

# Figurations

## Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

### ■ CONTENTS

People	1
From the Norbert Elias Foundation	
<i>University of Chester Norbert Elias Prize</i>	2
<i>Book launch</i>	2
<i>Norbert Elias Ghana Artist's Stipend</i>	2
<i>Collected Works of Norbert Elias</i>	2
<i>Desperately seeking pigeons</i>	2
Looking forward to the ISA World Congress of Sociology, Göteborg, 2010	3
Involvement and Detachment: A Reflection on the Leicester conference 2006 – <i>Andrew Linklater</i>	3
The Shoe-lace Breaching Experiment – <i>Ingo Moerth</i>	4
The Impact of Elias's Work on Organisational Research and Management Development – <i>Ralph Stacey</i>	6
Review Essays	
<i>Elias, The Genesis of the Naval Profession</i> – <i>Abram de Swaan</i>	8
<i>Jack Goody, The Theft of History</i> – <i>Katie Liston</i>	10
<i>A. N. García Martínez, El proceso de la civilización</i> – <i>Sofia Gaspar</i>	12
Recent Books and Essays	13
Book Announcements	17
Bibliographical Retrospect	18
Work in Progress	18
Recent Conferences	
<i>The Art of Polyphony: Group Analysis as a Model for the         Civilising of Conflicts</i>	19
<i>X Civilising Process Symposium, Brazil</i>	19
Forthcoming Conferences	
<i>Completion of Elias Gesammelte Schriften,         Marbach 14–15 September, 2007</i>	20
<i>Civilising and Decivilising Processes: A Figurational Approach         to American Studies, Frankfurt, 22–24 November, 2007</i>	20
Obituaries	
<i>Peter Reinhart Gleichmann, 1932–2006</i>	21
<i>Anne Witz, 1952–2006</i>	23

### ■ PEOPLE

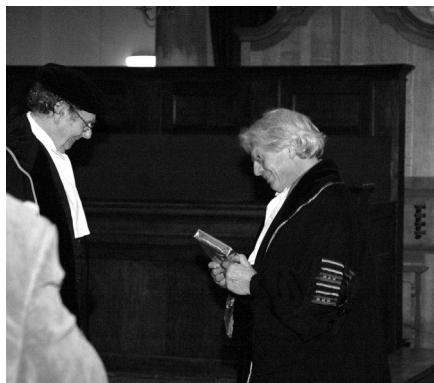
• Roger Chartier has been appointed to the Collège de France. The title of his chair is 'Écrit et cultures dans l'Europe moderne', and he will be giving his inaugural lecture on 11 October, 2007.

• Pieter Spierenburg is now Professor of Historical Criminology at the Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

• Reinhard Blomert has been appointed editor of *Leviathan*, a journal for social sciences – sociology, politics and economics. It is based in Berlin, with an office in the research institute WZB (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin).

• In January 2007 Abram de Swaan reached the age of 65, the mandatory retirement age at all universities in The Netherlands. On Friday, 26 January, he gave a valedictory lecture to a large audience in the grand auditorium of the University of Amsterdam, and was subsequently honoured in speeches by the Rector of the university and several colleagues. The valedictory lecture was given in Dutch, while the English translation was simultaneously projected on a screen. The original text, entitled 'Wijsheid achteraf' [Wisdom in hindsight], and containing a personal retrospective upon his career as a sociologist and writer, is published in the Dutch literary review *De Gids* CLXX, nr. 2 (February 2007), pp. 87–102. On the occasion De Swaan was presented with a *Liber amicorum*, entitled *Gren-*

*zeloos nieuwsgierig: Opstellen voor en over Abram de Swaan* (Boundlessly curious: Essays for and about Abram de Swaan, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 2007), edited by three of Bram's former PhD students, Annet Mooij, David Bos and Sonja van't Hof.



*Bram de Swaan receiving the Liber amicorum*

## ■ FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

### University of Chester Norbert Elias Prize

With the support of the Norbert Elias Foundation, the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Chester has instituted an annual prize for the best thesis submitted for the MSc in the Sociology of Sport and Exercise (of which Katie Liston is Programme Leader). The prize is to be known as the University of Chester Norbert Elias Prize. The first winner is Steven Cock, who wrote an outstanding thesis on 'Swimming and Bathing in the Civilising Process', of which an abstract is printed later in this issue of *Figurations*. After the university congregation in Chester cathedral on 30 March 2007 at which the degree was conferred, the prize was presented to Steve Cock by Stephen Mennell.



## Book launch

On 4 July the first Dutch edition of *Quest for Excitement* (*Sport en spanning. De zoektocht naar sensatie in de vrije tijd*, Bert Bakker), will be launched during the congress celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Mulier Instituut, the Dutch institute for research in the social sciences on sport. Joop Goudsblom will give a talk on 'Norbert Elias and the Sociology of Sport' (in Dutch). For more information on the congress, see <http://www.mulier-instituut.nl/congres>.

## Norbert Elias Ghana Artist's Stipend

The third winner of the Norbert Elias Ghana Artist's Stipend is Bernard Akoi-Jackson. In his twenties, he grew up loving the arts and spent eight of his childhood years in Selebi-Phikwe, Botswana, where his interest in literature and theatre was initiated. Upon his return to Ghana, he took a course in visual art in the Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School in Legon. Here too, his interest in drama was further nurtured by the existence of a vibrant school drama club.

He gained admission into the College of Art, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, at Kumasi, where he obtained first-class honours in the Bachelor of Fine Art in painting. His undergraduate thesis/project, which was a study in non-static art, was entitled 'Statements (An Installation): A project inspired by the concepts of time and space in contemporary painting'. He did his national service in art therapy at the Pantang Hospital, a psychiatric institution in Accra, Ghana.

As a painter of eclectic mannerisms, his fascination is in mixed-media, conceptual art and non-static forms. He writes drama and poetry and is artistic director of Christ@Work, a Christian youth choreo-visual and theatre arts group. He recently directed the group's production of 'Ananse Must Die!' – a contemporary folkplay written by Cecil Jones Abban, the president of Christ@Work. Bernard's poem 'Eternal Link' won the first prize in the first ever literature competition organised by the Goethe Institute, Accra in 1999. This poem was later included a Goethe Institute publi-

cation, entitled *Encounters*, and in *An Anthology of Contemporary Ghanaian Poems*. He designed the cover of the book.

Bernard Akoi-Jackson is currently a Master of Fine Art student at the Department of Painting and Sculpture, College of Art, KNUST, Kumasi. His proposed thesis/project topic is 'Okadii Dijii: Ga Concepts of Signification and their Relevance as Idioms of Contemporary Art Practice'.

## Collected Works

### Norbert Elias

The following volumes were published by UCD Press in February 2007:

#### *Involvement and Detachment*

Collected Works vol. 8

Edited by Stephen Quilley

ISBN: 1904558429

Price: £ 45.00 / € 60.00

#### *An Essay on Time*

Collected Works vol. 9

Edited by Steven Loyal and Stephen Mennell

ISBN: 1904558410

Price: £ 45.00 / € 60.00

The texts have been carefully corrected, passages omitted from earlier versions restored, and explanatory notes supplied where necessary. *Involvement and Detachment* contains full-colour images of two paintings discussed at length by Elias, Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* and Velázquez's *Las Meninas*.

UCD Press can offer substantial discounts to readers of *Figurations* who wish to buy copies direct from the publishers. Readers far across the globe from Dublin may find, however, that the cost of postage may outweigh the discount. Contact [ucdpress@ucd.ie](mailto:ucdpress@ucd.ie) for further details.

## Desperately seeking pigeons

Eric Dunning recently recalled having written an article with Norbert Elias on the popular working-class hobby of pigeon racing, sometime in the late 1960s, which he thought had been published in an American magazine, probably *Newsweek*. If that were so, it should be included in the forthcoming

ing three volumes of Elias's essays in the Collected Works. There has been no difficulty in retrieving the draft of this article from a typescript in the Elias archives: it consists of 800 words packed with insights. But we have had no success in finding out when and where it was actually published. We have established, with the help of their archivist in New York, that the piece did *not* appear in *Newsweek*. It would appear that it did not appear in *Time* magazine, because there is an online index of its contents going back to 1923. Eric is amazingly vague about exactly when and where the little essay may have appeared, but it looks as though it was in 1967–8, give or take a few years. Or perhaps it was only submitted for publication but never actually published. The obvious resources of the internet and library searches have already been tried. But if any reader of *Figurations* can pin down this phantom publication, we shall be immensely grateful. Please send any information to Stephen.Mennell@ucd.ie.

