

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

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■ FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

Radically revised edition of *The Symbol Theory*

Norbert Elias, *The Symbol Theory*, edited by Richard Kilminster (Dublin: UCD Press, 2011 [Collected Works, vol. 13]). xxvi + 193 pp. ISBN: 978-1-906359-10-2. €60.00 [for 20 per cent discount, order online direct from the publisher: www.ucdpress.ie.]

This – the last book Elias completed before his death – is the thirteenth volume of the Collected Works to be published, and also volume 13 of the series. It contains much that is new. Elias wrote it when he was already effectively blind, and the dictated text was not easy to follow. Now Richard Kilminster has made the numbered sections into separate chapters and given each of them a thematic title – which, at a stroke, makes apparent the overall architecture of a remarkable book.

The Symbol Theory situates the human capacity for forming symbols in the long-term biological evolution of *Homo sapiens*, showing how it is linked through communication and orientation to group survival. Elias proceeds to recast the question of the *ontological* status of knowledge, moving beyond the old philosophical dualisms of idealism/materialism and subject/object. He readjusts the boundary between the ‘social’ and the

‘natural’ by interweaving evolutionary biology and the social sciences. *The Symbol Theory* provides nothing less than a new image of the human condition as an accidental outcome of the blind flux of an indifferent cosmos.

Elias was still dictating a new Introduction to the book over the weekend before he died (on Wednesday 1 August 1993). It was published in an incomplete version. Now, however, it has proved possible to retrieve from ‘floppy disks’ the last parts he wrote – indeed the last academic statements of his life – and incorporate them into a trenchant new version of the Introduction. Among other things, he makes passing remarks about his friend Pierre Bourdieu and, of special interest, launches a devastating critique of Jacques Derrida.

Finally, in the course of reconstructing the Introduction, Kilminster gleaned information from two of his last student assistants, Mieke van Stigt and Willem Kranendonk, about Elias’s way of working in the last phase of his life. He dictated to an ever-changing team of assistants, who had to read back to him whatever the last passages were, whereupon Elias would begin dictating again. Sometimes the assistants were not always sure for which of several ongoing projects the new text was intended! This new evidence goes a long way to explaining why some of Elias’s very last work can seem rambling and repetitive. But the new edition of *The Symbol Theory* makes clear that this is a misleading impression: Elias’s intellect remained keen and sharply focused until the very end.

The next volume to be published, in the first half of 2012, will be *On the Process of Civilisation*. The text of Elias’s masterpiece has been thoroughly revised and annotated, and all 13 plates from *Das mittelalterliche Hausbuch* are reproduced in colour. This new edition is far more accessible to students and other readers, and will be an essential purchase for all scholars of Elias. More details in *Figurations* 37.

Copies of any of the volumes of the Collected Works may be purchased

online at a 20 per cent discount directly from the publishers, at www.ucdpress.ie.

A glimpse of Elias in wartime

Gordon Fyfe has sent us this little gem, from *Private Battles* by Simon Garfield (London: Ebury, 2006), which contains excerpts from wartime diaries from archives of the Mass Observation organisation. It dated Tuesday 5 October 1943:

‘After early supper, cycled to the other end of Hoddesdon to the first meeting of a WEA [Workers’ Educational Association] course on the “Future of Europe”. The tutor missed his train and was late, but was very good when he arrived, a doctor, N. Elias. Only 13 people. Stopped in a pub on the way home.’

Norbert Elias Prize, 2009–10

Such was the number of authors’ first-time books nominated for the Elias Prize for 2009–10 that, as we go to press, the jury is still completing its deliberations. The winner will be announced via the Norbert Elias Foundation blog (www.norberteliasfoundation.nl), and the prize will be presented in Copenhagen at the conference on ‘Norbert Elias and Figurational Sociology: Prospects for the Future’, on 2–4 April 2012. Details (and photographs, no doubt) will be published in *Figurations* 37.

■ POSTSCRIPT ON GOBBLEDEGOOK

One reader of *Figurations* contacted the editors to complain about the ‘Gobbledegook’ column in *Figurations* 35. He wrote:

‘I was very disappointed to see the Gobbledegook column in the latest issue of *Figurations*. I had always taken the project of Norbert Elias and figurational sociology to be one of challenging conventional ways of thinking and an openness of inquiry. I have no brief for any of the examples cited, but do not like to see experimentation with language, theory

or subject matter ridiculed in such a conservative and negative manner.’

Of course, we never like to offend our readers, but it needs to be said that Elias was radical rather than conservative in his views on the sociology of knowledge and the sciences, and very strongly opposed to the obfuscation that is often used by social scientists to disguise their own intellectual confusion. In some remarks about Jacques Derrida that he dictated in the last days of his life, and only recently published, he said:

‘Derrida uses the French language in a highly idiosyncratic way. He pays little regard to the fact that the principal function of language is that of a means of communication between people. He creates his own version of the French language and leaves it to the reader to learn Derrida’s French if he wants to become an initiate of the philosopher’s metaphysics.’ (*The Symbol Theory* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2011 [Collected Works, vol. 13]), p. 14).

More generally, Elias observes:

‘If we want to introduce new concepts in order to deal adequately with the problem, a certain restraint is necessary. Sometimes scholars take undue advantage of their right to bring new concepts into circulation to express new insights. This may block possible channels of communication, both within the discipline in question and between it and other disciplines.’ (*What is Sociology?* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p. 129)

In our view, sociologists – and in particular ‘social theorists’ of what Elias called the ‘philosophoidal’ variety – have too often failed to exercise that ‘certain restraint’. Yes, in the history of the sciences, new concepts often mark important intellectual breakthroughs; we all know the famous case of Lavoisier’s invention of the term ‘oxygen’, which marked the overthrow of phlogiston chemistry. But Lavoisier discovered *something* – or recognised the significance of something that Priestley had isolated but not recognised – and invented a word for it. Elias himself coined a few

new terms, such as 'figuration', but that was merely shorthand and the ideas for which it stands can be expressed quite clearly without using the new word (I rarely use it in my own writing), and he did not regard the word *itself* as an intellectual breakthrough. His demand that we think *processually* requires great care in 'the way we use words', but only to a limited extent does it involve neologisms – it is more a matter of grammar than vocabulary.

Too often in sociology, each 'school' or 'approach' invents a new set of jargon that expresses little that is new, little that represents a definite advance in knowledge that cannot be expressed through longer-established vocabulary. Still worse, many of those who write in an obscure way, laden with neologisms, appear to do so to create an air of false profundity to impress their readers. The Emperor's new clothes! It is surely one of the greatest indictments of present-day sociologists that they not only tolerate but are impressed by obscurantism of this kind. The instances of 'gobbledgook' selected for display in the last issue of *Figurations* are prime exhibits in the case. And, let's face it, they are – in their own idiosyncratic way – as 'conventional' as can be.

The march towards *more reality-congruent* knowledge (for those of us who still believe in the time-honoured notion of 'reality') will proceed at a faster pace if we speak and think clearly, and remember that all knowledge involves *communication* with others.

Stephen Mennell

■ HOMO CLAUSUS RIDES AGAIN

It is sometimes said that Norbert Elias's repeated onslaughts on *homo clausus* thinking, and more generally on the mainstream of Western philosophy, is outmoded because everyone now knows how erroneous they were. The announcement of the 2011 Mangoletsi Lectures in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Leeds shows how relevant Elias's denunciations still remain. The lectures

were given on 16–24 May 2011, on the subject of 'Other Minds' by a leading British philosopher, Jane Heal – Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge – and the blurb given for them shows how far philosophers continue to perform the ancient round dance that they have danced for the last two and half thousand years. It reads:

Other Minds

What is it to think of something one is confronted with as a person, rather than as merely a very complicated physical object? And when we judge what others think or feel, how do we form our views? These lectures will contrast two possible answers to these questions. The first – the 'theory' view – holds that grasp and use of psychological concepts is a matter of being able to deploy a distinctive theory. The second – the 'imagination' view – holds that grasp and use of psychological concepts is a matter of being able to put oneself in others' shoes, by using one's imagination in an appropriate way. The lectures will try to bring out the strengths of the second view and will explore some implications and corollaries of it.

■ THE DEATH OF GADDAFI: A RETROSPECT

Bruce Mazlish

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The battered dead body of Colonel Gaddafi has been on view in all its ghastly details. Rejoicing is almost everywhere. The picture of his bloodied face will probably not become as iconic as that of another dictator, Mussolini, dangling upside down from a rope. It will undoubtedly join the gallery of tyrants overthrown and killed in a butcher-like manner.

Should we all be rejoicing? I think not. Once again, as with Osama bin Laden, instead of being captured and put on trial by the International Criminal Court, which had put him on its list, vengeance rather than justice has taken place. International law has not advanced an iota. Violence on the part of Gaddafi has been answered by equally lawless violence.

What should have happened? The answer is that he should have been taken alive, instead of suffering something like a lynching, however deserved. Then he should have been put on trial, to show the world that his captors were not as cruel as he was. And to show the world that humanity has moved on a step towards peace and justice.

Norbert Elias wrote in his book, *The Civilizing Process*, that starting around the fifteenth century in Europe violence by individuals was increasingly seen as barbarous, and to be abandoned in favor of more peaceful behavior. Indeed, the institution that could make sure that this was the path taken was the growing absolute monarchies of the time. The use of violence was now to be restricted to the state.

