

Radboud University
Nijmegen School of Management
Human Geography Department
Specialization Urban and Cultural Geography

Master's Thesis

The adventure of living in the Netherlands and the challenge of cross-cultural communications



Yulia Dubova

s4804597

Supervisor: dr. Rianne van Melik

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“For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure who provides the adventurer with amulets against dragon forces he is about to pass.”

(Campbell, 1968)

Executive summary

Geographic space and location are key determinants in the process of innovation, technological change, and eventually, knowledge transfer (Audretsch & Feldman, 2003, p.1). The modern economy is highly dependent on well-trained knowledge workers who play a role of an economic growth motor. Their flow promote the global knowledge transfer which is one of the most important factors of the current globalization. Thus, the interest into the phenomenon of expatriation is rapidly increasing.

An expatriate experience is characterized by multiple roles, balancing between two or more places, between two or more cultures. Expatriates are forced to confront one's own cultural illusion. Moreover, they are forced to be involved into a new culture, language, life and work environment.

The current research frames the challenges that arise after the entrance in a new country, i.e. on the "Living in" period. It involves the difficulties that expatriates might experience on the way from "honeymoon", when expatriates come to the country to cultural shock, and finally, adjustment to a new place. Moreover, this research focuses on the transformative nature of the expatriate experience. It goes without saying that life abroad entails stress, misunderstanding, frustration and opportunities at the same time. This Master Thesis is based on 20 interviews with representatives from Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, India, South Korea and China who live and work in the Brainport region of Noord Brabant province in the South of the Netherlands. Data for this research was gathered over six months of fieldwork in Holland Expat Center South in Eindhoven. The purpose of this study is to provide a description of the subjective expatriates experience that reveals the rich diversity of human individuality shaped by homeland culture.

Along with representatives of Chinese and South Korean cultures, Spanish expatriates face the major internal challenges of cross-cultural communication in the Netherlands due to significant cultural differences and difficulties of integration. Surprisingly, representatives of Indian culture reached Dutch cultural competence and home feelings fast and easy. The majority of interviewees have experienced involvement issues into the Dutch society and making friends and tend to live in international "bubble". Moreover, almost all participants, regardless of their cultural background, face external challenges such as Dutch language, healthcare, food and entertainment in the Netherlands.

A person's capability to acculturate in a new country depends entirely on its identity (gender, profession, individuality, etc.). Thus, not only home culture determines the challenges

expatriates face in host country. Previous experience abroad, having a partner, international environment on the workforce and all other aspects of expatriation life matters in order to achieve cross-cultural competence. In addition, the research elicited that expatriation experience has a clear transformative power and let sojourners turn from a caterpillar to a butterfly. Thus, in our global world it seems that ethnic or geographical proximity does not matter anymore. The key of successful expatriation is personality and the effort one has to put to acculturate.

I hope this study will add richness to the cross-cultural communication management field and also serves as a “magical friend” to inspire future expatriates on the cross-cultural adventure to the Netherlands.

Preface

A few years ago I accepted the challenge of moving to another country... from traditional Russia to the country of freedom and liberality- the Netherlands. I was extremely excited, everything was so new and unknown that I was on a hurry to explore. Suddenly, I became a five-year old child trying to understand the world. I had only a rudimentary sense of how things work and all my existence became a series of interesting guesses. I did experience a cultural shock in all its multiplicity and often I wanted to pack my suitcase. Thanks to my fighting spirit and character, I did my best to hold my new life in my hands and not give up. Now I have become more master of myself than at any other time. I discovered in myself a number of qualities I never knew I had. I was a provincial person and transformed myself into a citizen of the world.

I met “magical friends” - people who helped me with acculturation, I made lifelong friends, I met a lot of wonderful people, traveled around this beautiful country, got to study at university, got a job, and day by day made myself feel at home in the Netherlands.

Moving overseas is a bitter-sweet thing. There is the sadness of departure and the joy of adventure mixed together. Once you leave your birthplace, nothing is ever the same. Certainly, a journey of expatriation is the most rewarding, life-changing opportunity you can have in your life. And I believe everybody should challenge themselves with this experience.

And here is my Master Thesis about the adventure of living abroad, based on my own experience and the experience of the people I met. This work will enable me to graduate from the master program Human Geography - Urban & Cultural Geography at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

During the whole process, there are several people that helped me in achieving the best results and supported me and kept my motivated. First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Rianne van Melik for her astonishing capability to guide my ideas in the right direction, for inspiration and providing me with her constructive feedback. I also want to thank her for the great help in arranging my internship at Holland Expat Center South.

Special thanks goes to Ed Heerschap, the coordinator of the “Living in” project who always supported me, connected me with the right people and helped with whatever issues I have had during the internship. It has been an amazing experience and my Master Thesis and degree would not have been the same thing without it. Furthermore, I want to thank all the interviewees I talked to, who shared with me their stories and experiences. Thanks to that, I met

very interesting people, had a number of meaningful conversations and even made friends. On that note, I want to thank Abhishek Sharma from India who has been a great help in getting me in touch with other expatriates who participated in the research. Certainly, doing interviews was a wonderful experience for me. I got to know the Netherlands much better after talking to expats and had an opportunity to look at the country from different perspectives.

Finally, I want to thank my family and my friends for their endless support and belief in me.

Besides some excruciating long days working on this thesis, I did enjoy learning more about the topic and getting to know people who, like me, left their home to create a new one in a different place in the world. I hope you will find reading this thesis equally interesting and enjoyable.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Challenging adventure

Imagine, you are moving to another country. You are excited, opened to fascinating adventures, new opportunities, looking forward to meet new people, visiting new places and starting a new life. But there is an other side to the coin. You will miss most birthdays of your family and friends, weddings, birth and death occasions, you will not be able to see your beloved ones, you will miss a lot because you will not be in your homeland... You will be alone most of the time. The new language will frustrate you, every day routine will be a challenge, and you will not understand the new culture, customs and habits.

A life in a new country will definitely challenge you, your new life will open extraordinary capabilities in you, it will change you and help you to grow. The new adventure will question your own identity, values and your assumption about everyday life previously taken for granted. After a few years, you will obtain a greater cognitive awareness of a foreign land, gain increased self-confidence, interpersonal skills and tolerance in differences in people and you will be able to work successfully in an international team.

Thousands of people and their families accept the challenge of living and working abroad every year. “The 2016 mobility survey of 224 companies in 26 countries conducted by business consultancy Price Waterhouse Cooper found that 12.2% of employees work overseas every year” (Forbes.com, 2017).

According to A Dictionary of Human Geography (Oxford University Press), an expatriate (often shortened to expat) is a person temporarily or permanently residing in a country other than that of their citizenship. In common usage, this term often refers to highly skilled professionals sent abroad by their employers, who can be companies, governments, or non-governmental organizations. Moreover, professionals going abroad on their own initiative to explore the world also fall into the expatriate category (self-initiated expatriates). “Unlike refugees, they are drawn by the opportunities and challenges of an international move and do not flee political strife, violence, or economic squalor; unlike immigrants, they intend to return home sometime in the future and do not arrange to pull up roots for good” (Vaiman, Haslberger and Vance, 2015, p.1).

Immigrants likely have an emotional commitment to their new residence place. Expatriates can always leave the country, that is why their effort to integrate, learning new

language and culture, finding ways to belong, creating connections, making lifelong friends, and a lot more is questionable (Yeung, 2016). People's minds and circumstances can change. And then fears surrounding job security, concerns over immigration and nationalism inspire discussion across the globe, when do we consider ourselves expats and when are we immigrants (Nash, 2017)?

In common usage, social class, country of origin and economic status are indicators to distinguish people. According to The Guardian, a British daily newspaper, the term expat is reserved exclusively for Western white people going to work abroad, still non-white or Eastern-Europeans (poor or working class) are considered as "immigrants". "Europeans, Americans, Australians and Japanese abroad are most of the time referred to as expats, while Latinos, East Europeans, Arabs, Africans and Asians are considered migrants" (Focus, 2017). All expats are simply glorified immigrants. The word "expat" comes with connotations of choice and wealth and being white, while 'immigrants' are assumed to work in low-paid jobs or claim benefits (the Guardian, 2017). Eventually, there is not much difference between expats and migrants. Whether someone is an expat or not does not depend on origin – it is about the motivations behind their decision to move abroad. In the present research the main focus will be on the expatriates and the challenges they face during the "living in" period (the period of time that starts after entering a new place).

1.2. Holland Expat Center South

The Netherlands aims to create an attractive positive image and welcomes knowledge workers and talent from abroad. Moreover, the government wants to persuade expatriates to stay and build their career in the country (Seo economic research, 2015). For this purpose national and local governments increasingly try to establish and creates favourable living and working conditions for expatriates and modernize migration policy. Consequently, specific expat information centers were established throughout the country: Amsterdam, Leiden, Eindhoven, Nijmegen, Rotterdam and The Hague. They all share an objective of giving expats a "red carpet welcome" to make their stay more comfortable in the city and the country in general (Van Bochove et al., 2011).

Holland Expat Center South (established in 2010) is a non-profit governmental agency located in Eindhoven, The Netherlands. "It is a joint initiative of the participating municipalities in Noord-Brabant and Limburg provinces, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (IND) and Brainport Development" (South, 2017). The agency supports companies and international

employees, provides information and organizes events for the expat community in “The Hub” (separate initiative of Eindhoven municipality). The Hub is a social club where expats, locals and people with all sorts of international backgrounds can meet and enjoy various activities (comedy and quiz nights, parties and courses such as Dutch lessons, painting, guitar, yoga) and build networks that contribute to the local community. Yearly, 20,000 visitors come to the Hub to participate in the various activities, all organized by a group of more than 100 volunteers. The main goal of the organization is to help people to socialize and integrate in the city of Eindhoven (The Hub Eindhoven, 2017).

The main focus of the Holland Expat Center South involves helping expats and their families to settle into their new living and working environment and feel welcome and at home in the Netherlands. The center provides practical information about residence permits, housing, healthcare, education, leisure and a lot more (South, 2017) (See Appendix 1 for more detailed information).

The new project “*Living in*” - present as a 4th phase of expatriation (after preparation, arrival and setting in phases) focuses on the expatriates experience in the Netherlands. Holland Expat Center South is interested in researching how to make expatriates feel at home in the Netherlands, which intercultural challenges exist in a Dutch working environment in order to implement a strategy to keep expatriates staying in The Netherlands. The research considered opinions and wishes of people with the aim to improve the expat's life and work conditions in the Netherlands. Thus, this research project will contribute to the “*Living in*” phase knowledge development and will help to improve the international knowledge workers to become culturally competent in the Dutch society.

1.3. Research objective and research questions

In this research we will look at the world through the eyes of expats from all across the globe in the Netherlands, particularly in the Provinces of Noord Brabant and Limburg. Expatriates have to work and live in the Netherlands, overcoming all kind of issues they meet along the way. This research aims to investigate these issues and provide the results to the Holland Expat Center South and other Expat Centers in the country, companies, such as ICT group, AkzoNobel, StudyPortals, etc. for creating a strategy to deal with issues and help expatriates feel comfortable within a Dutch society and Dutch work environment. The most interesting issues are: cultural stereotypes, questions of home and host cultural values,

involvement into a Dutch society, Dutch working environment, personal transformation, the role of a “magical friend”, quality of life and plans for future (Osland, 1990). All these cross-cultural experiences provide an opportunity to see life in the Netherlands from a different perspective.

The cross-cultural experience is a planned and evaluated learning experience that places a person in an environment where learning is accomplished through active interaction with a different culture, especially abroad (Education.hannover, 2018). While immersed in a new environment, an expatriate will experience diverse lifestyles, make new international friendships, learn respect for other heritages and will cross ethnic, racial, social class, and/or religious cultural borders. A person will learn things about himself, which often includes a new appreciation for family and home, when seen in contrast with a very different reality. The cross-cultural experience helps people to understand and appreciate the characteristics of another culture, its complexity and diversity. While developing a sense of cross-cultural acceptance, people will also gain an appreciation of the sources and values of their own culture.

Such important aspects of cross-cultural experience will be incorporated in this research under one umbrella. The objective of this research is to find out about the feelings expatriates have living and working in The Netherlands in order to improve their stay in the country.

Therefore, the author has proposed the following research question:

What complex of challenges do expatriates face in the process of a cross-cultural experience on the way to achieving cultural competence and home feelings in the Netherlands?

The following aspects of expatriates life experience will be considered:

1. Background
2. Migration to the Netherlands
3. Personal transformation
4. Living in the Netherlands
5. Working in the Netherlands
6. Recommendations

The concepts whereby expatriates experience will be studied:

1. cross-cultural communication model,
2. cultural dimensions,
3. cultural shock,
4. adjustment,
5. acculturation,
6. adaptation,
7. integration,
8. personal transformation,
9. capability approach,
10. the notion of Home.

Note: “*Acculturation* refers to the process of becoming communicatively competent in a culture we have not been raised in” (Hall, 2005, p.270). Acculturation is the social process where foreign-born individual adopt cultural features, such as values, customs and habits, norms, attitudes, and behaviours of the dominant host culture. In other words, acculturation is second-culture learning processes that lead to numerous changes in psychological and physical well-being and changes in daily behaviour (Hall, 2005).

Adjustment refers to the changes which happens with a person him/herself in terms of behavior, thoughts, emotions, strategies and actions. Moreover, their adjustments lead to changes in communication and interaction with others that facilitate the process of adapting. The more adjusted a person, the better his/her ability to deal with life issues, work requirements, career wishes, personal development and so on. Adjusting means making incidental or situational changes in behavior which can have little or no lasting impact on the normal, day to day life of an individual (Hall, 2005).

Integration occurs when an individual is able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture while maintaining his/her culture of origin. “The process of integration means that both sides take steps toward each other, get involved and communicate, find similarities and differences, and take on communal responsibility” (Deutschland, 2018). Integration leads to, and is often synonymous with biculturalism.

Terms such as *acculturation* refers to *adjustment*, because adjustment is a final step of the whole acculturation process, thus these two notions can be considered as equal in this research. *Acculturation* refers to the process of becoming *communicatively competent* in a

culture we have not been raised in. In this research terms such as *communication competence* and *cultural competence* are used as equal on the basis of avoiding tautology in the text. *Adaptation* relates most with the outcomes of the *adjustment* process. *Adaptation* is one of the components of *acculturation*. *Acculturation* is the highest dimension of *integration*. Thus, terms such as *adjustment*, *adaptation*, *integration*, *cultural communicative competence*, and *acculturation* have similar meaning and differ insignificantly, and can be used in this research as synonyms. All the concepts will be described through the whole research.

1.4. Scientific relevance

The first step to develop the scientific knowledge about expatriates living and working in the Netherlands is to explore how the more general concepts of expatriate experience have been conceptualized and operationalized in previous research. Precedent research from the field of cross-cultural communication, geography, multiculturalism, global economy and psychology provide well-accepted theoretical definitions about expatriation (Silbiger et al., 2016), migration (Samers and Collyer, 2016), inclusion and integration (Favell, 2007), diversity (Cardinal and Brown, 2007), cultural differences (Hofstede, 2010), notions of home and belonging (Duyvendak, 2011). Integration studies mostly focus on the migrants in general, including low-skilled migrants and refugees.

However, the literature of expatriate business people is relatively limited and focusing primarily upon selection, training, arrival, effectiveness and repatriation instead of the transformative nature of the expatriate experience and their “Living in” phase. (Franke and Nicholson, 2002; Zhang, 2012; Ko and Yang, 2011; Plake, 2016; Ahad M. Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008). “Transnational social spaces can be understood as pluri-local frames of reference which structure everyday practices, social positions, biographical employment prospects, and human identities and, simultaneously, exist above and beyond the social context of national societies” (Pries, 2001:23).

Most of rich description of expatriates’ subjective experiences are found in works of fiction (Osland, 1990). It is still unclear how foreign expatriate experiences have a long term effect on a personal transformation. Investigating the link between living abroad and transformation nature of expatriates experiences makes a number of contributions of both theoretical and practical value.

According to Favell (2007, x), “The European Union is built on freedom of movement: of capital, goods, services, and persons. European citizens on the move were projected as the key population heralding the building of a new Europe beyond the nation-state”. The European Union “builders” await for sociological proof of the new highly Europeanized population due to the movement of scientific, technical and professional talent. It is still questionable who are these “New Europeans”, the “pioneers of European integration”. Their unique experience of freedom and mobility, including more complicated issues of settlement, participation, integration, and home feelings could tell us more about the Europe today. These people can be found ethnographically, through life stories and subjective narratives rather than any rigid procedures. However, very little research has ever been done on them. Hence, it is important to know what are the difficulties expatriates experience in the “new Europe beyond the nation-state” and how to make their lives in the foreign land better.

Holtslag e.a. (2012, p. 30) advises the European Union to stress the importance of integration of foreign knowledge workers in its different member states. Currently, the European Union have only an integration programme focused on the inflow of knowledge workers from outside. But according to Holtslag e.a. (2012, p. 31), EU-workers also have the need to get assistance in moving between different EU member states.

Therefore, the analysis of expatriates experience in the Netherlands is a useful contribution to better understanding the existing gaps. The research consists of the study of people and their cultures and interactions with the foreign environment. Studying their relationship with and across new space and place can contribute to the Human Geography knowledge about the expatriate life in the Netherlands.

1.5. Social relevance

Expats are unique people who come from one country, but live in another. It is important to understand their emotions and help them to feel welcome in the Netherlands and at home. The challenges expatriates face when entering a new place and at the fourth step when “living in”, are significantly different. As at first, expatriates have issues with arranging the movement (documents, work related difficulties, housing, etc.), later on they experience deeper challenges, such as cultural shock, personal transformation, emotional rollercoaster and a lot more. Identity integration, tolerance of incongruity and social acuity (the ability to read social cues and adapt

one's behavior accordingly) appear to be the competencies needed to have a happy life in a new place (Osland, 1990).

Moreover, a new working environment in an international team definitely raises some problems of adjustments. Both the expatriates, as well as Dutch employees, should make an effort understanding the other culture.

International assignment failure rates depend on the country and challenges that an expat faces. In developed countries the failure rate estimates from 20% to 40% and in under developed the rate jumps to 70% (Management, 2017). The financial cost of returning expatriates before their tours are completed is substantial and estimates from \$ 400,000 per family (Asian Tigers Mobility, 2018). The major reasons for an early return are:

- the inability of the spouse to adjust,
- the expatriate's inability to adapt to different physical and cultural environment,
- other family related problems,
- the expatriate's personality or emotional immaturity,
- the expatriate's lack of motivation etc. (Osland, 1990).

Thus, international assignment failure is a signal that our understanding of this phenomenon is inadequate.

A big inspiration for this research was Osland's Model of Working Abroad (1990) and "The Hero's Journey" she described in her book as well as Joseph Campbell's work on mythic heroes (2008). They call the expatriate travel a hero's journey. At the end of the journey an expatriate becomes a different person. A person who has grown, got empowered, and obtained a broader perspective of the world.

This Master's Thesis will focus upon the transformational nature of the expatriate cross-cultural adventure. A better understanding of the expatriate experience might produce better ideas for improving the way both expatriates and companies handle overseas assignments. The study may provide more guidance to companies regarding their expatriate policies and practices and it may help expatriates make better sense of their experience (Osland, 1990).

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

This Master Thesis aims to give knowledge to Dutch employees and the Holland Expat Center South about dealing with cultural differences and implementing a strategy of adaptation.

In chapter two we will look into the theoretical background of the topic (the theory of acculturation, Lewis' Cultural Model, Hofstede's cultural dimensions etc.) and the conceptual framework of the research. Chapter three will consider the methodology of the Master Thesis. It will explain why Eindhoven as a "Brainport" region was chosen as a case study. Additionally, this chapter will give information about the twenty interview participants from Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, India, South Korea and China. Chapter four will describe the current situation with high-knowledge workers in the Netherlands and, particularly in Eindhoven. In chapter five we will look at the results of the research that came out of the interviews with expatriates living and working in Eindhoven, the city that serves as an in-depth case study. Moreover, we will look into culture comparisons between the Netherlands, European (Spain, Germany, United Kingdom) and Asian (India, China, South Korea) countries, based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Finally, chapter six will provide the conclusion of the Master Thesis that will be drawn from the results along with related recommendations.

Chapter 2

Intercultural interaction: an exercise in serendipity

Living in another culture that differs from an original one can be both an exciting adventure and a challenging process. A culture in which we have been raised, its language and traditions, etc. determines our values, define who we are and how we perceive the world. It is essential to understand that this set of values is amazingly varied all around the world. Thus, the cultural background of an expatriate influences its experience of a new cultural environment and, eventually, the acculturation process. Understanding these transformation trials will help to create a positive dialog between representatives of different cultures. The acculturation literature has illustrated how expatriates manage the challenge of forging an intercultural identity as they navigate the differences in norms, values and beliefs between the home and host cultures (Chirkov, 2009; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Phinney, 2003; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Ward, 2001).

2.1. Stereotyping

We have all heard about countries, cultures and regions in our global world. But we do not often have the opportunity to closely experience them. So, why and how do we develop opinions about them?