## ■ LOOKING FORWARD TO THE ISA WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY, GÖTEBORG, 2010

Many readers of *Figurations* will have participated in previous ISA World Congresses, especially the very successful Figural Sociology sessions at the 1994 Bielefeld congress, but also in Montreal (1998) and Brisbane (2002). It was unfortunate that plans for a presence at the 2006 congress in Durban failed to materialise; we were trying to upgrade from an 'Ad Hoc Group' to a more permanent 'Working Group' status, but administratively fell between two stools. We now have good news about plans for a 'figural presence' at the ISA World Congress of Sociology in Göteborg in 2010.

For some years we have all been interested in establishing a more secure foundation for figural/process sociological research activity in the ISA, and happily this has now come to fruition.

The President of ISA Research Committee 20 on Comparative Sociology, Prof. Mattei Dogan (Paris) has

now indicated that the RC20 Board is happy to include among its Working Groups one on Figural Sociology (although we may want to discuss the name). RC20's website is: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc20.htm>.

We now need to get some discussion going about what we are going to do for 2010, what kinds of sessions we would like to run, who would like to organise and chair them, who would like to function as the 'chair' of this working group, or set up a website, and so on. In order to set the ball rolling, in approaching the RC20 Board, we made the following claims (below) about what we would do leading up to the 2010 Göteborg ISA World Congress:

The areas in which this RC20 Working Group will be providing the opportunity for sociologists from around the world to present the results of their recent research include, but are not restricted to:

- a) the question of processes of civilisation in stateless societies, and such an analysis might enrich contemporary social anthropology;
- b) the analysis of the current dynamics of processes of civilisation, and the extent to which it should be understood as improving control over human relations, in areas such as the sociology of emotions, the sociology of sport, media and communications, education, etc.;
- c) the study of the 'barbarism of civilisation', decivilisation or 'dyscivilisation', the analysis of totalitarian states, genocide, colonialism and post-colonialism;
- d) comparative studies of civilisation around the globe, in relation to the wide diversity of forms of state formation and cultural development, in regions such as Asia, South America and Africa, as well as the social scientific analysis of globalisation and the expansion of a 'world society'.

The bulk of the work done in figural sociology so far has been in Western Europe, and the Working Group will work towards the stimulation of research undertaken from this perspective by scholars from North

and South America, Asia, Africa and Oceania, in relation to an ever-broader range of parts of the globe.

Please send comments, suggestions and offers to help to Robert van Krieken at

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## ■ INVOLVEMENT AND DETACHMENT: A REFLECTION ON THE LEICESTER CONFERENCE 2006

Andrew Linklater  
University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Elias maintained that one of the purposes of Sociology was to enable human beings to exercise higher levels of control over uncontrolled social processes (including warfare) but he rejected partisan scholarship. He appears to have shared Marx's hope that human beings will eventually come to make more of their history under conditions of their choosing while rejecting the efforts to link theory and practice that animated much of the Marxist tradition. At the conference on 'Elias in the Twenty-First Century' which was held at the University of Leicester, 10–12 April 2006 [see *Figurations* 25], Eric Dunning maintained that Elias hoped that progress in detached sociological inquiry would inform practical inquiry. The commitment to 'practical engagement' invites a discussion of the position that figural sociology should take on what counts as morally desirable as opposed to morally reprehensible practical involvement. Related issues include the extent to which at least one branch of figural inquiry should promote connections with 'critical' approaches to the study of society and politics.

What Eric Dunning called Elias's humanism at the Leicester conference is



apparent in his claims about the desirability of a world which extirpates force as far as possible; and arguably it is evident in his quiet support for extending the circle of emotional identification to include as many people as possible. One might note his claim in *Involve-ment and Detachment* (2007, p. 13) that it 'should be recognised as a basic human right that human beings can live out their natural lives to their limits, if that is their own wish, and that people who use or advocate and threaten the use of force as a means of shortening other peoples' lives have therefore to be regarded as criminals or as insane'. But the normative dimensions of Elias's sociological project were largely implicit rather than developed in a systematic philosophical manner.

Elias's claim that all societies must devise ways to ensure that their members do not kill, maim, or in other ways harm each other time and time again in the course of satisfying their most basic physical and psychological needs highlights themes that can be used to make connections between figurational sociology and critical social theory. And as with individual societies, it may be argued, so with the various global economic and political interconnections which have brought virtually all human beings into contact with each other. A recurrent question in the history of international relations is how far human groups can agree that certain forms of harm (the slaughter of the 'innocent' in war, for example) should be prohibited. What might be called 'embodied cosmopolitanism' starts with the premise that different social groups may be able to find some common ground in the desire to eradicate forms of mental and physical pain which are intelligible more or less everywhere since they are grounded in corporeality and vulnerability; the approach starts with the supposition that the mutual intelligibility of suffering can underpin the most basic displays of human sympathy and solidarity.

Support for this ethical standpoint can be found in the writings of Adorno, specifically in his claim that while societies do not agree on the nature of the good life, most can agree on certain forms of the 'bad' society that should be resisted. They can also be found in

Horkheimer's observations about the possibility of building human solidarity around concerns with the need to alleviate kinds of suffering which are feared more or less everywhere. Perhaps, to use the language of the Frankfurt School, an embodied cosmopolitanism which starts with the body and its vulnerabilities has been immanent in most social systems at most times.

How far it has been expressed as an ethical ideal, and how far it has influenced human conduct, has varied enormously, and not least because of what Elias called the dualisms between insiders and outsiders which have shaped all periods of human history. Variations in support for embodied cosmopolitanism and on its 'immanence' require detached sociological analysis. But one strand of figurational sociology can explore social variations in connection with an explicit normative stance; it can do so while striving to ensure that moral commitments do not distort empirical inquiry and produce only convenient findings. Such an approach can advance the quest for sociological investigation with an emancipatory intent. More specifically, it can promote links between figurational sociology and Frankfurt School critical theory, and it might even work to unify modes of sociological and critical analysis which appeared in a remarkable period at the University of Frankfurt approximately eight decades ago.

## ■ THE SHOE-LACE BREACH- ING EXPERIMENT: NORBERT ELIAS AS ETHNOMETHODOLOGIST

### An almost unknown text on a breaching experiment

Ingo Moerth

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In November 1967 a short article by Norbert Elias was published (in German) in the regular travel section of the German weekly journal *Die Zeit*.<sup>1</sup> It is entitled '*Die Geschichte mit den Schuhbändern*' ('The story of the shoe-laces'), and until recently it has remained rather unknown – at least in the sense that it has not been listed

in any of the 'official' bibliographies of Elias's work (except recently in the HyperElias©WorldCatalogue). It was not included in the corresponding volume of the German *Gesammelte Schriften*. Nor has it hitherto been discussed within the German- or English-speaking academic community of scholars interested in the work of Norbert Elias. The only previous reference to (a manuscript version of) this text by Norbert Elias was made by Hermann Korte in his paper on 'The ethnological perspective of Norbert Elias' at the conference on 'Norbert Elias and Anthropology' at Metz in 2000 (see *Figurations* 14), published in French translation as 'Le regard ethnologique de Norbert Elias', chapter 1 in Sophie Chevalier and Jean-Marie Privat, eds, *Norbert Elias et l'anthropologie: 'Nous sommes tous si étranges ...'* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004 – see *Figurations* 23). But even Korte acknowledges that he 'was unable to find out when the text was really published', and his citations therefore pertain to the provisional manuscript version and not to the actual published text.

I re-discovered the 'officially' published version of this text in January 2007, by following a different trail: the hint on the manuscript context (and also on the *Die Zeit* context) in a 1985 report by Michael Schröter,<sup>2</sup> and then digging up the published text with the help of Mrs. Andrea Beekmann, the archivist of *Die Zeit* in Hamburg.

The text testifies to Elias's 'professional sociological gaze' even when he was only being a tourist, and it may be described as a *premature breaching experiment*. Harold Garfinkel, recognised as the founder of 'ethnomethodology', invented the term and used the method of 'breaching experiments': experiments in which his students breached the taken-for-granted assumptions underlying everyday situations, thereby generating consternation and embarrassment among other people present. But Garfinkel's experiments were not widely known until after the publication in 1967 of his book *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967, especially chapter 2, 'Studies on the routine grounds of everyday activities'), after

which they were widely copied. But Elias's little breaching experiments, testing the reactions to his (at first accidentally and then deliberately) untied and trailing shoe-laces, were conducted in 1965–6, and in that sense they are 'premature'!

