

**Education and Training for Governance
and Active Citizenship in Europe**

LEARNING CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN EUROPE

ANALYSIS OF LIFE HISTORIES

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Education and Training for Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe:

Analysis of Adult Learning and Design of Formal, Non-formal, and Informal Educational Intervention Strategies

Learning Citizenship and Governance in Europe: Overall Review and Analysis Analysis of Life Histories

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CHAPTER FOUR

LIFE HISTORIES OF ACTIVE CITIZENS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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4.1 Relevant Context

In the first half of the 20th century, the Netherlands was typically a compartmentalised society, as the Dutch say it, a *pillarized* society. The main religious groups each had, for instance, their own institutions for education and health care, while the socialists supported the public system. But religious groups and socialists alike had for instance their own unions and associations for social work and leisure time. This system started to crumble as a consequence of the unified resistance against the Germans during the Second World War, but it nevertheless lasted till the end of the sixties, when it really came down as a significant factor in Dutch politics and civil society.

The seventies and eighties have been the stage of strong political and cultural movements, such as the feminist movement, environmental movement, peace movement and third world movement. These movements served as important and inspiring contexts for many of our respondents, old and young. A striking example is a massive campaign of the peace movement in the eighties, mentioned by many of our respondents, against the location of American nuclear Cruise Missiles in the Netherlands. The campaign became internationally known as *hollanditis*, a seemingly typical Dutch disease of progressive thinking.

But amazingly, the nineties in the Netherlands became famous for what seems to be at first glance a contradictory movement, a new habit of reconciliatory politics. It started with the social partners (representatives of employers and unions) who reached, already in the eighties, a mutual understanding that the unions should accept less growth in wages in exchange for gradual reduction of working hours, leading to an increase in employment. But the spirit of this so-called *poldermodel*, characterised by collaboration, found its way in the nineties in many other domains of Dutch society, replacing social action by negotiation.

Recent comparative research seems to confirm this typical Dutch blend of progressive thinking and a tendency towards collaboration. A recent report² compared Dutch research data on political and societal participation with that of other European countries. The Netherlands turned out to be the country with comparatively very low participation in traditional organisations (political parties, unions and churches). On the other hand, the Netherlands has by far the highest participation in modern political organisations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace. But this does not lead to an anti-state attitude. On the contrary, two thirds of the Dutch trust their government and the parliament, while in other countries (far) less than half of the population trusts such state institutions.

¹ We would like to thank Joel van Raak for her important contributions in the field research and Floris de Laat for his input in this paper.

² *Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 2000: Nederland in Europa* (2000). Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. In particular chapter 5 on 'participation'.

4.2 Learning Governance: Why do people become Active Citizens?

Within the ETGACE research project, the concept of an *active citizen* is explicitly related to the concept of *governance*. Whereas government refers to a formal and static relationship between state and citizens, governance is supposed to reveal a more dynamic, open relationship in which citizens are facilitated to become active. Why do some people take up the challenge of governance by becoming active citizens, rather than demanding the restoration of a strong government? What factors influence their decision to become active citizens?

One factor could be their early socialisation, family life and school. We asked our respondents therefore to tell us about their youth. Most of them (13 out of 16) are born in small villages or middle-sized cities. Some of them describe their youth as a happy childhood, whilst others describe it as unhappy, isolated and lonely. The first (mostly males) sum up their youth as hard work helping the family, but also as an adventure full of pranks; the latter (mostly females) point to pestering at school, conflicts with or between parents, illness and the narrow-mindedness of the countryside as the causes of their unhappiness.

The families our active citizens grew up in, are not always your typical cornerstone-of-society families where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is the caregiver. In seven cases, the family is not complete due to divorce or death of one of the parents. In three cases the mother is seriously ill and in four cases she works outside of the house, which most of the times urges children to help in the household. While two of our citizens describe their parents as rather a-political, most characterise them as leftwing oriented (social, progressive, humanist, strong sense of justice) or, to a far lesser extend, slightly rightwing oriented (conservative, authoritarian and law-abiding). Most of the families our citizens grow up in, have a religious background, be it catholic or, in a few cases, protestant. In only a few cases these families are deeply religious, and in even less cases this is the cause for serious conflicts with the parents.

Our citizens express a sense of being different, either because they feel misplaced as far as their socio-economic background is concerned, or because they grown up in a social or religious enclave. Either way, most of them point out that already at a young age, they had to stand up for themselves in order to fight for their different position in the broader community:

Charlotte: "I was always forced to dress in checked knee socks and pleated skirt, while other girls wore their first seamed nylon stockings and tight skirts. So I was an incredibly exceptional young lady in that school class. That was because of my parents. In the early sixties, there was a big difference between the city and the countryside. That difference is all gone now [...] In 1966 a movement arose that expressed itself in long hair, smoking hashish and so on. Because I was an exception in that fashionable school anyway, I joined that movement".

At some point in their lives, our citizens decide to go their own way. They describe their life course in terms of a series of events or incentives that strengthen them in their decisions, but more often, they point to critical incidents that help them make changes. All our respondents speak of a moment or period of waking up, opening their eyes, and becoming conscious of what is essential to them. From that moment on, they become active in the social groups of their own choice. They sometimes indicated a very emotional reaction to an occasion, such as anger, irritation, annoyance, disbelief about the irrationality of an incident, or love for the matter at hand. Sometimes they stressed very personal concerns, such as the food they eat, the upbringing of their children, the quality of their lives. Sometimes they pointed to more

abstract terms such as justice, compassion and peace. Sometimes they just referred to very concrete experiences in their private lives, such as the death of a relative, a divorce or illness. For some this means making a conscious choice to abandon their religion, for others it means a conscious choice for a religion at a later stage in their lives. For some it means breaking with the family tradition, for others it means continuing that tradition finding a new format. They consider these events as eye-openers that help them see things more clearly and they attribute a lot of the changes they went through to coincidence, to confrontations with things they recognise as a fit with their personality:

Ans: "That year in Germany really opened my world. It was a personal development in which our children joined us. Unlike my husband, I have always been very connected to my family. We decided not to be limited by our parents and our environments anymore and to really consciously choose for our own family and the way we wanted to raise our children, in an anti-authoritarian way. The distance offered us more freedom to really give in to that."

Ronald: "I left the military academy, because I didn't like the way some of my fellow cadets screw you over for their own careers, and because I discovered that it wasn't my style to give orders in such an authoritarian way. My mother was deeply disappointed when I left the academy and joined the Union for Conscientious Objectors. My friends, who were rather leftwing oriented, were already active there. To me it was more of a breaking free from a youth that was, so to speak, parochial and frumpy."

Olga: "I found out that the place where I lived had nothing to offer me. I felt very lonely and decided to run away from home, to the big city. That has been a very good decision for me."

Although some respondents (Antoine, Frank, Laila and Ottelien) point expressly to their respect for the authority of older and experienced people, most respondents have a rather critical or even straightforward anti-authoritarian attitude. This is probably not just a personal attitude, but a typical trait of the libertarian Dutch culture:

Merel: "Since I am engaged in international politics, I love the Netherlands much more. Previous to that I never loved it in fact. I was always a little bit ashamed to be Dutch. In particular when you happen to visit vacation spots abroad and again a group of Dutch youngsters shouted football songs and for instance puked on everything, I thought, my God, maybe I should say I am Danish, as if Danish people don't do that. I still think there are a lot of negative things in the Netherlands. But since I have been working in Brussels (*for the European Parliament*), it became clear to me that I am tremendously Dutch in my way of thinking, this libertarian character of the Dutch. I had never seen differences between countries on this level, till I met politicians of other countries. (...) It is also related to the fact that the Dutch think it is the task of politics to enlarge the freedom of people to decide for their own (...). For instance in Sweden, politicians have the mentality: 'we are elected politicians and therefore we know what is good for the people'. They are really very paternalistic. That would be completely unacceptable for us."

What is most striking in the life histories of our 16 active citizens, is that they describe their lives as a search expedition, and that this expedition is mainly characterised by trial-and-error. You can distinguish two goals for the expedition. Firstly, the learner engages in the expedition for the sake of the experience. Learning is exciting up to the point where the

learner reaches an established goal, after which he or she gets bored and looks for a new and exciting learning challenge. In this type of life project, the goal is self-actualisation:

Olga: "Life is an adventure. I want to grow open and critically. You live to enlarge your consciousness."

Igor: "I want to experience things, be active, do stuff. Boredom is unpleasant, I want to try and experience as much as possible."

Secondly, the expedition is a means of finding one self and one's own identity. These learners, who sometimes describe themselves as late-developers, are pre-occupied with their personality and try different ways to develop themselves mostly to find out that their efforts do not fit their identity. The goal in this type of life project is discovering one's own identity:

Ans: "I think you do everything for yourself and your own satisfaction, the realisation of your own person and identity. That's very essential to me."

Antoine: "You mustn't neglect your own personality in the process, create pauses in your development and in your own person. You mustn't chase after something, thinking 'what am I looking for anyway?'."

Frank: "I just try a lot of things and if they are interesting, I stick around."

Both types of learners describe their expedition as a trial-and-error process, in which coincidence plays an important part:

Ronald: "If I hadn't seen that programme on television and if I wasn't stopped at the border when I tried to go to that peaceful demonstration, I wouldn't have become active."

Igor: "Seeing that violence at this close range has made me a lot more conscious of what's going on. Previous cases of violence did strike me because of their senselessness, but seeing those two girls lying there on the floor has really turned a switch."

