

Master Thesis Strategic Human Resource Management

How do women at all levels of organizations perceive their in-company women's networks?

Study: Strategic Human Resource Management
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Abstract

This research provides insight into how women at all levels of an organization perceive their in-company women's network and what they think the network should look like in order to be of value to them. This study is a deductive case study, with Alliander as the case organization in the energy sector. The women's perceptions of the in-company women's network are investigated based on the network elements developed by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009). The network elements are network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, events and outcomes of the network. The perceptions are investigated based on the theoretical concept by De Meuse and Hostager (2001) and are divided into emotional reaction, behavioural reaction, judgements and perceived consequences.

Fourteen interviews have been conducted amongst women at all function levels of Alliander. Based on the women's perceptions, recommendations are given in order to develop a network which is perceived as positive valuable by all women within an organization.

Most of the interviewees were not familiar with multiple network elements. After the researcher explained these elements, women at all levels could explain why the women's network was or was not of importance to them or to the organization. This study shows that it is important to clarify these network elements for the employees within the company. Also, it is important for the network to consider the women's perceptions of the different network elements in order to be of value to all women at different function levels.

This research adds to the scientific literature on in-company women's networks by gaining insight into how women at all levels perceive the women's network. Existing literature is often focused on career-oriented women solely. This research, however, broadens the literature by including all women. Including female employees at all levels, it shows that the interests and needs of women at various levels are very different, namely the women differ in needs in networking and connecting with other women. This means that events organized by the network should be various in order to fulfil the needs of all the women.

This research is limited by the size of the group of interviewees. Also, it took place within a specific industry sector, namely the energy sector, which might have an influence on the perceptions of the women at all levels within the organization, because of the masculine organizational culture. Future research would have to interview more women, network members as well as non-members, in order to have more diversity in the interview

respondents group, and to investigate whether the research outcomes also apply to organizations in other sectors.

Preface

After months of hard work, I can present my Master Thesis with a sense of satisfaction to you. This thesis has given me more insight into in-company women's networks but also into diversity. I am looking forward to presenting my thesis to the self-organizing team of Lianne in the hope that they feel that the time they have invested in me has been useful to improve the network Lianne and support more women within Alliander!

First of all, I would like to thank the organization Alliander for giving me the opportunity to attend this internship at their organization. More specifically, I would like to thank my CSR-team for helping me when needed during the research process and in particular my company supervisor Joy Lodarmasse for continuously being enthusiastic about my Master Thesis and giving me the support to write this research. You apologized for not always having the time to see me, but because of this you gave me the independence and space to come to you with questions.

Also, I would like to thank my supervisor from the university for her positive but critical look on my thesis and all her input. When I did not know how to move forward, you gave me the insights that I needed to make this thesis a better research. I appreciate all the time you took to guide me these last couple of months!

Third, I want to thank my family, friends and boyfriend for giving me the support, advice and motivation to finish my thesis.

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I hope you enjoy reading!

Seline de Vries

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem context

In recent years, many organizations have become more aware of the importance of a balanced work force in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities within the organization (Lansu, 2011; Benschop, Holgersson, Van den Brink & Wahl, 2015). They are motivated by different perspectives and interests, such as a higher quality of decision-making, a better connection with the market and corporate social responsibility, which can be reached through diversity and inclusion. As a consequence, many organizations actively develop and implement a diversity management policy, which is focused on cultural, ethnic and age diversity and gender diversity (Draulans, 2012). Benschop et al. (2015, p. 553) define diversity management practices as formalized practices that are developed and implemented by organizations to manage diversity effectively. Organizations are more focused than before on innovative ways to accomplish their strategic goals through creating more diversity and inclusion within the organization (Friedman & Craig, 2004). Formal employee networks have emerged as a new phenomenon in diversity management in large organizations over the last few years (Friedman & Craig, 2004; O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan, 2011). These networks, such as women's networks, may provide organizations with a powerful way to reshape the social environment of minority employees (Friedman & Craig, 2004). They may be helpful in establishing a means by which members can share information and experiences with each other (Cross & Armstrong, 2008) and they are a support in the diversity change policies of organizations to advance the careers of minority employees (Van Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere & Schouten, 2006). According to Van Emmerik et al. (2006), the networks are public, officially recognized within the organization by employers and they also tend to have an identifiable membership and explicit structure.

Much literature pays attention to how to set up an employee network and looks at network benefits from an organizational perspective (Hucke & Kepinski, 2016). According to Hucke and Kepinski (2016), the implementation of formal networks often leads to a different network reality than intended by the organization, with networks not contributing to either the engagement or advancement of employees in the organization. However, little is known about who joins a network and even less is known about why someone joins a network (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Bourdil & Géraudel, 2015). The scarce literature suggests that reasons for joining a formal network are divergent, such as social identification, dissatisfaction at work, career costs, and benefits (Friedman & Craig, 2004). According to Donnellon and Langowitz

(2009), women evaluate formal networks differently; some women credit networks for helping them progress in the organization, but others do not see the added value for the women or the organization. Friedman and Carter (as cited in Friedman & Craig, 2004) suggest that people refrain from joining an employee network (1) because they are afraid of being tainted as angry radicals if they join a network, (2) because the group is riddled with infighting and politics or (3) because of a simple lack of interest. The study by Hucke and Kepinski (2016) showed that even though the female members appreciated the network, a high share of the respondents felt that their network was not fully embraced by the organization and did not contribute to their own needs. It is important to know what the reason for joining a network is, because then the network can be as effective as possible in creating value for both its members and the organization. In addition, organizations are able to support their employee networks accordingly.

1.2 Problem definition

It is often assumed that in-company women's networks can support women in the organization to gain the required social and human capital to obtain a higher function. Much of the empirical research on women's networks focuses on the career advancement of women in organizations and, as a consequence, on women in specific type of jobs, who are career oriented (O'Neil et al., 2011; Cross & Armstrong, 2008; Pini, Brown & Ryan, 2004). Therefore, theory on in-company women's networks is possibly based on, and valid for, women's networks that are focused on the career advancement of women. To broaden the empirical basis of the theory on in-company women's networks, it is important to explore how in-company women's networks are experienced which are aimed at fulfilling the interests of women at all levels within organizations. It is important to explore the perspective of women of all organizational positions on employee networks, because these women may all be interested in joining and/or participating in a formal women's network to achieve their goals. Therefore, this study focuses on women at all levels of organizations, because it wants to investigate why women at all levels do or do not join and/or participate in a women's network. The aim of this study is to explore how women at all levels of organizations think the in-company women's network in their organizations does or can contribute to their goals and what this network should look like in order to be of value to them. Thus, this research contributes to the literature on formal women's networks (O'Neil et al., 2011; Pini et al., 2004; Forret & Dougherty, 2004) by broadening its empirical basis rather than focusing only on career-oriented women, as has been the case in the literature thus far. This study shows

what is important for women of all organizational levels to achieve through joining and/or participating in an in-company women's network. This contribution will be realized by exploring how women at all levels of organizations perceive the in-company women's network. While literature on formal women's networks is growing, there is still a lack of clarity about why women of all levels of an organization join a women's network (Singh, Vinnicombe & Kumra, 2006) and on how they think a women's network does or can contribute to their goals (Friedman & Craig, 2004; O'Neil et al., 2011). By focusing on women at all levels within an organization, this study contributes to filling this gap in the literature, and thus contributes to the empirical basis of the theory on in-company women's networks.

In a practical sense, by providing an image of the perceptions that women at all levels of organizations have of the formal women's network, the current research may provide recommendations for shaping in-company women's networks that focus on women at all levels in such a way that they fulfil the needs of women at all levels of the organization.

To gain insight into why women at all levels of organizations join a formal in-company women's network and how they perceive the network including what the network should look like according to them, in order to be of value to them, the following main question will be answered:

“How do women at all levels of organizations perceive the in-company women's network and what do these women think the network should look like in order to be of value to them?”

To answer the main question, this study will be conducted as a case study within the organization 'Alliander', which is one of the largest firms in the Dutch energy (distribution) sector. A case study research is relevant to conduct, because it allows researchers to describe in depth (Yin, 2014) how women at all levels of an organization perceive their in-company women's network. This argumentation will be further explained in chapter three. The case of Alliander fits the research question perfectly, because the organization has a formal women's network named 'Lianne', which focuses on women at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, it is unclear to the network why women in this organization do or do not join and/or participate in the network (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, November 10, 2016).

1.3 Thesis structure

This research started with an introduction to the problem context, the research aim and research question. The second chapter includes the concepts that will be used in this study. Networking in general will be outlined and the elements of the in-company women's network will be explained in detail following Donnellon and Langowitz (2009). In addition, the importance of the concept 'perceptions' will be discussed based on De Meuse and Hostager (2001). Concluding remarks will be made concerning the use of these concepts in the current study. The third chapter consists of the methodology and explains which research design and strategy will be used and how the data will be collected and analyzed. Also, the case organization will be introduced. In addition, the concepts in-company women's network and perceptions will be operationalized into indicators and the methodological quality of the research project and the research ethics will be discussed. In order to give answer to the six sub-questions, the fourth chapter provides the analysis of the multiple methods: document analysis, participant observations and interviews. The fifth chapter consists of the conclusion and discussion based on the analysis, which includes the theoretical- and methodological discussion. Also, it provides recommendations to the network Lianne and other practical implications.

2. Theoretical background

This chapter addresses the two concepts that will be used in this study. These concepts are central to the research question and will be used in order to systematically investigate it. The first concept is in-company women's network, its elements will be outlined based on Donnellon and Langowitz (2009). The second concept is perceptions, which will be discussed based on De Meuse and Hostager (2001).

2.1 In-company women's networks

2.1.1 Networking

In the literature, there are different definitions given to 'networking'. For example, the article by Singh et al. (2006, p. 2) describes networking as "Activities by individuals attempting to develop and maintain relationships with those with, or perceived to have, the potential to assist them, in their work or career". Whiting and De Janasz (2004, p. 283) define networking as "The building and nurturing of personal and professional relationships to create a system of information, contact, and support and altogether this is thought to be crucial for career and personal success". This definition mentions what can be created by networking and cites personal as well as career success. Therefore, this study uses the definition of Whiting and De Janasz (2004), as it covers multiple outcomes of joining a network by building a system of information, contact and support. Networking plays an important role in building a sense of community (Cross & Armstrong, 2008) and it helps the individual to understand the political and cultural organizational practises (Ibarra, as cited in O'Neil et al., 2011). Defining 'networking' is of importance for the current study, because the definition indicates what people may gain through joining a network and to which elements it may contribute.

2.1.2 In-company women's networks

Women tend to develop informal networks that are small in size and have a great social tie strength (the emotional intensity of the relationship) (O'Neil et al., 2011). In the literature, there is a lack of consensus about the extent of similarity among women's network members. According to O'Neil et al. (2011), informal women's networks have a high degree of similarity among network members, while Ibarra (1997) states that women's networks are less homophilous. Forret (2014) adds that informal women's networks in organizations have a low degree of influence in the organization and are not well-developed, which results in less effectiveness and opportunities that the network can offer.

Formal in-company women's networks are organized to address three problem areas

(Singh et al., 2006); (1) women often experience more challenges than men in organizational environments, (2) women are often excluded and isolated by the organizational social structure and (3) established career paths sometimes exclude women who do not have the benefit of female role models. In the literature, in-company women's networks are defined as "A network as response to the ongoing exclusion from informal male networks, a positive developmental activity or useful tool for organizations committed to valuing diversity" (Perriton, 2006, p.101). In this study, the definition of in-company women's network by Perriton (2006) will be combined with the network elements listed by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) in order to systematically investigate the perceptions of women at all levels of Alliander of the in-company women's network Lianne. According to Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), different elements of an in-company women's network can be distinguished; network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, activities, and outcomes of an in-company women's network (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009). Corporate policies towards in-company women's networks require clarity on these different elements (Friedman & Boger, as cited in Friedman & Craig, 2004). Including these elements in the definition of in-company women's networks enables this study to systematically investigate the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander of the in-company women's network Lianne. In this study, the in-company women's network definition by Perriton (2006) will be combined with the network elements of Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) into the following definition: "A network as response to the ongoing exclusion from informal male networks, which consists of a network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, activities and outcomes".

Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) state that based on the different elements of a formal women's network, a particular network typology can be recognized. They distinguish three types of networks: connective, developmental and strategic, which respectively increase from low network embeddedness in the organization and low intended business leverage to high network embeddedness and high intended business leverage, as will become more clear in section 2.1.2.2. In-company women's networks tend to progress over time from connective to developmental to strategic networks. Based on these insights, the elements of in-company women's networks will now be discussed more elaborately.

2.1.2.1 Network structure of an in-company women's network

In-company women's networks often consist of a chair, a board and one or more organizing committees. Most networks are managed by female volunteers (Singh et al., 2006). Often,

senior executives or HR managers are part of the board of the network (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). The role of senior women is important to the authority and visibility of the women's networks in the organization (Gremmen & Benschop, 2013).

According to McCarthy (2004), however, formal in-company women's networks are highly flexible and do not require heavy infrastructures or long planning processes to set up. They can connect women quickly and effectively from across different parts of the organization. The networks are participatory and self-organizing: they rely for their success on their self-organizing capacities and dynamism. Flexibility can also be seen as the extent of the right of say that the female employees have in the in-company women's network, which means the openness of the network to bringing in new ideas by female members of the network.

As structure is one of the elements of in-company women's networks distinguished by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), in this study, the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander of Lianne's structure will be explored.

