Bayerischer Forschungsverbund
Transnationale Netze

SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Erika Spieß

Sponsor: Bayerischen Staatsministerium
for Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst

Workshop „Harnessing Diversity in Workplaces, 20.11.2009

Bayerischer Forschungsverbund
Transnationale Netze

Results stem from a research association:

Transnational Networks

(FORTRANS)

KMU's (Small Businesses) Success as a Result of Intercultural Risk Management

Sponsor: Bayerischen Staatsministerium
for Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst

Interregional and Interdisciplinary

Disciplines

- Business Management
- Intercultural Communication
- Geo-economics
- Psychology

Universities

Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg

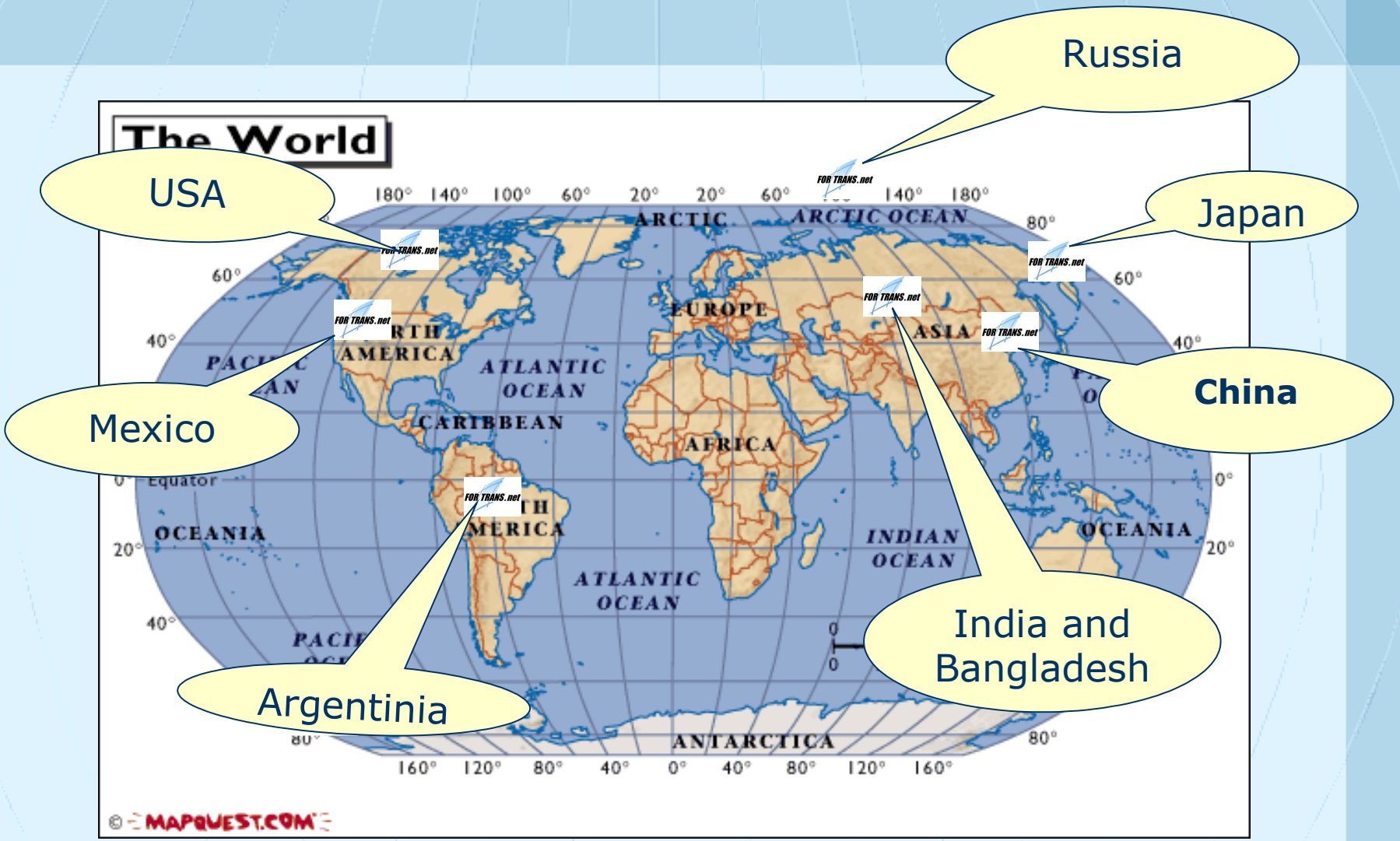
UNIVERSITÄT BAYREUTH

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

LMU

FOR TRANS.net

Fortrans Around the World



FOR TRANS.net

Theoretical Background

In view of globalization, foreign assignments have become increasingly important for large corporations as well as for small and medium-sized companies, but many foreign assignments fail.

