

Generational walks in Doorn and other educational projects



Huis Doorn

Life histories

Explanatory notes

Many pre-university pupils and students attending higher vocational education study generations. They write papers on this topic, often supplementing them nowadays with video reports. Social studies, history, economics and management, particularly, lend themselves to theses and graduation papers on generations.

Most students write papers on the life histories of members of generations. This practice is known as a '*life history approach*', which is habitually used in historical sciences and sociology. Several chapters in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* contain examples of this approach.

Because this book, *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs*, will likely inspire many pupils to learn about generations during their studies some examples are provided here, the first being interviews with seniors of the Pre-War Generation and the Silent Generation. What was their childhood like and how did their formative years affect the rest of their lives? What impressions have they retained of the '*Cultural Revolution*' of the late 1960s and early 1970s? How did they benefit from the economically favourable 1990s and how did they prepare themselves for their retirement years?

A second example is interviews with women concerning their experience with discrimination against women. Members of the Pre-War and Silent Generations

suffered serious discrimination on the employment market. Take, for instance, women in public service who automatically lost their job upon getting married. One of the radical effects of the '*Cultural Revolution*' is the strongly reduced discrimination against women, although it is still not entirely eradicated even in the year 2011.

A third example is papers that compare life histories in several generations. This approach often involves collaboration between several pupils or students and lends itself to comparing lucky devils and unlucky dogs. Who has been able to benefit from favourable circumstances and how did they put these advantages to use? Who had to deal with unfavourable conditions? Were the consequences compensated later on in life and did they leave generational scars?

A fourth example concerns changes between generations resulting from the rise of IT and the Internet. Chapter 2 in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* discusses research into technology generations. Many sectors in society can similarly be considered on the basis of the effects of mainly young people becoming digital savvy. In the '*old days*' youngsters used to learn from adults; nowadays many young people help their grandparents as well as their parents to use PCs and the Internet.

Attention usually focuses on general social generations. They dominate the picture that members of society have of generations. However, specific generations, such as in the art of painting or the art of music, or in professions such as teaching are also suitable topics for papers.

Scientific research projects on generations can be a useful source of information for these papers.

Generational walks 'Doorn in Europe'

Explanatory notes

In the 1930s, sociology husband-and-wife team Lynd explained the consequences of the economic crisis in the United States by describing them in the setting of a medium-sized town. They called it *Middletown* which, as it later emerged, was actually a town called Munci. When, a few years later, the economy recovered upon the introduction of the '*New Deal*' the Lynds described the upturn in their book *Middletown in Transition*. The authors wrote both books based on participating observation. Munci acquired international fame through these

books.

Many more examples of social developments and involvements are described against the background of a town or village, including examples outside of sciences. Take, for instance, Amsterdam during the depression in the 1930s seen through the eyes of Geert Mak, a Dutch journalist and a non-fiction writer in the field of history.

This exercise chapter takes the Dutch town of Doorn as a concrete example for writing papers. The author's participating observation gives this chapter its scientific basis; however, literary sources are available as well. Author Simon Vestdijk discussed '*het dorp van de donder*' (the village of thunder) in his essay *Gestalten tegenover mij* (Shapes in front of me). At the beginning of this century Marjolijn Februari used Doorn 'anonymously' as the background for one of her novels. Website www.heuvelrug.nl contains a video of Doorn and other towns of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug (Utrecht Ridge).

The preceding section on life histories can be read as a separate entity but can also be read in preparation of the section on generational walks.

From bad to worse

The first example of a generational walk is based on Simon Vestdijk's novel *De Zwarte Ruiter* (The Black Rider). It is set in the woods around the Ruiterberg estate in Doorn and centres on two leading figures, a young girl and her father. The father is a typical member of the conservative Pre-War Generation. In his opinion, father knows best. He is the kind of father who, when arguing with a child, tends to say '*end of discussion*', breaking off any further argumentation. This kind of behaviour has filled many children with despair.

