

Chapter 22

Twenty-First-Century International Careers: From Economic to Lifestyle Migration

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INTRODUCTION

While many chapters in this book examine Ireland-specific research, reports and literature pertaining to contemporary Irish business and society, this chapter takes a different approach. It explores the contemporary career influences and preferences of highly educated knowledge professionals in Europe (Crowley-Henry 2008a), and considers the implications for present and future Irish business and society in the post-Celtic Tiger era. The concept of international careers in modern-day society is studied from a critical and individual, rather than a managerialist or policy, perspective. It investigates what 'career' means to people in the twenty-first century and suggests the ramifications of this for human resource practitioners.

While large proportions of Ireland's and other countries' populations have emigrated for economic, employment, or pure survival reasons (Sally 1995; Schrier 1958; Thomas and Znaniecki 1996), findings from the study shared in this chapter consider a trend towards *lifestyle migration* (Crowley-Henry 2008a; Heffernan 2008; Schein 1990). There has been a noticeable shift from the *mass* emigration evident in the Europe of the past, to which Ireland was a very large contributor, to today's situation, in which highly qualified specialists are increasingly proactive in seeking out new markets for their *individual* professional and personal development (Heffernan 2008; Vandamme 2000; Yan *et al.* 2002). The research shared here explores an elite category of international assignees termed 'bounded transnationals' (Crowley-Henry 2009a), whose primary concern is the quality of life/lifestyle on offer in a particular host country environment, rather than a focus on objective career success.

Based on primary, qualitative, exploratory research, concerning a sample of bounded transnationals in the south of France (2002–2005), a career framework is presented that was induced from the findings, and delineates the relational,

individual and economical influences on career preference and choice. While the study concerns a geographical case study in the south of France, the findings are discussed in light of the Irish situation: from the perspective of immigrants to Ireland and the modern-day emigrants from Ireland. The findings emphasise the requirement for organisations' human resource practitioners to develop human resource management strategies that open up and elaborate career management and planning beyond extrinsic elements.

The initial sections present the relevant literature from international human resource management and career theory. Next, the research methodology of the study is outlined briefly (for a more detailed discussion see Crowley-Henry 2009b). Then core findings are considered in light of the Irish situation. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for further research are expounded.

GLOBALISATION, LABOUR MOBILITY AND THE MIGRANT WORKER

Globalisation has brought about many changes, one being the growing number of multinational organisations in different host countries (Tregaskis 1998). It is accepted that business globalisation, and the increase in global competition, could have a direct impact on the staffing of expatriate managers (Harvey and Novicevic 2002). According to Patel (2002:18), the so-called 'brain drain', where highly skilled professionals emigrate to another country, has 'long been a byproduct of increased labour mobility and globalization'. Yan, Zhu and Hall (2002:385) postulate that 'as the overall level of globalization increases, the international experience of the average employee accumulates'. A global relocation survey predicts that the number of international assignments/assignees is a trend that will continue to increase (Windham International 2000). Labour mobility within the European Union (EU) is one of the founding pillars of the Maastricht Treaty, and labour mobility is encouraged in many Community policies (Vandamme 2000:446). Vandamme (2000:441) found there to be 5.5 million EU nationals living and/or working in another member state of the EU. These labour mobility developments confirm the need to examine migration in more detail. This chapter focuses on individual perspectives in order to throw light on the practice.

My study focuses on highly educated and skilled workers, as research has found that highly qualified professionals and specialists have become more positively disposed to migration (Vandamme 2000:441). Werner (1996) suggests that, within the EU, the demand for higher-skilled workers, graduates and professionals is rising, while the demand for lower-skilled workers is decreasing. Boswell (2005:5) confirms that European workers are 'more highly qualified than they were a decade ago'.

Saxenian's (1999, 2002) research focus has been centred on Silicon Valley immigrants, specifically highly skilled individuals who move to the west coast of the United States to undertake employment opportunities, primarily in the

information technology (IT) profession. It is within this globalisation context that my investigation is set. Despite the boom and wealth from Ireland's Celtic Tiger, and net migration into Ireland over this period, a grouping within the population persists in leaving the country in search of a better life elsewhere. Indeed, given the demise of the Celtic Tiger, increasing numbers of Irish nationals are seeking opportunities internationally (Heffernan 2008). The geographical mobility of knowledge professionals that my study explores is thus most relevant to contemporary Ireland.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Much has been written and published about the expatriation process and experience in international human resource management literature (e.g. Borg and Harzing 1995; Brewster and Scullion 1997; Dowling and Welch 2004; Dowling *et al.* 2008; Mendenhall *et al.* 1987; Scullion and Collings 2006; Tung 1998). There have been calls to widen the research on expatriates to incorporate different types of international assignees (Brewster and Suutari 2005; Scullion and Paauwe 2004; Scullion *et al.* 2007). My study responds to the call, at least in part, by focusing on a category of international assignee: the bounded transnationals.

