträge weiterzuentwickeln, helfen Wissenschaftler aus den Bereichen der internationalen Wirtschaftswissenschaften und des interkulturellen Managements mit, diese essentiellen Veränderungen zu untersuchen und abzubilden sowie Unterstützung zu deren Bewältigung anzubieten (Apfelthaler 1999; Perlitz 2000; Rothlauf 1999). Im Gegensatz zum Unterfangen, eine (steuer-)rechtliche und finanzielle Basis für Landesgrenzen überschreitende Tätigkeiten zu kreieren, wurde den Hauptakteuren auf dem globalen Parkett bislang verhältnismäßig wenig Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Da sie diejenigen sind, die als Bindeglied zwischen dem Unternehmenshauptsitz und den Auslandsgesellschaften fungieren, die Unterschiede zwischen den Kulturen hautnah erleben, den Austausch unter ihnen fördern und zwischen Individuen vermitteln sollen, stehen diese Personen regelmäßig zwischen zwei Fronten; und sie bekommen die Spannungen und die Anforderungen zu spüren, die aus dieser Sandwich-Position (Schroll-Machl 2007a) resultieren. Es ist die Absicht der vorgelegten Dissertation, Raum für diese oft gefühlte aber kaum besprochene und wissenschaftlich untersuchte ‚Dazwischen-Stellung‘ von Führungskräften zu schaffen und im Speziellen auch dem Stress, dem Druck und den Widersprüchen, durch die sie charakterisiert ist, die entsprechende Anerkennung zukommen zu lassen. Dazu werden die bereits in der heutigen Theorie diskutierten Unterstützungsmaßnahmen beleuchtet, die diesen Personen vor, während und nach ihrer Entsendung zur Verfügung stehen. Ziel der Arbeit ist schließlich, die Praxis und das Potenzial einer relativ jungen und bislang unerforschten Form der Unterstützung – Coaching für Expatriates – zu untersuchen.

Langzeitentsendungen im Fokus

Diese Dissertation betrachtet insbesondere die Entsendungspraxis und Unterstützungsmöglichkeiten multinationaler Unternehmen in Bezug auf Expatriates – Personen, die im Zuge einer Langzeitentsendung ihren Arbeitsplatz sowie ihren Lebensmittelpunkt für die Dauer von circa drei bis fünf Jahren ins Ausland verlagern (Petrovic/Harris/Brewster 2000: 6). Die

Organisation und Durchführung von Langzeitentsendungen, später auch Expatriate Assignments genannt, hat zwar aufgrund der hohen Kosten, die unter anderem durch Umzug und Vergütungspakete zustande kommen, ihre Nachteile und bringt zudem beispielsweise wegen der fehlenden Bereitschaft geeigneter Kandidaten längerfristig ins Ausland zu gehen, ganz spezifische Schwierigkeiten mit sich. Allerdings sind Expatriate Assignments für Aufgaben wie der Sicherstellung eines kontinuierlichen Wissenstransfers zwischen dem Hauptgeschäftsstandort und den ausländischen Niederlassungen oder der Übernahme von Führungsaufgaben an Auslandsstandorten unumgänglich. Trotz des Booms alternativer Entsendungsformen wie kurzzeitiger Entsendungen, internationalem Pendeln und Vielfliegen (GMAC 2006; Welch/Worm 2006), machen Langzeitentsendungen immer noch einen Großteil der Auslandstransfers aus. Einer Untersuchung von PricewaterhouseCoopers (2005) zufolge, die internationale Assignment Trends aufzeigt, erwarten Organisationen in den nächsten Jahren hinsichtlich der Ausreise in Länder wie zum Beispiel China und Indien sogar eine steigende Anzahl an Langzeitentsendungen. Aufgrund dieser Prognosen, aber auch weil sich Langzeitentsendungen wegen ihrer Dauer und Intensität besonders gut für die Erforschung verschiedener Herausforderungen und Unterstützungsmaßnahmen bei internationalen Transfers eignen, konzentriert sich die vorliegende Arbeit auf Expatriate Assignments. Neben all den Besonderheiten von Auslandseinsätzen, die im Fall von Expatriierungen besonders stark ausgeprägt sind – wie beispielsweise dem Entscheidungsfindungsprozess vor der Jobzusage, der (interkulturellen) Vorbereitung auf die Aufgabe, der (interkulturellen) Kommunikation mit diversen Stakeholdern im Heimat- sowie im Gastland, dem Einfluss der mit ausreisenden oder daheim gebliebenen Partner/innen bzw. Familien auf den Entsendungserfolg oder der Rückkehrphase nach dem Auslandsaufenthalt – lässt sich bei Langzeitentsendungen ein Phänomen speziell gut beobachten, das alle international tätigen Personen unabhängig von ihrer Entsendungsform betrifft: die Macht und der Einfluss von ‚Kultur‘ auf deren Leben (Morley/Heraty/Collings 2006: 5). Im Gegensatz zu kurzzeitig Entsandten, internationalen Pendlern und Vielfliegern können sich Expatriates den kulturellen Besonderheiten ihrer temporären Heimat nicht einfach entziehen. Sie müssen sich zusätzlich zu den kulturellen Differenzen im Berufsumfeld auch tagtäglich und langfristig mit dem Leben in einer fremden Kultur auseinandersetzen (Gregersen/Morrison/Black 1998: 23; Mayerhofer/Hartmann n.d.: 6).

Herausforderungen und Unterstützungsmaßnahmen bei Expatriate Assignments

Der gesamte Entsendungs-Lebenszyklus (Punnett 1997: 250ff, siehe Graphik), der bereits beim Angebot eines Expatriate Vertrages durch das Unternehmen beginnt und erst mit der Reintegration ins Heimatland bzw. mit der Integration in ein neues Gastland endet, ist durch eine Vielzahl an Herausforderungen gekennzeichnet. In welcher Kombination und mit welcher Intensität sie auftauchen und auch inwiefern Expatriates, ihre Partner/innen und Kinder auf sie reagieren, ist von zahlreichen personen- und situationsbezogenen Faktoren abhängig (Bolten 2003a: 67; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 41). Dadurch sind eine Vorhersage des Entsendungserfolges – wie auch immer er definiert sein mag – sowie die Vorhersage notwendiger Unterstützungsmaßnahmen kaum möglich (Kealey 1989: 420; Stahl 1995: 43ff).



Um häufig auftretenden Schwierigkeiten vorzubeugen, haben sich verschiedenste Maßnahmen wie zum Beispiel Umzugsservice, Informationsreisen, Vorbereitungsgespräche, Sprach- und interkulturelle Trainings, Mentoring und Workshops für Rückkehrer etabliert, mittels derer Unternehmen ihre Expatriates unterstützen können (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 204ff; Harvey et al. 1999; Mendenhall/Stahl 2000: 253ff; Selmer 2002: 38ff). Die in der Literatur häufig diskutierten Interventionen werden in dieser Dissertation vorgestellt und anschließend einer kritischen Reflexion in Bezug auf die zuvor dargestellten Entsendungshürden unterzogen. Betrachtet man die Unterstützungsmaßnahmen hinsichtlich ihrer Anwendung während des

Entsendungszirkels, hinsichtlich des Ortes an dem sie stattfinden sowie in Bezug auf ihre Dauer und Kundenorientierung, dann fällt folgendes auf: Die Mehrheit der Angebote findet off-the-job, also vor bzw. nach dem Auslandsaufenthalt statt, ist auf eine kurze Zeitdauer begrenzt und stellt vorwiegend standardisierte Inhalte zur Verfügung. Zudem ist Unterstützung für private Herausforderungen relativ rar. Spiegelt die deutsch- und englischsprachige interkulturelle Managementliteratur die tatsächliche Entsendungspraxis in Sachen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen wider, dann ist das derzeitige Unterstützungsnetz verhältnismäßig grobmaschig. Mehrere Wissenschaftler haben deshalb Zweifel an einer umfangreichen Abdeckung der vielfältigen und individuell auftretenden Entsendungsschwierigkeiten geäußert und Vorschläge zur Weiterentwicklung bzw. zur Erweiterung des Unterstützungsangebotes gemacht (Bolten 2005; Kinast 2005; Kühlmann 1995).

Coaching als Unterstützungsmaßnahme für Expatriates

Eine der Ideen, um das Unterstützungsangebot bei Langzeitentsendungen auszuweiten, ist die Bereitstellung von Coaching für Expatriates. In Anlehnung an die deutschsprachige Coachingliteratur wird hier unter Coaching eine professionelle Form der Beratung für Führungskräfte verstanden, die innerhalb eines Zweier-, Gruppen- oder Team-Settings stattfindet. In diesem vertraulichen Rahmen kann hinsichtlich der beruflichen Herausforderungen gearbeitet werden, welche entweder im geschäftlichen Umfeld der Führungskraft, in ihrem Privatleben oder in ihrer Persönlichkeit begründet sind. Basierend auf dem Expertenwissen von Coaches und ihrer Fähigkeit, den Selbstreflexions- und Problemlösungsfindungsprozess von Klienten anzuregen, unterstützen sie deren persönlichen und beruflichen Entwicklungsprozess (Backhausen/Thommen 2003; Looss 2002; Schreyögg 2003). Soll Coaching allerdings den Ansprüchen international tätiger Klienten inklusive Expatriates gerecht werden, dann muss das Beratungsformat den Einfluss von Kultur auf das (Berufs-)Leben mit einbeziehen (Abbott/Rosinski 2007). Eine kleine Anzahl an Publikationen zeigt, dass sich Coaching mit ausgeprägtem kulturellen Bezug zunehmend am Coachingmarkt etabliert (Abbott et al. 2006; Barmeyer 2005; Blüml 2005; Clement/Clement 2003a; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002; Schroll-Machl 2006). Wie genau allerdings die Praxis und der Nutzen dieser kulturbezogenen Coachingprozesse aussehen, ist nur schwer fassbar. Weltweit existieren nur sehr wenige Literaturbeiträge darüber, die sich zudem einerseits den unterschiedlichsten Anlässen und Zielgruppen widmen und sich andererseits nicht aufeinander beziehen. Resultierend daraus gibt es auch die unterschiedlichsten Begrifflichkeiten für diese ‚Form‘ des Coachings. Um

sie benennen zu können, ohne die Bezeichnung von bestimmten Autoren bevorzugen zu müssen, wird in dieser Arbeit der Begriff ‚Coaching^{Culture}‘ eingeführt. Er spiegelt auch die Potenz, die Kraft kultureller Prägung wider, die spürbar wird, wenn man sich mit dem Faktor Kultur auseinandersetzt und mit kulturellen Differenzen konfrontiert wird. Die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede diverser Publikationen zu Coaching^{Culture} werden im Verlauf der vorgelegten Arbeit aufgezeigt und dienen als Ausgangspunkt für die Erforschung von Coaching^{Culture} in Bezug auf die Zielgruppe ‚Expatriates‘ – in weiterer Folge Expatriate Coaching genannt.

Präsentation der Forschungsfragen

Das Kerninteresse dieser Arbeit geht aus einer intensiven Analyse der interkulturellen Managementliteratur hervor. Diese zeigt, dass es eine Diskrepanz zwischen den mannigfaltigen Herausforderungen bei Langzeitsendungen und der vergleichsweise limitierten Reichweite von angebotenen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen gibt. Deshalb stellt sie die Notwendigkeit für neue, zusätzliche Maßnahmen ins Zentrum und schenkt dem Potenzial von Expatriate Coaching besondere Beachtung. Die wenigen Berichte, die bislang zu Coaching^{Culture} im Allgemeinen und Expatriate Coaching im Besonderen publiziert wurden, haben die Angemessenheit des Beratungsformates im Zusammenhang mit Herausforderungen im interkulturellen Management zwar unterstrichen, jedoch ist wissenschaftlich gesehen bislang kaum geklärt, inwiefern Coaching^{Culture} im Zuge von Langzeitsendungen tatsächlich angewandt wird. Das Ziel der vorgelegten Dissertation ist es, diese Forschungslücke zu minimieren. Im Detail geht es bei diesem qualitativen Forschungsprojekt darum, folgende zwei ineinander verwobene Fragen zu untersuchen:

- Wie sieht die Praxis von Expatriate Coaching,
- wie das Potenzial dieser Unterstützungsmaßnahme aus?

Die erste Frage soll nicht nur untersucht werden, weil die tatsächliche Praxis von Expatriate Coaching weitestgehend ungeklärt ist – beispielsweise hinsichtlich der Fragen: Von wem und unter welchen Umständen wird Expatriate Coaching nachgefragt? Wer bietet die Dienstleistung an und in welchem Rahmen? Wird sie als Ersatz für oder als Ergänzung zu anderen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen praktiziert? – sondern auch weil die Analyse der Unterstützungsmaßnahmen ergeben hat, dass deren Nutzen nicht nur das Produkt ihres Inhaltes ist, sondern auch aus der Art, wie diese Maßnahmen angeboten werden, resultiert. Um das Potenzial von Expatriate Coaching in seiner Gesamtheit untersuchen zu können, ist es deshalb wichtig, sich die Art wie es praktiziert wird, anzuschauen und darauf aufbauend den potenziellen Nutzen und die potenziellen Grenzen

der Maßnahme zu explorieren. Da Coaching eine höchst individuelle Form der Unterstützung bietet, ist nämlich zu bedenken, dass die Anwendung und die Effekte sich möglicherweise von Klient zu Klient, von Coach zu Coach und von Situation zu Situation unterscheiden. Die Reichweite und Qualität des Nutzens und der Grenzen von Expatriate Coaching sind deshalb wahrscheinlich fallspezifisch.

Das Forschungsprojekt zielt darauf ab, ein möglichst facettenreiches Bild von Expatriate Coaching zu entwickeln, sich jedoch innerhalb eines bestimmten Rahmens zu bewegen und somit auch einen klaren Fokus zu verfolgen. Bisher wurde das Thema Coaching^{Culture} (für Expatriates) hauptsächlich aus der Sicht von Coaches kommentiert. Die Sichtweisen von Unternehmensvertreter/innen und Expatriates selbst wurden jedoch nur unzureichend erfasst oder zumindest nicht der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht. Um einen umfangreicheren Einblick in die Praxis und das Potenzial von Expatriate Coaching zu erhalten, ist es notwendig, alle Parteien, die eine Rolle in Coachingprozessen spielen, für sich selbst sprechen zu lassen. In der durchgeführten Empirie wurden deshalb die folgenden drei Zielgruppen befragt:

- Repräsentant/innen von Human Resources Abteilungen europäischer Organisationen, die für Entsendungsprozesse zuständig sind,
- Coaches, die mit Expatriates arbeiten und
- Europäische Expatriates, die in die Volksrepublik China entsandt wurden.

Weshalb gerade europäischen Entsandten in China besondere Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt wird hat zwei Gründe. Einerseits ist China derzeit eine der populärsten Entsendungsdestinationen, die laut Prognosen in Zukunft eine noch größere Anzahl an Expatriates beheimaten soll (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2005: 5). Andererseits sind auch die vergleichsweise gravierenden kulturellen Unterschiede zwischen Europa und China ein Grund für die Wahl der Zielgruppe; denn die offensichtliche Vielfalt der Herausforderungen, die Notwendigkeit für Unterstützung und die möglichen Ansatzpunkte für Expatriate Coaching können auf diese Weise besonders gut dargestellt und besprochen werden.

Vorstellung des Forschungsdesigns

Wie die vorangegangene Diskussion der Literatur zu Unterstützungsmaßnahmen bei Langzeitentsendungen zeigt, ist Expatriate Coaching bislang relativ unerforscht und scheint eher noch im Entstehen begriffen, als bereits existent zu sein. Deshalb ist die ‚Entdeckung‘ (Glaser/Strauss 1967) von Expatriate Coaching die treibende Kraft dieses Forschungsprojektes. Das primäre Interesse der Forscherin ist es, den

Forschungsgegenstand mithilfe einer offenen und flexiblen Herangehensweise in so vielen Facetten wie möglich kennen zu lernen. Deshalb wird ein qualitativer Forschungszugang gewählt, der sich an die sechs bei Lamnek (2005: 20ff) diskutierten Prinzipien qualitativer Sozialforschung (siehe auch Flick 2006; Mayring 2002) – Offenheit, Prozessorientierung, Flexibilität, Kommunikativität, Reflexivität, Explikation – anlehnt und sich in mehrerlei Hinsicht an der Methodologie der Grounded Theory (Glaser/Strauss 1967) orientiert. Die gewählten Datenerhebungs- und Analysemethoden entsprechen wiederum der Qualität dieses Forschungszuganges und passen somit zur Natur der Forschungsfragen (Mayring 2002: 66f).

Für die Datenerhebung wird auf eine halbstandardisierte Form des qualitativen Interviews zurückgegriffen, die sich ebenfalls an die Grounded Theory und insbesondere an ihren entdeckenden, offenen und prozessorientierten Charakter anlehnt: das ‚Problemzentrierte Interview‘ nach Witzel (1985, 2000). Mit Hilfe eines flexibel gehandhabten Interviewleitfadens werden die Interviewpartner/innen durch einen reflexiven und kommunikativen Prozess begleitet (King 2004: 11; Rapley 2004: 15), der es ihnen jedoch freistellt, bestimmten Themen mehr oder weniger Raum zu geben (Barbour 2008: 115). Um demographische und biographische Informationen zu erfragen, wird neben dem Leitfaden auch der von Witzel empfohlene Kurzfragebogen angewandt. Die Interviews werden unter Einverständnis der befragten Personen aufgezeichnet und im Anschluss an das Gespräch transkribiert.

Ein reflexiver Datenanalyseprozess komplettiert jeden Datenerhebungsvorgang, sodass vorläufig gewonnene Informationen im Zuge der weiteren Samplingentscheidungen und Interviews mitgedacht und eingebaut werden können (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 46). Ein häufig gewählter Zugang zur Analyse qualitativ erhobener Daten, der sowohl von Glaser und Strauss (1967) vorgeschlagen wird als auch Kern der beiden in diesem Projekt verwendeten Methoden ‚Globalanalyse‘ (Legewie 1994) und ‚Zirkuläres Dekonstruieren‘ (Jaeggi/Faas/Mruck 1998) ist, ist das Kodieren. Das Kodieren von verschriftlichten Daten ist – verkürzt gesagt – ein Prozess des Auseinanderbauens und Wiederausbaus von Textmaterial, wodurch mittels Vergleich und Differenzierung ein tieferes Verständnis des Forschungsgegenstandes ermöglicht wird (vgl. Ezzy 2002: 94). Kodieren bindet Forscher/innen kontinuierlich in einen kreativen Prozess ein, der gerade zu Beginn der Analyseaktivität zu einer großen Anzahl an Informationen und Ideen über den beforschten Gegenstand führt. Um den Überblick hinsichtlich der daraus entstandenen Überlegungen, unbeantworteten Fragen, vorläufigen Erkenntnissen und ähnlichem bestmöglich bewahren zu können, ist es unumgänglich, den Analyseprozess stetig und sorgfältig zu dokumentieren (vgl. Flick 2006:

287). Das Schreiben von Memos hat sich somit als Hilfsmittel zur Entwicklung und zum Festhalten von Gedanken etabliert (vgl. Fielding/Lee 1998: 32) und ist auch fester Bestandteil der von Legewie, Jaeggi, Faas und Mruck vorgestellten Analysemethoden. Die Globalanalyse ist eine Methode zur Evaluation der Datenentstehung sowie zur groben Bestimmung der im Text enthaltenen Themen. Somit hilft die ‚Globalanalyse‘ Forscher/innen dabei, einen Überblick über und ein Gespür für die bereits erhobenen Daten zu erlangen, die gewonnen Erkenntnisse für den fortlaufenden Datenerhebungsprozess zu nützen und jene Texte auszuwählen, die in Folge einer Feinanalyse unterzogen werden sollen. Das ‚Zirkuläre Dekonstruieren‘ ist der ‚Globalanalyse‘ sehr ähnlich. Allerdings werden im Anschluss an die Analyse einzelner Textdokumente mehrere voranalysierte Texte einander gegenübergestellt und detailliert auf Gemeinsamkeiten und Besonderheiten verglichen.

Einblick in den Forschungsprozess

Bevor qualitative Interviews durchgeführt werden können, ist eine Menge an theoretischen Überlegungen und praktischer Vorbereitungsarbeit zu leisten; beispielsweise in Bezug auf das Forschungsdesign, die Konstruktion des Kurzfragebogens oder die Auswahl und Organisation von Interviewtreffpunkten, elektronischen Aufnahmegeräten und Computersoftware für die Datenkodierung. Um den Leser/innen dieser Dissertation einen tieferen Einblick in zwei Aufgaben zu geben, denen neben den bereits genannten besonders viel Zeit und Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet wurde, beinhaltet die vorliegende Arbeit ein Kapitel, das sowohl die Auswahl von und die Kontaktaufnahme mit Interviewpartner/innen als auch die Konstruktion der Interviewleitfäden detailliert beschreibt. Zudem berichtet es über die Handhabung und Besonderheiten des Datenerhebungsprozesses mittels halbstandardisierter Interviews, über das Verhältnis zwischen der Forscherin und ihren Interviewpartner/innen, über die Verarbeitung der erhobenen Daten mittels Transkription und schließlich über die rekursiven Datenanalysevorgänge sowie die Verwendung der Computersoftware MaxQDA. Anschließend folgt eine kritische Reflexion des Forschungsprojektes, die jene Entscheidungen diskutiert, die nennenswerte Auswirkungen auf die Entwicklung des Forschungsprozesses hatten und somit für zukünftige Projekte in Betracht gezogen werden sollten. Die an dieser Stelle diskutierten Themen befassen sich insbesondere mit der Auswahl von Interviewpartner/innen in großen Organisationen, mit den Vor- und Nachteilen einer Zusammenarbeit von Forscher/innen und Organisationen bei einem Projekt wie dem vorliegenden, mit dem potenziellen Nutzen von Gruppendiskussion, den Differenzen zwischen

persönlichen Interviews und Telefoninterviews und mit der Anwendung ‚Problemzentrierter Interviews‘ nach Witzel.

Präsentation der Forschungsergebnisse

Die Darstellung der Forschungsergebnisse resultiert aus der Analyse von einunddreißig qualitativen Interviews sowie einem Textdokument, das ein Interview komplettiert. Da drei Interviewgruppen in das Projekt involviert waren, wurden die Ergebnisse erst gruppenspezifisch präsentiert und im anschließenden Kapitel aufeinander bezogen. Neben den zahlreichen Einblicken, die die Analyse der Interviewdaten in die facettenreiche Praxis und das Potenzial von Expatriate Coaching gibt, wird durch die erhobenen Daten auch sichtbar, wie die Einstellung der Interviewten zum Forschungsgegenstand zustande kam.

Zwei von sechs interviewten **Personaler/innen** sind mit der Organisation von Expatriate Coaching beauftragt und sprechen der Maßnahme einen hohen Wert zu, wohingegen die restlichen vier kaum bzw. nicht mit der Maßnahme vertraut sind und auch keine Notwendigkeit in ihr sehen. Ob Human Resources-Verantwortliche Expatriate Coaching in bestimmter Hinsicht als sinnvoll erachten und die Maßnahme in ihrem Unternehmen praktiziert wird, scheint maßgeblich von einigen Faktoren abzuhängen:

- Je mehr Langzeitentsendungen als außergewöhnliche Aufgabe und mit außergewöhnlichen Herausforderungen verbunden verstanden werden,
- je umfangreicher bereits der Auswahlprozess von zu Entsendenden gestaltet wird und deren Angehörige in diesen Prozess miteingebunden werden,
- je stärker Personalverantwortliche mit Expatriates während des Auslandsaufenthaltes in Kontakt bleiben,
- je mehr sie über berufliche und private Herausforderungen bei Langzeitentsendungen informiert sind,
- je vielfältiger die bereits angebotenen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen sind und
- je mehr diese geschätzt werden,

desto wahrscheinlicher scheint es, dass Personal-Verantwortliche mit Expatriate Coaching vertraut sind und die Maßnahme auch als sinnvollen Zusatz zu anderen Maßnahmen verstehen.

Was die **Expatriate** Interviewgruppe anbelangt, so wird bzw. wurde nur eine Minderheit der interviewten Expatriates im Zuge ihrer Entsendung gecoacht, wodurch nur fünf Personen umfassend mit der Maßnahme vertraut sind. Im Gegensatz zu den Personalverantwortlichen stellen sich aber beinahe alle Entsandten Expatriate Coaching als wertvolle

Unterstützungsmaßnahme vor, da sie in Coaches vor allem professionelle Dialogpartner für berufliche, private und interkulturelle Belange sehen, die in ihrer Funktion als neutrale Sparringpartner mit hoher interkultureller, landesspezifischer und Management-Kompetenz einen entscheidenden Beitrag zum Erfolg ihrer Langzeitentsendung leisten können.

Die interviewten **Coaches** haben ihre Dienstleistung entweder aufgrund der starken Nachfrage oder aufgrund ihres eigenen Aufenthaltes im Ausland zum Teil oder sogar vollständig auf die Kundengruppe 'Expatriates' verlagert. Sie verstehen Langzeitentsendungen großteils als Trigger für eine Vielzahl gravierender Veränderungen im beruflichen und privaten Leben von Expatriates, zu deren Bewältigung oft ein maßgeschneidertes Unterstützungsangebot notwendig ist. Deshalb schätzen sie an ihrem Service im Speziellen, dass sie ihren Klienten auf sehr individuelle und breitgefächerte Weise Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe anbieten können.

Diskussion der Forschungsergebnisse

In diesem Kapitel wurden die Forschungsergebnisse aller Interviewgruppen aufeinander bezogen und in Hinsicht auf die zwei Forschungsfragen diskutiert. Dabei wurden sie auch in Verbindung mit der bereits bestehenden Coaching und Coaching^{Culture} Literatur gebracht.

In Bezug auf die Praxis von Expatriate Coaching wurde zuerst beleuchtet, von wem, wieso, wann und wofür die Maßnahme überhaupt nachgefragt wird. Abhängig vom Initiator des Expatriate Coaching Prozesses – Verantwortlichen aus Personal- und Fachabteilungen oder Expatriates selbst – variieren nämlich sowohl die Intention für die Inanspruchnahme des Services, der Zeitpunkt zu dem Expatriate Coaching stattfindet, als auch die Erwartungen an die Maßnahme und in weiterer Folge unter anderem die Dauer und die verfolgten Ziele. Daraus resultiert, dass Expatriate Coaching Prozesse nicht einheitlich ablaufen, sondern zu unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten des Entsendungszirkels angeboten und in Anspruch genommen sowie auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise gestaltet werden. Um diese Formen des Expatriate Coaching transparent zu machen, werden sie in dieser Arbeit als

- Transition Coaching,
- Emergency Coaching,
- Repatriation Coaching und
- Culture-Focused Coaching bezeichnet.

In einem zweiten Abschnitt wurden das Design, die Methoden und Themen von Expatriate Coaching besprochen und auf diesem Wege auch die Nähe des Ablaufes und der Inhalte zum Coaching im nationalen Kontext aufgezeigt. Im Gegensatz dazu folgte eine Diskussion der Besonderheiten

der Expatriate Coaching Praxis. Mit dem Ziel, die Entwicklung interkultureller Kompetenz zu fördern und mit der Herausforderung, die örtliche Distanz zwischen Coach und Klient zu überwinden bzw. einen passenden Coach im Gastland zu finden, hebt sich Expatriate Coaching von Coaching im nationalen Kontext ab. Weiters wurden die Hemmschwellen und Barrieren, die die Nachfrage nach Expatriate Coaching im Vergleich zu anderen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen gering halten, aufgezeigt und die in der bestehenden Literatur erwähnten Gründe um sechs Punkte erweitert. Expatriate Coaching schreckt Organisationen und Individuen demnach nicht nur aufgrund hoher Kosten und des vergleichbar großen Zeitaufwandes ab, sondern wird relativ selten nachgefragt, weil

- die Maßnahme wenig bekannt ist,
- Coaching als Karriere-Killer verschrien ist,
- kein wahrgenommener Bedarf für Coaching besteht,
- großer Widerstand herrscht, den Bedarf zuzugeben,
- sich Personaler/innen nicht für die Organisation von Expatriate Coaching verantwortlich fühlen bzw. keine Befugnis haben, die Maßnahme einzuleiten und
- die Suche nach passenden Coaches sehr aufwändig sein kann.

Die Anforderungen, die neben Erfahrung und Diskretion an Expatriate Coaches gestellt werden – eigene längerfristige Auslandserfahrung und ein Fundament an kulturspezifischem und kulturgenerellem Wissen – schließen die Ausführungen zur Praxis von Expatriate Coaching ab.

In Bezug auf das Potenzial von Expatriate Coaching wurde zuerst der mögliche Nutzen der Maßnahme diskutiert. Während in der Literatur hauptsächlich die Entwicklung interkultureller Kompetenz im Zentrum des Interesses steht, wurde hier zusätzlichen Vorzügen Beachtung geschenkt, welche aus den inhärenten Eigenschaften von Coaching resultieren und gerade für die Expatriate Klientel von Bedeutung zu sein scheinen.

- Im Gegensatz zu standardisierten Maßnahmen zielt Expatriate Coaching darauf ab, wiederholt den kurz-, mittel- und langfristigen Unterstützungsbedarf seiner Klienten zu eruieren und darauf basierend maßgeschneiderte Interventionen zu planen. Sollte sich Coaching nicht als geeignete Maßnahme herauskristallisieren, kann der Prozess frühzeitig gestoppt und zugleich eine adäquatere Maßnahme identifiziert werden.
- Coaches übernehmen in ihrer Rolle als professionelle Kommunikationspartner diverse Rollen, wie zum Beispiel die eines aktiven Zuhörers, Fragenstellers, Feedbackgebers, Wissensvermittlers und Kommunikationsexperten. Somit schaffen sie für Coachees die Möglichkeit, einer neutralen und kompetenten Person ihre Gedanken

mitteilen zu können, Bewusstsein über die eigenen Handlungs- und Denkmuster zu erlangen und Perspektivenwechsel zu vollziehen, in einem geschützten und unterstützenden Rahmen selbst Lösungen zu entwickeln und nicht zuletzt die eigenen kommunikativen Strategien weiterzuentwickeln.

- Expatriate Coaching kann an die spezifischen Bedürfnisse und komplexen Situationen ihrer Klienten hinsichtlich des Designs und der Inhalte der Intervention angepasst werden, wodurch die Maßnahme oft überhaupt erst in Anspruch genommen werden und möglicherweise andere Interventionen sogar ersetzen bzw. ergänzen kann.

Abschließend wurden die Grenzen von Expatriate Coaching benannt, die im Gegensatz zu den derzeitigen Hemmschwellen und Barrieren auch trotz günstiger Entwicklung des Beratungsformates bestehen bleiben. So enden die Möglichkeiten von Expatriate Coaching meist in jenen Fällen, in denen Psychotherapie und medizinische Hilfe angebracht sind, in denen kein für beide Seiten zufriedenstellendes Arbeitsverhältnis zwischen Coach und Coachee hergestellt werden kann und auch in denen Expatriates nicht bereit sind, ihre Schwierigkeiten mitzuteilen bzw. zu reflektieren.

Folgerungen aus den Forschungsergebnissen für die Zukunft von Expatriate Coaching

Der Erfolg von Entsendungen – wie auch immer er definiert sein mag – ist von einer Vielzahl von Faktoren abhängig wie zum Beispiel von der Passung zwischen Expatriate und Gastland, der Vorbereitung auf den Auslandsaufenthalt und der Reintegration, der Einstellung der Angehörigen oder der Marktentwicklung. Da der Einfluss dieser Faktoren nur zu einem gewissen Maß kontrolliert werden kann, kann der Erfolg von Expatriierungen nie garantiert werden; auch nicht durch Expatriate Coaching. Obwohl die Maßnahme den Daten zufolge kein Allheilmittel ist – ein Schluss, den auch Abbott et al. (vgl. 2006: 310) gezogen haben – so zeigt sich doch, dass Expatriate Coaching (zumindest) in vielerlei Hinsicht dazu beitragen kann, die Chancen für einen Entsendungserfolg zu erhöhen. Deshalb scheint es aus Sicht der Forscherin wünschenswert, dass sich Expatriate Coaching zu einer bekannteren und anerkannten Maßnahme im Verbund der Unterstützungsmaßnahmen entwickelt und dass das Potenzial von Expatriate Coaching umfassender ausgeschöpft wird. Die Forschungsergebnisse weisen allerdings auch darauf hin, dass dazu einige Anstrengungen auf Seiten von Coachingverbänden, individuellen Coachinganbietern und Organisationen notwendig sind. Neben der Erhöhung des Bekanntheitsgrades und der Attraktivität von Expatriate Coaching erscheint es essentiell, die Qualität der Maßnahme nachhaltig

sicherzustellen sowie die Verfügbarkeit des Angebotes auf internationaler Ebene zu verbessern.

Zusammenfassung und Ausblick

Langzeimentsendungen bringen eine Fülle an Veränderungen im beruflichen und privaten Leben von Expatriates mit sich. Da Expatriates diese Veränderungen oft in sehr ähnlichen Bereichen erleben, haben standardisierte Unterstützungsmaßnahmen auch ihre Berechtigung. Allerdings ist die Kombination der Standard-Herausforderungen, die Länge, Intensität, die Umstände unter denen sie auftauchen und nicht zuletzt die Art wie Individuen mit ihnen umgehen, von Person zu Person verschieden. Und es ist eben diese Einzigartigkeit, die in Betracht gezogen werden muss, wenn man Entsendungen möglichst erfolgreich gestalten will. Die Konsequenz für ein gut durchdachtes Unterstützungsnetz ist deshalb, dass es aus Maßnahmen bestehen sollte, die auf spezielle Unterstützungsbedürfnisse eingehen können.

Die vorgelegte Dissertation hat die Praxis und das Potenzial einer alternativen Form der Unterstützung erforscht, die eben diese Individualität in Betracht zieht: Expatriate Coaching. Zugunsten eines klaren Forschungsfokus und aufgrund des steigenden Trends von Langzeimentsendungen nach China konzentrierte sich dieses Projekt auf die Verkleinerung der Forschungslücke in Bezug auf Coaching für europäische Expatriates in China. Deshalb ist es wünschenswert, dass weitere Projekte andere Zielgruppen und Länder fokussieren. Ausgehend von dieser Arbeit könnte es somit für Coaches, Expatriates, Organisationen und Forscher/innen wertvoll sein, wenn in Zukunft unter anderem die folgenden Fragestellungen untersucht würden:

- Inwiefern eignet sich Coaching^{Culture} für Inpatriates, die beispielsweise aus kollektivistischen Ländern und solchen mit großer Machtdistanz kommen, in denen Coaching kein gängiges Beratungsformat ist?
- Wie beurteilen jene Personen Expatriate Coaching, die im Zuge ihrer Entsendung gecoacht wurden, jedoch trotzdem aus ihrer Sicht oder jener ihres Unternehmens gescheitert sind?
- Wie muss die Landesgrenzen überschreitende Zusammenarbeit von Coaches aussehen, sodass eine bessere Verfügbarkeit des Beratungsformates für Klienten gegeben ist und gleichzeitig die interkulturelle Kompetenz von Coaches gesteigert werden kann?
- Unter welchen Umständen und in welchem Ausmaß ist es sinnvoll, dass der technologische Fortschritt in Hinsicht auf die Durchführung von Expatriate Coaching genutzt wird und Sitzungen via Telefon, Videokonferenz, E-Mail oder ähnlichem abgehalten werden?

Diese Vorschläge sollten nicht nur in Betracht gezogen werden, weil sie noch bestehende Lücken in Bezug auf Unterstützungsmaßnahmen und Expatriate Coaching im Besonderen schließen, sondern weil sie die tatsächliche Entsendungspraxis verbessern können – wenn auch nur Stück für Stück. Denn die Untersuchung hat klar gezeigt, dass oft schon ein kleiner Schritt in die richtige Richtung dazu beitragen kann, dass Veränderung und Schwierigkeiten im Zuge von Entsendungen nicht mehr nur als Herausforderung, sondern auch als Chance wahrgenommen werden.

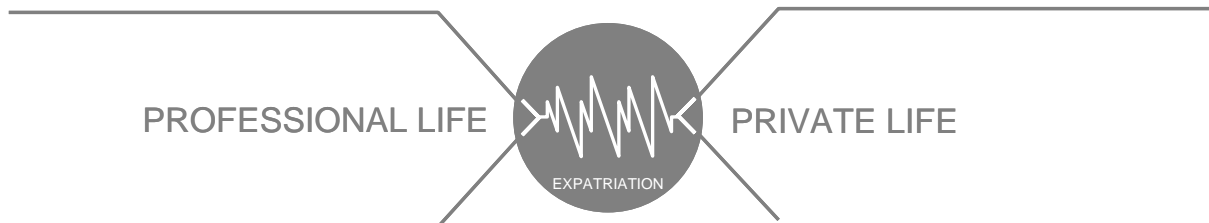
1 Introducing 'Coaching Expatriates'

Companies' trend to 'go global' has brought lots of changes to both the theory and practice of doing business. While organizations affected by internationalization and globalization have come to adapt their business strategies and have, in particular, developed human resources (HR) issues like international staffing policies, recruiting practices, and employment contracts, scholars of international business and intercultural management, respectively, have come to seize and research these essential topics. However, busy exploring and creating the groundwork for business across national borders, the main actors in the game have been forgotten all too frequently. When it comes to doing the international jobs, it is the staff and especially often executives who INTERact between headquarters and foreign subsidiaries, who foster the INTERexchange between different cultures involved, and those who act as INTERmediary between individuals. These people are, therefore, often in-between; and they are to feel, endure, and deal with the tension, the pressure, and the high demand that results from that inter-position. It is the purpose of the presented thesis to create room for the often felt, but rarely outspoken 'between' position which executives involved in intercultural business hold; and more precisely, for the mix of stress, challenges, ambiguities, and discrepancies by which it is characterized. In this respect, the focus of this research paper emerges as considerations regarding intercultural management practice intersect considerations regarding the well-being of interculturally active managers and leaders.

This dissertation pays particular attention to the pressure and resulting challenges experienced by executives of multinational companies (MNCs) who have relocated their workplace to a foreign country for the limited period of a few years – expatriates. The tensions, namely, which result from their specific home-host country inter-situation are of manifold nature although they are first and foremost associated with working life; for instance, with reporting to multiple bosses, leadership in a foreign country and a different organizational culture, with intercultural communication as well as repatriation. Yet, in the course of an expatriation, tensions are likely to also occur outside of the professional context. They do enter expatriates' private lives and are even likely to affect their partners and children as far

as social network, work-life balance, life planning, and other issues are concerned.

Figure 1: Professional-Private Life Tension



Due to relatively high expatriate failure rates and a decreased willingness on behalf of executives to assume an(other) expatriate function, the range of possible tensions and resulting challenges experienced by long-term sojourners has meanwhile received heightened awareness on behalf of practitioners and theoreticians. As a consequence, support measures supposed to alleviate frequent expatriation repercussions have been introduced; as will be shown in this thesis, however, they only insufficiently cater for the diverse and individually different mix of expatriates' needs.

Based on these findings, a fairly new support measure for long-term assignments is introduced in the course of this dissertation: coaching for expatriates. Coaching features unique characteristics which might be capable of filling at least some of the existing support measure gaps, if adapted to the circumstances of expatriates. Since from a scientific point of view it is very unclear to this day what 'expatriate coaching' looks like and which effects it can have, the exploration of the actual practice of expatriate coaching as well as the potential benefits and limitations resulting from it take this thesis' center stage. In an attempt to help create a more comprehensive picture of expatriate coaching, all key players which might be involved in a coaching process are asked to provide their viewpoints: coaches who have worked with expatriates, human resources professionals of European multinational companies responsible for expatriations, and European expatriates who have been transferred to the People's Republic of China. The current and persistent boom of international assignments to China accounts for the focus that is put on Western executives leaving for this country. Due to the obvious cultural differences, additionally, China tends to be regarded as an outstandingly challenging country for Westerners which is why the use of support measures like expatriate coaching can be particularly well illustrated.

Before the structure of the thesis is hereinafter introduced, there is one thing left to mention. Although this dissertation is composed in a German-speaking country at a German-speaking university, it is written in English; there is a twofold reason for this: To start with, intercultural communication is at the heart of this research work; the challenges which it tends to produce are one the main reason for why it was written. In an attempt to develop people's understanding of the manifold intercultural communication difficulties and possibilities as well as to foster the mutual exchange of research interests and results on this matter, the paper's language is meant to make it accessible to a greater number of expatriates, members of multinational organizations, scholars, and students than to only those who know German. Especially, however, the non-German-speaking interview partners who provided their expatriation and coaching experience are thus given a chance to read it. Second, the understanding of what coaching is and how coaching is to be performed varies around the world. As coaches still tend to write about their work and experience in their mother tongue, however, their approaches and practices are being prevented from spreading to other countries and cultures. In the case of expatriate coaching it seems particularly useful to foster the exchange of know-how between them: Due to an increase in professional mobility, even more coaches around the globe will be working with clients with different cultural backgrounds; and they will be confronted with diverging ideas of what their service is supposed to look like. Expatriate coaching is about crossing cultures, encouraging intercultural communication, and learning from those who speak a different 'language' – this thesis is geared towards serving that purpose as well.

Chapter 2, 'Setting the Frame', now lays the groundwork for the following sections: It introduces what is understood by 'expatriation' and delimits the term from other types of international assignments. Then, the chapter sheds some light on the phenomenon 'culture'. It first offers an idea of its manifold characteristics; it then gives an insight into the particularities of intercultural cooperation in general and business in particular; and, eventually, brings in the concept of 'intercultural competence'.

Chapter 3 aims at shaping the research project's focus. To start with, it pictures expatriations: It presents typical tasks and frequently found expatriation motives both on behalf of future expatriates and organizations; and it discusses the meaning of expatriate failure and success as well as candidate selection for long-term assignments. Second, the chapter illustrates expatriation challenges as dealt with in the international assignment literature. A number of 'hurdles' that may occur in the course of a long-term assignment and that may impact expatriates not only in professional but also in private respect, are exemplified. Third, the paper demonstrates possibilities of support for the named range of

challenges. It points out to the individual measure's potential and limitation, and ultimately critically reviews whether the presented support measures do adequately cater for the reported support needs of expatriates. Subsequently, subchapter four is dedicated to a relatively new form of professional support: coaching. The chapter drives at uncovering coaching's facets; besides touching upon its development, definition, and demarcation from other forms of consultation, it takes a special look at its 'key players' as well as at its processes, settings, goals, methods, and evaluation. The final chapter, then, connects coaching and culture. It explores scholarly articles which report to particularly consider the impact of culture on (business) life within coaching sessions and thus to also cater for the needs of clients involved in intercultural management, expatriates included.

Chapter 4 introduces the empirical research constituting this dissertation project. After the guiding research questions have been presented, the study's overall research design – its qualitative, grounded research approach as well as its according data collection and analysis methods – is disclosed. What follows is a description of the research process as planned, carried out, and experienced by the researcher herself. A thorough reflection of the entire research design and process, and thus of the research project in general, is added.

Chapter 5 presents the research results. As a consequence of the three different groups that have been interviewed in the course of the project, the results are presented for one group at a time.

Chapter 6, in contrast, integrates the research results of all interview groups and discusses the research findings in the light of the two main research questions. Here, also the connection between the existing literature, which has already been presented in chapters 2 and 3, and the insight gained from the research study is established.

Chapter 7, then, presents a number of implications resulting from the conducted research. They may be worth being taken into account when inventing about the future of expatriate coaching.

Finally, chapter 8 concludes this dissertation by providing an outlook for further research projects revolving around expatriate coaching.

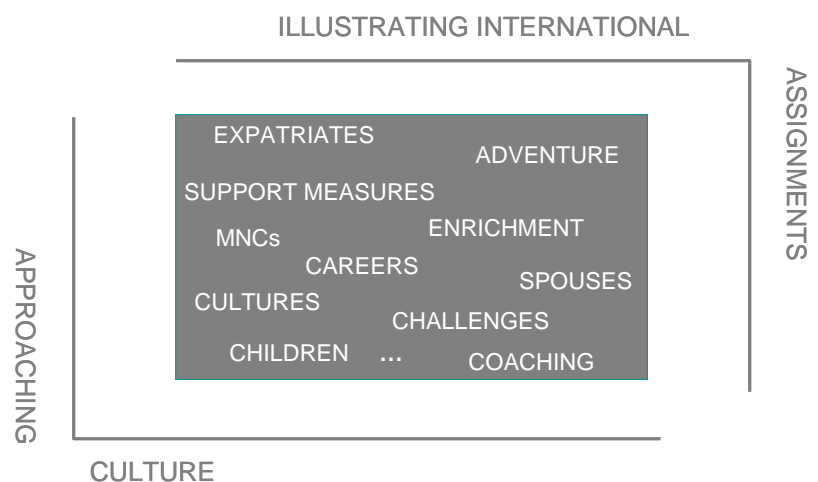
2 Setting the Frame

This chapter creates the context for the later discussed central issues of the paper: expatriates and coaching. It aims at embedding those two topics in a context so that the reader understands within which frame the paper navigates. Thus, it sets boundaries and provides a picture of the stage on which 'Coaching Expatriates' plays.

The term 'expatriate' has become a buzzword in the international business world. Yet, from a scientific perspective, expatriates pursue specific tasks, have specific contracts, and face (dis-) advantages which distinguish them from other international assignees. In order to better define the assignment type 'expatriation', three other prominent types of international assignments are presented.

What makes international assignments as exciting as they are is that the impact of culture affects sojourners' lives in a remarkably strong way; and on both a conscious and subconscious level. As a consequence, this paper cannot do without approaching prime aspects of the culture phenomenon, especially highlighting those facets which affect expatriates and concern scholars of intercultural management.

Figure 2: Setting the Frame



2.1 Illustrating International Assignments

As a rising number of organizations is subject to internationalization, the demand for international work increases; and with it emerges the continuously growing need for an internationally mobile workforce (e.g. see Petrovic/Harris/Brewster 2000). In many fields of business, international presence, movement, and cooperation decide on organizations' competitive advantage. In particular, the establishment of a global corporate culture and the effects of "cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices" (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2002: 4) have proven advantageous in the 'business battle'. Today, no longer only the employees of multinational companies (MNCs) are confronted with geographical dispersion; resulting from joint ventures and cross-border alliances, also an abundance of small- and medium-sized organizations have turned into "key players in global trade" causing the handling of staff mobility to be "increasingly important in a far wider range of organizations than the traditional giant multinationals" (Morley/Heraty/Collings 2006: 2).

2.1.1 Differentiating Types of International Assignments

Until the beginning of the new millennium, international transfers have been dominated by long-term assignments which are later also referred to as expatriations. These stays abroad typically last for three years and, because of the long time period, necessitate the move of expatriates to the host country. In many cases, their spouses or families accompany them. Due to expatriates' extensive shift of work place, this type of assignment has primarily proven its worth for the following tasks: skill transfer between the headquarters and foreign subsidiaries; the exertion of managerial control in the foreign subsidiaries; and management development purposes on behalf of the expatriate (cf. Petrovic/Harris/Brewster 2000: 6). However, expatriate assignments have their disadvantages. First of all, the costs which arise from the management and retention of expatriates, i.e. for instance their salaries, moving, and administrative costs, are tremendous. Second, companies have been lacking suitable expatriate candidates who are able and willing to leave their home country, be it because they take care of dependants or because of their involvement in a dual career partnership (cf. GMAC 2006: 28; PricewaterhouseCoopers 2005: 12) (for a more detailed description of expatriate tasks and challenges see chapter 3.1.1 Going Abroad: Tasks and Temptations and

3.2 Facing Expatriate Challenges). First and foremost therefore, it is due to cost containment and staff immobility that organizations across the globe fall back upon alternative forms of transfers of which short-term assignments, international commuting, and frequent flying are the most prominent (e.g. see GMAC 2006; Petrovic/Harris/Brewster 2000; Welch/Worm 2006).

Figure 3: Types of International Assignments



Short-Term Assignment: Like long-term assignments, short-term assignments have a specified duration but usually do not exceed one year. Due to the limited time period and not least because many spouses and their children choose to remain in the home country, expenses are held on a comparatively low level. Besides that, repatriation problems – difficulties which tend to occur upon completion and return from the assignment – can fairly well be restrained. In terms of work-life balance, however, short-term assignments are tricky; they are characterized by long working hours and enormous time pressure.

International Commuting: In contrast to long- and short-term assignments, international commuters return to their place of residence on a regular basis. Instead of spending long periods abroad, they commute between their domestic and out-of-country work place on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. While this enables international staff to keep their bonds with family and friends and prevents their partners and children from moving abroad, this type of mobility is outstandingly strenuous. Moreover, the costs which commuting causes have been estimated to top those of expatriations.

Frequent Flying: Also called international business travelers, frequent fliers do not relocate at all. Their work is characterized by constantly paying literally flying visits to a company's foreign subsidiaries which lends their

job great variety and continuous novelty. Due to the high frequency of traveling, however, frequent fliers are heavily confronted with family separation, travel stress, health issues, safety concerns, and incessant work demands. It is because of these challenges and the connected high risk of burnout that according to Welch and Worm, international business travelers “can be regarded as extreme case examples of the work demands confronting 21st-century employees” (2006: 287).

2.1.2 Highlighting Expatriations

As research on international forms of assignments shows, alternative sorts of cross-border employment hold their own advantages and disadvantages; just the way expatriations do. Depending on which task an employee has to fulfill, the one or the other kind of assignment is preferable. Short-term assignments, international commuting, and frequent flying seem to be more flexible and even better adjusted to the recent enhancement of travel and technology. Long-term assignments, however, strike out as far more elaborate and transparent in terms of policy, cost, and tax management issues. It is, therefore, due to vague rules and regulations of alternative forms of assignments, lacking experience regarding their return on investment, and the limited presence of short-term assignees, commuters, and frequent fliers in host country subsidiaries that “long-term assignments still account for the highest proportion of international working scenarios” (Petrovic/Harris/Brewster 2000: 3). Referring to the latest PricewaterhouseCoopers (2005) international assignment trends survey, organizations anticipate high, even growing expatriation numbers for the upcoming years.

Subsequently, expatriations are not only put into the focus of this thesis because they are still widely practiced and researched; more than that, long-term assignments are referred to as they are particularly suitable for the study of a broad variety of assignment challenges, like expatriate assessment and selection, intercultural preparation and communication, adjustment to foreign life and work styles, spouse influence, dual career couple and repatriation issues. Additionally, one matter which affects all international staff regardless of their assignment type can especially well be observed by the means of expatriations; it is the power and influence of ‘culture’ on their lives. The for all sojourners “omnipresent intercultural transitional adjustment issue” (Morley/Heraty/Collings 2006: 5) is particularly present for long-term assignees who cannot evade the host

culture as easily as short-term assignees, international commuters or frequent flyers. Besides succeeding professionally abroad, expatriates also need to “manage on-going, daily life in a foreign culture” (Mayerhofer/Hartmann n.d.: 6). But what does that actually imply? What is culture?

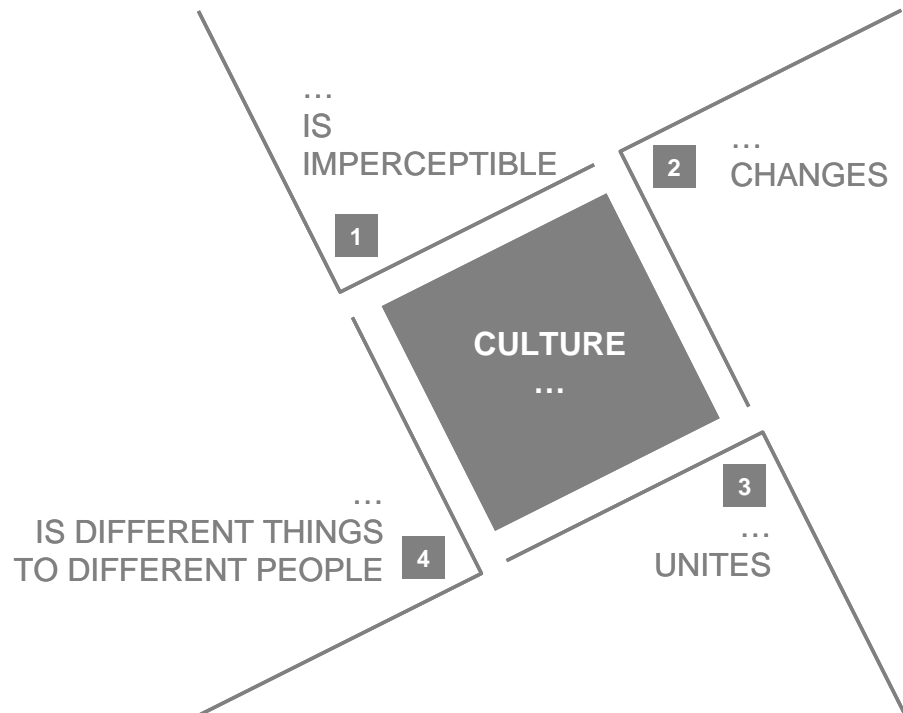
2.2 Approaching Culture

Culture is a multi-faceted phenomenon and thus difficult to grasp. Consequently, in many areas and also in the context of intercultural management, culture is often portrayed in a reduced and hence more comprehensible form. Depriving culture of its complexity and, in particular, of its intangibility, however, holds certain dangers which become apparent as this paper unfolds. At this stage, therefore, various – if clearly only a selection of – ‘faces’ of the phenomenon are presented in order to foster a broader understanding of culture’s influence on intercultural management in general and on expatriates’ (professional) lives in particular. These facets need to be considered in order to understand the theoretical input and the research results to come. Finally, intercultural competence, a concept which has evolved as people increasingly crossed cultural borders, is introduced.

2.2.1 Peering Through the Culture Lens

It is due to the complexity of culture, its inherent variety of characteristics and manifold influence, that there exist numerous definitions, essays, and pieces of literature which differ in approach, intent, and outcome (for a compilation of definitions on culture see Kroeber/Kluckhohn 1952; for a selection of pieces on culture see Geertz 1973; Hall 1990a; Hofstede 2001; Schein 1985). Thus, there exists no single, comprehensive definition of the concept which could cut this chapter short. Yet, as shown in the subsequent chapter on culture and management, it is also impossible to drop the matter. Therefore, characteristics of culture which are of particular significance to the field of intercultural management are depicted below:

Figure 4: Characteristics of Culture



It is the interplay and simultaneousness of these key components which make culture as special as it is.

Culture is Imperceptible: As people are born into and grow up in a society, they acquire culture, or in other words, 'knowledge' of how to perceive, feel, think, and behave in the course of their life. Since this knowledge is gained more or less unconsciously, it mainly manifests itself as "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi 1985). This means that members of culture neither tend to register the process of learning and internalizing culture nor of displaying culturally coined behavior. In Trompenaars' words, "[c]ulture is like gravity – you do not experience it until you jump six feet into the air" (1994: 5). Unless people become aware of their cultural background – for instance through the encounter of members of other cultures – culture is likely to keep its status as a "taken-for-granted" phenomenon (Schein 1985: 6). The intangible component makes culture particularly powerful. Through the process of enculturation, it 'sneaks' effortless and unnoticeably into people's lives and without their active engagement makes them 'feel at home' among the members of their own culture (cf. Thomas 2003: 138). On the contrary, however, in that culture can rather be described as 'know how' rather than as 'know that' (cf. Straub 2007: 16), it escapes people's ability to control its application and display. Consequently, also when people actively try to dissociate themselves from or even try to unlearn their behavior patterns, culture is likely to cross their plans. Metaphorically

speaking, culture is like a lens. Barely noticeable, it covers people's eyes and lets them see the world through their culture-specific-colored lens. Even when there exists awareness of the culture lens, once one has become used to peering through it, it is extremely difficult to free oneself from and observe without it. Despite culture's strong imperceptible nature, the phenomenon also consists of tangible parts. As people act, their behavior can be observed, compared, and assigned to one or various culture(s).

Culture Unites: Subjectively and spontaneously, many people would agree that culture unites a group of people who share common characteristics. A large group of scholars, of which Thomas (2003) can be named as representative, stresses this prevailing face of culture. They depict culture primarily as the "homogeneous (coherent) nature expressed in a group of human beings" (Rathje 2007: 260) resulting from the enculturation process which people run through. In that culture is acquired, it generates similarities in the form of shared values, norms, language and the like among group members and thus simplifies their co-existence, their communication, and collaboration (cf. Thomas 2003: 138ff). Based on this coherence-oriented view, labels for culture such as 'orientation system' (cf. Thomas 2005: 33), "design for living" (Kluckhohn 1951: 86) or "mental programming of the mind" (Hofstede 2001: 9) have evolved during the extensive history of research on culture. Culture is perceived as unifying, complexity-, uncertainty-, and ambiguity-reducing factor. It is striking because it can "exert a stabilizing influence on people's lives [...]" (Hall 1990a: 182) based on which members of one culture can be deciphered and differentiated from members of other cultures. However, when members of culture are observed more intensively and over time, another and seemingly ambiguous face of culture can be discovered.

Culture Changes: "All cultures change over time [...] some slowly, some quickly, sometimes because of internal dynamics (e.g., innovation, invention), and sometimes because of external contact with other cultures (e.g., acculturation, cultural diffusion)" (Berry 2004: 171). Although cultures may appear as entities, they are not self-contained units. Rather, their permeable skin allows them to be in constant exchange with their environment based on which cultures can integrate bits and pieces from outside as well as exert influence on other cultures (cf. Straub 2007: 18ff). In that it brings countries, organizations, and people from all over the world closer to each other, globalization can be understood as a particularly strong culture change driver of our time (cf. Leung et al. 2005: 358ff). Consequently, the culture that is passed down to the next generation of group members is always a, if only subtle, modification of the culture that it once was. It is, therefore, difficult to pin culture down, since its content is in the process of gradual change.

Culture is Different Things to Different People: A close-up of a culture shows that it has an inherent heterogeneous character which results from the hardly noticeable, yet 'active' role which members of culture play in the process of enculturation. They each internalize culture in an individual way in that they attach subjective meaning to culture-specific assumptions, values, norms, and behaviors (cf. Auernheimer 2003: 155; Mae 2003: 195). As a consequence, to a certain degree culture manifests itself differently with different people.

At this point, the question arises of why then and how – despite the resulting variations of enculturation – members of a culture can still be identified as of the same culture? This apparent and seemingly indissoluble contradiction has divided scholars' opinions on culture; it has led to their extreme positioning on the culture spectrum either favoring a coherence-orientated view with a focus on members' conformity vs. a tendency to deconstruct the culture phenomenon in favor of people's heterogeneity and individual opportunities for development. In her attempt to address the crossroad where the two poles of culture meet, Rathje (cf. 2007: 12 based on Hansen 2000) explains that what characterizes all complex collectives, and hence also culture, is that it allows for a certain degree of variability concerning its members' perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The differences which exist within a culture are not only accepted by its members, even are they regarded as 'normal'. "The obvious cohesion of cultures is not the result of their coherence, therefore, but rather their familiarity and 'normality' of their internal differentiation" (Rathje 2007: 262). On the surface, this interpretation of culture might appear as a contradiction. Strictly speaking, however, it is this very interplay of uniformity and heterogeneity which characterizes culture. It grants its members enough room to move in order to develop their own 'culture touch', while it coins them in an obvious, in part even unmistakable, culture-specific way and allows for the recognition of culture members.

2.2.2 Characterizing Culture Clash

Based on the preceding understanding of culture, every encounter between two persons implies a certain degree of culture clash. As long as it happens between people who belong to the same culture, chances are that the (*intracultural*) encounters are characterized by familiarity and normality and thus make the interlocutors 'feel at home'. Should any friction result in spite of this, it is likely to either be neglected or at best be processed as

minimal, temporary confusion. In all probability, it is not associated with the impact of culture on people's lives but rather explained by the natural differences between people. On the contrary, when members of different cultures meet, the confusion which may emerge from their (*intercultural*) encounter has a different quality evoking feelings of foreignness or unintelligibility; when the confusion reaches a certain level, it eventually tends to be attributed to the different cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors (cf. Loenhoff 2003: 193). The conversation between a Chinese woman and the author is presented to exemplify an intercultural encounter (quoted after a personal communication between the author and her colleague in May 2007):

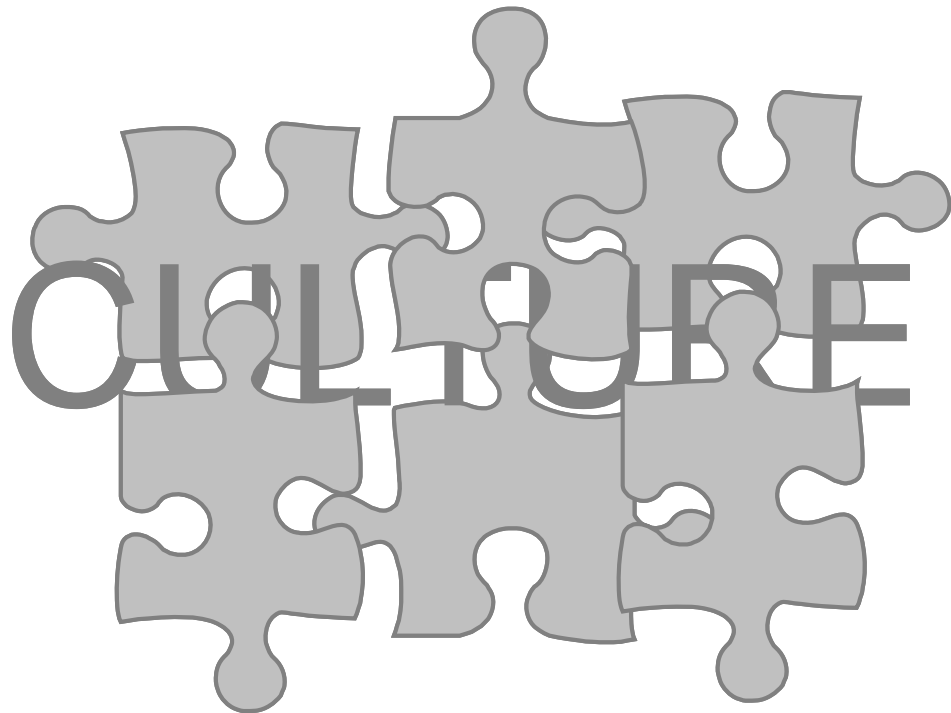
Table 1: Intercultural Encounter

Conversation	Author's Comments
My Chinese colleague at work was pregnant. I had become used to Min wearing a cape which protected her baby from cellular and other radiation. Without having thought about any further particularities which could differentiate her habits during pregnancy from those of an Austrian woman, I was surprised when one day Min told me that after having given birth to her baby, she would not leave the house for one complete month and also would not shower for that period of time. To me, her words came as a shock. For what reason would she not shower? How ever could a woman not give in to the urge of washing away the strains of delivery? I remained silent for a moment, trying to come up with an explanation.	The intercultural encounter caused confusion.
I could see why she would not leave the house with all that noise, dangerous traffic, and polluted air which characterizes Shanghai's down town area. However, it was a complete mystery to me why she would resist to water for such a long time. Min recognized my confusion. She told me she did not quite know herself why she would do that; it was just the 'normal' way of doing it.	Culture knowledge is tacit knowledge.
"Is the city's water as dirty as to pose a danger to a young mom's body?" I asked. She laughed and knew that this was the wrong explanation.	Explanations for cultural differences which are based on one's own cultural background – the view through the own culture lens – may not be adequate.
A few hours had passed before Min tapped on my shoulder. "I believe, I know now what it is, Anna," she said.	Culture traits can be raised to awareness.

Conversation	Author's Comments
"It has to do with the Chinese traditional medicine which attributes warmth and cold to all kinds of food and also, for instance, to water. Water is supposed to be cold (even when it is warm water) and everything that is cold is not good for a woman who just delivered.	Culture unifies its members' perceptions, feelings, thoughts and behaviors.
Since my family sticks with Chinese traditions, I will behave according to it; although today many young women do no longer practice this tradition."	Culture changes over time and grants its members a certain degree of heterogeneity.

To conclude, intercultural encounters tend to take people by surprise unless they have gotten in touch with a number of individuals from other cultures. Such culture clash is capable of raising people's awareness of culture's impact on their lives and, at the same time, is likely to provoke an atmosphere characterized by confusion, foreignness, incomprehensibility or even exoticism due to the different nature of the interlocutors. Whereas an abundance of obvious, unifying culture-specific traits can indeed function as an orientation system in that it helps non-members to become familiar with and even to anticipate reactions of group members, it is mainly because of the multiple intracultural differences of varying degree that the culture phenomenon seems extremely difficult to be grasped. Culture penetrates all, even unimaginable areas and thus must never be underrated even when one already 'feels at home' in a foreign culture. Figuratively speaking, despite all attempts to understand or describe a culture in its entirety, we will probably always lack some pieces necessary to complete the 'culture puzzle'.

Figure 5: Culture Puzzle



Therefore, intercultural encounters can only result in collaboration and fruitful understanding when the interlocutors make the best of the orientation system which culture provides and, additionally, are ready and as courageous as to continuously let themselves in for the unknown, ungraspable, and unexpected – the intangible – which culture holds.

Since companies have expanded their sphere of activity across national borders, intercultural encounters have also turned into an issue for scholars and practitioners in the field of business. Particularly, when it comes to the influence of culture on people's effectiveness and to the necessity of handling intercultural encounters competently, their interest is raised – it is the junction where intercultural management enters the culture debate.

2.2.3 Weighing the Impact of Culture on Management

Whether culture influences business practices at all has been questioned by a variety of researchers. Supporters of the so-called convergence (or culture-free) theory believe that management principles are valid independent of cultural frames and that organizations across culture can, therefore, apply the same 'universal' theories and approaches to

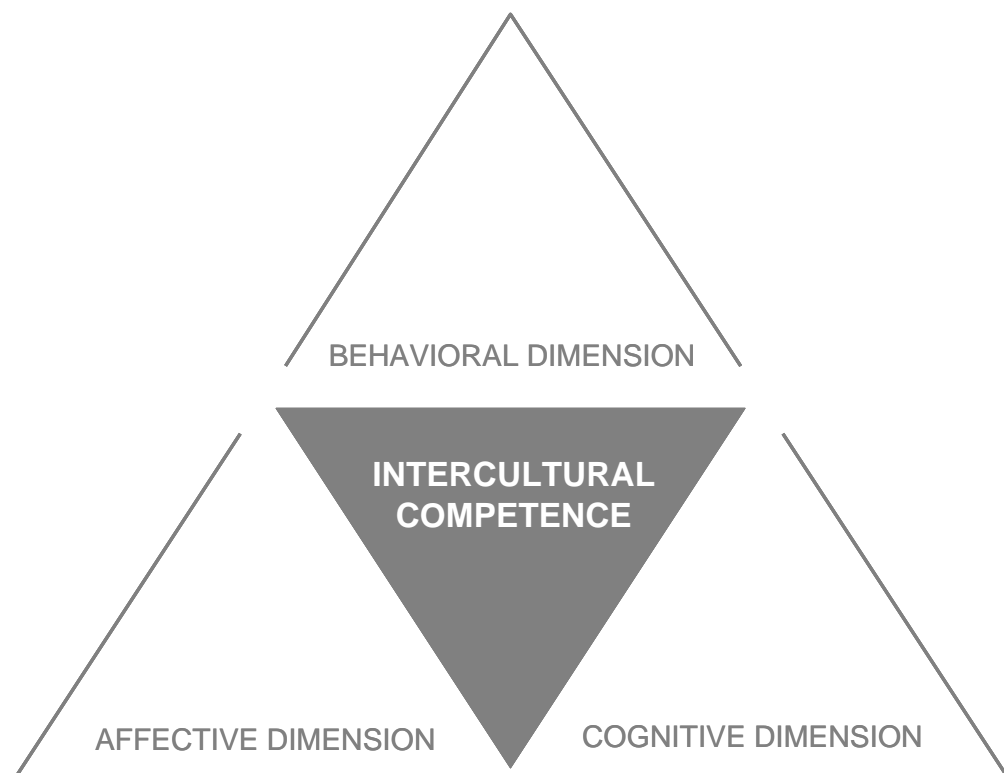
management. Contrastingly, culturalists favor the view that different cultural environments require different management styles (cf. Bergemann/Bergemann 2005: 22). Based on his comparison of research pieces supporting either the culture-free or culture-bound thesis, Child (1981) found that organizations do tend to homogeneity in some aspects. In regard to management structures and technology, for instance, organizations around the globe resemble each other. However, when it comes to the psychologically relevant aspects of organizations like communication, group dynamics, conflict management, motivation, identification, and leadership, culture-specific characteristics are prevalent (cf. Thomas/Schroll-Machl 1998: 283). Hence, "Child's conclusion was that organizations in different countries around the world are becoming more and more alike, but that the behavior of people within those organizations is maintaining its cultural specificity" (Adler 1983: 8). Following the divergence theory, intercultural managers' work is affected by the different cultural backgrounds of their employees and colleagues which become apparent in the diverging ways they perceive of and view the treatment of conflicts, leadership styles, decision-making processes and the like. Compared to management within one's home country, management across borders is a sophisticated form of it; it is complicated by the necessity to take cultural differences into account and nevertheless stay capable of doing the job. In alignment with divergence theory, many of today's MNCs regard the impact of culture as an additional challenge to intercultural management which is already characterized by the inevitability to travel (long-distance), work in a foreign language and consider host country-specific economic and legal systems. Based on their recognition that "[c]onstantly crossing cultural, language, political, social, and economic borders make global business complex and uncertain" (Gregersen/Morrison/Black 1998: 23), MNCs are in search of executives who are equipped with extraordinary qualities which enable them to stand the high demands of intercultural management. In order to describe those qualities, the term 'intercultural competence' is used and has become the common expression both in the sciences and the practice.

2.2.4 Identifying Intercultural Competence

When the first pieces of research on intercultural competence were conducted in the 1950s (e.g. see Lysgaard 1955), focus was put on the search of exceptional characteristics which distinguished interculturally successful persons from those who were not. In that the research

outcomes reflected beneficial personality traits like empathy, frustration tolerance, learning ability, optimism, patience or role flexibility, this research approach undoubtedly led to a better understanding of why intercultural encounters vary in effect. However, regardless of the demand for completeness, they resulted in an endless enumeration of qualities-to-have – which is why they were named ‘list models’ – without revealing to which extent these qualities need to be possessed or developed. Both the questions of comprehensiveness and required magnitude of traits and skills have not yet been solved and they probably never will. They necessarily need to remain open, since which qualities are needed to which degree varies depending on each specific intercultural management task, as well as its particular goal. As such, this lack of clarity still tags more recent concepts of intercultural competence. In comparison to the early list models, however, intercultural competence has been given more of a structure. Today, the construct is mainly understood as a set of many-sided, interdependent qualities which – for the sake of clarity – are clustered into the following three dimensions resulting in a ‘structural model’: an affective (personality and attitude) dimension, a cognitive (culture-general and culture-specific knowledge) dimension, and a behavioral (action, communication) dimension (e.g. see Gertsen 1990).

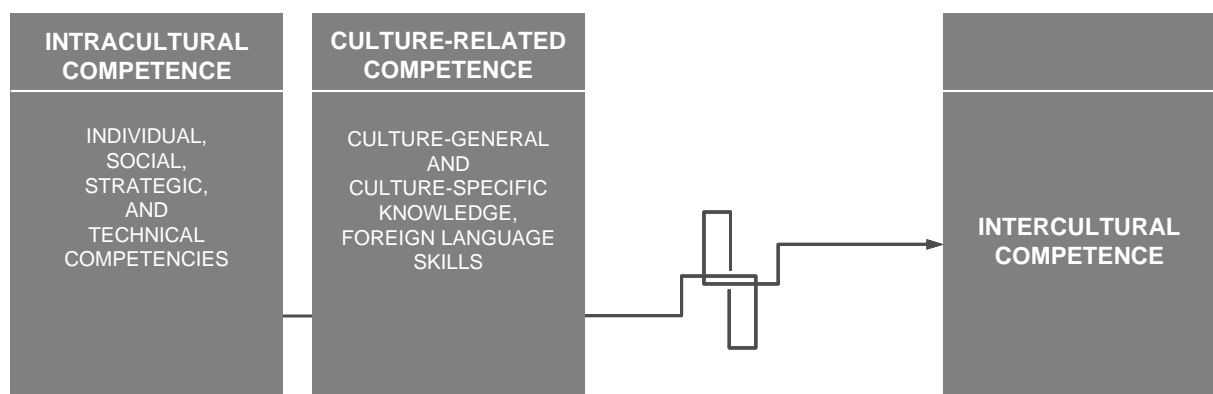
Figure 6: Intercultural Competence Dimensions



In reference to the structural models, Bolten (cf. 2005: 311ff) points out that many of the components which are subsumed under the named dimensions also make up general, *intracultural* management competence. He warns of an understanding of intercultural competence as an independent set of qualities which may mislead to the idea that intercultural competence distinguishes itself entirely from its intracultural counterpart. In other words, Bolten demonstrates that intercultural competence can not be developed independently from qualities that are essential within a national context. Except for the acquisition of culture-related competencies, e.g., culture-general and -specific knowledge and foreign language skills, intercultural competence predominantly calls for the further development of already existing beneficial character traits and abilities towards a superior quality. Intercultural competence results from a combination of

- sound and multi-faceted intracultural competencies,
- the interest and capacity to enrich one's intracultural competencies with culture-related competencies,
- the ability and openness to realize the dangers and synergy effects of intercultural encounters and cooperation,
- the awareness and acceptance that the outcome of intercultural encounters and cooperation can never be fully anticipated and planned (as is the case with intracultural encounters and cooperation),
- the capability and willingness to change and/or adapt previous behavior,
- the power and motivation to emotionally stand the challenges resulting from intercultural encounters and cooperation (cf. Bolten 2005: 311ff).

Figure 7: Complexity of Intercultural Competence



Illustrated by the example of intercultural communication, intercultural competence consists of components like:

- the ability to communicate adequately and efficiently within intracultural contexts,
- the awareness that communication works differently in different cultures,
- the knowledge of one's own communication style,
- the understanding of communication specificities within a particular foreign culture,
- the ability to anticipate which communication style may be adequate for which communication situation (leading vs. socializing) with foreign country nationals,
- the courage to try out new communication styles when communicating with foreign country nationals,
- the willingness to adapt one's communication style on a long-term basis if it has proven adequate and efficient,
- the ability to stand negative communication outcomes like misunderstandings or ambiguous feedback and having enough frustration tolerance and perseverance to continuously try new communication styles.

As a more sophisticated, due to the culture factor more complex form of management, intercultural management demands *a higher degree* but (with minor exceptions) not a different form of *general management competence*. Therefore, the question of how intercultural competence can be developed has moved into the center of researchers' and MNCs' interest. In this respect, apart from self-study material, so-called intercultural trainings have gained in importance during the past decades. There exists both great supply and demand for such trainings as well as a large number of research results on their methodology and effectiveness (e.g. see Hesketh 1997; Kinast 1998). Despite the boom in the training industry, however, trainings have been heavily criticized for they can neither fulfill the promises on the side of the suppliers nor the expectations on behalf of the consumers, namely to create interculturally competent participants – and there are multiple reasons for why they cannot.

The presented thesis argues that to some extent intercultural trainings, self-study material and other interventions can well serve the purpose of raising people's awareness of culture and of its impact as well as of imparting culture-specific knowledge. However, their effect is limited. Due to their limitation to a few days, trainings, for example, can never display and discuss culture in its complexity, can barely make participants experience the elusiveness of culture, and can hardly have them grasp the power of the culture-lens. Additionally, due to their frequent group settings

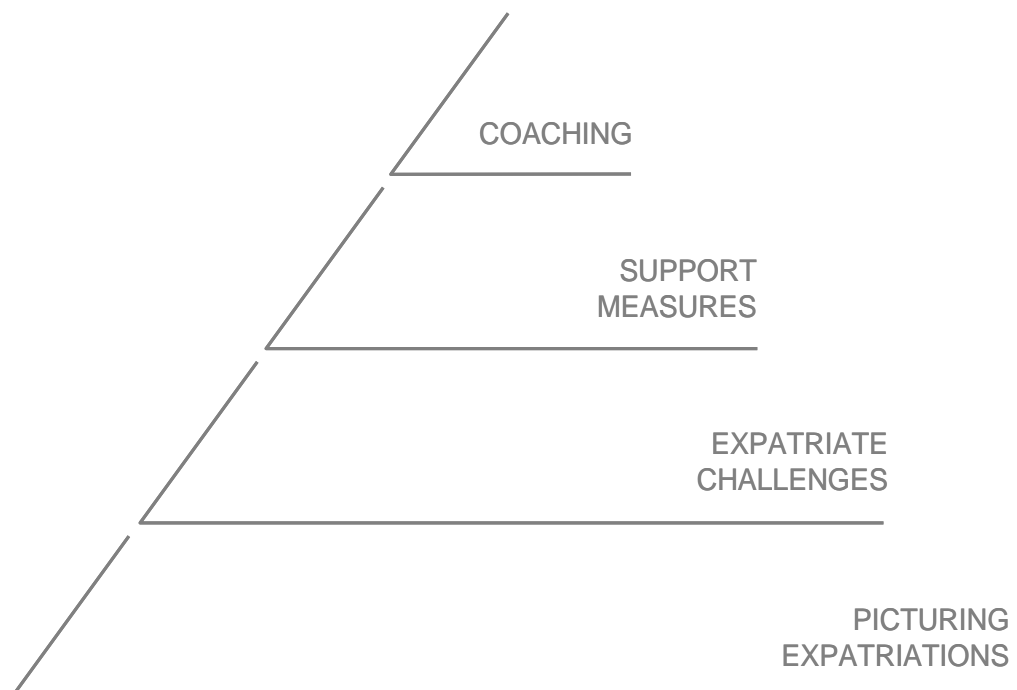
and more or less preset contents, trainings cannot offer participants enough room and support to develop in regard to the behavioral competence dimension (see chapter 3.3.1.5 Intercultural Trainings). The central underlying question here is, therefore, which offer – or which combination of offers – is capable of supporting managers in their development of intercultural competence. In order to explore the usefulness of a fairly recent form of support measure, expatriate coaching becomes the focus of attention.

3 Shaping the Focus

The following chapter deals with the dissertation's key topics: expatriations, expatriate challenges, and support measures, of which coaching is explored in detail. Its goal is to provide an in-depth picture of the various topics and to enhance readers' understanding of how they connect.

First, expatriations are examined in great detail as this form of international assignment is the foundation on which all other topics to come are based. Secondly, a variety of expatriate challenges is discussed before – in step three – different support measures are presented which are then juxtaposed to the previously mentioned challenges. Finally, coaching as a relatively new form of expatriate support enters the limelight.

Figure 8: Shaping the Focus



3.1 Picturing Expatriations

Literally speaking, expatriates are people who work 'ex patria', i.e., outside of their home country while staying on the headquarters' payroll. Traditionally, the head office sends these mostly male and married parent country nationals to its foreign subsidiaries and thus shifts their work place to another country for approximately three to five years (cf. Petrovic/Harris/Brewster 2000). Recently, however, the expatriation profile has undergone a change process (cf. Morley/Heraty/Collings 2006: 5). On the one hand, more and more third country nationals – people who do neither come from the parent nor the host country – are deployed for long-term assignments. On the other hand, also the number of female expatriates and, in particular, that of dual career couples is on the increase (ibid.). While detailed sojourner figures and characteristics change, there remains an overall, stable "continuing growth of expatriate numbers across the globe, with no real slowdown in sight" (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2005: 07). Unfortunately, there exist only few surveys which have closely portrayed the development and practice of expatriate assignments over the years. Consequently, information on MNCs' practice of expatriate arrangements, on connected administrative and strategic challenges as well as on resulting (competitive) advantages are barely available. Especially in financial terms, expatriations lack analyses. "Existing research indicates that there is limited measurement to determine how the benefits and costs compare, and to therefore establish what the return on investment is for organisations" (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2006: 1). It is to say, therefore, that expatriations have been carried out on a comparatively high level while their evaluation tends to lag behind. This does not come as a surprise when taking into account the "rapid globalization of business" (Morley/Heraty/Collings 2006: 1) that has been triggering a 'sudden' urgency for qualified staff which in turn poses a formidable challenge to the strategic planning of human resources.

3.1.1 Going Abroad: Tasks and Temptations

Indeed, one of the prime motives for why staff has originally been sent abroad, is the shortage of labor with adequate skills in foreign countries; a reason which is still compelling due to the "increase in assignments and cross-border developments between developed countries and New World trading blocs" (Morley/Heraty/Collings 2006: 2). A second decisive

assignment factor can be attributed to the coordination and control of subsidiaries carried out by expatriates. This kind of task is characterized by sojourners' effort to lay the groundwork for lasting cooperation between the headquarters and its foreign locations, like the establishment of communication flow, know-how transfer or a shared corporate culture. Third, expatriations serve the purpose of staff development; either in the form of management competence development and in this respect towards a career enhancement of the expatriate or towards an arrangement of an international expert pool, or in the form of host country staff development (e.g. see Macharzina/Wolf 1996; Scherm 1995; Thomas/Schroll-Machl 1998).

Table 2: Reasons for Expatriate Assignments

Assignment Purpose	Business Drivers	Expatriates' Tasks
Short Term Business Needs	Skill Shortage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set-Up of Foreign Subsidiaries ▪ Kickoff of Immediate Initiatives ▪ Trouble Shooting/Problem Solving
Control and Coordination	Cooperation between HQ and Subsidiaries	Establishment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication Flow ▪ Know-How Transfer ▪ Corporate Culture
Strategic Development	People Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management Development ▪ Development Host Country Staff

In cooperation with Cranfield School of Management, PricewaterhouseCoopers (2005) has explored what attracts people to long-term assignments. To start with, expatriations offer the possibility to develop both in technical and personal terms (cf. *ibid.*: 10). Moreover, interest in a change of perspectives and in the broadening of one's horizon as well as curiosity and thirst for adventure encourage today's international workforce (cf. Thomas/Schroll-Machl 1998: 296ff). Apart from this, "many individuals see international assignments as a springboard to develop careers in or outside the organisation" (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 8; also cf. Macharzina/Wolf 1996: 241); a frequent misconception, as the past has often proven. However, "[s]ome expatriates feel forced to

go and end up overseas only because they are afraid to decline the offered assignment" (Selmer 2004: 797). Another reason for accepting a long-term assignment has been assumed to be connected to the alluring contract and not least to the fancy lifestyle and social status which expatriations entail. Yet, it has turned out that expatriates are rather interested in a smooth, appealing time abroad resulting in career advancement and corresponding financial upgrade than 'only' on an immense assignment contract for the time abroad (cf. PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 11).

According to a variety of sources (cf. PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 13; Black/Gregersen 1999: 103), long-term assignments cost the multiple amount of a local hire. Estimates have leveled out at the triple or quadruple local hire sum; an incredibly high figure, especially when the assignment outcome does not bring about the return on investment expected on behalf of the sending organization.

3.1.2 Tapping A Hot Topic: Assignment Failure

The failure of expatriations is a burning issue for both research and practice. First and foremost, expatriate failure has been defined as the premature return of expatriates from their assignment because tremendously high numbers of early assignment termination – between sixteen and forty percent – have been reported in the literature (cf. Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 78f). With the growing experience of scholars and practitioners regarding international assignments, however, the supposedly extreme numbers have been criticized for their accuracy. Whereas already in 1995 Harzing claimed that there is "almost no empirical foundation for the existence of high failure rates when measured as premature re-entry" (ibid.: 458) and Hofstede describes them as a "myth" (2001: 427), recent surveys show that premature return only amounts to approximately four to six percent which "is significantly lower than most organisations' normal turnover rates" (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2006: 16; also see Andersen/Bennett 1997). Apart from this, premature return is losing its solely negative connotation.