2.1.2.2 Network mission and purpose of an in-company women's network

The network mission of an in-company women's networks can be distinguished into the mission and purpose of the network. A network mission is what the network wants to convey, which anchors the identity and constantly reminds people of the choices made (Vermeulen, 2007). The network purpose is the long-term goals that are based on the network mission. Formal in-company women's networks differ in their purposes (Benschop et al., 2015). Some networks are focused on inequalities, discriminatory practices, and power relations in their organizations, which they aim to change (Benschop et al., 2015). Other formal networks are focused on the individual; they emphasize community building and career development.

According to Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), the goals of the in-company women's network can be presented as a mission pyramid. The bottom four goals are focused on the individual level. At the core of each women's network is the goal to connect one woman to another. The subsequent goal can be providing channels for sharing trustworthy guidance of a critical nature for personal development, referred to as 'peer reference and support' (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009, p. 31). Another goal is competency development, which means supporting women to thrive at work. This is followed by the goal of career support, in which women's networks serve as the provider of opportunities to job openings, business contacts, and career development strategies. The two goals at the top are focused on the organizational level. Women's networks may have the goal of advancement and advocacy of

women in leadership positions and the contribution to the firm, such as letting the women participate in talent reviews (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009). At the top of the mission pyramid is the goal of business development, which means that networks are helping women drive business success, for example, helping the women in the organization to think differently about particular products or services, which leads to innovative input (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009).

Especially strategic in-company women's networks relate their goals at the top of the pyramid to their organization's goals by formulating a business rationale concerning the network's contribution to organizational goals (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009). This is encouraged when women's networks are supported by the management of the organization (Benschop et al., 2015). Because of the support given by certain departments of the organization, the business rationale of the organization is often related to how decisions are made by network members about and within the network (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009).

Depending on the extent that the network's goals align with the corporate goals, the network can be considered to be embedded in the organization at large (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009; Hucke & Kepinski, 2016).

As network mission and purpose is one of the elements of an in-company women's network distinguished by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), in this study, the perceptions of female employees within Alliander of Lianne's mission and purpose will be explored.

2.1.2.3 Target audience of an in-company women's network

Membership refers to the target audience of the women's network (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009). In-company women's networks differ in their target audience. Some networks are just focusing on women-only networks, while others are also open to the male employees of the organization. Still other networks focus on women in certain function levels when determining their target audience. Membership means different things to women's networks, which partly depends on the size of the network (McCarthy, 2004). For some networks, membership just means being subscribed to a mailing list or occasional attendance to events, while other networks define membership as being part of a group, with regular meetings, tight eligibility restrictions and annual membership fees (McCarthy, 2004). As target audience is considered an element of in-company women's network by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander about the target audience of Lianne will be explored.

2.1.2.4 Activities organized by an in-company women's network

Networks organize various events, which range from one-way communication to interpersonal contacts between members (Benschop et al., 2015). One-way communication consists of lectures, guest speakers or training, while interpersonal contacts are more focused on informal coaching. According to Friedman and Holtom (2002), the events are often organized as interactive, such as social gatherings, drinks, discussions about company issues or career success, and conferences bringing people with common interests together.

The diverse events can be planned during or after work in employee's spare time (Benschop et al., 2015; Friedman & Holtom, 2002). They tend to occur about once a month or every other month. Organizational support for the network, such as sponsorship and/or a budget for the network, may enhance the status of events and lower the costs to participate (Gremmen & Benschop, 2013). While many in-company women's networks started as grassroots initiatives, most of the networks have achieved formal sponsorship and some budget by their companies (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009). As network events are considered an element of in-company women's networks by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), this study will explore the perceptions of women at all levels of Allander of the events of the in-company women's network Lianne. Exploring what women's perceptions are of the events may explain why some women will or will not join the network Lianne.

2.1.2.5 Outcomes of an in-company women's network

Different studies show positive as well as negative outcomes of in-company women's networks on both individual and organizational level. The research by Pini et al. (2004) shows benefits for the network members, such as support, learning from sharing experiences, advice from other members, the fostering of a collective identity, and a reduction of feeling isolated. Also, Cross and Armstrong (2008) show that formal networks provide a context in which individual members can share their experiences and what they have learned.

The research of Vinnicombe, Singh and Kumra (as cited in O'Neil et al., 2011) suggests that a women's network contributes to organizational level outcomes, such as the retention of qualified women, an enhanced corporate reputation, a better equipped workforce, and organizational learning. Bierema (2005) found that receiving high psychological support from employees of a lower status than the individual, resulted in higher levels of work satisfaction.

Negative outcomes on individual and organizational level are found in the studies of Pini et al. (2004) and Bierema (2005). In the study of Pini et al. (2004), almost half of the women who participated believed that creating a separate women's network did not contribute

to a greater inclusion of women in the organization. Bierema (2005) found that, at the organizational level, the women's network copied the organization's patriarchal culture, which made it difficult for the women to create their own identity and they lacked the power to make an organizational change.

As the outcomes of in-company women's network are considered as an element of in-company women's networks by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), both at the individual and organizational level, the outcomes of the network Lianne will be explored in this study. The findings may help to explain why women at all levels will or will not join the network.

The study by Hucke and Kepinski (2016) shows five foundational rules for networks to reach positive outcomes; (1) expectations of a network and its agenda need to be aligned with the network's resources, (2) relevant metrics are needed and provide the basis to measure impact and development over time, (3) members' needs and expectations are a key insight to inform network priorities and strategy, (4) network leaders must be recognized for the work they do and (5) network members and leaders have to feel embraced by their organization. These rules show how the women's network Lianne can be successful. Especially the third rule is of importance for this study, because the perceptions of women at all levels within Alllander of all the network elements discussed above will be investigated from this viewpoint.

In the previous paragraphs the elements of in-company women's networks as distinguished by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) have been explained, as well as how these apply to the in-company women's network Lianne. In this study, the perceptions of women at all levels of Alllander of these elements of the in-company women's network Lianne will be investigated. This calls for an explanation of the concept perceptions, which will be provided in the next section.

2.2 Perceptions

In this section, the concept of perceptions will be outlined, because the perceptions of women at all levels within Alllander of the in-company women's network Lianne, including what the network should look like according to them in order to be of value to them, are the focus of this research. The literature shows that in-company women's networks are not always perceived as positive in organizations and by women. For example, women may have the feeling that women's networks are chat-clubs (Pini et al., 2004) or may be afraid that they will send the message that they need help by joining a network (Bierema, 2005). The perceived value of women's networks has implications for the continued use of the formal women's

network and the use of other formal diversity programs by organizations (O'Neil et al., 2011). O'Neil et al. (2011) state that when network members or other employees hold these negative perceptions of the value of a women's network, these networks are unlikely to contribute to the goals of network members.

Perception is defined by Robbins and Judge (2015) as "The process in which the individual person organizes and interprets his or her sensorial impressions in order to give meaning to his or her environment" (p.108). What people observe may deviate from objective reality. The understanding of perception is important, because human behaviour is based on the perceptions people have of reality, which has an influence on the way they make decisions. By understanding the perception of the women at all levels of Alliander of the in-company women's network Lianne, this research may explain why these women join or refrain from joining the network.

De Meuse and Hostager (2001) developed a five-dimensional framework to identify key attitudes and perceptual dimensions of positive and negative reactions towards diversity. This framework is focused on diversity, but the explanation below will show that the identified dimensions of perceptions are also useful for analyzing the perceptions that female employees have of their in-company women's network, and, thus, the dimensions will apply to perceptions of the women's network in the current study.

The first dimension is *emotional reactions*, which consists of the initial responses and feelings of an individual about the in-company women's network. According to Ekman and Cordaro (2011), six universal emotions can be distinguished: interest/curiosity, joy/happiness, sadness, anger, disgust and fear. For example, women might have the fear that, if they associate with the network, they come across as needing help to be visible in the organization or to obtain a job (Bierema, 2005).

The second dimension is about what an individual intends to do in response to the women's network, referred to as *behavioural reactions* (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001). Women at all levels within Alliander might differ in their behavioural reactions, which might be based on reasons to join or refrain from the women's network, or to participate in a certain way, for example as an active member. It is possible that they have rational motivations to join or refrain from the network, based on a cost-benefit analysis. Also, workplace (dis)satisfaction or the (dis)attraction of the community and social ties within Lianne may lead to behavioural reactions (Friedman & Craig, 2004).

The third dimension, is *judgements* (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001), which concerns the individual's beliefs about the value of the in-company women's network as a principle and as

a practical value. According to Bryn, Matson and Weiss (2007), network participation can be seen as a function of time and interest; members join networks that have more value to them than the opportunity costs of their time and will leave when the network no longer creates value for them. The study by Friedman and Craig (2004) shows that the members of a network who are the most active, see the network group as most beneficial.

The fourth dimension is *personal consequences* (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001). These are the perceived outcomes the individual receives when the person does or does not participate in the women's network. It is about the personal view on what the women's network may result in for the individual. Fifth, *the organizational outcomes* are the person's views on the women's network's outcomes for the organization. In the current study, the fourth and fifth dimensions are combined into the dimension *perceived consequences*, using personal, network and organizational consequences. Apart from the fact that this makes sense on a conceptual level, it enables the researcher to prevent that the interview questions concerning these topics are directed into either personal, network or organizational consequences. The perceived consequences are the perceived outcomes of every element of the formal women's network as perceived by an individual.

The four dimensions of perceptions will be combined with the elements of a formal in-company women's network to systematically explore how the women at all levels of Alliander perceive the in-company women's network, including what they think the network should look like in order to be of value to them.

2.3 Concluding remarks

In this study, based on Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), the following network elements are distinguished; network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, activities, and outcomes (as described in the previous sections). Based on De Meuse and Hostager (2001), the perceptions that will be used in this research are emotional reactions, behavioural reactions, judgements, and perceived consequences. The network elements of Lianne may create emotional and behavioural reactions with the women at all levels within Alliander. Also, these women may create judgements about the elements of the network. Lastly, the female employees within Alliander may think of the impact that the network Lianne might have on personal or organizational level. In order to systematically explore the perceptions of the elements, the sub-questions listed below are distinguished to answer the research question. The first question is preparatory and questions two to six are the four dimensions of perceptions of the five elements of in-company women's networks.

1. *How is the women's network Lianne known among women at all levels of Alliander?*
2. *How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the structure of Lianne, how should the network be structured according to them and why do they think it should be structured in this way?*
3. *How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the mission and purpose of the women's network Lianne, which goals should the network pursue according to them and why do they think these goal(s) are important for the network?*
4. *How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the target audience of the women's network Lianne and which target audience should the network focus on according to them and why?*
5. *How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the activities organized by the women's network Lianne, which activities should the network organize according to them and in what way and why?*
6. *How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the outcomes of the women's network Lianne and which outcomes should the network have according to them and why?*

Together, the answers to these six sub-questions will provide the answer to the research question. The research methodology will ensure that they contain the various dimensions of the perceptions of the respondents in this study. The methodology of the study is discussed in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and strategy

The position of the researcher in this study was inspired by the interpretivist perspective. According to Duberley, Johnson and Cassell (2012), interpretative positions take the human interpretation as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world. An important aspect of this philosophy is ‘*verstehen*’ (Outhwaite, as cited in Duberly, Johnson & Cassell, 2012), which means the access to and understanding of the actual meanings and interpretations actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena in order to describe and explain their behaviour, through investigating how they experience, sustain, articulate and share these socially constructed everyday realities with others. The current study explored how women at all levels of Alliander perceive the in-company women’s network Lianne, and what this network should look like according to them. Their interpretations of this social reality are what the researcher tried to understand. As a consequence, this interpretivist stance was exactly what the current study required.

The research was deductive in nature, because the analysis of in-company women’s networks by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) combined with the dimensional framework of perceptions by De Meuse and Hostager (2001) were used as a basis to study the case. In this sense, the researcher was theory-driven and has developed operationalization schemes of the core concepts of the study’s research question based on the scientific literature before collecting and analysing data (Bleijenbergh, 2015). The operationalization schemes were leading in the data collection and the analysis of the gathered data.

To answer the research question (and reach the research goal) it was necessary to gain insight into the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander about Lianne and about what they think the in-company women’s network should look like in order to be of value to them. This insight was obtained using a case study, because it can be used to investigate the meaning people attach to social phenomena in organizations (Bleijenbergh, 2015). Therefore, this research had the form of a case study.

A case study is preferred when the study is carried out within the boundaries of a social system and in its natural context (Swanborn, 2013) and the social phenomenon under study is investigated in depth. This study was conducted in the context of Alliander. The context of the social phenomenon was important, because it might have influenced on the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander. Alliander is active in the energy sector, which results in a high percentage of men working in the organization. Also, Alliander is very

progressive with its CSR-policy; one of its subjects is diversity. An in-depth research was needed, because this study wanted to explore the perceptions of women at all levels of the network Lianne and what the network should look like according to them and why they think that was important. The social phenomenon was monitored during a certain period of time, by using several data methods, such as documents, interviews with informants and participant observations (Swanborn, 2013). Document analysis and participant observations gave information on the context of the perceptions of the women at Alliander. The data from the different data methods were compared to analyze the content of the interviews.

To investigate how women at all levels of Alliander perceive the in-company women's network, and what the network should look like according to them, this study combined qualitative and quantitative methods, which consisted of document analysis, conducting interviews, and surveys, and participant observations. The combination of multiple methods of data collection was important, because it gave context to the content of the perceptions of the women within Alliander (Swanborn, 2013), and, in addition, the survey was of importance, because it gave the opportunity to investigate a greater number of respondents.

First, the qualitative part consisted of the document analysis, interviews and participant observations to explore the social phenomenon in depth. Second, the survey was conducted after finishing the qualitative part. The survey provided information about the perceptions of a larger group of women and about possible differences between the women of different function level groups.

