

# Figurations

## Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

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### ■ PEOPLE

• Johan Heilbron, having served for two four year terms as the part-time Norbert



Elias Professor, first at the University of Utrecht and then at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, has now taken up a permanent (though still part-time) chair at Rotterdam, with

responsibility to teach 'social science, in particular the study of long-term processes in the domain of economic institutions and organisations'. Johan also continues to hold his post at the Centre de Sociologie Européenne (CSE-CNRS) in Paris. For the advertisement for the new vacancy see page 13.

• Katie Liston has left the University of Chester and is now Lecturer in the



Social Science of Sport at the University of Ulster, based at the Jordanstown campus (which is just on the northern edge of Belfast).

Her new contact details are given on the back page. Katie is a big loss to the Chester Centre for Research on Sport and Society, where she was part of a team of figurational sports sociologists, but she is an equal gain to the University of Ulster. She is, of course, back on her native island, even if north of the line of partition.

• Abram de Swaan, University Professor Emeritus of Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam, was awarded the 2008 P.C. Hooft Prize for his literary essays. The prestigious prize of € 60.000 is named in honour of the famous Dutch poet P.C. Hooft. The presentation took place on 22 May, 2008.

## ■ IN THE MEDIA

• On 3 January 2008, the Australian television station SBS broadcast a fascinating report about cricket being promoted (by some West Indian immigrants) in south Los Angeles, explicitly as a ‘civilising’ influence to counteract the violent gang culture among young people there. Robert van Krieken sent us the video clip, which may possibly still be available on the SBS website.

• Under the characteristic heading ‘Elk antwoord ontlokt een nieuw waarom’ [Any answer raises a new question], a long interview with Johan Goudsblom appeared in *NRC Handelsblad*, 9 August 2008.

• In its *Geisteswissenschaften* supplement on 3 September 2008, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a column-length review of Stephen Mennell’s article ‘Auf Mythenjagd in Amerika’ (mentioned elsewhere in this issue of *Figurations*). To review journal articles, rather than books, appears to be a novel – and probably welcome – departure.

• In the *Wissen* supplement to the Zürich newspaper *Sonntag Zeitung* on 7 September 2008, the Swiss sociologist and now journalist Balz Spörri published a striking article headed ‘Schamlos’ – illustrated with some vivid pictures – on contemporary trends in behaviour and feelings of shame, drawing upon Elias.

## ■ FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

### Sixth Norbert Elias Prize

The sixth Norbert Elias Prize will be awarded in 2009. The Prize consists in a sum of € 1.000 and it will be awarded

to a significant *first* major book published *between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2008*. First-time authors from any part of the world are eligible for the award.

The Prize is awarded ‘in commemoration of the sociologist Norbert Elias (1897–1990), whose writings, at once theoretical and empirical, boldly crossed disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences to develop a long-term perspective on the patterns of interdependence which human beings weave together’. This does not mean, however, that the prize-winning book will necessarily be directly inspired by Elias’s own work.

Previous winners of the Elias Prize have been:

1999 David Lepoutre, *Coeur de banlieue: Codes, rites et langages* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1997)

2001 Wilbert van Vree, *Meetings, Manners and Civilisation* (London: University of Leicester Press, 1999)

2003 Nikola Tietze, *Islamische Identitäten: Formen muslimischer Religiosität junger Männer in Deutschland und Frankreich* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001)

2005 Jason Hughes, *Learning to Smoke: Tobacco Use in the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)

2007 Georgi Derlugian, *Bourdieu’s Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

For the 2009 prize, the jury will consist of three previous winners of the prize, under the chairmanship of Wilbert van Vree. Nominations for the prize should be sent to Marianne Bernard, Secretary to the Norbert Elias Foundation, by 31 March 2009, either by post to J.J. Viottastraat 13, 1071 JM Amsterdam, The Netherlands, or by email to [elias@kpnmail.nl](mailto:elias@kpnmail.nl)

### New email address

Thanks to a series of takeovers among ISPs in The Netherlands, the Norbert Elias Foundation’s email address is now

[elias@kpnmail.nl](mailto:elias@kpnmail.nl). For the time being, however, two earlier versions will continue to work.

## ■ THREE MORE VOLUMES OF THE COLLECTED WORKS OF NORBERT ELIAS

Just published are the following three volumes in the Collected Works of Norbert Elias in English:

Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, edited by Cas Wouters (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008 [Collected Works, vol. 4]). xx + 250 pp. ISBN 978-1-904558-92-7.

Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process*, edited by Eric Dunning (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008 [Collected Works, vol. 7]). xvi + 320 pp. ISBN 978-1-905558-43-9.

Norbert Elias, *Essays II: On Civilising Processes, State Formation and National Identity*, edited by Richard Kilminster and Stephen Mennell (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008 [Collected Works, vol. 15]). xxii + 289 pp. ISBN 978-1-906359-02-7,

All three volumes contain valuable new material. *The Established and the Outsiders* includes for the first time an essay that Elias wrote in 1990, only a couple of months before he dies, ‘Further aspects of established–outsider relations: the Maycomb model’. It was inspired by, and includes a close discussion of, Harper Lee’s celebrated novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, set in the racist society of America’s Deep South in the early twentieth century. Curiously, although Elias dictated this essay in English, it has previously been published only in German and Dutch translations.

In his Note on the Text Wouters argues that, together with the original book about ‘Winston Parva’, the Maycomb model essay and the essay entitled ‘Towards a theory of established–outsider relations’ (which Elias wrote for the 1976 Dutch translation of the book, and which is also included here), represent Elias’s attempt

to formulate a *general* theory of power relations in human society.

As Elias's co-author, Eric Dunning has edited what amounts to a second edition of *Quest for Excitement*. This volume includes one essay by Elias that has never before been published anywhere. Entitled 'The genesis of sport as a sociological problem, part 2' (pp. 134–49), it was originally intended for inclusion in the first edition in 1986. But Elias had lost all the necessary references, and Dunning decided to omit the essay for that reason: if he had drawn the problem to Elias's attention, there would certainly have been another endless delay in the publication of what was already a long-overdue book. For this edition, Stephen Mennell tracked down all the missing references, in the Cambridge University Library, the British Library, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Besides that entirely new essay, Dunning has made extensive corrections and revisions to his own essays, including a postscript to that on 'Sport as a male preserve', which takes account of the large body of research on sport and gender that had been amassed since he first wrote the essay a quarter of a century ago, and replacing his 1986 essay on hooliganism with an entirely new and up to date essay on 'Football hooliganism as an emergent global idiom'.

*Essays II: On Civilising Processes, State Formation and National Identity* is numerically the middle one of three volumes of Elias's collected essays, but the first to be published. The other two, *Essays I: On the Sociology of Knowledge and the Sciences* (vol. 14) and *Essays III On Sociology and the Humanities* (vol. 16) are already in press, and will be published in the first half of 2009. Unlike in the German *Gesammelte Schriften*, where Elias's 80–90 essays are arranged in order of the date of their publication, the editorial advisory board for the Collected Works decided to group them thematically, as the titles of the three volumes indicate.

Of the 18 essays in volume 15, *Essays II*, as many as 11 have not previously been published in English. These are: 'Civilisation', probably Elias's most

succinct exposition of his theory of civilising processes, written for a German textbook of basic concept of sociology, published in 1986.

'What I mean by civilisation: reply to Hans-Peter Duerr', which appeared in *Die Zeit* in 1988.

'*L'Espace privé* – "Private space" or "private room"', a lecture given in Berlin in 1983, one of several essays in which Elias criticises the work of the historian Philippe Ariès, who was present in the audience on this occasion.

'The structure of development of standards of behaviour', Elias's foreword to Hans-Volker Krumrey's book *Entwicklungsstrukturen von Verhaltensstandarden* (1984).

'Power and civilisation', a lecture given in 1981 in Graz.

'The Germanesi', Elias's postscript to Meike Behrman and Carmine Abate's 1984 book of that name, a study of the effects on their home village of Italian *Gastarbeiter* returning from Germany to their original communities.

'The charismatic ruler', published in *Der Spiegel* in 1989 to mark the centenary of Hitler's birth.

'Public opinion in Britain' and 'National peculiarities of British public opinion', two lectures given in Germany in 1959 and 1960. For British readers especially, these two enjoyable and insightful lectures will confirm the truth of L. P. Hartley's famous dictum, 'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there'.

'Fear of death', a 1986 lecture in Groningen, deals at some length with a subject that Elias is often accused of neglecting: religion. (Actually, in the course of editing the Collected Works, it becomes clear that Elias actually discussed religion in very many parts of his work.)

'Has hope a future?', a contribution to the 1986 Christmas edition of *Die Zeit*.

Even among the essays originally written in English, many have not until

now been at all easy to track down. One example from volume 15 is Elias's 1950 review of Eva G. Reichmann's book *Hostages of Civilisation: A Study of the Social Causes of Antisemitism*.

Like all volumes in the series, these latest three have been very carefully edited and annotated to improve the readability of the texts: sadly, it appears that the first editions of most of Elias's works in English escaped the attentions of competent copy-editors, a lacuna that has now been remedied.

Especially because of the higher standard to which these volumes have been produced, which makes Elias's texts much more accessible both to students and scholars, it is important that they find their way into university libraries throughout the world. *Readers of Figurations are urged to ensure that they are ordered by their own institutions' libraries.*

*You can also buy copies of the volumes direct from the publisher, at a discount, via the website: [www.ucdpress.ie](http://www.ucdpress.ie).*

Previously published volumes in the series are:

- 1 *Early Writings* (2006)
- 2 *The Court Society* (2006)
- 8 *Involvement and Detachment* (2007)
- 9 *An Essay on Time* (2007)

Supplementary volume:  
*The Genesis of the Naval Profession* (2007)

## ■ A BELATED FIND

*Hermann Korte*

On 5 October 2008 in a packed Stuttgart Opera, Elias's *Ballade vom armen Jakob* was performed once more (see *Figurations* 13 and 28 for reports of two other performances in recent years). I gave a short introduction and, in preparing that, I read through notes that I made in April 1987. I had been consulting the archive of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, in the Department of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (file 349/4 relating to the Society). I had

not looked through my notes since I was working on my book *Über Norbert Elias: Das Werden eines Menschenwissenschaftlers* (1988).

In the Society's papers were to be found some 80 pages concerning Norbert Elias, his life, correspondence and reports. There was also correspondence with the Professional Committee for German Refugee Scholars, about efforts to secure Elias's release from the internment camp on the Isle of Man, where he had been sent in 1940. There I found a reference relevant to my introduction to *Armen Jakob*. On 4 June 1940, Miss E. Rosenberg wrote to the Society on behalf of the Committee: 'I am worried however about poor Elias. As far as I know he was alone in the world, and he is not a very practical man at the best of times. I feel sure he must have left his personal affairs in the greatest disorganisation behind him.'