Roos: "I didn't even do it out of conscious choice. I was asked for that, I'm thinking of the third world centre now, and then I thought 'well, that is fun'. And then you start with it, and then you gradually grow into that, little by little, and then you increasingly start to know more about it, what it's all about and how it goes, and you get interwoven in it. I think that's the way these things go. I didn't make a conscious choice, I just kind of rolled into everything."

Donald: "I just passed by the shop window of that bookstore as I saw the ad that they needed volunteers. It was purely coincidental. I had been walking around with ideas about becoming politically active. I immediately felt at home with these people and they have become very important to me and my activities today."

In their expedition, some of our active citizen's sense that they are very successful in what they are doing. This success strengthens them in their conviction:

Charlotte: "I am convinced that the Wadden Sea would not have stayed clear of derricks if I had not fought that battle, and I am even more convinced that if I had not done anything, my son would have been worse off with regard to care."

Merel: "It took me a long time before I was taken seriously, because I was so much younger. I worked incredibly hard. And at a certain moment it all turned out very well and people came to me to ask me about my opinion on

matters. I sort of found my way in that and became reasonably mature in it. I became more self-confident, confident in that I am quite able.”

4.3 How do People Shape Active Citizenship?

If trial-and-error is indeed one of the main characteristics of the life histories, then how do people transform their reaction on certain events into the kind of active citizenship we focus on? How do they develop or affirm their identities? Which causes, or type of causes, appeal to them? What instruments do they seek and use to become successful in their efforts? In this section, we will present the (social) identity, responsibility and effectivity of our citizens in order to answer these questions.

4.3.1 Identity

The people we interviewed were all, in one way or another, connected with an organisation. This might be a result of the selection process of our candidates. Strictly individual forms of active citizenship, expressed in such acts as separating waste and donating blood or organs, were not considered, nor was the mere act of voting. Most of our respondents tried out different groups until they found the one they feel at home with. People join and stay in organisations where the atmosphere is good and where they find people to relate to in a sense that they share the same ideas about the cause at hand and the way to proceed. However, if the colleagues are not effective or if the atmosphere is not good, this might cause people to leave an organisation; but they can also choose to innovate and raise the professional level of the organisation they are in; depending on the possibilities they see for both the organisation and themselves:

Ronald: “When I first came there, I thought ‘Yeah, what a mess here’, so to say. But at a certain moment, I saw, together with a couple of board members, possibilities to really develop that club. There is so much potential in such an organisation. All possible ways that remained unused, because it just plodded on, you know. So in that sense, it is inspiring, that that possibility is there, because you try to work there with those people. That is why I stay. I mean, there is a lot possible, and I like to see how such an organisation develops and what your part in that development can be.”

Most of our active citizens claim to have no explicit role models, but that there are sometimes people who inspired them. The names they give are usually those of people they know personally (friends and family); few also mention teachers, politicians and writers (for instance the name of Nelson Mandela was mentioned a couple of times). These references to others, in some way, reflect either how our citizens see themselves or how they wish to see themselves: strong, optimistic, helpful, intelligent, social, hard working and eloquent. Most say they find the inspiration in themselves, claiming that it has always been a part of them, speaking of a vocation and sometimes even a duty or calling to become active for a greater cause. As one of our respondents sums it up, it is a combination of conviction and success. Although our respondents do not claim to be active just for the fun of it, none of them stays in an organisation they feel unhappy in.

Identity is often closely connected with a more general notion of what is good and bad. For instance, a person might have an anti-authoritarian attitude, join an anarchistic movement and from thereon help conscientious objectors from an anti-militaristic point of view, but also becomes a vegetarian, because killing animals is the ultimate act of power. In other words: the identity our citizen’s display is expressed in a holistic way. It has become their lifestyle:

Olga: “For me it’s all about authenticity, and not about all that bullshit about being powerful. I always want to grow, develop myself. If you ask

me why I am alive, I'll say 'you live to enlarge your consciousness'. I really like doing that. [...] I don't think my enterprise [*bio-dynamically produced health drinks*] has to grow. So I think quantity has to be in balance with quality. If you lose the overview, you'll just have to pause for a moment. Just growth isn't important. [...] My ambition is balance."

There are also other motivating factors for our citizens to express their identity in some sort of form of active citizenship. It has to be fun. In line with this, active citizenship can be considered a hobby:

Antoine: "At the age I am now, citizenship has become more of a hobby to me. A serious hobby, but I enjoy doing it."

Secondly, the very act of active citizenship is appealing, the excitement, the solidarity of activism, the romanticism of the battle:

Merel: "To me, back then, the solidarity was very important. I mean, to go for something together. Maybe because I didn't have that at school, I have been very lonely there. That world of activism, just throwing us into the breach together, a very major sense of solidarity, was tremendously appealing for me. The other ladies of the feminist network are sometimes making fun of it, saying 'you just learned when you were a child that feminism is enjoyable'. And that's true."

Ronald: "1968 surely was a period in which you were swept along with it, if you were at the least sensitive for that kind of romanticism, because that's what it was of course."

Finally, some of our interviewees mentioned that for them, heroism in active citizenship was very important:

Igor: "In my dreams I am mostly the hero. (...) I dream that later it might happen that I am with a foundation and via that foundation I propose an idea about a bill to a political party, which will pose it as a question in parliament or adopt it as an enactment. I sometimes fantasise like that. Once in awhile my fantasies are about truly heroic deeds that will probably never happen. That's just really dreaming away in my fantasy, not about a New World, but about a better world. And then I dream that I do something that makes the world better and so also fantasising about helping individual people. I think it's more about doing something an average person wouldn't do. I don't dream about having magical powers. It's more being different from the average person, a bit more heroic."

4.3.2 Responsibility

It was a deliberate goal of this research project to interview active citizens in four domains: politics, civil society, work and the private sphere. Below we shall describe the type of activities of our respondents in each domain. For each of them we will also mention the concrete issues they have been engaged in and in order to get an easy overview we underline these topics.

Two of our respondents (Antoine and Merel) are active in traditional political systems. Merel is active on the top level of her political party, dealing mainly with women's issues. But for some time she was also a volunteer in a project for the homeless and lobbied with others for the continuation of this project. Antoine, on the contrary, is active on the local level of his political party and is now a member of the municipal council. He is interested in the revitalisation of neighbourhoods through decentralised urban planning and support of social-

cultural initiatives. Others have been a member of a political party, but became disappointed and left the party. Some of them were disappointed by the culture of power play and infighting, others were disappointed by the immobility of politics, to which we referred in our literature report as the *treachiness* of late modern politics.

Distrust in state politics and in political parties does not mean that active citizens stop worrying about state politics. If they cannot negotiate a meaningful position within the political system, they may choose for extra-parliamentary political action. Ronald was active in the seventies and eighties in the movement against nuclear energy. After that his life took a more quiet turn, but he remained active on the board of a couple of cultural foundations. Charlotte has been an activist for two decades in the fight for the conservation of the Wadden Sea, the largest Dutch natural reserve. As the mother of an autistic child, she also became active in the parent organisation of mentally handicapped children. Charlotte describes a typical historical development: in the seventies and eighties, the environmental movement was rather militant, but gradually both the movement and she as a person learned to think more strategically. However, she still has problems with the rather moderate thinking that is now dominant in the movement:

Charlotte: "I did make wrong political assessments sometimes (...) but you learn also from that. You try to handle issues just firmly, but then you notice that the issue is very sensitive and that you should have handled it more strategically, while in fact I was acting like a bull in a china shop. (...) On the other hand I have also achieved a lot. (...) It is my feeling that (*the environmental movement*) thinks different the last decade. They are glad to win ten percent of their purposes. So, the real fight isn't there any longer."

Roos is an older female agricultural engineer, who spent many years with her husband in third world countries. After returning to the Netherlands she became active in the third world movement, but she has also been active in a large civil organisation for some years to defend environmental interests. Three of the younger respondents (Rita, Bas and Donald) are active in the movement against economic globalisation. Laila, a young woman, is a representative of the Moluccan community, known for its sometimes violent action because of the injustice the Dutch State did to them. It is interesting to see how many of these, more or less radical, extra-parliamentary activists stress consciousness raising and information of the broad public as an important aim of their activities.

In light of the fact that The European Commission finances this research project, it is interesting to know how respondents assess the functioning of the European Union and what governance could mean in that context. Merel, already mentioned above, has worked in Brussels for her political party in the European Parliament and is strongly in favour of strengthening the European Union. Others, particularly the ones in the anti-globalization movement, see the European Union mainly as a broker for economic interests, favouring the rich and damaging the position of ordinary citizens.

For a long time citizenship has almost exclusively been understood as being a citizen of the state. Part of the discussion about governance refers to a growing interest in a strong civil society, as a domain separate of the state. There are many examples in our research of citizens active in this domain. Four of our respondents (Jaap, Laila, Ottelien and Roos) are active members of their church, either on the board of a church organisation or as a volunteer. Also in other activities in the civil society there is often a link with a religious affiliation. For instance, Jaap, as a Christian, was a member of a Christian political party, but he devoted his leisure time to Christian organisations in, for instance, the field of education and social work.

After his retirement he became a main figure in a Christian organisation for the emancipation of the elderly.