3.2 Case organization

Alliander is a network company that is responsible for the distribution of energy, such as electricity, (bio)gas and heat in the Netherlands (Alliander N.V., 2016). Alliander consists of three organizations, Liander, Liandon and Allego and has in total 7,150 employees in the Netherlands (Alliander N.V., 2017). The headquarters of Alliander is located in Arnhem. The mission of the company is to provide customers, such as households and firms, with the access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy under normal conditions (Alliander N.V., 2017).

Alliander is focused on sustainable energy in the Netherlands, but also on sustainability within the organization. They want to reflect society. The organization works on social responsibility and responds to issues such as women's employment. Alliander takes gender diversity very seriously, for example, the organization wants at least 27 percent of the executives to be a woman in 2020 (Alliander N.V., 2016). At the moment, the percentage of

female executives is 26 percent. The goal of the year 2015 was to have a percentage of 23 percent of executive positions held by women. The organization wants to create more gender diversity in the top positions of the organization, which it aims to achieve by moving step by step towards realistic goals (Alliander N.V., 2016). In addition, Alliander wants to create a diverse overall workforce, despite the fact that energy engineering is one of the ten most popular jobs among men. The organization believes it is important to be diverse at all levels of the organization, because it has noticed that diversity causes better decision making and cooperation (Alliander N.V., n.d.). Without diversity, Alliander is unable to fulfil its strategic choices, because without a diverse workforce, the organization does not fit into the diverse society and, because of this, possibly misunderstands its clients (Alliander N.V., n.d.).

In the year 2009, Alliander developed a women's network, called Lianne (Alliander N.V., 2016) (more information is given in chapter four about Lianne). Most of the female employees are not familiar with the network or do not know its content, and most are not part of it (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, November 10, 2016). Another issue is the lack of clarity about whether the mission and vision of the network coincides with the goals of women at all levels of the organization, as well as the reasons why women do or do not join the network. These issues were mentioned by one of the active members of the network (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, November 10, 2016). This study possibly contributes to clarifying these issues for the network, and thus might be of practical relevance to the network Lianne and to Alliander as well. By exploring how women at all levels within Alliander perceive Lianne and how the network can be of value, it might help Alliander to improve the women's network. Furthermore, Alliander has a great influence on its environment and society; by being socially responsible, they can influence other companies to be more socially responsible as well and create more diversity within their ranks, for example, by establishing an in-company women's network. Many organizations do not have an in-company women's network yet (Pini et al., 2004). This makes this case organization well-suited for the current study to answer the research question and realize the theoretical aim of this study.

3.3 Data collection

As stated in the previous section, this research combined qualitative with quantitative research methods in a case study research. The study used multiple methods of data collection, such as document analysis, interviews, participant observations and a survey. These methods will be further explained below.

3.3.1 Document collection

The document collection contained internal documents (only available for employees within Alliander or active members within Lianne) and external documents (available on the internet) of the organization as well as of the in-company women's network Lianne on the intranet page. Internal documents of Lianne provided details of policies, strategies and information about events (Lee, 2012), these documents were obtained through the thesis supervisor at Alliander. Some of these documents are not accessible for members of the network. The researcher can find out how the network leading members discursively give meaning to the network in written documents (Bleijenbergh, 2015). The following internal documents were analyzed: mood boards (visual representations of certain network elements, for example target audience) of Lianne which were made during the rebranding (as further explained in chapter four), PowerPoint Charter Talent to the Top, Roadmap 2020 voorstel 0.3, a document with goal setting for the years 2015/2016, Excel document with the planning of activities, the event calendar, and the intranet page of Lianne. The intranet page of Lianne, with information about the network, provides information to the employees of Alliander about Lianne and, also, has given the researcher an image of how the network elements are presented to the employees. The following external documents have been analyzed: the annual reports of Alliander of the years 2015 and 2016, which provided information about the organization as a whole.

An advantage of documents collection is that they are a direct reflection of decisions that are made at a particular moment (Bleijenbergh, 2015), for example, decisions regarding certain elements of the in-company women's network Lianne. These decisions play an important role in the context of the perceptions of women at all levels of the network Lianne.

3.3.2 Interviews

A second method of data collection is interviews. The interviews had a semi-structure in order to collect relevant information, which means that the interview questions were formulated beforehand and the order of the questions was also determined in order to systematically study the research sub-questions about the five elements of in-company women's networks. The interview questions were adapted during the interview (Bleijenbergh, 2015), when it gave the respondents the space to answer the questions in their own words, which revealed their perceptions of the different network elements. The questions were formulated as open questions, so that the women had the chance to give a full and complete answer in their own words (Bleijenbergh, 2015). Questions with only 'yes' or 'no' answers were avoided; they hinder the possibility of obtaining full answers. Furthermore, the interviewer asked for an

explanation when needed, which helped the respondents' wording of their perceptions. Also, the respondents brought other subjects into the conversation, which led to a broader view of the perceptions of the women at all levels within Alliander about the women's network Lianne. When the interview respondent was not familiar with certain network elements, the interviewer showed cards with information on these elements and explained these cards (which can be found in Appendix II).

Fourteen interviews have been conducted with women at all levels of Alliander. The goal of this research was to conduct fifteen interviews, however, as can be seen in table 1, the lowest function level has not been interviewed (function level 2). Despite the trouble taken to invite them to participate in this study, none of the women at function level 2 were willing to be interviewed. All of the other function levels were interviewed. It was difficult to find

Function level	Interview respondent
2	X
3	R1
4	R9
5	R8
6	R5
7	R14
8	R7
9	R10
10	R2
11	R6
12	R13
13	R3
14	R12
15	R11
16	R4

Table 1. List of interviewees

members from other lower function levels who were willing to be interviewed, because in the lower function levels there are not many network members. In addition, it was difficult to find women who were willing to be interviewed from offices that are further away from Arnhem. Women in lower and middle function levels are not based at the headquarters of Alliander and, as a consequence, were often not members of the network Lianne, as the network mainly operates from the headquarters in Arnhem. The interviewees were personally contacted by e-mail or phone.

The function level groups were divided as follows; lowest function level group 2-6, middle function level group 7-11 and the highest function level group 12-16. An example of a function in the lowest function level is mechanic or administrative jobs, in the middle function level group are functions for instance advisors, and in the highest function level directors of departments.

The number of interviews was limited because of the time given for this research. Only women were interviewed for this research, because the purpose of the research is exploring the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander about the in-company women's network. There were some criteria that had to be considered when selecting the women at all levels of the organization. According to Alvesson and Ashcraft (2012), it is important to have some breadth and variation among respondents, so that they allow coverage of the social category one seeks to explore (p. 247).

The goal of this research is to investigate the perceptions of women at all levels within Alliander, and therefore it was important to select women in a strategic way so that every organizational function level was represented. Not all the women have access to the network Lianne. Women with in-rental contracts or interns do not have access to the network, because of their short-term contracts, so these women were not interviewed. Also, the active women who form the self-organizing team of the network Lianne were excluded from the interviews, because these women have an influence on the policies, strategies and events organized by the self-organizing team of Lianne.

Another criterion to select respondents was the geographical distribution of the women. Women in other locations than the headquarters in Arnhem, for example, women located in Amsterdam, may have a different perception of the women's network Lianne and what it should look like.

3.3.3 Participant observations

The third method of data collection this research has employed is participant observation. The researcher had the role of 'participant as observer' during meetings or events of Lianne. Participant as observer means that the researcher fully participates in the social situation, and, at the same time, also discloses the observational objectives to the other participants (Gold, as cited in Brannan & Oultram, 2012). The researcher made it known that the development and cultivation of relationships with participants was for the purpose of the research.

The participant observations were undertaken mainly in order to collect data on the context of the perceptions of the women at all levels of Alliander of the women's network Lianne. During the meetings of Lianne, the researcher took observation memo's (Bleijenbergh, 2015) about the following points; the timing of the meeting, who were present during the meeting, the subjects discussed and interaction between participants.

Six monthly meetings of the self-organizing team of Lianne were observed, which were held at the headquarters of Alliander in Arnhem in the afternoon and lasted for an hour. These meetings were calls, because of the different locations where the active members of the self-organizing team work. Some of them mostly work at the headquarters, so they came together for a meeting, while the other active members called in. Some of the active members were not always present during the whole meeting or not able to attend.

Also, the events organized by Lianne were observed. The researcher paid attention to the following elements; the costs to participate in the event, the timing and place of the event, who was the organizer, the number of participants, who were participating in the event, the

interaction between participants, information about the event and the subjects of the events, reasons why the participants were at the event (if mentioned by the participants), and feedback about the event (if available).

Four Lianne-events have been observed. The first event took place in the afternoon, at the Alliander headquarters in Arnhem. It was a master class about how successful women network, which was based on the Master Thesis by a colleague. The second event was watching a women's movie to celebrate International Women's day, which took place in the evening in Arnhem. The third event was about politics on the work floor, which also took place in the afternoon at the headquarters of Alliander. The fourth event took place in the afternoon in Arnhem, and was about the hidden dimension of leadership. The fifth event, in which the researcher did not partake, took place in the afternoon in an office of Alliander in Amsterdam. The subject of this event was strategic negotiating.

3.3.4 Survey

Alliander has more than 7,000 employees, as stated in the description of the case organization. When the interviews had been conducted, only fourteen women at all levels of Alliander were interviewed. Interviews are important to explore the women's perceptions of Lianne in depth. However, it was important to consider the perceptions of all women at all levels within Alliander about Lianne in order to create a more complete picture of the perceptions. For this reason, the research also entailed a survey among all female employees who were not interviewed or were part of the self-organizing team, which means that the entire population has been taken into consideration for the survey. The survey had been conducted after the qualitative part of this study and was based on the results of the interviews. Similar to the interviews, the survey captured the four dimensions of perceptions on the five elements of Lianne. The wording of the items was based on the findings of the qualitative part of the study. The survey was conducted online, because of the degree of geographical distribution of the women at all levels within Alliander and because the internet is easily accessible for all (female) employees.

The survey has been conducted, but the survey results were not analyzed and included in this research, because of the limited time given to conduct this research. This has been agreed upon with the supervisors of the university and the organization.

3.4 Operationalization

This study used different concepts that were combined in order to provide an operationalization to make the abstract concepts measurable and to answer the research

question. First, the concept 'perception' was operationalized into dimensions and indicators using the framework by De Meuse and Hostager (2001). Second, the in-company women's networks will be operationalized following the elements provided by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009). The concept 'perception' was not completely operationalized into items, because it was considered not useful to specify interview questions to one dimension of the concept. For example, emotional reactions were not measured by asking a question about the kind of emotional reaction the respondent thinks she will have when participating in the in-company women's network. Instead, the operationalizations of the concepts 'perception' and 'in-company women's network' were combined to develop the interview questions, for instance "What do you think about the fact that Lianne welcomes men as members of the network?". This question is about the target audience of Lianne and may generate various perceptions, such as an emotional reaction or a judgement.

As stated in chapter two, perception is "The process in which the individual person organizes and interprets his or her sensorial impressions in order to give meaning to his or her environment" (Robbins & Judge, 2015, p. 108). When applied to the case organization it has the following operational definition: "The process in which female employees at all levels within Alliander organize and interpret their sensorial impressions in order to give meaning to the formal women's network Lianne". This operational definition is divided into four dimensions; emotional reaction, behavioural reaction, judgements, and perceived consequences.

The first dimension is 'emotional reaction'. Respondents might react differently to the same question, depending on the individual's emotions associated to the question. Emotional reactions is divided into six universal basic indicators (Izard, 2007); interest/curiosity, joy/happiness, sadness, anger, disgust and fear (as stated in section 2.2). The second dimension is about the behavioural reaction of the respondent. This dimension was measured through the indicators 'participation', 'member of the Lianne intranet page but not participating in events' or 'non-participation'. Third, the dimension 'judgements' is operationalized into the 'content of value' and 'intensity of value'. Values represent a person's ideas about what is right, good, or desirable (Robbins & Judge, 2015). The content of value is the end value (goals that a person would like to achieve at a certain point in his or her life) and intensity specifies how important the value is. The last dimension of perception is 'perceived consequences', which is about the consequences of the various network elements which the respondent expects for herself, the network or the organization when joining or

refraining from joining Lianne. The operationalization scheme of the concept perception is as follows:

Theoretical definition	Operational definition	Dimension	Indicator	
Perception is the process in which the individual person organizes and interprets his or her sensorial impressions in order to give meaning to his or her environment	The process in which female employees at all levels within Alliander organize and interpret their sensorial impressions in order to give meaning to the formal women network Lianne	Emotional reaction	Interest/curiosity	
			Joy/happiness	
			Sadness	
			Anger	
			Disgust	
			Fear	
		Behavioural reaction	Participation	
			Member of intranet page, but not participating in events	
			Non-participation	
			Judgements	Content of value
				Intensity of value
			Perceived consequences	Perceived individual consequences
				Perceived network consequences
				Perceived organizational consequences

Table 2. Operationalization scheme of perception

The second concept that is operationalized is ‘in-company women’s network’. The theoretical definition of ‘in-company women’s network’ is “A network as response to the ongoing exclusion from informal male networks, which consists of a network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, activities and outcomes” (formulated in chapter two). The operational definition of this concept is “Lianne as response to the ongoing exclusion from informal male networks, which consists of a network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, activities and outcomes”, which is further operationalized into the following dimensions; network structure, network mission and purpose, target audience, activities, and perceived outcome.

The first dimension is the ‘network structure’, which is divided into ‘structure of

leading members’ and ‘right of say of members’. Questions such as “What do you think about the fact that Lianne is organized by eight women? What are possible consequences?” or “Do you think Lianne is open to ideas or opinions?” were asked.