When she was young, the father ill-treated his daughter, crippling her for life. In remorse the father changed his behaviour towards his daughter, but his ill-treatment worsened the fate of the child. Therefore, the saying '*from bad to worse*' is highly relevant. In despair and in a trance the girl wanders through the heathland near her father's estate, the Ruiterberg, where she encounters the Black Rider. The girl sets fire to some heather. Due to a fatal twist of fate the heath catches fire and the girl perishes in the flames.

The idea of a Black Rider is based on a legend of the Spessart, a woodland in Germany. In this legend a father gambles away his daughter. When the winners of the dice game come to claim their prize the nobleman jumps on his horse, with his

daughter riding pillion, and tries to flee the fortress. During this flight the daughter is killed.

This legend forms the background for the first generational walk through the town of Doorn. In our mind's eye Vestdijk's novel unfolds before us. The heathland is still there and the Ruiterberg estate still graces the landscape.

The saying '*from bad to worse*' has lost nothing of its meaning. Even in our day and age parents sometimes make decisions that make children '*jump out of the frying pan into the fire*'. Policy makers in organisations issue orders that go wrong. National governments and international bodies have been known to pursue a policy that does not improve but only worsens the situation. In these instances, the mechanism '*from bad to worse*' usually relates to the relationship between generations, often concerning general and sometimes specific generations as well.

For purposes of writing a paper, one can take parents whose generation is not very authoritarian. Initially, they are very forgiving towards their children. However, if this approach results in unwelcome behaviour abrupt harsh demands for discipline might be made, in which case the children can be expected to rebel. Numerous situations in society can be analysed on the basis of '*from bad to worse*'. Examining lives can sometimes bring such mechanisms to one's notice.

Generational scars

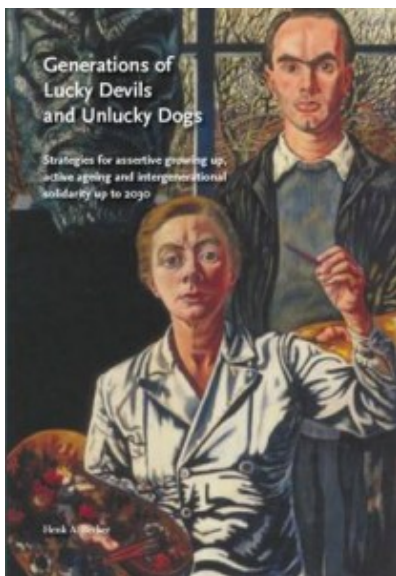
Being part of a social generation can in time lead to bottlenecks in the form of generational scars influencing one's life. If we take an imaginary walk through Doorn we first come across a large woodland studded with dozens of bungalows housing military victims of the Second World War and later military campaigns. The residents are provided help and support from a central building. The Second World War is a well-known cause of generational scars among citizens and the military. Later military operations have in turn affected later generations.

Continuing our walk we come across an entirely different kind of generational scar. In the heart of the town is a building that used to be a Calvinist church. Due to the sharp fall in the number of people who foster Calvinist religious convictions the members of the Calvinist church had to merge with other religious communities, such as those of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Maartenskerk (church) now accommodates both Calvinists and members of the Dutch Reformed Church, a development that will have left many Calvinists with a generational scar.

Those who have lived in Doorn for many years can point out the spot where a kindergarten used to be. When the number of births in Doorn dropped starting in 1970, the number of under-fives decreased as well and the school became redundant. Perhaps not a dramatic generational scar, but a symbol of a radical social trend break nevertheless.

Those who wish to write a paper on generational scars can walk around their town and record the traces of such unwelcome trend breaks. If life histories have already been compiled then signs pointing to generational scars can usually be derived from this data as well.

Generations in the arts



Ch.Toorop - Three Generations - Museum Boymans van Beuningen Rotterdam

The town centre and rural areas around the town in particular boast numerous buildings that reflect a pattern of generations. Generations of affluent citizens who commissioned houses; generations of architects who were given the opportunity to express their artistic convictions in buildings; titled families who built manor houses along a waterway just outside of town. Doorn features stately mansions built in the 17th century as country houses for wealthy people from Amsterdam. Of more recent date is a residence designed by architect Rietveld. During this walk we also come across several sculptures in the public space that

reflect the difference between generations of artists and their donors.