Some of the reasons are the lack of private networks and the discontent of spouses / partners.

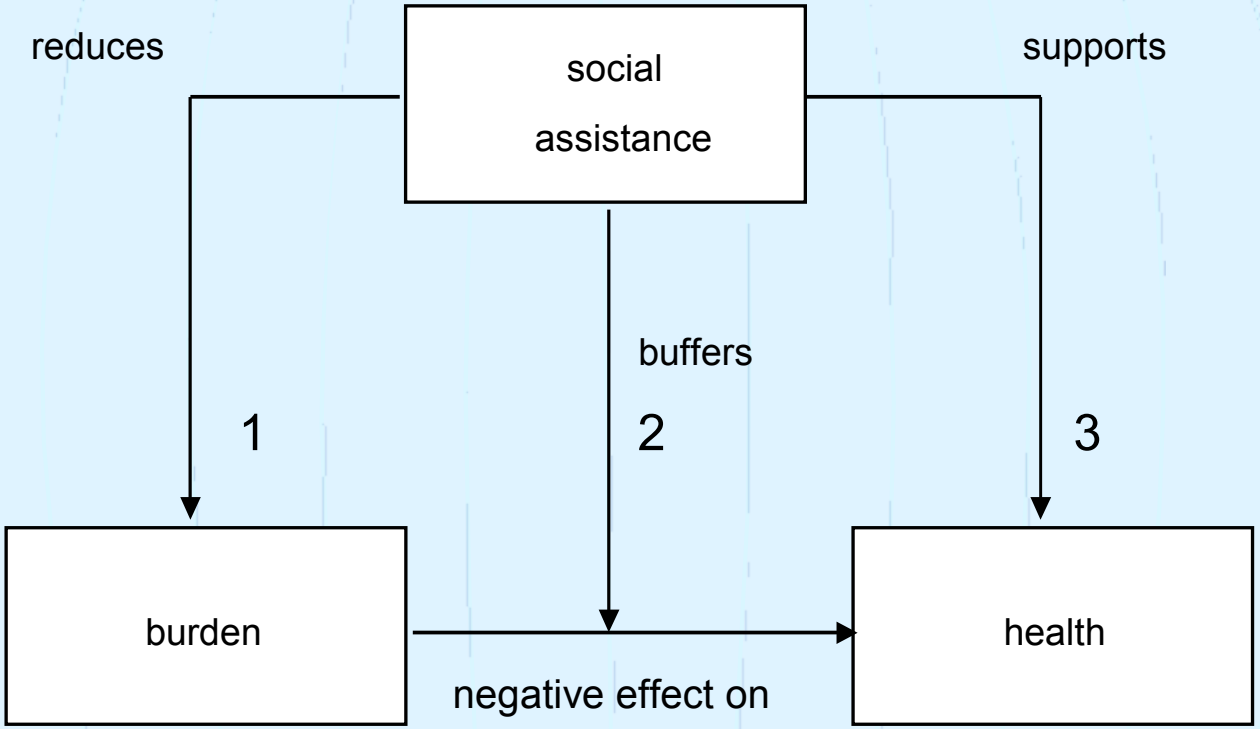
Spouse / family social support have been shown to play an important role for general and work-related adjustment (see for review: Hechanova, Beehr & Christiansen, 2003)

Many studies showed a positive relationship between social support at work and the well-being of those who received support (overwiev Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Hardly any research has been done on the relationship of social support and adjustment on foreign assignments!

FOR TRANS.net

Theoretical Background



Presumed effects of social support on health and well-being
(further developed by Pfaff, 1989; in Stadler & Spieß, 2003).