#### *The context*

After retiring as Reader at Leicester in 1962, and completing his subsequent appointment as professor at the University of Ghana at Legon near Accra in the summer of 1964 – and around the same time having been awarded the pension of the full Professor at Frankfurt that he would probably have become had it not been for the rise of Hitler – Norbert Elias obviously enjoyed his new emeritus existence and spent a considerable amount of his spare time travelling as more or less private tourist, or with 'tourism' extensions of journeys to give lectures or participate in conferences. He continued to travel and spent a considerable amount of time away from home until the last years of his life, including holidays in Greece, Morocco, the Seychelles, and East Africa. The rediscovered contribution to *Die Zeit* reflects these experiences as a leisure-time traveller and tourist – probably really relaxed travelling for the first time since he became a refugee in 1933.

In his paper, Hermann Korte gives valuable background information to this mainly 'touristic' context. Korte travelled with Norbert Elias to Greece – the Mani peninsula in the Peloponnese – in late autumn 1966, and there by accident (in the small village of Gerolimena) they met Wolfgang Boller, the then editor of the travel section of *Die Zeit*. After discussing travelling experiences at a dinner they enjoyed together in a harbour tavern, Norbert Elias agreed to write an article on the theme 'A travelling sociologist', which was afterwards completed in January 1967 (manuscript version) and finally published November 1967.

In the published *Die Zeit* text, Elias therefore refers explicitly to mainly touristic or spare-time experiences: when on holiday in Spain (Torremolinos, in the spring of 1965); while in London in 1965 to give a lecture on

'Sociology and Psychiatry'; on a private trip to Paris (probably in spring 1966); during a visiting professorship in Münster (autumn 1965 to January 1966); and on a semi-private journey to Switzerland (in the early autumn of 1966) to negotiate the re-issue of '*Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*' by the Bern publisher Francke.

#### *On the text*

Elias starts his reflections on being a 'sociologist on the move' by emphasizing the inevitability for him of taking a sociological point of view, in addition to all the 'merely' touristic perspectives, such as 'indulging in beaches, museums, ruins, landscapes' and so on. The additional perspective is provided by his 'sociological spectacles': 'I cannot help it: I am fascinated by the people, their differences, their behaviour, their way of life ...'.

The key experience took place in Torremolinos (probably in May or June 1965), when Norbert Elias strolled around the small original fishermen's village, wondering about the people's everyday life and world, and conceptually applying an exclusive *Gemeinschaft* model to their social life, distinguishing it from Tönnies's model of '*Gesellschaft*', and feeling more or less excluded from their community.

Eventually he experienced signs including him as addressee of communication, without – at the beginning – knowing the context: 'I had the impression of women shouting after me. Then a little girl approached me laughing, but hid her head, and was running back to her mother ... Finally I understood through an older girl: she pointed to my shoes, where the left shoe-laces were untied and trailing.'

By retying the loose shoe-laces, Elias had the feeling of being included in the village community – at least for a moment, and based on the community aspect of the everyday reality in the village: people took notice and nodded approval of his rectifying something that had a disturbing appearance.

After reflecting on this experience Norbert Elias started a *series of breaching experiments*, beginning *ad hoc*, and

ending in various situations in Spain, France, England, Germany, and Switzerland. He strolled around in all these contexts with *intentionally* untied and trailing shoe-laces. The results of these purposefully conducted breaching experiments are reported as follows:

(1) *Spain*: Torremolinos 1965 (upper village): In the mostly touristic context of 'upper' Torremolinos the loose shoe-laces were sometimes noticed, but never communicated, which he explained by a predominantly anonymous *Gesellschaft* context, brought about by a predominance of tourism.

(2) *England*: London 1965 (Regent Street, Bond Street): Here Elias conducted three experiments, all of which lasted three hours. He got nine reactions, mostly by older 'citizens', as Norbert Elias notes: 'In England mostly elderly gentlemen reacted by communicating with me on the danger of stumbling and falling'. This might be interpreted as an established '*society-context*', where the anonymity is overruled by engaged and experienced citizens watching the public space.

(3) *France*: Paris 1966 (Champs Elysées, Boulevard St Michel, Montparnasse): Here Elias conducted three experiments of three hours, but with much less reaction. Only two people communicated directly with him about the visible shoe-lace problem, both sitting in street cafés on the Champs Elysées, besides a youngster who shouted directly '*prenez garde*' ('take care') into his ear, much to the amusement of the young man's group of companions. As an explanation of this different reaction, perhaps a *different character of 'public space' in France* may be relevant: mere *observation* in contrast with engagement and direct intervention.

(4) *Germany*: for instance Münster 1965: Here the '*society-context*' mentioned above was – according to Norbert Elias – watched and communicated not by gentlemen, but mostly by *women*: 'In Germany older men only looked at me somewhat contemptuously, whereas women reacted directly and tried to "clean up" the obvious disorder, on the tram as well as elsewhere.

Here in most cases a short conversation, comprising more than the obvious “shoe-lace disorder” took place, such as a short warning about what might happen if he didn’t take care of the basic problem’.

(5) *Switzerland*: Bern 1966: Here Elias experienced the most elaborate conversation about dangers related to untied shoe-laces, including admonitions about dangers of eating grapes and using trains. He explicitly states: ‘This was probably an exception, from which no conclusion on a Swiss national character can be drawn.’

#### Discussion

The *Die Zeit* text is remarkable in four respects:

(1) As an anticipation of what Garfinkel was to call a ‘breaching experiment’, used to uncover underlying assumptions of everyday life. The breaching character of Norbert Elias’s shoe-lace experiments might be considered as rather low, but they are still among the very first examples in print of such an approach.

(2) As a contribution to and illustration of the classical ‘community vs. society’ problem as defined by Ferdinand Tönnies. Elias enlarges the classical dichotomy by hinting at public spaces, which can be defined as either community or society, according to participating groups and individuals.

(3) As puzzle-piece leading up to his important 1974 essay ‘Towards a Theory of Communities’, in Colin Bell and Howard Newby (eds): *The Sociology of Community* (London: Frank Cass, 1974, pp. ix-xli), emphasising the varying community-character of social spaces, measured by the respective reaction within the social space to a (mildly) breaching experiment and intervention.

(4) As methodological reflection on qualitative approaches to reality. In the manuscript version Norbert Elias writes: ‘The results of my inquiry are not really conclusive. Maybe the social world cannot be divided so sharply into communities and societies as assumed according to the needs of “orderly people”. In addition, my method

[experimenting with shoe laces] needs more testing. It makes fun, but it could be improved to meet the challenges of a really up to date scientific method’ (quoted by Korte).

The full German text of the *Die Zeit* article can be found at <http://hyperelias.jku.at/1967.htm#BM1967Ager1>, and an English translation will be included in *Essays on Sociology and the Humanities*, volume 16 of the Collected Works of Elias (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008).

#### Notes

1. Norbert Elias, ‘Die Geschichte mit den Schuhbändern - Soziologe auf Reisen’, *Die Zeit*, 17 November 1967, p. 55. See <http://hyperelias.jku.at/1967.htm#BM1967Ager1>. An English translation will be included in *Essays on Sociology and the Humanities*, volume 16 of the Collected Works of Elias (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008).

2. Michael Schröter, *Bestandsaufnahme der wissenschaftlichen Manuskripte von Norbert Elias*, Bochum 1985 (Abschlussbericht zum 1. Arbeitsgang des Forschungsprojektes ‘Vorbereitung einer deutschsprachigen Edition zentraler Arbeiten von Norbert Elias’, durchgeführt mit Unterstützung der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung unter der Leitung von Hermann Korte an der Fakultät für Sozialwissenschaft der Ruhr-Universität Bochum).

## ■ THE IMPACT OF ELIAS’S WORK ON ORGANISATIONAL RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Ralph Stacey

University of Hertfordshire

The Complexity and Management Centre at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire has been conducting a research programme on organisational change since 2000. This programme leads to the degrees of either Master of Arts by research or Doctor of Management. It is necessarily a part-time programme because the research method is a basically reflexive one that requires students to reflect rigorously on their own current experience of their work in organisations, locating

those reflections in the wider organisational, psychological, sociological and philosophical literatures. It is in locating their reflections in the wider literature and in making sense of their own experience that students find the work of Elias to be of great importance. As Elias did, so do we take the view that there is no detached way of understanding organisations from the position of the objective observer. Instead, organisations have to be understood from something of a detached perspective, in terms of one’s own personal involvement with others in the co-creation of the patterns of interaction that are the organisation.