Cultural issues, such as the international assignee's acculturation process (Berry and Sam 1997; Black and Mendenhall 1991), are not developed here as they have been explored elsewhere (see Crowley-Henry 2008b). Rather, the focus is on career drivers; that is, what influences an individual to remain in a host country and work under local, host country terms and conditions of employment. The literature (which has favoured the organisation-assigned expatriate who embarks on a temporary international assignment and is then relocated, still as an employee of the organisation, to the home country on completion of the assignment) stresses the relationship and social aspects that impact upon expatriate success or failure. Trailing spouses (Black and Stephens 1989; De Cieri *et al.* 1991; Harvey 1998; Stone 1991), children in education, dual careers (Harvey 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998) and family responsibilities are all considered as factors influencing the expatriate's assignment success. Such relationships are also assessed with specific regard to the bounded transnational's career preferences and choices.

While the organisation-assigned expatriate's temporary international assignment and its implications for his/her career have been examined to various degrees in international human resource management literature (Dowling and Welch 2004; Yan *et al.* 2002), there is a shortcoming in international career research with regard to the bounded transnational type, which is the focus of my research shared here.

Career Theory

Career has been defined as:

the overall pattern of a continuous development process, by which an individual, via an interactive and interdependent relationship with an organizational environment, experiences and makes sense out of a sequence of critical events, activities and situations, through which competence is acquired, meaning is created, and projections for the future are made. The gradually unfolding career contains changes visible to others (the objective career) and changes in the individual's perception of her/his activities and identity (the subjective career). The two aspects form a duality, becoming inseparable. (Larsen and Ellehave 2000:104)

This section gives an overview of the literature on career theory and career research in an international context. It outlines the range in career theory from the organisational career to the boundaryless career, including the external (or objective) and the subjective (more protean) career elements.

Traditional or orthodox career theory concerns the organisational career of employees as they move vertically up the hierarchy of the organisation (Fletcher 1996). It has generally been applied to those employees currently in managerial positions or with management potential (Fletcher 1996:109; Larsen and Ellehave 2000:90). The implication is that careers are linear (career ladder) and age/service-related, unfolding in unchanging organisational settings (Fletcher 1996:109). Whereas Whyte's (1956) 'organisational man' fits this theory, it is argued that today's workforce is more distrusting of its employing organisations and leaders (Keyton and Smith 2009; Rosenbaum and Miller 1996) as a result of initiatives such as downsizing and mass redundancies (Larsen and Ellehave 2000:99). Changes in the psychological contract (Gratton and Hope-Hailey 1999; Rousseau 1995), from more relational to transactional contracts, have prompted the contemporary developments in career theory.

Contemporary literature argues that an elaboration and evolution of the orthodox career model is required in order to take stock of the present-day realities (Arthur and Rousseau 1996:7; Larsen and Ellehave 2000:89). While traditional career theory has 'discounted the role of the person' and stressed 'the presumption of employee dependence on the employer firm' (Arthur and Rousseau 1996:7), it is contended that there is 'a move towards a more individualistic notion of careers' (Gratton and Hope-Hailey 1999:79). Hall argues that organisations cannot be responsible for an individual's career; that it is up to the person him/herself to shape his/her career path (Hall and Associates 1996:318). This move towards individualism on the employee's side is matched with a move toward flexibility (and away from lifelong employment) on the organisational side (Gratton and Hope-Hailey 1999:79). The move away from careers being organisationally

managed (Kahn 1996), to employees managing their own careers, has been critiqued (Hesketh 2003).

Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994:429) separate the internal and external career frames of reference into 'individual aspirations and occupational realities', where the 'internal career is generally described in terms of career orientations, career anchors, decisions between personal and professional life, dual-career marriages, and progress through psychological life stages'. The internal career, then, is the individual's subjective view about work life and his/her role in it (Van Maanen and Schein 1977). In comparison, the external or objective career is 'what can be seen and measured about an individual's working life' (Mallon 1995:12). Weick (1996:40) argues that future careers will be more concerned with the internal career dimension.