Legal institutions and a code of law were to serve as the means for carrying out this policy. A giant step took place in humanity's quest for greater peace and justice, at least within the state. Violence among states, as we well know, was hardly mitigated, even by the attempts at establishing international law. Yet the seeds were sown here for exactly that end.

It was from these seeds that trials such as the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–46 grew. Here the focus was on both war crimes and crimes against humanity. In an extraordinary step, aggressive war was declared a crime, thereby renouncing such use of force for the first time in humankind's long history. The importance of this change in attitude can hardly be exaggerated. A 'Judicial Revolution', as I have called it, has taken place, as important as any revolution before it. From the Nuremberg Trials through the Yugoslav and Rwanda Trials to the ICC, humanity has looped toward a more sovereign international law. 'Crimes against humanity' has taken on increased meaning and power.

The judicial revolution has taken place alongside a long-term decline in violence. To look at newspaper headlines you would think that the opposite were true. In fact, since the First and Second World Wars, no

European war has taken place; France and Germany are now linked inside a European Union, and war between them is unthinkable, as it is among all the other members.

This state of affairs does not preclude ethnic and religious clashes in some parts of the EU. Such clashes take place within an individual country. This is true worldwide, with a few exceptions such as the recent war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. That exception proves the rule. It must be conceded that unfortunate Africa is still the scene of numerous tribal episodes of violence (with perhaps the Balkans as another example).

Such exceptions must not obscure the big picture that wars have decreased over time. In our own time, there has been the Cold War. What is noteworthy is that it did not degenerate into a hot war. This was partly owing to the possession by both superpowers of nuclear weapons. Although the two sides came perilously close to using them, that awful destruction did not take place. In a sort of irony, the very weapons that made possible the most violent of exchanges made such an outcome 'unthinkable'.

In a forthcoming book, Ian Morris is giving depth and detail to some of what I have been saying. Here he marshals the facts and figures that I have been skimming over. He makes his case in a conclusive manner. It is a book that needs to be read in conjunction with Elias's work.

So, too, must Stephen Pinker's *Better Angels*, which, basing itself on Elias's theories plus more recent work in evolutionary psychology, makes a very persuasive case that violence and war have been declining in a significant way over the centuries. Pinker also makes the case for the Enlightenment and its values as playing a major role in this trend.

If mass war is declining almost to the vanishing point, is terrorism taking its place? With George W. Bush's fear-mongering call for a 'War on Terror,' it would almost seem so. If we cast aside his ignorance and demagoguery, we can see that the

Al Qaeda-type terror is better understood as 'crimes against humanity.' This is the conclusion of the eminent international jurist, Antonio Cassese, in his exhaustive article, 'The Multifaceted Criminal Notion of Terrorism in International Law.' (Lamentably, Cassese died on 22 October, 2011.)

The overall decline in violence and war has an ironic twist to it. As noted earlier, war has played an extraordinary role in human history. It has led to larger and larger social groupings. The largest such grouping, now painstakingly emerging, is that of Humanity. This category offers an identity open to all humans, and while not doing away with lesser identities such as a national one, transcends them.

In the past, as I have argued, it was war that led most readily to such larger groupings. The growth and deepening of the ties of Humanity in principle means an extension of peace and justice. It appears contradictory to appeal to war to achieve this end. If not war, or a similar catastrophe, how is that end to be achieved? Will the threats of climate change and ecological exhaustion take the place formerly occupied by war?

On this note, it is time to return to the death of Gaddafi. The way of his demise does nothing to advance the trend to lessened violence and war. It contributes nothing to the advance of international jurisprudence. In fact, it sets back that advance. We are returned to the barbarity of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Surely, humanity has come a long way from such simple 'justice.' The manner of Gaddafi's death should remind us how far we must still go.

■ CAS WOUTERS ON THE CONCEPT OF 'GOOD SOCIETY'

In response to some queries from Hans Joas, Cas Wouters wrote these remarks on the concept of a 'good society', which plays a much bigger part in the work of Elias than is usually noticed:

The precise meaning of 'good society' and the difference between regulations and practices are research questions because the answers will differ in different societies; and they change, for instance when new groups emancipate and become integrated in society and via representation in 'good society'.

1 I have written that 'my data are restricted to the strata and people identifying with the established, with good society', and that both authors and readers of manners books direct themselves at the code of good society, they identify with the established, thus again and again representing larger numbers of people from more and more layers of society. The code of 'good society' is the dominant code because it is cherished and defended by people in the dominant centres of power and it represents all those groups and strata that are integrated in society at large. This means that they at least pay lip service to this code in a similar way as they may pay lip service to the law. It also means that the code as well as the lip service change when new groups emancipate and integrate, or when their balance of power changes. In looking at the beginning of the twentieth century, it would not be wise to generalise the codes of good society (as formulated in manners books) to more that say ten percent of the total population, but this ten per cent was dominant; and, without adopting their manners and sensibilities, there was little or no chance of social success. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this percentage is much higher – say 80 per cent in the Netherlands and 60 per cent in the USA, but these numbers are just guesses. They depend on the level of social integration.

2 The difference between regulations and practices varies and changes together with changes in the balance

of power and controls. Therefore, it is wise not to take any meaning of ‘good society’ for granted, nor to suppose a static or fixed relationship between regulations and practices.

The practices of social mobility usually do not differ much from their regulations, for these regulations of making and breaking reputation at social gatherings such as dinners and parties *are* also practices that cannot easily be avoided or surpassed. The chances of doing just that are greater in the USA, because that country has many competing good societies, so people may seek entrance in a rival ‘good society’ or in a different state. In a country such as the Netherlands, good society is homogeneous enough to make that almost impossible.

The practices of teenage sexuality may differ from their regulations: an example is paying lip service to the importance of an engagement but in fact living a *verkering*. But this lip service and the gap between practices and code has come to an end, for reasons that are elaborated in my ‘No sex under my own roof: comparing teenage sexuality in the USA and the Netherlands’ [forthcoming in the *Archives européennes de sociologie/ European Journal of Sociology*].

3 My sources were mostly manners books for reasons explicated in the section on manners books and the functions of ‘good society’, and also because this is a source and a genre that existed throughout the research period and beyond. These books can therefore be systematically studied. Youth magazines cannot. I think they only started advice sections in the 1960s and 1970s. I did use dating books because these books started appearing when the dating system was established.

4 I do not know the impact of manners books on people. The question is similar to the one I discussed under 2 above, the difference between regulations and practices. Because the authors of these books try to capture the dominant code and try to sell it on the market – where some sell millions – they formulate practices and ideals; but these ideals are real, not

made up by social researchers. They stem from a longing to identify with the established and to belong to their group, so they provide directions and motivations; and, particularly from historically comparing changes in these directions and motivations, it is possible to develop an understanding of the relations between manners books and social practices.

■ RESEARCH AT THE ELIAS ARCHIVE: PAPERS ON SPORT AND LEISURE

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From August to October 2011, I was granted a scholarship by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA) and the Norbert Elias Foundation for research at the archive in Marbach. I was especially interested in manuscripts, notebooks and other documents concerning Elias’s (and Eric Dunning’s) work on sport and leisure, and searched for any new aspects not addressed in the relevant publications. Most interesting to me were plans and manuscripts for ‘An essay on sport and violence’, which was obviously planned as a longer work than the paper on foxhunting published under that title. Elias intended to undertake – and partly realised – a comparative analysis of different sportisation patterns (of foxhunting, boxing, cricket, greyhound coursing) and a discussion of the transition from ‘rural’ to ‘modern’ sports in the course of the nineteenth century. Together with ‘The genesis of sport as a sociological problem (parts 1 and 2)’, the Introduction to *Quest for Excitement* and the published ‘Essay on sport and violence’ that would have made up for a ‘complete’ developmental history of sport from Ancient Greece up to early twentieth century. Furthermore, there are manuscripts of chapters for the planned book *The Making of Football*, mentioned in the ‘Note on the text’ to the new edition of *Quest for Excitement* (2008). Although I think Dunning and others have analysed the development and bifurcation of football convincingly (see for example Dunning and Sheard’s *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*,

1979), the archive material might be useful for anyone specifically interested in that. Another striking text is ‘The citizen of tomorrow at leisure’, a talk given in 1957. It contains not only central thoughts which were later elaborated in prominent papers (‘Quest for excitement in leisure’, ‘Leisure in the spare-time spectrum’), but it also links the analysis of sport and leisure with Elias’s writings on the arts. It takes up thoughts from ‘Kitschstil und Kitschzeitalter’ (1935), which can be traced further in *Mozart* and in a lecture given at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld in 1979, also available in Marbach, in the collection of Hermann Korte. Needless to say, there are many more interesting documents which cannot be mentioned here.

Apart from the specific findings, working with the archive material is an exciting experience, maybe even more for someone who could not know Elias in person. By following research and writing from the first notes on the literature and sketches in notebooks via several manuscript versions up to the published papers, one is able to see how his theories developed. They are a result of open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity and research carried out thoroughly – and not the thoughts of a genius which were ready from the outset. Brilliant, yes, but not magic. I found that quite inspiring and encouraging. In the same sense it was good to see that the doodles in Elias’s notebooks are no better than my own childish drawings. It makes him a more ‘realistic’ person. That impression is even stronger when listening to some of the radio interviews or the notes Elias took with a voice recorder. Maybe things like that allow some extra involvement, which might help to understand him better.