The second dimension ‘network mission and purpose’ was measured through the indicators ‘mission’ and ‘purpose’ of the women’s network Lianne. For example, the question “What do you think about the mission of Lianne?” or “What do you think about the balance of the three sub goals of the mission of Lianne (to deepen, to strengthen, to connect)?” were asked.

Third, the dimension ‘membership’ is about the target audience of Lianne. It is divided into the function level and gender indicators. For example, the question “What do you think about the target audience Lianne focuses on?” was asked. Also, the question about the target audience includes everyone was of relevance.

The fourth dimension is ‘activities’, which was measured through the indicators ‘number of events’, ‘time’, ‘place’, ‘costs for individual to participate’ and ‘content of event’. Questions such as “What do you think about the timing of the events?” and “What do you think about the content of the events?” were asked, followed by asking further information on reasons, considerations et cetera, when was necessary.

The last dimension ‘outcomes’ was measured through the following indicators; individual-, network- and organizational outcome. This was measured by asking questions about what it is the respondent thinks that Lianne achieves and may contribute. The operationalisation scheme of the concept in-company women’s network is as follows:

Theoretical definition	Operational definition	Dimension	Indicator
In-company women's network is a network as response to the ongoing exclusion from informal male networks, which consists of a well-defined network structure, network mission, target audience, activities and outcomes	Lianne as response to the ongoing exclusion from informal male networks, which consists of a well-defined network structure, network mission, target audience, activities and outcomes	Structure	Structure of leading members
			Right of say of members
		Network mission and purpose	Mission
			Purpose
		Target audience	Function level
			Gender

	Activities	Number of events
		Time
		Place
		Costs for individual to participate
		Content of event
	Outcomes	Individual outcome
		Network outcome
		Organizational outcome

Table 3. Operationalization scheme in-company women's network

The operationalization schemes were the basis of the interview guide as well as the analysis of the data. The interview guide based on these operationalization schemes can be found in Appendix I. The procedures for the analysis of the data will be discussed in the next section.

3.5 Data analysis

The research contained multiple data methods which were systematically analyzed using content analysis (Bleijenbergh, 2015). As mentioned in section 3.1, the research held a deductive way of working. The data, such as interview transcripts and observation memo's, were split in relevant fragments which then were coded (given a label) based on the operationalization schemes of the core concepts that were derived from the literature (Bleijenbergh, 2015). These core concepts were operationalized into dimensions and indicators. The researcher first coded the data based on indicators and then formed categories of dimensions. It then became clear whether there are indicators missing or whether indicators belong to the same dimension. The indicators or dimensions of the operationalization scheme were adjusted accordingly. According to Bleijenbergh (2015), the comparison of text fragments within the same codes may provide insight into patterns in the data. The content analysis has helped to answer the sub-questions, and, in the end, has provided an answer to the research question.

Next to the coding and comparing phase, there is a second tool for the content analysis, namely keeping track of memos during the analysis (Bleijenbergh, 2015). First, theoretical memos refer to the theory as the starting point or the possibility to make more general pronouncements about the patterns found in the data (Bleijenbergh, 2015). These memos showed how the researcher went back and forth between the observations and the general meaning given to the observations. Also, it gave the researcher the opportunity to

connect the literature about in-company women's networks to the social phenomena within the context of Alliander.

Second, reflective memos are notes about how the study influences the researcher during the research (Bleijenbergh, 2015) and vice versa. In both the data collection and the data analysis, the researcher was part of the social phenomena that were the subject of the study, for example during the interviews and the participant observations. This might have an influence on the interpretation of data. The reflective memo's kept track of these influences and thus have helped both the researcher and the reader to estimate the status of the data and their interpretation.

3.6 Research ethics

According to Holt (2012, p. 102), ethical research practice involves both an apprenticeship in and a commitment to establishing the methodological norms associated with investigating phenomena and the theories established around them. There is no available set of ways in which researchers might consider their practices as ethical, but there are a number of virtues that can improve the use of practical reason, Holt argues (Holt, 2012).

The first virtue was the willingness of the researcher of making the intentions of the research and thoughts public towards the respondents (Holt, 2012). When, for example, during a participant observation, the researcher asked a participant of the event about his or her intentions for visiting the event, the researcher was honest that the reason for making observations of the event was that the data was used for a research and explained the goal of the research.

Second, to improve the ethical standards of this research, it was important to talk and write clearly and openly about ideas, but not in such a way that the voices of others were excluded (Holt, 2012). For example, at the beginning of the interview, the researcher made sure that the respondent knew what the goal of the interview and the study was. Also, during the data analysis, the researcher made sure that every perspective on a particular subject was given and no information was omitted.

Third, constancy of language and behaviours during interviews and observations improved the ethical research practices (Holt, 2012). It is about the pragmatic awareness of the researcher that concepts and signifiers need to be used carefully and consistently, for example, using the same techniques during an interview for informing the respondent beforehand about the interview and how the interview was structured and processed or, during participant observation, ensured that every respondent was treated in the same respectful way.

Fourth, it was important to handle the relationship with the respondent and the data provided by the respondent with care (Holt, 2012). This means that the respondent had to have a clear vision of her role in the research and how the researcher took care of sensitive information and the anonymity of the respondent during the research. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer made sure that the respondent knew that she remained anonymous. The surveys were anonymous to ensure confidentiality and the anonymity of the respondents. In order to improve the relationship with the respondent, the researcher also ensured that the respondent knew that she had the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the researcher asked the respondent if she wanted to read the transcript of the interview and gave her consent when it was correct and did not include any misregistrations.

3.7 Quality of the research

There are some criteria that increase the quality of the research that were of importance to the qualitative and quantitative part of this study. First, internal validity was secured by working deductively on the basis of pre-established theories on network elements (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009) and perceptions (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001). Internal validity was also ensured by interviewing women at all levels of Alliander in order to describe and explain the research question completely (Boeije, 2015). It was ensured that not one part of the story was left out, it was important to interview women at all levels of Alliander in order to investigate the different perceptions on the in-company women's network Lianne.

Second, external validity in this study can be seen as an analytical refinement, which means that the findings from the case research did not generalize from sample to population, but from experience and observation to theory (Buchanan, 2012). This study wanted to explore the perceptions of women at all levels within organizations about the network elements of the in-company women's networks. As mentioned in the introduction, the current literature is mostly focused on specific types of function groups of women, and this study broadens the literature on in-company women's networks by taking the perceptions of women at all function levels into account.

Third, the reliability was increased by standardization of data collection (Boeije, 2015). In this study, the interviews were semi-structured in order to avoid accidental errors and, therefore, inconsistencies. Also, during the participant observation, indicators derived from the context and operationalization were used in order to provide information about the meetings and events of Lianne in a systematic way. A second way to increase reliability was

to ask for feedback from the interview respondents on the transcripts of the interviews in order to make sure the researcher registered it correctly. Third, the reliability was increased by being transparent in the process of data collection and data analysis (Bleijenbergh, 2015).

Fourth, the neutrality of the researcher was increased by reflecting on the role of the researcher (Boeije, 2015). It was important for the researcher to be aware of her own experiences, opinions, feelings and ideas and reflect on the influence they may have, especially during data collection and analysis.

4. Data analysis

This chapter contains the analysis of the data that were collected using multiple data methods. First, information from the document analysis and participant observations will be given in order to sketch context of the women's perceptions at all levels of Alliander. Second, the six sub-questions will be answered systematically. Literature will be cited whenever related or contrasting specific findings are reported. The overall theoretical discussion will be part of the next chapter.

As mentioned in chapter three, several specific documents have been analyzed. First, an overview of important aspects of these documents will be discussed. The PowerPoint Talent to the Top is a plan to establish more diversity and inclusion within Alliander. It has been developed by the Diversity and Inclusion (DI) Manager of Alliander. This plan consists of goals and strategy, anchoring in the line management, HR-instruments, communication, and evaluation and improvements. The in-company women's network takes part in the HR-instruments to create more diversity and inclusion (sheet 11, 2017).

The Roadmap 2020 voorstel 0.3 is a proposal by the DI Manager to create more diversity by the year 2020. Lianne is mentioned in the Roadmap. It says that the board of Lianne and the events committee (now changed into the self-organizing team) have regular contact with each other about the completion of their annual plan (sheet 29, 2017). When comparing the PowerPoint with the Roadmap, Lianne plays a role in the realization of the diversity plans, together with the Board of Directors. The HRM Director and DI Manager also play an important role in the creation and realization of the plans. The DI Manager takes part in the self-organizing team of Lianne. The HRM Director is not part of this team but does take part in the Board of Directors. In this way, the HRM Director has a great influence when working together with Lianne. Lianne has contacted the new HRM Director who has recently been appointed but it is difficult to schedule a meeting with her, because the HRM Director has only started working at Alliander at the beginning of this year [2017] and has a very busy schedule. The first meeting is scheduled for the end of June in order for the HRM Director to get acquainted with the network Lianne and also, with the LGBT-network Pride.

In December 2016, Lianne had a rebranding, which means they changed their network structure, mission and goals, target audience, events and image (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, January 26, 2017). The researcher was not present during this rebranding. The active members wrote down and made mood boards about what kind of image Lianne should have, what their target audience is and what they want to achieve. The mood boards involve images from magazines that show what the current image of Lianne is. The target

audience and what they want to achieve were written down in bullet points without an explanation or time bound.

In the past, the network consisted of a board and an organizing committee. The network is now organized as a holacracy, which is a new way of organizing the organizational structure (Van de Kamp, 2014). According to Van de Kamp (2014), the organizational structure of a holacracy consists of self-organizing teams called 'circles'. The organizational structure emerges in the process and evolves over time. A typical characteristic is that individuals do not carry job or management titles and that their roles are often only vaguely related to the work they do on a regular basis. The roles are collectively defined and assigned to accomplish the work (Bernstein, Bunch, Canner & Lee, 2016). Currently Lianne does not have a formal board, but consists of eight different roles, for example, someone is in charge of financial affairs, relationships or communication. Another important role of the active members is the chef affairs. This person has the task to report to the HRM Director and the Board of Directors, but does not have to ask for permission to introduce new ideas or activities. The active members of Lianne only have to report monthly to the Board of Directors about their activities. The HR department provides a budget of 15,000 euro per year for the network to organize activities.

In the past, Lianne felt acknowledged by the top management level of Alliander (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, June 12, 2017), however, as the top management of Alliander has gone through some changes in employees, and the active members of Lianne have changed as well, their relationship is a little bit more unstable than before. The self-organizing team of Lianne consists of women who are part of the team on voluntary basis on top of their regular jobs.

During the meetings of Lianne, it became clear that the active members feel it is difficult to find a moment to meet each other. In every call someone was not present, because they were busy with their jobs, sick or called in later. One meeting had to be rescheduled (March 14, 2017), because only two of the active members were able to meet. One of the active members said during a meeting: "We have to encourage each other to make time for consultation once a month" (March 14, 2017). It seems that it is difficult to fulfil all of their tasks at Lianne, because it is on voluntary basis and they have to do it next to their jobs.

The goals of Lianne for the year 2017, which were written on a sheet during the rebranding, are: creating equality between men and women, creating confident women, gaining attention for diversity, broadening, deepening, strengthening and connecting women (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

Since the rebranding, the target audience of Lianne is all women within Alliander, which includes every woman who wants to grow, develop and take action (Braun, 2016), and male employees are also welcome. The women's network is focused on all women within the organization Alliander and not solely on women at higher positions, because Alliander wants gender diverse teams at each level of the organization. Before the rebranding, Lianne was focused on women with high function levels (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, November 10, 2016). Every woman is automatically member of the network Lianne, but only the members who want to participate in the network subscribe to the intranet page, newsletter or activate alerts for new events to stay informed. However, PowerPoint Talent to the Top shows that a second in-company women's network was developed within Alliander. This second network is called 20KV (definition: Krachtige Vrouwen; in English: powerful women) and is meant only for the top 20 women within Alliander (sheet 11, 2017). These women meet twice a year to enjoy dinner together, while discussing diversity and inclusion in an informal environment (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, June 9, 2017). Since 2015, three dinners took place and this network implicitly becomes more and more an in-company women's network for women at the top of the organization only, because women who are member of 20KV define it as a new formal women's network next to Lianne (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, June 9, 2017). During one meeting of Lianne, one active member asked what is the relationship between Lianne and 20KV-network (March 27, 2017). There was not a clear answer to this question. Another active member suggested the option to appoint the top 20 women as mentors at Lianne for members who need mentoring. According to the Charter Talent to the Top, both networks do not only help individual women, but also the entire organization through conversations about diversity, widening support, and policy advice of experts about diversity (PowerPoint Talent to the Top, sheet 11, 2017). The HRM director and DI Manager are both very involved in this plan.

In the annual reports of Alliander on the years 2015 and 2016, Lianne is acknowledged as an in-company women's network (Alliander N.V, 2016; Alliander N.V., 2017). Nothing is mentioned about the 20KV-network in these the annual reports.

When analyzing the intranet page of Lianne, it can be noticed that there is no information about the mission, goals or target audience. It is not made clear on the page that a rebranding took place, which has resulted in changes in certain network elements. During the sixth meeting (June 12, 2017) one active member mentioned that is important to organize a physical meeting in July in order to discuss what Lianne wants to accomplish and to regain what Lianne stands for. The new image of Lianne should be launched before the summer

vacation.