FOR TRANS.net

Design

qualitative pre-study

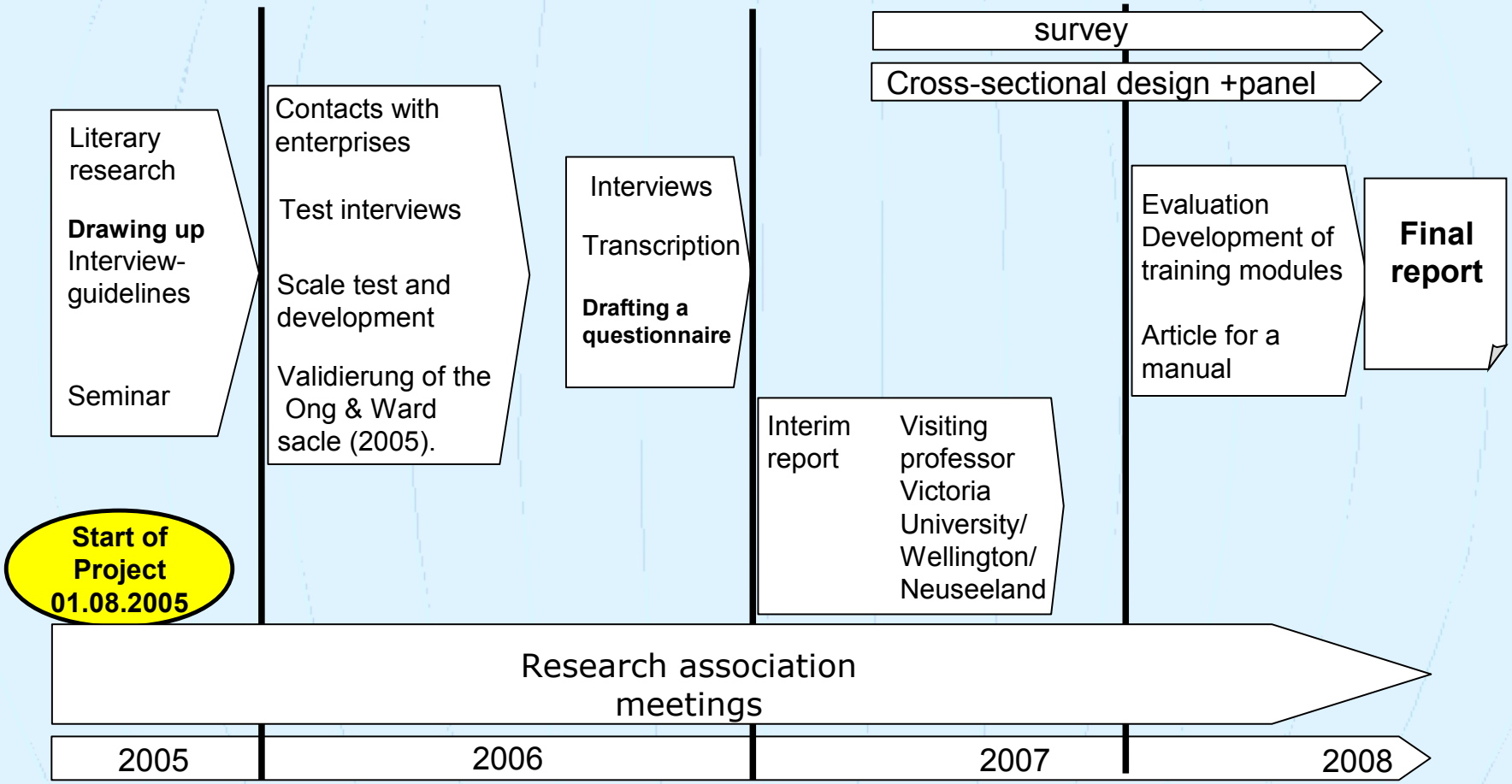
- Guided interviews
- need for support, significance of social networks

quantitative study

- study certain aspects more closely
- broader basis

FOR TRANS.net

Plan of the project



FOR TRANS.net

Qualitative Approach

Guided interviews with expatriates of small and medium-sized companies from April to July 2006.

Guidelines were developed separately for the preparation phase as well as for the two phases sojourn and return.

On demographics:
- 16 respondents, males, between 27 and 47 years
- medium-sized companies in Munich and surroundings
- fields: electronics, conveyor systems, paper manufacturing, engineering and mechanical engineering.
- destinations: China, Japan, Thailand and Indonesia.

FOR TRANS.net

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative definition of SMEs:

- 1) the owner plays an active, decisive role in running the company, i.e. usually management and owner are the same person,
- 2) high degree of product, service or market specialization,
- 3) a legal entity and
- 4) management's self-concept (“We are a small/medium-sized enterprise”).