Those who focus their attention on buildings and works of art will make interesting observations, especially in cities. Take, for instance, remnants of the Jugendstil, originating from a generation of rather influential artists around the turn of the century.

Tours around historic buildings

Those who wander through Doorn will certainly want to visit '*Huis Doorn*', originally the country seat of the bishops of Utrecht and occupied for many years in the 20th century by the last emperor of Germany. Huis Doorn is now a museum centred on the interbellum period. Its visitors include many seniors and particularly members of older generations from Germany. Members of younger generations, possibly on a school trip with a historical perspective, are also seen touring the manor house and its surrounding park. Huis Doorn and the history of the German emperor give generational walks through Doorn a special European distinction.

Quite a few readers of *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* will find one or more historical locations in their own town or city that attract visitors of different generations. This can arouse interest for generationally-aware tours through or past those sites.

A generational walk in 2050

An entirely different generational walk through a town like Doorn is one that explores what the town would be like in 2050. Doorn has housing complexes dedicated to the care of infirm senior citizens. Would care robots be put to use in these facilities in 2050 and what functions would they be able to perform? Doorn counts many restaurants and bars. Would robot waiters work in these establishments in 2050?

Surely, by 2050 '*the alternative workplace strategy*' would have been widely implemented. Many professionals would work a few days each week from home using the Internet and particularly video conferencing. International universities would be able to provide top courses from decentralised, collaborating centres in any required language. This has already been sketched in this book. One chapter also mentions how language barriers can be bridged in the future.

Science courts

Explanatory notes

Those who wish to write a paper on generations can also opt to use a '*science tribunal*'. This approach was first taken when the debate on the environment first emerged. Practical issues came to light that could not be solved entirely by way of traditional debates between advocates and opponents. Differences of opinion can be mostly solved by involving a science tribunal, although this approach does not take into account the possibility that some problems cannot be solved at all.

Science tribunals are along the lines of a criminal court. Three roles are involved, each of which can be fulfilled by one or more people: firstly, the role of prosecutor; secondly, the role of defender; thirdly, the role of '*passive judge*'. Criminal judges do not first make their own judgement but try to discover the truth by asking both prosecutor and defender questions. As explained in the chapter on environmental issues, science tribunals were held in the Netherlands in 1982 with respect to the Social Debate on Energy Policy. In those days they were referred to as '*controversy sessions*'.

A science tribunal can be deployed for purposes of an educational paper to methodically debate a specific difficult issue. The author of the paper organises a science tribunal while collecting material for the paper. The tribunal holds one or several sessions, each dealing with one or several dossiers. The results of these sessions can be processed into knowledge concerning the central social issue.

Social justice between generations can be considered a serious social issue. How much should the older generations, the baby boom generations and the younger generations each contribute in order to ensure a fair distribution of the costs of pensions and health care up to 2050?

The same can be asked with respect to the environmental problems up to 2050.

Should any questions arise with respect to the operationalisation of variables while studying social generations, one or more science tribunal sessions can help to explain matters.

Training sessions on generationally-aware policy

The *Europe 2020 – A strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* report provides clear evidence for the necessity of generationally-aware policy. It also shows that this kind of approach goes beyond what we have at our disposal today. New methods are required for studies, strategy formation and pre-assessment, called social impact assessment. This section contains a preliminary study.

Once the new methods are available policy makers and all other involved parties

will need to attend training sessions to learn how to use them.

The main thing here is that there is no way to accurately predict the future of the countries concerned. The best possible policy is one that, prior to implementation, reduces the chance of our eventually regretting that policy to a minimum.

Suppose a generationally-aware policy is being considered for implementation in a certain part in society. Studies will first need to be done to show which social bottlenecks are involved and how the policy could be pursued. This is called the *preparatory phase*. This is followed by the *main phase* which in turn is followed by an *institutionalisation phase*. Each of these phases will now be discussed in succession. This phase model constitutes a checklist; it is, therefore, an overview of sub-analyses from which the author of a paper can choose.

The preparatory phase

Suppose a religious community wants to take a new approach to the generation-related decline in the number of its members and their activities. A second example is a university that aims to improve its courses and the way in which it practices science so as to bridge generational differences amongst its scientists.

