



PARALLEL PAPERS I
FRIDAY 7th JULY 1145-1300
ROOM II - 7.0.08

Paolo Dal Bo

*Behind repatriation distress:
a Lacanian perspective*

This paper aims to contribute to the developing literature on repatriation, in particular it tries to further the still limited psychoanalytic research on international assignments and to address the issue of repatriation from a theoretical point of view with the aim of providing a psychoanalytic explanation of the expatriates' experiences after reentry.

In particular this work shows through the RSI (real, symbolic, imaginary) grid, the theoretical framework used by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to read the human psychology, how what he calls "Jouissance" is distributed among the expatriates in foreign subsidiaries. This term is a threefold concept and indicates that sexual drive is absorbed by actions (the real), by linguistic

interactions (the symbolic) and by identifications (the imaginary). The transition from the foreign subsidiary to the mother company implies a change on the way Jouissance is distributed among the employees: the foreign subsidiary provides spaces for real, symbolic and imaginary enjoyment that are reduced in the headquarter.

This switch of Jouissance shapes repatriates' needs: the mother company absorbs less sexual drive in comparison to the foreign subsidiary and so repatriates try to cope with this change with real, symbolic and imaginary demands that all denote a need for meaningful job or relationships.

This paper shows how sexual drive is intertwined with work dynamics and how a sudden change in them affects the individual relationship with work. In that sense it furthers the research on international assignments with a psychoanalytic concept linked to a theoretical framework that

takes into account three important pillars of expatriates research: identity, language and knowledge. It also contributes to psychoanalytic research in showing how Jouissance is intertwined with the organizational setting and finally it clarifies a manifold concept which has already been used in organization studies but has not yet deeply analyzed.

Paolo Dal Bo

ESCP-Europe PhD student in Organizational Behavior at ESCP-Europe