But there are also examples of commitment to the community, without an outspoken religious motivation (although some mention, like some respondents in political movements, that they had contacts with the church in the past and still are partly inspired by the Christian message) Ans has worked for a foundation that helps immigrants, because she feels solidarity with their struggles. Marius has been active in boards of a couple of charities. He has also been active on the board of cultural institutions and fought for the preservation of historical districts in his city. Igor, a young man, became active in an organisation against meaningless violence in the community, just out of anger about this type of increasing criminality. Frank, an executive of an insurance company, made as a volunteer a lifelong career in scouting:

Frank: "In former times the social responsibility of the scouting has been the education of good state citizens. That has been gone since. Now you have to be yourself. It is much more to set something to work together, a feeling for nature, fairness. By participating in scouting you get the feeling that vandalism (*and littering*) is not correct. (...) It also means a going along well with neighbours and migrants."

As board members of non-governmental organisations, active citizens sometimes find some sponsoring from the state for particular activities. On the one hand state money is a welcome help to realise the aims of the civil organisation, on the other hand it makes the organisation dependent on the state. Our respondents seem to be very careful not to lose their autonomy, afraid to become hedged in by the politicians. Again Frank gives here a clear example:

Frank: "At a certain moment the feeling was 'Just, keep your (*state*) subsidy, we can support ourselves'. I still agree with that, because in that case you aren't dependent (*on the state*). But as long as the state doesn't hinder us and we still get a considerable subsidy, I tend to think that is not bad. The government should not interfere with the content. (...) I love to negotiate, particularly in that period that the municipality didn't have a penny. All volunteer organisations (*in the city*) stirred up, they had already made their banners (...) but we thought that is not the way to do it. We have made a plan for a positive approach and we discussed it with the councilman (...) and the scouting got away with it better than all these volunteers did."

A third domain of citizenship is the market economy. Firstly, there is a question of business ethics, or how do you balance as an economic entrepreneur your aim to make a profit and your responsibility for the community? Two respondents are entrepreneurs and both actively seek for a good balance. One, Antoine, is the owner of a shoe shop. In his fight for the economic and social revitalisation of his neighbourhood he combines his political activities with initiating roles in civil neighbourhood organisations. Olga, a young woman, runs two food bars, but has less trust in political institutions:

Olga: "I want to set apart a part of the profit of the food bar for good causes (...) and then you start to think whether we can find some more money. You may set up a lobby. That is the way you can get more influence. So, I would like a co-operation with other companies. (...) I do not see local politics as really energetic, so I would not put my mind in first instance to co-operation with them."

The work of Rita and Donald in the movement against economic globalisation is partly the running of "alternative", non profit-oriented business:

Donald: “We try to demonstrate that the economy can be organised also in a different way. For instance by running a small non-profit shop for periodicals and a give-away shop, to demonstrate that trade not necessarily has to do with earning money. We also have a biological restaurant (...). Some of these initiatives are really successful, for instance the give-away shop (...) this shop is visited each week by hundreds of people. People who do not come from the leftist scene or activists scene also visit it. A lot of the visitors are migrants, just many common people, who have been appealed very much to the idea of not throwing away things but to use them again.”

Secondly, you may bring under the heading of citizenship in the domain of economy activities for democratisation of companies and human resource management. Some of our respondents are of have been executives of companies (apart from Antoine and Olga, also Frank and Jaap) and all of them stress that it is important for them to build respectful relations with their employees and in particular to foster teamwork:

Antoine: “I always made out a strong case for my employees. I have also the impression my employees respect me very much and remain motivated, because there is an open relation. (...) I could have had maybe more companies, but I refrained from that, because I try to achieve something in the societal domain and in the contact with people.”

With respect to citizenship in the private domain, the feminist movement formulated as a central principle that also “the personal is politic”. This refers in particular to gender relations in the private family situation. We will describe this briefly in chapter 6 of the report.

There are a couple of other comments of our citizens about public issues that are important for them in their private life. The most important recurring theme is the support for a more liberal education of children. Ottelien, as a nun, worked 30 years as a teacher at nursery schools, but became disappointed about the movement towards the “individualisation” of early education in the eighties that has lead in the Netherlands to the integration of nursery schools in primary schools. She feels that as an unintended side effect, teachers have less time to spend on the development of each child individually. After her early retirement as a teacher, because of her disappointment about this development, Ottelien worked as a volunteer in pastoral work. Ans has been active in the movement for anti-authoritarian education:

Ans: “We became acquainted with the idea of the anti-authoritarian Kindergarten while we lived in Germany in 1968. When we returned to (*this city*) in the Netherlands, my husband and our oldest daughter participated in the first anti-authoritarian crèche over here (...) later on also my second daughter and I went there. The main reason has been to break down the small, narrow family relations. To open up the family for the broader world. Another reason was to bring authority up to discussion. (...) When people now refer to this (*anti-authoritarian education*), there is always this idea of a laissez-faire approach in such an education. But this was not true, surely not for us. We met as parents almost every week and the central point was how to make understandable why you forbid something or not. Also if you don’t forbid something, you must have a clear argument.”

Another recurring theme is the consumption society:

Bas: “I am not averse to a little bit of luxury. But I would not buy a second car; I do not have even a first one. (...) People buy too much unnecessary clutter, I do not join in. (...) On the one hand you lose the meaning of things that are really crucial. There is little emphasis on that; people just overrun it. On the other hand it produces a gigantic trash heap. People buy a new car, but what happens to the old one?”

4.3.3 Effectivity

The final section of this chapter summarises what our respondents see as personal conditions and competencies that made them effective as a citizen. So, this section is not so much about the strategies that make the organisations effective they join, but about what made them effective as a person.

Active citizenship takes an enormous amount of time. Most respondents actively seek an effective balance between family life, paid work and other social commitments. This often means that they have to dim their activities in the period in which their children are young or in times in which there are serious problems at home. Also paid work can be limiting. Therefore, both active entrepreneurs among our respondents would put a hold on further growth of their business if it interfered with their ideals and activities as a citizen. Our political activists sought special arrangements to combine work and citizenship, either by holding a low-demand job or seeking payment for their political activities. Our older active citizens sometimes used their retirement to take up more social responsibilities. Three respondents (Rita, Bas, Donald), all of them young and active in the movement against economic globalisation, do not look for a job on the labour market, in order to be free to work full-time for other societal commitments:

Rita: “The state sees paid work as an ideal. (...) They make a lot of voluntary work impossible, because you have to have a paid job, because you have to complete your study within a certain time limit. People hardly get space to do what they want to do. (...) I think it should be possible that everyone gets a certain amount of money and that it would be up to the person whether for instance he wants to earn some extra money.”

Particularly our female respondents stress that active citizenship requires the courage to be different and to make a difference. Men often describe themselves as more or less stubborn and when necessary tough. On the other hand, both men and women stress that one has to be realistic and positive, that one should not become embittered and that humour can help to relieve tensions:

Laila: “Moluccan people can quickly inflame, also with respect to the injustice done to them. The situation on the Moluccan Islands is just terrible nowadays. But what you see, when people become so emotional, is that their perception of it becomes clouded. They cannot even react anymore in a normal way. I have at such moments still what I call Dutch down-to-earthiness. My (*Dutch*) mother also just tells me: you can be as passionate as you want, but keep an eye on reality. In that respect I try to pick the better of two worlds.”

For the analysis of the competencies for everyday business in citizens’ organisations, we used a classification in four elements, also mentioned in our literature report: action, collaboration, communication and reflection³. With respect to *action* all sorts of rather important competencies were mentioned, from fundraising to public relations and negotiation with the

³ Wildemeersch, D., Jansen, T., Vandenabeele, J. and Jans, M. (1998) A new perspective on learning in participatory systems. In: *Studies in continuing education* 20, (2), 251-265.

government. With respect to *collaboration* there is a typical tension. On the one hand, such collaboration (together you are stronger) is seen as important, but on the other hand, respondents lament about the boring and time-consuming character of the everyday task of running an organisation. Some respondents say they had problems to learn to delegate work to others. But crucial seems to be the element of *communication*. Most respondents indicate that they love to work with people, but still (or just because of that?) the biggest challenge in voluntary organisations seems to be to keep the groups together, to avoid too much free-floating discussion and to get the people in meetings more resolute. Five respondents make clear that they are perfectionists, for instance in preparing themselves for meetings. With respect to the final element of *reflection*, some respondents indicate that it is necessary to be competent to give and to accept critique.

4.4 Where do People Learn?

So far we have described what active citizens learned. The next question is how they learned. Below we shall make a distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Formal learning is diploma oriented. It happens typically at schools. Non-formal learning sometimes resembles formal learning, but does not lead to a legally recognised certificate. Non-formal learning takes the form of a rather short course or training. Informal learning refers to everyday facilitation of the learning process, mostly a mutual coaching of active citizens. We shall describe these three types of learning separately for each of the four domains of citizenship (politics, civil society, economics and private domain). This might give the (unintended) impression that people are active in only one domain; our remarks about "holistic expression of identity" and "lifestyle" however, indicate that people are active in more than one domain and that they transfer their knowledge and learning from one domain to the other.

4.4.1 Learning in the Political Domain

Eight of our respondents are mainly active in the political domain, either in parliamentary politics or extra parliamentary politics. Five of them have a university degree, two (both young females) interrupted their university studies in the final stage for a while, but plan to complete it in the near future. One has a degree in higher vocational education. This is an amazing high level of formal education, not only in comparison with the general level of education of the Dutch population, but also in comparison, as we shall see, with the formal educational level in other domains of citizenship. We have no idea whether this is just accidental, an effect of a non-representative sampling method, or whether it reflects the rather complicated and rational character of political discussion in late modern society.

