Understanding weak ties as an opportunity for elite leadership proliferation

How does organisational structure in AIESEC influence job seeking behaviour of Alumni?

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Declaration

I declare on oath that I authored the following paper independently and without assistance and that I only used the resources indicated in the paper. All extracts that have been copied from publications analogously or literally are marked as such.

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List of acronyms

AIESEC – Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales (originally)

AAE – AIESEC Alumni Europe

AAI – AIESEC Alumni International

AI – AIESEC International

DG – Directorate General

EB – Executive Board

EU – European Union

iTtT – international Train the Trainer Seminar

LCVP – Local Committee President

MC – Main Category

NLP – Neuro-Linguistic-Programming

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SC – Sub Category

US – United States of America

Acknowledgments

0. Abstract

In this "network society" of the 21st century, its complexities and dynamics are substantially determining the economic, cultural and social context and inter-relations (Castells 2010). Political sociology understands weak ties as grounds for access to certain networks and its opportunities. After being introduced by Granovetter in 1971, the term transformed into a behaviour of networking for the sake of career opportunities. His theory complements "an economic analysis of labour markets and hiring practices" and seeks to understand the practice of placing a job through connections (Volti 2012).

Taking that perspective, this qualitative research paper argues that weak ties within the elite student network AIESEC are providing a unique advantage for future career perspectives of Alumni. This argument is substantiated on the notion that AIESEC's network mechanisms and structures are creating a balance of social and human capital which both are used by Alumni for their career development. By exploring endogen structural tendencies of the AIESEC network, this research paper is based on the interviews of four AIESEC Alumni who pursued a career in the EU Commission. Their stories are analysed with regards to organisational sociology, career practices and ego-network. The research will conclude by discussing the analysed stories and how they might elucidate the understanding of the phenomenon weak ties for the network of AIESEC.

1. Introduction

This qualitative research is interested in exploring the enigma of how AIESEC Alumni use their organisational and social network for their career. The specific topic is the career path of four AIESEC Alumni to the European Commission which has interfaces to three areas of research that can be linked to political science: social network research, career research and organisational research. These areas meet at an interface that opens scientific access to the research topic which enables to conduct a reliable study. The research question is:

How does organisational structure within AIESEC influence job seeking be-haviour of embedded actors at a level that has high influence?

AIESEC aims to develop young students into sustainable leaders believing in youth leadership as a fundamental solution to global erroneous trends (AIESEC International 2016). By targeting students, however, their focus on youth is limited to a small, privileged part of youth. Its leadership development program is based on four qualities that shall prepare young students to "succeed in rap-idly changing times" (AIESEC International 2016). These qualities are "solution oriented, self-aware, empowering others [and being a] global citizen" and com-prised into a leadership development model (AIESEC International 2016). This model is targeting global trends and believed to be an answer to an "erosion of trust" in leadership, "cross-cultural environments" within a growing "global so-ciety", the "power shift" from people to digitalisation and the "rising speed of change" (AIESEC International 2016). Where a lot of energy is put into the de-velopment and realisation of these qualities within the active network, how-ever, no scientific evidence has been found in how far the structure of the or-ganisation and type of programs offered in AIESEC account for the career choices of AIESEC Alumni. The network of AIESEC Alumni counts 1.000.000+ members as opposed to the active network with a base of 70.000+ members (AIESEC International 2016). The organisational predicament AIESEC is facing here is to what extent it can sustainably develop this type of leaders within the

active AIESEC network. Another predicament is by what means AIESECers, active and Alumni, make use of the "global network", "the support system" and being a "future young leader", especially for their career choices (AIESEC International 2016). This research aims to create scientific and societal relevance for AIESEC and social network research by following these four sub-questions:

1. What kind of network factors are of profit and used by Alumni to shape their career?
2. What kind of self-perception does an Alumni have working in the EU Commission?
3. What influence can AIESEC have with regards to career choices of Alumni?
4. What career choices did Alumni make with regards to their influence in AIESEC?

The research is based on the investigation and exploration of data from four interviews with AIESEC Alumni who work or worked for the EU Commission. The interviewees career development, their self-perception and motivation within the respected socio-organisational context comprise the centre of this study. Goal of the research is to gain basic findings on how a membership in AIESEC influences career prospects at an EU level. On current information, it appears that AIESEC as a network has not been scientifically studied yet. Therefore, there is no empirical insights nor data available that can be analysed with regards to the research question. For that, there was no previous research found from which data or findings on AIESEC Alumni career development can be translated and tested in hypothesis. Consequently, it is decided to use an explorative-inductive research design. Drawing a preliminary hypothesis in qualitative research is rather repudiated (Flick et al. 2005). However, the assumption of AIESEC Alumni using weak ties for their career is pre-constructed by the author. The degree of empirical findings can be higher when the subjective observation statements and assertions conflict the prior knowledge. Therefore, a hypothesis that exceeds the assumption will not be formulated.

To reconstruct the career paths of AIESEC Alumni, this research concentrates on three dimensions of analysis that are closely connected to the three different areas of research: social network research, career research and organisational research.

The first area is represented by the global youth run organisation AIESEC which is the research subject. Its link to political science is established in the fact that AIESEC as an international association influences the political arena equal to other interest groups or NGOs. Social network analysis will function as a theoretical approach to the methodology of this research paper. The second area is manifested in the research question itself, including job seeking behaviours as well as recruiting conditions within European Institutions which bridges to political science as well. Finally, the third area of organisational research establishes an operative framework for the analysis of this paper. In his fundamental work about the sociology of organisations, Pohlmann argues that organisations as an accepted part of modern society, fulfil two functions: one is to individually shape social status and positioning (Pohlmann 2016). That is to enable a career independently from social background, gender, age or ethnicity which is highly respected by HR departments (Pohlmann 2016). Second is to reach for a collective goal that targets social problems within the scope and decision making power of its actions. Subsequently he deduces that organisations as an institution gain social recognition through pledging an individualistic and or social rational benefit through its working internal and external effects (Pohlmann 2016). With regards to Pohlmann's second function of organisation one can detect the content-related link to political science, i.e. the influence of organisations on political processes to put their goal into the political agenda (Pohlmann 2016).

After this introduction, the second chapter outlines the relevant theories and the theoretical framework connected to social network theory and the phenomenon of weak ties. Additionally, chapter three points to the relevance of elites in hiring practice. The fourth chapter introduces the organisational context AIESEC to which the previous presented theory will be applied. To summarise the linkages of the depicted theoretical concepts to the organisational

context, the fifth chapter consolidates the findings of the presented research areas. Chapter six attends to the art of investigation including the methodology and operationalisation before proceeding with chapter seven, the core of this research, the results and indications of the collected data and its analysis. By finishing with creating coherence and consequences between the results, chapter eight provides the conclusion and an answer to the central research question.

2. Theoretical Frame: Social Network Theory

The theoretical frame is designed to provide scientific insights which shall later be connected to the reality of the selected data in the analysis (chapter 7). The three chosen theoretical perspectives are social network theory connected to human capital and social capital theory which will be shortly introduced and later more closely discussed.

Since the 1950ies, networks have been mainly used as a subject of research focusing on empirical research methods and formal network analysis (Fuhse 2016). For example, the series of studies by Granovetter examined the effects of social networks concluding that vacancies are occupied by specific social connections known as the theory of "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973). Yet, a theoretical understanding of networks provides the answers to the questions of why certain networks develop under certain conditions and why they have specific consequences and effects (Fuhse 2016). In the context of rational choice, networks are configurated by individual actions which is apprehended as social capital. This action-theoretical perspective was first adopted by Pierre Bourdieu who explored the value of social relations for the individuals within a network (Bourdieu 1983). Generally, social capital constitutes an individual resource in networks and an opportunity to behave for actors (Fuhse 2016). This resource varies in its degree from weak (Granovetter, Burt) to strong (Coleman) which will be later introduced with regards to the respected scholars. Another determining factor for career development is human capital which generally

refers to the acquisition of individual characteristics and attitudes that represent an economic value according to Becker.

The theoretical frame of this research combines social network theory (Granovetter, Burt) with social and human capital theory (Bourdieu, Coleman / Becker) to gain basic findings on how a membership in AIESEC influences career prospects at an EU level. All three theories are applicable to the three research areas of the research question. In the analysis, social network theory will relate to the findings on the embeddedness of the four Alumni in their ego-network, whereas social capital will relate to the organisational structure of AIESEC and human capital to the Alumni behaviour.

2.1. Social Network Theory

Social networks are central to career prospects within organisations (Scheidegger 2010). Especially for positions in high management, not only your curriculum vitae but your connections are decisive to get a job (Granovetter 1973/ Bourdieu 1983/ Burt 1992/ Lin 2001). Networks as a buzzword are not only one of the latest phenomena of the 21st century, but also a ubiquitous metaphor for complex circumstances related to basically everything that is not isolated (Barabási 2003). When reduced into its original form, a network is a strict architecture triangular relationship. The third actor can be in- or excluded by the other two (Hessinger 2010). Networks categorically answer how the multidimensional nature of relationships, in which "nothing is [potentially] excluded" can be established (Barabási 2003). Broken down, networks can be constituted in a structure of comparable, basic elements such as ties, loops, branches or angles. From an outsider perspective, these elements may not show any relation, however, the network-analytical approach treats this constitution of elements as one heterogenic unit. In network analysis, attributes such as weak, strong, intensive, casual, simple or multidimensional relationships are assigned to the concerned elements to build a hierarchy or cluster. The observational horizon of studying a network can include a geographical and or a chronological frame. This allows an in-depth analysis of change processes, shifts or interactions of the examined relationships and their elements from

both macro and micro-structural level. The network research is scrutinizing relations of the relationships between people or "ties" within a certain network allowing for a comprehensive purview of how social relationships and interactions are embedded, explaining their relativity and dependency based on contextual information (Granovetter, 1985). Due to the methodology of network research, the situational patterns of relationships can be transferred in a flexible, temporal path of development. This process of tracing back relationship connections makes the development of these observable, thus operational, and allows to identify a conversion from weak to strong ties or vice versa. Even though relationships appear to be irreconcilable oppositions, network theory puts them into continuously changing levels and combinations of basic elements.

The central empirical method of network theory is the frequency of contacts which bears the problem of underestimating qualitative indicators, that should be the basis of determining and specifying the value of relations. Main, however, divergent arguments of network theory exist regarding to the effect and success of actors within a network. The discrepancy lays between whether weak or strong ties support actors to enforce their interest in or outside an organisation in the sense of Pohlmann (Pohlmann 2016).

2.2. The emergence of Social Network Theory

Long before the term network theory evolved, Leonhard Euler introduced the terms "nodes "and "links" as visualized graphic by solving the "Königsberg problem", (Barabási 2003). With this graph theory, he demonstrated that within the architecture of a network there are "properties [...] that limit or, enhance our ability to do things with them" (Barabási 2003). Concluding that the architecture of "networks is the key to understanding the complex world around us. Small changes in the topology, affecting only a few of the nodes or links, can open up hidden doors, allowing new possibilities to emerge." (Barabási 2003). Applied to Granovetter, society can be visualised as "a collection of complete graphs" (Barabási 2003).

In his dissertation „Getting a Job", Mark S. Granovetter (1973) laid out the groundwork for modern research in the field of social networks with his contrast of identifying weak ties and strong ties as main junction elements of a relationship within a network. He argues that a closed network with strong ties bears an information redundancy. Consequently, external information becomes crucial, channelized through weaker ties from outside the network. This weak tie metaphorically functions as a bridge and is to be understood as "the chasm between two social clusters" (Burt 1992). That concept has been developed further by Ronald S. Burt. He found that the phenomenon of a bridge is "two things" and in addition to Granovetter's understanding not only the "chasm spanned" but also "the span itself" which he defines as a "structural hole" (Burt 1992). It lays in the character and quality of that chasm to generate information benefits. Concluding that "whether a relationship is strong or weak, it generates information benefits when it is a bridge over a structural hole." (Burt 1992). When weak ties are activated, new, external information is made accessible that can be used as an opportunity. The usage of this juncture can be defined as network opportunism. Granovetter bases his conclusions on a study of limited networks of sub-neighbourhoods with a "total sample of 282" interviewed participants (Granovetter 1973). Based on this relatively small sample other scholars such as Gans argued that "Granovetter [...] overestimates the importance of weak ties" due to the geographical limitations of the study (Gans 1973). He further argues that "intradisciplinary collegial relationships fall into that [same] category" of acquaintanceship what Granovetter does not take into consideration but would rather define as a close tie (Gans 1973). The findings of the analysed network stories might shed light whether this accounts for the Alumni ties' importance or not.

2.3. Human capital and social capital

Besides the benefits of networks, one's career success is defined by two concepts: human capital and social capital (Scheidegger 2010). The OECD defines human capital as "The knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-

being." (OECD 2001). This describes the close connection of individual attributes condensed to a certain stock of capital, generated through education and other processes of lifelong learning, that was first coined by Becker (1975). Moreover, the definition provided by the OECD stresses the areas of social, as well as economic well-being and therefore reflects its multi-facet nature. Investing resources like time, money or work in education generates productivity growth, fosters innovation and enables to fulfil tasks of high economic value. This is understood to be a catalyst for opportunities to hold higher paid jobs and influential positions. Pertaining to human capital, the access to resources through certain relationship constellations is recapitulated in the concept of social capital introduced by Bourdieu and later advanced by Coleman, in 1988. Coleman defines social capital as a function-oriented "variety of different entities" consisting "of some aspects of social structures, [...] certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors - within the structure." (Coleman 1988). This generalized definition indicates two main parts of social capital. For an individual actor that is to either directly influence an outcome to their benefit or to bridge the "micro-to-macro" gap within a certain social structure (Coleman 1988). Coleman's action-theoretical perspective is simplified in "Coleman's Boat" which visualises actions within social structure in three steps (Coleman 1988/ Fuhse 2016). The first step begins with the social structure (the network) and proceeds to the actor. The second step continues between actor and its action and the third between this action and an alteration of the social structure (Figure 1).

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Macro level
(system of action)

Micro level
(actors and resources)
Figure 26.1 Causal diagram for relating micro and macro levels.
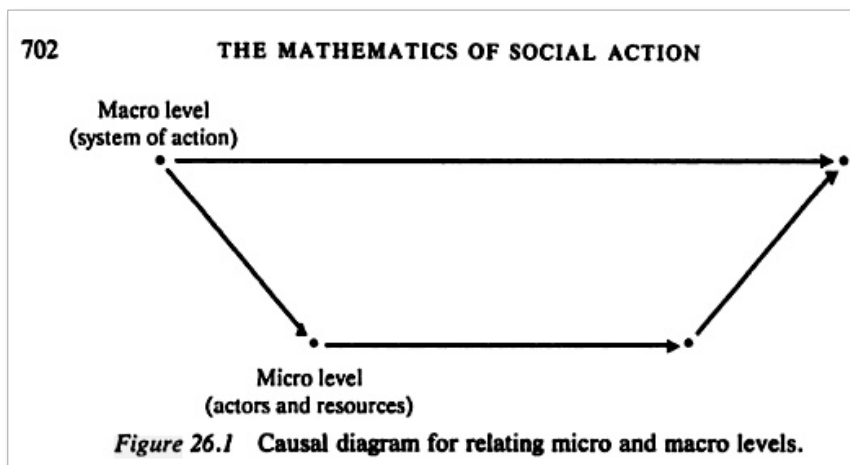
Figure 1 – Coleman's boat (Coleman 1988)

For an occupational attainment, both, human and social capital are vital to generate *exclusive* career opportunities (Burt 1997). Burt and Granovetter apply social capital for specific network structures, especially opportunities generated through information channels (Burt 1992/ Fuhse 2016). Based on this argument, this research paper anticipates that the effects of social networks are of more relevance in higher career opportunities that are intended to be sought by AIESEC Alumni.

3. Elite proliferation in hiring practices

The question who takes a leading role in societies has always been an area of research for sociology (Hartmann 2007). However, there is no scientific consensus on a definition of elites. The term's origin goes back to the Latin verb 'eligere' which means 'to elect something or somebody' or 'to sort something out'. Being part of the elite of a society means to have a superior selected social role without considering the described attributes and privileges of that role (Andersen & Woyke 2013). This superior role entails a constant influence on decision making processes that are relevant for a bigger group of people. Resources such as social, human or monetary capital, elections, or authority can legitimise and sustain an elite role, depending on the category and sector of elites. Elites are usually clustered in four categories: power, function, position and values (Hartmann 2008). The rough differentiation between elite of origin and performance elite or value based elites are commonly disseminated in public (Hartmann 2008). The later defines elite on the grounds of a normative understanding how they are representing the fundamental values and beliefs of a society or fulfilling its scope of performance (Hartmann 2008). Profile of requirements and recruiting techniques vary from sector to sector as well as in the underlying understanding of elite. For that, the term elite is always performance-related to the position or function of the elite in its respective society. In her ground work "Beyond the Ruling Class" the US-American sociologist Suzanne Keller introduced her concept of "strategic elites" (Keller 1963). She defines elite as an effective and responsible minority, in charge of realising social

goals and the continuity of a social order. For her, strategic elites are of social relevance since their decisions and actions shape society. The introduction marked a new understanding of elites in modern industrial societies after concepts of the ruling class and aristocracies (Hartmann 2008). Keller's definition of strategic elites will be depicted to be referred to when discussing elite related topics in this research paper.