We discussed the reasons behind early assignment terminations and found several instances where the reason was related to a positive rather than a negative factor. For example, the individual or the organisation found a better role for the individual back in the home location or in another territory, or a promotion created a need to move the individual into a new role (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2006: 16).

Today, premature return is no longer treated as much more than the tip of the iceberg. Far stronger emphasis is put on expatriate failure which takes the form of underperformance, non-fulfillment of expatriation goals, negative impact on cooperation relations or loss of expatriates upon return.

Of greater concern are those failures that are less apparent but just as costly: delayed productivity and start-up time; disrupted relationships with local nationals both inside and outside the company; damage to company image; lost opportunities; negative impact on successors; poor repatriation integration; and high repatriation turnover (Bennett/Aston/Colquhoun 2000: 241).

Even when an expatriation fails in such a less obvious form, the disadvantages caused are not restricted to lost money or additional costs. Rather, assignment failures also have a strong negative impact on the human key players, the expatriates as well as their trailing partners and children. Failed assignments can lead to loss of self-confidence and motivation, decreased goodwill on behalf of host and parent country nationals, and consequently can have a severe personal career impact (cf. Konopaske/Robie/Ivancevich 2005: 406). In an effort to reduce the risk of failure of any kind, plausible failure triggers have turned into one of *the* central expatriation topics of the last decade. In this respect, the following factors have been reported to have the most impact (cf. Jack/Stage 2005: 49ff; Festing/Kabst/Weber 2003: 173; Kinast/Thomas 2005: 243f):

- inadequate sojourner selection,
- insufficient expatriate and spouse/family preparation, and
- lack of expatriate support “to meet the myriad challenges of working and living in another country” (Jack/Stage 2005: 49) as well as to meet those which emerge upon return from the assignment.

Based on the insight into the occurrence of failure, much of the international assignment literature has been devoted to the discussion and evaluation of success predictors as the following paragraphs show.

3.1.3 Securing Sojourner Success: Calculation or Coincidence?

As is the case with the word 'failure', 'success' is an elastic term. In regard to the fact that international assignments in general affect a growing number of people across the world and, thus, have an impact on their professional and private life, the question 'What does successful expatriation actually mean?' deserves some consideration. Obviously, successful expatriates reach the goal(s) for which the organization has sent them abroad. However, are they also celebrated when they have met the expectations by means of causing disadvantages in other areas, like the annoyance of host country staff, the maltreatment of customers or the loss of potential business deals? And what if expatriates return successfully but after a burn-out episode and meanwhile divorced? Clearly, the success definition of expatriations varies from organization to organization, from job assignment to job assignment, and not least from individual to individual. Nevertheless, the notion is spreading that task fulfillment alone can no longer be enough assignment success. As more and more whole families are almost randomly moved across national borders and as lasting intercultural relations gain in importance, the well-being of expatriates and their families as well as the relationship to host country nationals have become decisive criteria for assignment success (cf. Scherm 1995: 18ff; Stahl 1995: 34ff). As a consequence of this multi-layered success concept, therefore, satisfying assignment accomplishment is no longer solely dependent on expatriates. In some regards and to a certain extent it also depends (1) on the personality, situation, and motivation of the trailing persons, and (2) on the degree of openness and flexibility as well as on the needs and expectations of host country nationals. Finally, of course, the success of international assignments is also dependent on the feasibility of its tasks (cf. Schroll-Machl 2007a); when organizations ask for the impossible, like the increase of production where there is labor shortage or an immediate improvement of quality where skills are only developing, who is to blame for the failure?

Moving on to success predictors, a number of key factors occur repeatedly in both the English and German assignment literature (e.g. see Bennett/Aston/Colquhoun 2000; Black/Gregersen 1999; Black/Mendenhall/Oddou 1991; Jack/Stage 2005; Stahl/Mayrhofer/Kühlmann 2005). In short, they refer to the

- 'right' selection of the expatriate incl. a favorable family fit,
- proper pre-departure preparation,
- continuous support during the period abroad,
- adequate reintegration, and
- key-player – assignment fit

The Key Players: Vitally, international assignments rely on capable persons at the front, the expatriates. Outstanding individual, social, strategic, and technical competencies are a must; besides that, however, expatriates also need to be able to apply them in – or modify them to the demands of – the foreign culture context. Intercultural competence is the term which is used to describe this capability in a nutshell (cf. Bolten 2005: 311ff). In this regard, uncertainty-, stress-, and frustration tolerance are particularly essential character traits. But also a good command of the foreign language as well as previous foreign experience contribute to enhanced intercultural competence (cf. Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 165; Hofstede 2001: 428). Additionally, expatriates' motivation to go abroad and their interest to make an effort are of paramount importance (cf. Jack/Stage 2005: 49f). At this stage, it is indispensable to mention the role of the family for the overall success of expatriations. Trailing partners and children, namely, do join expatriates in their role as key players. The willingness and motivation of spouses to go abroad, their ability to adjust to the circumstances of life overseas as well as the well-being of children while in the foreign country have been found to account for one of the most (if not the most) decisive factors regarding assignment success or failure (e.g. see Brett/Stroh 1995; Tung 1999).

Pre-Departure Preparation: A solid preparation which sheds light on the circumstances, the duties, the challenges, the advantages, and the options connected to work and everyday life abroad is geared towards the reduction of uncertainty which tends to accompany every intercultural contact and, even more so, a move to a foreign country. Furthermore, when preparation allows for the anticipation of stumbling blocks, potential challenges or problems may be deciphered and can be treated in advance; while without preparation they would only have occurred *after* the move had already taken place. Frequently used pre-departure offers are information material on work- and living-related matters like contract, housing, and schooling; a short visit to the host country in advance to the

proper move, known as look & see trip or orientation trip; and intercultural training (cf. Black/Mendenhall/Oddou 1991: 293; Macharzina/Wolf 1996: 331ff).

Assignment Support: More recently, the need for expatriate support extending the initial assignment span has been articulated. According to scholars, organizations primarily focus on “the pre-departure phase to prepare the expatriate, but fail to attend to expatriate development efforts involving self-awareness and self-assessment during the assignment” (cf. Jack/Stage 2005: 49). Consequently, intercultural training in advanced stages of assignments (see Rost-Roth 2007) as well as ongoing mentoring (see Feldman/Bolino 1999) and intercultural coaching (see Kinast 2005) sessions have been suggested.

Repatriation Support: Based on the extended understanding of assignment success, expatriations do not end with the last day at work. Rather, for expatriates and their trailing partners another strenuous adventure begins: returning home. Not only have new jobs to be found for expatriates and spouses and kindergartens or schools to be changed; also, many returnees experience serious difficulties upon their homecoming such as a reverse culture shock, for example. “Comprehensive and personalized relocation assistance” (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 206) has, therefore, made its arrival on the assignment support platform. Apart from ethical issues, however, the question arises if organizations can at all afford to no longer care about their returning expatriates and thus run the risk of losing all their accumulated knowledge with them (see Forster 1994).

Key Player – Assignment Fit: Ultimately, the success of an assignment does not depend on whether an expatriate is *generally* interculturally competent or whether a sending enterprise *principally* offers support measures. Success necessarily depends on how key players perceive of the detailed circumstances of the assignment, for instance, on whether the job meets his/her present career development ideas and thus is inviting or on whether the country is attractive for his/her children at that particular stage of their life. “The fact is that different people react to and interpret the same overseas environment differently” (Kealey 1989: 420) and it is also very likely that the same people react to the same overseas environment differently at different points in their lives (cf. Stahl 1995: 43ff). And at this point at the latest it becomes obvious that expatriations are indeed very personal, private life involving issues.

3.1.4 Selecting Sojourners: Theory vs. Practice

As the previous paragraphs on assignment failure and success show, the selection of proper expatriate candidates is one of the most difficult tasks for organizations. The mere challenge to find a person who has the commitment, the supportive family structure and who suits the job requirements, the host culture, and the time frame, is tremendous. "The mass of possible selection criteria [...] is rarely likely to be matched by a wide range of available candidates and the [wo]man chosen is often simply the [wo]man who happened to be there" (cf. Torbiörn 1982: 51, comment by AMH). Often, the selection of expatriates is even complicated by the tiny number of staff who is under consideration for an expatriate job at all. Although definitely challenging, there is a range of tools that can be made use of in order to trace the most success-promising candidate (cf. Stahl 1995: 51ff):

- multi-modal job interviews,
- biographical questionnaires,
- previous assignments and references,
- psychological (personality & cognitive) testing methods,
- (intercultural) assessment centers, and
- probations.

As the practice of sojourner selection shows, however, many of the proposed tools are never even touched by sending organizations. "Most international assignee selection generally happens using the most informal methods: recommendations of peers or supervisors [...] on basic dimensions such as work experience and willingness to relocate" (Caligiuri/Tarique 2006: 308). Frequently, the factor 'time' is to blame for this proceeding which likely results in overseas positions being filled under time pressure; and this in turn may evoke a chain of disadvantages. When pushed for time, the decision-making power concerning selection tends to shift from mutual responsibility of HR and line managers to line managers only. As a result, a greater emphasis put on technical skills and,

simultaneously, a neglect of 'soft' skills such as cultural sensitivity has been observed (cf. Halcrow 1999: 43). Additionally, this development is often characterized by a "domestic equals overseas performance" approach (Mendenhall/Oddou 1985: 39) meaning that in-country job success is falsely viewed as predictor for out-of-country success. Therefore, the "urgent need to fill a position overseas [...] may lead to the selection of the 'best available candidate'" (Anderson 2005: 568) instead of the best candidate.

Too often expatriates are selected in a knee-jerk reaction to the need to fill a new or unexpected vacancy overseas. Although the selection process should be carried out by a well-informed intercultural trainer or HR professional, it is often top management that decides who to send. Management tends to choose the most technically competent candidates, even though the qualities that made candidates a success domestically won't necessarily make them a success internationally (Shilling 1993: 58).

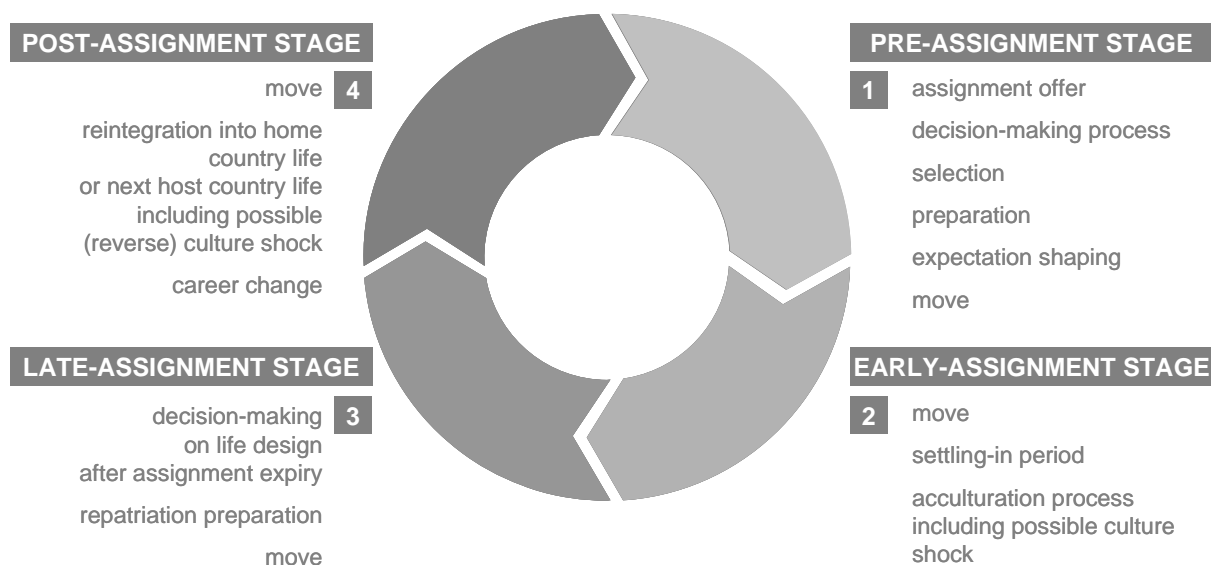
Finally, what has been found to result from candidate selection that takes place under time pressure is that the suitability, capability, and motivation of accompanying persons do not get the attention they deserve. In regard to the above discussed decisive part which spouses and families play in regard to expatriation success, it might surprise that companies dare to refrain from assessing their 'fit'.

We can speculate why companies appear to be reluctant to include families in the selection process, based on the separation between work and private life that occurs in most Western cultures. [...] this understandable reluctance to become involved in an employee's private life constrains the multinational's ability to select the most appropriate couple (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 88f).

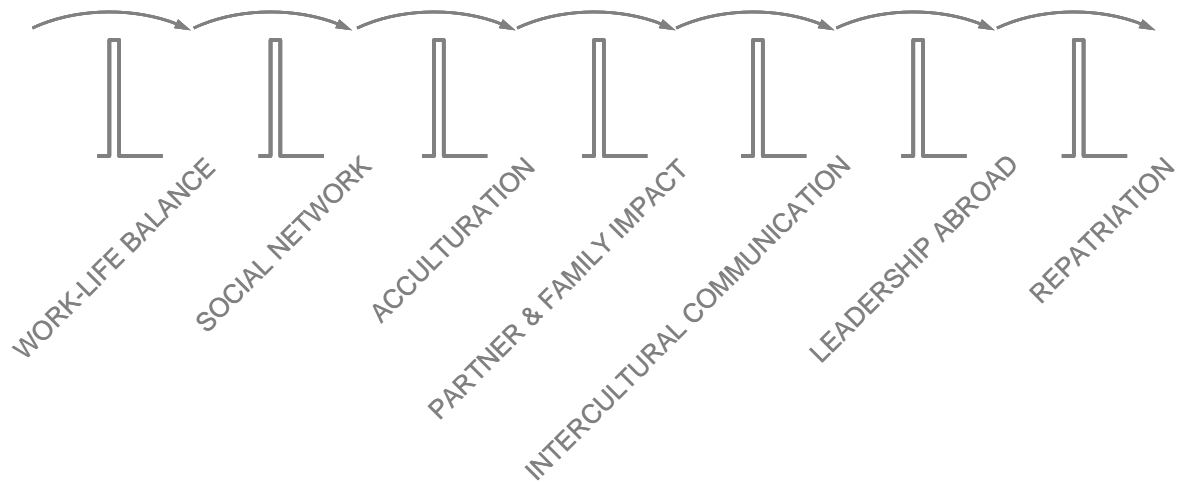
3.2 Facing Expatriate Challenges

Expatriations have been described as outstandingly challenging tasks (e.g. see Knapp et al. 1999) as they impact the transferred employee on various levels. Change does not only occur job-wise but also affects private life; living conditions, food styles or the circle of friends, for instance. Therefore, such deployments also have an influence on expatriates' dependants which implies that "unlike domestic jobs, an international assignment is more of a family affair" (Osland 1995; qtd. in Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001: 264). In fact, the whole expatriate assignment life cycle (cf. Punnett 1997: 250ff) is characterized by work- and private life-related ups and downs. The figure below provides an overview of the four assignment stages constituting the expatriate life cycle, each of which entails manifold challenging situations.

Figure 9: Expatriate Assignment Life Cycle



Following, the prime hurdles of expatriations are described in detail: Work-life balance, lack of social network, adjustment process, spouse and family issues, intercultural communication, leadership, and repatriation rank among the most discussed long-term assignment challenges.

Figure 10: Expatriation Hurdles

It is to note that these challenges tend to be connected, to influence and to reciprocally boost each other. However, for the sake of clarity they are discussed consecutively at this stage. Since the available pieces of international assignment literature do barely supply any examples for how the various hurdles manifest themselves in practice – i.e., in the everyday lives of expatriates and their families – every subsequent challenge subchapter closes with quotes from conversations which the author conducted with expatriates for this doctoral thesis. Clearly marked as interview excerpts, these passages are intended to embody the theoretically introduced challenges and thus to provide the reader with a more profound understanding.

3.2.1 Balancing Professional and Private Life

The transition from in-country employment to a long-term job abroad is a decisive event (e.g. see PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005). Besides the necessity to get used to a new role at work and a different organizational culture which evokes changed conditions in a variety of fields like communication, decision-making or leadership, expatriates are also confronted with life in a foreign culture which may demand major alterations in day to day habits, leisure activities or working life. Additionally, many expatriates experience extended travel as well as a sharp rise in working hours (cf. Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001: 273).

For example, increased connectedness through advances in telecommunications such as the Internet, e-mail and mobile telephone has sparked concerns about the intrusive nature of technology, and the growing expectation that a person is always available, including outside normal working hours (Welch/Worm 2006: 287).

In a nutshell, expatriates tend to be even more involved in professional issues than in their domestic jobs and, additionally, need more energy to manage life outside their office (cf. Thomas/Schroll-Machl 1998: 287). And this happens at a time when their family members are just as busy adapting to their changing life. Expatriate assignments bring about change for family members, regardless of whether partners and children leave for the host country together with the expatriate or whether they stay at home. In cases where families accompany the expatriate, spouses are often faced with the necessity to give up their job and instead take on stronger roles as housewives/-men and become responsible for bureaucratic duties; the latter of which can be outstandingly challenging when individuals do not have sufficient command of the host country language. Children, need to change schools, find their feet in classes held in a foreign language, make new friends, and get used to different hobbies. Even if family members stay at home, however, parent duties and parent-child relations do change; separation can have considerable effects (cf. van der Zee/Ali/Salomé 2005: 242). Everybody involved is likely to suffer from the strong backing they need, from the lack of assistance they can get as well as from the minimal support they can lend.

As individuals [expatriates] seek to prove and establish themselves in new roles, there is a real risk that work/life becomes unbalanced at a critical time when the family unit itself is adapting to the challenges of living overseas and establishing new support and social networks (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 12, comment by AMH).

It is both the overexertion of the new roles and their interference which causes work-life unbalance. When multiple roles exceed people's capacity and are, on top of that, mutually incompatible (cf. Linehan/Walsh 2000: 50), work-life unbalance may result in more than just stress. The realization that one cannot live up to one's own or other's expectations – that one literally has to choose between fulfilling the one or the other task – may have a negative impact on subjective well-being. This in turn might cause crossover of one person's emotional distress to another resulting in a blow-up of negative emotions – the starting point for severe physical, mental, work-related, and interpersonal problems (e.g. see Westman 2001).

There are real costs related to work and family conflict for employees and organizations. In general, there is evidence that the conflict related to work and

personal demands can lead to negative health outcomes for employees and may decrease organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and increase burnout [...]. Some of the symptoms that result for the relocated worker may include increased use of drugs and alcohol, causing decreased job performance and organizational effectiveness [...]. Previous research has indicated that relocating overseas can cause stress on a marriage and lead to divorce, particularly for marriages that are already weak [...] (Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001: 263f).

Work-life balance issues have gained in importance since the number of female expatriates, dual-career couples, and single parents in the expatriate population have risen. Individuals have become both less able and willing to lay down their lives for their own, and even less for their partners' careers.

The significant demographic and attitudinal changes of employees, as well the increased number of international assignments, illustrate the urgency for organizations to address work and family issues as a fundamental business concern (Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001: 262).

Table 3: Work-Life Balance – On Unacceptable Compromise

Interview Excerpt: Work-Life Balance – On Unacceptable Compromise

[...] ich kann mich noch erinnern, als wir in Indonesien waren und das war eigentlich auch die ganze Zeit ziemlich schwierig und dann hatten wir Besuch von unserem Bereichsleiter, der für Asien zuständig war [...] und dann sagte der 'Na ja, ich geh ja sowieso davon aus, dass ihr euch gelegentlich am Wochenende mal trefft und arbeitet.' Okay, ich mein wir haben alle zu Hause gearbeitet am Wochenende, fanden das höchst unangemessen, dass man sich so was überhaupt anhören muss, so nach dem Motto ihr sitzt hier und erholt euch hier am Strand. Und da haben wir kurz geschluckt und dann war der besagte Mann noch gar nicht richtig zurück in Deutschland, da kriegen wir einen Brief wo drin steht, wie wichtig es ist, dass wir unseren Urlaub rechtzeitig und vollständig nehmen und dann irgendwelches Geschwafel über Work-Life Balance. Und da dachte ich nur, das ist wieder typisch, das sind so diese Dinge, die man in der Theorie machen sollte, aber wenn es dann mal konkret darum geht, irgend ne Deadline zu verschieben oder irgendwas nicht zu machen, dann gibt es natürlich keinen Kompromiss. Also klar, alles machen und noch mehr und sofort und in super Qualität und vielleicht kein zusätzliches Budget und keine zusätzlichen Mitarbeiter, aber denk dran, immer rechtzeitig deinen Urlaub zu nehmen und dann noch möglichst, wenn du das nicht machst, wird er gestrichen, das kam dann auch noch. Also so viel zum Thema Work-Life Balance (28/85).

3.2.2 Losing and Establishing Social Networks

In the course of a move to a remote country, relationships with work colleagues, family members, and friends who have been reputable sources of social support inevitably change. Even though unfortunate, it is natural that social ties loosen as helpful conversations can at best take place on the telephone, via e-mail or letters; "the nature of these friendships necessarily changes as face-to-face contact is replaced with these technological means" (Copeland/Norell 2002: 258). The major intricacy about diminishing social support is not only, however, that people miss out on "positive feedback, disclosure of private feelings, advice, social participation, practical aid, physical assistance, and impersonal discussion" (Copeland/Norell 2002: 260f; qtd. in Weiss 1975), but that they also experience great difficulty to establish new networks in the foreign surrounding. Therefore, particularly singles are confronted with loneliness. It has been found that this expatriate group is more prone to resort to alcohol consumption because they lack the time and opportunity to make contact with host country nationals or foreigners like themselves. On the contrary, expatriate families with children are likely to socialize with others within a relatively short time period (cf. Tung 1999: 474). Besides organizational support, once established contacts to host country nationals and colleagues from the expatriate community can be of great help (cf. Copeland/Norell 2002: 259; Fontaine 1996: 265f; Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001: 265f). The same is true for support from within the own family. With expatriate colleagues and family members, however, there exists the danger that discussions on difficult situations can lead to mutual reinforcement of negative feelings and, eventually, to destructive attitudes towards the host country and its inhabitants (cf. Thomas/Schroll-Machl 2005: 392f).

Table 4: Social Network – The Be-All and End-All

Interview Excerpt: Social Network – The Be-All and End-All

[...] aber man muss halt ein sehr stabiles privates Umfeld haben; das ist das A & O würd ich sagen. Und also ich traue mich zu behaupten, dass hier die Leute, die hier überleben, die haben eine ganz starke private Basis, sei es Familie, sei es Freundin oder sonst was, das private Leben muss ganz stark sein und das ist auch etwas, wo ich sehr drauf Acht geb, dass einfach das private Leben stimmt, obwohl jetzt meine Freundin nicht hier ist, trotzdem hab ich meine Freunde oder die kommen mich besuchen oder ich hab hier einen Freundeskreis, das ist das Wichtigste; dass man einfach drüber redet, was halt die täglichen Probleme sind und das ist das Wichtigste (26/91). [...] hier sag ich mal, sind ein, zwei Deutsche da. Das war es dann. Mit den Chinesen-Kollegen kannst du jetzt nicht so

Interview Excerpt: Social Network – The Be-All and End-All

über die Probleme, die du als Expat hast, reden. Das geht ja nicht. Und du als Expat bist der Ansprechpartner für hunderte von Leuten in Regensburg neben dem Vorstand. In Deutschland da gibt es tausende andere Leute mit denen du noch sprechen kannst, aber hier bist du derjenige, der hier spricht. Und das ist dann natürlich schon anders (26/95).

3.2.3 Acculturating

An acculturation process – in this case the adjustment to a foreign culture – is a multi-faceted, interdependent, and highly individual event. As a result, the prediction of its course, its pace, its side-effects as well as its positive or negative outcome seems close to impossible. Nevertheless, scholars have been putting their efforts into the exploration of the expatriate acculturation process. Findings that seem valuable for the focus of this chapter are presented as follows.

What concerns its complexity, Black and Stephens (see Black 1988; Black/Stephens 1989) have found expatriate adjustment to be three-dimensional as it usually takes place in regard to (1) work, (2) interaction, and (3) general environment. At this point, again, the connection between work and private life becomes obvious. The capability of adjusting to work-related matters only, is by far not enough to succeed in a long-term assignment.

Work Adjustment is the adjustment to the new job role and to the performance expectations of headquarters and host country.

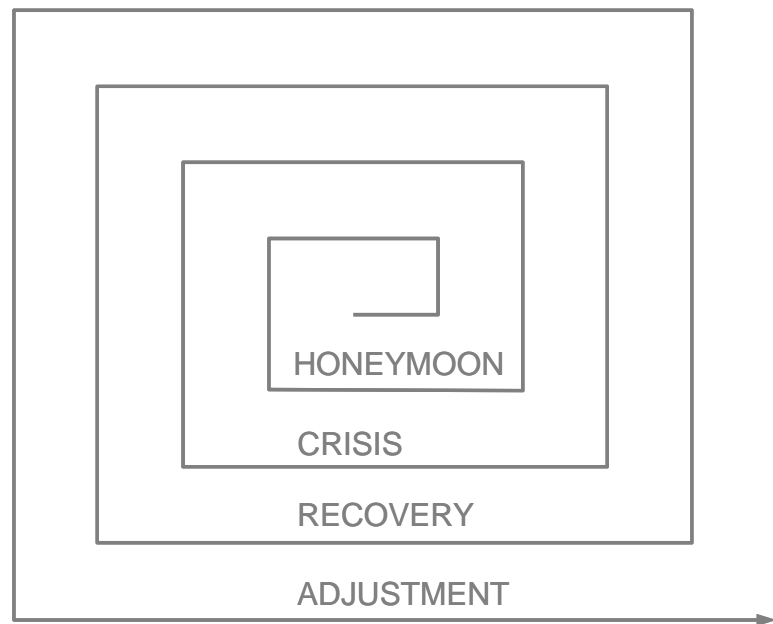
Interaction Adjustment refers to mingling and communicating with host country nationals be it for professional or private purposes.

General Environment Adjustment means adjustment to day-to-day life abroad, for instance, to the climate, leisure activities, and traffic or housing conditions.

Adjustment in one area does not necessarily predict adjustment in any of the other areas. It is likely, however, that adjustment success and resulting well-being at work facilitate adjustment in any of the other fields and vice versa. At least, if problems at work are kept to a minimum, issues in other spheres can more efficiently be compensated. Likewise, unfortunately, difficulties in one area may reinforce those in others and can trigger a multiplication of challenges (cf. Black/Mendenhall/Oddou 1991: 304f).

In terms of acculturation stages, Oberg's four-stage adjustment model (see Oberg 1960) is frequently quoted. He divides the process into four steps:

Figure 11: Adjustment Model



The Honeymoon Stage: It is characterized by enthusiasm and fascination for the foreign culture. The relationship to host country nationals is rather cursory and friendly.

The Crisis Stage: At this stage, language, value, and behavior differences or differences concerning expectations, and more evoke feelings of inadequacy, fear, and annoyance. Contact to home country nationals increases.

The Recovery Stage: Host country language proficiency improves which alleviates life abroad. Attitudes towards the host country take a turn for the better.

The Adjustment Stage: Habits and customs of the host country are accepted and even appreciated, and barely cause negative feelings.

A strong occurrence of the second stage, the crisis stage, is also known as 'culture shock' (e.g. see Furnham/Bochner 1982). The symptoms of this mental crisis can be of physical, experiential, and behavioral nature. Indicators of culture shock can be sleeping disorder, feelings of isolation and deception, continuous strain, anger, drop in performance, and increased alcohol consumption (cf. Kühlmann 1995: 7). The following paragraph characterizes culture shock in more detail:

The symptoms of cultures shock include excessive preoccupation with the cleanliness of one's drinking water, food and surroundings; great concern over minor pains; excessive anger over delays and other minor frustrations; a fixed idea that people are taking advantage of or cheating one; reluctance to learn the language of the host country; a feeling of hopelessness; and a strong desire to associate with persons of

one's own nationality. [...] Victims of culture shock also experience a decline in inventiveness, spontaneity, and flexibility to the extent that it interferes with their normal behavior (Brislin/Pedersen 1976: 13).

Oberg's outline of the acculturation process may reflect individuals' adjustment experience. Very likely, indeed, one's degree of acculturation varies throughout relocation. It is to note, however, that several pieces of counter-research do not support the very sequence or the necessary occurrence of the proposed stages (cf. De Cieri/Dowling/Taylor 1991: 399).

Also, the long prevalent idea that some cultures are 'easier' to adjust to than others has been weakened. Cultures which appear to be fairly similar to one's own culture can turn out as challenging as more remote one's – if only at second sight.

For an expatriate assigned to an entirely different host culture, the advantage is that the consciousness of dissimilarity is always there, whereas managers posted in a similar culture to their own often fail to identify the differences that do exist and easily resort to blaming their subordinates or themselves for problems which in reality are due to the culture clash. In other words, it is the expectation expatriates hold about the new culture and the attributions they make about what happens in the new culture that will have a significant impact on expatriates' adjustment (Selmer 2006: 1215).

Table 5: Acculturation – Energy and Creativity Required

Interview Excerpt: Acculturation – Energy and Creativity Required

You know the first wave is off. Everything is new, everything is great; then it is out. Then you have to find something new, especially also for the family or for my wife, she was also bored, you know. She had started all that she wanted, Chinese course and and and, then somewhere there is an end. Then that was the big thing and also for me at this period I was feeling a little bit pressure in the negative way. Then I started to have some physical impact, I was feeling really bad actually and, yeah, then you have to rethink it all, what cannot be changed and then change fast (laughs) what can be. That is the only thing. But I think this for every people, going to a new place the first time is always quite, always. But then you have to find a second breath, you know? And this is where you have to be creative enough (24/168).

3.2.4 Seeing Partners and Family Struggle

Relocations can have strong, positive effects on partner and family ties; they can bring individuals closer together as they jointly deal with the intercultural challenge. Facing this breathtaking adventure, family members

can exchange their personal pieces of experience and develop both as persons and as family unit (cf. Copeland/Norell 2002: 256f). As already touched upon in the chapter on work-life balance, partners' and children's satisfaction with the assignment may spill over onto expatriates, evoke their positive attitudes towards the relocation, and increase the probability of adjustment and overall assignment success. Yet, when family members are unable to adjust well and suffer more than they gain from their transition, spillover effects are as powerful negative-wise. Particularly in regard to accompanying partners, there are numerous factors which may cloud an expatriation; not without good reason have several studies deciphered the spouse as *the* "[...] family member whose support of and satisfaction with an expatriate assignment are crucial for the overall success of that assignment" (Konopaske/Robie/Ivancevich 2005: 406).

In the course of relocation, the lives and roles of spouses tend to undergo much more of a radical change than those of anyone else involved in such a transfer. First and foremost, this is because a majority of spouses lose their jobs as they leave for the foreign country. The 2005 GMAC Global Relocation Trends Survey Report showed (cf. GMAC 2006: 7) that sixty percent of partners were employed before the assignment whereas only twenty-one percent were employed during the assignment. Due to restrictive work permit laws in many countries, spouses' life patterns necessarily and often involuntarily change with expatriation (cf. Harvey et al. 1999: 817). As a consequence, accompanying partners' duties often shift towards taking care of children, dealing with bureaucratic issues, and handling housing, schooling, and shopping issues. In a foreign country where a foreign language is spoken and where support from friends and family lacks, these tasks can be exceptionally strenuous, tedious, and frustrating. Even partners who have focused on and well accomplished these tasks in the home country surrounding are likely to feel the difference (cf. Stahl 1995: 41).

Another prime partner issue – especially when expatriate couples do not have children – is that their lives tend to lack any regularity whatsoever. In contrast to expatriates whose jobs guarantee continuity and structure, trailing partners' greatest challenge may be to come up with their own daily routine and a new social network while experiencing the host country culture firsthand (cf. Adler 2002: 310ff).

To summarize, it is chiefly for reasons of job involvement and adjustment problems to the new, unfamiliar everyday life that today expatriates/expatriate couples refuse assessments or terminate them prematurely (cf. Konopaske/Robie/Ivancevich 2005: 409). De Cieri and colleagues (1991) note, however, that not only rising numbers of dual-career couples lead to a shortage of willing expatriates, but that more and

more people who pursue new forms of living together, blended families for example, are likely to decline a long-term assignment offer.

Expatriates with children from previous marriages face[d] particular difficulties, such as interrupting family relationships by separating children from a biological parent, step-parent and step-brothers and sisters (De Cieri/Dowling/Taylor 1991: 408).

Couples of whom the woman is the expatriate and the man the spouse are also expected to reject relocations more frequently than conventional couples. As a consequence of traditional gender roles,

[m]ale spouses who are unable to find productive work are [...] in a situation that is somewhat unique. Most of the other spouses are women and the male spouse is considered atypical, non-working men may be seen as somewhat unacceptable in certain locations, and they themselves have been conditioned to feel less worthy if they are not contributing financially (Punnett 1997: 248).

Table 6: Partner and Family Impact – Talking Expatriates' Better Half

Interview Excerpt: Partner and Family Impact – Talking Expatriates' Better Half

Auf der anderen Seite geht natürlich speziell der Partner durch ein Wellental. Also bei meiner Frau war es so, dass sie, also wir hatten kein Kind, als wir nach Hong Kong gegangen sind, dass sie natürlich aus einem sehr guten Job im Liechtenstein rausgerissen wurde, ah, ein relativ schwaches Englisch hatte, also wirklich für einen Job hat es nicht ausgereicht, Hauptschul-, HBLA-Englisch, das reicht, um irgendwo ein wenig Konversation zu führen, aber wirklich um einen Job zu haben, hat es nicht gereicht (20/18). [...] Und für sie war es wirklich frustrierend, also die ersten zwei, drei Monate waren total frustrierend. Und das ist natürlich auch etwas, das den Partner beeinflusst. Also wenn man heimkommt und sieht, dass es dem Partner nicht gut geht, dann kann der Job noch so faszinierend sein, es klappt dann einfach nicht (20/20). [...] War sehr emotionell für sie. Sie hat teilweise bis elf, zwölf geschlafen, was in keinsten Weise ihre Art ist. Sie ist ein sehr extrovertierter Mensch, der schnell auf andere zugeht und war dort eher wie ein Igel. Für sie war es halt, keinen Job mehr zu haben, von meinem Geld abhängig zu sein, die Sprache nicht richtig zu sprechen, in einem neuen Umfeld zu sein, weg von ihrer Mama bzw. von ihrer Familie, das waren alles Dinge, die auf sie sehr stark eingewirkt haben, auf der einen Seite; auf der anderen Seite, die Zeit zu haben, um drüber nachzudenken, also wenn man arbeitet, dann hat man die Zeit nicht, um drüber nachzudenken bzw. wenn man dann am Abend mit dem Partner zusammen ist, dann hat man auch keine Zeit (20/41).

3.2.5 Communicating Across Cultures

Intercultural communication is part and parcel of any expatriate assignment; and again, both private and professional life is equally affected by the chances it offers and the challenges it poses.

Communication is at the heart of all organizational operations and international relations. It is the most important tool we have for getting things done. It is the basis for understanding, cooperation, and action. In fact, the very vitality and creativity of an organization or a nation depends upon the content and character of its communications. Yet, communication is both hero and villain – it transfers information, meets people's needs, and gets things done, but far too often it also distorts messages, develops frustration, and renders people and organizations ineffective (Harris/Moran 1989: 31).

The ability to communicate effectively with host country nationals is a precondition in order to find one's way around in a foreign country. Language proficiency, however, does not only make life abroad possible; it may even enhance a person's quality of life abroad. Conversations and friendships with host country nationals can provide a deeper insight into a culture's values and life style and thus add to the development of a deeper understanding and appreciation of a people (cf. Copeland/Norell 2002: 258ff). Professional-wise, intercultural communication plays a decisive role as well; research has shown that no less than seventy percent of a manager's time is used for communication (e.g. see Wahren 1987). It is, therefore, highly advantageous when expatriates and their dependants are able to speak the host country language.

Yet, intercultural communication is not only speaking a foreign language; it requires more than that. Besides the study of vocabulary and grammar, intercultural communication demands knowledge of appropriate cues concerning intonation and volume as well as the compliance with cultural rules regarding posture, gesture, and eye contact. Additionally, a feeling for adequate direct or indirect communication, self-disclosure, and other particularities are essential (cf. Knapp 2003: 110ff).

When people encounter not just a foreign language and a different communication style but different ways of acting and managing, this can be very burdensome. In a tourist situation, interactional differences often result in only passing discomfort, but in business, much more is usually at stake. The success of the company's or client's business, the harmony of significant relationships, the jobs of staff and colleagues and/or indeed one's own, are among the things which may be endangered through culturally influenced, dysfunctional management interaction (Franklin 2007: 263).

Developing intercultural communication competence is, therefore, a longer-term endeavor; and difficulties and even misapprehensions are necessarily part of it – primarily at the beginning of one's effort. As a consequence, an

international assignment requires expatriates and dependants both to look into the particularities of the host country language and conversation style as well as to deal with repeated setbacks and recurring frustration.

As disagreements and misunderstandings based on intercultural communications are inevitable, it becomes important to be able to manage our negative emotional reactions when engaging with those differences. Those who can will be able to engage in a more constructive intercultural process and open the door to more successful intercultural interactions (Matsumoto/Yoo/LeRoux 2007: 80).

Table 7: Intercultural Communication – More Than Just a Different Language

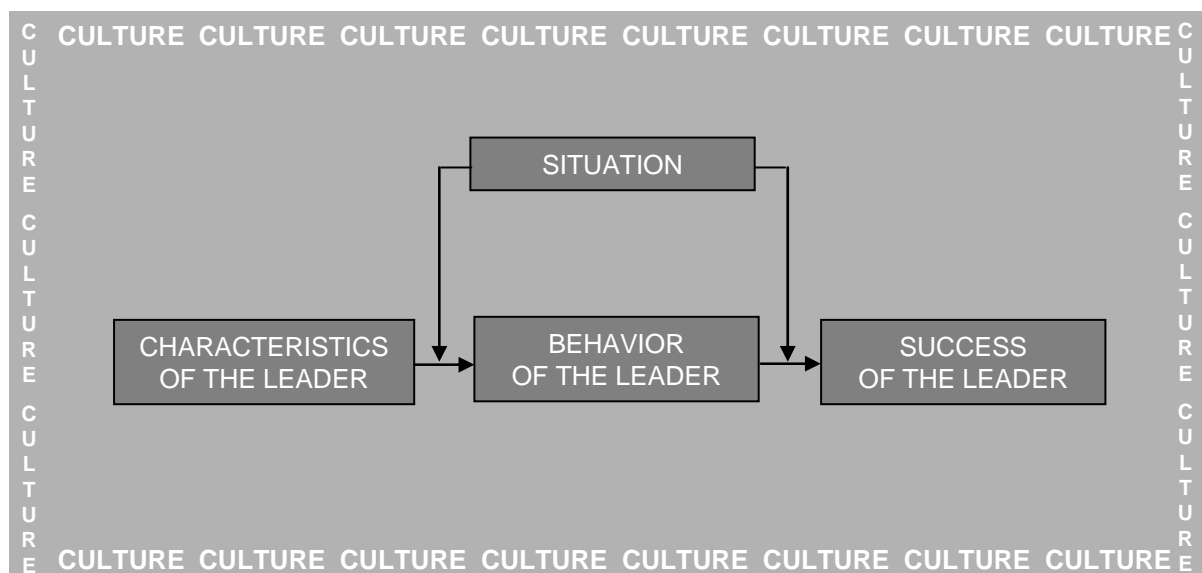
Interview Excerpt: Intercultural Communication – More Than Just a Different Language

- Kannst du denn Chinesisch?
- Nö, eigentlich nicht. Ich kann zwar ein bisschen Taxi-Chinesisch, aber das ist das höchste. Ich hab so ein bisschen gelernt und ich hatte auch ne Beziehung mit ner Chinesin für vier Jahre, also, von dem her ich kenn mich schon ein bisschen aus, aber ich komme auch durch, aber es ist kein Geschäftschinesisch.
- Und so mit den Mitarbeitern, wie funktioniert die Kommunikation?
- Ahm, Englisch. Das geht. Also ich sprech mit denen ab und zu mal ein bisschen Chinesisch aber nur wenn sie es gar nicht verstehen, aber in der Regel Englisch.
- Und das läuft auch relativ gut?
- (Prompt) Nö (lacht). Nein, also das läuft überhaupt nicht gut. Aber gut, das sind die verschiedenen Ebenen, also die Gruppenleiter, wir haben fünf Gruppenleiter, die können alle Englisch. Und das sind auch meine direkten Leute, mit denen ich zusammenarbeite und dadurch ist es eigentlich schon okay; die können sehr gut Englisch aber alles was darunter kommt, man muss immer entscheiden, nimmt man einen Ingenieur, der fachlich gut ist oder der Englisch kann. Da ist meistens immer die Regel, du nimmst den, der fachlich gut ist (26/112-117). [...] Also ich unterscheide das immer, die verstehen mich schon, was ich sag, rein vom Englischen. Aber sie verstehen nicht, was ich möchte. Das ist aber glaub ich eher nicht ein Englischproblem, das ist glaub ich eher ein chinesisches Problem; das ist einfach wenn ich sag, also ich kann dir jeden Tag 100 Beispiele nennen, wo das nicht funktioniert. Ich kann zum Beispiel sagen, 'Lieber Herr so und so, machen sie die Präsentation bitte fertig', 'Okay, mach ich'. Dann sag ich noch dazu, 'Bis morgen, vier Uhr'. Und morgen um vier kommt er nicht und dann sag ich 'Was ist das Problem, warum kommst du nicht? Bist du nicht fertig?' 'Ne, ich bin fertig'. Dann sag ich 'Warum kommst du dann nicht?' Sagt er 'Hast du ja nicht dazu gesagt'. Das ist jetzt ein blödes Beispiel, aber es gibt wirklich jeden Tag solche Beispiele und das ist einfach ne andere Denke (26/147).

3.2.6 Leading Abroad

Culture influences leadership; and in more detail, culture influences the way characteristics of leaders are perceived, it influences how leaders interpret situational factors upon which they make their decisions, it influences leaders' behavior and how that behavior is read, and it finally influences the success of a leadership intervention and the overall success of leaders (cf. Thomas/Stumpf 2003: 78ff and the figure below which is based on their Intercultural Leadership Model).

Figure 12: Impact of Culture on Leadership



In other words, leadership is embedded in cultural contexts (cf. Stumpf 2005: 325) which is why, in many respects, leadership principles and behavior are bound to certain cultures and are thus not necessarily transferable to other cultures. Consequently, when leaders and employees have different cultural backgrounds, the leadership situation's degree of complexity escalates. To exemplify possible leadership differences across the globe, the following issues are discussed:

- decision-making,
- problem-solving, and
- goal-setting strategies.

Decision-Making: Based on Event-Management Theory (e.g. see Smith/Peterson 1988), leaders interpret organizational events with the help of various sources. Depending on whether they fall back on their own previous experience, the opinion of their superiors, or formal and unwritten rules, they come to varying conclusions regarding an event which, eventually, influence their decisions. Which source leaders choose to base their decision on depends on leaders' cultural backgrounds.

Problem-Solving: The handling of social conflicts represents the cultural diversity of problem-solving strategies particularly well. Whereas some, especially Asian cultures tend to avoid conflicts in order to save people's face, other, for instance North American and European cultures prefer to address and argue out conflicts (e.g. see Hofstede 2001).

Goal-Setting-Strategies: Also goal-setting strategies do not only vary depending on individuals and situational factors, but also on cultural imprint. It is possible that leaders simply appoint the goals to be reached; that they present and, as it were, 'sell' their objectives and wait for their employees to buy them; or that leaders develop objectives in cooperation with their people. Again, which avenue is taken has been shown to be connected to cultural influences (e.g. see Erez/Earley 1987).

Table 8: Leadership Abroad – Hong Kong Team Meeting

Interview Excerpt: Leadership Abroad – Hong Kong Team Meeting

I remember calling a team meeting in the first few weeks here and saying, 'We have got these kinds of issues, anybody got ideas?' In the States that would have brought a loud barrow of suggestions, in Hong Kong it brought complete silence (31/34). [...] And so I said, 'Oh, okay, let me start with giving you one of my ideas, here is what I think we could do, what do you think?' And they all looked at the one lady and they wanted her to speak and she said, 'Well, you are the boss, you may say so.' And I said, 'What do you mean?' 'Well actually, if you think it is a good idea, you are the boss, you may say that is a good idea.' And I quickly realized that the last thing they were going to do was to offer an opinion in public, which I might decide I like or like not and would risk losing face if I was not supporting their idea. The way in which people communicate, their willingness to contribute to an open debate, the way in which they make decisions, the way in which they deal with hierarchy, completely different (31/36).

3.2.7 Repatriating

Repatriation, the act of returning from an assignment to one's home country, has been described as the most surprising expatriate challenge. Whereas 'coming home' tends to be imagined as simple and pleasant event, those who have gone through the process often report otherwise. The realization that they themselves, life in the home country, work in the organization, as well as their families and friends have changed has been shown to lead to feelings of disappointment, strangeness, and heightened uncertainty as to whether one will ever be able to 'fit in' again (e.g. see Forster 1994).

Throughout their international assignments, expatriates must adjust to new cultures and work environments, which tends to alter mental maps and behavioural routines about what to think, say, and do both on and off the job [...]. At the same time, changes may be occurring at home in the parent company, from corporate restructurings to shifts in strategy and policy. In addition, company executives, managers, and staff are likely to change during the assignment. Changes are likely to be taking place as well among friends, family, in neighbourhoods, and in other areas of the expatriates' non-work life. In short, when expatriates return home, they have changed, the company they work for has changed, and their community has changed. Their adjustment experience is very much like that of a newcomer, in that there are inevitably many surprises that may require many attempts at sense-making [...] (Stroh/Gregersen/Black 2002: 681f).

This explains why many returnees go through another phase of culture shock upon their come back. Reverse culture shock might even be experienced more severely than, or altogether instead of, that in the host country. "For some returnees re-entry is a shock. It is as if they had pressed the 'pause' button as they flew out of the country and expected life at home to remain in the 'freeze frame'" (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 216).

Additionally however, there are other factors which may place repatriations in an unfavorable light (cf. Linehan/Scullion 2002: 257; Selmer 2004: 806). The lack of adequate jobs in the home country is one of them, especially "[s]ince developing skills is one of the key reasons why individuals accept an assignment in the first instance" (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 17). When repatriates are maneuvered into tiring and frustrating "holding positions" (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 210) which neither allow for the application of knowledge they acquired in the course of their assignment nor for an expected career enhancement, repatriation is the bitter end of an altogether rough relocation journey.

The expatriate is frequently caught in a 'catch-22' stage of repatriation in that the availability of an appropriate new position will seldom be secure upon repatriating to

the home country organization [...]. The holding pattern syndrome and the lack of decision-making autonomy thus become cruel 'rewards' for personal and career sacrifices made for the good of the company by the repatriated manager (Harvey/Novicevic 2006: 329).

With an inadequate position upon return, the degree of independence, responsibility, and status diminishes which has also been found to be burdensome for repatriates. While the autonomy and standing of many executives reaches the climax while they are abroad, the situation on return might be just the opposite. Furthermore, widespread indifference towards expatriates' pieces of experience on behalf of the home country environment as well as the loss of social private and professional networks are among the most prominent repatriation challenges (cf. Thomas/Schroll-Machl 2005: 395f).

Table 9: Repatriation – Expatriates' Business

Interview Excerpt: Repatriation – Expatriates' Business

[...] als ich den Vertrag unterschrieb, da gab es irgendwie so ein Schreiben, wo ich zusagen musste, dass ich mich zu einer bestimmten Zeit in Berlin bei HR melde und sie darüber informiere, ich glaube ein halbes Jahr vor Ablauf des Vertrages musste ich also unterschreiben, dass ich mich bei denen melde und sozusagen meine Rückkehr ankündige. Und dann dachte ich, MAN EJ, können die nicht mal einen Terminkalender führen, ja?! Also wirklich, das zeigt so die ganze Einstellung dazu, der ist jetzt weg und der muss sich dann eben wieder bei uns melden, wenn er was will. Also das hätte ich mir schon deutlich anders vorgestellt, zumal ja diese Auslandsaufenthalte ja auch immer so als Entwicklungsmaßnahme verkauft werden und da würde ich dann schon auch erwarten, dass es einen Entwicklungsplan gibt, aber ich glaube, den gab es nicht. Und man war halt gut beraten, ein Network zu haben, dass sich dann auch jemand um einen kümmert, aber das lag in der Linie (28/67).

3.3 Presenting Expatriate Support Measures

The preceding chapter shows that expatriate challenges can affect various stages of the assignment life cycle and can have an impact on both professional and private life. More than that, however, it also demonstrates that challenges may vary in terms of intensity; that their occurrence depends on the individual expatriate and his/her family background, their home-host country match as well as on the organizational and economic situation in headquarters and foreign subsidiary; and, finally, that some challenges can simply not be forecast (cf. Bolten 2003a: 67; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 41; Schroll-Machl 2007b).

Due to the reported long-term transfer challenges, the intercultural management literature includes multiple contributions suggesting how expatriates, their trailing partners as well as accompanying children can be supported by their companies. The next section hence discusses a variety of organization-internal and frequently outsourced support measures, laying the groundwork for a subsequent critical review in regard to their impact. The central focus of the review is not only on the effect of each of these popular support measures but, in particular, to whether they together are capable of covering the broad spectrum of possible expatriation challenges.

3.3.1 Enlightening Expatriate Support Measures

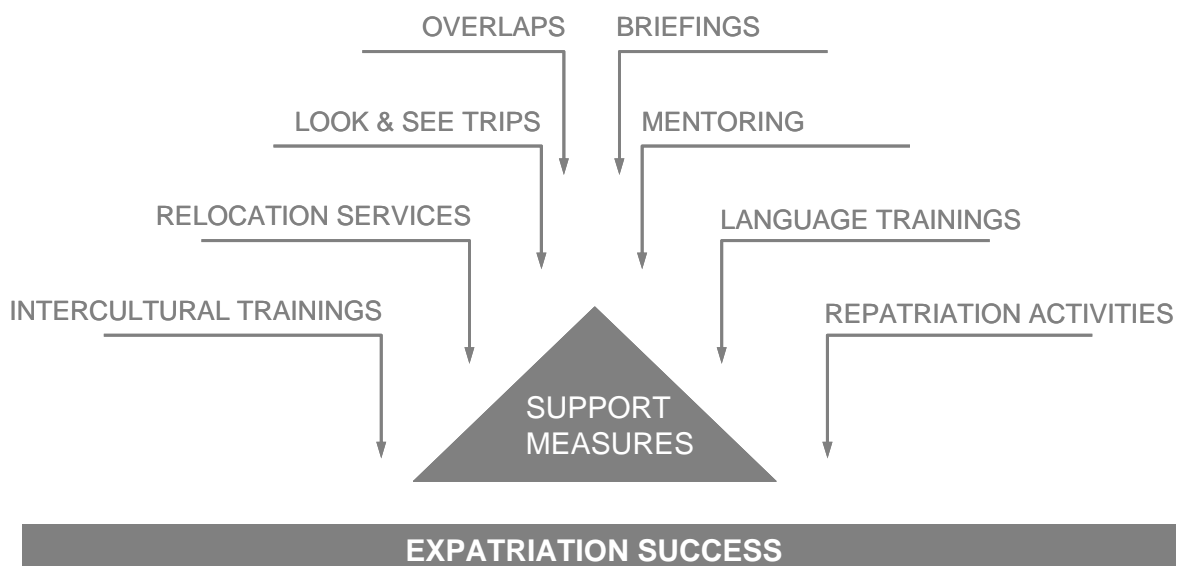
A variety of expatriate support measures which have been discussed in the international assignment literature are introduced in this chapter (see Figure 13: Expatriate Support Measures). Yet, before administrative, informal, off-the-job, and on-the-job measures like relocation services, look & see trips, briefings, language training, intercultural training, overlaps, mentoring, and repatriation activities are presented, the importance of granting expatriates lead time prior to their move is to be emphasized. Lead time can be viewed as an indirect support measure in that it gives expatriates and their dependants the opportunity "[...] to plan effectively for, and to maintain a sense of control over, the move [...]" (Forster 1994: 408). In addition to that, lead time is also essential in order to gather enough information so that realistic pictures of life abroad can be created.

The more accurate expectations individuals can form, the more uncertainty they will reduce and the better their anticipatory adjustment will be. The better the

anticipatory adjustment, the fewer surprises and negative affective reactions or less culture shock individuals will experience, the more appropriate behaviors and attitudes they will exhibit, and the smoother and quicker their adjustment will be (Black/Mendenhall/Oddou 1991: 305).

Although not treated in detail at this stage, it is to be mentioned that the expatriate contract can also be seen as a kind of support measure. Financial security is likely to lift diverse burdens from expatriate shoulders and may protect them from the necessity to make important decisions at short notice; for instance, selling an apartment or renting a house. However, it is also to say that financial compensation alone is not enough support for the variety of challenges that long-term assignment entail. Following the results of two PriceWaterhouseCoopers surveys (see PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005, 2006), throwing money at problems may in many cases not lead to any improvement at all. "Understanding the personal issues and motivations that are unique to each family and directing measured support towards them should prove to be a more effective approach" (PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 7).

Figure 13: Expatriate Support Measures



3.3.1.1 Relocation Services

Services from relocation agencies have become part and parcel of expatriations. Although they take care of packing up an expatriate family's whole interior design and reinstall it in the family's new home in the foreign country – and so relieve sojourners of quite some effort – the role of relocation services in the course of expatriations is hardly discussed in the literature. Listing a wide range of support measures, however, they are to be mentioned for their administrative support in regard to housing and moving including bureaucratic duties or else (see GMAC 2006).

3.3.1.2 Look & See Trips

Preliminary visits to the host country traditionally precede an expatriate assignment (e.g. see Torbiörn 1982). They serve the purpose of giving expatriates and their spouses a feel for the life in the foreign country and thus can help foster the development of accurate expectations regarding the assignment. During such a three to six day orientation trip, future sojourners can get familiar with the overseas environment, living conditions as well as schooling and housing options. Further, it enables them to visit their future work place, meet colleagues and personally get in touch with host HR contact persons. Eventually, a look & see trip which takes place before the whole expatriation process and especially before intercultural training starts, is reported to be particularly effective as “[t]his eliminates many of the basic logistical questions that frequently preoccupy assignees before departure and enables them to focus on the issues of cultural adaptation critical to their successful integration abroad” (Bennett/Aston/Colquhoun 2000: 243).

3.3.1.3 Briefings

Taking on a new job and moving to a new country raises lots of questions and uncertainty. Therefore, HR professionals in charge of the expatriation process provide sojourners with information concerning the expatriate contract as well as legal and organizational aspects of the international

transfer. It is common that they offer books and brochures on the life in the host country and have a checklist at hand which helps to structure and think of all duties that need to be carried out before departure (cf. Bittner 1996: 317f). Information on news and changes in the headquarters are as valuable for expatriates while they are abroad. Learning what happens at home gives them the possibility to stay on track and prevents them from an 'out of sight, out of mind' feeling (e.g. see Forster 1994).

Apart from providing standard information, HR officers and also line managers may be able to link future expatriates with those who are currently abroad for individualized information exchange. Repatriated sojourners have been found to be a particularly valuable source as they have sound experience of the host country and have gone through the whole assignment life cycle. Mendenhall and Stahl (2000) report the benefit of such expatriate-repatriate meetings to be threefold: Repatriates can equip their successors with insider know-how on a rather informal basis, can share their insights and attitudes with them in an arranged setting, and may even support them in their role as mentors or godfathers on a long-term program basis. Additionally, there is a positive side-effect: "Repatriates may also benefit from the program. If properly organized, such seminars can help executives readjust to their professional and personal lives in the home country" (Mendenhall/Stahl 2000: 257).

Reverse expatriation or inpatiation is another, relatively new way of fostering information flow. In that corporate headquarters invite employees from host country subsidiaries to the headquarters environment for training or work purposes, authentic intercultural encounters between foreign and local staff can take place on both a professional and private basis. As a result, intercultural trainings can be held which allow for an intensive analysis of cultural differences which the participants with their diverse cultural backgrounds provide themselves (cf. Mendenhall/Stahl 2000: 258f).

3.3.1.4 Language Trainings

As differences in language have been recognized "as a major barrier to effective cross-cultural communication" (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 90), there is point in providing expatriates and all transferring family members with foreign language training. Although a foreign language is most rapidly and authentically acquired in the country where it is spoken, companies are primarily reported to offer language lessons in the course of pre-departure

preparation only; a time period which is characterized by great amounts of stress and, therefore, not necessarily suitable for foreign language acquisition.

There are many crash courses offered, but unless the learner is exceptionally gifted, learning any new language at business level will take at least a year full-time – a bit less if the course takes place in the foreign country and the learner is fully immersed. Most employers do not plan far enough ahead to allow their expatriates such a large amount of time for language learning, to their own detriment. If an expatriate gets this chance, it is very important that his or her spouse be involved as well (Hofstede 2001: 428).

If language training is not taken up in good time, it should at least continue as participants move abroad. This way they can keep improving their skills as they practice them.

3.3.1.5 Intercultural Trainings

As already indicated in the chapter on intercultural competence, intercultural training is the most theoretically discussed and supposedly also one of the most practiced support measures in regard to international assignments (cf. Bolten 2005: 314). Intercultural trainings, also known as cross-cultural trainings, have been promoted as a means of intercultural competence development and are depicted as flexible, multimodal instrument. A detailed look into the training literature reveals that indeed a great variety of learning effects are possible through training: Trainings focus on developing culture-general and culture-specific knowledge and thus cultural awareness (cognitive dimension), on fostering intercultural experiential learning situations (behavioral dimension), and on enhancing cultural sensitivity, interest, and respect (affective dimension). The prime difficulty of training providers is, however, to support their participants in the development regarding all three dimensions. As the typology of trainings below (see Table 10: Intercultural Training Typology) – which Bolten (cf. 2005: 315, translated by AMH) developed based on Gudykunst, Guzley, and Hammer (1996) – shows, they each aim at special, valuable goals but each type per se does not offer the possibility to work on all three competence dimensions. The reach of trainings and in particular of group trainings is necessarily limited in one way or the other, for example, due to training type, trainer profile, culture and competence mix of participants, and generally narrow time frames.

Table 10: Intercultural Training Typology

Training Type	Content	Learning Effects vs. Disadvantages
Culture-General- Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture-General Assimilator ▪ Seminar Topics: Intercultural Communication Theory, Cultural Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Psychology ▪ Training-Videos ▪ Discourse-Analysis-Based Trainings ▪ Case Studies 	<p>Learning Effects: In regard to the understanding of intercultural communication processes, high cognitive learning effects are given.</p> <p>Disadvantages: This training type pursues a rather academic approach which leaders tend to perceive as too abstract. No culture-specific input; little opportunity for self-awareness due to prevalent 'chalk and talk' training style.</p>
Culture-General Interaction- Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intercultural Workshops (Multicultural Group) ▪ Simulations, Role Plays for Intercultural Sensitization ▪ Self-Assessment Questionnaires 	<p>Learning Effects: Given that the group of participants is multicultural, interculturality can be experienced.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Lacking connection to everyday (business) life in a foreign country, simulations are often fictitious and hence are not taken seriously by participants. Minimal theory and culture-specific input.</p>
Culture-Specific- Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture-Specific Assimilator ▪ Foreign Language Trainings ▪ Culture-Specific Seminar Topics: (Everyday) History, and Value Change within a Cultural Area ▪ Case Studies 	<p>Learning Effects: Given that explanations (rather than descriptions only) are provided, participants can develop a deep understanding of a culture-specific system.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Due to its descriptive and fact-based historical character, this training type runs the risk of overemphasizing dos and don'ts and developing stereotypes. Tends to lack an experiential, self-reflective character.</p>
Culture-Specific- Interaction- Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bi-Cultural Communication Workshops ▪ Culture-Specific Simulations ▪ Negotiation Role Plays ▪ Sensitivity Trainings 	<p>Learning Effects: If bi-culturality is given, intercultural, management-related action can be experienced in a semi-authentic way.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Usually, culture-specific and culture-general knowledge is not imparted theoretically.</p>

Could intercultural trainings live up to the idea of a comprehensive intercultural competence measure – in that they impart culture-specific and culture-general knowledge and in that they enable participants to

experience interculturality and thus promote self-awareness and self-reflection – they would be of great use for expatriates' possible array of needs. Advantages are, for example, that intercultural experience can be made in a safe, learner-friendly environment where misunderstandings and cultural ignorance do not trigger fatal consequences; or that participants can be supported in the analysis of intercultural encounters and hence in the development of different communication strategies. Like other above mentioned support measures, intercultural trainings can also play a role in providing

[...] individuals with useful information for reducing uncertainty associated with the impending international transfer and for forming accurate expectations about living and working in the prospective home country (Black/Mendenhall/Oddou 1991: 306).

Yet, intercultural trainings have been heavily criticized for several reasons. To start with, trainings usually do not exceed the duration of a few days and hence are too short as that the culture phenomenon could extensively be dealt with. Often, trainings can be found to present simplified descriptions of culture which for a start can be undoubtedly helpful; if these initial representations of culture are not further discussed on a more elaborate level, however, participants get a wrong idea of what culture is and – most importantly – what impact it can have on relations and collaborations (see chapter 2.2.1 Peering Through the Culture Lens). To exemplify such an at-first-sight simplistic representation of culture favored by intercultural trainers, Hofstede's five dimensions of culture can be introduced (for a detailed description of the dimensions cf. Hofstede 2001: 79-370).

In the course of his surveys covering more than 116.000 IBM employees in 53 countries, Hofstede identified four dimensions of culture, and eventually a fifth, "[...] along which dominant value systems in the more than 50 countries can be ordered and that affect human thinking, feeling, and acting, as well as organizations and institutions, in predictable ways" (Hofstede 2001: xix): power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, and long- vs. short-term orientation. Following Hofstede's research results, countries can be located fairly specifically on each of the five dimensions, i.e., countries can be characterized by their degree of power distance acceptance, by their tendency to avoid or allow uncertainty, by their propensity to value individualism or collectivism, and so on. The information that an expatriate's future host country values high power distance, that it is characterized by hierarchical structures and hence does not practice collective decision-making processes can be of great value to that person; provided with orientation, he or she could use this input to subsequently outweigh the advantages and disadvantages of working in such a country,

anticipate favorable behavior and stumbling blocks, and adjust a used-to leadership style to the expectations of host country nationals. However, most participants need guidance in order to be able to further reflect the meaning and manifold consequences of a country's location on Hofstede's dimensions (cf. Kinast 2003: 25). If the dimensions are simply presented and not discussed in more detail by trainers and participants because of time pressure, trainings run the risk of not meeting the requirements of a comprehensive intercultural competence measure. First, this is likely to be the case because the limited information tends to suggest that all regions, institutions, and companies within that host country are equally strong power distance driven and that distanced behavior is generally best practice – it lacks information on the different manifestations of culture. Second, it does not reflect possible changes of cultures since 1972 when Hofstede conducted his last dimension research study – it lacks information on the changing nature of culture. Third, power distance can become apparent in a variety of settings and situations, between bosses and employees, heads of families and children, particularly in front of strangers or the other way round. It can have an impact where it is not expected at all or occur exactly the way described in a book or mentioned by a trainer. Trainers' challenge is to provide as much useful information as possible without forgetting to point out that they are never able to provide a full picture of culture and its endless facets – otherwise, it lacks information on the imperceptibility of culture. To conclude, when there is not enough room for culture to be portrayed in its complexity, trainings are at risk of displaying the particularities of intercultural encounters in diluted, attenuated, distorted form (cf. Bolten 2003b: 74f; Selmer 2002: 40).

As a consequence of limited time frames and also because of the frequently chosen group settings, trainings tend to impart standardized, generalized content in the form of do's and don'ts and 'all Mexican/Japanese/British etc. are/do/think/expect etc.' which is another reason why trainings have been criticized. Broad input is perhaps good to start with in order to give an overview. Again, however, when the information flow stops too early or stays as broad instead of looking at culture from a more specific, individualized point of view it might not serve much more than the development of stereotypes. The gist of any intercultural competence measure is that it encourages learners to relate generally-known specificities of the host country culture, of nationals, and organizations to their personality: What do I like about high power distance? In which regard is high power distance a real problem for me? What does the leadership style in my future host country organization look like? Which possibilities do I have if I am not willing to pursue a hierarchy-based, authoritarian leadership style? Eventually, not the general compatibility of cultures counts but the compatibility of individual A's cultural background

with that of individual/organization B (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 242; Clement/Clement 2003b: 15; Mendenhall/Stahl 2000: 253). In order to serve the individual, trainings must aim at encouraging and supporting participants to answer their unique questions and to work on their personal issues. Otherwise, if participants finish the training with their individual questions left unanswered, they might perceive the training as a waste of time.

This leads to a third point of criticism, namely that intercultural training is most frequently offered in the form of pre-departure training which means that it is accommodated “during extremely busy weeks of planning and practical preparations for the departure” (Selmer 2002: 38), a period of time in which participants often feel they have other fish to fry.

Finally, trainings have received a negative connotation since their evaluations have shown that although many participants do acquire cultural knowledge in the sessions, they are not able to transform that knowledge into accurate behavior and adequately display it in real intercultural situations (cf. Kinast 2003: 25; also see Hesketh 1997). Even culture-specific interaction-oriented trainings do not guarantee that there acquired intercultural skills lead to a mastering of intercultural encounters since simulations and classroom experience can never be as impressive as authentic intercultural life situations (cf. Hofstede 2001: 423). Also, real encounters appear in such a great range of facets as that trainings can never cover all of them.

3.3.1.6 Overlaps

Whereas the previously portrayed support measures primarily cover the pre-expatriation stage, Selmer (2002) reports on the use of an on-the-job support measure: the overlap between incoming and outgoing expatriates. “During an initial period of the handover, the incoming manager and his or her predecessor are both present at the foreign operation, or the outgoing manager is otherwise available as an information source for his or her successor [...]” (Selmer 2002: 47). This opens up various advantages like a smoother job entry for the new expatriate, a more detailed transfer of valuable business information or a faster because fostered integration into the new work environment. Due to the doubled costs arising from overlaps, however, this support measure is kept to a minimum time-wise, if practiced at all. Overlaps do usually not exceed one or several weeks, but could – in theory – last up to a year.

3.3.1.7 Mentoring

Although mentoring has a long tradition (cf. Clawson 1996: 6; also see Kram 1985), its explicit application in regard to expatriates is minimal. Yet, there are a few pieces of literature which deal with the use of mentoring in the course of international assignments, introducing a long-term support measure which is capable of covering the complete expatriate life cycle (cf. Harvey et al. 1999: 809) – a characteristic which differentiates mentoring from the above discussed restricted support measures.

Mentoring describes a long-term relationship between a mentor (company contact, sponsor or godfather) and a mentee (protégé) that has been introduced on a formal or informal basis for professional reasons (cf. Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 222). In a nutshell, mentors are skilled members of the organization “[...] who support, guide and counsel less experienced colleagues in order to facilitate their career development” (Feldman/Bolino 1999: 54). Although the advice they pass on and the support they give is based on their personal experience, mentors are responsible for a number of duties taking on the role of communication facilitator, door opener, and career enhancer (cf. Kimmele 2004: 234f).

In the case of mentors who take expatriates under their wings, their responsibilities vary according to whether they are so called ‘back-home’ or ‘on-site’ mentors (cf. Feldman/Bolino 1999: 54f). Mentors located in the sending organization may rather be capable of alleviating the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 222) feeling on behalf of protégés and can “[...] keep them on the fast track in terms of subsequent career advancement [...]” (Feldman/Bolino 1999: 54). On the contrary, sponsors who are on-site with the mentee have been found to be particularly able to support expatriates with their adjustment to life in the host country as well as to the corporate culture and role abroad (see Feldman/Tompson 1993). At best, therefore, mentor programs either assign a home & host country mentor team to protégés or provide them with mentors who stay back home but are familiar with the mentee’s host country. Then, mentoring can cater for a variety of expatriate needs simultaneously:

Already in the pre-assignment stage, a mentor can support a mentee. During this stage, the forming of accurate expectations towards job and life abroad may receive special attention. Mentors can encourage mentees to explore and reflect their assignment attitudes as well as initiate a joint anticipation process of possible professional and personal expatriation difficulties.

In the pre-expatriation phase, mentoring serves to initiate the future expatriate's mental mapping process for interpreting the forthcoming assignment from both individual and organizational perspectives. In this phase, mentoring could emphasize more than just the 'facts' of the assignment by addressing the expatriate's predispositions relative to the foreign assignment as well as focusing on the expatriate's anticipatory learning of the ways to master the future challenges of cross-cultural adjustment. Mentoring could also address the development of the expatriate's self-efficacy concerning the best ways to build emotional perseverance so as to avoid failure [...] (Harvey et al. 1999: 810).

Thanks to the insider information and extensive networks of their mentors, mentees have the advantage of quickly gaining a helicopter view of the host organization and, thus, of its key persons. Also, such a comprehensive insight may help mentees to define their new professional roles and understand what is and what is not possible in the foreign corporate culture. Mentors are there to discuss these findings and help plan accurate strategies and adequate behavior.

It is envisioned that global mentoring may provide the personal and professional guidance to expatriate managers that facilitates socialization of the expatriate to both the host country's culture and the operating climate of the foreign subsidiary (Harvey et al. 1999: 810).

Mentors are especially important in their role as communicators; not only can they link new expatriates with the people they know, but also keep their protégés up-to-date regarding news or changes in the organization. Especially career-wise, the latter is of great value as expatriates are kept informed on the latest job and development opportunities. Also, however, knowing what goes on at home helps prevent the feeling which expatriates have often been found to experience: the feeling of being forgotten by the home organization. Based on their study of female expatriates, Linehan and Scullion (2002) report on the benefits resulting from mentors' communicator function:

The female executives indicated that mentors provided information, training, advice and career direction for re-entering their home organization. In addition, mentors were seen as important for introducing them to the informal networks which existed in their organizations. The female executives suggested that, while participating in international assignments improved their self-confidence and increased their visibility in organizations, mentors provide the contact and support from the home organization which in turn facilitates re-entry (Linehan/Scullion 2002: 261).

As already mentioned above, even challenges connected to the repatriation of expatriates can be mitigated through the support of mentors. The more mentors know about recent organizational developments and the greater their internal network is, the faster their mentees may find an appropriate re-entry position. Apart from a smooth transition, however, mentors are in a position to facilitate the use of repatriate knowledge within the

organization and, finally, may themselves “play a part in the debriefing and evaluation of the expatriate performance” (Bengtsson/Lund 2002: 52).

In the repatriation phase, mentoring could help to solidify the expatriation experience and facilitate an organization’s re-entry plan to further the career of the repatriate and the trailing spouse. It is important that the repatriate’s experience becomes organizationally functional and integrated into the MNC global learning process [...]. Mentoring may help to provide an operating system for this process of expatriational learning to occur [...] (Harvey et al. 1999: 812).

To sum up, mentoring can serve manifold purposes and does not cost (much) more than the mentors’ time which make it a fairly comprehensive and reasonable support measure. Yet, it is to be kept in mind that the outcome of mentoring can only be as good as the mentor-mentee relationship and the quality of their conversations. Since mentoring is not always based on voluntariness and, in addition to that, does often not exceed more but personally tinged advice, the avail of mentoring for mentees is questionable. Finally, mentoring which happens between two members of the same organization raises the question of confidentiality and trust. If mentees feel their concerns are not confidentially handled, they are likely to keep their true worries for themselves (cf. Kimmele 2004: 234f).

3.3.1.8 Repatriation Activities

Information on repatriation support measures is strikingly scarce. This is assumedly the case, since the awareness that repatriation can be problematic only emerges. The idea that ‘locals’ might need help when coming home still seems to have not gained widespread acceptance (cf. Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 204). Based on what has already been published on the challenges of repatriation, however, two prime areas where support could be helpful can be identified.

The first area refers to expatriates’ reintegration into home country organizations. When returning staff has a guaranteed return ticket, uncertainty concerning professional life upon return can be reduced to a great deal. This said, it is essential that repatriates are able to fill positions which are personally ‘rewarding’ either in terms of career advancement or in that pieces of experience collected in the course of the international assignment prove advantageous for the subsequent job. This requires strategic human resources management from companies; besides thorough succession planning, companies and expatriates need to stay in touch

throughout the assignment period and need to get involved in re-entry conversations no later than one year before transferring home (cf. PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 14). Additionally, repatriates may need some support in getting up-to-date concerning intra-organizational changes and reforms as well as insider information. In this regard, companies can support their repatriates in that they create networking opportunities for professional reasons and thus enable repatriates to “take a reality check” (Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 222). “A formal debriefing process” (Bengtsson/Lund 2002: 50) or an expatriate-repatriate workshop like mentioned above in the chapter on ‘briefings’ can serve to provide expatriates with an overview of important processes and, simultaneously, give them an opportunity “to identify skills enhanced overseas and systematically find ways in which those skills can be integrated in the home office” (Mendenhall/Stahl 2000: 257).

Private life is the second area where support has been found to be valuable. Personal relationships between friends, former neighbors and rather passive but still informative and pleasant acquaintances are likely to suffer when people are gone for several years. The school system, the property market, living conditions and tons of tiny things characteristic for the home environment are likely to change during that time. This may pose a range of difficulties to expatriates; and especially to those who return with the idea that everything has remained the same. Help in the formation of new social contacts (cf. Dowling/Welch/Schuler 1999: 222; Kühlmann/Stahl 1995: 206), culture shock prevention measures, and culture shock support measures should, therefore, be part of repatriation programs.

3.3.2 Reviewing Expatriate Support Measures

Undoubtedly, all above mentioned support measures do have their advantages and, thus, their justification. Yet, the point is whether they are capable of supporting expatriates accurately in terms of time and duration, adequately in terms of location and provider, and sufficiently in terms of thematic range. And furthermore, do current support measures serve the variety and, in particular, the individual composition of expatriate needs resulting from their challenges which have been discussed above?

With regard to the matching of expatriate needs and support measure characteristics, the previously dealt with means of support are critically reviewed at this stage. Finally, in the ensuing subchapter, the current

exchange of know-how between theoreticians and practitioners who deal with expatriate support measures is discussed.

3.3.2.1 Classifying Support Measures

When exploring the beforehand mentioned support measures in terms of location, time and duration, and customization – in other words, when classifying them into where and when they take place, for how long they last, and how tailored they are to the consumer – it becomes obvious that most of the current support measures tend to take place off-the-job, to be limited to a short period of time, and to provide standardized contents. Due to this finding, scholars (e.g. see Bolten 2005; Kinast 2005; Kühlmann 1995) have expressed their concern about whether the discussed measures can cater for the support needs of expatriates which have been characterized as manifold and individual in terms of where, when, for how long, and with which intensity and impact they occur.

Off-the-Job vs. On-the-Job Support: Most of the previously discussed support measures are explicit, or primarily applied as, off-the-job activities. They precede or succeed the actual stay abroad and are more of administrative nature rather than providing job-related support as the assignment is pursued. This is true for many interventions like look & see trips, relocation service activities, language and intercultural trainings, as well as for some types of briefings. Even though these measures have proven useful, past experience shows that they are often not sufficient since “[t]he sharpest learning curve and support needs come once they [expatriates] encounter obstacles during the assignment” (Jack/Stage 2005: 51, comment by AMH). Scholars have been claiming that particularly during assignments instant support is indispensable: First, because problems frequently occur during the sojourn; and second, because if these problems are put off, they may develop into huge difficulties that might even endanger the whole expatriation success.

Expatriate managers need answers immediately to questions that arise from confusing cross-cultural encounters, so that problems do not fester and launch widespread negative ripple-effects in relationships with employees, clients, government officials, customers, or suppliers. Consequently, expatriates need training in ‘real-time’; they need cross-cultural training – or some other form of personal assistance – ‘on the fly’ (Mendenhall/Stahl 2000: 253).

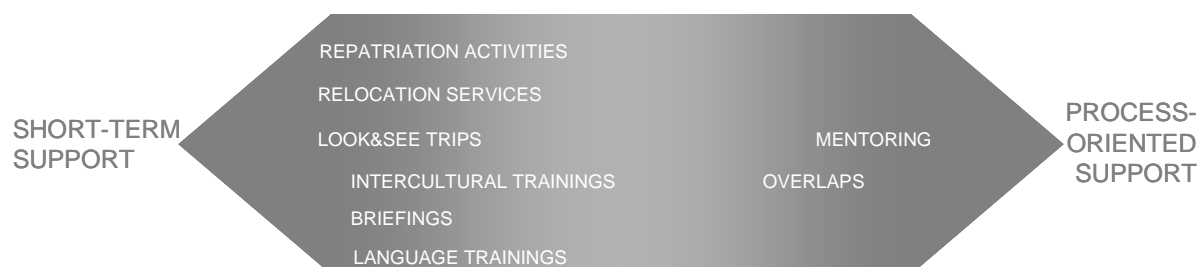
Due to these findings, and also because they are more efficient, practically orientated and have more of an integrative character, on-the-job activities are on the increase (cf. Bolten 2005: 309).

Figure 14: Reviewing Support Measures – Point in Time



Short-Term vs. Process-Related Support: Apart from mentoring and overlaps, most of today's taken for granted support measures can be characterized as interventions limited to one day or several days (cf. Bolten 2005: 314). In other words, the contact between expatriates and support providers lasts only for a short period of time and often ends with the selective intervention. On the one hand, this implies that there exist barely any support measures based on which expatriates can continuously develop their intercultural competence during the entire assignment process; whereas on the other hand, it implies that when help is needed outside of interventions' time frames, it is hardly available and difficult to arrange within an adequate time frame.

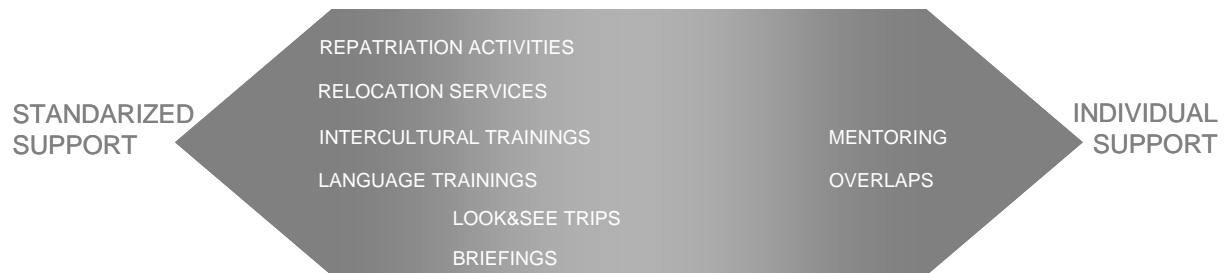
Figure 15: Reviewing Support Measures – Duration



Standardized vs. Individualized Support: Typically, support measures are standardized and provided to a variety of customers in one and the same way. Since many sojourners deal with similar challenges in the course of an expatriation, standardized measures have their legitimacy. Nevertheless, expatriates may also face unique challenges which require

individualized support actions on top (cf. Bittner 1996: 319). It seems to be one of today's greatest assignment challenges to provide expatriates and their families with a mix of useful standardized and tailored support measures which are within companies' financial ranges.

Figure 16: Reviewing Support Measures: Customization



External vs. Internal Providers: Last but not least, support measures can be divided into those offered by organization-external and those presented by organization-internal providers. In contrast to the other named dimensions, the crux is not that there is a lack of support measures offered by either external or internal providers. Rather, the problem is that external providers like trainers, travel guides, and relocation agencies tend to take care of administrative things as well as the transfer of basic knowledge whereas internal providers like HR, expatriates, repatriates, and superiors look after the integration of expatriates into their new environment. The latter is a highly sensitive matter – including challenges like culture shock, family issues and a lot of other topics that are of personal, psychological, social, and confidential nature (cf. Trimpop/Meynhardt 2003: 184) – which requires an atmosphere of absolute trust between expatriate and support provider; the atmosphere needs to be one that encourages expatriates to open up, to reflect, to bring in private topics, and to admit difficulties if necessary. And such an atmosphere can be outstandingly difficult to create between organization-internal support providers and expatriates. In other words, there are various issues which can only be looked after by external, independent, and professional support providers. For example,

- although HR professionals can take a decisive, especially administrative, role in the support of transferred employees, many of them are overtaxed when it comes to dealing with intercultural, private or career-related long-term assignment challenges. Black and Gregersen's study (1999) shows that only eleven percent of HR Heads

themselves have worked abroad and hence have not personally experienced any of the difficulties that expatriates face.

- mentors who in contrast to many HR professionals do have their own store of experience, may in turn lack the necessary theoretical intercultural framework or a professional consultation/counseling background (e.g. see Kimmele 2004).

To conclude, it can be said that most of today's theoretically discussed support measures tend to be standardized off-the-job measures which take place in expatriates' home countries either preceding or succeeding the stay abroad. Furthermore, external support providers for intimate topics seem to be rare. Should it really be the case that the English and German expatriate assignment literature adequately mirrors the intercultural management practice (for a discussion of an appropriate theory-practice exchange see chapter 3.3.2.2 Talking Support: Does Theory Equal Practice?), it is to say that the currently existing support measure net is only coarsely meshed. And this implies that expatriates support needs fall by the wayside time and again. Therefore, other or additional support measures to fill the gaps of the current support measure system seem necessary. To this effect, the fairly new support measure concept 'coaching' is introduced in chapter 3.4 and 3.5, respectively.

3.3.2.2 Talking Support: Does Theory Equal Practice?

When comparing theoretical best practice expatriate support suggestions of scholars with support measures applied in the business world, discrepancies between theory and practice can be noticed. One might get the impression that the theoretical knowledge about expatriate challenges, their resulting needs and conceivable support possibilities have not been fully taken into account by practitioners to develop a comprehensive support measure system. This is best illustrated by the two topics 'intercultural communication' and 'repatriation' discussed below where support measures offered in practice do not correspond to the more complex and extensive suggestions that scholars have made. It remains open at this stage whether indications of theoreticians have really not (yet) been adopted by practitioners or whether scholars simply lag behind in adequately displaying what has long become an expatriation matter of course.

Language training, for instance, is a frequently provided and often approved pre-assignment measure for expatriates which is increasingly

offered also to spouses and accompanying children (cf. GMAC 2006: 14). In scholarly publications it is reported that language training is an integral part of intercultural communication competence (cf. Hofstede 2001: 428); nevertheless, theoreticians point out that knowledge about culturally coined non-verbal and paraverbal communication, lexical items, speech acts, conventions of discourse sequence, register differences, and communicative rituals as well as the ability to appropriately deal with these communication specificities are additional, essential intercultural communication competencies (cf. Gibson 2000: 33ff; Heringer 2004: 81ff; Rost-Roth 2007: 499ff). As there barely exist accounts of intercultural communication trainings (for an exception see Müller-Jacquier 2000) which include other factors than the foreign language vocabulary and grammar itself, the impression arises that comprehensive intercultural communication programs do not exist in practice. This must not necessarily be case as it is possible that the lack of research is responsible for the seeming non-existence of such support measures. Therefore, more surveys which mirror the current types of support measures as well as their application are needed.

The same is true for repatriation programs. Surveys do indicate that single measures like re-entry discussions and re-entry position search are taken in practice in order to support expatriates (e.g. see GMAC 2006); again, these measures are described as invaluable by scientific writers. Yet, information on the implementation and realization of comprehensive repatriation programs in MNCs as suggested in the literature (e.g. see Harvey/Novicevic 2006), are hard to find. Like in the case of extensive intercultural communication programs, the question arises if the theoretical input of scholars has really not been put into practice or if scholarly papers simply do not adequately mirror the advances in expatriation support practice.