Also, the presentation of the active members of the self-organizing team on the intranet page is outdated. During the third and fourth meeting, it became clear that three of the active members had left the self-organizing team of Lianne and that they were looking for new active members. During the fifth meeting, one new active member was introduced. The sixth meeting (June 12, 2017) made clear that there is still no other new member found. The active members of Lianne tried to find a new active member via their personal networks, but unfortunately, they were not successful. When searching for a new active member of the team, they take into account that the self-organizing team has to be a representation of the women working within Alliander. As one of the active members said: “The active part of Lianne has to be a representation of the female employees within Alliander, distribution in offices and the departments” (May 8, 2017). On the current intranet page, they have mentioned that Lianne organizes different kinds of events and how active members can subscribe for having a mentor via Lianne. However, it is not mentioned that employees within Alliander can activate an alert for upcoming events and that they can subscribe to the newsletter.

The above results show that Lianne is acknowledged as part of the diversity strategy within Alliander. The documents do not clarify which support Lianne will receive and how she has to realize her goals and the organizational goals, except that there is a form of support from the HR-department in terms of budget given to organize Lianne. What can be noticed is that the cooperation between Lianne and other parties is difficult because of changes in the top management level as well as in the self-organizing team of Lianne. Also, because of the rebranding of Lianne, there are some inconsistencies about developing a report for the next years and informing employees within the organization about the rebranding and the consequences. The active members of Lianne have to organize Lianne on voluntary basis on top of their jobs, which might explain why there are inconsistencies and why certain network elements are not developed.

4.1 How is the women’s network Lianne known among women at all levels of Alliander?

The in-company women’s network Lianne is well-known among the interviewees, because all of the respondents said at the beginning of the interview that they are familiar with the network. Most of the interviewed women have a positive overall image of Lianne. For example, one respondent (R6) said “I know they organize a lot of workshops and activities, especially focused on female colleagues. They are committed to supporting women in the

organization”. Only a few of the interviewees said they do not like the idea of a network where they are surrounded with only women during activities or that they believe that participating in an in-company women’s network is feminist. For example, one interview respondent (R5) said: “I do not have to join a women – only group. Training can also be together with men and women”, and another respondent (R7) said: “I am not that feminist”, which might implicate that she believes that people that participate in a women’s network are too radical in excluding men. Just one of the respondents (R9) gave the impression that she is really disgusted by these types of networks. She said that she is okay with the existence of an in-company women’s network, but she acknowledged that she has a prejudice towards these networks, namely that these women cannot be trusted. What she meant by this is that she thinks that mostly highly educated women participate in the network and that they have a different way of working compared to the female workers on the work floor: “They have their own group, they manipulate the men in their way in this company, and they know how to accomplish what they want”.

When analyzing the different network elements, it can be seen that there is a lot of ignorance and vagueness among the women at all levels of Alliander about the network. Most of the interviewees have no knowledge of the self-organizing team of Lianne and none of them know for sure who is an active member at the moment. Most of the respondents reacted with “I do not know anything about that”.

In addition, the mission and goals of the network Lianne are not known among the respondents. Some of the interview respondents have some idea of what the mission could be, for example (R6) “Supporting women to feel comfortable in their work environment, that they do have strong characteristics like men, and connecting these women in order to empower them”. The goals of the network were harder to imagine for the interview respondents.

Also, only one respondent (R6) knew that Lianne invites men to the network based on her own interpretation, namely “Basically women, but there may also be men, but they must be invited by women”. Furthermore, most of the interviewees thought the network focuses on all women working at Alliander, but some of them were not sure, because of the different focus groups Lianne organized before the rebranding. None of the respondents knew that this rebranding actually took place, so they were unsure whether the network still focuses on highly educated women, as one woman (R10) said: “I heard that women under a certain function level were not invited and not allowed to participate. I think that would be a bad thing. I do not know if that is true”.

Some of the female respondents are aware of the activities organized by Lianne, but

most of the women click the alerts on intranet away and do not know which activities took place during the last few months. For instance, one woman responded (R11) with “I did not know that there was a film-event and that there is a strategic negotiating workshop today”. A few interview respondents gave the argument that they do not look on intranet very often or that there are a lot of intranet groups that they can follow and, because of this, they have to make choices in which alerts to prioritize.

For some women, it was difficult to think about outcomes of the network (individual, network or organizational level), because they are not familiar with the other network elements. One respondent (R8) argues that “I think I can only say something about it if I know what they are doing and I am insufficiently aware right now”.

When the interviewee was not familiar with the network elements, the interviewer showed her cards with information on the elements (see Appendix II) and explained the cards. In this way, it was possible to gain further information on the interviewees’ perceptions of the network elements, as reported below.

4.2 How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the structure of Lianne, how should the network be structured according to them and why do they think it should be structured in this way?

In general, women at all levels of Alliander perceived the network structure as positive, indicating that the self-organizing team is seen as a good way to organize a team. However, they did not know the board (self-organizing team) was organized as a holacracy, but when this concept was explained to them, they all reacted positively to this way of organizing the network. According to the interview respondents, the distribution of roles, instead of function titles, ensures that the active members are not placed in a box (i.e. everyone has their own tasks and cannot deviate from them). One respondent (R5) said: “I do not think in boxes”. Also, some of the women responded that it creates an environment that is low-threshold, for example, one respondent said (R4), “It makes it easier for people to be part of the board. When they are too busy with work they might consider quitting, but when they have time left they might be part of the board”. Furthermore, one respondent (R8) said that it is a good thing that women are not being judged on their function or achievements; everyone has the chance to become an active member. In addition, it is a low-threshold way to learn new skills outside of their jobs, according to the interviewees. Some of the women said that the successfulness of the way of working of the self-organizing team depends on the motivation of the active members and the way they take their responsibility within the flexibility of the team

functions. For instance, one respondent (R15) reacted: “I do not know how it functions, it can be positive or negative. Of course, it is a sense of responsibility and how do you prioritize”.

Another argument is that Alliander goes through a lot of organizational changes, which means that people have to leave the organization but also that new people will be hired. Flexibility within Alliander is important according to an interview respondent (R14). She argues that this way of organizing ensures the flexibility that is needed for the existence of the network. However, to create steadiness and continuity within the self-organizing team, one respondent (R4) argued that it is better to create a report for the upcoming two or three years, so that every new active member can read by herself how Lianne is organized and the way of doing things.

This way of working is acknowledged by some of the women at middle and higher levels as a good example of how an organization should be structured. They (R13 & R6) argue that it is better to look at who is good at performing a task, instead of looking at functions.

According to the respondents, the network is easily accessible. All of the interviewed women do know how to contact the self-organizing team of Lianne, via the intranet page of Lianne, e-mail or by personal contact with one of the active members of Lianne. One woman (R1) said: “You can, of course, search through the intranet who is part of it”. Another woman (R3) argues: “When searching for general information, my first source is basically the intranet”.

None of the interviewees has experienced the openness of Lianne by bringing in new ideas. However, they do believe that the network is open to new ideas or opinions from others. Some of them (e.g. R2) even said that it is important for a network like Lianne to be open to new ideas and opinions: “A network survives or fails with the openness to opinions of other people”.

The way of organizing the network as a holacracy should not be changed, according to the respondents, because of the arguments given above; the self-organizing team has to be low-threshold, accessible and flexible. The motivation and responsibility of the active members of Lianne are important to the way the self-organizing team functions. The self-organizing team of active members should represent women at all levels and business units of the organization according to some of the respondents. This finding is in accordance with McCarthy (2004) who contends that networks can connect women quickly and effectively from across different departments and function levels of organizations, because of their high flexibility and they do not need infrastructures.

Another point the respondents mentioned was that flexibility is important for the steadiness of the structure of Lianne to set up a report, for example for the upcoming two or three years. This gives the active members of Lianne more steadiness and every new active member knows what Lianne wants and how it is organized.

4.3 How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the mission and purpose of the women's network Lianne, which goals should the network pursue according to them and why do they think these goal(s) are important for the network?

Women at all levels of Alliander perceive the mission of the in-company women's network Lianne as positive, while the goals of Lianne are perceived as less positive. The mission of Lianne is 'Lianne wants to deepen, strengthen and connect', as mentioned in the beginning of chapter four. When the interviewee was not familiar with the mission of Lianne, the interviewer showed her the card with the mission and explained it to her. The mission is perceived as (R2) "Wonderful", (R4) "It is not limited to the women's case" and (R13) "Brief and strong". There is a division in perception which element (deepen, connect or strengthen) is the most important sub-goal of the mission and why that an in-company women's network should pursue. An argument for strengthen is "Women are lagging behind in comparison to men". An argument (R13) for deepen is: "When you are not sure of the possibilities within Alliander or how to get a clear image of the possibilities, then Lianne is a nice way to have the first conversation about these possibilities". One of the women (R10) said: "Deepen is more a result of connecting". Most of the women believe that all three sub-goals of the mission are good, as one of the respondents (R4) said: "Women naturally tend to deepen, connect and strengthen". However, one interviewee (R14) believes that it will be difficult to connect all the different function level groups within the organization. If Lianne wants to accomplish that, the network has to work on different function levels, because otherwise it continues to focus on management level and connecting will be a challenge.

However, women at all levels of Alliander perceive the goals of Lianne as blurred. The goals of Lianne are: creating equality between men and women, creating confident women, gaining attention on diversity, to broaden, to deepen, to strengthen and to connect women (as mentioned in the beginning of chapter four). They cause a lot of confusion, because the women do not exactly know what is meant by them, as one respondent (R12) said: "I would expect that you had it worked out more concretely". The goals are too vague, too many in number and some of the goals are repeated from the mission, for example, deepen and strengthen. At the moment, Lianne has no formal document containing

information about certain network elements. In the past, Lianne has had a formal document with goals formulated as SMART, which means specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bounded (Day & Tosey, 2011). This document was written on April 23, 2015 and concerned the years 2015 and 2016. At the moment, Lianne has not formulated her goals into SMART goals, and, because of this, it is not possible for Lianne to measure the impact and achievements of the network. During a meeting on April 10, 2017, one of the active members said: “Are the goals of this year [2017] already determined? No? We have to determine these goals”. Also, on May 8, 2017, one of the active members said that she wants Lianne to formulate her goals. One goal, not related to Lianne’s mission, was discussed: “At the end of this year [2017] Lianne has to have at least 500 members on the intranet page”.

The first goal, equality between men and women, received the most comments of the seven goals. Most of the women said that this goal is not a good one to pursue, because of several reasons. First, a few interviewees stated that they do not experience inequality between men and women. As one respondent (R7) said: “In my experience, I do not notice that there are inequalities between men and women”. Another woman (R5) said: “I do not have the feeling that I am treated differently from the men in my team”. Second, the term equality is considered bad, because men and women are not equal [the same], according to one respondent (R4) “A better wording for equality is equivalence”. She believes that women and men are not equal, but that they are equivalent of one another. Third, Lianne is not able to reach equality between men and women by itself, as one respondent (R3) said: “They need cooperation with other parties [Board of Directors or HRM Director] to reach this goal”. According to several interviewees, it is possible for Lianne to create awareness for this subject.

Also, an interview respondent of the higher function level (R3) thinks that it is important that the goals of Lianne and the Board of Directors and the HRM Director are aligned, which means that all parties should cooperate in order to achieve the organizational goals. She said: “How is Lianne positioned and perceived by the board and are they getting the position within the organization to achieve organizational goals? I am questioning that”.

The mission of Lianne should not be changed, according to the interviewees, because it is perceived as positive. Most of the respondents think they are good elements to have as a mission for the network Lianne.

However, the goals related to this mission should be changed into more concrete goals. Lianne should clarify what they want to achieve with the network. Interview respondents gave arguments that the goals are too many, unclear, and some of the goals are

not reachable for the network. This means that the goals should be SMART. According to the Center for Gender in Organizations (2012), concrete goals and specific metrics are needed to ensure accomplishment of the network goals, but also, organizational success. Hucke (2016) argues that focusing on the number of members or events does not support performance measuring and evolving a strategy and agenda over time.

One respondent gave a clear vision of how the goals could be set up. She suggested pointing out three spearheads and developing them into manageable goals aligned with the goals of Alliander in order to become more accessible and understandable to employees within Alliander.

In addition, one interviewee who has a higher function level within Alliander thinks that the network should be aligned with the high management level of Alliander, for example the Board of Directors or the HRM Director. This means that the network should closely cooperate with the board to reach more alignment in the goal setting of both parties in order to accomplish the goals of Alliander.

4.4 How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the target audience of the women's network Lianne and which target audience should the network focus on according to them and why?

The target audience of Lianne is 'every woman who wants to grow, develop and take action and male employees are also welcome', (as mentioned in the introduction of chapter four). Women at all levels of Alliander perceive the target audience as positive, namely almost every respondent thought the target audience is well chosen and does not exclude someone. However, the current target audience was not known by every woman who was interviewed. Only one woman (R6) mentioned that men are welcome to the network. Most women reacted positively when the interviewer explained that men are invited to Lianne, because they think it is important that when a network is created within the organization, no one should feel excluded. In addition, most of the respondents think that it is important to invite men in order to start a dialogue and in this way the network might create more awareness of the subject of gender diversity. One of them (R14) said: "The network wants to reach equality but they do not reach this goal by excluding men". Some of them are questioning the fact that men are invited, because they feel that it might limit some women in expressing their feelings during an activity while these activities are the low-threshold opportunities for them to express and learn. At the same time, they understand why men are invited. For example one respondent (R9) said: "They want to invite the men, but .. yes, of course they want communicate with

them” or (R3) “If the intention is to engage in conversation with men and if they can facilitate this then I think it is okay”. Another woman (R13) said: “It is sometimes necessary to be vulnerable to indicate that you find something difficult or that you are suffering from something. And then it is nice to be able to share with women, the threshold is just a little lower. It is therefore very dependent on the group’s size and what is being discussed during the event”.