4. AIESEC as an organisation of elite leadership development

After world war II, European students from seven countries, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden meet in Liege, August 1946 (AIESEC International 2008). Topics that have been discussed centred around opportunities of student exchange programs between European faculties of economic and commerce (AIESEC International 2008). With this they sought an opportunity to sustainably secure freedom on the European continent. The aftermath of world war II complicated not only means of traveling but also communication between the different countries. The initiative of these students resulted in the first international congress in March 1949, which culminated in the founding of AIESEC three years later (AIESEC International 2008). Originally an abbreviation for 'Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales' it is no longer used. With the expansion to every academic background, the full term 'AIESEC' replaced the French acronym and is now legally accepted as the official name of the organisation (AIESEC International 2008).

Today, AIESEC is the world's largest non-profit, non-governmental, registered student-run organisation that provides students with opportunities of leadership development and cross-cultural exchange experiences in the form of professional internships and volunteer programs. Over its 68 years of existence, it developed a network of more than a million AIESEC Alumni, whereas the active network includes around 70.000 members in 126 countries – still growing and expanding (AIESEC International 2016). To provide the exchange opportunities

and promote leadership as a fundamental solution for global peace, AIESEC co-operates with over 1.500 business partners worldwide, from local to global level (AIESEC International 2016). AIESEC consults with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is cooperating with the UN's Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (AIESEC International 2016). Its coopera-tion with UNESCO dates to its early years which demonstrates the organisa-tion's motivation to seek political influence outside its academic and corporate network (AIESEC International 2008).

4.1. Internal view

Internally, AIESEC presents its *nature* as being "an international, non-political, non-profit, student-run, independent, international foundation" (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2000). It is comprised of students and recent gradu-ates of institutions of higher education who are interested in economics and management. AIESEC does not discriminate based on race, colours, sex, sexual orientation, creed, religion, national or ethical origin (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2000).

Six *core values* are representing the leadership attitude every member should life up to during and after an active membership: "striving for excellence, demonstrating integrity, activating leadership, acting sustainably, enjoying par-ticipation and living diversity." (AIESEC International 2016). Its organisational *vision* which is rooted in its founding context is: *Peace and Fulfilment of Human-kind's Potential* (AIESEC International 2016). AIESEC defines its *role and social recognition* as being a contributor to the development of worldwide communi-ties with an overriding commitment to international co-operation and under-standing by developing individuals into responsible leaders (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2000). Its *core work* centres around the facilitation of international traineeship exchanges and supporting activities that provide prac-tical learning experiences for trainees and that facilitate the learning of mem-bers and other stakeholders (AIESEC International 1998). Working towards achieving its *goal* to "engage and develop every young person in the world by