3.4 Visualizing Coaching

In this thesis, coaching is introduced as an alternative form of support for expatriates. Its design and reach as well as its limitations within the realm of long-term assignments is to be discovered within the next chapters. Before entering into expatriate coaching's details, however, coaching – as a relatively young consultation format – is dealt with in general terms. The intent of this first part is to lay the groundwork for the discussion of a type of coaching which pays special attention to culture's influence on clients' lives.

3.4.1 Shedding Light on the 'Chameleon Affair'

The term coaching has been used to refer to a number of consultation offers which vary in terms of settings, target groups, approaches based on, methods applied, objectives aimed at, and background of coaches required. Around the world – but also within countries – there exist manifold understandings and practices of coaching. There is thus no clear-cut answer to the question 'What is coaching?' which makes this consultation format difficult to discuss and compare. What its pluralistic usage on behalf of consultation providers mirrors, however, is that coaching's assumed power and possibilities are huge. It is a modern method which raises expectations and is associated with the capacity to cater for modern needs. The following chapter aims at looking behind the iridescent term to explore where the qualities and limits of coaching are located.

3.4.1.1 The Term 'Coaching': An Etymological Perspective

The term coaching originates from the coaches that were produced in Northern Hungary in the mid of the 15th century. The coachmen who were responsible for having horses and coach safely arrive at their destination shaped the understanding of today's coaches; the idea of helping clients attain their objectives in a fast as well as safe and sound way is inherent to the concept of coaching (cf. Barnhart 1988; König/Volmer 2003: 9).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the term coach was used to describe the job of a tutor at universities in the Anglo-American region, supporting students in the preparation phase for exams, sports competitions, and other tasks (cf. Rauen 2003: 20f).

In the 1960s, coaching entered the world of sports as an extension to the by then prevalent development measure, training. Whereas training primarily focused on the physical fitness of an athlete, coaching drew particular attention to the emotional and mental factors that contributed to sports(women's success. Coaches granted space to coachees' attitudes, fears, hopes, and doubts and helped shape them for success, just the way trainers helped shape trainees muscles (e.g. see Handow 2003).

In the 1970s then, coaching slowly started to be used in the Anglo-American business context; namely, in the form of superior coaching. As coaches, executives did no longer only delegate tasks to their team members, but – like in sports – they made it their business to improve coachees' technical competencies, motivation, and performance (cf. Böning/Fritschle 2005: 26).

3.4.1.2 The Development of Coaching

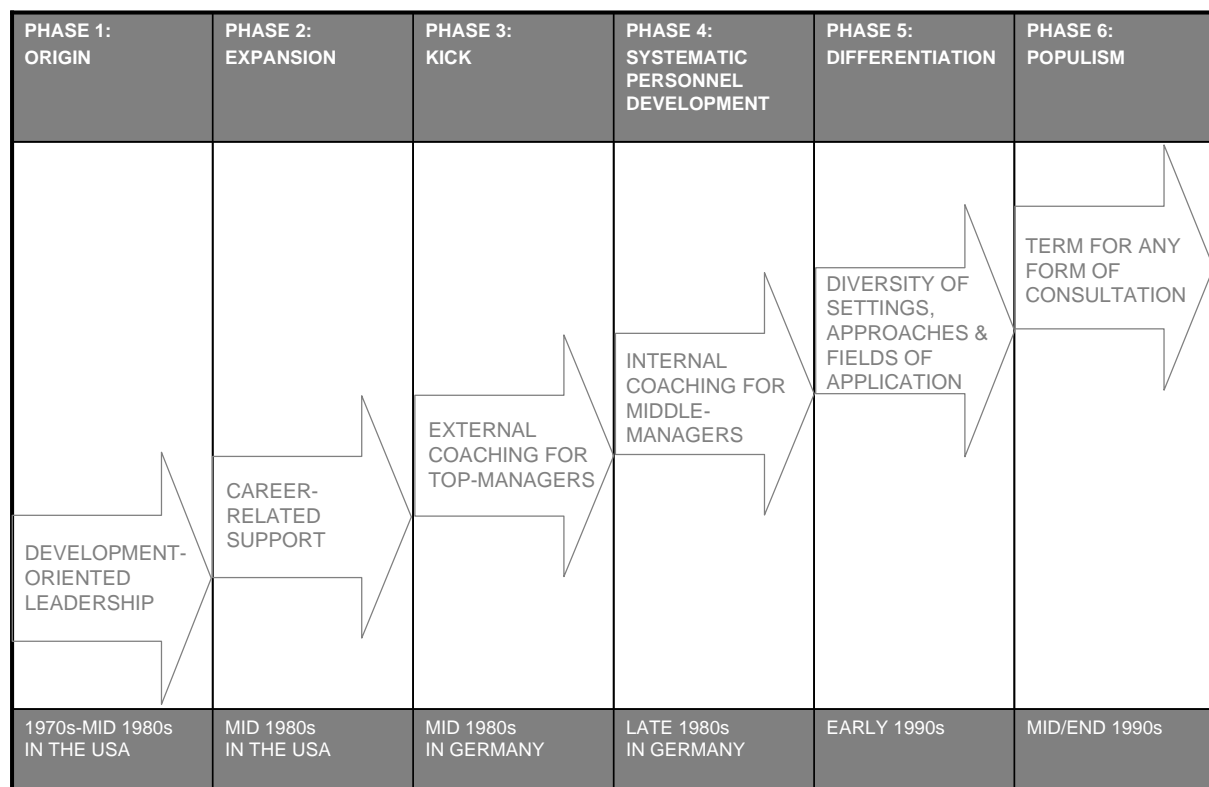
In their book 'Coaching fürs Business' ('Coaching for Business'), Böning and Fritschle (2005) depict the development of coaching (see Figure 17: Development of Coaching). Going back to the mid of the 1970s when coaching gained attention in the business world, they identified a total of six developmental stages which have helped shape coaching into its present form (cf. Böning/Fritschle 2005: 31).

Phase 1 – Origin: Business coaching started in the form of development-oriented leadership of staff. Leaders incorporated the job of a coach into daily business, adding the flavor of personality and motivation development to their heretofore mostly content-driven area of responsibility. This shift suited the prevalent values of the late 1970s, early 1980s in the U.S.A. as well as its growth-oriented economic development.

Phase 2 – Expansion: In the mid 1980s, coaching efforts reached organizations' high potentials. Superiors started to support the young talents career-wise, supporting and guiding them on their way to the top. Today, this kind of support measure is known as mentoring, although career path issues are still part of the topics covered within coaching sessions.

Phase 3 – ‘Kick’: At the same time, when coaching in the U.S.A. spread to high potentials, the coaching wave finally reached Germany. There, however, it was focused on a completely different target group. Instead of employees and high potentials, coaching was predominantly dedicated to top management executives. Also, coaches’ profiles changed: Subordinates were more or less replaced by external consultants. Consequently, different concerns like conflicts on management level, leadership and strategic challenges as well as private issues moved into the center of coaching sessions. As an exclusive form of consultation for selected top managers that provided them with invaluable feedback which they usually lacked, coaching became popular in Germany in no time. The way coaching developed there, was soon re-imported into the U.S.A. where coaching by an external consultant had not been practiced until then.

Figure 17: Development of Coaching



Phase 4 – Systematic Personnel Development: Towards the end of the 1980s, coaching started to be offered by organization-internal coaches based on which a fairly competitive atmosphere between them and external coaches evolved. When the two providers had finally focused their consultation offers, however, the discord between the two providers eased off. Internal consultation services offered by personnel development

departments have since primarily dealt with clients from middle management also putting an emphasis on development-oriented leadership. External consultants, in contrast, have for the most part been covering top management level. In short, this phase contributed to coaching's differentiation and systematization in that responsibilities were cleared: who should coach whom, with which approach and methods, regarding which issues became increasingly transparent.

Phase 5 – Differentiation: With the beginning of the 1990s, coaching started to be practiced within various settings; besides individual coaching, team coaching which fostered the communication flow among team members became popular. Group coaching, where motley thrown together people were encouraged to open up, give and receive feedback, and meta-communicate about interpersonal processes also entered business life and, by the way, also revitalized self-awareness seminars off the business world. Besides the differentiation of coaching settings, a wave of new approaches and fields of application flooded the coaching market, again contributing to complexity.

Phase 6 – Populism: The positive connotation of coaching spread in the 1990s. Everything that was named coaching raised great expectations; thus, the term turned into a label for a number of offers that did not contain what coaching was originally intended to cater for. In fact, it was used in a variety of fields to describe merely more than conversation, feedback or suggestions from a trainer (cf. Böning/Fritschle 2005: 26ff).

Up to the present day, "[t]here is a great deal of confusion around what is meant by the term 'coaching'" (Lawton-Smith/Cox 2007: 1). For its obvious 'semantic elasticity' (cf. Looss 1999: 105) it has been described as a "watered-down" (Morgan/Harkins/Goldsmith 2005: 23) term which changes its appearance like a 'chameleon' (cf. Stiefel 2000: 5). The coaching term confusion, however, may have been the driving force for today's professionalization efforts in the field which aim at establishing a legal framework to protect the term's use.

The development of coaching as described above focuses primarily on the U.S.A. and Germany. Due to a lack of surveys that investigate coaching's level of development country-specifically as well as due to a lack of cross-cultural surveys which compare country-specific coaching particularities, there exists no comprehensive picture of coaching; neither in regard to the level of development coaching has reached in other countries around the world nor of how coaching is understood and practiced elsewhere. Although for Europe, there exists a survey (e.g. see Bresser-Consulting 2008) which roughly covers coaching's stages of development in European countries and hence offers some interesting pieces of information like the number of coaching professionals per country, it sheds no light on how coaching is

precisely understood and practiced in specific regions across Europe: For instance, it does not inform the reader on whether coaches, e.g., in Spain use different coaching methods than coaches in, e.g., Germany; it does not show in which regards coaching trainings and thus coaches' profiles differ across countries; it does not give reasons for the differently advanced development stages of coaching across countries; and it does not say to which degree professionalization efforts vary country-wise. Consequently, the European Coaching Survey 2007/08 (Bresser-Consulting) can be regarded as contribution to making the multi-faceted picture of coaching more transparent; it provides, however, clearly only a small input and due to its focus, of course, leaves questions that go beyond European borders unanswered: Does coaching – as a consultation format that promotes the development of individuals – exist in collectivistic countries like China? If it does exist, which purpose does it fulfill? What does the development and practice of coaching look like in countries with strong emerging markets where currently great numbers of people need to develop for professional reasons; in Russia, for example? Should country-specific understandings of coaching exist, is there a point in coaching federations offering the same coaching training to people from different countries?

Due to the possibly different understandings of coaching within European countries and probably even more so around the world, it is to be mentioned that in the subsequent subchapters a view of coaching as prevalent in German-speaking countries is adopted.

3.4.1.3 Coaching Booms: Why?

As an 'anything goes' term, coaching has become common talk. Yet, also in the field of business, and particularly on management level, coaching has continuously been gaining in acceptance and attractiveness. But why does coaching actually 'boom'? What is its recipe for success?

Assumptions regarding coaching's magnetism refer to the growing complexity of today's business world characterized by ambiguities and discrepancies which do have an impact on the quality of individuals' professional lives (cf. Zirkler 2006: 295). Furthermore, coaching success theories touch upon globalization issues and consequences connected to them. Kets de Vries, for instance, suggests that "[p]erhaps the biggest reason for the coaching trend is the pace of change in our present-day global world" (2005: 62). The Böning-Consult coaching study (2004) shows that many-sided job profiles and continuous change concern today's

professionals: organizational change processes, professionals' new tasks, roles, functions, and positions as well as their need for personality and competence development rank among the most frequent reasons for the demand for coaching.

Coaching may be as flourishing as it is tailored (or at least supposed to be tailored) to these present day challenges setting-wise. Within basically flexible coaching sessions, topics – or specific combinations of topics – which result from the heightened complexity and fast change of individuals' professional lives can be dealt with in desired degree. When clients' foci change, coaching's emphasis can change. Therefore, coaching makes a precise, customized and integrative impression; and clients and organizations obviously find that likeable (cf. Strikker 2007: 19):

- They pay for what they want (as it is them who decide what they want to work on).
- They get it from whom they want it (as the professionalization of the coaching market entails growing transparency and, thus, enables clients to make precise consultant choices).
- They get it when they want it (as dates for sessions only need to be agreed on between coach and coachee).
- Their issues are treated confidentially (as stipulated).

In their survey of coaches and HR professionals, Stahl and Marlinghaus (2000) found that ninety percent of HR professionals see coaching's strengths in its focus on individual needs. More than forty percent perceive the ability to work on practice-oriented issues within coaching sessions as advantageous; and twenty-four percent value the transferability of learned contents within coaching into everyday professional life.

3.4.1.4 Definitions of Coaching

The history of coaching and the developmental phases it went through indicate why there exists no single picture of what coaching is, what it is not, and which service exactly it is capable of providing. There is no *sole* definition of coaching which is why this section provides several perspectives.

Wilhelm Backhausen/Jean-Paul Thommen: Coaching kann als *"professionelle Form individueller Beratung im beruflichen Kontext*

formuliert werden" (Backhausen/Thommen 2003: 18, italics as in the original).¹

Richard Kilburg: "[...] *executive coaching* is defined as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to assist the client to achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement" (Kilburg 2006: 65-67, italics as in the original).

Wolfgang Looss: "Coaching ist – verkürzt formuliert personenbezogene Einzelberatung von Menschen in der Arbeitswelt" (Looss 2002: 13).²

Philippe Rosinski: "I define coaching as the art of facilitating the unleashing of people's potential to reach meaningful, important objectives" (Rosinski 2003: 4).

Horst Rückle: "Beim Einzelcoaching lässt sich ein Klient exklusiv von einem Coach betreuen. In dieser vertraulichen Zweierbeziehung können dann auch berufliche und persönliche Probleme und Konflikte bearbeitet werden. [...] Die die geschäftlichen Erfolge tangierenden privaten Bereiche werden dabei genauso bearbeitet wie die aus der Zukunft resultierenden Anforderungen und die Entwicklung von bislang noch nicht genutzten Begabungen und Talenten" (Rückle 2000: 25; qtd. in Rauen 2003: 109).³

Gregor Schmidt: "Coaching umfasst Aspekte von Beratung und Training, ist aber breiter, umfassender und ganzheitlicher ausgelegt. Coaching ist ein klientenzentriertes und individuelles Betreuungskonzept zur Optimierung aller vorhandenen Kräfte und Potential von Führungskräften auf kooperativer Basis mit Hilfe eines integrativen Methodenansatzes in

1 Backhausen/Thommen: Coaching can be described as a professional form of individual consultation in a work-related context.

2 Looss: To cut it short, coaching is person-related consultation of an individual in professional life.

3 Rückle: Individual coaching is characterized by a client who is exclusively supervised by a coach. This partnership creates a platform based on which professional as well as personal problems and conflicts can be dealt with. While private issues influencing work-related success can be treated in the course of coaching processes, also future demands that are expected to impact clients as well as the development of their yet untapped talent can be the focus of attention.

Richtung gewollter Entwicklung" (Schmidt 1995: 19; qtd. in Rauen 2003: 115).⁴

Astrid Schreyögg: Coaching ist "eine *innovative Form der Personalentwicklung* für Menschen mit Managementfunktionen [...]. Außerdem handelt es sich um eine *Dialogform*, bei der *Freud und Leid im Beruf* verhandelt werden. In diesem Sinne kann Coaching als Therapie gegen berufliches Leid und als Maßnahme zur Förderung eines ausgefüllten beruflichen Daseins bezeichnet werden. Dabei zielt es idealerweise auf eine maximale Selbstgestaltung im Beruf. Und wo die Möglichkeit zur Selbstgestaltung vorübergehend oder längerfristig verloren ging, soll sie durch Coaching wieder gefunden werden" (Schreyögg 2003: 51, italics as in the original).⁵

John Withmore: "Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" (Whitmore 2006: 8).

The definitions above emphasize different specificities of coaching. Yet, four characteristics of coaching which repeatedly crop up in regard to coaching seem to interconnect the various perspectives (cf. König 2007: 81ff):

- Coaching is a form of consultation; in other words, it is 'help for self-help'. This becomes obvious in that coaches do not decide for their coachees; they solely support them in making 'good' decisions themselves.
- Coaching refers to an occupational context.
- Coaching is usually a mixture of process and expert consultation (see Schein 1969).
- Coaching is a professional act which means that it is characterized by a certain ethic, a theoretical groundwork, a method repertory, and coaches' profound education.

These four characteristics are decisive for the understanding of coaching in this thesis.

4 Schmidt: Coaching includes elements from both consultation and training; yet, its focus is more comprehensive. Coaching is a client-centered and individual support measure aimed at optimizing all available energy and potential of executives; it is characterized by a cooperative relationship and integrates various methods in order to facilitate the intended progress.

5 Schreyögg: Coaching is an innovative form of personnel development for people with executive functions. Besides that, it is a form of dialogue that offers the opportunity to discuss joy and sorrow in regard to professional life. Therefore, coaching can be understood as therapy for work-related suffering and as a measure for the enrichment of professional life. In this respect, it is ideally aimed at fostering clients' initiative in regard to their working life. And in case the ability and possibility for own initiative has temporarily or even in the longer-term been lost, it should be regained through coaching.

Here, coaching is viewed as professional form of consultation for professionals with executive function. Within an individual, group, or team setting, coaching enables them to work on occupational challenges which are rooted in executives' work environment, private life, and/or their personality. Based on their expert knowledge as well as on their ability to promote self-reflection and to create a growth-oriented atmosphere, coaches support their clients during their problem solving and development processes.

3.4.1.5 Demarcation From Related Forms of Consultation

In order to further define 'coaching', scientific contributions have been comparing coaching with other forms of consultation (cf. Migge 2007: 22ff). By discussing what coaching is not, its boundaries and limits become more transparent. Those forms of consultation that are most frequently covered in this regard are introduced as follows:

■ supervision,

■ psychotherapy,

■ training, and

■ mentoring.

Supervision: Supervision developed as a result of the professionalization of social work which entailed growing role ambiguities in the everyday occupational lives of social workers (cf. Buchinger 2006: 9ff). As a means of reflecting one's professional role, the gravity and consequences of one's interventions, and as a means of receiving feedback regarding one's performance and appearance, supervision turned into a highly valued part of everyday working life in non-governmental organizations and is still widely practiced today. Supervision and coaching resemble each other in many respects; both deal with clients' occupational challenges and strains, both focus on the optimal embodiment of clients' occupational role, both apply methods for self-reflection, both let the client define which matters are dealt with (cf. Lippmann 2006a: 31ff). However, due to coaching's

prevalence among private sector companies, its executive-related subject matter and the therefore different target group, supervision and coaching have taken hold as two separate forms of consultation (cf. Schreyögg 2002: 27f). Some authors perceive coaching as carrying a more resource-oriented, potential-focused connotation than supervision (cf. Buchinger 2006: 10).

Psychotherapy: Psychotherapists deal with patients who suffer from mental disorders or severe emotional stress whereas coaches deal with clients who are primarily concerned with occupational challenges and difficulties. When providing help, therefore, psychotherapy tends to conduct etiology and often provides support on a long-term basis, whereas coaching is very much goal-oriented and, compared to psychotherapy, rather a short-term form of consultation. Yet, coaching issues can also be rooted in the personality or the private life of the coachee which may necessitate that these factors move into the focus of a coaching session. And even if coaches use methods which have originally been developed for psychotherapy, coaching never digs as deep as psychotherapy can and often does (cf. Lippmann 2006a: 33ff; Rauen 2003: 67ff).

Training: Training tends to be used by a far greater variety of target groups than coaching whose clients are mostly people with management and leadership functions. In contrast to coaching which emphasizes the development of self- and social competence in particular, training primarily serves the purpose of enhancing and developing technical competencies. Moreover, training is characterized by a hierarchical relationship between 'skilled' trainers and 'learning' customers. Consequently, its success greatly depends on trainers' degree and quality of technical know-how, and finally on their didactic and methodologically sound approach. Coaching, however, is much more characterized by a relationship between coaches and clients of equal rank, both of whom take over active although different roles (cf. Lippmann 2006a: 29f). Eventually, coaching differentiates itself from training "by always working from the coachee's agenda to arrive at solutions and answers which are very individual and subjective" (Lawton-Smith/Cox 2007: 4).

Mentoring: Mentors perform on behalf of the organization they work for and act as advisers for new, often younger organizational members based on their individual background and their experience within the organization. Usually thus, mentors are neither professional nor neutral consultants the way external coaches can be. Furthermore, the relationship between a mentor and a mentee is often of hierarchical nature; it is not necessarily based on voluntariness; and it frequently lacks a predetermined end (e.g. see Kimmele 2004).

3.4.2 Tracing the Key Players

Who is actually involved in a coaching process? The following chapter discusses the roles, profiles, concepts, and tasks of coaches and introduces its clients – coachees – together with their demands. Yet, it brings in a possible third player: organizations.

3.4.2.1 The Coach: Roles, Profiles, Concepts, and Tasks

Depending on coaches' roles, their individual background, and the concepts which their consultation services are based on, coaching processes can take different avenues and live up to diverse expectations. This adds to coaching being and staying an ambiguous concept; yet, it stresses coaching's individual flavor and ability to cater for a great variety of needs.

Coaches have first and foremost been described in three different roles, namely as

■ superior coach,

■ internal coach, and

■ external coach.

Superior Coach: Superior coaching originated in the U.S.A. where executives' intensive guidance, assistance, and advancement of their employees received a special name: coaching. In the Anglo-American region, this permanent and ongoing form of coaching is still prevalent and mainly used to lead and guide young executives new to the organization. Yet, in Germany and other countries, superior coaching has not spread as much; presumably for the following reasons (cf. Looss 2002: 147ff; Rückle 2000: 30; Schreyögg 2003: 206ff):

- The relationship between employees and superiors in the U.S.A. and in other countries differs – it is closer in the U.S. – which impedes the adoption of the concept outside of the United States.

- Even in the United States, where attitudes of employees towards superiors and vice versa may allow a coaching relationship, the possible range of topics to be discussed will be restricted due to matters of hierarchy and confidentiality.
- Coaching is characterized by openness and voluntariness on behalf of all parties involved. Due to the coach being in a superior role, clients' voluntariness and freedom may not be given in superior coaching relationships.
- The efforts of superior coaches have been criticized as being part of executives' regular leadership tasks which makes the term 'coaching' redundant.
- An ongoing coaching relationship such as the one between superiors and their employees can have counter-productive effects; for instance, it can cause dependence on behalf of employees.

Internal Coach: For cost reasons, organizations with relatively heavy and steady demand for coaching tend to have their own, permanently appointed internal coaches. The services of these professional, full-time coaches can usually be made use of on a voluntary basis and without great efforts for organizational members. The prime advantage of internal coaches is their organization-specific knowledge based on which clients' concerns can be discussed with an insider. In fact, internal coaches provide much of the services that external coaches are capable of providing; in comparison, however, there are few but perhaps decisive disadvantages (cf. Rauen 2005b: 122ff; Schreyögg 2003: 208ff).

- Internal coaching is difficult to implement so that its reputation within the organization turns out and stays positive. Its implementation, therefore, must be accurately planned and cautiously performed.
- Having an internal coach at hand may invite subordinates to decree coaching for their employees. Coaching which is arranged top-down, however, is likely to not result in desired effects but instead can cause that coaching receives a negative connotation.
- Although internal coaches are probably not as biased as superior coaches, they are not neutral; they work by order of the organization and in this regard have to fulfill certain obligations. Necessarily, this creates conflicts between the needs and expectations of organizations and those of coachees.

External Coach: Especially in case of crises when clients favor a neutral, confidential dialogue partner, coaching through an external provider is ideal. External coaches look at clients' concerns from an outside perspective and, thus, can bring new aspects to the table. Also, coaching which takes place in completely new surroundings far away from clients' everyday lives can be very encouraging in terms of experimenting with

unfamiliar methods suggested by the coach. Due to the neutrality and organizational distance of external coaches, they can, furthermore, be particularly helpful in supporting the initiation and realization of innovations in clients' organizations, in supporting mergers, and in supporting the personnel development of high-ranking executives (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 199ff). In contrast to superior and internal coaches, external coaches have the least insight into their clients' organizations. Depending on clients' concerns, this can be of advantage or of disadvantage. Which coach fits best has to be decided on each case's merits.

Especially for internal and external coaches, qualification profiles consist of a large spectrum of technical competencies and personality traits. Depending on whether coaches, HR representatives or coachees are being interviewed, their requirements regarding coach profiles vary. The Böning-Consult survey (2004) even found that demands on coaches depend on the client target group; i.e., HR managers have different expectations regarding coaches who work with middle managers compared to those who work with top managers. Nevertheless, there seems to be a general consensus among experts that a certain mix of technical competencies and character traits should be available on behalf of coaches (cf. Rauen 2006: 15; Schreyögg 2003: 130ff; Vogelauer 2004: 26ff).

Technical Competencies: In terms of technical competencies, psycho-social and economic know-how, proficiency regarding the application of methods, experience in the occupational context of the client (e.g., experience as a management committee member, experience with power and corporate policies) and expertise regarding the clients' concerns (e.g., leadership in a foreign country) are needed. Additionally, coaches' ability to conduct conversations and to create an atmosphere in which self-reflection, learning, and development can take place is vital.

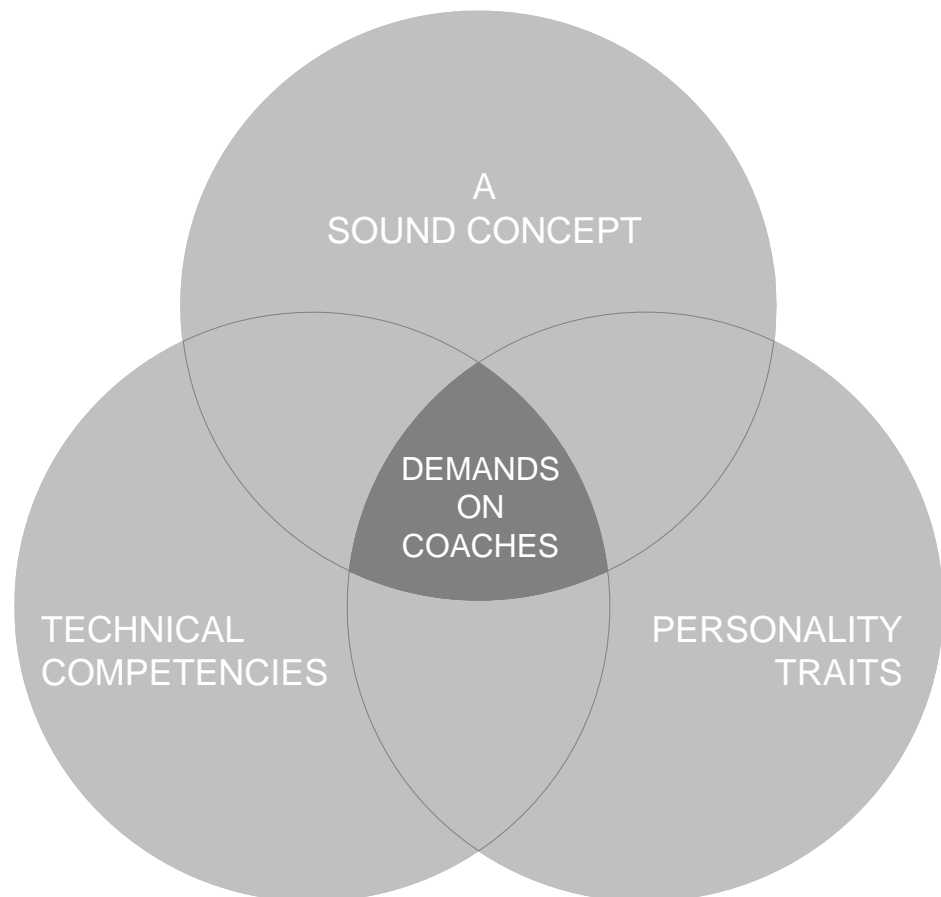
Personality Traits: Personality-wise, traits like courage, empathy, frustration tolerance, integrity, reliability, readiness to confront clients, and a true interest in clients are essential. Furthermore, social competence as well as an ethic tenor are crucial.

Although coach federations around the world (e.g., Austrian Coaching Council, Deutscher Bundesverband Coaching e.V., International Coach Federation), have already established or are working on rules and regulations for professional coaches, there exists no 'one' predetermined way to become a coach. Therefore, coaches do have different backgrounds; and this is why coaching services around the world and even within countries are colorful. For this reason,

[s]electing the right coach is a challenge. There are no defined backgrounds or sets of skills for coaches, just as there are no defined sets of problems or challenges. The coach is a highly specific resource of knowledge, expertise, intuition, and experience.

He or she brings to the table the ability to deal with dynamic challenges. Although this dynamic character makes coaching difficult to codify, it also ensures that a good coach, with the right expertise can work with a coachee to find a path to success. That path may differ from coach to coach, but the impact will still be positive (Morgan/Harkins/Goldsmith 2005: 25f).

Figure 18: Demands on Coaches



Besides adequate character traits and technical competencies, however, the ability and the need of coaches to base their work on a coaching concept has been strongly emphasized since coaching entered the professionalization phase (e.g. see Schreyögg 2003). Sound coaching concepts suit the professional background and personal attitudes of coaches and contribute to consistent, transparent coaching sessions and processes. In more detail, coaching concepts determine on which image of man coaches' work is based on, i.e., how they perceive human development and change, which ethics they follow; they determine which methods and techniques are used; and they determine with which intentions, for which purposes and in which situations they are applied (cf. Lippmann 2006a: 17; Rauen 2003: 191ff).

Coaching is an individualized form of consultation: Therefore, depending on the customer – and, as will be shown later, on the key players involved in the coaching process – the tasks of coaches vary (cf. Strikker 2007: 76ff). Taking into account these variables, only some basic tasks of coaches are dealt with at this stage:

- coaches as room providers,
- coaches as feedback providers,
- coaches as knowledge transmitters,
- coaches as self-help supporters,
- coaches as process designers.

Room Provider: Coaches provide safe and quiet environments in which coachees can open up and self-reflect upon their occupational situation. The atmosphere coaches help to create is one in which clients can spread out their concerns and develop their creative abilities, knowing that confidential matters stay confidential (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 66f).

Feedback Provider: Coaches are active listeners, skilled observers, and neutral feedback providers. A great percentage of executives, whose primary tasks are to dictate direction and rhythm and to make final decisions, tend to lack constructive feedback. Therefore, when coaches share with their clients how they perceive of them, coachees receive an invaluable and often long overdue service (cf. Rauen 2006: 15).

Knowledge Transmitter: First and foremost, coaching is process consultation. Yet, when adequate, coaches also share their expert knowledge with their clients. Information on business or psycho-social matters can be as relevant as information on coaching tools through which coachees get “the opportunity to acquire skills for dealing autonomously with future challenges” (Rosinski 2003: 245). This leads to coaches’ next task.

Self-Help Supporter: Having coachees regain the clarity and confidence to independently make decisions is one of the goals of coaching. Consequently, providing help so that clients can develop self-help strategies is a necessary job of coaches (cf. Rauen 2006: 15).

Process Designer: As already mentioned, coaching is primarily process consultation. Therefore, coaches are responsible for creating and shaping the coaching process in such a way that coaching goals can eventually be reached.

Coaches really add value when they devise tailored processes that significantly increase the chances of achieving individual and collective targets. [...] Coaches know how to create a learning experience conducive to progress, how to build an environment where talents can shine and synergies occur. Before a session, the coach will reflect on the gaps between the current situation and the desired future. He [or she] will use his [or her] experience and imagination to determine the nature and flow of experiences required to bridge the gaps. The coaching activities, as a sequence and as a whole, are carefully weighted in relation to the target objectives. No two coaching sessions will be the same, which is in sharp contrast with standard teaching programs, where the agenda is predetermined (Rosinski 2003: 243, comment by AMH).

3.4.2.2 The Client: Target Groups and Demands

Theoretically, coaching in the sense of business coaching, is directed at people with executive function regardless of the hierarchical level on which the role is performed (cf. Schreyögg 2002: 23). The Böning-Consult survey (2004) shows that also practically coaching covers all management levels; yet, most coaching activities take place at middle management level. This target group's promotion orientation, their openness and willingness to learn, their readiness for and interest in occupational changes, all this contributes to their heightened demand for coaching. In short, coaching suits their needs and their motivation suits coaching (cf. 2004: 62f). Reasons for the request for coaching can be both current crises and an interest in preventive support for longer-term or future concerns.

Crises can be triggered, for example, by events like the transition into a new role or a new organization, the adoption of the first leadership function or interpersonal conflicts. Crises, however, can also be noticeable symptoms of stress or burnout. Apart from such 'individual' crises, 'collective' crises caused by mergers or market- and politics-related developments may also turn into demands for coaching (cf. Schreyögg 2002: 34).

The wish for support regarding topics like career planning, performance optimization, personality development or the improvement of work-life balance may also be a trigger for coaching requests. These are of a more future-related, longer-term and even prophylactic nature than the above

mentioned crises which demands and allows different coaching practices, respectively (cf. Böning/Fritschle 2005: 88ff; Zirkler 2006: 295).

3.4.2.3 The Organization: A Possible Third Player

Besides a coach and a coachee, the organization – for example, represented by a coachee's superior – can be a third key player within a coaching process. This superior may be the one who initiated the coaching between coach and coachee; he or she may be the one to carry the cost of the coaching. Most probably, then, this person has expectations regarding the outcome of the coaching. Therefore, in any case, the intents and expectations of this third party must become as transparent as those of the other two key players in order to guarantee the mutual respect, openness, and transparency which characterize a coaching process. Questions that such a third party could/should be asked by the coach are for instance (cf. Dehner 2005: 355):

- Why do you think coaching is appropriate for the suggested person?
- Where do you locate the person's issue(s)?
- What must happen so that you feel the coach has been successful?
- Which expectations and wishes do you have in regard to the coach?
- Have you already talked to the person intended to be coached? How did he/she react?
- What is advantageous, what disadvantageous for the achievement of coaching objectives?

3.4.2.4 Characteristics of the Coaching Relationship

The precondition for a working relationship between coach and coachee is perceived equality and mutual acceptance which means that there is a partner fit due to background, experience, and sympathy. When, additionally, a limited time frame is agreed on and voluntariness, transparency, and – very importantly – confidentiality are given, both coach and coachee can do their jobs to jointly reach the predefined goals of the coaching process (cf. Looss 2002: 184f; Rauen 2006: 15, 163).

For the relationship to be effective, the coachee must be able to honestly discuss personal feelings, concerns, and attitudes that can encompass a broad range of subjects, including the coachee's superiors, peers, reports, and even family, as well as the organization and its strategy. [...] Without confidentiality, the relationship cannot progress to trust, nor can the coach understand the coachee's challenges with sufficient complexity (Morgan/Harkins/Goldsmith 2005: 43).

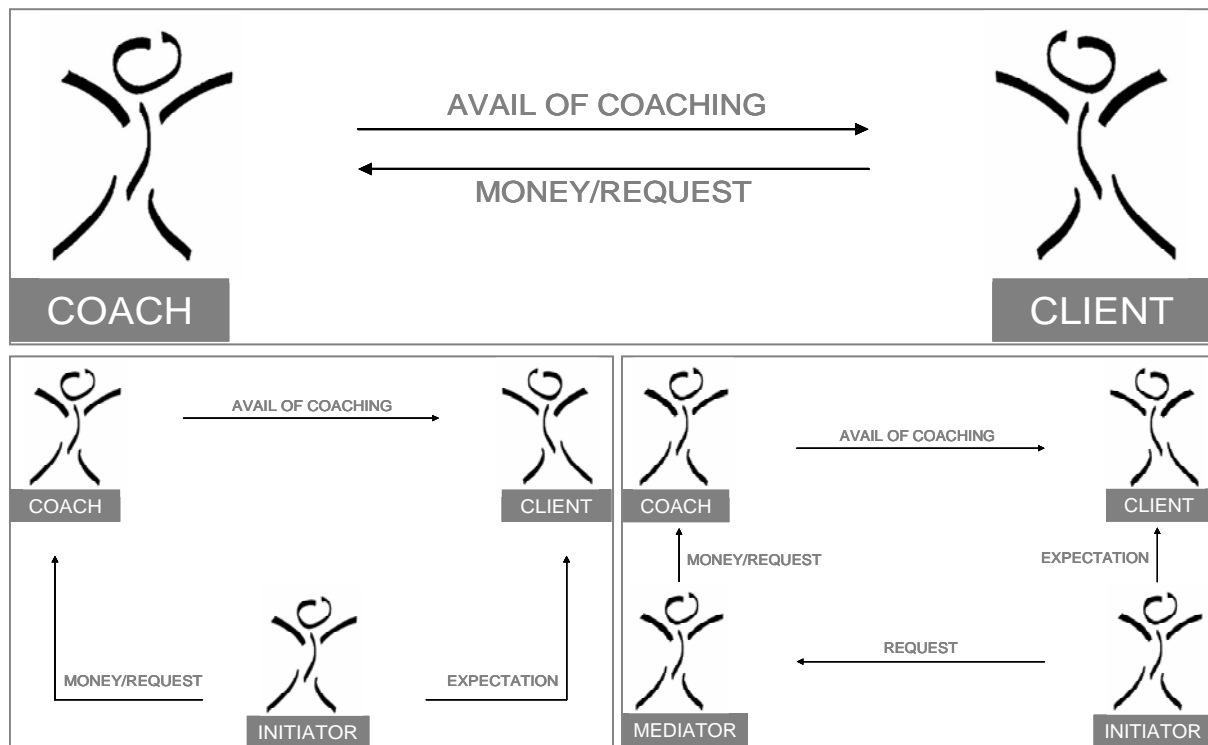
Although coach and coachee work towards the same objective(s), they each have different tasks. Whereas, for instance, the coach collects and analyzes information, defines an action plan and controls the pace and direction of the coaching, the coachee is responsible for his or her own progress and for bringing to the table the necessary commitment that the relationship requires.

The coach-coachee relationship is best described as a partnership, one in which both sides work to reach an agreed-upon destination. Obviously, neither coach nor coachee could get to the goal alone. From such mutual reliance, confidence, trust, and even friendship develop along the way (Morgan/Harkins/Goldsmith 2005: 41).

Finally, a coaching relationship has been found to work well and feel good, when it is "predictable" and "reliable" (Kilburg 2006: 72). Therefore, formal and psychological coaching contracts between all parties involved have become part and parcel of coaching partnerships. Formal contracts cover the planned number, duration, and frequency of coaching sessions as well as the duration of the whole coaching process; they define where coaching sessions take place and who is involved; they include matters of confidentiality, costs, and procedures in case of illness, and more. Psychological contracts contain rules regarding the coaching partnership as well as the expectations of parties involved. Fears, limits, and taboos on behalf of clients and approaches, procedures, possibilities, and limits on behalf of the coach are also included.

Depending on how many key players are involved in the coaching process, contracts are made between two (client-coach), three (client-coach-sponsor/initiator) or four (HR/mediator-client-coach-sponsor/initiator) parties (cf. Looss 2002: 184ff).

Figure 19: Coaching Contracts



3.4.3 Specifying the Consultation Format

Having introduced the term, development, definitions, and key players of coaching, the subsequent chapter illustrates how coaching relationships unfold: the process, the settings, the goals, and the methods are taken into detailed account.

3.4.3.1 The Process

Depending on clients' issues, coaching relationships differ in terms of duration. Long-term coaching – for clients interested in a permanent dialogue partner who regularly provides them with feedback – rarely has a predefined end as the coaching process begins. It has been suggested to take place every two weeks for the first two or three sessions and then to level out at once a month for one-hundred minutes. Contrastingly, in cases

where clients want to deal with a predefined concern, they and their coaches usually target a certain number of coaching sessions – around five to ten one-hundred minute sessions – once the complexity of their topics has been diagnosed. Finally, clients in the middle of a crisis may only need one or several session. Again, the duration of such a coaching can only be determined after the crisis' dimension has been evaluated (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 317ff).

Although the end of coaching relationships can sometimes not strictly be determined, coaching processes are mostly limited in time and characteristically 'fade-out' as progress is made (cf. Struck 2006: 26). No matter how long or short a coaching relationship lasts, however, it is designed as a process consisting of the following steps (cf. Rauen 2003: 162; Vogelauer 2002: 29ff):

■ realization of the coaching demand,

■ getting in touch,

■ making a contract,

■ clarification of the starting situation,

■ goal definition,

■ interventions,

■ evaluation, and

■ conclusion.

Realization of the Coaching Demand: The realization that a future coachee could benefit from coaching breaks the ground for every coaching process. Regardless of whether coachees themselves or other persons, possibly from HR or subordinates, register a demand for coaching, the need for professional support becomes transparent which eventually leads to the first conversation between coach and possible future coachee.

Getting in Touch: This first conversation is non-binding for neither person and serves several purposes: discussing the needs and expectations on behalf of clients; raising realistic expectations in regard to the conditions

and possibilities of coaching and coaches; and getting a feel for the dialogue partner in terms of sympathy. Basic decisions regarding client-coach-fit and appropriate coaching setting result from the initial talk.

Making a Contract: When both coach and coachee have decided to consent to a coaching relationship, a coaching contract is made which may include more than the two persons; a sponsor, for example. Once all formalities are set, clients' present situation is examined in great detail.

Clarification of the Starting Situation: Questions like 'Where exactly is your problem located?', 'In which situation(s) is it apparent?', or 'What would make you realize that it is solved?' are asked to illuminate coachees' situations. Such an in-depth analysis is essential so that the succeeding steps of the coaching process can be tailored to clients' exact issues and condition. It can take quite some effort until the concern is as clear as that the coaching can proceed to the next phase: goal definition.

Goal Definition: At this stage, clients and coaches jointly elicit objectives and figure out, evaluate and re-evaluate ways to reach those objectives.

Interventions: Interventions like feedback, role plays, relaxation exercises or visualizations support coachees in further defining their goals and in transferring the strategies they developed within coaching sessions into their professional lives.

Evaluation: Evaluations of coaching processes serve to assess the use of the coaching interventions for clients. If coachees' expectations have been fulfilled and their objectives have been reached, the coaching process can be terminated. If not, reasons for that outcome need to be found and further, perhaps different interventions have to follow.

Conclusion: Within a final coaching session, the whole coaching process and the changes that occurred throughout it are reflected. Then the formal relationship between coach and coachee ends.

3.4.3.2 The Settings

Coaching can take place in different settings to cater different needs. Therefore, one purpose of the initial talk between coaches and coachees is to consider the best possible client-concern – coaching-setting fit. Here, the most popular forms of coaching are portrayed:

■ individual coaching,

■ group coaching, and

■ team coaching.

Individual Coaching: This is the classic coaching setting characterized by sessions in which only one coach and one coachee take part. Due to its private flavor, individual coaching suits concerns where individual learning and development is necessary (cf. Looss 2002: 157) and fits intimate and highly confidential matters like outplacement, career development, and crises (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 215). Furthermore, it is capable of making clients experiment and hence of promoting their creative potential (ibid.: 292). As one-on-one consultation form, however, this setting is also ideal for executives with tight schedules because arrangements regarding session dates and time only need to be made between two persons. Whereas the relationship between coach and client can be more intense within a private setting, it might be a disadvantage to have only one dialogue partner. Particularly in regard to strategic and social management competencies, group or team settings can be more favorable (ibid.: 215).

Group Coaching: Group coaching takes place between a coach and clients with the same or similar functions who either belong to the same organization or different organizations. In any case, it is due to shared occupational backgrounds, shared interests, and shared expectations that work in this setting can be very intense. Group coaches promote the joint development of exemplary solutions for shared problems and thus enable clients to simultaneously learn from each other and to grow individually. However, in group settings coachees are also encouraged to bring forward individual concerns; since the other coachees are likely to be familiar with those concerns, knowledge and experience as well as possible ways of action can be exchanged (ibid.: 216f).

Team Coaching: Team coaching is geared towards parts of occupational groups or whole groups whose members work together in order to reach a shared goal. In group settings, mostly collective issues are paid attention to; individual problems are rarely uttered because many people fear humiliation as a consequence of opening up. Frequently, therefore, team coaching is demanded for new teams in the course of formation, for teams in the course of organization-related change and development or for those in crisis (ibid.: 217ff).

3.4.3.3 The Goals

The definition, transparency and pursuit of objectives are central to coaching. As coaches and coachees take active parts in the coaching process, both parties are responsible for working on goals.

The objectives of clients differ from person to person and even vary from coaching session to coaching session. It can be a complex task for coachees, therefore, to figure out what their overall coaching goal looks like and whether this goal can be reached step-by-step by achieving multiple smaller goals. Working on the definition, re-definition, and achievement of goals with regard to the overall objective of the coaching process is the core task of coaching clients (cf. Rauen 2003: 172).

In contrast to their clients, coaches' overall goal is to make themselves superfluous in the course of a coaching process, i.e., their aims are geared towards the independence of their clients (cf. Rauen 2006: 15). Within each coaching session, therefore, "the coach's goal is to enable the client to find the right answers by him or herself" (Morgan/Harkins/Goldsmith 2005: 26). Coaches encourage clients to define their objectives by themselves, they monitor the formulation of realistic goals, and support their clients in achieving the preset objectives (cf. Dehner 2005: 356ff).

3.4.3.4 The Methods

'The' method of coaching is conversation; dialogues are the core way of working on coaching objectives (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 228f). Depending on the issues and condition of clients, however, other methods that help unleash their potential may be appropriate and even more efficient than conversation only. Many of these interventions stem from the method repertory of psychotherapy or Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and require specific training (cf. Stahl/Marlinghaus 2000: 203). Besides verbal communication, therefore, role plays and experiments or body-centered interventions like breathing-, meditation-, and relaxation-techniques (e.g. see Kinast 2003) complement the tool kit of coaches. Many modify and combine methods to fit the customized and goal-oriented nature of coaching (cf. Rückle 2000: 158). Indeed, the consultation format is open to a wide range of methods. However, for them to be effective and beneficial to the coachee as well as to the client-coach relationship, their selection and application requires careful handling (cf. Rauen 2003: 175f):

- Methods are to suit the individual coachee so that he or she is neither overcharged nor bored. It is to be considered that not every intervention is suitable for each and every client. Therefore, coaches must tailor their choice of offered techniques to the needs, expectations, and capabilities of their coachees.
- Methods need to be explained to coachees so that they can anticipate their full range and accept or deny their application. Sharing information on the general set-up with coachees contributes to keeping the coaching process transparent; also, this way, clients' commitment and voluntariness to participate is consistently renewed throughout the succeeding coaching sessions.
- Methods must only be applied when coachees have agreed to their use so that clients' trust in their coaches is not jeopardized.
- Methods have to be aligned with coaches' concepts so that the whole coaching process is consistent within itself.
- Methods need to match the dimension and depth of the coaching process so that they are proportional to other used methods and coaching's time frame.
- Methods have to aim at amplifying coachees' choices in terms of perceiving, thinking, and acting so that growth can occur.

3.4.4 Evaluating Coaching

With the development, spreading, and professionalization of coaching, the evaluation of coaching processes has attracted the attention of scholars as well as coaching practitioners and customers. Whereas the scientific community and coaches are primarily interested in learning which factors (e.g., the client-coach relationship) trigger which effects (e.g., trust which leads to clients' openness and thus to more intense and effective sessions), clients, sponsors, and organizations in general are probably more concerned with the evaluation of coaching's price-performance ratio and the achievement of objectives through coaching. HR, finally, could be interested in seeing whether coaching was the most suitable support measure available for an employee and may benefit from learning about the client-coach fit in regard to future matches.

In order to cater for the interest of various target groups, coaching processes have been evaluated with different (quantitative and qualitative) methods, by different evaluators (e.g., scholars, clients, coaches), and at different stages (e.g., after interventions, after sessions or after the end of

a whole coaching process) (cf. König/Volmer 2003: 179ff). All in all, however, evaluations of coaching are still rare. "At this time, we have very little research specifically evaluation coaching in terms of outcomes, specific techniques, or underlying mechanisms of change in coaching" (Stober/Wildflower/Drake 2006: 2). And apart from the fact that the number of evaluations is small, the insight that can be gained from those that do exist is not huge either. This is due to numerous reasons: First, the various results can hardly be compared to each other as evaluation studies have applied a great variety of approaches and chosen different foci. Second, the effects of coaching do not occur at one point in time, but progressively which requires that evaluations need to be done repeatedly in the future. Third, the sustainability of coaching has not yet been evaluated. Also, the impact of the expectations which precede a coaching process has not been researched so far; and so are a number of other areas (cf. Künzli 2005: 239f).

In a nutshell, "empirical research into coaching is in its infancy and far more systematic and rigorous research is needed" (Grant 2003: 13). However, quality criteria for coaching have crystallized out of the experience of coaches, clients, and scholars. One of the most important quality criteria seems to be transparency; in many respects, coaching requires clarity, namely in regard to the roles, tasks, possibilities, expectations, and objectives of all key players involved in a coaching process. This includes the transparency of coaches' concepts, and applied methods. A careful diagnose of clients' situation at the beginning of coaching is also regarded essential as is the documentation of the coaching process, and continuous progress reflections and evaluations. Finally, adequate price-performance ratio has also become a quality criterion for coaching (cf. Böning 2003: 289).

3.5 Connecting Coaching and Culture: Coaching^{Culture}

The manifold personal, strategic, operational, and interpersonal challenges which constitute professional lives have created a domain for coaching. Especially executives, whose professional lives are characterized by the simultaneous discharge of an even greater abundance of duties such as decision-making, strategic planning, reporting, conflict solution, guidance and support of employees, (securing of) knowledge transfer, and delegation of tasks have become its customers. Within an intercultural management context, their professional lives gain even more in complexity; not only because more, new or different tasks need to be done but especially because most of the tasks need to be done in different ways than before, receive altered and even ambiguous acceptance, require new skills, and have changed consequences (Gregersen/Morrison/Black 1998) (see chapter 2.2.3 Weighing the Impact of Culture on Management). This may be illustrated by the example of a division manager located in a MNC's foreign subsidiary: Her challenge is not only that she has to report to both her boss in Bangkok and to the one in the headquarters in Rome but that these superiors have diverging expectations of how much, how often, and in which form she should report and, above all, that they have different ideas of how she should get her job done.

The hurdles of intercultural management take a different dimension due to the complexity brought in by culture. Culture is not an independent, additional hurdle to business life; it is a component which enriches and inflates each and every already existing hurdle or synergy effect to a more intricate something which cannot extensively be handled without cultural awareness and sensitivity, without special culture-related knowledge, and without an attitude that accepts and even embraces what culture brings – or in other words, without intercultural competence (see chapter 2.2.4 Identifying Intercultural Competence).

Only lately, coaching providers have started to realize that conventional approaches to coaching which do not pay particular attention to the impact of (national, regional, etc.) culture on business life are insufficient in order to comprehensively serve their intercultural management clients – which also includes expatriates. "Executive coaches are being challenged to provide multidimensional, multilayered, and rigorous approaches that can assist clients to find clarity and direction [...] [and] to create solutions that work in his or her unique context" (Abbott/Rosinski 2007: 59, comment by AMH). A small group of recent contributions to the coaching literature shows that coaching which specifically considers the culture phenomenon has been established and brought to market. Yet, how coaching and culture are connected in order to serve the needs of expatriates stays rather

unclear for two reasons: First of all, the relation of coaching and culture has only recently started to be discussed which is why there generally exist only few accounts on coaching with culture focus. Second, only a minority of these accounts puts an explicit focus on expatriates as its target group (e.g. see Abbott et al. 2006; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002). In order to receive an idea of what the connection of coaching and culture can look like for expatriates – which is what this dissertation calls ‘expatriate coaching’ – it is necessary to also draw on those accounts of culture-related coaching which do not explicitly center around expatriates. Using such an inclusive approach subsequently, coaching with culture focus is characterized on the basis of several pieces of literature in order to create a broadest possible picture. Since its authors have chosen various terms for this special form of coaching, this dissertation introduces an umbrella term: ‘coaching^{culture}’. The intention of using this expression is twofold. On the one hand, it is applied to avoid favoring one term over another; especially because the particularities of and differences between the different terms have not yet been made very clear. On the other hand, it is used in order to have the superscript emphasize the exponentiating effect that culture can have when it affects people’s lives (more than it usually does) and when it is explicitly considered within coaching sessions. The term ‘expatriate coaching’ then is treated as a sub-category of coaching^{culture}; in other words, it is the application of coaching^{culture} on expatriates.

Figure 20: Relationship of Coaching, Coaching^{culture}, and Expatriate Coaching



Below, the input that authors on coaching^{culture} have so far provided is sorted by the following dimensions which have already been used to describe basic coaching:

- terms and definitions,
- demand: occasions and goals,
- supply: settings and methods,
- key players: coaches, clients, and organizations, and
- evaluation.

The collected pieces of information are juxtaposed and compared in order to illustrate the multi-faceted approaches to coaching^{culture} as well as to pinpoint currently lacking information.

3.5.1 Exploring Coaching^{Culture}

To this date, the majority of contributions which have been written on coaching^{culture} stem from coaches who have realized the need and hence started to pay specific attention to the culture phenomenon within coaching sessions. Many of their accounts, therefore, tend to mirror practical experience rather than scientific research results. The focus is more on introducing the need to include the culture component into coaching than on comparing their experience with or differentiating it from that of other authors; this is why until now there exists only a small number of papers on coaching^{culture} but a handful of different terms whose relationship is rather intransparent (e.g. see Blüml 2005).

Table 11: Terms for Coaching with Culture Focus

Terms for Coaching with Culture Focus (Coaching ^{Culture})	Authors (Dates of Publication)
Coaching Across Cultures	Rosinski (2003)
Cross-Cultural Coaching	St Claire-Ostwald (2007)
Global Coaching	Abbott/Rosinski (2007)
Interkulturelles Coaching ⁶	Barmeyer (2005), Kinast (2005), Peuker/Schmal/Götz (2002), Schroll-Machl (2007b)

On the whole, most of the papers go without embedding their contribution into the greater discourse of coaching sparing to establish connections and well-defined limits. As a consequence, the picture of what coaching^{Culture} actually is, what it can do, in how far it is practiced and demanded, is still very much blurred; that it is practiced – or at least offered – demonstrate, however, the following webpages:

- <http://www.eidam-und-partner.de>
- <http://www.expcoach.com>
- <http://www.globalcoaches.com>
- <http://www.hodge-ia.com>
- <http://www.icm-global.net/consulting/dhtm/coach.html>
- <http://www.interkulturelles-training-coaching.de>
- http://www.pro-fit-consult.de/interkultureller_kontext.html
- <http://www.rachdi-beratung.at/menue/ikc.htm>
- <http://www.transition-dynamics.com>
- <http://www.windrose-coaching.de>

Depending on authors' foci, their understanding of coaching^{Culture} necessarily varies. Some mention coaching^{Culture} in relation to business life whereas others leave its target context open; some emphasize its use for culture-related learning whereas others explicitly open it up for growth on other competence dimensions. A look beyond the definitions below makes clear that authors focus their attention on different target groups with unique challenges which requires deviating settings, and finally leads to diverging ideas of what the goals of coaching^{Culture} are and should be, respectively. What these papers have in common, nonetheless, is that they depict coaching^{Culture} as a means of developing intercultural competence – be it in

combination with other intercultural competence measures or as a comprehensive, sufficient method.

Geoffrey Abbott/Philippe Rosinski: “[...] the practice of global coaching begins at the level of the individual. However; its *design, impact* and *success* are systematically and rigorously considered against broader considerations of the client’s family, friends, colleagues, team, organization, community, nation, and the society in general. The influence of culture is often given considerable attention. A ‘global’ dimension is therefore built-in rather than added-on” (Abbott/Rosinski 2007, italics as in the original).

Christoph I. Barmeyer: “Interkulturelles Coaching stellt eine personalisierte und prozesshafte Entwicklungsmaßnahme – interkulturellen – Lernens dar” (Barmeyer 2002: 200).⁷

Ute Clement/Ulrich Clement: “Unter interkulturellem Coaching verstehen wir die Unterstützung von Führungskräften bei der Lösung kommunikativer Probleme im interkulturellen Management. Interkulturelles Coaching zielt auf die Wahrnehmung und Berücksichtigung des Einflusses kulturgebundener Verhaltensweisen im Business” (Clement/Clement 2003b).⁸

Eva-Ulrike Kinast: “Interkulturelles Coaching ist eine neue und umfassende interkulturelle Personalentwicklungsmaßnahme für international tätige Fach- und Führungskräfte, die als Ergänzung zum interkulturellen Training eingesetzt werden sollte und eine Vielzahl von Methoden integriert. [...] Interkulturelles Coaching bietet tatsächlich genauso wie interkulturelles Training die Möglichkeit zum interkulturellen Lernen und baut neben interkultureller Handlungskompetenz auch individuelle, soziale und strategische (Management-)Kompetenz auf [...] Interkulturelles Coaching schließt aber auch noch die Persönlichkeit der gecoachten Person mit ein” (Kinast 2005: 218).⁹

7 Barmeyer: Intercultural coaching is a personalized and process-related development measure for – intercultural – learning.

8 Clement/Clement: We understand intercultural coaching as a means of supporting executives when solving communication problems resulting from their involvement in intercultural management. Intercultural coaching aims at promoting clients’ awareness and consideration of culturally coined business behavior.

9 Kinast: Intercultural coaching is a novel and comprehensive human resources development measure for internationally active specialists and executives; it is supposed to be applied as a supplement to intercultural training and integrates a variety of methods. Like intercultural training, intercultural coaching offers intercultural learning opportunities and besides intercultural competence also furthers individual, social, and strategic (management) competence. Furthermore, however, intercultural coaching takes into account the personality of the coachee.

Philippe Rosinski: "Coaching across cultures means looking for opportunities to unleash more human potential by leveraging cultural differences. The outcome is increased performance and fulfillment" (Rosinski 2003: 41). "Simply stated, leveraging cultural differences means making the most of these differences. The coaching process is the lever that helps to achieve greater success and to overcome complex challenges. Leveraging is associated with a dynamic view of culture. It implies proactively studying cultures, and looking for creative ways to find the best of different cultural views. Leveraging is about building *synergies*, creating a *synthesis* bigger than the sum of cultural components taken separately" (Rosinski 2003: 40, italics as in the original).

Sylvia Schroll-Machl: "Interkulturelles Coaching ist eine persönliche, prozessorientierte, interkulturelle Beratung auf individueller Ebene, das auf den konkreten Qualifizierungsbedarf abgestimmt ist und den Lerntransfer sichert" (cf. Schroll-Machl 2007b: 152).¹⁰

Barbara St Claire-Ostwald: "Cross-cultural coaching addresses the way in which cultural differences affect the daily lives of people, and raises awareness of cultural differences and the effect they can have on the process of managing others and doing business in general" (St Claire-Ostwald 2007: 45).

As aforementioned, coaching^{culture} has been described in regard to several target groups. Those (groups of) people who have so far been indentified as possible clientele vary in terms of being an individual or a group, being located in the home or the host country, and having an executive function or not. Whereas some papers on coaching^{culture} are dedicated to a specific target group only, others portray the use of the mentioned coaching form as applicable for some or all persons listed below. The broadest idea of coaching^{culture's} application is, therefore, anyone or any group member who is in touch with someone with a different cultural background. Due to the dissertation's focus on expatriates, information specifically dedicated to this target group is accentuated below.

¹⁰ Intercultural coaching is a personal, process-oriented form of intercultural consultation taking place on an individual level; it is tailored to clients' qualification needs and takes care of the transfer of learned contents into practice.

Table 12: Target Groups of Coaching^{Culture}

Target Groups of Coaching ^{Culture} ...		Vs. /As Well As ...
Group/Individual Setting	intercultural teams (see Bolten 2003c)	individuals (cf. Kinast 2005: 219f)
Home/Host Country Location	those who get in touch with people who have different cultural backgrounds but stay in their home country, e.g., leaders of intercultural teams (see Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002)	people who work abroad, e.g., expatriates and inpatriates (Abbott et al. 2006)
Executive/No Executive Function	people with executive function, e.g., team leaders, heads of foreign subsidiaries (cf. Kalt 2006: 247)	people without executive function, e.g., staff collaborating with staff from foreign subsidiaries, staff serving international customers, staff going through a post-merger-integration process or staff with a foreign subordinate (cf. Schroll-Machl 2006: 23)

A relatively high degree of consensus exists in regard to the profiles of coaches who offer coaching^{culture}. Many authors agree (e.g. cf. Barmeyer 2005: 268f; Kinast 2005: 217) that besides a typical coach profile (see chapter 3.4.2.1 The Coach: Roles, Profiles, Concepts, and Tasks)

[p]ersonal experience in adapting to foreign environments might be considered a prerequisite for someone coaching others in a cross-cultural situation. Familiarity with the theory and research of cross-cultural psychology is an additional and essential base for the professional coach working in this area (Abbott et al. 2006: 306).

Apart from coaches' foreign country experience and culture-related stock of information, various papers also discuss in which situations it is more favorable that coach and client have the same cultural background with the coach being familiar with the foreign culture in which the client operates; and when it is advantageous that the coach has a different cultural background than the client but speaks his or her language (cf. Kalt 2006: 251).

There are three possibilities in respect of the nationality of the coach – same cultural background as the client, host-country national or third-country national – each carrying advantages and disadvantages as far as the coaching is concerned. Like age and gender, nationality might be a factor best considered when deciding the ideal coaching fit for a particular individual (Abbott et al. 2006: 306).

The role of organizations as key players within coaching^{culture} processes has very much been neglected in existing papers. Readers are left in the dark

about whether MNCs, for instance, already request coaching^{culture} for their frequent flying employees, their expatriated staff or their intercultural teams; it is unbeknown whether they prefer it to other support and development measures like intercultural trainings or whether they have again abandoned the idea for something else. Altogether, there exists barely any information on how many and who exactly ask(s) for coaching^{culture}.

Even though most of the coaching^{culture} papers are experience-based, they do not offer too much insight into what its practice looks like. Since the demand for coaching^{culture} stays unbeknown, the occasions that have been described as starting points for coaching^{culture} interventions must primarily be understood as theoretically conceivable occasions; and not as practically given ones. In this respect it is interesting that only Barmeyer (2005) explicitly mentions the use of coaching^{culture} for preventive purposes; this may evoke the idea that coaching^{culture} is more of a crisis intervention tool than intercultural training, for instance, which has repeatedly been portrayed as preparatory measure.

Table 13: Occasions for Coaching^{Culture}

Occasions for Coaching ^{Culture} Described in Terms of ...	
... Unspecified Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ language problems (cf. Barmeyer 2003: 18) ▪ differing expectations (cf. Barmeyer 2003: 18) ▪ diverging working and thinking styles (cf. Barmeyer 2003: 18) ▪ failed relations and cooperation with international business partners (cf. Clement/Clement 2003a: 155) ▪ the occurrence of unpredictable difficulties (cf. Bolten 2003c: 11; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 41) ▪ need for intercultural know-how (cf. Schroll-Machl 2007b: 153) ▪ prepare people in advance for the abundance and diversity of potential intercultural difficulties in order to prevent as many as possible (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 270)
... Expatriates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ acculturation difficulties (cf. Kinast 2005: 220) ▪ family problems (cf. Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 41) ▪ the need to improve intercultural competence (cf. Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 41)

In terms of expatriations, Abbott et al. (2006) point out that not only the struggle with a *specific* challenge may motivate sojourners to ask for

coaching^{culture} but even more so may the array of minor and major changes caused by long-term assignments be a reason to seek coaching^{culture}.

Each manager arriving to take up an overseas assignment comes with their own professional and personal resources. These managers are generally skilled and productive operators and they are expected [and expect] to hit the ground running. Whenever an executive takes on a new position, some of the individual's skills and approaches may need to be enhanced and new resources added. For the expatriate manager there is the additional reality that things that worked well at home may not be quite right for the new context. [...] it can be a very testing time in which expatriates often question their basic assumptions about themselves, their culture, their interpersonal relationships and their management style. Change occurs simultaneously in virtually every aspect of life (Abbott et al. 2006: 312f, comment by AMH).

Since most of the occasions for coaching^{culture} are seen as a result of insufficient intercultural competence, its goals are first and foremost described in regard to this concept. Whereas some authors tend to claim that intercultural competence can fairly comprehensively be developed in the course of coaching^{culture}, others seem to understand its contribution only as a puzzle piece in that they state that coaching^{culture}

- works across the affective, behavioral, and cognitive domain which means that it can impart culture-related knowledge and thus raise coachees' awareness of the impact of culture on their lives and in particular on their (private and professional) interpersonal relationships; it takes into account clients' feelings, values, and motivations in order create solutions to challenges that clients are capable of implementing; and it supports clients in their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral growth processes and prepares them to apply the knowledge and behavior they gained within coaching sessions in real-life situations (see Abbott et al. 2006; Abbott/Rosinski 2007) and/or
- helps clients to develop their individual, social, technical, and strategic competencies if necessary (see Kinast 2005) and/or
- is tailored to the needs of the clients which means that it can adapt its services both in regard to duration and content to the individual challenges of persons or groups in unique situations and thus, can help to specifically work on those abilities that need to be enhanced towards intercultural competence with the needed intensity (see Barmeyer 2003; Schroll-Machl 2007b) and/or
- facilitates the independence of clients already during the coaching^{culture} process in that clients are encouraged to (self-)reflect, embed incidents into bigger contents, and to figure out their own solutions for their problems so that they are able to continue that independent problem-solution search once the coaching^{culture} process is finished (see Kinast 2005).

In order to fulfill the requirements for being an independent, comprehensive intercultural competence development measure, however, at least all of the above conditions would need to be complied with (see chapter 2.2.4 Identifying Intercultural Competence).

Table 14: Goals of Coaching^{Culture}

Goals of Coaching ^{Culture} Described in Terms of ...	
... Unspecified Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The goal is to make the cultural relativity of views and working styles clear to the client showing that other methods and ways of doing things can be as favorable so that the client can accept and better deal with these 'foreign' views and behaviors (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 250). ▪ The goal is to reflect conflict situations in order to make better decisions and solve problems more easily in the future (cf. Barmeyer 2003: 18). ▪ The goal is to develop one's ability to see things from different perspectives (cf. Bolten 2003c: 11). ▪ The goal is that clients become aware of their cultural backgrounds, that they learn about the consequences of displaying their culturally coined behavior, how to control their behavior, how to explore information within foreign culture contexts, and how to independently solve their problems (cf. Kinast 2005: 219). ▪ The goal is to develop intercultural competence based on which misunderstandings that are culturally determined can be prevented and intercultural encounters and cooperation run smoother (cf. Kalt 2006: 248). ▪ The goal is to raise clients' awareness of culture-related valuations, expectations, and behaviors and to reach an understanding of intercultural relations which embraces irritations as information based on which growth can happen (cf. Clement/Clement 2003a: 155). ▪ The goal is to sensitize clients to cultural differences and to impart knowledge of cultures as well as to figure out clients' personality-culture fit (cf. Schroll-Machl 2007b: 153ff).
... Expatriates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Coaching can assist in enhancing meaning through reflective dialogue while at the same time encouraging new behaviours that are appropriate in the new context. The result should be enhanced cultural intelligence and a more successful sojourn" (Abbott et al. 2006: 313). ▪ The goal is the personal development and growth of the expatriate (cf. Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 47).

Finally, the question of how exactly – by means of which process steps and methods – clients reach these goals with the help of their coaches, remains

unanswered at this stage. When methods of coaching^{culture} are mentioned at all in the literature, the reader is mainly constrained to take a look at those methods that are used in conventional coaching sessions (for an exception, e.g. see Abbott/Rosinski 2007; Kinast 2003). Apart from that, it is only suggested that a mix of methods should be used and that there is need to additionally apply those which enable the coach to impart culture-related knowledge (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 270; Kinast 2005: 220). References for methods which are particularly useful when coaching^{culture} takes place via telephone or, for example, in case client and coach do not speak the same mother tongue are not mentioned at all.

3.5.2 Comparing Coaching^{Culture} & Co: Differences, Twilight Zones, and Synergy Effects

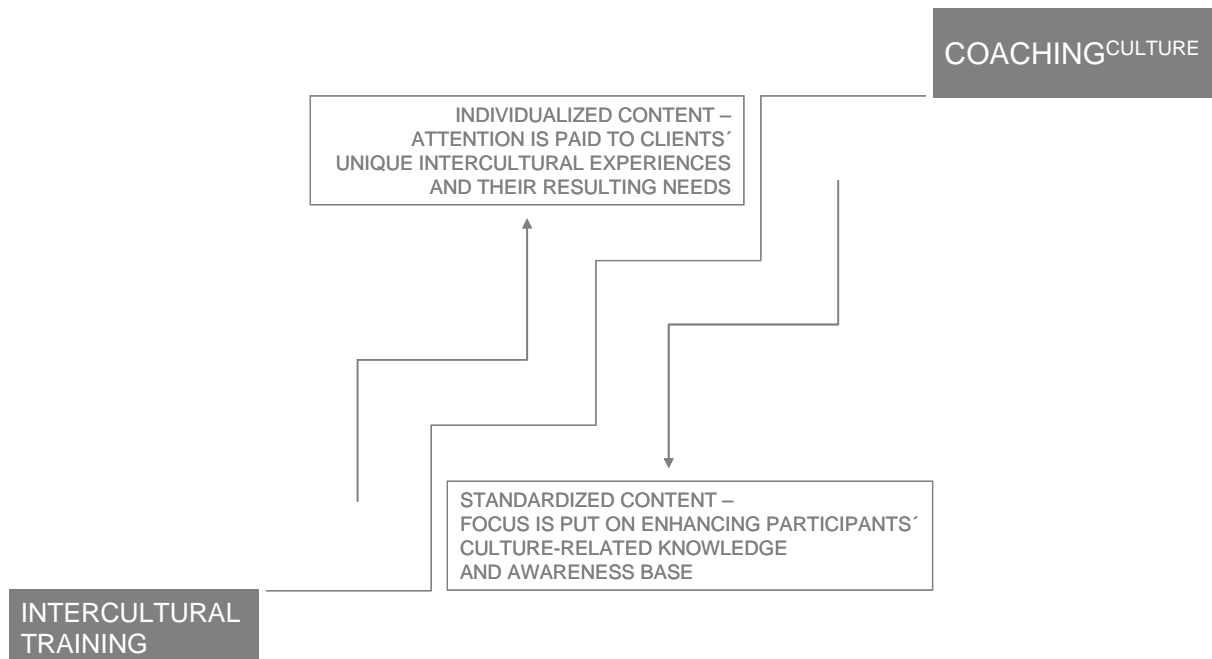
Since there exists barely any empirical research on coaching^{culture} (for an exception, e.g. see Abbott et al. 2006; Blüml 2005), little can be said about its evaluation. Most of the potential effects that are described are not empirically proven and the advantages (and disadvantages) stated are hardly seen in relation to other approaches that aim at developing intercultural competence. The majority of the few papers that have been written on coaching^{culture} put the support measure into an absolute vacuum. If a demarcation from a different measure takes place at all, then it mostly refers to the application and use of intercultural training:

- Coaching^{culture} is more customized than intercultural training: it focuses on clients' personality and experience, their current private and occupational situation, as well as their well-being and possibilities within that context (cf. Kinast 2005: 219; Schroll-Machl 2007b). Due to coaching's intimate and situational character, it can ask more specific and far-reaching questions like: How is the individual doing physically, mentally, and emotionally at work? What do his/her personal circumstances look like? What needs to be changed in order to reach increased personal satisfaction, better results, fruitful cooperation, heightened transparency, more freedom? How can this be changed under the given circumstances? What are the (dis-)advantages, the costs, the benefits of change in the very situation? Which influence does change/development have on other individuals, processes, relations, etc.?
- In contrast to intercultural training, coaching is more target group-oriented and can barely be standardized what concerns content;

coaching takes into account the specific mix of contents in which clients are embedded; due to the uniqueness of clients' situations, each coaching process has its individual point of departure; since coaching enables clients to bring in their personal, challenging real life incidents – whereas intercultural training often uses preset critical incidents – the problem-solution process is usually characterized by explosiveness and utmost importance which is rarely the case within trainings (cf. Bolten 2003c: 11).

- Whereas training is rather standardized and limited to few consecutive units, coaching is personalized and has more of a process-related nature; consequently, it is usually more time-consuming and expensive (cf. Barmeyer 2003: 18).

If at all, intercultural training and coaching^{culture} have been contrasted. Very few authors only, however, have described how closely adjoined the two support measures actually are. Following Schroll-Machl (2007b), there is no sharp cutting line that determines where training ends and where coaching starts. She states that rather there is an overlap between the two creating a twilight zone in which intercultural trainers and coaches apply both training and coaching elements. The more culture-related knowledge is imparted within sessions and the more, therefore, the contents are standardized, the more appropriate it is to speak of (individual or group) training. The more individuals and their own experience and challenges are put into sessions' focus, the more its nature is that of (individual or group) coaching. Especially within an individual, more intimate setting, training may contain coaching elements; coaching^{culture}, in contrast, is likely to comprise training elements when clients lack culture-general and/or -specific knowledge since it has a lot of potential to clarify critical incidents (cf. Schroll-Machl 2007b: 152f).

Figure 21: Intercultural Training – Coaching^{Culture} Continuum

The fluid transition between training and coaching contributes to an increased intransparency of offers by training and coaching providers, respectively. Depending on trainers' individual background, namely, intercultural training can take the form of mere one-way knowledge transfer of standardized content to a group of two, or it can be a one week group training for an intercultural team which besides a culture-general input offers the possibility to reflect on the team's difficulties and synergy effects resulting from their diverse cultural backgrounds. Similarly, intercultural coachings can be located on various spots of the training–coaching continuum depending on how much theoretical input a coach gives. The difference to intercultural trainings is, however, that the degree of culture-related knowledge input by the coach depends not only on his or her capability to provide it but also on clients' need and interest to receive it.

Due to the heretofore prevalent juxtaposition of expatriate support measures, not only their twilight zones but also – and perhaps even more importantly – their synergy effects have largely been ignored (for an exception, see Abbott et al. 2006). Cannot the expatriate-focused form of coaching^{culture} – expatriate coaching – for example, help clients figure out what kind of support (e.g., a mentor, a relocation service, a leadership seminar) best suits their needs? Cannot expatriate coaching support clients in examining which of the information they received from intercultural trainers, mentors, expatriate colleagues, HR, supervisors and so on, are of

relevance to their current situation? Cannot expatriate coaching be the platform where the transfer of culture-related knowledge into appropriate behavior takes place? Cannot expatriate coaches be the ones who make sure that their clients tap the full potential of support measures offered to them by their companies?

To put it in a nutshell, the literature on coaching^{culture} in general and on expatriate coaching in particular is still in its infancy. Obviously, the idea of including the culture component into coaching has been born; the accounts of its application, however, do not seem to be very much advanced at this stage. Like in the case of the discussed expatriate support measures (see chapter 3.3.2.2 Talking Support: Does Theory Equal Practice?), the marginal depth of existing reports may hide the fact that the coaching^{culture} practice is already more highly developed than in fact represented. If so, it would be interesting for the scientific community to receive more tangible information about coaching^{culture} in terms of supply and demand figures for specific target groups, process design characteristics, and practical value. In the case of expatriate coaching, namely, a lot of questions still remain unanswered: Who demands expatriate coaching; expatriates or organizations? Is it demanded at all? In which setting, individual or group, does it mostly take place? What are the specific occasions for expatriate coaching; is it used for preventive purposes, to deal with challenges as occurring in the host country or perhaps to repatriate sojourners? Which benefits have been found to result from expatriate coaching? Where does its competitive advantage lie? What are its limitations?

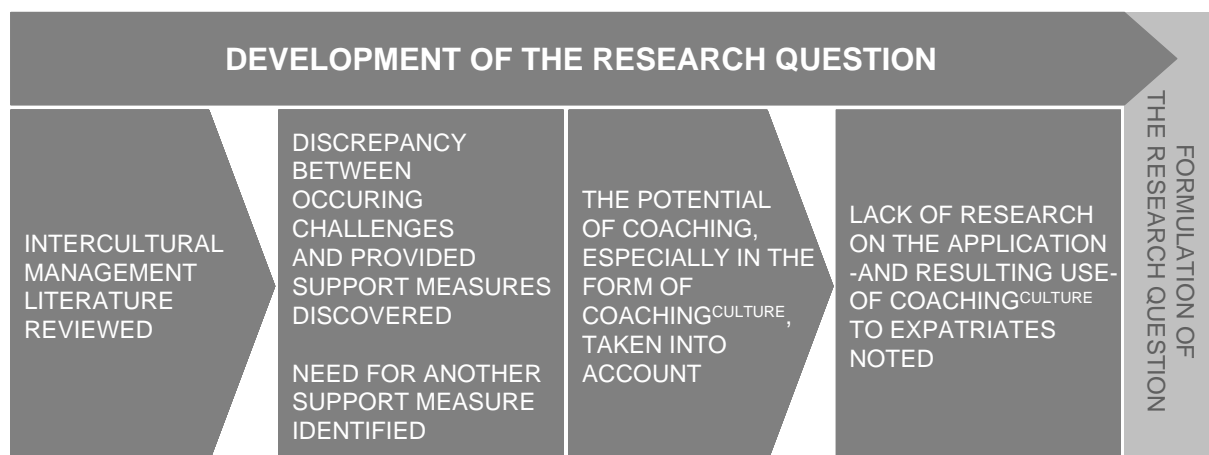
4 Researching Expatriate Coaching

In contrast to the preceding two main chapters which presented the literature and the empirical findings from which this dissertation's research focus emerged, chapter four introduces the research project itself in its details. To start with, the research questions are outlined; they guide the researcher all the way through the empirical journey from preliminary considerations on methodology to data analysis. Then, the research design which is tailored to the particularities of the research questions is portrayed: It consists of the qualitative, grounded research approach that characterizes the whole project as well as the data collection and analysis methods which have been selected to match the qualities of the overall research approach. Subsequently, the actual research process as experienced by the researcher is revealed; this section consists of lively accounts on how the project was gradually carried out and recalls the difficulties and surprises by which it was shaped. Finally, before the research results are presented and discussed, the entire research project is critically reflected.

4.1 Defining the Research Question

As the figure below illustrates, the core interest of this research work emerges from an extensive intercultural management literature review which has shown that there exists a discrepancy between the many and multi-faceted expatriate challenges and the comparatively limited impact of support measures offered in the course of long-term assignments. Consequently, it revolves around the need for a different, perhaps additional rather than substituting, support measure; and it brings the potential of expatriate coaching into focus: The few existing pieces of literature that have been written on coaching^{culture} in general and expatriate coaching in particular have touched upon its suitable nature to tackle intercultural management challenges. Yet, if at all, how and why coaching^{culture} is actually applied in the course of long-term assignments has barely been researched and described so far. From a scientific point of view, therefore, its function as expatriate support measure is still unclear. It is the overall purpose of the dissertation to help minimize this research gap.

Figure 22: Development of the Research Question



The more specific aim of the qualitative research conducted in the course of this dissertation is now to explore two intertwined questions: What does the practice of expatriate coaching look like and what is its potential as support measure?

What does the practice of expatriate coaching look like? The review of the currently most used support measures (see chapter 3.3.1 Enlightening Expatriate Support Measures) has shown that their avail is not

merely the product of the content they provide, or in other words, the result of *what* they provide. The notable gain of support measures is also very much dependent on *how* they are provided: It varies based on when, for how long, and by whom they are provided, on the intensity and the setting in which they are offered as well as on their combination with other support measures. To give an example, intercultural trainings are not (only) useful because they provide amongst others culture-specific knowledge, but especially so because culture-specific knowledge is provided in the run-up to authentic intercultural encounters, because it is provided in an atmosphere conducive to development and growth, and because it is provided by a trainer who is acquainted with both the home and future host culture of the participants. In order to explore the potential of expatriate coaching in its entirety, therefore, it is essential to look into the way it is practiced and go from there to see where its benefits and limits originate.

What is the potential of expatriate coaching? To figure out where expatriate coaching's potential as support measure for expatriates lies, is the ultimate goal of this dissertation. The emphasis is clearly on looking for *potential* benefits and *potential* limits. Since coaching is a highly individual form of support, namely, it is to consider that its application and effects are likely to at least slightly vary from coachee to coachee, from coach to coach, from situation to situation; the range and quality of expatriate coaching benefits and limitations can thus be expected to be somewhat case-specific; "different benefits and disbenefits might be experienced, and these might register differently with different users" (Fielding/Lee 1998: 59). With the objective to discover as many facets as possible of expatriate coaching's potential, the research approach chosen to tackle the two-step research question is throughout explorative in nature.

Figure 23: Defining the Research Question



This research aspires to draw a picture of expatriate coaching that is colorful but has a clear frame: It is supposed to be multi-faceted in that it integrates various perspectives on the practice and potential of expatriate coaching; and it is intended to have obvious boundaries by pursuing a precise focus.

The first intent – to paint a rich picture of expatriate coaching – results from the fact that the idea of coaching^{culture} (for expatriates) has so far predominantly been commented on by coaches. Its practical value as reported by MNCs and expatriates themselves, on the other hand, has not yet been adequately collected or at least not been published. In order to create a comprehensive picture of expatriate coaching, however, it is necessary to get all the parties involved who play a role in coaching processes. The dissertation's research contribution endeavors to let all three possible key players speak for themselves:

- European MNCs represented by their human resources division responsible for the processing of expatriations,
- coaches who have worked with expatriates as well as
- European expatriates transferred to the People's Republic of China.

Representatives of these groups are consulted on their experience and viewpoints in regard to expatriate coaching. This leads to this study's

second research intent: to provide a clear frame for the exploration of the research question.

Figure 24: Framing the Research Question: Scope and Limitation



There are two reasons for why in this thesis expatriate coaching is researched in regard to Western expatriates in China. First of all, the emphasis on China can be explained by its current status as popular expatriate destination. On top of it, the country is being reported to host an even growing number of sojourners in the future.

China has opened up quickly to multinationals and this, together with its membership of the World Trade Organisation, has made China the preferred location for foreign investors. This is reflected in the continued increase in anticipated growth of assignments in the region. In part, the increase is due to current expatriates being re-assigned within China, opening up further opportunities throughout the country, as well as new expatriates entering the region (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2005: 5).

If there is a demand for support measures today and in times to come, therefore, it will very likely be made in the course of assigning expatriates to China. Hence, for the dissertation to be of practical relevance, its primary attention has been turned to this very target group.

Apart from its business opportunities, however, there is a second motive for choosing China as research location.

China is distinctly different from most other countries. From a Western perspective, China 'is seen as the most foreign of all foreign places. Its culture, institutions, and people appear completely baffling – a matter of absolute difference, not of degree' (Chen, 2001: 17). This makes China a challenging destination for Western business expatriates, since they have to deal with a very different way of life than in their own country and they have to perform in an unfamiliar work context (Selmer 2006: 1210; Chen 2001).