Finally some remarks on the working conditions at the DLA in general: its staff is always friendly and willing to help. Contents of the *Nachlass* are good to handle, everything is well documented and quickly accessible, including the audio documents. The library stock does contain the (German) Collected Works and some standard secondary literature but lacks English editions of Elias’s works and secondary

literature could be more extensive. As Hermann Korte informed me about who is visiting the archive, it was possible to arrange some interesting exchanges with colleagues over a cup of coffee. For those intending to stay for some weeks, I recommend accommodation in the *Collegienhaus* of the DLA: it is nearby, not too expensive and shared with international researchers from several disciplines, making up for a sociable and intellectually inspiring atmosphere.

NOTE: In response to Jan Haut's remark above, a set of the volumes so far published of the Collected Works in English has now been donated to the DLA library.

■ FIRST ISSUE OF *HUMAN FIGURATIONS*, JANUARY 2011



The first issue of the new online journal *Human Figurations* will be published by MPublishing, the imprint of the Scholarly Publishing Office at the University of Michigan, early in January. Although sponsored by the Norbert Elias Foundation, the journal is not intended to be exclusively Eliasian in content or in target audience. Rather, it is an interdisciplinary journal that seeks to promote, in the words of its subtitle or strapline, 'long-term perspectives on the human condition'. It aims to promote those qualities in terms of which Nico Wilterdink – in the supplement to this issue of *Figurations* – defines 'good sociology':

'It does not conceive human society as the sum of neatly demarcated and autonomous social sectors or spheres ... Nor does it conceive 'a society' as an autonomous and clearly bounded whole. Good sociology, in other words, seeks understanding of social processes by making wide-ranging interconnections, by viewing social processes within broad spatial and temporal contexts, including the context of historical developments of

which they are a part. This also means that good sociology does not separate 'micro' and 'macro' levels, and sees them as interwoven. ... [It] defines its field of study broadly; it does not draw sharp boundaries with the other social sciences, such as political science or cultural anthropology, nor with parts of the humanities (including history); and it is also open to insights from other sciences that are important for understanding human behaviour – such as, in particular, psychology and biology.'

The initial Editorial Board consists of:

Editor: Katie Liston
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Journal Manager: Clare Spencer
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Board Members

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- Jose Esteban Castro (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)
- Robert van Krieken (Dublin/Sydney)
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- Florence Delmotte (Brussels)
- Paddy Dolan (Dublin) – *Co-ordinating Reviews Editor*
- Stephanie Ernst (Hamburg)
- Tatiana Savoia Landini (São Paulo)
- Stephen Mennell (Dublin) – *Chairman*

Human Figurations will be published twice a year. The first issue contains a series of invited (but peer-reviewed!) essays by distinguished representatives of a range of disciplines, from earth science to musicology. The second issue (in July 2012) will be devoted to International Relations. But after that, the journal will be open to

general contributions, and readers of *Figurations* are urged to submit papers for publication from now onwards.

Contents of the first issue

Peter Burke – Norbert Elias and the social history of knowledge

Olle Edström – Elias and/or Adorno: a short personal reflection and perspective from a musicologist

Johan Goudsblom – Energy and civilisation

Joseph Maguire – Making sense of global sport: zones of prestige and established-outsider relations

Andrew Linklater – Long-term patterns of change in human interconnectedness: a view from International Relations

Gary Wickham and Barbara Evers – Elias in the footsteps of Hobbes?

Peter Westbroek – Civilising Earth

Book reviews

David Garland, *Peculiar Institution: America's Death Penalty in an Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010). Reviewed by: Jeffrey S. Adler, University of Florida, USA.

Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Reviewed by: Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Paul Seabright: *The Company of Strangers: A Natural History of Economic Life*, rev. edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Reviewed by: John Connolly, Dublin City University, Ireland.

Leonard Nevarez: *Pursuing Quality of Life: From the Affluent Society to the Consumer Society*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011). Reviewed by: Paddy Dolan, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland.

■ AND ANOTHER NEW ONLINE JOURNAL: CAMBIO

Almost simultaneously with the launch of *Human Figurations*, another journal sympathetic to the figurational approach has been launched: *Cambio*, which will publish articles in both English and Italian. It is edited by Paolo Giovannini and Angela Perulli, who write:



This electronic journal keeps its name from a Research Laboratory (CAMBIO) active in the Department of Sociology and Political Science (University

of Florence, Italy). It is on line twice a year. The subtitle *Review on Social Change* emphasizes central interests of the promoters (a group of scholars and researchers from various Italian universities) for the transformation processes that today affect individuals and society, nature and culture, local societies and global realities. It is not by chance that the first two numbers publish the best papers presented at a recent International Conference on Norbert Elias, a sociologist who has been one of the best interpreters of past and present societies. We will keep faith to this tradition in a totally secular and flexible way, hosting contributions of research and theoretical analysis in the social sciences – of every discipline and research approach. The review addresses a call to those who recognize their selves in the guidelines that we quickly traced, to submit their contributions and proposals, which will be promptly discussed and peer reviewed.

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■ IN THE MEDIA

Proof on Time?

‘Free from the tyranny of the clock, the tribe with no concept of time’ by Richard Alleyne, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 2011

This newspaper clipping was sent to us by Andrew Linklater, with the comment, ‘At last we have a proof for Elias’s theory of time!’ The *Daily Telegraph* reported on the Amazonian Amondawa tribe, which has been discovered to have no concept of time or dates. Professor Chris Sinha from the University of Portsmouth argues that he has finally been able to prove that time ‘is not a deeply entrenched universal human concept’ and it is possible to have a culture and language that does not treat the concept of time as something that can be measured or counted in abstract.

Steven Pinker, using Elias, widely reviewed

The distinguished Canadian social psychologist Steven Pinker, who teaches at Harvard, cites Elias very extensively in his acclaimed and widely reviewed new book, *The Better Angels of our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes* (New York: Viking, 2011). This must be one of the first major books to emanate from the USA that makes Elias’s work central to its thesis. Indeed, Pinker refers to Elias as ‘the most important thinker you have never heard of’ (p. 59). So much for several decades of our efforts to draw attention to Elias’s importance! And it has taken a major psychologist, not a sociologist, to ‘discover’ Elias in the USA.

Pinker’s casual comment appears justified in view of several of those who have reviewed the book in the newspapers having expressed surprise at the thesis that human beings have gradually become less, not more, violent over the course of long-term social development. What has the status of conventional wisdom among readers of *Figurations*, not to mention many other historians, criminologists and International Relations scholars still comes as a shock to many general readers.

■ CIVILISING AMERICA: TWO NEW BOOKS

In view of the remark by Steven Pinker just quoted above, it is reassuring that two recent books demonstrate the relevance of Elias’s ideas for understanding America and its culture. Both books are however, significantly, edited by European scholars in the burgeoning field of American Studies, in which Christa Buschendorf and Dietmar Schloss particularly have taken the lead. Here there is space only to list the contents of the two books, but both are highly recommended.

Christa Buschendorf, Astrid Franke and Johannes Voelz (eds), *Civilizing and Decivilizing Processes: Figurational Approaches to American Culture* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), viii + 334 pp. ISBN: 978 1 4438 2728 7.

This book arises from the conference on ‘Civilising and Decivilising Processes: A Figurational Approach to American Studies’ in Frankfurt in November 2007 (see *Figurations* 29). Contents:

Christa Buschendorf, Astrid Franke, and Johannes Voelz – Introduction 1

I American Civilizing Processes: Sociohistorical Perspectives

Stephen Mennell – The American Civilizing Process: A Skeptical Sketch 17
 Mary O. Furner – Ideas, Interdependencies, Governance Structures, and National Political Cultures: Norbert Elias’s Work as a Window on United States History 35
 Astrid Franke – Drinking and Democracy in the Early Republic 63
 Ruxandra Riidulescu – ‘Making Us Be Like Wasichus’: The Civilizing Process in Nineteenth-Century Indian Boarding Schools 87

II Challenges to the Civilizing Process

Rachel Hope Cleves – ‘Savage Barbarities!’: Slavery, Race, and the Uncivilizing Process in the United States 103
 Johannes Voelz – Regeneration and Barbarity: *Dred* and the Violence of the Civilizing Process 123

Loïc Wacquant – Decivilizing and Demoning: The Remaking of the Black American Ghetto 149

III Civilizing Projects? Approaching Literature with the Tools of Relational Sociology

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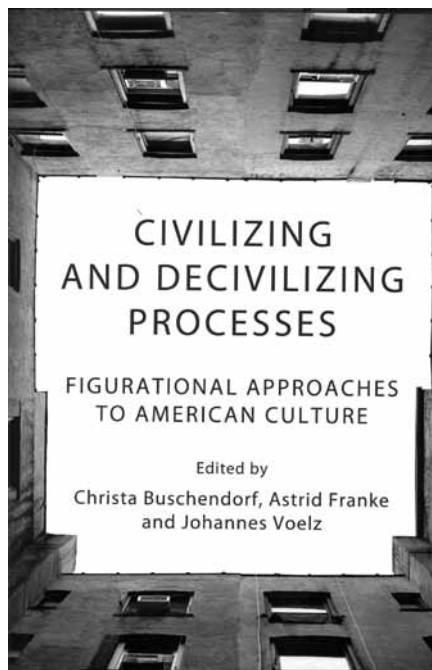
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Dietmar Schloss (ed.), *Civilizing America: Manners and Civility in American Literature and Culture* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), xxxiv + 360 pp. ISBN: 978 3 8253 5616 3.