Every interviewee feels attracted to the target audience, but some of the women did not like the wording of the target audience. For example, one respondent (R13) said: “It is so typically feminine to put it in those words”, which refers to “All women of all shapes and sizes”. Another issue related to the target audience is that, in the past, Lianne has created an image of the target audience that was focused on highly educated women or women above a certain function level. This image has not entirely changed, because almost every interviewee still has the feeling that Lianne is focusing on highly educated women instead of women at all levels within Alliander, as one respondent (R9) said: “Women who are in a certain dominant position”. Indeed, during the four events of Lianne that were observed for this study, it was noticed that the target audience was not fully represented in terms of the function levels of the participants of the events. Almost none of the female employees at higher function levels participated in the four events. Also, almost none of the women of the lowest function level group were present at the events. Only at the film event there were a few women of this function level group present. The highest percentage present at the events are the women of the middle function level group. During the meetings of Lianne, it was not discussed for whom an event was meant. For example, during one meeting an active member said: “It does not matter who participate in this event, it just depends on what audience you attract” (March 27, 2017), which shows that Lianne does not determine beforehand for who an event is meant and which target audience they want to attract.

The current target audience of Lianne should not be changed, according to the interviewees, because they all think that the network should be open to women at all functions levels of Alliander and not exclude men, because inclusion within Alliander will be only accomplished when everyone can be part of it. However, the wording of the target audience should be changed in order to attract all women. According to the interview respondents, men are welcome, but it should be clear why they are invited and to which activities. This finding is in accordance with McCarthy (2004), because she also argues that a network is a safe space for women where they can share their feelings and reflect. While the men are welcome, the network should stay a safe environment for women.

4.5 How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the activities organized by the women's network Lianne, which activities should the network organize according to them and in what way and why?

In general, women at all levels of Alliander perceive the activities organized by the in-company women's network Lianne as positive as well as negative, because the interview respondents' perceptions were divided on what events they think the network should organize. When analyzing this network element, different opinions appeared which can be divided according to different function level groups.

First, the number of events that the interviewees have participated in will be analyzed. Most of the interviewees acknowledged that they never or only once or twice participated in Lianne-events. This is not specific to members or non-members. Half of the interviewees were member of the intranet page of Lianne before they were interviewed, but did not know for sure whether they are a member of Lianne and recognized that they are not active in participating in events.

When looking at the subjects of the events, there is a big difference between the interests of the lowest and middle function level group on the one hand and the highest function level group on the other. The lowest and middle function level group are not interested in events together with other similar companies or events with the subject 'Women at the top'. They are interested in the smaller network-events within the company. However, the highest function level group is interested in bigger network-events, for example together with other in-company women's networks in the energy sector. These interviewees said that smaller network-events within their company have no added value for them. One woman (R13) said: "Because of my position in the organization, I have already built my own big network, so I do not need these network-events anymore".

All three groups agreed that the events should be related to work. The interview respondents think it is unnecessary to spend events on the subject work-life balance. For example, one respondent (R4) reacted with "Whining about the work-life balance, I am done with that!". Also, some of the respondents (R14 & R6) think it is important to spend an event on the organization, because Alliander is a technical company where many men work. Lianne can give workshops on how to communicate with the male employees and learn more about technical skills or the product the company sells, because every employee should know about his or her company and the technical aspect of Alliander, despite her function. When analyzing the event calendar, it can be noticed that the subjects of the events vary widely, from going to the movie to learning about the hidden dimension of leadership. The three

work-related events were not focused on the technical aspect of Alliander and during these events nothing was said about this technical aspect. When analyzing the events calendar, it can be noticed that every month one or two events take place, in total around 20 events during the year 2017. What can be seen is that the events are different, but only two events are related to the technical context of the organization and no network events take place together with other women's networks (however, such an event is organized once every two years). Most events are workshops and master classes about various subjects.

Also, there is a division between lower and middle and higher function levels in perceptions when the events should take place. Most of the time, the events take place in the afternoon. Middle and higher function level groups have more flexibility when it comes to joining an event, because they do not have jobs that require working from 8 till 5, but lower function levels do have the obligation of working from 8 till 5, where productivity is a very important measuring instrument. For them it is unlikely to participate in an event that takes place in the afternoon. One woman (R14) suggested to combine an event with a lunch or that events can sometimes be organized in the evening, in alternation with events in the afternoon. The participant observations show that three of the four events took place in the afternoon, and only the film event took place in the evening.

In addition, the place of the event is also an important consideration for the respondents. Most of the respondents agreed that it seems like events often take place in Arnhem and occasionally in Amsterdam. Alliander has multiple offices, so most of the women said that it is important to alternate the place where the event takes place. It can be noticed, based on the participant observations, that the four events that were observed took place in Arnhem. However, one event that is not part of the participant observation took place in Amsterdam. Also, when analyzing the event calendar, it can be noticed that it does not clarify the location of the event.

Almost every interviewee thinks it is important to evaluate the events of Lianne by sending participants evaluation forms online and directly after the event. As one respondent (R8) argued: "It is a good learning process for Lianne to evaluate her events in order to improve herself". Seven out of eleven events of the event calendar are evaluated in different forms. Some of them are evaluated in a short survey, others through asking some questions about the event in a mail (J. Lodarmasse, personal communication, May 22, 2017). Most of the women who participated respond to the evaluations. Only the event about politics on the work floor was not evaluated fully positively, because some of the women thought that the structure of the workshop could have been better and more professional.

The Lianne-events should be changed on some points, according to the respondents, because of the arguments given above. The subjects of the events should be varied to attract women at all levels within Alliander, but most of the respondents agreed that the events should be work-related. The study by O'Neil et al. (2011) shows that networking helps to understand the context of the organization, which means that Lianne can play an important role in understanding the organization better by organizing events that are related to the organization. There should be alternation in the place and timing of the event, so that every woman has the chance to participate in at least some of the events.

It is positively perceived when the events are evaluated in a short mail or online survey, directly after the event. The respondents find it positive when Lianne gives them the opportunity to give their opinion in order to learn from the event.

4.6 How do the women at all levels within Alliander perceive the outcomes of the women's network Lianne and which outcomes should the network have according to them and why?

Women at all levels within Alliander perceived the actual and potential outcomes of the women's network Lianne in different ways. The individual outcomes of the interview respondents might depend on multiple work environment factors. First, the opportunities in developing, training and courses provided by their departments to the employees influence which outcomes the respondent perceives. When the extent for opportunities of developing, training and courses is high, the respondent seems to think that Lianne contributes less to her personal development, because she already is given the chance to develop herself through other courses and is less likely to consider participating in workshops or master classes organized by Lianne.

Second, the phase of the career the respondent is in is of importance to the individual outcomes she perceives. As one respondent of the higher function level group (R4) said: "Women with higher positions in the organization, do not gain anything, for example networking, because the women who visit the events are not of the same function level". Another respondent (R13) argued that when a woman is new in the organization, it is important to participate in events, so she can learn about the organization and connect with other women. Also, when a woman searches for a new job within Alliander, the network Lianne can be of importance, because there is the possibility that she is talking to someone who knows a job opportunity. But when a female employee works in the organization for a longer period of time, she already knows everything about the organization and has built a

network.

Most of the respondents do believe that Lianne contributes to their personal development by listening and talking with other women in the organization, because they gain different perspectives. For example, one woman (R8) said: “I personally learn a lot from listening to other people, for instance: I could have approached it from that point of view, too”.

Most of the women agreed that Lianne is not of high importance to their career development. For instance, one respondent (R6) argued: “When they want to reach a broad public, it is not possible for them to deliver such customized work in development”. Lianne’s value to their career development is that the network can show them the first steps they can take in their career path in a low-threshold way, but not directly in their career development. One of the reasons the women gave is that Lianne does not organize events that are focused on technical or communication skills within the company or that are related to the product the organization sells. Work-related events are more important to them in order to contribute to their career development, because of their functions in a technical environment, according to the interviewees. Another reason is that some women do not know what Lianne stands for and what she organizes, and therefore, could not answer the question regarding what Lianne might mean for their career development. Two of the interviewees (R8 & R10 respectively) responded positively about the career development: “I am very positive about that, you must be open to it” and “I think it could contribute positively if I were more active”.

Most of the participants recognized what their membership might mean for the development of the network itself. Women at higher levels within Alliander said that it is important for the network that they are present at events, because they are an example for other women within the organization. Also, women at higher function levels can volunteer to be a mentor via Lianne. As one woman (R4) said: “It gives other women the opportunity to ask me questions in a low-threshold way and to get to know me in an informal way”. This respondent argued that it is of importance to her that people are relaxed when they have to meet with employees with high function levels. Women of lower and middle function levels recognize that their membership is important for the development of the network Lianne, because they can make other people aware of the existence of Lianne and, in this way, make Lianne more known. Also, they think it is important to keep the conversation about diversity alive within the company to create more awareness among employees.

At the organizational level, Lianne can contribute in several ways according to the interviewed women. First of all, multiple interviewees believe that Lianne can create a safe

and low-threshold environment where women can connect and support each other. As a result, they become women that are strong and confident in the organization. Second, Lianne contributes on the organizational level by making the subject of diversity and equality more visible throughout the organization, which results in awareness of the subject. For example, one woman (R10) said: “Either way, it is a form of visibility within the organization”. Third, some of the women think that Lianne should contribute to the organizational goal of Alliander, as one woman (R4) said: “One of the core values [of Alliander] is ‘cooperation’ and that also applies to the women’s network”. Fourth, one woman (R11) argued that she thinks that Lianne can contribute in closing the gap between the actual culture within Alliander and the vision and mission of the Board of Directors. She believes that the actual culture is the dominant culture wherein men still not respect women and the vision of the Board is that they do respect women. In addition, she said that she believes why it is important for Lianne that she has an active role [because of her function] within Lianne, because together [as women] we are stronger and as a result, we create a flow of good energy”. Fifth, if Lianne wants to be of interest at the policy level they have to get and take that position in the organization. One of the respondents (R3) replied that she is not sure whether Lianne gets the position within the organization to make a difference on the policy level. The top management level of Alliander has to notice that Lianne is valuable in a certain way and give the network the opportunity to contribute to the organizational goals.

The way of Lianne contributes to the individual, network and organization outcomes should be changed, according to the respondents, because of the arguments given above. On individual level, respondents believe that the network contributes more to personal development than to their career development. They think that every conversation positively influences their personal development. This is also acknowledged by Singh et al. (2006), who argue that by networking with each other, women can learn from experiences and strategies and learn from one another. However, the interviewees said that if Lianne wants to contribute to the career development of the women, she should be focused more on events that are focused on subjects that are related to the organizational sector and product.

The interviewed women believe that they themselves can contribute to the network by introducing new employees to the network, giving their opinions and starting conversations about diversity and creating more awareness among employees. Also, women of higher function levels believe that they have an example role for other female employees within the organization and they can offer help by being a mentor. This finding is in accordance with Singh et al. (2006), who contend that women benefit from having female role models, which

shows that it is important to connect different function levels to learn from each other. Also, Friedman and Craig (2004) argue that these informal contacts lead to more deep and personal relationships as well as a broader network of casual connections.

On organizational level, the network Lianne should contribute to creating more powerful and confident women in the organization, making diversity more visible through the organization, and as a result creating more awareness. It should contribute to the organizational goal of Alliander and, if they want to be of interest on policy level, they should take and get the position from the organization to realize changes in policy. The research by Hucke and Kepinski (2016) shows that many respondents do not believe that their network is fully supported by the organization, which has a strong impact on their network experience and the willingness to recommend the network to others. Also, their study argues that employees have too high expectations of what a network is able to achieve. This also applies to Lianne, the interviewees had high expectations of what Lianne should achieve. Also, some of the respondent thought that Lianne is not fully supported by the organization.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This chapter will present the conclusions based on the analysis in chapter four. The main research question of this study is “*How do women at all levels of organizations perceive the in-company women’s network, and what do these women think the network should look like, in order to be of value to them?*” and can be answered based on the analysis. Six sub-questions were formulated to answer the main question and two theoretical concepts were used in order to answer these sub-questions. The first theoretical concept is ‘perception’ by De Meuse and Hostager (2001) and the second concept is ‘in-company women’s networks’ provided by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009).

Women at all levels think positively of the network structure organized as a holacracy, because it gives flexibility within the team and the opportunity for everyone to be an active member and learn new skills next to their job. The self-organizing team should be a representation of all female employees within the organization. Also, the team should be aligned with the high management level of the organization, which means that there should be full co-operation between these multiple parties. In addition, the network should set up a report for the upcoming years, because it gives more steadiness and clarity in the self-organizing team.

The network elements ‘mission and purpose’ is partly perceived as positive, namely the mission is positively perceived by women at all levels of the organization, but the purpose is less positively perceived. The interviewees agree with the mission of the network being ‘Lianne wants to deepen, strengthen and connect’, because it gives an indication of what the network wants to accomplish over time, but the goals should be formulated as SMART, which means specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bounded. The goals should be clear to everyone and it should be possible to measure the achievements and developments. Also, the goals should be aligned with the goals of Alliander in order to reach organizational success.

Women at all levels think positively about the target audience of the network as open to everyone in the organization. The target audience of the network should be open to everyone and not exclude people, because by excluding people the network will not reach inclusion within the company. The wording of the target audience should be formulated in a way that is not obviously feminine and that makes everyone understand that it is open to anyone within the organization. This has implications for the events of Lianne, because not

every woman feels comfortable to express her feelings in the company of men.