Stereotypes and prejudices are some of the major challenges in intercultural relations. Stereotypes are attributions that cover up individual differences and unite certain characteristics to an entire group of people. Roots of stereotyping lay in crucial human ability to make categorization in order to make sense of the world. Stereotypes have a great impact on what we perceive and how we learn about the world. We stereotype people the minute we categorize them and attribute any behaviour, values and beliefs, when we perceive the other person as belonging to a different category than us. We have put people together in a way that focuses on similarity (real or imagined) and provides an explanation (accurate or inaccurate) for their behaviour. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. However, it is important to manage stereotypes in productive ways by working to make them more accurate, keeping them open for refinement and always allowing for individual differences (Hall, 2005).

Strong stereotypes turn into prejudice, an easy knowledge that is a convenient way to make quick decisions. “Stereotyping is a practice where prejudice is always a negative attitude”

(Hall, 2005, p. 192). Expatriates unavoidably fall into stereotypes or even prejudices since they are representative of something “foreign” and, perhaps, not a well known culture. In addition, characteristics promoted by mass media might put a certain label on a person which is not always true. On the other hand, expatriates also come having a certain idea about the host society. However, they will have a unique opportunity to verify.

2.2. Cross-cultural communication

One of the purposes of this section is to make a comparison of cultures based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and Lewis’s cultural model. It will help us to distinguish cultural characteristics of all world countries, as well as to understand how geographical proximity influences cross-cultural communication processes. Indeed, any generalization lead to stereotyping. It goes without saying that all Dutch people differ from each other and it is unlikely that you will meet two absolutely similar Spanish persons. However, the past thirty years of scientific cross-cultural experience let scientists claim that inhabitants of any country in the world have a certain basic package of life view that they express in their behavior (Lewis, 2013).

2.2.1. Richard Lewis’s Cultural Model

Richard Lewis is one of the world famous specialists in the field of multicultural communications. According to “The Lewis Model of Cross-Cultural Communication” there are 3 types of cultures, based on behaviour:

1) *Monoactive (Linear-Active)*. People in this group are task-oriented, logical thinkers who plan, schedule and organize. They do one thing at a time and work only on fixed times. They are very accurate and efficient in their work. Monoactive people consider truth as a more important aspect than diplomacy. They are restrained and concise, prefer facts, logic and punctuality. They focus on the task and have a lack of consideration for relationships. They plan the future systematically and strictly stick to that. Their slogan is “time is money”. Examples: Northern Europe, North America.

2) *Polyactive (multi-active)*. People in this group are social, lively, talkative, communicative and people-oriented. They can do many things at the same time, pursuing multiple goals simultaneously. They live not according to a time schedule, not punctual and

easily change plans. Polyactives switch from task to task, based on a combination of apparent urgency and whatever seems more interesting. They prioritize their work based on feeling as much as thought. When they disagree, they can be loud and emotional, but will quickly forget this as agreement is reached, they perceive the truth to be flexible. They consider managing relationships as an essential part of the job. ("The Lewis Culture Model", 2016) Examples: Southern and Eastern European, Latin, African and Middle-Eastern countries.

3) *Reactive*. These people are introverts and respect keepers. When they plan, they see the full picture. They are polite, used to hide emotions and not direct with communication, patient. Non-contentious, they are not allowed to lose face under any circumstances. Diplomacy here is more important than the truth. They tend to think widely, avoiding fixed plans or vague intentions. They seek harmony and will step back and start again if things are not working well ("The Lewis Culture Model", 2016). Examples: East Asians: Chinese, Japanese and Finns are in this group.

All three dimensions can be combined.

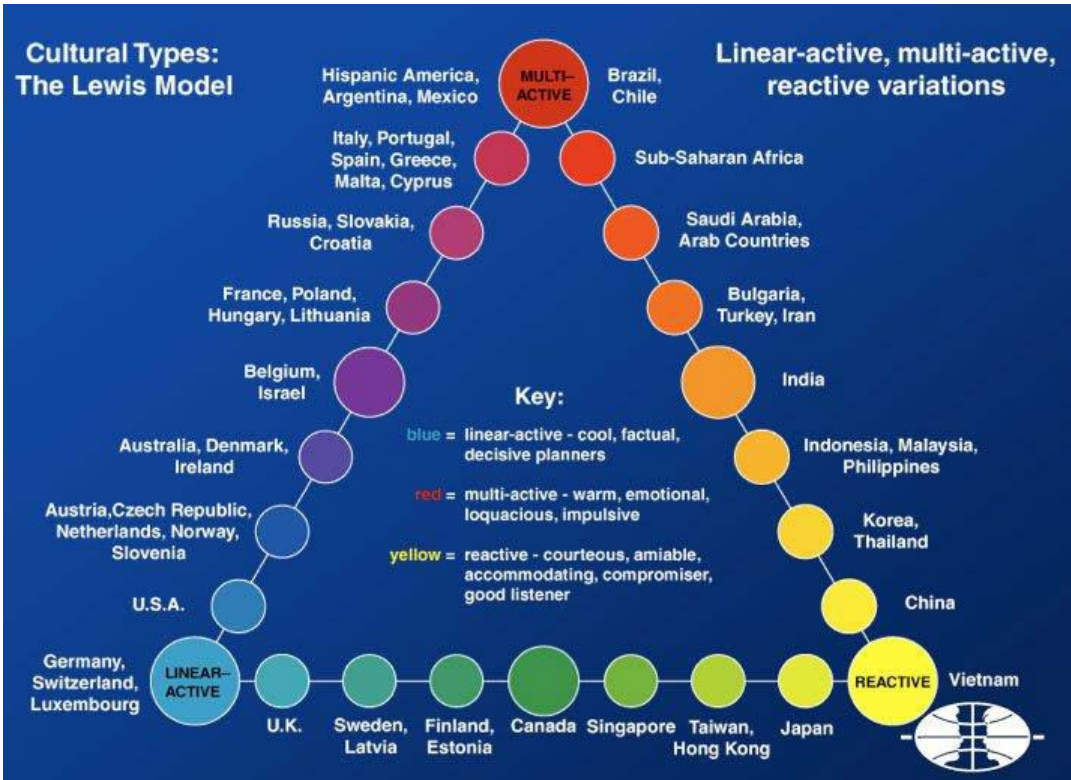


Figure 2.1. Cultural Types: The Lewis Model. (Source: Crossculture.com, 2017).

The Lewis Model lets us compare the culture of origin with others, find something common and different, the point where two cultures meet. It helps us to define the mechanism

of interaction with people from different cultures. This model can be used to accurately predict the reaction of others, by focusing on the cultural roots of national behaviour.

2.2.2. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

One of the most outstanding work about cross-cultural differences was made by a Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede (2010). He developed a system of dimensions to understand culture and national character.

1) *Individualism / Collectivism*. In an individual environment the individual person takes action according to his own interests, cares the most about himself and his family. "I am"-independent, can live without the group element. Feelings of group belonging are quite low. Here, competition takes place and not cooperation. Examples: Germany, The Netherlands, The USA, Great Britain, Canada, etc.

In a collective environment, people have strong bonds with the community. There is a group power. Group interests are more important than the individual. This kind of society may be distinguished by allegiance, cooperation, a sense of duty, close relationship, following traditions, sense of confidence and emotional belonging to a group. About 70% of the population lives in a collectivist environment. Examples: Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Russia, South Korea, etc.

2) *Power Distance (PD)*. It is the extent to which less powerful members expect and accept unequal power distribution (Chhabra & Muneesh Kumar., 2009). High PD cultures (Asia, Arab countries, Latin America, Russia, France, Belgium) perceive power as an important part of life, top-down control.

Low PD (Denmark, Austria, The USA, Great Britain, Germany) think that inequality should be minimized and implies empowerment.

3) *Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)*. It focuses on the degree to which "traditional" male and female values and roles are assigned in a culture. For instance, "male type" cultures are considered ambitious, desire to power, competitive, confidence, aggressiveness (Japan, Italy, Mexico, Philippines and Austria). "Female type" is expected to be more gentle, consider relationship value, reverence for cultural values, care of life quality, home and family (Denmark, Norway, Sweden).

4) *Anxiety or Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)*. This is the extent to which a society reacts and perceives the danger in unknown situations. In countries with high level of UA people have strong traditions, rituals and formal trust, bureaucratic structures and rules. (Greece, Portugal,

Guatemala, Germany, Peru, Japan). Representatives with low level of UA perceive the unpredictability of life, rely only on themselves and demonstrate patience towards everything new.

They appreciate initiative, flexibility with decisions and show a willingness to take risks. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the USA, Ireland, Finland and the Netherlands relate to these cultures .

5) *Focus on the future (long term/short term orientation)*. This relates to cultures who tend to look into the future, set and achieve strategic long-term goals. The high position on this dimension goes to Asian countries. People of this culture display prudence, perseverance and firmness in a case of goals achievement. European cultures take the low position (Hofstede, 2013).

These models can be used to describe cultures as a whole, but they can also help describe individuals and organizations. In a linear-active culture not each individual will be linear-active. There will also be more reactive individuals, as well as multi-active ones. Moreover, we should not forget that each person has its own personality and an initial element of a culture is an individual with his own personal culture.

The same goes with organizations. Organizations also have their own culture and personality. Some organizations will be masculine, linear-active, such as accounting firms, technical companies, while others, such as art galleries, will be more feminine and polyactive.

2.3. Acculturation

Having described the cultural characteristics of countries and ascertained their remarkable differences, we can assume that any traveller will unavoidably face challenges of cross-cultural communication.

When we consider the question of how to succeed in our international travels, it is important to have an understanding of what is meant by acculturation. “Acculturation refers to the process of becoming communicatively competent in a culture we have not been raised in” (Hall, 2005, p.270). Acculturation is the social process where foreign-born individuals adopt cultural features, such as values, customs and habits, norms, attitudes, and behaviours of the dominant host culture. In other words, acculturation is second-culture learning processes that

lead to numerous changes in psychological and physical well-being and changes in daily behaviour (Hall, 2005).

One of the earliest and now most well established ways of understanding the acculturation process is through the rough visual image of a letter “U”, developed by Kalvero Oberg (1960). “This model captures the basic idea that a person travelling to other cultures must get through some difficult times before they can get back to the same level of comfort and sense of normalcy that they felt before their travels” (Hall, 2005, p.271). There are basically four stages that a person is seen to go through in this model: honeymoon, crisis (cultural shock), recovery and adjustment. U-curve describe the emotional ups and downs that occur during intercultural sojourns. It applies to the time spent in a foreign culture and suggests that a sojourner begins his/her intercultural experience with high spirits in the initial “honeymoon” period, yet drops to a more negative state named “cultural shock”. Then the recovery period comes up and, eventually a positive perspective as he/she becomes more comfortable in the host culture.

A degree of adjustment

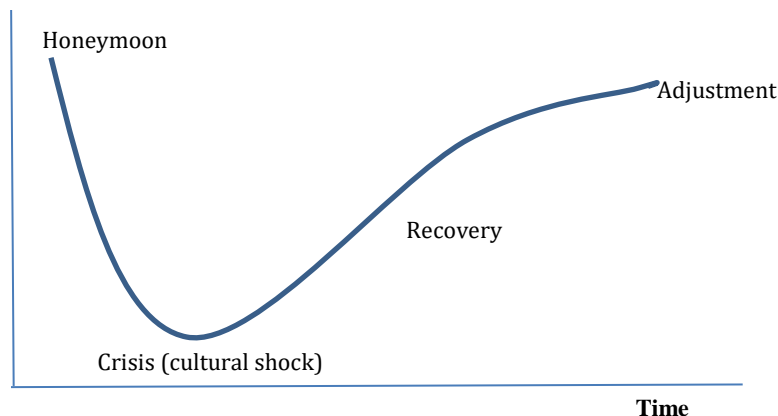


Figure 2.2. The U-Curve Model of Acculturation Process.

Source: B. Hall, *Among Cultures, The Challenge of Communication*, 2005, p. 271.

The last stage in the acculturation process according to Hall (2005) is adjustment. Adjustment refers to the changes which happens with a person him/herself in terms of behavior, thoughts, emotions, strategies and actions. This changes leads to changes in communication and interaction with others that facilitate the process of adapting. The more adjusted a person, the better his/her ability to deal with life issues, work requirements, career wishes, personal

development and so on. Therefore, acculturation (or its final stage adjustment) is the highest dimension of integration.

Young Yun Kim has written extensively on the acculturation process. Her work assumes a human need to adapt and grow and highlights both the dynamic nature of acculturation and the role of communication in this process. The model of Deculturation and Acculturation Over Time, by Kim (2001), demonstrates how, as the sojourner spends more time in the host culture, s/he incorporates more aspects of that culture into her/his beliefs, behaviors and values. Eventually, the sojourner “re-arranges their mental furniture” such that their worldview adjusts to accommodate both new and old cultural values, norms and behaviors, resulting in a new construct. It takes many years of considerable exposure to a new culture for someone to achieve Time 3. It is useful to keep in mind that, for most sojourners, the time spent abroad helps them move from Time 1 to Time 2, and that they should not expect to achieve complete acculturation unless they are exposed to and engage in the other culture for a prolonged period.

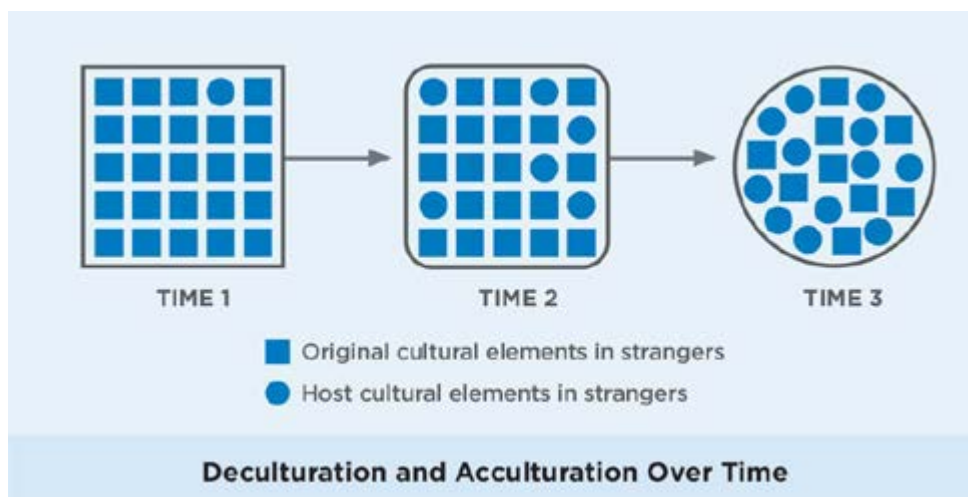


Figure 2. 3. Model of deculturation and acculturation over time (Y.Y. Kim).

Source: (AFS Intercultural Programs, 2018).

2.4. “Bubble”

In contrast to a positive experience such as integration, there is a negative one such as separation. It happens when individuals mainly prefer to socialize with representatives of their own culture, become alienated toward the host culture and, eventually, isolate themselves from the main society (Hall, 2005).

People share culture as a construct of symbolic boundaries that separate their culture from ‘the rest’. This generates feelings of similarity and difference and separate people into groups, making communities, such as “expat bubbles” (Amit, 2013). To break the “bubble”, expatriates have to go out of the comfort zone that naturally will lead to discomfort, experience of unknown or even stress. However, this is the only way to incite a development.

“The negotiation of symbolic boundaries between the immigrant and the host society lies at the heart of socio-cultural integration and constantly takes place in ‘banal’ or ‘domestic’ everyday contexts such as household, a pub or barbershop etc. With its accent on common beliefs and behavioral conduct, culture ‘reinforces national identity and forms an integral part of the distinction between Us and Them’ (Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou, 2014).

This creates a vicious circle: To be able to integrate into a Dutch society an expat has to live in the host society, but “living in” requires an expat to be integrated. Therefore, an expatriate should be able to step out of his own culture to fully integrate into the host Dutch society.

2.5. Capability approach

Another possible lens to study expatriates functioning and wellbeing in a foreign country is capability approach by Amartya Sen. “Sen’s capability approach is a moral significance of individuals’ capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. A person’s capability to have a good life is defined as a set of valuable ‘beings and doings’ like being in good health or having loving relationships with others to which they have real access” (Iep.utm.edu, 2017).

According to the Capability Approach, “the challenges expatriates face” may be understood as deprivation in the capability to live a good life in a foreign country, and ‘development’ is understood as capability expansion. In other words, when an expat moves to another county and culture, he is deprived of a number of these capabilities like speaking the language, or understanding the society. This negatively affects his wellbeing. However, when

the expatriate involves himself into a society, learns the new language and gets to know the people who could explain him “the rules” then the level of his wellbeing can be increased.

Challenges that one faces in a new land eventually will lead to finding a “magical friend” or a cultural mentor. These mentors serve as guides during the expat’s journey, helping with all sort of challenges and issues one might have, such as language concerns, living accommodations, rules, social contacts, and other advices, etc. Usually a mentor can be found through information-seeking efforts. It can be anyone: a person who has travelled a similar path in the past, a fellow expatriate, a colleague, a member of the new culture, etc. (Hall, 2005).

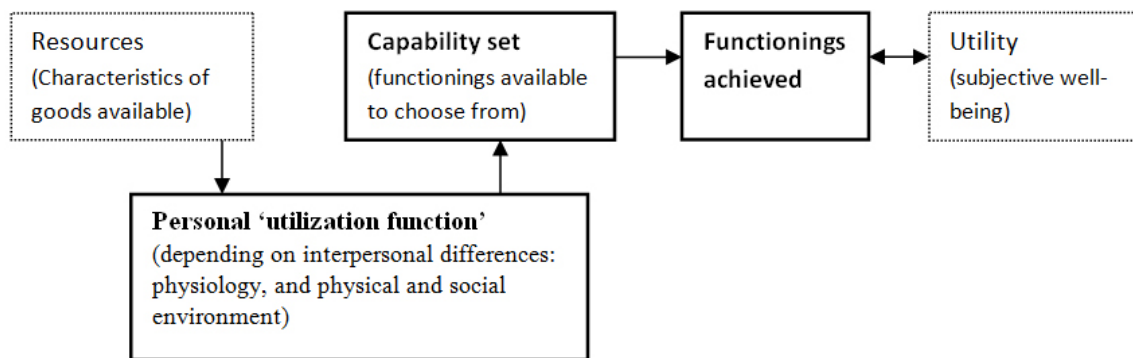


Figure 2.4. Outline of the core relationships in the Capability Approach
Source: Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017

Resources (such as Dutch language course) are considered as an input, but their value depends upon individual's' ability to convert them into valuable functionings (such as studying), which depends, for example, on their personal physiology (such as assiduity), social norms, and physical environment (such as language school).

Individuals can differ greatly in their abilities to convert the same resources into valuable functionings. However, to be able to acculturate and integrate a person has to put a lot of effort that leads to personal transformation.

2.6. Personal transformation as a result of living abroad

Many specialists have agreed on the idea that “hitting the road has substantial effects on who we are” (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013, p. 527). Indeed, living overseas is a life-changing experience. Young Yun Kim (2001) stresses that the acculturation process typically involves a transformation in terms of functional behaviors, intercultural identity and psychological health

(Hall, 2005). Understanding the transitional nature of living abroad is essential to understanding the experiences of expatriates.

Cross-cultural experience involves sufficient stressors, both positive (e.g., excitement, novelty and adventure) and negative (e.g., value questions, feelings of inadequacy, assumptions about yourself and others, your and other culture, and interpersonal relationships), ways that require people to act “heroically”. For many expatriates the level of stress might be so high that the cross-cultural setting demands from ordinary people rise to extraordinary and even “heroic” heights (Osland, 2000). Among commonly identified sources and symptoms of stress for international knowledge workers are the various psychological challenges associated with moving to another country, such as experience of homesickness, alienation, depression and loneliness, and establishing relationship with the host country society.

A personal transformation as a result of living abroad is unique and psychologically demanding experiences that can cause an increase in self-concept clarity. “Expatriates have to plumb the depth of their social-psychological resources first to survive the differences and changes, then to be effective, and, finally, to develop explanations for the ambiguity of their new experiences” (Osland, 2000, p.8).

Culture gives us identity building blocks, and, as we grow up in our home culture, we consensually learn beliefs, norms, customs and habits, traditions, etc., which in turn influence how we think and behave. In a sense, our culture defines who we are. Thus, constantly staying within home culture gives little opportunity to a person to ascertain if the beliefs that form one’s thoughts and behaviors are truly consistent with s/his own core values or simply follow from the shared beliefs of the culture s/he is embedded in (Zou et al., 2009).

In contrast, on the expatriation, opportunities for self-examination abound. As Osland (2000) notes, when living abroad expats embracing some of the local values and norms in order to adapt to their new culture and all their previously unquestioned cultural values and beliefs are “put to the test” and are either discarded or clarified and strengthened as a result.

The breadth (i.e., the number of foreign countries lived in) and the depth (i.e., the length of time lived abroad) of foreign experiences are always taken into account when speaking about personal transformation. The longer people live abroad, the better understanding of themselves and their culture they are likely to accumulate.