But the secretariat of the Society also kept notes of the publications of those to whom it had given assistance. And thus I found a reference to a letter to the editor of *The Listener*, published in the issue dated 6 November 1958. (*The Listener* was a weekly magazine published by the BBC; it ceased publication in 1991.) The reference had lain neglected for 20 years in my 1987 notebook. To my shame, the letter therefore does not appear in the *Gesamelte Schriften* (though it will now be included in volume 16 of the *Collected Works in English*). As soon as I spotted the reference again, I rang up Stephen Mennell, who contacted Ariadne van de Ven, who very kindly went round to the London Library and dug the letter out of their back run of *The Listener*.

Elias wrote in reaction to a review (anonymous in those days) in the previous week's issue of *The Listener* (30 October 1958) of the fifth volume of Edward Hallett Carr's *A History of Soviet Russia* – that is, the first of three volumes of that part of the whole 14-volume work which are subtitled *Socialism in One Country* (London: Macmillan, 1958). Here is Elias's letter:

#### A HISTORY OF SOVIET RUSSIA

Sir – I am not sure whether your reviewer of Mr Carr's fifth volume (*THE LISTENER*, October 30) is quite fair either to Mr Carr, or, indeed, to himself. His criticism falls into the pattern of a standing controversy among historians and, perhaps even more so, between historians and sociologists. Its central point is the relative part played in history by intentions and aims of great men and, to use your reviewer's own word, by 'circumstances'.

The problems referred to are, it seems to me, in many respects still unsolved, although partisans on either side often believe and assert that they hold the solution in the hollow of their hand; and I cannot help feeling that Mr Carr, far from offering a simple solution, is more conscious than many other contributors to this discussion that here are problems with which we are still grappling, but which have not yet found an entirely satisfactory answer. To say, as your reviewer does, that the 'interconnection between great men and the circumstances in which they find themselves' is a 'self-evident truth' is only possible for someone who is satisfied with rather woolly words such as 'circumstances', and fails to realise that they screen from his view the same kind of problems with which others wrestle if they speak of the 'impersonal' properties, for example of a process of industrialisation.

What Mr Carr wishes to say, if I understand him rightly, is not, as your reviewer suggests, that 'Stalin's elimination of Trotsky ... was unconnected with the political rivalry between the two men' (that, of course, would be self-evident nonsense), but that the industrialisation of Russia as such had characteristics which cannot be explained by reference to the personal characteristics of either of the two men.

Finally, I think it would help greatly in clarifying these issues if it were well understood that references to impersonal aspects of historical changes need not by any means imply agreement with what has now been popularised under the name 'historicism' – with the idea that history runs its course like

the sun according to unalterable laws. One can say with great confidence that if a large agricultural country, such as Russia or China, embarks upon a process of industrialisation, certain well-defined changes are bound to occur, even though no single person intended them to occur.

An historian who would not take account of such recurrent regularities would fail in his task. He would equally fail if he were unaware of the fact that in certain aspects the industrialisation of one country is different from that of another and that personal characteristics of those who govern a country may to some extent account for these differences. How these broad regularities, these national differences, these personal characteristics interweave, and how to present their interweaving in writing history, that indeed is the problem. –Yours, etc.,

N. ELIAS, Leicester

#### ■ DOES THE 'MARSHMALLOW TEST' PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A COMPARATIVE NEURO-SOCIOLOGY?

*Stephen Quilley*

University of Keele

In an article entitled 'Leave it! Or your life will be a failure' in *The Sunday Times*, 2 November 2008, Tony Allen-Mills provides a reprise of the famous 'marshmallow test' developed by Walter Mischel (formerly at Stanford University and now Columbia, NYC). In decades of psychological testing and detailed longitudinal studies, Mischel found that the capacity to defer gratification in children was strongly associated with future success in education and a 'happy and successful life'. Mischel's work has become the cornerstone in the burgeoning field of 'emotional intelligence'. Apparently he now has funding to do a neuroscientific follow up study which will involve scanning the brains of forty of his original subjects in an effort to identify how the brain is implicated in our different capacities to defer gratification and to control our impulses.

Question:  
Should Eliasians be interested in this?

Answer: Clearly we should. Elias always had a strong interest in medical science and the links between biological and social processes. He was keenly aware that the process of socialisation was simultaneously neurological, social-psychological and historical. Impulse control plays a central role in Elias's theory of civilising processes. Even if neurobiology demonstrates a physical difference in the structure of the brain that corresponds to different control profiles, whatever the intellectual predispositions of neuroscientists it is not clear what the lines of causation are: when babies are taught to control their impulses according to a prevailing social standard, do they develop particular kinds of brains, or *vice versa*? But it is surely relevant that the processes of control relate to social standards of behaviour that are variable in space and time – between different historical and social contexts.

Opportunity: More controversially, if Mischel's brain scanning technique produces something, there may be a way to test Elias's 'sociogenetic ground rule' – the idea introduced in *The Civilizing Process*, that in progressively more complex societies (a) childhood becomes longer and more differentiated; and (b) during the course of their socialisation children recapitulate patterns of restraint characteristic of earlier-stage, less complex societies. For instance, modern potty training and toilet etiquette (not peeing on the floor) *for toddlers and young children* is in some ways comparable to the conscious direction of the bodily functions that became a preoccupation for those medieval manners books that were aimed *at young adults*.<sup>1</sup> The implication of this is that babies socialised in more complex societies are subject to and internalise more pervasive behavioural controls, and are required to monitor, channel and restrain their affective impulses more completely, in relation to more people, for more of the time. Elias also showed that self-restraint varies within societies, between people of different groups such as social classes, status groups and outsider groups, and so on. If such patterns of affective restraint do

indeed have a measurable impact on the brain, this presumably opens the way to a *comparative neuro-sociology*. Mischel's research seems to relate to the middle classes, for whom the generational transfer of social and cultural capital involves consistent patterns of detour behaviour and pressure to defer gratification. Middle class success is based on structural positions of access to scarce resources, and all the other advantages that we know so well, to the point of cliché. It would certainly be interesting to know if the brains of 'unsuccessful' people show a different pattern of development. In practice this would, of course, be controversial because of the way that such research would presumably be interpreted by right-wing racists – as proof of racial-genetic difference giving rise to neuro-behavioural phenotypic variety.

That is:  
different genes → different brains → different behaviour.

In line with modern biological anthropology, Elias, however, insisted on the biological unity of humanity as a species. Individuals have different genes but the spectrum of genetic difference varies across humanity as a whole without any significant mapping onto socio-cultural groups or linguistic communities.<sup>2</sup> From this premise, the line of causation would run in the opposite direction, that is:

[same genes +] different behaviour in different societies → different patterns of socialisation → different epigenetic processes of neurological 'wiring up' in the course of child development → [same genes +] different behaviour.

Either way, it is not often that a 'hard [brain] science' and technology can be brought to bear to test a historical-sociological hypothesis. There is a revolution going on in the biological sciences at the moment that is providing a mounting challenge to the reductionist credo of selfish genery and provides a much more sophisticated and multi-dimensional picture of the relationship between genes, (biological) development and social processes. Juxtaposed alongside Elias's *The Symbol Theory* and *Involvement and Detachment*,

Jablonka and Lamb's *Evolution in Four Dimensions* (2005) and Merlin Donald's *A Mind So Rare* (2001) would provide useful starting points for an Eliasian neuro-sociology. Is anyone brave enough to enter the fray? Perhaps more to the point, is anyone able to persuade major funders that sociologists are able to do 'science' and that, working alongside psychologists and neuroscientists, contribute to the science of humanity?

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Elias's sociogenetic ground rule was self-consciously modelled on the German biologist Haeckel's 'biogenetic law', which stated that ontogeny (the growth and development of individual organisms) recapitulates phylogeny (the evolutionary development of species) – the subject of decades of controversy among theoretical biologists and the subject of monograph by Stephen J. Gould (1990).*

<sup>2</sup> *As Cas Wouters puts it 'Every single individual is born in a rather undifferentiated and pliable emotional condition. They are all different individuals but, at birth, the range of these differences is limited, and it seems most likely that for many millennia the spectrum of inborn differences has remained basically unchanged. Therefore, its explanatory power is limited: the range of differences in newly born individuals cannot possibly explain changes in spitting and nose blowing, nor other changes on the social level such as from feudalism to capitalism or from formalisation to informalisation.'* (2007:11)

Thanks to Johan Goudsblom, Richard Kilminster and Cas Wouters for comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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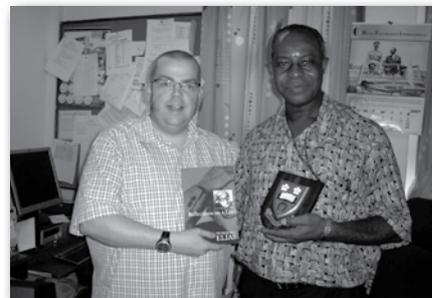
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Professor Walter Mischel's web pages at Columbia University can be found at: [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/psychology/indiv\\_pages/mischel.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/psychology/indiv_pages/mischel.html)

ment, and whose contribution is long forgotten. To remedy this I presented Professor Kodjo Senah with a copy of *Reflections on a Life*, and my own department has donated a full set of Elias books for staff and students there to use and to (re)discover the value of Elias. I hope my paper will be out in the next year or so, but in the meantime I thought readers of *Figurations* may like to see a sample of the photographs I took while I was there. The department has changed very little. I can now fully understand the sentiments in Elias's correspondence with Neustadt in which he notes 'I like the view from my windows, like almost everything else here. To my mind, this is one of

the most beautiful universities in the world aesthetically speaking'.

John Goodwin  
CLMS, University of Leicester



John Goodwin with Professor Senah

## ■ AFRICAN INTERLUDES - ELIAS AND NEUSTADT IN GHANA

The time Elias spent in the Sociology Department at the University of Ghana, Legon, remains largely undocumented beyond the accounts provided in Elias's own *Reflections on a Life*. There are others who have provide some insight into Elias's time there – most notably Jack Goody in the *Theft of History*, although, by his own admission, Goody's encounter with Elias in Ghana was very brief. Indeed, reading Goody's account reminds me of Neustadt's assertion of how a deep anthropological training distorts so much and creates an inability for sociological analysis. Yet the fact remains that Elias's time in Ghana remains largely unexplored. With this in mind, I was delighted to visit the University of Ghana in May this year as part of my own research for a paper entitled 'African Interludes', which seeks to examine further the connection between Legon and Leicester and, in particular, explore Elias and Neustadt's contribution to sociology in Ghana. During my visit I met with the current Head of the Sociology Department – Professor Kodjo Senah – and spent some time discussing Elias and Neustadt. In many respects one of the most interesting aspects of the discussion is that, in Professor Senah's words, they 'lost their departmental history'. This means that to most Elias and Neustadt are simply 'exotic' European names on a plaque in the entrance to the Depart-



University of Ghana

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY HEAD	YEAR
DEPARTMENT NOT ESTABLISHED	1948-1950
PROF. K.A. BUSIA	1950-1957
PROF. I. NEUSTADT	1957-1958
PROF. J.G. ST CLAIR DRAKE	1958-1960
PROF. R.T. SMITH	1960-1961
PROF. N. ELIAS	1961-1964
DR. C.E. FISCIAN	1964-1965
PROF. K.E. DE GRAFT-JOHNSON	1965-1968
PROF. J.H. ABRAHAM	1968-1971

Heads of the Department of Sociology, 1950–71.