The programme seeks to provoke participants into critical reflection of taken-for-granted views of what organisations are and how they change. As staff, we provide this provocation in the form of what some of us call the theory of complex responsive processes. From this perspective, organisations are thought of as patterns of interaction between people that are iterated as the present. Instead of abstracting from the experience of human bodily interaction, which is what we do when we posit that individuals create a system in their interaction, the perspective of complex responsive processes stays with the experience of interaction which produces nothing but further interaction. This position clearly reflects the thought of Elias in that we are moving from thinking in terms of the spatial metaphor of systems to a temporal processes way of thinking, where the temporal processes are those of human relating. Organisations are then understood as the simultaneously cooperative-consensual and conflictual-competitive processes of relating between people. It is through these ordinary, everyday processes of relating that people in organisations cope with the complexity and uncertainty of organisational life. As they do so, they perpetually construct their future together as the present.

Complex responsive processes of relating can be understood as acts of communication, relations of power, and the interplay between people’s choices arising in acts of evaluation.



## *Acts of communication*

It is because human agents are conscious and self-conscious that they are able to cooperate and reach consensus, while at the same time they conflict and compete with each other, in the highly sophisticated ways in which they do. Drawing on the work of the American pragmatist, George Herbert Mead, one can understand consciousness – that is, ‘mind’ – as arising in communicative interaction between human bodies. Humans have evolved central nervous systems such that when one gestures to another, particularly in the form of vocal gesture or language, one evokes in one’s own body responses to one’s gesture that are similar to those evoked in other bodies. In other words, in their acting, humans take the attitude, the tendency to act, of the other and it is because they have this capacity that humans can know what they are doing. It immediately follows that consciousness (knowing, mind) is a social process in which meaning emerges in the social act of gesture-response, where the gesture can never be separated from the response. Meaning does not lie in the gesture, the word, alone but in the gesture taken together with the response to it as one social act.

Furthermore, in communicating with each other as the basis of everything they do, people do not simply take the attitude of the specific others with whom they are relating. Humans have the capacity for generalising so that when they act they always take up the attitude of what Mead called the generalised other. In other words, they always take the attitude of the group or society to their actions – they are concerned about what others might think of what they do or say. This is often unconscious and it is, of course, a powerful form of social control. According to Mead, self-consciousness is also a social process involving the capacity humans have to take themselves as an object of subjective reflection. This is a *social* process because the subject, ‘I’, can only ever contemplate itself as an object, ‘me’, which is one’s perception of the attitude of society towards oneself. The ‘I’ is the often spontaneous and imaginative response of the socially formed individual to the ‘me’ as the

gestures of society to oneself. Self is this emergent ‘I-me’ dialectic so that each self is socially formed while at the same time interacting selves are forming the social. Communication, then, is not simply the sending of a signal to be received by another, but rather complex social, that is, responsive, processes of self formation in which meaning and the society-wide patterns emerge. This view has strong resonance with Elias’s claim that society emerged in the ongoing interplay of many, many intentions. *Relations of power*

Drawing on the work of Elias, one understands how the processes of communicative interacting constitute relations of power. Elias showed how such power relationships form figurations, or groupings, in which some are included and others are excluded and where the power balance is tilted in favour of some groupings and against others. These groupings establish powerful feelings of belonging which constitute each individual’s ‘we’ identity. These ‘we’ identities, derived from the groups we belong to, are inseparable from each of our ‘I’ identities. As with Mead, then, we can see that processes of human relating form and are formed by individual and collective identities, which inevitably reflect complex patterns of power relating. This provides an insightful way of understanding what happens in activities of mergers and acquisitions which threaten the very identities of people and so raise great anxiety and resistance.

## *Choices arising in acts of evaluation*

In their communicative interacting and power relating, humans are always making choices between one action and another. The choices may be made on the basis of conscious desires and intentions, or unconscious desires and choices, for example, those that are habitual, impulsive, obsessive, compulsive, compelling or inspiring. In other words, human action is always evaluative, sometimes consciously and at other times unconsciously. The criteria for evaluating these choices are values and norms, together constituting ideology. We are thus using the notion of ideology in the sense of Elias who argued that we always act on an ideol-

ogy and every act of negating an ideology immediately leads to another one. Ideology is thus not abstracted from experience, understood as direct interaction between bodies, and it is not, therefore, located in some ‘whole’ that actually exists outside of experience. *Norms* (morals, the right, the ‘ought’) are evaluative criteria taking the form of obligatory restrictions which have emerged as generalisations and become habitual in a history of social interaction. We are all socialised to take up the norms of the particular groups and the society to which we belong and this restricts what we can do as we particularise the generalised norms in our moment by moment specific action situations. Elias’s work shows in detail how norms constitute major aspects of the personality structures, or identities, of interdependent people. *Values* (ethics, the ‘good’) are individually-felt voluntary compulsions to choose one desire, action, or norm rather than another. Following Dewey, we understand values to arise in social processes of self formation, which give meaning to life, opening up opportunities for action. Mead describes these as cult values, which need to be functionalised in particular contingent situations and this inevitably involves conflict. Together the voluntary compulsion of value and the obligatory restriction of norms constitute *ideology*. Ideology is the basis on which people choose desires and actions and it unconsciously sustains power relations by making a particular figuration of power feel natural. We can see, then, that complex responsive processes of human relating form and are formed by values, norms and ideologies as integral aspects of self/identity formation in its simultaneously individual and collective form.

## *The consequences of taking a complex responsive processes perspective*

Thinking in this way has two important consequences.

First, no one can step outside of their interaction with others. In mainstream thinking, an organisation is thought of a system at a level above the individuals who form it. It is recognised that this organisational system is affected by patterns of power and economic

relations in the wider society and these are normally thought of as forces, over and above the organisation and its individual members, which shape local forms of experience. Individuals and the social are posited at different levels and causal powers are ascribed to that social level. In the kind of process terms I am trying to use, there are no forces over and above individuals. All we have are vast numbers of continually iterated interactions between human bodies and these are local in the sense that each of us can only interact with a limited number of others. It is in the vast number of local (in this specific technical sense) interactions that widespread, global patterns of power and economic relations emerge. The widespread patterns emerge as repetition and potential transformation at the same time. We can then get highly repetitive patterns iterated over long time periods. The general comments we make about such patterns refer to what is emerging rather than to any force over and above those in whose interaction it is emerging. In their local interaction people will always be particularising, taking up these generalisations in their local interactions, and they may not be aware of doing so. No one can step outside interaction to design that interaction, and from this perspective it does not make sense to think of leaders setting directions or designing widespread patterns of interaction which they can then realise. When leaders set directions or formulate organisational designs, they are in effect articulating what Mead means by the generalised other and cult values. What happens as a result of doing this depends upon how people take such generalisations and cult values up in their local interaction with each other.

Second, there is no overall programme, design, blueprint or plan for the organisation as a 'whole'. Designs, programmes, blueprints and plans exist only insofar as people are taking them up in their local interactions. Any statements that the most powerful make about organisational designs, visions and values are understood as gestures calling forth responses from many, many people in their local interactions. The most powerful can choose their own gestures but will be unable to choose the responses of others, so that the out-

come of their gestures will frequently produce surprising outcomes. Global patterns emerge in local interaction, in a self organising manner, in the absence of any plan or blueprint for that global pattern. It follows that one can only really understand an organisation from within the *local interaction* in which global tendencies to act are taken up. This means that the insights and findings of the research must arise in the researcher's *reflection* on the micro detail of his or her own *experience* of interaction with others. It follows that the research method is 'subjective' or, rather, a paradox of *detached involvement*. The term involvement refers to the inevitable emotion that is aroused in the experience of interacting with others in order to accomplish some joint task. It is impossible for any of us to completely avoid every form of emotional engagement but quite possible that heightened anxiety, in conditions of not knowing, will submerge us in highly emotional, or 'involved', thinking which could take 'magico-mythical' forms. Clearly, such thinking cannot qualify as research. However, if we can never completely avoid involvement, then it follows – as Elias claimed – that it is impossible for any of us to achieve fully detached thinking about the action of engaging with others. In relation to human action, then, the approach and thinking called for is paradoxically detached and involved at the same time.

Research, from this perspective, is not an activity which is separate from practice because the reflective practitioner is, on the view so far presented, inevitably also a researcher: both are engaged in reflecting upon their own experience. It follows that research is closely linked to the iteration and possible transformation of identity. This is because identity is the answer to the questions: Who am I? Who are we? What am I doing? What are we doing? What is going on? How do we now go on together? Effective research is potentially transformative of identity and is therefore bound to expose vulnerability and raise existential anxiety with all the emotion this brings with it.