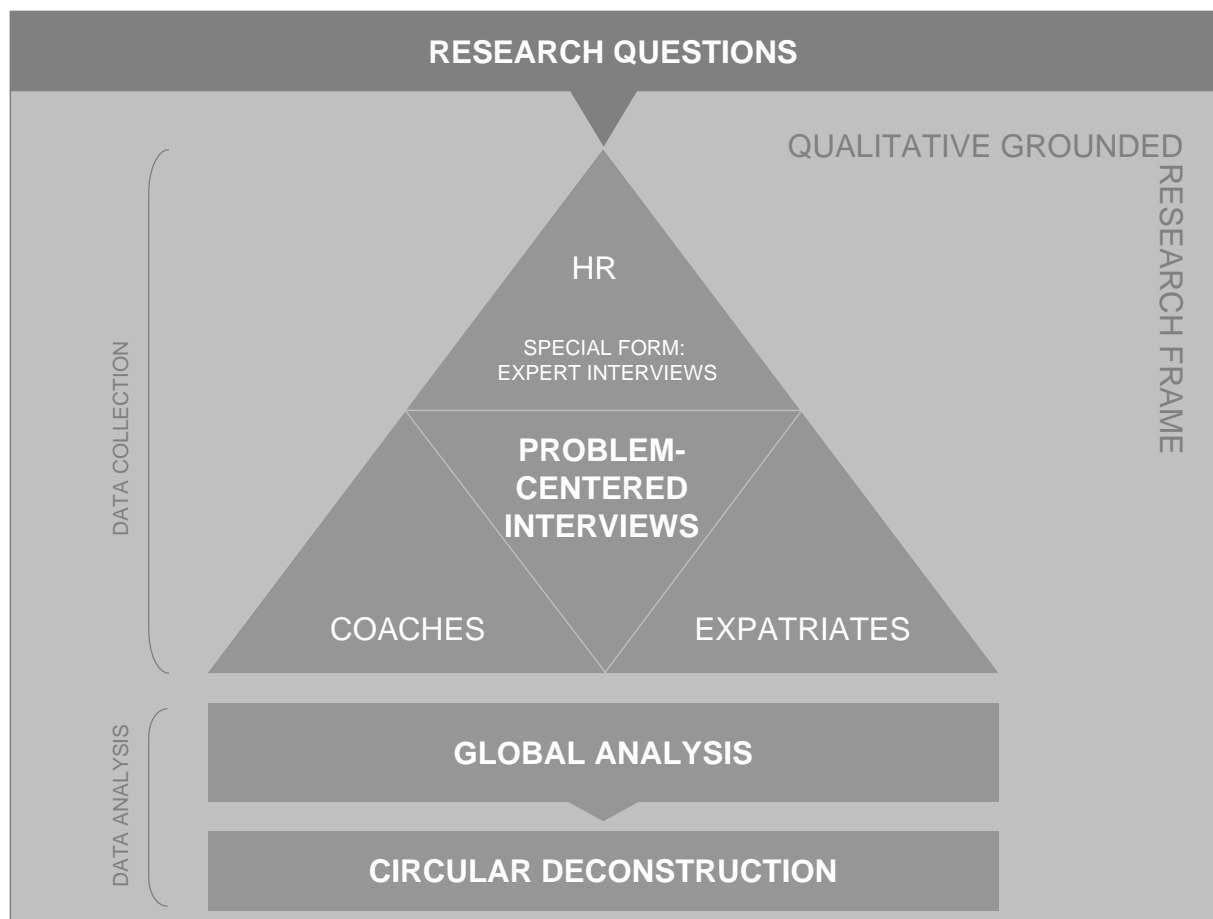
The occurring intercultural differences and their evoked challenges are likely to be much more visible than is the case with other country constellations. The idea behind researching this very combination is that the diversity of challenges, the resulting need for support, and the possible points of departure for expatriate coaching can best be illustrated this way.

Due to its focus on Westerners in China, this research does not claim to develop a picture of the practice and potential of expatriate coaching in regard to deviating target groups. To explore its differences and similarities is to be the aim of future research projects. Likewise, voices from non-European MNC's HR representatives should be integrated in further studies; it is mainly due to reasons of accessibility and sample size that only European organizations have been asked to participate in the study.

4.2 Portraying the Research Design

The chapter on research design addresses how the presented study has been planned; it sheds light on how the current state of expatriate coaching and the resulting research questions have steered the development of the research design, gives an insight into the assumptions and values guiding the researcher, describes the various applied methods, and shows how they match the overall research approach (cf. Ragin 1994: 191).

Figure 25: Research Design



The explication of the research design is an important part of qualitative research, the approach chosen for this study. Only through revelation of the single but coherent steps taken, namely, can the research project result in a comprehensible and constructive contribution to the (scientific) community (cf. Flick 2006: 135ff). In this respect, the theoretical framework which acts as 'template' for the integration of the used methods

is introduced first. Then, the applied data collection and analysis methods are outlined, followed by a discussion and reflection of the actual research proceeding.

4.2.1 Characterizing the Qualitative Research Approach

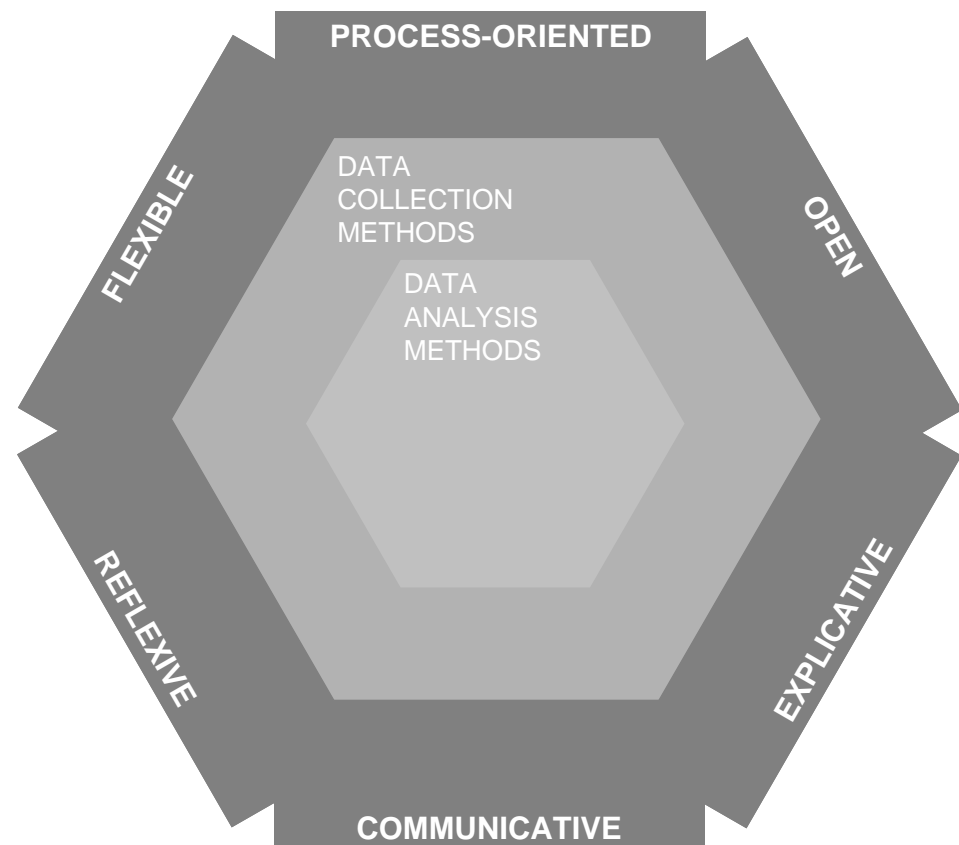
As the preceding literature review on long-term assignment support measures illustrates, expatriate coaching is an uncharted island and thus still a reasonably opaque topic. Both the term as well as the ideas behind it are fairly novel and have just recently entered the fields of vision of those who are involved in intercultural business; expatriate coaching seems to rather be only 'in the making' than already 'there'. As a consequence, the "discovery" (Glaser/Strauss 1967) of expatriate coaching is the driving force of this research project. It is the researcher's prime need and interest to 'get to know' the research object in as many facets as possible by means of an open and flexible data collection and analysis process; and then to introduce the ensuing findings to the scientific community as well as to those who might benefit from the provisional results. This objective in mind, a qualitative research approach is chosen which, in a variety of respects, orientates itself by the ontology and methodology of Grounded Theory (e.g. see Glaser/Strauss 1967).

The world is very complex. There are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events are the results of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex. We [Corbin and Strauss] believe that it is important to capture as much of this complexity in our research as possible, at the same time knowing that capturing it all is virtually impossible. We try to obtain multiple perspectives on events and build variation into our analytic schemes. We realize that, to understand experience, that experience must be located within and can't be divorced from the larger events in a social, political, cultural, racial, gender-related, informational, and technological framework and therefore these are essential aspects of our analyses. Process is integral to our studies because we know that experience, and therefore any action/interaction that follows is likely to be formed and transformed as a response to consequence and contingency. We don't necessarily want to reduce understanding of action/interaction/emotion to one explanation or theoretical scheme; however, we do believe that concepts of various levels of abstraction form the basis of analysis (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 8, comment by AMH).

Qualitative, grounded research, "is exploratory in nature" (Barbour 2008: 233); and it consists of additional characteristics which suit studies like this, aiming at investigating the particularities, the width and depth of intricate, often yet untapped issues. Subsequently, six central principles of

qualitative social research as mentioned by Lamnek (cf. 2005: 20ff) are introduced (for the characterization of qualitative research also see Flick 2006; Mayring 2002). Thereby, since “[a] bigger part of the qualitative research refers to one or other part of the program of Strauss and his colleagues [...]” (Flick 2006: 21), some basic elements which typify Grounded Theory are revealed. Discussed at this stage, the reader is provided with an idea of how, with which attitudes and considerations the researcher has approached the research project. This presentation, however, also provides the framework for the later inclusion of data collection and analysis methods into the overall research design. It is the fit of research approach and applied methods, namely, which raises the study’s transparency, traceability, dependability, and hence its quality (cf. Flick 1998b: 148; 2006: 98).

Figure 26: Qualitative, Grounded Research Frame



Openness: “Qualitative research takes into account that viewpoints and practices in the field are different because of the different subjective perspectives and social backgrounds related to them” (Flick 2006: 16). As a consequence, one central aim of qualitative research is to get hold of and to understand those varying views of reality as presented by individual

research participants at the time of the research. In order to capture such specific, snapshot perspectives, qualitative research pursues an idiographic research approach; one that takes single cases with their specificities and in their uniqueness into account (cf. Lamnek 2005: 245f). Moreover, since it is “concerned with eliciting in-depth accounts from people with room for them to select which aspects they wish to emphasize” (Barbour 2008: 115), it is designed in a way that grants research subjects a great deal of space and opportunity to bring forward their pieces of experience and thus allows the research object to unfold its facets. The provision of research participants with the necessary freedom is arranged in that the chosen methods are relatively unstructured; and in that a great deal of the research process – data collection as well as a part of data analysis procedures – is moved to the familiar environment of the research subjects. Having researchers visit them in their used-to settings has two advantages: First, research participants are left in a more comfortable, natural situation – within their ‘own four walls’, so to speak – which likely heightens their readiness to let themselves in for the research question(s). And besides, it enables researchers to also observe the context and circumstances surrounding them (cf. Fontana/Frey 1998: 67f).

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin/Lincoln 2005: 3).

Consequently, openness in qualitative research also means that the research object is largely characterized and contextualized by the research subjects rather than by researchers’ preconceived assumptions; research subjects’ structure, then, serves as the base on which researchers further identify connections, generate hypotheses, and develop theories.

The principle of openness implies, that the theoretical structuring of the issue under study [i.e. the formulation of hypotheses] is postponed until the structuring of the issue under study by the persons being studied has ‘emerged’ (Hoffmann-Riem 1980: 343; qtd. in Flick 2006: 98, comment by AMH).

Apart from that, however, openness in qualitative research as well refers to the open-mindedness of researchers themselves. Qualitative projects cannot be without curious investigators who are open to finding whatever it is; the unusual, the unintended, the surprising, the extraordinary, the feared, the pleasant, the casual, or even the expected. In this respect, Dey notes that “there is a difference between an open mind and an empty

head" (Dey 1993: 63). Being open does not imply ignoring or even denying one's previous experiences, attitudes, and opinions for the sake of objectivity and pureness; rather conversely, it refers to continuously making oneself aware of them and to keeping them in mind when dealing with data.

As researchers move along in the analysis, it is their knowledge and experience (professional, gender, cultural, etc.) that enables them to respond to what is in the data. When we [Corbin and Strauss] speak about what we bring to the research process, we are not talking about forcing our ideas on the data. Rather, what we are saying is that our backgrounds and past experiences provide the mental capacity to respond to and receive the messages contained in data – all the while keeping in mind that our findings are a product of data *plus* what the researcher brings to the analysis (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 32f).

Process-Orientation: Instead of being static, research objects as well as the behavior and statements of research participants in social qualitative projects tend to be in continuous process. In order to research them, i.e. to also be able to capture the inherent developments, the research design needs to be adapted. Like the phenomena to be investigated, therefore, qualitative research procedures are iterative rather than linear (cf. Barbour 2008: 189; Lamnek 2005: 23).

It is typical of qualitative, grounded research that the various steps which constitute the overall project are process-like. In terms of data collection, for example, the selection of participating research subjects is not (exclusively) pre-determined before the data collection circle has started. Rather, following the principle of "theoretical sampling" described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), choices regarding "[...] what data to collect next and where to find them" (Strauss 1987: 38) are incessantly made as the research project unfolds. Similarly, also coding which characterizes grounded data analysis procedures is a process-, development-oriented activity.

Coding is the process of disassembling and reassembling the data. Data are disassembled when they are broken apart into lines, paragraphs or sections. These fragments are then rearranged, through coding, to produce a new understanding that explores similarities, and differences, across a number of different cases. The early part of the coding process should be confusing, with a mass of apparently unrelated material. However, as coding progresses and themes emerge, the analysis becomes more organised and structured. Careful coding allows the researcher to move beyond preexisting theory to 'hear' new interpretations and understandings present in the data (Ezzy 2002: 94).

On the most general level then, process-orientation in qualitative research means that "[...] there is a mutual interdependence of the single stages of the research process [...]. Most clearly, Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed this idea of the research process in their approach of grounded

theory research [...]" (Flick 2006: 97f); "[...] each stage after a time is transformed into the next – earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage [...]" (Glaser/Strauss 1967: 105). The selection of research participants, the application of data collection, processing, and analysis techniques as well as the inductive development of hypotheses and theory from those gained data go hand in hand, complementing and advancing each other. When talking qualitative, grounded research, therefore, it is to be mentioned that

[...] this circularity is one of the strengths of the approach, because it forces the researcher to permanently reflect on the whole research process and on particular steps in the light of the other steps [...]. The close (also temporal) link between collecting and interpreting data and the selection of empirical material on the other, unlike in the traditional linear method of proceeding, allows the researcher not only to ask the following question repeatedly but also to answer it: How far do the methods, categories, and theories that are used do justice to the subject and the data? (Flick 2006: 100).

Flexibility: The two above mentioned characteristics, openness and process-orientation, make qualitative research an 'elastic' approach and hence also demand flexibility from researchers. They need to continuously go back and forth between the various steps of the research process, i.e., select their samples, collect their data, process and analyze them, work their newly gained insights into subsequent sampling considerations, (probably) adapt data collection methods (e.g., interview schedules) to the particularities of the new samples, then again devote themselves to analysis and so on.

If data analysis begins only after [all] the data have been collected, researchers will have missed many valuable opportunities that can be taken only *at the same time* as they are collecting their data. This is particularly the case if you are using the methodology of grounded theory. However, it also applies more generally to most other research methods that are interpretive, inductive and exploratory (Ezzy 2002: 60f, emphasis as in the original, comment by AMH).

Yet, not only is the overall research process open, repetitive, and flexible. The different methods used can, to a certain degree, itself be modified as needed. They are, namely, as well expected to "do justice to the diversity" of individual research subjects (Flick 2006: 15) and hence to appropriately match the overall explorative character of the research design. With the qualitative paradigm's intention to trigger subjective accounts, flexible because unstructured and communication-fostering methods "provide the best – most 'adequate' and 'efficient' – way of acquiring the desired information [...]" (Alvesson/Sköldberg 2005: 18; cf. Glaser/Strauss 1967: 18). If data are, for instance, collected by means of conducting interviews,

[a]lso, conversation techniques are applied flexibly: according to the requirements of developing a communication situation focussed on the individual respondent, the interviewer can more frequently use, depending on the varying degree of the respondent's reflection and eloquence, narration or recurrent questioning in a dialogue procedure (Witzel 2000).

Communicativeness: As outlined in Witzel's quote above, "[t]he aim of qualitative research is to allow the voice of the 'other', of the people being researched, to inform the researcher" (Ezzy 2002: 64). Therefore, qualitative data collection is designed as communicative act in which both researcher and research subject are equal interlocutors despite their very different roles: In that researchers express their interest in the experience of their research subjects, they stimulate them to contribute to the research question. And in that research subjects, on the other hand, are given the opportunity to open up and reveal their points of view, they provide researchers with valuable data (cf. Honer 2006: 96). Hence in the qualitative tradition, the interactive relationship between the interlocutors is not regarded as impairing but in fact as constituting the research act (cf. Lamnek 2005: 22). By the qualitative researcher and the research subjects entering a communicative process, "[...] qualitative research goes beyond the measurement of observable behaviour (the 'what'), and seeks to understand the meaning and beliefs underlying action (the 'why' and 'how') [...]" (Marschan-Piekkari/Welch 2004: 8).

Like qualitative data collection, analysis also resembles a communicative process. Qualitative, grounded ways of analyzing data are characterized by "[...] an attempt to allow the data to speak, or for the researcher to engage with what the data have to say" (Ezzy 2002: 9). Listening, reading, describing, understanding, and interpreting the gained data, even with the help of research subjects, are means of eventually generating hypotheses and theories; and thus to fulfill the objective of qualitative research, namely to "bring the words of our [research] participants to life through research" (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 49, comment by AMH).

Reflexivity: Qualitative data are the result of a distinctive communicative process between researcher and research subject, the unique backgrounds and experiences the interlocutors bring to the table, and the quality of their relation, their communication. As far as qualitative research is concerned, therefore,

[t]he term reflexivity refers to the recognition that the involvement of the researcher as an active participant in the research process shapes the nature of the process and the knowledge produced through it. Researchers must reflect on the nature of their involvement just as they consider the meaning of their participant's contributions (King 2004: 20).

When working with data emerging within the course of a qualitative research project, it is crucial to reflect on how they came into being and to contextualize them this way. Why did the research subject participate in the study? In what connection did the participant make specific statements or show particular reactions? In how far did the research subject frame the perspective of the researcher? In which way did the researcher influence the person? What were the researcher's preconceptions? What guided his or her interpretation of the data? "Being reflexive in this way would entail reflecting on how the assumptions of our [the researchers'] background discipline have prompted us to create a particular version of reality through our research" (Symon/Cassell 2004: 6, comment by AMH).

There is no one-way street between the researcher and the object of study; rather, the two affect each other mutually and continually in the course of the research process. A positivistic conception of research, according to which the object is uninfluenced by the researcher and the researcher is unaffected by the object, is thus untenable (Alvesson/Sköldberg 2005: 39f).

When Glaser and Strauss talk about grounding hypotheses and theory in data, they refer to transparently relating them to the original empirical material and its diverse contexts. By continuously comparing various data with each other and against the conclusions drawn by the researcher, researchers necessarily engage in an ongoing reflexive process. Developed as part of the original formulation of Grounded Theory,

[t]he 'constant comparative method' lies at the root of all qualitative data analysis and does exactly what it says, relying on constantly comparing and contrasting. It involves looking systematically at who is saying what and in what context (Barbour 2008: 217).

In order to live up to the demand for reflexivity, two requirements need to be met. First, the applied methods are to allow space for reflection; reflexivity, hence, is another reason why open and flexible data collection and analysis methods are used in qualitative, grounded research. The second prerequisite, then, is that researchers themselves are able to reflect. As a result,

[r]esearcher's reflections on their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings, and so on, become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation and are documented in research diaries or context protocols [...] (Flick 2006: 16).

Explication: Explication, finally, refers to the wish – or even more so the expectation – that qualitative researchers disclose how they approached, designed, and proceeded in the course of their research project. Only if social research processes are made transparent, namely, can their quality be evaluated by means of the following criteria: on whether the used

methods have been adequately selected and applied, on whether the research process is characterized by reflexivity, on whether the findings are grounded in empirical data, and, finally, on whether the research is of relevance (cf. Flick 2006: 15; Yardley 2000). To this effect, the description of the methods used to handle empirical data, is of special importance; they reveal how the researcher accumulated data and moved from raw material to generating hypotheses, and, eventually, to developing theory.

The task of the researcher is not [...] to show whether his [or her] findings, models or hypotheses are right or wrong, but to convince the reader that they are reasonable conclusions, drawn from material, which has been processed by methods which can be explicitly described (Berg 1979: 165, comment by AMH).

The above characterization of the qualitative grounded research approach makes the following transparent: In the course of their research projects, researchers go through multiple phases of which the subsequent are the most described ones (e.g. see Flick 2006; Lamnek 2005; Mayring 2002); reviewing literature, generating research questions, selecting research participants, collecting data, processing data, analyzing data, and writing down research findings. However, the mentioned phases are not passed through one after the other; rather, researchers recursively return to previous phases in order to reconsider them with the knowledge gained during the other phases. This is a consequence of the open, flexible, and process-oriented nature of qualitative, grounded research and the reflexivity of the researcher by whom it is conducted. Hence, for example, the practice of selecting and approaching research participants may raise alternative research questions which are complementarily included in the research, while initial data analyzing may make researchers reassess their samples. Figuratively speaking, doing qualitative research is like travelling the world with lots of return tickets in the bag. After a country has been toured, it can always be revisited for closer and comparative inspection; additional particularities can be found, connections between countries and experiences made can be drawn, similarities can be contrasted for minimal deviations, previous conclusions can be revised. Researchers, in this sense, are flexible, open-minded, and reflecting travelers who enjoy discovering new land but keep returning to familiar grounds in order to re-explore, enrich, and finally condense the characteristics of their research objects based on their newly gained perspectives.

Due to the interconnectedness of the various research journey phases, it is hard to introduce the research project's single steps and used methods chronologically and independently from each other. Only by splitting the research process into its pieces, however, can the development of the findings be made transparent. In order to do justice to both the complexity of the qualitative, grounded proceeding *and* the traceability of the research,

the data collection and analysis phase are below separately dealt with but constantly related to each other.

4.2.2 Outlining the Data Collection Methods

Verbal data play a particularly important role in qualitative research since subjective meanings can hardly be deduced from observations only. It is necessary, therefore, that research participants are given the opportunity to recall their pieces of experience and then to verbalize their thoughts and feelings (cf. Mayring 2002: 66f). Qualitative interviews are effective means of engaging participants in such reflexive, communicative processes and hence are “the most common method of data gathering in qualitative research” (King 2004: 11; also cf. Rapley 2004: 15). Yet, there exist a number of forms of qualitative interviews; episodic, focused, in-depth, narrative, open, and unstructured interviews are here just mentioned selectively (cf. Lamnek 2005: 356).

When researchers describe their work as involving interviewing, they may actually be talking about rather different approaches. Again, a broad spectrum is involved, ranging from the use of highly structured interview schedules with identically worded questions being put in exactly the same order to each interviewee through to very loosely structured encounters where the interviewee determines the content and order of the exchange (Barbour 2008: 114f).

In a nutshell, interviews vary in the degree of freedom granted to both the research participant and the researcher during the interview process. Whereas open, unstructured types of interviews leave both interviewee and interviewer lots of room to decide what to say and ask, respectively, closed, structured interviews have a rather restrictive because directive impact on the interlocutors. It is the job of the researcher to choose the type of interview which best suits the research objectives and thus also fits the nature of the research question(s) and the overall methodological approach (cf. Mayring 2002: 66f).

Qualitative interviews are also the data collection method used in the presented research project. In more detail, a semi-structured interview approach has been chosen. This implies that the researcher uses an interview guide which helps ensure that the overall research focus is retained. Since the schedule is not strictly followed, however, research participants are still provided with enough space to prioritize and elaborate on individually preferred subtopics. The characteristics ‘communicativeness’, ‘flexibility’, ‘openness’, and ‘process-orientation’

which are essential parts of this project's qualitative, grounded research frame are particularly highlighted with semi-structured interviews.

The 'semi-structured' aspect is crucial as it refers to the capacity of interviews to elicit data on perspectives of salience to respondents rather than the researcher dictating the direction of the encounter, as would be the case with more structured approaches (Barbour 2008: 115).

The Problem-Centered Interview described by Witzel is such a semi-structured interview method which "borrows largely from the theory-generating procedure of grounded theory [...]" (Witzel 2000). As it integrates well into the project's research design, Witzel's concept is followed during the data collection process. It is introduced in more detail (see chapter 4.2.2.2 Problem-Centered Interviews) after, at this stage, the procedure of selecting interview partners is explained.

4.2.2.1 Case Selection through Gradual Sampling

From a qualitative research perspective, the term sampling refers to several decision-making processes which await researchers as they move along in their projects. The initially encountered and most discussed sampling loop is about choosing research participants (cases) – in this thesis, interview partners. This form of sampling which occurs during the data collection phase is called 'case sampling' and is the kind predominantly dealt with in this chapter. Other forms of sampling appear during the stage of data analysis and presentation of findings; researchers decide which data are to be transcribed, which to be analyzed in more detail, which to be used in order to present the research findings (cf. Flick 2006: 122f). What all qualitative sampling activities have in common is that they each recursively engage the researcher in decision-making. For example, not all passages to undergo meticulous analysis are determined on one go; rather, one passage is chosen after the other and often even as the result of the prior choice: Research participants as well as bits and pieces of data are gradually selected

[...] according to their (expected) level of new insights for the developing theory in relation to the state of theory elaboration so far. Sampling decisions aim at material that promises the greatest insights, viewed in the light of the material already used, and the knowledge drawn from it (Flick 2006: 126).

Like qualitative research in general, also its sampling strategies are characterized by 'openness', 'process-orientation', and 'reflexivity'; and

they demand a considerable amount of 'flexibility' from the researcher just as other methods suiting the qualitative approach do.

The procedure of gradual sampling has become part and parcel of qualitative research projects. The degree to which particularly 'case sampling' is pursued gradually, however, varies depending on the formulation of the research question(s), the size and range of scientific projects as well as on the available financial resources and time frame (cf. King 2004: 16). Glaser and Strauss' strategy of "theoretical sampling" – with which they laid the foundation for gradual sampling – can be described as the 'purest' and thus most data-driven form. They suggest that researchers let themselves fully guide from the just collected data as they revisit or turn to their next research participant or even include a whole new group or institution for investigation (cf. Glaser/Strauss 1967: 45ff).

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his [/her] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his [/her] theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory [...] Beyond the decisions concerning initial collection of data, further collection cannot be planned in advance of the emerging theory (as is done so carefully in research designed for verification and description). The emerging theory points to the next steps – the sociologist does not know them until he [/she] is guided by emerging gaps in his [/her] theory and by research questions suggested [sic] by previous answers (Glaser/Strauss 1967: 45ff, comment by AMH).

In contrast to quantitative research where research subjects with their specific characteristics tend to be determined a priori, "[t]he goal of qualitative sampling is not to produce a representative sample, but is rather to reflect diversity [...] and to provide as much potential for comparison as possible" (Barbour 2008: 53).

Since the presented research project aims at researching three different interview groups and since the individual interviewees might not as easily be returned to due to great distances between them and the researcher, theoretical sampling in its original form cannot be pursued. The way data are collected in the course of this dissertation, hence, orientates itself by Grounded Theory in terms of research approach but does not closely follow it. As is depicted below, this is also the case in regard to data analysis.

Once enough diverse data have been collected to engage in comparative analysis and more data collection does not result in additional new information, "saturation" (Glaser/Strauss 1967: 61f; cf. Flick 2006: 127) has been reached and the collection phase can be terminated. Deciding when to stop collecting data "[...] requires, of course, that researchers are analysing their data as they are collecting it, otherwise it would be very difficult to identify when saturation had been achieved" (Ezzy 2002: 75).

4.2.2.2 Problem-Centered Interviews

The Problem-Centered Interview (PCI) described by Witzel (1985, 2000) is characterized by three basic criteria:

- problem centering,

- object orientation, and

- process orientation.

Problem Centering: To start with, problem centering means that the research topic is of relevance for a certain social group. Yet, this alone, does not distinguish the PCI very much from other interview forms (cf. Flick 2006: 164). What is more important in this regard, is that researchers applying the PCI aim at understanding and interpreting their research objects already as the data collection process unfolds (see Glaser/Strauss 1967). As a consequence of combining data collection and analysis and of persistently working the preliminary research findings into the next interview, researchers can go more precisely into the research problem/question/topic interview after interview. In other words, in the course of the research already, the picture of the research object becomes clearer and clearer. Also the formulations used to describe it gradually become more specific and to the point.

Object Orientation: Object orientation refers to researchers' attempt to adjust the project's research design to the particularities of the research object and its resulting demands. At this stage, it is important to mention that Witzel originally presented the PCI as a method combination consisting of the 'qualitative interview', the 'biographical method', the 'case analysis' and the 'group discussion'. These four elements can be combined depending on their usefulness to explore the research object. As a consequence of object orientation, also, for example, interview conversation techniques are flexibly applied. Depending on interviewees' degree of eloquence and reflexivity, researchers adapt their conversation style. Object orientation exemplifies the flexibility inherent to qualitative research projects particularly well.

Process Orientation: Process orientation refers to the overall research event – for instance, in terms of gradual case sampling – and specifically to the way interviewees unfold their viewpoints. As a result of the flexibly

handled communication process, a comfortable and trustful atmosphere can emerge between the interlocutors. This in turn promotes openness and self-reflection on behalf of interviewees through which they start to present their perspectives. In the course of the dialogue, they reconsider and reformulate them and hence “[...] new results are produced again and again by means of the cooperation between the interviewer and interviewee” (Witzel 2000). This shows that “[t]he researcher’s ability to develop trust and rapport, and to establish relationships with interviewees, is of utmost importance for gaining access, and for collecting and analysing data [...]” (Marschan-Piekkari/Reis 2004: 225).

Besides these three principles, Witzel conceptualized the PCI as consisting of four elements:

- preceding short questionnaire,

- interview guide,

- tape recording, and

- postscript.

Preceding Short Questionnaire: The questionnaire serves to extract those questions from the actual interview process which would otherwise engage the interlocutors in an exhaustive question-response ‘ping-pong’. In an attempt to prevent questions on demographic data, for example, from ‘stealing’ valuable interview time, easily given information is often inquired in the form of a short questionnaire. Although the freeing of interviews from these (in terms of problem centering) ‘second-rank’ information exchanges is the primary task of these questionnaires, they may fulfill an additional function. Handed out to participants in advance of the interview, the questions posed and answers given can stimulate the conversation between interviewer and interviewee and thus help kick off the actual interview.

Interview Guide: Interview guides or schedules consist of an outline of questions which serve as aide-mémoire for researchers during the interview process. Whereas their primary purpose is to guarantee the comparability of the different interviews conducted within the course of a research project, these guides also help researchers take their time to create a pleasant atmosphere. In that researchers formulate, for example, possible conversational entries and questions for exploration in advance of

the actual interviews, they can pay more attention to how and when to best pose them during conversations. This suggests that interview schedules must not be strictly followed but can be flexibly used depending on interview situations and partners. Also, since they are designed even before the first interview has taken place, they can be subject to change, if alterations seem necessary.

The development of the interview guide does not end at the start of the first interview. It may be modified through use: adding probes or even whole topics which had originally not been included, but have emerged spontaneously in interviews; dropping or re-formulating those which are incomprehensible to participants or consistently fail to elicit responses in any way relevant to the research question(s) (King 2004: 15).

Tape Recording: Taping interviews is another part and parcel of Witzel's PCI. Taping creates authentic and precise recordings of interview conversations which afterwards allow complete and accurate transcriptions. The resulting text, then, becomes the source for in-depth data analysis. Apart from this advantage, researchers even benefit from the recording device as they collect their data material. Since the tape 'memorizes' interviewees' statements and thus discharges researchers from noting everything that is said, they can fully concentrate on the communicative process itself, observing situation-related conditions as well as non-verbal cues.

I always try and use a tape-recorder, for some very pragmatic reasons: I want to interact with the interviewee, and I don't want to spend a lot of my time head-down and writing. Also, the tape provides me with a much more detailed record of our *verbal* interaction than any amount of note-taking or reflection could offer. I can replay the tapes, produce transcripts and then selectively draw on these to provide demonstrations of my argument (Rapley 2004: 18, emphasis as in the original).

Despite the obvious advantages of tape recording for researchers, it is to be considered that taping might prevent interviewees from entirely opening up or at least from expressing their thoughts and feelings as explicitly as they would in cases where they were not taped. For this reason, it makes sense that researchers keep devoting their attention to interviewees after the recorder has been switched off.

To be sure, interviewees offer 'on and off the record' talk: 'Well, I can say more about [organization X] after you turn the tape off as well.' It is interesting that *sometimes* different and contrasting talk is produced off-tape. Such off-tape talk is not somehow more 'authentic', it does different work, it emerges from and reflexively creates a different context. It can often construct interviewees as a different type of person, 'Well, *personally* I feel ...', that with prior talk 'I-was-speaking-as-a-spokesperson-for-the-company' or 'I-was-being-polite'. Importantly it documents that the prior talk was the product of a specific interactional context (and a specific identity) and that now the context (and identity) has shifted again (Rapley 2004: 19, emphasis as in the original).

Postscript: Although transcriptions provide researchers with an abundance of useful data, it is to acknowledge that

[...] transcription is a transformational process, taking live conversation and changing it into a textual representation of talk. Hence, transcripts are silent in several ways. They are, for instance, silent about body language, such as gestures, facial expressions [...] and positioning [...] (Poland/Pederson 1998: 302).

The by means of researchers' observation additionally collected information, therefore, play a significant role in the course of data gathering and analysis. Everything that strikes interviewers – conversational topics, taboos, non-verbal expressions, the foci of interviewees, issues that were skipped or remained unaddressed, and more – can be noted in the form of interview protocols, called postscripts. When finally analyzing data, researchers can go back to both their transcripts *and* their postscripts; and by doing so fall back on an amplified amount of data. Furthermore, postscripts also have a supportive function in sampling processes. They give a neat overview of the particularities of the already sampled cases and thus guide researchers to select more similar or contrasting cases in the future.

The above described four elements give researchers who apply the PCI direction in how to approach their data collection process. Yet, Witzel goes one step further in guiding users through the interview schedule construction and data gathering phase. He suggests pursuing certain communicative strategies which are either intended to generate storytelling, i.e. the engagement of the interviewee in a narrative process, or to generate understanding, i.e. the promotion of comprehension on behalf of both interlocutors through questioning:

■ introductory question,

■ general prompting,

■ specific prompting, and

■ ad hoc questions.

Before any of these communicative strategies can be applied, however, a trustful relationship between researchers and participants needs to be developed. Interview partners cannot be expected to answer any questions or even let themselves in for narration, before they have understood that

their experience and viewpoints are of interest and are thus given space to unfold during the interview process.

A key feature of the qualitative research interview method is the nature of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. In a quantitative study using structured interviews, the interviewee is seen as a research 'subject' in much the same way as if completing a questionnaire or taking part in an experiment. The researcher's concern is to obtain accurate information from the interviewee, untainted by relationship factors. The interviewer therefore tries to minimize the impact of inter-personal processes on the course of the interview. In contrast the qualitative researcher believes that there can be no such thing as a 'relationship-free' interview. Indeed the relationship is part of the research process, not a distraction from it. The interviewee is seen as a 'participant' in the research, actively shaping the course of the interview rather than passively responding to the interviewer's pre-set questions (King 2004: 11).

During the introductory phase, therefore, the researcher clarifies the cause and the reason for the meeting with the interviewee and briefly explains what the following problem/topic-centered conversation should look like to fulfill its purpose. Since the researcher's intent is to "[...] seek to show the range of ways that a phenomenon is experienced within the chosen context" (King 2004: 16f), i.e. to explore the perspectives of the participant and thus expects him or her to 'open up', the assurance that the collected data are treated confidentially plays an important part in this relationship-building phase (cf. Barbour 2008: 81). Once the interview process and questions or concerns on behalf of participants have been clarified, the introductory question can be posed.

Introductory Question: This entry question is the starting signal for the following exploratory process; it explicitly shapes the topic of interest but gives interviewees enough room to select specific foci and to come up with their own structure. Or in other words, the conversational entry merely denotes the topic of interest but does not give interviewees any clue of how to respond to it. It is like handing out "a blank page to be filled in by the interviewee" (Merton/Kendall 1956: 15) which then serves as a base for further probing (general and specific prompting). As a consequence, this question often engages participants in self-reflection. Its purpose is also to arrange the interview start as convenient as possible for the interviewee by not insisting on a response to a specific question.

It is normally best for the interviewer to open with a question which the interviewee can answer easily and without potential embarrassment or distress. More difficult or sensitive questions should be held back until some way into the interview, in order to give time for both interviewer and interviewee to relax and feel they are getting to know each other (King 2004: 17).

General Prompting: General prompting "serves to successively disclose the subject's view" (Witzel 2000) of the research object. Researchers take

up those topics that have already been mentioned by participants when reacting to the introductory question; by doing so, they invite them to further elaborate on contents they have already brought up and thus to create more 'material', more details (also cf. Flick 2006: 161).

Specific Prompting: In comparison to the other two introduced communicative strategies, special prompting aims at understanding interviewees' perspectives rather than at generating storytelling. By mirroring what they have said, by asking questions for comprehension, and by confronting them with contradictions and inconsistencies, research participants engage in one more process of self-reflection, re-emphasizing their views, and correcting the allegations of the researcher. "The combination of narratives and questions suggested by Witzel is aimed at focusing the interviewee's view of the problem around which the interview is centered" (Flick 2006: 164). In addition, however, the alternation of storytelling strategies and probing also serves to decrease the probability of misunderstandings.

Ad Hoc Questions: These spontaneous questions can be thrown in to cover topics which have not been tapped by interviewees but for reasons of comparability are of importance. Ad hoc questions, however, are also those standardized questions which trigger rather short and spontaneous answers and are suitable to wrap up interview processes.

In that Witzel introduces interview elements and even communicative strategies, his data collection approach may appear fairly restrictive at first sight. Yet, depending on how his questioning suggestions are woven into the different interview courses, researchers can accumulate a broad spectrum of data material (cf. Barbour 2008: 119f). The way of approaching interview partners, the quality of the introductory question as well as the proportion of narration and specific questions, for instance, give researchers lots of room for maneuver; i.e., to adapt interview styles to various target groups in order to receive specific kinds of data. How PCIs can be used to interview 'experts', in contrast to those who are more personally and emotionally 'involved' in the research topic, is dealt with below.

4.2.2.3 Special Case: PCIs with Experts

Many qualitative research projects involve or even consist of data produced by so-called 'experts'. Yet, understandings of what makes an expert differ considerably across researchers and studies (cf. Bogner/Menz 2005: 7).

From a most general perspective, everyone who has any connection to the research object – and thus an advance in knowledge – might be viewed an expert (cf. Gläser/Laudel 2004: 10). Meuser and Nagel (2005, 2006), on the contrary, suggest a more limiting definition; one that differentiates experts from those research participants who are more deeply because more personally, perhaps more emotionally involved in the research topic (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2005: 72f). The two authors emphasize that the particular information and experience which experts are capable of providing result from their privileged position within a specific, functional context (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2006: 57). In more detail, this means that their accumulated knowledge emerges,

- first, from the responsibility they have for designing, implementing, and controlling the research object; and,
- second, from their immediate access to decision-making processes concerning the research object as well as to people who are of interest to the researcher (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2005: 73).

In that light, the advantages of interviewing experts are twofold. On the one hand, experts can help researchers get ‘the big picture’ of the research object: They can present to researchers the developmental stages of the research object; they can report on its facets and demonstrate how these are linked or how they mutually influence each other; or they can contrast and compare its characteristics to related objects, to name but a few. Especially when the research ‘territory’ is yet uncharted, it makes sense to initially get involved with those research participants who help researchers obtain a general idea of the topic under study. On the other hand, experts can help researchers with their networking activities, i.e., to get in touch with other potential interview partners: Since experts are naturally very much into the research topic, they usually have a fairly comprehensive idea of who else is interested in or concerned by it, for personal, professional or other reasons. Consequently, experts can use their knowledge to make researchers aware of promising interview groups. In addition, however, when experts are in key positions within an institution, committee or company, they may even be able to literally link researchers with new participants. This might be particularly helpful in cases where researchers tap sensitive or tabooed subjects. The bond of trust existing between experts and these potential interviewees may eventually be the reason for why the latter agree to participate in the research project (cf. Bogner/Menz 2005: 7f).

Unlike other types of interviews and most obviously in sharp contrast to biographical interviews, expert interviews do not put the focus of exploration on the research participants themselves, but rather exclusively on the specific pieces of knowledge and experience which they have

accumulated in regard to the research object (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2005: 72f); or in other words, "[...] the interviewees are of less interest as a (whole) person than their capacities of being an expert for a certain field of activity" (Flick 2006: 165).

In the scientific literature, there is no consensus about how this special 'expert' material consisting of explicit as well as tacit knowledge can best be obtained. All in all, there exists hardly any theoretical, methodological foundation for expert interviews (cf. Bogner/Menz 2005: 20; also see Bogner/Littig/Menz 2005). In this respect, the essay of Meuser and Nagel (see 1991, 2003) is an exception; they suggest using semi-structured interviews characterized by open interview guides for data collection. Not only does the structure provided by these kinds of interviews contribute to the comparability of expert statements, but also helps ensure that the interview focus is maintained throughout the course of the interview.

The range of potentially relevant information provided by the interviewee is restricted much more than in other interviews. Therefore, the interview guide here has a much stronger directive function with regard to excluding unproductive topics (Flick 2006: 165).

As a consequence of following an interview schedule, the expectations of both interlocutors – that of researchers to lead a topic-centered conversation and that of experts to only present their insight resulting from their particular position – are met. Due to the flexible application of the interview schedule, however, the conversation does not turn out utterly restrictive despite its pursued focus. Yet apart from remaining focused, the use of an interview guide serves an additional purpose in the course of expert interviews: The formulation of the schedule in advance of the encounter makes researchers prepare themselves for the interview. This way, interviewers become (more) capable dialogue partners who are able to understand and react to the information given by experts (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2005: 77ff).

According to Meuser and Nagel, the interviews should also be recorded so that the gained data material can afterwards be roughly transcribed and used for thematic comparison, coding, and generalization, the analysis strategy suggested by the authors (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2005: 80ff).

4.2.3 Depicting the Data Analysis Methods

In qualitative research, the communicative, flexible, and process-oriented data collection process which creates a wealth of data is complemented by an equally complex because elastic and reflexive data analysis process. "Analysis is a very dynamic process. The analyst has to brainstorm, try out different ideas, eliminate some, and expand upon others before arriving at any conclusions" (Corbin 2008: 46). A frequently chosen approach to the analysis of qualitative data, also suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is coding; it is a way of dealing with collected empirical material that is also adopted by the two data analysis methods 'Global Analysis' (Legewie 1994) and 'Circular Deconstruction' (Jaeggi/Faas/Mruck 1998) which are introduced later in this chapter. "In short, coding is the process of defining what the data are all about" (Charmaz 1995: 37). Or in other words: "A researcher can think of coding as 'mining' the data, digging beneath the surface to discover the hidden treasures contained within data" (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 66). And in more detail:

Coding is the process of disassembling and reassembling the data. Data are disassembled when they are broken apart into lines, paragraphs or sections. These fragments are then rearranged, through coding, to produce a new understanding that explores similarities, and differences, across a number of different cases. The early part of the coding process should be confusing, with a mass of apparently unrelated material. However, as coding progresses and themes emerge, the analysis becomes more organised and structured. Careful coding allows the researcher to move beyond preexisting theory to 'hear' new interpretations and understandings present in the data (Ezzy 2002: 94).

Coding engages researchers in a constant reflexive, open-minded, and creative process which especially in the beginning of analysis activities results in a great amount of ideas. In order for researchers to avoid losing track of their evolving considerations, their preliminary findings, their unanswered questions, and the like, "[...] there is a need for documentation of and reflection on the ongoing research process" (Flick 2006: 287). Writing memos, an activity which is part and parcel of Glaser and Strauss' Grounded Theory (1967), has thus established itself as a means of fostering both the development and the storing of thoughts.

The aim of memoing is to provide a loosely structured forum within which to develop theoretical ideas. Memos exhaust 'momentary ideation', as Glaser (1987: 84) puts it. They are a vehicle by which the process of raising descriptive material to theoretical significance can be begun and pursued. Memos, in other words, are the site for categorizing, dimensionalizing, hypothesizing and integrating theoretical ideas. Thus, a rule in grounded theory work is that the analyst should always break off from the coding process to record a memo. Memos provide a 'free' context for theory emergence. That is, considerations of style, voice, elegance and analytic closure are subordinated to the production of the memo. In Glaser's words, 'The idea is the

thing.' Inscribing ideas about one's material as and when they occur avoids the loss of ideas through forgetting and provides a set of new materials which can be refined, elaborated, rewritten and commented upon; processes, of course, which can be continued through further coding (Fielding/Lee 1998: 32).

For decades, coding, memoing, and qualitative data analysis in general has been conducted by means of paper and pencil. With the rise of the computer age, however, software support has also found its way into the intricate world of qualitative research and particularly so into data analysis. Computer programs geared towards this very purpose have become known under the acronym CAQDAS which stands for Computer-Assisted (or Computer-Aided) Qualitative Data Analysis Software. Atlas/ti, NUD.IST, MaxQDA or NVivo are just a selection of the approximately twenty different programs available (cf. Kelle 2004: 473; also see Richards/Richards 1998). "The word 'assisted' in the term 'computer-assisted qualitative data analysis' (CAQDAS) clearly suggests that the computer package only assists and does not actually do the data analysis" (Ezzy 2002: 111). What it does, however, is facilitate data management and hence is predominantly indicated where voluminous records need to be handled (cf. Fielding/Lee 1998: 57-85). Yet moreover, computer software is especially suitable where coding procedures are applied. Since they require researchers to engage in a continual process of labeling, disassembling, arranging, and rearranging data, the already existing complexity of empirical material is even heightened. This is why "[a]lthough other forms of data analysis are compatible with using QDA software, their link to coding and categorizing is the closest" (Flick 2006: 354). In short, the advantages of qualitative data analysis programs are many-sided but are primarily obvious in terms of process overview and transparency as well as information retrieval:

They contribute to creativity in the sense that the researcher is able to try out different axial views of data, looking at relationships first 'this way' and then 'that way' without having to spend a lot of time retrieving and organizing data. The computer does the retrieval and layout work while the researcher does the mind work. Since with the use of a computer program the researcher can always retrace his or her analytic steps, the research process can be made transparent to self and others, leaving the audit trail at one's finger tips. Then too, the researcher doesn't have to guess at what he or she was thinking or wrote in memos months ago. These can be pulled out of the data bank in moments, making the analysis more consistent and the findings more reliable. [...] Most important from my standpoint is the value computer programs have when it comes to writing the research. It is so easy to access codes, to return to the raw data to use as examples or for quotes, to retrieve memos, do diagrams, correct mistakes, find gaps in logic, and most of all rewrite (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 315).

Below, two methods which follow the qualitative, grounded way of analyzing data outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) are introduced: 'Global Analysis' (Legewie 1994) and 'Circular Deconstruction'

(Jaeggi/Faas/Mruck 1998). Since their authors orientate themselves by Grounded Theory, these analysis methods also center on coding and memo writing. In contrast to the authors of Grounded Theory who advocate a most meticulous, line-by-line approach to data analysis, however, Legewie, Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck suggest a more practical, research economic way of handling empirical material. In regard to the scope of the research project and especially to the quality of the research intent, therefore, Global Analysis and Circular Deconstruction are a better fit to this research project than the plain application of Grounded Theory. Also, by describing in detail the various steps constituting data analysis, the latter four authors provide a greater degree of guidance to researchers. For these reasons, data analysis in the presented research project is carried out by means of Global Analysis and Circular Deconstruction. Both procedures have in particular been developed for the analysis of qualitative interview data and are suitable for the application of CAQDAS. Yet, what distinguishes the two is the degree of analysis pursued. Whereas Global Analysis can be regarded as a preparatory, rough way of understanding and organizing empirical data, Circular Deconstruction enables researchers to look at and compare the data at hand in detail.

4.2.3.1 Global Analysis

Following Legewie (1994), Global Analysis is a means of evaluating and roughly analyzing text in the course of qualitative social research. Although it was initially developed to interpret interview data, the procedure can be employed on any written document like publications, protocols, group discussions or speeches. In a nutshell, Global Analysis is “[a] pragmatically oriented supplement to other analytic procedures [...]” (Flick 1998a: 196); it serves the purpose of obtaining an overview of a large amount of texts in terms of adequacy as well as thematic range. On the one hand, therefore, Global Analysis is a tool for reflecting and reconstructing the intents and credibility of the document producers; whereas, on the other, it is a way of exploring the variety of topics comprised in the texts at hand. This way, Global Analysis helps researchers to select those adequate and useful pieces of text material which then become subject to subsequent in-depth analysis.

Global Analysis consists of various stages which are here – for reasons of transparency – divided into three main phases: a preparatory phase, a document analysis phase, and a processing phase. Whereas the

preparatory phase considers all pieces of raw data at once, the two latter phases deal with one document at a time; the phases are repeated for every additional bit of material. Any particularity, realization or ideas found by the research during any of the three phases is jotted down on index cards in the form of memos.

Preparatory Phase: In this initial phase, all documents to undergo Global Analysis are compiled together with all the material that is needed for Global Analysis itself: interview transcripts, paper and pencil, and possibly computer software suitable for coding (e.g., Atlas/ti or MaxQDA).

Yet before transcript after transcript is taken into account, researchers are advised to first reflect on how and under which circumstances the collected data emerged at all (→ memos): Who were my interview partners? Why did I ask them for an interview? How did they react when they were invited to participate in the study? What have I been looking for when approaching my interview partners? How did the interviews progress? Was there anything special before, during or after the interviews? Which question(s) did I add to my interview guide(s) as a result of an interview? Besides this retrospection, however, researchers following Global Analysis also have to consider at this stage what they need to take special care of when later analyzing the transcripts (→ memos): What is/are the objective/s of my study? What is/are my research question(s)? What kind of information serves my aims?

Due to these preliminary considerations, it is necessary that researchers, besides the above mentioned interview transcripts and analysis utensils, additionally gather their formulated research questions, notes on sampling proceedings, the interview guide(s), and perhaps even the original interview recordings. Going through this material is a helpful means of recalling how and why the research process has developed so far and also a way of realizing its direction.

Document Analysis Phase: Also the document analysis phase starts with a preparatory stage. Since only a single transcript (or document of any kind) is taken into account at one time, however, it is much more focused and in-depth. First of all, the transcript is formatted in a way that brings about a broad margin at the right hand of the page which later serves as space for notes. Then, all lines are numbered before the text is read and unimportant passages are eliminated. Long transcripts are split up into content-related parts of ten to twenty pages and are separately analyzed. Then, the development of the text is reflected upon (→ memos); content- or context-specific memories, particularities of the interviewer-interviewee relationship, and more matters. At this stage, it might be useful to also consider pre- and postscripts, interview-specific diary entries, field notes or sampling information. Based on the underlying research questions and

intent, researchers finally come up with key words which they want to pay special attention to while working with the transcript (→ memos).

In a next step, the text itself takes center stage. On the one hand, the transcript is studied on a communication-related level, i.e., in regard to the way things are put, in regard to the roles and motives of the interlocutors, in regard to textual gaps and interactional breaks, in regard to between-the-lines information, and in regard to the text's completeness and comprehensibility, to name but a few (→ memos). On the other hand, it is examined on a thematic level, i.e., in regard to research significant topics and key words. Relevant passages are marked and labeled with approximately three to five 'codes' per page. These codes can either be one of the key words extracted in the preparatory phase, a new term created by the researcher or a so-called 'in vivo' code, a term or short phrase formulated by the interviewee. In any case, a code should well describe the content of the passage which it refers to. Similar or relating codes can, if appropriate, be subsumed under a superordinate concept.

For every new code, then, an index card is set up including a description of the code. This is especially important when working in teams where the different members work with codes that have been created by their associates.

Once the whole document has been coded, the index cards with code descriptions are alphabetically ordered. On the back of every index code card, then, the line numbers of all according text passages are listed. This ensures that for every code the underlying text can easily be retrieved.

Processing Phase: Once a document has gone through content and communication analysis, it is summarized on less than a page. At first, a motto or headline is chosen which best represents the gist of the text. Subsequently, the most important topics are recapitulated.

What follows is an assessment of the document based on the preceding two Global Analysis phases. Information on the emergence of the data material (results from the preparatory phase) is summed up at this stage as is the information of the document's particularities (results from the document analysis phase). Consequently, the transcript is rated in terms of its relevance for the overall research project. As a result, decisions on the further use of the document – an in-depth analysis, for instance – can be made.

In a next step, the most important two to five codes are selected from the alphabetical code list. Its content-related importance for certain aspects of the research project can thus be underlined. Essential aspects which have not yet been coded can, at this stage, be labeled.

It is left up to the researcher whether he or she lists resulting consequences for the research project as it depends on the nature of the research project whether the answering of the following questions makes sense: Which questions have been left unanswered? Which texts might be able to close the gaps? Which additional data need to be collected? Making use of this final option is advantageous, for instance, when Global Analysis is applied in the course of a qualitative research project which follows a grounded approach; then, namely, the results of Global Analysis are integrated into sampling decisions (cf. Glaser/Strauss 1967: 45ff).

Eventually, all memos are attached for completion.

4.2.3.2 Circular Deconstruction

Circular Deconstruction is a qualitative research method for the interpretative analysis of communicatively gathered data drafted by Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck (1998). Following the authors, 'communicatively gathered data' are such which, for instance, result from group discussions, in-depth interviews or – like is the case here – PCIs. In any case, in order to be suitable for the procedure of Circular Deconstruction, the data need to be the product of well planned stimuli for narration which grant the interviewee room for unfolding and, simultaneously, provide the interviewer with possibilities for exploration. Besides these initial stimuli, it is suggested that also ad hoc questions are part of the data collection process; these are regarded as a means of spontaneously extracting the gist of what research participants are saying during the interviews (see Witzel 2000). Additionally – and this also reminds of the suggestions made by Witzel in terms of the PCI – a precondition for Circular Deconstruction is that interviews are recorded and then transcribed. In the context of this very analysis procedure, however, transcription serves more than preparing data for analysis; it is regarded as one of the researcher's first intense interactions with the collected data and, thus, has the potential of kicking off a creative, iterative, comparative, and productive data analysis process. The transcribed text, finally, is also the source material used for the procedure of 'deconstructing', i.e. of circularly and recursively splitting up the text into smaller portions which are then reassembled in such a way that the implicit meaning of the text becomes transparent. Potential novel understandings of the research object eventually result from the multiple changes of perspective a researcher goes through during the process of Circular Deconstruction. Apart from the transcription, Jaeggi, Faas, and

Mruck (cf. 1998: 5f) emphasize that interview pre- and postscripts as well as ideas that are noted during the phases of transcription may also function as data based on which ideas or hypotheses can be developed or dismissed.

As this short introduction already shows, the data analysis methods Global Analysis (1994) and Circular Deconstruction resemble each other in quite a few aspects. What sets the latter apart from the first, however, is that Circular Deconstruction goes beyond the separate analysis of single documents. After a detailed analysis of individual texts, it additionally engages in a comparative process of the various pre-analyzed transcripts. A more detailed look at the procedure of Circular Deconstruction reveals that it consists of two extensive activity phases. In the first analysis phase (I), researchers' attention is successively devoted to every single transcribed interview and its corresponding notes; similar to the procedures of Global Analysis. Contrastingly, in the second phase (II), all collected data that has been run through the first phase is systematically compared with each other and condensed.

Analysis Phase I: This phase itself already consists of six steps and starts with (I.1) the formulation of a motto that captures the very essence of an interview. Hence, every interview receives its own 'identification-label' which helps the researcher distinguish the abundance of data as he or she moves along in the analysis process.

What follows is (I.2) an interview summary of approximately two pages which contains its most important explicit and implicit aspects. Which aspects are pre-selected for further intense analysis, depends on the eye of the beholder, i.e. the emphases of the researcher (team). Therefore, to make sure that valuable facets of the given data material are not carelessly neglected, reflective thinking and the making transparent of research foci must necessarily accompany this analysis step.

After that, (I.3) all striking and noticeable terms that occur in the transcription are listed in chronological order. This helps researchers develop a clearer, more structured understanding of the text. Simultaneously, it encourages spontaneous attempts of interpreting the data, an unconstrained involvement with the material which may turn out helpful as the analysis process unfolds.

The constructed key word list, then, functions as base for (I.4) the extraction of the text's subject areas. Key words with similar meanings are subsumed under a penetrative generic term based on which, eventually, a topic catalogue is created. Like Legewie, also the authors of Circular Deconstruction encourage researchers to include interview pre- and postscripts as well as any other kind of notes in this pre-categorization process; i.e., to consider the particularities which characterize the

interviews including the interaction between the interlocutors. In this respect, Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck point out that the researchers need to be aware of the likelihood that their 'sensitizing concepts' – their experience, opinions, preconceptions, and more – influence their definition of the generic terms.

With reference to these pre-categorizations then, (I.5) the data material is paraphrased. This paraphrase is different from the preceding summary (see step I.2), in that it introduces the various subject areas, demonstrates their connectedness, and even integrates them into meta-subjects, if adequate.

Finally, in the last step of the interview-specific analysis phase, (I.6) the central categories of an interview are extracted. These core categories can subsequently be compared with other interview-specific categories; a process which, eventually, leads to the development of theory on the research question.

Analysis Phase II: The second data analysis phase can be initiated as soon as at least two interviews have run through the first analysis phase (I). Then, (II.1) the synopsis of the hitherto interview-specific central categories is initiated: A table is used to get an overview of the category distribution across all interviews involved. Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck note here that frequently occurring categories are likely to be of particular importance to the research but that the qualitative researcher may also attach value to the less frequent, idiosyncratic categories. If the data gathering and data analysis process alternate, a question which is developed out of an idiosyncratic category can supplementary be included in the interview schedule.

Table 15: Circular Deconstruction – The Synopsis of Central Categories

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	...
Interview 1	✓			✓	✓		
Interview 2		✓		✓	✓	✓	
...							

In a next step, (II.2) those central categories which several of the interviews have in common are again condensed to build a meta-category, a so-called 'construct' or 'gestalt'.

The final analysis step, (II.3) the 'comparative paraphrase', follows: It is a circular and recursive process, in which the decision for the development of a construct – to speak with Glaser and Strauss – is grounded in the data; this way it is ensured that the established connection between various central categories is not only based on intuition. The original data material which has first been subsumed under key words, then subject areas, central categories and eventually under the construct is checked against each other; a gestalt's possibly different facets and nuances are thus elaborated which leads to its differentiation: variations, contrasts, demarcations, and overlaps can hence become apparent. Due to the wealth of data, Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck suggest that no more than four interviews are taken into account for the process of comparative paraphrasing. In accordance with the tradition of "theoretical sampling" (Glaser/Strauss 1967: 45), they propose that researchers use their insights gained during the data analysis process of a small number of interviews to include them in and let them influence their further data gathering process. Once additional data have been collected and analyzed against its core categories, these are explored in terms of their fit to the already existing construct; the construct is grounded in even more data and new constructs may be developed. This way, the analysis of data results in one or more interconnected gestalts, a meta construct, which eventually sheds new light on the research object.

4.3 Describing the Research Process

Having introduced this thesis' research intent, its guiding questions, and a variety of methodological considerations concerning the overall research approach as well as data collection and analysis methods, the following chapter now is devoted to reporting on how the research process was eventually organized and how it gradually unfolded. Apart from demonstrating mere action, however, it also illustrates how theoretical considerations have steered the actual research practice of the presented project and how practical progress has in turn influenced the application of theory. It is the turn-taking of stepping into and out of 'doing' research that characterizes the way of proceeding.

4.3.1 Getting Prepared

Before qualitative interviews can be conducted, a great amount of preparatory work is necessary. Preliminary methodological and sampling considerations are followed by detailed thoughts and tasks regarding interview partner approach, interview guide and questionnaire construction, interview location search, electronic devices for recording and transcription, computer software, and more. Below, two issues which give the reader an insight into the prime precursory steps that have been taken for the presented research are outlined: approaching interview partners and constructing interview guides.

4.3.1.1 Approaching Interview Partners

Since the presented thesis has a fairly specific research focus aiming at investigating three roughly predefined interview groups – HR professionals, coaches, and expatriates – its sampling strategy did not follow the highly open proceeding in the sense of Glaser and Strauss (1967). It was still gradual, however, in that the sequence in which the researcher approached members of the various groups was strongly directed by the emerging findings. Besides that, the sample strategy in this project was also gradual in the way that variations within the sample groups – for instance,

regarding age, gender, and background – remained open. The objective of this research project, to explore the practice and potential of expatriate coaching in as many facets as possible, could thus be well pursued by means of gradual sampling.

Approaching HR Professionals: After the review of expatriate and coaching literature had led me to consider a total of three interview partner groups in my research, I started off getting in touch with HR professionals as I assumed them to be experts on the practice and potential of expatriate coaching. How come? In contrast to coaches and expatriates who personally provide and receive the support measure, respectively, I expected HR professionals to be less ‘emotionally’ involved and thus to have a more ‘distanced’ relationship to coaching. When it comes to the measure, and to expatriation support in general, HR representatives have a more organizational function rather than a participating role; they have (if at all) a responsibility for the availability, quality, and utilization of coaching but are not caught up in the sessions itself. Following Meuser and Nagel’s (1991) definition of experts, I expected HR professionals to be able to provide me with a helicopter view of how expatriate coaching is practiced and in which regards it is viewed as measure with potential in their companies. In more detail, I imagined them to help me understand how the preparation and support of expatriates was arranged in their company; and to share with me the degree and pieces of experience they had made with expatriate coaching, also in comparison with other available support measures. Additionally however, as a result of their probable role as intermediate between coaches and expatriates, I also expected HR professionals to be able to link me with the coaches who worked with their relocated staff and hopefully even with those managers who had themselves been coached at some point during their expatriation. Whereas I knew, namely, that I could anyway get in touch with expatriate coaches via information on the World Wide Web or by contacting the authors of coaching^{culture} literature, I feared that it could be outstandingly difficult to get hold of interview-ready managers with expatriation-related coaching experience.

In order to find these prospective expert interview partners, I looked for online and newspaper job advertisements that had been posted by relocation/delegation units of MNCs or more generally by their human resources departments (HRD) with international responsibility. MNCs headquartered in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Great Britain presented itself as suitable research opportunity. I directly called the declared contact persons and explained to them what kind of interview partners I was looking for. Additionally, I offered to provide them with a digital exposé of my research project which they could mail forward to whom they thought were potential interviewees. In many cases namely,

the initially addressed people had to put me onto their superiors or colleagues with whom I would eventually conduct the interview. In the few cases where my request reached the 'local' HR office, I was referred several times across and within departments before, finally, an interview partner acquainted with expatriation was found. Except for one interview which resulted from a personal contact, all interview partners were canvassed this way. After four interviews had been conducted with HR professionals, the first interviews with coaches started; to some extent, therefore, the expert interviews took place in parallel with coach interviews.

Approaching Coaches: Compared to getting in touch with HR professionals, I was able to contact coaches much more directly. I used contact information on scholarly papers and newspaper articles as much as I relied on hits provided by internet search engines. Depending on whether e-mail addresses or telephone numbers were supplied, I presented my matter straight to the potential interview partners either by e-mail or by phone. This strategy proved fruitful for the search of coach interviewees; it was first, for reasons of accessibility, restricted to coaches located in the German-speaking triangle and then expanded to coaches to be found in China. Since I wanted to talk to expatriates while they were living and working in the foreign country – in order to learn about their experience as they were experiencing it – I planned a five-month stay in China. In the course of this stay, I also interviewed coaches who worked with expatriates abroad to get their perspectives on the research questions.

Approaching Expatriates: When I started approaching my first two interview partner groups, I was fairly optimistic that the one or the other HR professional or coach could connect me with further interview partners, especially with expatriates. To me, this seemed the most plausible way of getting in touch with managers who at that time were or had been on a long-term assignment in China *and* received coaching. For several reasons, however, I was not referred to any potential expatriate interviewees: partly for reasons of confidentiality; partly because expatriates were considered a currently heavily investigated target group and thus 'already overtaxed' in terms of research; and partly because the contact to expatriates was reported as not or no longer being as close as considered necessary by HR and coaches in order to link expatriate and researcher. Therefore, I postponed my expatriate interview partner search to my personal visit to China where I hoped to find alternative ways of approaching these people. Prior to my departure and during my overseas stay, hence, I turned to my professional and private contacts in order to explore their business relationships and private acquaintances with expatriates in China and specifically in Shanghai; the city where I had planned to spend five months for my research and an internship in a MNC, respectively. Although only few of the addressed people knew a person with the profile I was looking

for, the small number of contacts I was given played a decisive role in the eventual recruitment of expatriate interview partners. To some extent, these initially contacted people themselves turned into research participants; to a greater degree, however, they mobilized their own contacts to support my search. Due to my stay in Shanghai, I myself became part of the expatriate community which is how I got in touch with additional coach and expatriate interview partners in the People's Republic. All in all, 69 people had eventually become involved in the overseas interview partner search which resulted in a total of 18 interviews with coaches, coached expatriates, and non-coached expatriates. Two of these interviews had to be conducted on the phone after I had returned to Austria, because the research participants were busy travelling during the preceding months. Although the other interviews could all take place face-to-face while I was in China, it was sometimes quite a challenge to realize an appointment due to manager's jam-packed schedules. This is a well-known difficulty characterizing research in the field of international business.

Another practical problem to be found in firms with international operations is that potential informants often spend a large amount of time travelling across borders. The researcher may even arrive in the foreign location just to find out at the outset of the interview that the interviewee has other demands on his/her schedule. The international nature of their activities is the very reason that makes them difficult to access for an interview (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2004: 258).

Besides the initial difficulty of finding China-located interview partners and the challenge to really meet up with them, I was confronted with another problem: the multiple definitions of the terms 'expatriate' and 'coaching'. In different MNCs, for instance, 'expatriate' is used to refer to several types of international staff regardless of whether they are on short time, frequent flying assignments, or else. Some organizations even use different names altogether; they are not listed here, however, for reasons of confidentiality. Yet, also in expatriate communities, the meaning of 'expatriate' is not straightforward: every foreigner – no matter whether abroad for a short or a long period, for a job or as a trailing partner – is regarded an 'expat'. Since I had a narrower understanding of expatriates (see 2.1.2 Highlighting Expatriations), it was necessary, therefore, to explicitly and repeatedly explain to people who exactly I was looking for. The same was true for the term coaching. All kinds of conversations – conversations between expatriates and superiors, expatriates and mentors, expatriates and expatriate colleagues, expatriates and intercultural trainers, expatriates and internal/external coaches, and even between friends and family members – were understood as coaching. This is why in interview requests via e-mail, on the phone, in personal communication, and not least during interviews, research participants and I as researcher had to illustrate what

exactly we were thinking of and talking about when using the expression coaching.

4.3.1.2 Constructing Interview Guides

Corresponding to the three interview groups, I drafted a triplet of interview guides; each with an emphasis on the practice and potential of expatriate coaching but tailored to the specificities of either HR professionals, coaches, or expatriates. These three interview guides are attached at the end of this thesis (see Appendices). Content-wise, I was inspired by the preceding literature reviews on culture, intercultural communication, international assignments, and coaching. Moreover, my personal overseas experience resulting from vacation-, study- and internship-driven stays in various European countries, China, South Africa, and the United States of America influenced the design of the guides; and so did “[...] informal preliminary work such as discussions with people who have personal experience of the research area” (King 2004: 15). Structure- and communication-wise, I followed the suggestions made by Witzel (1985, 2000) and in terms of expert interviews also those by Meuser and Nagel (1991).

Among the interviewed coaches and expatriates there were also nine non-German-speaking participants. This is why the interview guides of these groups were additionally translated into English. In this respect, special care was taken of “[...] the wording of interview questions in a linguistically correct and culturally sensitive way” (Marschan-Piekkari/Reis 2004: 232).

Expert Interview Guide: The most obvious difference between the expert interview guide and that of the other two groups was probably the initial question. In the case of HR professionals, there was no ‘introductory question’ in the sense of Witzel (2000) which characterized the kickoffs of coach and expatriate interviews. In contrast, the expert guide started off with rather blunt questions exploring the interview partners’ understanding of ‘expatriations’. In more detail, the questions investigated typical expatriate tasks and expatriate assignment duration but also looked at the terminology used to describe (1) long-term assignees sent abroad by the company’s headquarters (in this thesis called expatriates), (2) returned assignees (repatriates), and (3) assignees sent to the headquarters by foreign subsidiaries (inpatriates). The latter issue, the clarification of terminology, was immediately added as an interview question after confusion in the first interview had proven its necessity. As already stated, a variety of different names unmentioned in the literature are used

company-internally to refer to international staff. Hence, in a nutshell, the first questions helped ensure that interviewee and researcher were talking about the same issue.

The subsequent set of questions explored the particularities of the company-specific expatriate assignment life cycle. While focusing on usually occurring challenges and offered support measures, topics like the following were covered: expatriate selection practice; time span between selection and departure; expatriate challenges and support in the pre-assignment, assignment, and post-assignment/repatriation stages; support initiatives available for trailing partners and children; costs for support measures; reasons and costs of premature return; and exchange between prospective expatriates, inpatriates, and repatriates. Then, questions on the role of expatriate coaching followed: experts' attitude towards coaching as support measure, its practice as well as interviewees' experience with coaches and coached expatriates was touched upon. Before HR professionals were given the opportunity to add whatever they had in mind, they were asked to provide their opinion on whether any (and if yes, which) support measures should additionally or instead be offered to expatriates (and their families).

Coach Interview Guide: The schedule for coaches opened with a question that explored how the interviewees became coaches. The intent was to start off the conversation with a topic that quickly involved research participants in a reflective and explorative process which was to characterize the overall interview. Furthermore, the initial question helped the researcher get to know coaches' profiles and possibly even receive some background information on how these coaches got to coach expatriates. Since, like in the case of experts, it quickly turned out that coaches were using different terminology for the kind of service they were providing, some clarifying questions on terminology were added.

Then, a fairly open question was used to focus the interview on the particularities of expatriate coaching. In case interviewees would not automatically cover specific issues, prompts were prepared and included in the schedule to have coaches report on how they usually get to coach expatriates, on the steps and duration of the coaching process, on the frequency, the setting, and location of the coaching sessions, on covered topics as well as on the (dis-)advantages of external and internal expatriate coaches. Moreover, the difference between coaching and other support measures, especially intercultural training, was a topic in the interview guide as was the one on expatriate coach competencies and training. After exploring the specificities of expatriate coaching in comparison with 'local' coaching and other typical expatriate support measures, coaches were requested to inform the researcher on the feedback they had so far

received from their expatriate clientele and MNCs, respectively; and then to present their opinion on whether and how expatriations could be optimized altogether. Finally, coaches were encouraged to speak about whatever that had not then been covered.

Expatriate Interview Guide: By the time I set up the expatriate interview guide, I had come to understand expatriations as highly personal and private affairs; and even so was my idea of coaching. I expected that when talking with expatriates, I might tap some delicate areas. Therefore, I took Barbour's advice particularly serious: "In terms of drafting an interview schedule it is generally best to start with the least threatening questions and move gradually through to those that probe a little more" (Barbour 2008: 115). I chose a question that could be answered on various levels – from very dry to highly personal, in a sentence or in great detail: 'To start with, I wonder what brought you into your current position; would you mind talking me through how you became an expatriate?'

Subsequent questions referred to the different phases of becoming and being an expatriate: The challenges and benefits of preparing for, going on, being on, and returning from an expatriate assignment were explored whereby the ways expatriates (together with their partners or families) dealt with challenges were emphasized. The use and the lack of received support measures were highlighted as well. Next, the attention was drawn to interviewees' expectations towards expatriate coaching and their experience with the support measure. Then, the guide closed with several ad hoc questions on what interviewees thought was the best, the worst, and the biggest surprise about their expatriation. After the third interview, two additional questions were included which investigated what makes a successful expatriate and whether the pressure experienced by expatriates is different to that of 'local' managers. As was the case with the other two interview groups also expatriates were eventually given room to add whatever comment they felt was important.

4.3.2 Collecting Data

Qualitative data collection methods provide researchers with a fairly clear picture of how to proceed in terms of material gathering. Nevertheless, since in interviews two human beings meet under specific circumstances, for particular reasons, and with individual motives, every interview is unique; and so is its outcome. In order to share with the reader an idea of the situations under which data material was produced and collected in the

course of this research project, the following chapters present facts and figures on information gathering as well as input on interviewer-interviewee relationships.

4.3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Since the research questions of the presented research project aim at exploring individuals' knowledge and experience on expatriate coaching's practice and potential, a generally open and flexible interview design seemed suitable. In that such an approach gives research participants enough room to emphasize what they think is important, namely, the research object is characterized from various angles – and this is what this project eventually aspires to do. Yet, despite the explorative character of the research intent, its guiding questions refer to a relatively clear thematic focus: coaching for expatriates. Hence, in order to make sure that researcher and interviewees do not drift away too far from the subject matter, an interview guide which helps the researcher navigate the interview partners within the predefined thematic waters appeared to be necessary. As it meets the twofold demand of the research objective, therefore, a semi-structured interview approach as described by Witzel (1985, 2000) was chosen to collect empirical data in the course of this project. All data – with one exception¹¹ – was gathered by means of PCIs lasting between forty-five and ninety minutes.

Semi-Structured Expert Interviews: Since Meuser and Nagel's description of their semi-structured interview approach (cf. 2005: 77ff) resembles very much the data collection procedures outlined by Witzel, I decided to also collect expert data material by means of PCIs. Given that PCIs take the preparation for interviews, their recording and transcription, and not least the adjustment of communicative strategies to the nature of interview partners for granted, this method seemed highly appropriate. In contrast to interviews with coaches and expatriates which I also recorded, transcribed, and adjusted to the communicative styles of each research participants, I adapted my communicative strategies not only to the

11 One telephone conversation with an expert was a bit shorter than the majority of interviews and was not recorded. A minutes from memory was produced after the dialogue had ended. However, in order to compensate for the reduced interview duration, an extensive e-mail message containing answers to interview questions was additionally provided. The contents were attached to the minutes from memory and the so recorded data were later processed similar to the transcribed interviews.

individual expert, but also more rigorously to the whole group of HR professionals. Whereas the other two interview groups were given much more freedom in regard to steering the conversation, I took a more directive role when interviewing experts. The questions of the interview guide were aimed at triggering multiple brief responses to give me a profound insight into the handling of expatriates in today's MNCs. General probing was more insistently pursued. Some questions referred to argumentation lines of scientific papers on expatriate challenges and support measures based on which the connection between theory and practice could be established. This resulted in the welcome side effect that experts acknowledged the researcher as informed and capable dialogue partner with whom they even engaged in conversation on meta-level.

Outset of PCIs: In accordance with Witzel's suggestion for the conduction of semi-structured interviews, all interview guides were constructed with special attention to the outset of conversations. The interviews thus started off with an introductory phase which primarily enabled interlocutors to make a connection. Additionally, it gave both the researcher and the interviewee the opportunity to clarify their needs and expectations in terms of interview duration, recording, and confidentiality. A frequently asked question which was addressed to me during these warm-up phases concerned the degree of pro-activity expected from interviewees. This way, several interlocutors even invited me to explain to them the flexible but intended use of the prepared interview guide and gave me an opportunity to stress that they should feel free to utter what they thought mattered. As a result, the introductory phase often blended into the core interview phase. When that happened, I gave the interviewees room to elaborate on their thoughts; I would weave in the introductory question at a later, proper point in time. Otherwise, once the initial phase had reached its natural end, I would kick off the central interview phase by the set opening question.

Handling of Interview Guides: In more or less all three groups, the early interviews led me to make slight alterations on the schedules, reformulating or adding the one or other question. In general, however, the guide matched fairly well with the topics touched upon by the conversation partners. Therefore, in basically all interviews, I was able to let the research participants talk freely and choose their own sequence of topic units. While they filled the different units with meaning, I checked whether they had referred to all the subtopics that my schedule covered. In case of missing information, I put forward a more explicit question when appropriate. Towards the end of the interviews, I reconsidered my schedule in order to make sure all topics and subtopics had been dealt with. Although I could have conducted the later interviews without the guide, for I had already internalized all its bits and pieces, I used them throughout

the entire data gathering process. My experience is that these guides do not only serve to control comparability across single interviews but that they take pressure off the interviewer. Instead of constantly having to worry whether all vital aspects have meanwhile been brought up, researchers can fully devote themselves to what is naturally (and what is not) revealed and, more importantly, to how things are said. These are essential information, 'extra' data, which can be included in interview protocols, so-called postscripts.

Collection of 'Extra' Data: For reasons of transparency in documentation, I distinguished between (field) notes, pre- and postscripts, and memos. In my understanding, **(field) notes** consist of noteworthy observations or conversations which spontaneously occurred detached from the actual data gathering process – interviewing – and which were recorded in the form of a research diary. Hence, these (field) notes include entries that were made during the literature review phase, during sampling consideration processes, during the research preparation and data processing phase including my stay in China as well as during thesis writing. In contrast, **pre- and postscripts** are notes which resulted from my very contact with interviewees as researcher. Prescripts thus contain accounts on noteworthy remarks that were made in the run-up to interviews. Interpersonal aspects were most frequently recorded together with interesting topics which prospective interview partners already mentioned during preparatory conversations. The postscripts that followed phone conversations tend to be rich in content and also include many hints on the researcher-participant relationship. In contrast, the interview protocols resulting from face-to-face interviews, contained more input on emotions, situation-related information, and descriptions of the location in which the interview took place (and hence often also of participants' work places). To put it simple, all 'highlights' from the conversations that I thought should be reconsidered for further sampling decisions or in the analysis phase, were put into writing in the form of pre- and postscripts and jointly documented with interview transcripts and completed short questionnaires. Noting these particularities did not only get me engaged in initial and repeated reflection circles but, by providing mini summaries of the already collected data, also enabled me to always go back to the material for an overview. What I call **memos**, finally, are thoughts and considerations which emerged during the recurring process of data analysis; they were put into writing either directly on the transcript or by means of computer software intended for data analysis. Due to the different circumstances in which the various remarks – (field) notes, pre- and postscripts, or memos – were produced, they naturally vary in depth and length as a result. In this respect, I found myself in what Corbin stated in terms of annotations:

Field notes are data that may contain some conceptualization and analytic remarks. Memos, on the other hand, are lengthier and more in-depth thoughts about an event, usually written in conceptual form after leaving the field. And as such, they are much more complex and analytical than any remarks that I [Corbin] might make on my field notes (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 123f, comment by AMH).

Use of Short-Questionnaires: Besides making notes in the form of postscripts, Witzel also suggests the use of short questionnaires in addition to interviews. Hence, with the intent to gain data based on which interview partners can be introduced and at least to a certain degree be compared, I designed three slightly different questionnaires, one for each interview group. Mainly, the questions referred to educational, occupational, and foreign country experience. Since most of the introductory conversations with the interview partners naturally paved the way for the first interview question, the majority of questionnaires were handed out only *after* the interviews. Based on my experience, I agree with Flick that “[c]ontrary to Witzel’s suggestion to use this questionnaire before the interview, I think it makes more sense to use it at the end in order to prevent its structure of questions and answers from imposing itself on the dialogue in the interview” (Flick 2006: 163). Throwing in the questionnaire between introduction and interview start would very likely have destroyed the natural flow and with it the emerging unconstrained atmosphere. Due to time constraints of many interviewees, I even offered them a digital questionnaire version which they could fill in when suitable and return to me via e-mail; many preferred the latter option.

Recording of Interviews: Whereas material resulting from questionnaires and from note-taking play a supportive role in qualitative research projects, original data are crucial for the provision of accurate and subtle research results. After I had received research participants’ approval to record our conversation, therefore, I switched on the voice recorder. For phone interviews, a phone-integrated recording device creating .wav files was used. During face-to-face interviews, I placed a tiny digital voice recorder on the table between or next to the interviewee and myself which saved the data in .wma format. Both devices noiselessly recorded the conversations and this way did not disturb the information exchange except for one time when the battery had to be changed. Whereas some interviews literally ended with my pressing the recording button, others continued providing more in-depth accounts on already touched upon subjects or new topics altogether; these non-recorded bits and pieces of information were treated as immediate ‘food’ for postscripts.

Considering all interviews that took place in the course of the research project, the following distribution of characteristics can be reported (see Table 16: Distribution of Interview Characteristics).

Talking figures, eight out of thirty-one interviews were conducted by phone. Seven of these telephone conversations were recorded; due to the interviewee's preference, one took place spontaneously and was thus not recorded. The other twenty-three interviews took place in nine different locations within Europe and China and, more specifically, in research participants' office buildings or consulting rooms, in hotel lobbies or cafés. All except one of these face-to-face interviews – in a single case an interview partner did not want to be recorded – were taped with a portable digital voice recorder. Overall, twenty-two conversations were held in German; the other nine interviews were conducted in English. For three of those interview partners, English is the native language whereas for the other six English is their second language.

Table 16: Distribution of Interview Characteristics

	Total # per Group	Interview Type		Language		Tape- Recorded
		Telephone	Face-to- Face	English	German	
Interviews with Experts	6	5	1	0	6	5
Interviews with Coaches	11	1	10	4	7	11
Interviews with Expatriates	14	2	12	5	9	13
Total #	31	8	23	9	22	29

Regardless of whether the interview data resulted from confidential phone or face-to-face conversations, they were complemented with a postscript as well as the short-questionnaire results, and transcribed in the original language. When indicated, also prescripts were written in the run-up to interviews; findings or questions that emerged detached from the actual interview process were noted down in a research diary.

4.3.2.2 Interviewer-Interviewee Relation

Although all three interview groups were approached in a similar way and asked to support the research project in a comparable manner, the roles of interviewees and researcher differed from participant group to participant group. In general, I would describe the relationship of interviewees and researcher in expert interviews as one between 'informant' and 'explorer'; that in coach interviews as one between 'teacher' and 'learner'; and that in expatriate interviews as one between 'research subject' and 'radiologist' – although the degree to which these 'roles' were adopted varied.

Informant-Explorer Relation: The interviews with HR professionals tended to be characterized by an initially rather neutral attitude on behalf of experts. A conspicuous percentage of this group was ready to provide me with the facts and figures I asked for but did not make the impression to expect much gain from the conversation – neither for themselves nor for the researcher. Few of the interviewees were interested in what the research project they participated in was all about. Several seemed not to be very emotionally involved in the topic or to not attach much value to it; thus, many also did not feel the need to sign a confidentiality form. When talking to one of the experts in order to make an appointment for a tape-recorded telephone interview, she literally suggested answering my questions right then as she did not see much sense in recording what she had to offer.

Interestingly, the majority of these rather 'dry' conversations developed to a more intense, more interactive level as they unfolded. Since all interviews but one with HR professionals took place via telephone, the lack of face-to-face interaction and the resulting anonymous character – due to the uncertainty of how the vis-à-vis may react to the posed questions and given answers, for instance – may be a plausible explanation for the finding that the relationships with some experts seemed more distanced at first than that with interlocutors whom I met in person (cf. Lamnek 2005: 345f). Lively interaction hence also resulted from telephone interviews, but frequently only in later stages of the communication process when the explicit information exchange had perhaps compensated for a certain degree of unavailable non-verbal information. Yet, the described initial atmosphere may also be a result of the specificities of the expert interview guide which – as outlined above – differs from the schedules used for the conversations with coaches and expatriates. The former literally urged HR professionals to provide short and sweet answers at the outset of interviews.