Both these examples first require a *problem analysis* to determine the key *focus actor*. Is this focus actor a part of an organisation? An organisation as a whole? A collaboration between organisations? A combination of these actors?

Focus actors are the parties that must realise a strategy that is to be formulated. They are often a collaborating association made up of actors that are each other's competitors. Take, for instance, local communities or universities.

The next step is to list the focus actor's activities. What is the *mission*? Which *strategies* are currently in place? What *tactics* are involved? Which *operational planning* applies? What *phases* does one propose?

An organisation's official mission, such as is described in publicity brochures for instance, and its actual mission usually contain discrepancies. Copy out both the official mission and the actual mission. Sometimes the aims are difficult to put down in writing, but they certainly can be defined in guarded terms.

Problem analysis

What *problems* does the focus actor expect in realising the mission and other plans? Policy makers fairly often respond: 'It's not my job to have unsolved problems'. To get around this, policy makers can best be asked what dilemmas they have to contend with. Dilemmas are 'equally desirable (or undesirable) alternatives' to policy choices.

System analysis

Next, it is necessary to ascertain which organisations are involved in the planned policy. First, the focus actor is put on paper, from where an arrow diagram is drawn up containing the positions of all significant opponents. Which organisations must the focus actor reckon with?

Trend analysis

Which social developments must be considered when formulating a strategy? Which social developments have a heavy impact on the strategy and which have a lighter impact? A preliminary trend analysis gives a tentative idea.

Project design

The project design describes the target situation, including the deadline for achieving the target. It also involves several advisable interim situations towards the final goal and includes a list of available resources.

The preparatory phase starts with rough outlines which are then reviewed and improved bit by bit during the course of the preparatory phase.

The main phase

Those who draw up the strategy must try to put the main aspects of the problem and the solutions down on paper. A workable method is to first analyse and design in separate subgroups, then discuss the results in a plenary meeting, followed by another series of meetings in subgroups.

Environment scenarios

Those who help form a strategy tend to first consider developments around focus actor and opponents as following naturally from recent developments. To overcome this blinkered view several environment scenarios must be written up. In any case the consideration should include a trend scenario, a shrinkage scenario and a growth scenario. Several impeding developments should also be discussed so as to be sufficiently prepared for unexpected radical events.

Strategies

Which policy alternatives should be included in the considerations? The current policy, usually referred to as business as usual, will need to be included in any case. A moderate and a more risky strategy can also be included.

Pre-assessment

Each strategy's environment scenarios must be analysed. Which threats are at

issue with respect to focus actor and opponents? Which opportunities do the actors have, both as regards established resources and hidden resources?

Decision-making

Decision-making concludes the main phase. All things must be considered. A phased plan specifies how the objectives can be realised.

The institutionalising phase

Next, it must be specified how the generationally-aware policy is to be embedded in the organisation. How should the focus actor do this? What manpower must be deployed? This phase also specifies what organisational units are needed. Take, for instance, departments and their cohesion.

Continuous assessment

A periodic formative assessment is required during the implementation of the policy. A summative assessment is done upon completion.

Training sessions

The above is called '*strategic learning*'. The activities produce results vis-à-vis strategic goals. The activities also require ongoing reflection and adjustment if necessary.

The training sessions need to address '*instant assessments*', or in other words lightning analyses. Some instances require that the cycle is completed within fifteen minutes or an hour. If the strategy that is to be formed involves serious implications, a lightning analysis is only a stopgap solution. The training sessions must also discuss medium-term and long-term policy processes.

Very experienced policy makers have learned – often the hard way – that completing the cycle is an absolute necessity as all too often it turns out that a strategy designed in haste eventually results in unwelcome surprises.

Five worked out cases

Case 1 : Generationally-aware policy in secondary education

The first case concerns secondary education. Those who work on this case are advised to first revisit the chapter in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* on generations in education as well as the chapter on generations and language barriers.