In three cases there is a direct link between their degree and their practice as an active citizen (politically committed art, social geography, international relations). In other cases the link is less clear, the university degree seems to function more as a general education in the background (French, history, social psychology, special education, agricultural engineering). Both respondents who interrupted their studies for a while characterise themselves as rather practical, not so much interested in theory. These eight respondents hardly mention non-formal courses; the only exception is the mentioning of a language course by two of them.

With respect to informal learning we did not only consider learning processes of the eight respondents who have their main activity in the domain of politics, but also the remarks of four other respondents, who are mainly active in another domain, but occasionally became active in the political domain and indicated how they learned to do so.

Five respondents active in the political domain describe themselves as people who loved to read but they indicate at the same time that their active life (combination of work and

citizenship) makes it very difficult to find time to do so. Only the two who has been retired by now (Jaap and Marius) report that they picked up this habit again. Four (Charlotte, Donald, Laila, Rita) report that they, as part of their function within a political organisation, actively collect and screen documentation, ranging from books to newspaper clippings. Two active citizens in the political domain (Jaap and Merel) report that they, preparing meetings, are perfectionists in gathering as much knowledge as possible about the items on the agenda. But the overwhelming impression is that most active citizens get their information just by endless *discussions*. Acquisition of the information you need in the political domain seems to happen mainly through communication, in both informal settings and formal meetings, with sympathisers and adversaries:

Ronald: “Well, in fact I learned a lot. At least I learned the skill to discuss. (...) (*our*) power was not based on authority but was based on arguments and the fact that people listened to us. If you put a lot of energy in it, you know to parry any possible argument there is, in discussions with outsiders but also in internal strategy discussions.”

Three respondents in the political domain mention that they are keen observers. They watch others before they act themselves:

Antoine: “A lot of people (*new members in the community council*) enter with the idea that they are going to change things immediately. But I observed a lot. I have been cautious in my statements. I tried to give my story a firm base to earn credibility. After all, you have to start at the bottom of the hierarchy. After having performed well a couple of times, you reach a higher level. You must go on steadily, you have to make your point. It is also important that people know you work in the social domain, so you have to visit certain people and talk to them.”

But whether there is firstly an observation period or not, most skills seem to be learned by *trial and error*. Many stress that it is important to get feedback from others or to be self-reflective:

Jaap: “I always try to learn from my mistakes. I make notes in my diary of things I did wrong. (...) I have the habit of going through them at the end of the year and to write these facts in my new diary to withhold myself of repeating them. (...) When I set out (*for a meeting*) I read these notes again.”

4.4.2 Learning in the Civil Domain

Four respondents are mainly active in the civil domain. One (Igor) is very young. After completing his secondary education, he worked for a while, but he plans to start an academic study in economics in the fall of 2001. The other three are older males (Frank, Jaap, Marius). They started their career with just some form of secondary education. Jaap would have loved to get more formal education, but at that time it was impossible, because he came from a poor family. Later in life, Jaap was very lucky in negotiating with his employer, to be allowed to replace the traditional vocational education for his occupation by a part-time study in sociology at the university. Frank and Marius, when they were young, deliberately did not want to engage in further school education. To qualify for their jobs they had to complete part-time formal vocational education. Marius retired last year and started an academic study in history in the fall of 2000.

Both Igor and Frank followed a lot of non-formal courses that were connected with their leisure time activities: Frank followed courses to qualify for leading positions in scouting,

Igor learned through all sorts of courses to improve the skills for some of his hobbies (combat sports, ballroom dancing). The general impression is that all four respondents in the civil domain are very inquisitive persons, not so much interested in formal education but looking for personal learning routes that fit their specific interests.

With respect to informal learning again we did not only consider learning processes of the respondents who have their main activity in this domain, but also the remarks of four other persons (Ans, Laila, Ronald and Roos) who occasionally became active in this domain. The overall picture, sketched by these in total eight respondents, is that learning in the civil domain is learning the know-how of organising. Careers in this world often start as doing rather practical things as a volunteer and then gradually one climbs to higher positions:

Frank: “As a boy, immediately after the war, I landed in the scouting and then, as it happens more often in associations, you cling to it. In the beginning it is really working with children: Cub Scout leader and so. At a certain point, it is not satisfying enough any more, so you move on to the organisation of bigger plays for 200 to 300 children. Next you start to do something in training, firstly you are training yourself and later on you give courses for volunteers. This still happens (*in scouting*), although the way it is done has changed since then. At that time it was really teaching, like you should do it like this or that, and there was not much participation, lack of time did not allow for that. Fortunately, all of this has improved now a little bit. Next you start to do some things on an administrative level (...) First (*on the municipal level*) and later on, automatically, on regional and national level. So you just go from one thing to the other.”

Compared to learning in the political domain, with its emphasis on information gathering and arguing with sympathisers and adversaries, learning to organise in the civil domain is a much more practical and businesslike thing. It is about getting things done, holding the group together and facilitating mutual positive critique. It creates a typical dilemma for our active citizens. On the one hand they are perfectionists and on the other hand they have to collaborate and delegate:

Marius: “The creepy thing is that at a certain moment you are in the situation that you have to delegate. I have to admit that I often have had problems with that. It has been a learning process to oppress the inclination to check whether he or she has really done it. Because in that case I could have done it better myself. I had to learn it, also through courses. I was too much inclined to do things myself in such situations.”

4.4.3 Learning in the Economic Domain

Two respondents (Antoine and Olga) are mainly active in the economic domain. Antoine has a diploma in secondary vocational education for the retail trade, followed some years later by an intensive course for management in this sector. Olga has a diploma in higher vocational education in the arts, but after having worked for a short time in this field, she decided to start her own business. Two others (Frank and Jaap), who talked mostly about their activities in the civil society, have also been executives of corporations. As said above, they started out with a diploma in secondary education, but during their career qualified for their position by following for many years part-time education typical for their field. The general picture seems to be that the economic domain is rather open for people who start with some form of secondary formal education but who during the career, follow all sorts of intensive additional formal and non-formal training.

How did these four respondents learn to become socially committed employers? In their answers no one referred to their initial formal education. However, they do refer to two other long-term learning processes. The first one is a mixture of non-formal and informal learning. They all have an interest in working with other people as equals and in their career they try to realise that in giving extra attention to human relations at the shop floor. Training and individual coaching supported this learning process occasionally:

Antoine: “I see myself as a person who is engaged every day in his business honestly and conscientiously and who talks about it with a lot of people. On the one hand you try to listen to people, but on the other hand there should be an interchange of ideas. That is the winning combination. Being on your own as an entrepreneur, you have the inclination to think individualistically, but I have learned also to talk with people in the group at crucial points, to learn about their ideas and to build support (*I: Did you learn it at this course?*) Yes, that’s what you learned, the human side of the company. (...) I kept contact with some people of that course about how they dealt with their company.”

Secondly, deeper down, there is a deliberate process of fighting to remain authentic and honest. More precisely, three of them refer to habits of reflection on whether their life is still in line with their deeply felt values and intuitions about what is just and meaningful. As an entrepreneur, as they say, you need the courage to take responsibility and initiative, but it is important for them that such activism does not take you away from yourself:

Olga: “My inspiration comes from here and there. For instance, books and people inspire me. I also meditate, that works too. I make sure I have spaces where I can be silent and reflect on things (...) It is crucial to remain close to yourself and that is in fact quite difficult.”

So, these two learning processes seem to be partly contradictory. On the one hand these entrepreneurs love to work with people and to share their ideas with others. On the other hand they know that in the end they are responsible and that they have to learn to trust their own deeper intuitions and feelings.

4.4.4 Learning in the Private Domain

The private domain is, at least in our research, much less a domain of itself. There are only two respondents who were mainly active in the private domain. Ottelien, a nun, worked many years at a nursery school. After her early retirement she did pastoral work, recently as a volunteer on a centre for personal counselling. Ans was an active feminist in the early years of that movement, and, as a parent, has been active in an anti-authoritarian centre for children’s day-care; later in her life she worked as a counsellor for immigrants. Both have diploma’s in secondary and higher vocational education. Ans also followed for many years university courses, not for a degree but just because she was interested in the subjects of these courses.

Their learning process seems essentially a process of unlearning, in particular the unlearning of traditional directive methods of educating children and helping people. Both come from traditional families. Along with their own liberation of that personal history, both develop a liberal style of educating children. Later in life both develop a non-directive way of counselling, Ottelien in her work in the church and Ans in her work with refugees:

Ottelien: “To be just a good listener, that’s it. (...) Nothing else is needed than to be yourself, to speak from your heart. That’s very important, people notice that. Afterwards you may think: ‘How can things like that happen, it is unbelievable’ (*I: what do you learn from that?*) I learned that it is

important to be just good to each other. For me it is also important to remain positive, if you become negative, you won't keep up."

Ans: "Just be there, at the moment they need you. I do not mean just wait passively. I think along with them but what I am doing less and less is offering them solutions and to set these in motion. (...) They need you as a bridge to institutions or as a source of information. Well you can do that but apart from that people ultimately have to solve their own situation, at least they have to indicate themselves what they want and what they need for that."