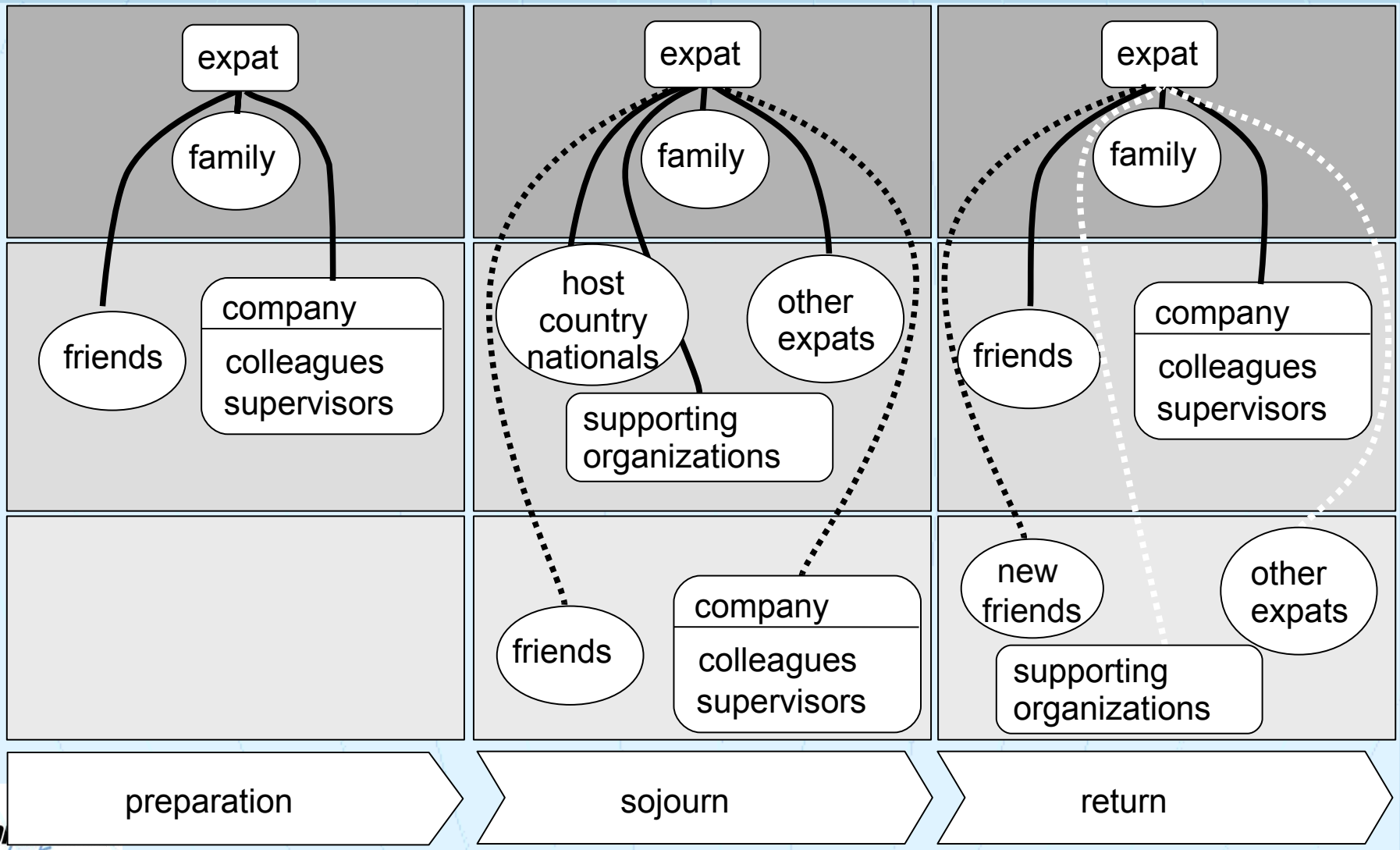
FOR TRANS.net

Qualitative Approach

- For all 16 respondents, family assumed a very important value.
- However, it was also stressed that keeping in contact and cultivating contacts, mainly over the telephone and via email, demanded special effort.
- Especially keeping in contact with friends suffered due to lack of time: “One can only work, eat and sleep”.
- If accompanied by a spouse: ”Only a busy wife is a good wife, a bored wife is torture”.

FOR TRANS.net

Result: The Interpersonal Network



Quantitative Approach

The aim:

Clarify the role of different social network partners (spouse, friends, co-workers and supervisors) and different types of interaction for the intercultural adjustment of expatriates.