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AIESEC
International (AI)
international level
    │
Member          │
Committees (MC) ─┤
national level   │
            Local Chapters
            (LC) local level
                  │
            Local Commitee
            President (LCP)
                  │
            Vice Presidents
            (VPs)
                  │
            Teamleader
            (TL)
                  │
            Member
```
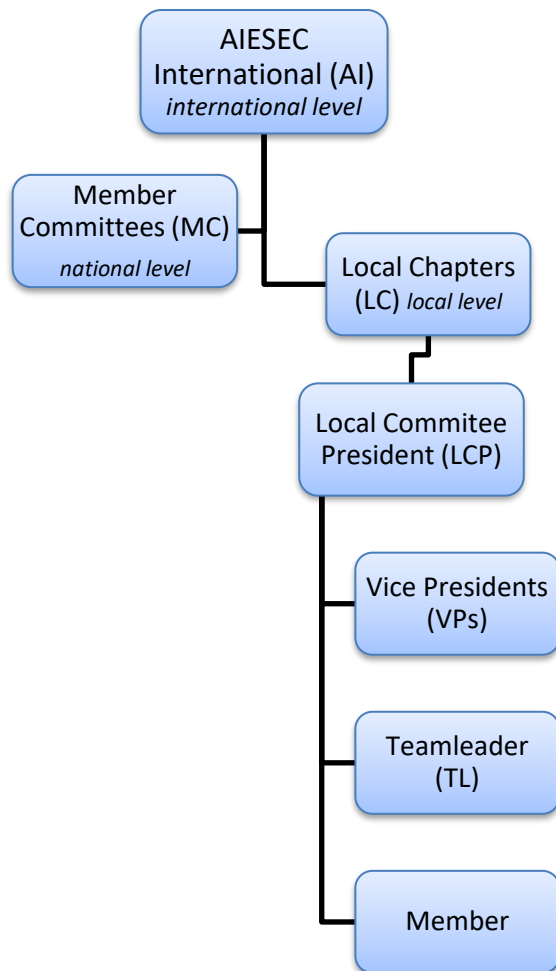
Figure 2 - Organigram of AIESEC (own diagram)

equipping them with 4 leadership characteristics: being self-aware, world citizen, solution oriented and being able to empower others." (AIESEC International 2016). Its revenues are generated by fees from the exchange programs, as well relied on corporate supporters and donations. In a nutshell AIESEC is itself a "global ethnoscape" – a non-territorial community increasingly integrating with the economic, cultural and social surroundings (AIESEC International 1998). Its organigram resembles a rather traditional organisational hierarchy that can be compared to multinational companies (Figure 2). Generally, AIESEC's organisational structure shall enable its performance towards its impact achievements. Furthermore, it shall integrate all entities with different characteristics into one common vision. Lastly, it shall provide stability and sustainability to the organisation concerning AIESEC's short-lived member basis. In the early years, structures were functional and often related specifically to exchange procedures (AIESEC International 2008). Most tasks consisted of writing to, or telephoning companies, filling in exchange forms, handling authorities, etc. (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 1960). Members were supposed to be able to do most of the tasks themselves. This reflected the industrial type of organising, with few managers and many "unskilled" workers doing routine, procedural work (AIESEC International 1998). While the tasks changed, and developed over time, back office functions such as finance, marketing, talent and information management gained more importance (own experience). With the use of online communication means AIESECs operations grew in terms of numbers and effectiveness

(AIESEC International 1998). AIESEC seeks to be flexible and agile to react to current trends – year by year – its members need to establish the impact and relevance of the organisation aligned to the current global context (AIESEC International 2016). This is reflected in their approach of "shaping what we do around what the world needs and align it to our ambition for peace" such as embracing the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (AIESEC International 2016).

4.2. External view – AIESEC as an elite organisation

The origins of suitable leadership figures and their qualities and attributes can be traced back to classical antiquity (Schäfers 2004). Elite as a phenomenon is universal, central and constitutes society. It assumes the dichotomy between the elite and the mass indicating that the elite are those who control and lead social processes and change for which they often need or want to mobilise bigger population groups (Andersen & Woyke 2013). The recruiting and circulation as well as the integration of elites is the current interest of elite research (Schäfers 2004). A pluralistic, however structural and normative integrated elite that is later to be connected throughout different sectors can be attributed to AIESEC. In elite research, this is a prerequisite of sustainably consolidate a democracy (Andersen & Woyke 2013). Corporate stakeholders find attraction in the cooperation with AIESEC due to its access to "qualified junior staff", Porsche states (Porsche 2017). However, corporate hiring practices show that the term 'elite' is put on the same level with 'talents' or 'high-potentials' that is reflected in the different phases of a curriculum vitae and the numbers and results of certificates. Its use is rather avoided as perceived in the language applied in hiring approaches. Whereas EON, a corporate partner of AIESEC, presents the organisation from their perspective as "AIESEC sees itself as a network of tomorrow's elite, who are already establishing contacts to top companies during their studies." (EON 2017). This conflict, however, with the normative image AIESEC is promoting. Phineo, a platform for social investors, presents AIESEC as a "socially responsible elite with intercultural competences", without differentiating the term elite (Phineo 2009). In a testimonial of a German exchange participant elite is defined as "being a student and living with

less than 979€/month" (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2017). Elite seems to be of differing use depending on the perspective and intention.

4.3. The input dimension: approach and vision

An experience with AIESEC are based upon five standards: real resources, learning by doing, a global network, the development of others and the achievement of results (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2013). This shall account for the following five products:

- Local Volunteer (community development project-based program)

- YouthSpeak Forum (an event for students and professionals to exchange)

- Global Talent (company-based internship)

- Global Entrepreneur (start-up-based internship)

- AIESEC Membership

These products shall enable young people to develop their leadership potential through learning from practical experiences in challenging environments (AIESEC International 2016). The cross-cultural exchange experiences shall have two positive aspects: allow the exchange participant to grow outside their comfort zone and expand their world view while at the same benefit the surrounded community (AIESEC International 2016). This shall create the effect of understanding how to communicate and capitalize on diversity. A team experience provides an opportunity to develop leadership potential in a global network. To enhance these learning experiences, AIESEC provides a framework called "Inner and Outer Journey" which shall support learning by doing (outer journey) through reflecting (inner journey) (AIESEC International 2016). It shall ensure that learnings from these experiences have a sustainable effect on choices and behaviours later in life. This approach to an experience of leadership development shall guarantee to unlock the members' potentials (AIESEC International 2016).

AIESEC envisions an exchange-based society (AIESEC International 1998). This is apparent in its mainstreaming of providing opportunities to go abroad as a

student or young graduate. However, the provision of seeking practical experience next to studies does not account as mainstreaming. Still, a minority of students get engaged and spend their time for social engagement during their studies. The competition for this minority is high between other student organisations or NGOs, especially, to those connected to business administrations. The organisation is not defined by its multitude of members and exchange participants but the other way around – the values and experiences provided by the organisation individualize its engaged students – which guarantees AIESEC's existence in its original form (AIESEC International 1998). But it shall also enable a multiplying effect - every individual approached – proofs its AIESEC conformity outside of the organisation. With that "any AIESEC experience is ever closed. It grows a lifetime long, overlaps and heightens with other experiences. It is the basis for a contemporary, global, responsible and human leadership culture." as Patrick Günther, a former president of AIESEC in Germany 2013-2014, explains (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2013).

4.4. The output dimension: global exchange and leadership development

AIESEC defines its accomplishment in every single member that either went abroad and returned with a deeper understanding of the world or learned that sustainable development is a key to peace and freedom (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2012). For five years, AIESEC's exchange number grew exponentially which created a constant growth of its global network which counts over one million members (Deutsches Komitee der AIESEC e.V. 2012). Most students who are in AIESEC are self-selected future leaders in business or government or education (AIESEC International 1998). Their work in developing an AIESEC most suitable to the times ahead should prepare them all the better for their own future leadership roles. Statements of member's self-image are 'top talents' or 'leaders of tomorrow'. What happens when AIESEC engages and develops young people with effects on their leadership path will be presented in the four cases of the AIESEC Alumni interviewed. Organisations have the power to establish institutions such as values, skills, mindsets which become like a "second skin" (Pohlmann 2016). These institutions are influencing the motivation and the motives for staying or leaving an organisation (Kühl 2011). In

the case of AIESEC, motivation is seized in three ways: first, through incentive structures by providing leadership opportunities and the internalisation of norms that is actively promoting the AIESEC values (striving for excellence, demonstrating integrity, activating leadership, acting sustainably, enjoying participation, living diversity). Second the de- and legitimation and recognition of motives through rewarding successful local chapters or closing local chapters that did not meet the expected national criteria. The recognition of motives is also carried out in small teams by celebrating successes or, in contrast, by expelling members. Third, by articulating and pushing motives and career paths through supporting and recommending members to develop themselves further and take a higher leadership position in the organisational hierarchy. These presented institutions shape the members' self-portrayal of 'being an AIESECer' and their identification with the organisation after leaving as it will be presented in the analysis (chapter 7).

5. Consolidation of the presented research areas

The three research areas social network research, career research and organisational research have been presented by discussing the three theories as a framing, introducing AIESEC as the research subject and enlarging on elite proliferation in hiring practices. Before proceeding with the methodology, this chapter will shortly consolidate the purport of linking these findings to one basis. Generally, it should answer the questions of:

- What is the point of using social networks and social capital theory for this research?
- How is AIESEC connected to the European Union in the context of this research?

Looking at the depicted subject of research, the social structure of AIESEC shapes certain behaviour – based upon subjective considerations and oriented

on objective circumstances. For example, in AIESEC every member is aware to invest time and resources if one wants to learn practical leadership and management skills. Members of AIESEC are motivated by the expectation to gain these practical skills and to learn by applying them. The social structure of AIESEC does not only exists of its members but also its external supporters and advisors which include corporate stakeholders, AIESEC Alumni, NGOs. For example, by investing time as well as financial and human resources Porsche expects to gain access to high potential applicants for their employee pipeline. This social structure in AIESEC exists upon the expectability and the commitment of complementary actions between the active AIESEC member network and the network of its supporters. It shapes the behaviour of active members and supporters as well as it is subject to change. By using social network and social capital theory, the social structure of AIESEC can be analysed with regards to its composition and type of actors as well as their behaviour and decision making.

Understanding AIESEC and the EU beyond their common founding purpose, there is a similarity within their social structure provided that the EU Commission is put on a level with a working environment of the corporate sector. In AIESEC, members learn, the more experiences and higher positions one takes the more one is exposed to new acquaintances and possibly profitable networks due to a higher level of influence. It is expected to enlarge one's network as a return of investing time, money and capabilities. The social structure of the EU Commission presents a similar rationale: the higher the position the greater the possibility to enlarge one's network and career success.

6. Art of empirical investigation

By re-constructing ego-centred social relationships this research seeks to understand what kind of influence involved actors (the egos) have been exposed to and profited from by their individual network. The level of understanding this social phenomenon within an ego-centred network is based on the ego's

interpretative patterns (Fuhse 2016). Therefore, focus of the methodological approach will be the convergence of involved actors to connect their subjective meaning to their embeddedness as well as to important relationships in their network. Three aspects of interpretative patterns will be of relevance to serve the research question. First, the general importance of the relationship. Second, the process of information exchange and their effects on the relationship. Third, the personal motivation to build or sustain such a relationship.

To analyse how the network and organisational structure of AIESEC influences members' career success, the nature of relationships must be taken into consideration to formulate dimensions of analysis that are in congruence with the three areas of research. This research paper focusses on three in the organisational network context relevant forms of touchpoints that establish a certain form of relation that is typical for the organization AIESEC. Following Scheidegger's approach of her research on the effect of structural holes in career success, three dimensions of analysis will be derived from these defined forms (Scheidegger 2010).

Organisational Research	*Dimension 1*: modi of integration in AIESEC
Career Research	*Dimension 2*: career path practices
Social Network Research	*Dimension 3*: social network effects on career development

6.1. Research Methodology

In this research, AIESEC represents the organisational context of the research and the four career trajectories of Alumni investigated represent four sampling cases. As already discussed in the introduction, an explorative-inductive research design will be used. The data collection method is the conduction and analysis of four interviews of four AIESEC Alumni. The objective of the data collection method is to collect personal information by conducting four quali-

tative interviews of AIESEC Alumni who currently do or did occupy a job posi-
tion at an EU Institution. To ensure a goal-oriented output, the interview is de-
signed with an adequate degree of structuring regarding the research question.
The three sampling criteria are determined by the content of the research ques-
tion, i.e.: AIESEC Alumni, over 30 years, working in an EU Institution. The case
sample has been developed by using a snowball system. One possible candidate
has been contacted and asked to contact other possible candidates which re-
sulted in a successive collection of the four cases. All four interviewees have
agreed to reveal their name for the purpose of this research study. The content-
based case analysis uses AIESEC as a network structure in the sense of Grano-
vetter's study and his theory of weak ties. The consequences of this network
phenomena will be utilized as a framework for the data analysis.

The research interest of re-constructing ego-centred networks determines the
type of qualitative interview. Kaiser defines three different types of qualitative
interviews which will be shortly introduced (Kaiser 2014).
The *narrative interview* is a representation of biographical chapters and experi-
ences of the interviewees life (Kaiser 2014). Whereas the interviewee is in the
role of the story-teller, the interviewer is actively listening without following a
strict guideline, whereas, subsequent questions are formulated coming to the
end of the interview to gather all relevant information for the research (Kaiser
2014).
The *ethnographic interview* aims to capture opinions, attitudes, values, and daily
routines. Compared to the narrative interview, the interviewee determines the
flow (Kaiser 2014). The interviewer only prepares a small set of key questions
(Kaiser 2014).
The *expert interview* is significantly distinguished to the other types (Kaiser
2014). The expert is interviewed as and expected to be the prime source of
information for the interviewer. The main goal is to generate expected results
in a structured interview situation. Kaiser argues that, fundamentally, biograph-
ical information does not play a critical role (Kaiser 2014). For this research
paper, a reasonable combination of an expert interview will be conducted with

narrative elements. The presented dimensions are somewhat anticipating certain results that require a more structured interview, as well as the reconstruction of an ego-centred network. However, Kaiser underestimates biographical information that are expected to be vital for the generation of individual network structure as well as to the timeframe in which cause and effect are suspected. Data gathered through qualitative interviews are no subject to statistical analysis due to their low degree of standardisation and open nature, nonetheless, the generation of an individual network structure involves quantitative aspects as well. Therefore, a set of interpretive techniques are applied that are systematically following pre-set criteria of a narrative and an expert interview.

6.2. Conceptual and instrumental operationalisation

This research paper aims to reconstruct the mechanism of embedded actors and their usage of weak ties. Goal of the research is to gain basic findings on how a membership in AIESEC influences career prospects at an EU level. The theoretical framing of network and organisation theory will now be transmitted into the reality of the case study and the research question will be coded into questions that fit to the context of the ego-network activities. With that, the theoretical concepts can be qualitatively measured in the empirical context. Kaiser suggests three consecutive steps from research to interview questions (Kaiser 2014). The conceptual operationalisation follows two steps. From the research question, dimensions of analysis will be derived that are further broken down into batteries of subjects in a second step. These observational criteria are then operationalised in an instrumental manner to form interview questions that aim to explore the research field and understand weak ties, see Table 1 in the appendix. The interview is commonly find as a methodology for ego-network research designs of case studies that involve only a few, comparable subjects to describe processes or contextualise interdependencies (Kaiser 2014/ Fuhse 2016). With the interview questions formulated in Table 1, an ego-centric network cannot be sufficiently generated. To understand and measure weak ties as an influential career factor for embedded actors the interview questions need to go beyond an exploration of the research field.

Therefore, the questions need to shift back to the focus to connect the interviewees subjective meaning to their embeddedness as well as to important relationships in their network. Three aspects of interpretative patterns will be of relevance to serve the research question. First, the general importance of the relationship. Second, the process of information exchange and their effects on the relationship. Third, the personal motivation to build or sustain such a relationship.

To reconstruct personal ego-networks, two types of questions are necessary that qualify, not quantify, the nature of relationships (Fuhse 2016). First is the *name generator* and second the *name interpreter* (Fuhse 2016). The name generator is an instrument to collect important reference persons that are of relevance to the ego. In a succeeding step a set of name generator and interpreter questions are formulated, additionally to the explorative interview questions. With this, questions about what kind of relationships are relevant to the ego and how to effectively ascertain them will be covered. The first set of questions is to determine the size of the network. On average, interviewees name three reference persons (Fuhse 2016). Not names are of research matter but the quality and behaviours of the relationships between alter and ego (Fuhse 2016). Therefore, the nature of the ego-network will be interpreted by follow up questions, see Table 2 in the appendix.

The full interview guideline will serve as the data collection method. To gain an elaborated access to the ego-centred network analysis as well as to support the interview process and data collection visually, a network map per Kahn/ Antonucci will be filled out during the interview as seen in Figure 3 in the appendix (Kahn & Antonucci 1980). With this additional method, the research aims to measure the nature of ties mentioned in the theory chapter by analysing the relation between the ego and atleri, i.e. the influencing persons.

7. Data and Analysis

In the following chapter, assertions about the elite network of AIESEC and its career opportunities in the EU Commission are presented based on four conducted interviews of AIESEC Alumni who work for the EU Commission. First, the collected data is presented before the research question is addressed. These assertions concern the reality of the examination group and enable to derive further exceeding hypothesis of the research field. The study is of explicit explorative character and its findings can possibly prepare a quantitative scrutiny.

For the qualitative design of this study, the data collection method of expert interviews is open and the data evaluation is of interpretative and thematic nature. This case study centres around the exploration and reconstruction of four individual cases of AIESEC Alumni, in so far, one case is overlapping three dimension:

- *Dimension 1: social network effects in career development*