4.5 Formal Characteristics of the Learning Process

In the theoretical framework underlying this research, a central hypothesis is that learning is not a linear process, but that it appears as a *series of transitions*. During their life active citizens make choices, have experiences, and react to incidents that change the meaning and/or form of their active citizenship. It is often only in retrospect that such transitions become clear. We have tried to trace for our respondents what they see as main transitions in their life as an active citizen. We have also tried to indicate how it affects the essential three dimensions of identity, responsibility and effectivity. The results are summarised in the tables 1 till 4 below. For each transition it describes:

- As precise as possible the exact age at which the transition happened or started (mentioned between brackets). Sometimes this is a rough estimate, when a respondent uses an expression such as "after some years I began to feel".
- The description of the change in *identity* in a short sentence.
- An indication whether it made them more *society-oriented* or more *person-oriented*, expressing how this transition affected their awareness of responsibility for society.
- An indication whether it made them feel to be more *empowered* or more *disempowered*, expressing how this transition affected their effectivity.

But we have to be careful in the interpretation of these results. In some cases it is dubious whether the transition is really a transition or just a gradually increasing line, whether the transition is really more society-oriented or just a process of personal self-realisation and even whether a transition is empowering or disempowering (for instance a divorce that leads to an empowering society-oriented transition).

Table 1: Transitions on the axes of identity, responsibility and effectivity(Igor, Merel, Rita and Laila)

Age cohorts	Igor (19)	Merel (26)	Rita (28)	Laila (29)
0 – 4		(4) Divorce parents, lives with her mother, who is active feminist, therefore pestered at primary school; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .		
5 – 9	(8) Divorce parents and move from rural to urban setting; active at secondary school and in the civil domain; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .		(5) Feels lonely and displaced; more personal-oriented; feels <i>disempowered</i>	
10 – 14		(12) At secondary school academic and social problems disappear, increasing political awareness (feminism, international politics); more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(15) decides to become a vegetarian; more personal-oriented; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(14) At secondary school and later on at university academic problems, active as volunteer, mostly in Moluccan organisations; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
15 – 19	(17) After finishing secondary education planned interruption of school education to prepare for backpack hike in Australia; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(18) At the university not very interested in study, becomes an active member of political party; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(18) Happy to leave her conservative family and school (for a university study) and to be able to meet and work with other politically conscious people; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	
20 – 24		(23) To get rid of pangs of love becomes (along with party activities) volunteer and political activist for the homeless; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(24) Becomes full-time activist after completing university study; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(24) Becomes a central figure in a national political organisation of the Moluccan community; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
25 – 29			(27) Accepts job at leftist bookshop and moves to country-side; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(27) Takes the role of her terminally ill mother in their family household, stops temporarily her study (but continues political activity) losing grip on her self; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .

Table 2. Transitions on the axes of identity, responsibility and effectivity (Bas, Donald, Olga and Antoine)

Age cohorts	Bas (30)	Donald (32)	Olga (34)	Antoine (45)
0 – 4				
5 – 9				
10 – 14	(12) Divorce parents, lives with mother, felt displaced at school for primary vocational education in administration; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .		(13) After her mother commits suicide, feels depressive and alone, after two years runs away from home and ends up in relief centre for problem youth; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .	
15 – 19	(17) Starts secondary vocational education in the social sector, active in political groups; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(15) Living in a-political environment gets interested in political actions against Cruise Missiles and decides to refuse to serve in the military; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(15) Takes care of herself (house, school); more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(16) Hangs around with unconventional friends, decides that going in business is the sort of challenge that fits him; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
20 – 24	(21) Chooses for his creativity and higher vocational education in the visual arts; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(21) During his university study for short time member of pacifist party but is disappointed by party culture; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .	(21) After completing secondary school rejects the idea of university study, travels a lot and finally follows a higher vocational education incinematography; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(21) Because father has health problems, he decides to take over his retail business; more <i>person-oriented</i> , feels <i>empowered</i> .
25 – 29	(25) Moves after unsuccessful relation to another city and becomes again increasingly active in political groups; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(25) Meets almost accidentally some politically active people and becomes ultimately full-time activist in the anti globalization movement; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(27) She saw in the USA health drink shops. After three years of preparation she opens her own first shop of this kind, implementing societal responsible management; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i>	(25) Realises that it is not so much money but fulfilling social responsibilities that gives meaning to his life, becomes active in neighbourhood associations; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i>
30 – 34				
35 – 39				
40 – 45				(41) Feels that at his age he has the responsibility to engage in more challenging social functions, accepts nomination for municipal council and is elected two years later; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .

Table 3. Transitions on the axes of identity, responsibility and effectivity (Charlotte, Ronald, Ans and Marius)

Age cohort	Charlotte (50)	Ronald (55)	Ans (59)	Marius (60)
0 - 4				
5 - 9				
10 – 14	(12) Moves from happy rural home environment to urban boarding school, feels terrible lonely; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .		(12) Pestered and unhappy in secondary school; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .	
15 – 19	(16) Joins hippie movement, travels a lot, interested in art and ecological sustainable agriculture; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(19) As conscript trained as officer, dismissed because of resistance to authoritarian character army, becomes active in union of soldiers; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i>	(16) Lives one year as au pair in Paris, subsequently educated as a nurse; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(17) Resisted pressure from parents to study law; loves creative/communicative work; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
20 – 24				
25 – 29	(25) While following university study in social geography, becomes engaged in organisation to protect Wadden sea; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(28) Angry about construction of a nuclear plant near to his city, becomes a leader in the movement against use of nuclear energy; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(28) With her husband one year in Germany, her world opens up, becomes active in feminist movement and anti-authoritarian education; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	
30 – 34	(33) Mother of an autistic son, in later years active participation in organisation of parents of mentally handicapped children; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i>		(31) Becomes engaged in study of cultural anthropology, that has her heart and soul, and becomes active in Third World movement; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i>	(32) After three years abroad, he becomes active in local actions for preservation historical districts; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
35 – 39		(37) Accepts job that makes it possible to combine work with political activity; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .		
40 – 44				
45 – 49	(47) Conflict in the Wadden sea organisation, has to look for a new job; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .	(46) Gets tired of political work with volunteers, changes job, later two small functions in civil organisations; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(41) Wants a real (= paid) job, becomes counsellor of migrants, follows higher vocational education; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(?) Becomes active member of civil organisations to express feelings of human solidarity; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i>
50 – 54				
55 – 59			(57) Painful involuntary early retirement; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .	(59) Because he lost gradually interest in work, asked for early retirement and started study of history; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .

Table 4. Transitions on the axes of identity, responsibility and effectivity (Roos, Ottelien, Frank and Jaap)

Age cohorts	Roos (67)	Ottelien (68)	Frank (68)	Jaap (75)
0 - 4				
5 - 9				
10 – 14		(12) Enters boarding school, feels just happy; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .		
15 – 19		(19) Decides to become a nun against the wishes of her parents; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(17) Realises he loves to organise and to train people, to take new challenges. more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(16) Had to take a job for financial reasons, disliked his jobs, became active in civil organisations; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
20 – 24	(20) Although not from a religious family, chooses to become member of a Christian student association; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(21) Starts as teacher nursery school, stresses groupwork; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(24) After marriage he becomes more serious and composed, also about his career; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	
25 – 29	(26) Falls in love, lives with her family at different places in the world; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .			
30 – 34			(34) Shifts as volunteer from training to administration, three years later also at work appointed as office manager; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(30) The chance of his life, gets interesting position offered, has to follow part-time study sociology; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
35 – 39				
40 – 44				
45 – 49	(47) Becomes active in political and civil organisations; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .			
50 – 54		(53) Embittered because of forced reorganisation of nursery schools, allowed to quit and works as part-time domestic help in presbytery; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .		
55 – 59				(58) Dismissed as member executive board, for a while embittered; more <i>person-oriented</i> ; feels <i>disempowered</i> .
60 – 64	(61) Divorce, finds her own way by working for Voluntary Service Oversea in Guinea-Bissau; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .		(60) Retirement and almost full time working for scouting and other civil organisations; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .	(62) Finds new engagements in movement of elderly, leads him to top-functions at national level; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .
65 – 69		(66) Stops work at presbytery, volunteers as counsellor, feels happy; more <i>society-oriented</i> ; feels <i>empowered</i> .		

Concentrating on the labels for transitions in responsibility and effectivity, the overall results are shown in the table 5.

Table 5. Number of transitions on the axes of responsibility and effectivity

	Society-oriented	Person-oriented	Total
Empowered	32	21	33
Disempowered	1	11	12
Total	33	32	65

As could be expected on the basis of the fact that we interviewed successful citizens, there are twice as much society-oriented transitions than person-oriented transitions, and also the overwhelming majority of transitions are empowering. In so far transitions are disempowering they are mainly person-oriented, which is understandable because many disempowering situation pulls citizens back in a period of personal survival. Moreover, the one exception (society-oriented, disempowered) is dubious (it refers to Merel who was pestered at school because of her highly society-oriented family education), so we leave out this one transition in the analyses below.

In the chapters 6 and 7 we shall concentrate on differences related to gender and age. Here we restrict ourselves to a comparison of domains. While the respondents are unevenly spread over the domains, we corrected the figures as if there were in each domain just four respondents. Such a corrected calculation shows no significant differences between domains, apart maybe from the fact that in the private domain there is a somewhat higher number of person-oriented transitions, in particular disempowering personal transitions. Such a connection between the private domain and disempowering person-oriented transitions could be logically consistent, because the motivation to work in the private domain could be connected to negative personal experiences.