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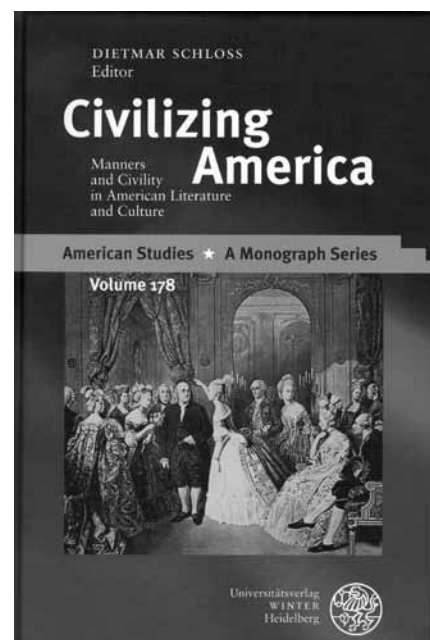
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■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Hermann Korte, *Eine Gesellschaft im Aufbruch: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den sechziger Jahren*. 2nd edn, Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009. 126 pp. ISBN: 978-3-531-16767-1.

The 1960s in Germany shared many characteristics – the student movement; demographic developments; informalisation; economic policy problems; changing power balances between rulers and ruled – with other West European states. But German society faced specific problems that came to the fore in the late sixties. The post-war period was characterised by a singular determination to build up the economy within the framework of parliamentary democracy.

At the beginning of the 1960s all German citizens began to reap the fruits of the ‘economic miracle’. They began to travel in their vacations to Southern Europe, while ‘guest workers’ from that part of Europe were engaged to replace them in unpleasant work. The post-war period during which the crimes of the Nazi past were repressed by concentrating on economic growth

came to an end. For many young people, especially students, established politics and political parties were no longer acceptable. Economic considerations for them no longer had a high priority. Moral questions about past and present were much more important to them. German society as it developed after 1945 began to break up.

Hermann Korte first published his book 24 years ago, in 1987, when the 1960s were already nearly forgotten. In the public image they were identified with 1968, with the student movement and their excesses (the RAF), but Korte argues that the political and intellectual upheavals of the time can only be properly understood on the basis of a long-term perspective as developed by Norbert Elias. Because an exhaustive treatment of this development was not possible, he chose the form of four interconnected essays. Not being an expert on the *Bundesrepublik*, I found his essays quite illuminating.

The first essay deals with the transition from (post-war) restoration to reform, in which Korte concentrates on the rise of an opposition movement

outside parliament (APO: *Aussen Parlamentarische Opposition*), in reaction to the so-called Grand Coalition government of Christian and Social Democrats. The APO was intellectually inspired by Marxism, critical theory and the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, and spread more widely because of opposition to the war in Vietnam. The second essay deals with a more specific subject: education (*Bildung*). Korte sees a development from education as a privilege to a right for every citizen – and by extension to immigrant children. The third analyses a theme shared by all other West European societies – and the United States: the liberation of sexuality from social constraints. Korte elaborates on informalisation (Wouters) and deals also with the rise of feminism. The last essay deals with the need for reform of economic policy in the transformed society of the *Bundesrepublik* in the sixties.

Having followed the events and developments Korte described and analysed in his four essays at the time as an interested newspaper reader, I remember the importance of the sixties

for German society quite well. At the time – as also in Holland, for obvious reasons – they were written about and discussed from a strongly involved and emotional perspective. Korte provides a more detached perspective as a necessary correction. The first essay in particular would merit an English translation.

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh
Den Haag

David Ledent, *Norbert Elias: Vie, œuvre, concepts*. Paris: Éditions Ellipses, 2009. 125 pp.

Ledent's *Norbert Elias* is firstly, and explicitly, dedicated to students and French-speaking public at large. Conceived as an introduction to Elias's thought, this short book aims at presenting Elias's main pieces of writing and concepts. The objective is above all to make people want to read Elias, who is described in Ledent's introduction as a great theorist but also as 'charming', moving, scientific. The first chapter is thus dedicated to an 'essential biography' based on the famous autobiographical *Norbert Elias über sich selbst*. It gives the reader an

overview on Elias's life and links to the twentieth century's tragic features. These are supposed to shed light on the hesitations running through all the work and partly characterising it. Its intention is very relevant (and quite unusual in a handbook), but it sometimes sounds a bit naïve sometimes.

The second chapter summarises the main ideas of the most important writings that have been translated into French. Ledent divides them in three fields: 'historical sociology' (*The Court Society, The Civilizing Process*), 'epistemology' (*What is Sociology?, Involvement and Detachment*) and 'practical studies' (*Established and Outsiders, An Essay on Time, The Loneliness of the Dying, Quest for Excitement, Mozart*). Of course the goal is here to give a broad outline of the main themes, and Ledent succeeds pretty well in presenting them without too much reductionism. However one can maybe deplore that a 'continuist' way of thinking is reduced in a quite static, analytical way, by isolating historical sociology (all sociology is in itself historical in Elias's work!) and 'separating' – even if only pedagogically – epistemology from more empirical studies. It is also

astonishing that Ledent does not talk about *The Society of Individuals*, a book that precisely demonstrates in its different three parts from the 1930s to the 1980s the comprehensive way of thinking championed by figurational and process sociology. Surprisingly too *The Germans* is only referred to later, in connection with *decivilization* – and that could contribute to neglect of the socio-political *present* relevance of Elias's work (about balances of power and conflicts, nationalisms and post-national integration, for instance), which is undoubtedly specific and directly 'useful' to know about for students and *l'homme de la rue*. Chapter 3 comes back to conceptual 'fundamentals' of civilizing process theory and figurational theory in a genealogical and prospective perspective. Ledent points out and insists on the legacy from Max Weber's (indeed almost too much, even if I do agree!), especially about modern state formation, but also on Elias's conception of sociology, and on links between the theory of civilisation and the theory of rationalisation, critical theory and the Frankfurt School. He also more traditionally underlines the deep influence of Freud's psychoanalysis, and convincingly shows how Elias succeeded in combining Tocqueville and Marx's teaching. He then deals with the work's reception in France, evoking the obvious interactions with Bourdieu's sociology, the specific role played by the historian Roger Chartier and current perspectives. It also stresses conflicts of interpretations, avoiding a celebratory, uncritical tone, and efficiently deconstructs classical misunderstandings, such as the criticism advocated by Hans Peter Duerr about the supposed crude evolutionism advocated by Elias that simply doesn't exist, and represents the accuser as a sort of Don Quixote. Once again, in few pages and using a simple vocabulary, Ledent does his job quite well.

Ledent ends up coming back to ambivalences and ambiguities that deeply mark Elias's thought, which precisely make it open and stimulating. The book also offers a timeline placing Elias, his life and his work in relation twentieth-century



landmarks, and a short bibliographical selection mainly – but not exclusively – focusing on French writings. A bit disappointing is the too short ‘specific glossary’ that defines some typical notions articulating sociology and psychoanalysis (*habitus*, self-restraints, *curialization* ...).

At the end, French-speaking readers of Elias and of *Figurations* obviously won’t learn much reading Ledent’s book. Nevertheless, it could be argued that it is good for a society-oriented sociology to be diffused as widely as possible, and to be popularised – in the best sense of the term.

Florence Delmotte
FUSL, Brussels

Adham Saouli, ‘Hizbullah in the civilising process: anarchy, self-restraint and violence’, *Third World Quarterly*, 32: 5 (2011), pp. 1–18.

Abstract: This study builds on Norbert Elias’s ‘civilising process’ theory to examine when, how and why Lebanon’s Hizbullah exercises self-restraint or violence in its political interactions. As opposed to studies that focus on how Hizbullah’s ideological goals determine its political behaviour, this article argues that Hizbullah’s political conduct should be understood by locating the Islamic party at the crossroads of war-making with Israel and state-making in Lebanon. Hizbullah’s aim to minimise its vulnerability to Israel led it to rationalise its behaviour in Lebanon by exercising self-restraint and by remoulding its ideology. However, as the political divide in Lebanon has sharpened and the state there weakened, Hizbullah has advanced to fill the void by employing state-like measures, including violence.

Norman Gabriel and Stephen Mennell (eds), *Norbert Elias and Figurationnal Sociology*, Sociological Review Monograph (Oxford: Wiley–Blackwell, 2011). vi + 265 pp.

The recently published volume in the Sociological Review Monograph series, edited by Norman Gabriel

and Stephen Mennell is an up to date addition to the growing body of international research flowing from Elias’s thinking. This collection of original papers, says the blurb on the back of the book, ‘represents the scope and vitality of figurational or process sociology, spanning the first and second generation of scholars concerned with both Elias’s own work and its application and extension to other areas of research. Representing the best of the Eliasian research tradition, it is theoretical and empirical in orientation, focusing on the international and multi-disciplinary implications of his work.’