## ■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

**John Sutherland**, *The Boy Who Loved Books* (London: John Murray, 2007).

John Sutherland is Lord Northcliffe Professor of English Literature Emeritus at University College London. He arrived as an undergraduate at the University of Leicester in the autumn of 1960, and in his autobiography recalls his encounter with the Department of Sociology there. His recollections are factually incorrect in places, but still valuable and amusing. The following excerpts are taken from pp. 222–7:

When I arrived there, the campus was porridge-thick with inferiority complex. The university on Cemetery Road (immortalised in [Kingsley Amis's novel] *Lucky Jim*) was, if not of last resort, then at best the hopeful undergraduate's third, 'safety net' choice. Unlucky Jims, all of them. To be accepted at Leicester was to have failed everywhere else in academic life. ...

Malcolm Bradbury has graduated a year or two before me. Although his degree was in English ... he had been infected by another richly endowed department. The 1960s was the decade of sociology. Leicester, under the archotypically rootless cosmopolitan head, Ilya Neustadt, had recruited on to its staff the exile Norbert Elias, a developmental sociologist to rank with Weber or Durkheim. Elias's classic work on socialisation had been lost, with his other papers, when the Nazis invaded Poland. It was (about this time) rediscovered, as was he as the greatest living sociologist in the country. His accent was reminiscent of the radio naturalist, Ludwig Koch, and

when he became excited (as, for example, when delving into the intricacies of Durkheimian 'anomie') he was both comic and incomprehensible. But one felt in the presence of intellectual greatness. I suspect Oxford undergraduates felt the same about Isaiah Berlin.

Among junior members of the department was Anthony Giddens – the thinker credited with the invention of Tony Blair's Third Way: the doctrine that put the 'New' into 'New Labour'. Now Lord Giddens, he was then, to put it euphemistically, a 'dashing' figure on campus. He could also be breathtakingly rude to male undergraduates (me, once) – perhaps because, dark haired and slim, he was so often mistaken for a student.

Dashing was the flavour of the time. Among its other achievements, sociology – with its commitment to relativism and distrust of absolutes – was loosening and relaxing morality. Its undergraduates, sniffing the first reverberations of swing in the decade, pioneered the wearing of denim shirts, leather jackets (*en masse*, the department fairly creaked) and Beatle haircuts. It was, no questions asked, the best sociology department in the country – and the trendiest in any subject.

I took a subsidiary in sociology and would have transferred to it as my major had the intellectual competition not been so fierce and my essay marks so middling (they gave no credit for fine writing). There was, at the heart of the discipline, a way of thinking I could not quite master – epitomised in the writing of the structuralist Talcott Par-

sons (a decade later post-structuralism would invade English, and I would feel the same again). I could not, in the last analysis, 'do' it. Or, at least, I could do it in the same way I could do French: I could read, but not speak the stuff. ... I was also put off by Neustadt. One evening he invited me back to his house for a discussion of T. S. Eliot and a nightcap. He had picked me up, drinking moodily by myself, in the Marquis of Granby – a friendly pub at the end of Cemetery (aka University) Road. I was developing a taste for soapy Midlands bitter. It was a cool evening in my first term and I was wearing a donkey jacket (working man's gear, £5 from Millett's – my feeble Terson's protest against denim, leather and Lennonism). Neustadt, people told me, liked young men. He took me back to his flat to discuss, as he proposed, T. S. Eliot and recent experiments with poetry and jazz. He had some LPs – Christopher Logue, it turned out, with, I recall, the Tony Kinsey Quartet. He made what I construed as a pass at me – although why, with so many pretty young school-leavers around, I can't think. It may have been the donkey jacket and still hardened hands: rough trade (I flatter myself). Or, quite possibly, I got it all wrong.

After some rumination on the subject I decided sociology wasn't for me, although I could see it was the coming subject. I was more interested in expressing myself (as a kind of act of self-love) than in changing the world, which is what most of the young sociologists were burning to do. Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach ('The philosophers have only interpreted the

world in various ways; the point is to change it') was holy writ with them. I was quite happy to philosophise – or waffle, chunter and dabble – for the next forty years. English was the subject for the wafflers of the world – scholars happy not to lose their chains (as long as they came with a pension after forty years). Let the world change itself. It had done enough of that, over the last twenty-one years, without my help.

My closest friends, and girlfriends (happily emancipated by the new libertarian doctrines emanating from their department), were none the less mainly sociologists, and their ways of thinking influenced my way of doing my waffly subject. 'A literary sociologist', I liked to think of myself over the following decades.

**Richard Kilminster**, 'Narcissism or Informalisation: Christopher Lasch, Norbert Elias and Social Diagnosis', *Theory Culture & Society* 23: 3 (2008), pp. 131–51.

Christopher's Lasch's influential 'culture of narcissism' thesis is shown to be an empirically unproven, conservative overreaction to the 'permissive society' of the 1960s and 1970s. It is suggested that the theory of informalisation developed by Elias, Cas Wouters and Hans-Peter Waldhoff, provides a more complete and convincing analysis of that phenomenon and related cultural developments. The shortcomings of Lasch's use of Freud, Klein, and the clinical psychoanalytical literature generally, are demonstrated. The history of the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism is traced in order to reveal how Lasch elides and exploits the everyday and technical meanings of the term. It is argued that today we are witnessing not a fatal narrowing of the superego (Lasch's fear) but rather its further differentiation and rebalancing with ego-functions. For what Cas Wouters calls the 'Third Nature' of people of our time, guilt (although it has not disappeared) becomes less important than shame in shaping our conduct. The article concludes that Lasch was not propounding a sociological theory as such, but was largely engaged in a complex rhetorical exercise in moral and political persuasion.

**Gina Zabłudovsky**, *Norbert Elias y los problemas actuales de la sociología*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007. ISBN: 978-969-16-8332-0. 189 pp.

This small book, published in Mexico last year, is very welcome. As Gina Zabłudovsky states, interest in Elias's work in Hispanic speaking countries spread from the Iberian peninsula in the mid-1990s. In Latin America, his work has not had great recognition, but that has started to change recently. Elias's books were published in Spanish by prominent presses. Nevertheless, there are still not many articles and books about Elias, which is exactly where this one fits.

Easily accessible to graduate students and those who are beginning to discover Elias, it is a competent introduction. It gives a broad outline of Elias's biography, influences on his theory, his main critics, the reception of his work in several countries, including Hispanic speaking ones, and possibilities for using his theoretical and methodological approach to analyse contemporary topics such as violence, globalisation, individualisation, gender, sports, and so on.

Against this broad outline, I want to call attention to the positive contribution of this book to the discussion of influences on and of Elias's theory.

Gina Zabłudovsky identifies Freud as one of the main influences in Elias's theory, also reminding us that Elias was a founder of the Group Analytical Society while living in England. Aggression as a human drive is the focus of the explanation here, opening the way to show the importance of this conception to Elias's argument that external constraints are internalised in the superego in the course of the civilising process. She also quotes Comte and Marx as important figures who made great advances in the discussion of long-term developments, moving far ahead of eighteenth-century evolutionism. Weber is quoted to remind us the importance of his concept of monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. From Durkheim she emphasises socialisation as an internalisation of external

constraints and, also, the concept of anomie (and its most important complement, cohesion), which is used by Elias in *The Established and the Outsiders*.

Among those influenced by Elias's theory, she cites Zygmunt Bauman. Those who know Elias and Bauman fairly well can recognise their differences in regard to the understanding of holocaust and violence. What is interesting about this book is that Gina Zabłudovsky also points to Elias's influence on Bauman's theory, especially the importance of *The Established and the Outsiders*.

In short, this is a very competent introduction to Elias's work. It does not bring deep or new discussions to those familiar to the Anglophone bibliography. But let us bear in mind that many people do not have access to works published in English. That is where the importance of this work lies. It can also be useful for those in search for supplementary bibliography about Elias in Spanish.

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**John J. Rodger**, *Criminalising Social Policy: Anti-social behaviour and welfare in a decivilized society* (Cullompton: Willan, 2008).

This book provides an account of legislative and policy developments in the fields of social policy and criminal justice in Britain under New Labour. Building on the work of Durkheim, Bourdieu, Bauman and, most prominently, Norbert Elias, John Rodger of the University of the West of Scotland explores the emergence of an approach to welfare aligned with the rise of dis-embedded markets and the emotional consequences of declining functional democratisation.

The book starts off by examining the changing relationship in Britain between social policy and criminal justice in order to lay the foundations for an analysis of policy grounded in the civilising process. Rodger explores the relations between individuals said to be acting in an anti-social/criminal manner and those doing the defining, in order to examine the bonds and interdependencies that bind individuals together in

post-modern society. In so doing the book highlights the cultural dimensions of incivility and the political shift towards inauthentic modes of governance, which Rodger situates within the tension balance between processes of *formalisation* and *informalisation*. Rodgers's central argument focuses on the pivotal role of the family in recent policy developments; he claims that the dysfunctional family has emerged as the primary 'cause' of anti-social behaviour in children over recent decades as a result of new commercial attitudes, changes in levels of emotional self regulation, and a decline in civilised attitudes towards poverty. New Labour's contradictory policy approach towards families, children and 'anti-social behaviour' – as exemplified in the trend towards punishing parents for the actions of their children – is examined through a review of research on the relationship between the family and criminality. Throughout, Rodger outlines the way in which community and voluntary sector organisations are being manipulated as part of New Labour's wider attempt to generate political support for their agenda through what has been termed 'consent-through-coercion'.

Rodger also discusses the role of the media in exacerbating 'dangerisation' and decivilising tendencies within society. The media do this, he claims, by generating a heightened sense of fear about incivility and anti-social behaviour that breaks down social bonds and further enhances the trend towards emotional insecurity. John Rodger was a student of Elias at Leicester and his knowledge of figurational sociology and its applications are impressive; the book will undoubtedly widen the reception of Elias's work whilst making an important contribution to debates about welfare policy. Rodger could have made more of earlier figurational accounts of processes of urbanisation and welfare, thus putting current global trends in the governance of welfare in a more historically grounded developmental perspective. But this is a minor point and takes thing away from a very timely and important book. As Rodger concludes, only when there is a broader understanding that interdependence is not antithetical to freedom will 'the

relationship between de-civilising processes and anti-social behaviour ... be broken'.