Especially two interviews, however, lacked the fading of experts' preliminary reserve throughout the whole phone conversation; and it was in these two interviews that I talked to HR professionals who were clearly only responsible for certain parts within the expatriate assignment life cycle; either because their colleagues were in charge of the other tasks or because the company did not view expatriations as a special form of job assignment that required HR involvement past the recruiting and selection phase. It is possible, therefore, that the one or the other interviewee was somehow 'stumped' by my comprehensive interest in the organization of the expatriate assignment life cycle from A to Z. Due to their professional specializations, some of my questions may have exceeded their area of responsibility and understandably might have triggered a feeling of uncertainty or unease; a situation which Meuser and Nagel (cf. 2005: 78) alert researchers to when approaching expert interview partners.

Teacher-Learner Relation: In sharp contrast to the 'informant-explorer' interviews with experts, the majority of coaches were highly interested in getting involved in the research project. They were eager to 'teach' me the art of expatriate coaching, to report on their personal development as a coach, and to share with me the insights they had gained in terms of expatriations. During the interviews, my role could be described as that of an active listener, attentive observer, and curious learner who was expected to work with the collected data. After the interviews namely, while I was analyzing the material and writing my thesis, several interview partners got in touch with me to see how far I had come with drawing conclusions.

Coaches interest in my research findings are understandable given the small amount of scholarly contributions that exist in regard to expatriate coaching. Since my exchange with coaches involved in the long-term assignment business shows that many of them do not know a whole lot of other coaches with a comparable focus, it can be imagined that they have a profound, even personal interest in getting to know the opinions and experience of others who are in similar shoes.

Likewise, my role as learner is comprehensible; and not only because of my young appearance or because expatriate coaches were given an opportunity to speak. Before having conducted several interviews with coaches namely, my understanding of what expatriate coaching is/does and can/could be was limited to what publications and my own imagination offered. As I was interested in an enrichment of this knowledge and ideas, the learner role was to some extent certainly a position in which I maneuvered myself into. Since during the conversations, however, it was my part to structure the interview course, to revive interviewees' statements and to make them accessible for further reflection, both

interlocutors had active roles which overall contributed to well-balanced dialogues. In retrospect, therefore, I can say that the combination of my roles as learner and researcher put me in a favorable position based on which it was able to live up to the goal of exploring the expatriate coaching 'X'.

Research Subject-Radiologist Relation: The role constellation in terms of expatriate interviews was different altogether since both interlocutors had multiple roles. I had the impression that, first and foremost, many expatriates tended to perceive themselves in the role of research subjects who were being x-rayed; they talked to a researcher with a background in education and counseling about very personal issues concerning their private and professional life and expected her to see lots of connections and think analytically about what they were saying. Therefore, the majority attached quite some value to the contents of the confidentiality form. One person even refused to be tape-recorded. Particularly at the beginning of a couple of interviews, I experienced strong resistance to giving the researcher insight into issues beyond casual facts and figures.

Apart from this, however, many expatriates also acted as very confident and experienced managers who informed the researcher on their life as expatriate in an expert manner. In addition, expatriates also appeared as learners who used the interview to get up-to-date on expatriate support measures; and besides that, they viewed themselves as in the same boat with the researcher who was also some kind of expat due to her stay in China. Hence during expatriate interviews, my role changed from that of a radiologist who used her x-ray vision to penetrate to interviewees' innermost parts to that of a student, to that of an up-to-date informant, to that of an expatriate colleague. The change of roles across interview passages turned the conversations with members of this interview group into the most adventurous, challenging, and emotional ones. As a result, however, these interviews have provided a wealth and width of data which exceeds the amount of data resulting from the other interview group members by far. However, what strikes me the most about the expatriate group dialogues is that all have – at least during a stage of the conversation – come to a very private, personal, and touching level of presenting their experience; regardless of whether the predominant character of the interviewees was that of resistance fighter, expert, learner or colleague.

4.3.3 Processing Data

Qualitative research tends to produce riches of data which has to be processed in a way that the material gets manageable. The transcription of recorded data is a frequently used way to do this. It is a lengthy process but has two decisive advantages: First, it gets researchers involved with the gained information which might result in notes, further questions, and ideas for sampling or perhaps even a post-interview conversation; and second, it provides researchers with a solid base for detailed data analysis and might even trigger some analytic thinking during the typing process itself. Therefore, the processing of data by means of transcription does not only link data collection with data analysis; it *is* the end of a data collection unit and the beginning of data analysis (cf. Mayring 2002: 89).

In order to get an overview of the collected material and to be able to apply the methods Global Analysis (Legewie 1994) and Circular Deconstruction (Jaeggi/Faas/Mruck 1998), I completely transcribed all twenty-nine taped interviews myself. For reasons of authenticity and research-economy, both the German and English interviews were transcribed in the original language.

For presentations or publications in a country other than the one where the data were collected (if the language is different), key passages and their codes can be translated, approximating the original as close as possible. However, as a general rule, too much valuable time and meaning can be lost in trying to translate all the research materials. Also, many of the original subtleties of meaning can be lost in translation (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 320).

The two conversations that were not recorded were summarized in the form of an interview protocol right after they had ended. What concerns the data collected by means of the short questionnaire, three interview-specific tables were drawn. The questionnaire results were then compiled in the according table. Finally, all transcripts together with the according pre- and postscripts, interview schedules, filled in questionnaires, and protection of privacy forms were jointly filed.

4.3.4 Analyzing Data

Compared to the periods of processing accumulated material which I perceived as a rather 'recreative' activity, the always subsequent phase of

data analysis required a great amount of concentration, reflection, and thoughtfulness. It was the more intense but also more reviving job.

Applying Global Analysis and Circular Deconstruction: For the analysis of collected data material, both the methods Global Analysis (Legewie 1994) and Circular Deconstruction (Jaeggi/Faas/Mruck 1998) were applied. Global Analysis was used to instantly get an overview of the 'incoming' data; i.e., after an interview had been conducted and transcribed, I roughly analyzed it by means of Legewie's technique. This was also true for expert interviews. Instead of following the analysis procedure suggested by Meuser and Nagel (cf. 2005: 80ff), I decided to put all the data collected by means of PCIs through the analysis process outlined by Legewie. His Grounded Theory-based understanding of data analysis is comparable with the ideas of Meuser and Nagel but provides researchers with more directive guidelines for analysis. Since many times the intervals between interviews were short and lots of travelling was necessary in the course of the research project, I preferred to do the initial 'broad brush' analysis in the traditional way, by means of paper and pencil. This way, I was able to work flexibly, doing Global Analysis whenever and wherever suitable. On the basis of interview transcriptions as well as pre- and postscripts, I paid particular attention to the topics which were covered by interviewees in advance, during, and after the interviews. Moreover, I considered how they reacted to my questions in order to see whether changes had to be made in terms of interview guides and sampling decisions. In contrast, analysis following the suggestions of Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck was only started after sampling had been completed and all interview material had been collected. Those interviews which had been judged 'useful' in the course of Global Analysis were then analyzed by means of Circular Deconstruction. For reasons of manageability, however, I decided to use the computer software MaxQDA in order to have my detailed qualitative data analysis process supported.

Following, one of the central interview topics – perceived need for expatriate support – is used in order to exemplify the analysis process by means of Global Analysis and Circular Deconstruction and to provide some insight into how the finally depicted picture of expatriate coaching emerged from the wealth of accumulated raw data material. For reasons of transparency, the analysis procedure is outlined on the basis of two interviews only and thus in simplified but all the more graphic manner:

As already mentioned above, moving through Legewie's Global Analysis first of all served the purpose of reflecting my personal approach to and behavior in the field, relationships to interview partners, adequacy of the interview guide, and the like. Secondly, I extracted those topics that shaped the character of the document and used self-explanatory, figurative

or 'catchy' (in vivo) expressions to code the important passages of the text: one of them was 'Talking High-Performers', for example. In order to define the exact meaning of the code, memos were created and the code memo list arranged in chronological order. 'Talking High-Performers', for instance, was defined as follows: 'This code characterizes passages that depict expatriates as all-rounder who are expected to be capable of dealing with the range of expatriation tasks and challenges on their own and, should they be in need of support, to be able to independently arrange that support'. And thirdly, I summarized the text based on these essential topics and chose a motto that well represented its gist: 'Employee Equals Expatriate', 'Comprehensive Coaching Missing' or 'Hello, This Is Your Coaching Speaking', to name but a few. To put it in a nutshell, Global Analysis helped me get and keep an overview of the conducted interviews as well as to make changes to the ongoing data collection process. In contrast, Circular Deconstruction which consists of a total of nine steps (I.1-I.6 and II.1-II.3) enabled me to engage in an in-depth analysis of the interview material. Since the two methods overlap in some aspects, the outcome of the first one was partly used as starting point for the second:

Every time I engaged in a new process of in-depth analysis, I would first reconsider the motto (I.1.) and summary (I.2) that had already been created in the course of Global Analysis; this was useful in order efficiently review the main topics of the interview and to regain a feeling for the circumstances under which the data were generated. Then, I would go back to the original transcript, re-reading the full version of the interview in order to mark striking key words (I.3). Then, those that seemed connected what regards content were pre-categorized under a generic term (I.4) and the term again defined by means of memos. In the case of this one expatriate interview (18/--), the following subject areas (they are just a selection of many more) emerged from some of the accumulated key words:

Decision-Making Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ war so ein Wechselbad ▪ in der Familie drüber geredet ▪ ein privater Entscheidungsprozess ▪ ... 	Language Proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sie konnte sich nicht ausdrücken ▪ Sprachbarrieren ▪ Die Message runter zu bringen ... eine Challenge für sich ▪ Privatkurs vor Arbeitsbeginn ▪ ... 	Loss of Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ich war der einzige Expat ▪ sehr angespannt für die Familie ▪ Familie auf sich alleine gestellt ▪ ...
Dealing with Cultural Differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ein Wort falsch ... Sache kann schief gehen ▪ Möglichkeit für interkulturelles Training ▪ helfen würde, dass man mit jemandem reden könnte ▪ Orientierungsreise ... das hilft ▪ ... 	Finding One's Way Abroad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ alles ist anders ▪ Nachbarschaft ... viel geholfen ▪ riesen bürokratischer Prozess ▪ Expat Community ... wichtig, dass man schnell Anschluss findet ▪ Ansprechpartner wäre hilfreich ▪ ... 	Repatriation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ wieder ein Kulturschock ▪ Da braucht man dann schon jemanden mit dem man reden kann ▪ Unterstützung ... das braucht man ▪ ...

Based on the extracted subject areas, the next step of Circular Deconstruction was devoted to paraphrasing the transcription at hand (I.5). It aimed at 'explaining' the constituents of the topic catalogue and at making transparent the pre-categorizations' connectedness. In the case of the presented interview, the paraphrase included, among others, these lines:

[...] Mentally navigating through the various stages of the assignment life cycle, the interview partner recalls multiple challenges that have been characterizing his pre-assignment, early and late expatriation, and his repatriation period. Many of the difficulties he has been facing, have both a professional and a private component. So does the 'Loss of Network', for instance, become transparent in that the expatriate lacks business-related exchange with his equals, something which he enjoyed in his former position; and, simultaneously, he and his family members also experience this loss in regard to their circle of friends and dependants. What connects this variety of mentioned difficulties is that the interviewee attaches great importance to the possibility of information, input, and exchange (from/with HR, trainers, his coach, the expatriate community) in order to tackle the occurring challenges; regardless of what kind of challenge and period into the assignment he is referring to. It is due the combination of work-related difficulties and the strong impact of the expatriation on his and his family members' private life that he perceives his long-term assignment as an ongoing challenge and hence as extraordinary phase of his professional life. Consequently, the interviewee emphasizes his awareness of the omnipresent risk for failure characterizing expatriations and thus highly values the various sources of support that he has been able to mobilize and fall back upon. [...]

Consequently, the central categories (I.6) that were created to 'represent' this piece of interview – again, these are only a selection – were

- Awareness of Risk for Failure
- Dependence on Repeated Exchange
- Different Phases – Different Challenges

- Interdependence of Professional and Private Challenges
- ...

Once the analysis of the first interview had proceeded through Global Analysis and then through all of the mentioned six phases of Circular Deconstruction, its central categories were juxtaposed to those of a second interview in the process of synopsis (II.1); after that, three were considered at a time, then four. Usually not more than five interviews were crosschecked as the wealth of data would cause more confusion than provide clarity. Therefore, always up to four or five interviews out of one interview partner group were jointly considered; then, the rest of the group's interviews were separately taken into account; and consequently, all interviews constituting one group were crosschecked. Only afterwards did interviews from different groups undergo the process of synopsis.

Central Categories of Several Interviews Number of Interviews	Awareness of Risk of Failure	Dependence on Exchange	...	Interdependence of Professional and Private Challenges	...	High-Performance Implied	Usefulness of Initial Effectiveness Acceleration	...
Interview Expatriate	✓	✓		✓			✓	...
Interview HR Professional		✓				✓	✓	...
...								

The picture that emerges from the synopsis of two or more interviews makes content-related overlaps of data material as well as idiosyncrasies of individual texts particularly transparent. The next analysis step as suggested by Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck is to build meta-categories out of several central categories, if suitable; so-called 'constructs' or 'gestalts' emerge (II.2). In the case of the presented example, the categories 'Awareness of Risk of Failure', 'Dependence on Repeated Exchange', 'Different Phases - Different Challenges', 'High-Performance Implied', and 'Usefulness of Initial Effectiveness Acceleration' were condensed to a construct which was named 'Perceived Need for Support'. The final analysis step, the comparative paraphrase (II.3), serves to shed light on the various facets which constitute the resulting constructs and thus eventually also contributes to the enrichment of the research object's picture:

During their conversations with the researcher, both the interviewed expatriate (18/-) and the HR professional (01/--) illustrate difficulties which they have experienced to crop up during international long-term assignments. And both stress the challenge

that especially the transfer and the early weeks in the foreign surrounding can involve (“[...] administrative Dinge [...] wie Wohnungssuche, Meldung, Visa [...]” (01/28); “[...] das war nervlich schon sehr aufreibend” (18/40)); there is accordance that these difficulties tend to be both of private (e.g., moving, adapting to the new living conditions and life style) and work-related (e.g., getting familiar with rules and regulations at the foreign subsidiary, doing business in a foreign language) nature. And the interviewees agree that there is at least a certain need for input that comes from intercultural and language trainers, from relocation services, and especially so from the expatriate community in the host country – support that helps accelerate expatriates’ effectiveness upon arrival (“alles was ein Expat braucht, um sich zu adaptieren und zu akklimatisieren wird angeboten, ist auch Standard” (01/30)). Yet, while the HR professional locates possible challenges almost exclusively at the initial period abroad [...] and hence attaches importance to preparatory and early-assignment support measures, the expatriate characterizes the whole assignment life cycle as one ongoing challenge and emphasizes the need for lasting support in multiple areas. The HR professional seems convinced that expatriates – after having received some assistance in order to get started – can well deal with the challenges of their assignment on their own (“[...] sie brauchen keine Unterstützung, weil das schon High-Performance Menschen sind” (01/74)). Contrastingly, the expatriate who is highly aware of the incessant risk of failure despite his capability, emphasizes the relatively high need for support for his extraordinary professional and life situation (“[...] also es ist ein roter Faden, der sich durchzieht [...]” (18/151)).

Taking into account the overall in-depth analysis process, the perceived need for expatriate support was subject to manifold comparative paraphrases between interviews of all three target groups. Gradually, the repeated juxtaposition of various data sets revealed that there was a linkage between the perceived need for recurring support, the provision and appreciation of support measures, and the perceived usefulness of expatriate coaching.

Deriving Benefit from Periodic Global Analysis: As is characteristic for the qualitative, grounded approach chosen for this research project, the data collection and analysis process alternated. Even though the rotation of the two processes may sometimes appear as interruption to what could be a smooth course of action, this way of proceeding does have decisive advantages. Not only do researchers benefit from intermediate Global Analysis in terms of sampling decisions; the interchange of collecting and analyzing data can also help increase researchers’ awareness of their role and their way of approaching both the research object and the research subjects.

After having conducted and roughly analyzed several interviews with HR professionals and coaches by means of Global Analysis, I had learned that expatriate coaching is, first of all, a hardly practiced long-term assignment support measure; second, one that is widely viewed an exaggerated measure for more than capable managers; and third, that having a coach while abroad is supposedly to a great extent about having a dialogue partner at hand when no one else is available. From these early findings I concluded that it could be difficult to find coached expatriates at all: One,

because few may have actually been coached. Two, because many HR professionals (and also expatriates) who were initially regarded as possible matchmakers between researcher and coached expatriates did not even take into account that their expatriates (or in the case of expatriates, their expatriate colleagues) could be coached and would not, for reasons of privacy, make an attempt to find out. And, three, because it seemed possible that dialogue partner relationships did exist but due to the only recent emergence of expatriate coaching did not explicitly carry the label 'coaching'. This made me all the more determined to not only include coached expatriates in my study but to extend my expatriate sample to those who did not (explicitly or officially) receive coaching as part of their assignment support package. In retrospect, this was a useful decision because it shed light on those resources that are mobilized if coaching is not an option and why it is not an option. Apart from that, however, it was a useful decision as it made it easier for HR professionals, coaches, and expatriate colleagues to get me in touch with research participants. In one case, this strategy proved particularly useful: One expatriate manager whom I asked for an interview linked me with some of his colleagues who then also participated in the study. Rather surprisingly for me as researcher, one of them turned out to have suffered from severe burnout and in this connection got himself a coach.

Apart from the indications for sampling, the most striking insight resulting from these recurring phases of analysis refers to my closeness to expatriates. Already the examination of the first expatriate interviews made me clearly aware of my emotional attachment to the members of this interview group – a consequence of my familiarity with the strains of moving and living in China (even though my stay abroad was much more limited in terms of duration as well as in terms of impact on private and professional responsibilities). Not only did my communication style reflect the empathy towards these participants, but so did the fact that I basically knew the interview contents by heart or that mottoes for the various texts occurred next to naturally. In some respect, of course, this was advantageous; for example, in that it accelerated the application of analysis procedures or the retrieval of text passages. On the other hand, however, I also experienced the danger of jumping to conclusions or neglecting those thematic areas introduced by interviewees which affected me less. On that score, the application of Global Analysis as regular 'interruption' of the extensive data collection process was outstandingly helpful. It provides researchers with the chance to consistently reflect upon their communication, intents, thematic foci, and emotions; eventually, this is how it forces researchers to stick with the data and to keep grounding inductions in the material at hand. Before that, however, it continuously raises their awareness of how they approach and deal with their research

subjects and the whole project in general. By doing so, it creates opportunities to 'step out' of the data collection cycle after every interview and to 'step into' the next interaction process with a raised level of attentiveness.

Matching MaxQDA with Circular Deconstruction: Another issue that is worth mentioning in terms of data analysis is that the application of the computer software MaxQDA fits very well the demands of the second analysis method applied, Circular Deconstruction. Thanks to its comprehensive but easily understandable online manual as well as its simple set-up and intuitive menu design, MaxQDA is a user-friendly program which encourages researchers to 'deconstruct' the collected data material into its smallest meaningful bits and pieces. It is encouraging because, first, it ensures that the disrupted elements can easily be rebuilt to significant units (i.e., subject areas, central categories, and eventually constructs) in the course of logical and creative ways of thinking. And second it has an encouraging effect, because it ensures clarity even when text passages are coded several times; a demand which users of the visual type make on a computer assistance tool and a clear advantage over paper and pencil analyzing. This way, MaxQDA literally steers researchers to carry out the multiple changes of perspectives which – according to Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck (1998) – can lead to the development of novel understandings of the research object. Besides that, MaxQDA comes in handy in the later stages of the analysis process; for instance, when the practice of Circular Deconstruction suggests making transparent the synopsis of the interview-specific core categories. Here, the computer software relieves researchers of all but one step; i.e. to click on the Code-Matrix Browser symbol which triggers the automatic calculation of allocated codings. Another advantage – if not *the* argument for computer-aided analysis software – which researchers benefit from particularly towards the end of their analysis process, is the simple and reliable way of text retrieval. In a matter of seconds one can gain an overview of matching passages based on which the grounding of hypotheses in data is facilitated. To sum up, MaxQDA is a tool that naturally supports the analysis of even large amounts of qualitative material by helping researchers focus on the potential of data instead of bothering them with the handling of the software itself.

4.4 Reflecting the Research Design and Process

In the course of a research project stretching over several years, an abundance of formal, content-related, and methodological decisions are made. At this point, those that had an impact worth noting and should be reconsidered for prospective research projects are discussed.

In one book about qualitative research in the context of international business, there is a subchapter titled "Interviewing in the MNC: One Company, Multiple Units" (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2004: 251). The authors point out to a difficulty which should have been stronger taken into account in the early design phase of the presented study:

[...] interviews in the MNC are likely to vary depending on the experience and organisational position held by the interviewee. Access to a clear diagram showing the organisational hierarchy, reporting lines and business units often facilitates locating appropriate informants for the study (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2004: 256f).

In the course of researching 'Coaching Expatriates' several HR professionals from MNCs of varying size were interviewed. Those who represented relatively small international HR units seemed to be well informed about the sequence of procedures and events that HR got involved in during an expatriate assignment life cycle. Consequently, these interviewees were able to give the researcher a comprehensive idea of their own, their colleagues', and the organization's overall involvement, duties, difficulties, and opportunities in the course of expatriations. Contrastingly, the conversations with experts of large MNCs showed that their responsibility in regard to expatriates is divided to such an extent that some of these interviewees were hardly able to extensively cover the whole scope of questions presented to them by the interviewer. While some were, for instance, in charge of recruiting, selection, placement, and career development of (prospective) expatriates, they were barely involved in the development and organization of support measures or the pre-departure conversations with expatriates and their family members. In retrospect, therefore, it would have been advantageous for the understanding of the researcher as well as for the comfort of some interviewees to find a person, a company-insider, who could have provided the researcher with a helicopter view of the responsible divisions/persons involved in the expatriate assignment life cycle; and then to jointly consider which person(s) should be interviewed in order to get the big picture of how expatriations are handled within the respective MNC. Deducing from my own experience with MNCs, the realization of such a preparatory measure can be quite a challenge, especially so if the researcher has no personal relationship to members of the organization under study. Due to the

advantages that are likely to result from an insight into the company, however, it is probably worth leaving no stone unturned.

Talking about cooperation with MNCs, it is to add that I had initially tried to establish a research agreement with a company that was interested in exploring the support measures offered to their expatriates; of course, with special regard to the practice and potential of expatriate coaching. Unfortunately, however, this idea was not viable since all companies under consideration did not at that time support any academic research projects in the field of social sciences. I can imagine that such a type of cooperation would have simplified various steps that are to be taken as a research project of this kind unfolds. In any case, I as researcher would have been granted easier access to experts but, more importantly, also to expatriate interview partners; a challenge with which I was confronted before and during my time China. Although I had five months to establish contacts with expatriates overseas, I was tremendously pressed for time in order to locate and meet with willing conversation partners and to finally conduct a sufficient amount of interviews. The question whether expatriates would have been as open as they were had the project been company-driven needs to be left unanswered. The administrative struggles I was confronted with might have been replaced by confidentiality issues. Nevertheless, I believe that the cooperation with an organization could have taken a considerable amount of uncertainty and tension off the project.

Another issue concerning the way of approaching interview partners should be mentioned at this stage. As depicted in chapter 3.5 Exploring Coaching^{Culture}, the connection of coaching and culture has only fairly recently been established. Publications on the topic symbiosis have resulted from diverging occasions, are geared towards different target groups, and tend to lack connection to other coaching^{Culture}-related publications and the coaching scene in general. As a consequence, my idea of coaching's practice and potential in contexts where culture has a special impact was relatively blurred. This brought quite some tension to the interview situations with coaches as I did not only have to be attentive to what they were saying about expatriate coaching but to simultaneously figure out what they understood by expatriate coaching. As a result of this experience, I agree with the expert of PCIs that "[i]t might therefore for instance make sense to prepare for interviews regarding a new research topic by holding a group discussion (focus group) in order to obtain a preliminary overview of the range of opinions among the sample to be studied" (Witzel 2000). I am positive that a gathering of expatriate coaches would have provided me with a useful insight into the different coaching services in regard to expatriations; and, additionally, that this exchange could have been a value-added for the participating coaches themselves.

A final critical thought concerning the organization of qualitative interviews refers to the use of telephone interviews. Since it was my impression that relationships with interview partners could be easier established in face-to-face situations than via phone, I can only encourage other researchers to arrange as many personal meetings as possible; especially so in the case of dialogues with members of organizations, because an on-site visit to a company can be a thought-provoking experience and a source of inspiration due to visual or non-verbal inputs which telephone conversations deprive researchers of. Given the economic advantages of phone interviews and the increased willingness of interview partners to support my project once the telephone option was uttered, however, I am still convinced that there are situations where the breaking with traditional face-to-face dialogues is strategically wiser.

A methodological choice which I am particularly content with is the decision for the use of PCIs according to Witzel (2000). To start with, his directions in terms of overall and core interview set-up are straight-forward and well implementable. One of the most valuable characteristics of the PCI is, however, that it encourages researchers to give their interviewees room for maneuver and at the same time ensures that researchers are well prepared for 'silent moments': By having developed an interview schedule which includes ideas for introductory and ad-hoc questions as well as for general and specific prompting, researchers do not need to worry about losing track of their research objectives. Well prepared for the conversation, they can grant their interviewees the opportunity to head in multiple directions and by doing so benefit from the new facets of the research object which are presented to them. From this perspective, the PCI served very well my research intent which was to discover and explore the practice and potential of expatriate coaching. Besides that, the usefulness of the PCI as data collection instrument becomes obvious at the latest once researchers engage in data analysis. When reconsidering the postscript in the course of Global Analysis, for example, I came across essential notes which I had jotted down right after interviews had ended; and which would probably have been lost without the formal practice of writing postscripts. Yet, added-value also results from the application of a short questionnaire. Witzel suggests using such predefined set of questions before engaging in the actual interview process; mainly, to capture straight-forward demographic data. Having interviewees respond to the important but easily answered questions by means of this paper-pencil technique has two advantages: First of all, it is time-saving as the interview itself can thus be dedicated to more intricate topics. Second, it provides interviewers with information which can, if suitable, be integrated into the conversation; possibly, it even serves to kick off the interview. As I also experienced time pressure, especially when conducting interviews with expatriates, I

separated demographic data gathering from problem-centered interviewing. Consequently, as already depicted, I handed the questionnaires out *after* the interview had ended and even offered interviewees online versions which they could complete whenever they had a little time slot during their working day. This turned out to be an interviewee-friendly service as many research participants welcomed it. Additionally, it enabled the interlocutors to smoothly move from the introductory phase to the interview; this helped create an unconstrained, comfortable atmosphere which I found very valuable. Yet, changing the chronology described by Witzel deprived me of the second advantage mentioned: to use the information gathered by means of the questionnaire already as the conversation unfolded. In retrospect, I think it would have been useful to put more effort into trying to accommodate the questionnaire prior to the interview or weave it into the introductory phase. This way, I sometimes might have faster understood connections drawn by research participants which in turn could have had an additional relaxing effect on the interlocutors.

5 Presenting the Research Results

The following portrayal of research findings results from an analysis of thirty-one qualitative interviews; a text document has complemented one of these interviews. In the process of Circular Deconstruction, a total of 105 codes and subcodes, respectively, have been created and more than 1280 passages have been coded. Since three interview groups have been considered in the course of the research project, they are successively introduced and dealt with below before the group-specific findings are eventually related to each other in the subsequent chapter.

Corresponding to the project's research interest, the analysis of collected data gives an insight into interviewees' understanding of the expatriate coaching practice and their assessment of the measure's potential. Additionally, the data disclose interview partners' ideas of how else expatriate coaching could constructively be practiced and where they assume yet untapped expatriate coaching potential. Yet, the data do not only mirror what the practice and potential of expatriate coaching looks or could look like; they also provide explanations for *why*, according to interviewees, the measure is currently practiced in certain ways and *why* they see or do not see reason to fall back upon additional or different options of expatriate coaching application. As will be elaborated on below, the perception of the particularities of long-term assignments plays a decisive role in the understanding of expatriate coaching.

To start with, the HR interview group is presented as they were the first ones to be interviewed for this research project. The results of expatriates follow, before eventually the analysis of coach interviews is depicted. This order has been chosen because it creates added value. Since expatriate coaches are in touch with both HR professionals and expatriates, their research results mirror and thus confirm much of what has been uttered by the previous two interview groups; and by providing additional information, it helps embed the results in a greater context, fostering understanding. Quoted interview passages are marked by two-digit numbers of which the first refers to the order of the conducted interviews; the second points out to the line of the transcribed text.

5.1 Research Results – Interviews with HR Professionals

HR professionals are among the primary contact persons for expatriates before, during, as well as after their stay abroad. To varying degree, they are involved in selecting candidates for long-term assignments, in making expatriate contracts, in establishing the contact between future expatriates and host country HR departments, in repatriating their MNCs' international staff, and very importantly for this research project, in arranging support measures throughout the entire assignment life cycle. Now, how do these people perceive of expatriate coaching? With which kind of expatriate coaching practice are they familiar? How do they assess its potential? The following subchapters shed light on these questions, revealing that HR professionals' prevalent view of long-term assignments and expatriate managers seems crucial for their understanding of expatriate coaching.

5.1.1 Characterization of HR Interview Partners

Who helps select the expatriates of tomorrow? Who are the people who take care of transferring and repatriating long-term assignment's key players? The following paragraph shares some background information on the HR representatives interviewed for this research project.

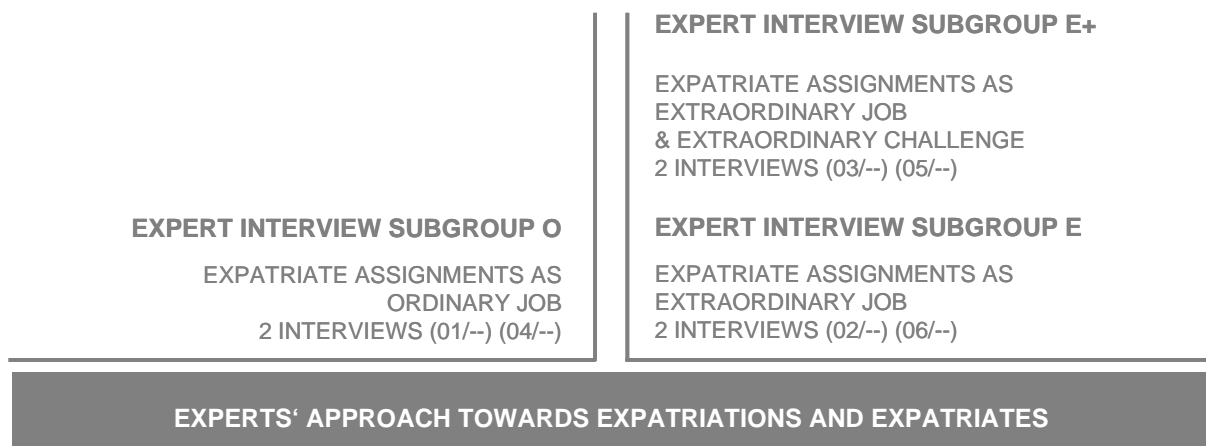
Gender and Age: The group of HR professionals consists of six interviewees who were between twenty-six and fifty years old at the time of the interview. Whereas five HR experts are female, only one interview partner is male. **Education:** All of them have an academic background; two each in business administration and law, respectively; one in education, and one in translation studies. **Nationality and Interview Language:** Since all interviewees are Austrian or German and thus German-native speakers, the interviews were conducted and transcribed in their mother tongue. **Foreign Country Experience:** Five of the six interviewees do not have professional foreign country experience besides business trips; one of them has been abroad for the duration of three months.

5.1.2 Diverging Approaches to Expatriations and Expatriates

When considering the statements of expert interview partners regarding the organization of expatriations in their company, one difference between them is outstandingly striking: Their attitudes and expectations – their approach – to long-term assignments and expatriates vary fundamentally. Since always two of the six interviewed HR professionals have been found to represent a very similar approach to expatriate managers and assignments, their viewpoints are subsequently illustrated in pairs; for this purpose, always two according interviews constitute one expert interview subgroup: In a nutshell,

- expert interview subgroup O represents those interviewees who regard long-term assignments as **Ordinary Job**;
- expert interview subgroup E stands for those experts who view expatriations as **Extraordinary Job**; and
- expert interview subgroup E+ corresponds to those HR professionals who perceive expatriate assignments as **Extraordinary Job** and **Extraordinary Challenge**.

Figure 27: Expert Interview Subgroups



Now why is the approach of MNCs' HR representatives to expatriations important for this research project which is actually interested in the practice and potential of expatriate coaching? Well, the collected data gives reason to suppose that the way expatriations are handled is to a great extent determined by the prevalent attitudes and expectations of HR professionals towards long-term assignments and expatriates. In more

detail this means that the general approach to expatriations appears to influence

- the expatriate selection process;
- the degree of staying in touch with expatriates while they are abroad;
- the awareness of expatriate challenges on behalf of HR professionals;
- the application and image of expatriate support measures; and even
- **the practice and perceived potential of expatriate coaching.**

Therefore, in order to understand which and why organizations do or do not fall back upon expatriate coaching – by whom expatriate coaching is practiced – it is necessary to consider their way of approaching expatriations in general. The practice and perceived potential of the researched measure then is discussed at the end of every subgroup chapter.

5.1.2.1 Expatriation Approach and Practice – HR Interview Subgroup O

Approach: The first two interviewees who are referred to as subgroup O, tend to perceive of long-term out-of-country jobs, i.e., expatriate assignments, as of any other in-country job. According to their viewpoints, both jobs can be challenging; the only real difference which they seem to identify between them is that expatriate assignments require people to move to a foreign country. Thus, the experts' tenor is that long-term assignments are indeed likely to be challenging, but are not necessarily much more challenging than other in-country jobs; except for the strain that is connected with changing one's place of residence. Therefore, for these two interviewees, it is a matter of course that only senior professionals or high potentials are entrusted with expatriate assignments and that they are supported in terms of relocation and all bureaucratic issues connected. Simultaneously, they naturally expect that expatriates neither need nor are granted any other extras than employees on in-country assignments.

Die Betreuung ist wie bei einem normalen Dienstverhältnis; eine Besonderheit betrifft Behördengänge und die Unterstützung durch den Relocation Agent (01/38). Ich glaube, sie brauchen keine [zusätzliche] Unterstützung, weil das schon High-Performance Menschen sind, die kommen, die das gewohnt sind und es auch mit sich bringen (01/74).

Das wichtige ist, dass die Erwartungen schon im Vorfeld nicht zu hoch geschraubt werden, dass die Expats weder auf ein Podest gehoben werden und dass sie wissen, dass dort Leistung genauso erwartet wird wie hier. Dass sie nicht allein durch die Entsendung Anspruch haben auf Leistungen oder besondere Betreuung, die die anderen auch nicht haben (04/63).

Selection: In the MNCs represented by subgroup O interviewees, therefore, the selection process of future expatriates is designed very similarly to that of employees for in-country jobs. An interview with representatives of the technical department coupled with an interview with HR representatives usually lays the foundation for an expatriate job offer. The closer inspection of interview data shows, however, that HR's overall involvement in the assessment of potential candidates tends to be fairly limited.

HR berät, die Entscheidung trifft die Führungskraft, denn sie kennt das Team am besten (01/14). [...] Das ist eine gute Frage, wir in HR bekommen das [die Auswahl eines Expatriates] oft gar nicht so mit. [...] in den Selektions-Prozess bin ich manchmal nicht wirklich involviert (01/28).

Assessment or development centers with a focus on the evaluation of (international) management potential or intercultural competence testing are not part of the selection procedure; instead, successful business trips are taken as a reliable and sufficient predictor for out-of-country success.

Viele haben tagtäglich Umgang mit den ausländischen Standorten und meistens sind es dann eh solche Leute, die rausgehen (04/24).

Although many pieces of intercultural management literature have reported that the influence of the spouse on the success of expatriations is decisive, the dependants of expatriates are not actively included in the personnel selection practice of expatriate candidates.

Ich kenne die meisten Partner unserer Expats, was aber nicht heißt, dass wir die in irgendeiner Form in den Selektionsprozess mit einbeziehen, das tun wir nicht. Wir fragen natürlich, wie ihre Lebenssituation aussieht, ob die Partnerin mitkommen würde, ob Kinder da sind, um ein Gefühl für die Kosten zu bekommen. Wobei das kein ausschlaggebendes Kriterium ist (01/20).

Hence, the selection of expatriates-to-be appears to be primarily based on persons' degree of familiarity with the company, their technical skills, and their previous in-country success. Overall, therefore, the decision-making process in the MNCs represented by interview subgroup O is fairly management-driven rather than the result of joint agreement between line managers and HR.

In Touch: Just the way the selection of expatriates does not vary extensively from that of other employees, the degree to which group O

representatives stay in touch with expatriates is not strikingly different compared to their contact with other employees. A more extensive level of information exchange can only be found in regard to particularities caused by the move to a foreign country, such as administrative, contractual or tax issues.

Ja, es besteht Kontakt zwischen HR Home und HR Host [Base] um vertragliche, administrative, steuerliche Dinge abzuwickeln und der Expat hat natürlich immer wieder Kontakt zu seinem Home, ginge gar nicht anders, weil wir Salary Reviews und Bonus-Geschichten auch immer home-based abwickeln, d.h. für unsere Expats, die im Ausland sind, mache das alles ich. Alleine daraus ergibt sich schon laufend Kontakt (01/44).

Awareness of Challenges: It can be understood as a consequence of their attitude that no unusual difficulties need to be expected in the course of an expatriation as well as of the relatively limited degree of staying in touch with expatriates that group O interviewees do not seem to be distinctly familiar with expatriate challenges. When comparing their statements to those of subgroup E or E+, it is to note that these two interviewees anticipate and recall far less challenges connected to expatriations than the remaining four. Also, when considering what the two experts say and cannot say about expatriation difficulties, it seems that they see no reason for themselves to be informed about occurring challenges; and especially so, if they are of personal or private nature.

[...] bisher funktioniert alles relativ gut. Aber ich muss sagen, Anpassungsprobleme der Kinder würde ich nicht wirklich mitbekommen, dafür ist der Kontakt zu wenig intensiv (01/64). Es ist jetzt nicht darauf ausgerichtet, dass das [persönliche/private/berufliche Schwierigkeiten] kommuniziert wird und wir da einschreiten (01/66).

Support Measures: Expatriates are viewed self-responsible for their capability, their performance, their own and their dependants' well-being, and hence also for arranging support measures if needed – just like any other employee. The support that is naturally provided by their companies does not exceed the following three measures: a look & see trip, a language course, and a preparatory intercultural training. This triplet is subsequently referred to as 'expatriate standard support measure package' for it is offered in all companies represented by the six expert interviewees. What is striking about the response of group O interviewees regarding the provision of support measures in general is that they do not seem to be much convinced of the measures' usefulness, potential impact or value and thus neither recommend nor proactively suggest them to their expatriates.

Da bieten wir natürlich kulturelle Trainings und Language Trainings an; alles was ein Expat braucht um sich zu adaptieren und zu akklimatisieren wird angeboten, ist auch Standard, wird nicht von allen angenommen, weil wenn wir uns innerhalb von Europa

bewegen sind das vielleicht noch die Sprachtrainings aber mir ist es noch nie untergekommen, für jemanden ein Kulturtraining suchen zu müssen. Wird aber, wenn es gewollt wird, aber natürlich angeboten (01/30).

Wir bieten zwar so was [Interkulturelles Training] an, allerdings zum ersten Mal dieses Jahr. Aber bei uns gibt es so viele Kooperationen, auf bilateraler Ebene oder zwischen den Abteilungen, dass das eigentlich eher gelebt wird (04/24). Es ist kein länderspezifisches Training, sondern dass man generell sagt, worauf man achten muss. Information, Kommunikation, Konfliktlösung, Time Management, das wird in den verschiedenen Kulturen unterschiedlich gehandhabt. Ziel ist zu sensibilisieren, worauf die Mitarbeiter achten sollen. Wir erwarten, generell ist soziale Kompetenz ein sehr hoher Wert, dass die Leute aus Eigenbeobachtung heraus – und generell gibt es ja vor Ort eine Unmenge von Ansprechpartnern und Kollegen die behilflich sind – das Verhalten dann entsprechend verstehen lernen (04/39).

Na ja, wir können nur im Vorfeld darauf hinweisen, dass das so ist. Aber wir können von hier aus nicht in lokale Abläufe eingreifen. Wenn z.B. das Thema Entscheidungskultur woanders anders gehandhabt wird, damit müssen die Expats lernen umzugehen. Das werden sie nicht massiv ändern können, sie werden es vielleicht ein bisschen steuern können im Laufe der Zeit, wichtig ist, dass jemand nicht hinkommt und innerhalb von ein paar Wochen glaubt, er könne alles anpassen, wie er es im Head Office [...] gewohnt ist. Also einfach diese Akzeptanz, da können wir hier darauf hinweisen, dass es angenommen werden muss [...] (04/71).

Expatriate Coaching: Asked for their practice and understanding of expatriate coaching, the HR representatives appear to be hardly familiar with the existence and specificities of a coaching concept for expatriates. Moreover, they tend to see neither the need for coaching nor any justifiable reasons for implementing it.

Es wäre sicher was Nettes, ich frag mich nur, wer soll es machen und ist es notwendig (01/72).

Also ich glaube nicht, dass es wirklich notwendig ist, ich meine Coaching für Führungskräfte ist immer wieder ein Thema aber so wie Coaching sonst auch eine individuelle Sache ist, ist es in dieser Situation genauso. Aber bei uns gibt es sehr viel Know-How [im Unternehmen] aber auch im HR-Bereich und deshalb scheint mir das nicht so notwendig (04/89).

To summarize, the HR professionals constituting interview group O do not expect more-than-usual challenges in the course of expatriations. Consequently, there is also no perceived need for a specified selection process, for a closer relationship with expatriates, for the awareness of their potential and actual challenges, and for actions regarding the prevention or the support of occurring challenges.

5.1.2.2 Expatriation Approach and Practice – HR Interview Subgroup E

Approach: In contrast to interview group O, the two interviewees that are subsumed under subgroup E rate expatriate assignments differently. E stands for Extraordinary Job; and this name already points out to the interviewees' understanding of expatriations: These out-of-country jobs seem to be of particular importance for their MNCs; expatriates are the companies' keys to entering and succeeding in new markets and to accumulating intercultural know-how and experience. Since their performance is closely linked to the organizations' competitive advantage and international success, expatriates are expected to perform on a very high level; in order to ensure a proper accomplishment of assignment goals, expatriates are closely monitored while in the foreign country. In the course of their stay abroad, long-term assignees become invaluable assets to organizations whom MNCs benefit from even as they return to the home base.

In aller Regel ist es so, dass die Wiedereingliederung schon deswegen nicht sehr schwierig ist, weil die Leute durch den Aufenthalt ja auch an Erfahrung, Qualifikation dazu gewinnen und das auch sehr geschätzt wird. Also wir sind ein international agierendes Unternehmen mit Wurzeln hier in [Ort] und diese internationale Erfahrung das hat in den letzten Jahren sehr geboomt. Also der ganze Bereich, wir sind immer größer geworden, immer internationaler und diese Erfahrung ist sehr viel wert; so wird es zumindest hier im Hause erlebt (06/21).

Selection: The experts constituting group E are particularly interested in their expatriates' high level of performance during their stay abroad. Therefore, like in the case of group O interviewees, the technical competencies of long-term assignment candidates are crucial for their selection; and again, the prime decision-maker is the line manager. The overall impression is, however, that the role of HR representatives is a more active and more consistent one than that depicted by group O experts. Although intercultural skills are not formally tested and the dependants are not actively included in the decision-making process, culture and family issues are considered important factors in the course of getting prepared for expatriations.

[Die Auswahl erfolgt] in erster Linie nach ihrer Erfahrung, Qualifikation. Natürlich muss ein Mitarbeiter auch bereit sein, ins Ausland zu gehen, es macht keinen Sinn, jemanden für zwei Jahre nach Singapur oder Hongkong zu schicken, der sich mit der Kultur dort, mit dem internationalen Umfeld und den Menschen dort nicht identifizieren kann oder sich dort nicht wohl fühlt. Das sind so die Grundkriterien (06/23). [...] Es gibt Interviews, zum einen im Fachbereich. Also es sind jetzt in der Regel keine Mitarbeiter, die noch nie in der Region waren üblicherweise oder noch nichts mit Leuten aus dem Bereich zu tun hatten. Sondern ja, durch die Zusammenarbeit mit den Standorten außerhalb von Österreich entstehen da schon

vorab Kontakte und man greift dann schon auf Mitarbeiter zu, die Erfahrung haben, die die Leute und das Umfeld kennen und irgendwie speziell jetzt bei längeren Entsendungen wissen, auf was würde ich mich da einlassen. Also im Fachbereich kennt man sie, weiß um deren Qualitäten und die grundsätzliche Bereitschaft und wir machen dann im HR Bereich auch noch mal ein Gespräch mit den Leuten und klären gewisse formale aber auch kulturelle Themen im Detail ab: In welche Richtung kann das gehen, was braucht der Mitarbeiter um sich wirklich so wohl zu fühlen, dass er mit gutem Gewissen hingehen kann, wie ist die familiäre Situation und alles was so an informellen, sozialen Dingen so rundherum dazugehört (06/25). [...] es ist schon mal zuerst in der Familie zu klären, macht es einen Sinn, die Familie zu lösen und woanders hin zu transferieren? Klar, also da ist von unserer Seite her niemand dabei in diesem Stadium. Danach sind wir sehr wohl eingebunden (06/41).

In Touch: Similar to their relatively dynamic part in the assessment of future expatriates, group E interviewees' put quite some effort into staying in touch with expatriates. They actively and regularly approach their assigned managers and, simultaneously, encourage them to keep the home base up-to-date on important information. The purpose of the bi-directional information flow is not only to stay informed on expatriates' current performance level. Besides that, it is intended for two additional reasons: One, to learn about expatriates' suggestions regarding the improvement of certain long-term assignment processes; and, two, to ensure that the needs and expectations of expatriates regarding their job on return can be complied with in the best possible way.

Also es gibt regelmäßig Updates wo wir dann mit den Leuten in Verbindung treten und dann mal nachfragen, wie es läuft, ob was anders organisiert gehört, ob wir was verändern sollten, das passiert alle drei bis vier Monate und ja, insofern bleibt der Kontakt auf jeden Fall aufrecht. Über die fachliche Schiene ist es in den allermeisten Fällen ohnehin notwendig, dass sich die Leute regelmäßig treffen. Es ist auch üblich, dass – in den Transfer-Guidelines ist es vorgesehen – es binnen eines Jahres ein Rückflug für die Mitarbeiter und Familie gibt, der üblicherweise für den Urlaub verwendet wird, aber wir dann daran auch ein Gespräch mit uns koppeln. Darüber hinaus ist es der Fall, dass die Leute über Dienstreisen am Standort sind, um gewisse Dinge zu klären oder sich up-zu-daten, wenn es fachlich notwendig ist – das ist die Voraussetzung (06/45).

Was wir machen hier ist, einmal im Jahr eine Runde für [Expatriates], wo wir abfragen, wie der Mitarbeiter performt und gehen dann in die Heimathäfen, das sind die Abteilungen, die den Mitarbeiter wieder aufnehmen und geben denen das Feedback aus dem Ausland, sagen der kommt in einem halben Jahr wieder, überleg dir, wo du den einsetzt. Damit die nicht in Vergessenheit geraten, das ist denk ich ne sehr wichtige Sache, weil wir ja gerne mal umstrukturieren hier und wenn jemand vier Jahre draußen ist, dann kann das passieren, ja ich will nicht sagen, dass der in Vergessenheit gerät, deswegen machen wir das einfach, damit wir ne Plattform für diese Mitarbeiter haben (02/51).

Awareness of Challenges: Due to their consistent contact with expatriates, the two interviewees think that they usually learn if difficulties occur in the course of international assignments; thus, they also seem to have a broad understanding of what can generally turn into an expatriation

challenge: the transfer of a dual career couple of whom one person has given up the job in order to accompany the expatriate, for instance. They both clearly point out, however, that private issues do normally only come to light, if there exists a personal relationship between expatriate and HR professional. Otherwise – and this is usually the case – expatriates tend to keep their personal and their family's difficulties to themselves up until a premature return seems to be the only way out.

Wenn jemand im Ausland schon ist, und es klappt gar nicht, krieg ich es eigentlich schon erst dann mit, wenn er sagt ich muss nach Hause, weil meine Ehefrau zwei Mal überfallen wurde. Und dann schauen wir, was wir tun können (02/91).

Viele Eltern wollen ihre Kinder auf eine englischsprachige Schule schicken und da klappt es dann sprachlich nicht so. Also das sind so Themen, die ich in die Privatsphäre mit hinein nehmen würde. Andere Dinge erzählen sie jetzt nicht immer (lacht) hängt auch wahrscheinlich immer vom persönlichen Verhältnis zu den Leuten ab. Manche kennt man recht gut, manche weniger gut. Je nachdem fallen dann auch die Gespräche mehr oder weniger privat aus (06/47).

Support Measures: Like the MNCs represented by group O interviewees, group E interviewees do also only provide expatriates with the standard support measure package consisting of a look & see trip, a language course, and an intercultural training. They, too, do not seem to be generally convinced of support measures' potential to prevent or deal with challenging situations. Yet, in certain cases – for instance, where managers and families are assigned to countries with obviously very different cultures – they are well aware of the usefulness of the given measures and proactively propose them to expatriates and their dependants.

Also es gibt dieses Ausreisegespräch, dieses Pre-Departure-Meeting und es gibt ein Entsendungspaket. Da ist es möglich einen Orientation-Trip zu machen, also auch mit dem Ehepartner in das Land zu reisen und sich das anzuschauen, und wenn der Ehepartner sagt, 'Oh Gott, das ist ja ganz furchtbar, das geht gar nicht', dann ist es auch okay, wenn der Mitarbeiter sagt, nein, mach ich nicht. Also gerade in exotische Länder, ich hatte gerade einen Mitarbeiter mit einer brasilianischen Frau, den wir nach Moskau entsandt haben, und da hab ich gesagt, fahren sie da vorher mit der hin, aber die fühlt sich da äußerst wohl, abgesehen von der Kälte. Dann gibt es ein Intercultural Training und es gibt auch Sprachkurse nach Bedarf. Und das Intercultural Training empfehlen wir auch sehr stark, gerade bei Ländern bei denen die Kultur sehr stark abweicht, also Asien, Südafrika (02/35).

Expatriate Coaching: Apart from the standard package and help provided to find a position in the home base upon return, however, no other preparatory, on-assignment or repatriation measures, including expatriate coaching, are available.

Ne, also es gibt keine Plattform und wir geben hier auch keine Listen raus so nach dem Motto, der war schon mal in Belgien, den kannst du anrufen. Oftmals kennen

die sich halt untereinander, aber es ist jetzt kein Automatismus oder nichts was wir anstoßen (02/83).

Es gibt keinen systematisch organisierten Know-How Transfer wo wir sagen ein Mitarbeiter, der zurückkommt betreut dann jemanden, der nachfolgt. Passiert auch, wenn wir schon wissen, es gibt wieder eine Aufgabe und die könnte ein anderer Mitarbeiter übernehmen, klar gibt es da dann Unterstützung von Leuten, die schon im Ausland tätig sind. Da versuchen wir schon auf diese Erfahrungen zu setzen. Ahm, aber es ist jetzt nicht systematisch so, dass wir den jetzt gezielt einsetzen, um Leute auf einen weiteren Auslandseinsatz vorzubereiten (06/74).

While coaching is generally offered by their companies in certain cases, the interviewees of group E themselves have never taken coaching for expatriates into consideration. Hence, they do not really have an idea of how such a measure could or should look like and under which circumstances it could be valuable.

To summarize, the companies represented by interview group E expect a high return on investment in expatriates. Therefore, they do pay attention to the suitability of people sent abroad and are interested in having them well prepared. According to their primary attention to expatriates' successful performance while abroad, however, they focus their energy on monitoring the managers' professional progress during their assignment. Should vital difficulties occur, these companies tend to accept them as natural part of the extraordinary job which could not necessarily have been avoided or cannot be alleviated through certain support measures once they exist; thus they also tend to repatriate their managers ahead of time instead of moving heaven and earth in order to prevent a premature return.

5.1.2.3 Expatriation Approach and Practice – HR Interview Subgroup E+

Approach: The attitudes and expectations towards expatriations of the two remaining interviewees – united in subgroup E+ – are akin to those of group E. Whereas E stands for Extraordinary Job only, however, E+ stands for Extraordinary Job *and* Extraordinary Challenge. Besides acknowledging the special meaning of expatriations for MNCs, namely, the interview partners of group E+ additionally allude to the extraordinary impact which such long-term assignments have on both the professional *and* the private life of expatriates. They expect even successful managers to experience more or different or simply a greater impact of challenges than they

normally would in the course of a home country assignment. Hence, they take the possibility of struggling as well as the need to approach expatriate assignments differently than other jobs for granted.

Selection: The interview partners, who represent those companies that expect expatriates to do a great job under extraordinarily challenging circumstances, stand out due to their very elaborate design of expatriation procedures. Already their assessment process of future expatriates is tailored to the specific demands which international long-term assignments are expected to make on expatriates. The interviewees of group E+ have made it particularly transparent that expatriate selection is handled with utmost care. In their organization even old-established and well-experienced managers who have proven successful are re-assessed in terms of the particular job requirements whereas special focus is put on their intercultural potential. For this purpose, a mentor is included in the selection procedure in one company while the other MNC uses an online tool that generates candidates' culture profiles. Here, the proof of previous professional capability in the course of in-country positions seems to be the precondition in order to be considered for an expatriate assignment; however, it is not nearly the 'free ticket' to an out-of-country position.

Wir machen [...] einmal im Jahr eine Mitarbeiterentwicklungsdurchsprache, über alle Angestellten weltweit mit den Vorgesetzten, [...] um zu sehen, wo ist das Potenzial der Mitarbeiter. [...] d.h. wir haben eine Datenbank vorliegen, bei der ich nachschauen kann, wo ist welches Potenzial wie vorhanden. Dann kann ich das kurz auswerten, nehme Kontakt zu den Standorten auf, kann noch mal fragen, ob das noch aktuell ist, oder ob sich schon was getan hat, hol mir noch ne Rückmeldung von den Standorten zu den Personen, auch von den Vorgesetzten, führe dann aber selber noch mal Interviews mit den Mitarbeitern um noch mal abzuklären, ob das, was wir für dieses Land benötigen, oder wo wie der Meinung sind, da könnten vielleicht doch Schwierigkeiten auftreten, um das abzuklopfen, um zu gucken, sehen wir auch das Potenzial; sind wir auch der Meinung, das ist wichtig, und wir haben derzeit auch den Grundsatz, dass wir nur Mitarbeiter entsenden, die Potenzial für die nächste Stufe haben (03/24). [...] dann wird ein Mentor festgelegt für denjenigen, der ins Ausland geht. Der führt auch noch mal ein Gespräch mit dem zu entsendenden Mitarbeiter, dann gleichen wir uns noch mal ab [Mentor und Interviewpartnerin], wenn wir denken, da hat derjenige seine Stärken, seine Lernfelder und geben das ans Ausland weiter und sagen passt da vielleicht ein bisschen auf (03/32).

Die eingehenden Bewerbungen werden, wie in einem inländischen Stellenbesetzungsprozess, analysiert und die Kandidaten anschließend nach einer ersten gemeinsamen Vorauswahl mit dem Fachbereich zu einem fachlichen Interview eingeladen (05/26). Wenn der Fachbereich der Einsatzlandgesellschaft befindet, dass die fachliche Qualifikation eines Mitarbeiters zu den Anforderungen der Position passt, durchläuft er eine Einschätzung der interkulturellen Sensibilität. Der Fokus ist hierbei auf kulturelle Besonderheiten des Ziellandes und auf überfachliche Fähigkeiten, wie z.B. Durchsetzungsvermögen, gerichtet. Zur Vorbereitung des Interviews wird jedem Kandidaten geraten, sich näher mit der Kultur des Ziellandes auseinanderzusetzen und sich im Intranet ein persönliches Kulturprofil über ein dort hinterlegtes elektronisches Tool zu erstellen (05/27).

Even partners and children seem to play a decisive role from day one. Although the degree to which the two HR professionals actively approach expatriates' dependants varies, both interviewees' statements make it clear that their organizations attach much value to the inclusion of dependants in the decision-making process.

Wenn die bei uns das Interview durchlaufen haben und ich der Meinung bin, das ist der richtige Mitarbeiter, nehme ich Kontakt mit unserer Zentralabteilung auf, die für mich den administrativen Part übernimmt. D.h., die gehen zur Zentralabteilung, haben ein Vorbereitungsgespräch und haben mit unseren Leuten, die speziell für bestimmte Länder ausgebildet sind und sich da auch wirklich auskennen, noch ein Gespräch: Was muss man da beachten, gibt es da genügend Kindergärten, wie sieht's mit der Schule aus in der Stadt. Und das passiert auch immer mit dem Partner zusammen, sofort, egal ob verheiratet oder nicht, deshalb sprechen wir auch nur noch von Partnern. Die haben da wirklich ein langes Gespräch, auch wie sieht bei uns das Vergütungsmodell aus und wer ist der Ansprechpartner im Ausland; das geht in der Regel um die 2 Stunden Minimum. Danach hat der Mitarbeiter eine Inforeise ins Ausland mit seinem Partner zusammen. Zusammen mit dem Relocation Service und der Leitung vor Ort, kriegen die den Standort vorgestellt, die Abteilung, in die sie reingehen sollen, mit Relocation Service gucken die sich um, wo könnte man vielleicht wohnen, gucken sich schon mögliche Kindergärten und Schulen an, sollen mindestens einmal einkaufen gehen, um einfach ein Gefühl zu bekommen, kann ich mir das vorstellen oder nicht. Und erst, wenn die Leute von der Inforeise zurückkommen, müssen die Leute erst ne definitive Zusage oder Absage geben, ob sie die Entsendung durchführen möchten oder nicht (03/40).

Darüber hinaus erhält der Mitarbeiter den Leitfaden 'Familien auf Auslandsentsendung' [Name geändert], der diverse Hinweise und Leitfragen enthält, die seine Familie bewegen und die durch die Auseinandersetzung damit zu einer gemeinsamen Entscheidung führen soll (05/27). In einem ersten Ausreisegespräch werden die individuellen Bedarfe erfasst und diskutiert; an diesem Gespräch können die (Ehe) Partner auf Wunsch teilnehmen (05/29).

In Touch: Similarly to the way that selection procedures are tailored to expatriations, are the procedures for keeping in touch with assignees during their stay abroad. While the organizations represented by E+ interviewees do encourage and even expect from their expatriates to actively stay in touch with the home base, also representatives from HR and technical departments have an active part in ensuring communication flow. This is a joint obligation which has already been reported by group E interviewees but is not found to such a degree in MNCs represented by interview group O where expatriations are approached from fundamentally different angles. What distinguishes the companies of E+ interviewees from the others is, however, that individual persons located in technical and HR departments are literally put in charge of staying in contact with specific expatriates. This way it can be ensured that, for example, their performance, administrative needs, repatriation issues, and well-being is being monitored on a regular base and from multiple angles, and can be

discussed with people from other departments who are responsible for keeping an eye on the same expatriate.

Wir haben in der Regel immer gut Kontakt zu den meisten [Expatriates]. Die melden sich eigentlich auch bei mir, wenn irgendetwas überhaupt nicht klappt, oder man merkt das auch am Telefon und dann fragt man halt, Mensch, was ist los, sie hören sich heute komisch an. Und wir kriegen gleichzeitig auch sehr gute Rückmeldungen aus dem Ausland von den Leitungen, die sagen, das klappt hier irgendwie nicht und der dritte Faktor, der mir auch ne Rückmeldung gibt, ist der Mentor, deswegen haben auch alle [Expatriates] einen Mentor (03/60). Ich fordere meine [Expatriates] auf, mindestens einmal im Jahr hier vorbei zu kommen [...] und die erzählen schon viel, wenn man dann auch fragt, was so das Privatleben angeht, da sind sie eigentlich unheimlich offen (03/64). Ja, und jetzt flieg ich für vierzehn Tage nach China und im Vorfeld der Reise kündige ich mich halt immer an, dass ich dann und dann komme und versuche mit allen, die in Shanghai und Beijing sind [...] auch einen Gesprächstermin zu vereinbaren (03/66). Wir haben die Pflichtquote, das Ziel, dass im Laufe der Entsendung alle Expats zu hundert Prozent ein Mitarbeiterentwicklungsgespräch haben, mit mir und ihrem Mentor, da wird geguckt, wohin soll die Reise gehen, was stellt er sich mittel- und langfristig vor, wo sind seine Stärken und Lernfelder, was kann aus unserer Sicht eine mögliche Perspektive sein und da werden auch Absprachen und Maßnahmen festgehalten. Das sollte spätestens bis zwölf Monate vor der Rückkehr erfolgt sein, dann fangen wir an, mit dem Mitarbeiter und dem Mentor eine geeignete Anschlussstelle in der Heimat zu finden. Wir haben das Ziel, dass acht Monate vor Rückkehr mindestens fünfzig Prozent der Expats bereits ihre Anschlussaufgabe kennen und vier Monate vor Rückkehr müssen mindestens achtzig Prozent die Anschlussaufgabe definiert haben. Aber wir erfüllen es derzeit nach wie vor über (03/92).

Sobald sich ein Mitarbeiter und der Fachbereich der Einsatzlandgesellschaft geeinigt haben, wird von [...] der zentralen Abteilung für internationale Mitarbeiterereinsätze, die Orientierungsreise organisiert und die Reintegrationszusage eingeholt, ohne die kein Vertrag ausgestellt wird. Eine Reintegrationszusage ordnet einen Mitarbeiter eindeutig einem bestimmten Fach- und Personalbereich im Heimatland zu. Auf Basis dieser Zuordnung stellt [die Abteilung für internationale Mitarbeiterereinsätze] eine regelmäßige Kommunikation mit den Reintegrationsfach- und Personalbereichen im Heimatland sicher, um die Berücksichtigung von Mitarbeitern während ihres internationalen Einsatzes in Planungs- und Entwicklungsprozessen der Heimatbereiche zu ermöglichen. Mitarbeiter im internationalen Einsatz erhalten darüber hinaus einmal jährlich einen Heimflug, damit sie mit ihrem Fachbereich im Heimatland Kontakt halten können und insgesamt die Gelegenheit zur aktiven Netzwerkpflege nutzen (05/28). Auf Basis der Ebene im Heimatland sowie der Performance im Einsatzland, werden Einkommensgrundlagen und gegebenenfalls Personalentwicklungsschritte geplant und einmal jährlich in Abstimmung mit den zuständigen Fachbereichen im Heimatland überprüft (05/32). Die [Abteilung für Mitarbeiterereinsätze] führt halbjährlich einen Planungsprozess zur Aktualisierung der Einsatzdaten der Mitarbeiter im internationalen Einsatz durch. So haben die Gesellschaften Gelegenheit, für einen Teil dieser Mitarbeiter bereits rückgemeldete Einatzdaten zu aktualisieren, falls sich etwas zum letzten Planungsstand geändert haben sollte (05/35).

Awareness of Challenges: The formalized communication flow appears to have a great influence on the awareness of expatriation challenges on behalf of HR professionals. In sharp contrast to the remaining four interviewees, those representing group E+ seem to be even up-to-date in

regard to expatriates' private issues. Since their companies acknowledge that long-term assignments also challenge expatriates' private life, their personal well-being is part of MNCs' and, in particular, of HR professionals' responsibility. As already stated by group E interviewees, a personal relationship between HR representatives and expatriates seem to be the precondition for an exchange on a more private level.

Wir haben da schon die Auffassung, dieses Thema Work-Life-Balance und für uns ist auch wichtig, dass der Mitarbeiter nicht nur sein Berufsleben sieht, sondern auch sein Privatleben. Wir wollen keine Leute haben, die sagen, ich will nur noch Karriere machen und es ist mir egal, was mein Partner zu Hause macht, sondern wir fragen schon immer wieder nach, weil es nicht unser Interesse ist, die Leute einzeln zurück zu holen, sondern wieder als geschlossene Familie (03/70). [...] Ich glaub, da ergibt sich im Vorfeld eine Beziehung. Ich merke das auch ganz stark, die Leute, die ich praktisch übernommen habe von meinem Vorgänger, die ich persönlich nicht entsendet habe, bei denen hat es deutlich länger gedauert, oder ich hab bis heute eigentlich nicht so die Beziehung, weil man sich nur zwei Mal kennen gelernt hat. Die Leute, die ich persönlich entsendet habe, zu denen hab ich ne ganz andere Beziehung, weil man von denen natürlich ganz viel Privates weiß, welche Ängste davor geherrscht haben, mit der Familie, mit dem Partner, welche Schwierigkeiten es gab, ob der Partner mitgehen wollte oder nicht, das ist komplett anders. Und die rufen hier natürlich deutlich häufiger an und sagen, sie brauchen mal irgendwie grade ein offenes Ohr (03/80).

Support Measures: When it comes to the availability and practice of support measures, interview group E+ stands out once more. Among others, they also provide the standard support measure package; yet, in a very different manner than reported by the interviewees of the other two groups. The two E+ interviewees are convinced of the usefulness of the support measures' availability in their company. Therefore, they do not only proactively point out their existence to expatriates-to-be but even suggest that they make use of them.

[...] da hab ich eigentlich eher das Gefühl, die Leute fragen manchmal nach, manchmal trauen sie sich auch nicht [nach Unterstützungsmaßnahmen] zu fragen und sind total glücklich, wenn man sagt, 'Mensch, haben Sie eigentlich schon mal darüber nachgedacht, wäre das für Sie nicht eine sinnvolle Alternative?' (03/57).

As a consequence, some measures are thus already treated as obligatory 'must haves' rather than as optional 'can haves'. The participation in a preparatory intercultural training, for example, is a next to natural step in the course of getting ready for a long-term stay abroad.

In jedem Fall gibt es für alle Mitarbeiter ein interkulturelles Training, je nach Land sogar spezifisch darauf ausgelegt (05/30).

Also wenn einer auf die Vorbereitung verzichtet, dann knirscht es gewaltig mit der Frau [Interviewpartnerin], zu hundert Prozent wird es durchgeführt. [...] da finden sich immer genügend Leute, für bestimmte Lehrgänge, das ist gar kein Problem. Das liegt natürlich auch einfach an der Größenordnung [des Unternehmens] (03/72).

Even the standard support measures, however, are not necessarily provided in one and the same manner. After the skills as well as needs and expectations of assignees and their dependants have been grasped, the practice and contents of support measures are tailored to the very situation and particularities of their recipients.

Wenn die Zusage erfolgt ist, dann beginnt die Maschinerie zu laufen. Die werden mit ihrem Partner zusammen angemeldet für ein interkulturelles Seminar, das geht über mehrere Tage. Dann gucken wir das Thema Sprache an und zwar nicht nur für unseren Mitarbeiter sondern für die ganze Familie. Also wir haben letztes Jahr jemanden entsendet, da waren die Kinder von null bis elf, vier Stück, und auch seine Frau konnte relativ wenig Englisch, und da haben wir ein halbes Jahr vorher mit dem Sprachtraining angefangen, wobei dann der Sprachlehrer zu der Frau nach Hause gekommen ist, um das auch zu Hause mit der Frau, mit den Kindern spielerisch relativ früh zu beginnen (03/42).

Apart from the proactive, partially obligatory, and tailored handling of standard support, it is also to mention that the organizations represented by E+ interviewees offer a variety of additional measures covering the pre-departure, early-assignment as well as repatriation phase. Formally created platforms where expatriates and new host country employees or expatriates and repatriates can exchange information, for example, are used to accelerate the transfer of know-how within the MNC. A repatriation workshop which both organizations present to returned expatriates is supposed to help digest and use the foreign country experience as well as to provide help around reverse culture shock issues.

[...] der Exchange Workshop [Name geändert] ist ein eintägiger Workshop, da geht es darum, die Erwartungen der Mitarbeiter [im Ausland] abzuholen, wo sind die Schwierigkeiten, wo brennt es schon immer, dass die [zukünftige Expatriates und MitarbeiterInnen im Ausland] sich gegenseitig auf eine angenehme Art und Weise kennen lernen und dass der Vorgesetzte ein Gefühl bekommt, wo brennen gerade die Themen, wo könnte es gefährlich sein und wo sollte ich nicht hinein laufen (03/51).

Der Austausch klappt extrem gut, einmal informell [...], dann geb' ich denen [zukünftigen Expatriates] auch die Namen [von bereits entsandten Kollegen], die wenden sich dann meistens direkt an sie. Und was ich oft mitbekomme ist, dass die sich dann verabreden und der eine führt den anderen am Standpunkt herum, zeigt dem mal Shanghai, so wie er die Stadt kennen gelernt hat; es gibt auch ein Forum für Rückkehrer, in dem die sich als Ansprechpartner zur Verfügung stellen (03/110).

Nach ihrer Rückkehr besteht für die Mitarbeiter die Möglichkeit, ein Rückkehrerseminar zu besuchen. Dieses Seminar wird angeboten für Rückkehrer einschließlich ihres begleitenden Lebenspartners, die seit ca. zwei bis vier Monaten eine Tätigkeit in Deutschland aufgenommen haben. Es ist gedacht als Plattform, um eigene Erfahrungen kognitiv und emotional aufzuarbeiten. Dabei wird betrachtet, wie die internationalen Erfahrungen und das Know-How wertschöpfend für das Unternehmen und die eigene persönliche und berufliche Entwicklung genutzt und eingesetzt werden können. Zusätzlich dient es der Stabilisierung der Mitarbeiter und ihrer Familien durch gegenseitigen Austausch mit anderen Rückkehrern und durch

die Vermittlung der relevanten psychologischen Faktoren, die für eine erfolgreiche Rückgliederung wichtig sind (05/37).

Expatriate Coaching: Moreover, also expatriate coaching is available. Both companies have initially implemented it as a complementary measure to already existing pre-departure offers. It is practiced as an exclusive personnel development instrument limited to top management executives who are expected to face challenging circumstances and/or duties.

Leitende Führungskräfte erhalten ein spezielles Coaching zur Vorbereitung auf die veränderte Führungssituation in einem fremden Land (05/30).

In sehr schwierigen Fällen, bei denen wir uns sicher sind, dass die Entsendung schwierig werden kann, bekommen die Leute bereits im Vorfeld einen Coach an die Seite gereicht, der mit denen im Vorfeld bespricht, worauf sollten sie achten, was sollten sie machen und sie während der ersten Wochen und Monate im Ausland begleitet, das wird dann manchmal über Videokonferenz gemacht, oder über Telefonkonferenz und damit versuchen wir den Wechsel ins Ausland zu begleiten, machen wir aber nicht durchgängig bei jedem, ist glaub ich auch nicht auf jeder Stelle notwendig (03/51).

As the second quote shows, the preparatory coaching in this organization consists of several sessions that also cover expatriates' initial on-assignment period. In contrast, the other interviewee states that the expatriate coaching offer is limited to one session only; but expatriates can make use of four additional sessions. For those, however, they need to find themselves a sponsor in the host country. Due to this special condition, so the experience of the interviewee, these four extra sessions are hardly ever made use of.

According to the statements of the two interview partners, these preparatory coachings encourage future expatriates to imagine how their first weeks and months in the foreign country – or, following the second interview partner, the first one-hundred days – could and should look like. By trying to create a picture of the initial period abroad, thoughts on potential duties, potential key players, potential opportunities, potential challenges and more are triggered. This way, expatriates are expected to identify where possible pitfalls hide, in which areas they are still lacking information, where they can receive more input (e.g., from other expatriates or host country employees who are familiar with the history and currently ongoing procedures in the foreign subsidiary), and so forth. Besides, the pre-departure sessions are also meant to prevent expatriates from making mistakes as they enter a different cultural environment. In that expatriates are supposed to share their planned initial steps with their coach, their intended behavior and overall leadership style is examined in regard to the particularities of the foreign culture. Potentially culture-inadequate behavior or behavior that might bear certain risks when

displayed in the country of assignment can thus be discovered 'in time' and can hence be reconsidered in terms of its necessity, dangers, possible alternatives, etc. To summarize, within the expatriate coaching sessions introduced by the two interviewed HR professionals, coachees are asked to start anticipate and plan their very first steps abroad under supervision of a skilled host country specialist which is supposed to make them more effective within a shorter period of time upon arrival. Thus, coaching's potential as pre-departure measure can be described as 'effectiveness accelerator' ("Wechsel-Beschleuniger", 05/20).

Yet, apart from using expatriate coaching as a preparatory measure, one interviewee reports that her organization also uses it to support expatriates while they are abroad struggling.

Es wird immer mehr nachgefragt, auch wenn wir merken, dass Führungskräfte extreme Probleme im Ausland bekommen, da haben wir auch gerade einen Fall extrem, bei dem wir sagen, der ist absolut an der emotionalen Belastbarkeitsgrenze, und versuchen das jetzt noch mal mit einem Coach irgendwie auf die Reihe zu bekommen (03/57).

She also knows that personal topics tend to be part of these coaching sessions, but stresses that it is for professional issues only that coaching is initially offered to expatriates. Apart from its primary purpose of decreasing uncertainty, identifying pitfalls, preventing expatriates from making mistakes, and thus to ensure an accelerated degree of effectiveness, expatriate coaching also fulfills the purpose of helping expatriates recover from difficult phases during their stay abroad.

Both interviewees are convinced of the concept's promising potential although their companies have not been offering expatriate coaching for very long. They each receive direct feedback from expatriates and collect evaluation sheets filled out by expatriates after the coaching relationship has been terminated. One interviewee reports that she perceives the measure as 'useful' ("sinnvoll", 05/19). Since coaching, namely, is tailored to the individual expatriate, i.e., to the person, the professional situation, the country, the specific challenge, it ensures that expatriates are well-prepared for challenging out-of-country assignments. As a consequence of the successful implementation of preparatory expatriate coaching, the interviewee's MNC is now about to introduce coaching for repatriates and a coaching program is also planned for inpatriates. The other interviewee emphasizes that for coaching to be effective it is a precondition that the coach is familiar with the coachee's future host country.

Beim Ausland muss man aufpassen, dass es Leute [Coaching Anbieter] sind, die das Land auch kennen (03/117).

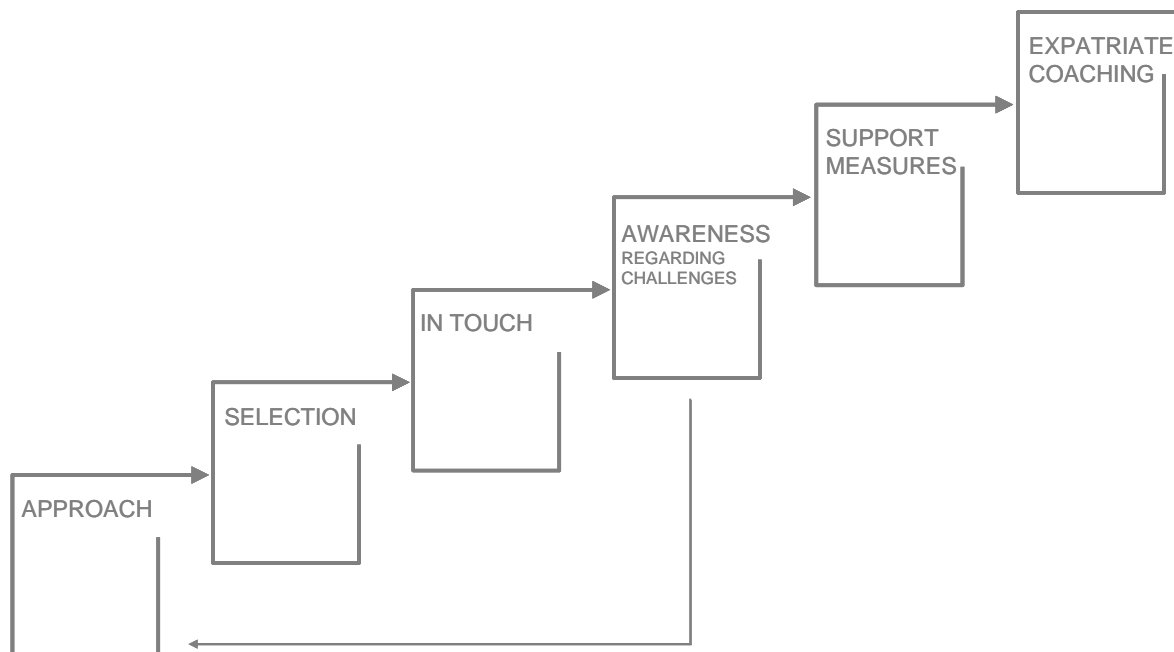
Then, so her experience, coaching can really make a difference; in that it contributes to making expatriates aware of culture specificities and to implementing their strategies in a host culture adequate and thus more successful way.

Ja, [wir bekommen] extrem gute Rückmeldungen. Die Leute waren ganz begeistert. Es gibt viele Sachen, die auch ein bisschen länderspezifisch sind, an die wir auch nicht gedachten hätten, ich auch nicht, ich war auch ganz überrascht, es ist immer natürlich abhängig von der speziellen Situation, aber ich war jetzt gerade letzte Woche in Madrid und der Mitarbeiter wurde von einem Coach begleitet zur Entsendung [...]. Und der sagte, er wäre sehr skeptisch gewesen, weil der Coach gesagt hätte, am ersten Tag, bring Wein mit, Schinken, Käse, stell das dahin und halt ne tolle Antrittsrede und er erzählte mir, er hätte fast keine Zeit gehabt um das alles einzukaufen, denn er wusste noch nicht mal so richtig wo, und er sagte mir aber, es wäre der Volltreffer gewesen. Und er war ganz froh, weil er dadurch einen schönen Einstieg gehabt hatte. In Brasilien hatten wir andere Sachen. Mit so einer Kleinigkeit eigentlich, erleichtern wir den Leuten da rein zu kommen. Und dann werden aber mit dem Coach die schwierigen Situationen auch weiterhin besprochen (03/53).

To conclude, those companies that expect a lot from the performance of expatriates *and* acknowledge the heightened impact of expatriations on managers' professional and private lives, seem to have an increased sense of responsibility for this employee group. They have developed custom-made expatriation procedures which are meant to ensure that selection, preparation, on-assignment communication and support as well as repatriation takes place on a comparatively sophisticated level, and that long-term assignments thus turn into positive and enriching adventures for expatriates and their dependants.

5.1.3 The Practice and Potential of Expatriate Coaching

The analysis of HR interview data shows that there is a connection between how expatriations are approached by HR professionals, their degree of familiarity with the expatriate coaching practice, and their perception of the measure's potential; a connection that can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 28: Link between Expatriation Approach and Expatriate Coaching

The more companies and HR professionals regard expatriate assignments as demanding undertaking which may even challenge demonstrably successful professionals, the more complex are the selection procedures of potential expatriate candidates and the higher is the probability that their dependants are actively included in the decision-making process. The more elaborate the assessment process, the greater is the chance that HR representatives are urged to and even feel responsible for staying in touch with internationally assigned employees. The greater and more personal the communication flow between expatriates and home-based company members then, the higher chances are that long-term assignment challenges come to light; which in turn positively influences the perception that expatriations are more special in some regards than national assignments. Now, the larger the degree to which expatriations are experienced as exceptional and exceptionally difficult tasks, the more support measures tend to be provided, the greater is the chance that HR professionals believe in their usefulness for expatriates, the higher the probability that they are more proactively suggested to potential recipients, and the more probable that they even tend to obtain individualized and obligatory character. Finally also, the conviction that additional support measures – including expatriate coaching – could be a valuable offer and should be offered to expatriates is likelier to develop.

5.2 Research Results – Interviews with Expatriates

In the following subchapters, the (potential) recipients of expatriate coaching, expatriates, are given a voice. While some of them do have first-hand expatriate coaching experience and thus have been able to recall the experienced practice and perceived potential of the measure in the dialogues with the researcher, all of them have been gaining personal long-term assignment experience in China. They all, therefore, have collected a valuable stock of information that affords an insight into the perceived benefits and challenges of expatriate lives as well as into the availability, reach, and limitation of support measures – accumulated pieces of experience from which their understanding of the practicability and imagined potential of expatriate coaching evolves. Hence, before illustrating expatriates' experienced and imagined practice and potential of expatriate coaching, their view of expatriations is disclosed in the second subchapter. Subchapter one introduces some specificities of the fourteen interviewees.

5.2.1 Characterization of Expatriate Interview Partners

Who are the people who go on long-term assignments? Where do they come from and what kind of background do they have? Are they the high-potential bachelors or married fathers? The subsequent paragraph provides an insight into some characteristics of the interviewed expatriates.

Gender and Age: The entire expatriate interview group is male. Twelve are aged between twenty-six and fifty, whereas the majority of interviewees is between thirty-one and forty-five years old at the time of the interview. The age of two persons has not been recorded. **Nationality:** All fourteen expatriate interviewees are European but stem from a variety of countries. Whereas five interviewees are German and three are Austrian, only one person each is from France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. **Education:** Twelve expatriates have an academic background in business, chemistry, engineering, or physics; three of them have earned a doctoral degree. The remaining two interview partners have either gone through commercial or technical vocational training. **Expatriation Experience:** At the time of the interview, twelve expatriates are in the middle of their assignment; one has just returned to his home base; and one is in the transition to a new assignment within

China – it is going to be his fourth expatriation. For the majority of interviewees, for ten people, their long-term stay in China is their first expatriate assignment. Three have already gone through another expatriation before. **Acquaintance with China and the Chinese Language:** Only two expatriates had spent expansive periods in Asia and China, respectively, before deciding to be expatriated to China. Whereas four knew their host location from previous business trips, most interviewees had never been to Asia for professional reasons prior to their look & see trip. None of the fourteen interview partners had sound Chinese language skills before relocating to China. **Marital Status:** Eight people moved to their host location in China together with their wife and child or children. Three went on assignment together with their wife, two with their girlfriend, and one as a single.

5.2.2 Introduction to Expatriate Challenges and Support Measures

Expatriate lives are exclusive lives; and as expatriates' interview data show, exclusive in a twofold sense: Very obviously, they are exclusive in that they provide luxurious lifestyles and unique opportunities. Huge apartments with great view, invaluable quality of international schools, enriching get-togethers with personalities from all over the world, unique chances for career development, and power and status within the company are part and parcel of most long-term assignments. Yet, expatriate lives are also exclusive in a different, more literal sense of the term: they do not allow for many of the amenities which have characterized the professional and private lifestyle of people preceding their expatriations. Hence, the lack of used-to support from colleagues and friends, alarming environmental and health conditions, the implications of the language barrier, the loss of opportunities and time for recreation, and constant attention and pressure from management boards are just as much reality of expatriations as are its benefits; with one difference: The discomfort and surrender connected to long-term assignments are much more hidden than its positive side – and not only to those who make their contracts and to those who become their new employees; to a great extent the negative aspects are even invisible to expatriates themselves until they gradually enter expatriates' lives in the course of their assignments. Expatriations bring with them a tremendous gain on the professional, financial, and to some extent also on the private life side. But they are an unthinkable sacrifice as well; and one that according to expatriates can no longer be offset by financial goodies.

In order to get a better understanding of the downside of long-term assignments and to later see where expatriates' appreciation of support measures comes in, the following chapter looks into characteristic challenges of expatriations as reported by sojourners; they are a mix of professional and private issues covering the entire assignment life cycle.