Network Partner
-spouse
-friends
-co-workers
-supervisors

Type of Interaction
- socio-emotional
- instrumental

Intercultural Adjustment
- life satisfaction
- job satisfaction
- job stress

(modeled on Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002)

FOR TRANS.net

Quantitative Approach

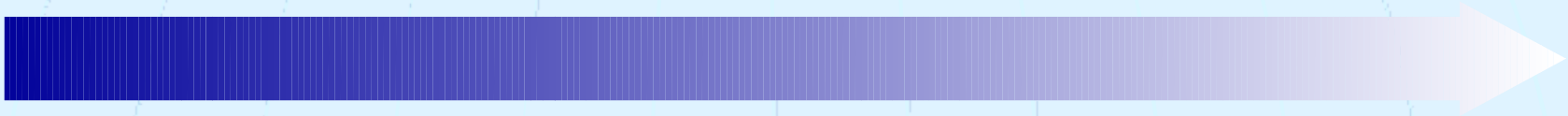
Hypotheses:

The social network partners (spouse, friends, co-workers and supervisors) and different types of interaction are important for the intercultural adjustment of expatriates.

- Hypothesis 1: Life satisfaction can be predicted by the degree of social support by the spouse and by friends.
- Hypothesis 2: Job satisfaction can be predicted by the degree of social support by co-workers and by supervisor/s.
- Hypothesis 3: Job stress can be predicted by the degree of social support.

FOR TRANS.net

Questioning Periods



Assignment phases:

Before Assignment | Sojourn in host country | Return

cross-sectional design

Questioning periods

FOR TRANS.net

Questionnaire

Type of interaction	Ong, A. S. J. & C. Ward (2005). The Index of Sojourner Social Support (ISSS) Scale; 18 Items
Social support by network partner - spouse, friends, co-workers supervisors	Frese, M. (1989), Social Support at the work-place; 20 Items
Job satisfaction	Agho, A. O., Prise, J. L. & Mueller, C. W. (1992). 6 Items
Life satisfaction	Fahrenberg, Myrtek, Schumacher & Brähler, Hogrefe Test 8 Items
Job stress	Sosik, J. J. & Godshalk, V. M. (2000). 8 Items
Demographic Data	Age, Sex, Company, Education, Marital status
Phase of the assignment	Before Assignment, Sojourn in host country, Return

Table 1: Some scales and variables of the questionnaire

FOR TRANS.net

Results: Descriptives

The inquiry period: from **April 2007** to **December 2007**.

All the **143** individuals were interviewed: 16 of them in the preparation phase, 90 in the sojourn phase and 37 in the return phase.

45% of the respondents were employees of small and medium-sized companies, **55%** employees of large corporations.

The average age: **38.33**. (Range: 25-63).

17% were female. At the time of the survey, most of the expatriates had a steady partner or were married (**80%**). About half of the respondents were accompanied by their family (**52%**).