2.7. Diversity management

Indeed, understanding the specifics of cross-cultural communication in our global world is vital for individuals as well as for any company that has a diverse workforce. “This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them. Cross-cultural communication in a company deals with understanding different customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high context vs. low context cultures, nonverbal differences, and power distance are major factors that can outline cross-cultural communication” (Lombardo, 2017).

Managing diversity is one of the most important and powerful management tool in Human Resource Management strategies. Literature on the management of diversity emphasizes its two-fold purpose: to identify and correct discriminatory practices in the workplace and to help organizations gain a competitive advantage through the positive effects of diversity on a team and organizational performance (Mazur, 2013). Diversity can make teams more innovative and flexible and, thus, increase their productivity. Eventually, it can be translated into increased overall organizational performance.

Diversity management positively values difference and provides a radically new approach to the question of the ‘different’ at work. Traditionally, the relationship with the ‘different’ in a work environment was shaped from the perspective of prejudices, stereotypes, racism, and in most cases was determined by outside pressure. Managing diversity is considered to be a proactive strategy with the aim of maximizing the employees’ potential that gives companies a competitive advantage (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005). A substantial share of the diversity management literature suggests several economic advantages of the workforce diversity (Mello and Ruckes, 2001; Polzer et al., 2002; O’Flynn et al., 2001; Swann et al., 2004). “These advantages include a better understanding of local markets and customers, increased ability to attract and to retain the best people, greater creativity, better problem-solving and greater flexibility. Another argument is that valuing differences enhances people’s impression that they are valued for what they are, which in turn leads to higher productivity” (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005). In addition, an international assignment is considered to be one of the most powerful means of developing a global mindset that is extremely valuable nowadays (Lovvorn and Chen, 2011). Thus, there is an urgent need to develop a model of the individual cultural competence that affects the harmony in a diverse work floor and, eventually, the economic advantages for companies.

2.8. The notion of Home

All previously mentioned theories raise a question about home feelings. Where there is home, eventually? According to Duyvendak (2015), at the fundamental levels (Maslow's hierarchy of needs) we all have the right to belong and the ability to feel at home (Amartya Sen). Predictability, safety and familiarity are necessary to develop a sense of home. Home is associated with the people we know, actions, feelings, emotions and cues that make us feel "at home." We all need a place that provide a healthy living environment, a place where we can feel comfortable and relaxed, a place that inspires, uplifts and stimulates us, and provides social and environmental sustenance.

The current era of transformation, commonly known as "globalization" has led to mobility of goods, information and people. "This mobility is profoundly transforming our apprehension of the world: it is provoking a new experience or orientation and disorientation, new senses of placed and placeless identity" (Duyvendak, 2015, p.7). Movement has become fundamental to modern identity. Being "rootless", "displaced" across worlds, living between a lost past and a fluid present, are perhaps the most fitting metaphors for the journeying modern consciousness.

Since the increase in global mobility, the meaning of place and space has changed. An experience of non-place (beyond "territory" and "society") is an essential component of everyday life. Expats can no longer develop thick attachments to places, as a consequence of their mobility. For "detached" people who have lost their ability to value a specific place, places eventually become interchangeable.

Look at the European Union, a new Europe without borders where not only economy, legal systems, political institutions are integrating, but a new European society is in the making. Horizons have changed, new forms of cross-border mobility, networks, and exchanges have emerged. "Freedom of movement, in particular, has given the opportunity to millions of EU citizens to move effortlessly across borders: forget roots, change lives and careers; go look for work in a foreign city; shop; study; buy second homes; or retire in a foreign land" (Favell, 2007, x). Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, Milan, London... today they are quintessential European capitals, truly cosmopolitan with denationalized lifestyle.

"Today, the rapidly expanding and quickening mobility of people combines with the refusal of cultural products to "stay put" to give a profound sense of a loss of territorial roots, of an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of places" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992).

According to Anthony Giddens, “globalization...has led to scene of rootlessness and meaninglessness. People lack a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose in their lives, which is leading to a search for a sense of identity and belonging in the private sphere of home” (Duyvendak, 2015, p.10). Belonging is not an individual fixed in a community rooted in a place, but rather, one in which the place becomes valuable to the individual. To feel at home somewhere, “somewhere” needs to be a specific place able to arouse feelings of belonging.

An attachment to a home place is seen as a primordial sentiment created by familiar daily routines and regular settings for activities and interactions. According to these environmental psychologists, ‘place attachment is thus conceptualized as a positive place-bound affection by which people maintain closeness to a place’ (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001, p. 274). Home then is an inclusive and distinctive sort of place with which people have strong social, psychological and emotional attachments (Easthope, 2004, p. 136).

Many policy-makers encourage long- term inhabitants and immigrants to get to know one another and practice what Kwame Appiah has called ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’: ‘Attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people’ (Appiah, 1998, p. 91).

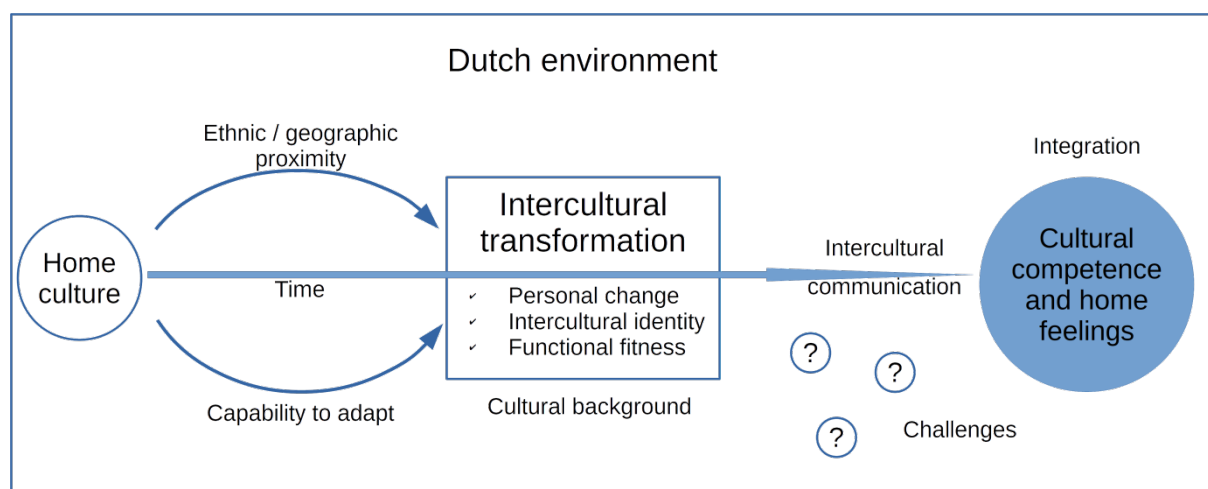
Nowicka’s perspective on home, as part of ‘globally stretching networks’ (2007, p. 83), tells us about the nature of the people and objects that make the highly mobile feel at home. This implies that homes for the extremely mobile are more socially than territorially defined: they are more about the people one interacts with, the familiar faces, etc. In this way, her work transcends the ‘one- needs- a- particular- place to-feel- at- home’ paradigm. A house only becomes a home when symbolic value is attached to it (meanings and feelings). Thus, Nowichka notes that ‘home is being established around particular relationships to people and objects’ (2007, p. 81). For the very mobile, this ‘particular relationship’ is often determined by the generic quality of places, and that home can therefore be even more radically de-territorialized. Highly mobile people feel at home with others like themselves in recognisable spaces of a generic character. Home is not necessarily a material, geographical place. “The world is my home”- claim cosmopolitans.

2.9. Conceptual model

The conceptual framework is based on the described linkages in the current living situation of the expatriates in the Netherlands, particularly in the south of the country, and the theoretical framework. The model gives an overview of the challenges that foreign knowledge workers face on the way of achieving cultural competence in the Netherlands in order to find a way of improving their life in the country.

The author seeks to explain why and how differing national/ethnic backgrounds of expatriates play role in shaping their adaptation experiences in the Netherlands. The main goal is to find out the recipe of “an overall fit” between an individual and the Dutch environment to maximize the individual’s social life capability. The core of the structure of cross-cultural adaptation is identified as the dimension of host communication competence. This means the cognitive, affective, and operational (or behavioral) capabilities of an individual to communicate according to communication symbols and meaning system of the Netherlands.

Figure 2.5. Conceptual model. Factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation.



We are situated in Dutch environment. Expats represent their home culture and carry their home cultural values and worldviews. In the process of intercultural communication they aim to achieve Dutch cultural/communication competence and “Home feelings” due time. The researcher assumes that ethnic/geographical proximity as well as personal capability to adapt will influence the acculturation process. The research assumes that British and German people will have better capability to adapt than representatives of Asian cultures. Adaptation process is interfaced with intercultural transformation in terms of personal change (becoming independent, confident, communicative, coming up with new habits, hobbies and interest), intercultural identity (becoming open minded, make international friends) and functional fitness

(get a job, study new language, self-realisation). All these transformations are shaped and influenced by the cultural background of an individual. On the way to integration, expats will face certain challenges. Which are they and how they are shaped by the cultural characteristics, will be described in the chapter five.

- The researcher assumes that those who have more international experience and speak the local language might have less challenges of cross-cultural communications in the Netherlands.
- The researcher assumes that adaptive challenges confronting Asian knowledge workers in the Netherlands are bigger than for European ones, due to the relatively high degree of difference between their ethnic (including cultural) background. Findings from a substantial number of studies (e.g., Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Galchenko & Van de Vijver, 2007; Redmond, 2000; Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013) indicate that individuals with higher degree of ethnic distance are likely to face more difficulties in adapting to the host culture and, thus, have a higher stress level (Kim and Kim, 2016).

The researcher also assumes that European knowledge workers with a similar ethnic market, share more traits, belief and values with the native Dutch society, than other groups do. These similarities might make it easier for European expatriates to be accepted by Dutch people and ultimately, make their adjustment much smoother than other groups of international knowledge workers.

- The study utilized a definition of acculturation that consist of three categories:
 - rejection of the foreign culture
 - integration of foreign and home culture
 - rejection of the home culture in favor of the foreign culture- “going native” (Osland, 2000).

Expatriate effectiveness is related to the second category of acculturation that involves integration of the two cultures, a bicultural stance.

- This study assumes that acculturation is a prerequisite for effectiveness since it is difficult to imagine an international situation in which an expatriate could succeed without any attempts to adapt to the local culture. However, Tung (1987) identified interpersonal skills as a key factor in expatriate success.

These factors described above directly or indirectly explain and predict different levels of intercultural transformation and, consequently, levels of cross-cultural competence.

While studying these factors we will find out about the problems foreign knowledge workers experience in the Netherlands. This will lead to feedback to the companies, Holland Expat Center South and the foreign knowledge workers to further enhance the factors that are of influence in having a happy life in the Netherlands and in the decision to further stay in the country. This enhancement will be useful for policymakers and firms who try to attract and retain foreign knowledge workers in the Netherlands, as it shows which buttons can be pushed to improve the conditions of foreign knowledge workers in the Netherlands.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This Master Thesis will collect its data using qualitative research. It involves 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews and participatory observation. The interview questions are based upon the literature review, researcher's experience and observation of expatriates life. The interview guide is developed before the interviews via an internship at Holland Expat Center South and with the help of supervisor. The research is done as a part of an internship with Holland Expat Center South that took place in February 2018 and lasted for six months.

3.1. Qualitative research

“Qualitative research is a type of social science that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places” (ThoughtCo, 2017).

Qualitative research method focuses particularly on the human elements of the social science. Since the expatriate experience and the challenges they might face are related to socio-psychological issues, qualitative method was chosen as a perfect approach to study things in their natural settings. Moreover, the qualitative method will help us to make sense of, or interpret these things in terms of the meanings expatriates bring to them. In-depth understanding of the expatriation phenomenon by the means of qualitative method involves a series of representations such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and self-memos.

In qualitative research, the in-depth interviews are proven to be successful method for data collection, because they reflect different visions and after their coding it is easy to find the emerging similarities (Strauss, 1987:27). It is possible to understand the meanings, experiences, personal transformations, emotions of the interviewees and abstract details, which may not come out during quantitative data collection or surveys. (Calhoun et al. 2005).

Unlike qualitative method, surveys generally rely on closed-ended questions to produce numerical results. A survey is characterized by: a substantial domain, consisting of a large number of research units; extensive data generation; more breadth than depth; a random sample rather than a strategic sample; an assertion which consists of variables and the relationships between these variables; preferably remote, closed data generation; quantitative data and quantitative data-analysis (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010).

In survey research the most distinctive characteristic is that the data is gathered from relatively large numbers of research units (research population). Fewer units will result in less reliable and/or less precise results of quantitative analysis. Taking a random sample is typical for a survey. A random sample is a sample in which all potential research units in the population of interest have an equal chance of being included, regardless of their characteristics. A random sample selection is the best guarantee of gaining a representative picture of the whole population, which in turn is needed for generalization of the results later on. This is very different from a case study in which the research units are chosen especially for their distinctive characteristics (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010) .

Therefore, a qualitative method is chosen for this Master Thesis. The most valuable data is collected by means of numerous semi-structured interviews that are taken on the desired target group. Interviews consist of questions that invite the subject to tell the story of their overseas experience. All the interviews have been recorded and transcribed. An analysis of them is presented in chapter five.

3.1.1. Participatory observation

Beyond interviews, the research will involve the participatory observation. “Observation, particularly participant observation, has been used in a variety of disciplines as a tool for collecting data about people, processes, and cultures in qualitative research” (Kawulich, 2017). Participant observation actively engages the researcher in the activities of the research participants. The researcher has to integrate into the participant's' environment while also taking objective notes about what is going on (Study.com, 2017).

The researcher is involved into expatriates life, goes to the meetings, has formal and informal conversations with employers and employees. Meanwhile the researcher will observe the work environment and take detailed notes about what she observes and what happened during her encounters with highly skilled knowledge workers. Participant observation provides the researcher with access to different types of information that may not be easily accessible to outsiders. By being a part of the group, the researcher can get a better feel of what is important for the research participants.

To understand an expatriate's journey from a very first step the researcher had meetings with Ted Dekker - a relocation officer from Tielemans, who meet expats in their very first day in the Netherlands. She helps with first essential concerns such as accomodation, bank accounts, insurance, doctors, schools and so on.

The researcher was involved into expatriates documents arranging meetings with representatives from IND (Integration and Naturalization Services) and municipality on every Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The researcher has attended several times expatriate's spouses "Get in Touch" Thursday's events initiated by Carola Eijssenring under Indigo-Wereld organisation (indigo-wereld.nl). It helped to find out what kind of challenges expat's spouses experience in Eindhoven. In addition, the researcher was connected to Expat Spouses Initiative (expatspousesinitiative.org) for extensive discussions about work related issues for spouses.

Moreover, the researcher helped to organize annual International Fair & Festival for expats in Eindhoven on 10th of June, 2018, arranged by Expatrica. The aim of this event is to connect two thousand international attendants, introduce them to different cultures, help to find a job, buy a house, and celebrate the diversity of our world.

In addition, the researcher attended numerous events in "the Hub" and InterNations organization once in a month to meet expats, hear their stories, be more involved in their environment and become a part of their group and, eventually, recruit respondents.

3.1.2. Object

The object of the interviewing in the context of this Master Thesis is cross-cultural expatriate experience and challenges they face in the Netherlands, particularly in Brainport area. This area was chosen as a European leading innovative top technology region and the Netherlands second main economical center that attracts thousand of high knowledge workers for work from all around the world. The research will be focusing on the relationship between cultural involvement, acculturation, personal transformation, and cultural background of expatriates. The motive is to understand the challenges behind the expatriate's life and work in the Netherlands. The cultural variables dealt with the nature of the work, the host culture, and the expatriate's culture. The purpose of the interview is to capture a living picture of people and their way of life and work in a foreign land.

3.2. Research units and data sampling

3.2.1. Target group

While making the selection of interviewees, the researcher focused on the high knowledge workers who hold at least a Bachelor's Degree. Moreover, the researcher considered expatriates who live and work in Noord Brabant and Limburg, especially in Brainport area for at least two years. According to fig.1 "The U-Curve Model of the Acculturation Process" and the theory of acculturation, there are four stages that a person has to go through: honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment. There are no strict time periods for each stage. It rather depends on the personal characteristics of an expatriate and the culture from where he/she came from. The honeymoon stage connects with first expectations, thoughts about new life and the entrance to a new country, in other words, this is the settling period. The living period, which is the main interest of this research, involves crisis, recovery and adjustment stages. Thus, to obtain valuable interview answers, expatriates in this research have to go through all four stages. Presumably, two years of living in another country might be enough to embed in the Dutch society. And an expatriate might be already involved into a fulfilled "living in" period.

In addition, the researcher focused on six specific countries- being the main suppliers of expatriates in Brainport area. Among them three European countries: Spain, United Kingdom and Germany; and three Asian countries: China, India and South Korea. The countries were selected in consultation with Holland Expat Center South according to their interest.

3.2.2. Sampling

To reach the population group, the researcher together with Holland Expat Center South contacted a number of organizations where the foreign knowledge workers are active. ASML, Study Portals, InterNations, ICT group and other small companies were willing to cooperate and connect the researcher with high knowledge workers. All interviews are done in person and recorded with the permission of the interviewee. Some interviews took place in offices inside of an organization, some of them were conducted over the coffee talk in a cafe.

Table 3.1. Companies where contacted expatriates work

Company	City	Number of participants
ASML	Eindhoven	7
Study Portals	Eindhoven	5
Eleven06 Consulting	Tilburg	1
RF Solutions B.V.	s'Hertogenbosch	1
SIOUX	Eindhoven	1
50Five	Eindhoven	1
The Hub	Eindhoven	1
NXP	Eindhoven	1
SIOUX Lime	Eindhoven	1
Puck creations	Eindhoven	1

Table 3.2. Number of participants

Continent	Country	Number of participants
Europe	Spain	3
	Germany	3
	United Kingdom	3
Asia	India	4
	China	4
	South Korea	3

3.3. Data collection

The interviews are conducted with foreign knowledge workers from three European and three Asian countries. It will help to make a comparison between the perception of expatriation, influenced by the cultural backgrounds. Comparison is made by asking the similar semi-structured interview questions regarding important factors, such as 1) personal background information, 2) migration to the Netherlands, 3) personal transformation factors, 4) living in the Netherlands, 5) perception of work environment, 6) recommendations for future expats.

Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner. In that way it is possible to remain open considering several different factors. And the interviewer has room for flexibility and remains free to ask extra questions, which may come up during the process of interviewing in order to obtain as much information as possible (Kvale, Brinkmann, 2009).

The interview starts off with an introduction on the research and on the interviewed candidate. It furthermore continues with questions set on certain topics of expatriation.

In general, the researchers distinguish six stages in the interviews with the foreign knowledge workers. In the first part, the researcher wants to know the age of an interviewee, where does he/she works and for how long time, does he/she came to the Netherlands with a family or not etc. In the second part, the researcher wants to find out why the respondent came to the Netherlands. What are his or her reasons and motivations? In the third part, questions will be asked about their personal psychological transformations as a result of exposure of a foreign country. The fourth part involves actual life experience in the Netherlands. What stands out in the Dutch living environment? Which of these aspects are rated as pleasant and which obstacles do they experience? In the fifth part we will find out about the perception of the Dutch work environment. And in the last part will be asked questions in terms of recommendations for future expats. Table 1 below will clarify the research design and key questions.

3.3.1. Participants

Table 3. Participants

	Name	Country of origin	Date of the interview	Duration
1	Abhishek Sharma (m)	India	30.04.18	01:00:05
2	Shiv Anand (m)	India	01.05.18	01:02:23
3	Cayetano Sanchez (m)	Spain	09.05.18	00:42:54
4	Abhishek Sharma (m)	India	09.05.18	00:55:25
5	Albert Kang (m)	South Korea	11.05.18	00:59:12
6	Jihoon Kim (m)	South Korea	11.05.18	00:43:58
7	Raj Modani (m)	India	14.05.18	00:48:17
8	Manuel Agudo Companario (m)	Spain	14.05.18	00:39:36
9	Nina Grether (f)	Germany	16.05.18	00:30:35
10	Elene Kalatozishvili (f)	Spain	17.05.18	00:38:00
11	Ann Chang (f)	China (Taiwan)	17.05.18	00:47:54
12	Yang Chen (f)	China	18.05.18	01:09:39
13	Yang Lui (m)	China	30.05.18	01:09:39
14	Jun Leon (m)	China	01.06.18	00:46:28
15	Friha Ahmad (f)	Germany	11.06.18	00:29:34
16.	Lou Nixon (f)	UK	14.06.18	00:41:36
17	Rezwan Hussain (m)	UK	15.06.18	01:07.49
18	Noreen Walker (f)	Germany	20.06.18	00:44:48
19	Jaewoon Sohn (m)	South Korea	26.06.18	00:53:01
20	Stefano Capacchione (m)	UK	04.07.18	00:50:59

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. Transcription

All the interviews are recorded and transcribed. The analytical part will be conducted as commonly known in qualitative analysis with supporting quotes from the interviews, which will be presented in an unchanged manner. Every part of the result chapter will be structured according to the central aspects, which come out from the interviews. The analysis and data will help to present and reflect the stories of expatriates. The analysis of the interviews will be done using all the standards of qualitative interviewing.