- *Dimension 2: modi of integration in AIESEC*

- *Dimension 3: career path practices*

The data which is going to be examined is verbal data collected and recorded in four interviews. The interviews have been transcribed word-by-word upon the transfer into written English and will be cited with 'Interview #[number]' (Mayring 2002). The recordings and transcriptions are accessible on request. The output of these interviews is aiming to generate knowledge of processes, network stories and career decisions. To respect the scientific criteria of reproducibility all statements have been condensed and categorised to make the complexity of what has been said controllable on a higher abstraction level. In that way, dissimilar expression that are used synonymously can be summarized (Fuchs et al 2015). However, it does not allow a direct access to general network activities and process trends. A category system is functioning as a searching tool for the analysis of the interviews. Each main category, abbreviated with MC, is comprised of three to five sub categories, abbreviated with SC. The category system is attached in the appendix. All four main categories

are assigned to a dimension of analysis. To serve the research question, the focus is set on social network effects in career development (MC 3 and MC 4) and the modi of integration in AIESEC (MC 1). If a category is self-explanatory, a code rule is dispensed. Otherwise, a coding system is developed to reduce the interview output and substantiate it to the categories, as presented in the coding system (Table 4). The main categories have been defined based on the research question's elements and are theory-led. Whereas the sub categories have been developed based on the interview output. This way of category development presents a standard combination of inductive and deductive procedure per Mayring (2010).

The analysis is structured with regards to the three areas of research that are linked to the career path of AIESEC Alumni to European Institutions: organisational research, social network research and career research. Goal of the analysis it to filter relevant aspects that are falling into the categories of the research dimension. The emphasis is on findings that build a perception on how an AIESEC membership influences the Alumni career prospects.

7.1. Evaluation and presentation of results

The results will be presented in three steps. First, each single case will be analysed by giving a short description. Four AIESEC Alumni have been separately interviewed by Ines Glasner during a field trip to Brussels, January 20 to 27, 2017. They all joined AIESEC with the beginning of their studies in their early twenties. Besides fulfilling the selection criteria, all of them did not pursue the typical AIESEC Alumni career which can be usually found in the private economic sector. Second, the analysis proceeds with a category-based description and interpretative integration of the results in the theoretical context of the three dimensions. Third, the analysis closes with discussing the results for the theories and the praxis of organisation sociology, elite/ career research and ego-networks.

7.1.1. Gordon Buhagiar (Interview #1)

First interviewee was Gordon Buhagiar who works as a policy officer at the EU Commission for DG Growth, Responsible for competitiveness of the mechanical engineering industry. He kindly invited to the interview setting, the top-floor cafeteria of DG Growth, located at Avenue d'Auderghem 45, 1040 Brussels. Born in 1977 in Malta, he joined AIESEC in Malta in 1994 during his first week at university. After being involved in the organisation for five years, he joined the Maltese government.

> *"If you want to do something and you look for it, then you will find it. Things don't happen just like that."* (Interview #1)

His level of integration and roles in the hierarchy of AIESEC was relatively high compared to the average member. After leaving AIESEC his focus of interest shifted from AIESEC to the EU. Routed in his interest in international trade policy, he successfully pursued a career path within the Maltese government which consequently led him to the position in Brussels. His career path progressed by using internal structures and opportunities linked to the occupations he took up, not by using his AIESEC network to get into a job. The expectations and support from his parents had significant influences on his career choices as well. His optimistic mindset and open attitude towards personal and career development was initially shaped by his internship experience with AIESEC in Columbia, to which he noticeably often referred to during the interview. That resulted in applying for his first position at the Maltese government as an economist, although lawyers have been preferred at that time, he explained. And is now expressed in his ambition for taking further education to become a trainer for neurolinguistics programming. Currently he is interested in the potential of shifting the direction of his career within the EU Commission from DG Growth to a cabinet. He wants to "combine the two [backgrounds] and create a niche for [himself]" (Interview#1). If not directly his network, then his approach to life, developed during his membership in AIESEC, influences his career prospects.

7.1.2. Jan Peeters (Interview #2)

The youngest of all interviewees, 34 years old Jan Peeters, was the first possible interview candidate contacted and due to his involvement in the Alumni network he referred to other Alumni in the EU, such as Gordon Buhagiar and Wolfgang Pape. Currently Jan Peeters works for the EU Commission as an IT Service Officer - Local System Administrator in DG Mare. The interview was conducted during lunch at an Italian restaurant, Il Gallo Nero, Rue Franklin 21, 1000 Brussels.

Born in 1983 in Belgium, Jan Peeters upbringing was influenced by his grandfather's wide personal and professional network that he kept even after retirement (Interview #2). During his IT studies, he started building his personal network. His first contact to the AIESEC network was during an Erasmus stay in Helsinki, Finland. The access to the global community and personal development opportunities was a chance for him to gain cultural understanding and "international connections", also professionally (Interview #2). With regards to hierarchy, Jan Peeters stayed a member in the active AIESEC network infrequently before he joined the board of AIESEC Alumni in Belgium, in total nine years (Interview #2). He is using the Alumni network and its opportunities for personal development that effected the success of his application at the EU. While at the same time he aspires to launch operations of the active AIESEC network (exchange programs) to the Alumni network.

> *"I was looking for something more international, more exciting."* (Interview #2)

The influence of his membership in AIESEC on his career development is manifested in his approach towards his next career steps. On the one side, his interview is focused on his way of addressing future occupational challenges with an open, positive and 'prepared for everything' mindset. On the other side, he attends to changes of the duration and understanding of an AIESEC membership caused by a rapidly changing society that result in members feeling "less connected with AIESEC" (Interview #1).

7.1.3. Wolfgang Pape (Interview #3)

Third was Wolfgang Pape who is a retired, former official of the EU Commission. He was a member of *la Cellule de Prospective*, a think tank of Jacques Delors, president of the EU Commission from 1985 to 1995. Wolfgang Pape granted the invitation to have lunch over the interview at the Berlaymont, Headquarter of the EU Commission.

Born in 1937 in Germany, as a child of the second world war, he developed a strong idealism for peace and multiculturalism early on in his childhood and youth. In opposition to his father he went abroad to the US during high school. That experience shaped his identity as a "European" which characterises a decisive component of his career choices (Interview #3). It also led him to study law and graduate with the second state degree instead of pursuing a business administration path as it was expected from his family. He joined AIESEC as a law student only for an internship in Cognac, France, where he stayed two months to gain practical experience. As the oldest Alumni and EU employee interviewed, he held the highest positions of influence in the EU and due to that has the biggest global network. Within AIESEC he did not pursue any functional roles and used his membership solely for the intellectual exchange with students to advocate the idea of Europe and the importance of intercultural understanding.

> *"I developed a word which I am still working on [...] 'omni-lateralism'."* (Interview #3)

The interview is dominated by his emphasis on peace, a global community and the importance of intercultural exchange for youth. All idealistic values that he dedicates his professional and personal life to by still enlightening the academic surrounding and being a "proactive pacifist" (Interview #3). Staying engaged as an Alumni is due to that idealism, since usually interns do not stay in touch with the organisation much nor do they consider themselves as Alumni. Furthermore, it provides him an access to spread his work and experience to a young, global audience. Right now, he is finishing a book about 'omni-lateralism'.

7.1.4. Ella Strickland (Interview #4)

The last interview was taken with Ella Strickland who worked as Head of Unit 6 (Multilateral International relations: DG Sante — Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety), a middle management position, until December 2016 and is now going under a transition phase. She suggested a casual café, The Pulp at Avenue d'Auderghem 9, 1000 Brussels.

Born in 1972 in Malta, she joined AIESEC in Malta in 1990 in her first semester of her bachelor in economics. After being active in AIESEC for four years, she continued her academic path and studied two master's degrees one of international relations in London and another in diplomatic studies in Malta. She progressed with her first job as a diplomat at the ministry of foreign affairs in Malta.

> *"I was always a big picture person, and that meant global, always, or international."* (Interview #4)

Like Gordon Buhagiar, she left AIESEC to pursue a diplomatic career. After holding one of the highest positions, being a president of AIESEC in Malta, and establishing AIESEC in Sri Lanka, she left "this world" and continued to pave the way for her international career to which she refers to as a "thirst for more" that has been developed during her membership in AIESEC (Interview #4). Followed by holding her position at the ministry in Malta for eight years, she "naturally" advanced and got "invited" to join working for the EU by her superior who became "Malta's first commissioner" (Interview #4). Her diplomatic network enabled her to continuously occupy higher positions within the institutions, whereas AIESEC was basically not present. Especially noticeable is her perception of influence. She first characterizes herself as rather "not influenceable" a couple of times albeit she mentions persons with pivotal influence on her career path (Interview #4). Her network seeking behaviour is based on the motivation of "fun, enriching and qualitative" not on the "notion [that it] could be useful" to her (Interview #4). Another similarity to Gordon Buhagiar: she is taking further education to become a certified coach which she wants to work "as more" in the EU Commission (Interview #4). For that, she is using a tie to a friend that has been strong during her AIESEC career and is now gaining back

personal and desirable career importance. That supports her statement regarding her networking behaviour. It is unlikely that she reactivated her old tie if it was weak or of functional nature.

7.2. Integration of the results

The category-based analysis aims to reflect and contrast the individual statements of the AIESEC Alumni concerning their self-perception of their professional role in AIESEC and the EU Commission. The findings shall be placed in the respected dimension on which the interview questions had been designed. As already introduced the analysis is category-based and refers to the categories findings that are presented in the category system (Table 3).

The four Alumni show a variety in their year of joining, their position as well as their level of power and influence both in AIESEC and in the EU. All of them have in common that there was no direct influence of their personal AIESEC network in terms of their career path, no matter why and what they did in AIESEC before joining the EU Commission. However, all of them relate to AIESEC as being fundamental for their personal development as well as developing soft and leadership skills in their formative years which are useful for their career (Interview #1 & #4). The integration into the dimensions will filter the findings with respect to the research goal to understand how an AIESEC membership influences career prospects.

7.2.1. Dimension 1: Modi of integration in AIESEC

The sociological approach to the first dimension, organisational sociology, is based on the prerequisite that humans are using social forms or functions, here being part of AIESEC, that enable their self-portrayal (Pohlmann 2016). In organisational sociology, there is a strict differentiation between *human* and *person* which will be applied in the analysis (Pohlmann 2016). A person of an organisation is an "analytical construct" representing a social form that is characterised by its organisational and social contexts; it can be influenced by an organisation or vice versa, similar to Coleman's Boat concept (chapter 2.2.). The analysis will treat the four AIESEC Alumni as representative persons of the organisation AIESEC to focus on their social contexts in and outside of AIESEC.

The main category under scrutiny assigned to the dimension 'modi of integration in AIESEC' is 'Reasons for joining AIESEC' (MC 1). The experience and personal context of joining AIESEC is covered by the first main category. The Alumni interviewed represent two different types of engaging with AIESEC:

1. Join AIESEC as a member during student life.
2. Go on an internship abroad with AIESEC.

The organisational structure of AIESEC at the time of the interviewees access has been open and informal with a focus on expanding the membership basis for students of all academic fields (SC 1.1). This is rather an untypical procedure for an organisation that seeks to ensure conformity through the conditionalities of a membership. Looking at the formal conditionalities of an AIESEC membership, requirements are: being a student and under 30 years old. The comparably low conditions of a membership, however, conflict with the level of commitment towards the organisation (Kühl 2011). Therefore, informal conditionalities can be found in the framing of behaviours and pre-set goals, based on AIESEC's values and purpose. New members' acceptance of them are being put to the test before and right after joining by attending conferences. AIESEC's values and goals have been not even embraced but proactively sought by the four Alumni. AIESEC attracts young students on campus by providing a global network and enabling them to develop themselves through real practical experiences. Their motivation of seeking a fun, international environment and practical experience can be linked to the values of enjoying participation, living diversity and striving for excellence (Interview #1-#4). At the time of the Alumni joining they found low formal entrance requirements, however, a certain tendency towards living up to AIESEC's values which demonstrates an informal condition of the organisational structure. These informal conditions, as part of the organisational structure, play a great role for providing the leadership and network development, which is part of the membership experience (SC 1.4 & SC 1.5).

The identification of AIESEC's purpose and products serves to motivate potential members or exchange participants. Another way of creating motivation to join is to attract with occupational activities. A third is the collegial and global network. These three forms of attaching members characterise the basis of the

Alumni initial decision to join AIESEC. Per Kühl, differences in reasons for joining can be explained through a variance in types of memberships (Kühl 2011). Considering AIESEC's yearly inflation rate of members, the identification of typical membership provisions becomes indistinct and cannot be broken down further as being a member and being an exchange participant. However, the differences in the four Alumni membership types cannot account for the decisions being made concerning career in life after AIESEC. Once they were part of the network structure, as a member or an exchange participant, they experienced the access to AIESEC's global network comparably unrestricted. The more they sought to experience, the more they have been able to.

The experiences being reported display the great range and possibility of opportunities offered in the network. Organisational distinction becomes fluid and so does its understanding of membership. Therefore, AIESEC can be rather seen as a network with blurred edges which explains the variety of activities one can identify with to AIESEC (Kühl 2011).

All skills mentioned by the Alumni during the interview are falling in AIESEC's leadership development model. The skill set one can acquire within AIESEC is not necessarily linked to the organisational hierarchy of leadership positions one can occupy. The Alumni had all different positions whereas they skillset developed comparably equal. Their level of leadership skills can serve as an indicator and motivation for their future job seeking behaviour which will be discussed in the second main category. Concerning network development, the type of relationships the Alumni developed during their active time was predominantly friendships. Professional connections to companies have also been established, but have been only mentioned with regards to a certain position that entailed working with corporate stakeholders (Interview #1). As being part of one global organisation, AIESEC potentially, consists of millions of weak ties by default. These ties can bridge to another network of an active member or Alumni which presents and information benefit according to Burt. Fundamentally, the ties are built on a friendly and respective nature which puts network opportunism in a positive light.

7.2.2. Dimension 2: Career path practices

The second dimension of career path practices is assigned to the second main category 'reasons and strategies for an international career' (MC 2). The socio-economically concepts of human capital and social capital by Becker/ Coleman/ Bourdieu as presented in chapter 2.2. will serve as the theoretical frame for the detailed interpretation of this category. The theories' approaches define networks as a goal of an individual decision to "invest" into relationships to others (Fuhse 2016). Moreover, networks present a functional instrument to pursue other individual goals, for example, one can "capitalise" on them to start a career a Granovetter concluded in his study (Fuhse 2016). Networks present a versatile tool; therefore, individuals shall seek to maximise its values. Generally, findings in this category show an interplay of structures as well as the Alumni motivation and academic background which altogether supported to progress in their career path in the EU Commission.

Julia Stamm explored in her dissertation the biographies and career patterns in the European Parliament after the 2004 enlargement (Stamm 2006). Based on her interview findings she defined typologies with regards to the biographies and career paths of parliamentarians she interviewed. The "primarily national-European career type […] designates recruitment paths and career patterns that developed within the national context […] complemented by substantial European reference points" (Stamm 2008). Tracing back the structures and factors of influence that the Alumni were using for their career path, the careers of Gordon Buhagiar, Wolfgang Pape and Ella Strickland can be defined as a national-European career type. All three started to work for their national government before joining the EU Commission. While having "contact with Europe and/or the European institutions before their entry" to the European Commission (Stamm 2008). It was not due to the network of AIESEC that had direct influence on their career choices for a position in the national government. For Buhagiar it was an advertisement in the newspaper that attracted him to apply for the Maltese government supported by his motivation for international trade policy and academic background in economics (Interview #1). After he attained a high human capital in terms of education and practical experiences, it was with his first job that he started to capitalise from his growing social capital. "I

was networking within the government, so there was an opening at [the Maltese] presentation [in Brussels], so I applied through an interview" (Interview #1). He was able to mobilise resources in terms of his occupational advancement. After graduating with one master in international relations and a second in diplomatic studies, Strickland "naturally" progressed starting her diplomatic career at the ministry of foreign affairs in Malta (Interview #4). Concerning career path practices Buhagiar's and Strickland's use of social capital for their career path represent a parallel development. "I was in the private office of the minister for foreign affairs who became Malta's first commissioner. Until he invited me to join him here [in Brussels]" (Interview #4).