Rosenbaum and Miller (1996) consider the new environment in which careers are unfolding, in which company loyalty is in question, and in which employees move increasingly inter-organisationally. They see a movement toward the 'mobile worker' who is following a 'boundaryless career'. They explain this further, as follows:

While the old company man moved up the company ladder, mobile workers move up any ladder onto which they can get a foot. They rise in their careers by hopping from firm to firm, with an eye toward ever-better positions, and the firms which employ them often benefit by gaining ambitious employees who bring new ideas, creativity, and the enthusiasm of new blood. (Rosenbaum and Miller 1996:350)

Arthur and Rousseau (1996:5) concur. To them, boundaryless careers refer aptly to those careers that do not evolve within a single organisation. It has been suggested that international assignees (including bounded transnationals and Irish migrants) are ripe for boundaryless careers (Inkson *et al.* 1997) given the international experience they amass while on international assignment. That international experience is valued by organisations other than their employing organisation, thus prompting their potential inter-organisational career moves.

A further development of career theory is the concept of the protean career (Hall and Harrington, 2004). The protean career is more concerned with the subjective or internal career dimensions, taking contemporary realities in the employment market into consideration, whereas it can be argued that the boundaryless career is influenced by objective career dimensions. With its focus on the individual and his/her role in transforming his/her own career path, Hall (1976: 201) describes the protean career as follows:

The protean career is a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organizations, changes in occupational field, etc. . .

The protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life. The criterion of success is internal (psychological success), not external. In short, the protean career is shaped more by the individual than by the organization and may be redirected from time to time to meet the needs of the person.

The emphasis is on internal or subjective success, rather than objective success (position, salary).

Where orthodox career theory has ignored the relevance of non-work related incidents in an individual's life that may shape his/her career ambitions (Hall and Harrington 2004; Larsen and Ellehave 2000:93), the significance of this area is becoming more recognised within career theory, particularly as traditional organisation career paths and/or opportunities are less typical (Parker 1996:181).

Schein (1978) formulated the concept of career anchors from his longitudinal study of alumni members of the Sloan School. He recognised that an 'occupational self-concept' developed as individuals acquired more and more self-knowledge in their early working lives. The career anchor has three parts: first, the self-perceived talents and abilities an individual has, which are based on real successes in different work settings; second, self-perceived motives and needs, which are based on opportunities for self-tests or self-diagnosis in actual situations and on feedback from others; and third, self-perceived attitudes and values, which are based on the actual relationship between the self and the norms/values of the organisation and work setting (Schein 1978:125). Schein (1978, 1990) empirically investigated whether different individuals have different career anchors and identified the following anchors under which individuals could be categorised:

- technical/functional competence
- general managerial competence
- security/stability
- entrepreneurial creativity
- autonomy/independence
- service/dedication to a cause
- pure challenge
- lifestyle.

Schein's (1978:126) research found that people's views of their careers differed, despite the sample being an arguably homogeneous group of graduates from a management school. The individual nature of careers is underlined. This finding is corroborated in the research I conducted among bounded transnationals. The complexity of factors, structural and agential, impacting upon an individual's career preferences is emphasised.

THE 'BOUNDED TRANSNATIONAL'

While international human resource management has focused on the traditional expatriate assignment as central to its field, my research on bounded transnationals develops the international career subject by focusing on non-host country nationals living and working of their own choice on a potentially permanent basis in another country. A qualitative exploratory research study of the international careers of a sample of international members of the workforce working and living on a potentially permanent basis in the south of France (around the Sophia Antipolis science and technology park) was undertaken over a three-year period (2002–2005). During this period, I was a member of the international community, which enabled the collection of contextual information from participant observation.

Taking international human resource management and career theory as the foundation literature disciplines, my research considers international careers inductively. My research findings, which are based on interviews with over fifty individuals, explore the motivations for embarking on and maintaining an international career in a host country for an indefinite period of time.

Core Findings

Given the depth of the study, the intention and focus here is simply to draw out findings relating to international careers as experienced by the sample in question. To provide a deeper description of the bounded transnational sample in this study, Table 22.1 sub-divides the core sample of bounded transnationals based on the various explanations for residing in the south of France, as derived from the interview narratives. It should be noted that these sub-categories are depicted here in their ideal states. However, in practice (and evidenced in the empirical study), there is overlap between states, with some individuals potentially positioned in a number of sub-categories. In addition, it should be noted that individuals may reposition their rationale from sub-category to sub-category. Parallels between these findings and the motivations for migrants to remain resident in Ireland may be drawn. Equally, the table is relevant to Irish migrants, in potentially explaining the complexity involved in determining to stay in a host country.