To be able to code and analyze the results of the interviews, the researcher records the complete interview to capture the words of the respondent. The researcher will later transcribe this record. In this transcription, the researcher writes down the complete sentence with the exact words of the respondent, excluding repetition and in relevant comments. This will make the text clearer and more understandable. The researcher will benefit from this type of transcription in the coding process and also in the fact that this type of text will be easier to write down, hence the time needed for the transcription will be reduced. Transcripts of the interviews can be found in Appendix I.

3.4.2. Coding

After conducting the interviews and transcribing the open coding will be performed. During the coding process, the researcher will combine the data from all of the transcribed interviews by highlighting and marking similar categories, topics and themes. The researcher will do the overview of the selected data and make comparisons manually.

Based on this, the higher codes will be found and it will be possible to create groups and categories, which will be then used as chapters. The categories will be supported with quotes from the interviews in order to support the argumentation of the analysis (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008 : 225-231). Additionally, since the topic has an explorative approach, an open coding method is used as well, in order to identify recurrent topics and coherence between different conversations that were not yet identified in the literature and assure no themes are excluded (Van Lanen, 2010). This combination of deductive and inductive analysis is described by Van Lanen (2010) as a way of being able to have a solid framework for analysis based on theory while remaining open to varieties and new topics.

3.4.3. Limitations

This research comes with a number of inevitable limitations that have been taken into consideration during the research process. General limitations lie in the nature of the qualitative research. The most common known critique on qualitative research implicates much space for researcher interpretation and a lack of standardized procedures and modules (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). However, the qualitative research is creative and flexible what a necessary condition in order to obtain in depth information about an understudied topic.

Moreover, the results of qualitative research cannot be generalized to different situations and contexts (Bryman, 2012). Since in this research we considered only seven specific cultures, including Dutch culture, the findings cannot be applicable to any other culture. However, general insights can be relevant for all world cultures. The research findings could contribute to the academic debate about expatriates life and work experience abroad.

Additionally, the number of research participants was limited to 20 persons, with 3-4 culture representatives from each country, relevant for the research. It was made in order to make the research doable for one researcher for a limited length of time (six months of internship). It means that the results of the research are quite subjective and shaped by a small group of research participants.

3.4. Conclusion

The research design and related methodology has been discussed in this chapter. The first part of this research consists of a qualitative content analysis of existing literature about cross-cultural communications that provide a scientific overview on the expatriates experiences abroad. A case study of the Netherlands and particularly the city of Eindhoven as the heart of Brainport region and one of the most attractive places for work, is described further.

Consequently, the challenges expatriates face in this area in their “living in” period are explored by conducting twenty in-depth interviews with expats living and working in the Netherlands for two and more years. Moreover, a cultural background of the research target group is analyzed extensively in order to gain a deeper understanding of its influence on expats’ experience. In the chapter five and six, results and recommendations will be discussed, derived from the data using the methodology described in this chapter, taking all possible limitations into account.

Chapter 4

Background information on the Netherlands

4.1. Global migration of knowledge workers to the Netherlands

The Netherlands is one of the most successful and attractive countries for an international business, ranked No. 7 in Forbes list of the best countries for business (Forbes, 2017), No. 1 on DHL's Global Connectedness Index (Dhl.com, 2017), and ranked No. 5 in the EU on the European Innovation Scoreboard (European Commission, 2017). Moreover, the Netherlands ranks 5th place worldwide with regard to prosperity. The country has a competitive international climate and is home to more than 8,000 foreign companies. It is one of the world's most multicultural innovative hubs for creative talent (Invest in Holland, 2016). Currently, the Netherlands has the 17th largest economy of the world (World Bank, 2016). The most notable properties of the Dutch economy are the stable industrial relations, the low unemployment and inflation rates. Industrial activity is predominantly in food processing, chemicals, petroleum refining, high-tech (a major portion of the HTSM (High Tech Systems and Materials) sector is concentrated around the Brainport Region in Eindhoven), financial services, creative sector and electrical machinery. Moreover, the Netherlands has an excellent education system, efficient infrastructure, stable political situation and focus on innovation (Schwab, 2015). All this makes the Netherlands an attractive country for high knowledge workers to move in and accept a life of adventure and expatriation.

Hence, the Dutch government developed the economic cluster policy ('topsectoren beleid'). This policy enhances the triple helix approach, in which government, industry and education cooperate. This cooperation has contributed to a more innovative ecosystem and helps the Netherlands to make the transition to a more advanced knowledge economy. This transition requires a large number of knowledge workers. More highly skilled workers results in more human capital and vice versa.

Whereas, in the 1960s-1970s most of recruited immigrants in The Netherlands were low-skilled workers, nowadays the highly skilled specialists are the most desirable target. High knowledge workers make an important contribution to the Dutch economy, culture and science, bringing diversity and innovation to the country. Thus, the Dutch government has a strategic interest in binding international talent to the country and follow an international trend of countries competing for international human capital (Funk and Walenkamp, 2013).

Global competition for skilled migrants is expected to intensify in the coming decades. Not only developed countries such as the Netherlands, the United States and Germany, but also BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and other upcoming economies such as Turkey are on a hunt (van Erp, 2016). In popular terms, the rivalry of companies for the foreign talent has been dubbed as the “battle for the brightest”, the “battle for brains” or the “war for talent” (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2015). Thus, presenting and promoting the Netherlands as an attractive country to work and live in, is top priority for the Dutch Human Capital agenda (van Erp, 2016).

Over the past decade, the Dutch government has introduced several policies to attract skilled workers and international students. In contrast with other types of migrants, expats experience an enabling policy environment rather than a restrictive one (“red carpet”).

“Red carpet” involves the measures made by Dutch government to attract and retain skilled migrants, such as the development of a ‘Knowledge Migrant Scheme’, the opening of special expat centers who help with fast-track immigration procedure (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Nijmegen, Leiden and Eindhoven), the establishment of favourable living (e.g. high level of English proficiency) and working conditions (e.g. 30% ruling).

In 2009, the Netherlands established a ‘Knowledge Migrant Scheme’ that admit knowledge migrants without job offers that either had a master’s degree or doctorate from a Dutch university or from a non-Dutch higher education institution ranked among the top 150 universities on the Times Higher Education List (Wiesbrock & Hercog, 2010). Most highly skilled migrants gain access to the Netherlands through “Highly Skilled Migrants Scheme (Kennismigrantenregeling)” which guarantees quick processing and high acceptance migrants rates.

The Intra Corporate Transferee (ICT, a new EU directive), was implemented in the Netherlands in November 2016. The new rules based on the ICT directive let multinational companies transfer high knowledge workers from non-EU countries easier. This EU directive overrides national regulations such as the highly skilled migrant scheme (Ind.nl, 2018).

Currently, there are approximately 100,000 international knowledge workers employed in the Netherlands (Groot e.a., 2013,p.198). In total, about half of the highly skilled migrants come from the Asian continent (predominantly from India, US, China and Japan). The dominant percentage of Indian migrants probably reflects the importance of the IT consultancy sector, where India is a major supplier worldwide. Another half of skilled migrants, approximately 50 thousand people, come from European countries (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2015). The majority of highly skilled workers are relatively young man, working full-time in large

international companies. Compared to the Dutch labour force, highly skilled migrants are over-represented in business, financial and IT services, in wholesale and at universities.

Table 4. The percentage of highly skilled workers presented in the Netherlands from outside of European Union

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Percentage in 2012, %</i>
Indian	25.3
United States of America	12.8
Chinese	6.7
Japanese	6.5
Turkish	5.1
Russian	4.2
Canadian	2.5
South-African	2.4
Iranian	2.2
Australian	2.1

Source: SEO calculations, based on CBS microdata

Table 5. The percentage of highly skilled workers presented in the Netherlands from European Union

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Percentage in 2013, %</i>
Germany	12
United Kingdom	12
Poland	8
Belgium	7
France	7

Source: Decisio, 2015

The Netherlands has a unique flexibility of the labour conditions, which offers the employees time to spend with their families and friends (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2015). The Netherlands is known for its non-hierarchical working environment that lets high knowledge workers express their creative freedom, drives motivation to perform well and increases job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the 30% ruling where the employer is allowed to pay 30% of the agreed wage as a reimbursement for “extraterritorial costs” is deemed essential as a competitive advantage towards other countries with regards to attraction and retention of foreign knowledge workers. This reimbursement does not count as salary, and is, therefore, non-taxable, regardless of the actual expenses that the employee has incurred for housing, etc.

In addition, there is an interesting fact that, according the EF English Proficiency Index 2017 (a standardized measurement of adult English proficiency), the Netherlands has the world’s highest level of English. As every Dutchman is able to speak English, the foreign knowledge worker can easily adapt which can be seen as a strong pull factor for foreign knowledge workers to migrate to the Netherlands. Also, high levels of English proficiency strengthen European multiculturalism, economic integration, tourism, and mobility. (Education First, 2017).

Table 6: Very high English Proficiency in the world

<i>Level</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	Netherlands	71.45
2	Sweden	70.40
3	Denmark	69.93
4	Norway	67.77
5	Singapore	66.03
6	Finland	65.83
7	Luxembourg	64.57
8	South Africa	63.37

Source: EF English Proficiency Index (2017)

Unfortunately this English proficiency can hinder foreign knowledge workers with learning and practicing the Dutch language, as everyone keeps addressing them in English.

Nevertheless, all advantages of working in the Netherlands, the participation of high-skilled migrants in the total Dutch labour force is equal to 2.4%. These statistics are significantly lower when comparing the same numbers to the United Kingdom and Sweden (Kremer & Schrijvers, 2013, p. 74).

Within the Dutch HTSM (High Tech Systems and Materials) sector, labour shortages have grown significantly over the last years. There is especially a need for software engineers, mechanical engineers and physicians (van Erp, 2016). Dutch high-tech companies such as ASML and AkzoNobel are constantly seeking talented technicians.

Tens of thousands of freshly skilled young people finish their education each year ready to take their job. However, this is not enough, there is a constant shortage of beta educated people. The need to attract foreign knowledge workers has also urged the government to increase interest among Dutch students to choose technical sectors for studies. Despite all the existing initiatives and plans, the number of graduates in technological professions is not increasing fast enough. Analyses by the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) show that the country will need to produce 30,000 additional technology graduates a year to meet the growing demand for skilled technologists. Moreover, in the upcoming period until 2020, more than 70,000 construction workers, installers, electricians, metal workers,

engineers and system analysts will be retiring each year (National Technology Pact 2020, 2015).

To be able to compete on a global level and to take advantages of market opportunities, the Netherlands needs more highly skilled workers at all levels. Businesses in promising industries, such as energy, horticulture, chemicals, life sciences and health have thousands of challenging jobs for hands-on vocational graduates as well as for talented academic researchers.

Another challenge is to keep these workers in the Netherlands before they and their tacit knowledge emigrate elsewhere. The retention of these workers is quite a challenge as the Dutch Statistic Bureau (Groot, e.a., 2013) shows that half of these international highly skilled workers leave the Netherlands within four- eight years.

In addition, the Netherlands has a small market share compared to the main European competitors, missing economic benefits that come with a large population and high density. As a result, Dutch regions have less economic power and have more challenges with keeping up with the competitors (PBL, 2014).

Berkhout et al. (2010) concluded that a possible problem was the fact that many skilled migrants are unaware of the Dutch merits and potential. PBL (2014) stressed that Dutch companies and government should put more energy into “selling” the Netherlands to potential skilled migrants and developing strong market pull factors (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2015).

4.2. Eindhoven is a Brain Port in The Netherlands

Eindhoven is a European leading innovative top technology region. The southern part of the Netherlands is the country’s second main economical center. In this region the annual growth is above the national average.

Brabant has transformed itself from a mainly rural area to a strongly industrial region. One of the initial driving forces for that was Philips, which today is one of the world biggest electronic companies. The region’s reputation for the high-tech activities has attracted new companies for investment. Former Philips concerns have also grown into great independent companies such as ASML and FEI. Founded in 1956, the Eindhoven University of Technology has greatly contributed to this rapid economic development.

Thus, provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg have a great demand in high quality workers due to the concentration of global high-tech companies, such as Philips, Bosch, DAF, NXP Semiconductors, ASML, Toolex, Simac, Neways, Atos Origin and numerous other small related firms. These companies attract many highly specialized knowledge workers. Moreover,

the Eindhoven University of Technology today has become the third best European technological university and attracts professors and researchers from all over the world.

Eindhoven is the breeding ground for industrial design and technology in the Netherlands. The modern city was awarded with the title of ‘the World’s Most Intelligent Community’ in 2011. “Eindhoven is an industrial city that was able to change in the last twenty years, finding a complete new identity as a leading place for technology and design” (Holland Expat Center South, 2018).

Certainly, Eindhoven has a thriving international community, attracted by Philips, Eindhoven University of Technology and the High-Tech Campus. Spearhead sectors for Eindhoven are high-tech systems and materials, medical technology, lifetec, automotive, mechatronics, design and ICT (Holland Expat Center South, 2018) .

“High Tech Campus Eindhoven (a.o. Philips, NXP, IBM, Intel) is the smartest km² in the Netherlands with more than 160 companies and institutes, and 11,000 researchers, developers and entrepreneurs working on developing future technologies and products. These companies are responsible for nearly 40% of all Dutch patent applications. Business-services and industry are now two of the biggest employees in Eindhoven with 37 000 and 18 000 people working in these sectors” (Holland Expat Center South, 2018). Today the Eindhoven region gives jobs to 400 000 people.

Almost 30% of the region residents have a non-Dutch background (Expats, 2017). The top 10 most represented nationalities in 2014: Turkish 13,2%, Polish 10,6%, Indian 7,3%, Chinese 7,0%, German 4,7%, Spanish 4,5%, British 3,7%, Italian 3,7%, Moroccan 3,5%, French 2,8% (Holland Expat Center South, 2018).

Dutch high-tech companies such as ASML, Holst Centre and AkzoNobel are constantly seeking for professional technicians in order to expand or complement their teams (for example, Brainport Eindhoven has 3861 vacancies at large companies such as Philips, VDL, ASML and small companies, for English speakers, for experienced and inexperienced people (Brainporteindhoven.com, 2018) .

These thousands of internationals stepped into the unknown world of the Netherlands. It is important to know about their experience, level of integration, what kind of challenges they face in everyday life and at work in a new country. All previously mentioned global companies have numerous high knowledge workers in their work team from all around the world. For such companies with long-term international experience an effective cross-cultural communication strategy is crucial to maintain a successful business in a global environment. Similarly, a lack of cultural understanding can create a barrier for business success. Further we are going to

compare the Dutch culture with six cultures coming from Europe (United Kingdom, Germany, Spain) and Asia (India, China, South Korea), according to Holland Expat Center South interest.

Chapter 5

Results

5.1. The experience of interviews

The overall feeling the researcher received from doing the interviews is that expatriates were willing and happy to talk about their experiences in the Netherlands. Some of the interviewees were able to make sense of their experience as they talked. For all expatriates the excitement with which they related their feelings, thoughts and adventures made it evident that their overseas experience is one of the most profound challenges and events of their lives.

Everybody was excited and scared at some point about the movement to the Netherlands. Interviewees moved to the Netherlands because of work, study, love, or simply because of a wish to change their life. All the participants find that the 30% ruling is highly beneficial for them as well as the opportunity to exchange their driver's license in the Netherlands (see §4.1). Everybody agreed that the level of English proficiency in the Netherlands is remarkable, and it helps them to live here. Moreover, expats agree that this is a very well organised, open and progressive country.

The Netherlands has a long history of social tolerance and is generally regarded as a liberal wealthy country. Important factors that contribute to this liberal image are having legalized abortion, prostitution, euthanasia and maintaining a progressive drugs policy. The Netherlands was also the world's first country to legalize same-sex marriage (BBC.com, 2013). Here people are free to express themselves and it is a perfect place for unusual people.

“Growing up in Asia I have noticed that I cannot really fit into society. I am not a typical Asian person. I am lesbian, I have tattoos, I dress like this, I talk like this...and nobody look at me here like I am strange. I feel myself very comfortable in the Netherlands” (Chinese 1).

Expats think that the Netherlands has a very welcoming environment for internationals and it is a very safe place to live. Many ethnicities can live properly together here. Only a few expats experience stereotypes or prejudices, and complain that people put labels, others take it only as jokes. All expats enjoy the outstanding work/life balance in the country and job security. Asian people get an opportunity to spend time with their families and for hobbies. The environment at work is nice, friendly and highly professional. Expats enjoy the non hierarchical Dutch work culture.

The one thing that unites all the expats is an adventurous spirit and sense of courage. All of them find themselves quite flexible people who can manage a life in a new environment. All of them reported of positive transformations as a result of the expatriation.

5.1.1 South Korean

All three representatives of Korean culture moved to the Netherlands for work for ASML as engineers. Each of them has a family with two children. Two of three Korean spouses do not have a job and experience stress and homesickness because of that. One found a part-time job as a Korean language teacher for Korean children. Even though the spouses are highly educated, they speak only Korean and Japanese, neither English nor Dutch yet. However, they attend the Dutch courses. Thus, their capability is very limited and all they can do is to take care of the family. Because of difficulties to mingle with Dutch people due to cultural differences, values and worldviews the families socialize with other Koreans or other expats. Koreans think that people ignore them and do not pay attention to them.

“I feel the wall between myself and the Dutch. I feel bad and feel blocks.” (Korean 2)

“I am not involved into Dutch society. I don’t have Dutch friends. I don’t speak Dutch.” (Korean 1)

“I am not involved, 1 out of 10. Except work, there is no involvement.” (Korean 3)

As we can see, none of the Koreans are able to speak Dutch, none of them have Dutch friends and none of them feel involved into society. Internet plays the role of “magical friend”, colleagues in a less degree.

Korean people do not feel themselves comfortable with Dutch directness. They find it very difficult and have to learn how to say “no”.

“Dutch say easily “no”, they don’t put any effort to do a favour for anybody. In Korea people never say “no” (Korean 1).

“People are too direct here. I don’t like it. I cannot answer them. It is against my culture” (Korean 1).

All Korean participants agree that in terms of respect for old people there is a huge gap between Dutch and Korean cultures (see §5.2). Moreover, the differences in etiquette are significant. Expats mention that in the Netherlands people show less respect to people around them. Here people do not help with baby carriages, with heavy bags, do not hold a door for a lady, make a lot of noise in a train and they do not care that they disturb people with that.

Koreans are happy with Dutch life/work balance and enjoy spending time with their families and children. In contrast to Korea where hierarchy and competitiveness are very high, in the Netherlands everything is flat. In Korea people expect to work overtime and on holidays. Thus, Dutch and Korean workstyles are opposite to each other. Moreover, communication with colleagues also differ substantially. In the Netherlands, there is no contact except work related issues, in Korea colleagues socialize after work.

“South Korean work environment is very hierarchical and critical. Korea is a very masculine country. Life there is like “fun hell”. People work a lot, kids don’t see their parents, but people enjoy entertainment ” (Korean 3).

“Slow, free, structured, fantastic, happy, relaxed”, - these are the words Korean used to describe their life in the Netherlands. Currently all three families plan to stay in the Netherlands at least until the 30% ruling will be lifted or until the children will finish their school.

One family has been living in the Netherlands for 7 years, all family members are occupied with work and school. By this time they were able to achieve Dutch cultural competence and home feelings. The two other families live in the Netherlands for 2,5 years. Spouses are not able to realize their potential due to language issues and, consequently, fall into “cultural shock” stage. Differences in cultural values, not understanding “the rules” cause shock and discomfort in the Dutch environment, especially for women. English and especially Dutch languages are the major issues for Koreans. Children are struggling with Dutch language at school.

*Thus, the major challenges for Korean people in the process of cross-cultural communication are **cultural differences/ involvement into Dutch society/ Dutch language.***

5.1.2. Indian

All four representatives of Indian culture spoke about themselves as very social and open people that the researcher can confirm herself. Interesting to note, all participants have quite Western personal characteristics and habits, even though their ethnic background is Indian. This is expressed in their preferences, worldviews and values as shown in the interviews. Unexpectedly, all Indians are happy with Dutch weather.

However, for some Indian expats cultural differences are the major challenges in the Netherlands. India is a very traditional, and culturally strong country. All participants note about huge differences in values. Strong family bonds, hospitality issues and respecting the elders are

the major differences. In contrast to the Netherlands, where family members are man, wife and children, and where is a culture of appointments to see parents, Indian family include all uncles, aunts, grandparents etc. which are always welcomed and invited to dinner. Moreover, instead of making children build their own life outside of the parents' house, in India it is widely accepted to live with your parents and take care of them until they die. In contrast, elderly houses are very popular in the Netherlands. In addition, in India to have personal service people for help is a common thing, which does not exist in the Netherlands.