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Norman Gabriel and Stephen Mennell

2 Three faces of civilization: ‘In the beginning all the world was Ireland.’
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4 Entropy, the anthroposphere and the ecology of civilization: An essay on the problem of ‘liberalism in one village’ in the long view
Stephen Quilley

5 Norbert Elias’s post-philosophical sociology: from ‘critique’ to relative detachment
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6 Towards a process-oriented methodology: modern social science research methods and Norbert Elias’s figurational sociology
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7 How civilizing processes continued: towards an informalisation of manners and a third nature personality
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8 Sport and leisure
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9 A land of a hundred thousand welcomes? Understanding established and outsiders relations in Ireland
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10 Norbert Elias and developmental psychology
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11 Norbert Elias, the civilizing process and penal development in modern society
John Pratt

12 Meetings: the front-line of civilization
Wilbert van Vree

Irem Özgören Kinli, Figurational analysis of imperial festivals and of Ottoman elite entertainments (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries). Unpublished doctoral thesis, Sorbonne, 2011.

This thesis attempts to highlight the possibility of understanding the dynamics of changing sensibilities of the Ottoman elite with reference to Norbert Elias's methodology as developed in *The Court Society* and *The Civilizing Process*. In this perspective, the theoretical tools of Norbert Elias allow us to give particular attention to the study of specific dynamics of the Ottoman court as the representative body of social structures in the imperial strategy. Thus, we have focused our research on the changing function of imperial festivities following the political, economic and administrative in the nineteenth century. Within the framework of this thesis, we studied the spatial dimension of the festivities, the display of conspicuous consumption during the festivals and festive rites. After analysing the Ottoman court as a centre of development for the social codes, we focused our analysis on the socio-historical model of the civilising process in order to study the transformation of representative dynamics of the Ottoman society. Our objective was to question the relationship between the social and psychic development of Ottoman society in the process of consolidating the central authority of the Empire. Inspired by the example of Norbert Elias, we attempted to assess changes of the Ottoman elite's manners in the socio-historical process of bureaucratisation of the Ottoman state. The doctoral degree was awarded with the highest honours. For readers who were present at the figurational sessions at the IIS congress in Budapest in June 2008 it will come as no surprise that some of the illustrations in Irem's thesis caused a minor sensation; we reproduce below (discretely small) the one about how to have sex with a camel. ▼



Johan Heilbron, *But what about the European Union of Scholars?* 29th Uhlenbeck Lecture, 9 June 2011 (Wassenaar: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, 2011).

ABSTRACT: Among the existing analyses of European integration, there is a noticeable dearth of research by scholars into their own modes of association. That is not because the subject is unworthy of attention. Aside from a single market and a political union, European institution building has unmistakably extended into the domain of scholarship and science as well. This emerging field of transnational research is often depicted as the continuation of a European tradition of higher learning, exemplified by medieval universities and early modern academies. But the time-honoured European heritage also includes the counter-force of rival nation states and distinctly national academic systems. How, against this ambiguous historical background, has the current process of European integration affected the world of scholars? What patterns of exchange and collaboration have emerged? And how do these relate to developments in other parts of the world?

Johan Heilbron, Jochem Verheul and Sander Quak, 'Aandeelhouders eerst!: De opkomst en verspreiding van "aandeelhouderswaarde" in de

Verenigde Staten' [Shareholders first! The rise and diffusion of 'shareholder value' in the US], *Sociologie*, 7:1 (2011), pp. 21–42.

Although much has been written about the conception of 'shareholder value', its rise and spread have not been properly researched. In this article we use public sources such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the journal *Institutional Investor* to examine when and how the concept of shareholder value arose and spread in the United States. From an economic sociological perspective both the rise and spread of 'shareholder value' can be understood as a function of the changing power and dependency relations in which firms are embedded. The deep economic recession around 1980 led to a crisis in the prevailing management beliefs, offering newcomers the opportunity to promote alternative business models in which the shareholder value conception became dominant. The spokesmen of the new business model were originally wealthy outsiders, corporate raiders, who used the economic crisis to acquire



Cas Wouters and Stephen Menell were among the audience at Irem's thesis defence, and can be seen celebrating with her afterwards. ▲

shares in undervalued firms under the threat of restructuring and selling them, either in parts or as a whole. These controversial ‘hostile’ takeovers were accompanied by a sharp critique of established management, which would compromise shareholders’ interests, whereas maximizing shareholder value should be the only objective of managing firms. Under the Reagan administration, the lucrative operations of corporate raiders gradually became a more legitimate type of investor behaviour for public pension funds. These funds had few ties to the established management and they considered themselves disadvantaged because often only corporate raiders profited from the advertised takeovers, while other shareholders did not. The tensions between raiders and public pension funds led to the organization of public pension funds, and the newly founded Council of Institutional Investors (1985) immediately became a leading player. Because managers found profitable ways to adapt to the new balance of power, the shareholder value ideology rapidly spread through the economic field with the result that from the mid-1980s onwards, the alliance between top managers and large shareholders around the creation of shareholder value became the dominant business strategy of North American firms.

Thomas Franssen and Giseline Kuipers, ‘Overtloed en onbeheer in de mondiale markt voor vertalingen Nederlandse redacteuren in het transnationale literaire veld’ [The embarrassment of riches in the global market for translations: Dutch editors in the transnational literary field], *Sociologie*, 7: 1 (2011), pp. 67–93.

This article analyses the practices of Dutch literary editors involved in the acquisition of translation rights for English fiction. Combining neo-institutionalist and field theory we show how editors cope with three main problems in the acquisition of new books: excess of new titles; uncertainty over the nature and quality of new titles; and strong competition. They manage these challenges through decentralized organization, trust in their (transnational) network and their own

expertise, and building symbolic capital through the catalogue. The catalogue, especially, is an important means of communication, and simultaneously a marker of status and identity, in the transnational literary arena. The focus on these catalogues, however, along with the constant reliance on information from others, leads to increasing isomorphism between national fields.

Ryan Powell, ‘Spaces of informalisation: Playscapes, power and the governance of behaviour’, *Space and Polity*, 14: 2 (2010), pp. 189–206.

Geographers have contributed a great deal towards an understanding of social control across different spaces and the ways in which power is exercised in the interests of elite groups to the detriment of marginalised ‘Others’. Little attention however, has been given to de-controlled spaces: spaces where the standard of conduct expected of previous generations is no longer as rigid and formalised as it once was. This paper draws on the work of Norbert Elias and Cas Wouters in exploring how previously prohibited behaviours become admissible within particular social situations, groups and settings: a process known as informalisation. The informalisation thesis posits that a long term perspective can elucidate the ways in which gradual changes in expected standards of behaviour are linked to corresponding changes in social habitus and the power differentials that characterise the social relations between elite and outsider groups. The paper contends that a revision of the sociological concept of informalisation, emphasising spatial context and difference can contribute a great deal to debates in human geography. It is argued that the spatialisation of Elias’s work could provide a useful theoretical framework with which to enhance the geographer’s understanding of the relationship between group identities, power, social change and governance. Conversely, a focus on the spaces of informalisation may also advance the theory from a sociological perspective. The theory is applied to specific playscapes and highlights the uneven, problematic nature of contemporary

governance projects and the related problem of social misdiagnoses in the quest towards the non-antagonistic city.

J. Flint and R. Powell, “‘They sing that song’”: Sectarianism and conduct in the informalised spaces of Scottish football’, in D. Burdsey (ed), *Race, Ethnicity and Football: Persistent Debates and Emergent Issues* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.191–206.

Jan Haut, *Soziale Ungleichheiten in Sportverhalten und kulturellem Geschmack: Eine empirische Aktualisierung der Bourdieuschen Theorie symbolischer Differenzierung*. [Social inequalities in sports and cultural taste: an empirical actualisation of Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic distinction] (Münster: Waxmann, 2011). 259 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8309-2476-0 [PhD thesis, Universität Saarbrücken]

This book is a theoretical and empirical study of changing patterns of social inequalities in cultural taste, lifestyle and sport activity. It addresses a strand of criticism particularly popular within German sociology, according to which the impact of social inequalities has declined in general and especially within sports. In contrast to that, the author follows a more complex approach to social stratification, leaning to the theoretical framework developed by Pierre Bourdieu, most prominently in *Distinction*. After a critical discussion of Bourdieu’s theory, its ability to explain current patterns of cultural taste and sport activity is assessed by applying it to recent data. The latter is based on surveys conducted in Saarbrücken and Southwestern Germany (N=760; 2004–7), featuring two questionnaires: one focusing on sports activity, motivation, organisation, preferred disciplines, etc.; the other, resembling the instrument used for *Distinction*, dealing with cultural practices and lifestyle preferences. The analysis also follows Bourdieu methodologically, using correspondence analysis to figure out relations between social positions and preferences in different fields. Results on cultural practices show that the impact of social inequalities is varies across different fields. While class is still the main

structuring principle in areas like classical music, arts or furniture, it seems less relevant in film or pop music, which seems to be influenced foremost by age and gender differences. The field of sports shows complex patterns: Indeed, some 'traditional' inequalities concerning access to sports have decreased, as formerly under-represented groups like women and elder people are participating more and more actively. However, class, age and gender differences still structure the specific forms of sport activity, such as the preferred disciplines, types of organisation, reasons for and aims of the activity, and so on. Thus Haut concludes that social inequalities have by no means become insignificant, neither in general nor for sports in particular, but the ways in which they affect cultural and sports practices are continuously changing. Bourdieu's approach still provides a sound framework for empirical analysis, but its fallacies and limitations – which are also critically mentioned by the author – have to be addressed, too.