#### *The response of the students*

The perspective outlined above, with the clear influence of Elias, has encour-

aged participants on our program to explore a number of areas of work in organisations, as indicated by the following examples of successful theses:

Executive Coaching as the Differentiating Patterning of Power  
The Leader: An emergent, participative role  
The Practical Side of Complexity: Implications for leaders  
Developing Leadership: Learning what cannot be taught  
Reconciling Local Initiative with National Policy in Teacher Professional Development  
Spontaneity and Power: Theatre improvisation in processes of change in organisations  
National Healthcare Strategy and the Management of Risk in a National Health Services Trust  
Organisation Development and Power Relations in an NHS Trust  
Leadership Power and Ethics in the Educational Sector  
The Experience of Power, Blame and Responsibility in the Health Sector  
The Relevance of Theatre and Improvisation to Consulting for Organisational Change

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## ■ REVIEW ESSAYS

**Norbert Elias**, *The Genesis of the Naval Profession*, edited and with an introduction by René Moelker and Stephen Mennell. Dublin: UCD Press, 2007. xii + 172 pp. ISBN: 1904558801 (hb). £40.00 / €50.00.

In the Elias archives at Marbach, René Moelker discovered a note by Elias, written many years ago, listing a possible seven chapters of a book about the origins of the profession of naval officer and its wider relationship especially to English society. *The Genesis of the Naval Profession* – a new book by Elias! – is the nearest approximation that can now be made to creating the book that Elias might have written. It contains five, not seven, chapters:



1. Gentlemen and Tarpaulins – the essay by Elias published in the *British Journal of Sociology*, 1950.
2. Tensions and Conflicts, part of which consists of a different version of the essay ‘Drake and Doughty’ published in Dutch translation in *De Gids* in 1977, together with passages from unpublished typescripts.
3. The Development of the Midshipman – hitherto unpublished.
4. Achieving Maritime Supremacy – hitherto unpublished.
5. Three hitherto unpublished fragments: ‘The Growing Costs of the Naval Establishment: Elizabeth and Cromwell Compared’; ‘On Institutions’; ‘The Last Act: Elias’s Scenario for a Play about Drake and Doughty’

The book was launched at the Kat-tenburg naval base in Amsterdam, on 23 April 2007. The event was chaired by René Moelker, and the speakers



were his co-editor Stephen Mennell, the historian Dr Gijs Rommelse of the Netherlands Institute of Military History in Den Haag, and Professor Abram de Swaan. After the speeches, Stephen Mennell presented a copy of the book to the Inspector-General of the Netherlands Armed Forces, Vice-Admiral Michiel Van Maanen.

In his speech, Bram de Swaan said:

A more fitting environment than the naval base cannot be found for today’s joyous celebration. We have before us a most carefully and tastefully produced book, *The Genesis of the Naval Profession*, composed of dispersed and mostly unpublished writings by Norbert Elias. The two essays that had indeed appeared at earlier dates, in the *BJS* in 1950 (57 years ago) and in *De Gids* in 1977 (30 years ago) were familiar to me. I was one of the many sociologists

who in the 1970s worked on the development of the professions (psychotherapy in my case) and took their cue from Elias’s work on the subject. But the master who is at work in these pages was unmistakably a grandmaster. At first sight it seems that these are historical studies, mostly documented painstakingly, written with much subtlety and argued with *panache*. But even though these essays can hold their own as historical contributions, there can be no doubt that they are at the same time exemplary and intended to be so, to be paradigmatic to use a more recent expression, for the Eliasian approach to historical – or if you wish ‘figural’, or if you wish ‘processual’ – sociology. I would call this brand of sociology, with a dig at our Dutch rational-choice rivals, ‘*verklarende sociologie*’, or ‘explanatory sociology’. The author does not hide this programmatic intention when in many asides he provides comments on the subject matter under discussion that are of a much broader theoretical scope.

The same tendency also becomes manifest in a little private note that the editors unearthed from the archived papers. It was surely not meant for a wider audience and therefore reveals something of Elias’s intimate ambitions. The heading reads: ‘Die Eliassche Methode’. You don’t speak like that in public – you leave that to your followers if you have any. And Elias would be the last to do so. But as the editors rightly observe, this note contains a key phrase, which they quote on p. 18: ‘Makrostrukturen durch die Untersuchung von Mikrostrukturen sichtbar zu machen’ [in the editors’ translation: ‘to reveal macro structures by researching – or maybe rather ‘investigating’ (AdS) – micro structures]. And the editors in their excellent and most illuminating Introduction go on to point out that these studies in the genesis of the naval profession are in fact investigations into the civilising processes that made Britain into an empire, and this in a comparative vein, including also brief studies of the French and Spanish, and even the Dutch constellation.

But when we read the tale (and in fact, it is told as a tale and even used for the first outline of a scenario for a

stage play) of Drake and Doughty, we come to realise Elias’s complementary strategy: interpreting the microsocio-logical episode by locating it in the macrosociological process of a competition between classes in Britain and of rivalry between nations, Britain and Spain in this case.

In other words, we must describe the ‘Eliassche Methode’ – and I am sure Elias would agree – as: ‘to reveal macro structures by investigating micro structures and interpreting micro structures by locating them in the encompassing macro structures; and this in a perpetual to and fro’.

But that sure isn’t easy. It requires vast erudition across many quite divergent fields of knowledge. It also demands a sure and detailed grasp of the particular subject-matter. And even then, one needs an intuitive sense for what particular fact and which major development to connect at any given point in the argument. In this little book we can see the grandmaster at work.

Maybe the best proof that a text is truly excellent is when the reader puts the book down and follows his own line of thought inspired by his reading. Thus my thoughts wandered to one of those late late night TV movies in which a submarine goes on a special mission. The young captain, quite handsome in his impeccable uniform, straight from the naval academy, goes by the book, dead set at accomplishing the task entrusted to him by the lords of the Admiralty. The boatswain cautions him: the ship and its crew are headed for certain destruction. But the captain cannot be dissuaded. In the ensuing claustrophobic, hydrophobic disaster, there is mutiny and finally the boatswain, invariably aided by one black sailor and one Hungarian immigrant telegraph operator, saves, if not the ship, at least a good part of the crew, while at the very last moment the enemy warship goes down in flames and waves. Hurray ... for Norbert Elias. The tensions he depicted have lasted to the present day, at least in Hollywood productions.

But once we get the idea, we can apply the *Eliassche* method to many other figurations. Remember Tom Wolfe,

when he was still the genius reporter of *The Right Stuff* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), his big book on American space explorations. There, the overriding conflict was between those crazy, daredevil jet pilots, seasoned by the combat experience of many campaigns, who were selected to fly the first space shuttles, and who were set against the cold, calculating engineers who wanted computers rather than humans to control these first flights. Today's astronauts are fully certified scientists with a thorough training as jet pilots, who in emergency situations are now expected to take over the automated controls. This was predicted, or rather retrodicted, by a 50-year-old study about seafaring Englishmen four centuries ago. Elias did get his stuff right. Wolfe's Chuck Yeager is Elias's Francis Drake. Clearly, Wolfe and Elias know a good story when they see it.

But a similar analysis, admittedly with a little less drama, just a patient's death, suicide or murder case here or there, could be told about the struggle between medically trained psychiatrists and therapists formed in the humanities over the treatment of patients in mental asylums. And what about the confrontation between prestigious surgeons or oncologists in the cancer ward and this little crew of researchers from the human sciences who set out to investigate the mental care for cancer patients? I am talking about a project on a cancer ward in which I participated long ago. The research team lost, and their report is – after 30 years – still suppressed. They could have known what was coming to them if they had read their Elias more closely. At least they were not summarily executed as Doughty was.

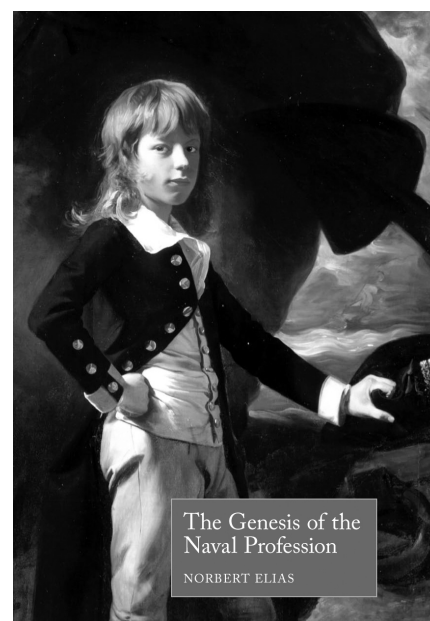
Allow me a few unconnected final musings.