Table 6. Number of transitions on the axes of responsibility and effectivity for each domain, corrected for numbers of respondents in domains

	Political domain	Civil domain	Economic domain	Private domain
Society-oriented; Empowering	9	8	6	8
Person-oriented; Empowering	5	5	7	8
Person-oriented; Disempowering	3	1	2	6

4.6 The Role of Gender

In this chapter we shall look closer to differences between women and men as active citizens. We shall follow the sequence of topics in the earlier chapters. So, we start with a glance at the personal background of respondents, followed by some observations on gender aspects of identity, responsibility and effectivity and conclude with a comparison between men and women with respect to learning and transition processes. Possibly it is relevant to know that the primary author of this chapter is a man.

4.6.1 Personal Background

Most respondents do not refer in-depth to gender aspects of their early education, but two younger female respondents do, and their stories are quite different from each other. One is Merel. Her divorced mother often took out Merel, already from her sixth year on, to feminist manifestations. For Merel also later in life, as a politician, women's issues were her main inspiration. Laila on the contrary has been raised in the Moluccan community and has always tried to play the traditional role of the ideal daughter. In her teenage years she was never allowed to go out, and when her mother became sick when Laila was 25, she took the place of her mother in the family household. Only recently, at the end of her twenties, she became in crisis because she realised she would like to have a life for herself.

Three men, out of eight, lived their whole life in a traditional marriage (before law and church). Of the eight women only two lived their whole life in a traditional marriage. This is a remarkable difference from the average situation in the Netherlands. Both women who live in a traditional marriage carry their own name and not the name of their husband. Another woman gave up her Ph.D. study for her husband, as she gave up her own name after the marriage. She followed her husband all over the world to support his career, but later, after her divorce, regretted this meekness.

4.6.2 Identity, Responsibility, Effectivity

Both the political and economical domain has a more or less equal division of men and women. But in the civil domain all four respondents are male and in the private domain both respondents are female.

Laila, Rita and Roos (all three of them working mainly in the political domain) mention that they had to deal sometimes with typically male-dominated organisations:

Rita: "That squatter's movement was a very macho movement, so to say. So it is a matter of big shots, it is actually a very hierarchical happening, people who are the boss and decide what happens. And others who try to belong, because if you do not belong, you are just out. People will not look at you then, they just stare you out of the door, you aren't asked for anything, you just do not belong. You must really take effort to fit in, wear the right clothes, show your face at the right places, have the right friends. That is very exhausting, but I have tried it for a while. Not all those things, but I wanted to achieve certain things and do certain things, but I just didn't get through to them. And at a certain moment I did get through, because I was accidentally doing something I enjoyed at the right moment and the right place. And then I was accepted more or less, but there I met with all those things I just mentioned. And I couldn't cope with that, I just didn't fit in. I've tried it really hard for some time, because I wanted to achieve something, do something together with those people. But I got so frustrated, now I don't really mind anymore, I don't need that anymore, not like that, but back then I got frustrated for some time."

On the other hand Merel says that in her political party there is respect for women.

As said, all four respondents in the civil domain are male. Maybe this is an effect of the fact that we interviewed mostly respondents on the higher levels of civil associations. In our literature research, we already found that women, although fully represented at the lower levels of volunteer organisations, are underrepresented at the higher levels. Frank confirms this:

Frank: “(*Scouting*) has many female leaders (...) we also have a female chairperson at the national level and our bylaws say that we strive for a fifty-fifty distribution in all boards. But it simply doesn’t work. There are plenty of women we would like to have on our boards and we also invite them (...) but we fail.”

Five female and one male respondent were, at least for some time, involved in discussions about feminism. Three of the women were or are active feminists, but there is an interesting difference between the two generations. Ans has been active in the *Dolle Mina*’s, a Dutch feminist organisation in the sixties, but she is in hindsight rather negative about the harsh climate in the feminist movement at that time. Maybe in reaction to this earlier period, the younger feminists (Merel and Rita) stress that for them feminist groups must be fun too. In addition Merel adds that feminism is now also an issue of men.

With respect to effectivity we mentioned earlier that active citizenship is time consuming and therefore it can only be realised if your job or private situation allows you that much spare time. The older respondents, living in a traditional marriage, make clear that the traditional division of tasks in the private household facilitated active citizenship. On the one hand men could be active citizens, because their wives take care of the family household. On the other hand women, having no job obligations, can become active from the moment on the children reach the teenage years:

Frank: “In those years, a woman didn’t work, she took care of the children. (...) I have been away many evenings, also because of my club activities. But the family did not suffer (...) everything went smoothly, because my wife was always at home.”

Roos: “At that time the children were bigger, they went to high school and I had more time and they asked me to help with the foundation of a centre for development aid. (...) This was my first societal activity.”

We have no findings on whether or not active citizenship influences relationships, except for Ronald, whose activism leads to a divorce because he spends so little time at home. We did, however, find evidence that the support of the family (partner and children) is usual to most respondents; two even claim that if anything were to happen their family, they would stop their activities at once. Two men and one woman discuss in their interviews the difference between women and men in their behaviour at meetings. These three respondents fully agree that women are more pragmatic and co-operative, while men tend to be more wordy and stubborn:

Marius: “In my opinion women are more down-to-earth. (...) I think that a question such as “What’s the point?” is very female. They are more concise, like: ‘let’s finish this and have a cup of coffee afterwards’.”

4.6.3 Learning and Transitions

The average level of formal education in our sample is a little bit higher for women than for men. There is an equal number of women and men (each three) with a university degree, but there are three women with higher vocational education, compared to only one man. There are also three women who did not yet finish their university studies, but who have university courses followed for many years, compared to only two men who have just started or plan university studies.

We checked whether our material suggests differences in learning styles between men and women. The results are shown in the table below. We depend here on self-reports that can be somewhat accidental and incomplete. For instance, maybe some people are mentioned more

than others just because they were more explicit about their learning process. We did not apply any sort of learning theory; we just coded statements of our respondents.

Table 7. Learning styles compared for men and women

Learning style	Men	Women
Love to read	Antoine, Bas, Jaap, Marius	Charlotte, Olga
Gather information	Donald	Charlotte, Laila, Rita
Curious	Antoine, Frank, Jaap, Igor, Marius	Ans
Learn from experienced others	Antoine, Frank	Laila
Learn by observation	Antoine, Ronald	Laila, Merel
Learn through discussion	Bas, Donald, Ronald	Rita
Perfectionist	Frank, Igor, Jaap, Marius	Merel
Follow feelings, intuitions	Antoine	Laila, Ottelien
Self-reflection, meditation	Jaap	Laila, Olga, Roos
Appreciate mutual critique	Ronald	Ans, Olga

Comparing men and women, there does not seem to be any clear difference. There are only rather small differences in the self-reported learning processes:

- men more than women report to learn by reading, curiosity (interest in new things), discussion and perfectionism,
- women report to learn more by gathering information and self-reflection.

Table 8 compares men and women for number and sort of transition moments.

Table 8. Number of transitions on the axes of responsibility and effectivity for men and women

	Men	Women
Society-oriented; empowering	16	16
Person-oriented; empowering	10	11
Person-oriented; disempowering	3	8

Women have twice as many disempowering transitions, which make them for a while person-oriented. If we look closer to the change in their social identity that is behind these transitions (table 9), we see that women had more problems in both their younger and their older years. The identity transition of Laila is typical for her position as a woman. With respect to the other transitions it is rather difficult to determine if there is a typical gender pattern. If it is not just accidental, it could be that women more often perceive a transition as disempowering (so men might perceive a similar situation more optimistically). Or, at the contrary, women might have to overcome more difficult situations (so women might pursue their life course more optimistically).

Table 9. Disempowering transitions in identity

Men	Women
Bas: Divorce parents	Olga: Mother commits suicide
	Ans: Pestered on secondary school
	Charlotte: Moves to urban boarding school
Donald: Member of pacifist party, disappointed by party culture	Laila: takes the role of her terminally ill mother in their family household
Jaap: Dismissed as member executive board	Charlotte: Conflict in the Wadden Sea organisation
	Ans: Painful involuntary early retirement
	Ottelien: Embittered because of forced reorganisation primary schools, quits job
	Merel: pestered in school
	Rita: feels displaced in school

4.7 The Role of Age

Below we will use the same analysis techniques as in 4.6, but now with respect to differences between older and younger respondents. Our main interest here is whether the changing socio-cultural and economic context leads to differences between old and young in purposes of active citizenship⁴. So again, we start with a glance on the differences in the personal background of respondents (4.7.1), followed by some observations on age aspects of identity, responsibility and effectivity (4.7.2). But, in the final paragraph (4.7.3), we will also sketch some typical changes in learning processes through the life span that seem to be more a matter of socio-psychological development. In case this could have affected the analysis, it could be important to know that the primary author of this chapter is an older man.

4.7.1 Personal Background

Three of our respondents have a vivid memory of the harsh final year of the Second World War. Jaap went underground to avoid military service for the Germans. Frank survived the “hunger winter” by all sorts of illegal actions to secure the bare necessities of life. Ottelien grew up in a border region where the population suffered from heavy shelling from the German army. None of them however, made any direct connection between these war hardships and their later life.