5.2.2.1 Expatriates' Understanding of Challenges

Chapter 3.2, Facing Expatriate Challenges, has introduced a number of so-called expatriation hurdles as discussed in the international assignment literature: These are challenges around

- work-life balance,
- losing and establishing social networks,
- acculturation,
- partner and family well-being,
- intercultural communication,
- leadership, and
- repatriation.

When comparing the academic input to the collected expatriate data, it can be said that all seven theoretically dealt with issues have been playing decisive roles in the long-term assignment experience of the interviewed expatriates. What results from the analysis of interview material apart from this is, however, that a plain enumeration of these different expatriation challenge types does not do justice to the width and depth in which difficulties tend to manifest themselves in the course of expatriates' assignment life cycles. Besides confirming the prevalence of the seven mentioned hurdles, the collected data show that challenges already occur in the pre-departure stage of assignments, that many challenges and their impact are not expected, that challenges tend to occur simultaneously, and that most of them accompany the whole expatriation or at least keep recurring in various stages. Thus, what characterizes expatriate challenges beyond the diversity of occurring issues per se, is

- the prematureness of expatriation challenges,
- unforeseen challenges and the unexpectedly strong impact of challenges,
- the simultaneousness of various challenges, and
- the continuity and recurrence of challenges.

The Prematureness of Expatriation Challenges: First of all, expatriation challenges do not only start to crop up once managers and their dependants have arrived in the host location. Often, they actually already start with learning about the mere option to go abroad. Right away, many expatriates feel pressure from the company to quickly make their decision for or against the long-term assignment opportunity; the only chance most of them probably ever get.

I got this call and I was not very enthusiastic but actually this was a single chance for me and I still believe that if in a company you say no, you are out of the pipeline (24/55). [...] All the pressure was really there. They told me if you do not accept, do not ask anymore (24/57).

And simultaneously there is the realization that the impact of the option they are considering is not restricted to their professional life only. For all candidates, but especially for those with partners and children, whether or not to go is also a joint private life decision: It necessitates that the possibilities and restrictions of living in the foreign country are explored, evokes in-depth considerations about the worthiness and tolerability of giving up the present lifestyle, and leads to the one or the other serious resolution; a premature marriage, for instance.

Und dann hat sie 'Ja' gesagt, wobei das immer etwas ist, wo man, man bekommt dann nicht so ganz mit, was sich da abspielt im Kopf vom Partner. Es ist natürlich, einen Beruf anzunehmen ist das eine, aber sagen wir für den Partner etwas aufzugeben, also für den, der mitgeht, ist das nicht so leicht. Und da passiert im Hintergrund, da passieren oft Sachen, die kriegt man als Expat nicht mit. Also was da durch den Kopf des Partners geht (20/24). [...] Also für sie ist das insofern auch schwierig gewesen, weil wir noch nicht verheiratet waren und wir dann eigentlich auch gesagt haben, die erste Zeit wollen wir nicht heiraten, wir haben gesagt wir möchten nicht das als Grund sehen, dass wir heiraten, es sollte andere Gründe geben und durch das hat sie nicht gewusst, wenn es mit Hong Kong nicht klappt bzw. mit uns nicht klappt, was passiert dann mit ihr? Sie hat jetzt einen guten Job, verdient jetzt ein gutes Geld, ist glücklich mit dem, was sie tut, ahm, und gibt alles auf. Und wenn sie wieder zurückkommt, was passiert dann mit ihr? Das hat sich insofern dann auch ein bisschen geändert als dass wir dann doch geheiratet haben (20/51, 53).

Another difficulty involved in this stage, so expatriates, is that it can never be fully anticipated what that new life abroad will be like; the decision-making and pre-departure phase of long-term assignments are hence usually characterized by a fair amount of uncertainty in regard to whether the 'right' decision has been made, both career-wise and private-wise.

[...] ich habe doch relativ große Kinder, also ich hab keine kleinen Kinder, die man – bitte nicht falsch verstehen – es hat eine andere Qualität einen dreizehn- und einen sechzehn-jährigen zu verpflanzen als einen drei- und einen sechs-jährigen (22/7). [...] Es ist für beide Altersklassen schwierig, aber ihr Anspruch an das Umfeld ist anders (22/9). [...] Der sechzehn-jährige [...] spielt Spitzenfußball in der Schweiz mit und das muss er aufgeben (22/11). [...] der andere ist im Tennis sehr gut; er spielt Geige, er liebt Zeichnen, Kunst, Theater – haben wir das Umfeld? D.h. es waren

zwei, drei Monate, wo die Kontakte nach China gegangen sind; was ist überhaupt in Shanghai? (22/15). [...] Aber es ist äußerst schwierig, es ist äußerst schwierig, sich ein Bild zu machen, ist es, kannst du damit das Bedürfnis eines Teenagers, von dem man doch nicht so richtig weiß, was er möchte manchmal, decken oder nicht? (22/21).

Finally, it is also the strain related to relocating itself that impacts the lives of future expatriates and their families before their assignment has officially started; it can be understood as foretaste of the work-life balance challenges to come.

[...] ich war von Mai, Anfang Mai dann schon unten gewesen [in China] und d.h. sechs Wochen von der Familie getrennt, d.h. meine Frau musste alles, musste dann die Abschlusssachen machen [...] ich glaub wir hatten noch den Container zusammen voll geladen mit dem Zügelunternehmen und dann bin ich runter, dann war mal die Wohnung [in der Schweiz] leer, dann ging es drum, wo kommen sie unter; Familie usw. zur Familie, also wir sind ja aus Deutschland ursprünglich, also ist das auch noch mal ne Distanz von vier, fünf Fahrstunden und, ah, dann natürlich, ah, das ist natürlich eine Zeit vier bis sechs Wochen, die dann sehr lang wird. Also die Wohnung ist im Prinzip aufgelöst, Frau und Kinder noch da, müssen irgendwo unterkommen provisorisch und kommen dann nach, also sind von daher schon nervlich angespannt, kommen dann in eine neue Umgebung und die Wohnung oder das kleine Haus, das wir da hatten, ein bisschen außerhalb von Hong Kong war noch nicht in dem Zustand, dass man da wohnen konnte und es stand auch noch längere Zeit leer dann vorher und, ah, das, da gab es dann sehr, sehr viel zu tun, also das war nervlich schon sehr aufreibend (18/40).

It appears to be due to the far-reaching decisions that expatriates and their dependants make in the pre-assignment stage, due to the load of organizational efforts caused by such a transfer, and due to the pressure and uncertainty accompanying this assignment stage that many expatriates have already gone through a strenuous period once they are hit by those challenges that have made it into the existing assignment literature.

Unforeseen Challenges and the Unexpectedly Strong Impact of Challenges: Expatriations do not only trigger an abundance of challenges, they seem to trigger 'the unexpected'. Unless expatriates have not personally experienced the particularities of operating in a foreign market, of communicating with people who have a different cultural background, of living far away from their used-to support net and more, they are barely able to grasp that a different location can cause such an alteration of work- and private life-related conditions, so the tenor of experienced expatriates. Several interviewees recall, for instance, that it came as a shock to them when they realized that they were no longer able to independently monitor their own work-life balance; resulting from the lack of suitable conversation partners, from the lack of family- and friendship-related obligations that have been a matter of course in the home country, from the lack of used-to opportunities to recharge their batteries, and also due to the combination

of enormous work load, management attention, personal ambition, and more, they entirely focused their attention on their professional role – which at least in one case came to a bad end.

[...] es kommen immer Warnungen aber mir passiert das doch nicht. Jung, gesund und stark (lacht). Man übersieht es dann relativ schnell, ja, das würd ich sagen (21/82). [...] Ahm, ich persönlich bin noch am glimpflichsten davon gekommen mit Schlafstörungen, zwei andere haben Schlaganfälle gehabt, insofern, self-awareness ist glaub ich etwas, das man dann lernt; es gibt niemanden, der einen vor solch einer Situation beschützen kann als man selbst. [...] Insofern ist das etwas, wo man in China oder zumindest als Expat leichter hinein fällt, weil man aus dem Freundeskreis und dem schützenden Umfeld quasi herausgerissen wird, das einen ja immer wieder auffängt und dann auch sehr viel leichter in eine Situation hinein rutscht, in der man immer mehr arbeitet, mehr arbeitet, weil man eigentlich keinen Grund hat, nach Hause zu gehen. Es sind ja keine Freunde da, man hat keine Kontakte usw., zumindest anfangs ist die Situation so. Also insofern, das ist etwas, das relativ leicht passieren kann (21/84).

The unexpectedly strong impact of cultural differences is another and one of the primary sources of astonishment for expatriates. The majority of interviewees report a feeling of paralysis when finding that what they believed – and have even experienced – to be adequate and effective elements of their leadership style can have such an undesired and hindering effect under different circumstances. And for many it is part of the harsh reality of their international assignment that it took them a great deal of trial and error before they were able to figure out new effective ways of approaching basic working life situations.

[...] wenn ich mein eigenes Verhalten reflektiere, speziell mein Führungsverhalten im ersten halben Jahr, dann sind mir tatsächlich einige Fehler bewusst, die vermeidbar gewesen wären. Hier in China, speziell in China ist es sehr wichtig, das Gesicht nicht zu verlieren. In Europa ist es ganz normal in einem Team, eine Review zu machen der Action Items oder die Aufgaben, die man einem Mitarbeiter gegeben hat und, das würde im Normalfall einmal in der Woche in einem Team mit einer Liste passieren und man geht da die Items durch, der entsprechende Mitarbeiter macht das Follow-Up, ist das bei dir passiert, ja oder nein, warum ist es nicht passiert, warum auch immer. In China ist das ein riesen Affront. Und am ersten Tag wie ich kam, hab ich meine Liste schon fertig gehabt und hab das Team eingeladen, weil ich das einfach so gewohnt war. Mir ist dann nach zwei, drei Wochen aufgefallen, es funktioniert nicht und ich hab dann intuitiv damit begonnen, im Team quasi nur die Dinge zu besprechen, die das ganze Team betreffen und mit den Mitarbeitern individuell gewisse Reviews zu machen. Und seit dem funktioniert es besser (21/40).

The Simultaneousness of Various Challenges: Another specificity of expatriate challenges is that they tend to occur simultaneously, complementing and reinforcing each other. Especially in the early-assignment stages when gradually realizing the wealth of changes caused by their transfer, expatriates tend to feel swamped by duties and deprived of solutions both in professional and private respect. The mixture of endless to-do lists, speechlessness, difficulties on behalf of family members,

frustration, inefficiency, pressure, and helplessness has, however, been found to cover the whole assignment cycle of expatriates. Yet, its impact seems to slightly decrease during the later stages: then, the plurality of challenges has become a 'normal' component of expatriates' life abroad, more adequate strategies of approaching them have been developed, and the first wave of inconsistencies has been digested.

Für mich die große Herausforderung war, dass alles anders gewesen ist, wie man es sich erwarten kann. Im Job selbst, [...] alles, was du als selbstverständlich erachtet hast in deinem Team oder am Telefon, funktioniert nicht mehr. Du machst, du sagst, ich möchte das und das haben, es wird gemacht, aber nicht so, wie du es möchtest. Du kannst nicht kommunizieren mit den Leuten, die einen Fehler machen, weil sie kein Englisch können, also auch die Sprachbarriere ist, du bist abhängig von gewissen Leuten, die kommunizieren können, du bist abhängig von Informationen, die sie dir geben, Information ist ein kostbares Gut in China, sie benutzen das auch. Also du fühlst dich eigentlich recht hilflos, also ich hab mich eigentlich recht hilflos gefühlt am Anfang; ich weiß, was ich will, wie ich es tun will, ich weiß, dass ich es kann, aber ich kann es nicht umsetzen. [...] Und ich hatte diese Position und ihre Erwartung war, dass ich habe dann einfach einen Katalog mit Problemen bekommen in dem ganzen Betrieb, wo es mich irgendwie umschlägt. Also das ist dann erschwerend dazu gekommen, also das ganze Umfeld ist doch recht, es ist zu lange in die falsche Richtung gelaufen und es braucht einfach gleich lange, um es wieder zurück zu bringen. Und du hast die Zeit nicht. [...] Ein riesen Druck. Und du kennst auch das System nicht, du weißt nicht, wie sie arbeiten und du musst das raus finden und du hast sechs Wochen Zeit und einfach all die Sachen und du musst ein System präsentieren, wie du das managt innerhalb von sechs Wochen und weißt nicht. [...] Und erschwerend war einfach, dass die Familie, die Frau kein Englisch, die Kinder kein Englisch, in die Schule, der Strom funktioniert nicht, die Heizung funktioniert einmal nicht, sie kann mit dem Agenten nicht kommunizieren, die im Büro unten können kein Englisch, nur Chinesisch und da bist du immer wieder mit einem Fuß am Telefon, wo du noch versuchst, sonst irgendwas zu organisieren, dass du den Druck von ihnen wegnehmen kannst oder, die ersten drei Monate waren schon happig. (22/55, 57).

The Continuity and Recurrence of Challenges: A further particularity of expatriation challenges is that many appear to be ongoing; they either cover several stages of the assignment life cycle or simply keep recurring. A continuous challenge of Westerners in China, for example, seems to be communication with host country nationals. Since many expatriates are not able to speak more than the so-called 'taxi Chinese', essential in order to at least get from point A to point B, they continuously face the difficulty of making their point in regard to very basic issues. Constant limitation of everyday life communication can turn into a real source of frustration and can have a serious impact on personal well-being.

Kommunikation ist eine Katastrophe [...] (19/44). [...] Man muss sich einfach bewusst sein, hier in Shanghai, das hast du jetzt nach drei Monaten auch mitbekommen, es ist eine andere Kultur, man kann mit den Leuten nicht reden, man bekommt nicht die Information, man geht einkaufen, man wird ums Ohr gehauen, egal wo man hingeht, sobald man eine lange Nase hat oder die Sprache nicht kann wissen die genau, dass sie machen können, was sie wollen, [...]. Das sind dann eigentlich Frustrationsmomente, die aufkommen, wo man einfach nicht mehr kann. In China ist

ein riesen Thema, dass man über alles diskutieren muss und nichts sofort kriegt und beim einkaufen musst du verhandeln und irgendwann hat man einfach die Nase voll und will einfach irgendwo hin gehen und das und das einkaufen (19/209). [...] Und als ich das erste Mal wieder aus China rausgekommen bin, sind wir, meiner Frau ist das so gegangen, nach einem Jahr sind wir nach Australien gegangen und dann sind wir, das schönste Erlebnis, das wir dort hatten ist in den Supermarkt zu gehen und einfach durch die Regale durchzuschauen, ein wenig einzukaufen, aber einfach in den Supermarkt zu gehen, man hört Leute, versteht jedes Wort, man weiß, über was sie reden und ob sie über das Wetter reden oder über das, was sie am Wochenende gemacht haben und wenn es ein Sonderangebot irgendwo gibt, dass man, was weiß ich, zwei Flaschen für den Preis von einer kriegt, dann kann man das lesen und sieht das [...] und dann kann man einmal freundlich sein zu den Leuten und dann kann man auch mal einen Witz machen, und das war ein unheimliches Erlebnis, in einen Supermarkt zu gehen und Leute verstehen, freundlich sein zu den Leuten [...] abgesehen davon, dass es frische Luft gegeben hat (19/211).

Likewise, culture-related challenges also tend to be constant companions of expatriates' working lives. Even after years in the foreign country when expatriates thought they had fully grasped the host culture, new facets of cultural differences are being discovered and have to be adjusted to. And even familiar particularities of the foreign culture need to be re-brought to awareness when planning strategies and interventions that exceed professional everyday life activities. There is quite a temptation, so the tenor of interviewees, to first of all look at things through one's primary culture lens.

Hm, also was immer wieder ne Herausforderung ist, ist sich die kulturellen Unterschiede im Tagesprozess, im Tagesablauf äh klar zu machen, ahm, es geht wenn man längere Zeit da ist, gewöhnt man sich an gewisse Sachen, aber gewisse Sachen, äh, kommen eigentlich, gehen eigentlich nicht ins Unterbewusstsein, [...] es kommt immer wieder vor, dass man Situationen findet, wo man sich wieder bewusst machen muss, ja warte mal, der kommt aus einem chinesischen Hintergrund, der hat die und die Umgebungsbedingungen und der ist von da und da gekommen. Trotzdem man es rational weiß, dann das ganze einzubauen und dann auch richtig zu reagieren in Situationen, das ist ne Challenge würd ich sagen, die ongoing ist. Also man, im täglichen Umgang verliert man das ein bisschen und denkt 'Oh, jetzt hast du's raus!' Und es ist nicht so, du musst es dir immer wieder bewusst machen (18/135).

Apart from culture's ongoing impact on expatriates' private and professional lives also the extreme pressure resulting from the importance of expatriates' position, from the diverging attitudes that characterize their home-host country sandwich position, and from their own intention to succeed, is an omnipresent challenge and a source of considerable 'energy consumption'; and so is the constant uncertainty which most expatriates experience. Until they have not successfully repatriated, they are never really sure whether they will be able to take the next challenge and to eventually bring the assignment to a favorable close.

Sagen wir so, das Schlimmste, das ist eigentlich auch für viele Expats (lacht), viele sagen ja, 'Das schlimmste war, dass ich mich entschieden haben, hierher zu

kommen' (26/234). [...] Das ist aber immer so ein bisschen ironisch gemeint. Aber auch ein bisschen Wahrheit drin, ja? Weil jeder Expat fragt sich immer mal, 'Warum mach ich das?' Du hast so viel Druck und keiner weiß eigentlich, wie du da raus kommst. Ich mein für viele ist es ja Karriereende. Viele denken erst Karriere weiter, aber dann Ende. Und die Hälfte geht dann weiter. Da gibt es eigentlich nichts dazwischen (26/236). [...] Und deshalb sag ich, das Schlimmste ist die Frage, 'Warum bin ich gegangen?' Das ist diese Frage, die jeder Expat hat. Aber die jeder Expat auch am Ende beantworten kann, aber in der Mitte nicht (26/244).

The previous paragraphs have illustrated expatriates' understanding of assignment challenges in a way that goes beyond the mere introduction of single hurdles. The main challenge of expatriations is namely not to deal with each hurdle, so sojourners, but to deal with unexpected severe private and professional issues simultaneously, repeatedly, and under great pressure; plus in an environment where used to coping mechanisms or possibilities for recuperation are not available. Although it is eventually the interplay of these various challenges which seems to make expatriations an overwhelming experience, one challenge stands out against the others: The impact of intercultural differences on expatriates' professional progress and the difficulty to understand and to adequately deal with them is probably one of the most underrated and finally one of the greatest expatriate challenges; one that decides over success or failure. Keeping in mind expatriates' view of assignment challenges, the next chapter presents their perception regarding the use of and need for support measures.

5.2.2.2 Expatriates' Experience with Support Measures

When asked about the sources of support which expatriates were able to exploit during their expatriations, the majority of interviewees recalled their experience with the following measures:

- look & see trip,
- intercultural training,
- administrative support, and
- exchange with insiders.

Before these four prevalent factors are discussed in more detail below, it is to be mentioned at this stage that also other factors may play significant roles in the lasting commitment and perseverance of expatriates. Even though only mentioned by few interviewees, having a home port guarantee (i.e., a job at the home base even in case of premature return or assignment failure) and having developed realistic expectations towards

work and private life abroad prior to the move have both been found to have an uncertainty-reducing, reassuring, and thus supportive effect. And a very powerful source of support geared towards keeping the balance between work and life, and thus taking care of expatriates' recuperation, seems to be the presence of family members and friends.

And just for me another point related also to support. I have to say, if I would have come here alone, I would be back for a long time. I mean, my family brings me a lot of stability. Cause other way, I would work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, I mean there is no end, there is no end. And actually it is very interesting cause I am still in the learning phase. The more I invest, the more I can learn. It is very interesting, but to keep the balance is extremely challenging. And if you have a family, then you have to. And this is the, the very good thing (24/72).

Look & See Trip: The look & see trip, usually a five day trip to expatriates' future host country, has been made use of by twelve of the fourteen interviewed expatriates; and in cases where partners were intended to move to the foreign country location as well, girlfriends and wives joined the trip if compatible with their professional lives and child care requirements. The stay which was primarily used in order to explore housing and schooling options and to get familiar with the pros and cons of the foreign city, is generally viewed as vital part of the decision-making process. It contributes, so expatriates, to getting a rough idea of what life abroad could be like, to forming more realistic expectations, and to reducing some of the initial uncertainty connected to moving to an unknown place. Due to its limited time frame and restriction to a single visit, however, expatriates note that it enables first-time visitors only to catch a glimpse of one's future life but does not afford a comprehensive insight based on which profound decisions can be made or far-reaching actions can be taken. Were the trips intended to guarantee a smooth and well-prepared transition, additional visits would have to be offered, so interviewees.

Administrative Support: From their point of view, all interview partners, but one, have received extensive and sufficient administrative aid from home- and host-based HR professionals and relocation services. Besides this, several expatriates – and consequently also their partners – have experienced wide-ranging support from their personal secretary who apart from work-related issues also helped with going through the administrative machinery, registering electricity and telephone connections, organizing workmen, and the like. Since it takes burdens off expatriates' and their partners' shoulders, support geared towards the large number of vital administrative steps to be taken, is very much valued; at the latest, once the restrictions resulting from one's unfamiliarity with the host country and one's incapability of speaking the local language are being realized.

Dann gibt es natürlich eine Sekretärin, die ganz wichtig ist, denn die kann Englisch und Chinesisch und das Telefon dürfte so ziemlich das wichtigste Kommunikationsmittel sein. Wenn man dann irgendwo in der Stadt ist und nicht mehr heim findet, dann geht das halt nur in dem man die Sekretärin um zwölf in der Nacht anruft und ihr sagt, du ich stehe da, sag dem Taxifahrer ich will heim (19/116).

Intercultural Training: Given that intercultural trainings are one of the most discussed support measures for expatriates in the international assignment literature, it might come as a surprise that eight of the interviewed expatriates have not been offered any culture-general or -specific training prior or during their assignment. Four of those who had learned about the preparatory training option rejected it, either because they did not feel the need for it or because of its supposedly bad reputation. Therefore, only two out of the fourteen interviewees went through intercultural training. Based on their personal experience, these two expatriates state that the contents dealt with by trainers are in any case interesting, but relatively useless if they are not tailored to professional situations. Also, they are comparatively worthless, if not provided *after* the first few pieces of experience in the foreign country have been collected; the meaning and the impact of cultural differences, namely, can only be related to once they are literally being faced. Moreover, both expatriates stress that the potential of intercultural trainings is restricted to imparting knowledge; the development of know-how – and this is what expatriates are finally looking for – falls by the wayside.

Weil alles anders ist, man kann es nicht erleben, man kann es auch nicht fühlen. [...] Aber Asien ist einfach, man muss das erleben, man kann das nicht beschreiben, es gibt die schönen Beispiele zwischen Chinesen und Deutschen, wie das alles unterschiedlich ist, aber wenn ich das in Deutschland seh, dann kann ich damit nix anfangen, von daher. [...] Also eine coole Karikatur, da ist ein Strich und in der Mitte ist ein Problem und dann geht der Strich weiter. Der Deutsche geht dahin, geht durch das Problem durch und dann weiter. Und der Chineser geht auf das Problem zu, umrundet es und geht weiter. Und wenn man das mal im täglichen Leben erlebt, was das bedeutet und wie viele Schwierigkeiten so was macht, das ist was ganz anderes als mal das so kurz gesehen zu haben. [...] Das ist es ja, im Seminar krieg ich es gezeigt, aber was mach ich da draus? Ich weiß nicht (26/71-77).

In retrospect, all interviewees are convinced that they should have received (more) culture-related support in order to understand the actions and reactions which they have been encountering abroad. Also, they agree that training should mainly be offered in the early-assignment phase, and not in the pre-departure stage, of their assignment. Prior to experiencing the abundance and profundity of cultural differences first-hand – at least when entering the Asian world as a Westerner – one cannot adequately process culture-specific and even -general input, so their tenor.

I was certainly warned, I had no formal training coming to Hong Kong, but I read some couple of books myself on the subject, so I had some idea of there would be a difference and some idea of what it would be. But, personally, until I encountered it directly, had to deal with it, I had not realized how deeply engrained these behaviors are and how different they are (31/38).

Exchange with Insiders: Conversations with repatriates, members of the expat community, and with selected host country colleagues and employees are perceived as outstandingly helpful and even as most useful source of support, in all stages of expatriations. In the initial phase of the assignment, the exchange with these people seems particularly important as it provides hands-on advice that is necessary in order to find one's way in an unknown environment.

I found the best, again, getting to know people in the office who are in the same situation, who can give you real practical, hands-on advice about how to get things done, they, I mean people can teach you all the theory about you know why people think like Confucius or they think like, you know, in a Western way, all that stuff is academically interesting, but the harsh reality is all about where do I buy washing powder, these are the things people ask (laughs), you know, my wife [...] she could not find where to buy light bulbs. In the UK you go to a supermarket where in Hong Kong eventually someone tells you that there is a street that sells light bulbs and that is the only place in Hong Kong that sells light bulbs (31/30).

Apart from this kind of input, however, representatives of the repatriate and expatriate group are indispensable dialogue partners since they are capable of understanding the concerns of expatriates; and, essentially, understand those issues which result from intercultural differences. They can offer explanations for what expatriates are currently experiencing and why they are experiencing it; they can help expatriates identify potential pitfalls of operating abroad; and can share how they themselves would deal with or have tackled a certain culture- or expatriation-related problem. The exchange with host culture insiders can thus have a warning, enriching, and even an alleviating effect.

Then the other thing is the Suzhou community, [...], you listen to a lot of things and then you learn a lot. This is also a kind of therapy, you know, gathering around the table, you see that your problems are standard problems for China which are not the problems you would face in Europe, but this is also good to realize (24/65).

Unfortunately though, two problems are connected to the exchange with expat community members and host country colleagues/employees. To start with, the relationships to these people have first to be established. Whereas, most interviewees recall that it takes a lot of effort and time before Chinese employees open up and are ready to provide feedback, most expatriates fairly quickly make contact with community members. Still, it usually takes several weeks and months until suitable conversation partners have been found; weeks that are packed with stirring encounters,

paralyzing incidents, and lots of opportunities for making mistakes. A second problem connected is that some expatriates admit that they do not feel ready to share all their concerns with community members, colleagues or employees for reasons of discretion.

Given the mentioned problems of trust and establishing relationships, it is outstandingly striking that almost all expatriate interview partners report to have one special dialogue partner, besides those in the expatriate community or host organization, whom they fully trust. When confused or stuck, they tell this person about their current bewilderment or difficulties, knowing that they will receive immediate and useful feedback or advice. This person has been found to either be a home country boss with expatriation background, a well versed expatriate located in a different region in Asia, a mentor, an experienced father, or a professor teaching intercultural communication with a focus on China.

To summarize, it seems that most expatriates receive sufficient administrative support in regard to moving. In contrast to the formalized support of HR professionals and relocation services, however, there typically exists no address for crucial hands-on advice when it comes to settling in the host country. This need can usually be well compensated thanks to the openness and straight-forwardness of expatriate community members; and some expatriates are also lucky enough to have a personal secretary. The greatest lack of support thus seems to revolve around understanding cultural differences and developing adequate strategies of approaching them. Unless expatriates themselves are able to establish relationships with people who are familiar with the particularities of the host country, they are neither able to communicate their puzzling pieces of experience as well as the evolving uncertainty and helplessness, nor do they receive any of the desired help in order to develop more adequate attitudes and behavior.

5.2.2.3 Expatriates' Support Wish List – Improvement in Three Areas

As a result of their long-term assignment experience in China and their familiarity with various support measures, the interviewed expatriates have several suggestions regarding the improvement of expatriation support and hence of expatriation conditions in general. Whereas some expatriates believe that more support should be offered for private everyday challenges and in regard to career development, basically all interviewees

are convinced that more formalized opportunities for exchange should be offered prior but especially during the initial on-assignment period. Their expectations are summarized under the following three headings:

- handling of everyday life challenges,
- care for career development, and
- options for exchange.

Handling of Everyday Life Challenges: Long-term assignments tend to have a great impact on the private lives of expatriates; usually one that is greater than in-country jobs. They even make expatriates' dependants sacrifice a lot for their partners' career; and they tend to cause difficulties in areas which would not have come up had the couple or family not gone on assignment. Therefore, some expatriates think it should be a matter of course that there exists help around private everyday life challenges which characterize expatriations and recurrently distract expatriates' attention from their job. Money alone does not always do, so their experience. In order to back expatriates up, it seems important that the needs of expatriate families are carefully checked in the run-up to assignments, that expatriate contracts are tailored to these needs, and that the provision of help is flexibly handled when conditions change or unexpected incidents crop up.

If I was an HR Manager taking care of expatriates, I would take care of the family first. [...] I do not care, you know, hard days here, I am paid for that, I came here for that. But if my family has a problem, nobody is here to support, then you start to be here in shit and you cannot manage both you know (24/172). [...] I give you a very stupid example. When our daughter was born in Switzerland, of course you have to be there about four weeks before the delivery because you do not know and you expect to be there one or two weeks after, and this is already six weeks out. I mean, this is a huge amount of time and of course, I had to go back earlier and it took me three months to have the company accept that my mother could fly with the wife and the two children back, just to pay for the air ticket. I mean this is a stupid thing, but I mean, for me the message was clear. If you do not do that, I stay there until you accept to take that over. You know all these small things because we speak about a single item 1000 Euro. For me it hurts, really, because this is what I always say to HR, 'I do not have time to discuss about these things, I want to run the business, so for this you just have to use your brain, step into my shoes and know what would be good. Do not speak about package, what is allowed or not, no, just think' (24/198). [...] I do not mean to have a 100, 200, 500 square meters apartment, you know, this is not what I am discussing, I discuss all these small, symbolic things to say 'I take care' (24/202).

Care for Career Development: Especially those four expatriates who have already once repatriated from a long-term assignment are convinced that more support should be provided in terms of career development. Mentors, for example, are mentioned as suitable promoters of career after the international assignment has come to a natural end. Knowing that someone helps to take care of one's professional path is expected to

mitigate some of the uncertainty that tends to overshadow the expatriation experience.

[...] und was glaub ich allgemein hilfreich ist, ist glaub ich so ne Art Mentor zu haben, so einen Senior Manager, der einem eben generell hilft, der einen vielleicht auch so ein bisschen coacht, ah, der an einen glaubt und der einem auch bestimmte Wege ebnet, ja. Das ist ne extrem hilfreiche Geschichte (28/75). [...] Ja, jemand, der mit einem so ne Art Karriere-Development-Plan entwickelt, der auch dafür sorgt, dass dann auch diese einzelnen Schritte auch eingehalten werden, nicht dass HR da irgend ein Stück Papier aufschreibt und das abheftet, sondern der einen eben über Jahre begleitet, mit dem man mal reden kann, wenn man Probleme hat, der dann auch mit überlegt, was der nächste Schritt sein kann, der einem aber auch hilft, diesen Schritt zu nehmen, HR kann das normalerweise nicht, die können alles mögliche aufschreiben, aber die haben keine Jobs zu vergeben (28/81).

Options for Exchange: Expatriates express a strong desire to communicate the experience they have made and the challenges they are facing; and they are interested in both understanding and learning how to best deal with them. More than anything else therefore, they demand formal opportunities for exchange with country insiders such as repatriates, experienced expatriates, host country employees, intercultural trainers, and the like – exchange that can provide alleviation and insight into how international assignments and, in particular, intercultural differences can be handled in a more successful way.

One way of learning about intercultural differences, about culture-general and -specific issues, is by intercultural training; this is also the prevalent imagination of those expatriates who have not personally gone through one. An expert on culture, so the representative opinion of one interviewee, could have helped both him and his wife to understand their conflicting ways of adjusting to life abroad. And even if knowing about it would not have changed that awkward situation, it would probably have led to a more desirable handling of the circumstances.

I cannot think of any way to stop it, but the way of mitigating, of making it less difficult for people is making people understand what is happening to them and that they will experience these things and at least they can talk about it and they have a vocabulary and a framework within they can talk about it. So they can help each other or get help from friends. So, I think, educating people that there are these curves of ups and downs and give people an insight into what causes them I think is probably the biggest intervention (31/61).

In regard to culture-specific trainings it is to note that a number of expatriates emphasize the need for joint training sessions including host country employees and expatriates. The latter's experience shows that successful professional cooperation between people of different cultures is often only possible, if both parties are able and willing to step into the other's shoes.

Yeah, it is not only you who has to understand the culture, they have to understand you as well! You are working together; you have to understand each other (27/129).

Apart from training, another way of anticipating and coming to terms with the impact of entering a foreign culture can be timely – and thus necessarily formally established – opportunities for exchange. According to expatriate interviewees, these could take place in the form of company-internal pre-departure meetings between repatriates and future expatriates, in the form of a buddy or mentoring system between an experienced ex-/repatriate and a 'newcomer', in the form of official expatriate gatherings in host cities, or in the form of one-on-one sessions with a neutral conversation partner who is skilled in regard to culture- and expatriation-related issues.

[...] it would have been helpful if I had some sort of summit board where I can say 'I am doing this and this and this but it does not seem to work, why is that?' And I think, I eventually found out through working with the people themselves, but I think it could have been more efficient, if I had somebody whom I could have a more open conversation with. Because the people I had the conversation with, were my, the people working for me. So they were very hesitant in being very direct and they were afraid that I would be punishing them which is another aspect. So having had somebody who had been more objective and neutral would have been helpful (30/63).

To put it in a nutshell, being able to communicate one's expatriate and foreign country experience, getting help around understanding and digesting it, and being supported in terms of dealing with cultural differences is one of the most prevalent desires of all interviewed expatriates. Their urge in terms of exchange also seems to be the reason for why most experience and imagine expatriate coaching as promising support measure. Before it is disclosed where they locate coaching's potential, however, the next chapter looks into the experienced coaching practice of the interviewed expatriates.

5.2.3 The Practice of Expatriate Coaching

A total of five of the fourteen interviewed expatriates have received coaching in the course of their expatriation. In the light of their first-hand experience, the subsequent chapter illustrates occasions and characteristics of expatriate coaching and identifies difficulties that are related to arranging and maintaining expatriate-coach relationships. Moreover, the statements of both coached and non-coached expatriate interview partners

are referred to in order to shed light on the current demand for expatriate coaching and for required qualifications of expatriate coaches, respectively.

5.2.3.1 Occasions and Characteristics

Occasions for the Practice of Expatriate Coaching: There are two considerable differences between the five interviewees who have been experiencing coaching during their expatriation: Whereas only a couple of expatriates pursued coaching with the intention to get help around the mix of challenges characterizing their stay abroad, the reason for why the other three were coached was not directly connected to their assignment.

One of the interviewees who addressed coaching for expatriation-related reasons felt extremely pressured by the deviating demands of home and host country representatives and was eventually completely stuck in his sandwich position. Besides that, a major difficulty for him was to communicate with host country nationals at work. Even though he had learned a lot of theory on intercultural business communication during his studies, he did not manage to receive enough information and input on essential business issues. To him, the support from a coach seemed to be the last resort before quitting his international assignment altogether. The other person who arranged coaching for himself had suffered from severe burnout as a result of lacking work-life balance in the host country position. After a one month time-out from his job, he turned to coaching in order to reflect on and digest his bitter experience as well as to develop a healthier way of approaching the rest of his assignment period.

[...] wir hatten anfangs sehr große Probleme, die Produktion zum laufen zu bringen, das war ein relativ hoher Arbeitsaufwand, da hab ich so achtzehn Stunden am Tag gearbeitet, inklusive Wochenenden, keine Ferien für eineinhalb Jahre, was letztendlich relativ rasch zu einem Burnout geführt hat, ahm, und dann hab ich letztes Jahr glaub ich einmal drei, vier Wochen Auszeit genommen (21/78). [...] und wie ich dann zurück in den Beruf gegangen bin, sind die Probleme ja von heute auf morgen wieder da, oder? Und ah, da wollte ich mir Unterstützung holen, um nicht da zurück zu fallen, das ist eine Sache, um einfach noch konstanter an mir selbst zu arbeiten. Ahm, es ist auch so, es ist nicht sehr hilfreich, Probleme dann immer nach Hause in die Beziehung zu tragen. Insofern ist es toll, wenn man eine externe Stelle hat, wo man dann professionell unter Führungszeichen Hilfe respektive Ideen sammeln kann. Das war quasi mein persönliches Interesse (21/127).

From the viewpoint of the other three interviewees, their expatriate coaching experience was more of a 'coincidence' than a result of their location in a foreign country. One interviewee was leading the management

team of his company's subsidiary in China. When he realized that his team had to develop in terms of cooperation but that the members had their individual strengths and limitations, he found that coaching would probably be the most effective measure for each person and for the advance of the team as a whole. Consequently, every team member including the expatriate himself worked with a coach on an individual basis but towards joint goals. In the case of the other two expatriates, coaching was initiated by their MNCs: At the time of his stay abroad, the organization of one expatriate started an executive coaching program aimed at developing a company-internal coach pool. The interviewee was selected to become one of the future coaches and in the course of his admission to the program was himself coached by a master coach. A second expatriate, who also reports that his coaching was organized by his company, received coaching sessions as a response to the outcome of his leadership potential assessment center.

Ah, the organization that I work for runs a leadership development program where we, at a certain point in your career you get the opportunity to go on to be assessed for, against various competencies, ah, for high performance leadership and, so about three or four years ago I went to one of those assessment centers and came out with the usual mixture of strengths and limitations and then after that you have to execute an action plan and one of the interventions that was offered to me was the executive coaching. And, so I did go down that road and work with a guy here in Hong Kong [...] absolutely had nothing to do with that I was in Hong Kong or an expat (31/42).

Characteristics of the Expatriate Coaching Practice: The overall time span of the provided coaching services has been found to vary from interviewee to interviewee, regardless of for what reason the coaching had been initiated. Periods ranging from four months to one-and-a-half years have been mentioned. What differentiates the coaching practice of the expatriation-related coachees from the other three is, however, that their intervals between the single sessions have been much shorter. That their sessions have taken place once or even twice a week in the beginning – and that of the others only bi-weekly or every three weeks – may be a result of the 'emergency' situation characterizing their coaching relationship.

What all expatriates have in common, though, is that for reasons of accessibility the coaches they worked with were located in their current host countries. Furthermore, and for reasons of availability or better overall coach-coachee fit, the coaches' nationality differed from that of expatriates in all cases. Hence, in the case of four coach-coachee relationships, at least one person was not able to communicate in her mother tongue.

5.2.3.2 Experienced Inhibition Thresholds and Barriers

The two expatriates who independently arranged themselves a coach were the only ones who mentioned any personal and administrative difficulties in setting up a favorable coaching relationship. These were mainly related to

- admitting the need for support,
- making time for sessions, and
- finding a suitable coach.

Admitting the Need for Support: Many of the interviewed expatriates describe themselves as very ambitious, goal-oriented persons who have been sent on assignment due to their previous professional success history and essentially also due to their ability of establishing and maintaining fruitful interpersonal relationships. And they emphasize that they are neither used to failing nor of presenting their difficulties as they are struggling with them, not even to colleagues.

But also if you have a very good circle of friends, you know, to tell these kind of things, first it is not easy to accept because if we come here, this is because we want to be successful, and you have to be very honest with yourself to say 'I am failing' [...]. It is not easy actually; if I admit my mistakes and weaknesses, this is *after* I have compensated them. When it is not, I shut up; and then I discuss with the people, I say 'I could not but I survived'. During the phase, this is just shut down, block out, I correct that (laughs) by myself (24/180).

These character traits have also made it very hard for the two expatriate coachees to take coaching into account. They recall that it took them a fair amount of time and will-power before they realized – and were able to admit to themselves – that they needed some kind of help around their precarious situation.

[...] wenn man es gewohnt ist eigentlich meist oder immer erfolgreich zu sein, ist es relativ schwierig, ah, sehr spät draufzukommen, dass man auch versagen kann (21/78).

Making Time for Sessions: Besides acknowledging the 'must' for support, also allowing oneself the time to be helped seems to be a challenge for expatriates. One interviewee states that he barely knew how to make time for his coaching sessions. Again and again, he cancelled his appointments as he was out on business trips or needed the hours in order to meet his deadlines.

Finding a Suitable Coach: It is not to the commitment and readiness of coachees only, however, that coaching plans are thwarted. One expatriate points out that, first of all, the number of coaches in his host location is very limited, and that to find one among them who speaks his mother

tongue and fits his working style was outstandingly challenging; and in that case, not even his extensive and repeated search resulted in a satisfying coach-coachee partnership.

Ich glaube das Problem ist die Sprache; man ist natürlich gewohnt, speziell wenn man über private Probleme spricht, in der Muttersprache zu sprechen, auch wenn man die zweite Sprache, in diesem Falle Englisch, sehr gut beherrscht. Ah, es ist trotzdem so, dass man sich in einer Muttersprache leichter auseinandersetzt und es gibt auch Coaches, die in Deutsch coachen hier; das ist eine der Schwierigkeiten. Die andere der Schwierigkeiten ist natürlich, dass das Angebot begrenzter ist als in Europa letztendlich, weil das Problem als solches noch nicht erkannt ist in China oder zumindest auch totgeschwiegen wird in gewisser Form. Aus meiner Sicht. Also ich hab mich sehr stark und sehr lang damit auseinandergesetzt und hab nach Burnout-Unterstützung gesucht hier in China und es gibt quasi in Shanghai nichts. Und da gibt es den amerikanischen Weg der Xanax wie auch immer Psychopharmaka, der für einen Europäer eher abstoßend und keine Variante ist und alle Varianten, die in Europa angeboten werden, gibt es hier relativ wenige, ah, es gibt wohl einige Angebote wie Yoga und was auch immer um Stressbewältigung zu machen, aber das Angebot ist sehr begrenzt. Und was darüber hinausgeht wie Gesprächstherapie, Coaching usw. ist sehr begrenzt. Also ich glaub, das ist schwieriger hier zu erhalten als in Europa (21/133).

5.2.3.3 Imagined Reasons for the Limited Request of Expatriate Coaching

As a result of their familiarity with the expatriate population, with MNCs as well as with the challenges and support measures in regard to long-term international assignments, both coached and non-coached expatriates have a fairly clear idea of the reasons for why expatriate coaching is requested to an only limited extent. These are that coaching

- has a negative connotation, and
- is an unknown, costly measure.

Coaching Has a Negative Connotation: One conspicuously often provided explanation for the restricted use of expatriate coaching and coaching in general is the negative reputation attached to the measure. Coaching, so several expatriates, is by many associated with incapability and weakness; and not only by the potential clients of coaching but also by those who are responsible for making it available, HR professionals for example. Coaching, hence, is considered a threat to career development and thus still 'virgin soil'.

Es ist trotzdem auch immer, obwohl die Schweigepflicht haben, es ist immer ein bisschen negativer Touch, so, das ist immer dabei, wobei ich das nicht finde, trotzdem ist es halt so. Wenn ich das in Anspruch nehmen würde, was ich jetzt zum

Beispiel getan habe mit den Gruppen, ah das ist dann immer so, ah, der [Interviewpartner] hat seine Gruppe nicht unter Kontrolle, ja. Das ist aber gar nicht. Wir sind die produktivste Gruppe, die wir hier in China haben zurzeit, die höchsten Erfindungsmeldungen von R&D aber trotzdem ist die Offenheit ist einfach noch nicht da. [...] in traditionellen Unternehmen ist die Offenheit dafür nicht da, weil Psychologe, da denkt man gleich, ist der kaputt im Kopf oder (...). Aber das muss man halt. Aber trotzdem, die höheren Manager sehen das anders. Das ist eigentlich immer nur so auf der mittleren Management-Ebene, lokale HR, die sind da immer so, aber die höheren Manager, die sehen das eigentlich schon positiv. Also die haben das Verständnis schon (26/203).

Coaching Is an Unknown, Costly Measure: Apart from its negative connotation, however, expatriates stress that coaching is still a new and hence relatively unknown personnel development measure. It is not surprising, therefore, that companies and individuals have neither yet come to realize what coaching's potential looks like nor that it can be worth its apparently high cost. According to one statement, expatriate coaching's potential is even more hidden than that of coaching for the 'usual' employee because HR representatives are not even acquainted with the challenges which expatriates face.

I think it is because the whole coaching aspect is a relatively new concept. The organizations themselves have not yet thought about it. And it is something that people do not take time to think about really. People do not think about it because they are not expatriates themselves at that point. So it is just because they are not aware of it, second is cost, and third is that it is a very new concept that has not been integrated widely (30/125).

5.2.3.4 Demands on Expatriate Coaches

When coaching is provided in the course of long-term assignments, the main point of both coached and non-coached expatriate interview partners is that coaches should have the following two qualities:

- be an external coach, and
- have extensive coach and foreign country experience.

Be an External Coach: First of all, for reasons of confidentiality and trust, expatriates agree that coaching services should be provided by external coaches. Working with a person who is not as deeply involved in the organization's internal affairs is expected to increase one's readiness to open up, especially in regard to personal and relationship issues with superiors, colleagues, and employees.

Ahm, die Frage ist immer und das ist so eine strategische Frage für einen selbst, in wie weit man dem Unternehmen quasi selbst Einblick in seine persönlichen Schwierigkeiten oder ah, täglichen Probleme gibt oder nicht. [...] ahm, ich persönlich bin eher der Meinung, dass das von der Firma vielleicht mit unterstützt aber eher im privaten Bereich stattfinden sollte als direkt in der Firma selbst oder von der Firma angeboten, weil in den meisten Fällen das Coaching natürlich auf Selbst-Management, Stressbewältigung, persönliche Probleme mit Mitarbeitern respektive dem Chef, wie auch immer stattfindet und das glaub ich im privaten Bereich leichter zu formulieren und besprechen wäre, als dann tatsächlich direkt in der Firma mit einem installierten Coach, der dann mit allen Mitarbeitern spricht und die ganze Interaktion dann auch mitbekommt; ah, ich glaub da fehlt dann die natürliche Distanz, die man braucht, um ehrlich zu sein (21/138).

Have Extensive Coach and Foreign Country Experience: Moreover, the interviewees seem to be convinced that expatriate coaching can only be perceived as effective, if providers are very experienced coaches who can relate to the experience of high-level executives; and second, if they can fall back upon their own foreign country experience, perhaps even as expatriate.

Aber das Problem ist, und das ist glaub ich bei allen Führungskräften, wenn das so sein sollte, dann muss es ein ganz erfahrener sein. Also das muss kein Feld-Wald-und-Wiesen-Psychologe sein, weil die meisten Manager haben psychisch viel drauf. [...] Ja? Und wenn das ein normaler Psychologe ist, der noch nie im Ausland war, das kann ich mir schenken. Ich brauch dann schon einen, der sehr erfahren ist, der größere Führungskräfte gecoacht hat, der weiß, um was es hier geht und wenn ich dem was erzähl, dass er dann gleich kapiert, wo ich bin. Nicht, dass ich ihm das dann alles erst erklären muss (26/214, 216).

To summarize, only few of the interviewed expatriates have experienced coaching in the course of their assignments; and of those only two interviewees have asked for coaching in order to come to terms with their international assignments. The collected and analyzed data, thus, do not reveal *what* expatriate coaching looks like in the pre-departure or repatriation phase; but it gives hints on *why* it is not made use of in these stages of the assignment and why in such a limited number during the early and late expatriation phase. What is left to discuss then, is the potential of expatriate coaching as experienced and assumed by expatriates.

5.2.4 The Potential of Expatriate Coaching

The subsequent chapter first introduces the favorable effects and limitations of expatriate coaching as experienced by expatriates who have received coaching in the course of their long-term assignment. Then, it illustrates in which further regards these interviewees expect expatriate coaching to be useful. Finally, it shows what expatriates who have not been coached think about the potential of expatriate coaching.

5.2.4.1 Experienced Potential of Expatriate Coaching

As the previous chapter illustrates, coaching has only in the case of two interview partners been used as a direct result of their expatriation challenges. In spite of this, they are not the only ones who have a practical view of the favorable effects and limitations of expatriate coaching. Also those expatriates who have been coached ‘incidentally’ during their long-term assignment, report in which regards these sessions were beneficial when dealing with challenges of their expatriation: the immense work load and the intercultural flavor of their (professional) lives. The discussed benefits are connected to the following specificities of expatriate coaching:

- it provides a professional dialogue partner,
- it is tailored to individual needs,
- it has a decelerating effect, and
- it reminds of and helps deal with intercultural differences.

Expatriate Coaching Provides a Professional Dialogue Partner: The coach as professional dialogue partner seems to play a decisive role in expatriates’ understanding of the potential of expatriate coaching. Both expatriates who arranged themselves a coach stress how alleviating it was that thanks to coaching they were able to digest their problems *and* spare their primary contact person, their girlfriend. Previously namely, the two interviewees had realized what a burden it was for their partners to be confronted with their problems but not be able to do anything about it. And they had also understood that talking to their girlfriends could be comforting but did not really change their situation for the better. Having a coach at hand, therefore, was experienced as tapping the only available source of understanding, constructive feedback, and practical input; to them, coaches stand out as people who can relate to and react to the challenges of expatriates in a useful way.

Expatriate Coaching Is Tailored to Individual Needs: An advantage of expatriate coaching that becomes especially transparent when comparing the measure to intercultural trainings, management- and country-related literature or other pieces of information material, is that expatriate coaching caters for clients' specific interest. Especially in situations where time is precious, expatriate coaching gives expatriates the impression that their time and money is well-spent.

Hm, ich glaub jeder muss für sich selbst entscheiden, was das Beste für ihn ist, ahm, um mit Problemen oder Stressbewältigung oder welches Problem er auch immer hat, umzugehen. Ah, ich hab für mich selbst herausgefunden, mir hilft es nicht, ich hab mir sehr viele so Effizienz-, Stressbewältigungs-, Managementbücher gekauft und bin drauf gekommen, das alles zu lesen war eher so eine Ehrenrunde, weil man die meisten Dinge ja ohnedies kennt respektive die Selbsthilfebücher sehr pauschal geschrieben sind und eigentlich nicht auf die individuelle Situation hin geschnitten, also man lernt eigentlich nichts daraus. Es gibt dann diese ganz klassischen Managementbüchern mit den Anleitungen, wie man mit Problemen umzugehen hat, die dann letztendlich nicht helfen, insofern hat mir das individuelle eines Coachings schon sehr stark gefallen. Es gibt natürlich dann Personen die sagen, sie möchten sich nicht öffnen und sie gehen lieber mit einem Buch und machen das in ihrer Privatsphäre, wie auch immer jemand damit umgeht, ich persönlich für Typen wie mich, würde das sehr empfehlen (21/131).

Expatriate Coaching Has a Decelerating Effect: Expatriations have been associated with time pressure, extreme management attention, great work load, feelings of insufficiency, paralysis, and uncertainty plus a variety of unexpected everyday life challenges. It is also a result of the vast amount of new and difficult circumstances that expatriate coaching is perceived as useful support measure in the course of long-term assignments. Due to its regularity and continuity it provides expatriates with a steady opportunity to step out of the everyday routine, to reflect, to 'get the big picture' and thus to take first things first.

[...] it really helps you think about your personal situation and it allows you an hour ever so often to really talk about something very different and really pace yourself, concentrate on myself and the personal situation, think things through and what is important, what is not important; it was not the day to day work life which is basically one ongoing rush for me, so. So it is a good hour as well to reflect on things and as you prepare for it as well, it is a good hour to really think through what is important and what needs to be done (30/91).

Expatriate Coaching Reminds of and Helps Deal with Intercultural Differences: Finally, expatriate coaching has been experienced as preventive measure to mistakes resulting from intercultural differences. A skilled coach, so expatriates, can jog expatriates' memory in regard to their awareness of host culture specificities. Coaching reminds clients of the contents of intercultural trainings or first-hand foreign country experience and, over and above, it can support them in developing adequate ways of approaching these differences.

[...] selbst wenn man nach langen Jahren da ist, es gehen sehr viele Sachen, die man so täglich im Tagesverlauf so automatisch abspult, aber die dann gar nicht mehr bewusst sind und wenn man dann so ein Thema angeht, Organisation oder Positionierung vom Management-Team, dann muss das wieder ins Bewusstsein zurück. Und dann ist es gut, wenn man ein Gegenüber hat, das sagt, hast du an das gedacht? Ach ja, stimmt und dann kommt es wieder. Es kommt wieder ins Bewusstsein. Von daher ist das eine große Hilfe (18/153).

Besides the favorable effects of expatriate coaching, hardly any limitations have been identified by coached expatriates. Yet, two important factors that may cut down on the expected effect and even on the practicability of coaching, have been mentioned:

- the trust factor, and
- the coach-coachee fit.

The Trust Factor: It is a precondition for the practicability of expatriate coaching that expatriates are willing to share their questions and issues; and more specifically, with a 'stranger'. If, for reasons of confidentiality and discomfort, potential clients are generally lacking the readiness to disclose what is on their minds and their hearts, coaching can never be an option.

The Coach-Coachee Fit: In order for a coaching relationship to be fruitful, there must be a certain degree of compatibility regarding coaches' and their clients' working styles, regarding their understanding of effectiveness, progress, and more. If that degree of accordance is not given, the coaching agreement is likely to trigger a great deal of frustration for both parties involved.

[Coaching] hat mir bedingt geholfen, um ehrlich zu sein (21/107). [...] Nein, es war schon in einer gewissen Form hilfreich, es, ich hab längere Zeit mir einige verschiedene Coachs angeschaut, ich hatte hin und wieder dann einfach den Eindruck, dass nicht die richtigen Fragen gestellt wurden (21/117). [...] Aus meiner persönlichen Sicht nicht die richtigen Fragen. Auf der anderen Seite muss ich sagen, es ist schon in gewisser Weise hilfreich gewesen, also es ist jetzt schwer zu sagen, dass es nicht hilfreich war, es ist nicht effektiv genug aus meiner persönlichen Sicht (21/119). [...] Ich hab den unangenehmen Nachteil, dass ich Physiker bin und eher strukturiert an Themen herangehe und ich den Eindruck hatte, dass es sehr unstrukturiert passiert ist. Es hat einfach zu meinem Muster, Dinge und Probleme zu bearbeiten, nicht gepasst. Also ich hab einfach mit dem Coach selbst, das hat nicht so funktioniert (21/121). [...] Das war eher so eine Harmoniegeschichte zwischen dem Coach und mir als tatsächlich die Institution Coaching als solche (21/123).

5.2.4.2 Coached Expatriates on Expatriate Coaching's Additionally Expected Benefits

The following statements about the benefits of expatriate coaching reflect coached expatriates' understanding of the measure's yet untapped potential. Provided at certain stages in the long-term assignment life cycle, expatriates assume that expatriate coaching has the following, additional effect:

- expatriate coaching can decrease pre-departure uncertainty,
- expatriate coaching can accelerate expatriates' effectiveness, and
- expatriate coaching can support the repatriation process.

Expatriate Coaching Can Decrease Pre-Departure Uncertainty: If expatriate coaching were practiced in the run-up to transfers, as part of the other preparatory measures taken in the course of long-term assignments, it is expected to be capable of reducing the high degree of uncertainty that accompanies this expatriation stage. And at the same time, so interviewees, it could help shape more realistic expectations of what the future holds and to prepare for what is to come. In this regard, one expatriate emphasizes that coaching may not be necessary because these considerations *cannot* be taken on one's own but because they *are not* taken unless there is certain impetus to do so.

Ahm, yes, actually I would also recommend it to non-expatriates, but certainly for expatriates. I think it is a useful source to have and I would probably start that before the expatriate goes on assignment and just say 'Hey what do you expect to happen?' and take them through and let them be helped (30/119). [...] 'What are you expecting of this assignment?' And obviously people ask you these questions as family and friends, but [...] so 'What is the first thing you are going to be doing?' or 'What do you expect are the challenges when starting your assignment in Beijing?' or 'How are you overcoming your first challenges?' Simply asking these questions to make yourself think through them and take the time to really do that because as you get ready for expatriation, there are so many other things going on, there is your old job going on, you are getting ready for you new job, your are concerned with the logistics of moving, paperwork, so you do not really take time to talk about that and you do not talk about that because you are so busy with all the other stuff. So that creates this haven of, this dedicated time to think about it (30/121).

Expatriate Coaching Can Accelerate Expatriates' Effectiveness: The efforts of preparatory coaching sessions, however, are not only imagined to improve expatriates' well-being in the pre-departure phase. Rather, they are viewed as precautions which show their effect once the client has landed abroad. Preliminary coaching combined with early-assignment coaching sessions is expected to literally accelerate the effectiveness of expatriates.

Ahm, and I think if a company is putting somebody into, if a multinational company is moving people to different countries to lead a business or play a senior role in a business, I could imagine really, it could be very valuable. I mean it should help shorten the learning curve; make the person more effective, more quickly (31/59).

Expatriate Coaching Can Support the Repatriation Process: The potential of expatriate coaching is mainly seen in connection with the pre-departure and early expatriation stages. Yet, one interviewee who had just recently returned to his home base at the time of the interview, states that he also understands coaching as a valuable repatriation measure. From his viewpoint, namely, coaching is an appropriate means of preparing for and dealing with change – which characterizes the repatriation phase just as it is typical for the beginning of the assignment cycle.

When you typically think of an expatriation, it is three years. I would have probably two or three sessions before and surrounding the expatriation, two before, one just after the move and then I would have it on a quarterly basis or every four months, a connect, just someone to say 'How are things going, what are you struggling with?' And maybe at the beginning of the assignment the frequency is a bit higher and in the middle it is a bit less and when you come to the end again you have again an increase of session, because those are the biggest change periods (30/123).

5.2.4.3 Non-Coached Expatriates on Expatriate Coaching's Imagined Benefits

Many of those interview partners who had never been in touch with coaching were first puzzled when asked about their idea of expatriate coaching's potential. Quite a percentage had never thought about what such a measure could (not) look like or do. After some consideration, however, several came up with their thoughts on coaching and expatriate coaching's favorable effects in particular; their understanding can be integrated into two aspects:

- coaches can helpfully respond to one's issues, and
- coaches can point out to blind spots.

Coaches Can Helpfully Respond to One's Issues: One of the greatest challenges of expatriates is that they are lacking suitable conversation partners; and by suitable they mean 'reachable' in terms of proximity and immediacy, 'capable' in terms of being able to grasp the meaning and impact of their issues, and 'skilled' in terms of corresponding to them in a way that helps them change their problematic situations.

Weil man kann das auch seiner Familie erzählen, nur die verstehen das nicht und die wollen das auch nicht hören. Und es nervt einfach auch, aber die können einem auch nicht, nicht wirklich was zurückgeben, weil sie die Situation nicht verstehen (28/101).

Since family members, friends, and often even colleagues are not able to comply with expatriates' wish for such a suitable dialogue partner, it is expatriates' hope and idea that expatriate coaches can fill their need. Especially in regard to dealing with the infamous sandwich position, the high degree of pressure, and the difficulty to understand and react to cultural differences, expatriate coaching is imagined to be useful.

Coaches Can Point Out to Blind Spots: Moreover, expatriate coaches are also understood as a 'warning device' to pitfalls; their ability to mirror clients' potential dangers but also to point out to chances is regarded as invaluable. Particularly during long-term assignments when managers tend to receive even less feedback than in their home base position, a person that raises expatriates' awareness to threats and opportunities can play a crucial role in regard to expatriation success and failure.

You know, for me a very skilled coach is the guy who can point out your blind spots. This is the key. Actually, this is really hard to find out and this is where the skill of a coach can make the difference. Because to point out what you are not conscious of (24/117). [...] This is something, I would say, would make sense. To define one guy who [...] could have enough distance to your problem trying to look where you never look at (24/122).

In contrast to most interviewed expatriates who see several reasons for why the application of coaching could make sense for expatriates, one interviewee stresses that he really does not see too much point in coaching. After the recorder had been switched off, he refers back to what he stated during the interview; namely how important it is that MNCs select suitable applicants from the beginning. Whereas he tends to believe that candidates who are both technically competent and suitable as a person are capable of coming to terms with expatriation challenges anyway, he is convinced that no measure whatsoever – coaching included – is able to turn a headstrong and inflexible person into a successful expatriate.

To sum it up, from the perspective of expatriates, the experienced and imagined potential of expatriate coaching is primarily to have a skilled and trustful conversation partner who is capable of fulfilling a manifold purpose: Coaches encourage expatriates to step out of their everyday rush and to prioritize and plan their next steps; they direct expatriates' attention to unnoticed aspects and thus, among others, help them take into account the impact of the foreign culture in which they are operating; and they even support clients in developing more adequate ways of handling intercultural differences. All in all thus, expatriate coaches are perceived as a means of preventing expatriates from making mistakes and of improving their

performance in general; they are also, however, regarded as a means of mental hygiene and hence may even bring alleviation to those who would otherwise get to notice expatriates' pressure, frustration, and uncertainty. Since the function of coaches reminds expatriates very much of the personal, trusted conversation partner which most of them state to have, the majority of interviewees can well imagine to work with a professional coach during their stay abroad – always given that a beneficial, trustful relationship can be established with that person. Several expatriates also understand that coaching would make sense in the run-up to assignments, sparing them from the first big wave of mistakes and inefficiency.

5.3 Research Results – Interviews with Expatriate Coaches

The subsequent findings stem from data that have been collected in the course of eleven qualitative interviews with coaches; all of whom are experienced in working with expatriates. Since coaches are both in exchange with expatriates and HR professionals or representatives of MNCs in general, the analysis of their data discloses what the current demand for expatriate coaching looks like, unveils how expatriate coaches have been reacting to that demand and hence are practicing the measure. And finally, they also reveal where the very providers of the service themselves locate the potential of expatriate coaching.

5.3.1 Characterization of Coach Interview Partners

What kind of background do expatriate coaches have? How do they work with clients who live in a different country? Why does someone become an expatriate coach at all? The answers to these questions have been found to vary just the way, the age and educational background of coaches in general do. Here comes a short insight into noteworthy particularities of expatriate coaches who served as interview partners for this research project; as the subsequent chapters show, most of these characteristics influence how expatriate coaching can be and is eventually practiced.

Gender and Age: At the time of the interview, the five male and six female coaches were aged between thirty-six and sixty; in more detail, two were between thirty-six and forty, three between forty-one and fifty, and six were between fifty-one and sixty years old. **Education:** All interviewees have an academic background, with six of them having earned doctoral degrees. Their study areas reach from business administration, psychology, and theology – each studied by three coaches – to education, ethnology, German philology, history, philosophy, politics, and statistics. Six interview partners have additionally received formal coaching training but none of them has gone through training which put a specific focus on coaching expatriates. **Foreign Country Experience:** Eight coaches have been abroad at least for one and up to ten years; they generally regard this experience as valuable for their work as expatriate coach. Three of them do not have any foreign country experience except for occasional business trips and do not regard this as disadvantageous.

Aber das ist wie immer beim Coaching, der Coach des Schwimmers muss nicht derjenige sein, der am Besten schwimmt. Die Fragen sind wichtig und die Aufmerksamkeit (08/122).

Meine Beschreibung ist immer, ich bin der männliche Gynäkologe (10/79).

Nationality and Current Location: Seven interviewees are German and provide their coaching services mainly in Germany. One coach is a national of Honk Kong and also coaches in his home country. In contrast, the remaining three interview partners usually coach in their host country Shanghai; two of them have moved there from the U.S.A., one from Hungary. One of the U.S. nationals also caters many clients in other regions in China and other countries altogether since she does a great amount of telephone coaching. **Professional Emphasis on Expatriate Coaching:** Five interviewees coach expatriates, if there is a specific request for it but do not have a special focus on this target group. The other six have brought their coaching offers in line with the needs and expectations of MNCs and expatriate clients, mainly because they have realized the market demand for it. In order to meet sponsors' and clients' interest in expatriate coaching, two interview partners have tailored their original coaching offers specifically to expatriates, whereas three have started expatriate coaching as a supplement to their work as intercultural trainers. The reason for why the sixth person provides coaching primarily to expatriates is a result of his personal move to China.

5.3.2 The Demand for Expatriate Coaching

According to the interviewed coaches, expatriate coaching is not yet a widespread and popular expatriate support measure. Nevertheless, it is currently experiencing a conspicuous upswing; following the tenor of the eleven coach interviewees, the measure has probably never been as attractive as today. How come? The number and intensity of intercultural cooperation has greatly risen during the past five years but their success has not come naturally, so coaches' tenor. In short hence, it is supposedly both a result of the need for successful intercultural relations and the helplessness, difficulties, and failure connected to them that expatriate coaching is requested. But what does the demand for expatriate coaching look like in detail?

- Who requests expatriate coaching? Who are the initiators of the support measure?

- When is expatriate coaching requested? Which occasions trigger the demand for expatriate coaching?
- Why is expatriate coaching requested? What are the primary motives for making use of the measure?
- Why is expatriate coaching not requested? What are the main inhibition thresholds and barriers which hold potential sponsors and clients back from demanding expatriate coaching?

5.3.2.1 Initiators of Expatriate Coaching

The requests for expatriate coaching mainly come from two different sources: expatriates and MNCs. With regard to the latter, however, it is to note that not only HR and HRD departments are responsible for the arrangement of expatriate coaching but that a growing number of technical units themselves take an active role in requesting the service for their staff. The primary initiators of expatriate coaching are, therefore,

- HR/HRD departments of MNCs,
- technical departments of MNCs, and
- individual expatriates.

HR/HRD Units: Only four coach interviewees report that they chiefly receive coaching requests from companies and, in more detail, from their HR representatives.

Executive Management Development oder Führungskräfteentwicklung [...] diese zuständigen Stellen, wenn sie denn ein Coachingprogramm haben, haben entweder für alle oder für bestimmte Ebenen oder für bestimmte Fälle das Angebot Coaching und d.h. die rufen mich an oder schicken mir eine Mail mit einem standardisierten Formblatt und da steht drauf: Name, heutige Funktion, neue Funktion, Ausreisedatum, wohin und dann nehme ich Kontakt auf. Das ist relativ simpel und standardisiert (07/38) [...] Ganz simpel, wichtig ist uns immer, dass der Coach anruft und dem Coachee nicht gesagt wird, er soll bei uns anrufen, weil das geht meistens unter; die Expats haben mit ihrer Ausreise so viel zu tun, dass es gut ist, wenn wir uns melden. Dann machen wir einen Termin und einen Ort aus und fangen an. Schlicht und ergreifend (07/42).

Technical Units: Some mention that, strikingly often, the demand is directly expressed by the technical departments of MNCs; supposedly in an attempt to disguise their employees' actual need and demand for coaching which might have a negative impact on their career development.

Das merk ich sehr häufig, dass der Weg gar nicht über die Personalabteilung geht, sondern auch über andere Abteilungen, also Fachabteilungen und zum Teil die

Personalabteilung überspringen, und als Abteilung dann so ein Coaching buchen. Vielleicht auch aus gutem Grund. Also dass man das gar nicht so über die Personalabteilung laufen lassen möchte und lieber hinten rum geht (11/7). [...] Na ja, einfach aus Angst, wenn es über die PA geht, wird es aktenkundig (11/9).

Expatriates: Additionally, a noticeably great amount of coaches is directly approached by expatriates themselves.

Mh, die meisten kommen privat, das ist das Lustige. Ich hab mal versucht, ist schon länger her, mach ich gar nicht mehr, in internationalen Unternehmen versucht zu akquirieren von wegen Expats brauchen Coaching und da haben die immer gesagt Coaching brauchen unsere Expatriates nicht und das Lustige war, dass ich genau aus diesen Unternehmen Expatriates hier hatte und gecoacht habe, die sich bei mir gemeldet haben. Also ich finde es gibt ein großes Loch zwischen dem, was die Personalentwickler, dass die sagen ihre Leute brauchen nix und die Leute rufen hier an, weil sie total fertig sind (09/16).

[T]he first two cases were actually headhunters who referred them to me. The first one, he was in so much turmoil inside and some friend of his knew [a coach], and [that coach] could not take him on at that time and asked me to look after him [...]. The second case was a referral from a headhunter. He [the expatriate] was interviewed by a headhunter and he asked the headhunter whether he knew any coaches. So, the headhunter referred him to me (15/33). [...] The third one is, that is interesting [...] you have heard of the [university], they have [several] MBA programs and one of them approached us to design a Leadership Development Program in the MBA program, so we have started this and their alumni heard this and said, if we wanted to pay for this, can we get something like that? I said, yes of course. And this third guy, he is one of the alumni (15/41).

5.3.2.2 Occasions Triggering the Request for Expatriate Coaching

From what the data disclose, there seem to be four primary cases in which organizational representatives and expatriates submit their expatriate coaching requests, whereas the third appears to be the most decisive one:

- expatriation of a top management executive,
- previous failure,
- current crisis, and
- repatriation.

Expatriation of a Top Management Executive: First of all, coaching is demanded to prepare high-level managers as they tend to expect an exclusive since very flexible, individual, and confidential preparation.

Und je höher Sie in der Hierarchie kommen, desto weniger können Sie Training anbieten (07/115).

Previous Failure: Secondly, coaching seems to be a reaction to lessons learned from previously failed intercultural cooperation.

So passiert z.B. bei Software-Verlagerungsprojekten am Anfang völlig gegen die Wand, Projekt total gescheitert, Millionen versenkt, jetzt probieren sie es nach ein paar Jahren wieder und plötzlich ist ein höheres Management bereit vorher in ein Training zu gehen und dann in einem Coaching mit mir das noch einmal detailliert durchzusprechen, wie könnten sie es denn dieses mal besser machen (10/45).

Current Crisis: Thirdly and most frequently, so coaches, expatriate coaching only comes in when severe difficulties have occurred in the course of expatriations and already reached an advanced stage. In the majority of cases, regardless of who initiated it, expatriate coaching seems to be made use of as an emergency rather than as a preventive support measure. Accordingly, the fire-fighter metaphor is strikingly often used by interviewees to describe these immediate demands.

Also, 'Sie, es brennt an, bitte unsere zwei Leute, die vor Ort sind, die sind zu dieser Zeit in Deutschland und da müssen Sie bitte kommen und dann arbeiten Sie mit denen.' Und dann hab ich genau die aufgezählten Schwierigkeiten, das ist nicht eingebunden in größere Strukturen und Strategien, sondern das ist mit denen Feuerwehrarbeit. So weit das geht und dann düsen die wieder ab und ob ich von denen jemals wieder etwas hör, das ist die Frage. Das ist also kein Coachingprozess, weil das geht einfach nicht; dann sind die wieder weg (10/53).

When it is too late (laughs). Typically, people do not want to invest in a person until it is really too late. But it is never too late. I do not need to sound negative but the fact of the matter is that if an expatriate showed up and received a coaching right away and the coached worked with them just six, nine months, then things would go much smoother for that individual (14/57). [...] Typically, they would not receive a coach until there is a specific need for one, which then it turns into this 'I do not need a coach, because I will do it myself' (14/59).

Um ganz ehrlich zu sein, weil das Haus brennt. Ich komme mir sehr oft vor, wie ein Feuerwehrmann. Es ist sehr selten, dass wir Vorbeugungsarbeit machen dürfen (17/43).

Repatriation: The return of expatriates appears to be one of the latest occasions for why expatriate coaching is initiated. Up to recently, so coaches, companies have not viewed the repatriation phase as a(nother) critical stage of the assignment life cycle. Since more and more people are assigned today, however, the perception of the challenges related to the 'comeback' of expatriates seems to be changing. Both, finding adequate positions in the home base and dealing with reverse culture shock are now gradually being viewed as challenges inherent to expatriations.

Ich bekomme jetzt deutlich mehr Repatriates. Das Konzept für Repatriates hab ich seit zwei Jahren in der Tasche. Seit zwei Jahren! Jetzt kommen die Ersten erst mit richtig vielen, weil sich das Problem noch verschärft hat (07/151).

5.3.2.3 Motives for Expatriate Coaching Requests

Expatriations may bring about situations or constellations where support is needed. Yet, what interests in the course of this research project is, why exactly expatriate coaching is considered a promising measure? According to coaches, it is due to the initiators' following four associations in particular, that expatriate coaching is requested:

- it supplements and replaces intercultural trainings;
- it has a flexible setting and provides tailored support;
- it develops personal, social, and leadership skills;
- expatriate coaches are suitable dialogue partners.

Supplement to and Replacement of Intercultural Trainings: To start with, expatriate coaching is understood as a suitable addition to intercultural trainings; coaching is meant to make up for trainings' insufficiency to help expatriates *deal with* their actual culture-related challenges.

Es heißt aber noch lang nicht, dass jemand, wenn er jetzt auf Kopfebene weiß, wie man chinesische Mitarbeiter führt, dass er sie tatsächlich führen kann, weil ihm die Basisführungs Kompetenzen fehlen. Das ist wie beim Tennisspielen. Sie können, wenn Sie ein Buch lesen über Tennisspielen oder mal einen Vortrag hören über Tennisspielen nicht Tennisspielen. Und genauso ist es mit diesen interkulturellen Trainings; die sind viel zu kopflastig, bauen viel zu wenige Kompetenzen auf, als dass man nachher agieren könnte im Ausland (09/65).

Training can provide a set of skills and a set of tools but what's been mentioned consistently is that without following coaching (...) no change really occurs. They have learned the tools and they go off and are not using the tools. So is coaching the right answer? Yes, it is an expensive answer but it is the answer for taking your high potential employees and actually helping them learn who they are and how to operate differently in whatever environment to (...) it is that internalizing the learning and for the most part most training programs do not result to the internalized form (16/67).

Yet additionally, it is pointed out that trainings are not only expected to complement but have even been asked to be replaced by expatriate coaching because trainings have gained a fairly bad reputation among MNCs.

Ein nicht zu unterschätzender Grund ist das schlechte Image von interkulturellen Trainings, das es vielfach gibt, weil viele Unternehmen schlechte Erfahrungen gemacht haben mit Trainern und daher das ganze auch schon vor zehn Jahren ad acta gelegt worden ist; da hat man gesagt, wir haben schlechte Erfahrungen gemacht, das ist Humbug, wir machen das nicht mehr (11/13).

Flexible Setting and Tailored Content: Secondly, the specific request for expatriate coaching is reported to result from its assumed capability to provide support that is outstandingly flexible in terms of setting as well as tailored in terms of content – requirements which a contemporary support measure necessarily has to meet due to the intricacy and speed which characterizes the occurrence of today's assignments.

Oder es ist jemand, der arbeitet – es gibt verrückte Kontexte – mit Sitz in Deutschland bei einem deutschen Konzern, der für seinen Bereich mit einem japanischen fusioniert ist. Und der sitzt jeden Tag in einer Tele- oder Videokonferenz mit den Japanern um Kunden in Amerika zu betreuen. Sein unmittelbarer Vorgesetzter ist aber ein Deutscher und das sind dann die richtig kniffligen Situationen. Das ist nicht die Ausnahme, das kommt immer mehr. Und dann ist auch klar, warum der Mensch einen Coachingbedarf hat, weil der kriegt kein interkulturelles Training wo es um Deutsche, Japaner und Amerikaner im gleichen Seminar geht. Der braucht einen solch individuellen Zuschnitt von der interkulturellen Seite her, dass er den sicher nur individuell findet (10/29).

Und auf der anderen Seite ist es sicherlich auch so, dass die Kontexte in den Unternehmen sich verändern, d.h. man muss viel schneller reagieren als vor zehn Jahren und man muss auch sehr viel individueller reagieren. [...], d.h. es sind ganz andere Profile auch gefordert im Ausland; vor allem auch viel stärker die Fähigkeit in Teams zu arbeiten, Teams anzuleiten [...] heute laufen Merger so schnell, dass selbst so was wie bei [bekanntes multinationales Unternehmen] innerhalb von vierzehn Tagen über die Bühne gehen muss und da kann man nicht (...) (11/13). [...] Damit verschiebt man dann aber alles in den on-the-job Bereich (11/15). [...] Ja, das ist genau der Grund, dass man nicht mehr langfristig vorbereitet, nicht mehr pauschal auf ein Land sondern dass man viel stärker individuenspezifisch vorbereitet, teamorientiert und aufgabenorientiert [...]. Und dadurch ist die Situation eine andere, dass man den Prozess begleiten muss, man kann sich nicht mehr auf einen Prozess vorbereiten, weil die Vorbereitung, in dem Moment, wo der Prozess beginnt, sich schon überlebt hat (11/23).

Development of Skills: Thirdly, the interest in coaching is stated to result from the need of surprisingly many expatriates to develop their basic personal, social, and leadership skills; a support that no culture- or expatriation-specific measure aims at providing.

Ich bin jetzt seit fünfzehn Jahren in diesem Bereich tätig und meine Hypothese ist, dass die Führungskräfte, die da rüber geschickt werden, die verfügen über zu wenig ausgeprägte persönliche, soziale und Führungskompetenzen. Die sind meistens fachlich topfit. Und deswegen werden die auch rüber geschickt, aber die sind was so die eben genannten Kompetenzen anbelangt, sind die auch im nationalen Kontext nicht fit. Was ich beobachte ist, wenn die schon im nationalen Kontext nicht fit sind und dann ins Ausland gehen, dann scheitern sie. Hier im nationalen Kontext können sie es noch irgendwie kompensieren, fragen Sie mich nicht wie. Wahrscheinlich über Kommunikation oder Protegierung, sagt man so? Weil es immer wieder Leute gibt, die diese Leute unterstützen. Und da einfach nicht hinschauen wollen, dass die eigentlich nicht fit sind als Führungskraft. Aber wenn die dann ins Ausland gehen, dann fällt das alles weg. Dann können sie häufig schlechter kommunizieren, haben häufig einen Dolmetscher dabei und dann fällt auch so ihr Netzwerk außen rum weg, das sie stützt (09/65).

Coach as Dialogue Partner: Finally, the need for a conversation partner seems to be a reason for why especially individual expatriates get themselves a coach. Many expatriates have none to talk to once they have left their used-to social network as it takes time before new relationships can be built up in the foreign country. A lack of possibilities for exchange tends to exist even more so when returning to the home country; to the surrounding where most people do not share long-term foreign country experience.

Because there are big changes and there is no support on the other side when you get home. There aren't a whole lot of people who have a clue what you are talking about whereas here [in Shanghai] people do. I mean if you want to invent about life in China, invent about life as an expatriate and you need some sort of support it's out there, it's around. That's true in a place like this [...]. You live in a major city, there is a lot of places and people who will understand what you are going through. When you go home, they are not there (16/45).

5.3.2.4 Inhibition Thresholds and Barriers to Expatriate Coaching

When asked why expatriate coaching is still a comparatively neglected expatriate support measure, interview partners' statements basically come down to six explanations; the latter three mainly refer to the restrained application of expatriate coaching within organizations:

- publicity: expatriate coaching is still relatively unknown;
- cost: expatriate coaching is viewed as an expensive support measure;
- reputation: expatriate coaching is associated with weakness, insufficiency, and ineligibility;
- perceived need: HR representatives do not see the need for expatriate coaching;
- power for implementation: HR representatives have not enough power to make MNCs implement expatriate coaching;
- responsibility: HR representatives do not feel responsible for arranging expatriate coaching.

Publicity of Expatriate Coaching: The tentativeness in regard to expatriate coaching is regarded to largely result from people's general unfamiliarity with the concept and their lacking awareness of how one could benefit from it. Most coaches report that their coachees have neither an idea of how to imagine nor what to expect from the measure; even if coaching is practiced within their company, they hardly know anything about it.

Manchmal haben die Fragen: 'Was soll das überhaupt und ich weiß überhaupt nichts' (07/44). [...] 'Meine Personalbetreuerin hat mir zwar gesagt, aber ich weiß eigentlich nicht wirklich', das ist sehr unterschiedlich. Es kommt drauf an, wie gut das von der Personalabteilung eingestellt ist. Aber die großen [Unternehmen] haben eine Unterlage, die die denen zuschicken; manchmal lesen die die nicht (07/46).

Cost of Expatriate Coaching: Unless there is no urgent need for support, individual clients as well as organizations tend to avoid coaching due to the anticipated costs involved; the cost-benefit ratio tends to be neglected.

Natürlich ist Coaching teuer im Vergleich zum Training, die Tagessätze von Coaches sind höher als die von Interkulturellen Trainern und zweitens ist es halt für eine Person und das Training halt für zehn oder so (07/115).

Reputation of Expatriate Coaching: Another reason for why especially expatriates consciously refrain from the measure is because coaching tends to be practiced as 'punishment' to failure within organizations rather than as development option for high performers. The term is connected with key words like weakness, insufficiency, and ineligibility – it has a negative connotation which is why expatriates have a hard time admitting their interest in coaching to their companies; which is why there is a lot of resistance when it comes to coaching; and which is why the measure is only taken into account as a last resort.

Ich glaube es ist so, die Manager, die entsandt werden, scheuen sich häufig Coaching anzufragen, weil sie befürchten, dass ihnen das als Schwäche ausgelegt wird (13/69).

Und das Problem ist, achtzig oder neunzig Prozent der Coachees sehen das so: 'Brauch ich das?' Ich sage nein, die Frage ist falsch. 'Verdienen Sie das?' Und dann können sie damit besser umgehen (...). Ich habe noch nie erlebt, dass jemand selbst zum Boss gegangen ist und gesagt hat, 'Ich brauche ein Coaching, würde die Firma mir das?' Sondern die Leute empfinden das als Muss und finden es ist so mühsam (17/39).

Perceived Need for Expatriate Coaching: The majority of coach interview partners have the impression that a great amount of HR professionals is not familiar with the professional and private lives of expatriates. It is due to their low degree of staying in touch with expatriates and not least to their own lack of foreign country experience, supposedly, that they cannot and do not see expatriates' challenges and needs, and thus also do not provide expatriate coaching although it might be adequate.

Und die Personalentwickler haben auch keine Vorstellung, wo es wirklich fehlt, das ist auch ein großes Manko. Viele Personalentwickler waren selbst nie im Ausland längere Zeit, haben keine Vorstellung davon, wie es einem da geht und wie schlecht es einem da gehen kann, ich glaube, das muss man auch mal selbst erlebt haben, Kulturschock, also das Extrem einfach mal erlebt haben oder mal ne Arbeit im

Ausland geleistet haben wo man ein Arbeitsergebnis bringen muss und dann merkt, es funktioniert so nicht wie in Deutschland. Daran glaub ich scheitert es auch. Und was ich auch glaub, was ein entscheidendes Moment ist, ist dass viele Führungskräfte die Personalentwickler nicht ernst nehmen. [...] Und die Personalentwickler haben umgekehrt von dem, was die Führungskräfte dort tun keinen blassen Schimmer – die meisten. [...] Und wie will ich auch jemanden als Personalentwickler adäquat coachen oder auch einen adäquaten Coach suchen, wenn ich von dem Arbeitsumfeld, von der Aufgabe, von dem, was ne Führungskraft macht im Ausland oder auch hier, wenn ich überhaupt keine Ahnung hab. Also ich find, viele Führungskräfte nehmen Personalentwickler überhaupt nicht ernst. Also aus meiner Sicht völlig verständlich (09/76).

Power for Implementation of Expatriate Coaching: In this regard, coaches also explain that even if HR professionals were acquainted with expatriate lifestyles and hence took into account the value added by support measures and expatriate coaching in particular, they would probably not be able to implement it due to their lacking status as strategic business partner within their companies.

[...] die Personalabteilungen haben auch viel zu wenig Reputation und Durchschlagskraft, genügend Einflussmöglichkeiten, um Coachings durchzusetzen (13/47).

Also die [MitarbeiterInnen in der Personalentwicklung] sind insgesamt sehr stark aufgeschlossen, sie sind nur völlig impotent im Unternehmen. Also das ist so eine nice-to-have Abteilung, die man sich leistet und wo praktisch bis zu den Entscheidungsträgern hin, die Leute von denen versorgt werden. Aber jeder der drüber ist hierarchisch, der täte nie auf einen Weiterbildner hören [...]. Das sind total liebe Leute, persönlich, engagiert, gewissenhaft, wollen das Beste und für die Leute, für die sie wirklich zuständig sind, da hängen sie sich auch rein, je nach Budget und je nach Kapazität, nur sie sind leider nicht für die entscheidenden Leute zuständig. Sag ich jetzt ganz brutal (10/109).