Although Elias is invariably read as a humanist scholar with a literary bent and a penchant for the grand, all-encompassing panorama, he was in fact also a mechanic of sorts, always looking for the mechanisms that made history tick, like a watchmaker patiently reconstructing clockwork. Loathing a mechanistic view of events, he himself identified and reconstructed

what he did indeed call 'mechanisms'. The most famous case in point is, of course, 'the monopoly mechanism' in the second part of *The Civilising Process* (2000 edn, pp. 268–77). But in this study of *The Genesis of the Naval Profession* Elias identifies several such 'mechanisms', for example on page 116 where he describes 'another of these elementary screw mechanisms which play such an important part in every historical development'. First of all, note the engineer's tendency to apply an effective tool (a screw movement) in all sorts of different machines: 'every kind of historical development'. In a later version of this early draft Elias might have wanted to replace the word 'screw' by 'ratchet'. The core idea is that conditions in one sector must advance to a certain level for conditions in another sector to move ahead, and vice versa: Elias is talking about the hither and thither in the expansion of the commercial and the naval fleet (and I quote): 'Each move forward from the one side had to be followed, sooner or later, by a move from the other; and if one branch moved too far ahead of the other, in the long run it was bound to fail.' Listen to the words: 'it *had to be* followed ...' And: 'it was *bound to* fail ...' We're talking machinery here. And there is much more of that in this little book and in Elias's oeuvre as a whole.

'Mechanisms' such as these can also be described in formal terms. But Elias would not have it. When I once proposed that to him, he reacted somewhat glumly: 'What would that add to it?' At the time, I was taken aback and left it at that. But now I would have answered: it would have connected your ideas with other schools of sociology and with other disciplines in the human and natural sciences.

Having laid the book aside and musing on its contents, watching its beautiful cover, there is an afterthought. I am reminded of Leo Strauss (*Persecution and the art of writing*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), a contemporary of Elias who lived through many of the same vicissitudes, without ever being a kindred spirit, and who encouraged us to interpret the thinkers of the past while keeping in mind what had to be said in their times and social



environment and what could not be said under the circumstances.

The parts of Elias's study on the naval profession that have now been published are completely silent on one theme that was most germane to those isolated seafaring societies and paramount in his own life: homosexuality. These were after all companies of boys and men, males only, tightly packed together in cramped quarters without any access to female companionship, sometimes for many months at a stretch. Young boys, often no more than nine or ten years of age, mingled intimately with adult men in their prime. The theme of homosexuality among soldiers and sailors has now been much studied and is even a topic *à la mode*. In the England of the 1950s, for a German Jewish immigrant without a reputation and without much of a job, for Norbert Elias, that was very different. Maybe, just maybe, this void, this absent theme, explains why so little of the study was published and so late. Closing the book, and looking at its cover, I contemplate the splendid portrait of the handsome, young cadet, a boy still, and I face the 'return of the repressed'.

**Jack Goody, *The Theft of History*.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. x + 342 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-87069-6 (hb); 978-0-521-69105-5 (pb)

According to summary on the back cover of this book, *The Theft of History*

builds on the author's previous work to extend his critique of what he sees as the Eurocentric or occidental biases of much of western historical writing, and the consequent 'theft' by the West of the achievements of other cultures.

The doyen of British social anthropology, Sir Jack Goody, first set out his critique of Elias at the conference 'Sommes-nous civilisés? – bilan du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle' held in Paris in April 1998 (see *Figurations* 10), and restated them two years later at the conference in Metz on 'Norbert Elias and Anthropology' (see *Figurations* 14). From these presentations were derived several publications: the Metz paper is to be found (in French translation) in Sophie Chevalier and Jean-Marie Privat, eds, *Norbert Elias et l'anthropologie: 'Nous sommes tous si étranges ...'* (see *Figurations* 23), and variations on the argument appear in 'Elias and the anthropological tradition', *Anthropological Theory*, 2, 2002: 401–12 and 'The "Civilising Process" in Ghana', *Archives européennes de sociologie* 44 (1) 2003: 61–73.

Here we are particularly concerned with chapter 6 of Goody's new book, entitled 'The theft of "civilisation": Elias and Absolutist Europe', in which he reiterates his earlier criticisms of Elias's work. For a younger academic such as me, who is beginning to grapple with the intellectual depth and scope of Elias's work, it is frustrating on one level – though not at all surprising on another – that Goody appears not to engage with any of the responses by figurational sociologists such as Mennell, Goudsblom, and especially Dunning (whose essay 'Some comments on Jack Goody's "Elias and the anthropological tradition"', was printed immediately after Goody's in the same issue of *Anthropological Theory* (2 (4) 2002: 413–20 – though Goody does not cite it) to his earlier critiques of Elias's work. Similarly, it appears that much of what he has to say in his latest work reiterates others' criticisms of Elias's ideas (for example, Anton Blok's remarks in Elias's presence at a conference in Amsterdam in 1981, discussed in Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, pp. 228–34). All that being said, it is worth summarising briefly the thrust of his argument in *The Theft of History*.

For Goody, the idea that the West 'wins out' (p. 154) in written histories is a prime example of ethnocentrism, and eurocentrism in particular. 'The more extravagant ethnocentric claims involve not only presenting contemporary or recent advantage as virtually permanent, but interpreting that advantage in terms of the evolving aspects of European society alone, at least since the sixteenth century and often long before' (p. 154). For him, *The Civilising Process* is one example of this very problem because of the limitations and self-congratulatory nature of Elias's approach to human cultures generally, particularly those cultures at a lower level of civilisation. It is here that the origins of Goody's criticisms lie – the concept of civilisation has a moral undertone for him – and the fact that Elias concentrates primarily on European variants of the civilising process becomes 'the rod with which to beat the back' of Elias (and other figurational sociologists) because Goody insists on understanding Elias's 'endeavours in a totally different, evaluative, frame of reference' (p. 156). One consequence of this, for example, is Goody's misrepresentation of Elias's ideas on state formation and pacification; Goody sets out, quite unnecessarily, to demonstrate that 'there is nothing particularly European about this notion of the role of the state' (p. 164). This is to miss the point about pacification entirely. Similarly, Goody points to the impossibility of reconciling Elias's 'Whiggish approach' (p. 165) with the emergence of Nazism and the ensuing Jewish Holocaust. One of the reasons for this irreconcilable notion is that, according to Goody, Elias was intent on 'imposing a pseudo-historical, pseudo-psychological, pseudo-philosophical concept of *Naturvolk* on what he saw' (p. 179). The inaccuracy of this interpretation of Elias's work notwithstanding, it would also be appropriate to ask whether Goody is intent on imposing a pseudo-philosophical notion of civilisation through his own work. Certainly, Goody's personal recollections of Elias reveal as much about Goody as they do, in part, of Elias – 'I found the idea that one could gain any profound insight from a casual collection of African "art" from itinerant traders to be highly questionable' (Goody, 2006: 178, n.

71). Goody was also 'unhappy at this notion of "fieldwork" (driving out to a village with chauffeur and students) and at what I [Goody] saw as the non-comparative, eurocentred kind of sociology he [Elias] practised' (ibid.).

For these reasons, the task of reviewing the adequacy of the text in its entirety is made more difficult, not least because of Goody's central assumption that the title refers to the take-over of history by the West. Therefore, he sets out from the outset to right what he regards as a 'wrong', that is, to turn our supposed Eurocentric historical perspective (particularly European versions of time, largely Christian) on its head. He concludes the book by reiterating that his 'special problem has been with the attempts at periodisation that historians have made, dividing historical time into Antiquity, Feudalism, the Renaissance followed by Capitalism ... Here the question of imposing concepts has very different, teleological, implications' (2006: 286). Goody proposes 'an anthropo-archaeological approach to modern history' to replace the domination of European ideas in accounts of the world's history – 'there was a strong element of teleology behind the European claim that its tradition distinguished itself in earlier times when its subsequent superiority was seen as having its origin (p. 287) – yet his response to those scholars (like Elias), who, in his view, appear to have fallen foul of the search for the singularity of early Europe, is but to express a preference for 'more regular evolutionary change rather than for a sudden revolution of a putative kind' (p. 297) and not to abrogate 'critical parts of the developmental process to the west'.

It is confusing, then, that Goody espouses the necessity of a sociological grid without predetermined categories of the kind Antiquity, capitalism, feudalism and so on, when Elias himself has sought, using a detour via detachment, to understand the very social processes at the centre of complex developments on the continent of Europe. Thus, while he claims that his book is not so much about world history *per se* but rather about the ways that European scholars have perceived



it, the problem for him has been in trying to comprehend and explain the comparatively detached analysis of the concept of civilisation provided by Elias.