Pape started his career "at the Japanese embassy" in Bonn, Germany, while taking "the examination [for working in the EU Commission]" (Interview #3). There is no indication that he capitalised on his social capital to pursue his career in an EU institution, but on his human capital. During his second juridical state examination, his long-term stays abroad and his exchange experiences with "AIESEC, AFS and DAAD" he acquired the highest education standards compared to the other three Alumni (Interview #3). His knowledge, skills and competencies supported him to pass the concour and get directly access to work for the commission without being supported by former superiors related to the German national government (Interview #3). In contrast to the "national-European career type" Jan Peeters represents a "side-entrant career" (Stamm 2008). He found his way to the EU Commission as an IT developer through "Euros [, a] job day" (Interview #2). Participating at this event he used the strategy of connecting to one of the recruiters which he said lasted "almost half a year" including "20-30 phone calls, a lot of emails [and] a lot of preparation" (Interview #2). He was creating social capital with the goal to capitalise from it. Looking at the Alumni reasons for being employed at the EU Commission the interest of pursuing an international career had been developed through exchange experiences within AIESEC, Erasmus or ASF (SC 2.2). This consequently led to the reason for working in the EU. Reasons are defined as motivation, interest and opportunity for being employed at the EU Commission. All of them are linked to human or social capital, which have been proofed to be useful to successfully pass the concour in the case of Buhagiar, Pape and Strickland. The

concour is the open competition of the selection procedure to become an official EU servant (Auswärtiges Amt 2017). The procedure includes three steps: a pre-selection test, an e-tray exercise, and lastly an assessment centre. The e-tray exercise tests the „key competencies of setting priorities, goal-orientation and organisational abilities" (Auswärtiges Amt 2017). Whereas the assessment centre looks for problem solving and leadership skills as well as the ability to personal development (Auswärtiges Amt 2017). Drawing from the Alumni motivations, i.e. their behaviours, experiences, knowledge and personal characteristics that enable them to seek an international career, their ambitions have been meaningful in succeeding (SC 2.4). For example, Strickland mentions her "good organisational abilities" that she developed during her AIESEC membership as being a factor in succeeding during the concour (Interview #4).

However, holding a position in the EU Commission is limited. Whereas this comes as an expectation with the job, the Alumni are constantly seeking further educational training to create a "niche" or to stay employable (Interview #1 & #3). The notion of a career path and the attitudes to seek further education can be traced back to personal AIESEC experiences. With regards to human capital, "education and training [...] advanc[es] the fortunes of men and women who are already employed" (Volti 2012). Concerning employability, social networks in the sense of Granovetter and Burt provide weak ties and structural holes as an information channel which can create opportunities on other markets. These opportunities present a source of increasing social capital which will be presented in dimension 3. The Alumni motivation is somehow elitist for it reflects a great self-perception of character traits and behaviours that enabled them to seek an international career. Their career destination was not directly influenced by the AIESEC network, however, traces of AIESEC's conditionality are resembling with the motivations.

The understanding of the EU highly differs between the four Alumni interviewed. Whereas one understands it as a natural career destination, the other finds his idealistic visions fulfilled (Interview #1 & Interview #3). Only one identified his position in the EU as a possible tie for his ego-network, including

AIESEC (Interview #2). The perspective on that bridge was even optimistic concerning a future cooperation between the EU Commission and AIESEC as a civil society organisation (Interview #2).

7.2.3. Dimension 3: Social network effects in career development

The third dimension is assigned to two main categories: 'AIESEC background' (MC 3) and 'Personal Network' (MC 4). With respect to the research question and the research subject, this dimension presents the focus of the analysis. It shall provide the basic findings on how a membership in the AIESEC network influences career prospects.

Generally, the Alumni identify their AIESEC background, with differences, as influential on their personal development which was not only useful for their career choices but also for their lives in general (MC 3). The findings present a sustainable impact on the Alumni through cultural conditioning but not exclusively through actors of the network (MC 4).

While some understand the Alumni 'role' as a reminder of a past membership, others see it as a responsibility of staying connected. However, neither of the interviewed Alumni uses the whole Alumni network for their career development. There is an indication that one might be using an old strong tie for her future career development. Strickland who revived her contact to her close AIESEC friend "Cathy" because she is "trained as a coach and [Strickland] want[s] to see if there's is any work [they] can do together" (Interview #4). It is especially noticeable, how Strickland demeans work-related relationships while stating that her "relationships are based on genuine connections, they are not enforced connections" (Interview #4). Looking at her cultural background she later explained that "in Malta [they] tend to mix work and pleasure very often" (Interview #4). This accounts for a social network effect that are long lasting. With regards to the degree of influence on choices and behaviours regarding career and life, the Alumni AIESEC background is manifested in their approaches and attitudes towards a global oriented life and career (SC 3.2). Per Alumni network stories these are rooted in experiences and relationships in AIESEC, but not exclusively. Looking at the degree of importance, their use of

relationships and points of involvement in Alumni activities, the findings presents a cleavage between active engagement to passive disposition (SC 3.3). The network lost its importance for the Alumni are seeking opportunities outside of it, the benefit from that "world" seems to be exhausted from their perspective (Interview #1 & #4). One reason mentioned was the lack of connection between Alumni to their current or desired work reality (Interview #1). Buhagiar is interested in connections outside of his occupation if he can find a way to link and capitalise from that bridge. To him, being engaged in further training education is more profitable for his EU network than connecting to the AIESEC network (Interview #1). The organisational structure of the Alumni network is not likewise established compared to the active AIESEC network. On the official website of AIESEC Alumni International (AAI) the initiative "Integrated Organization & Membership" is being introduced to establish an organisational structure. It is aiming to "strengthen [AIESEC's] cause and increase [AIESEC's] value to alumni and members who are committed to Leadership Under AIESEC Values Delivered for Life." (AIESEC Alumni International 2014). To the question what a typical Alumni career looks like, the four interviewed Alumni answered the same. Most AIESEC Alumni seek an international career in the corporate sector, per the interviewee's statements and loosen they connection to the AIESEC network, as intended. It is AIESEC's intention to release young leader's that are living up to its values and vision outside the member network albeit the Alumni network is there. From an ex post perspective of the four Alumni, AIESEC is defined as a channel to cultivate their elite leadership development by providing global practical experiences, however, they all rather see it as a network reserved for students. The traces left behind can be mainly find in the corporate sector.

The fourth main category 'Personal Network' is presenting the Alumni ego-networks. Social network effects in career development can be traced back to the egos relationships and experiences. The impact of the Alumni network architecture is somewhat equal. Alteri that played a decisive role in their career success are rather close and not AIESEC related. The Alumni have been asked to

position influential persons for their career development in an own ego-net-work map during the interview. The findings will be further discussed by presenting the cases individually in chronological sequence.

7.2.3.1. Gordon Buhagiar

During the interview, Buhagiar made clear that there has been no tie between his AIESEC network and his occupational network (Interview #1). Before en-
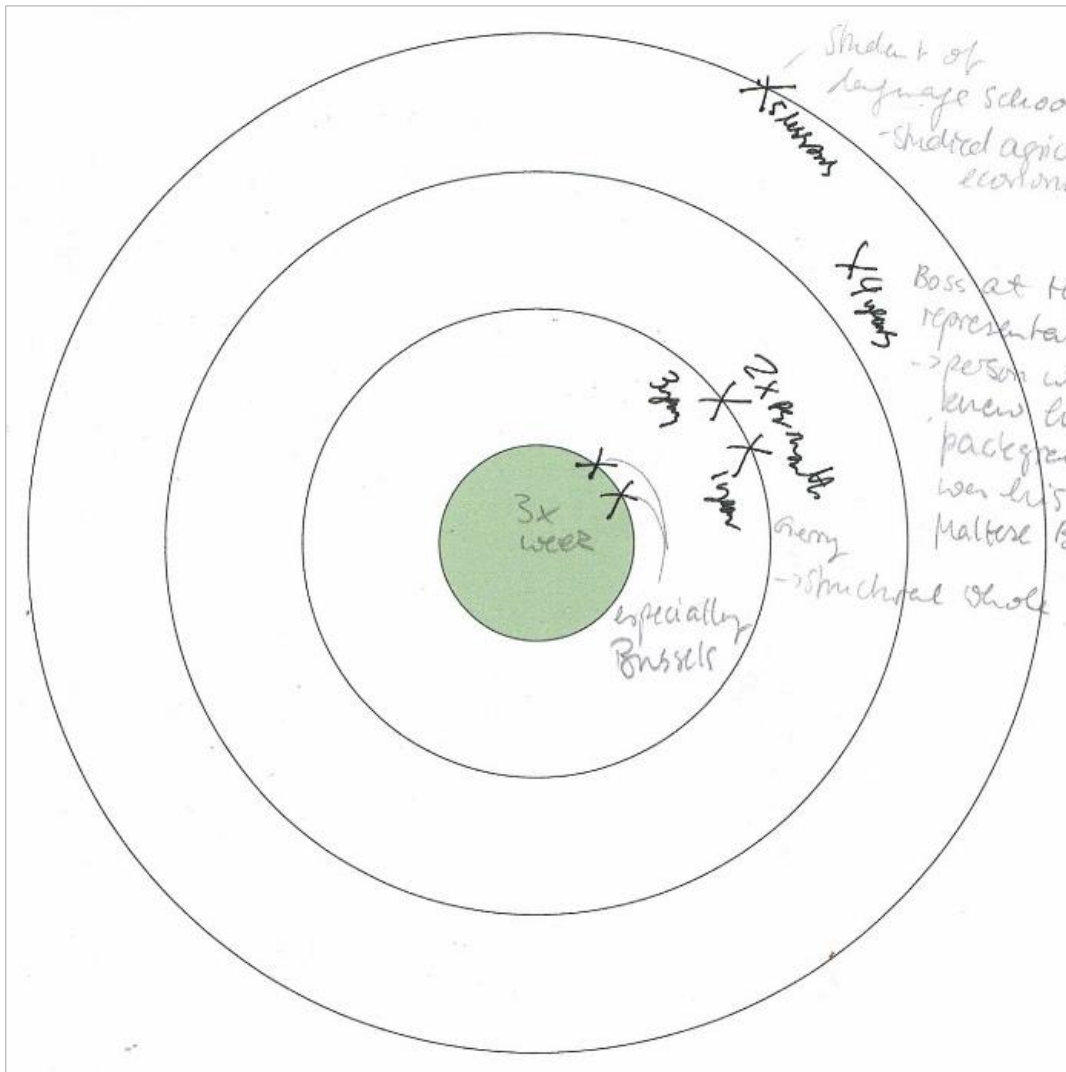
Figure 4 - Ego-Network Map G. Buhagiar (Interview #1)

tering his diplomatic career, he states that "there wasn't really much networking" (Interview #1). His answer to who influences his career was met restrainedly: "I can't really say that there were one or two people who really influenced me to move on" (Interview #1). Persons that left an impact during a shared experience which let to certain career choice are defined as being influential. Buhagiar mentions six people. First, his both parents who "wanted [him] to do

something more ambitious" and ultimately have played a decisive factor in finding the job opportunity at the Maltese government (Interview #1). With regards to proximity, frequency and duration of contact, Buhagiar put his parents to whom he has contact "three times a week" closest to him (see Figure 4). Second, Buhagiar put "Gerry from NLP. And the founder of energetic NLP" after his parents (Figure 4). These two persons are Buhagiar's teachers who are influencing his future career perspective in Human Resources (Interview #1). He has contact to them twice a month, either by participating in a course or by email contact. Per Burt, these two present a tie over a structural whole for Buhagiar. Right now, Buhagiar is" trying to find a position for [himself where he can] combine [his background of NLP and economic policy officer] and create a niche" (Interview #1). Third, Buhagiar placed his boss at the representation in Malta who "helped [him] to get [...] the job [...] in Brussels" by recommendation (Interview #1). According to Buhagiar "it was thanks to him, he was the only one who knew me and my background" (Interview #1). However, the relationship to his boss has been defined as rather distant and weak for the four years Buhagiar knows him (Figure 4). This weak tie was a bridging opportunity for Buhagiar to proceed his career for the Maltese government in Brussels which later created the possibility to work for the EU Commission. Fourth, Buhagiar remembered a Colombian student that he taught during his AIESEC internship in Colombia (Interview #1).

Buhagiar recounted that this student "influenced [him] quite well [...] [by presenting] a great metaphor that helped [him] stayed on" his ambition to seek a governmental career despite his economic background and lack of political experience (Interview #1). The influence is limited to Buhagiar's attitude towards career "to be more open and more looking forward to the opportunities that life has to offer" as he recollected (Interview #1). Albeit he told "that [it] helped [him] to be more open and eventually led [him] to find [his] job [...]" this weak tie cannot account for direct effects to Buhagiar's career success (Interview #1). However, it provides findings that Buhagiar's AIESEC membership influenced his career prospects in terms of attitudes and skills he acquired while being involved and in touch with the network and its opportunities.

The own self-portrayal of his ego-network regarding influencing persons for his career path provides that a student related to Buhagiar's AIESEC experience "influenced [his job seeking behaviour] quit well" as a weak tie (Interview #1). Whereas a job-related tie, where the nature of the relationship was marked as weak by Buhagiar, have been more crucial for the success of his career.

7.2.3.2. Jan Peeters

The Alumnus Peeters emphasized his understanding of network during the interview by saying: "Networking is really important. It's really important to have a huge network, get to know as many people as needed [...] also kind of lobbying. Not in the negative sense but ..." (Interview #2). The first reason he mentioned for joining AIESEC was "to have that international network" (Interview #2). Considering his childhood, he was confronted early on with the importance of having and maintaining a network. His grandfather who had "a huge network of people" had been an influential person regarding Peeters career choices (Interview #2). He mentions his grandfather as the only person outside of AIESEC. Peeters network seeking behaviour within the Alumni network is comparably high to the other three Alumni. He holds a position at the national board of AIESEC Alumni Belgium which gives him a more central position in the Alumni network he underlines as "one of the most favourable things in AIESEC" (Interview #2). Categorizing the seven persons Peeters named as being influential for his career choices in his ego-network (Figure 5), six of them are related to AIESEC as he put down in the graph "AAI board members, LCVP, EB AAE, Victor Loewenstein, iTtT Trainers, start-up founders", of which four of them are AIESEC Alumni ("AAI board members, EB AAE, Victor Loewenstein, start-up founders"). This is explained by Peeters ambition to seek a career path within the AIESEC Alumni network. While working as an IT employee, he seeks to balance his time between AIESEC and the EU Commission. For that he is in frequent contact with the AIESEC related persons "at least monthly or a few times a month" for "three to four years", albeit the proximity of persons vary on the map (Interview #2). This can be explained further by his interest to "switch to the European board" of AIESEC Alumni (Interview #2). Apart from his Alumni career path, Peeters is capitalizing from his AIESEC network for his

career as an IT specialist. He is using seminars and trainings to prepare himself for selection processes, such as an international Train the Trainer (Interview #2). With these experiences, he can distinguish himself from other IT experts who are rather lacking in soft skills according to Peeters (Interview #2). Peeters
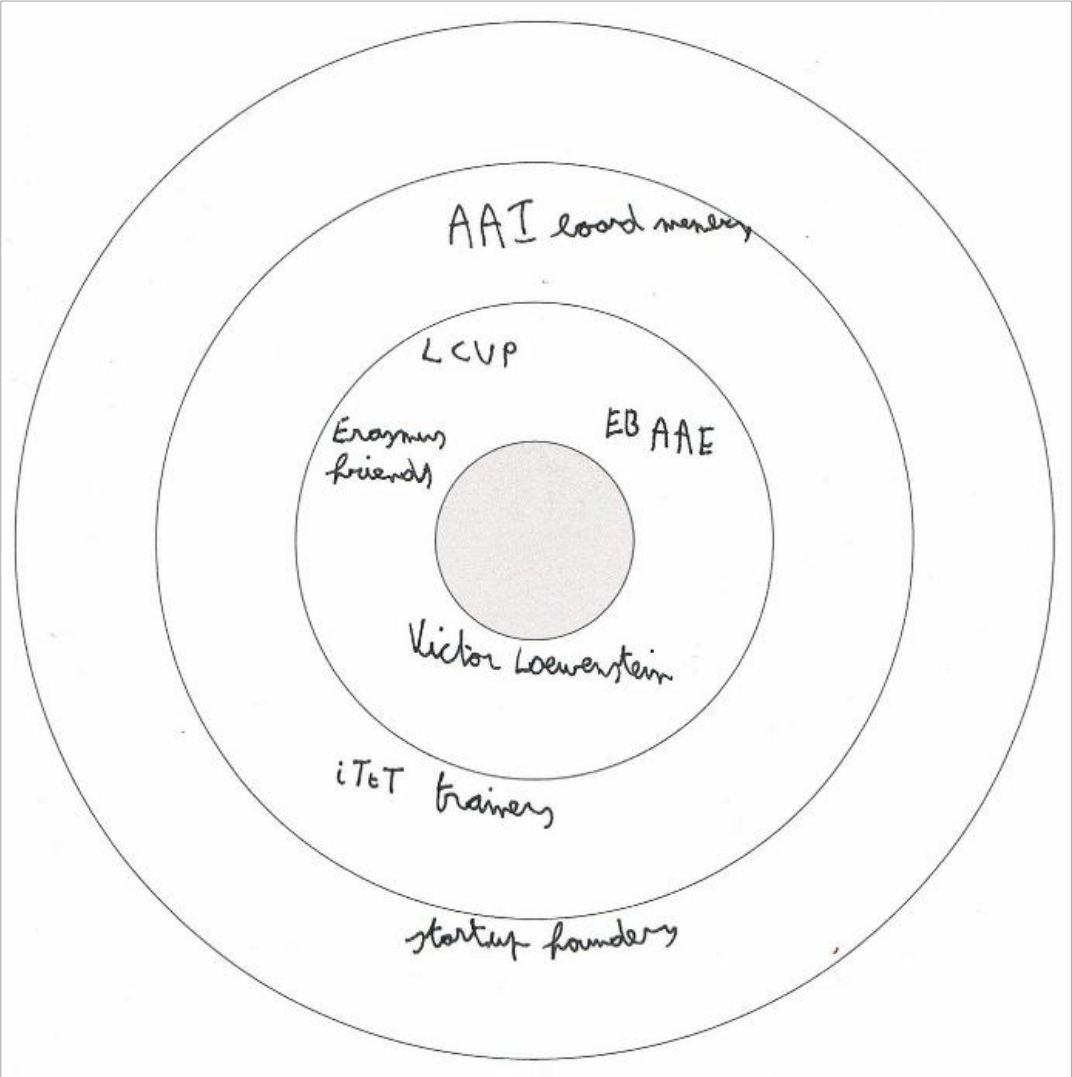
Figure 5 - Ego-Network Map J. Peeters (Interview #2)

network presents insights to influential persons for his AIESEC career choices, not outside of it. In the sense of Granovetter and Burt, Peeters is using his AIESEC ties, weak and close, as information channels to create opportunities that are complementing his level of social capital. Whereas, his AIESEC membership evidently provides him with human capital in the form of soft skills that influenced his career prospects at the EU Commission (Interview #2).

7.2.3.3. Wolfgang Pape

In the same way as Buhagiar, Pape made clear that there has been no tie or bridge that linked his AIESEC background with his career choices: "it is difficult to say inside of AIESEC. There is no individual which I can recall" (Interview #3). However, similar to Peeters, he indicates that an AIESEC experience provided him with an advantage to pass the concour (Interview #3). As an influential person for his career choices Pape named his father "against [whom he was] very much formed" (Interview #3). This and his "Japanese" understanding of relationships define his network seeking behaviour (Interview #3). For one he seeks a global connection and second, he tries to maintain relationships for a "lifetime" (Interview #3). He divides his global network of friends and acquaintances
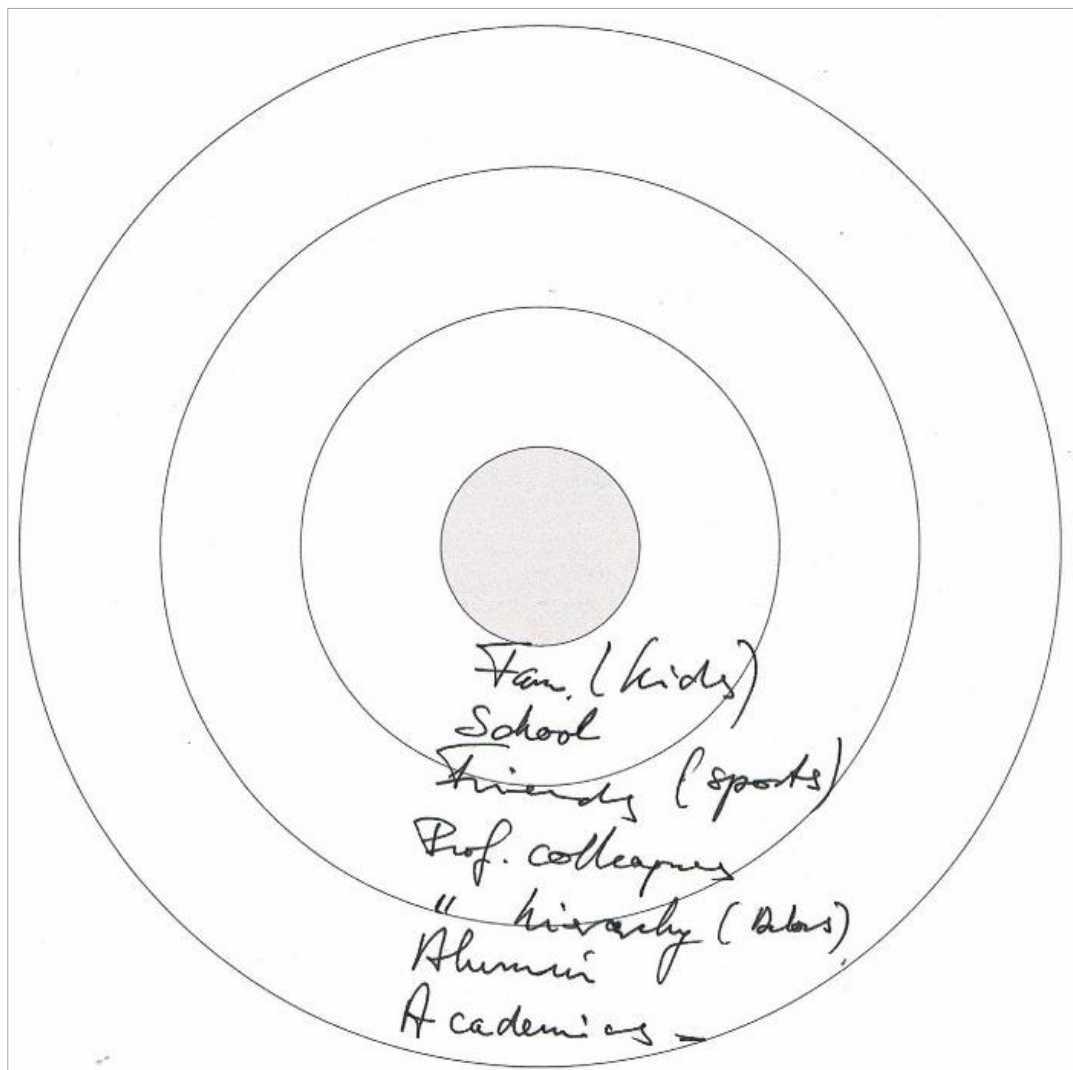

Figure 6 - Ego-Network Map W. Pape (Interview #3)

from "AIESEC, AFS, DAAD", his career in the EU and working with think tanks like the "Brookings Institution" into "sector friends" (Interview #3). These "clear

differences" indicate a variety of possible bridges to other networks in the sense of Granovetter and Burt. In that case, friends would have been used as an information channel. However, looking at Pape's motivation to maintain his relationships, including to the AIESEC network, it is more the conveyance of cultural knowledge less the opportunity for his career that defines his social network behaviours. That becomes clear in his understanding of the AIESEC Alumni role to be "with younger people to insight them" (Interview #3). Moreover, he mentioned that he "saw it more as a private edition, it wasn't that [he] used [the network] directly for career purposes or stuff" (Interview #3). For that Pape's ego-network presents a traditional "hierarchy" from family being closest and most influential to his career choices such as his father (Figure 6). Followed by school that presents the influence of his "teachers" to whom he was relatively close as a student as well (Interview #3). As already argued in the introduction of Pape, he lived formative career experiences early on during a High-School exchange in the US (chapter 7.1.3). After his professional colleagues, Pape listed Alumni friends as an influencing factor although he mentions that he "didn't [had] much contact, [and] was much more giving speeches" to students (Interview #2). Being a person of his ideals Pape used the AIESEC network as an "open experience" and is still using it to "contribute" to these experiences further by promoting a global career and expressing his experiences and knowledge (Interview #3). While Pape's internship experience with AIESEC might not directly influenced his career choices, it was an important experience in his career path. The prospect he gained was of personal nature as he is still using the network for self-expression.

7.2.3.4. Ella Strickland

Albeit Strickland associates her AIESEC background as "the foundation of eve-
rything [she is] today", she understands her career choices that led to the EU
Commission as a "natural progression" onto which she adds "I am not sure if it
is for every AIESECer" (Interview #4). The finding in her network map show the
similar indication to Buhagiar: her AIESEC membership influenced her career
prospects in terms of attitudes and skills she acquired during her active time.
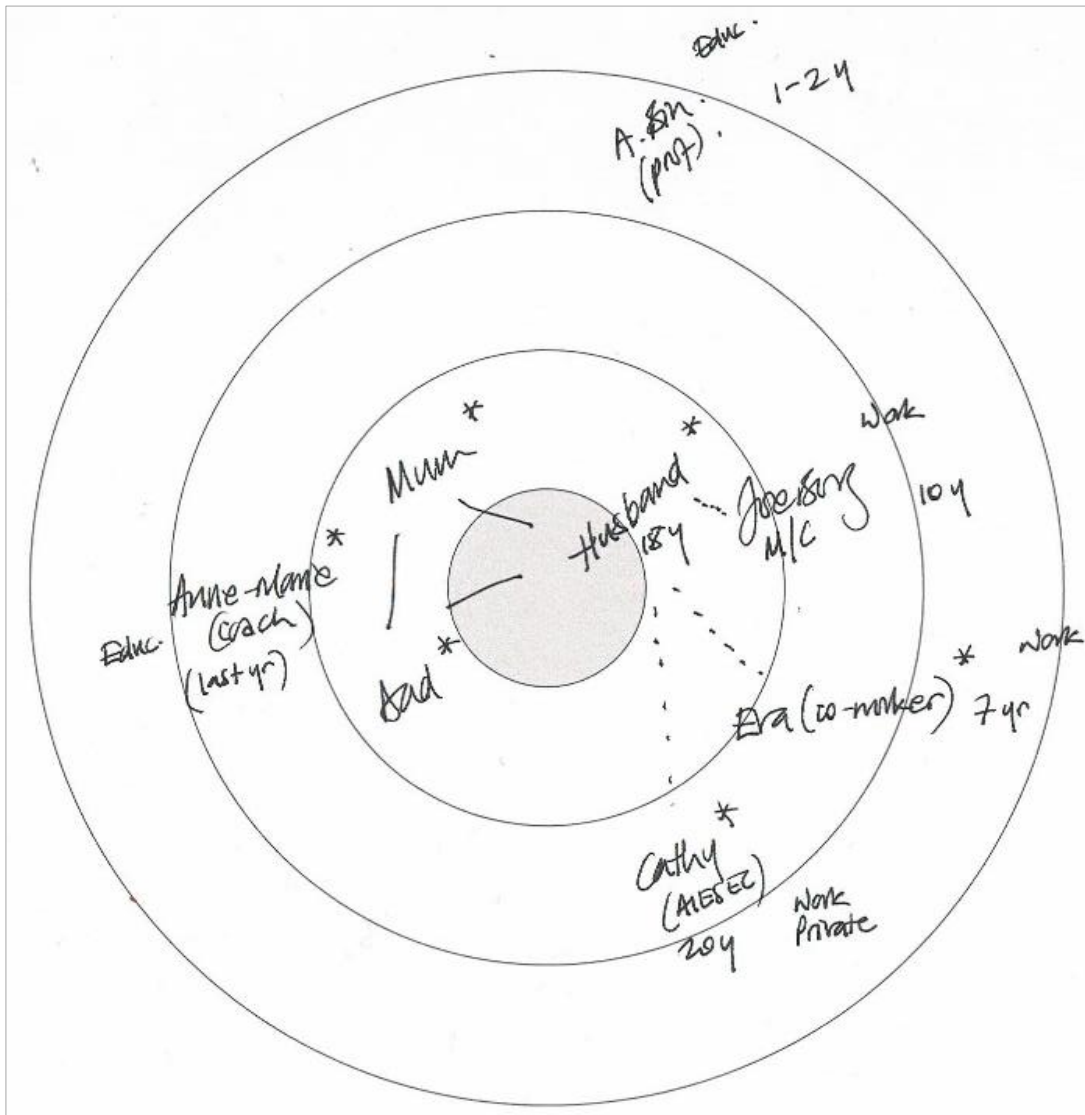
Figure 7 - Ego-Network Map E. Strickland (Interview #4)

However, an AIESEC membership does not ultimately account for her career
success, from which she indirectly wants to distance herself. She states that
AIESEC "would have taken something that was instinctively already there and
cultivated it" (Interview #4). With "something" she refers to her ambition for a
global career and "looking beyond the shores of Malta" (Interview #4). She used

the AIESEC network to build up her profile from which she capitalises on for her work in the EU Commission. However, it was not due to ties within AIESEC that enabled her to start her career at the Maltese government. That was due to her academic background (Interview #4). Strickland "was in the private office of the minister for foreign affairs [Joe Borg] who became Malta's first commissioner." (Interview #4). Due to her relatively close tie to Joe Borg, considering her ego-network map, she got the invitation to work in Brussels (Figure 7). For her career path, so far, strong ties have been of use. In contrast to Granovetter who argues that strong ties bear an information redundancy. This leads to the conclusion that for Strickland's career path to the EU, not information but the person's position and influence itself play a decisive role for succeeding. It was not external information channelized trough weaker ties, but her close relation to her former boss Joe Borg who she knows for "10 years" (Interview #4). Taking her future career aspirations into the perspective of her ego-network map, her coach Anne-Marie is as close as Joe Borg (Figure 7). This indicates a parallel degree and symbolises Strickland's networking approach not "to befriending someone because they could be useful" (Interview #4). The parallel is assumed to be in how much information Anne-Marie possibly provides for Strickland to change her career direction into human resources as a coach. To assess her future career opportunities Strickland revived her tie to the AIESEC Alumna "Cathy" who she knows for "20 years" (Figure 7). She described this tie as an "elastic band relationship" which explains that its proximity of being close to weak changes with their frequency of contact (Interview #4). While in their AIESEC past they have been in contact daily, their relationship developed into a close tie. After they parted when leaving AIESEC, their tie became rather weak. As indicated in her ego-network map, Cathy still has a semi-close position, which is changing now. Strickland is seeking more contact now for personal and professional reasons (Figure 7). Parallel to Buhagiar an AIESEC membership influenced her career prospects in terms of attitudes and soft skills she acquired while being involved and in touch with the network and its opportunities.

7.3. Coherence and Consequences

The following chapter shall compare and combine the coherence and consequences of the data found with regards to the Alumni ego-networks, career developments and their AIESEC background. The sub-questions introduced in chapter one shall be revisited as well as the research question be answered.

As discussed in the theory chapter, networks present a versatile tool; therefore, individuals shall seek to maximise its values in the sense of human and social capital. The findings in the analysis present that an interplay of social structures as well as the Alumni motivation and academic background had consequences to progress in their career path in the EU Commission. The social structure of the Alumni ego-networks presents in all four cases an individual development of habitus which determines social behaviour and preferences that ultimately led to an occupation at the EU Commission. As social behaviour accounts for the degree of human and social capital, all four cases indicate that the Alumni career development is not solely an issue of class but one of culture that shaped their habitus of seeking an international career with high influence on decision making. This is evident in the Alumni notion of following an international career with high influence and a challenging environment. One can generally argue that it is an issue of class when taking AIESEC's entry requirements of being a student into consideration. However, it is not conceivable that all students are predestined to follow an international career with high influence, rather not. One can specifically argue further that it is an issue of class when taking the Alumni family backgrounds into consideration. In three cases their family backgrounds present evidence for high expectations regarding their career development and the means to pursue it (Interview #1, Interview #3, Interview #4). Nonetheless, the Alumni habitus of seeking an international career had been "cultivated" during their AIESEC time (Interview #4). With regards to the first sub-question culture as a network factor was of profit and had been used by all Alumni. This culture was established through the opportunities AIESEC provided to them.