FOR TRANS.net

Results: Descriptives

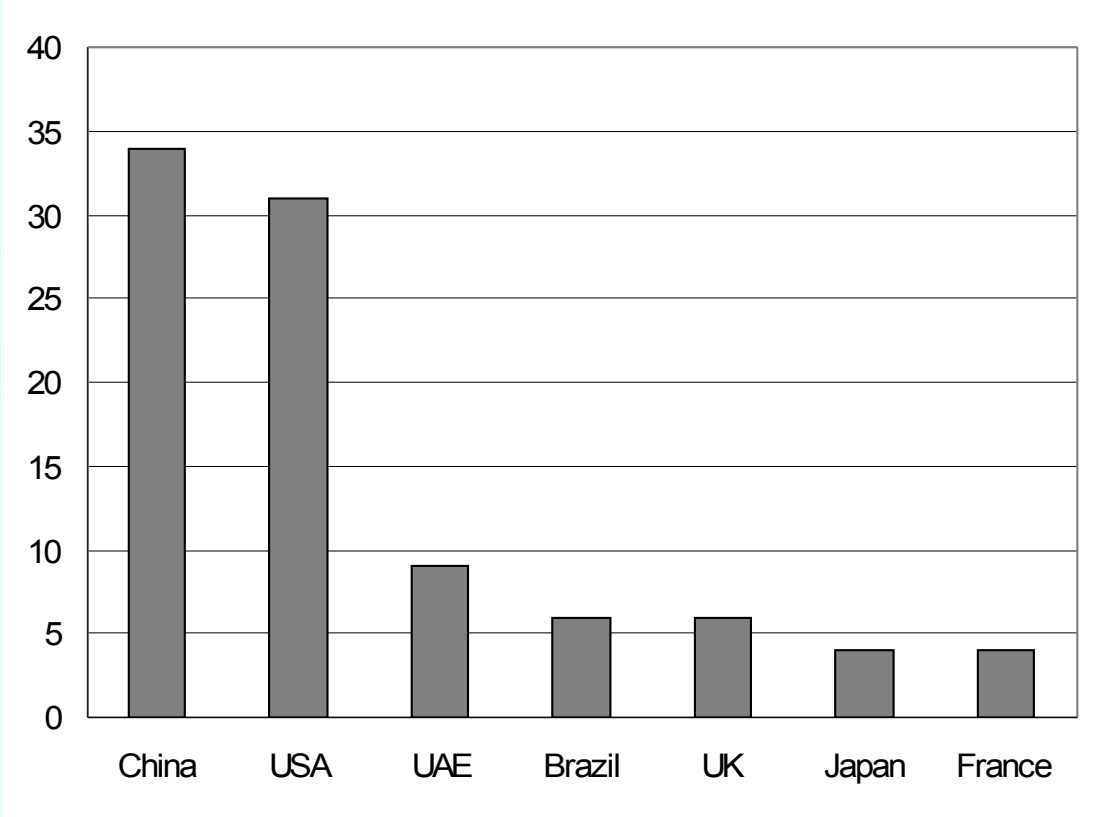


Figure 1: Expatriates' Countries of Sojourn

FOR TRANS.net

Results: H1 - Life Satisfaction

	B	SE B	β
spouse	**.12**	**.04**	**.27*** **
friends	**.20**	**.06**	**.29*** **
co-workers	.03	.07	.04
supervisors	.08	.05	.15
socio-emotional	-.03	.08	-.05
instrumental	.08	.08	.15

R^2adj = .23, $p < .001$
n = 127. ***p < .001. Two tailed tests.

Table 2: *Regression analysis for 4 network partners' social support and instrumental and socio-emtional support in predicting* ***life satisfaction.***

FOR TRANS.net

Results: H2 - Job Satisfaction

	B	SE B	β
spouse	.03	.05	.04
friends	.08	.08	.09
co-workers	-.01	.09	-.01
supervisors	**.14**	**.07**	**.20***
socio-emotional	-.15	.11	-.19
instrumental	**.30**	**.11**	**.39****

R^2adj = .14, $p \leq .001$
n = 127. *p < .05 **p < .01. Two tailed tests.

Table 3:*Regression analysis for 4 network partners' social support and instrumental and socio-emtional support in predicting **job satisfaction.***

FOR TRANS.net

Results: H3 - Job Stress

	B	SE B	β
spouse	.02	.04	.04
friends	-.02	.07	-.02
co-workers	.03	.08	.03
supervisors	**-.13**	**.06**	**-.23***
socio-emotional	**-.20**	**.10**	**-.29***
instrumental	**-.28**	**.10**	**-.42****

R^2adj = .14, $p \leq .001$
n = 127. *p < .05 **p < .01. Two tailed tests.

Table 4:*Regression analysis for 4 network partners' social support and instrumental and socio-emtional support in predicting* ***job stress.***

.

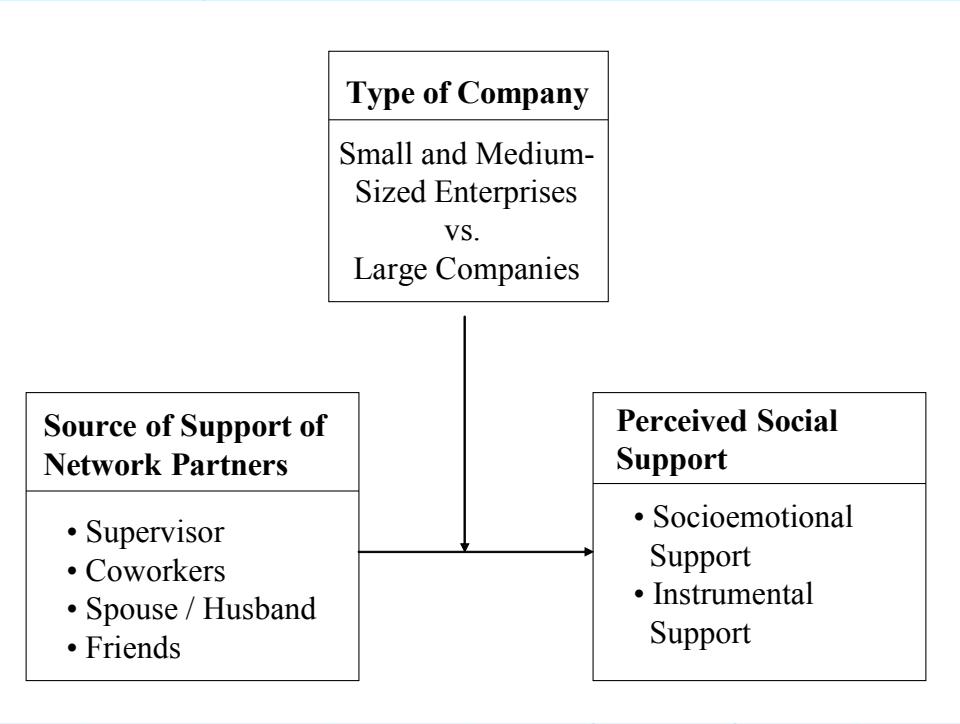
FOR TRANS.net

To sum up:

- high life and high job satisfaction and low job stress are indicators for successful adjustment
- for life satisfaction spouse and friends play a significant role
- for job satisfaction supervisors and instrumental support are important predictors
- job stress can be buffered by social support by supervisors and emotional and instrumental support.