The events of the network are partly perceived as positive. The events of the network should alternate in timing, place and subjects, according to the interviewees, so that every employee in the organization is able to participate in at least some of the events. The women with high function levels are more interested in bigger network-events, for instance with other women's network, but the lower and middle function level groups are not interested in these big network-events. They prefer small events where they can connect with other women from Alliander. The subjects of the events should be work-related and also related to the sector and type of company. The events should be evaluated, because it gives members the opportunity to give their opinion, which is a learning process for the network.

The actual and potential outcomes of the network are perceived in different ways by women of different function levels. The outcomes of the network on individual level should be focused both on personal and career development. On the network level, the outcomes should be that female employees introduce others to the network and start conversations about diversity with other employees. Also, women at higher levels should be an example by participating in the network or being a mentor via the network. The outcomes on the organizational level should be focused on creating powerful and confident women, making diversity more visible in the organization and should contribute to the organizational goals, for example creating more diversity and inclusion within the organization.

Taking these arguments together, an in-company women's network is perceived as positive by women at all levels when the structure is flexible, the mission and purpose are clarified, the target audience is open to everyone in the organization, the events are work-related and vary in subjects, place and time and the outcomes of the network contribute to the individual, network and organizational level. The implications of this research are discussed in the next section.

5.2 Discussion

The discussion section consists of three parts. First, the theoretical discussion will be presented where the contribution of the study to the scientific literature will be discussed. Second, the methodological discussion will be presented in which the methodological strengths and limits of the research will be discussed. Third, recommendations and practical implications will be presented.

5.2.1 Theoretical discussion

As proposed in the first chapter, this research wants to contribute to the theoretical debate on formal in-company women's networks by broadening its empirical basis rather than focusing on career-oriented women only, as has been the case in the literature thus far (O'Neil et al., 2011; Pini et al., 2004; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). The theoretical concepts 'perception' by De Meuse and Hostager (2001) and 'in-company women's networks' by Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) were used to investigate the perceptions of women at all levels of Alliander of the in-company women's network Lianne. The concept 'in-company women's network' in combination with 'perceptions' was valuable in the investigation of the women's perceptions at all levels about the different network elements, because it enables the researcher to systematically and exhaustively investigate every perception of the network elements. The theoretical framework was exhaustively, because no additional dimensions or indicators were found. A valuable contribution of this research to the existing literature is that women at all levels within an organization do not have the same interests to accomplish by joining or participating in an in-company women's network. As the literature discusses, in-company women's networks often focus solely on women in higher function levels, and exclude women in lower positions and male employees. Because of this, the focus of the network is mostly on career-oriented women. This current research shows that women at all levels appreciate that the network is open to everyone, that it has to connect people and strengthen them by organizing events that are interesting for all woman (and men) in the organization. Women at higher function levels are not joining or participating in an in-company women's network because they are career-oriented, but rather because they feel that they have an example or mentor role to the other women in the organization. Women at higher function levels said that they have an example role and by being active in the network-events it shows that the diversity subject is important to the organization (as shown in section 4.6). Because of their high positions, they believe that by joining or participating in such a network they do not meet women of the same function level, which means that they cannot network to obtain even a higher position within the organization. In addition, women of lower and middle function levels do not feel the need to join or participate in an in-company women's network to embrace their career development, but rather for their personal development. Also, women at lower and middle function level groups argued that they might contribute to the network development by introducing other women to the network.

Donnellon and Langowitz (2009) showed a matrix with different network elements which provides typology of in-company women's networks. The typologies Donnellon and

Langowitz (2009) distinguish are connective, developmental and strategic. When applying the elements to Lianne, the mission of Lianne is developmental, because it is about how to give women in the organization the position where they are powerful and confident within the masculine culture. The network's business rationale has a strategic content, because Lianne is part of the diversity and inclusion plans as an HR-instrument and wants women to advance, which shows that diversity within the organization is important to reach better organizational outcomes. The business rationale of Alliander is also strategic, because they want that Lianne is part of the diversity plans in order to create more diversity and inclusion in the organization which is considered as an organizational advantage. The membership of Lianne is a mixed membership including men, which results a developmental typology, according to Donnellon and Langowitz (2009). Lianne receives a budget from the HR-department, which shows that Lianne receives some form of support. However, the business and functional support is limited, indicating developmental level. The programming of Lianne is also developmental, because when analyzing the events of Lianne, for example, they are focused on mentoring, leadership and negotiation. The subjects of the events of Lianne are not on strategic level, because it does not contribute to business development of Alliander. Based on the typology of Donnellon and Langowitz (2009), it can be noticed that Lianne is partly strategic, and mainly, developmental. The analysis of the typology shows that Lianne plays a role on strategic level, but the network and organization are not organized in such a way that the network is not able in being successful with its strategy. The organization does not provide the required support the network needs and Lianne does not create the chances to accomplish to get the support, because Lianne has not developed a report which shows what they want to accomplish with the network.

As discussed in chapter two, the goals of an in-company women's network can be presented as a mission pyramid (Donnellon & Langowitz, 2009). The mission pyramid of Lianne will be based on the data of the interview analysis, the document analysis and participant observations. The lowest goal is to connect women, which is recognized by women at lower and middle function levels to be of importance to them. The second goal of the pyramid is peer reference and support, which is acknowledged by the women at higher function levels. The third goal is about the development of competencies, which is recognized by women at all levels: by entering into conversations with each other, they gain different perspectives. The fourth goal is career support, which is not acknowledged at the moment by the majority of interviewees, but they argued that if Lianne wants to contribute to the women's career development, Lianne has to organize events that are work-related. The fifth

goal is advancement and advocacy. This goal is not supported by Lianne, because women in top positions cannot be part of talent reviews via Lianne. This kind of advancement and advocacy is organized within the 20KV network and by the DI Manager. The goal at the top of the pyramid is the goal of business development. Lianne is part of the DI strategy which contributes to the business development, but is not fully acknowledged by getting the resources to contribute to the goals of the organization, except that Lianne receives a budget to organize events. This shows that Lianne is not at the top of the mission pyramid based on the data of this study.

A limitation of this research is that it took place within a specific industry sector. Alliander is active in the energy sector, which means that many men work within the organization and Alliander has a masculine culture. It is possible that within another sector, for example temporary employment agencies, women at all levels react differently to the in-company women's network. Further research is needed to investigate whether these perceptions about the in-company women's network are only valid for companies within the energy sector or are also valid for organizations within other sectors. Another possibility for future research is repeating this study within Alliander to investigate whether the perceptions have changed over time, which is useful because it shows whether changes can be detected in the alignment of the expectations and needs of the members and the priorities and strategy of Lianne, which might result in a contribution to the literature on how network elements should be organized to be successful over time. As mentioned in the analysis in chapter four, Lianne will launch their new image in July, so it is possible that they create a new image over time. In addition, future research might include the top management level of the organization to explore their perceptions about the in-company women's network. It is important to investigate how they perceive the women's network in order to determine how the expectations of the top management level are (or are not) aligned with the strategy of the network, which might contribute to the literature on how formal in-company women's networks effectively set up goals and measure them and cooperate with the top management level in order to be successful as a network.

5.2.2 Methodological discussion

In this section, the methodological aspects of the study will be discussed. This research is analytically generalizable, because it offers insight into how women at all levels perceive an in-company women's network and what it should look like that can be used as a framework for future research. However, the empirical generalizability is limited because the size of the

interview group was $n = 14$ and the limitation of the study to one sector. Unfortunately, the lowest function level did not want to be interviewed for this research. Future research is needed to investigate the perceptions from members as well as non-members on each function level in various organizations.

By working deductively, theoretical concepts became clear and gave the opportunity to structure the interviews according to five network elements and to be prepared to observe the dimensions of perceptions. As a consequence, the interviews were semi-structured, which resulted in gathering relevant information, while they also gave the interviewee the chance to express her perceptions using her own words. Because of the deductive way of working and the semi-structured interviews, the internal validity increased.

During the interviews with non-members of Lianne it appeared that some of the interview questions were not suitable to ask the respondent, because they were not familiar with some of the network elements of Lianne, even when an explanation had been given. These questions were not asked during the interviews with non-members, but other questions, for example relating to the work environment of the respondent, were asked to deepen why some of the women did not join the network. This increased the internal validity as questions were asked about the context of the interviewee in order to understand their answers. By making sure during the research process that the respondents remain anonymous, it seemed that most of them were honest and critical when they wanted to be, thus increasing internal validity. Only woman who was not a member of the network did not understand the purpose of the research even after explaining it multiples times in different ways. During the interview, it seemed as if she was scared to be honest, because she said that she was afraid of what the researcher might think of her, even after the interviewer made clear that she would remain anonymous and that there were no wrong answers.

It was well appreciated by the respondents that the interviewer created an environment where she gave the opportunity to see the cards with information about the network elements and gave an explanation of what was meant by the cards. One respondent said: "I like those cards very much. For the people who are visual it is a good way to make it understandable". In addition, some of the respondents said that it was good that the interviewer did not write during the interview, so she had full attention for the respondent. This may have increased the internal validity, because interview respondents might have felt that the information they gave was of high importance. Their answers may also have been more complete because the study was of interest to the organization they work at.

Some of the women wanted to check the transcripts of the interviews. They did not

have any remarks, except for a company's name, that had no effect on the reliability of the interview. These member checks increased the reliability of the research, because the women agreed on the written transcripts. However, repeating these interviews might not give the same results, because at the time each respondent was not familiar with one or more network elements of Lianne. Now they have more information about the elements and might give a different answer from when they had just learnt about the elements. Also, the interviewer would not be the same when repeating the interviews. Also, the reliability was increased by being transparent in the process of data collection and data analysis.

The interviewer has kept reflective memos during the research. They made sure that the interviewer thought about how the interview unfolded and which role the interviewer had. This increases the validity and reliability of the research, because the researcher evaluates whether and how she has influenced the interview respondent or which other factors were of importance that might have influenced the interview. For example, the woman who did not seem to understand the purpose of the interview, because she was not a member of the network and it looked like she was not convinced that the researcher was not trying to persuade her to become a member of Lianne. The answers given by the respondent were short, but they were included in the research because the interviewee gave her view on the network. The researcher reflected on her role if she might had tried to persuade the interviewee, but concluded that it was not the case. This was a meaningful lesson for the researcher that she had to be careful in not creating an environment where the interviewee thought the researcher wanted to persuade her.

By using triangulation of methods in order to answer the main question, different perspectives became visible and gave context to the perceptions of women at all levels about the in-company women's network, which has resulted in an increase in the validity of the research results.

5.2.3 Recommendations and practical implications

Based on this study, several recommendations will be made to Lianne. First, the overall recommendation to Lianne will be presented, then the remaining recommendations will be linked to the success rules of Hucke and Kepinski (2016). As discussed in section 2.1.2.5, the study by Hucke and Kepinski (2016) showed five foundational rules for in-company women's networks to reach positive outcomes.

The rebranding of the network was positive, according to the interviewees, because Lianne includes everyone in the organization, but the rebranding was not made public. As a

result, none of the interviewees knew there was a rebranding and which changes this caused in, for example, the target audience of Lianne. It is advisable to Lianne to still make this rebranding public, so that everyone knows that Lianne has changed in their network elements and for what this means for all employees and what they can expect from Lianne.

Hucke and Kepinski's (2016, p. 21) first rule, 'expectations of a network and its agenda need to be aligned with the network's resources', are the expectations of the active members of Lianne, and the expectations by its members, non-members and top management level of the organization. Based on the analysis, it can be noticed that Lianne is part of the realization of the plan to reach more diversity at Alliander, because Lianne is mentioned as a HR-instrument. Also, the HR department provides Lianne with a budget to organize events. The analysis of the interviews made it clear that, because of the broad target audience and multiple interests, employees of Alliander as well as the organization at large have high expectations of the networks. However, the active members organize Lianne on voluntary basis, which does not give them the time needed to organize themselves successfully in order to fulfil all the high expectations. Also, it is difficult to plan meetings in order to discuss issues with employees of the top management, because of their busy work schedules. It seems that the expectations of the network Lianne and its agenda are not fully aligned with the network's resources. It is recommended to Lianne to set up a two- or three-years plan, so they can guide their actions and clarify and transfer their agreements on Lianne next to their new active members for the self-organizing team. In addition, the self-organizing team of Lianne will be able to take advantage of such a plan when they work together with other parties, for example the Board of Directors or the HRM Director. In this way, both parties may become more aligned in what they want to accomplish within the organization, which is important because it contributes to the organizational goal of Alliander. Lianne will be able to contribute to the goals of Alliander when the network works together with other parties within the organization. A practical implication is that co-operation with different parties also has an effect on the duration of completing some of the recommendations Lianne might consider in order to improve themselves. Because of the busy work schedules of not only the active members but also other parties, for example the Board of Directors or the HRM Director, appointments will be difficult to make on a short-term notice and new tasks that the network might consider may be delayed. A recommendation to the top management level of Alliander is to give the active members of the self-organizing team of Lianne half a day per week to perform tasks of Lianne.

The second rule by Hucke and Kepinski (2016, p. 21), 'relevant metrics are needed

and provide the basis to measure impact and development over time', means that goals have to be developed to measure achievements and developments. Lianne has not formulated SMART goals and, as a result, it is not possible to measure their impact over time. Also, because of the fact that Lianne is an HR-instrument contributing to the diversity goals of Alliander, it is important to measure the impact Lianne has with respect to the realization of diversity and inclusion. The metrics for this goal should be coupled to the goals of the two diversity documents of Alliander. A further recommendation is that the network goals that are related to the mission of Lianne should be further developed. At the moment, Lianne has written down what the network wants to accomplish in a few bullet points without explaining what it wants to accomplish within a certain time period. It is important for the network to develop goals according to the SMART-rule, so the goals will be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bounded, and achievements and impact of Lianne over time can be measured. It should be noticed, however, that goal setting is time consuming, because the goals have to be well thought out and measured over time, while the active members of Lianne do not have much time to invest in Lianne.