Responsibility for Expatriate Coaching: Eventually, coaches also point out that many HR professionals simply reject to treat expatriates differently, i.e. more extensively, than other employees – among others, because expatriates receive great amounts of money for their out-of-country jobs. This attitude seems to depend on both HR representatives' degree of foreign country experience and their positioning as strategic business partner.

Die HR Bereiche ziehen sich zunehmend – und jetzt überspitze ich es mal – darauf zurück, dass die Führungskräfte mehr Verantwortung übernehmen sollten/müssten. Und die Führungskräfte sagen, 'Ich hab so viel an der Backe, um den Scheiß kann ich mich nicht auch noch kümmern'. Es ist ganz banal. Bei einem Repat war das jetzt grad ein Thema. Es geht darum, wer organisiert den Raum für das Coaching? Ich hab gesagt, HR muss das organisieren, weil die Repats haben nicht mal mehr ein Büro hier. Und es ist kein Thema, ich besorg den Raum, das kostet am Tag 100 Euro. Das ist nicht mein Thema. Wir haben in jeder Stadt dieser Welt einen Raum. 100 Euro ist vergleichsweise wenig. Da kommen die doch wieder mit ihrer Story, die Führungskräfte sind doch groß und alt genug und ich denk mir, so was von daneben, da kommt einer daher geflogen und soll sich um den Raum kümmern. Die ticken

doch nicht richtig die HR (07/139). [...] Aber es gibt auch andere Firmen, die haben das wunderbar geregelt. Bei einem Pharmaunternehmen da kostet ein Coaching so und so viel, da sind unsere Reisekosten abgedeckt, der Raum, am Ende unterschreibt der Coachee, das Papier geht an das Unternehmen und dann zahlen die die Rechnung. So einfach geht es auch (07/141).

Na es sind Störungen in der Routine, also einfach andere Erfahrungen oder Kontexte, die vor Ort ja zunächst mal keine Bedeutung oder Gültigkeit haben, aber jetzt den Umwegen und Gedankengängen nachgehen zu sollen, die jemand mit sich bringt, der eben drei Jahre im Ausland war. Das wird häufig als Verumständlichung und Zumutung empfunden und nicht direkt ergebnisorientiert wahrgenommen. Und da sozusagen zuzulassen, dass es außerordentlich wichtig ist, dass solche Blicke über den Tellerrand und hinaus in eine andere Kultur durchaus eine Bereicherung für Verhaltensweisen, Prozesse, Produktentwicklung, Wertkette usw. bedeuten können, wenn man genau hinguckt. Aber es braucht eben diese Sorgfalt; es ist ein zusätzlicher zeitlicher Aufwand, das ist ganz klar (08/67).

5.3.3 The Practice of Expatriate Coaching

As the previous subchapter illustrates, expatriate coaching is requested under various circumstances, for different purposes, and in different expatriate assignment stages. The study of collected data material shows that – according to these differing demands – also the expatriate coaching practice of interviewed coaches varies. In order to make transparent the ways in which they differ from each other, they are subsequently clustered into four groups and from now on referred to as

- **transition coaching**, intended to guarantee a smoother transfer to the out-of-country job;
- **emergency coaching**, the most frequently requested type which aims at helping expatriates deal with challenges while abroad;
- **repatriate coaching**, one of the least asked for kinds but viewed essential by coaches who have developed it to support expatriates as their assignment comes to an end; and
- **culture-focused coaching**, the 'luxury type' of expatriate coaching limited to culture-related topics.

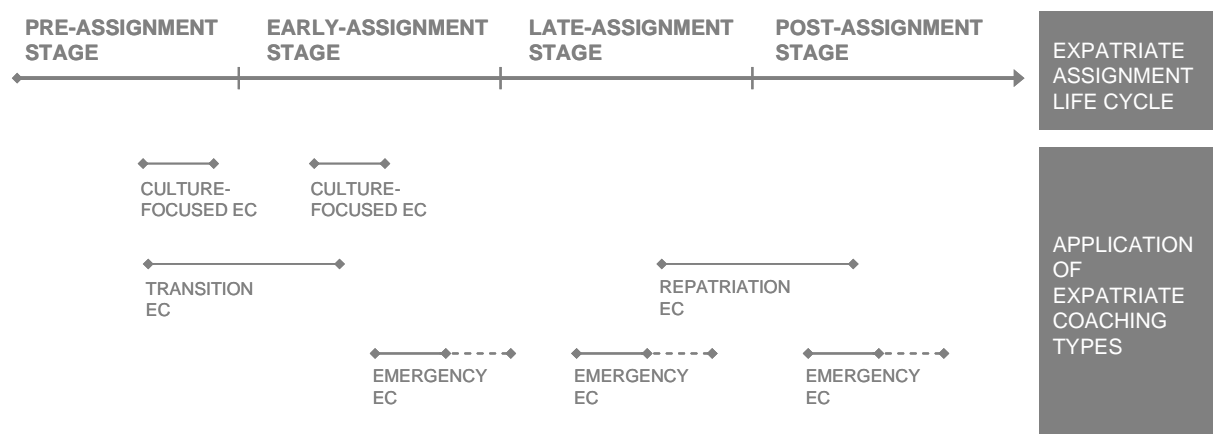
Before shedding light on how the practice of expatriate coaching looks like in detail, it should be mentioned at the outset that the majority of coach interviewees takes two characteristics of expatriate coaching for granted. When talking about expatriate coaching, they tend to have a one-on-one setting, a work relationship between a coach and one coachee, in mind. The possibilities of team coaching are actually only mentioned by a single interview partner. Besides that, expatriate coaching is typically regarded as

service for managers who leave a MNC's headquarters for one of its foreign country subsidiaries; and not for so-called inpatriates who transfer from a subsidiary to the companies' headquarters. Just two coaches point out that there also exists a (if only minor) demand for expatriate coaching articulated by inpatriates.

5.3.3.1 Types of Expatriate Coaching Application

The various ways in which expatriate coaching is practiced, most obviously differ in its application's point in time; this is why they have been grouped in regard to the expatriate assignment life cycle. When the expatriate coaching types are set against the four assignment phases, the following picture emerges. It reveals that expatriate coaching is basically provided in all stages of expatriations; yet, the early- and late-assignment period is characterized by the greatest density of interventions.

Figure 29: Types of Expatriate Coaching Application



Transition Coaching: Transition coaching usually consists of three to five sessions of which one takes place before coachees' departure to their assignment destination and usually covers half a day or even a whole day. The remaining sessions are held during the first six months of the assignment. Transition coaching can thus be characterized as a measure of medium range with preparatory and preventive character. As typical for coaching, also topics dealt with in transition coaching sessions are determined by expatriates. If coaching is initiated by coachees' companies,

however, and expatriates-to-be are not familiar with the concept, coaches tend to take a more active role in suggesting potential subjects. Classic issues revolve around change, power and influence, key relations, business and national culture, career planning, family matters, and work-life balance.

Oft sage ich zu Beginn, zu welchen Aspekten wir hier und heute arbeiten können, und das ist 1.) Job-Assignment, angefangen von Erwartungskklärung, Chef, Kollegen, Mitarbeitern, auch entsendender Bereich hin zu Schlüsselpersonen, Zahlen, Daten, Fakten, was weiß der über seinen neuen Job schon, was für einen Auftrag hat er denn, muss er sanieren, aufbauen, ist es eine neue Funktion, muss er in den nächsten drei Monaten zwanzig Mitarbeiter einstellen oder austauschen, also was ist die Ausgangssituation, wie war die Situation hinsichtlich seines Vorgängers, hatte er einen, wie ist er gegangen, was hat er hinterlassen, wie lange war der da, was hat er für eine Mannschaft, das heißt welche Ressourcen stehen ihm zur Verfügung, qualitativ und quantitativ, aber quantitativ ist der entscheidendere Punkt eigentlich, und was kennt er schon für Themen? Die waren ja schon alle auf Look & See Trip, die haben dort schon viel gehört, was für Themen sind schon herangetragen worden? 2.) Kultur, dort unterscheid ich immer zw. Business-Kultur und National Culture [...], die zum Teil durch die interkulturellen Trainings abgedeckt wird und wir arbeiten dann zu den Fragen: Was bedeuten denn die interkulturellen Themen in Bezug auf den Job, den die Führungskraft zu machen hat. Also wir beziehen das immer auf den Job (07/48).

One issue that arises in terms of transition coaching is whether it is better that expatriates return to the home country for these remaining sessions or whether it makes more sense to transfer clients to coaches in their host country; the experience regarding transferability differs widely.

[...] hier vor der Entsendung anzufangen, z.B. mit mir und dann zu übergeben an 'local' Coaches, das ist ganz schwierig. Wir haben da Protokolle geschrieben und Absprachen gehabt, aber das ist alles Theorie geblieben. Weil wenn jemand angefangen hat und sich auf jemanden eingelassen hat, dann möchte der das Pferd nicht wechseln (07/58).

Beispiel, ein Coachee von uns übernimmt eine Aufgabe in den USA [...] er ist sieben Monate hier gecoacht worden, dann war der Wechsel, und dann hat das Coaching dort unser Kollege aus Montreal übernommen, weil er dort oben in Amerika gearbeitet hat und das ist dann auch eigentlich das nächste; also sonst wären die anderen Partner eigentlich in New York, aber das war nach Kanada näher. Da wir international [...] zusammenarbeiten, ist so eine Übergabe oder Wechsel eines Coachees von einem Mitglied zu einem anderen ohne irgendwelche Probleme gut möglich. Also da ist dann einfach eine hohe Anschlussfähigkeit gegeben (08/34).

Emergency Coaching: In contrast to transition coaching, emergency coaching has not much of an anticipatory character. Rather, it is a response to an already established challenge or crisis that expatriates struggle with while abroad. According to the range of possible expatriate difficulties, emergency coaching can have a variety of thematic emphases: Challenges in regard to the specific assignment, communication and leadership, relationships with bosses and business partners or with employees abroad

and at home, career issues, cultural differences but also rather personal topics concerning work-life balance, or the influence of private difficulties on professional life represent just a selection of possible topics. The duration of this type of expatriate coaching tends to differ just the way its content does. It is mainly offered, however in the mid- and late-assignment stages.

[...] ich hab auch einen Expatriate gehabt mit dreizehn bis fünfzehn Sitzungen, also das gibt es auch (09/29). [...] Das ist ganz unterschiedlich, je nachdem wie das der Coachee gestalten will; es kann sein, dass man im Informationsgespräch ist und einen richtigen Prozess vereinbart und dann läuft das wirklich so ab, dass man sagt, man macht jetzt wirklich sechs Coachingsitzungen, man trifft sich alle vier Wochen einmal zu einer Sitzung, telefoniert dazwischen, das ist schon ein richtiger Prozess mit einem definierten Anfang und Ende. Es kann sein, dass man im Informationsgespräch sagt, es gibt dieses eine Thema und bei dem bleibt man und dazu gibt es eine Sitzung mit allem was dazugehört, das ist dann eher punktuell. Häufig ist, dass jemand eine Coachingsitzung nimmt und merkt, was das für eine Wirkung hat und bei der nächsten Situation, wo es ihm wieder schlecht geht oder er mit irgendwas nicht klar kommt oder eine Entscheidung nicht treffen kann, kommt er wieder und dann gibt es wieder eine punktuelle Intervention. Das ist einfach wie der Coachee das für sich gestalten will. Ich greif nur dann ein, wenn ich merke er möchte jetzt Rahmenbedingungen schaffen, die erfahrungsgemäß und aufgrund von Evaluationsergebnissen nichts bringen, z.B. eine einstündige Coachingsitzung zu machen (09/37).

Repatriation Coaching: Repatriation coaching seems to be the stepchild of the expatriate coaching family. It is highly recommended by coaches but still widely neglected by organizations and even more so by individual expatriates. Therefore, while concepts for repatriation coaching do exist, its application can barely be found. Originally, the measure was intended to support the reintegration process of expatriates into the home organization and the home country; focus was, for example, on finding an adequate position upon return, getting up-to-date on the key topics and key persons within the home base, as well as to prevent and deal with reverse culture shock. In order to deal with the named issues in time, it is usually planned as medium range measure starting while expatriates are still abroad and last until they are settled back home.

[...] it is to begin preparing people about both reflecting on the experiences here, sitting back and recognizing where they have changed and where their passions have changed and what they have learned about themselves and what they have learned about the world, thinking about what their experiences have been when they had gone back on home leaves and whatever they had done, recognizing both the advantages and disadvantages that have come from living here, and again, anticipating and planning around what do you lose and what do you gain in going home. And it is huge and most people don't, you know, all they go is I can go shopping, everything is green (...) but they're going to lose a lot of the freedom that has come with being an expatriate, the money, the social life and all those advantages. So, again, it is preparing and setting yourself some plans and how you're going to deal with that, how you're going to address those changes because

they are big changes and there is no support on the other side when you get home (16/45).

In today's fast-moving times and in organizations which have turned into cultural melting pots, additional topics are on the repatriation agenda: How can expatriates learn and benefit from their own experience in regard to the next foreign country assignment? How can expatriates' gained knowledge be fed back to the organization in efficient ways? How can it best be made use of to improve the MNC's global strategy or to prevent future expatriates from making the same mistakes?

Bei der Rückkehr ist für uns natürlich wichtig, [...] dass wir da noch mal den Kontakt aufnehmen und bei der Rückkehr darauf achten, wie der Rückkehrer selbst nicht nur seine Erfahrung ins Unternehmen mit einbringen kann, sondern wie andere Stellen, die für die Entsendung zuständig waren, auch Erfahrung abrufen und aufgreifen. Weil es da oft eher mangelt. Jemand wird irgendwie so ins Ausland geschickt, soll ne Lehrzeit – also unausgesprochen – absolvieren, was er oder sie lernt interessiert dann hier wieder niemand, ja (08/65).

Culture-Focused Coaching: Coaches offering transition, emergency, and repatriation coaching always consider the impact of culture on expatriates' professional and private lives as possible trigger for expatriate challenges. The two interviewed coaches who practice culture-focused coaching do so, too. The difference to the other expatriate coaches is, however, that they only work with clients if their challenges are really culture-related; a focus which results from the fact that both have their first standing leg as intercultural trainers. Issues dealt with are more or less limited to the differences that exist between expatriates' home and host culture and their impact on professional and private life. Therefore, culture-focused coaching resembles very much the content of an individual intercultural training session and its duration is, like that of trainings, usually limited to one or two days. Yet, as a result of its one-on-one character, clients tend to take a more active role in the choice of issues dealt with and naturally apply the discussed topics to their current situation.

Also mehrheitlich sind das Leute, die ausreisen. Und deren Idee ist in erster Linie einfach, sich zu informieren über das was ihnen da bevorsteht in diesem anderen Land und an dieser Stelle sind die Inhalte eigentlich mit dem interkulturellen Training identisch. Aber natürlich wenn Sie nun einen vor sich sitzen haben, dann fängt der automatisch an 'Und was bedeutet das dann für mich und für meine Aufgabestellung und wenn Sie mich jetzt erleben den ganzen Tag, wie würden Sie mich denn dann einschätzen, was würden Sie denn dann kommentieren und mir als Rat geben?' Und damit wird das von dem interkulturellen Einzeltraining zunehmend mehr zum Coaching, wenn es dann nämlich zunehmend mehr in diesen persönlichen Bereich reingeht und den konkreten Aufgaben bezogenen Bereich. Also ich bin kein Coach, der von irgendeiner systemischen Ausbildung her kommt oder aus dieser Psychotherapeutencke sondern ich definier mich eindeutig als jemand, der spezialisiert ist als Interkulturalist und mit dem Coaching macht. Aber wenn jetzt jemand sagt, ich hab allgemein Schwierigkeiten als Führungsfigur und ich möchte

deshalb mit Ihnen darüber reden, dann sag ich, da gehen Sie bitte zu jemand anderem, das ist nicht mein Gebiet (10/11).

It is to note that conspicuously many coach interviewees made it clear that they do not want to be mistaken for coaches whose focus is limited to culture. Some German-speaking coaches thus deliberately distinguish their services from 'intercultural coaching' (i.e., expatriate coaching with culture focus, and in German 'Interkulturelles Coaching') by introducing theirs as 'coaching in the international/intercultural context' (i.e., 'Coaching im internationalen/interkulturellen Kontext'). In English, the differentiation is even more indefinite. Expatriate coaching is often simply referred to as coaching whereas that with exclusive culture-focus is either known as culture or acculturation coaching.

5.3.3.2 Specificities of Expatriate Coaching Practice

Expatriate coaching is necessarily embedded in an international context; and there are several particularities which result from this and naturally set it apart from coaching that lacks the international flavor. Five issues seem particularly relevant:

- home and host country coaches,
- telephone and face-to-face sessions,
- proximity of expatriate coaching to intercultural training contents,
- accelerated coaching pace, and
- extension of support offer to expatriates' 'significant others'.

Before they are introduced below, it is to be mentioned at this stage that the methods and tools applied in the course of expatriate coaching sessions are reported to be fairly akin to those used with other target clients. The meetings between coach and expatriate are mainly characterized by dialogues; besides, role plays as well as empty chair and relaxation exercises are also stated to be part of expatriate coaching, if indicated.

Home and Host Country Coaches: One particularity of expatriate coaching refers to the location of coaches. They can either be placed in coachees' home country or their future/current host country; both of which has its pros and cons. Home country coaches are usually able to provide their services in coachees' mother tongue and are personally available for conversations during expatriates' preparation and repatriation stage. Out-of-country coaches, in contrast, are likely to be more familiar with the host

culture and are 'present' should challenges occur during expatriates' stay abroad.

Für den Gesamtblick, Entsendung und Rückkehr, ist es ein Vorteil einen Coach zu haben, der in der Heimat ist, weil der ist dann näher an dem dran was zu Hause und im Unternehmen läuft. Die [Expatriates] sind immer erstaunt, was ich über die Firmen alles weiß und über Personenbewegungen. Aber natürlich gibt es lokale Fragen, wo das Kulturelle mehr in den Vordergrund kommt (07/106).

Weil ich denk, also Unterstützung vor Ort ist dann (...) geschmeidiger und weniger Terminprobleme, steht wesentlich direkter zur Verfügung, als wenn es nur hier [in der Heimat] geleistet werden kann (08/61) [...] Es ist eine andere Übersetzungsleistung, die jemand vor Ort geben kann. [...] Aber auch da, beides kann, das hängt von den Menschen, der Situation ab, ich würde nicht sagen, das eine ist besser, also ich empfehle es schon, weil es in der Regel einfacher zu machen ist und ich schon merke, die Heimataufenthalte, die Erwartung des Unternehmens sind dann sehr hoch an die eine Woche, was da passieren soll. Dann gibt es familiär mit Eltern und Geschwistern auch noch besondere Erwartungen und Druck und dann sind sie [Expatriates] zeitlich unter sehr hohem Druck und sich das dann frei zu schaufeln [für die Coaching Session]. Also in der Regel ist es einfacher, wenn das im Ausland passieren kann (08/104).

Telephone and Face-to-Face Sessions: Despite the distance between expatriate coaches and their clients, most coaches prefer face-to-face to telephone sessions. They tend to offer phone conversations only after an initial meeting with the client, as a regular follow-up to face-to-face meetings or in case sessions cannot take place because expatriates are on business trips.

Wenn die [Expatriates] das brauchen schon auch am Telefon, das bietet ich jedem an. Wenn ich die Leute kenn, dann auch am Telefon. Das rechne ich genauso ab wie persönlich; da machen wir Telefontermine (13/57).

Nur wenn die mal auf Geschäftsreise gehen, dann machen wir die Coaching-Sessions per Telefon oder Skype. Das machen wir schon, aber das macht nicht mehr als zehn Prozent der ganzen Dinge aus bei mir. Persönliche Präsenz ist schon sehr wichtig (17/35). [...] jede zweite Woche gibt es ein face-to-face Coaching und jede andere Woche gibt es eine Stunde Telefonmöglichkeit. Das ist nicht compulsory aber wenn sie das wahrnehmen wollen, dann kriegen sie das praktisch so als Bonus. Das ist kein richtiges Coaching. Ich lege Wert darauf, dass es am Telefon kein richtiges Coaching gibt, sondern eher so ein Follow-Up und hilft der eigenen Reflektion (17/45).

Only one coach expresses her clear preference for telephone coaching; illustrated by intentional and unintentional silence, she demonstrates the chances and disadvantages connected to it.

Right now, I use two forms of coaching, phone-based coaching which is sure the majority of my work, and face-to-face. My preference is for the phone, I charge more for face-to-face coaching because it is more work for me. And I also, my style preference is actually for the phone coaching, I can listen better, I can hear more, I can keep better notes, and I believe it actually creates a space for the client to, you know there is an anonymity through the phone, and so there is some space that's

created for them to really go into themselves more than if we are meeting in an office or in a café with somebody looking at them and so they feel impelled to keep themselves; their body language, their eyes are in control. Phone-based coaching gives the client a safer space to really let the eyes wonder off, to get up and walk around the room, to do whatever which is much harder face-to-face (16/51) [...] Yeah, I get mixed reactions. (...) Some people need face-to-face sessions for the trust factor. One of the things that we have to talk about is silence. It is part of the coaching experience and, again, I think this is easier on the phone, but it is also making sure that there is an understanding around that silence because silence on the phone could be like 'Are you still there?' I have a lot of international clients, so a lot of phone lines drop out, so you have to find that balance between 'Is that silence intentional or is the person gone?' And for me silence with the clients is part of the intent listening; so when I talk to my clients at the first time, you will have silence, because I work very hard to not actually think about what my next questions is as you are talking, but to be listening and then processing and then giving an answers rather than giving the next question. You know not a conversational format where the next question pops out. So inherently there is silence, and it is not a manipulative silence, it is not waiting to see if there is more; it is really that time to process and allow the person to process what they just said. So yes, both, we've done it all so far (laughs) (16/59).

Proximity of Expatriate Coaching to Intercultural Training

Contents: Successful expatriations depend on individuals' awareness and understanding of cultural differences as well as on their ability to adapt thoughts and behaviors to the particularities of the foreign country and its nationals. Since both, the cognitive and the behavioral component are essential for expatriates, intercultural training (but also language training) and expatriate coaching often go hand in hand: It is nothing unusual that trainers refer expatriates to coaches and vice versa; alternatively, support providers who have both training and coaching skills have been found to serve clients for a twofold purpose if necessary.

[...] also man hat im Grunde genommen auch so Schnittstellen zw. Training und Coaching. Vielfach ist es so, dass man im Training merkt, es gibt Probleme, die man mit diesem Plenum oder der Gesamtgruppe diskutieren kann, man auch was thematisieren kann, aber man merkt auch es gibt Probleme Einzelner und das sind dann im Grunde genommen die Kandidaten, die dann aus diesem Training ins Coaching reingenommen werden. Umgekehrt kann es aber genauso sein, dass vom Coaching zurück überwiesen wird in so ein Training, also wenn man merkt, dass es mangelnde Sprachkenntnisse von jemandem sind, dann sagt man okay, du gehst jetzt in ein Sprachtraining (11/37).

In many cases, expatriate coaching and intercultural training imperceptibly blend when it is necessary that, within sessions, coaches impart small portions of culture-general and -specific knowledge to their coachees. To a great extent, therefore, current coaches are convinced that own foreign country experience is advantageous when serving expatriates.

I believe that coaching is most powerful when the coach has some relevant experience; so a coach who has been an expatriate or married cross-culturally (...) can bring a bigger depth to coaching than someone who has not (16/89).

Coaches who have themselves been abroad for professional reasons are expected to make a more qualified impression on clients and to be perceived as more capable conversation partners who can “strike up an easier relationship” (15/77) with their coachees. Whereas foreign country experience is viewed useful but not essential, coach interviewees regard a sound theoretical culture-related background to be a precondition for professional expatriate coaches; even for people who can fall back on their own expatriate experience.

Yeah, it is interesting because since I have been here in China, I have seen a lot of progress and until a few years ago, I knew about as much as anybody about how an expat should deal here in China. And then as more and more progress was made and more information were made available, it just overtakes you and you get passed by information and you cannot see ahead of it and then you have to go formally. The issues that people began to run into were more complex than I could deal with based on my own experiences (14/87).

Accelerated Coaching Pace: Another specificity of expatriate coaching concerns its clients: Expatriate coachees are described as outstandingly ambitious people who act under great pressure; pressure that seems to result from the expectations of both home and host country management, their own expectation to succeed, the competition existing among expatriates, the uncertainty connected to career development after expatriation, the limited time frame allowed for such assignments, and not least from the impact of long-term assignments on expatriates' private life and vice versa. As a consequence, also expatriate coaching sessions tend to be characterized by more-than-usual pressure, speed, solution-orientation, and commitment. Once the strain experienced by expatriates exceeds a certain level, however, the atmosphere may twist and expatriates are found paralyzed in their thinking and incapable of action.

Na ja, die Neugier ist im Allgemeinen größer, die die Führungskräfte haben, weil das ist einfach Fremdheit und Fremdheit führt ganz häufig zu Neugier und das macht natürlich einen großen Unterschied, weil das auch Unsicherheit bedeutet. Also ne größere Unsicherheit, wenn man von Funktion A nach Funktion B oder von Werk A nach Werk B oder von der Zentrale in ne dezentrale Einheit wechselt. [...] Und natürlich ist die Frage der Familie eine deutlich größere. Also geht die Familie mit und wie kann das gehen? Das fängt bei einer berufstätigen Ehefrau an, geht über die Kinder, die in die Schule oder Kindergarten oder sonst was gehen, also da sind die Fragen und die Themen, die zu lösen sind, deutlich größer. Was auch ein deutlicher Unterschied ist, Entsendungen sind zeitlich befristet, das gibt es bei Inlandsverträgen ja nicht. [...] die Erwartungen hinsichtlich einer karrierestärkenden Perspektive ist bei einem Auslandseinsatz größer als bei einem nationalen Wechsel. Also es wird einfach mehr Karriereerwartung damit verknüpft (07/30).

[...] expatriates have been exposed to a large number of experiences [...]. And because they have such a deep broad foundation you can move very quickly and very intuitively with an expat [...] (14/39). Expats are on an accelerated path [...]. Expats live at a very fast pace here in China, but actually they do everywhere

(14/125). [...] You have got to make things happen, they want to make things happen. They are typically, I think, my impression is, they are typically achievers to begin with and you get a whole bunch of achievers in one spot at the same time and they typically try to out-achieve each other and they may not think of it as competition but, so the pace moves quicker (14/129).

Extension of Support Offer to Expatriates' 'Significant Others': Due to the blending of professional and private life which, according to interviewees, characterizes expatriations, the offers of coaches are no longer exclusively geared towards expatriates. More and more coaches have realized the need for a mixed bag of support measures which exceed classic coaching sessions. Quite a few, for example, organize preparatory sessions for couples or workshops for expatriate partners; interventions that are often a mixture of training and coaching elements.

Also erstmal hinterfrag ich, wer ist denn unglücklich? Ist es der Ehemann mit der Ehefrau oder ist es umgekehrt oder sind es sie mit den Kindern? Und den Unglücklichen coache ich. [...] Was ich auch häufig schon gemacht habe, ist im Ausland eine Gruppe von unglücklichen Ehefrauen. [...] Häufig haben sie überhaupt keine sozialen Kontakte und sitzen nur noch mit ihren Kindern alleine in der Wohnung. Und dann ist schon mal gut, wenn ich weiß, an welchen Stellen andere Frauen sitzen, wenn man die mal alle zusammenholt, dann haben die schon mal einen Erfahrungsaustausch; [...] Also es ist dann eher wichtig, als Coach zu versuchen die Perspektive zu verändern. [...] Aber das man einfach auch versucht, Alternativen auf's Tablett zu bringen und die durch zu diskutieren, ist aber auch kein klassisches Coaching (09/42).

[...] ein spezielles Partnerinnen-Angebot [...]. D.h., man arbeitet dann nur mit den begleitenden Partnerinnen und nimmt von daher eine andere Perspektivik auf, gibt Raum und Möglichkeit, die besonderen Entscheidungsprozesse, dieses sehr ambivalente 'Ja, ich tu natürlich, weil das für meinen Mann wichtig ist und für seine Karriere und damit für unser gemeinsames Familienweiterkommen, andererseits ist es für mich – häufig ist es halt so – eine schwierige Situation' oder der Partner nimmt darauf viel zu wenig Rücksicht, nicht weil er böswillig ist, sondern weil er die Situation nicht einschätzen kann bzw. weil nicht ernsthaft geredet wird darüber. Weil das Reden über die eigenen Befindlichkeit ja schwierig ist und wenn das Paar nicht gelernt hat, wie soll man sagen, sehr differenziert auf einer emotionalen Ebene zu reden, d.h. Gefühle zu verbalisieren was ja generell schwierig ist, dann ist es auch schwierig, diesen spezifischen Entscheidungsprozess transparent zu machen. Für die Paare ist es oft überhaupt nicht greifbar, da laufen verdeckte Modelle ab, etwa so eine Art Denken von Seiten der Partnerin, 'Ich tu jetzt was für dich, aber dafür tust du was für mich'. Also diese Deals, die da innerlich gemacht werden, aber nicht ausgesprochen werden, die sind sehr deutlich da. Und von daher, also Erwartungshaltungen, die dann aufgebaut aber möglicherweise nicht erfüllt werden und dann entsteht Stress, Ablehnung, sich verschließen, dem Partner negative Botschaften geben usw. Gut, das alles kennt man ja irgendwo und weiß, dass solche Partnerinnen-Workshops da sehr hilfreich sind, weil plötzlich erlebt wird, 'Mensch, es geht nicht nur mir so, den anderen auch'. Und indem das gemerkt wird, wird eine Sprache gefunden, können die Gefühle, die so ein bisschen diffus da sind, ausgedrückt werden. Man findet Modelle, Konzepte, man findet eine Sprache. Und dann werden Sachen klarer, dann können die auch besser kommuniziert werden mit dem Partner (12/45).

5.3.4 The Potential of Expatriate Coaching

While different kinds of demands for expatriate coaching have been shown to result in various types of expatriate coaching practice, each expatriate coaching type brings with it a specific set of favorable effects and limitations. What can be deduced from the coach interview material is, thus, that to a great degree the potential of expatriate coaching depends on the way the measure is practiced; even though many effects can be achieved by several expatriate coaching applications. Altogether the collected data reveals ten specific benefits of expatriate coaching. Also, however, its limitations and yet untapped potential becomes more tangible.

5.3.4.1 Ten Benefits of Expatriate Coaching

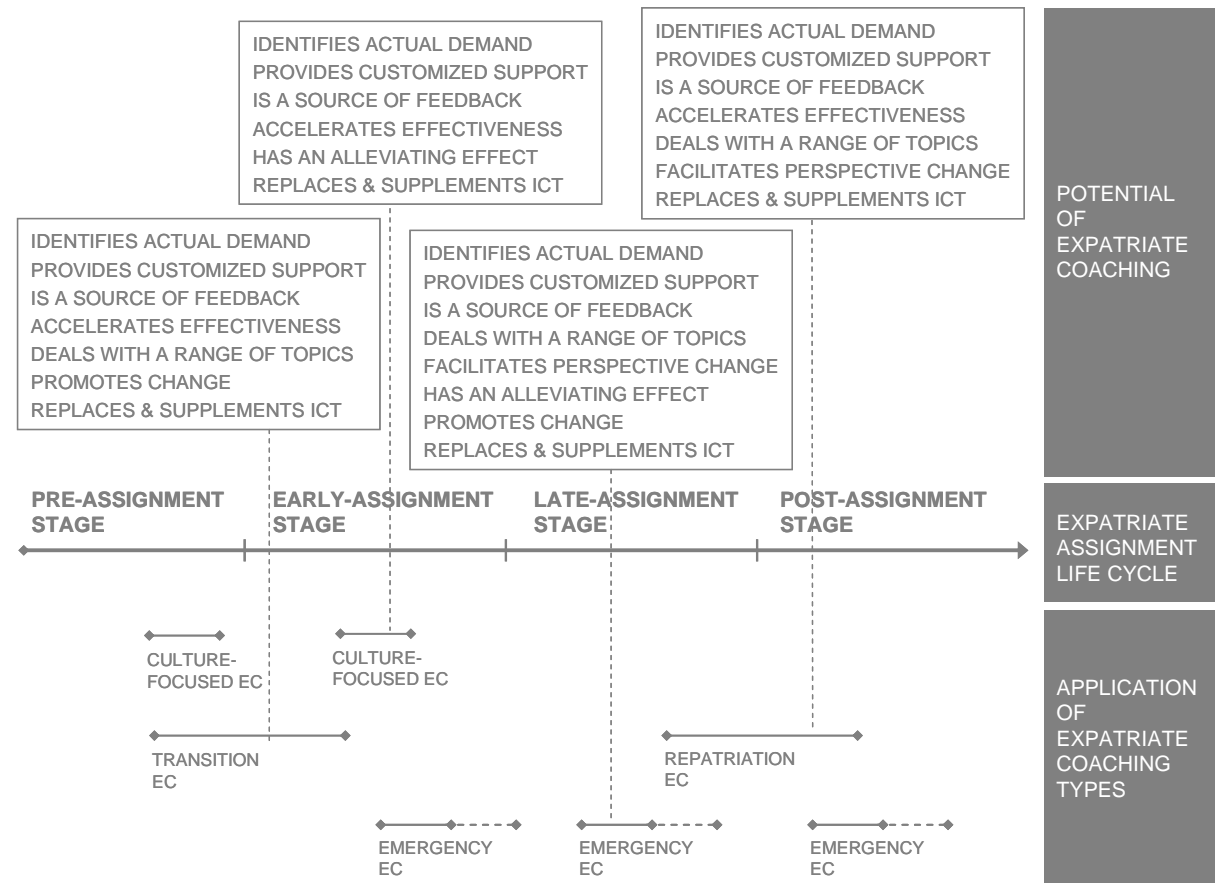
There are several reasons for why coach interviewees identify expatriate coaching as a useful and effective support measure. Some of the key benefits have already been identified by MNCs' representatives and expatriates (see chapter 5.3.2.3 Motives for Expatriate Coaching Requests) which suggests that either the message of coaches has reached its clientele or that coaches have well adapted their services to the latter's requests. According to coach interviewees, the main potential of expatriate coaching is that it

- 1) can identify clients' actual demand for support,
- 2) can provide customized support tailored to individuals' personality and situation,
- 3) can be a source of feedback,
- 4) can deal with a broad range of issues,
- 5) can replace and/or supplement intercultural training (ICT),
- 6) can facilitate expatriates' change of perspectives,
- 7) can promote attitude and behavior change,
- 8) can increase the development of realistic expectations,
- 9) can accelerate expatriates' effectiveness, and
- 10) can have an alleviating, mind-clearing effect.

Whereas the first three issues apply to all types of expatriate coaching, the remaining seven benefits vary in degree of application depending on

whether one looks at transition, emergency, repatriation, or culture-focused coaching.

Figure 30: The Potential of Expatriate Coaching Types



1) Expatriate Coaching Can Identify Clients' Actual Demand: A perhaps rather neglected but very important potential of all types of expatriate coaching is that they inherently start with an analysis of clients' current state. This analysis is aimed at identifying their obvious and latent needs and expectations based on which they can be ranked in terms of urgency and importance. This way, coaches can evaluate whether coaching is at all an appropriate means of support for the very situation. Furthermore, they can better ensure that only those interventions are planned which suit the demands of coachees and which are capable of helping them reach determined goals. According to coaches, this is an essential step that should precede the application of any support measure, since different people need different kinds and different degrees of support; there is no one correct answer to 'What is the best support measure (package) for expatriates?'

There is no single answer and I think that that is the challenge for providers of this service because, I think people who most need cross-cultural orientation don't get it, don't absorb any of it or don't even take it and they get here and they know it all anyway. So, any money you spend on them was a raid off. You have people, on the other hand of the spectrum, who are incredibly flexible, adaptable people and so if you say you're going to get coached on an ongoing basis and we're going to check in with you to see how you're doing, they don't need that. They don't find any value in that. So there is no right model. There needs to be customization based on the couple and their prior experiences (...) I don't have the answer, and I think the answer is there is not one (16/85).

As a result of identifying clients' actual demand, the thematic focus of coaching, the methods applied, the duration, frequency, and overall time frame of sessions can be adapted to the individual. If appropriate, favorable combinations with other support measures or even a transfer to another support measure provider can be initiated to make sure no valuable time is wasted through the application of an inadequate intervention.

Das Informationsgespräch ist mir total wichtig, also a) muss ich ja wissen, wo drückt der Schuh und meine Erfahrung ist, es gibt eine Symptomebene – sag ich immer – also kann sein, dass jemand glaubt, hier ein Problem zu haben, aber das sitzt ganz woanders. Im Informationsgespräch wend ich schon eine Coachingmethode an, eine Dyade sagen wir, das ist eine strukturierte Kommunikationsübung und ich frag denjenigen immer nur, 'Sagen Sie mir ein Thema, das Sie zurzeit beschäftigt.' Sie müssen sich vorstellen, wir sitzen uns gegenüber und dann sag ich immer diesen Satz. Sie sagen ein Thema, ich sag Danke und schreib es mir auf. Und dann geht es wieder mit der gleichen Frage weiter. Wenn man das fünfzig Mal macht, dann tauchen die Themen auf, die denjenigen total beschäftigen. Und wenn ich merke, da gibt es noch etwas, dann wandle ich die Dyade ab und sage 'Sagen Sie mir ein Problem, das sie zurzeit haben.' Das ist so halb kopfgesteuert, halb gefühls-, bauchgesteuert, also da taucht alles auf dem Inneren auf und erfahrungsgemäß ist die Wirkung schon mal die, dass derjenige sich sehr erleichtert fühlt, also er hat ungefähr schon mal so alles rausgekotzt, was ihm so im Kopf rumgeht. Dann kann man Themen oder Probleme einkreisen, um die es geht und dann können wir anfangen, gemeinsam die Coachingsitzungen zu strukturieren, in der Regel, nein kann man nicht sagen, es kann auch nur ein einziges Thema sein und eine Sitzung reicht, es kann einfach sein, dass es mehr Themenfelder gibt, die kreisen wir ein, legen die Themen fest und auch die Termine für die Sitzungen und natürlich erzähle ich auch, mit welchem Ansatz ich arbeite, vor allem auch wer ich überhaupt bin, versuche dadurch ein bisschen Vertrauen aufzubauen. Die Rahmenbedingungen, die Kosten, Zeitaufwand, die Termine werden da geklärt (09/19).

2) Expatriate Coaching Can Provide Customized Support: The identification of expatriates' demands automatically leads to its next benefit which becomes particularly transparent when contrasted to intercultural trainings which are often standardized. Expatriate coaching's content and setting is tailored to the individual questions, issues, needs and expectations, experience and personality of coachees. For this purpose, the very combination of specific circumstances which make up clients' expatriation is considered and reconsidered as the coaching relationship

unfolds. In a nutshell, a customized and unique offer to clients seems to be the speciality of expatriate coaches.

Coaching beantwortet die [...] Fragen des Coachees, die beim Training nicht unbedingt, also aus Zeitgründen, aus Gruppendynamik, was weiß ich Prozessverlauf des Trainings unbeantwortet bleiben. Also dass die Fragen des Coachee, die sich aus der Situation und aus seinem Erleben ergeben wirklich aufgenommen werden, das muss einfach auf die Person hin entwickelt oder ausgesprochen, durchgearbeitet werden (08/108).

Coaching, I would say, is a silver bullet; cultural training is a machine gun. Coaching is individualized work that caters for individual needs; cultural training is a general platform to move from where they are, from whatever country they came from to a level they know a bit about the ways and means of living in a foreign country, that is all. But you still have a lot of issues [...] (15/103).

3) Expatriate Coaching Can Be a Source of Feedback: Coaches are dialogue partners who pick up what their counterparts are (verbally and non-verbally) telling them, process that information, and feed it back to their clients. Expatriates can benefit from the measure in that coaches raise their awareness, making sure that they intently do what they are doing.

Jede Führungskraft, egal was sie tut im Ausland, es ist die Entscheidung der Führungskraft; und so lange sie es mit Bewusstheit tut, habe ich keinen Job. Solange sie etwas unbewusst tut, habe ich einen Job und zwar das zu spiegeln und ins Bewusstsein zu heben (07/76).

Expatriate coaches' attention is particularly drawn to issues like communication and leadership style, obstructive attitudes, host culture adequate behavior, indication of overtiredness, and the like. Within a confidential setting, they monitor the well-being and progress of expatriates and feel responsible to hold up a mirror to their clients, people in high ranks who tend to either do not receive feedback or are not able to make use of it.

Das ist bei Führungskräften häufig, dass sie, wenn sie höher aufsteigen, nicht mehr genug Feedback bekommen und keine Gesprächspartner haben (13/49).

Also ich hab das Gefühl, dass die Menschen sich selbst nicht kennen, sehr wenig Feedback einholen oder nicht auf Rückmeldungen hören und es nicht verstehen, sich selbst nicht empathisch anschauen können, also von außen (17/39).

4) Expatriate Coaching Can Deal with a Broad Range of Issues: Unless expatriate coaching is not exclusively practiced in order to help expatriates deal with cultural differences as exemplified by culture-focused coaching, expatriate coaching is an outstandingly comprehensive measure content-wise. It considers person-, situation-, and culture-related specificities as trigger for challenges and works with clients on a great

range of issues – for instance, on their personality, personal relations, leadership style, strategic plans, work-life balance or career development. As expatriate coaching is capable of working on these various levels it is reported to be very appropriate for expatriates who may be struggling in multiple areas as they move through their assignments.

[...] internationales Handeln, das ist ja eine Funktion der Wechselwirkung aus Person, Situation und Kultur [...] ich sag halt immer, nur dieser [Kultur-] Aspekt ist zu wenig. Wenn Sie in Unternehmen berufen werden um Beratung zu machen auf interkultureller Ebene, stellen Sie sich vor, da soll ein Unternehmen gegründet werden, dann geht es wirklich um den Standort, also die kriegen immer wieder in China eine Absage für einen Standort und eigentlich, von Vorstandsebene haben sie schon total Druck, zu solchen Themen werd ich z.B. gerufen und unter dem Deckmantel, wir machen jetzt mal interkulturelles Training. Irgendwann wird im Training klar Ding geredet und dann ist man bei dem eigentlichen Thema. Irgendwann stellt man fest, dass das gar nichts mit der Kultur zu tun hat, sondern die sind einfach zu blöd, die Geschichte durchzurechnen. Da ist eher eine BWL-Geschichte gefragt, als dass das mit der Kultur zu tun hätte. Oder zum Beispiel auch wenn man Expatriates nimmt und da ruft einer an und sagt ihm geht es so schlecht und man könnte meinen, das hat mit dem Land und der Kultur zu tun, aber dann erzählt er Ihnen, dass seine alte Mutter zu Hause hockt, alleine, und derjenige macht sich total Stress damit. Was hat das mit der Kultur zu tun? Und natürlich gibt es Themen, die mit der Kultur zu tun haben, aber eben nicht nur. Deswegen muss man immer alle drei Sachen sehen [Person, Situation, Kultur] (09/90).

5) Expatriate Coaching Can Replace and/or Supplement Intercultural Training (ICT): Even if to varying degree, all coach interviewees report to have foreign country experience and/or at least a fair amount of culture-general and -specific knowledge. As a result, they feel they are capable of weaving typical components of intercultural trainings into their coaching sessions or – independently from the coaching contract – provide their clients with training sessions, if necessary.

Also viele wissen einfach nicht, wie führe ich jetzt da die Mitarbeiter? Oder wie bring ich jemandem eine bestimmte Arbeitsaufgabe bei. Hier in Deutschland wird ja viel mit Zielen geführt, in China kann ich nicht in Zielen führen. Manche haben gar keine Vorstellung davon, wie sie die Leute führen sollen. Und dann machen sie halt irgendwie so rum und wundern sich, dass die ständig zu ihnen kommen, also die Chinesen kommen ja dann dauernd, das muss man ja wissen, was da dahinter steckt und dann merken sie, sie kommunizieren ständig, geben ständig kleine Aufgaben, kommen zu ihren eigenen Aufgaben nicht was vom Stammunternehmen aber erwartet wird und dann wächst der Stress immer mehr, weil sie merken, sie kriegen nix gebacken und dann verlängern sie ihre Arbeitszeit immer mehr und dann wird die Ehefrau immer unglücklicher. [...] Da ist es wichtig [...] die Führungskompetenz bei demjenigen aufzubauen, da geh ich dann weg vom Coaching. Ich bin auch interkulturelle Trainerin, ich mach ja vor allem China und USA, wenn jetzt jemand in China ist, dann versuch ich dem mal so auf der Grundlage von Kulturstandards klar zu machen, warum er Chinesen so führt und nicht anders. Das ist kein Coaching mehr im klassischen Sinne, sondern eher ein Einzeltraining auf einer Verhaltensebene (09/40).

Besides substituting intercultural trainings, however, expatriate coaching can also supplement them. Trainings tend to impart culture-general and/or -specific knowledge which is an important first step towards intercultural competence. Yet, what most of them refrain from is to support expatriates in applying this knowledge to everyday professional and private life abroad. Whereas intercultural trainings' frequent endeavor is to ensure that expatriates are aware and can in fact recognize cultural differences, they often do not aim at helping their participants adequately *react to* and *deal with* them in real-life situations – and this is exactly where expatriate coaching comes in. Coaches encourage expatriates to think through the effects of their used-to behavior, to identify alternatives, and to practice them within and out of coaching sessions.

So our coaching is about making people aware of what is happening inside and around them and then do something about it (15/101). [...] having some training that is helpful but culture training is to help them understand how the Chinese behave and their culture; but it does not teach them how to deal with them. Coaching helps them to deal with them (15/103).

6) Expatriate Coaching Can Facilitate Expatriates' Change of Perspectives: The move to a foreign country brings about a lot of change which in turn often causes uncertainty, a feeling of being stuck, and a lack of energy and perspectives. It is another benefit of coaching, so coaches, that the measure enables clients to recharge their batteries in that it provides them with new input in the sense of:

Ja genau, daran hab ich noch nie gedacht, oder so könnte man das auch sehen, hm da wäre ne Falle, das ist ja so ein Hinweis, da war ich noch nicht. Das ist ein neuer Aspekt, eine neue Perspektive (07/133).

Very importantly, coaching delivers opportunities to think through the unthinkable, to look at situations from different angles, to walk in other people's shoes, to be hypothetical. Coaching allows for and even encourages a change of perspectives and thus points out to before unseen alternatives. Especially in an intercultural environment where many things tend to change simultaneously and one might lose track of options, coaching can be enriching.

Das hat eine entlastende und eine öffnende Funktion. Also ich hab mit einer Führungskraft gearbeitet, deren Frau seit zwei Jahren mit draußen war; er wollte gerne länger bleiben, aber dann verpasst die Frau den Jobanschluss zu Hause und was könnte man da tun? Und dann haben wir ein Brainstorming gemacht und die zwei Berufswege nebeneinander aufgezeigt und sind zu wunderbaren Optionen gekommen und das hat ihm unheimlich geholfen, mit jemandem neutralen darüber zu reflektieren, was heißt denn das, wenn ich verlängern würde und meine Frau würde den Anschluss verpassen? Also in der Form ja, das hilft (07/104).

7) Expatriate Coaching Can Promote Attitude and Behavior Change:

Particularly within intercultural contexts, ingrained attitudes and behaviors might turn out to no longer be effective. A mere change of perspectives might no longer be enough to cope with expatriation difficulties. Attitude and behavior change may be necessary. To give an example, this might be the case when a host organization demands a more participative leadership approach or when conversations with host country nationals require a more indirect communication style. By means of role plays, empty chair exercises, homework and the like, coaches enable clients to try out different ways of approaching and behaving in situations and mentally support them when it comes to applying them outside of the protected coaching frame. In the course of subsequent coaching sessions, experience can be reflected and attitudes or new habits can thus be fine-tuned.

[...] so I think coaching is really about helping people change their habits, find new habits, find new solutions, and that can happen across any spectrum (16/73).

[Coaching] is basically about objectives and [...] about behaviors. Combine them and they [coachees] are actually going to walk with something that they are actually going to do (14/105).

8) Expatriate Coaching Can Increase the Development of Realistic Expectations:

In the course of expatriate coaching sessions – and in particular with transition, repatriation, and culture-focused coaching – coachees are encouraged to anticipate their professional and private life to come. Also, coaches tend to take an active part in suggesting issues which expatriates-to-be should think about. A realistic assessment of the changes, challenges, and opportunities connected to an expatriate life, namely, can take pressure off expatriates' and their dependants' shoulders; and since it prepares people for the challenges they might face in the course of their assignments, it can – at least to some degree – prevent expatriates from nasty surprises, far-reaching disappointments, and impeding attitudes.

Da geht es vor allem darum, das realistisch zu besprechen, was wird sie erwarten? Was könnte Sie erwarten, so nach dem Motto, wenn ich damit rechne, dann fällt es weniger schlimm aus. Oder wie mir einer mal zurückgeschrieben hat von Japan, ich hab so lachen müssen, 'Ich möchte Ihnen nur mitteilen, es ist alles viel weniger schlimm als Sie das sagten und da bin ich so froh drüber und immer, wenn es mir schlecht geht, erinnere ich mich was Sie gesagt haben und dann denk ich mir, na also so schlecht geht es mir nicht und dann geht es mir schon wieder besser' (lacht) (10/31). Mein Eindruck ist, der Haupteffekt liegt darin, dass die Leute eine realistische Vorstellung kriegen von dem, was sie erwartet. [...] Und ich find das irre, denn das ist der uralte Trick indem ich eine Wahrheit weiß, kann ich mich damit arrangieren (10/83).

[...] also wenn Sie das Ausland nehmen, dann ist da oft auch nochmal eine Veränderung in Haushaltsführung, Einkauf und so weiter und so fort, und dann

wohnen die in so einer gated community und das ist ja oft zusätzlich so eine Restriktion, also Einschränkung der Bewegungsfreiheit einerseits oder da gibt es dann Hausangestellte, in einem Umfang, wie es hier nicht üblich ist und mit dem klar zu kommen und dass es dann schon eine besondere Herausforderung ist, diese Art von familiärem oder häuslichem Leben zu gestalten. Und wie das passieren kann, sprechen wir vorher natürlich an, was da auch jemanden unterstützt und hilft; also da sind natürlich die Vernetzungen und die deutschen Clubs im Ausland und die Vorerfahrungen von vorherigen Expats usw. wichtig und Netzwerke und Verbindungen und auch die eigenen Bestimmung, also was will ich damit machen, wie nütze ich diese Zeit für eigene Lernerfahrung, eigene Aufgaben, ehrenamtliche Tätigkeit, aber jedenfalls für etwas, was ich hier nicht so gemacht habe. Das heißt eigene Zeit zu bestimmen und zu konzipieren, also vorweg bis hin zu mit Metaphern positiv zu füllen und durchzugestalten ist einfach ganz ganz wichtig (08/94).

9) Expatriate Coaching Can Accelerate Expatriates' Effectiveness:

Uncertainty, unforeseen surprises, and initial setbacks are factors which tend to 'paralyze' people. In that especially preparatory transition and culture-focused expatriate coaching aims at increasing the development of adequate expectations and thus at preparing its clients for the future, it also helps ensure that expatriates immediately concentrate on what they can and need to change instead of pondering over what they cannot. In short, appropriate expectations and constructive attitudes consequently also facilitate expatriates' effectiveness. And given the relatively short period of expatriations, effectiveness is what both MNCs and expatriates themselves are heavily dependent on.

[...] das klassische Führungswechselcoaching dauert ein halbes Jahr und dann muss es laufen. Nach einem halben Jahr ist eher schon die Reflektion. Da muss es rund sein. Weil bei dreijahres Entsendungen können Sie davon ausgehen, ein Jahr braucht der um volle Leistung zu bringen, ein Jahr ist er richtig dabei und ein Jahr steigt er schon wieder aus. Weil er muss sich darum kümmern, hier wieder zu landen. Das ist ja die Krux (07/66).

10) Expatriate Coaching Can Have an Alleviating Effect: In many regards, coaching's potential results from its dynamic, efficiency, and goal-orientation. In spite of this, its potential can merely, or additionally, result from the fact that coaching provides a protected and neutral setting 'to let go' and so to regain a 'clear mind'; especially, if it is provided by external coaches. They can be understood as discreet dialogue partners who attentively listen to and, due to their background, are able to understand what their clients are telling them. Therefore, coaching provides a confidential setting in which people can relieve their thoughts and feelings and are heard; they can find alleviation simply by sharing what is on their minds.

In dem einen Fall von dem ich erzähle, der kommt gar nicht oft, aber der weiß, dass er sich an mich wenden kann und das reicht eigentlich schon. Es ist beim Coaching ja überhaupt oft so, man macht das nicht so oft. Den Leuten reicht es oft schon, dass sie wissen, an wen sie sich wenden können, da hab ich etliche, die jedes halbe Jahr

mal kommen, weil sie wissen, da können sie mich als Dialogpartnerin ansprechen um ein paar Dinge zu besprechen, weil sie sonst am Arbeitsplatz niemanden als Dialogpartner haben (13/49).

5.3.4.2 Limitations of Expatriate Coaching

Like any expatriate support measure, also expatriate coaching's potential is reported to be limited. Depending on when, under which circumstances, with which focus, by whom, for whom, and for which purpose coaching is offered, its favorable effects vary in range and intensity. However, the interviewed coaches have identified two situations which basically make expatriate coaching impracticable; this is the case when

- there is a lack of commitment on behalf of coachees, and
- counseling is indicated.

Lack of Coachees' Commitment: Expatriate coaching, like coaching in general, necessitates that coachees are interested in and ready to open up and reflect. Without a basic degree of self-motivation and readiness for disclosure, coaching can never turn to good purpose.

[...] we have to work through the resistance but that is really the make or break. If a person is resistant and not willing to receive coaching in the first place, then what is the point? Why are we doing this? And I would directly go back to the sponsor and say 'The person does not really want to be coached, so?' (14/53).

Coaching is not useful for someone who does not want to explore and reflect, so you cannot force it on people (16/85).

Coaching Ends Where Counseling Starts: Expatriate coaching is also no longer indicated when counseling services are more adequate. In case of psychological syndromes, for example, the referral to a psychological or medical service provider may be more appropriate.

Now there is a fundamental difference to counseling, there is nothing that is broken, nothing that needs to be healed, we are talking about people who are fundamentally creative, resourceful people who have the inherent tools or can find the tools that are going to lift them forward (16/73). [...] That said, there are clearly cases and a lot of them where coaching is not the answer: it is counseling or it is getting on a plane and going home (16/77).

5.3.4.3 Untapped Expatriate Coaching Potential

Following the statements of coaches, it is especially due to the low degree of familiarity of expatriate coaching, the moderate amount of expatriate coaches around the world, and the limited perception of expatriate challenges and needs that the demand for expatriate coaching is still very much restricted; its potential, therefore, only partially tapped. Particularly in four regards, the interviewed coaches wished for a stronger utilization of expatriate coaching:

- expatriate coaching as preventive measure for high performers,
- expatriate coaching as culture-related support,
- expatriate coaching as reflection facilitator, and
- expatriate coaching as comprehensive support measure covering the whole assignment life cycle.

Expatriate Coaching as Preventive Measure for High Performers: To the most extent, expatriate coaching is practiced as emergency support measure that is frequently limited to a single intervention or only few consecutive sessions. In that they provide coaching on call, many coaches seem to have come to terms with this kind of demand. Nevertheless, the tenor of coach interview partners is that coaching is unfortunately not made use of in a more preparatory, preventive, and persistent way and thus helps unleash people's potential before they are caught up in crisis. According to basically all interviewees, coaching sessions should more frequently and repeatedly be provided in the preliminary stages of expatriation when expatriates-to-be burst with energy, confidence, and commitment.

[...] and see this is the interesting thing, coaches do not serve the industry by accepting problem situations to coach. It is literally too late by that point. Coaches are best used with high performers. People who really do know what they are doing and people who want to get better; coaches are better used that way. Another thing is, and this is what you do in the first session, you lay the ground rules, you explain the rules of responsibility, you want to explain them that a coach is like a tool. If you learn how to use this tool correctly, then you get good use out of it. It is like picking up a hammer; if you try to paint a Monet with a hammer, you are not going to do a very good job and it will be interesting but not the real thing. But if you use a hammer to pound nails and learn how to best use it, then you will be able to pound a lot of nails without a lot of effort. A coach is the same thing, it is a tool. If you try to use me as your coach as your teacher, it is not going to work very well. If you are looking at me for answers, you are going to get frustrated. And I am going to get frustrated (14/61).

Expatriate Coaching as Culture-Related Support: According to coaches, the strains that result from working and living in a foreign culture are still widely underestimated by MNCs and expatriates themselves.

Expatriate coaching could to a much greater degree be used as a precursory and accompanying measure aimed at helping expatriates and their dependants get used to the idea of living in a foreign country and after that to adapt to and deal with the particularities of the foreign culture as they are experiencing them.

[...] acclimation or cultural coaching [...]. In fact, I do not know if there is a lot of that out there in China. There needs to be a lot, but there are not any [...] there is a psychological process that a person goes through when they become an expat, you know their first three months is 'Wow, we got a car, big house, driver, maid, we have more than we ever had before, we got to do this, this, and this'. The next three months is more of like this puzzle, 'Now why do people cross the street whenever they want to?' You know what I am talking about, right? (14/65). [...] And the next three months, so from the ninth month on or the sixth to the ninths, it is kind of frustrating, it is 'Why do they cross the street whenever they want to!?' Or 'Why can my driver not understand what I am saying to him!?' And they get a bit angry and the last three months of that first year is more like, 'This is my life, okay, I am still getting paid for it but I am not awfully happy about it' (14/66). [...] Now, if there were coaches for those people to help them understand what they are going through and to help them identify things that they can be doing to minimize the angst or frustration, that would be fantastic. And some big coaching organizations out there offer that, they do not get taken up on it very often (14/67).

Expatriate Coaching as Reflection Facilitator: Although expatriate coaching is mainly geared towards events as well as clients' performance and well-being in the present and the future, the measure could play a more decisive role in reflecting upon the past, so several interviewees. Once foreign culture experience has been made, coaches could serve as conversation partners who help expatriates digest their experience in order to learn and benefit for the future; and second, in order to come to terms with pieces of experience that otherwise hinder expatriates' future performance during and upon return from their assignment.

I think there is a huge need around the repatriation process that has not been met at all (16/41). [...] for the most part companies are only beginning to give any level of repatriation support, counseling, coaching or what ever form that comes to, but most people just kind of hear the words 'going home is bad' they really do not know what that means and don't even begin to anticipate and don't take any steps to address the challenges that are going to come and there are things that you can do before you leave and actually get home and that are going to mitigate some of the worst that will come. Open your eyes and get some education and do some exercises and do some reflection. Part of it is that the expectations, you know you come out as an expatriate there is a lot of anticipation and excitement and, depending on where you going, a firm amount of support. When you go home it is assumed – from everybody else – to be an easy exercise. You need to reset your expectations, you are actually leaving home because if you have been here for more than a year, this has become home; that is a different place, so unless you start, well how has that changed, and how have I changed, and where are the conflicts going to rise and I am anticipating that you can begin to mitigate some of it (16/43).

Expatriate Coaching as Comprehensive Support Measure: Finally, coaches imagine expatriate coaching to be best made use of if it were provided for generally longer periods and even covered the whole assignment life cycle. If it were started before expatriates' departure, continued with several sessions during the initial period and then were available upon demand before a few sessions were again arranged when repatriation becomes an issue, expatriates and organizations themselves would benefit from coaching's potential in multiple aspects: Expatriates could feel better prepared, the number of mistakes could be decreased, the probability of failure reduced, the motivation raised, the (sudden) need for a neutral and capable conversation partner could flexibly and immediately be catered for, and a smoother repatriation could be ensured. These are all factors which help make expatriations more attractive and would perhaps contribute to an increased readiness of employees to take on an expatriate assignment. Yet, MNCs actually never practice expatriate coaching this way, since their perception mostly deviates from that of expatriates; organizations do not tend to view long-term assignments as a challenging adventure that starts with selection and only ends with expatriates' reintegration into a new position.

Diesen Zyklus-Gedanken haben Unternehmen nach wie vor nicht verinnerlicht. [...] Aber so denken die Unternehmen nicht. [...] Ich hätte keine Hoffnung, dass das Coaching auch so angelegt wird bei den Unternehmen, dass das in den nächsten fünf Jahren. Mein Konzept lag bei denen in der Schublade aber sie nutzen es nicht. Die nutzen es immer dann, wenn es eng wird, wenn sie ein Problem haben (07/151). [...] Der prozessuale Charakter fehlt (07/153).

6 Discussing the Research Findings

As a result of the discovered discrepancies between distinctive expatriate challenges and established support measures, this dissertation has taken up scholars' idea of including coaching into the international long-term assignment support measure net. According to its reported characteristics like process-, on-the-job-, and customer-orientation, coaching seems a promising intervention; and especially so, if it takes the culture phenomenon into particular consideration. Yet, since there is hardly any empirical research on coaching^{culture} and even less on its application to expatriates, the obtainable pieces of literature leave readers with a rather blurred picture of the measure's particularities. Due to the intangibility of coaching's role in the course of expatriations, it has been the intent of the presented research project to study coaching for expatriates and to discover what constitutes the concept. In more detail, the project has been aimed at exploring two specific questions:

- What does the practice of expatriate coaching look like?
- And what is the potential of expatriate coaching, i.e. its possible benefits as well as its possible limitations?

In order to receive several viewpoints on the research focus and thus to develop a picture as comprehensive as possible of the practice and potential of expatriate coaching, three interview groups – HR professionals, expatriates, and expatriate coaches – have been studied. Attempting to provide a detailed insight into the research results of each of these groups, the preceding chapter (see chapter 5 Presenting the Research Results) has introduced them for one group at a time. By considering accounts on expatriation challenges and support measures in general, it has embedded the results in a greater context, shedding light on the circumstances under which the presented statements have been made. While that chapter has offered a group-specific overview of results, the subsequent paragraphs are now geared towards considering the findings in the light of the two driving research questions; and towards establishing a connection to the already existing coaching and coaching^{culture} literature.

6.1 Discussing the Practice of Expatriate Coaching

Focusing on the first research question, below the application of expatriate coaching during the assignment life cycle, the initiation of and occasions for the service, its design, methods, and topics, two specificities, inhibition thresholds and barriers, as well as demands on expatriate coaches are discussed.

6.1.1 The Application of Expatriate Coaching during the Assignment Life Cycle

When considering the existing pieces of literature on coaching^{culture}, it can be noticed that the measure has been reported to have multiple goals (see chapter 3.5.1 Exploring Coaching^{Culture}). Partly, this can be explained since coaching that considers the influence of culture on people's lives can cater for various target groups: expatriates, inpatriates, staff with colleagues who have a different cultural background, intercultural team members, leaders of intercultural teams, and more (e.g. see Bolten 2003c; Kalt 2006; Kinast 2005; Schroll-Machl 2006). As a result, it can be assumed that coaching^{culture} is applied in very different contexts and situations and hence also pursues diverging objectives. Still, even if only those scholarly contributions that focus on an expatriate clientele are considered (e.g. see Abbott et al. 2006; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002), one finds that varying intentions, aims, and expectations are associated with the measure. The collected qualitative data constituting this research project allow for an attempt at explanation: Expatriate coaching has been found to be practiced in various stages of the assignment life cycle. And since the research results – as well as various pieces of literature (e.g. see Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001; Knapp et al. 1999) – also show that each of these phases tends to be characterized by a different set of challenges, it is not surprising that expatriate coaching is needed to provide differing kinds of support depending on when it is applied. Therefore, according to the stage of the long-term assignment, the foci of expatriate coaching tend to differ and so do eventually also the possible benefits resulting from the measure.

All in all, four types of expatriate coaching have been identified. For reasons of differentiation they have been named 'transition coaching', 'repatriation coaching', 'emergency coaching', and 'culture-focused coaching'. Although they could theoretically be combined to one continuous

coaching process covering the whole expatriation life cycle, they tend to be requested and practiced independently from each other.

Transition Coaching: Transition refers to the move from one job assignment to a next, from one country to another, from one period in one's life to a next stage. In an expatriation context, the term transition specifically characterizes the shift of expatriates' professional and private life to their temporary host country. What this dissertation calls transition coaching, hence, is an intervention that prepares for and attends expatriates as they are facing change. Transition coaching usually starts in the pre-departure phase of long-term assignments. Since the period before the big move tends to be stressful and stirring, the coaching process only consists of few sessions, sometimes only a single meeting. Further sessions may take place once expatriates have already settled and made their first-hand experience abroad. Generally speaking, the goal of transition coaching is to deal with and reduce the impact of those factors that may hinder a smooth transition and a satisfactory start in the host country; and on the other hand, to reinforce those which facilitate successful expatriation kickoffs.

Repatriation Coaching: Like transition coaching, repatriation coaching is primarily concerned with the facilitation of change; and in more detail, with change that occurs in the course of returning to one's home country. Yet, repatriation coaching does not only focus on developing useful strategies of coming to terms with what is going to be different (and especially with what is thought to be 'home' but is likely experienced as having changed into something unfamiliar). The measure is usually also a means of looking back at what has become one's temporary 'home' and at the loss and gain connected to the period abroad. Its overall goal, hence, can be described as supporting expatriates in digesting what has been experienced, in freeing and preparing them for the new, and in effectively coping with life after the long-term assignment. Just like transition coaching, also repatriation coaching has been found to frequently cover two phases of expatriations; in this case the late and the post-assignment stage.

Emergency Coaching: In contrast to the before described types of expatriate coaching, emergency coaching is much less of farsighted, preventive nature. As its name reveals, it is a reaction to crisis occurring at one point of the assignment life cycle and frequently in the early to late expatriation stages. Therefore, its major goal is to bring fast alleviation to the emergency situation and then – if applicable – to support expatriates in such a way that they can complete their assignments in the best possible way for all parties involved. Depending on the difficulties that lead to the emergency coaching intervention, the measure is applied with varying

intensity, ranging from a single session to an extensive coaching process that covers several weeks and months.

Culture-Focused Coaching: Culture-focused coaching aims at enhancing expatriates' culture-related dimension of intercultural competence; a goal that is primarily interesting for prospective and relatively new expatriates. Compared to the other applications of expatriate coaching, this kind does not actively engage in generally developing personal, social, leadership, and management competencies. Consequently, it strongly reminds of an intercultural one-on-one training that is limited to a relatively short period of time. The difference to trainings is, however, that its set-up and content are tailored to the very situation and personality of its clients. Among others thus, it can deliver culture-specific input that is of particular relevance to a certain client and pay closer attention to the development of culture adequate behavior for specific situations than trainings usually can.

6.1.2 Expatriate Coaching: By Whom, Why, When, and What It Is Asked For

Whereas existing pieces of literature on coaching^{culture} have not shed much light on who in fact initiates expatriate coaching services, the results of the presented research project reveal that the requests mainly come from two directions: On the one hand, it is companies and, in more detail, either HR professionals or representatives of technical departments who arrange the service for their international staff. On the other hand, it is individual expatriate managers themselves who approach coaches. That the demand for expatriate coaching is articulated by both companies and individuals may not come as a surprise. As has been illustrated in chapter 3.4.2 Tracing the Key Players, coaching in general can be arranged by an individual and the contract hence be made between two 'key players' – a coach and a coachee. Often, however, it is started through organizations and thus results in a contract among three parties: the coach, the coachee, and the organization as represented by its coaching sponsor. Yet, there is a more striking side to the finding that expatriate coaching requests have varying origins: Depending on who exactly asks for coaching, the reasons for the demand and the expectations towards the measure tend to differ. And as a consequence, both the point in time, i.e. the assignment stage in which expatriate coaching is eventually practiced as well as the potential of the expatriate coaching intervention varies. In short, it seems that the type of expatriate coaching applied – 'transition coaching', 'emergency

coaching', 'repatriation coaching', or 'culture-focused coaching' – is largely a result of who initiates the measure:

- HR professionals,
- technical departments, or
- expatriates.

In the case of company-arranged expatriate coaching, it is often the representatives of (international) HR departments who are responsible for getting in touch with coaching providers. If HR asks for expatriate coaching, so the corresponding statements of interviewed HR professionals and coaches, the occasion is usually that an employee faces, or is at least expected to face, an important and challenging long-term assignment. Due to the significance of these jobs for the company, it is mainly top executives who eventually receive the service. Following the research results, the primary expectation towards the measure tends to be that it can help prepare assignees for their new task and ensure a smooth transfer to the out-of-country job in a way that accelerates their effectiveness upon arrival in the host country. Therefore, if expatriate coaching is requested by HR professionals, then mainly as it seems in the form of 'transition coaching'. In more detail this means that the service is expected to encourage future expatriates' anticipation of opportunities and pitfalls and thus to facilitate their planning of the initial essential steps that need to be taken. Yet apart from this, the measure is also supposed to make coachees aware of those specificities of the assignment that arise because the person is operating in a foreign culture; and not only that: Besides raising clients' awareness of culture-general and –specific particularities, expatriate coaching is also regarded as measure that can help expatriates adequately react to and deal with these idiosyncrasies. While the intervention's concern with culture-related issues is discussed in more detail below, it is to be mentioned at this stage that expatriate coaching is hence, among others, understood as means of culture-related knowledge transfer. Whereas coaching studies (e.g. see Böning/Fritschle 2005; Jüster/Hildenbrand/Petzold 2005) have shown that knowledge transfer is usually not one of the primary occasions to make use of coaching, it does seem to play a vital part in the course of expatriate coaching initiated by HR. In order to fulfill its purpose of preparing and helping expatriates get off to a flying start, of preventing them from committing culture-related faux pas, and hence to increase the chances for a successful expatriation, the service is chiefly arranged to take place in the pre-departure phase of the expatriation and sometimes also covers the early out-of-country period.

But why do HR professionals feel the need to provide expatriate coaching, if they are anyway only spending the service to experienced high-level managers with a success history? The research results give reason to

suppose that first and foremost those HR representatives fall back upon expatriate coaching whose organizations have come to view long-term assignments as extraordinary task and extraordinary challenge; one that results from an individual mix of severe changes occurring both in the private and the professional lives of expatriates. Having learned that expatriations can have an *unexpectedly* strong impact on even very skilled staff members, these HR representatives appear to comprehend elaborate selection and monitoring procedures, administrative and culture-related support provided by HR, relocation services as well as intercultural trainers as necessary intervention to reduce the risk of assignment failure. Yet, besides that, they seem to be convinced that more tailored support is needed additionally in order to increase the chances for success. Since the combination of individual sojourner, family background, home-host culture compatibility, work experience, expatriate assignment, and more creates always unique expatriation situations and challenges, customized support is regarded as a necessary complement to rather standardized support measures. If expatriate coaching is initiated by HR professionals at all, thus, it has been found to be primarily offered as preventive measure at the outset of expatriations and supplementary to the already existing support measures. Even if only gradually, companies – and usually those that have already implemented the measure in the pre-assignment stage – are starting to request coaching for what can be understood as the second transition phase of expatriations: repatriation. Also with ‘repatriation coaching’, coming to terms with change occurring both in professional and private regard is the primary issue of the intervention. According to some interviewed coaches, companies are beginning to understand that the digestion of foreign country experience and support in regard to transition is often necessary in order to ensure that repatriates can quickly become effective in their next role.

Additionally to HR professionals, however, representatives of organizations’ technical departments turn to coaches; this has come to light through the experience of interviewed service providers. Yet, when they request expatriate coaching, it is hardly ever for preventive, preparatory purposes but mainly out of their employee’s urgent need for support during expatriations. In contrast to transition coaching, therefore, the demand for the measure is rather spontaneously articulated and, accordingly, the expectations towards its effects are first of all of temporary nature. In these crisis situations, expatriate coaching seems to be requested because it is known as client-centered, goal-oriented and flexible what regards thematic range and set-up. Coaches are expected to help clients identify their major difficulties, explore ways of handling and decreasing their negative impact, and thus to bring about immediate change to the precarious situation. When technical departments thus turn to expatriate

coaches, the measure is mainly applied in the form of 'emergency coaching'. Supposedly since these departments fear that the reputation and career chances of their expatriated staff may dwindle once the utilization of expatriate coaching is made public, coaches state that technical units tend to arrange the service single-handedly, passing HR unnoticed. In an attempt to save expatriates from failing and, simultaneously, to disguise the actual need for and utilization of coaching, therefore, technical departments often pay for expatriate coaching out of their division-internal pocket. Expatriate coaching arranged by organizations must therefore not only be understood as transparent measure that is a natural component of the support measure package provided to long-term assignees, but also as intervention taking place 'behind the curtain'.

Thirdly and very frequently as it seems, expatriate coaches are directly approached by clients-to-be. In contrast to HR representatives who initiate coaching for expatriates in the run-up to their departure, most prospective expatriates are not aware of the range of challenges which they may face; so the joint statement of both interviewed expatriates and coaches. Similarly to the way expatriate coaching is handled by technical departments, individuals rarely fall back upon coaching before they have moved to the foreign country. Also when they ask for the service, therefore, it is mainly an 'emergency coaching' request. With the exception of few individuals, expatriates tend to get in touch with coaches when they are already completely overtaxed by their long-term assignment. In that research results illustrate that typically expatriates only request coaching if the worst comes to the worst, the project's data are in accordance with Abbott et al.'s (2006) recent findings of expatriates' coaching demand. The authors have already emphasized that future clients do not usually initiate the service as a result of one specific difficulty but rather as a response to the accumulated impact of several challenges. Accordingly, the service is usually asked for in mid- or late-assignment stages and often as a last resort to premature return. What potential clients expect from coaching, therefore, is instant and effective help around their difficulties and dilemmas. They hope for support in terms of understanding and dealing with intercultural differences, coming to terms with pressure, establishing work-life balance, improving their communication and leadership style, and much more. Besides that, however, coach and expatriate interviewees point out, many assignees are simply desperate for alleviation through conversation. Their major expectation towards expatriate coaching is that the measure provides them with the opportunity to unload their burdens to a neutral and professional person; one who is capable of actively listening to and understanding what they are being told, and who provides constructive feedback. Especially in the case of mid- to late-assignment coaching but also when expatriate coaching takes place in other stages of

the assignment life cycle, the coach as conversation partner seems to play a vital role for the perceived usefulness of the measure. That this is the case for coaching in general, has already been mentioned by several authors of coaching literature (e.g. see Rückle 2005: 184; Schreyögg 2003: 215ff). And also Barmeyer (cf. 2005: 243) has considered this aspect in his piece on coaching^{culture}. He even emphasizes that executives who operate in an intercultural context are more interested in discussing their experience with unbiased professionals than executives in general are. Whereas the existing literature points out to the favorable aspect of the coach as interaction and reflection partner, it does not tend to regard the possibility for exchange as a reason for why coaching is requested in the first place (cf. Jüster/Hildenbrand/Petzold 2005: 92f). From the presented research results, however, it can be deduced that the need for a conversation partner is not only a welcome 'side-effect', but that it is also one of the major reasons for the utilization of expatriate coaching. Due to the immense changes, the overwhelming complexity, uncertainty, paradox and pressure that characterize expatriations, many expatriates are dependent on a sparring partner. Experienced expatriates, repatriates, and mentors, for instance, have been found to take over this function. The less neutral, experienced, skilled, and available they are, however, the greater the chances are that a professional sparring partner like a coach is needed and turned to.

Whereas expatriate coaching in the form of transition and repatriation coaching is usually initiated by HR professionals, and emergency coaching seems rather a result of technical departments' and expatriates' requests, 'culture-focused coaching' has been reported to be requested by both individuals and companies. From what the research results reveal, it tends to be made use of by those (prospective) expatriates who want or need to get familiar with the particularities of the foreign country but who are not able or not willing to join intercultural group training. Time constraints, the wish for a customized culture-related preparation and education, the need for secrecy of the out-of-country task or the top-level status of the expatriate(-to-be) itself are reasons for why individual culture-focused coaching is preferred to group training.

To conclude, expatriate coaching is today requested and offered in all assignment stages. Whereas HR professionals mainly view the service as a preventive expatriate support measure that should take place in the pre-assignment stage, both technical departments and expatriates themselves tend to make use of the service during expatriation. Comparatively few but a growing number of requests are also triggered by repatriation challenges; this is why especially company-initiated expatriate coaching has started to also be practiced towards the end of assignments. From what the research results reveal, Barmeyer's (cf. 2005: 270) hope regarding a stronger use of

coaching^{culture} for preventive reasons seems to gradually come true; so far, however, mostly only then when HR professionals initiate the coaching process.

6.1.3 Design, Methods and Topics of Expatriate Coaching – Proximity to Coaching in a National Context

When analyzing the research results in terms of how expatriate coaching processes and sessions are organized and characterized, there appears to be great resemblance to the way coaching set-ups have generally been outlined (cf. Vogelauer 2007: 20-25). Both coaching and expatriate coaching processes tend to start with an introductory phase and move through a contracting, working, and finalizing stage until they eventually result in a period of evaluation. And also coaching as well as expatriate coaching sessions tend to follow the always similar design of reviewing the time between the last and the current session, picking up the thread of the coaching process, working on issues and hence towards the coaching objective(s), planning further interventions, and reviewing the session. Yet, how specific coaching and expatriate coaching relationships are organized in detail, varies from case to case. As Rauen (2005a) and Rosinski (2003), for example, have clearly emphasized, there is no 'best practice' of coaching; no single right way of handling a coaching request; no "one-size-fits-all" coaching model (Abbott/Rosinski 2007: 74). Rather, it is typical for coaching – and also one of the measure's strength – that the length of the overall process, the duration of the sessions, and the intervals between them vary depending on the demands of each client (cf. Rauen 2005a: 280; Rosinski 2003: 243). According to this project's research results, the individual flavor accompanying coaching also characterizes the design of expatriate coaching. Both coaching and expatriate coaching relationships thus may, for instance, consist of a single session or cover several months; the sessions' length may range between two hours and a whole day; and the intervals of meetings can have a weekly rhythm or may be left open at all.

Also when taking into consideration the methods which are applied in expatriate coaching sessions themselves, there do not seem to be substantial differences to coaching that is not geared towards the expatriate clientele. Expatriate coaches have been found to come from different training backgrounds and hence fall back upon differing and often even multiple coaching methods and techniques; just the way coaches in

general do (cf. Rauen/Steinhübel 2005: 305; Rückle 2000: 158). As far as the practice of interviewed coaches is concerned, usually a mix of methods that has already proven useful in an intracultural context is being used. This finding is in line with the statements of several authors on coaching^{culture} (cf. Bolten 2005: 318). Whereas some of them have already illustrated the applicability of conventional methods to the coaching of clients who operate in an intercultural context (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 259ff; Bolten 2005: 318; Kinast 2005: 220ff), Abbott and Rosinski (2007) have even elaborated on the usefulness of classic coaching approaches when it comes to coaching^{culture}. In their paper they discuss the advantages of integrating multiple approaches from cognitive-behavioral psychology, psychoanalysis, adult development, action learning, system theory, and positive psychology and underline how each of these perspectives suit the treatment of culture-related issues (ibid.: 65-74). It can be deduced, therefore, that there is no fundamental need for the development of distinctive expatriate coaching approaches and methods. Nevertheless, it might be interesting for future studies to explore and juxtapose different approaches and techniques as far as their potential for expatriate coaching is concerned.

Even when it comes to the primary topics dealt with in the course of executive coaching, expatriate coaching does not appear to stand out. The development of leadership skills, performance, and career as well as the management of conflict, stress and work-life balance rank among the most frequent coaching issues (see Böning/Fritschle 2005; Jüster/Hildenbrand/Petzold 2005). Yet, following the empirical study of Jüster, Hildenbrand, and Petzold (cf. 2005: 84ff), the development of leadership skills – which the authors use as a synonym for social interaction within a professional context – is by far the most widespread concern of clients. This is also mirrored by the results of Böning and Fritschle's (2005) third German coaching study. Thus, this potential-oriented matter has been identified as *the* central task of coaching. Following the presented research results, leadership development and the overall enhancement of (intercultural) communication competence can also be named as one of the prime interests of expatriate coaching initiators. Besides expatriate coaching's proximity to the design and methods of coaching in a national context, therefore, there also seems to be a strong content-related similarity between expatriate coaching and coaching in a national context. Yet topic-wise, two things appear worth noting: The first one concerns the prevalence of leadership development as coaching topic; the second one concerns the occurrence of career-related issues.

While for coaching in a national context the development of leadership skills has been discovered as the number one topic, the collected interview data give reason to assume that in expatriate coaching sessions dealing

with stress can turn into a similarly important topic; and at times perhaps even overshadow the leadership issue. Compared to job assignments placed in a national context, namely, there seems to be a greater probability for stress-causing situations to coincide in the course of international assignments. On the one hand, it may indeed be the perception of leadership-related shortcomings that causes stress on behalf of expatriates. This might especially so be the case because expatriates are often under extraordinary pressure to succeed, because their assignment is limited to a predefined time frame, because particular career expectations are connected to it, and more. On the other hand, however, there are a number of other specificities characterizing international assignments which may cause (additional) stress. Relocating to the foreign country, leaving behind dependants, causing family members to break with their used-to lifestyle and adjust to life in a new country have repeatedly been reported to be sources of considerable stress; and so have issues like dealing with the expatriate sandwich position, coming to terms with the subsidiary's working hours, office rules, people's working styles or communicating in a foreign language. Now, the specificity of international assignments does not seem to be limited to the finding that stressful incidents may overlap. According to expatriate and coach interviewees, a reason for the heightened stress level characterizing expatriations is also that used-to stress reducing behavior can no longer be applied abroad. Exchange with trusted colleagues, specific kinds of sports, the attendance of social events and other forms of stress compensation may simply no longer be an option. Eventually then, it may be due to the combination of various stressors and the difficulty to naturally reduce stress that expatriations can have an overwhelming effect. In fact, such a high level of stress might be caused that it is necessary for expatriate coaches to initially devote as much attention to clients' development of stress reduction techniques as to the development of deficiencies like lacking leadership competencies, for instance.

Since expatriations have been described as a springboard for career development, it is actually surprising that career issues have not more frequently been described as part and parcel of expatriate coaching; and this is especially astonishing, because more and more career expectations of expatriates have been found to not come true (cf. PricewaterhouseCoopers/Cranfield 2005: 8). That expatriate coaching does not tend to revolve around career issues very often might be explained by the urgency of other topics; in the pre-departure and on-assignment phase when most expatriate coaching interventions have been found to take place, other topics like leadership skill improvement or conflict management appear more significant. It can be assumed, therefore, that career development only turns into an expatriate coaching topic once the

'immediate' issues have been dealt with and there is more room to think about the time *after* the assignment.

6.1.4 Specificities Worth Noting: Particularities of the Expatriate Coaching Practice

When the components that make up the design of expatriate coaching processes and sessions, the tailored way in which they are assembled, the mix of methods used, and the prevalent topics dealt with are so similar to coaching in a national context, then what is it that makes the expatriate coaching practice worth receive special attention? Below, two specificities of coaching that tend to emerge when an expatriate clientele is catered for, are discussed. The first one regards content; it deals with expatriate coaching's capability of supporting coachees in developing intercultural competence. The second one is of administrative nature; special difficulties in arranging and pursuing coaching relationships appear to arise when (prospective) clients are located in a foreign country.