This case takes an imaginary regional network of secondary education schools. The growing shortage of teachers over the coming years is the first problem set

related to the dynamics of generations. The second problem set is the increasing shortage of pupils for certain subjects due to the fall in the birth rate. The third problem set is the English-language pre-university-plus courses for which language assistance is advised. Expected cutbacks are the fourth problem set. Virtual distance learning can solve the problem of long-term vacancies or a teacher's prolonged illness. Virtual distance learning enables one teacher to teach two classes, provided the class without a teacher does have a class assistant present.

An inspiring example is education provided in the Frisian language as discussed elsewhere in this book. The interested pupils live so far apart that they cannot be grouped into a class, so they are taught individually via virtual distance learning. Pre-university-plus courses are taught in English. Students usually acquire sufficient working knowledge; however, once complicated constructions have to be used multilingual communication support can prove necessary.

The Zuyderzee College merits particular attention. Its website contains information on computer-assisted learning as well as on the '*electronic learning environment*' (ELE) which eliminates the use of textbooks. Papers that are written on generationally-aware policy in secondary education should make special mention of ELE.

Case 2 : Generationally-aware policy in a religious community

The second case requires that the chapter in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* on generational differences in the environment and religions is revisited, after which the relevant problem sets merit attention. The first problem set has to do with risk awareness. The relevant chapter has already pointed out that growing risk and risk awareness can cause an increase in the number of people who say they foster religious faith. Risk awareness is expected to grow over the coming years, particularly amongst the younger generations. The second problem set is that not many Dutch people still attend church. This poses a problem for church communities, who are now looking for new ways to survive.

Sociologist of culture and religion Joep de Hart studies the situation with respect to religion in the Netherlands in his book entitled *Zwevende gelovigen: oude religie en nieuwe spiritualiteit* (Floating believers: old religion and new spirituality), which was published in Amsterdam in 2010 by Bert Bakker. The churches are dying but religion is not dying out. Approximately 40% of the Dutch population is a member of a church community and 15% attends church every

week. Approximately 60% of the population believes in God or 'a higher force'. Two out of every three Dutch people believe in life after death. 40% believes in miracles and in the usefulness of prayer.

In other countries more and more church communities are establishing a '*virtual church*' alongside their traditional church organisation. In the Netherlands, the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN/Protestant Churches in the Netherlands) has already introduced a virtual church. Information on this church can be found on the Internet.

An interesting challenge with respect to generationally-aware policy is to design a '*virtual church*' for a religious organisation of one's own choice that caters to generational differences among its potential members. The Nederlandse Protestantenbond (Dutch Protestant Union) can serve as an example. Families with young children like to enjoy outdoor activities on Sunday mornings and therefore have little or no interest in church services, even if they are also geared to children. Middle-aged as well as senior believers usually want to spend their Sunday mornings enjoying nature and culture. A virtual church can organise services that can be attended via the Internet on weekday evenings. Distance meditation can also be presented. The components of a virtual church can be worked out in a paper.

Case 3 : Generationally-aware policy in university education

The third case requires that the chapter in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* on generations in science be revisited. The first problem set presents the significant shrinkage that can be expected in the number of academics working in universities. The shrinkage can be expected as a result of the baby boomers retiring.

The second problem set is additional expected cutbacks. Presumably many vacancies will remain unfilled. A hidden resource in the Dutch academic system presents an opportunity. If universities join forces with respect to education a significant amount of manpower could be deployed more efficiently, such as in the case of one discipline that is taught in several universities. During the first few years of the course the universities could share subjects such as the history of the discipline, statistics as well as research methods and techniques. Besides this communal part, the courses can also comprise a specific part geared to the peculiarities of the discipline. The Zuyderzee College can again serve as a tangible example. The manner in which generationally-aware virtual distance

learning could be realised in the university system could be a topic for a paper. The specific features of the youngest generation of students ought to be discounted, particularly their IT skills. The specific characteristics of older generation university teachers can also be deployed systematically.