The third rule is members' needs and expectations are a key insight to inform network priorities and strategy (Hucke & Kepinski, 2016, p. 21). By doing research like this current study, insight is provided into the needs and expectations of not only members of Lianne but also potential members. This study shows that the activities which Lianne organizes should be focused on work-related subjects, for example, focusing more on the product that Alliander sells and giving workshops on how to learn about some technical skills that are necessary when someone works at Alliander. As there are differences in perception when it comes to the subject, place and timing of the events between the different function levels, the network has to consider alternating the subjects, places and time points for the events in order to attract all the women the network wants to attract. The time and place of the events should vary between the different offices in the Netherlands and events that take place during the lunch, afternoon or evening. The target audience is now focused on a broad public, so Lianne should organize events that are interesting for all of the women within Alliander and every woman should be able to participate once in a while in an event. A practical implication that comes along with this recommendation is that it may be difficult for the network to organize activities within the budget. There is a difference in perception when it comes to the subject, place and timing of the events between the different function levels. Another recommendation is that Lianne should continue to evaluate the events. Evaluations after events, give members the opportunity to give Lianne the insight into their needs and expectations which is appreciated

by the interviewees.

In addition, expectations of the interviewees are that the outcomes of Lianne result in women having the feeling that they want to recommend Lianne to other employees, because of their positive experiences and outcomes. Also, women of higher function levels have the feeling that it is important that they participate in events of Lianne because of their example role. In addition, Lianne should create powerful and confident women, more awareness and visibility of diversity and should contribute to the organizational goals of Alliander. An implication of these expectations might be that there are too many expected outcomes of employees that Lianne might consider and, as a result, Lianne might not contribute well on most of them. A recommendation to Lianne is to make well-considered choices in which outcomes Lianne thinks the network should result in.

The fourth rule, 'network leaders must be recognized for the work they do' (Hucke & Kepinski, 2016 p. 21). Most of the interviewees did not know who is in the self-organizing team of Lianne, and, in addition, also, the active members are not fully presented at the intranet page of Lianne, so in this way it is not possible to acknowledge the active members for the work that they do. A recommendation to Lianne is that it should change their self-organizing team of active members on their intranet page, so that everyone knows who is part of the self-organizing team at the moment and easily can contact them if needed.

Furthermore, it is important to receive recognition from the top management for the work done by Lianne. When the top management level does not recognize Lianne as a contribution to the organization, there is a greater chance that other employees also do not recognize the network.

The last rule is 'network members and leaders have to feel embraced by their organization' (Hucke & Kepinski, 2016, p. 21). Because of the changes in top management level and the active members of Lianne, the relationship and acknowledgement is a little more unstable than in the past. In addition, the top management level should recognize the network in their resources, which means giving them more time next to their job to fulfil the tasks within Lianne, giving them a budget that is suitable for the broad target audience and giving them the opportunity to meet with the top management level when necessary. Also, because of the changes in the image of Lianne, employees within the organization do not know what Lianne stands for and which target audience they are focused on. This research shows that women feel more attracted to the network based on the new target audience. But the image Lianne has created in the past by inviting only women of higher function levels still is the image women at all levels of Alliander have of the network. This might retain the feeling that

women of lower function levels are not welcome to the network and are not embraced by it. Another implication might be that because of the fact that men are welcome to the network, some women do not feel comfortable participating in events, which might result in a loss of female members who need their support from other employees the most. A recommendation to Lianne is that it should make well-considered choices in when they invite men to an event and what are the consequences.

If Lianne considers the recommendations of this research, it has the opportunity to become a successful network in which it is acknowledged by the top management level and other employees of Alliander and has the opportunity to contribute successfully to the organizational goals of Alliander.

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Appendix I - Interview questions

Inleidende tekst:

Welkom bij dit interview en bedankt voor uw bereidheid om aan dit onderzoek mee te werken. Ik zal eerst wat over mijzelf vertellen. Ik studeer de master Strategic Human Resource Management aan de Radboud Universiteit, waarbij ik nu in mijn afstudeerfase zit. Sinds 1 februari loop ik stage bij het MVO-team binnen Alliander, waarbij ik mij richt op het onderzoek doen naar het vrouwennetwerk Lianne. Hierbij ga ik de visie van vrouwen op alle functieniveaus van Alliander onderzoeken over het vrouwennetwerk. Het doel is om het vrouwennetwerk Lianne zo goed mogelijk te adviseren. De informatie die tijdens dit interview gegeven wordt zal alleen voor dit onderzoek gebruikt worden. Het netwerk Lianne zal wel de bevindingen uit het onderzoek mogen gebruiken om zo nodig zich te verbeteren. Er is geen fout antwoord mogelijk en ik hoop dat u zo open en volledig mogelijk de vragen kunt beantwoorden. Ik zal uw anonimiteit waarborgen, door uw naam, standplaats en functie niet te vermelden in het onderzoek. Als u er geen bezwaar tegen heeft, zou ik graag dit interview opnemen om deze zo goed mogelijk te kunnen uitwerken en analyseren. Het interview zal beginnen met inleidende vragen, vervolgens algemene vragen over Lianne en daarna gaan we in op verschillende onderdelen van Lianne, bijvoorbeeld de doelen en leden. Heeft u tot zover vragen? Dan zal ik nu beginnen met de algemene vragen van dit interview.

Inleidende interviewvragen:

1. Wat is uw naam?
2. Wat is uw leeftijd?
3. Wat is uw functie? Wat houdt het werk in? Hoelang bent u werkzaam bij Alliander?
4. Wat is uw standplaats? Is de standplaats waar u voornamelijk werkzaam bent?
5. Heeft u via uw functie een relatie tot het vrouwennetwerk Lianne?

Algemene kennis van Lianne:

1. Kent u het vrouwennetwerk Lianne?
2. Wat weet u van het vrouwennetwerk Lianne?
3. Wanneer heeft u voor het eerst iets gehoord over Lianne?
4. Hoe heeft u hier voor het eerst iets van vernomen?
5. Bent u lid van Lianne, waarom wel/niet lid?

Structuur van Lianne:

1. Wat weet u van hoe het vrouwennetwerk Lianne georganiseerd is? (informatie geven over de missie wanneer het onbekend is)

2. Wat vindt u ervan dat Lianne door acht vrouwen wordt georganiseerd? Waarom vindt u dat?
3. Hoe denkt u dat deze structuur invloed heeft op de manier hoe Lianne zich presenteert naar de werknemers van Alliander? Waarom denkt u dat het wel/geen invloed heeft op de manier van presenteren naar de werknemers?
4. Hoe kijkt u ertegenaan dat Lianne flexibel ingericht is waardoor het bestuur snel van organisatoren kan wisselen? Hoe denkt u dat deze flexibele inrichting van het netwerk van invloed is op het functioneren van het netwerk? Waarom vindt u dat deze wisseling wel/geen invloed heeft op het functioneren van het netwerk?
5. Hoe weet u het netwerk te vinden als u dat wilt? Is er een gemakkelijk en duidelijk aanspreekpunt bij het netwerk? Waarom vindt u dat er wel/niet een gemakkelijk en duidelijk aanspreekpunt bij het netwerk is?
6. In hoeverre vindt u dat Lianne openstaat voor uw meningen of ideeën? Waarom vindt u dat Lianne wel/niet openstaat?

Doelen van individu en Lianne:

1. Wat is u bekend over de missie van Lianne? (informatie geven over de missie wanneer het onbekend is)
2. Wat vindt u van de missie van Lianne?
3. Wat weet u van de doelen van Lianne? (informatie geven over de doelen wanneer het onbekend is)
4. Wat vindt u van de doelen van Lianne?
5. Wat is uw doel om lid te zijn Lianne? Waarom heeft u deze doelen wel/niet? Welke mogelijkheden ziet u bij Lianne om deze doelen te realiseren? Hoe maakt u gebruik van deze mogelijkheden? Wat doet u om de doelen te realiseren?
6. Wat zou uw doel kunnen zijn van lidmaatschap van Lianne?
7. Hoe ziet u de vergelijking tussen uw eigen doelen en de doelen van het netwerk? Hoe denkt u dat uw doelen aan sluiten bij de doelen die Lianne voor ogen heeft? Waarom wel/niet?

Leden/doelgroep Lianne:

1. Wat weet u van de doelgroep van Lianne? (indien nodig informatie over de doelgroep geven)
2. Wat vindt u van de doelgroep waarop Lianne zich focust? Waarom vindt u dat?
3. In hoeverre voelt u zich aangesproken als behorend tot de doelgroep? Waarom wel/niet?

4. Wat vindt u ervan dat Lianne ook mannen uitnodigt om zich aan te sluiten bij het netwerk? (indien nodig informatie geven)

Programma/activiteiten georganiseerd door Lianne:

1. Wat weet u van de activiteiten die Lianne organiseert? (indien nodig informatie geven)
2. Heeft u weleens deelgenomen aan activiteiten die Lianne organiseert? Zo ja, hoe vaak heeft u deelgenomen aan activiteiten? Aan welke activiteiten heeft u deelgenomen? Waarom nam u deel aan deze evenementen? Wat vond u van die activiteiten? Waarom vindt u dat?
3. Wat vindt u van de tijdstippen waarop de events plaatsvinden?
4. Wat vindt u van de plaats waar de events plaatsvinden?
5. Welke kosten of moeite brengt het met zich mee/kan het voor u met zich mee brengen om deel te nemen aan events? (bijvoorbeeld thuis iets regelen, leidinggevende vragen). Wat vindt u ervan wanneer u voor een event moet betalen om deel te kunnen nemen?
6. Wat vindt u van de inhoud/onderwerpen van de events?
7. Hoe ziet u een balans tussen de drie doelen van de missie en de inhoud/onderwerpen van de events? Waarom vindt u dat er wel/niet een balans is tussen deze drie doelen van de missie?
8. Wat vindt u ervan als Lianne na elk event in een evaluatie naar uw mening vraagt over het event? Positief: Waarom moet er wel geëvalueerd worden? Waarom zouden ze wel moeten evalueren en hoe zouden zij moeten evalueren? Negatief: Waarom moet er niet geëvalueerd worden? Wat zou anders moeten en waarom op deze manier?

Mogelijke uitkomsten van het participeren in Lianne:

1. Denkt u dat Lianne kan bijdragen aan wat u voor zichzelf wilt bereiken met uw lidmaatschap van het netwerk? Hoe denkt u dat Lianne hieraan kan bijdragen? Waarom vindt u wel/niet dat Lianne aan uw individuele doelstelling kan bijdragen?
2. Denkt u dat het (al dan niet) lid zijn van Lianne kan bijdragen aan uw persoonlijke ontwikkeling? Hoe denkt u dat dit kan bijdragen aan uw persoonlijke ontwikkeling? Waarom denkt u dat dit wel/niet kan bijdragen?
3. Denkt u dat het (al dan niet) lid zijn van Lianne kan bijdragen aan uw carrièreontwikkeling? Hoe denkt u dat dit kan bijdragen aan uw carrièreontwikkeling? Waarom denkt u dat dit wel/niet kan bijdragen?
4. Denkt u dat lid zijn van Lianne bij kan dragen aan de ontwikkeling van het vrouwennetwerk? Hoe denkt u dat lid zijn kan bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van het netwerk? Waarom denkt u dat wel/niet?

5. Denkt u dat Lianne kan bijdragen op organisatieniveau? Hoe denkt u dat Lianne kan bijdragen? Waaraan kan Lianne bijdragen? Waarom kan Lianne wel/niet bijdragen?

Afsluitende vragen:

1. Als u uw ervaringen/ideeën over gesprek over Lianne zou moeten samenvatten, wat springt er dan voor u uit?
2. Heeft u nog toevoegingen?

Ik wil u bedanken voor het interview. Ik ben momenteel bezig met 15 interviews af te nemen, te transcriberen. Hierna zal ik alle data analyseren en verwerken. Wilt u het transcript inzien van het interview voordat ik de data ga analyseren? Kan ik dit toesturen naar het emailadres: ...? Als u na het interview nog vragen heeft over dit onderzoek, dan kunt u mij altijd contacteren. U kunt mij bereiken via het emailadres: ... of bereiken op het nummer:

Appendix II – Information cards during interviews

1st version*: De denkers en doeners achter het netwerk Lianne

Op deze kaart stonden namen van acht dames die op dat moment deel uit maakten van de actieve leden.

Lianne staat voor: uitdagend, kort & krachtig, van nu, stoer, flow ritme, bubbly, sprankelend, disco en jazz.

2nd version*: De denkers en doeners achter het netwerk Lianne

Op deze kaart stonden namen van zeven dames die op dat moment deel uit maakten van de actieve leden.

Lianne staat voor: uitdagend, kort & krachtig, van nu, stoer, flow ritme, bubbly, sprankelend, disco en jazz.

Missie

Lianne wil verdiepen, verbinden en versterken.

Doelen

- Gelijkheid tussen man en vrouw
- Zelfbewuste vrouwen
- Veroveren
- Verbreden
- Verdiepen
- Versterken (empowerment)
- Verbinden

Doelgroep

Alle vrouwen van alle soorten en maten. Vrouwen die zich willen ontwikkelen, groeien en actie willen ondernemen. Ook mannen zijn welkom.

* Lianne has had a change in active members of the self-organizing team during the execution of the interviews, because of that the information cards had to be changed.