FOR TRANS.net

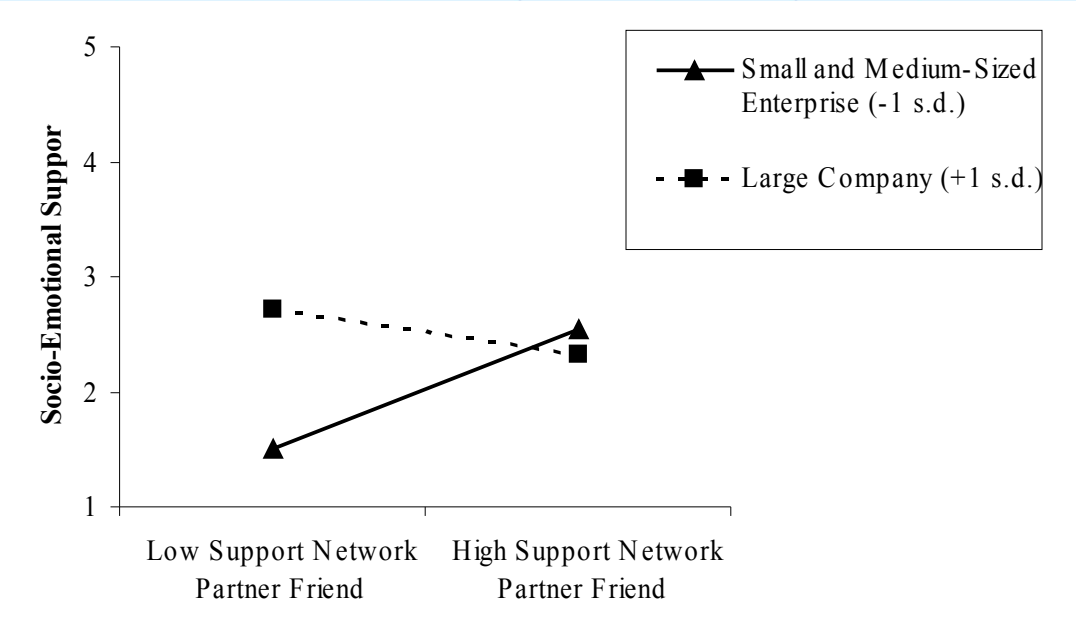
Hypothesized Model of Source of Support and Perceived Support



Stroppa & Spieß, 2010

FOR TRANS.net

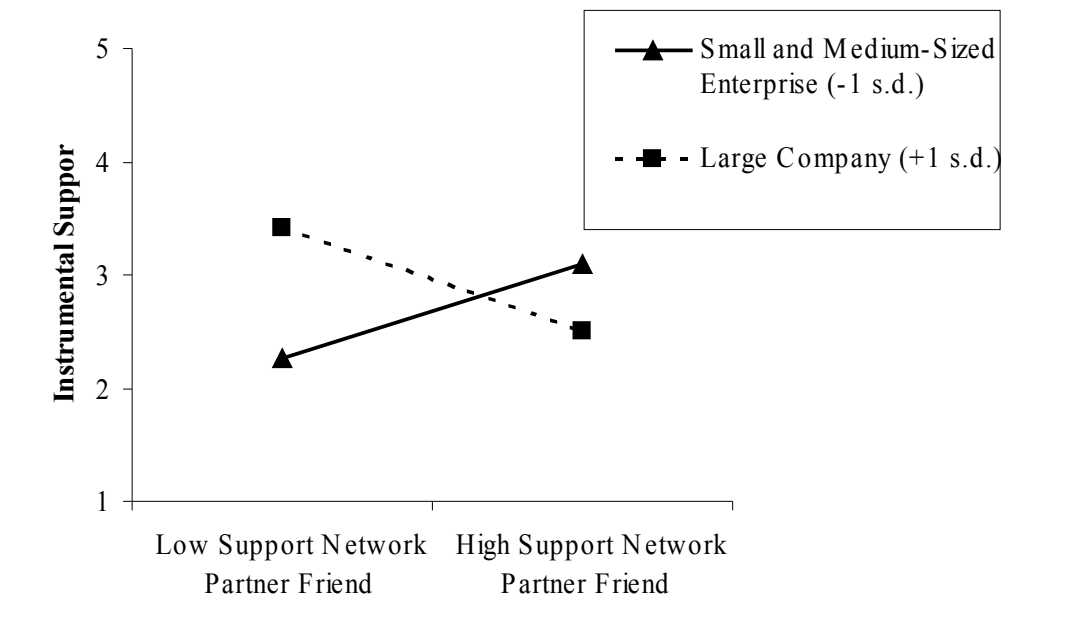
Interaction Plots for the Moderating Effect of Type of Company (Socio-emotional Support)