Case 4 : Generationally-aware policy in the practice of science

To work on the fourth case the chapter in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* on generations in science should be revisited before examining the problem sets. The first problem set involves the ever-growing competition between universities, faculties and research groups. External assessments and rankings force the collective social actors involved to constantly heighten their research activities and publication behaviour. The second problem set is the necessity for ensuring not only acute top specialism but also a wide perspective on one's field of expertise. The occurrence of '*blinkered specialists*' must be prevented. The third problem set can be found in the hidden resources among emeriti and other senior scientists. To exemplify, an international market for top emeriti has emerged. Problem set number four relates to the hidden resources that can be found in the opportunities for universities to collaborate within their own country as well as abroad, the latter as part of the globalisation of science. Those who wish to write a paper on this topic can design a '*virtual institute of advanced studies*' (VIAS). Virtual Institutes of Advanced Studies can recruit English-speaking scientists from around the world. Top emeriti should be given special attention here.

Case 5 : Generationally-aware policy and the alternative working strategy

Those who wish to work on the fifth case must first reread the chapter on generations and language barriers in *Generations of Lucky Devils and Unlucky Dogs* . They are also advised to revisit Chapter 2 containing examples of generation patterns.

It is a well-known phenomenon that more people are mastering the advancing English language in large parts of the Western world, although French-speaking countries and most other Mediterranean countries still do not have a working knowledge of English. The chapter on generations and language barriers shows that systems for multilingual communication, such as Sociolinguaf Franca, can overcome this shortcoming.

The alternative working strategy implies that paid work can be carried out for clients all around the world from alternative workplaces, such as one's own home.

The globalisation of the labour market is in full swing. This means that assignments can be carried out in the language of the customer's country. Take, for instance, French and other Mediterranean languages. The work can involve education and training courses; or coaching; or administration and bookkeeping. Designing, testing and institutionalising distance working in accordance with the possibilities provided by the alternative working strategy requires quite a few organisational facilities. This constitutes a useful challenge for developing a training course and drawing up a master document.

In closing

Bonus chapter 15 containing '*frequently asked questions*' includes an example of a report on a generational walk. This bonus chapter will also contain an example of a paper pertaining to a form of generationally-aware policy.

Background information on designing a generationally-aware policy can be found in: Henk A. Becker 1997. *Social impact assessment: method and experience in Europe, North America and the Developing World*. Routledge, London. Also in Henk A. Becker & Frank Vanclay (eds.) 2003. *The International Handbook of Social Impact Assessment: Conceptual and Methodological Advances*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

For the bonus chapter see: www.europegenerations.com

The book accompanies the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012

<http://europa.eu/ey2012/>

About the author: *Henk A. Becker* was born in Greifswald, Germany, in 1933. In 1946 he emigrated to the Netherlands, where he obtained his sociology degree (cum laude) at Leiden University in 1958. From 1956 to 1964 he held a staff position within a government ministry. From 1964 to 1968 he was the head of the research department of the Sociological Institute at the Netherlands School of Economics, which today is Erasmus University Rotterdam. He took his doctoral degree there in 1968 with a thesis on management careers, which concerned an early version of a normative career analysis and of a computerized career simulation. The University of Utrecht appointed him professor of sociology as well as of methodology of social research in 1968.

He organized his scientific work in line with the TRIPOD model, i.e., discussing (1) substantive issues, (2) methods and (3) meta-aspects of the relevant scientific discipline in a coherent manner. As regards substantive topics he is primarily concerned with careers and life in cohorts as well as in generations. As to methods he has published on computer simulations, cohorts analyses and social impact assessment. The meta-aspects concern the state of the art in sociology and related aspects of the science of philosophy. When lecturing at the University of Utrecht, he taught general sociology as well as the sociology of planning and policy.

He was dean of both a faculty and a sub-faculty and a committee member of science associations in the Netherlands and abroad. In 1996 he was knighted in the Order of the Netherlands Lion (Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw). In the year 2000 the International Association for Impact Assessment presented him with the Rose-Hulman Award for his work on demographic impact assessments.

In 1998 he turned 65 and was accorded emeritus status, since which time he continues his scientific work on a part time basis.

Henk Becker is married to Johanna Enzlin. The couple has two daughters and two grandsons.

A detailed biography is provided in Henk A. Becker & John J.F. Schroots (Eds) 2008. *Releasing the Potentials of Senior Scholars & Scientists*, Utrecht: Igitur.