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**Alejandro N. García Martínez**, *El proceso de la civilización en la sociología de Norbert Elias*. Pamplona: Eunsa, Colección Filosófica nº 192, 2006, 410 pp. ISBN: 84-313-2372-8.

Although Norbert Elias is already well-known within Spanish academia and his theory of civilising processes and figurational approach to sociology are likely to make an occasional appearance in some journal or book chapter, a strong and solid line of Eliasian thought is markedly absent. Elias's status within Spanish sociological academia is still somewhat unstable when compared to other classics within the discipline. This is despite the fact that Elias's works have been translated into Spanish since 1982, and despite a special issue of the *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* having been dedicated to his work in 1994. More recently, in doctoral research, a clear attempt has been made to develop Elias's theory. One example is the work carried out by Fernando Ampudia de Haro who applied civilising process theory to the Spanish situation – in *The Civilisation of Behaviour: Civility and Good Manners in Spain since the Middle Ages to the present* (PhD thesis in press). Another example is Raúl Sanchez Garcia who analysed the way combat sports contribute to the study of institutionalised violence, in *Cultural Paradigm and violence in Spanish society: the case of combat sports in the autonomous community of Madrid* (unpublished PhD thesis, 2006). These contributions are some of the few to promote and revitalise the active reception of Norbert Elias's sociological perspective.

Thus any overall attempt to advocate Elias's ideas in Spain is extremely welcome. García Martínez's book *El proceso de la civilización en la sociología de Norbert Elias* (*The civilisation process in the sociology of Norbert Elias*) fills the absence of a text that

brings together in a systematic way the whole perspective of the sociologist. This broad and profound work is an unprecedented attempt to reactivate the reception of Elias's approach in Spain. This is, in my opinion, the greatest achievement of this book; in addition, it contains useful reviews of almost all Elias's works, and also provides a didactic exposé of the author's entire theory. For this reason, it is a valuable source to recommend to undergraduate students undertaking a sociological theory course, to scholars who want to prepare a new course on Elias's theory, or even to someone who simply wants to revise knowledge of his work. Written in brilliant Spanish, with a clear vocabulary and well-structured sentences, García Martínez's book provides an illustrative and comprehensive systematisation of Elias's work. The bibliography used and quoted is also extremely complete since García Martínez 'writes through Elias', which means that he follows, step by step, the principal ideas and arguments contained in Elias's books. On the other hand, this work also presents an excellent compilation of the major critiques and debates – both Spanish and international – surrounding Elias's perspectives, which makes the book extremely useful when pursuing a theoretical path to follow further developments in the civilisation process theory.

The book is structured in three main sections. In the first section, which is clearly devoted to Elias's principal works – *The Court Society*, *The Civilising Process* and *The Germans* – García Martínez tries to rebuild a general description of the civilising process theory as a whole. This section contains a detailed review of these three books, setting out clearly the conceptual framework of the civilisation/de-civilisation processes as it has been shaped among sociologists today.

In the second section, García Martínez tries to systematise the so-called figurational sociology, raising some fundamental questions about the ontological and anthropological view that implicitly or explicitly underlies Elias's work. Once again, García Martínez uses Elias's own works – *Involvement and Detachment*, the essays on the

sociology of knowledge and the sciences, *What is sociology?*, *The Symbol Theory* and *The Society of Individuals* – to explore the processual nature of social reality and the unintended consequences of action, Elias's notion of *homines aperti* in opposition to the classical view of *homo clausus*, and also to demonstrate the conceptual and methodological support for figurational sociology. This section also provides an illustrative chapter dedicated to knowledge as a sociological category, in which the author provides a deep reconstruction on Elias's sociology of knowledge. At the end of this second part, García Martínez also includes a brief overview of books like *Time: an Essay*, *The Established and the Outsiders* and *Quest for Excitement*, completing the wide spectrum of Elias's writings.

The last section of the book introduces a critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the civilisation process theory. In particular, García Martínez brings together the principal critiques and counter-critiques lately addressed to Elias's work: questions about the universality of the civilising process theory and the debate between those who subscribe to it (Mennell, Goudsblom) and those who argue the difficulty of applying the theory to non-European societies (Arnason, van Velzen, Rasing, Jagers); the discussion of civilising and de-civilising processes (Dunning, Mennell, Szakolczai, Krieken, Wacquant, Zwaan, Fletcher, Van den Bergh); and the theory of informalisation (Wouters, Brinkgreve, Korzec, Kapteyn, De Swaan). This review also includes remarks about some of the historiographical criticisms by some scholars on the way Elias thought about (1) power relations between monarchy and court society (J. Duindam, G. Barraclough) and court society and bourgeoisie (D. Gordon, E. Le Roy Ladurie); (2) the criticism of Hans-Peter Duerr about the myth of civilised society when considering some other non-occidental cultures which also possess a certain kind of 'civilisation' level; and also, finally, (3) a short exposé of Derek Layder's revision of figurational sociology and his arguments to highlight its theoretical fragility when compared to some other attempts at individual–society integration.

This last systematisation has the particular advantage of bringing into the Spanish academic literature some of the relevant critiques addressed to Elias's work. At a certain level, García Martínez sets up the actual debate traced by Elias's followers and Elias's detractors about the main arguments that involve the most significant contemporary lines of research. This is especially important since it provides for Spanish academia a good picture of the present state of the 'Eliasian question'.

Finally, at the end of the last section, García Martínez tries to go a step further and makes a comparison between Elias's civilising process and some of the ideas shared by other classic sociologists such as Simmel, Durkheim,

Weber and Mead. It may be said to be García Martínez's personal perspective (or, in his words, 'shy attempt') to develop the theoretical contribution of Norbert Elias. According to the Spanish author, there are three points that can be compared whenever one regards Elias's civilising theory in relation to those classics of sociological thought: (1) changes in the social *habitus* towards greater self-regulation of behaviour and emotional management; (2) changes in the social structure illustrated by the functional division of labour and the expanding and strengthening of interdependent networks; and (3) the interaction between action and structure, leading to the relation between intentional action and the crystallisation of social structures.

To conclude, this is a very good treatment written in Spanish of Norbert Elias's theory of civilising processes. Although the book does not add much to the 'Elias agenda', since it predominantly describes and illustrates the author's sociological approach, it nonetheless represents a complete and wide interpretation that can be used by a Spanish public. It is possible – one hopes – that this work will not only increase knowledge of Elias within Spanish academia, but also will motivate future theoretical and empirical research using Elias's theory.

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## ■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

**Stephen Cock**, *Swimming and Bathing in the Civilising Process*, unpublished MSc thesis, University of Chester, 2007

There was evidence, within existing literature, which suggested that the attitudes and behaviour of people regarding swimming and bathing may have changed during the period between the Middle Ages and the early twentieth century. However, research regarding retrospective analyses of swimming and bathing was, and arguably still is, predominantly atheoretical and, in particular, lacking in sociological analysis. The sociological problem within this research was, therefore, to investigate from a figurational sociological perspective whether Elias's theory of the civilising process could provide an adequate theoretical explanation for the changing attitudes and habits of individuals, regarding swimming and bathing, from the late Middle Ages to the

early twentieth century. The research method utilised was that of documentary analysis. Relevant documents were sought from: the British Library and website; the public libraries in Harrogate and Blackpool; *The Times* Digital Archive. These documents (including books, poems, swimming treatises, pictures, manuscript illustrations and both local and national newspaper articles) were analysed in a processual manner, across the entire period of investigation. The research findings supported the contention that, over time, there had been changes in the behaviour of individuals, regarding swimming and bathing, which appeared to have occurred in a civilising direction. It was argued that Elias's theory of the civilising process could be used to provide a theoretical sociological explanation, in terms of complex figurational processes, for the behavioural changes that were apparent within the research findings. [For this

thesis, as noted above, the author was awarded the first University of Chester Norbert Elias Prize.]

**Robert van Krieken**, 'The ethics of corporate legal personality', pp. 77–96 in Stewart Clegg and Carl Rhodes (eds), *Management Ethics: Contemporary Contexts*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Robert van Krieken begins this chapter by quoting some of the more realist contributors to ethical debate, notably Thomas Hobbes and Max Weber. What characterised both of these thinkers was a keen concern with the application of ethics to practice in troubled times. Indeed, from a business ethics point of view almost all times appear troubled because a concern with ethics is rarely characterised by an absence of trouble. It is often when situations are constituted as 'problems' that manag-

ers reach for ethical accounts. As Van Krieken puts it, it is when 'we become concerned with contradictions or conflicts between managerial conduct and widely-shared ethical principles, [that] it is important to see that there are two ways of approaching such conflicts'. These two ways are described as 'thick' and 'thin' respectively; the former is something not too dissimilar to the framework that Ibarra-Colada prepared, which looks at ethics against the backdrop of a whole civilisation. By contrast, thin accounts focus on matters of organisational design, abstracted from the thick context and from the motives of the managers who run them; they stress the normative character of the organisation as a whole, rather than those of managers as individuals.