“Most of Indian men don't get it, because we have always been protected, always been taking care of by our moms and sisters. We always have somebody to do things for us, like washing your car, clothes and house. Everything can be done by somebody, you just pay money. Here you have to do everything yourself which gives you a feeling of independence and confidence that you can live anywhere in the world.”(Indian 2)

After moving to the Netherlands, one of the four participants said that his religion has a lot of restrictions, including drinking alcohol. But here he finds drinking beer as a traditional way of socializing. Thus, he had to compromise on his religion to be accepted in the Netherlands. Other Indian have not given up any of their cultural values. However, allowed drugs and smoking evoke a cultural shock.

Here people are interested about what is happening in the world, people in India are not exposed to the world. All Indians realized that India is very exotic and diverse country and nothing can be generalized there.

“I just realized how superior my culture is. I so strongly believe in that. I am getting so proud about my heritage and culture. Indian culture is older than any other civilization, any other culture in the world. My ancestors managed to save Indian cultures for many hundreds years. I strongly believe that the Western world could learn a lot from Indian culture” (Indian 2).

As for social contacts, only one interviewee socializes with Indians. The other three persons try to avoid their compatriots. They find Indians abroad as too flashy.

“Indians here have a fake Western accent and personality just because they live abroad. I think it is not necessary. You are Indian by skin colour, by hair, by everything. Just because you bring an accent doesn't make you a Western person. I think that fakeness is too much with Indians living abroad” (Indian 2).

Two interviewees claim that they are not much involved into Dutch society. The other two participants have local friends and participate in all Dutch activities and celebrations. A role of “magical friend” play colleagues, the ASML team, local acquaintances, Facebook

groups such as “Expats in Eindhoven”, the Hub, and InterNations website that keep posting important information about the country.

Indians find that work professionalism is very high in the Netherlands. Work culture is reasonably informal, relaxed and comfortable. Working in the Netherlands feels like a holiday for Indians. In India it is a complete chaos. There is no work/life balance and people are forced to work overtime. Moreover, there is a high level of hierarchy and competition, ten people for one working position. Employees must do their best or they will get easily fired. Thus, there is a lot of pressure in India, people are always threatened about consequences of being not good enough. Employers in India abuse people which is absolutely not the case in the Netherlands. Here employees are free to express themselves and are not criticized for initiative and mistakes.

“In India with age people develop themselves and go to higher position. But people here work what they like to do. I asked one guy: ”You work as a software designer for 30 years. He said: ”Yes, that’s what I studied for.” It would not happen in India. There people grow faster. Growing means more salary and higher position” (Indian 1).

All participants note that they feel themselves more at home in the Netherlands than in India. It is difficult to come back to India and adjust themselves to the Indian environment. It takes them about three days to manage cultural differences.

“I do have family there, but the Netherlands feels like home, to be honest. I feel more comfortable living here. Indian society is very different. I am not able to blend socially there, my thoughts and belief...there is a mismatch there. Even when I worked in India for 10 years, I was physically there but not mentally. I go to India only when there is a wedding or other big event. Other than that, I don’t go there” (Indian 4).

“I can easily live here, but I face a lot of difficulties of living in India. I have to do some learning and adjustment there. Here it is very natural and easy” (Indian 2).

All participants plan to stay in the Netherlands.

*Major challenges for Indians are **cultural values/ Dutch language.***

Surprisingly, even though India is an Asian country with significant ethnic and geographical proximity, all Indians who participated in this research managed to achieve Dutch cultural competence and home feelings in the Netherlands quite fast and easy, avoiding cultural shock. Moreover, all participants feel happy and settled in the country. The researcher assumes that perhaps because of Indian history, specifically, occupation by the United Kingdom, which

culture is the most similar to Dutch (see §2.2.1, §2.2.2 and §5.2) and English as an official language, Indians are able to easily adapt in the Netherlands.

5.1.3 Chinese

When talking about benefits of moving to the Netherlands, the Chinese interviewees state about the Dutch professional innovative international environment that gives an opportunity to experience different cultures and make friends with foreigners. Moreover, they mention the high level of English proficiency and the quality of Dutch education that raises the chances to get a good job. Good life/work balance, stable and safe life, good environment, friendly and helpful people, and equality were named as very attractive characteristics of the country. Here everybody can express themselves without being judged.

“People are open minded, and they have respect for individual differences. I can feel the tolerance of the society” (Chinese 2)

Everybody talked about outstanding personal transformations, such as openness, independence, learning and discovering about themselves and getting new insights. Some Chinese mentioned about learning how to argue and express an opinion.

“In China I was part of a community, but here I see myself as an independent human” (Chinese 2).

“I became a different person. Now I really talk. My environment really changed me. It is interesting, you bring this difference back to China. Sometimes even my family is a bit scared, because I am really changing. I am a different person now” (Chinese 2).

Participants agree that being exposed to a foreign culture let them see their Chinese culture more clear. It has been noticed that Dutch value individuals more, whereas in China people value community opinion and family boundaries. All participants miss their Chinese family values. Relationships between parents and children, business relationship between people and

the high level of directness cause shock for Chinese people in the Netherlands. Moreover, the Dutch way of socializing was found as unnatural and boring. They find Dutch people racist in their jokes toward Chinese.

“Physical and mental distance are so small in China. Here people are colder, independent and respectful to each other” (Chinese 1).

All participants mentioned that since they moved to the Netherlands, they had to give up their habit to say “yes”. Here they learn how to argue, voice an opinion to be heard and not

to stay salient as it is common in China. Moreover, here they had to give up flexibility and live according to their agenda.

“Dutch people grow up in a structured way” (Chinese 1).

Everybody claim that they are not very much involved into Dutch society and think that interactions with Dutch people are not easy. They socialize with Chinese friends, international colleagues or friends from Dutch universities where all of them were studying. The role of “magical friend” played by universities, Chinese friends, Taiwanese community, and Internet.

“I came with five other Chinese people from my university, I knew them before. So we helped each other a lot with all kinds of issues, like finding a house or opening a bank account. Then I felt homesick and uncomfortable. I missed familiarity” (Chinese 2).

In China people put a lot of effort to create a positive atmosphere at work and build connections. People work a lot and, and eventually, work and life is mixed. Scheduling does not work that well in China. According to opinion of the Chinese participants, people in the Netherlands are much more well organized, they have a lot of time for themselves and do not work extra hours. That makes the Dutch happier in that sense.

The most common words that were used in order to describe the life in the Netherlands were: easy, stable, proud, comfortable, confident, calm, lonely, curious, learning, freedom, hungry, independent, happy, changing, relaxed, boring, safe.

Even though, none of the Chinese research participants feel themselves as a part of Dutch society, they are settled in the Netherlands and plan to stay in the country. Three male participants achieved Dutch cultural competence and home feelings in the Netherlands, whereas one female participants fell into “cultural shock”.

*The main challenges that were mentioned were **exclusion from the society/cultural differences/Dutch language.***

To sum up, South Koreans and Chinese people face deeper challenges of adaptation in the Netherlands, due to outstanding cultural differences in family and community values, friendship, and interpersonal relationships. Indian seems to have less obstacles, presumably because of their history and the major influence of the British Empire.

Challenges that face all Asians are similar and among them are cultural differences (mentioned by 9 participants out of 11), Dutch language (8 participants), exclusion from the Dutch society (9 participants).

5.1.4 Spanish

The three participants from Spain are quite young, and outgoing social persons. They all lived abroad for a short time before. Only professional benefits of living in the Netherlands were mentioned, such as more work opportunities than in Spain, work/life balance and a very international environment.

All participants noticed that people here don't have the same concept of family, friendship and intimacy. Spanish find Dutch people quite self-centered and not paying attention to people around. Two of the three participants face integration challenges. All participants miss Spain and their families there. Moreover, they miss the Spanish atmosphere, Spanish character and values. All participants note that the Netherlands is a more boring country than Spain.

“And other common things like organizing a party, congratulations or giving gifts it is different. In Spain people are very friendly and they are very close to each other, they speak a lot. But here people prefer to keep the distance, they have their own bubble, their own world.” (Spanish 2)

“Spanish are more emotional and open, they don't plan much.”(Spanish 3)

“Spain is a perfect country if you want to chill, relax. But the Netherlands is perfect if you want to grow in your career, get some opportunities.” (Spanish 3)

The Spanish in Eindhoven socialize with other foreigners or colleagues. However, none of them have mentioned Dutch friends. They find it extremely difficult to make Dutch friends. The role of “magical friends” is mostly played by colleagues and websites such as Expatica.

“In Spain I have a feeling that people would help you to adapt. But here I don't feel that anybody here is going to make my life easier. You came here, you have to adapt” (Spanish 1).

“Dutch people could go for a beer at least once in a while.” (Spanish 1)

Two of the participants think that they are not much involved into Dutch society. One participant mentioned 80% of involvement to the society and even recently voted for a first time. Three interviewees make a point that they have two homes.

Though, Spanish enjoy the absence of hierarchy, it feels a bit loose sometimes. Moreover, they claimed that the working conditions in the Netherlands are better than in Spain. All participants noticed that the Dutch are more productive at work.

“I really like it. All managers are approachable, you really can be heard.”(Spanish 3)

“Here when people work- they work and when they have free time-it's really a free time. In Spain during working time people do a lot of different things, like social activities, that's why

people in Spain go home after work at 7 or 8 pm. Here you work from 9 till 6 and that's it. "(Spanish 3)

"If you are good and work hard you will get what you want, you can grow. Here it is less about making friends, but more about what you can deliver. "(Spanish 3)

All participants plan to stay in the Netherlands for a while and learn as much as possible. Two of the participants wants to go back to Spain later on.

*The challenges that face Spanish people on the way to achieve Dutch cultural competence and home feelings are **cultural differences/ differences in values/ integration.***

It goes without saying that North Europe and South Europe differ significantly. Spanish interviewees participating in this research definitely confirmed it. They feel themselves more comfortable in Spanish/Southern environment among family and friends. However, due to work related issues and better opportunities, they make the effort to adjust in the Netherlands. Two persons fell into "cultural shock" stage, but after 3 years of living in the Netherlands they are recovering.

5.1.5 German

No benefits were mentioned for Germans of moving to the Netherlands, because of the similarities between the countries. The reasons for movement were Dutch partner and education. Germans like the Dutch social system and transportation, it works properly. Dutch people are friendlier and more open to foreigners than Germans.

Germans feel differences in how people value things and celebrate holidays. As the participants think the German society is more collectivistic than the Dutch society (see §5.2.). Both German and Dutch are very structural and strict with their calendar. Directness of Dutch people caused discomfort only for one person.

"Sometimes I feel that Dutch people are too direct, they say too much to a face. Personally, I am a sensitive person and I don't really like too much directness."(German 1)

Germans mostly have international friends, only one woman has Dutch friends and she feels herself involved into society. The other two women do not feel much involvement and the biggest challenge for them is to make Dutch friends. Dutch husbands play the role of magical friends for two woman and it is the university for the third one. All German participants are quite competent in Dutch culture and feel themselves settled and at home in the Netherlands. Three German participants feel that they belong in the Netherlands and feel comfortable living

here, however, they have two homes and one is in Germany. None of the participants have mentioned going through acculturation process.

“I do speak Dutch. I think I am not involved that much into a society. I am German, I don’t feel myself like Dutch at all “(German 3).

As for the work environment, all Germans agree that it is very good and uncomplicated. People here are more equal than in Germany. Two participants have a lot of interactions at work and, thus, opportunities to make friends. And due to the international environment and a similar life of expatriation, they share their experiences.

Two participants wish to stay in the Netherlands for a while and then, as one said move to South of Europe. Another one wants to go back to Germany. The third participant does not want to move anywhere.

Thus, there are hardly any big challenges for Germans in the Netherlands, except making Dutch friends.

5.1.6 British

As for the challenges British face, finding Dutch friends and finding a house were named. For one British woman finding a job was a challenge.

“It was very difficult to find a job. If you don’t speak Dutch- “no, thanks” (British 1).

“Communication is a challenge because I don’t speak Dutch and because I am a stranger here. Plus, Dutch are very direct, it is often offensive” (British 1).

As for the personal transformation, two of the British noticed that there are huge changes. They became confident, stronger and secure. Another British said that he became more individualistic, direct and liberal.

“I became something new. I found parts in myself I didn’t know existed. I was very shy and scared, but I opened like a butterfly. I am a lot happier since I moved to the NL. I am independent. It makes you a lot stronger, a lot better”(British 1).

British find Dutch culture is very similar to the UK, except that British are not that direct. Moreover, the appointment habit does not exist so strictly in the UK.

“Here people believe in appointments. Without an appointment you can’t do anything.” (British 2)

Two persons have social contacts with other internationals and really would like to make Dutch friends, even though they find it difficult. The third one does not have close friends in the Netherlands. A Dutch boyfriend plays the role of “magical friend” for one British woman. For the other two participants, there are British colleagues, HR, Expat Center and Internet. British participants’ feelings in terms of involvement into Dutch society are divided into two parts: “*I don’t know anything about the Dutch language. I am involved 2 out of 10. I am not a part of Dutch society.*” (British 2), and: “*I would say 6 out of 10. I do make an effort. And I learn the language.*” (British 3)

All three British participants claim that they belong and settled in the Netherlands and feel absolutely comfortable and at home. Due to cultural similarities, none of the British participants faced a cultural shock in the Netherlands or went through an acculturation process (see §2.2.1, §2.2.2, §5.2).

“Maybe because I am English it is easy transition” (British 3).

“We just bought a house. I think I settled here very quickly. I find it easy to settle in the Netherlands. I think because of cultural similarity. People are friendly, they all speak English. I am active in the settling process. I meet people, go to events. I do feel welcome here. I think they do their best here” (British 3).

The working environment is quite friendly and people are helpful. They find professionalism higher in the Netherlands. In contrast to the Netherlands, British say “*... life is crazy in the UK. Basically, you just work, you don’t live. All life there is about work. Here people have a flexible work style*” (British 3).

“People in the UK are more adventurous, they can easily change job. Here most of colleagues work at the same place for 20 years. Here work/life balance is great. And this is a massive difference. Moreover, people in the UK live in credit, the Dutch don’t do that” (British 2).

Two of the participants plan to stay in the Netherlands. Another one wants to move away to explore the world.

Thus, there are hardly any big challenges British face in the Netherlands.

Among the three European cultures that were chosen for the research, only Spanish people struggle the most with acculturation and adjustment in the Netherlands due to cultural differences, specifically the collectivistic nature of Spanish society (see §5.2).

5.1.7. Analysis

Expatriates arrive in the Netherlands, coming from different countries with different cultural values. These values are mutually shared between the members of this culture. “Culture is defined as a historically shared system of symbolic resources through which we make our world meaningful” (Hall, 2005 p.4). Hofstede defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or society from those of another” (Hofstede, 2011).

To summarize the findings from interviews, we can note that all the previous description confirm the theory of cross-cultural communication. According to Lewis’s cultural model (see §2.2.1), South Korea and China are reactive cultures which tend to maintain harmony and peace, be quiet, do not argue and agree with everything. Thus, it not a surprise that to succeed in the Netherlands, they are forced to give up some home cultural values in order to be accepted and successful in the Netherlands, such as the habit of saying “yes”, being abstract (South Korea, India and China are high context cultures), silence and harmony. All Asian interviewees feel themselves uncomfortable with Dutch directness.

Moreover, due to the collectivistic nature of these cultures, family bonds are highly valued. All three Asian cultures, as well as the Spanish one, are communistic, family oriented and masculine with a high level of hierarchy. Spanish poliaactive individuals struggle to fit into the monoactive Dutch character. British and German cultures are also monoactive, that explains the ease of transition for people from these countries to the Netherlands. Even though Indian culture is in the middle between proactive and reactive, Indian are able to adjust fast to Dutch culture. The researcher assumes that it might be connected with British influence and widespread English language in India. Moreover, all four Indian male participants had previous experience of expatriation to Western world.

Most of research participants developed a new identity built on a strength formed through the challenges of moving to a new country, learning a new language, experiencing a new culture and creating a new life. To confirm the theory of transformation (see §2.6), all participants agreed that expatriation experience lead to positive changes in the self and enrich their personalities. This experience teach them how to be independent, brave, mature, open, confident, how to be more sensitive to cultural differences. Most of participants mentioned about becoming more direct to fit into the Dutch environment.

“You have broader perspective then people who never left their hometown” (German 3).

“Living abroad is very beneficial. I do think that it benefits me a lot and I am very grateful and happy for this experience. I have become more open to different personalities and have become more adaptable” (German 1).

“I have become a completely different person. When you are in India, you are not actually internationally thinking. When you are here, you interact with people from different nationalities and you try to understand how different our world is” (Indian 3).

Furthermore, all expatriates in this research told that the opportunity to look at their home culture from the distance through the lens of Dutch culture made them appreciate home even more. It raised patriotism and respect to the roots. Indian named their culture *superior*. Thus, we can apply “The master of two words” (Campbell, 1968) metaphor to the expatriates’ biculturalism.

“I must say that I learned more about India after coming to the Netherlands. Every time we hang out with my friends, we have a discussion on how we could improve stuff in India. Because things there are not going in the right direction. I definitely learned about how India is wiser comparing to certain cultures and where they are regressive” (Indian 3).

It was noted that expatriates adapt better and feel happier in international environment among people who are going through the same journey, rather than only a Dutch environment.

The source of power for the expatriates is a bicultural perspective, increased self-awareness, and the knowledge that he or she had the inner resources to master a difficult situation. The ability to integrate in a new cultural surrounding with expatriates’ own unique cultural background is paramount to the success of the expatriation.

Cultural competence explicitly connects with the cultural involvement into a host society. However, most participants (12 out of 20) feel that they are not part of Dutch society. The language ability is frequently mentioned as conjunction with expatriate effectiveness. Unfortunately, most of the participants are not able to speak Dutch and struggle with it after a few years of expatriation. Thus, the ability to speak Dutch is another great challenge of cross-cultural communication in the Netherlands for expatriates, even though the Netherlands is taking the leading position in the world in English proficiency. Home feelings in the Netherlands achieved half of the research population, i.e. 10 persons. The other 10 feel “in between” and claim that they have two homes.

5.2. Cultural backgrounds of Dutch, Asian (South Korea, India, China) and European (Spain, Germany, United Kingdom) cultures of high knowledge workers.

To understand the nature of previously mentioned challenges of cross-cultural communication in the Netherlands, the cultural background of the Netherlands will be compared with its main high knowledge migrants supplying countries from Asia (South Korea, India, China) and Europe (Spain, Germany, United Kingdom). The comparison will be based on the Hofstede dimensions that let us identify and compare the differences in detail between the cultural backgrounds of the knowledge workers coming to the Netherlands. It will help us as well realize why expatriates face certain challenges in the process of cross-cultural communication.

In order to compare the foreign knowledge workers' cultural background with the Dutch cultural background, the cultural characteristics of seven countries will be analyzed. To put the scores of the Netherlands in perspective, the cultural dimensions of European countries (the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain), and Asian countries (India, China and South Korea) are retrieved.

1. Power distance

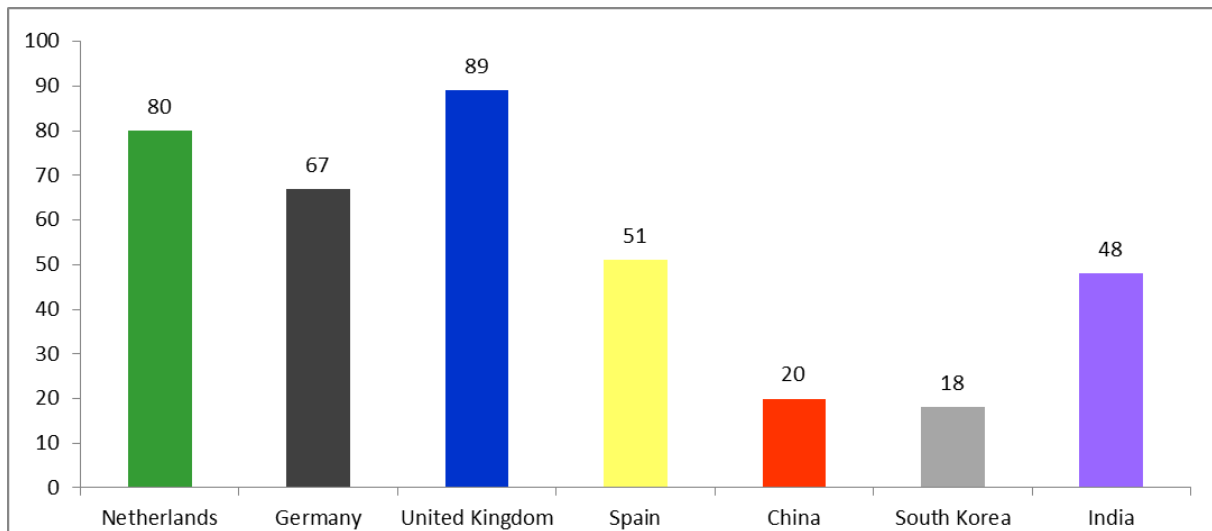


Figure 5.1. Power distance

According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the Netherlands scores 38 on the power distance dimension, which indicates that power is rather decentralized. The low level of power distance also indicates that all Dutch people expect to have equal rights. This is reflected in the non-hierarchical working environment and shown in an attitude and accessibility of superiors. Dutch people like to express their opinion, and, truly, even a low-ranking employee can be heard. Power is decentralized and managers count on their team members' experience. All communications are direct and participative, contacts are informal and on a first-name basis (Hofstede, 2018).