Table 22.1 shows the various considerations that enter the decision-making process of individuals when assessing the option of remaining in France or returning to the home country, or indeed moving to a third country. As stated, these levels of analysis, which have been elicited from the researcher's interpretation of the interviews and labelled accordingly, overlap and are not exhaustive. However, they do demonstrate and deepen understanding regarding the complexity of concerns that impact upon the individual choice that is made. Of importance is that the work/job or objective career elements are just one component in the overall decision to remain resident in a host country

environment. This underlines the necessity for human resource practitioners and organisations to reconsider career management programmes and widen their remit so that they include more extra-work elements.

In relation to Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchors, a key finding from the study conducted by the author found that the bounded transnational sample prioritise the lifestyle anchor over objective career success variables in the decision to remain resident in France. In particular, for the sample researched, the lifestyle on offer in the south of France, with the weather and environment, and the benefits of France's social policies (such as free schooling from the age of three and extended parental leave), came before any objective career ambitions. This was evident from members in the sample sharing that they had turned down offers of employment that would objectively enhance their careers in favour of remaining resident in the area. The host country lifestyle on offer to the individual and to his/her significant others (family, spouse, children) is considered a primary factor in the decision to remain in a host country potentially permanently. This is relevant for Irish business and society, where an increasingly knowledgeable workforce seeks to maximise the lifestyle anchor in collaboration with other objective and subjective career factors in determining the career path to follow. In an era that is witnessing the increasing international interdependence of nations, opportunities exist for Irish nationals to embark on international careers of a potentially permanent duration. Such a move may be for a myriad of reasons, not least of which are those of lifestyle. Similarly, Ireland, which has become home to thousands of migrants during the Celtic Tiger period, retains many of these migrants in the present days of recession, suggesting lifestyle as a rationale for their continued residency. In contemporary times, the economic situation (unemployment once again rearing its head), coupled with the increasingly free movement of workers cross-nationally, would suggest a growing propensity to migration for Irish and other nationals. The pull of the lifestyle on offer elsewhere is as relevant as the push of unemployment in the home country (Ireland).

While Table 22.1 presents the perceived justification for remaining resident in a host country environment, with the lifestyle anchor an underlying trend, it became clear from the narratives that a number of career influencers impact upon decision making (Crowley-Henry and Weir 2009). These influencers (career framework) include:

Table 22.1 Sub-categorisation of bounded transnationals based on the rationale for residing in France

Label	Description	Informed by literature	Sample respondent
Cosmopolitan lifestyle	Craving the admiring glances of contemporaries; wanting to be perceived well by others in having a exotic lifestyle or image	Schein (1990)	Tracy: 'I love that I am living where other people want to go on holidays', Lisa, Inge, Rick, Katharina, Donal, Vincent, Tim, John
Redemption lifestyle	Wanting to escape the commute, the media, the drinking culture in the home country. Difference is that they choose not to engage with negative aspects in the host environment. There is an element of rebirth, the 'phoenix', a new beginning in avoiding a self-destructive lifestyle; anti-'rat race'.	Schein's (1990) lifestyle anchor	Kate, Philip (commute); Steve (anti-media); Pat (anti-drinking culture)
Proving self	Wanting to be perceived by others as having made the right initial choice; not wanting to take a step back, looking-glass self. Pride.	Cooley's 'looking-glass self' (2003 [1902])	Sarah, Tracy, Natalie
Fear of return	The home country that they left has changed and moved on; a feeling that they would no longer fit in there without the need for readjustment.		Angie, Geraldine

Label	Description	Informed by literature	Sample respondent
Relational (home) / Relational (host)	This relates to the relationships in the home and/or host country between the individual and their significant other (parent, child, spouse), where the duty of care and an empathy with the significant other's desires is taken into consideration, such as offspring, a spouse – immediate family who don't want to move, who feel at home – that bind you to the place, whereas you may like to move yourself		Tim, Billy, Sarah, Ronald (relational host – children); Catherine, Barry, Fiona, Philip, Milly, Shaun, Steve, Vincent, Gordon, Mark (relational host – spouse/partner), Susan, David (relational home – parents)
Life quality	Wanting to remain in order to enjoy the quality of life on offer.	Schein's (1990) lifestyle anchor	Kate, Donal, Lisa, Alice, Deirdre, Shaun, Natalie, Rick, Francis, Katharina, Tracy, Pat, Ronald, Diane, Hilda, Susan, Catherine, Tim
Home, integration	Feeling more at home in France than in home country.	Berry and Sam's (1997) assimilation	Sarah, Angie, Deirdre, Clare, Joe, Geraldine, Diane, Billy, Hilda
Tough adjustment	Not wanting to go through readjustment phase again.		Mary, Milly, Deirdre, Barry, Catherine
Job	Having a job in the area, equivalent of which one might not get in home country.		Elaine, Mark

Source: developed by author.