[See, elsewhere in this issue of *Figurations*, Jan Haut's report on his research on Elias's manuscripts on sport and leisure in the archive at Marbach: Dr Haut is an Eliasian as well as a Bourdieuan! – eds.]

Christopher Powell, *Barbaric Civilization: A Critical Sociology of Genocide*. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011) 368 pp. ISBN: 9780773538566.

BLURB: Why have the largest mass murders in human history taken place in the past hundred years? And why have European colonizers, bearers of Enlightenment ideals of universal humanity, so often denied the humanity of the people they have colonized? Building on Elias's work, *Barbaric Civilization* traces the connections between state formation and habitus in the civilizing process to advance a radical thesis: that civilisation produces genocides.

Since the early twelfth century, the Western civilizing process has involved two interconnected transformations:

the monopolisation of military force by sovereign states, and the cultivation in individuals of habits and dispositions of the kind that we call 'civilized'. The combined forward movement of these two processes channels violent struggles for social dominance into symbolic performances of distinction. But even as the civilizing process frees its privileged subjects from the threat of direct physical force, violence accumulates behind the scenes and at the margins of the social order, kept there by a deeply habituated performance of dominance and subordination called 'deferentiation'. When deferentiation fails, interdependency becomes impunity, difference becomes dangerous, and genocide becomes possible.

Using a deconstructed reading of Elias's account of the civilizing process, and discussing examples ranging from thirteenth century Languedoc to 1994 Rwanda, *Barbaric Civilization* offers a wholly original framework for analysing, comparing, and discussing different genocides as variable outcomes of a common underlying figuration. This analysis raises unsettling questions about the contradictions of Western civilization and the possibility of a world without genocide.

Laurent Mucchielli, 'Are we Living in a More Violent Society?: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Interpersonal Violence in France, 1970s–Present', *British Journal of Criminology*, 50 (2010), pp. 808-829.

ABSTRACT: This text suggests a general sociological model to interpret the development of violent behaviours in interpersonal relationships, based on the French case. An original synthesis of various types of data is used: police and judicial statistics, victimization and self-reported surveys, demographic and socio-economic data. The model links together five processes at work in French society: a societal process of pacification; a political and legal process of criminalisation; a process of judiciarisation of everyday life conflicts; a socio-economic process of competition for consumer goods; and a process of economic, social and spatial

segregation. This model also attempts to link many theoretical contributions that have shaped the history of sociology and criminology. [Laurent Mucchielli is affiliated to the Centre Norbert Elias, Marseille.]

David M. Matsinhe, 'Africa's fear of itself: the ideology of Makwerekwere in South Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 32: 2 (2011), pp 295–313.

ABSTRACT: Since the collapse of apartheid, the figure of Makwerekwere has been constructed and deployed in South Africa to render Africans from outside the borders orderable as the nation's bogeyman. Waves of violence against Makwerekwere have characterised South Africa since then, the largest of which broke out in May 2008 in the Johannesburg shantytown of Alexander. It quickly spread throughout the country. The militants were black citizens who exclusively targeted African foreign nationals, with some witnesses reporting grotesque scenes of sadistic behaviour. So far these violent spurts have been described as xenophobia, overlooking the history of colonial group relations in South Africa. From the perspective of this article, the history of colonial group relations cannot be overlooked, for the relations between citizens and non-citizens are extended shadows of this history. I argue that, rather than rushing to characterise these relations as xenophobia, we should factor in the history of colonial group relations and the extent to which the post-apartheid ideology of Makwerekwere and South Africa's 'we-image' vis-à-vis the rest of Africa may bear the imprints of this history.

John Lever, Urban regeneration partnerships: a figurational critique of governmentality theory, forthcoming in *Sociology* 45: 1 (2011), pp. 86–101.

ABSTRACT: This paper provides a critique of governmentally inspired accounts of urban regeneration and partnership working under New Labour. Drawing on the work of Norbert Elias and prominent figurational sociologists, the paper discusses the changes taking place *within* and *through* the many

partnerships set up by New Labour around the notion of ‘community safety’. Whilst recognising the important insights that have emerged through governmentality studies of urban regeneration over recent decades, the paper claims that such accounts fail to adequately consider the impact of partnership working on the individuals, communities and organisations involved. Drawing attention to a managerial agenda that compels partnership managers to deliver New Labour’s crime and disorder reduction agenda at the expense of community concerns, the paper compares the institutional regimes emerging around urban regeneration partnerships to royal courts in an insightful and illuminating way. While the processes that emerged around royal courts had a wider civilising impact, the paper draws on empirical material from a case study of partnership working in the UK to demonstrate how these inauthentic governance structures are part of an extensive decivilising trend. Although urban regeneration partnerships have the potential to be the motor of the civilising process in the manner identified by figurational sociologists, Lever concludes that they are not currently living up to this civilising potential.

Fernando Ampudia de Haro, ‘Gerir a dissidência: vencedores e vencidos na Espanha franquista [Managing dissent: winners and losers in Franco’s Spain’], *Análise Social*, XLV, 194, 2010, pp. 91–113 (ISSN: 0003-2573)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to offer a general perspective on the ‘victor/defeated’ dichotomy as a result of the new power balance in the Spanish post-civil war. The power balance administration by the Francoist regime includes, inevitably, the ‘defeated’ management. First, this management is compared with other similar experiences in the Western European context. Second, the text describes the main procedures used by the Francoist regime for such management. Finally, it will be argued that the distinction ‘victor/defeated’ provides a sociological background to speak on the ‘Two Spains’

meta-historical metaphor as a social reality during the Francoism.

Fernando Ampudia de Haro, ‘A possibilidade da decivilização’ [‘The possibility of decivilisation’], *Sociologia. Problemas e Práticas*, 63, 2010, pp. 91–112. (ISSN: 0873-6529)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to propose a general approach to the concept of de-civilisation. This analysis is carried out in the framework of civilisation process theory defined by Norbert Elias. According to the author, processes of civilisation develop within a tension balance of centripetal–centrifugal forces that drive to major or minor levels of social integration. However, some doubts about an appropriate interpretation of the concept have been raised and, in this way, it has been interpreted as retrogression, regression or reverse of the civilisation process. Nevertheless, certain difficulties still persist within the theoretical frame of this discussion: The temporal aspect of de-civilisation; the possibility of decivilising processes in the long term and the comprehension of the decivilisation connected to the concept of social change handled by Norbert Elias and based on the logic of unintended consequences of the intentional action

Fernando Ampudia de Haro, ‘As duas repúblicas: Portugal (1910-1926) e Espanha (1931-1936): Ensaio de interpretação sociológica comparada’ [Two republics: Portugal (1910–1926) and Spain (1931–1936): a comparative sociological essay’], *Comunicação e Cultura*, 9, 2010, pp. 123–43. (ISSN: 1646-4877)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to offer a comparative approach to the Portuguese and Spanish republican periods. This analysis is carried out in the framework of figurational sociology defined by Norbert Elias. According to this, the advent of the republic led to a new power balance in Spain and Portugal, which provoked different reactions depending on the social group considered. Some of these reactions were expressed as a collective fear related to certain social definitions in terms of disorder or threats of social

disruption. In many cases, political, police and military authority were demanded as the unique and desirable solution to face the uncertainty and unpredictability expressed by some social sectors.

Fernando Ampudia de Haro, ‘La cultura de guerra franquista como pauta de regulación conductual y afectiva [Francoist war culture as a behavioural and emotional regulation pattern], *Annis: Revue de civilisation contemporaine Europes/Amériques - Université de Bretagne Occidentale*, 10, 2011. (ISSN: 1764-7193)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to analyse the war culture that has been constructed and transmitted through handbooks of good manners and civility published during the Francoist dictatorship. As I will sustain, war culture operates as an emotional and behavioural pattern, through which individuals would be socially integrated in a national community, sharing its values, beliefs and rules and establishing a radical difference from the emotional and behavioural patterns of those individuals who had been vanquished.

Fernando Ampudia de Haro, ‘Recivilizar España y Portugal: El arquetipo humano franquista y salazarista’ [Recivilising Spain and Portugal: the Francoist and Salazarist human model], *Revista de Historia Actual*, 8, 2010, pp. 15–29 (ISSN: 1697-3305).

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to analyse the Francoist and Salazarist human archetype in its national and social dimensions. The making of this archetype is related to the recivilising rationale of the two regimes, which is integrated in the European authoritarian–fascist wave during the 1930s and 1940s. This archetype is developed according to the contents of the civility and patriotic handbooks published under the Portuguese Estado Novo (1933–74) and the Spanish Nuevo Estado (1939–75) directives.

John Connolly and Paddy Dolan, 'The civilising and sportisation of Gaelic Football in Ireland, 1884–2009', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 23: 4 (2010), pp. 570–98.