*John Lever*  
Cardiff University

**Sabine A. Haring and Helmut Kuzmics** (eds): *Das Gesicht des Krieges: Militär aus emotionssoziologischer Perspektive* [The Face of War: The Military Seen from a Sociology-of-Emotions-Perspective] (Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie 5/2008; Vienna: Sicht, 2008). 301 pp. ISBN: 3-902456-99-X.

In Norbert Elias's theory of civilising processes, the reality and experience of war are situated historically. In one of the most surprising and original recent interpretations of war, Martin van Creveld (*On Future War*, London: Brassey, 1991) has stressed its basically unchanging character, including the motives and causes for war. For him, the male fascination for war is deeply rooted in needs that can be summarised vaguely as the appeal of danger, the wish to prove manliness, not guided by rational interest or profit-seeking. Norbert Elias's theory of the civilising process is, of course, very different here. In *The Civilizing Process*, Elias dealt with many aspects of the changes in the affective experience of life in peace and war that have taken place since the European Middle Ages: growing inhibition in the pursuit of once-spontaneous pleasures and needs, accompanied by their refinement and the continuing tabooisation of violence, at least within the state-societies that develop a strong and effective monopoly of force. But Elias, who had volunteered for the German army in the First World War and had been massively traumatised then as well, did not live to learn the consequences of the disappearance of the Iron Curtain in 1989 (he died in 1990) and, therefore, did not witness the rise of the many-headed hydra of 'terrorism', whereas Van Creveld has acquired a deserved reputation for addressing and analysing the special phenomenon of 'low intensity warfare', of which 'terrorism' is but one of many variants. Although there is much upon which Elias and Van Creveld might agree, they differ in one decisive point:

what Elias sees as a change not on the surface but in the substance of the experience and meaning of war, Van Creveld treats as the essentially and eternally same. Who is right?

This book originated from a research seminar conducted at the University of Graz in the year 2006/2007 and it tries to solve this puzzle in the following chapters: It contains

- an introduction on the causes of war and the meaning of emotion in war,
- a chapter on the emotional experience of Austro-Hungarian soldiers in the First World War, as seen in fictional and non-fictional sources,
- an account of the discursive practices of former members of the French Foreign Legion,
- a qualitative survey on Austrian peacekeeping forces,
- an analysis of the emotions of child soldiers on the basis of published sources,
- and the results of a survey of the motives, strategies and behavioural patterns of professional soldiers in contemporary Austria.

The conclusions that can be drawn here confirm the perspective of a civilising of war, if seen as a developmental process that transforms spontaneous affects of medieval warfare into the tamed habitus of a self-restrained social-worker-like attitude of peacekeepers who have to deal with unruly so-called 'terrorists'. But the picture has to be complemented by a view that accepts the manifold forms of the 'simultaneity of past and present': modern warfare often means a crossing between old-fashioned barbarism and modern methods, from political mass-mobilisation to the use of modern weaponry.

*Note by Helmut Kuzmics*

**José Esteban Castro**, *Water, Power, and Citizenship: Social Struggle in the Basin of Mexico* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xx + 232 pp.

Unusually, here we reprint two excerpts – the first and last paragraphs – from a long review of Esteban Castro's important book by Diane E. Davis of MIT in the *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40 (2008), pp. 370–2. The review is

mostly enthusiastic, but the last paragraph is a magnificent testimony to the profound ignorance of Elias's work that still prevails among most American scholars. Davis demonstrates that she is entirely unaware of the theory of state formation processes – with its stress on war, violence and conflict – that is an inseparable part of the theory of civilising processes. Witness the following: 'This ambitious, historically sweeping study of water in the basin of Mexico casts a wide disciplinary net and captures in its wake some valuable observations and intriguing insights as well as the occasional exaggerated interpretation. Framed as a study of the ways that allocation, management and access to water have established the contours of citizenship in Mexico, this book is equally important and perhaps more analytically path-breaking for its focus on state formation and water's role in the rise, fall and transformation of governance regimes in Mexico. José Esteban Castro's decision to use a key natural resource like water as a springboard for examining large-scale political and social changes in how society is organised and the ways that citizens connect to each other and the state is a brilliant one, and could be fruitfully applied to a number of country contexts because of the importance of water to all major producer and consumer functions, no matter the extent of modernisation. But it is a pure stroke of genius to use water as the entry point for studying Mexico, since water abundance – and more recently, water scarcity – have marked that country's history, both geologically and socio-politically, for ages.' ...

'More disconcerting is the over-emphasis on a few framing concepts and ideas. Principal among these is the inordinate attention paid to Norbert Elias and his concept of the civilising process. Not a chapter goes by without a quote (or two) from Elias, although most of the time the relevance is far from obvious. One gets the sense that Castro is on a quest to find a concise theoretical framing to buttress his far-reaching historical and empirical narrative. But it also might be due to the fact that the sweeping historical accounting of water struggles does come across as somewhat descriptive, with little attention paid to identifying causality or

to offering middle-range theories that could account for the longer-term patterns of state formation and citizenship seen in Mexico. Whatever the origins of the preoccupation with Elias, as a theoretical reference point he hangs a bit intrusively over the grounded essentials of the story, never quite integrating into the historical narrative so much as sitting awkwardly on top of it. In stylistic terms, this mars an otherwise fascinating and important book. After all, the consistency with which struggles over control and access to water have emerged and re-emerged sustain Castro's more universal claims about the ongoing tensions between water, power and citizenship, even as they give him a basis for underscoring striking empirical continuities, over time, in terms of who wins and who loses in these struggles.

This is much better than grand theory any day, and will keep the reader engaged, reflective and curious to know more about what comes next for citizens, water and the state in Mexico.'

For readers of *Figurations*, Davis's misapprehension will only underline the significance of Castro's work.

*SJM*

**Matthew P. McCormick**, 'Human–Animal Interdependence in the Civilizing Process'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2008.

This investigation asks why the island territory of England came to be stamped with a distinctive animal welfare character. This association between individuals and caring sentiments towards animals was indirectly cemented in the early twenty-first century when the Hunting Act 2004 excluded the deeply historic activity of hunting foxes with hounds from the stock of permitted acts in this country. However, developments of arguably greater significance for the sociology of human–animal interdependence can be observed in the sphere of British horseracing towards the latter stages of the twentieth century. British horseracing in this period was the site of a number of civilising developments concerning general standards of conduct and sentiment towards animals, in

this case racehorses used for the creation of human tensions and excitement. This detailed spurt can be shown on the theoretical–empirical plane to be the latest stage in the long-term overall transformation of British society that Norbert Elias (2000) proposed to be the process of civilisation.

The investigation also traces why, specifically, it should have been in England and not elsewhere that the animal concern movement should have emerged with such a sustained tempo and durability, forming the major precursor form of a distinct animal welfare concept. Manuals on equestrianism and the training of horses published over three centuries are used in a way that parallels Elias's use of manners book. Questions are posed and answers sought as to what social conditions emerged from the intertwining of processes at the level of state formation and civilisation from the late medieval period onwards leading to the formation of a distinctive human–animal mentality in Britain compared to, for example, France. The historical study also provides a comparable frame of reference and a sociological link between different epochs within the social history of the same society.

**Robert Lake**, *Social Exclusion in British Tennis: A History of Privilege and Prejudice*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2008.

This study focuses on the issue of social exclusion in British tennis. It commences with a critique of current policy of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), presenting exclusion as static, ahistorical and underpinned by false dichotomies of age and social class. Aspects of Norbert Elias's theoretical approach are employed throughout as an analytical framework. Initially, the roots of exclusion in British tennis are sought through historical analysis. Aspects of the civilising process help direct attention towards wider social processes to explain the prevalence of exclusion, particularly in tennis clubs. Cost was a crucial factor in determining early access, but as tennis became more accessible to lower classes, codes of behavioural etiquette helped demarcate members along status lines. Into the mid twentieth century, the globalisation, professionalisation and

commercialisation of tennis pushed the LTA to adopt a more performance-oriented outlook, but this has come to oppose the more relaxed culture of tennis clubs. Thus, a power struggle emerged between these two institutions, and, underpinned by thirty interviews with leading figures in British tennis as well as extensive documentary analysis, the third section of the thesis documents these developments from the 1980s. Crucially, tennis clubs remain largely amateur and voluntary-run organisations, yet are important locations for the implementation of the LTA's demanding talent development objectives. These recent developments are understood with the help of Elias's Game Models theory. The fourth section presents findings from a ten-month ethnographic study of social exclusion in a tennis club – a micro-analysis of club member relations underpinned by Elias's established-outsider relations theory. Overall findings suggest that social exclusion in British tennis is far more complex, multi-faceted and historically rooted than what current LTA discourse presents. Differences in age and class are less central, and instead preconceived notions of social status based on longevity of membership, adherence to behavioural norms and playing standard are powerful determinants of inclusion.

**Amanda Rohloff**, 'Moral panics as decivilising processes: towards an Eliasian approach', *New Zealand Sociology* 23:1 (2008), pp. 66–76.

Abstract: Applying the ideas of Norbert Elias to the sociology of moral panics, this article argues that moral panics are processes of decivilisation; occurring where civilising processes break down and decivilising trends become dominant. Examining the definitions of Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) and Stanley Cohen (2002), the article compares key characteristics of moral panics with some of the symptoms of decivilising processes as proposed by Stephen Mennell (1990). Proposing two different types of campaigns that may accompany panics – integrative campaigns to 'civilise' the other; and exclusionary campaigns to isolate the dangerous 'other' – the article concludes by outlining how some of the fundamental

concepts of figurational sociology can aid in our understanding of the complexities of moral panics.

(Note: This article was the product of Amanda Rohloff's honours dissertation at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand; she is now beginning a PhD at Brunel University, with Chris Rojek and Jason Hughes.)

**Tim Dant**, 'Materiality and Civilisation: Things and Society', *British Journal of Sociology* 57: 2 (2006): 289–308.

Abstract: This paper argues that although classical sociology has largely overlooked the importance of social relations with the material world in shaping the form of society, Braudel's concept of 'material civilisation' is a useful way to begin to understand the sociological significance of this relationship. The limitations of Braudel's historical and general concept can be partially overcome with Elias's analysis of the connection between 'technisation' and 'civilisation' that allows for both a civilising and a de-civilising impact of emergent forms of material relation that both lengthen and shorten the chains of interdependence between the members of a society. It is suggested that the concept of the 'morality of things' employed by a number of commentators is useful in summarising the civilising effects of material objects and addressing their sociological significance. From the sociology of consumption the idea of materiality as a sign of social relationships can be drawn, and from the sociology of technology the idea of socio-technical systems and actor-networks can contribute to the understanding of material civilisation. It is argued that the concept of 'material capital' can usefully summarise the variable social value of objects but to understand the complexity of material civilisation as it unfolds in everyday life, an analysis of 'material interaction' is needed. Finally the paper suggests some initial themes and issues apparent in contemporary society that the sociological study of material civilisation might address; the increased volume, functional complexity and material specificity of objects and the increased social complexity, autonomy and substitutability that is entailed. A theory of 'material civilisation' is the

first step in establishing a sociology of objects.