None of the younger respondents lives in a traditional marriage and only five of the older respondents do.

We expected that the older respondents, who grew up in a more traditional society, would have, compared to younger ones, more respect for authority. But as reported in chapter two, we found only three respondents (Antoine, Frank, Laila) who express such a respect for authority and these three are equally divided over the age range. Most active citizens of all

⁴ In fact, according to Mannheim’s typology, we have only talked to citizens belonging to certain generation units. In this typology, a *generation location* refers to individuals born in the same period and socio-cultural space and thus exposed to a common range of historical events – which for the Dutch case has been described in chapter 1. A generation location is a potential generation that may or may not materialise. Whether or not this happens and an *actual generation* arises, depends on the recognition of common experiences during the formative period of individuals born in the same historical and cultural space or region who feel connected with their contemporaries because of their common destiny. This means that, from a sociological point of view, birth cohorts are at best generation locations but they do not yet represent an actual generation. It is within a generation as an actuality that *generation units* may emerge. These are the most concrete manifestations of a generation, and develop a common vision on societal events. Still different units within the same actual generation might hold very different views on these events.

ages have a strong critical attitude towards authority. They accept authority only if it is based on knowledge and arguments, not if it is based on structures, positions and functions. But there are some other typical differences, although rather small. Two older respondents (Jaap and Ottelien) report that they learned in their family a strong sense of dedication, which helped them to remain faithful in life to their social commitments. Also two older respondents (Jaap and Marius) stress their love for an original and correct use of language and in particular Marius is rather negative about the lack of skill of young people to use language properly. Finally, two older respondents (Roos and Ottelien) regret that the computer damages the social life in the family.

4.7.2 Identity, Responsibility, Effectivity

During the first two decades after the Second World War, the Dutch built a strong welfare state on the ruins of the Second World War. These years of hard work can be easily traced in the life histories of the four oldest respondents. Roos is very explicit about the culture of that time.

Roos: “I went to grammar school in the years just after the Second World War and at that time it was very important that you had to build the country, to serve the society (...) My parents taught me that, and it was taught at school. It was self-evident that you had to look for something that could improve the society. I realise how strange this may sound now, but it was just normal at that time.”

Because of this experience of building a welfare state, you might expect that many of the older respondents have been very active in social policy. But in fact the four respondents active in the domain of social policy are equally divided over the age cohorts. One older (Jaap) and one younger (Merel) respondent are active in social policy on the national level. One older (Marius) and one younger (Antoine) respondent are active on the local level, and one older (Jaap) and two younger (Antoine, Olga) are active within corporations on matters of social policy.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the Netherlands was a religiously *pillarized* society till the sixties. Two of our respondents were actively involved in breaking down this compartmentalised society. Jaap joined a new Progressive Party in the sixties to end the dominance of traditional Christian parties. Frank was active in the de-pillarization of the scouting. Three older respondents and five younger respondents broke with the traditional religious belief of their parents. Only five respondents are still church members (one in the younger and four in the older cohort), a rather clear example of how the Netherlands gradually became the country with the lowest church membership in Europe.

As said in chapter one, the seventies and eighties have been the stage of strong political movements. And it is exactly there that many respondents became politically active. Typical for the older political activists is their participation in the third world movement (Ans and Roos) and the environmental movement (Charlotte and Ronald). Typical for the nineties is the rise of globalisation as a new integrating theme, combining issues of poverty and environment. For three of our younger respondents (Bas, Donald and Merel) this is the central theme. The younger generation also seems more anti-militaristic. One older (Ronald) but three younger (Bas, Donald, Rita) respondents are inspired early in their life by their resistance against the military. Donald is a typical example of how the Dutch anti cruise missiles campaign of the eighties triggered his active citizenship:

Donald: “These cruise missiles were one of the first things I became really interested in. I lived close to Woensdrecht (*one of the American air bases in the Netherlands*); I went to bike there often and saw the blockades (...). I

was just fiercely opposed to it. I was at that time rather pacifistic and started to think about conscientious objection, which I finally did (...) I also participated in a huge demonstration at that time, the first demonstration ever I participated in.”

In chapter one we mentioned the high level of trust the Dutch have in their government and the parliament, compared to other European countries, and the emergence in the nineties of a consensus model in Dutch politics, coined as the *poldermodel*. Amazingly, we cannot find much enthusiasm for this development in our interviews. Although they respect the basic attitude of the Dutch government to collaborate with and even to subsidise its own opponents, they tend to stress the dangers involved. On the one hand Merel, as a politician, warns that the *poldermodel* is only justifiable if the involved civil organisations really represent the majority of the population, and on the other hand particularly the young activists are afraid to become encapsulated:

Donald: “In practice, the *poldermodel* works as a way to canalise and to moderate resistance. Its result is that the decisions taken mostly are in the interest of the powerful, instead of the victims of a particular policy. I don’t see this *poldermodel* as a positive thing.”

At the end of section 3.3 we referred to societal changes in the private domain. From these developments, the liberation of women has among our respondents equal support from older and younger respondents. The older cohort is more explicitly in favour of the greater freedom of children nowadays, the younger cohort tends to support in particular the danger of a growing consumerism.

4.7.3 Learning and Transitions

You might expect a lower level of formal education in the older cohort, but the opposite is true. Four older respondents have a university degree and only two younger respondents have such a degree. But if we add to these figures the respondents who plan to have their degree in the years to come, the picture changes. Under this condition in both cohorts there are five respondents with university studies. This supports the general finding that active citizenship, also in the progressive movements, is mainly the business of an educational elite.

There are also no big differences in learning styles. The older cohort more often mentions that they see themselves as curious, but are less involved in gathering information and do not mention so often that they learn by observation and discussion. A very cautious conclusion could be that the older cohort indeed is somewhat more experienced, that they are still curious but not any longer engaged in systematically improving their knowledge and skills.

Table 10. Learning styles compared for age

Learning style	Old	Young
Love to read	Charlotte, Jaap, Marius	Antoine, Bas, Olga
Gather information	Charlotte	Donald, Laila, Rita
Curious	Ans, Frank, Jaap, Marius	Antoine, Igor
Learn from experienced others	Frank	Antoine, Laila
Learn by observation	Ronald	Antoine, Laila, Merel
Learn through discussion	Ronald	Bas, Donald, Rita
Perfectionist	Frank, Jaap, Marius	Igor, Merel
Follow feelings, intuitions	Ottelien	Antoine, Laila
Self-reflection, meditation	Jaap, Roos	Laila, Olga

Appreciate mutual critique	Ans, Ronald	Olga
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We compared both cohorts for the number and sorts of transition moments in the first thirty years of their life.

Table 11. Number of transitions on the axes of responsibility and effectivity before the age of 30, compared for the two age cohorts

	Older cohort	Younger cohort
Society-oriented; empowering	10	14
Person-oriented; empowering	9	8
Person-oriented; disempowering	2	5
TOTAL	21	24

In the younger cohort you see both more empowering society-oriented transitions and more disempowering person-oriented transitions. Looking more closely to the changes in identity that are behind these figures, there is no specific pattern behind the greater frequency of both in the younger cohort. Maybe younger people in a late modern society just have a somewhat more dynamic life.

For five respondents in the older cohort mid-life is a transition to a more person-oriented life. This does not mean that they retreat completely from active citizenship, (otherwise they would not have been selected for this research project), but that they take up less time consuming tasks and spend more time on personal hobbies. Two older respondents (Frank and Jaap) intensify their commitments as a citizen after their retirement. For one older respondent (Roos) mid-life has been the starting point for her active citizenship.

All four respondents who report a disempowering person-oriented transition in mid-life (Ans, Charlotte, Jaap, Ottelien) report strong feelings of embitterment. But the same risk of embitterment can be recognised in the way older active citizens define their peculiar problems growing older:

Jaap: "I have tried always not to get caught in embitterment. You are allowed to be bitter for a while when your friends, people you trust, abandon you. When I was disposed of at (*my work*), I cursed them, these devils, what a dirty trick, such cowards, to break my neck. But finally I thought, you can not behead me, I won't let my embitterment go on."

Frank: "Criticism is OK. When other people criticise me, I don't like it, but I let them. But it is the only thing that makes me aware that I am getting older. In former years I let it pass more easily, but now I think more often: 'Dash it, do you have to say it like that?'"

4.8 Interviewees' Profiles

This preliminary report has been based on 16 interviews. There are eight women and eight men. Each of both categories can be divided in an equal number of younger and older respondents. For sake of anonymity of our active citizens, not all information is given in this report.