- the individual (unique characteristics of the person);
- the individual's stakeholders (e.g. family);
- the job in question (tasks, rewards) and the work environment (colleagues, policies);
- host country elements (amenities on offer, weather, environment); and

- the wider society (socio-cultural factors, such as the extent of the multicultural community; labour laws, minimum wage, maternity benefit, etc.).

The factors impacting on career preference and choice are complex, and they overlap and impact upon each other. However, the findings show that many elements – of structural and agential control – impact upon career decisions. While the literature suggests a more individual approach to careers, in reality this is bounded by external relations and conditions in the wider environment, as well as by individual agential desires and ambitions. This calls for human resource practitioners, career planners and, ultimately, organisations to approach an individual's career from a more comprehensive and holistic perspective over his/her working career, as career preferences can alter. There is much scope for opportunity given the move toward proteanism, or adapting to work roles that better suit the other components of an individual's life at different periods of time. Organisations should continuously look within their own structures when deliberating on staffing, as individuals' career ambitions evolve in line with life and circumstance changes.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective career dimension (job title, financial reward, hierarchical ranking) has traditionally been the focus of practical human resource management initiatives concerning recruitment and retention of personnel. However, my research suggests that factors beyond the objective career dimension come into play in the decision-making process. A focus on a more comprehensive systems approach to careers is emphasised, an approach that involves encompassing subjective and objective career dimensions, as well as structural forces (such as the economic situation, labour market policies, childcare provision, etc.) and life stage elements.

The implications of my research findings for international human resource management and career management insist that a 'one size fits all' approach to careers is not sufficient. Career influencers have different weightings at different periods of time during an individual's career and life stage. A comprehensive approach to addressing the implications is required, where organisations offer flexibility throughout an employee's career so that the individual employee can choose which option is most suitable to her/his particular life circumstances at that period of time. Options should not be closed off should a particular path be chosen; rather they should persist, as changes in an individual's life or personal situation have been shown to be highly influential in career preferences (Hakim 2000) chosen at different points in time (Crowley-Henry 2007; Crowley-Henry and Weir 2007).

My study has examined the individual perspectives of a sample of bounded transnationals. This individual and sociological focus rather than the traditional

managerial approach in international human resource management (IHRM) seeks to add to and widen the IHRM field. In exploring issues from an individual perspective, the complex nature of the field of international careers can be analysed in more detail. Career narratives present the myriad of issues that individuals consider and encounter in their career orientation. In addition, my study on bounded transnationals explores an under-researched category of the internationally mobile workforce, which is of relevance to human resource practitioners, employing organisations and society in general.

My findings have implications for further research opportunities, particularly with regard to comparing the sample residing in France to foreign residents wishing to remain long term in Ireland. It also has implications for educated Irish people who voluntarily choose to embark on an international life and career experience as lifestyle migrants, unlike their predecessors, who had to move internationally for economic or work reasons due purely to the poor economic situation in Ireland. Relational and structural influencers need to be considered in order to ascertain a more complete picture and assessment of individual career paths within (or outside) organisations.

Irish knowledge professionals were included in my research, which thus has resonance for Ireland's knowledge base, where highly educated professionals increasingly seek to better their quality of life by engaging in agential action and embarking on an international move of a potentially permanent duration. This has implications for the Irish economy, also, as it suggests the new 'brain drain' is from the more highly skilled categories of employees who leave Ireland for work and lifestyle reasons.

In addition, this research is valuable for foreign residents in Ireland – the skilled and highly educated migrants who have moved here. While many may initially have moved for economic or employment reasons, they may decide to remain in Ireland indefinitely. Factors including quality of life, global political and economic structures that impact on where the individual may find fair and quality employment and payment, the stakeholders (partner, children), who may not wish to be uprooted from where they now consider their home, need to be considered by organisations and policy makers in order to retain quality, skilled talent in Ireland.

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