**Jan van Gestel**, *Figuraties in de sport* (Gent: Academia Press, 2007), 322 pp. ISBN 9879038211459.

Sport sociology in Flanders is rather policy directed and consists mostly in the statistical interpretation of survey data without much systematic theorising. Van Gestel was not satisfied with this situation and he has published a book in which he introduces process sociology, and its application to the sociological study of sport, to Flemish social scientists. His book can be divided into three parts. In the first part he gives a general introduction to process sociology. He explains to his readers Elias's game models, his theory of civilising processes and his ideas on involvement and detachment. Then he offers Elias and Dunning's ideas on the sociology of sport, and in the third chapter of this first part he compares the process sociological approach to sport with more conventional approaches like Marxism, functionalism and feminism. In the second part Van Gestel offers Dutch translations of four articles of British process sociologists on subjects in the field of sport: Mennell on sport and violence; Dunning on soccer hooliganism, Waddington on doping, and Maguire on globalisation and sport. In the third and last part Van Gestel offers his explanation of the international popularity of soccer and he gives an analysis of the development of shokotan karate. It is a pity that in these chapters, while he knows Van Bottenburg's book *Global Games* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), he neglects the process sociological theory on the popularity of sports as explained in it. I hope Van Gestel's book will fulfil its purpose of giving a more process-sociological turn to the sociology of sport in Flanders, but I am a little bit pessimistic. Most Flemish sport sociologists that I know are already well aware of the process sociological approach to the study of sport. If they had been convinced of its superior qualities they would already have changed their approach ten or twenty years ago.

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**Anke Barzantny**, *Mentoring-Programme für Frauen. Maßnahmen zu Strukturveränderungen in der Wissenschaft? Eine figurationssoziologische Untersuchung zur akademischen Medizin* [Mentoring-programs for women – an adequate measure to change structures in academia? A figurational approach to academic medicine] (Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008). 281 pp. ISBN 978-3-531-16123-5.

In this study Norbert Elias's model of established-outsiders relations is adopted as a heuristic concept in order to structure empirical research. The author subsumes the model's criteria under five topics (Women as outsiders?; Self- and outsider images; Cohesion; The impact of a third party; Mentoring as an instrument to change the power balance?) and develops indicators for empirical testing. The research is carried out by the means of loosely structured interviews which provide answers to relevant themes on the one hand and openness for the interviewees' points of view on the other.

The main part of the research is dedicated to the situation in academic medicine in general and to the difficulties and sometimes problems students and young researchers in this discipline face – either male or female. A smaller part investigates the mentoring programme which existed at the clinic in order to promote women's careers.

One innovative aspect of the study lies in the direct application of Elias's theoretical concept to empirical research – and its transfer to another area: from community to academia. Another new aspect can be found in taking the figurational approach of continuous change seriously and by doing this developing criteria to evaluate a program which actually tries to change the figuration – that is, to change its power balance in this case between men and women in academic medicine.

The results show clearly the transferability of Elias's concept to this new area and its power of explanation, for example in relation to the still widely accepted 'validity' of biological images, which can – by employing a figurational approach – be unmasked as stereotypes relying on a power dif-

ferential. The discussion on mentoring shows possible advantages of formal mentoring but also the often-unintended side effects, which many programmes seem to neglect. Finally, the recommendation cannot be unambiguous, but can nevertheless offer a more differentiated approach and sharpen perception in dealing with the field of mentoring as such.

*Note provided by the author*

**Stephen Mennell**, 'Auf Mythenjagd in Amerika', *Leviathan: Berliner Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft* 36: 2 (2008), pp. 191–211, 'History, National Character and American Civilisation', *Sociologie* 4: 2–3 (2008), pp. 285–303.

These are variants of same article: that published in *Leviathan* is a direct translation into German of the text of the Tim Curtis Memorial Lecture given at the University of Central Lancashire on 29 November 2007; that published in English in *Sociologie* is a later, revised version, but the same abstract will suffice for both:

Abstract: This essay explores how Norbert Elias's theory of civilising (and decivilising processes) is relevant to understanding the social development of the USA, as well as to how Americans see themselves and are seen by others today. It is argued that the key historic experience shaping American habitus and 'national character' is of their country constantly becoming more powerful relative to its neighbours.

The essay focuses especially on manners and the formation of habitus, on violence, and on state formation processes and their continuation in empire formation processes, ending with some reflections on the geopolitical position of the USA at the present day.

**Carina Kaplan, ed.** *La civilización em cuestión: escritos inspirados em La obra de Norbert Elias* (Buenos Aires: Miño & Dávila Editores, 2008) ISBN: 978-84-96571-74-7.

This book is a selection of ten academic articles presented at the *X Civilising Process International Symposium: Sociabilities and Emotions*, that took place at University of Campinas, Brazil, in 2007. The book aims to present the dialogue on such mat-

ters between the European and South American researchers in figurational perspective. This knowledge exchange enables us to see how rich the figurational approach is. Unfortunately, due to limited space, it is not possible to mention all articles in this review, but the texts chosen here refer to a variety of topics (civilisation, sport, education, etc) related to Elias's approach.

The first article, 'La vergüenza como dolor social' by Johan Goudsblom is a sociological discussion of shame. Its central point is to put in evidence the contradiction among the manifestations of shame: the persons usually externalise their own shame to the social world (and here is the logical incongruity) intending to hide themselves and to conceal themselves from others. This contradiction could be better understood if shame was seen as a feature beyond the individual pain, when it is – in fact – social pain.

The second article, 'Los procesos civilizatórios: algunas relaciones entre las configuraciones, las mentalidades y las representaciones sociales', by José Castorina (Argentina), discusses contributions to social theory from the theory of mentalities, the figurational theory and then the theory of social representation. These three approaches have in common the criticism on the dichotomous view of knowledge, and therefore they all reject the social analysis that disconnects individual from society.

The article aims to make very clear the object of each one, pointing out the convergences and divergences between them. But it misses the point when it comes to the main topic: the discussion about the compatibility of these three theories is not deep enough.

The article 'Portugueses, jesuitas y la educación de los indios bravos e bárbaros', by Ademir Gebara (Brazil), explores – from a figurational point of view – two topics regarding the civilising process in Brazil: the relationship between the Portuguese colonisers/Jesuits and the indigenous peoples at the beginning of Brazilians' colonisation, and their behaviour towards slave labour. Moreover, the article analyses the origins of the educational process in Brazil and its development. Corroborating his argument with historical documents, the author shows the

sources of social disparities that were created by such educational process, which – later on – crystallised the dissimilarities between the Brazilian elite and the socially excluded population. Gebara also points out that civilising processes that occurred outside Europe have not been properly studied by figurational researchers. In this way, this article is an important contribution to the field, examining Brazilian events that totally differ from the European social configuration, even though there were deeply affected by it. Despite this relevant contribution, the analysis of the article reveals some shortcomings. Because its approach is extremely complex, the text lacks a clear articulation between the civilising perspective and its influences over educational development during the Brazilian colonial and imperial periods.

Cas Wouters's contribution to this book is the article entitled 'La civilización de las emociones: formalización e informalización'. According to Wouters, from the beginning of the twentieth century, the social differentiation process increased, as societies became more heterogeneous and a strong constraint diminished. Human behaviour has become more spontaneous and flexible. The informalisation process intensified between the 1950s and 1980s; and as much as self-control, social control over emotions has not been based any more upon an authoritarian consciousness – it is in fact experienced as a second nature. The text leads us, in a refined way, to the comprehension of the process of assimilation and development of this second nature by the individual. Nevertheless, it makes us curious about the original concept of 'third nature'.

The article 'Reflexiones sobre la desigualdad social, violencia y civilización en Brasil', by José Luis Simões (Brazil), deals specifically with the severe and daily issues of urban violence in Brazilian society. Based on a long-term perspective, the author points out the origins of urban violence, shows the constitution of an unequal power access and the fallibility of civil and social rights pledged by democracy. Thus, the protagonists in violence, usually individuals from the poorest social strata – amongst them, the descendents



**Norbert Elias Chair, Erasmus University Rotterdam**

The Department of Social Sciences of the Erasmus University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, invites applicants for an Extraordinary Chair in the Social Sciences. The Chair, co-sponsored by the Norbert Elias Foundation, was established in 1992 as the Norbert Elias Chair at the University of Utrecht and transferred to the Erasmus University in 2005. Previous occupants were Nico Wilterdink and Johan Heilbron. Teaching and research are conducted in a trans-disciplinary fashion, combining the perspectives from several social and behavioural sciences in a long-term developmental framework.

Appointment is for 8 hours a week for a period of 4 years, with the possibility of a second 4-year period. Candidates should hold a doctorate in one of the social sciences, preferably sociology, and have experience in the study of long-term historical processes informed by an integrated theoretical perspective. Further information can be obtained from Professor Johan Goudsblom at the Norbert Elias Foundation, by email: [elias@kpn-mail.nl](mailto:elias@kpn-mail.nl) or telephone: +31-20-6718620.

Applications including curriculum vitae and list of publications) to:  
 Erasmus University Rotterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences  
 attn. drs. A.A. van Aarsen (BAC)  
 P.O. Box 1738  
 3000 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands

of African slaves or people from a low position in the society – have urban violence as their only means of survival. For Simões, Norbert Elias's approach to the civilising process gives us a broad perspective for researching on daily violence. Civilisation, as Elias asserted, is a 'work in progress' and not a concluded state, hence violence tends to be minimised while the civilising process itself evolves. In the specific case of Brazilian society, Simões argues (and it is difficult to disagree) that the high level of violence shows that 'we still have a long way to go in respect to civility'.

The article by Carina Kaplan (Argentina) 'Comportamiento individual y estructura social: cambios e relaciones. Una lectura desde Norbert Elias' analyses social beliefs in natural talent – genius – as the explanation for social success or failure. Kaplan refers to Norbert Elias's work *Mozart: the Sociology of a Genius* to dismantle the current image on the natural gift as a justification for social dissimilarities (in general) and especially educational dissimilarities. Elias's approach to Mozart

supports her reasoning on such matter: she states that genius cannot be disconnected from the individual social existence. In other words, the specific capacity considered as an individual natural ability should be understood as interdependent and interrelated with other individuals living in society. Kaplan's article helps us look upon the real causes of social inequality, which should not be credited to individual social agents or to social structure itself. The causes of social inequality might be better understood by the elucidation of social configurations formed by interdependent individuals. In general, this book gives more incentive to social researchers to take a wider perspective over social issues. The figurational approach is precisely rich because it considers most aspects of the social reality, which enables the study of a variety of social subjects, preserving the singularities from each social configuration. In this sense, this book is an interesting contribution to the development of figurational perspective in South America.