For instance, the two Alumni from Malta have an anchoring in the national context in common. Both started their diplomatic career with the Maltese government and both have been raised to pursue an elitist career. Besides, another common denominator is their linear pursuit of leadership positions within AIESEC. The two, Buhagiar and Strickland, joined AIESEC in the 1990ies when starting their economics study. As first semesters, both had been at an early stage in their lives that are formative and the ambition to seek practical experience and fun "beyond the shores of Malta" was high (Interview #1 & #4). Both followed a four to five years' consecutive career path in AIESEC. From being a member and organising small events to joining the national executive board in their last active year, Buhagiar as External Relations Coordinator and Strickland as Member Committee President. Besides that, they attended national leadership seminars as well as international conferences and went on exchange to Latin America. Strickland established AIESEC in Sri Lanka. They worked on all three operational, strategical and leadership levels (Interview #1). From an organisational perspective, AIESEC had a great level of influence in terms of developing them personally and functionally which means that within AIESEC both developed their social personality and their habitus ("the foundation" Interview #4) with whom they associate themselves still today. Taking into consideration that the Maltese Alumni both have been an AIESECer for their duration of studies (four to five years) their external appearance or self-perception was acquired and "cultivated" during their active membership throughout the personal, functional and international experiences they had (Interview #1 & #4). Both represented themselves as advocates for the compatibility of personal values and organisational principles, that they sought in their career path later. These values are basically being open to opportunities, following an international career and self-development (Interview #1 & #4). The organisational structure itself enabled shaping their "approach to life" which is fundamentally influencing decision making processes, for personal life and career (Interview #1). Consequently, their AIESEC background show a distinct influence on their habitus with regards to career choices.

Looking at the other two Alumni, their network story strongly differs on many levels, albeit, both share prior intercultural exchange experience. The German Alumni Pape joined AIESEC 1970 as an exchange participant to do a two months' internship in Cognac, south France. After that, he did not pursue a "functional" role in AIESEC, however, as a law student he profited from the knowledge of business students in AIESEC that represented most members' study background (Interview #3). Unlike other exchange participants he identifies himself with an AIESEC Alumni and understands it as a role to act as an ambassador for "younger people to insight them" with the idea of peace promotion and the necessity of a global mindset (Interview #3). From an organisational sociology perspective, his network story before encountering AIESEC matters to how he perceives his role as an Alumni today. Furthermore, it explains, how his habitus of seeking an international career developed during his youth apart from class. The international experience, that influenced his career choices, "started with high school in the U.S." as he says, where he began to identify himself with "being European in contrast of being only a national", an idea in parallel with U.S. citizens calling "themselves Americans" which geographically refers to the continent as well (Interview #3). The other reason was to distance himself from the "Nazi background" and split German state, which was at that time, the external perception of Germans in the U.S. (Interview #3). Within this social setting, he constructed his social identity which later determined not only his career choices but also his social activities as an Alumni within AIESEC (Interview #3).

The Belgian Alumni Peeters joined AIESEC as an Erasmus student which indicates a pre-developed interest of interculturality before joining AIESEC. His involvement in the active network was comparably low whereas his engagement in the Alumni network is comparably high in which his interest was cultivated. Looking at the career choices all Alumni made with regards to their influence in AIESEC their trajectories show no relation between the level of influence in AIESEC and their career choices nor success afterwards. The premonition formulated in the second sub-question "What career choices did Alumni make with regards to their influence in AIESEC?" cannot be verified with the pre-

sented data. This sustains the argument that culture as a network factor is understood to be the main source of influence for the four Alumni. Additionally, the Alumni mention trainings, leadership experiences, exchange programs and personal contacts as a source of influence as well. For example, Buhagiar mentions his teaching experience in Columbia as most influential where he met a student that shaped his approach to life. For Peeters, an iTtT conference is "the most really useful conference" since it prepares "for the course for getting hired by the EU" (Interview #2). Pape names his internship in Cognac which "helped" him to succeed in "the official concour [he] went through." (Interview #3). Strickland refers to her "interest in cultural awareness" that has been shaped by her exchange experiences with AIESEC which she has been "extremely well served by" working "as a negotiator" (Interview #4).

Regarding the third sub-question what influence AIESEC had with regards to career choices the Alumni mention their approaches and attitudes such as "being open to opportunities", the encouragement to pursue a career at the EU and their candour towards cultural diversity (Interview #1).

The last sub-question "What kind of self-perception does an Alumni have working in the EU Commission?" had been developed to identify the degree of influence of the AIESEC experience to the current occupation. Generally, all Alumni detect the founding history of AIESEC and the EU as a similarity. However, there was only one Alumni who connected his AIESEC background with his embeddedness in the EU. Peeters states "if you contact me I can say, I have contacts in the EU commission. And maybe it can be useful even for AIESEC. [...] it would be nice if you can bring them together." (Interview #2). During the interview with Pape, he presented a reversed understanding. Pape connectes his EU background with his embeddedness in AIESEC stating that he perceives his Alumni role "to insight" youth with his experience of an international career for that he attends AIESEC events as a speaker (Interview #3). Buhagiar and Strickland who are not active share the same contrary position that they have "never seen the overlap" nor intend to seek one (Interview #4).

Considering the findings to the sub-questions, the research question - *How does organisational structure within AIESEC influence job seeking behaviour of embedded actors at a level that has high influence?* - will be answered with regards to the dimension of analysis.

Dimension one explored the *modi of integration* of the four Alumni within AIESEC which includes the hierarchy, level of experience and type of membership. The data shows, that all the Alumni share the social form 'exchange participant' for their experience abroad. These experiences enabled them to create a self-portrayal which Peeters describes as "go anywhere out of my comfort zone", Pape mentions his behaviour of seeking "having the difficult experiences which is challenging", Strickland as "my international dimension is always there" and Buhagiar links his openness to his exchange experience with "AIESEC [which] continued to enhance that kind of mentality or mindset". These attributes of self-portrayal can be linked to one of AIESEC's leadership qualities which is "global citizen" (AIESEC International 2016). Looking at the differences in hierarchy and level of experience, their self-portrayal was not so much influenced by the responsibility they held on operational, strategical or leadership level but by going abroad. Therefore, the four Alumni job-seeking behaviour is not attributable to a certain position or integration within AIESEC but can be linked to the quality of being a "global citizen" developed through participating in the exchange program (AIESEC International 2016). The entry level for the exchange program shows the lowest level of conformity, for example, one does not necessarily need to agree with AIESEC's values. For that, the level of conformity is rather low and presents no conditionalities for the integration of an exchange participant. The potentiality of establishing weak ties connected to a global context of personal and professional networks is therefore high. The analysis has shown, that all four Alumni sought the network for personal benefits that manifested in indirect professional advantages.

Dimension two analysed the *career path practices* of the four Alumni linked to their self-portrayal as an AIESEC Alumni and their academic background. There was no indication that an Alumni invested into certain relationships which would create the opportunity to start a governmental career that leads to the

EU. All four Alumni invested in their social and human capital by attaining a high level of education and joining AIESEC for their personal development. This practice marks the early stages of their future career path. Where there is indication that the Alumni capitalise from their education there is equal indication that they profit from their AIESEC experience as well. The data referring to the degree of influence (SC 3.2) presents a limitation "to the soft ways" which exceeds academic and professional skills (Interview #4). The lack of data for a direct influence explains that there was no physical opportunity to connect as an AIESEC Alumni to the EU (Interview #4). Buhagiar indicates that at the beginning of his EU career "there wasn't really much networking" due to the lack of networking events, a cooperation between the EU and AIESEC as well as the absence of contact persons (Interview #1). Therefore, the Alumni built their network by investing in work-related connections which directly influenced the career paths to the EU in all four cases. The organisational structure of AIESEC however influenced the Alumni job and network seeking behaviour as argued in dimension one. The Alumni soft skills indirectly supported to build professional but friendly ties, a career path practice they reportedly cultivated in AIESEC. In all four cases, these ties led to a successive career development. Additionally, the acquired soft skills supported all the Alumni in recruiting practices to the EU such as the concour as mentioned by Strickland, Buhagiar and Pape.

Dimension three examined the *social network effects* of the four Alumni in their career development. The presented findings show that the organisational structure within AIESEC created a culture in which individual or provided experiences and low conditionalities had allegedly influencing effects on the four Alumni leadership and network development. Regarding the embeddedness of the egos under research, the four Alumni, their degree of centrality in the AIESEC network varies. Whereas Strickland was central and used rather strong ties, Peeters was much less central and used weak and strong ties. Therefore, neither the proximity of contact nor the frequency nor the duration of contact played a role for creating a bridging opportunity or information channel from AIESEC to an external career perspective. It rather seems to be rooted in the

self-conception of sharing information among 'equals' as in AIESECers. This information can be sharing an approach to life as it happens to Buhagiar in Colombia or sharing experiences in the coaching business as Strickland is seeking it. Hypothetically, it can be an arrangement to a job which was, however, not evidently in this research. The collected data shows no direct network opportunism in AIESEC since there was no indication that an information is expected in return. This accounts for an open and natural network culture which seems to be typical for the organisation AIESEC. This network culture creates the possibility of easily creating weak ties which can be used for bridging or establish into stronger ties. The network seeking behaviour of Buhagiar, Strickland and Pape after leaving AIESEC indicates that there was a deficiency in bridging from AIESEC to a political context such as the Maltese government or the EU. Therefore, their alteri in AIESEC had no direct network effects for their career development so far. It seems likely that Strickland's revived tie to her AIESEC Alumni friend Cathy can create a direct social network effect for her career development as a coach. Despite this exception, the ego-networks map architecture creates an image of a certain pattern. For one, career relevant effects for a primarily national-European career type can be traced back to career-related networks and closer rather than weaker ties. For example, the promotion of Buhagiar and Strickland to the EU through their bosses at the national level. Whereas the side-entrant career of Peeters presents career relevant effects deriving from a career-related network with weak ties as "Euros", the job EU fair (Interview #2).

The social network effects, as part of the organisational structure within AIESEC, create the perception that it is likely influential to a great range of students due to its low accessibility to a global network of people and leadership opportunities. The analysis concludes findings that the Alumni AIESEC membership influenced their career prospects in terms of attitudes and skills they acquired while being involved and in touch with the network and its opportunities. Prospectively, the AIESEC network presents an opportunity to return to for "self-expression" in the case of Pape or to get involved as in the case of Peeters or possibly to re-connect for current job intentions as for Strickland (Interview #3 & Interview #4).

7.4. Limitations to the Analysis

This chapter shall discuss the research process in terms of reliability and validity. Further, it will identify the shortcomings and draw attention to future research.

In quantitative research, reliability refers to the accuracy and precision of the research, thus determines the stability of the results (Mayring 2002). Whereas validity focuses on the certainty of the results assessing if the research method is effectively scrutinising what its intended to do (Mayring 2002). However, the application of these quantitative criteria is limited to the qualitative research paper. Due to the interference of the researcher, the research object is subject to change as well as the conditions of the research subjects.

Therefore, Mayring established five criteria applicable to qualitative research that shall be shortly introduced and directly applied to the content of this paper (Mayring 2002). First, the *documentation of the research procedure* need to be presented and justified. This includes the disclosure of prior (theoretical) assumptions and the description and reasoning of the methodology including data collection and analysis. The pre-construction of the assumption "AIESEC Alumni using weak ties" has been introduced in chapter one. Each step of the methodology designed in this research has been presented and argued for in chapter 6. The limits to this qualitative approach are that a content analysis of interviews is strictly an analysing technique and has to be embedded into a superordinate research design. The explorative-inductive research design enables a focus on understanding the network dynamics and individual behaviours in which the content analysis is embedded. For this bottom up direction the data creates multiple temporal, cognitive and aggregation scales which reduces the bias of the pre-constructed assumption since it aims to construct an alterative outcome, not the most likely. The content analysis follows a category system which advances a structure. However, it is questionable whether the content analysis is adequate to answer the research question in terms of flexibility. The category system was altered and three dimension of analysis had been added to sustain flexibility which is more likely to create unexpected results that are intended by the extensive research question. Generally, the aim to generate

basic findings on how an AIESEC membership influences career prospects has been met and extensively documented in the appendix.

Second, Mayring mentions the argumentative basis for a reasonable interpretation of the interview content. The coding system presents how original text statements have been paraphrased and classified to the categories to structure the analysis. Additionally, original text statements complement the analysis to allow an inspection to the individual's interpretative patterns. Conclusion shall always be based on the content itself. However, the interpretative nature is subject to the diversity of the researcher and the research subjects. Therefore, the information value is strictly limited to the research and the four Alumni at the time of their interviews. Any significance that exceeds the specific context of the research is not evidently and shall be underlined as hypothetical. Third criterion is the set of rules on which the analysis is based on. This set of rules on which the category and coding system have been written presented a certain flexibility to the research design. However, any extent of flexibility to the rules allows for errors in the analysis such as miss-interpretations. Therefore, concluding causal effects or consequences are neglected.

Fourth criterion is the *proximity to the research object and subject*. This qualitative research connects to the day-to-day world of four AIESEC Alumni and the actual nature of the organisation AIESEC. However, the frame of this research generated a very narrow proximity which focused on the day-to-day life of their career paths in connection to their network development. On the one side, it creates an in-depth perspective into the concerned area, whereas on the other side it may dismisses factors outside this frame that could have been of significant relevance to the Alumni life choices. A broader frame was not considered due to the explorative nature of this research and the limited research time.

Lastly, Mayring defines the *communicative validation* as a process of reviewing and ensuring the validity by discussing the categories, coding and interpretations within a team of researchers. Due to the absence of a research team and the unavailability of the research subjects such a discussion has not been performed. For that, the validity of this research paper is limited to the interpretative nature of the interviewees output and the researcher's conclusions. The

qualitative content analysis is based on self-presentation of interviewees which reduces scientific significance and inhibits from generalisations. These common limitations to a qualitative content analysis have been expected and dealt with caution during the creation of the research plan. However, the research process may have created more specific limits to the analysis which might affect the strength of the presented results. The data collected during the interviews have been treated as if the narrative of the Alumni were comprehensive albeit limited or restrained answers could have been suspected. This suspicion is based on the small timeframe each interview has been conducted in as well as the assumption that official EU employee might not want to fully reveal their networking behaviours or their notions. Additionally, this suspicion is supported by the argument that the researcher may have been subject to bias in interpreting the comprehensiveness of the answers by projecting her own AIESEC experience. However, the AIESEC background of researcher allowed a unique access into the career trajectories of Alumni at the EU level which might not have been granted to a researcher without an AIESEC background. This circumstance presents equal difficulties and advantages. Another difficulty encountered was the amount of data collected during the interview which effected the timeframe of this research. With the support of content analysis this was sought to be minimised. The content analysis involves the creation of a category and coding system on which the analysis is based and can be related to the research question. Due to the extensiveness of the research question, the category system had to be created in a way that it remains comprehensive without leaving out details. This resulted in an equally extensive category system which took more time than anticipated.

The reconstruction of four network stories and four career trajectories is a reconstruction of subjective meaning-positioning. Whereas the weakness of the obtained data lies in the applicability of their results it does not prevent from exploring the research field of the network AIESEC. The strength of the analysis exists in the detailed and individual narratives of four AIESEC experiences which all created data that serve to answer the research question. It confirms the suspicion of social network effects to career prospects. However, it does