Germany and the United Kingdom also have low power scores (35). It means that, as in the Netherlands, direct and participative communication style is common, control is disliked and leadership is challenged. Both societies aim to minimize inequalities amongst people. Thus, German and British people are able to easily adapt in the Dutch working environment that was confirmed by interviewees.

Spain's high score on this dimension (57) means that this country has a hierarchical society. Everybody here has a place without further justification. Organizations are mostly centralized and have a strict hierarchy, the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat, and employees are expected to follow directions. Spanish participants mentioned about a lack of guidance and being lost at work.

On the Asian continent, India, South Korea and China have a high score on power distance. This means that people accept social inequalities and they are obedient to formal power. In Asian culture real power is centralized, control is familiar, communication is top down and directive. Employees expect to be directed clearly and not welcomed to show initiative. Having known that the high pressure Asian workstyle, people from India, South Korea and China enjoy relaxed Dutch corporate culture and equal society.

2. Individualism

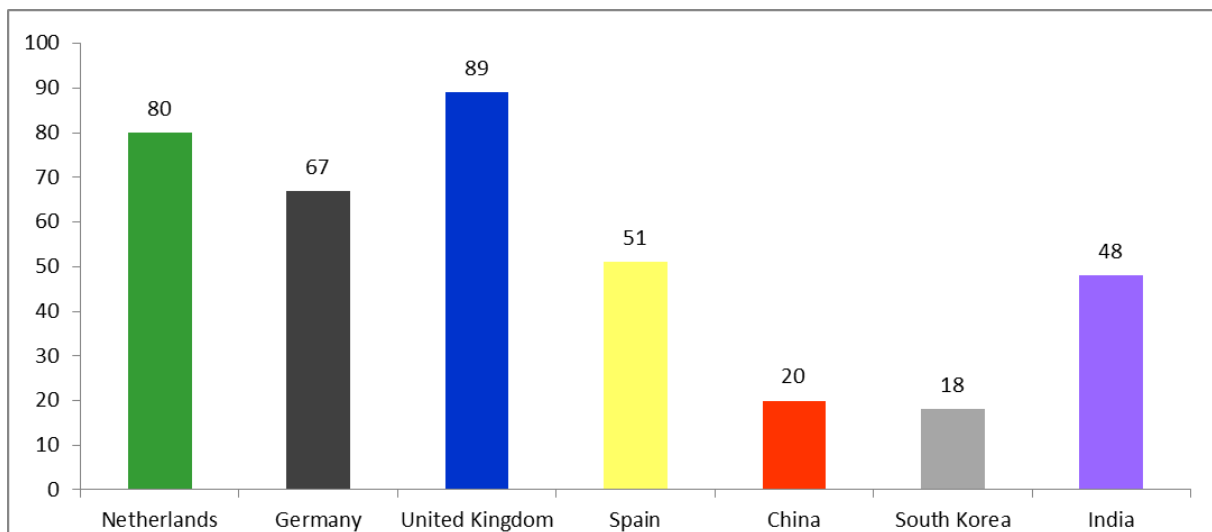


Figure 5.2. Individualism

The Netherlands has a very high score of 80 and, thus, is an Individualist society. The Dutch prefer loose social bonds in which everyone is expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. The high score on individualism in a Dutch working environment can be recognized by employees often working with ‘targets’, which are free to choose how to reach them. Working from home is commonplace, as well as the use of flexible offices. The employer/employee relationship is based on mutual advantage, hiring and promotion decisions are based only on merit.

At a score of 89 the UK is amongst the highest of the Individualist scores, beaten only by Australia and the USA. “The British are a highly Individualist and private people. Children are taught from an early age to think for themselves. The route to happiness is through personal fulfillment” (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

The German society is also a truly Individualist one (67), but less compared with the Dutch, this was confirmed by German interviewees. Small families with a focus on the parent-

children relationship rather than aunts and uncles are most common (Hofstede Insights, 2018). In Germany personal development is highly appreciated. Communication is among the most direct in the world.

Spain, in comparison with the rest of the European countries is Collectivist (its score in this dimension is 51). Employees mostly work within teams without the need for strong motivation from management.

When comparing the Netherlands with Asian countries, we find great differences on the Individualism/Collectivism level. Whereas the Netherlands is a highly individualistic society, China and South Korea are highly collectivistic where people act in the interests of the group and not necessarily for themselves. In such societies offence leads to shame and loss of face. Hiring and promotions are mostly based on in-group considerations instead of individual merit. Employer/employee relationships are perceived in moral terms (like a family link) (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Employees are more committed to coworkers than to the organization. Commitment to in-group colleagues is high, whereas commitment to out-group colleagues can be cold or even hostile, personal relationships prevail over task and company. Long time loyalty and commitment to the member group is more important than other societal rules and regulations.

India, with a rather intermediate score of 48, is a mixed collectivistic and individualistic society. The collectivist side of Indian society is comparable to these of other Asian countries, such as China and South Korea, with the aim to belong to a larger social group (big families). Also, individual behavior is based on the merits of the group. The employer/employee relationship is based on employee loyalty expectations and almost familial protection by the employer. Decisions are often made based on relationships which are the key to everything in a collectivist society. On the other hand, Indian people, as Hindus, believe in reincarnation, where each rebirth is the result of how the individual lived the previous life. Individuals are responsible for the way they lead their own lives, how they will be reborn. This individual responsibility leads to the individualistic side of Indian culture. This mixture of individualism and collectivism is reflected in the intermediate score on this dimension.

3. Masculinity

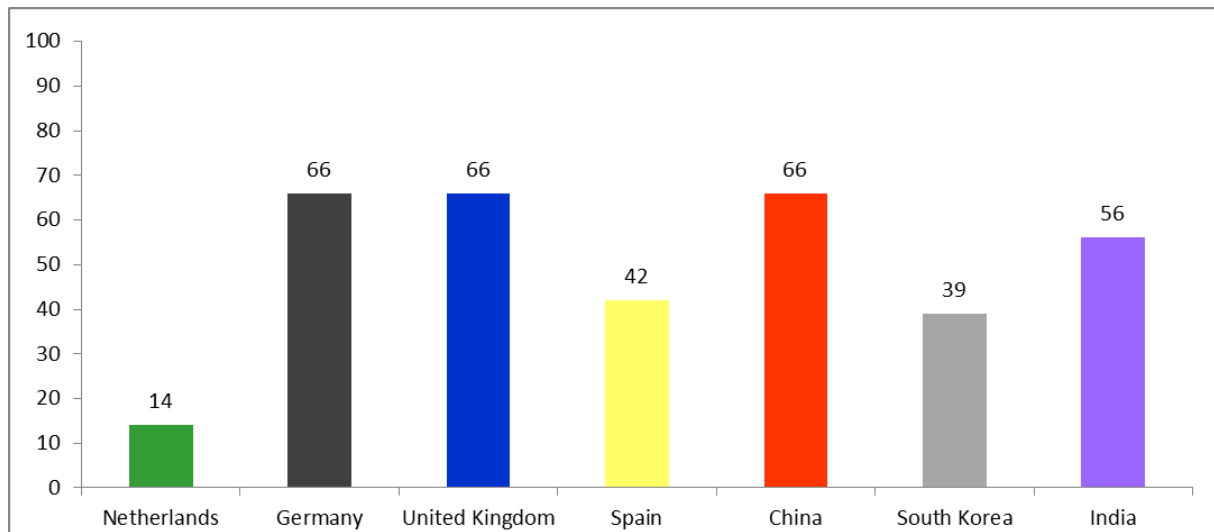


Figure 5.3. Masculinity

The Netherlands scores 14 on the masculinity dimension and is therefore a feminine society (Hofstede Insights, 2018). A feminine Dutch society values quality of life as the sign of success, and standing out from the crowd is not appreciated. It is important to keep balance between life and work, while career is more important in the other countries. In the Netherlands, managers strive for consensus and employees value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Thus, the Dutch rather do what they like (feminine) than be motivated to become the best (masculine). Conflicts in the Netherlands are resolved by compromise and negotiation and Dutch are known for their long negotiation until consensus has been reached, while conflicts in masculine countries are settled through a tougher approach.

To be the best in everything is more common in the more masculine countries like the United Kingdom and Germany, who both have a score of 66 - highly success oriented and driven. In these countries, authority from a manager is highly valued. Managers are expected to be decisive and assertive, performance is highly valued. Status is often shown, especially by cars, watches and technical devices. Critical to understanding the British is being able to “read between the lines”. What is said is not always what is meant (Hofstede Insights, 2018). In comparison to feminine culture such as the Netherlands, people in the UK and Germany live in order to work and have a clear performance ambition and draw a lot of self-esteem from their tasks.

Spain scores 42 on this dimension and consensus is pursued. Polarization or excessive competitiveness is not well appreciated. Spanish people are raised with an idea of harmony,

without standing out. Weak and needy people generate a natural current of sympathy. Regarding work, managers like to know the opinions of their subordinates and, according to them, make decisions.

South Korea scores 39 and is thus considered a feminine society which makes the country closer to the Netherlands in this dimension. In feminine countries the personal life is valued more than the working life. Status is less important. In working life, equality, solidarity, quality and involvement are appreciated. Compromise and negotiation are the major tools to deal with conflicts. Free time and flexibility at work are favored.

China and India score 66 and 56 on this dimension and are thus considered very masculine societies - success oriented and driven. It is widely practiced to show symbols of success and power, such as designer brand label and ostentation. Work is the center of one's life. Many Chinese will prioritize work over family and leisure.

4. Uncertainty avoidance

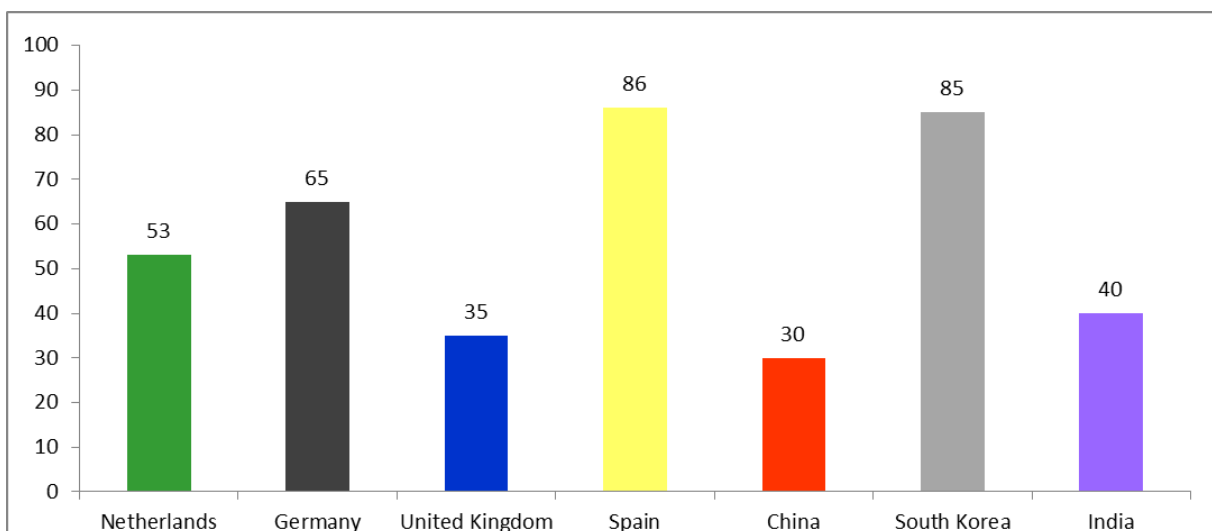


Figure 5.4. Uncertainty Avoidance

The Netherlands scores 53 on the uncertainty avoidance dimension and thus exhibits a slight preference for avoiding uncertainty. European countries with high level of uncertainty avoidance like Spain (86) and Germany (65) are very strict to the rules and are intolerant of non conventional behavior and ideas. In these cultures there is an emotional need for rules and laws. Time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are highly valued by society, innovation may be resisted, security is an important element in individual motivation.

Spain has the highest uncertainty avoidance score of 86 among the chosen European countries. People like to have rules for everything, changes cause stress, confrontation is avoided. There is great concern for changing, ambiguous and undefined situations (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

At 35 the UK has a low score on uncertainty avoidance which means that the society easily accepts changes, the British are comfortable in ambiguous situations and do not plan far ahead (it was mentioned by all British interviewees). Being open to changes, and being individualistic, the British embrace creativity and innovation, that can be seen in their humour and heavy consumerism for new and innovative products.

At 30 China has a low score on uncertainty avoidance. Truth is not always seen as absolute. The same goes for laws and rules. These are more guidelines, flexible to suit the actual situation. The Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity, even the Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for Western people to follow. Chinese are adaptable and entrepreneurial.

India scores 40 on this dimension and thus has a medium low preference for avoiding uncertainty. Indian society is patient, flexible and tolerance for the unexpected is high. There is a saying that “nothing is impossible” in India, so long as one knows how to “adjust” (widely used notion in India).

At 85 South Korea is one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries in the world (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Just like in Spain, people like to have rules for everything, changes cause stress, confrontation is avoided. There is great dislike for changing, ambiguous and undefined situations.

The countries with a lower score, like China, India and the United Kingdom, are more flexible to rules and laws and show a more pragmatic attitude. These countries tend to be more entrepreneurial and adaptable. Consequently, the Netherlands may seem bureaucratic to foreign knowledge workers from China, the United Kingdom or India.

5. Long term orientation

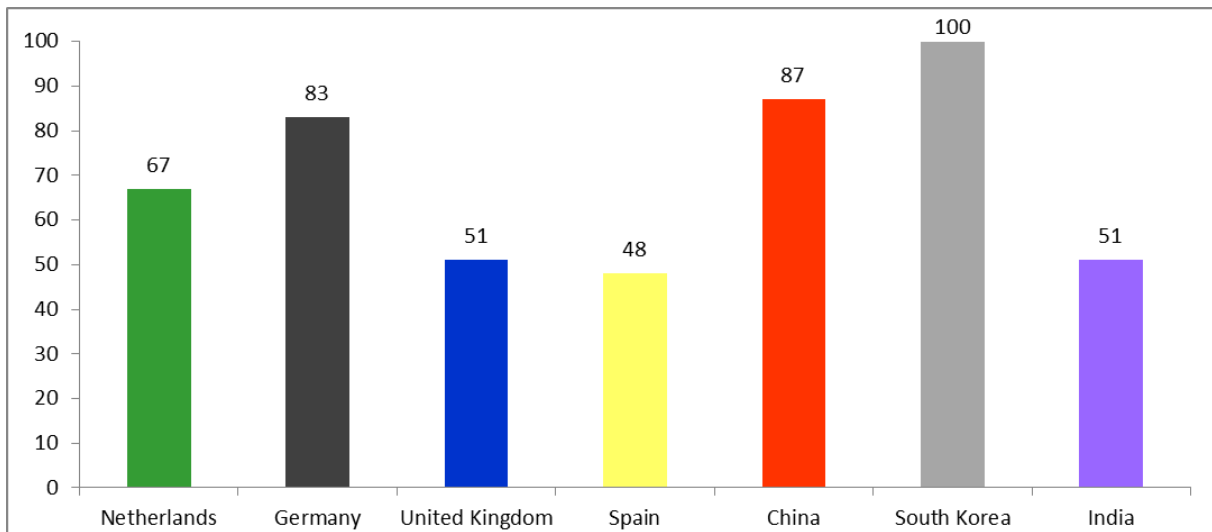


Figure 5.5. Long term orientation

The Netherlands (67), along with Germany (83), has a high score on the long-term orientation dimension among chosen European countries, which means that these cultures have a pragmatic orientation. In such societies people believe that truth depends on the situation, context and time. These cultures are able to easily adapt traditions to changed conditions. “They have a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness and perseverance in achieving results” (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

Spain has an intermediate score of 48. Spanish people like to live in the moment. In fact, Spain is the country that has given the meaning of ‘fiesta’ to the world. It is not in the Spanish nature to care too much about the future, they need well defined rules and structures to secure long term prosperity.

The UK has an intermediate score of 51 in this dimension, indicating that change in England can be achieved more rapidly than in the Netherlands .

“At 100, South Korea scores as one of the most pragmatic, long-term oriented societies. South Korea is not a religious country, people live guided by virtues and practical good examples” (Hofstede Insights, 2018). South Korean companies prioritise steady growth of market share over quarterly profits. There is great concern for company durability to serve the future generations.

India has an intermediate score of 51 in this dimension, the smallest among chosen Asian countries. Concern about time is not as important as to western societies which typically score low on this dimension. Plans easily change according to changing circumstances. Societies that have a high score on pragmatism typically forgive a lack of punctuality. In India

the concept of “karma” dominates religious and philosophical thought. There are many truths and often they depends on the seeker (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

China scores 87 in this dimension, which means that it is a very pragmatic culture. As in the Netherlands and Germany, people here believe that truth depends on situation, context and time. There is a strong ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.

Thus, the country of origin matters greatly when talking about difficulties in adapting to cultural values in the Netherlands. It would be wrong to say that the geographical proximity, such as European region, will promote closer cultural connection than, for instance, with Asian part of the world. In practice, we can see that Spanish people face big challenges of integration and Indian feel themselves comfortable and at home in the Netherlands.

Surprisingly, for certain cultural dimensions, congeniality is closer between countries located at opposite compass point (China and Germany score 66 at the masculinity dimension, and 87/83 respectively at long term orientation dimension. United Kingdom and India have the same score of 51 at long term orientation dimension. Spain and South Korea scores 85 and 86 points respectively at uncertainty avoidance dimension).

The only issue of geographical and ethnic proximity does not cover the explanation of the challenges scale for a certain nationality. Whatever aspect we take, such as differences in level of individualism or power distance, gender or profession, the results of adaptation comparison will be different. The individual’s capacity to adapt in a new culture depends on ethical background in less degree then on personality. We should always keep in mind all individual’s characteristics.

5.3. Remarks

According to the researcher's observations, the challenges that expatriates face are not a matter of only culture, but also of different aspects of their identity. All parts of the identity matter. Presumably, being a woman means going harder through acculturation process, while having previous experience abroad makes it easier. According to the theory of intersectionality the personal characteristics cannot be viewed separately, because they are not mutually independent: they influence each other (Grabham, 2009). This is interesting to note that some specific characteristics explicitly influence the success of cross-cultural communication. Among them:

Personality is definitely the most important factor that influences the acculturation process in a foreign environment. The more social, outgoing, open, curious and strong a person is, the easier and faster he/she will adapt in a new country.

Besides personality, **gender** has significant influence on the acculturation process. It was noticeable that all seven female participants in this research are more sensitive to their expatriate experiences than male participants. Women worry about their families in home countries, even feel guilt, care about cultural differences and personal transformations. Women feel themselves less secure and build one's nest. In contrast, men take the expatriation easier and do not attach themselves much to the Netherlands. Most of male participants could easily move to another country tomorrow.

Another important aspect is the **profession** of expatriates. Nine participants are involved in business and marketing. This type of work is oriented to people and the work environment corresponds to that. Most work colleagues are friends. They meet after work and do some activities together and help each other with challenges in the Netherlands.

"It is really good. There is respect, understanding and friendship. Apart from work we also have drinks after work hours, we have events. We create a really nice environment where professionals are really comfortable with each other" (Spanish 2).

Eleven other participants have an engineering or IT related job. Due to their logical mindset, they find a solution for any problem. They have a systematic approach to their overseas experience. All participants share the following feeling:

"There is a wall between Dutch and international people" (Spanish 1).

"It is a friendly environment, everything goes quite stable. We hardly communicate after work" (Spanish 3).

It was noted that expatriates who have *previous experience abroad* before coming to the Netherlands, especially in Western countries with similar culture to the Netherlands, have less challenges of cross-cultural communication and achieve cultural competence faster.

All three Korean families have previous experience of expatriation in Western countries, such as Germany, Canada and the USA for an extended amount of time that certainly helps with adaptation in the Netherlands. All four Indians lived in Germany, France, Australia and the UK. Only one of the Chinese participants out of four, lived in the USA before. Spanish people have lived in Italy or Bulgaria before which are close cultures to the Spanish one. Two Germans used to live in Switzerland before. Two British lived in Spain and Canada.

Thus, out of twenty participants, for only four the Netherlands is a first life experience abroad. Chinese face challenges of cultural differences and understanding the system. Spanish people feel the differences in cultural values and miss the Spanish environment. The British person had some stress of movement but managed to make a home in the Netherlands.

According to Amartya Sen, the wellbeing of an expat in a new environment explicitly depends on the amount of *effort* a person puts to reach it. Most participants do study Dutch language, do activities, go on the events and build networks. The bigger motivation to realize one's potential in a new environment a person has, the faster he/she will reach cultural competence, comfortability and home feelings.

The Netherlands is famous for its highest position in the world in the index of English proficiency. This fact definitely is one of the major decisions whether to move here or not. However, 18 out of 20 expatriates find not *speaking Dutch* still challenging, especially in terms of documentation and services. Moreover, it evokes significant frustration and has even greater effect of marginalizing the expatriates.