*Luci Ribeiro Frey*  
 University of Campinas

## ■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

This article was overlooked when it was first published; we are grateful to Richard Kilminster for discovering it during a trawl through *Sociological Abstracts*:

**Hans Elbeshausen**, 'Den realistiske videnssociologi eller Elias' kamp mod nominalismen' [A realist sociology of knowledge: Norbert Elias's fight against nominalism] *Grus*, 60 (2000), pp. 35–52.

Abstract: Recently, there has been a growing interest in the sociology of Norbert Elias, and much discussion of how this kind of sociology can be systematically and historically conceived. Different interpretations, such as historical sociology, figurational sociology, or process sociology, have been suggested, each focusing on various aspects of his writings and research. The article points to Elias's struggle to elaborate the realistic paradigm in a historical context that was particularly anti-realistic and irrational. With the realistic paradigm as the basis for Elias's ontology and epistemology, there is good reason to accentuate the notion of process as the core of Eliasian sociology of knowledge. Finally, the article draws some parallels to the New Critical Realism, associated with Bhaskar and Pawson. (Language: Danish)

## ■ RECENT CONFERENCES

### International Institute of Sociology (IIS) 38th World Congress of Sociology

*Budapest, 26–30 June 2008*

The 38<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology was held in Budapest, 26–30 June 2008. Overall the conference, loosely organised around the overarching theme 'From Local Universalism to Global Contextualism', was considered to be successful, being well attended, with multiple sociological approaches and traditions represented.

In order to accommodate the impressive response of contributors, there were three 'Civilising and decivilising

processes' sessions, which ran across successive slots on the penultimate day – forming what is sometimes called a 'mini-conference' in itself. This helped the sessions to develop cohesively and contributed to conducive conditions and lively discussion. All the sessions were well attended, with an average of around 40 people at each, although it is doubtful that a methodologist was present who could validate this claim. Presentations were limited to 12 minutes each, which required remarkable self-restraint with only limited social constraint imposed by the chairs (demonstrating that figurational sociologists must be highly civilised people, in the technical sense of the balance in the steering of their behaviour being heavily tilted away from *Fremdzwänge* in favour of *Selbstzwänge!*).

Despite the tremendous array of papers, it was possible to divide the sessions into three themes: Paths to the Present; Power and Conflict; and Today.

The first session on 'Paths to the Present' opened with Andrew Stebbins's paper on 'Elias and China'. Andrew explored the processes through which social constraints have become less formalised as Chinese social relationships and concomitant state policies and larger, global figurations have shifted. In 'Spanish "dyscivilisation" and "descivilisation": the case of the Second Republic, Civil War and Franco's dictatorship', Fernando Ampudia de Haro explored the period of Franco's dictatorship and the preceding social dynamics that were instrumental in subsequent developments. Through the application of a 'dyscivilising' model, Fernando explained how the Franco government utilised violence and victory rhetoric to justify the new order and repressed pluralism while promoting social polarity. Irem Özgören Kinli also discussed shifting historical patterns of behaviour in her paper, 'Gendering the civilising process of the Ottoman Empire'. Whilst acknowledging that differences in Ottoman society resulted in the civilising processes differing in many respects from those identified by Elias, Irem was able to identify, through unforgettable examples, how a 'pacification period' fostered changes in manners and forms of cultural expression. (I shall refrain

from more than a passing allusion to the Ottoman sex manuals' discussion of sex with elephants.)

Historical exploration was also central to Helmut Kuzmics paper 'Emotions of commanders and officers and their control in war and peace: the example of the Habsburg army from 1800 to 1918'. This period of Austrian history was marked by a decline in fortunes, exemplified by frequent defeats in war. These defeats could be attributed to the role of emotions and associated processes of education, organisation and bureaucracy which contributed to the Austrians being defensive, under-prepared and unwilling to take risks. The historical theme continued in Rafael Marques paper, 'Von Braunmühl's conjecture: the civilisational dimension of duelling'. Focusing upon duelling in Europe, Rafael explained how the practice declined due to a number of social processes and policies. These included duelling shifting from being the prerogative of aristocrats, undertaken in the name of honour to the adaptation of the practice by the emergent bourgeoisie which contributed to a loss of aristocratic appeal, the introduction of laws penalising the families of dualists killed in conflict, which undermined honourable intentions and the emergence of sport. Sam Nelson explored a very different period of history in his paper 'Colonial state-building and "civilisation" in early protestant overseas missions', examining the Dutch Reformed and Danish Pietist missions in Sri Lanka and Coromandel respectively, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The main focus was on explaining why the Dutch VOC mission collapsed and the Danish mission was considered to have succeeded to such an extent that it became the template for future Protestant missions in the region. Finally in this session, in 'Is there a civilising process of interstate relationships?' Dieter Reicher, drew upon three different state systems, Roman Empire, Ancient Greek and relations behind the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. By highlighting differences in intra- and international attempts at civilising, most notably the lack of a monopoly of violence across nations, Dieter was able to outline how attempts have been made to regulate violence, with international political and cultural

institutions becoming increasingly significant.

The second session 'Power and Conflict' commenced with Stephen Menzell's paper 'The American Empire: functional de-democratisation and diminishing foresight'. Due to the number of contributors to this session, Stephen selflessly reduced his presentation to 'two minutes', reviewing some of the salient points from his recently published *The American Civilising Process*. These included the discrepancies within American self-perceptions and those of the rest of the world, functional democratisation and vertical de-democratisation. Cas Wouters explored different aspects of American life in 'Status competition and the development of an American habitus', a paper drawing from his book, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890*. Through using the example of the corset, Cas was able to show how processes of social control have changed to what he refers to as 'controlled decontrolling' within broader processes of informalisation.

Ghettoising young people was the focus on Matthew Clement's paper 'Civilising and ghettoising: social figurations and urban development.' Examining the impact of discrimination on the transition from child to adulthood, Matthew explained that current British government neo liberal policies, particularly with regards to exclusion from schools, were contributing to growing inequalities with decivilising consequences. Exclusion was also prominent within José Esteban Castro's 'Social struggles, common goods, and the long-term development of citizenship: local water conflicts in global perspective'. José outlined different national and economic approaches to water and perceptions of citizenship that have resulted in struggles and gross disparities of access both to clean water and sanitation. In 'Out of the barracks and running amok? an Eliasian perspective on trends in the organisation of violence in the twenty-first century', Michael Drake applied an Eliasian framework to trace the development of military practice. Particular attention was placed upon the conditions of 'new war' where instead of disciplined constraints that are associated with the controlled monopoly

of violence, the new forms become dysfunctional. Violence, and in particular the consequences of British and American forms of counter-terrorism, was the subject in Stephen Vertigans's 'Decivilising in the name of civilisation: understanding the consensus on the "War on Terror"'. In the paper it was argued that current ambiguous policies and reactions, allied to existing geographical demarcations are contributing to enhanced social constraints 'behind the scenes' and a reduction in mutual identification. This session concluded with Andrew Hammel's presentation 'The civilising process, the politics of "civilisation", and the death penalty in Europe and the United States of America'. By comparing the history of abolition in other countries with America's continuation of death as a legal penalty, Andrew identified ways in which European elites were able to abolish the death penalty as a 'civilising' innovation that were not present within the USA.

The final session, 'Today', began with Tatiana Savoia Landini's 'Sexual violence against children: a decivilising process?' Focusing upon sexual violence against children in Brazil, Tatiana pointed both to processes of civilisation which were resulting in greater sensibilities and to broader processes

of decivilisation which led to 'sexual' tourism. In 'Towards a leisure theory of value: the game of bird watching and the concern for conservation in Great Britain' Stefan Bargeer explored the transformation of attitudes to birds. Shifting from the practice of hunting, bird watching, has he suggests, become a form of game with certain achievable ends. Norman Gabriel's 'Affective bonding or attachments?: An exploration of the relation between Bowlby and Elias's approach to human interdependence' compared the related concepts. He detailed how both Bowlby and Elias examined life long relations, integrating the former's attachment theory within the latter's psychogenetic structures. This was followed by Yi-Tung Chang's complimentary paper, 'Civilising or decivilising the children in the global age'. Yi-Tung applied the concepts 'modelling process' and 'overlapping mechanism' to childhood and globalisation and placed particular emphasis on the impact of global media both on processes of 'decivilisation' and the balance of formalisation and informalisation. The session was brought to a close with Sarah Egan's 'A Good Sport? hunting and civilisation in the twenty-first century.' Drawing upon her research Sarah discussed the rise of protests over fox hunting in the UK and argued that the activity was banned because this was an



Michael Drake, Stephen Menzell, Norman Gabriel, Tatiana Savoia Landini, Irem Özgören, Andrew Hammel, Richard Kilminster, Stephen Vertigans, John Lever.

example of killing for the sake of killing which contravened perceptions of civilised behaviour that pro hunt supporters were unable to change.

In the post-session analysis, undertaken in even more relaxed surroundings, the sessions were widely declared to be hugely successful with the papers and subsequent debates exemplifying the continuing development of 'figurational sociology'. Everyone involved therefore needs congratulating, with particular thanks to Stephen Menzell and Robert van Krieken for organising the sessions so successfully. Robert deserves special mention because unfortunately he was unable to attend the conference and thus has to endure the pains of organising without the pleasures of attending.

In addition to these sessions, a number of contributors (namely Bargheer, Chang, Clement, Hammel, Kuzmics, Landini, Loyal, Vertigans and Wouters) also presented papers at other sessions, highlighting the ways in which contributions from figurational sociology are embedded across other specialised sociological areas of research.

*Stephen Vertigans*

Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

## XI International Civilising Process Symposium: Civilisation, Culture and Institutions

*1-4 July 2008, University of Buenos Aires*

The XI Civilising Process International Symposium took place from 1-4 July 2008 in the Biblioteca Nacional de Argentina. The theme of the meeting was 'Civilisation, culture and organisations'. The event was organised by the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and the group of Brazilian researchers who have organised the previous Elias Symposiums in Brazil. Among the many people present at the event may be mentioned Dr Vera Weiler (Colombia), Dr Emilio Tenti (Argentina), Dr Ademir Gebara (Brazil), Dr José Antonio Castorina (Argentina), Dr Carina Kaplan (Argentina), and Dr Carlos da Fonseca Brandão (Brasil). The ses-



*Carina Kaplan, Vera Weiler, Ademir Gebara, Emilio Tenti*

sions were entitled: 'Norbert Elias and social theory'; 'Civilisation, history and education'; 'Civilisation, sports and leisure'; and 'Civilisation, organisations and citizenship'.