not directly confirm the relevance of weak ties for their career success. This results from the fact that the career paths of the four alumni analysed do not represent the typical Alumni career path. It is inconclusive whether weak ties might have been more relevant in the corporate sector. In the case of the four Alumni, the AIESEC culture and living an AIESEC experience presented the opportunity for leadership proliferation, rather than weak ties. To that extent, the data does not sufficiently support the proposition of this research that AIESEC Alumni have a career advantage due to the organisational structure. The findings leave room for doubt concerning the relevance of an AIESEC experience for future connections to a leadership position. However, it confirms that an AIESEC experience can cultivate a habitus that influences job seeking behaviour of Alumni.

8. Conclusion and Outlook

Reflecting the above said, the research question's aim to generate basic findings on how an AIESEC membership can individually influence career prospects of Alumni has been satisfied. All the four cases provided evidence that the network of AIESEC cultivated specific global-oriented leadership skills and attributes which lead to the pursuit of the Alumni careers to the EU. The research question itself has been based on the assumption that AIESEC Alumni use weak ties related to the organisation as a career path practice. The empirical context shows that AIESEC seems to be a global network established on weak ties. Based on the four presented cases, this assumption should be preliminary neglected. The network seeking behaviour of the four Alumni shows that the potentiality of weak ties within AIESEC has not been used for direct career practices but for personal reasons. This is also due to the fact that AIESEC's network presents very limited bridging opportunities from the organisation to the EU – over weak or strong ties.

Attending to the research question itself, this thesis found indications that the organisational structure of the AIESEC network is equally effected and defined

by complexities and dynamics from micro to macro level. Albeit AIESEC presents a hierarchical organisational structure, the career prospects are not determined by position or level of responsibility as the data attests. The differing organisational embeddedness of the four Alumni show no relations to their career success nor job seeking behaviour after leaving the organisation. The influence on job seeking behaviour seems to be rooted in the organisational culture that shapes this civil society organisation and its members, not in the sense of its traditional corporate-like structure that can be likely subject to network opportunism. Due to AIESEC's culture and conditionalities, all the four Alumni cultivated their self-portrayal and habitus resembling the characteristics of a global citizen. This provides a reasonable impetus to pursue an international career with a high level of influence and social recognition, such as working at the EU. The Alumni leadership skills can serve as an indicator of motivation for this particular job seeking behaviour.

The analysis of the Alumni ego-networks indicates that their current work-related networking behaviour is a relic from their AIESEC conditionality. As the Alumni told, their networking behaviour within AIESEC was established on an open, friendly and non-opportunistic basis to create ties without considering the degree. This could account for a similarity of the work environment within the EU and AIESEC. Therefore, the usage of weak ties within AIESEC remains as a phenomenon non confirmatum in this study and opens avenues for further research into Alumni pursuing a corporate career path. This research contributes a social analysis of embedded actors in a civic context to the "economic analysis of labour markets and hiring practices" that was conducted by Granovetter (Volti 2012). It creates a minor perspective on the usage of weak ties and helps to find an understanding how this phenomenon might occur or be applied in a social network of a civil organisation.

Referring to AIESEC's influence on the Alumni career development, their network stories affirm the notion of young students' motivation to join a student organisation. In the sense of Bourdieu, experiences and opportunities with AIESEC provided the four Alumni with an ***extra edge*** to their social and human

capital which ultimately emerged to be an advantage in the competition and recruiting practices for a job in the EU (Bourdieu 1987). The significance of this 'extra edge' is not to be underestimated in a global economy of challenging labour markets and reduction of jobs. Therefore, it is recommended to sustain these findings for the EU context by researching comparable effects for a corporate and private context. How useful AIESEC might be in getting a job with EU relevance cannot be generalised and its effects are limited to the individuals experience of the four Alumni.

Generally, this study showed that AIESEC experiences and the organisation's conditionalities had influencing effects on member's career choices as well as leadership and network development in four cases. Their career success until now, was, among other conceivable factors, based on a great balance of human and social capital with a decisive edge of AIESEC background. The discussion of AIESEC as an influencing organisation contributes to the arguments of Coleman's boat stating that individuals can shape a certain network and vice versa as it is the case in AIESEC. Without this rationale, AIESEC would likely be a different organisation. Whereas the significance of it might be clear, its scientific relevance remains unexplained and a potential territory for further research in the context of social and human capital theory. Especially when resolving the complexity of sustainable leadership development of a global civic organisation with +70.000 actors. As a result of this study stands the suggestion to further expand in quantitative longitudinal studies that might create a more comparable and reliable understanding of weak ties in civic organisations.

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Appendix

Interview Guideline

Basic Information

- Aim of the research
- Selection criteria of the interviewee
- Introduction to the flow of the interview
- Interviewee: ....
- Birth year: ....
- Country of birth: ....

Self-perception of professional role in AIESEC and EU

- When and how did you join AIESEC?
- For how long have you been active?
- Why did you join AIESEC?
- How was the network structured?
- What did a typical career of an AIESECer look like?
- What did you do in AIESEC?
- What did you develop in AIESEC in terms of skills and networks?
- How did it influence your career choice?
- What kind of positions did you have in AIESEC with regards to hierarchy?
- What kind of relations did you have in AIESEC?
- What kind of importance does these relationships have for you?
- What is/ was your job position in the EU Commission? How did you apply and got selected?
- Why did you apply for a job at the EU Commission?
- What role do you see yourself in as Alumni & EU employee?
- What does a typical career of an AIESEC Alumni look like?

Networks

- Who influenced you and your career development the most (in and outside of AIESEC)?

- To whom did you have a close/ loose relationship?
- How frequent is your contact (daily, weekly, monthly, once a year)?
- How long do you know them/ him/ her?
- With whom did/ still do you share important experiences and topics in AIESEC?
  - How are you connected to that person (friend, colleague, job, family, mentor…)?
  - What kind of activities connected/ connect you?
  - How are these persons connected to each other?

Career Success in the European Institution
- Are you involved in policy processes?
- Do you have personal contacts to parties?
- How do you see your AIESEC background influencing your career in the EU?

Figure 3 – Example of a network map (own source)
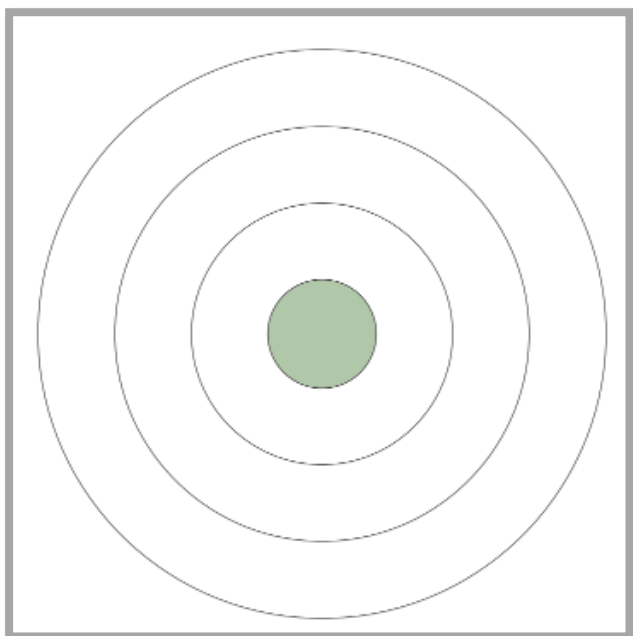
Table 1: Operationalisation of the Research Question

Research Question	Dimension of Analysis	Battery of subject	Interview Questions to explore the field of research
How does organisational structure	Organisational level	Power, influence and accessibility of organisations	When and how did you join AIESEC? For how long have you been active?
within AIESEC		Collective aim, promise of NGOs Life-long connection Operational level	Why did you join AIESEC? How was the network structured? What did you do in AIESEC?
influence job seeking behaviour	Organisational level (recruiting of elites)	Impact/ effect on hiring practices → career success Leadership development (hypothesis 4)	What did you develop in AIESEC in terms of skills and networks? How did it influence your career choice?
of embedded actors	Individual and network level (social phenomenon of ego-networks, individual relations)	Consequences of network positions Strategic embeddedness (hypothesis 3) Degree of centrality Weak ties Strong ties	What kind of positions did you have in AIESEC with regards to hierarchy? What kind of relations did you have in AIESEC? What kind of importance does these relationships have for you?
at a level that has high influence?	Organisational level (hiring practices)	Social recognition	What role do you see yourself in as Alumni & EU employee? Why did you apply for a job at the EU Commission? Are you involved in policy processes?

		Current employment situation Application and selection process	What is/ was your job position in the EU Commission? How did you apply and got selected?

Table 2: Interview Questions for Ego-Networks

Interview Questions to explore the field of re-search	Interview Question that re-construct the ego-network	
	Name Generator	**Name Interpreter**
When and how did you join AIESEC? For how long have you been active?	-	To whom did you have a close/ loose relationship?
Why did you join AIESEC? How was the network structured? What did you do in AIESEC?	-	How frequent is your contact (daily, weekly, monthly, once a year)? How long do you know them/ him/ her?
What did you develop in AIESEC in terms of skills and networks? How did it influence your career choice?	Who influenced you and your career development the most (in and outside of AIESEC)?	
What kind of positions did you have in AIESEC with regards to hierarchy? What kind of relations did you have in AIESEC? What kind of importance does these relationships have for you?	With whom did/ still do you share important experi-ences and topics in AIESEC?	How are you connected to that person (friend, col-league, job, family, mentor...)? What kind of activities connected you? How are these persons connected to each other?
What role do you see yourself in as Alumni & EU employee?	-	
What is/ was your job position in the EU Commis-sion? How did you apply and got selected?	-	

Table 3: Category System

Analysis Dimension		Category Name	Definition	Anchor Sample	Code Rule
Modi of integration in AIESEC	MC 1	Reasons for joining AIESEC	The experience and personal context of joining	"Yeah, I joined AIESEC in my first year, as a fresher, in university, 1993, I think, that's when, no 1994. First week at university, I was a fresher […]" (Interview #1) "Well I came to know AIESEC when I did my internship with Erasmus in Finland, Helsinki" (Interview #2) "There [at the university in Geneva] I had some contacts with friends" (Interview #3) "Yes, in 90 I joined AIESEC. And I was in AIESEC for 4 years, because I did an economics degree in Malta" (Interview #4)	Entry year, life circumstance
	SC 1.1	Accessibility	The procedure, network structure and entry requirements	"and AIESEC had a stand over there, and they promoting, at least at that time, a lot of people to a weekend, to a kind of conference party that they would have to go there." (Interview #1) "I went to an info-meeting of AIESEC" (Interview #2) "There [at the university in Geneva] I had some contacts with friends and they proposed I should try to apply for the stage" (Interview #3) "I came to know AIESEC when I did my internship with Erasmus in Finland, Helsinki" (Interview #2)	Includes hiring practices and procedures of member and trainee recruitment as well as first touchpoints and the network structure

				"I went to an info-meeting of AIESEC" (Interview #2) "pretty informally […] we really had a drive to go out there, talk about things and explaining what it was and recruit people" (Interview #4) "I was doing my business management and economics degree there, and AIESEC was very active on campus. And I would like to think, in the period of time that I was there, that it actually got bigger and bigger and bigger and I ended up being the president of the Maltese chapter" (Interview #4)	
	SC 1.2	Motivation	Reasons that attracted the Alumni to join for a certain time	"And I said I am a fresher, that sounds actually fun, so I joined". (Interview #1) "I was here only three months, so I joined the social like activities but not really like being involved in the core tasks of the LC" (Interview #2) "to have that international network and especially to have a common thing to have that experience and that conferences, like to have an iTtT is for me the most really useful conference there is." (Interview #2) "like to be in touch with the international community" (Interview #2) "was really international. That really attracted me" (Interview #2) "I wanted to get practical experience. Because I was a lawyer, not in business. So,	Initial intrinsic reasons or extrinsic incentives

				this was the chance in south France. And AIESEC was very helpful there" (Interview #3) "I liked the fact that is was practical and that there was something to do other than just the idea. And, it was the network also" (Interview #4)	
	SC 1.3	Experiences	Internal occupation and activities the Alumni had been involved in during their active time	"being active in different small projects. […] AIESEC seminars abroad as well, EUROLDS. […] I joined the MC as external relations co-ordinator. This was in 1998/99. […] I went to Colombia as a trainee for practical experience. […] involved in with welcoming Trainees in Malta." (Interview #1) "I did a few iTtT and then last year I was still somehow regular member in my LC, so the MCP Belgium approved my request to join the LDs in Egypt" (Interview #2) "the stage [fr. Internship] in 1970. That was in Cognac […] for two months" (Interview #3) "Just a stage in Cognac. I wasn't in any administrative career role, MC or whatever, never." (Interview #3) "Just as regular member, because I was working fulltime in the bay and studying evening courses. And that went pretty well, but very soon I also got involved in alumni network (Interview #2)	Entails job descriptions and their abbreviations, positions with regards to hierarchy, events such as conferences and training seminars, traineeships

				"social like activities but not really like be-ing involved in the core tasks of the LC" (In-terview #2) "I was here only three months, so I joined the social like activities but not really like being involved in the core tasks of the LC […] mainly for social activities" (Interview #2) "I have an IT background I did marketing and communication, the website. But then mainly on alumni relations" (Interview #2) "I met a lot of people through AIESEC […] also international." (Interview #4) "went to places I never would have gone to otherwise. So, Presidents Meeting was in the Philippines, Sri Lanka I lived in for 6 months. I also went to Brazil, but that was something else. It was through AIESEC, we had a suage project in a favela in Brazil" (In-terview #4)	
	SC 1.4	Leadership develop-ment	Skills the Alumni acquired dur-ing their membership in cer-tain positions	"self-awareness, public speaking, also kind of creativity" (Interview #2) "finding a common denominator for these experience, various contacts, beyond your own nationality" (interview #4) "And I learned how to lead a team for the first time and I learned how to motivate people and how to share a vision between a group of people. […] So, the foundation,	Accounts for soft and hard skills as well as character traits

				which I created, was in AIESEC. And the ability, well I always had this wanderlust in the world, but AIESEC really encouraged it and I went to places I never would have gone to otherwise." "it broadened my horizon in a hundred different ways" (Interview #4)	
	SC 1.5	Network development	Types of relationships the Alumni built during their active time	"Mainly companies […] mainly with AIESEC" (Interview #1) "some contacts in bigger companies and also like in the EU" (Interview #2) "really good friends" (Interview #2) "Friendship. It was very personal, yes." (Interviews #3) "it was more friendships." "fun, enriching, quality" (Interview #4)	Includes personal and professional relationships established during the active time in and outside of AIESEC
Career path practices	**MC 2**	**Reasons/ Strategies for international career**	General	"like to work in an international environment and also go for new experiences, exchange myself." (Interview #2)	
	SC 2.1	Structures and factors of influence	Informal or formal structures Alumni are using for their career path Factors that are influencing the career path but without the control of the Alumni	"I can't really say I used my AIESEC network to get into my job" (Interview #1) "I landed this job at the government thanks, partly, to my dissertation." (Interview #1) "I was networking within the government, so there was an opening at their presentation, so I applied through an interview" (Interview #1) "raise myself above the rest by doing a post-grad" (Interview #1)	Educational or family background, Practical experience, channels of job search

| | | | | "experience with the government as well as experience abroad" (Interview #1) "developed a negotiation profile, let's say, through working with different negotiators from around the table, different attachés, learning more about government policy how that relates to EU policy and finding the bridge between the two." (Interview #1) "did my concour to join the European Institutions, I passed it in economics and that's how I came to work in the Commission" (Interview #1) "So, we were just literally looking at advertisements." (Interview #1) "I was working two years in the EU commission in DG connect and my contract was finishing but before the […] beginning of July I went one week to Lithuania to the iTtT and when I came back I was like when I have to leave the commission or go for another position I was ready for it." (Interview #2) "Euros job day, Euros is the European jobservice" (Interview #2) "as I got experience I could easily move to another EG. But what I learned from that is that if you do an interview or you would like to have a position you need to keep in | |

					touch with the person, with the recruiters" (Interview #2)
					"professional IT bachelor" (Interview #2)
					"I studied economic law mainly" (Interview #3)
					""the stage [fr. Internship]. That was in Cognac […] for two months" (Interview #3)
					"went to Japan, and the scholarship was with the Japanese government,"
					"I was there with DAAD, you know, Deutschar Akademischer Austausch. I profited very much of them because of their scholarship. And in Japan I even had two scholarships. One Japanese and the DAAD. Gave me the chance to travel all over the world at this time." (Interview #3)
					" I did the examination in Bonn because I was working at the Japanese embassy with a temporary contractor while waiting for the results from Brussels" (Interview #2)
					"things [team-management] that are actually quite useful for me today. In a management role"
					"I then started to study diplomatic studies and international relations and I became a diplomat and I worked in the ministry of foreign affairs in Malta […] 8 in the ministry and I worked 5 on the accession to the EU.

				And I was in the private office of the minister for foreign affairs who became Malta's first commissioner." "3 years in, I set the concour and I got selected and I joined the commission then." (Interview #4)	
	SC 2.2	Current occupation	Reason for being employed at the EU Commission	"I was interested in EU" (Interview #1) "I was looking for something more international, more exciting" (Interview #2) "I felt European […] and foreign service" (Interview #3) "I was in the private office of the minister for foreign affairs who became Malta's first commissioner. Until he invited me to join him here" (Interview #4)	Motivation, interest, opportunity
	SC 2.3	Future occupation	Ideas, choices and actions steps taken to shape Alumni next career steps	"Well I see myself going up the career ladder, but I don't have any specific career path, not yet. But if I manage to get something with NLP as a coach or trainer or something I might then be more ambitious. That is something which I really like and I really have an idea what I could do to help the institution improve the way it recruits people and the way it manages them." (Interview #1) "I am working on a book in that context. I have already, more or less a book, but I want to translate it now into, you know	Further education, Notions of career direction, Projects, attitudes

				what Mangas are? So, I want to translate into visual presentation" (Interview #3) "I am undergoing a transition and I want to move more into the world […of] HR, personal development and organisational development field." (Interview #4)	
	SC 2.4	Motivation	General Behaviours, experiences, knowledge and personal characteristics that enable the Alumni to seek an international career, that are meaningful for succeeding	"paying attention" (Interview #1) "I am still ambitious that we can make something out of Europe" (Interview #1) "go anywhere out of my comfort zone" (Interview #2) "In general, the international experience. For me it started with high school in the US […]. So, the experience of being exposed to different cultures. For me […] it is very important" (Interview #3) "already as a student I had some ideas of being European" (Interview #3) "Languages help of course. At the time, this was my kind of niche" (Interview #3) "I didn't show off" "I am a pacifist, proactive pacifist" (Interview #3) "I was open not only language wise it is having the difficult experiences which is challenging, you know. I like to be challenged and get to know new things and different things" (Interview #3)	Such as ambition, attitudes, interests, beliefs, values

				"if I cannot continue there I would find another opportunity even if it's abroad […] my interest for other countries" (Interview #2)	