Length of living in the Netherlands is essential in the acculturation process. According to requirements of the research population, two years was minimum amount of time a person should live in the Netherlands. It goes without saying, the longer a person lives in the country, the more experience of cross-cultural communication this person has, and, eventually, the better achievement of cultural competence a person can reach. To confirm on this, participants living in the Netherlands for two/three years still face problems with acculturation and understanding the system. In contrast, people living here for six/seven years never mentioned any misunderstanding.

5.4. Additional challenges, problems and complaints

Asian participants find it difficult to approach a doctor in the Netherlands. They find the **healthcare** system with GP (general practitioner) and appointments very strange and the whole process is slow. Interviewees complain that Dutch doctors do not take their complaints seriously. In their opinion, the Dutch healthcare is not efficient, bad and very expensive. It makes people hesitate to go to doctors.

“In India it is very easy to approach a doctor. If you have anything you can immediately see a specialist and next day you have your medicine and everything is done“ (Indian 3).

“We have to pay so much on the monthly basis but we don’t get real doctors. I recently read a statistics that Dutch healthcare is top 5 in the world...I was like... “What????!”... I couldn't believe. I assume it is just a cultural thing. When Dutch people grow up they give them a brainwash that if you eat well and sleep well then everything will be ok. That’s why Dutch people don’t go to doctors that much. We as foreigners suffer a bit”(Chinese1).

9 out of 11 Asian participants face challenges with Dutch healthcare.

Dutch healthcare system also causes shock for Spanish and Germans.

“They don’t do anything. They tell you to take paracetamol and send you home. I have to ask them to do something, take analysis, etc. You have to insist. They ask what I would do in this or that situation, that’s strange“ (German 3).

4 out of 9 European participants are not satisfied with the Dutch healthcare system.

Most of interviewees prefer to check their health in their homeland or go to Germany for that. Thus, 13 interviewees have complains about the Dutch healthcare system, 4 persons do not have any complains and are satisfied with it, 3 persons do not have any experience so far.

All three South Korean families find life in the Netherlands boring. In Eindhoven there are not much **activities and entertainment** that could meet their wishes. All four Chinese participants are not satisfied with activities in Eindhoven, the same opinion is shared by Spanish one, one German and one British person. Some people are passionate about extreme sports, however, they are not able to do this in the Netherlands, only abroad.

“The only thing you can do is drinking beer or go out golfing in Eindhoven”(Korean 3).

Thus, 12 participants out of 20 are not satisfied with entertainment in Eindhoven. The researcher’s observations have shown that the Dutch way of entertainment differs significantly

especially compared with Asia where all facilities (shopping, parks, cinemas etc.) are much diverse, made in much bigger scale and accessible 24/7.

All Asian participant miss their Korean/Indian/Chinese food and the diversity of cuisine in the Netherlands. *Dutch food habits* are shocking for them. For 10 Asian participants out of 11 food is one of the major challenges. European people also struggle with Dutch food.

“I think food in Germany is better. It is more natural” (German 3).

Thus, 15 participants out of 20 are not satisfied with food in the Netherlands.

Two of three Korean expats face challenges with the *slow services and not clear “regulation rules”* in the Netherlands in terms of taxation, insurance, school related issues and so on. They complain that information depends on who you talk to and nobody has a clear answer for their questions. That is always confusing and annoying. Two of the Chinese interviewees think that service people are not sales oriented here. People do not have a passion for their work, no motivation to reach bigger goals. And, in general some upper-institutions, such as hospital, city hall and IND are slow and inefficient. British and Spanish participants share the same opinion. However, only six interviewees have bad experience with services.

Thus, the analysis in this chapter answers the main research question:

What complex of challenges do expatriates face in the process of a cross-cultural experience on the way of achieving cultural competence and home feelings in the Netherlands?

The complex of challenges can be divided into internal and external. Internal challenges connect with the transformation nature of expatriates' experiences and include cultural differences, difficulties of integration and challenge of cross-cultural communication, specifically with representatives of the Dutch society. It was noted that the majority of expatriates are not involved into Dutch society, do not have Dutch friends and face discomfort in accepting the Dutch values and way of living. The Dutch language is a key and major barrier to the Dutch culture.

The external challenges that expatriates face in the Netherlands mostly include facilities, such as a dissatisfaction with the healthcare system, entertainment, food and slow services in the country.

Chapter 6

Conclusion, discussions and recommendations

The final chapter contains an overview of this study and a review of the significant findings in relation to the research question and main aspects. It presents the limitations and weaknesses of the investigation and the theoretical implications of the data and suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with the practical implications of the study.

6.1. Overview of the study

The sojourn literature on expatriate business people has seldom focused upon the expatriates' subjective experience shaped by their cultural background. Therefore, in this Master's Thesis the researcher analyzed the experience of 20 expatriates from China, India, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany, making use the framework of acculturation model.

This research aims to contribute to the academic knowledge about expatriates experiences abroad and provide insights in the underlying processes and challenges. The results confirm the theory of cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the study adds the knowledge to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The challenges an expatriate faces in a new country are not solely determined by the home culture, but by all parts of an individual's identity, such as gender, profession, and all aspects of intersectionality. Moreover, this Master's Thesis adds knowledge about the transformational nature of the expatriation and provides an extensive description of the "Living in" phase. What stands out from the conducted interviews is that moving abroad and starting over in a new country is one of the most terrifying, but at the same time exhilarating adventures ever.

Furthermore, this study builds on "pioneers of European integration". Freedom that was given by the European Union comes with certain challenges. Cultural and values differences, involvement into Dutch society, personal capabilities to speak the Dutch language and motivation to acculturate, greatly influence the expatriation experiment and were acknowledged as the most significant internal challenges of cross-cultural experience in the Netherlands. In the greatest extent, the representatives of South Korean, Chinese and Spanish cultures who participated in this research, feel these differences. The Indian culture provides unpredictable findings in this research. Even though, this culture differs greatly from Dutch culture in terms of individualism, masculinity, level of hierarchy, values and more, all four interviewees claim

about their successful acculturation process in the Netherlands. British and German representatives had an easy transition to the Netherlands and do not face any significant challenges of cross-cultural communication due to cultural similarities, as British, German and Dutch cultures are highly individualistic.

There are a number of external challenges, such as the Dutch healthcare system, entertainment, food and perceived inefficient services, that cause high level of discomfort and dissatisfaction of living in the Netherlands for a majority of expats.

The unique experience of “pioneers of European integration” expatriation comes with significant rewards. First of all, living abroad was admitted as the greatest opportunity to enrich personality. All expatriates experienced great transformation to the better and stronger version of themselves. Expatriation is a constant learning process that expands the worldviews and appreciation for diversity. Expats have an opportunity to make international friends and speak a different language that would be limited in the case of constant living in the homeland. Moreover, living in Europe gives an advantage of easy movement throughout the European side of the world.

The resulting framework outlines the predictable stages in the expatriate journey and articulates the complex of challenges and transformational nature of the expatriate experience. In addition to helping expatriates make sense of their experience, this framework furnishes prospective expatriates with more realistic expectations and provides guidance for companies and human resource professionals who want to handle expatriates more effectively. This study is achieved its goal in adding knowledge to the academic debate on the topic as well as, providing practical insights for the Holland Expat Center South.

6.2. Recommendations to Human Resources departments/ Expat Center/Municipality from expatriates participated in this research

- HR should know the correct information about all relevant and important issues with regards to expatriates, such as documentation, visa, driver’s license etc. They are often not aware and are not willing to learn what makes expats complain a lot.
- Cultural training should be also given to Dutch employees on the workfloor. Only expatriates knowing the cultural differences are not helping to build connections, it should be both ways.

- More entertainment, more events and activities to meet people should be organised, considering the international environment. Currently, in terms of entertainment Eindhoven does not meet the expatriates' wishes and is found "too Dutch".
- It seems that nevertheless Holland Expat Center South does a massive job in terms of providing information about visa, documents, taxes, medical insurance, how to handle the mortgage if somebody wants to buy a house etc. But this is not visible to all expatriates. Moreover, it is very hard to reach IND.
- Giving people a start package and help with accommodation is extremely needed. It is really hard for newcomers to understand all the systems.

"HR could try to be a bridge and introduce us to the country" (British 2).

- HR in companies in the Netherlands in comparison with the UK is way behind. Here HR does not know how to help and make internationals integrate better. They are not very supportive and give help only when asked. In terms of activities, events for colleagues, team building, company culture, HR here hardly does anything. They simply don't have this concept.
- Bureaucracy is still high. So many foreigners live in Eindhoven. Paperwork would help to be in English or even in native languages of expats. For now, most of documents are in Dutch. A lot of Indian, Chinese, Koreans live here with spouses, who do not speak English and they do not understand the rules in the Netherlands. Explanation of Inburgering exams for foreigners is in Dutch as well.

"It is like you came for climbing lessons and they tell you to register up there. Ridiculous" (British 2).

Thus, as we can see, the major challenges for expatriates start outside of the workfloore and to avoid expatriates failure (see §1.5) the responsibilities of HR and other services should be expanded.

6.3. Limitations & Recommendations for Further Research

This research inevitably comes with certain limitations that might have influenced it to some extent, such as the limited number of participants due to the resources of Expat Center and InterNations organisation. A critical perspective from the researcher was necessary to make sure the study was portrayed realistically. Moreover, during meetings with representatives of Indian culture the researcher found out that India is an unbelievably diverse country and it is incorrect to generalize. Moreover, it was difficult to compare expats' experiences shaped by the

home culture due to differences in personalities, age, gender, profession, previous experience abroad and the time spent in the Netherlands. Interviewing expatriates shaped by strict requirements for the research, such as, for example, only men, only IT related employees, or only from a certain country, might have given different results.

Even though the topic of this Master's Thesis is very relevant, a wide variety of studies on the expatriates experiences could be conducted. During the interviews realized, there were a number of nuances that would be worthwhile to explore further. Here are just some of them. It would be interesting to know how small Dutch companies could attract and retain high knowledge workers. Today small companies are not able to widely accept internationals due to limit in capacity, budget, network and language. Future research could be done with the aim to find out ways to increase the capabilities of small companies. And, among certain facilities for internationals such as language and cultural courses, help with documents and accommodation, the future research could try to answer the question: "What resources and tools are necessary to develop for small company to attract high knowledge migrants for work?". There is little research done on this topic and these issues remain unanswered.

Another possible topic of study could be the Dutch healthcare system and why most internationals have troubles with it. Would it be possible to adjust the system to the needs of internationals?

And, going deeper into psychology, the researcher suggest to investigate in details the women's personal transformation as a result of living abroad as it is known. In general women are more sensitive and emotional and, apparently, fall deeper into cultural shock.

Last, but not least, an interesting topic to study further would be language. To what extend speaking in different language can change the mindset, self-awareness and even life? In fact, the highest rate of individualism in the world have English speaking cultures (The USA, Australia, the UK, Canada, the Netherlands etc. with 91, 90, 89, 80, 80 points respectively according to Hofstede's theory). It means that English is a highly individualistic language (even "I" is written with a capital letter). But what can possibly happen with a person moving, for instance, to Russia, which is highly a collectivistic society (39 points)? This fact manifests itself in the language : "If Russians plan to go out with their friends, they would literally say "We with friends" instead of "I and my friends", if they talk about brothers and sisters, it may well be cousins" ("Country Comparison - Hofstede Insights", 2018). So if an English native speaker would move to Russia and would speak Russian language, will it possibly open collectivistic characteristics in him/her? And oppositely, would a Russian person become more individualistic by moving to an English speaking country? The researcher assumes that detailed

studying of this process might be captivating. Indeed, a different language is a bridge to a different reality and mindset, an opportunity to rewrite an identity.

In the end, expatriation is a journey full of challenges and the greatest adventures of our lives, full of new discoveries, experiments and friends. Trading one habitual life for another of larger opportunities and greater freedoms comes with a price. Homesickness, missing family and friends, support network, familiarity and small silliest things you used to take for granted will be with you all the way. The guilty little voice might tell you that you left your beloved ones to go after your own dreams. The adjustment is difficult and takes time. Culture shock is something almost all expats can expect to go through. Even though this journey can be hard and stressful, by being open to changes, expats can work through the obstacles that show the immense human capability to adapt to a new environment and to a new life. They will come out victorious with an increased capacity to know themselves, appreciate diversity and see the world in a new light. All expats are in the same boat. Friends you make in your new destination become like family, often remaining good friends for life. Whether it is being a shoulder to cry on or simply spending the holidays together, expats quickly form strong friendships. To develop a real connection with a new home country and the locals, language is key and learning is necessary. Over time the geographic roots become weaker and home will be defined by your feelings and attachments rather than geography. Now there is one country that raised you and the other one that adopted you, the family that molded you and the friends that embraced you, the past experiences that defined you and the new opportunities in front of you. Be proud and enjoy the adventure!

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Appendix 1

The checklist of actions, what a person has to do when moving to another country include:

1. *the preparation phase.* A new high knowledge worker signs a contract with a company in The Netherlands. A company contacts the Immigration and Naturalization Services (IND) in order to make an application for the new expatriate (TEV or VVR procedure, if necessary, application for MVV). If an application was accepted, the IND informs the Expat Center. HECS receives a copy of the application and in compliance with the employer, makes an appointment for the expat. The employer receives approval MVV. Employer informs an expat and they decide about the dates of coming and starting the work. An expat using the TEV procedure must visit the Dutch embassy in his/her home country. A company hires a relocation officer for help with arrival of an expatriates and their families. An expat arrives to The Netherlands. In turn, an expatriate has to prepare all documents (passport, visa, birth and marriage certificates), arrange a new bank account, finish all orders and payments, request medical records, take all necessary belongings, start to look for houses in a new living place and school for kids, decide about pets and cars, whether you take it with you or not and a lot more).
2. *the arrival phase.* An expatriate settles in an apartment that an employer reserved for him or she and paid (after 2 months, he/she has to move to the other place that they will arrange and pay himself/herself). An expat has an appointment in the Expat Center for receiving a residence permit, municipal registration, and BSN (citizen service number). A relocation officer spends with an expatriate 3 or 4 days helping with open a new bank account, register at a local doctor, set up health insurance, organize a house concerns (contract, utilities, insurance), explain the everyday routine destinations, including possibilities for an expatriate's hobby and leisure time.
3. *the setting in phase* (exchange your driver's license for a Dutch one (if applicable), apply for child benefit (if applicable), apply for spouse tax credit (if applicable) (South, 2017).

Appendix 2

Key questions for the six parts in interviews with expatriates.

1) *Background information*

Age

Gender M F

What is your education background?

Company

Occupation

Length of time employed by this company years months

- Have you come to The Netherlands with your spouse/ family?
- If married, what nationality is your spouse?
- If with family, how many kids and what is their age?
- What is your family/wife think about living in The Netherlands?
- Does your spouse have a job in The Netherlands? Is this job satisfied his/her wishes and requirements?
- Have you lived abroad before (excluding holidays abroad)? Please, specify where and its length.

2) *Migration to the Netherlands*

- What was the reason for your move to The Netherlands?
- How did you feel yourself when you decided to go to the NL?
- What were the first few days like?
- Have you experienced a cultural shock in the NL?
- Is there any benefits for you of moving to the NL?
- What situation can be represented as the biggest challenge or discomfort you have had in The Netherlands? What complex of challenges do you have now?

3) *Personal transformation*

- How would you describe your ability to adapt to changes?

- To what extent have you changed your behavior (habits, traditions) since you moved to the Netherlands?
- How would you describe your personal transformation as a result of living abroad?
- What do you feel about your home cultural values after an exposure of another country?
- Do you think you have to give up some of your home cultural values in order to be accepted or successful in the Netherlands?
- How often do you go back home? How does it feel like to come home?
- What do you miss about your homeland?

4) Living in the Netherlands

- Whom do you generally socialize with?
- How would you describe your degree of involvement into a Dutch society? How is your Dutch language skills?
- What do you think about experience stereotypes and/ or prejudice towards you and your homeland?
- What do you think about Dutch healthcare system?
- What do you think about Dutch education system for your children? (applicable only for expats with children)
- Who or which facilities help you to understand the rules, norms, customs and habits in the Netherlands?
- What are the obvious differences between Dutch and your home country way of living?
- How would you describe your feelings of settling and belonging in The Netherlands?
- Do you feel you get supported in making you feel at home in the Netherlands?
- How would you describe your life in the Netherlands (name a few adjectives)?

5) Work in the Netherlands

- With people which nationalities do you mostly work?
- How do you experience the social communication on the Dutch work floor?
- How do you experience the corporate culture on the Dutch work floor ?
- What are the obvious differences between Dutch and your home country way of working?
- Did the company you work for try to make you settle in? What did they do?

6) Recommendations

- What are the most important things you have already learned about living in a foreign country?
- What would you recommend to the future international knowledge workers coming to The Netherlands in order to promote successful acculturation in the country?
- What advice would you have for HR departments about handling expatriates?
- In ten years, do you see yourself still living and working in the Netherlands?
- Which factors should be improved in making you feel at home?

Appendix 3

Recommendations for future expatriates from participants in this research.

All expatriates that participated in the research recommend to the future high knowledge workers coming to the Netherlands to:

- Learn Dutch, it will help to make friends and adapt faster;
- Keep a positive mindset is important;
- Prepare in advance, save money to buy a house, it is cheaper than rent;
- Get to know all information about how the systems work;
- Get to know about cultural differences;
- *“Express your opinion clearly and in details, not in Asian way of abstraction. Here people don’t read between the lines, they don’t understand” (Korean 2);*
- Be open and learn things;
- *“Always keep the first thing in mind: this is not your country. Do not expect other people to behave in a way you think is good. “When in Rome, be Roman” (Indian 3);*
- *“Try to have a good understanding of culture, the way of life, the social structure of that place. And try to become a little bit like that. It will only help you to blend very easy, it is going to make your stay very comfortable and you will feel like a part of society. That’s important” (Indian 4);*
- Explore;
- Become more global;
- *“You should drop your expectations and embrace things that you like. You need to be very open minded to understand what it is and how to live in a foreign world. Understand yourself first, and then you will be able to embrace most of the stuff” (Indian 2);*
- *“Try to step out of your comfort zone. Try to not focus on how these people are different from you but try to see how they are similar to you. Focus more on what you want and not on what people expect you to be. Focus more on enjoying your life then focusing on this adapting mindset. Think how can you make yourself more comfortable here and create a better life. When there is a lot of changing and you focus only on this changes you have this uncomfortable feeling. At the end it is not much about changes, it is about*

you making yourself enjoy your life. For that of course you need to make a certain effort”(Spanish 2);

- Find a job in international company, they have a lot of resources. Small companies do not have that, there will not be much help for internationals;
- *“There will be always paperwork to do and you need to be just patient. It is a different country, different rules. You just have to be open minded and be flexible. You have to learn how to live with a feeling of nostalgia, missing your family or even guilt. Either you accept it or you go back”(Spanish 2);*
- *“They should really think what is their background regarding studies and take into account to which city they are going. For example, my education is very humanistic, and I came to Eindhoven which is about IT. So, of course, for me it was difficult to find a job in a city for engineers. So, look for positions beforehand. Of course, knowing more than one language will help you” (Spanish 1);*
- Try to join local clubs, associations and communities to meet people and make friends;
- You are going to start from zero, but do not be scared. The society, neighbors, institutions will help you.