4.8.1 Younger Females

1. *Laila* (29) has a Dutch mother and a Moluccan father. She is born in the Netherlands and raised in a Moluccan environment with strict Moluccan norms and values. After primary school she goes to grammar school. Because of her activities for the Moluccan and Dutch society, she neglects her schoolwork. She finds joy in organising activities for the youth, such as dancing clubs, camps and homework supervision groups. It takes her a long way in order to get her diploma. In her activities she feels stimulated and supported by her family. Especially her father and grandpa are role models for her. She is very active in politics, where she fights for the rights and independence of the Moluccan people. Besides she invests a lot of time and energy in her activities for the Moluccan church, where she finds her inner peace. She calls herself a late-developer. She has always been helping others, completely neglecting herself. She thinks she is an active citizen, because she can hardly say 'no'.
2. *Rita* (28) is born in a small city in one of the northern provinces in a conservative, strict religious family. She feels lonely and displaced at primary and secondary school. At the age of eighteen she leaves this small town for a study in social psychology. She recently completed her studies, but she refuses to apply for a job as a psychologist, because of the manipulative character of this discipline. Instead she is active in the anarcho-feminist movement. During and after her study she works as a volunteer in a vegetarian and biological restaurant, in a co-operation that buys and sells biological food and in a centre for anti-militarism. Since 1999, she has been holding a part-time job in a bookshop for "alternative literature" paid through a government program for additional job positions. She also publishes booklets with information about political issues. She has lived in a couple of vegetarian residential communities and recently started a new one at the countryside, because she is not an "urban type".
3. *Olga* (34) is born at the countryside. She decides to run away from home at the age of fifteen. In Amsterdam she finds her way to youth-help agencies, but those are of little assistance to her. Independent as she is, she selects a school where she can finish her secondary education, and a home where she lives under supervision. She decides to study medicine, because she wants to find ways to cure people in a more holistic way, by not victimising patients but by letting them share responsibility. However, she starts travelling and studying theatre, ultimately resulting in her quitting the wish to study medicine. She registers into the School of Arts to study to become an editor. After a few years of work in television, on holidays in the USA she is inspired by health drinks franchise. Back home, she enthusiastically jumps into the preparations of a corporation selling biologically-dynamically-produced health drinks and three years later she opens her first store. She recently opened her second store. She hopes that one day, she can start a lobby with a part of her profits, and co-operate with other organisations in bringing about projects with social goals.
4. *Merel* (26) is born and raised in the east. She has a lonely childhood with no friends at school. Her only social activities are in the feminist movement, where her mother takes her. At a very early age, she wants to become a politician in the European Community. She decides to study International Relationships at the university. For her practical training, she works in Brussels for her political party. Next to her political party activities, she is a volunteer in social work. When this social work project became threatened some time ago, she started a lobby to save it.

4.8.2 Older Females

1. *Ottelien* (68) is born in a Catholic family with six sisters and one brother. As a daughter she has a strict upbringing and protected childhood. All the children have to work in their father's smithy and their mother's grocer's shop. After primary school at the nuns, her mother sends her to a boarding school in a big city in the south, where she gets her degree as a primary teacher. At the age of 18, she decides, against the will of her parents, to enter an order. Living in the nunnery, she worked for 30 years at nursery schools, the last 16 years as the head of a nursery school. But because of the re-organisation of these schools, leading to a more individualised education of young children, at the age of 53 she quits her job. She becomes the personal housekeeper of a priest for more than ten years. She is, so to say, a jack of all trades. After her retirement, once a week she works at a public centre where people can come and tell their stories. She listens and sometimes she also gives advice. Besides, she has started a course to learn the English language and she likes to express herself in pottering.
2. *Ans* (59) is born in a small city and has had a very lonely and isolated childhood. At the age of eighteen, she goes to Paris for one year, and after her return, she starts her nursing education. She meets her husband and starts a family of her own. They go to Germany, where they learn about anti-authoritarian education. Back in the Netherlands, she becomes active in starting an anti-authoritarian pre-school. She is also active in third world development and feminism, domains of activism she prefers above regular politics – something she tried, but did not enjoy. She divided her time between education and work with foreign employees, thus qualifying for a staff position at a community centre. After her retirement, she remains active in a centre for Somali refugees. Her opinion on intervention is, that as a counsellor one should not always intervene: being there is also helping.
3. *Roos* (67) has had idealistic parents. Both her mother and her father are active pacifists and humanists. She and her sister are raised in a radical left-wing family. Her parents send her to the grammar school, which is very modern in those days. After she has finished her studies in agriculture, she goes to the USA in order to get a Ph.D. degree. She never finishes this, because she meets her husband at the time. He has a good job and she follows him anywhere. While he is making career, she takes care of the children and does some development work. When the children are older, she becomes involved in politics and in the church. She also becomes an active member in the interest group for disquiet motorists. During the feminist period, she realises that she has always been rather docile. This feeling becomes even stronger after her divorce. She decides to make up the lost chances and leaves to Guinea-Bissau to do serious third world development work as a teacher. In the last few years, she has become a more active citizen, as she says.
4. *Charlotte* (50) is born at the border of the Wadden Sea, and this has imposed on her a love for the Wadden. Here father is the first biological-dynamical farmer in the Netherlands. After an isolated youth of reverie, she continues her dreaming with a band of hippies. Once back in the northern part of the Netherlands, she finds out that her beloved Wadden Sea is in danger and joins a movement to preserve this fragile nature reserve. She is very successful in her activities and becomes a paid activist. Because of her direct approach she gets a lot done, but her direct approach eventually also leads to a conflict with her employer. Her oldest son is autistic. In order for him to have the best life possible, she fights for his rights in an organisation for parents with mentally handicapped children.

4.8.3 Younger Males

1. *Bas* (30) grew up in the northern part of the Netherlands. His parents divorced when he was twelve. He completed an education as social worker, but, as he says, could not avoid his creativity and subsequently decided to follow a higher vocational education in visual arts. Since two years now he has been trying to make a living through building “installations”. He lives with his friend in a caravan camp. He is active in the anarchistic movement and tries to integrate this engagement in his creative work. Apart from his creative work in the strict sense, he helps to produce a periodical and occasionally also posters for demonstrations for the movement. His main topic is the evil of globalization and the dominance of economy in general. He was also an active member of the board of the caravan camp.
2. *Igor* (19) has witnessed the violent death of two girls in the city where he lives since his parents divorced and he and his mother and brother moved to. Enraged by this incomprehensible violence, he helps organise silent marches and other activities aimed at raising consciousness for this social problem. He has always been extremely busy with social activities and likes to organise events for fun; however, he takes the matter of ‘useless violence’ very seriously.
3. *Donald* (32) is born and raised in a city nearby an air basis for jets with nuclear cruise missiles. Age fourteen, he is confronted with protests against these missiles for the first time, and he is immediately encouraged to join. The procedure for gaining the status of consciousness objector is difficult, because his objection is not ‘violence’, but distrust in the State’s monopoly on violence. While awaiting the result of this struggle, he starts his education in history in the Northwest. He wants to become politically active, but is disappointed with his experience in a socialist party. By accident, he sees an ad in the window of an alternative bookshop, and here he feels at home. Interrupted by a break because of his alternative military service, he works a few years as a volunteer in this shop. In 1997, he is involved in the establishment of an anarchistic collective that actively works on alternatives for the globalization of economy.
4. *Antoine* (45) is born in a small city in the south, where he grows up, until he is sent to boarding school. His father has a shoe shop and when he has his diploma, he takes over the business. He is keen on managing his store in a personal way. Instead of growth, he chooses for quality of management, having an open relationship with his employees. He becomes politically active in the city council where he represents the district he grew up in. He believes that it is his duty and his challenge to participate in societal developments and progress.

4.8.4 Older Males

1. *Frank* (68) is born in a big city in the West and he still lives there. His father dies three days after his birth. As a boy he survives the “hunger winter” at the end of the Second World War. After the war he makes a career as an insurance agent and he retired eight years ago. He has been active in scouting during his whole lifetime, starting as a scout, becoming a leader, moving on to the position of trainer of leaders and finally acting as a member of the board, in different positions, on regional level. After his retirement, for a period of three years he is an almost full time voluntary co-organiser of the World Jamboree in 1995 and after that he accepts the position of chairman of an association that organises a massive walking tour each year.
2. *Ronald* (55) is born into a rather military-loving family with a dominant father. Fulfilling his military service, he is selected for training as an officer. However, his friends are more leftwing oriented and he decides to complete his draft as an ordinary soldier, joining an

interest group for conscientious objectors. At a rather young age, he starts a family and devotes himself to a study of French Language and Literature. Watching the television one evening back in 1974, his attention is drawn to the possibility of nuclear fusion as an energy source. Interested, he decides to go to what is supposed to be a peaceful demonstration in Germany. He gets alarmed when he is refused to cross the border and becomes extremely active in the movement against nuclear energy. This movement is very successful in the Netherlands, raising a wave of protests among old and young, ultimately forcing the government to abandon their plans. After this period of him being a central figure in the fight against nuclear energy, he becomes the director of a non-profit organisation for *societal responsible* scientific research, a position he leaves a few years later for a management position in higher education. He is active in local media and an organisation that facilitates young musicians. He finds his goal in life to be contributing to societal development.

3. *Jaap* (75) is born in a catholic family with fourteen children. Because his mother dies when he is just a couple of months old, his oldest sister raises him. Being the youngest of the family, he is the only one who has the opportunity to go to school. All the other children have to go out to work immediately after primary school. His family is very interested in social questions. In his work he grows from a jack of all trades to a position on the executive board of a big corporation. In the course of this career he got the opportunity to get a university degree in sociology. Education and personal development have always been very important to him: he wants to get the best out of himself. Besides his work, he is also active in all kinds of civil associations. Since his retirement he especially invests in interest groups for elderly. He wants to be important for these people as long as possible. Therefore, he tries to keep up with new developments in the ever-changing world. He takes care of his schizophrenic son.
4. *Marius* (60) is born in a big city in the west. After secondary school and a job in a bookshop for a short time, he starts a lifelong career as program developer for an international broadcast station. Last year he got early retirement. He started an academic study in history. He has a broad experience as active citizen, ranging from being a member on the board of charities to active membership of a social action group.