

Chapter 14 - Synopsis

The '**Foreword**' was written by Prof. Dr. Paul Schnabel, director of the Netherlands Institute for Social Research. In December 2010 his Institute published a report entitled *Wisseling van de Wacht: Generaties in Nederland* (Changing of the Guard: Generations in the Netherlands). In all probability, the Netherlands has this report to thank for being the best researched country as regards the pattern of generations.

Chapter 1 introduces generations. A thought experiment prefaces this introduction. Taking a hypothetical man, how would his life have developed if he had been born ten years earlier or ten years later? This thought experiment is also applied to a hypothetical woman. The thought experiment was devised by Goethe who included it in his autobiography published in 1830. If Goethe had been born ten years earlier, he would have been formed by Classicism; however, his actual date of birth occurred in a lee between Classicism and the Romantic Movement. During that lee he was able to prepare himself of his own accord for his part in the Romantic Movement, eventually becoming the leading light of the 'Sturm und Drang' movement.

In his autobiography, Goethe reflects on how major social events can affect not only the opportunities people are given during their lifetime but also the threats they face. What major social events influenced people's opportunities and threats in the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st? How did these major events amalgamate people into generations?

Those who were born in the Netherlands between 1930 and 1945 belong to the older generations. Whoever came into the world between 1945 and 1970 belongs to the baby boom generations. Those who saw the light of day after 1970 belong to the generations born after the baby bust. This generation pattern occurs not only in the Netherlands but also in other European countries, albeit with slight differences.

Two kinds of information are required in order to discuss generations in society. Firstly, highly simplified descriptions known as 'idealizations', which as regards generations constitute a name and a brief profile, including one or more roughly

defined years. Secondly, detailed descriptions as can be found in research reports.

A new mathematics discipline is essential for researching the pattern of generations, namely 'fuzzy logics', combined with pattern recognition.

Next, Chapter 1 discusses the pattern of generations in a nutshell, followed by how problems between generations can bring about policy action. It mentions 2012 as the *European Year for Active Ageing* as well as the *Europe 2020* strategy. An appendix to this chapter contains a description of the key concepts.

Chapter 2 pertains to 'Generations in Europe'. Those who wish to go deeply into generations are well advised to start by examining a comprehensive example. The example provided in this chapter was written on the strength of this recommendation. How did problems within and between generations bring about the European Commission's two policy actions as mentioned here? What instruments are there for implementing these policy actions?

Fortunately, examples can be given of successful sweeping social changes in which such policy instruments have been used. What can we learn from those experiences for the European Commission's sweeping long-term development strategies?

The 'active ageing' policy strategy assumes that such behaviour can increase among seniors in coming years. A 'hidden resource' is available. The chapter provides an example of how to measure this hidden resource, with results per member state. The *Europe 2020* policy strategy assumes that by implementing a few 'flagship initiatives' Europe can be protected from 'declining'. Which 'hidden resources' are waiting to be involved and what about experiences gained in the past with similar policy strategies?

An appendix at the end of this chapter discusses the core analysis model relating to generations.

Part I of the book presents the generations that can be found in a country as a whole and explores their hidden resources.

Chapter 3 centres on the Pre-War Generation (born roughly between 1910 and 1930) and the Silent Generation (1930-1945). What did the members of these

older generations experience during their formative years? Now, in 2012, these generations are already experienced in 'active ageing'. What can we learn from their experiences?

Chapter 4 discusses the Protest Generation (1945-1955) and Generation X (1955-1970). It pertains to those who were born during the early and the late baby boom. What did their formative period provide them? During that time conventional values were replaced by liberal values in most European countries.

Chapter 5 discusses generations born after the 'baby bust', starting with the Pragmatic Generation (1970-1985) and followed by the Unlimited Generation (1985 onward). The baby bust denotes a drop in the number of births to below an average of 2.1 children per woman.

Part II brings up some specific generations for discussion, while exploring the relevant hidden resources.

Chapter 6 examines generations in science. It builds on a book that describes processes of active ageing, i.e., H. Becker & J. Schroots (eds), *Releasing the Potentials of Senior Scholars & Scientists: Emerging Productivity in a new Era*, published in 2008.

Chapter 7 pertains to generations of teachers. The Netherlands is faced with an imminent shortage of teachers as a result of many cohorts of teachers retiring. How have similar problems been solved in comparable countries?

Chapter 8 considers generations and multilingualism. Have cohorts in the former Eastern Bloc countries, after experiencing the revolution during their formative years and after, improved their knowledge of the English language? Knowledge of the English language generates more opportunities for participating in the economic process. This chapter was written in cooperation with Zoltán Lippényi, who is exactly fifty years younger than the author of this book. Cooperation between seniors and juniors can be considered one of the hidden resources in these countries.

Chapter 9 pertains to social justice between generations. The need for intergenerational solidarity was first mentioned in connection with environmental issues. Sustainability was later also argued with respect to other sectors in society. Sustainability is interpreted here as 'fair play' between generations.

Chapter 10 discusses generational differences with respect to the environment. The environmental threat was presented in 1962 by Rachel Carson in her compelling book *Silent Spring*. Especially the deaths among the bird population ensuing from excessive spraying of agricultural pesticides drew people's attention at the time. The environmental issues were then raised in 1972 in a report by Dennis Meadows entitled *Limits to Growth*. The worldwide policy that was pursued as from 1972 with respect to ecological as well as demographic, economic and social sustainability is an example of successful systematic macro change. The success of the policy that is based on *Limits to Growth* depends heavily on the application of 'serious gaming'. The experience gained can be of great importance to the implementation of *Europe 2020*.

Chapter 10 also discusses generational differences as regards religion. Importantly, research shows that increased risk and risk awareness in society leads to increased religious convictions.

Part III discusses generations, science and strategy formation.

Chapter 11 discusses the question as to the extent that generation sociology and related scientific specialisms and disciplines are ready to support the current policy in Europe. A starting point for this contemplation is the mention that epidemiology has become the pivotal example for empirical sociology. As far back as the 19th century, sociologists already noticed that the study object of epidemiologists contains many ambiguities, as does their own study object. The sociologists capitalized on this by developing and applying specific research methods. Consequently, epidemiological research reference books contain a lot of information that can also be found in those for social scientific research.

Chapter 12 provides a more detailed analysis of similar developments in Europe in the recent past, after which the year 2012 as *European Year for Active Ageing* and the *Europe 2020* strategy are discussed in more detail. The seven 'flagship initiatives' are followed by seven cargo ships containing hidden resources. Will Europe learn sufficiently from the success of *Limits to Growth* to make the *European Year 2012* and the *Europe 2020* strategy a success? Will 'serious gaming' be brought into play again? Will a similar booster to *Limits to Growth* be published? The new policy strategies could be presented as *Limits to Risk*.

Part IV presents methods

Chapter 13 presents generational walks through the Dutch village of Doorn along with similar projects that can be used for educational purposes and that can be relevant to pupils, students and other interested parties.

Chapter 14 comprises a synopsis of the book.

Bonus chapter 15 contains 'Frequently Asked Questions'. This overview of relevant questions and subsequent answers will be updated regularly as from 2012. It will enable interested parties to follow the social debate. The following question will also be answered: How can 'serious gaming' be used in realising 2012 as the *European Year for Active Ageing* and as well as the *Europe 2020* strategy? This chapter also presents a conventional summary of the book.