ABSTRACT: Over the course of the last 125 years the sport of Gaelic football in Ireland has undergone a sportisation and civilising process as the rules governing the sport became stricter and players developed greater levels of self-control. However, the civilising of Gaelic football was a particularly fragile and uneven process. The growing social desire to diminish displays of violence was moderated by ambivalence towards violence. Gradually the external social controls on players increased and, greater and more stable levels of internalisation occurred reflected by more advanced levels of player self-restraint in the control of violence. At the same time the threshold of shame toward displays of violence advanced. This transformation was shaped by lengthening chains of social interdependencies in Ireland.

John Connolly and Paddy Dolan, 'Organisational centralisation as figurational dynamics: movements and counter-movements in the Gaelic Athletic Association', *Management & Organizational History*, 6: 1 (2011), pp. 37–58.

ABSTRACT: In this paper we develop aspects of Elias's figurational approach within organisational studies by using some of the core theoretical constructs as a model to explain organisational change through an empirical investigation of the dynamics of centralisation–decentralisation processes in an Irish sports organisation. Based on historical analysis, the paper documents the expanding interdependencies, figurational dynamics and shifting power balances which led to a gradual, non-linear movement towards greater integration and centralisation within the organisation.

Robert J. Lake 'Social class, etiquette and behavioural restraint in British Lawn Tennis, 1870–1939', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28: 6 (2011), pp. 876–94.

ABSTRACT: From the 1870s, lawn tennis developed a code of behavioural etiquette demanding on-court self-restraint, which notably influenced the development of particular playing strokes and styles. This paper explores the sport's historical development in Britain from 1870 to 1939, with its main aims: to document the changes in behavioural etiquette and playing style; to consider these interdependent developments in the context of shifting class relations in wider British society; and to examine the social and practical functions etiquette served for players. Evidence suggests that prohibitions against certain playing strokes up until the First World War were indicative of class anxiety among the socially aspirational upper middle classes who controlled lawn tennis, as certain playing styles conveyed seemingly an abhorrent 'working-class' competitiveness. Greater inclusion for lower-middle-class players during the inter-war years signalled a trend towards adopting a more 'professional' mentality, helping to relax behavioural controls in playing style around the world.

Guillaume Devin and Marie-Claude Smouts, *Les Organisations internationales* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2011), 253 pp.

BLURB: In a globalising world, multilateral activity represents the greatest part of foreign policy. All fields of human activity need now be considered at a global level. In order to respond to this need for international cooperation, international bodies tend to proliferate. Their numbers have skyrocketed and their shapes and names vary according to circumstances, themes and institutionalisation: one encounters for instance committees, groups, organisations, councils, etc. on the international scene. Every institution is singled out by its characteristics and the way it interacts with its members.

This book is a breakthrough in the understanding of international organisations for at least two reasons. It is the first book on international organisations written in French to choose a global approach to these actors. Moreover, considering international organisations as a major social phenomenon, the authors analyse the action of international organisations together with their interaction with the international system. They therefore propose a new way of reading the transformations of international relations. This social historical 'evolutionary' perspective revisiting the works of Norbert Elias places the game between actors at the heart of the analysis.

David Kettler, *The Liquidation of Exile: Studies in the Intellectual Emigration of the 1930s* (London: Anthem Press, 2011). ISBN: 9780857287939 (hb)

BLURB: In a series of focused studies related to the event that has generated the richest literature in exile studies – the intellectual exiles arising out of Nazi rule – this volume reconsiders a number of issues raised by that literature, notably the multiple, complex and changing negotiating processes and bargaining structures constitutive of exile, especially as the question of return interplays with the politics of memory.

T. N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Andrew Linklater comments: Bisson 'has some interesting reflections on court society (see esp. 438ff). The analysis seems close to Elias's but there is no reference to his major works.'

Richard Kilminster and Stephen Menzell, 'Norbert Elias', in George Ritzer and Jeffrey Stepnisky (eds), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists*, 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), II, Contemporary Social Theorists, pp. 13–43.

This is an updated and expanded version of the long essay written by Kilminster and Menzell for the first edition of the *Companion*, published in 2000.

Stephen Menzell, 'America through the one-way mirror', *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 48: 2 (2011), pp. 217–48 [special issue on 'Twenty-first Century America in Crisis']

ABSTRACT The crisis facing the USA in the early twenty-first century is interpreted in the light of Norbert Elias's theory of established-outsider relations, which leads to the proposition that unequal power ratios between social groups systematically distort the more powerful group's perceptions of the less powerful (as well as affecting the less powerful's perception of themselves and of the more powerful party). The relationship between the USA and the rest of the world is examined as the largest-scale established-outsider relationship. Particular attention is paid to the limited congruence with reality of American we-images concerning social mobility, economic inequality, economic prosperity, military might and political democracy. The rest of the world's they-image of the USA is also shaped by the USA's inadequately restrained use of its power – actions often founded in the distorting effects of unequal power balances. There is no obvious way of remedying these problems, and Elias's theory predicts that they will become more, not less, acute as America's relative power declines.

Nico Wilterdink, 'Omstreden wetenschap', *Sociologie* 7: 2 (2011), pp. 117–34.

This is the original Dutch text of the Wilterdink's farewell lecture upon retiring from his chair at the University of Amsterdam, which is published in English translation – 'Controversial Science' – as a supplement to this issue of *Figurations*.

Rengenier C. Rittersma (ed.), *Luxury in the Low Countries: Miscellaneous Reflections on Netherlandish Material Culture, 1500 to the Present* (Brussels: Pharo, 2010), 271 pp. ISBN: 978 90 5487 797 4.

Hovering in the background of this book is Elias's *The Court Society* (even though it is not cited in every contribution), as well as Sombart, Schama and other distinguished writers on luxurious lifestyles. This is a beautifully produced book with copious colour illustrations, and it will be of interest to many readers of *Figurations*.

■ BOOKS TO BE REVIEWED IN HUMAN FIGURATIONS

With the launch of the new online journal *Human Figurations*, extended reviews of books that we expect to be reviewed in the journal will no longer be published in the *Figurations* newsletter. But for the information of the newsletter's readers, we shall continue to list them here. Here is a first batch:

Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes* (New York: Viking, 2011). xxviii + 802 pp. ISBN: 978-1-846-14093-8 (hb); 978-1-846-14094-5 (pb).

David Garland, *Peculiar Institution: America's Death Penalty in an Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010).

Larry Ray, *Violence and Society* (London: Sage, 2011). 232 pp. ISBN: 978 184 787036 0

Ayshe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge, 2011).

Emmanuel Taïeb, *La guillotine au secret: Les exécutions publiques en France, 1870–1939* (Paris: Belin, 2011). 317 pp. ISBN: 978-2-7011-5696-5

Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2011). xiv + 306 pp. ISBN: 978-1-107-00443-6 (hb); 978-0-521-17984-3 (pb).

David Hansen-Miller, *Civilized Violence: Subjectivity, Gender and Popular Cinema* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), viii + 205 pp. ISBN: 978 1 4094 12258 8 (hb); 978 1 4094 1259 5 (ebook).

■ CAS WOUTERS BIBLIOGRAPHY

A full list of Cas Wouters's publications can be found at <http://caswouters.blog.com/>. The full text of many of his articles can now be downloaded from the University of Utrecht's Igitur website: see <http://tinyurl.com/Cas-Wouters-articles>.

■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

R. W. Kaeuper, 'Chivalry and the "Civilising Process"', in R. W. Kaeuper (ed.) *Violence in Medieval Society* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000).

This article considers the relationship between chivalry and violence in the light of Elias's analysis of the civilising process. The paper criticises Elias's account of low levels of internal restraint in the medieval world while emphasizing the highly mannered nature of noble society and the ambivalence of chivalry. 'Even an increasingly courteous chivalry', Kaeuper argues, 'was fully compatible with and partially responsible for the practice of armed self-help, vengeance and private war which knights carried on with enthusiasm for centuries; it formed no barrier to the highly destructive campaigning by the armies of powerful proto-states as England and France filled more than a hundred years of later medieval history with their costly and destructive warfare' (p. 25).

■ RECENT CONFERENCES

Launch of new British Sociological Association Study Group on 'Sociology, Psychoanalysis and the Psychosocial'

Birkbeck College, University of London, 28 October 2011

A new BSA Study Group of direct interest to readers of *Figurations* was launched at Birkbeck College in London on 28 October. Stephen Mennell opened the conference with a paper entitled 'Sociology needs an historical social psychology: Norbert Elias's final critique of Sigmund Freud', in which he summarised some of the main points of Elias's late essay on Freud, recently published in French. He was followed by Professor Michael Rustin of the University of East London, who drew on many years of practical experience of psychosocial research and practice, including at the famous Tavistock Institute, who explored the relationship between psychoanalysis and sociology from a viewpoint embedded in the British object-relations perspective. Later speakers were Professor Diane Reay (Cambridge), Professor Michael Roper (Essex) and Dr Tom Wengraf (East London).

Peter Redman – one of the study group's convenors – says that he 'expects process sociology to have a strong presence in the group's work'. Redman, who works in the Sociology Department at the Open University, set up the study group with Sasha Roseneil, Director of the Birkbeck Institute for Social Research and a Professor in Birkbeck's Department of Psychosocial Studies. Commenting on that decision, Roseneil says, 'We had a sense that "the psychosocial" is beginning to generate a lot of cross-disciplinary interest but felt that sociological voices – particularly those informed by psychoanalysis – have been surprisingly absent from those debates'. Encouragingly, the group has attracted a lot of support and attention. The original application to the BSA was sponsored by a range of high-profile sociologists, the group's inaugural meeting sold out in a matter of weeks, and membership – which currently

stands at around 80 – far exceeded the expectations of the group's instigators. Plans are now afoot to build on that early momentum with a series of further events and activities. As Redman and Roseneil put it, the series will have two main aims: the first 'to investigate the mutual constitution of social and psychic worlds', the second 'to explore the often difficult relationship between sociology and psychoanalysis'. Further details about the study group can be found at: <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/specialisms/SPP.htm>.