During the event the book *La civilización en cuestión: escritos inspirados en la obra de Norbert Elias* was launched. Among the authors are Johan Goudsblom, Cas Wouters, François Depelteau, Ramón Spaaij and Ademir Gebara. This book is a result of the X Civilising Process International Symposium, which took place in Campinas, Brazil, in April 2007 (see the review by Luci Ribeiro Frey above). In 2009 two more books will be launched, with papers presented at this last Symposium.

A few important decisions were made during the symposium:

- 1 construction of a permanent website to put together the works of everyone involved with this annual Symposium. Languages of the home page will be English, Portuguese and Spanish (see [www.uel.br/grupo-estudo/processos-civilizadores](http://www.uel.br/grupo-estudo/processos-civilizadores))

- 2 construction of an International Virtual Journal. We invite those interested to the Editorial Board. Languages will be English, Portuguese and Spanish. We also invite all those interested in sending articles

- 3 the XII International Symposium will be held in Recife, Brazil, in 2009 (see below). It is very likely that the XIII International Symposium will take place in Colombia or Argentina.

Any question or suggestions should be sent to Ademir Gebara ([am\\_gebara@yahoo.com.br](mailto:am_gebara@yahoo.com.br)).

*Ademir Gebara and Tony Honorato*

## Care or Control of the Self: The Sociology of the Subject in the Twenty-First Century

*3-5 July 2008, University of Hamburg*

Eight-three participants gathered at the University of Hamburg from the 3-5 July 2008 for the conference 'Care or Control of the Self: The Sociology of the Subject in the Twenty-First Century'. The aim of the conference was to develop further perspectives of trans-disciplinary research on the individual with reference to the work of Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault. The conference addressed theoretical and empirical implications and consequences of the fundamental social changes and transformations taking place in the early twenty-first century. The organisers assumed not only the traditional, hegemonic and rational understanding of subjectivity to be affected by these developments but forms of self-regulation or self-governance to be transformed as well. In particular, the conference focused on the topics work, body, desire, time and space.

After the introduction by the organisers (Andrea D. Bührmann and Stefanie Ernst) in Søren Nagbøl (Copenhagen) presented his paper 'Criticism and respect: figurational sociology and experience analyses in a process-sociological perspective', using visual modes of interpretation as a key to Norbert Elias's and Michel Foucault's ideas. In an inspiring keynote speech on 'Individuals in the Order of Change', Annette Treibel (Karlsruhe) systematically introduced fundamental differences as well as points of agreement between Elias and Foucault – for example in self-conception, biography, generational implications (academic self-conception and position in the establishment), issues, models/guiding themes and key terms. She did this by questioning to what extent Elias and Foucault represent opposing evolutionary and revolutionary perspectives, and whether they can be regarded as separate entities housed under a common roof.

In reflecting upon the first day of the conference, it became clear that, in accordance with specific perspectives, there are similarities as well as great

differences in the theories of Elias and Foucault, which become obvious in subsequent sociological research. The opening day of the conference was concluded with a splendid reception at which some 45 guests were able to network and exchange information and ideas.

The morning of the second day was marked by three further keynote speeches. Dr. Thomas Schäfer (Berlin), Stephen Mennell (Dublin) and Helga Pelizäus-Hoffmeister (Munich) focused on the theoretical-empirical questions of self-regulation and self-care. For this purpose, Foucault's and Elias's work was examined and discussed in light of theories on power, as well as historical, biographical and cross-cultural perspectives. The lively discussion, which followed initially, drew light to the controversy of the theoretical approaches, yet also revealed perspectives for new and innovative fields of research.

In the afternoon, the conference participants met in well-attended parallel working sessions on the topics *work* (Forum 1) and *body* (Forum 2). Forum 1 began with a keynote speech by Prof. Dr. Pongratz (Munich) on the society of entrepreneurs (Gesellschaft von Unternehmern). The focus of the following speech by Boris Traue (Berlin) was the cybernetic self, which constitutes itself in the virtual space of the Internet. Next was Magdalena Freudenthuß (Berlin) with a look at the precarious or self-entrepreneurial self. An open discussion concluded Forum 1. Forum 2 opened with a keynote speech by Gabriele Klein (Hamburg). Using this lecture as a basis, Paula Villa (Munich), Torsten Junge (Hamburg) and Mona Motakef (Duisburg-Essen) explored various aspects of body and physicalness. While Junge was primarily interested in modes of governance by the state, Villa focused on the area of conflict of physical empowerment and control thereof. Motakef discussed the body as a 'gift' or 'donation' in the context of the debate on organ transplants.

Forum 3 was dedicated to the issue of *desire*, whereas Forum 4 dealt with *time and space*. In the Forum about *desire* the keynote speech was held by Elisabeth Tuider, Münster. She discussed

Foucault's idea of desire and Elias's idea of sexuality using the biographical studies she conducted in Mexico as a background. Following these thoughts, Eva Tolasch (Munich) raised the question of the scope of actions for groups defined as 'deviant'. Volker Woltersdorff (Berlin) dealt with sexual policies in neo-liberal states. Lena Nepyypa (Hamburg) used her research on sexual services to demonstrate the productivity of Foucault's theory of the sexual dispositive. Forum 4 (*time and space*) included inspiring speeches by Johan Goudsblom (Amsterdam) and Samuel Binkley (Boston). The forum offered ample time for open discussion on subjects such as Foucault's and Elias's concepts on time and space as well as thoughts on the historic models of shame.

Following these four workshops, a group of 22 participants founded an inter- and transdisciplinary network under the working title: *Research Network for the Study of Subjectivities* (RNSS). This network, the creation of which was one of the goals of the conference, will focus on research of (late) modern modes of subjectivation. It was established that this innovative area of research initiated by the congress is to be further pursued by joint congresses and research projects. The second day of the congress was concluded with a dinner, which offered additional time for networking and the exchange of ideas.

On the third and final day of the conference, perspectives on transdisciplinary research of the subject were drawn. In their keynote speeches the conference organisers Andrea D. Bührmann (The Death of the Subject and its Sociological Rebirth as Subjectivation) and Stefanie Ernst (From Self Discipline towards Market Discipline? The Self, the Individual and Processes of Subjectivation) explored (despite, or perhaps because of, the lack of an explicit definition of the subject by Foucault and Elias) a possible direction, which may provide a creative impetus for the current debate on subjectivation. Additionally, contributions from the field of education (Sabine Reh, Bettina Fritzsche and Kerstin Rabenstein, Berlin) and sociology (Jason Hughes, London, and Ines Langemeyer, Berlin) showed the implementation and recep-

tion of both approaches in specific areas of study and research (school and enterprise/organisation and comparison of theories).

In a 90-minute panel discussion moderated by Marianne Pieper entitled 'Individuum und Gesellschaft: Eine paradoxe Entgegensetzung?' (Individual and Society: A Paradoxical Opposition?), perspectives on researching the nature of the subject were controversially discussed. Furthermore, due to the fact that the panel was heterogeneous and interdisciplinary, it was possible to understand various interpretations of Foucault's and Elias's work influenced by differences in nationality, generation or fields of study.

This conference, which was of high academic standard, marks the beginning of an excellent exchange of ideas and research on Foucault and Elias. This work is envisaged to be continued in the future by further conferences and additional activities. The results of the conference are going to be made available to the German- as well as the English-speaking public. ([www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/srsc](http://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/srsc))

Stefanie Ernst and  
Andrea D. Bührmann

## American Sociological Association: 103rd Annual Meeting

Boston, 1-4 August 2008

Cas Wouters and I attended this year's meeting of the ASA in Boston. I presented a paper entitled 'Power and perception: the American civilising (and decivilising) process' in a session on 'Perception and political process in historical perspective', and Cas one on 'The civilising of emotions: formalisation and informalisation' in a round table organised by the Section on Comparative and Historical Sociology. In addition, we made a joint presentation called 'Taking Elias to America' in a round table organised by the Section on Marxist Sociology.

Lars Bo Kaspersen and Norman Gabriel were listed to speak about 'The

importance of survival units for Norbert Elias's figurational perspective', but we didn't actually track down either of them. We did, however, have the opportunity to renew contact with many old friends in American sociology, including Arlie Russell Hochschild, Randall Collins, Eiko Ikegami, George Ritzer, Lauren Langman and John Torpey.

Of course, Norbert Elias's ideas still do not have a very high profile within American sociology, and the fragmentation of the discipline into numerous postage-stamp-size areas of empirical or theoretical specialisation – which has perhaps gone further in the US even than elsewhere – creates a considerable obstacle. We gained the impression that few people are painting the big picture nowadays, and indeed that sociologists often find such an enterprise slightly alarming. Perhaps that is because the cult of – or rather the institutional pressures towards – 'methodological' and 'scientific' 'rigour' serves to frighten younger sociologists away from anything more than sociological philately.

Stephen Mennell

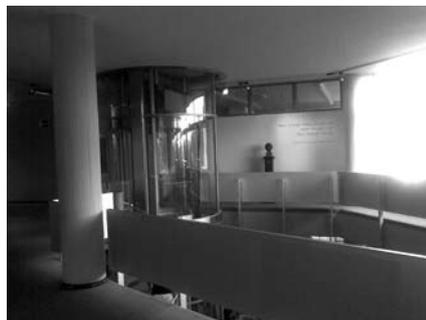
## Final Conference: Control of Violence

Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung,  
Bielefeld, 10–13 September 2008

This conference was held to mark the conclusion of the work of a large international group of scholars who had spent all or part of the academic year 2007–8 at the ZiF discussing many aspects of the problem of the control of violence. I had been invited to deliver the final contribution of the conference, responding to Peter Imbusch's impressive research paper on 'Processes of decivilisation', which represented a notable advance in the development of that tricky concept. Among many other excellent contributions, I enjoyed Steve Messner's paper on cross-national homicide trends, Helmut Thome's on 'Self-control, conscience and criminal violence', P. J. Henry on 'Explaining the origins of cultures on honour through the lens of status', Jean-Germain Gros on various types of failed and failing states, and Jochen Hippler on 'Violence, governance and Islam in Paki-

stan'. (The last two caught my interest because the unhelpful part played by the USA was a common thread.)

But I am reporting on the conference partly because the spirit of Elias seemed to hover over the conference – for the very material and un-spiritual reason that the ZiF's seminar room has now been named the 'Norbert Elias



Room', with his famous little poem 'How strange these people are ...' painted prominently above his bust (see the photograph). The reason, of course, is that Elias was Permanent Fellow in Residence at the ZiF – so far the only one there has been – from 1978–84. Many of the German speakers referred to Elias; some of the other participants (notably Americans) appeared a little hazy about who exactly he was; but the bust was inescapable!