6.1.4.1 Efforts Towards Intercultural Competence

In accordance with the divergence theory of international management, operating in a foreign culture environment makes heightened demands on the capability and flexibility of managers (e.g. see Adler 1983; Child 1981; Thomas/Schroll-Machl 1998). When managing outside of the used-to-national, regional, and organizational culture, so the assumption of culturalists following divergence theory, cultural differences of various kinds have to be taken into account. Therefore, for successfully doing business across cultural borders a heightened degree of awareness, attention, and skills are needed. Having been described as a sophisticated form of management in a national context, intercultural management first of all requires a mix of strongly developed general management competencies: According to Bolten (cf. 2005: 311ff), a sound base of social, individual, technical, and strategic competencies that is necessary for managing in an *intracultural* environment is as necessary for managing in an international environment. Besides that, however, also a set of culture-related skills and not least a mindset that is interested in understanding and appreciative of

cultural differences is a prerequisite. What intercultural management calls for, thus, is a combination of 'general' and culture-related qualities – a mixture of cognitive, affective, and behavioral traits that has come to be subsumed and widely known under the term 'intercultural competence' (see Gertsen 1990). The development of intercultural competence has thus turned into the prime objective of various expatriate support measures; briefings, look & see trips, intercultural and language trainings, mentoring, overlaps, and repatriation activities are just a selection of measures that can be mentioned in this respect (see chapter 3.3.1 Enlightening Expatriate Support Measures). What interests at this stage is now in how far expatriate coaching contributes to enhancing coachees' intercultural competence?

When intercultural competence development measures are discussed, there is a tendency to focus on the measures' capability to improve *culture-related* competencies; simultaneously, the development of *general* (management) competencies like communication skills, frustration tolerance, flexibility, and self-confidence (cf. Bolten 2005: 311) remains widely neglected or is at least not explicitly considered. Hence, how the usefulness and quality of expatriate support measures is rated, is primarily dependent on whether they are able to raise expatriates' awareness and acceptance of the impact of culture on their professional and private lives (affective dimension), whether they impart culture-general and -specific knowledge (cognitive dimension), and whether they support expatriates in using that awareness and knowledge in order to develop beneficial attitudes and display valuable behavior (behavioral dimension) (e.g. see Bennett/Aston/Colquhoun 2000; Brewster/Pickard 1994). Also a great percentage of authors who have devoted their practical and scholarly attention to coaching^{culture} have first and foremost been emphasizing the measure's capacity to develop culture-related competencies (Clement/Clement 2003b; Schroll-Machl 2007c). And that expatriate coaches are in fact heavily involved in building up and improving much of the sensitivity and knowledge as well as many of the skills that are particularly needed when their clients are operating in an intercultural context, has also become transparent through the research findings.

Yet, before elaborating on how expatriate coaching has been found to enhance culture-related competencies, it is to be mentioned that expatriate coaches are also concerned with assessing clients' need for improving their general (management) competencies. In contrast to trainings, for instance, which typically offer standardized and predefined contents, expatriate coaching uses client's actually experienced and currently significant intercultural encounters as starting point for defining coaching topics. In a nutshell, coaches work with coachees on those issues which are relevant for them and plan development-oriented interventions, like role plays or

relaxation exercises, accordingly. In that coaches encourage clients to portray the critical incidents that bring them to coaching, coach and coachee automatically engage in identifying the reasons for struggling. According to many of the interviewed coaches, weak general (management) competencies are relatively often found to be the origin of expatriation difficulties. It is the shared assumption of several interviewed coaches that, perhaps not least through company-internal patronage and sponsorship, a great deal of deficiencies and weaknesses can somehow be compensated within an intracultural context. The heightened demands that intercultural management makes on managers, however, tend to uncover their shortcomings. In a foreign country environment where expatriates have to manage under special circumstances – i.e., in a foreign language, without the support of benevolent supervisors, with an adapted leadership style, under great (time) pressure, and with regard to ambiguous expectations (cf. Abbott et al. 2006: 305, 310) – insufficient general (management) competencies are likely to come to light. If their background enables them to support the development of these basic competencies, expatriate coaches have been found to work with clients on these issues. Otherwise, for example, when intercultural trainers provide coaching with an exclusive focus on culture-related topics or when a comprehensive leadership program seems more suitable, coaches tend to transfer clients to other service providers. Their twofold focus on culture-related *and* general competencies can be understood as the prime reason for why many expatriate coaches refuse to market their service under terms like ‘intercultural coaching’, ‘cultural coaching’ or ‘or culture-focused coaching’. Much of the service they offer, namely, is not per se culture-related; even though the reason for why coachees’ shortcomings of general (management) competence have become transparent may be connected to their presence in an intercultural context.

While expatriate coaching can be viewed as contributor to the development of intercultural competence in that it furthers general (management) competencies, it has already been mentioned that the measure also specifically serves the improvement of culture-related competencies by

- imparting culture-general and -specific knowledge and
- supporting the development of situation adequate behavior.

To start with, expatriate coaching has been found to play a decisive role in imparting culture-general and -specific knowledge. That the measure specifically caters for the cognitive dimension of intercultural competence might be a bit surprising given that knowledge transfer has so far been described as an only minor task of coaching in general (see Böning/Fritschle 2005; Jüster/Hildenbrand/Petzold 2005). First and foremost, imparting knowledge has been attributed to the role of

information brochures, literature, and intercultural trainings (cf. Morris/Robie 2001: 115f). Yet, already several pieces on coaching^{culture} literature have pointed out that the enhancement of the cognitive competence dimension is a vital function of the measure. (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 250; Clement/Clement 2003a: 155; Kinast 2005: 219; Schroll-Machl 2007b: 153f). Accordingly, the experience of coach, HR, and expatriate interviewees clearly shows that the closing of knowledge gaps is a basic component of expatriate coaching. On the one hand, it is indeed a reason for why the measure is requested at all. Following expatriate coaching providers, especially HR departments initiate the service for their expatriates because they expect the coach to provide culture-related pieces of information; and in contrast to the predefined information offered through literature or trainings, for instance, it is supposed to bridge the *distinct* knowledge gaps of individual clients. On the other hand, raising clients' awareness and knowledge level appears to be a frequent precondition in order to pursue certain expatriate coaching goals. The majority of interviewed expatriates report that they left their home country without going through intercultural trainings. And also several coaches state that they often work with expatriates who have never experienced a culture-related training session. As a result, a fair amount of expatriates can be assumed to be lacking basic cognitive intercultural competencies which are a prerequisite for understanding and eventually also for dealing with intercultural differences (cf. Abbott/Rosinski 2007: 61, 66; Ward/Bochner/Furnham 2001). If coachees are already familiar with the culture phenomenon and have come to understand where the cultural differences they are experiencing originate, the practicability and usefulness of behavior adjustment can be taken into consideration within coaching sessions. However, before they have not been equipped with 'the culture ABC' – if they are not at least to some degree acquainted with the culture phenomenon as well as with the specificities of their home and host culture – coachees are lacking the groundwork for making well-planned attitude- and behavior-related changes. Then it is indicated that coaches first impart the missing pieces of knowledge to their clients or refer them to intercultural trainers, literature or else. Since many coaches have been found to provide the culture-related input themselves if necessary – a function that has also been identified by Abbott et al. (cf. 2006: 301) – they take over a role that has so far primarily been ascribed to intercultural trainers. Hence, corresponding to Schroll-Machl's exposition (cf. 2007b: 152f), the research findings confirm that there is a content-related overlap of trainers' and coaches' tasks; or in other words, a twilight zone between the practice of intercultural trainings and expatriate coaching (see chapter 3.5.2 Comparing Coaching^{Culture} & Co: Differences, Twilight Zones, and Synergy Effects).

Apart from fostering coachees' affective and cognitive dimension of intercultural competence, however, expatriate coaching's attention has been found to also be geared towards the development of the behavioral component. A sound culture-related knowledge base, namely, even in combination with a range of qualities that are typically subsumed under the affective competence dimension (e.g. see Stüdlein 1997) – frustration and ambiguity tolerance and an open, ethno-relativistic mindset, for instance – does by no means guarantee that expatriates are able to convert their knowledge into practice (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 255). Or in other words, even if expatriates have come to understand that the paralysis, the uncertainty and inefficiency they may be experiencing in everyday (professional) life might be a result of intercultural differences, people might still not be able to deal with these differences in an adequate way. That culture-related knowledge and sensitivity do not automatically facilitate appropriate behavior has been known for long (e.g. see Hesketh 1997; Kinast 1998). The statements of several coaches who have been interviewed for this research project again underline that this is the case. And almost the entire group of expatriate interview partners confirms this finding based on their own foreign country experience. How expatriates' progress in effectively handling intercultural situations can be facilitated, has thus been the driving force for the improvement of expatriate support measures. In order to foster the development and application of alternative behavior in intercultural situations, intercultural trainings are no longer only conceptualized as 'chalk and talk'. Besides informative trainings in which knowledge transfer from trainer to trainees takes center stage, interaction-oriented trainings are available (cf. Bolten 2005: 314ff; also see Gudykunst/Guzley/Hammer 1996). If its participants do have diverging cultural backgrounds, this type of training indeed enables participants to experience 'real' intercultural encounters and thus also provides participants with the opportunity to test the consequences of their used-to and/or alternative behavior. Depending on how exactly interaction-oriented trainings are designed, they can create realistic situations of 'culture clash' (see chapter 2.2.2 Characterizing Culture Clash) and so provide a training ground for intercultural encounters. Since the interpersonal situations that expatriates eventually face during their assignments may, however, be of very different quality, the lessons learned during trainings might not prove beneficial or at least not sufficient. And this is a gap which expatriate coaching aims at bridging. In contrast to trainings where intercultural encounters are simulated, expatriate coaching can support clients' development of adequate behavior as they are experiencing difficulties resulting from real *and* significant intercultural relationships. The specific circumstances of the situation, the very needs and expectations of the interlocutors, the emotions involved and more can be considered and the

definition of 'adequate' behavior adapted. Especially the professional interpersonal constellations faced by expatriates are likely to call for a well-thought-out degree of behavior adjustment. Mere adaptation to the typical host culture behavior, so the experience of interview partners, is often not an 'adequate' option as the objectives of the assignment could not be reached this way. Situation adequate expatriate behavior must hence fulfill several purposes: It has to facilitate the realization of expatriation goals, but also needs to be practicable for the expatriate him- or herself, i.e., for example, be compatible with his or her prevalent values. In addition, however, it also has to be eligible for host country nationals. As a result of its flexible design, expatriate coaching appears to be a suitable means of developing components of this behavioral dimension. In the course of recurring one-on-one sessions, for example, feasible options for prevalent behavior can be explored and tested in role plays with the coach; they can be applied in practice, its pros and cons reflected in the next meeting, and the behavior refined as a result. By applying such an action learning-oriented coaching approach (cf. Abbott/Rosinski 2007: 70), random trial and error attempts of being successful *and* establishing lasting and fruitful relationships with host country employees are thus substituted by well-planned, customized attempts of coming to terms with expatriation challenges.

6.1.4.2 Overcoming the Distance between Coach and Coachee

As coaching is not a registered designation and the number of 'coaching' providers has uncontrollably reproduced itself in the past years, the selection of a suitable coach has turned into a real act. Therefore, both among scholars as well as among practitioners and prospective clients, finding an adequate coach has become a fashionable issue for discussion (e.g. see Lippmann 2006b; Wrede 2005; [http://www.coaching-report.de:selection of coaches](http://www.coaching-report.de:selection%20of%20coaches)). So far, coaches' educational background, practical experience, coaching approach and concept, age and gender, the membership in renowned coaching associations, empathy and more has been discussed in terms of selection criteria (ibid.). In contrast, the location of coaches has not yet received much attention in this respect. This might be so, because prospective coachees are assumed to search for a coach within their close vicinity unless perhaps they have a strong preference for a specific service provider or a great interest in keeping the utilization of coaching secret. Yet, in the case of expatriate coaching, the selection of coaches and eventually also the handling of the overall coaching process

turns into a whole new challenge *because* of the location of coaches and clients, respectively. The analysis of interview data shows that expatriates who are interested in coaching face the option of either turning to a coach

- in their home country or
- in the temporary host country; both alternatives involve their intricacies.

If for reasons of proximity, travel time and travel cost, for example, expatriates prefer to be coached in their current location, prospective coachees might not only face the difficulty of selecting a suitable coach but even that of tracing coaches at all. Depending on expatriates' host country, namely, the choice of available coaches might be very much restricted (cf. Abbott et al. 2006: 313). This is especially likely to be the case in regions where coaching is not a popular and thus no widespread means of professional support: In collectivistic countries like China, for instance, where the progress of a whole group or team is much more valued than the development of an individual (see Hofstede 2001) or in large parts of Arabia, for example, where a clear distribution of power in organizations leaves only little room for own initiative and responsibility (cf. Kammoun/Fritschle 2006: 7), one-on-one coaching sessions can be relatively difficult to obtain.

Even if coaches are accessible in the foreign country, however, it might be more difficult to make an appropriate coach-coachee match than at home. Besides the variety of selection criteria mentioned above, namely, the research results show that suddenly also the language in which coaching can be pursued and whether coach and coachee share a nationality may turn into prevalent selection criteria. Especially when coaching is initiated in emergency situations, common cultural backgrounds and tongues seem to be regarded as facilitators of coaching processes: For some, talking to a coach in one's native language appears to be more convenient and easier than in a second language; particularly when private issues are concerned. Likewise, same cultural backgrounds appear to make coachees feel that they and their issues are better understood by coaches. It can be assumed that these criteria play a certain role in almost every coach selection process. When a coach is tried to be found within one's home country, however, these preferences do not have to be particularly considered because it can almost be taken for granted that coaches are locals and thus speak the same language and have the same nationality as prospective clients do. Yet, in popular expatriate destinations, and especially in foreign countries where coaching markets are only emerging, many of the available coaches are likely to either be host country nationals with foreign country experience or foreigners themselves (cf. Dreyer 2006: 3). That this is the case has also been strongly confirmed by the experience of

interviewed expatriates. Therefore, there are only slim chances that these coaches speak the expatriates' mother tongue or that they have the same cultural background. If expatriates favor a coach who is deeply acquainted with their own culture and with whom they can discuss their issues in their native language, the number of potential host country coaches may dwindle rapidly. And one way of receiving coaching in spite of this is to turn to offers in the home country.

According to several interviewed coaches, many of their clients have been making this step; they combine their face-to-face coaching sessions with their home country business trips or vacations. While this appears to be a convenient or at least acceptable solution to some, the majority of expatriate interview partners have pointed out that returning to the home location for coaching would be or, in fact, has been impracticable for them. Corresponding to the characteristics of their long-term assignment, many sojourners do not often, and let alone regularly, visit their home base. And if they do, so also the experience of a coach interviewee, their schedules are usually jam-packed with professional and private obligations, making it difficult for expatriates to put their energy into coaching sessions.

To summarize, the plans of expatriates to establish a coaching relationship may be thwarted by the difficulty to find a suitable coach in the host country as well as by the inability to pursue regular face-to-face sessions in their home country. However, overcoming the distance between coaches and clients does not only turn into a topic when a coaching relationship is initiated during the on-assignment period of expatriates. It has also been found to impact those relationships that are set up *before* clients leave their home country but which continue during their stay abroad; as is frequently the case with transition coaching. Having been confronted with these hurdles, coaches who are still interested in providing their services to the expatriate clientele have partly started to experiment with the organization of expatriate coaching processes. Today's practice of home country-based expatriate coaching reveals that in particular two options of deviating from the classic face-to-face coaching setting with a steady coach are pursued: the first one is

- using telephone and internet facilities; and the second one is
- cooperating with other coaches.

On the one hand, coaches have been found to turn to alternative forms of communication, if necessary. Instead of persistently sticking to the prevalent face-to-face way of doing coaching, they fall back upon the telephone, Skype or even more progressive means of communication like video conferencing. This way, for instance, follow-ups to coaching sessions can be carried out regardless of coachees' whereabouts. Likewise, whole sessions may be held via electronic devices, if clients are on business trips.

Even though these alternative ways of coaching have been found to gradually being used and are even perceived as advantageous by coach interviewees, the presented research results also indicate that the remote versions of coach-client contact are only pursued if absolutely needed. The majority of interviewed coaches is not very fond of 'digitalized' coaching and, if at all, switches to phone or online opportunities solely in addition to face-to-face sessions. That alternatives to face-to-face coaching mainly have a complementary function has already been repeatedly reported for coaching in general (cf. Rauen 2005b: 135; Rückle 2000: 190; Siegrist 2006: 312; Wrede 2005: 323). Despite the great advantage in terms of place- and time-related flexibility, it seems that the perception of alternative coaching forms is still overshadowed by its disadvantages; for instance, by the loss of non-verbal cues, a delay of speech acts, restrictions in terms of coach interventions, and by the complication of establishing a bond of trust (e.g. see Döring 2002; Janssen 1998; Sobanski 2001; van Well 2000).

On the other hand, in order to enhance the practicability of coaching for expatriates, home country-based expatriate coaches have started to cooperate with coaches who are located in clients' host countries. Should face-to-face contact be vital for expatriates even though they are not able to visit the home country coach, transferring clients to a host country coach may be a means of solving the distance problem. Due to the different standards and quality criteria for coaching that exist in countries around the globe (e.g. see Bresser-Consulting 2008), passing clients on to other coaches has been experienced to be fairly difficult if not even impossible; not least because the exchange between coaches itself has to take place via telephone, e-mail or the like. If the two cooperating coaches are not deeply familiar with each other's working styles, attitudes and expectations, so the tenor of interviewed coaches, the shift can supposedly cause quite an interruption to the coaching process. That transferring clients can also be smoothly arranged, however, has been reported by one interviewed coach. He is involved in a coach pool that includes coaches in various locations across the world. The members share similar coaching trainings, follow joint guidelines, and exchange information on their working styles in the course of regular, face-to-face supervision sessions. This way, the coaches constituting the pool are recursively concerned with creating a shared groundwork for coaching based on which clients can more easily be referred from coach to coach. And furthermore, the intercultural exchange also provides the individual coaches with opportunities to educate themselves in regard to their own culture-general and -specific knowledge. Therefore, it can be assumed that, on the one hand, clients can benefit from international coach pools in that the arrangement of coaching and the transfer between coaches itself is

facilitated. On the other hand, however, it can also be understood that the cooperation of coaches may be advantageous for its members themselves; that group supervision of people with different cultural backgrounds can be regarded as a means of intercultural learning has already been discussed in various scholarly contributions (e.g. see Englisch 2006; Röcher 2006; von Schlippe/Hachimi/Jürgens 2003).

6.1.5 Inhibition Thresholds and Barriers to Expatriate Coaching

Following the existing pieces of coaching^{culture} literature, the comparatively high cost and amount of time associated with coaching processes are the prime factors deterring potential customers from the measure (cf. Barmeyer 2003: 18; Kinast 2005: 224). And indeed, while expenses rank among the first associations that HR professionals and expatriates have when expatriate coaching is mentioned, the relatively large number of hours that need to be reserved for the measure have been found to be a barrier to its use. Taking into consideration the entirety of statements made by representatives of all interview groups, however, it turns out that cost and time are by no means the only two reasons that keep both organizations and individuals from using the service.

To start with, it seems to be a result of its low degree of publicity that expatriate coaching is not yet widely requested. According to the experience of coaches – and this is again reflected by the majority of interviews with HR representatives and expatriates – numerous members of HRD departments and a large percentage of internationally active staff are simply not familiar with the particularities of coaching. And even less are they acquainted with its favorable effects and competitive advantages. Lacking awareness of its existence and capability, many organizations and individuals have hence not come to identify the measure as potential long-term assignment support measure.

Even if coaching is taken into account as a possible means of supporting expatriations, however, it occurs that the service is often not asked for. First of all, it has been found that primarily its reputation as 'career killer' lets potential clients drop their idea of requesting coaching, so the prevalent opinion of coaches and expatriates. This tends to particularly be the case, if coaching is offered through the company. Then, namely, chances are that people with decision-making power in terms of career development learn about a person's utilization of coaching; and recipients

fear that their need for coaching might be a reason for not being promoted. Yet apart from that, it looks as if coaching for expatriates is frequently not an option because there is no perceived need for it. Unless representatives of HR and technical departments as well as expatriates become aware of the extraordinary mix and impact of long-term assignment challenges, they do not see much reason for initiating coaching. Even once they realize it, however, there appear to be additional barriers to the eventual request of expatriate coaching. Whereas potential clients tend to have a hard time admitting the need for help, HR professionals may just not feel responsible or do not have enough power to implement the measure.

Moreover, the administrative burdens connected to the establishment of a coaching relationship seem to be another inhibition threshold to the utilization of expatriate coaching. Since coaching is no registered designation, the market is full of service providers who offer all kinds and varying quality of support under the label 'coaching' (cf. Rauen 2006: 14). In Mid-European regions like Austria and Germany, for instance, finding an adequate coach among the abundance of persons available has thus turned into a real challenge (e.g. see Kühl 2005). Both companies and individuals first have to sift through the 'coach jungle' in order to trace seemingly eligible candidates and then to assess their actual suitability before their service can finally be made use of. The extended difficulties related to finding an expatriate coach – one with a suitable coach profile in terms of culture-related education and foreign country experience, language proficiency, cultural background and with the readiness and ability to offer telephone sessions, for example – have already been introduced in more detail before. Whereas the efforts connected to selecting proper service providers are likely to precede all attempts of demanding professional support to some extent (cf. Looss 2002: 86), there appears to be another administrative difficulty related to coaching. Due to the measure's comparatively high cost, some companies offer coaching only under the condition that future coachees find themselves a sponsor who covers the expenditure (cf. Abbott et al. 2006: 312; Schreyögg 2003: 319ff). One interviewed HR professional has pointed out to the kind of difference such conditions can make to the actual utilization of the service. The pre-departure coaching sessions which are fully arranged on behalf of her company, are pursued by the majority of expatriates. Those in contrast, that are offered in the early-assignment stage and for which a sponsor located in the foreign subsidiary needs to be found, are hardly ever made use of.

Concluding, it must be emphasized that cost and time that may have to be spent for expatriate coaching are only two out of several reasons for why the demand for the service is still relatively limited. That the benefits of expatriate coaching are not yet widely known, its negative connotation, the

lack of perceived need for the measure or responsibility to arrange it, the difficulty to admit the need for support, and not least the administrative efforts connected to its initiation – all this has been found to contribute to the service's status as still relatively neglected expatriate support measure.

6.1.6 Coach Equals Coach? Special Demands on Expatriate Coaches

In order for coachees to perceive coaches as capable sparring partners and the relationships with them as a 'good fit', service providers need to meet a variety of demands (cf. Chapman/Best/Casteren 2003: 88ff). While it is finally an individual mix of differently prominent qualities that makes a coach live up to the expectations of a client, several personal traits and professional competencies have become regarded as basic coach essentials. Besides the mastery of coaching methods and tools (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 269), coaches need to be skilled in a three-fold regard (cf. Rauen/Steinhübel 2005: 290ff): First of all, coaches must have technical competencies, i.e. a theoretical underpinning of both psychological and psycho-social as well as economic- and management-related knowledge. Secondly, a range of personal competencies are vital. The ability to actively listen to clients, empathy, flexibility, frustration tolerance, congruity, and discretion are named in this regard just as is life experience, an unprejudiced attitude, an interest in continuous education, and more. Thirdly, the authors point out that also competence gained through field work is an essential part of a favorable coach profile. As it is primarily own practical experience which enables coaches to eventually step into clients' shoes, it is important for coaches to not only be equipped with theoretical knowledge but to be experienced in applying that knowledge as well.

When asked with which kind of traits and abilities expatriate coaches need to be endowed with, HR and expatriate interviewees have been found to hardly mention any of these core competencies per se. It can be assumed though that they are simply taken for granted as several expatriate interviewees have emphasized that they expect expatriate coaches to be 'experienced'. It is mainly three particularities of coaches which the expatriate clientele and also organizational representatives who arrange coaching for their international staff attach great importance to:

- discretion,
- foreign country experience,
- and a solid base of culture-related knowledge.

Discretion of coaches can be regarded as the only component of personal competencies that is commonly mentioned by potential initiators of expatriate coaching. Especially if expatriates are dealing with strategic issues which need to be treated with absolute secrecy in order to ensure the company's competitive advantage, it is an invaluable quality of coaches to be trustworthy. Yet, the importance of discretion has also been found to have its origin on a more personal level. Due to the strong career expectations that are typically connected to expatriate assignments (cf. Ostermann 2001: 84) – and as the research data show these expectations still exist today even though many expatriations have proven to cause career-related stagnation, sometimes even a step backwards (cf. Harris/Brewster/Erten 2005: 271) – future coachees are likely to open up only when they are convinced that the struggles and weaknesses they are dealing with will not filter through to company's HRD departments or the executive floor. That the trust factor is a precondition for expatriates to pursue coaching at all has also been suggested by Peuker, Schmal and Götz (cf. 2002: 45). The authors put down the significance of trust to the observation that expatriate coaching issues are to a large degree of personal and even of private nature. It can hence be viewed as a result of the unconditional need for trust that the majority of interviewed expatriates expect expatriate coaches to be external service providers. In contrast, working with company-internal coaches can hardly be imagined. Likewise, the importance of discretion may also explain why many expatriate coaches are directly approached by prospective clients and not via organizations.

Apart from discretion, a demand that generally tends to be made on coaching relationships, initiators of expatriate coaching appear to pay particular attention to whether coaching providers can fall back on their own foreign country experience. As already stated in various pieces of coaching^{culture} literature (cf. Barmeyer 2005: 268f; Kinast 2005: 217), foreign country experience seems to be a factor that boosts coaches' attractiveness to organizations and individuals who are in search for an expatriate coaching provider. Deducing from the interview material, this is especially so the case if coaches' foreign country experience corresponds with that of coachees': When coaches have not only been abroad, but spent an extensive period of time in the expatriate's host country and that even in the course of an expatriate assignment, coaches tend to be perceived as even more capable of working with an expatriate clientele. As has been reported to be the case with field competence in general (cf. Rauen/Steinhübel 2005: 292), it seems that foreign country experience on behalf of coaches is expected to facilitate their ability of perspective change. As a result, it is anticipated to make it easier for the coach to comprehend the struggles of their expatriate clientele and overall to

enhance expatriates' feeling of being in good hands. If expatriate coaching aims at taking place between an expatriate and a coach who are at 'eye-level', a state which has been described as favorable for coaching relationships (cf. Rauen/Steinhübel 2005: 290), foreign country experience must be understood as a prerequisite for expatriate coaches. Undoubtedly, intercultural encounters can also be experienced within one's home country and much of what characterizes 'culture clash' (see chapter 2.2.2 Characterizing Culture Clash) can be learned through participation in intercultural teams, cross-cultural marriage or the like. Yet, acculturation to a foreign country on condition that specific professional objectives are reached and that sustainable cooperation between home and host country is established – as is frequently the case with long-term assignments – seems to be of very different quality altogether. Therefore, it is likely to be of great advantage for expatriate coaches' intuitive understanding to have expatriation-like pieces of experience.

Finally, the third prominent demand that is frequently made on coaches is that they have a sound theoretical understanding of the culture phenomenon and, additionally, that they are experts on their clients' home and host culture. Also this point has been brought up by authors on coaching^{culture} before (cf. Abbott et al. 2006: 306; Kinast 2005: 217; Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 45). The original interview data reveal that this requirement does not tend to be explicitly mentioned by expatriates; it becomes transparent, however, in that the clientele expects expatriate coaches to be able to make clients understand and help them deal with the culture-related difficulties they are struggling with. In contrast, the importance of a theoretical culture-general and -specific foundation as well as the awareness of one's own cultural background is clearly highlighted by expatriate coaches themselves. The more complex the circumstances of intercultural cooperation, so their experience, the less a coach can solely depend on his or her own culture-related experience, and the more a coach needs to be well grounded in cross-cultural psychology, intercultural management, and intercultural communication theory. The ability to explain cultural challenges and to facilitate an accurate handling of cultural differences, however, does not seem to be the only reason for why a theoretical underpinning is an important expatriate coach 'equipment'. Only if service providers are aware and deeply familiar with cultural phenomena, are they able to figure out whether culture-related difficulties are the driver for the coaching request at all. On this basis, they can decide then, whether and in how far the culture topic needs to be addressed in coaching sessions, and whether an intercultural training or non-culture-related interventions would be more appropriate measures for a client.

6.2 Discussing the Potential of Expatriate Coaching

Focusing on the second research question, subsequently both the benefits and the limitations that have been found to characterize expatriate coaching are discussed.

6.2.1 Talking Benefits: Favorable Effects of Expatriate Coaching

When comparing the existing coaching^{culture} literature, it can be noticed that the development of intercultural competence is discussed as its primary benefit (e.g. see Abbott et al. 2006; Clement/Clement 2003b; Schroll-Machl 2007c). Depending on how exactly authors define the term intercultural competence, this may also include the measure's capability of enhancing general (management) competencies like frustration tolerance, decision-making ability, and self-motivation. In any case, however, coaching^{culture} is understood as a means of developing a better understanding and appreciation of intercultural differences as well as the ability to adequately react to and deal with them. That expatriate coaching fosters the development of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and behavior patterns – which jointly contribute to enhanced intercultural competence – has been confirmed by the results of the presented research study.

When juxtaposing the expatriation challenges as described by interviewed sojourners, HR professionals as well as coaches and the characteristics of the method coaching (see chapter 3.4 Visualizing Coaching and 3.5.1 Exploring Coaching^{Culture}), however, additional benefits of expatriate coaching can be identified. The properties of coaching, namely, make the measure stand out against other support and development measures (see chapter 3.3.2 Reviewing Expatriate Support Measures) and create advantages which clients can benefit from. The analysis of interview data shows that some of these inherent qualities are of particular significance for an expatriate clientele. Thanks to these traits, coaching can not only contribute to solving problems that are caused by an insufficient degree of intercultural competence, but also to additional challenges characterizing long-term assignments: Such challenges are

- first of all, to identify the primary difficulties among the variety of simultaneously experienced challenges; and thus also to discover the actual short-, medium-, and long-term demand for support;
- secondly, to find a conversation partner who is available before, during, and after the out-of-country stay and who can operate as listener, knowledge transmitter, and feedback provider as well as create opportunities for reflection and anticipation; and
- thirdly, to make use of a support measure that is capable of considering the time pressure of expatriates, of bridging the possible distance between expatriate and service provider, and finally of dealing with the complexity and unexpected occurrence of expatriation challenges.

6.2.1.1 Benefits Resulting from the Inherent Characteristics of Coaching

Needs Assessment: Analyzing coachees' difficulties, identifying their needs, prioritizing their urgency as well as determining if at all and how exactly coaching can cater for these needs, stands at the beginning of every coaching process (cf. Rauen 2003: 162; Vogelauer 2002: 29). The assessment of requirements, however, also characterizes later coaching stages. It is a means of consistently ensuring that the currently pursued coaching goals and provided support match the demand of the individual client. A recurring analysis is not only necessary because the needs of coachees may change throughout the coaching process but also because the actual or additional reason(s) for the experienced difficulties may only come to the surface after considerable reflective thinking (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 317ff).

Support granted to figure out one's primary reason(s) for struggling can be extremely valuable. According to the experience of many interviewed coaches, the obvious reason for why prospective clients and also their organizations demand coaching, frequently turns out to not be the main cause for why support is needed. For expatriates, identifying the cause of reduced professional success and personal well-being can be especially difficult. As the research results show, preparing for and shifting private and professional life to a foreign country (and then also adapting and repatriating) usually brings about manifold challenges. The various occurring difficulties tend to intensify each other and, if not addressed in time, melt to one seemingly huge 'challenge chunk'; one that can have an

overwhelming and paralyzing effect. Only learning what actually causes the unsatisfactory state and performance can already improve expatriates' perception of their situation, so coaches.

Besides that, however, there are other advantages that result from a proper and continuous needs assessment. Unless the source of difficulties has been discovered chances are low that effective support can be provided. Yet, once the needs and expectations of coachees have been grasped, coaching can more easily be adjusted in such a way that it meets clients at their level. First of all, this allows for the service to be tailored to expatriates' personality and specific situation. Secondly, information on what coachees already have/can/know and what they are still lacking makes it possible for a support measure to start where the impact of other support measures received by the client have ended (cf. Abbott et al. 2006: 301f). By establishing a connection between various support measures experienced by clients, coaches create synergy effects: a repetition of interventions can thus be prevented and already existing competencies can more efficiently be used as starting point for further development. Thirdly, in case of company-arranged coaching, also the perhaps diverging expectations of sponsor and coachee can be considered as coaching needs and goals are defined.

Finally, there is another reason for why the analysis of clients' needs and their alignment with the capacity of coaching can be beneficial. If the assessment proves that coaching is not a (or not the most) suitable means of support for a person, coaching processes can be stopped before lots of time and money are wasted. As a result of the needs analysis, coach and coachee may however be able to identify other measures – those offered by counselors, mentors, physicians or trainers, for instance – as more appropriate means of support. Even if coaching is eventually not pursued, the initial sessions may at least have contributed to uncovering better service providers.

Expatriates can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that they are supported in identifying the source(s) of their struggling.
- in that they are supported in finding an adequate (mix of) support measure(s).
- in that suitable support may be faster available.
- in that the chance that time and money are usefully and effectively spent instead of being wasted for inadequate interventions, is increased.

Organizations can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that the representatives of their HR and technical departments are supported in figuring out the actual needs and the best available support measure (mix). Especially the latent and personal issues of expatriates and the resulting needs may be difficult for company-internal people to trace.
- in that a proper needs analysis that leads to an immediate utilization of adequate support can save a lot of precious time and money in the long-run; e.g., by decreasing the chance of ongoing poor performance and personal well-being that may in turn prevent from failure.

Coach as Conversation Partner: Conversation is the fundamental method of coaching; much of what is meant by coaching is conversation; much of what is achieved through coaching is a result of communicative acts (cf. Schreyögg 2003: 225ff). According to Schreyögg (ibid.), coaches fulfill a variety of tasks in their role as professional conversation partners: they are (active) listeners, feedback providers, questioners, knowledge transmitters, and not least communication role models. While in theory these tasks can be separately taken into account, coaches tend to perform them simultaneously in practice. As a result, they create opportunities

- for alleviation,
- for an increase in awareness and perspective change as well as
- for the development of self-help, and
- for the enhancement of communicative strategies – opportunities that have been found to be extremely valuable for expatriates.

Coaching often takes place on neutral ground and under four eyes (e.g. see Looss 2002). This way in particular, the measure creates discreet environments where clients can free themselves from their thoughts and express their emotions. For expatriates who go through severe change when moving back and forth between home and host country and thus tend to make manifold stirring and often incomprehensible pieces of experience, such a 'talking hour' can be crucial. It can have an alleviating effect but at the same time also facilitate the digestion of these incidents. While Barmeyer (cf. 2005: 201) has already pointed out to the great demand of internationally active managers to articulate their experience, the research results of interviewed expatriates and coaches demonstrate that expatriates also tend to have greater difficulties in finding adequate settings which allow for verbalization. Since long-term assignments part executives from their trusted colleagues, superiors, and social network, many expatriates have been found to lack understanding and neutral conversation partners. Thus, they are also deprived of the opportunity to unload their issues. Frequently, the only available listeners are people in

the expatriate community or a committed spouse. Community members have generally been described as 'competent' conversation partners but they may not be entrusted with severe and highly confidential matters due to reasons of discretion. While trust is usually given between expatriates and their spouses and conversations with partners are reported to even have a comforting effect, they have also been reported to be a major burden for spouses: they learn all about the difficulties, confusion, frustration, fear, and anger of their partner but are often not able to understand and provide help around these issues. Also for expatriates, therefore, conversations with partners can be more burdensome rather than alleviating when they realize how spouses suffer from their 'verbal explosions' and their own inability to provide support. Due to the professional, confidential relationship characterizing coaching, however, alleviation can be reached without causing a bad conscience on behalf of clients and burdens on behalf of dependants.

Just the way coaching is often the only way for expatriates to let off steam without having to deal with unpleasant consequences, it can also be one of the rare opportunities for feedback. While managers and leaders generally tend to receive little feedback (cf. Gray 2006: 479), expatriates appear to be especially affected by the absence of response. Again, it seems to primarily be a result of the distance between expatriates and their used-to-conversation partners that their need for feedback falls by the wayside. An additional reason for the even greater than usual shortage of feedback, however, also appears to be the host culture's tendency towards high power distance and high context (e.g. see Hall 1990b; Hofstede 2001). In countries like China, for example, where the decisions of superiors are not questioned or commented and where communication styles are fairly indirect, expatriates may indeed receive less feedback but also may not interpret the statements of host country nationals as feedback. That feedback may be even more difficult to obtain in a foreign culture context is particularly bitter. If received, namely, it can enhance competencies that are vital for expatriation success: Awareness of one's own and others' values and beliefs, of the impact of one's behavior when displayed in a host culture in contrast to the home culture, of how one is seen by others who have a different or similar cultural background as well as the ability of continuous perspective change are essential when performing across and mediating between cultures. Heightened awareness and being able to see things from different angles, namely, are preconditions for flexible and modified behavior – factors which seem to play a decisive role in preventing expatriation failure and increasing the chances for success.

An appropriate coach-coachee match involves that coaches are familiar with the clients' professional environment. As a result, coaches are usually able to discuss clients' issues on an expert level and even transmit

theoretical knowledge and input resulting from their own practical experience. As will later be dealt with in more detail when discussing the benefits resulting from coaching as a measure for intercultural competence development (see chapter 6.2.1.2 Benefits Resulting from the Suitability of Coaching to Enhance Intercultural Competence), expatriates can particularly benefit from knowledge and know-how enhancement. Doing one's job in a new environment where diverging value-, thought-, and behavior-patterns are prevalent, requires additional input. Mentors and trainers, for instance, may also be able to provide the requested input. In contrast to coaches, however, they are not necessarily capable of supporting expatriates in applying the received information to their specific situation. By consciously measuring out the provided input and encouraging continuous (self-)reflection, coaches ensure that expatriates do not blindly adopt the success strategies of others but try to figure out what may work for them. Thus, even by appearing as sparring partner, coaching leaves the responsibility, the locus of control with clients (cf. Jüster/Hildenbrand/Petzold 2005: 92). In the long-run, hence, coaching can well be described as a means of help for self-help (cf. Peuker/Schmal/Götz 2002: 46; Rosinski 2003: 245). Developing the ability to independently deal with difficulties seems especially essential for expatriates who tend to recurrently face manifold challenges throughout the assignment life cycle.

Besides explicitly transmitting knowledge and know-how, however, coaches can also implicitly provide 'input' by acting as communication role model. As is the case with coaches, also the jobs of executives largely consist of communicating (see Wahren 1987; qtd. in Knapp 2003: 109). Since one of the main challenges of expatriates has been found to be the successful communication with stakeholders in the host country, it can be regarded as particularly favorable that coaching works through conversation and thus offers an opportunity to exercise and learn about communication. Through imitation and meta-analysis of their coaches' communication style, clients can consciously and unconsciously enhance their own communicative strategies. Relationships between a coach and a coachee with different cultural backgrounds and different mother tongues even create an opportunity to practice and develop intercultural communication.

Expatriates can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that it provides a discreet opportunity where clients can unload what is on their minds and on their hearts without putting a strain on their dependants; simultaneously, also dependants benefit from the measure in that they are spared the feelings of incompetence, inadequacy, and helplessness.

- in that it is a source of feedback, knowledge, and know-how and thus can contribute to heightened awareness and facilitates perspective change; in this respect, also host country nationals can benefit from expatriate coaching in that coaches provide expatriates with feedback which they themselves are not able to verbalize in such a way that it is received by expatriates in the intended way.
- in that it provides help for self-help which in turn can enable expatriates to independently deal with the complexity and ongoing impact of assignment challenges.
- in that the relationship between a coach and a coachee (with different cultural backgrounds) creates an opportunity to 'exercise' (intercultural) communication and to improve one's communicative abilities.

Customized Design and Contents: Coaching is an outstandingly flexible support measure that allows for adjustment in terms of how, where, when, for how long and for what it is applied. In more detail, it can take place in a group setting or in private, face-to-face, via phone or the new media; it can vary in point in time and duration of application; it can deal with a broad range of professional and private issues; and it can make use of various methods in order to support the development of clients.

In an expatriate context, such a customized support measure seems to be particularly advantageous. According to the statements of interviewed expatriates, chances are high namely that due to the combination of enormous work load, decreased effectiveness and time pressure which often characterizes long-term assignments, expatriates reject standardized measures right from the start. Since they are likely to interfere with already arranged meetings, deadlines, and business trips, they tend to be perceived as an additional burden; and since they do not exclusively address individuals' issues, they are also frequently suspected to be a waste of time. In contrast, measures that appear both tailored in terms of content and compatible with the schedules of its addressees are more likely to be taken into account altogether.

While customized measures can increase the readiness and interest of expatriates to make use of support, it is to be noticed that only flexible measures may be able to deal with the demands of clients at all. Complex intercultural situations and private issues, the location of the client in a foreign country, the unexpected occurrence of challenges, and the need to change their communication or leadership styles, for instance, are some of the special demands that an expatriate clientele makes on support measures; demands which measures with standardized content, setting, preparation time, and duration are probably not able to cater for.

Interviewed coaches, for example, have reported that they are approached by more and more expatriates who are confronted with complex intercultural situations. While many expatriates have to deal with and mediate between their home and their current host culture, a growing percentage of sojourners have to consider a third or fourth foreign culture as represented by the company's stakeholders. Measures that are standardized in content and hence only deal with the difference between two cultures cannot live up to the needs of such expatriates. Experienced coaches, however, are able to adjust their input to the complex context in which their clients operate. Depending on their background, coaches are also capable of supporting expatriates who are struggling with issues that are more of a private than of professional nature. As both the international assignment literature (e.g. see Konopaske/Robie/Ivancevich 2005; Punnett 1997) and the experience of interviewed expatriates has revealed, long-term assignments considerably influence the private life of international staff as well as that of their dependants. Hence, for instance, also the difficulties of spouses and children to adjust to the changed lifestyle can make it difficult for expatriates to pursue their assignment. A measure like coaching that is also supportive in private regard can thus more comprehensively reduce the risk of assignment failure than measures that exclusively deal with culture- or job-related issues.

Besides by different kinds of challenges as far as content is concerned, expatriations are also characterized by the transition to a host country, by the stay abroad – which lasts several years and is more or less frequently interrupted by trips within the host country, to the home or a third country – and finally by another transition to the home or to another host location. Throughout the assignment life cycle, therefore, expatriates are placed in various locations; and as some expatriate interviewees recall, both the time of transition/repatriation as well as business trips are planned at relatively short notice. Hence, it might be very difficult for an expatriate clientele to make use of support measures that need a lot of lead time or can only take place in a certain location. Coaching which takes place via phone, for example, and which allows for the individual sessions to be adjusted to the time schedules of coachees can, therefore, be a more viable alternative. This may especially be so, because expatriates have been found to not be able to anticipate many of the challenges which they eventually face in the course of their assignments. In particular, the impact of cultural differences on private and professional everyday life is often underrated. The need for sudden help – and hence also for a flexibly available measure – can thus frequently be found among expatriates.

Just the way challenges vary in terms of occurrence, they also differ in terms of dimension. Often, the only support expatriates need is an opportunity to unload their problems, to step out of the everyday rush in

order to see things from a distance, or some culture-specific input. When they, however, experience that their communication and leadership styles, for instance, are not effective within a foreign culture context, longer-term and more intense support may be needed. Measures that are standardized in duration may hence not be able to provide a suitable degree of support. Yet, coaching which can be designed as one-shot affair, as an ongoing intervention accompanying clients as they go through change or anywhere between these poles, is more likely to meet expatriates' demand.

Expatriates can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that the coaching process can be adjusted in such a way that it does not coincide with deadlines, important meetings, business trips, or the like and so does not create additional, 'self-made' time pressure and stress.
- in that the measure provides help when it is needed.
- in that it supports individuals in a way that suits the scope of their issues.
- in that it can deal with a broad range of issues; no or less additional service providers may be needed.

Companies can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that it can be arranged in a way that is attractive to expatriates and, consequently, is in fact made use of.
- in that tailored support for professional and private, culture- and non-culture-related issues is flexibly available when there is a need for it; whether it is available or not may decide over success or failure.

6.2.1.2 Benefits Resulting from the Suitability of Coaching to Enhance Intercultural Competence

Expatriate coaching's capacity of developing the intercultural competence of its clients has already been discussed as one of the measures' specificities (see chapter 6.1.4.1 Efforts Towards Intercultural Competence). Whereas many of the existing expatriate support measures like briefings, intercultural trainings, literature, mentoring, and overlaps contribute to the enhancement of skills that make up intercultural competence, expatriate coaching stands out as it can develop intercultural competence in a comparatively comprehensive way.

In this regard 'comprehensive' first of all means that expatriate coaching works across the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimension of

intercultural competence. As a result of encouraging reflective thinking, anticipation, and perspective change, providing food for thought and transmitting knowledge, of initiating role plays and simulations, and more, expatriate coaching takes care of all three competence dimensions (cf. Abbott et al. 2006: 302ff). In contrast to other intercultural competence development measures, coaching's specificity is certainly the enhancement of behavioral competencies. Since coaches are capable of taking into account the particularities of their clients' personality and situation which eventually determine which kind of behavior is person and situation adequate and since they can facilitate change through supportive interventions, they can minimize the random trial and error attempts that have been found to characterize expatriates' early to mid assignment stages. In other words, expatriate coaching's competitive advantage as on-the-job measure is that it does not only prepare the ground for successful intercultural cooperation but actively supports clients in dealing with specific expatriation situations.

Secondly, 'comprehensive' means that expatriate coaching – besides fostering culture-related competencies that are specifically needed within an intercultural context – also looks after general (management) competencies (cf. Kinast 2005: 218). In contrast to intercultural trainings which usually do not aim at developing basic leadership, team work, and self-motivation skills, for instance, expatriate coaching can cover these issues. Unless coachees pursue 'culture-focused coaching' that tends to be restricted to developing culture-related competencies, they do not have to turn to an additional development measure, if they need to work on 'fundamental' skills. Due to the work load and time pressure characterizing long-term assignments, it is likely to be experienced as benefit that expatriate coaching's radius of action makes the need for complementary measures redundant.

Expatriates can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that it can develop a comprehensive set of competencies that facilitate a smoother, more effective and healthier handling of the long-term assignment, both in professional and private regard; in this respect, also dependants can benefit from expatriate coaching: interculturally competent expatriates who can perform more effectively and successfully at work can be assumed to thus have more capacity to support and to take care of their dependants' needs.
- in that it contributes to the development of expatriates as persons, executives, and international staff.
- in that it can supplement and (at least partially) replace other support measures and thus creates synergy effects as well as reduces the need for additional measures.

Companies can benefit from expatriate coaching

- in that it can be regarded as comprehensive people development measure that contributes to the development of executives in general and of high potentials for an international leadership pool in particular; thus, it is an investment whose return may exceed that of expatriation success.
- in that it can complement other intercultural competence measures which may raise expatriates' perception of the usefulness of individual interventions and thus also increase their appreciation of company-initiated support in general.
- in that it can replace the one or other additional intercultural competence development intervention, saving cost and effort.

6.2.2 The Limitations of Expatriate Coaching: About Unfulfilled Preconditions and Sheer Inadequacy

In contrast to the discussed inhibition thresholds and barriers which can be overcome or may even be eliminated through favorable developments in the future, expatriate coaching has its limitations; constraints that constitute the measure, simply making it impracticable under specific circumstances.

Even though expatriate coaching has been found to be a useful and effective means of support for a great variety of topics, there are situations that call for a more intense or just a different kind of help. Alcohol problems, marriage crises or burnout, for instance – severe issues that have been reported to be a possible result of culture shock or the conflicting demands of work and family life characterizing many long-term assignments (cf. Grant-Vallone/Ensher 2001: 263f) – may fall under this category. In general, therefore, it can be said that the possibilities of expatriate coaching end where counseling or medical attendance is indicated; just the way it is the case with coaching in general (cf. Lippmann 2006a: 33ff; Rauen 2003: 67ff). Whereas clients may still benefit from expatriate coaching sessions that are practiced in addition to medical care, it is essential to understand that under certain conditions coaching alone does not do. Pointing out to the limitations of coaching may be especially important when targeted to an expatriate clientele. Since the availability of adequate medical, psychological, and psychotherapeutic help may be just as limited as the coaching supply in many expatriation destinations, it can be assumed that expatriate coaching runs an even greater risk of being

requested and provided for inappropriate purposes than in situations where a fine-meshed support measure net exists. Support that is offered under the motto 'any help is better than no help' may have its legitimacy; yet, particularly in these cases it seems to be vital that both service providers and 'customers' are clearly aware of the measure's limitations.

While expatriate coaching may reach its limits due to the challenges expatriates are facing, it may also be as result of the relationship between expatriates and service providers that coaching does not 'work'. Sympathy, trust and perceived equality between the two key players, for example, have been described as playing a particularly vital role when it comes to coach-coachee fit. Knowledge and experience base as well as age, gender, and many other facets however, have also been identified as determining factors (cf. Looss 2002: 184f; Morgan/Harkins/Goldsmith 2005: 43). As has already been discussed above, this study's research results have discovered that within an expatriate context two additional aspects seem to affect the perceived match between coach and coachee and hence the practicability of coaching: To start with, it is essential that expatriate and coach have a good command of the language in which coaching is pursued. Secondly, it is crucial that the cultural and local distance that may exist between the two coaching partners as a result of their different cultural backgrounds and current residence, can be overcome. Otherwise, it is likely that coaching is a frustrating and uncomfortable experience that is prematurely terminated.

A final limitation of expatriate coaching that is discussed at this stage has primarily been brought to light by expatriate interview partners. Several expatriates have reported that in the course of their assignment, they preferred to keep their problems secret unless they had solved them on their own. Instead of sharing them with expatriate community members or people in the home country, they chose to deal with them single-handedly in order to hide their own weakness, to cover up mistakes, and to prevent rumors that may finally threaten their career. Expatriates who have experienced their own lack of commitment in regard to making transparent their struggling and need for support, therefore, have particularly emphasized this one condition that needs to be fulfilled in order for coaching to work: expatriates need to be able and willing to open up, present their issues to the coach, and accept being supported through the measure. The existing literature has repeatedly discussed that without openness, voluntariness, and readiness for change on behalf of clients, coaching's power is very limited (cf. Rauen/Steinhübel 2005: 294). Due to the heightened career expectations that frequently accompany long-term assignments and perhaps even more so because of all that has been given up to pursue these career opportunities – family, circle of friends, spouse's job, one's home, and leisure activities, for example – it can be assumed

that the expatriate clientele is less ready to address their challenges, if they fear this may thwart their plans for development. As Abbott et al. (cf. 2006: 311) have pointed out, however, also extreme stress may decrease expatriates' receptivity for coaching; when pressed for time, they may feel that talking to a coach takes more time than solving their problems on their own. Hence, this also impacts how organizations need to handle the implementation and practice of coaching as expatriate support measure. Whereas expatriates can namely at least to a certain degree benefit from mandatory measures like briefings or intercultural trainings even if they maintain a passive stance, expatriate coaching's practicability and effect is heavily dependent on clients' voluntariness, pro-activity and dedication. When introducing coaching as part of the expatriate support measure net, therefore, companies have to consider how they can increase expatriates' motivation and trust in the offer.

7 Implications from the Research for the Future of Expatriate Coaching

One of the first chapters of this dissertation has discussed that the way 'expatriation success' is defined, strongly depends on the eye of the beholder (see chapter 3.1.3 Securing Sojourner Success: Calculation or Coincidence?). Success can only be related to the achievement of the very job objectives or, from a more inclusive point of view, be regarded as the result of multiple achievements: professional progress, personal well-being and growth of expatriates and dependants throughout the assignment life cycle, career development upon return, the establishment of favorable relations between headquarters and foreign subsidiaries, and more. Having studied three different interview groups and in this respect also having explored their diverging definitions of expatriation success, the following can be deduced from the research results: Regardless of how narrowly or widely it is defined, expatriation success is always dependent on a variety of factors of which the subsequent are only a selection:

- the expatriate-assignment fit;
- the selection, preparation, support, and reintegration of expatriates;
- expatriates' level of intercultural competence;
- the attitude and situation of dependants; and
- the circumstances under which the assignment has to be carried out, such as company-internal rearrangements or market trends, changes occurring in private life during the assignment, natural disasters or the spreading of diseases, like SARS; the latter of which affected many of the interviewed expatriates' assignments.

The extent to which the negative impact of these factors can be controlled varies greatly. By no means whatsoever, therefore, can expatriation success of any kind be guaranteed. Consequently, it has to be acknowledged that also expatriate coaching cannot ensure that long-term assignments work out as expected; not even in combination with other support measures which might be able to take care of those issues which expatriate coaching cannot cover as a result of its own limitations.

Even though this research study has revealed that expatriate coaching is no "cure-all" for expatriation difficulties – a conclusion that has also been

drawn by Abbott et al. (2006: 310) – the analysis of interview data has brought to light that expatriate coaching can (at least) well contribute to increasing the chances of expatriation success; and, simultaneously, of decreasing the risk of failure. While, first of all, expatriate coaching is capable of comprehensively developing the intercultural competence of expatriates, it can also help identify their difficulties, resulting needs, and adequate support, facilitate alleviation, awareness, and perspective change, and offer support in very flexible and manifold ways; all of which contributes to accelerated effectiveness, better performance, and heightened well-being – and, eventually, to expatriation success.

Especially because the research on the practice and potential of expatriate coaching has disclosed that the measure can be beneficial in multiple respects and thus appears to be a support measure with relatively far-reaching impact, it is desirable that – one – expatriate coaching develops into a more recognized measure that is considered part of the available expatriate support measure net; and – two – that expatriate coaching's potential is more fully tapped in the future. The research results also indicate, however, that several steps can and need to be taken, respectively, in order to facilitate the recognition and attractiveness of expatriate coaching as well as to make best use of its potential. The latter implies that both the quality and availability of expatriate coaching should be taken care of in the future.

Implication 1: Enhancing the Attractiveness of Expatriate Coaching

- As long as the initiators of expatriate coaching are not aware of the plurality and concurrence of challenges which tend to characterize long-term assignments and of how unexpectedly and differently each of these challenges can manifest themselves and impact individual expatriates, chances are low that the usefulness of expatriate coaching (as well as that of other support measures) is seriously taken into account. Therefore, it seems important to more carefully educate potential initiators of the service on the characteristics of expatriation challenges and, simultaneously, on the capacity and competitive advantages of expatriate coaching. In other words, for the attractiveness of the service to be enhanced, it is essential to first of all create the groundwork based on which then the necessity for the service can be discussed and a cost-benefit analysis be made. Since individual expatriates as well as HR and technical departments have been found to be potential initiators of expatriate coaching, input on assignment challenges and the support measure itself needs to be made available to all three target groups. Additionally, however, it is also worth considering whether companies' management boards need to be familiarized with that information as the decision for or against

the implementation of expatriate coaching in an organization may be left to these higher ranks.

- Besides education, however, also efforts towards improving the reputation of expatriate coaching need to be made before especially individual expatriates can be expected to consider the service. It will be the job of coaches to point out to the chief strengths of the measure; that of people development for already successful individuals. Organization's job, in turn, will be to implement and 'sell' coaching in a way that reflects this development aspect and reduces the prevalent perception of coaching as 'punishment-for-incapability' and thus as 'career killer'.
- For many of the actions that are typically taken within coaching sessions – perspective, attitude, and behavior change, for instance – a certain degree of awareness and knowledge are sine qua non. While expatriate coaches have been found to (be able to) impart knowledge and raise awareness, this (in this case) 'preparatory work' might as well be provided by other support providers such as trainers or mentors but in a more cost-efficient way. Close cooperation between multiple service providers might thus also be a means of enhancing the attractiveness of various services and of the expatriate support measure net in general. On the one hand, namely, putting measures in relation to each other can enable each measure to emphasize its competitive advantage. On the other hand, however, also the synergy effects that may result from a collaboration of service providers can hence come to light.

Implication 2: Ensuring the Quality of Expatriate Coaching

- The presented research has shed light on the special demands that are made on expatriate coaches, many of which coaches also make on themselves. These demands can be subsumed under the term intercultural competence; a mix of competencies resulting from distinct general (management) competencies, a sound culture-related knowledge base, foreign language proficiency, and at best even from own long-term foreign country experience. In order to ensure that providers of expatriate coaching are in fact versed in these areas, it is high time to more profoundly discuss the role of culture-related education in the course of standard and vocational coaching trainings. According to the experience of interviewed coaches, there exist hardly any opportunities for coaches to improve their intercultural competence by services offered through coaching organizations. Many of today's expatriate coaches can thus be assumed to have accumulated their expatriate coaching competencies based on studies in cross-cultural psychology, international business or intercultural

business communication and/or based on their own migration experience. Since as a result of globalization's progress, intercultural situations faced by expatriates tend to increase in complexity and demand even more elaborate intercultural competence on behalf of coaches, it might not only be valuable but even necessary that coaching trainings start to get more deeply involved in the enhancement of intercultural competence. Providing calculated culture-related input in the course of trainings may be one way of doing so; arranging training groups in such a way that participants have different cultural backgrounds – which naturally creates an intercultural context where certain skills can be practiced and competencies developed – may be another.

- In order for the quality of expatriate coaching to be taken care of, however, it might also be important to ensure that the measure is not mistaken as cure-all for expatriate problems and as suitable intervention under all circumstances. As in expatriates' host countries, for example, psychotherapeutic interventions, psychiatric services, and medical assistance might be less available or differently handled than in their country of origin, expatriate coaching runs a certain risk of being misused. An inadequate application of coaching, however, can be harmful to the client as well as damage the reputation of the coach and that of coaching as expatriate support measure altogether. Therefore, it seems essential that, first, coaches are well aware of their service's limitations; and, second, that they underscore expatriate coaching's limitations just the way its advantages are communicated to (potential) clients.

Implication 3: Improving the Availability of Expatriate Coaching

- Selecting a suitable expatriate coach and pursuing a coaching relationship over time has been identified as one of the major hurdles connected to expatriate coaching. While an increase in the number of expatriate coaches around the world may facilitate coach selection and accessibility, also a greater transparency of expatriate coaching offers could contribute to the more efficient tracing of suitable coaches. The availability of coaching could, however, also be enhanced by other means:
- According to coaches, coaching is best used with clients who are interested in growth but not overtaxed. Therefore, for both coaches and clients it seems to be beneficial that coaching relationships are established in the pre-departure phase of long-term assignments, ensuring expatriates have a suitable, trusted coach 'at hand' when one is needed in the course of the assignment. Even though such an initially established and then dormant until needed coaching

relationship might be more expensive for companies than a sudden, single emergency coaching intervention, even to them pre-departure coaching relationships might be advantageous. If initially arranged coaching relationships, namely, enable and perhaps even encourage struggling expatriates to make use of expatriate coaching 'in time', the money that can be saved from prevented mistakes, burnouts, resignation, and even from premature return may easily cover the cost of the dormant or long-term coaching relationship.

- The establishment of international coach pools could also be considered as a means of increasing the availability of expatriate coaching. Through the cooperation of expatriate coaches around the world, expatriates may be more easily transferrable from one coach to another, if they change destinations. Another reason for why the establishment of international coach pools is desirable, however, results from the finding that it can also be understood as a means of developing coaches' intercultural competence. Transfer conversations itself or joint supervision sessions create opportunities to practice intercultural communication and to receive culture-specific input. Furthermore, for instance, they also facilitate perspective change and keep coaches up-to-date on developments of the coaching scene in other countries; information which the quality of their services may also benefit from. For its twofold advantage, the idea of establishing international coach pools appears particularly desirable for expatriate coaches to be pursued.
- Yet, also the use of technology can be a way of bridging distance and thus can facilitate the availability of expatriate coaching. While the measure has already been found to partially be offered through the new media or the phone, the reluctance of coaches and clients to coach and be coached this way is still considerable. Due to the high degree of mobility of today's workforce, it seems to be worth that ways of overcoming this reluctance are explored in the near future. Due to the rapid advance of technology it is possible that even more face-to-face-like coaching situations can be created in the future than is already possible by means of video-conferencing today; and that 'digitalized' coaching thus becomes more practicable anyway. It is advisable, therefore, that technological progress is closely monitored in order to develop the current coaching practice.
- Finally, however, also companies – and even if they, for whatever reason, are not able or willing to offer expatriate coaching to sojourners – could play a part in the facilitation of coach selection and thus of the availability of expatriate coaching. In that they make high-quality hands-on information on the existence of coaches in expatriates' home and host country accessible to potential clients, they

can grant essential help for self-help. This kind of support might be very much appreciated when expatriates struggle with private issues in which they do not want to get their employers involved. In this case, help for self-help might even be perceived as more helpful than direct support through the organization.

8 Conclusion and Outlook

While this dissertation was written, Barack Obama won the elections for presidency in the United States of America and the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression hit the world – developments among many others that brought about severe CHANGE. While a huge number of people and individual lives have been impacted by these changes, this research study has explored the role which change plays in the everyday (professional) lives of executives who keep international business going as the world turns. And it has primarily highlighted one particularity: Expatriation is not only *about* facilitating and promoting change within a company, among host country employees and even in the headquarters. Expatriation *is* change.

For executives and also for their dependants many things change as they get ready for, experience, and digest their expatriations. And it is due to a variety of prevalent specificities which tend to characterize long-term assignments – doing highly significant and highly paid jobs; holding an ‘in-between’ position; operating in a foreign language; managing, leading, and cooperating with people with different cultural backgrounds; residing in a foreign location and within an expat community, and more – that expatriates tend to face changes in very similar areas; and therefore, also share many of the joys and challenges resulting from that change.

From a helicopter view thus, it appears practical that expatriates receive standardized support measures for these ‘standard’ challenges, such as relocation services, intercultural and language trainings, briefings, and culture-specific information brochures. A review of these and other currently existing and practiced support measures has revealed that each of them contributes to the handling of change in one or the other area. However, when taking a closer look at the change, the joy, and the challenges which sojourners go through, it can be understood why probably not even all of these support measures together can adequately cater for the needs of individual expatriates: The combination in which challenges occur and manifest themselves, the duration and intensity by which they are characterized, the specific circumstances in which they are embedded, and not least the way individuals are able to cope with this mix and impact of change, this is what eventually provides a unique flavor to each and

every long-term assignment. And it is this uniqueness which has to be taken into account when talking assignment success. The consequence for a well thought-out support measure net is, hence, that it includes measures that can cater for the particular bundles of needs which can result from what are obviously 'standard' expatriation problems.

First and foremost, this research study was aimed at shedding light on an alternative form of expatriate support which pays particular attention to individuals and the very context in which they operate: expatriate coaching. Its primary intent was to explore the current practice and potential of expatriate coaching and thus to contribute to clarifying the role of coaching^{culture} within an expatriate context. For reasons of significance and specification of the research focus, this project was geared at minimizing the research gap that exists in regard to coaching for European expatriates in China. As a result, it necessarily had to neglect several areas of interest and simultaneously has raised new questions that seek clarification. Therefore, it is desirable that further research is conducted around expatriate coaching as well as around coaching^{culture} for other target groups. Taking this dissertation as starting point for supplementary research projects, it could be valuable for coaches, expatriates, organizations, and researchers, if future research considered the following areas of interest:

- As a result of the progress of globalization and, in particular, of the upswing of countries which have so far primarily been understood as expatriate destinations – China and India, for instance – it can be expected that the transfer of staff from headquarters to subsidiaries (expatriations) and from subsidiaries to headquarters (inpatriations) will be more well-balanced in the future. Therefore, it is likely that the number of inpatriates from countries with less extensive coaching histories is going to grow. Further research could thus be dedicated to exploring in how far the practice of coaching is at all suitable for inpatriates from collectivistic countries or those characterized by high power distance; and in how far the practice of coaching could or has to be adapted to the particularities of an inpatriate clientele in order to be (more) beneficial.
- The effects of coaching are fairly difficult to evaluate; and, hence, it is hard to tell which favorable and critical developments on behalf of coachees have eventually been caused by coaching or by other influencing factors. In order to learn more about the potential of expatriate coaching, it may thus be useful to study expatriates who received coaching in the course of their assignments but still 'failed'.
- From the current practice of expatriate coaching and the resulting difficulties connected to the availability of the service, it can be

deduced that it might be beneficial for clients that expatriate coaches around the world cooperate more closely with each other and that they fall more rigorously back upon alternative means of communication like the telephone or the new media. Further research has to explore in more detail

- how the cross-cultural cooperation of coaches can be designed in order to more adequately cater for the needs of clients as well as in order to make best use of the relations for the development of coaches' own intercultural competence.
- under which circumstances it is (even more) suitable that internationally active staff is coached via phone, video conference or else (than in a face-to-face setting); and if technological progress reveals new and more adequate ways of 'digitalized', 'remote' coaching.
- Even though expatriate coaching can be implemented as preparatory measure aimed at building up favorable attitudes, knowledge, and skills in advance to the stay abroad, it is still an intervention at 'relatively' short notice; and its preventive impact is necessarily limited. Hence, it is not able to facilitate the development of competencies that take more time to grow than the period of time left before the start of an individual's assignment. Taking into consideration the growing internationalization of work, it might be useful to, first, study ways of establishing international leadership cadres which gradually prepare and fit selected people for expatriations and other forms of international assignments; and, then, to explore which kind of (different) functions still can and need to be fulfilled by coaches, if their clients are members of these leadership pools.
- Due to the challenges and cost related to expatriations, companies tend to complement and even replace long-term sojourns with alternative types of international assignments. Since these kinds of international work entail their own difficulties and dilemmas, however, it will be interesting to explore which role expatriate coaching can play in the course of short-term assignments, international commuting, and frequent flying.

These ideas for further research are not only worth being considered because they can help close the research gap that still exists around expatriate support measures and expatriate coaching in particular. They are also worth being considered because they can contribute to enhancing the actual practice of long-term assignment support, even if perhaps only bit by bit. My personal conversations with expatriates have taught me that sometimes even these little bits and pieces of support can make a big difference to an individual sojourner. It is often already tiny gestures on

behalf of company-internal and -external service providers and not to forget that of family, friends, and colleagues, which can turn challenging expatriations to good account; or in other words, it seems that often only a detail has to be taken care of so that the strain that comes with **CHANGE** can more easily be viewed as **CHANCE**.

Appendices

Interview Guide HR Professionals [Leitfaden HR Interviews]

Introduction [Einleitung]

- How much time do we have for the interview? [Wie sieht Ihr zeitlicher Rahmen aus?]
- This interview is recorded, made anonymous and subsequently only used for the purpose of my doctoral thesis or publications in the course of my doctoral thesis. Are you fine with that? [Dieses Interview wird aufgezeichnet, im Anschluss daran anonymisiert und nur für die Dissertation oder Publikationen im Zuge der Dissertation verwendet werden. Sind Sie damit einverstanden?]

Terminology [Terminologie]

- Which term does your company use to describe employees who go on a host country assignment? [Wie bezeichnet ihr Unternehmen ins Ausland entsandte MitarbeiterInnen?]
- Which term does your company use to describe employees who have returned from a host country assignment? [Wie nennen Sie die Zurückgekehrten?]
- Which term does your company use to describe employees who have transferred from a foreign-country subsidiary to your location? [Welche Bezeichnung haben MitarbeiterInnen von Standorten im Ausland, die für eine Zeit in Ihrem Standort arbeiten?]

Particularities of Expatriation [Eigenheiten der Entsendung]

- For which purpose does your company assign expatriates? [Zu welchen Zwecken entsendet Ihr Unternehmen MitarbeiterInnen?]
- For how many expatriates (in percent) approximately is the job abroad their first leadership task? [In wie viel Prozent der Fälle, würden Sie schätzen, werden Expatriates erst durch ihre Entsendung zu Führungskräften?]
- How long do expatriate assignments usually last? [Wie lange beträgt die Entsendungsdauer von Expatriates für gewöhnlich?]

Selection of Expatriates [Selektion von Expatriates]

- How are future expatriates selected? [Auf welche Weise werden zukünftige Expatriates ausgesucht?]

- Which role does the trailing spouse/the accompanying family play in the selection process? [Inwiefern werden mit ausreisende PartnerInnen/Familienmitglieder bei der Auswahl berücksichtigt?]

Prior to Departure [Vor der Abreise]

- How much time does usually pass between the start of the expatriate selection process and a person's actual departure for the host country assignment? [Wie groß – für gewöhnlich – ist die Zeitspanne zwischen dem Start des Personen-Auswahlprozesses und der tatsächlichen Abreise der MitarbeiterInnen?]
- How does your company prepare employees for expatriations? [Wie werden die Entsandten vom Unternehmen auf den Auslandsaufenthalt vorbereitet?]
- Are there any preparatory measures for accompanying trailing partners/family? If yes, which? If not, why not? [Gibt es Vorbereitungsmaßnahmen – und wenn ja welche – für mitausreisende PartnerInnen/Familienmitglieder? Und wenn nicht, welche Erklärungen gibt es dafür?]

Abroad [Im Ausland]

- How are expatriates supported during their stay abroad? [Wie werden die Expatriates während ihres Auslandsaufenthaltes betreut?]
- Are there any support measures for accompanying trailing partners/family? If yes, which? If not, why not? [Gibt es Unterstützungsmaßnahmen – und wenn ja welche – für mitausreisende PartnerInnen/Familienmitglieder? Und wenn nicht, welche Erklärungen gibt es dafür?]

Repatriation (Planning) [Rückkehr(planung)]

- What does the repatriation (planning) and reintegration of expatriates look like? [Wie gestalten sich die Rückkehrplanung und die Wiedereingliederung der Expatriates?]
- Are there any support measures for accompanying trailing partners/family? If yes, which? If not, why not? [Gibt es Unterstützungsmaßnahmen – und wenn ja welche – für PartnerInnen/Familienmitglieder? Und wenn nicht, welche Erklärungen gibt es dafür?]

Support Measures [Unterstützungsmaßnahmen]

- Which additional support measures do you think should be offered to expatriates and their dependants? [Welche (Unterstützungs-) Maßnahmen sollten Ihrer Meinung nach für Expatriates und deren Angehörige *zusätzlich* getroffen werden?]

- Is there an exchange between expatriates-to-be and inpatriates, i.e. for example between Germans assigned to China and Chinese who are on assignment in Germany)? [Gibt es einen Austausch zwischen zukünftigen Expatriates und Inpatriates (also beispielsweise zwischen Deutschen, die nach China gehen und Chinesen, die nach Deutschland entsandt wurden)?]
- How much, approximately, are the support measures for an expatriate? [Wie viel ungefähr kosten die Unterstützungsmaßnahmen für eine entsandte Person?]

Premature Return [Abbruch der Entsendung]

- How much, approximately, does a premature return cost? [Wie teuer kommt ein frühzeitiger Abbruch schätzungsweise?]
- What are the most frequent reasons for a premature return? [Was sind die häufigsten Gründe für einen Abbruch des Aufenthaltes?]

Expatriate Coaching

- Which role does coaching for expatriates play in your company? [Was für eine Rolle spielt das Beratungsformat Coaching bei der Betreuung von Expatriates in Ihrem Unternehmen?]
- What kind of experience do you have with expatriate coaching? [Welche Erfahrungen haben Sie mit Expatriate Coaching gemacht?]
- What kind of experience do you have with coaches who work with expatriates? [Welche Erfahrungen haben Sie mit Coaches gemacht, die mit Expatriates arbeiten?]
- In your opinion, what kind of qualification should expatriate coaches have? [Welche Qualifikationen sollten solche Expatriate Coaches Ihrer Meinung nach haben?]

Miscellaneous [Sonstiges]

- Is there anything you would like to add? [Möchten Sie noch gerne etwas ergänzen?]
- Could you perhaps help me get in touch with coaches/expatriates who might be willing to be interviewed? [Können Sie mir helfen den Kontakt zu Coaches/Expatriates herzustellen, die möglicherweise zu einem Interview bereit wären?]

Interview Guide Coaches [Leitfaden Coach Interviews]

Introduction [Einleitung]

- How much time do we have for the interview? [Wie sieht Ihr zeitlicher Rahmen aus?]
- This interview is recorded, made anonymous and subsequently only used for the purpose of my doctoral thesis or publications in the course of my doctoral thesis. Are you fine with that? [Dieses Interview wird aufgezeichnet, im Anschluss daran anonymisiert und nur für die Dissertation oder Publikationen im Zuge der Dissertation verwendet werden. Sind Sie damit einverstanden?]

Background of the Coach [Werdegang/Erfahrung des Coach]

- I am interested in how you became a coach at all? Could you tell me something about that? [Ich frage mich zu allererst, wie Sie überhaupt Coach geworden sind?]
- What did you do before your coaching training/before you started to work as a coach? [Was haben Sie vor Ihrer Ausbildung zum/zur beziehungsweise vor Ihrer Arbeit als Coach gemacht?]
- With which clientele did you work before you became an expatriate coach/do you work besides expatriates? [Mit welcher Klientel haben Sie vor Ihrer Arbeit als Expatriate Coach gearbeitet/arbeiten Sie neben Ihrer Arbeit mit Expatriates?]
- Since when do you (also) work as an expatriate coach? [Seit wann sind Sie (auch) als Expatriate Coach tätig?]

Specificities of Expatriate Coaching [Eigenschaften des Expatriate Coaching]

- How do you receive requests for expatriate coaching? [Wie kommen Sie denn überhaupt zu einem Auftrag für Expatriate Coaching?]
- What does your initial contact with an expatriate coachee look like? [Wie sieht der Erstkontakt mit einem Expatriate Coachee aus?]
- What do the subsequent coaching sessions look like (frequency, duration, time span, methods)? [Wie werden die darauffolgenden Coaching Sessions gestaltet (Häufigkeit, Dauer, Zeitspanne, Methoden)?]
- Which topics/questions do particularly often crop up with expatriates? [Welchen Themen/Fragestellungen begegnen Sie in der Arbeit mit Expatriates besonders häufig?]
- What are the specificities of expatriate coaching? [Was sind die Besonderheiten eines Expatriate Coachings?]

- Are there any differences between the expatriate clientele and other coachees? [Gibt es Unterschiede zwischen der Expatriate Klientel und anderen Coachees?]
- Which are the advantages of external coaches in contrast to internal ones and vice versa? [Welches sind die Vorteile externer Coaches im Gegensatz zu internen Coaches und umgekehrt?]

Comparison between Expatriate Coaching and Other Support Measures
[Vergleich von Expatriate Coaching mit anderen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen]

- What is the difference between intercultural training and expatriate coaching? [Wo sehen Sie den Unterschied zwischen interkulturellem Training und Expatriate Coaching?]
- Is expatriate coaching needed in addition to intercultural training or other measures and if yes, why? [Wird zusätzlich zum Training oder anderen Maßnahmen Expatriate Coaching benötigt, und wenn ja weswegen?]
- With which arguments can you persuade a company to implement expatriate coaching? [Mit welchen Argumenten könnten Sie ein Unternehmen davon überzeugen, dass es Expatriate Coaching implementieren sollte?]

Feedback on Expatriate Coaching [Feedback zum Expatriate Coaching]

- Which feedback have you received from expatriate coachees? [Welche Rückmeldungen haben Sie von Expatriates zum Coaching-Prozess bekommen?]
- Which feedback have you received from companies in regard to expatriate coaching? [Welche Rückmeldungen haben Sie von Unternehmen zum Expatriate Coaching bekommen?]

Expatriate Coach Competence [Kompetenz des Expatriate Coach]

- Why do you think are you qualified to work with expatriates? [Was denken Sie qualifiziert Sie für die Arbeit mit Expatriates?]
- How have you gained your competence that you need when working with expatriates? [Wie haben Sie sich die Kompetenz angeeignet, die Sie beim Coachen von Expatriates benötigen?]
- Which role does your own foreign country experience play when coaching expatriates? [Inwiefern spielt Ihre eigene (Auslands-) Erfahrung eine Rolle beim coachen von Expatriates?]
- In how far did your coaching training prepare you for an expatriate clientele? [Inwiefern wurden Sie in Ihrer Coaching-Ausbildung auf die Arbeit mit Expatriates vorbereitet?]

- Do you think coaches who work with expatriates need special training? [Braucht man Ihrer Meinung nach eine spezielle Ausbildung zum/zur Expatriate Coach, um den Anforderungen von Expatriates gerecht zu werden?]
- In which areas do you feel you need to develop your competencies? [Wo sehen Sie bei sich Entwicklungsfelder im Coaching von Expatriates?]

Miscellaneous [Sonstiges]

- Based on your experience with expatriates, how do you think expatriations could be improved? [Wenn Sie aus Ihrer Erfahrung mit Expatriates sprechen, wie könnte man den Entsendungsprozess für Expatriates optimieren?]
- Is there anything you would like to add? [Möchten Sie noch gerne etwas ergänzen?]
- Could you possibly help me get in touch with expatriates who have been/are being coached in the course of their assignment? [Können Sie mir helfen, einen Kontakt zu Expatriates herzustellen, die im Zuge ihrer Entsendung gecoacht wurden/werden?]

Interview Guide Expatriates [Leitfaden Expatriate Interviews]

Introduction [Einleitung]

- How much time do we have for the interview? [Wie sieht Ihr zeitlicher Rahmen aus?]
- This interview is recorded, made anonymous and subsequently only used for the purpose of my doctoral thesis or publications in the course of my doctoral thesis. Are you fine with that? [Dieses Interview wird aufgezeichnet, im Anschluss daran anonymisiert und nur für die Dissertation oder Publikationen im Zuge der Dissertation verwendet werden. Sind Sie damit einverstanden?]

Selection – Decision – Preparation [Auswahl – Entscheidung – Vorbereitung]

- To start with, I am wondering how you became an expatriate at all? [Zu allererst interessiert mich, wie Sie überhaupt Expatriate geworden sind?]
- Why do you think were you selected for this assignment? [Warum denken Sie, wurden gerade Sie für diese Aufgabe ausgewählt?]
- What did the selection process look like? [Wie hat der Auswahlprozess ausgesehen?]
- In how far was your trailing partner/family included in the decision-making process? [Inwiefern war Ihr(e) Partner(in)/Ihre Familie in den Entscheidungsprozess eingebunden?]
- The time span between selection and departure – what was it like for you and for your dependants? [Wie war die Zeit während der Auswahl und der Abreise für Sie beziehungsweise für Ihre Angehörigen?]
- How did you get prepared for the host country? [Wie haben Sie sich auf das Ausland vorbereitet?]
 - Did you receive support from your company? If yes, what kind of support was that? [Haben Sie dabei Unterstützung vom Unternehmen bekommen? Wenn ja, welche Art von Unterstützung?]
 - What do you think of these preparatory measures? [Wie fanden Sie diese Vorbereitungsmaßnahmen?]
 - What kind of support would you have liked to receive? [Welche Unterstützung hätten Sie sich gewünscht?]
 - In retrospect, how would get prepared for such a transfer today? [Basierend auf Ihrer bereits gemachten Erfahrung, wie würden Sie sich heute auf diesen Transfer vorbereiten?]

Initial Period Abroad [Frühe Auslandsphase]

- What were the first weeks abroad like? [Wie gestalteten sich die ersten Wochen im Ausland?]
- Recalling these first weeks, was there any challenge that you remember in particular? [Wenn Sie sich so an diese ersten Wochen erinnern, gab es da eine besondere Herausforderung?]
- What kind of support did you receive then? [Welche Art von Unterstützung haben Sie zu der Zeit erhalten?]
- What kind of support would you have appreciated (in addition)? [Welche Unterstützung hätten Sie sich (noch) gewünscht?]

Abroad [Im Ausland]

- How are you doing today – in contrast to your first weeks abroad? [Wie geht es Ihnen heute – im Gegensatz zu den ersten Wochen vor Ort?]
- What kind of challenges cropped up in the course of your stay abroad? [Was für spezifische Herausforderungen sind im Zuge Ihres Aufenthaltes aufgetreten?]
- How do you deal with the challenges caused by working and living abroad? [Wie gehen Sie mit den Herausforderungen um, die das Arbeiten und Leben im Ausland mit sich bringen?]
- What kind of support do you have? [Welche Art von Unterstützung haben Sie?]
- What kind of support would you appreciate? [Welche Unterstützung würden Sie sich wünschen?]
- Have you always been familiar with whom you can contact in the headquarters for various issues (e.g., to stay up-to-date, for intercultural issues). [Ist es beziehungsweise war es immer klar für Sie klar, wer Ihre Ansprechpersonen für diverse Anliegen im Mutterunternehmen sind (z.B. um up-to-date zu bleiben oder bei interkulturellen Fragen)?]

Repatriation (if indicated) [Rückkehr (falls zutreffend)]

- What did your repatriation look like? [Wie gestaltete sich Ihre Rückkehr?]
- How did you perceive your reintegration into the home port? [Wie war die Wiedereingliederung im Heimathafen?]
- Did your career expectations come true? [Erfüllten sich Ihre Karriereerwartungen?]
- What can you tell me about the support measures upon return? [Was können Sie mir über die Unterstützungsmaßnahmen im Zuge der Rückkehr erzählen?]

Expatriate Coaching

If the person received coaching [Wenn die Person gecoacht wurde]

- Who initiated/arranged the coaching process? [Wer hat den Coaching-Prozess initiiert? Wie ist es eingeleitet worden?]
- When did the coaching sessions take place? [Zu welchem Zeitpunkt hat/haben die Coaching-Einheiten stattgefunden?]
- Which time span did the coaching process cover? [Über welche Zeitspanne hinweg haben Sie Coaching in Anspruch genommen?]
- With which frequency did the sessions take place? [In welchen Abständen fanden die Sitzungen statt?]
- Where did the sessions take place (in the home/host country or via telephone, etc.)? [Wo fand das Coaching statt (Ausland/Inland oder telefonisch, etc.)?]
- Which topics were discussed in the course of the coaching process? [Um welche Themen ging es im Coaching?]
- In which aspects do you feel coaching was helpful? [Inwiefern war die Unterstützung durch Coaching hilfreich?]
- Was there a negative side to the coaching process – if yes, what was it? [Hatte das Coaching irgendwelche unangenehmen Seiten – wenn ja, welche?]
- When/for what would you have liked to receive coaching instead of/in addition to other support measures? [An welcher Stelle hätten Sie sich zusätzlich zu/anstelle von anderen Unterstützungsmaßnahmen Coaching gewünscht?]
- Would you recommend coaching to other expatriates? Why/why not? [Würden Sie Coaching anderen Expatriates weiterempfehlen? Aus welchen Gründen (nicht)?]

If the person did not receive coaching [Wenn die Person *nicht* gecoacht wurde]

- Can you imagine that coaching could be/could have been helpful? [Können Sie sich vorstellen, dass Coaching hilfreich (gewesen) wäre?
 - If yes, in which situations? [Wenn ja, in welchen Situationen?]
 - For which reasons (not)? [Aus welchen Gründen (nicht)?]

Miscellaneous [Sonstiges]

- Recalling the transfer and your time abroad up until now, what was the best thing connected to your expatriation? [Wenn Sie sich an den Transfer und an Ihre bisherige Zeit im Ausland erinnern, was war das Beste, das Ihnen im Zusammenhang mit der Entsendung passiert ist?]
- What was the biggest surprise in the course of your expatriation? [Welche war die größte Überraschung im Zuge der Entsendung?]

- What do you think is the worst thing that happened in the course of your expatriation? [Was würden Sie als das Schlimmste bezeichnen, das Ihnen im Zuge der Entsendung passiert ist?]
- What was the biggest challenge in the course of your expatriation? [Was war die größte Herausforderung im Zuge der Entsendung?]
- Is there anything you would like to add? [Möchten Sie noch gerne etwas ergänzen?]

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