Coding & Analysis

South Korean

Code	1	2	3
Age	42	44	48
Profession	Engineer	Engineer	Engineer
Previous experience of life abroad	Germany 2 years Canada 1 year	the USA 10 months Japan 8 months	the USA 20 years
In the NL	2,5 years	7 years	2,5 years
Family	Wife have stress that she cannot find a job	Wife has a part-time job as a teacher	Family didn't want to move; Wife cannot find a job;
Shock	Too different cultures; Don't know how to say "no"; Different etiquette; Presents giving is strange, no respect to elders;	Cultural differences; Dutch people don't open a door to a lady, don't help old people or pregnant ladies, don't help with baby carriage and heavy bags;	Birthday celebration is strange Dutch don't care much about other people;
Benefits	30% ruling bigger salary; Time with family	Family time	Family time
Challenges	Time with relocation officer is too small; have to work with people, used to work with machines; English and Dutch languages; Services don't know the correct information; Rent a house; Information depends on people;	Cultural differences Work challenges to lead people; Hard to find an accommodation;	Dutch language is an issue;
Habits	Get to know how to repair stuff yourself		
Personal transformation		I learn how to say "no". It's really difficult.	Mindset turned to be more Western
Values		In Korea we respect old people better than here. We are very hospitable, make the whole table for guests, friendly.	
Miss	Food	Food Here there are no good	

		entertainment	
Social contacts	Koreans	Korean friends, expats like me; International colleagues;	Colleagues
Activities	Dutch courses, golf, swimming	Play tennis; Go to church; Books;	
Involvement	I am not involved into a society. I don't speak Dutch, I don't have Dutch friends.	I feel the wall between myself and Dutch. I feel bad and feel blocks.	1 out of 10, except work there is no involvement into a society
Healthcare	Slow and not efficient	It is difficult here to go to a doctor and it is very expensive	Slow and not efficient
Magical friend	Internet	Internet Colleagues	Colleagues, Expat center, ASML
What likes in the NL	Job security Children will speak different languages	Work and private life is really separate.	Work/life balance is amazing
What don't like in the NL	People are too direct; People ignore us; No respect for old people; Local etiquette;	Dutch people are too direct.	Not much activities; Too much arranged here, feels not natural;
Settling and belonging	I don't belong	Half/half	I bought a house here, settled for 80%
Words	Slow, free, enough holidays	Fantastic, happy, no stress, relax, boring	Structured
Social communication at work	Colleague don't communicate outside of work	Friendly, people willing to help, no connection outside of work	Only work related communication
Corporate culture	Absence of hierarchy is + and -		
Way of living and working	In Korea you can't say "no"; Hierarchy; Progress in Korea is faster;	In Korea everything is open 24/7. In Korea a lot of work, no time for family and hobbies High level of hierarchy;	There is no competitiveness in the NL. Here life is more relaxed; Here more time for family; Here is not clear what the target at work;
What learned	Language is important	Language is a key to understand the culture	Positive mindset is important
Plans for future	Don't know yet	Stay in NL till kids finish education and then will see	Don't know yet

Indian

	1	2	3	4
Age	31	39	28	37
Profession	Software designer	Business consultant	Mechatronics design engineer	Director of the trade company
Previous experience of life abroad	Germany 1 year France 1,5 year	Singapur Australia UK USA	Czech Republic	Australia 3 years
In the NL	4,5 years	2 years	6 years	3 years
Family	-	-	-	Very positive
Shock	drugs and smoking	Food habits	Food habits	
Benefits	30% ruling, bigger salary; Exchange drive lessons;		Life in a liberal country	
Challenges	Find accommodation ; Cultural differences;	Dutch language	Was hard to find a job;	Take over the whole company and restructure it was a challenge, especially doing that in another country. I had to learn all rules and lows, HR regulations.
Personal transformation	Become more polite, more straightforward, confidence, manage everything yourself	Confidence Independence	I have become an absolutely different person. International thinking	
Values	Respect to elders, strong family bonds, hospitality	What a superior Indian culture is!	Indian is very diverse country	
Miss	Food, friends	Mother and food	Food and diversity	
Social contacts	Indians	Locals, avoid Indians	Internationals Avoid Indians	Locals Internationals
Activities	Travelling	Travelling	Travelling	Travelling, extreme sports, however, I am not able to do this in the Netherlands, only abroad.

Involvement	Not much	Try to participate in Dutch celebrations	Difficult 6 out of 10	We are involved
Healthcare	Bad, expensive	Good	Not very good, not convenient, not approachable	Good
Magical friend	FB groups, orientation at ASML The Hub	Girlfriend and her family	Colleagues InterNations	Local acquaintances
What likes in the NL	Liberalism, rules, transportation, weather	Dutch way of living, active lifestyle	Open mind	Everything
What don't like in the NL	Food	Food habits, trains cold run 24 hours	Food	
Settling and belonging	NL feels like home	I belong	The NL more home than India	Settled and belong
Words	Liberal, free, systematic, punctual, straightforward	Stress free, healthy, free, active	Eventful, interesting, tumultuous, introspective, self improving time, transitional.	
Social communication at work	Formal relationship		Nice	Nice
Corporate culture	No hierarchy , work/life balance	Relaxed	No hierarchy , work/life balance	No hierarchy , work/life balance
Way of living and working	Different habits, Indian are hospitable, Big families including aunts, uncles etc. There are a lot of competition in India	Individual decision is appreciated here	Nothing can be generalized in India Indians are very family oriented Indians are not exposed to the world	
What learned	European countries more organised.	The differentiation between citizens, people, believes. In what we believe is different.	You are a small part of the world.	I learned from this culture how to live peacefully and welcome everyone from around the globe. We cannot be very fixed in our traditions and believes.
Plans for future	Stay for now	Stay	Stay for now	As long as my company stays I have to be here.

Chinese

	1	2	3	4
Age	28	27	29	26
Profession	Digital marketing specialist	User experience designer	Software engineer	Software engineer
Previous experience of life abroad	USA 1 year	Taiwan 4 months	-	-
In the NL	5 years	4,5 years	6 years	3 years
Family	-	-	Wife and son 1,5 years. OK.	-
Shock	Service people are not sales oriented	Relationship between parents and children Level of directness is high		
Benefits	NL a perfect country for not typical people, good English, feels comfortable Professional innovative international environment	Experience of different cultures, make friends with foreigners	With Dutch education chances to get a good job are higher	Life is easier here
Challenges		Exclusion	Dutch language	Cultural differences
Habits	byking	I developed a lot of new hobbies, I try everything. Sport, singing, travelling.		
Personal transformation	Huge	Huge I learned what kind of person am I, what do I like. I discovered myself I learned how to argue, how to express my opinion.	Became more open and independent	Become independent
Values	Family values in China	Here people value individuals more, in China people value community opinion and family boundaries.		I see my culture more clear now

Had to give up	Habit of saying "yes"	Habit of saying "yes", habit of being silent		Flexibility. I have to live here according to schedule
Miss	Family values Entertainment Food	Family, friends, food, open facilities till late		Food. I am not satisfied here with food.
Social contacts	Colleagues, friends from the university	Dutch boyfriend and his family, Chinese friends, international colleagues	Colleagues, Chinese friends, family.	Chinese friends
Activities	Travel a lot	Travel		Travel
Involvement	Interactions with Dutch people are not easy, not much involvement	Not much	I don't have Dutch friends, I don't speak Dutch. I would say 3 out of 10.	6 out of 10. I don't speak Dutch
Healthcare	Very bad	Expensive	Doctors don't take your complaints seriously. I think it is expensive.	Not efficient
Magical friend	University, Taiwanese community	Chinese friends	ICT group and Internet	Acquaintance and Internet
What likes in the NL	Stable life You can be who you are	People are friendly with strangers Direct culture. Location Services working good Roads are good	Good life/work balance. People are kind. The country is safe. People treat you equally. Life/work balance.	Environment is clean People are willing to help
What don't like in the NL	City hall is slow; Dutch are racist in their jokes; Services are slow;	Food; Business relationship between people; Dutch are loud. Way of socializing;	Food, people don't have a passion at their work, no motivation to reach bigger goals.	Dutch food is tasteless. Low efficiency of some upper-institutions, such as hospital, city hall, IND.
Settling and belonging	Home is in the NL, I feel like a foreigner in China, I feel the distance.	In between 2 countries. I don't see myself as a part of the Dutch society	I bought a house here but I don't feel like I belong	I don't belong. But my life here is quite settled and stable here.
Words	Easy, intense, stable, proud.	Comfortable, confident, easy, calm, but lonely sometimes, curious, learning, more time for myself, freedom, hungry.	Independent, lonely, happy, changing	Relaxed, happy, boring, safe, stable.

Social communication at work	My colleagues are my friends	I like it, we do some activities together	There is a wall between Dutch and international people	It is a friendly environment, everything goes quite stable. We hardly communicate after work.
Corporate culture	Flat hierarchy, very professional			I like flat hierarchy
Way of living and working	Dutch are spoiled, the NL is not service oriented country, work-life balance; Dutch people grow up in a structured way.	Dutch have a lot of time for themselves. Dutch don't work extra. Chinese put a lot effort to create a positive atmosphere and build connections. Hierarchy in China.	Dutch are happier. Chinese only work.	Physical and mental distance are so small in China. Here people are colder, independent and respectful to each other. Scheduling doesn't work that well in China. People are much more well organized here. In China work and life will be mixed.
What learned	To be open minded	Different cultures. Mindset is important.	How to be independent	How to arrange everything myself, how to be independent
Plans for future	Stay	Stay	When 30% ruling will be finished, then salary here is not that attractive anymore. And I will think to look for a job somewhere else.	Stay

Spanish

	1	2	3
Age	32	25	27
Profession	Engineer	Campaign manager	Marketing campaign manager
Previous experience of life abroad	USA 3 months Italy 6 months	I was born in Georgia, my family moved to Bulgaria and then to Spain when I was 7 years old.	Italy for 1 year
In the NL	3 years	2 years	3 years

Shock	Self-centered people here, food, healthcare		Dutch directness
Benefits	Only professional such as work/life balance		It is very international environment, here much more opportunities than in Spain, people are very nice.
Challenges	To integrate	Find a job Be away from the family	Accommodation
Personal transformation	Became more direct, eating habits. Became more open to different cultures, become more outspoken and extravert, independent.	I organise my own life without help from parents. Become more honest and direct;	It is 100% change. Before you live abroad you are totally different person. International experience brings a lot to your personality.
Values	I would like people pay more attention to people around and that Dutch people appreciate food like we do in Spain.	People here don't have the same concept of family, friendship, level of intimacy. And other common things like organising a party, congratulations or giving gifts it is different. And you have to adapt. In Spain or Georgia people are very friendly, we are very close to each other, we speak a lot. But here I see people keep the distance, they have their own bubble, their own world. And you have to accept it and work around it.	
Miss	The character of people, values, Spanish people, food,		weather, food, people's behaviour. Spain is a perfect country if you want to chill, relax. But the Netherlands is perfect if you want to grow in your career, get some opportunities.
Social contacts	Foreigners	Foreigners, colleagues	Colleagues
Involvement	Not at all. It is extremely difficult to make Dutch friends	I recently voted for a first time. Well, I work here, I have contact with Dutch people. I'm learning Dutch. I would say, I am involved for 80%.	Not much
Healthcare	Terrible	No experience	No experience

Magical friend	Just my observations	Dutch boyfriend, Expatrica	Colleagues, A Dutch woman
What likes in the NL	Directness; I like that people at work understand that you have a private life; I like that the country works perfectly, streets are lean, transportation works and so on.	The greenest of the country. And the honesty. I really appreciate that in politics people work for the country, they want to improve things. The government is taking care of people.	The opportunities that you have here. If you are good and work hard you will get what you want, you can grow. Here it is less about making friends, but more about what you can deliver.
What don't like in the NL	Food, healthcare, self-centred people.		This is more boring country than Spain; Slow process of decision-making.
Settling and belonging	2 homes	Home is in Spain and home is in Eindhoven	I have two homes
Words	Comfortable, boring, structured, routine, unexciting, healthy.	Peaceful, exciting, full feeling, organised, novelty.	Grow, adventure, freedom, development, multicultural.
Social communication at work	Communication is ok, but only about work.	It is really good. There are respect, understanding and friendship. Apart from work we also have drinks after work hours, we have events. We create a really nice environment where professionals are really comfortable with each other.	Nice
Corporate culture	I like the absence of hierarchy, but I feel a bit lost sometimes.	I really like it. All managers are approachable, you really can be heard. We also have meditation and yoga classes, it is either organised or volunteer by colleagues .	
Way of living and working	Spanish are more emotional, we don't plan much. I think Spanish are more open Dutch are more productive at work	In Spain bureaucracy, a lot things are not automated yet. Rhythm of life is more relaxed in Spain. In Spain it is more hierarchical. And also working conditions are better here. Here you are more efficient in your working time and give the most you can.	Here when people work- they work and when they have free time-it's really a free time. In Spain while working time people do a lot of different things, social activities, that's why people in Spain go home after work at 7 or 8 pm. Here you work from 9 till 6 and that's it. Dutch people are more productive. They always want to improve things.

What learned	Instead of being frustrated about things you cannot change, enjoy what you can enjoy. And there is something you cannot enjoy, see how you can work around it.		I learned a lot : how to arrange things, how to meet people, how to live alone
Plans for future	I am ok here, overall happy. But I don't want my future kids to grow up with this values. I don't want my kids to have Dutch values. It means that I am not going to live here for long.	Stay for now, go for a Master program at university here.	I want to learn as much as possible abroad and then move back to Spain. Spain is my country my home, I want to be close to my family.

German

	1	2	3
Age	35	27	32
Profession	Recruiter	Marketing	Software and mathematics
Previous experience of life abroad	Switzerland 2,5 years Spain 8 months UK USA 2 years	No	Switzerland for 1 year
In the NL	7 years	4 years	7 years
Family		Husband and daughter 3 years	
Shock	Directness of people		
Challenges			It is pretty hard to make Dutch friends.
Personal transformation	More open to different personalities and became more adaptable	I became more open and brave and confident. I had to learn how to be independent. I learned how to start a new life a new place and not to be scared.	I became more direct. You have broader perspective then people who never left their hometown. A lot of things happens in your life.
Values	Differences in how people value things and celebrate holidays. In Germany more communism than here, I feel		I think keeping promises it is more German thing than Dutch. German like insist on their right. Dutch are more relaxed in this way.

Had to give up	No, not in the Netherlands. I think in other countries yes, but not here.		
Miss	Food		Family, friends and food. I think food in Germany is better. It is more natural in Germany.
Social contacts	Colleagues, friends from sport club and dutch courses, neighbors. Most of friends are international, only a few are Dutch	Husband and daughter	Mostly with other foreigners.
Activities	Travelling, yoga, tennis, meeting friends		Amsterdam is easier to meet people, there a lot of activities going on. I like to live in Amsterdam more than in Eindhoven.
Involvement	But if really want to integrate and make Dutch friends, you have to learn their language.		I do speak Dutch. I think I am not involved that much into a society. I am German, I don't feel myself like Dutch at all.
Healthcare	It is very different system than what we have in Germany. So, it irritated me a lot in the beginning but I had to get used. Ovrall I think it is good system, but there are many things that I am not agree with.	German healthcare is better. Here you have to pay a lot. In Germany is cheaper.	I don't like it here. I think it is cheaper than in Germany. They don't do anything. They tell you to take paracetamol and send you home. I have to ask them to do something, take analysis etc. You have to insist. They ask what I would do in this or that situation, that's strange.
Magical friend	Dutch husband	My husband, colleagues, neighbours and internet.	University helped with everything.
What likes in the NL	You can live here without knowing Dutch; Social system, transportation are working properly. I really love the countryside. Everything is close by. Dutch people are very open to foreigners.		I think Dutch people are friendlier and more open than in Germany. There is no hierarchy here.
What don't like in the NL	Sometimes I feel that Dutch people are too direct, they say too much to a face. Personally, I am		

	a sensitive person and I don't really like too much directness .		
Settling and belonging	I belong	I belong, but I have two homes	Belong
Words	Easy, convenient, good, good central point in Europe.	Nice, settled, nice people.	Comfortable, good life/work balance, uncomplicated.
Social communication at work	Very good, some of people are really friends. There are a lot of interactions, a lot of movements.	It is good. A lot of people are also new in the NL, so we share our experience. We never have any conflicts.	It is nice Uncomplicated. People here are more equal.
Corporate culture	It it much more hierarchy in Germany, more formal.		
Way of living and working	I think Dutch are even more than Germans are very strict with their calendar, they are very structural. Germans are a bit more flexible I would say. Dutch are very much into their habits. And a warm meal for lunch, we are different here.	German people are not so open as Dutch. German people care about only their life. Here every Friday we have afternoon drinks to socialize with colleagues. I think it is nice. In Germany people focused only on work. They are more strict with the time. People are not so open, you can't make jokes with them. Here people also like to have fun.	German plan a lot. German buy houses. Dutch enjoy the life, when it is sun everybody go outside. Germans stick to the plan no matter what.
Plans for future	I plan to stay here for 5-10 years, but my dream is to live at the beach where it is warm most of the year time.	We want to stay here, I don't want to move anymore.	I would like to stay here for some years and then go back to Germany.

British

	1	2	3
Age	30	41	30
Profession	Team leader	Engineer	Marketolog
Previous experience of life abroad	No	Spain 5 years	Canada 8 months
In the NL	5 years	4 years	2 years
Shock		Not that much. In Europe you can divide into South and North. All North countries are similar.	
Benefits		I was looking for a change in my life. Financially NL is not that attractive country. I wanted to live in an equal society. I can see only middle class here. 30% ruling. Everything is so expensive here. Here jobs are more secure, you can't so easy get fired. But on the other hand, they don't give you any benefits.	A lot of work opportunities with a very good pay. High standard of living. Eindhoven has a nice mix of internationals and locals. I can experience new cultures.
Challenges	It was very difficult to find a job. If you don't speak Dutch- "no, thanks". Communication is a challenge because I don't speak Dutch and because I am a stranger here. Plus, Dutch are very direct, it is often offensive.	It is challenge for me to find Dutch friends.	Finding a house especially with a big kitchen was a real challenge. You get to view a house only once.
Personal transformation	I became something new. I found parts in myself I didn't know existed. I was very shy and scared, but I opened like a butterfly. I am a lot happier since I moved to the NL. I am independent. It makes you a lot stronger, a lot better. I became absolutely stronger and secure. I must admit that I became		I became more individualistic. I slowly become more direct. I become more liberal. There are huge changes. I became more confident. My mind is open. The way I interact with people changed. I am absolutely not judgmental anymore.

	stronger with my choices. I voice my opinion.		
Values			Dutch culture is very very similar to the UK. British people are very polite, a lot of please and thanks, but it is not necessarily mean that people mean it. It's like a habit. Compare to the Netherlands, UK people are not direct at all, even if it might seem opposite. Dutch are very direct. I prefer that better over UK tradition.
Miss	Food		Food
Social contacts	Other internationals	I don't have close friends here. But I know some people from Spain and Italy to go for a coffee.	Luckily, I have some friends here. They are all foreigners, but I would like to make Dutch friends. It is difficult to make Dutch friends. Especially for me because I am self employed so it is hard to meet Dutch people.
Activities		I organise meetings for foreigners. In Eindhoven there are no many events. I do photography. I collect artefacts from different countries. I travel a lot, almost every month. I do it alone.	
Involvement	Not much	I don't know anything about Dutch language. I am involved 2 out of 10. I am not a part of Dutch society.	I would say 6 out of 10. I do make an effort. And I learn the language.
Healthcare	I think here healthcare system is better than in UK and I am satisfied. Here you just pay a lot of money, in UK it is for free. When I speak to doctors here I get more answers.	In UK it is free, here you have to pay. I think it is absolutely horrible.	I don't have experience so far
Magical friend	Dutch boyfriend and his family. When I got a job also colleague helps me.	My British college explained a lot and HR helped, also Internet. HR in NXP helps a lot. But they don't have a	Expat center is a good resource. And I also find some good online resources.

		<p>standard process, they don't take an initiative. But if you have a question you can ask for help you will help you.</p> <p>Here a lot of events organised by The Hub or the Expat Center. I go there sometimes to get some information, meet people.</p>	
What don't like in the NL		Food	
Settling and belonging	<p>I belong more here than in England. It is more free and accepting here. I do feel settled, I don't want to move to another country or move back to England. I made my life here and here is a place where I meant to be.</p>	<p>I feel here at home, my life is quite settled here.</p>	<p>We just bought a house. I think I settled here very quickly. I find it easy to settled in the Netherlands. I think because of cultural similarity. People are friendly, they all speak English. I am active at settling process. I meet people, go to events. I do feel welcome here. I think they do their best here.</p>
Words	Settled, happy, organised,	Comfortable, relaxed, easy, secure.	
Social communication at work	<p>Happy, welcoming, hardworking, organised. People teach you how not to be shy. If we have some problems we just talk and find a solution.</p>	<p>Is good, friendly. Everybody speaks English. I never had any problems participation in coffee breaks or in other activities.</p>	
Corporate culture	They have here a very flat hierarchy.		
Way of living and working	Better professionalism here.	<p>People in UK live in credit, here they don't do that. Here people believe in appointments. Without an appointment you can't do anything. A lot of things are very slow here, a country in general is not efficient. People in UK are more adventurous, they can easily change a job. Here most of my colleagues work at the same place for 20 years. People in UK will think that you are not that good and you don't have</p>	<p>Specifically in Eindhoven, life is much more relaxed. In UK it is crazy. Basically you just work, you don't live. All our life there is about work. Here people have flexible work style. I think it is a massive difference. And here people follow a healthy lifestyle. Everybody syckle here and go to gym. Food here is not that good. It is not easy to find a good food here.</p>

		<p>another option, that's why you stay here. Here people love stability. In UK you can get gym membership from work, healthcare, childcare. Here you get nothing. Here work/life balance is great. People spend a lot of time with family. I don't see drunk people on the streets. Maybe in Amsterdam, but not in Eindhoven. UK Friday night...everybody are drunk, they even die from that.</p> <p>Crimes are less. In UK people don't like foreigners, but here I don't have any issues. Dutch work less hours than in UK. People here are less adventurous. British are good at selling. There is less hierarchy here. Work is very flexible, you can work here even from home. People here don't discriminate anybody. Even disabled people can get a job. Here people don't have a culture to congratulate properly with birthdays or at least give a card when somebody is leaving.</p>	<p>Maybe not officially, but in some way I feel. Unofficially I feel that people are willing to help you with all kinds of small issues. People here are very friendly, and I feel myself welcome here. Maybe because I am English it is easy transition, I don't know.</p>
<p>Plans for future</p>	<p>I want to be here, improve my skills and be good at my career.</p>	<p>I plan to stay here, at least for a few more years.</p>	<p>Probably I will not be in the Netherlands. I like to explore, I don't want to be at the same place for long time.</p>