				"like to work in an international environment and also go for new experiences, exchange myself" (Interview #2)	
				"I was always a big picture person, and that meant global, always, or international" (Interview #4)	
				"I always had this wanderlust" (Interview #4)	
				"I don't do network for the sake of networking. I network because I think there is value in a relationship." (Interview #4)	
				"good organisational abilities" (Interview #4)	
				"my international dimension is always there." (Interview #4)	
				"the diversity, so in this multicultural, multinational there is very rich diversity which is what I like about Europe, being European" (Interview #4)	
				"I really don't suffer from fear. Helped with public speaking which I had to kind of rediscover being a spokesperson for the last seven years" (Interview #4)	
				"I don't dislike the smallness but it was never going be enough for me" (Interview #4)	

	SC 2.5	Understanding of the EU as an employee	Self-perception	"if I do something in NLP I have more of a time with my employer" (Interview #1) "I think it's positive and negative. Because especially in a big organisation it takes time to get to know the job, get to know the unit and then when you finally know it and would like to change it you go for another position." (Interview #2) "And maybe for some people it can be also a surplus if you contact them and it can be convenient to contact me and get other contacts so if you contact me I can say, I have contacts in the EU commission. And maybe it can be useful even for AIESEC. IF you would like to cooperate with like the UN, the EU Commission and then I think mainly of the DG education and culture it would be nice if you can bring them to-gether." (Interview #2) "Erasmus next to the Euro is the most im-portant program we have in EU, obviously. And Erasmus has enormous influence as well to combat nationalism. To become aware of you know, once you know other people you can't ignore anymore." (Inter-view #3)	Includes statements on current and future occu-pation
Social net-work effects	MC 3	<mark>AIESEC background</mark>	General self-perception of role and skills	"Probably the foundation of everything I am today" (Interview #4)	

in career de-velopment				"the official concour I went through. To be honest, I guess it helped that I some partic-ular experiences with AIESEC, AFS, DAAD. And the Japanese language helped me a lot. AIESEC certainly can help, the expertise was a niche for me." (Interview #3) "it changes you, it ignites something that you feel, ok I need to continue, for me the alumni things I ran to the first conference of AIESEC alumni in France 2015" (Interview #2)	
	SC 3.1	Understanding of Alumni role	Opinion, lasting impact with regards to career development	"I have yet to see [...] if there is any role for me as an Alumni [...] I am not pursuing it proactively." (Interview #1) "To do something for the society, good im-pact" (Interview #2) "I have been active for 3 years. But the last 2 years I was just not involved in the cur-rent activities so I was kind of attached [as-sociated] member [...] but I am not involved in current operations" (Interview #2) "As an Alumni with younger people to in-sight them" (Interview #3) "it was mainly for me to explain the EU to them" (Interview #3) "I saw it more as a private edition, it wasn't that I used it directly for career purposes or stuff" (Interview #3)	Any kind of Alumni activ-ities from actions, events, projects, confer-ences, or touchpoints with linkages to the cur-rent occupation

				"Europa Akademie in Otzenhausen" (Interview #3) "I have never seen the overlap […] there is very little overlap" (Interview #4)	
	SC 3.2	Degree of influence	Influence on choices and behaviours regarding career and life	"being open to opportunities" (Interview #1) "There's also something, yeah you are interested in those companies and if you have the contacts, yeah that is also something. There is a big chance that in these big companies there is also an AIESECer working and you have AIESEC in common and it is easier to get higher." (Interview #2) "not really to prove myself on a professional level. However, you change a bit and you feel yeah I improved." (Interview #2) "I know a lot of IT guys and they are technical really good, but for example if they want to do the competition for the EU, they are always stuck somehow when they have to do like the paper or present themselves during the interview. Because they are HR people and they look only to the person and not to the technical background skill. But it's getting more like that I mean it's also with companies it's the first impression. So therefore, AIESEC is ideal also for preparing for the course for getting hired by	Includes general approaches and attitudes to life and career

				the EU, it's perfect, like going to an ITTT." (Interview #2) "the international experience" (Interview #3) "it is the motivation to come here [the EU] because I had this experience (Interview #3) "these [global] trips […] encouraged my thirst for more of it AIESEC cultivated it. […] They were real trips and I've become formed by them" (Interview #4) "to the soft ways" (Interview #4) "my openness to people, my lack of fear" (Interview #4) "protocol is everything" (Interview #4) "really heightened my interest in cultural awareness. And I think as a negotiator I have been extremely well served by that. I think, also, the fact that I've travelled to pretty much the weirdest places in the world." (Interview #4) "And AIESEC gave me this breath of experience. So, in that sense I can also speak a little bit of many languages which is very helpful" (Interview #4) "so, the fact that I can pull up a song or a word, and I remember these things from my AIESEC days." (Interview #4)	
	SC 3.3	Degree of importance	Use of relationships and points of involvement in Alumni activities	"I kind of lost interest in AIESEC and AIESEC Alumni. But I still attend some Gala events" (Interview #1)	Alumni activities seeking behaviour

				"through the AIESEC Alumni Belgium associ-ation. So, I, some friends, like last time this month, I went to the Thursday event" (Interview #1) "On Facebook, with few people in Malta, but I haven't met anyone in a few years" "Socially" (Interview #1) "In AIESEC I am now in the board of AIESEC Alumni Belgium. But I may want to switch to the European board." (Interview #2) "for me that was one of the most favourable things in AIESEC is alumni network. Maybe current members who are just students maybe do not really know it or are not aware of it. But for me it was really was something ok that alumni network and especially the international connections; I would like to have it" (Interview #2) "I was not very active." (Interview #3) "I that way I continued Japanese contact with AIESEC not so much for my career it was more in the sense of the contact with locals and the spot where younger people meet." (Interview #3) "I didn't have much contact, I was much more giving speeches and coming together in the evenings." (Interview #3) "went to Mexico, there was a meeting of AIESEC and Tunisia […] was not so much in the context of my job, was more private,	

				personal affair, chance to travel, people that are knowing people in that spot" (Interview #3) "I also got involved in alumni network, because for me that was one of the most favourable things in AIESEC is alumni network" (Interview #2) "But for me the international conferences, they are really the motivation to continue" (Interview #2) "organised an AIESEC Alumni Congress in Malta, in 1995." (Interview #4) "I don't really have much contact with AIESEC today I have to admit." (Interview #4)	
	SC 3.4	Understanding of AIESEC	Perception of the organisation from an Alumni *ex post perspective*	"AIESEC provided the medium to which I was able to experience that" (Interview #1) "AIESEC continued to enhance that kind of mentality or mindset I have" (Interview #1) "there wasn't really an AIESEC network over there or if there was, I wasn't aware of it but I never actually" (Interview #1) "I know here in Belgium, are in business in all kinds, not too much government, I haven't really met or I am not aware at least of AIESEC Alumni in Belgium who are working in the government" (Interview #1) "A lot of people, they would like to do something for a short time, experience it and then go for another experience. Like	Includes symbolic statements for AIESEC as well as the presence of the network itself

				they run out of options at AIESEC or they see another opportunity. Or they feel they are not doing something useful or wasting their times. Because that's also something, you are working in AIESEC on things and after a while they say it's not needed anymore." (Interview #2) "you've done a lot of work that is not recognised. And you feel like I was working for nothing" (Interview #2) "They really go up the ladder. And they become VP and they stop. Ok, you have to write your thesis but somehow they kind of disappear from the network." (Interview #2) "especially if you are young members, because I knew AIESECers that joined when they were 25 and I see that they are more mature, they know what to expect, they commit more. But what I also experience, that know members only stay two to three years' maximum, while in the past they stayed like 5 years sometimes." (Interview #2) "AIESEC is changing a lot" (Interview #2) "big international organisation" (Interview #2)	

				“And this is very important that open experiences like AIESEC contributes very heavily to that.” (Interview #3) “that world” (Interview #4) “AIESEC really encouraged it” “Multinational, multicultural, organisations with a very clear focus I think, both a product of world war II” (Interview #4) “AIESEC would have done, it would have taken something that was instinctively already there and cultivated it” (Interview #4) “AIESEC exposed me to loads of stuff, that otherwise, what would I have been doing, sitting the library or at school and study, and I am not a studier, you know. And AIESEC was exactly the right thing for me because I learned by doing not by reading about it in a notebook. So, it came along at exactly the right time. (Interview #4)	
Social network effects in career development	MC 4	Personal Network	Personal understanding of network/ relationships	“never really had a mentor” (Interview #1) “I can't really say that there were one or two people who really influenced me to move on” (Interview #1) “Networking is really important. It's really important to have a huge network, get to know as many people as needed […] also kind of lobbying. Not in the negative sense but …” (Interview #2)	Includes the ego-network map and persons mentioned during the interview

				"I am very Japanese, because when you get a visiting card, I keep them usually and even mark when and who I met at what time to what occasion. So, when travel or so I always have somebody, I have several thousand cards, I am very Japanese. And in Japan you can always come back. So, when you meet someone personally it is a lifetime relationship" (Interview #3)	
				"what I call sector friends. Which means I go out with somebody just to see a movie others I do sports together. So, I am rather aware of, it is very difficult for me to have one friend doing everything, maybe that's why not any more. So, I can be very conscious of what I can do with whom. So, I make clear differences here. So, that means I wouldn't have all my friends together for a party." (Interview #3)	
				"it's very ego-centric in that way, because I pick the raisings out of the cake, that's the experience. Maybe its diplomatic as well. The experience as a diplomat." (Interview #3)	
				_____	
				"I would like to think that the people who had influenced me most in my career are in the latest stage in my career. But actually, when I think about it, of	

				course, influenced came much earlier on" (Interview #4) "I think I am not that kind of person. I think there have maybe been two to three people, who I looked to and thought, yeah, one day I want to be just like that two, three, not more." (Interview #4) "I'm quiet uninfluenceable. Who influences me? I would say my immediate circle." (Interview #4) "my relationships are based on genuine connections, they are not enforced connections" (Interview #4)	

| | SC 4.1 | Influential persons for career development | Persons that left an impact during a shared experience which let to certain career choices that can be linked to that impact | "But, at that time, there wasn't really much networking" (Interview #1)
"my parents were […] they wanted me to do something more ambitious. So, we were all looking at the newspapers for, you know, opportunities (laughs). And there was a call for applications at the time for policy officer in economics in Malta and to join the government. And then when I joined the Representation, I can't remember if it was me or my parents, who found the note in the newspaper for the call in Brussels." (Interview#1)
"There was one person in Colombia who influenced me quite well […] was a great metaphor that helped me stayed on" (Interview #1)
"So, this person somehow influenced me to be more open and more looking forward to the opportunities that life has to offer rather than sticking myself to this one job. And that helped me to be more open and eventually led me to find my job […]" (Interview #1)
"my boss [at the representation in Malta] he actually helped me to get me the job, he gave me a good recommendation and that's how I ended up in Brussels, it was thanks to him, he was the only one who | Including persons in and outside of AIESEC and their moment of influence on behaviours or information relevant to career development |

| | | | | knew me and my background." (Interview #1)
"Gerry from NLP. And the founder of energetic NLP" (Interview #1)
_____

"for my motivation in AIESEC people like Victor Löwenstein, then the founders of AIESEC, Jean Choplin that like mainly like older alumni because you see they are still involved in all the efforts they do for the organisation" (Interview #2)
"the fresh alumni who start their own company start-up. They have a lot of influence on me" (Interview #2)
"my grandfather, he had also like a huge network of people" (Interview #2)
_____
"I was very much formed against my father, to start with" (Interview #3)
"The influence is very strong of my father" (Interview #3)
"I was very much influenced by teachers, yeah. And even people like in Cognac where I worked with AIESEC there." (Interview #3)
"Yeah, school was very important. School with friends, personal friends, professional colleagues." (Interview #3)
"my wife. I wouldn't say she had much influence on my choices" (Interview #3) | |

				_____ "I was in the private office of the minister for foreign affairs who became Malta's first commissioner. Until he invited me to join him here" (Interview #4) "Maltese girl, who was president maybe when I joined or the year after I joined. Loved her, still in contact with her, actually met her last week, have many parallels in our lives, an amazing number of parallels in our lives. She was definitely formative" (Interview #4) "Victor Loewenstein [1st president of AIESEC International" "guy, Pakistani or Indian, living in the UK, AIESEC Alumni, great. And I actually got an email from a guy called Roi Mendosa and on and off I have kept in contact with him" "minister of foreign affairs who became Malta's first commissioner, huge influence on my life, I worked with him for 10 years." "people who also laid good advice in my way. And that has been my inspiration, not so much the people, but what they have said. And there, sources are many. So, it's my parents, my teachers at school, one particular professor at university and people along the way. But I am not one of these Gandhi's and Nelson Mandela types. I get	

				my inspiration from the normal folk not from the big folk." "another co-worker who has influenced me. I learned from her, and there were things of her I wanted to copy" "coaching education, this is work and pleasure and fun, private. This is work, this is work. But in Malta we tend to mix work and pleasure very often" (Interview #4)	

		SC 4.2.1	Nature of connection	Proximity of contact	"student some over here. And for NLP I would say it is more over here in this area" (Interview #1) "I would say, somewhere over here." (Interview #1) "my parents are over here" (Interview #1) "professional colleagues and then the hierarchy, professional hierarchy, I can do that." (Interview #3) "that's the commissioner" (Interview #4) "That's my husband" (Interview #4) "Cathy" (Interview #4)	Close, loose, weak, includes statements that indicate the placement on the ego-network map
		SC 4.2.2		Frequency of contact	"Never. With these I am in contact on a semi-regular basis. With my parents, I am in touch three times a week. To the guy in Colombia, I have never seen him since. With my boss, we are in contact on Facebook. With these I am actually in touch via mail or Facebook." (Interview #1) "at least monthly or a few times a month." (Interview #2) "With family, now or less. Friends, of course they change over time, but some are still, from old days. Professional colleagues they are less than before, because I am not going to the office every day. So, the hierarchy much less, I don't meet Delors very often now. Alumni academics, yes, they are very close right now, with the present situation." (Interview #3)	While pointing at the ego-network map during the exercise

				"Every other day." (Interview #4) "Once a year." (Interview #4) "Cathy, I just have seen her." (Interview #4)	
	SC 4.2.3		Duration of contact	"My boss for 4 years. This student was just a few lessons (5 lessons), it was an intensive one to one for business English, 2001 we are talking about, long time ago" "let's say twice a month [NLP trainer]. This one I know for three years, this one one year" (Interview #1) "usually 3,4 years." (Interview #2) "Alumni? For a long time. I would say 20 years or so, even with AIESEC, Alumni with AFS from high school, I am still in touch with friends from high school" (Interview #3) "One to two years, this was 10 years, this is 7 years, this is forever, this is 18 years, this is the last year" (Interview #4)	While pointing at the ego-network map during the exercise
	SC 4.3	Job related network	Types of actors involved with	"other IT suppliers and then a lot of users. So, in fact all the users of the DG they are a client" (Interview #2) "Originally yes [professionally], but they be-come friends I admit. It is interesting, since I left the commission, a lot of people who have been professionally colleagues be-come friends very often because you realise	

				you have something in common still although you are not in the same office anymore, not everybody, but different people." "Mainly external policies of the EU, there of course Asia, mainly." (Interview #3) "I deal with governments from all over the world, I was also the spokesperson for the WTO for a number of years, again all government officials. We also deal with the private sector, because, I am in the business of standards, food safety standards and of course some of these are set by the private sector. Other actors: NGOs, lobby groups, industry, quiet a range of different actors" (Interview #4)	

Table 4: Coding System

Interview	Paraphrase*	Generalisation	Reduction/ Subsumption
#1	Joined AIESEC in my first semester by an invitation to a conference and it was fun as expected	Way and reason of joining AIESEC	MC 1 Reason of joining AIESEC SC 1.1 Accessibility
#3	To gain practical experiences abroad during my studies	Personal motivation for joining AIESEC	MC 1 Reason of joining AIESEC SC 1.2 Motivation
#4	From being a member, to becoming a team leader, coordinator and president	Roles, positions and its activities	SC 1.3 Experiences
#1	Intercultural competencies, networking skills, taking responsibility, confidence efficiency	Set of skills acquired during a membership	SC 1.4 Leadership Development
#2	Close friendships	Types of relationship that built a network	SC 1.5 Network Development
#2 **#4**	I want to work in an international environment to gain new experiences and develop myself Study of diplomatic affairs and international relations after AIESEC	Prerequisites indicating an international career path	MC 2 Reasons/ Strategies for international career
#1 + #4	Started to work for the national government	Steps taken to start an international career	SC 2.1 Structures and factors of influence
#1 **#4**	Interest in trait policy combined with my belief in the EU as an economic opportunity Natural development of a diplomatic career	Reasons for being employed at the EU	SC 2.2 Current occupation
#1 + #4 **#3**	Choice to take supplementary training aiming to pursue a career in HR/ organisational development Choice to write a book on 'omni-laterism' for a young target group	Future outlook and choices for career path	SC 2.3 Future occupation
#3 **#4**	Maxim of secular-rational values and self-expression values Strong ambition to leave the country	Set of characteristics and mindsets that enable an international career	SC 2.4 Motivation

#4	Trough AIESEC I developed into the person I am today	General self-perception	MC 3 AIESEC background
#3 **#4**	To share my experiences and knowledge as a diplomat and Alumni to younger people and encourage a global career Having Alumni in the EU Commission is a chance not being seized	Alumni activities or possibilities of involving AIESEC elements in EU operations	SC 3.1 Understanding of Alumni role
#1 **#2** **#4**	I did not consciously used AIESEC for my career besides mentioning it in my CV, however, my optimistic approach to life helps to be open for every opportunity I am open and flexible to challenging positions I am using my old contact to exchange experiences for my supplementary training	Choices and behaviours influencing career and life	SC 3.2 Degree of influence
#1 + #3	I am open for invitations to Alumni events, however, not proactively involved in Alumni work	Attitude towards Alumni activities	SC 3.3 Degree of importance
			MC 4 Personal Network
#1	At a time where I was searching for a job, a Colombian student's attitude towards career influenced me to stay optimistic and seek opportunities that might be impossible to get		SC 4.1 Influential persons for career development
		Family, Friends, Work, Colleagues, Teachers, Mentors,	SC 4.2 Nature of connection

* Paraphrase means to circumscribe the text to a statement that is limited to its content.