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Norbert Elias and Figural Sociology: Prospects for the Future

Copenhagen, 2–4 April 2012

The focus of this two-day conference will be on the development of figural sociology in relation to other disciplines. In *What is Sociology?*, Elias argues that sociology needs to develop new ways of 'thinking' about its relationship with other disciplines like biology and physics. But since that time, we have seen a rapid expansion of these academic disciplines, yet there has not been sufficient time to consider the theoretical implications of what this would mean for the future development of a figural sociology. The conference will address these issues by focusing on the following themes:

First day, based on the 'boundaries' and relationships between figural sociology and the following disciplines:

- 1) Politics
- 2) Economics
- 3) History
- 4) Psychology
- 5) Biology

Second Day, where there will be further discussion on the major themes that emerge from this 'boundary' work across disciplines, considering some of the strengths and limitations:

- 1) Survival Units
- 2) Organisational Sociology and Economic Sociology
- 3) Civilising Processes

- 4) Informalising Processes
- 5) The Expanding Anthroposphere

We look forward to seeing you in Copenhagen!

Lars Bo Kaspersen, University of Copenhagen – lbk@ifs.ku.dk
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Reinventing Norbert Elias: for an open sociology

Amsterdam, 22–23 June 2012

This conference aims to investigate the relevance of the figural or 'process sociology' of Norbert Elias for current sociological theory and research. The organising committee, consisting of social scientists from several Dutch universities and a renowned Australian expert, hope to attract scholars from around the world to join us in discussing and rethinking Norbert Elias's sociology for the twenty-first century. How can figural sociology contribute to current sociological debates? What is the place of Elias in today's social scientific landscape? How can the insights and concepts of figural sociology be developed further? Are Elias's critiques of mainstream sociology still valid? Is figural sociology a paradigm in itself, or rather a perspective to be used alongside others?

In recent decades, Norbert Elias has acquired a place in the pantheon of modern classical sociologists. His work is well known outside of the direct circles of his students, friends and collaborators in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. Many of Elias's insights have been incorporated in current sociological work. Elias is now recognised as pioneer in such divergent fields as relational sociology, historical sociology, the sociology of sports, culture, organisations, and emotions.

The conference will be held at the University of Amsterdam, where Elias spent the last decade of his long and productive life. The Netherlands

and the University of Amsterdam in particular, became an important international centre for figurational sociology. However, in the past decade, figurational sociology has lost its dominant position at the University of Amsterdam, increasingly becoming one paradigm among many.

For this conference, we have invited four plenary speakers: two young sociologists who have used Elias's work in new and creative ways, and two established scholars who are well-versed in process sociology. The conference will be preceded by a short intensive course on Elias and process sociology, which will be open to interested PhD candidates from the Netherlands and beyond. This course will be taught by renowned figurational sociologist Robert van Krieken (University of Sydney) in conjunction with Bart van Heerikhuizen (UvA). Professor van Krieken will also take part in the panel discussion at the end of the conference.

The paper sessions for this conference are organised around themes that are both central to the work of Elias, and at the heart of present-day sociological debates: sociology and history; bodies and biology; emotions and affect; and national habitus and cross-national comparison. Separate calls for papers for each of these topics can be found below.

Aims

- 1 Selected papers from this conference will be included in an edited book or a special issue of a journal.
- 2 The short intensive course preceding the conference is intended to attract and inform young researchers with an interest in figurational/process sociology and more generally in relational sociology.
- 3 By bringing together different ways of working with Elias's legacy, the conference seeks to arouse interest in new ways of using this legacy, among students and academics, and to specifically look for ways to link Eliasian sociology with current sociological debates. The aim is to contribute to the elaboration and

expansion of an open sociology: a broad and open approach, a preference for comparative and historical questions, mixed methods, an interest in the sociology of emotions, and a marked disregard of disciplinary boundaries.

4 Finally, we hope to strengthen, consolidate, and expand the international network of scholars with an interest in relational and process sociology.
Call for Papers, by theme

1 Sociology and History

Organisers: Marcel Hoogenboom (University of Utrecht) and Rineke van Daalen (Universitu of Amsterdam)

Almost without exception, the founding fathers of sociology put great emphasis on the importance of history in sociological analysis. Comte, Marx, Weber, Elias and even Durkheim – without hesitation all would have endorsed Norman Gottwald's maxim that 'history without sociology is blind, sociology without history is empty'. Yet after 1945, mainstream academic sociology did not give much attention to history, nor to long-term social change. Norbert Elias's historical sociological approach reconnected sociology to the dynamic classics and distanced itself from American functionalism.

For young sociologists in the 1970s, this came as a relief. The boundaries between sociology and history became more diffuse; historical sociology and social history bloomed. But in contemporary sociology, especially in the Netherlands, an historical perspective is virtually absent, and the distance between sociology and history has grown. At best, the development of a certain social phenomenon is treated as some kind of 'historical background' instead of seen as a fundamentally formative force and explanatory principle.

This session focuses on questions like: Do sociologists need history? Do sociologists and historians need each other? In what ways can sociologists incorporate history into their work?

What do they miss by 'hodiecentrism', restricting their research to static relations in the present? What could historical sociological analysis contribute to dominant debates in current sociology? Why has historical sociology become a relatively unimportant branch of sociological research and teaching?

2 Bodies and Biology

Organiser: Rogier van Reekum (University of Amsterdam)

Social scientific theorising and research have recently seen a marked increase in attention for bodily practices and processes. Parallel to that development, there has been a return of interest in biology: both regarding its impact on actual behaviour, and regarding the relationship between biology and long-term historical processes. This seminar aims to investigate the relevance of the body and biology for social science. Elias, for his part, developed a strong focus on bodily processes and the ways in which these were themselves transformed through (very) long-term processes. The control of the body is a major element in the civilising process. Elias stressed the embeddedness of habitus formation within wider chains of dependence and longer phases of change. How can appreciation of the bodily aspects of social practice and (very) long-term processes help us in our sociological theorising and research? If so, can insights from evolutionary biology be successfully utilised? We invite anyone working on these issues to submit a paper. We are open to both empirical research and theoretical explorations.

3 Emotions

Organisers: Christien Brinkgreve (University of Utrecht), Jacob Boersema (University of Amsterdam), Don Weenink (Wageningen University)

Emotions are a crucial part of social life, and in that respect also an important topic for sociology. Emotions are individually embodied but always embedded in social relations, referring to others, and formed in relations and interactions with others.

Emotions are also social in the sense that, in Arlie Russell Hochschild's terms, people use the 'feeling dictionaries' and 'feeling bibles' that are characteristic of the societies in which they live.

But emotions are elusive. How can sociologists give emotions the sophisticated attention they deserve? Which is their specific domain, the sociological niche between other disciplines, in the study of emotions? In the work of Norbert Elias emotions play a crucial role, and the way he connected relations and emotions has been very inspiring for a whole generation of sociologists. But his focus is on the social regulation of emotions.

In recent decades, there has been much research in psychology and the neurosciences that can be also useful for sociology. What insights from these disciplines are relevant for sociologists studying emotions? How can they incorporate these insights, particularly but not only with regard to the study of long-term social processes? We invite people working on these themes and issues to submit a paper – we are open to theoretical reflection and empirical research, with a preference for the combination of both.

4. Sociological comparison and national habitus

Organisers: Giselinde Kuipers (University of Amsterdam & Erasmus University Rotterdam) and Johan Heilbron (Erasmus University Rotterdam & Centre de sociologie européenne, Sorbonne-Paris)

National comparison has always been central to process sociology. In *The Civilizing Process*, Elias contrasted Germany and France, to better understand the dynamics of state formation and civilisation. Later, Elias's comparative approach was expanded to Europe, North America, and Asia. Similar social processes – state formation, civilisation, informalisation, globalisation – often develop and work out differently in different national contexts. Comparison, therefore, allows researchers to uncover underlying mechanisms of social processes.

National comparison also allows us to recognise and understand the specificities of different nations. In *The Germans*, Elias coined the notion of 'national habitus' to explain how, in the course of state formation, inhabitants of a particular nation become more similar in outlook and emotional make-up.

This panel invites both theoretical and empirical papers concerned with national comparative research from the perspective of figurational or process sociology. Especially in Europe, where large-scale quantitative comparative research has become the dominant form of social research, we feel process sociology can make a timely and critical contribution.

We are specifically interested in two issues. First, we are looking for papers engaging with national comparison in the current age of increasing globalisation and trans-nationalism. How do national contexts and trans-national processes interact and intersect? What do we compare when we compare nations in the twenty-first century? Second, we look to revitalise and expand the concept of 'national habitus'. How can we understand national difference and specificity not only at the level of institutions and processes, but also at the level of embodied, everyday practice?

CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in June 2012. News and notes should be sent to the Editors by 30 April 2012.

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