Stephen Mennell

## Zur Genealogie des Zivilisationsprozesses: Friedrich Nietzsche und Norbert Elias

[On the Genealogy of the Civilising Process: Friedrich Nietzsche and Norbert Elias]

Humboldt University, Berlin,  
26–28 September, 2008.

The conference *On the Genealogy of the Civilising Process*, focusing on interrelations between the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Norbert Elias, took place at the Humboldt University in Berlin from 26–28 September, 2008. Sponsored by the Norbert Elias Foundation (Amsterdam), the *Seminar für Ästhetik* (HU Berlin) and the *Nietzsche-Gesellschaft* (Naumburg), the conference was frequented by a large number of international scholars from a variety

of disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy, cultural and literary studies. It was organised by Dr. Enrico Müller (Greifswald), Angela Holzer (Princeton/Berlin) and Friederike Günther (Berlin).

Enrico Müller presented a programmatic statement that explicated the thematic aspects allowing for a confrontation of these two thinkers. He mentioned the overall importance of Nietzsche's cultural critique for the emerging German *Kultur-* and *Wissenssoziologie* that Norbert Elias was exposed to through Alfred Weber and Karl Mannheim in Heidelberg. Müller emphasised structural parallels in the critical and theoretical stances of both, ranging from the rejection of *Substantontologie* and its residues in scientific language to the long-term perspective adopted to explain the emergence of subjectivity, reason and conscience as effects of the process of civilisation. Renate Reschke compared the perspectives Nietzsche and Elias brought to bear on the description and valuation of courtly life. While Nietzsche's glorification of noble demeanour, style and values has to be seen as a cultural counter programme to the modernity he abhorred, Elias's view on the court emphasises its role for the genesis of modern civilisation. Stephen Mennell presented an analysis of the American habitus that developed from a warrior ethos he located among elites in the American south. The model for this ethos was described by Norbert Elias in his account (in *The Germans*) of the *satisfaktionsfähige Gesellschaft*, for which Nietzsche's philosophy served, according to Elias, as a mouthpiece. Johan Goudbloom spoke on nihilism and, while also discussing the lacunae in his earlier work on Nietzsche and nihilism inspired by Elias (*Nihilism and Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), emphasised that the nihilistic diagnosis brought forth by Nietzsche did not play a role for Elias – in fact, that he opposed this diagnosis and its consequences. Professor Goudbloom additionally cautioned against a short-term perspective on human development and emphasised the need to integrate archaeological evidence from pre-historical stages to gain a better understanding of the long-term genesis of civilisation.

Andreas Urs Sommer lucidly compared Elias's and Nietzsche's strategies for dealing with death after the disappearance of transcendental options that endowed death with meaning and proffered consolation. Annette Hilt and Chiara Piazzesi investigated the notion and genesis of individuality from different angles. Jörn Ahrens interpreted the *Process of Civilisation* as one of increasing asceticism, a thesis that was highly contested. Also contested was the analysis by David Wachter, who proposed that Elias did not accord to violence the same fundamental role for the genesis of civilisation as Nietzsche. Leander Scholz interpreted both Nietzsche's and Elias's political visions from a Luhmannian perspective and suggested the ways in which both sketch a global society. Werner Stegmaier focused on what he calls the philosophy of orientation and offered a penetrating interpretation of the role of communication – Nietzsche's *Mitteilungszeichen* and Elias's symbol theory – in the approaches of both thinkers. Friederike Günther spoke about the idea of a Copernican turn.

The discussions proved to be very fruitful and offered new theoretical perspectives. During the last decades, the international sociological research inspired by Norbert Elias has tended toward empirical research, while the engagement with Nietzsche has for the most part been restricted to philosophy, German or cultural studies. The importance of Nietzsche's cultural critique for the genesis of sociology has only recently been investigated by Klaus Lichtblau and Robert Häußling. While there are, from a perspective of the history of science, in-depth studies of Nietzsche's role in Max Weber's sociology (Wilhelm Hennis) and a recent dissertation by Franz Graf zu Solms-Laubach emphasising the early engagement – both enthusiastic and highly critical – of Ferdinand Tönnies, Rosa Mayreder and Alfred Weber with Nietzsche's philosophy, no such study has as of now been undertaken with regard to Norbert Elias.

While the emphasis on structural parallels not restricted to the theoretical conceptualisation underlying both the *Prozess der Zivilisation* and *On the*

*Genealogy of Morals* was a useful point of departure, the conference did not address *wissenssoziologische* and historical aspects of Elias's engagement with Nietzsche's philosophy. The milieu in which the young Elias received formal training was certainly conducive to such an engagement. However, there is also evidence that Elias took notice of almost all of Nietzsche's writings and confronted Nietzsche's philosophy throughout his life. Angela Holzer's essay offers an analysis of the direct reception of Nietzsche by Elias and provides evidence from Elias's library and his notebooks detailing his post-war engagement with Nietzsche, mediated by the British philosopher Frederick Copleston and the translator Oscar Levy. The proceedings, including this essay as well as an additional essay on the historical anthropology of violence by Christian Emden, are eventually to appear in book form.

Angela Holzer  
Princeton University and  
Humboldt University

### Social Science History Association

*33rd Annual Meeting, Miami FL, 22–26  
October 2008*

At this year's SSHA conference, Pieter Spierenburg organised an 'author meets critics' session on Stephen Mennell's book *The American Civilizing Process*. Comments on the book were made by Jeff Adler (University of Florida), Randy Roth (Ohio State University) and Pieter himself, to which the author responded. In a separate session, Randy Roth gave a paper entitled 'Are Moderns less violent? The pitfalls of Elias's civilisation thesis'. In fact his extremely interesting paper was less comprehensively critical of the theory overall than the title suggests. Roth explained that historical criminologists now had much more data about levels of homicide in the medieval period than they had only a few years ago, and his preliminary conclusion (the statistical considerations are quite complicated) is that levels of homicidal violence in the Middle Ages was probably lower than has generally been assumed. It was likely that there had been a steep

upward spike in violence in the period of the Black Death and for some decades afterwards, which sounds reasonable in view of the social upheavals and changes in power balances that arose from the loss of about a third of Europe's people. But violence had been much lower immediately prior to that.

Another 'author meets critics' session was held on Eiko Ikegami's book *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*, which, like her earlier book *The Taming of the Samurai*, contains much that is thought-provoking for adepts of Elias's theory of civilising processes. Commentators on her book were Fabian Drixler (Yale), Peter Perdue (Yale) and Anna Sun (Kenyon College).

### ■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

International Institute of  
Sociology (IIS) 39th World  
Congress of Sociology  
*Yerevan, Armenia 11-14 June, 2009*



*Yerevan, with Mount Ararat in the distance*

The 39th IIS Congress will come round less than a year after the previous one. We understand that this has arisen because for some reason the 38th Congress, in Budapest, was held a year later than planned. The meeting in the Armenian capital will also be little more than a year before the ISA's XVII World Congress in Göteborg, Sweden, 11–17 July (see below).

Nevertheless, in view of how successful and enjoyable the IIS Congress in Budapest was (like the one in Stockholm before it), we have applied for a 'figurational' session in Yerevan, under much the same title as for Budapest: 'Civilising and decivilising processes:

key trends of the twenty-first century'. We hope to see both old and new faces there.

In addition, Lauren Langman (Loyola University, Chicago) and Stephen Menzell have applied to organise a topical session on 'The Crises of Globalisation'.

Call for papers: If you would like to take part in the Yerevan session, please contact one of the organising team, who are: Stephen Vertigans (Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland – s.vertigans@rgu.ac.uk); Georgi Derlugian (Northwestern University – gderlug@northwestern.edu; or Robert van Krieken (University of Sydney – robertvk@mail.usyd.edu.au). For the 'Crises of Globalisation' session, contact Lauren Langman (Lang944@aol.com) or Stephen Menzell (Stephen.Mennell@ucd.ie).

## XII International Symposium on Civilising Processes

*Recife, Brazil, 10–13 November 2009*

The twelfth in the series of International Symposia on Civilising Processes will be held from 10–13 November 2009. It will be sponsored by the Federal University of Pernambuco in the city of Recife, Brazil.

See the website for the symposium at [www.uel.br/grupo-estudo/processos-civilizadores](http://www.uel.br/grupo-estudo/processos-civilizadores). (The English and Spanish versions are under construction, but it is up and running in Portuguese.)

See also the report of the eleventh symposium above.

Tenth Congress of the French Association of Political Science (AFSP), Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Grenoble, 7–9 September 2009

*Workshop No. 44:*

### **Sociology and History of the Mechanisms of Depacification of the Political Game**

The deadline for submission of proposals has now passed, but further details about this congress can be found at <http://www.congresafsp2009.fr/>. The organisers of this workshop are: Paula

Cossart (Gracc, Université Lille III, [cossart.paula@free.fr](mailto:cossart.paula@free.fr)) and Emmanuel Taïeb (IEP of Grenoble, [emmanuel.taieb@iep-grenoble.fr](mailto:emmanuel.taieb@iep-grenoble.fr))

## XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology

*Göteborg, Sweden, 11–17 July 2010*

The overall theme of the next ISA World Congress will be 'Sociology on the Move'. We shall be applying to hold 'figurational' sessions in our new status as a Working Group within ISA Research Committee 20, and may also apply to organise one other Ad Hoc session on a specific topic.

Stephen Vertigans (Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland – s.vertigans@rgu.ac.uk); and Robert van Krieken (University of Sydney – robertvk@mail.usyd.edu.au) will be involved, perhaps with others, in organising festivities in Göteborg. More details in *Figurations* 31 and 32, but in the meantime please also keep an eye on the ISA Congress website: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/>

We urge all readers who are not already members of the ISA to join it, and RC20, as soon as possible. The more members we recruit to RC20 and our own affiliated Working Group, the more sessions we can claim at Göteborg. Subscriptions are modest, and last for four years. If you are already a member of the ISA but not of RC20, you use the same online form to pay € 25 to add membership of that research committee to your existing membership. The form can be found at [www.isa-sociology.org](http://www.isa-sociology.org)

Both editors of *Figurations* have been excessively busy in recent months – Katie moving, and Stephen frenetically travelling to far too many conferences – and so there has not been time for us to write all the reports of new books and articles, nor even to chase up others whose contributions are overdue. We therefore crave the indulgence of any readers who expected to see their work noticed in this issue. We shall do our best to catch up in *Figurations* 31.

## ■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in May 2009. News and notes should be sent to the Editors by 1 April 2009.

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Contributions should preferably be e-mailed to the Editor in the form of MS Word (.doc), Rich Text (.rtf) or and plain text (.txt) files. Do not use embedded footnotes. Hard copy is accepted reluctantly.

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Graphic Design and Desktop Publishing: Annette van de Sluis.

Printed by MultiCopy, Weesperstraat 65, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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