Stroppa & Spieß, 2010

FOR TRANS.net

Interaction Plots for the Moderating Effect of Type of Company (Instrumental Support)



Stroppa & Spieß, 2010

FOR TRANS.net

Conclusion

- Great need for **action** especially for staff of small and medium-sized companies as to:
- Better and more relevant **preparation**
- provision of **information** about the culture, the country and the job.
- Continuance of support beyond the sojourn itself

→**Improvement** of **contact** between the **network partners**: family and friends, also co-workers, the company itself, locals, other expatriates and supportive organizations

→**Reduction** of **risks** involved with the sojourn.

FOR TRANS.net

Actual Research

Article: Subjective Cultural distance – panel data
(own vs. foreign culture)
Student project: Acculturation questionnaire for students according to the MIDA-Model (Multidimensional Individual Difference Acculturation) from

Safdar, S., Struthers, W. & van Oudenhoven, J. P. (2009). Acculturation of Iranians in the USA, the UK, and the Netherlands. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40*(3), 468-491

Cooperation with University of Barcelona, Survey on "Social Support, Stress in the Workplace and Work-Life-Balance"; acculturation questionnaire;

FOR TRANS.net

Discussion

The importance of network partners and social support for diversity?

Which type of network might be effective for diversity?

What role does diversity play in foreign assignments?

…

FOR TRANS.net

Thank you!

References

- Agho, A. O., Prise, J. L., & Mueller, C. W. (1992). Discriminant validity of measures of job satisfaction, positive affectivity and negative affectivity. *Journal of Occupation and Organizational Psychology*, *65,* 185-196.
- Caligiuri, P. & Lazarova, M. (2002). A model for the influence of social interaction and social support on female expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 13*, 761-772.
- Fahrenberg, J., Myrtek, M., Schumacher, J. & Brähler, E. (2000). *Fragebogen zur Lebenszufriedenheit (FLZ) Handanweisung Hogrefe Test [life satisfaction questionnaire (FLZ) manual*]. Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Frese, M. (1989). Gütekriterien zur Operationalisierung von sozialer Unterstützung am Arbeitsplatz [The Operationalization of social support at work]. *Zeitschrift für Arbeitswissenschaften*, 43, 112-121.
- Ong, A. S. J., and Ward, C. (2005). The Construction and Validation of a Social Support Measure for Sojourners: The Index of Sojourner Social Support (ISSS) Scale. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *36*, 637-661.
- Podsiadlowski, A., Spieß, E., Stroppa, C. & Vauclair, M. Instrumental and socio-emotional support on international assignments: A Validation of the Index of Sojourner Support (ISSS) Scale in Germany and New Zealand and the relevance of support from locals. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. (submitted).
- Sosik, J. J. & Godshalk, V. M. (2000). Leadership styles, mentoring functions received, and job-related stress: A conceptual model and preliminary study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 21*, 365-390.
- Spieß, E. & Stroppa, C. (2008). Role of social support and the importance of interpersonal networks to minimize risks of foreign assignment. In Dietsche, C., Holtbrügge, D., Kühlmann, T., Puck, F. F., Rehner, J., Schauwecker, P., Scheuring, G., Spieß, E., & Stroppa, C. (Eds.), *Transnational networks – an effective tool for risk reduction? Small and medium-sized companies on the global market place.* Fortrans, Arbeitspapier 1, (pp. 103-121). München: fortrans
- Stroppa, C. & Spiess, E. (acceptet). Expatriates social networks: The role of company size. *International Journal of Human Resource Management.*

FOR TRANS.net

Contact

Prof. Dr. Erika Spieß
Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich
Leopoldstraße 13
80802 München
Germany

Email: espiess@muenchen-mail.de
Tel.: 0049/89/2180 5206

FOR TRANS.net