But there is an internal contradiction that cuts across both the 'thin' and the 'thick' dimensions of managerial ethics, which is seen in the tensions between explicit normative standards and implicitly constituted practical forms of behaviour. This is the problem of 'hypocrisy' that is manifest in the ways in which otherwise 'good' men and women can still end up doing 'bad' things, and the ways in which good things can be done for bad reasons. In this chapter Van Krieken seeks to reconcile institutional design and socially constituted individual habitus not simply as alternatives between which one can choose, but as linked and interacting with each other within a broader overall process of the 'civilisation of management'. Thus, Van Krieken is involved in an ambitious project to develop further the application of the ideas of Norbert Elias to theorising contemporary organisation and management practice.

Van Krieken finds the 'ethical form' of management conduct somewhat inaccessible. In part this is because of the role that idealised standards play in fixing ethical responsibility. In practice, the ethical dimensions of management occur within a complex field of differing ethical interests and orientations. These provide for relatively autonomous, self-referential ethical sub-systems with no necessary consistency between them. The relation between them thus becomes a central problematic. Indeed, somewhat pessimistically,

in the context of the recent cases of corporate corruption such as Enron, Van Krieken concludes that contemporary management ethics may well be a testing ground for the character of contemporary civil society itself. If that is the case, then the prognosis is apparently not good.

**Andrew Linklater**, 'Torture and Civilisation', *International Relations*, 21 (1) 2007: 111–18.

**Abstract:** The global anti-torture norm has been one of the main examples of a global civilising process. It reflects modern sensibilities to cruelty and excessive force which were highlighted in Norbert Elias's account of the 'civilising process'. The idea of defending civilisation has also been used to defend torture in the war against terror. Exceptional methods are needed, it has been argued, to protect civilised ways of life. Notions of constitutional or 'civilised torture' have been introduced to try to harmonise these competing views. They have been employed in the attempt to reconcile civilised self-images with the use of excessive force. The future role of torture in the 'war against terror' depends on the interplay between these competing conceptions of the civilising process.

*Editors' Note:* Readers should also refer to the following recent articles by Andrew Linklater:

'The Harm Principle and Global Ethics', *Global Society*, 20 (3) 2006: 329–43.

'Cosmopolitanism', pp. 109–27 in A. Dobson and R. Eckersley (eds), *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

'Discourse Ethics and the Civilising Process', *Review of International Studies*, 31 (1) 2005: 145–54.

'Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process* and International Relations', *International Politics*, 41, 2004: 3–35.

**Tim Phillips and Philip Smith**, 'Emotional and behavioural responses to everyday incivility: challenging the fear/avoidance paradigm', *Journal of Sociology* 40 (4) 2004: 378–99.

**Abstract:** Although antisocial behaviour has become an issue of political and

policy concern, social science lacks basic information on such events. This article explores one aspect of such everyday incivility – how people react emotionally and behaviourally to the badly behaved stranger. Mainstream criminology, as well as the social theory of Goffman and Bauman, is oriented around a fear/avoidance vision. This dominant paradigm is unnecessarily restrictive on intellectual inquiry. A raft of other options including anger/intervention; disgust/aversion and indifference/do-nothing are analytically reconstructed from the classical social theory of Durkheim, Elias and Simmel. These various models are applied to incidents coded from the transcripts of the Melbourne Everyday Incivility Project. The results show that emotions and behaviours tend to pair up as predicted. Fear/avoidance, however, is a relatively uncommon response to incivil encounters. Anger/intervention and indifference/do-nothing are more frequent. The former is especially associated with events where the respondent is a 'victim', and the latter with those where the respondent is an onlooker. These findings suggest the limitations of current criminological research in areas related to incivility and fear of crime, and have implications for collective efficacy, social capital and broken windows criminology.

**Timothy Phillips and Philip Smith**, 'Rethinking Urban Incivility Research: Strangers, Bodies and Circulations', *Urban Studies*, 43 (5–6) 2006: 879–901.

**Abstract:** Research on urban incivility has made progress but has limited scope thanks to a stereotyped and policy-relevant focus on problem neighbourhoods and urban renewal. It also lacks benchmark comparative data, has almost nothing to say about interpersonal incivility and is experiencing diminishing returns to effort. A new agenda is proposed that explores everyday life incivility as this is experienced over the broader population in the course of daily routine. The Everyday Life Incivility in Australia Survey is introduced. This was a random national sample survey collecting systematic narrative information on interpersonal encounters involving a rude stranger.



Findings from the study are reported here, documenting the range of low-level incivilities experienced in daily life and outlining some of their properties. The results challenge received wisdom about the corrosive effects of urban incivility on society.

**Chris Otter**, 'The Civilising of Slaughter: The Development of the British Public Abattoir, 1850–1910'. *Food and History* 3 (2) 2005: 29–51.

'Meat might not have been murder, but to become "no more than a commodity", all signs of its bloody and brutal origin had to be obliterated or purged: it had to be made into something clean. Civilisation, as Norbert Elias informed us, advances by distancing itself not from killing itself, but from the perception and reminder of it. Therefore, meat offers the historian a particularly thick and fleshy lens through which to examine the conjoint histories of civilisation, commodification, and cleanliness.' (p. 30) Otter's essay is one of eleven in this special issue of *Food and History* on 'The Slaughterhouse and the City', edited by Paula Lee, all of them having a bearing one way or another on a civilising process that has been especially successful in hiding behind the scenes the distasteful origins of tasty comestibles.

**Claudia Opitz**, ed., *Höfische Gesellschaft und Zivilisationsprozesse: Norbert Elias' Werk in kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive*. Köln: Böhlau, 2005. 264 pp. ISBN 3-412-15004-5.

The publication in 2002 of a new edition of *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, as volume 2 of the complete works in German published by Suhrkamp, Frankfurt (see *Figurations* 19) – was the reason to invite scholars to assess once again Norbert Elias's book on court society, together with *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* and other works. An interdisciplinary conference, held in Stuttgart in May 2003, was organised by Prof. Claudia Opitz (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Dieter Bauer (Katholische Akademie Rottenburg, Stuttgart) to reconsider the importance of Elias's work for cultural studies in general, and especially for new research in history, sociology, art and literary history. The published volume, as an

outcome of this conference, reflects the current relevance of Elias's work and its ongoing capability to give new impetus to historical, sociological and cultural studies.

The volume is divided into three sections. A first section deals with the historical background in which Elias developed his theory on court society – Imperial and Weimar Germany; with his historical and sociological sources, his teachers and the biographical background; and with the various reactions of the academic world towards his books. Although he always saw himself as an outsider, various influences on his work can be traced, direct as much as indirect ones: his personal interest in the history of France and French monarchy, his study of the works of Max Weber, and the ideas he shares with other academics of his time such as, for example, Johan Huizinga or Aby Warburg.

That his work was not always approved by his academic readers is illustrated in the second section of the volume. Many historians who deal with court history have criticised certain aspects of Elias's analysis of the French court society; others have asked whether his observations were also true for the various European courts or how his explanation of the French Revolution should be revised. Nevertheless *Die höfische Gesellschaft* has been a point of reference for many other works.

Despite all these criticisms, Elias's theories are still indispensable and provocative sources for further research, as is shown in the third section of the volume. The authors of the various articles in it give a rich impression of how Elias's work should not at all be laid aside, but how it can still give rise to new perspectives in cultural studies. His combination of sociological and historical questions and methods is still of major importance; many of his interests can be linked to gender history; his figurational theory is still very productive if one tries to research relationships, networks and dynamics of smaller and larger societies – especially court society – as his theory permits the combination of macro- and micro-history. It is also clear that there are still unpublished texts by Elias which deal

with topics that are only now becoming 'hot topics' within cultural studies, such as for example the history and sociology of emotions and laughter.

Finally, the contributors of this volume agree on the fact that Elias's work is as relevant as ever – and there are many other readers who agree with them, for the book was chosen one of the four most important books published in 2005 concerning early modern history by the users of most important German mailing list 'h-soz.u.kult'.

The contents are:

Einleitung *Claudia Opitz*

I. Biographische und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Aspekte

Norbert Elias: Der jüdische Intellektuelle und die Liebe zur höfischen Kultur, *Reinhard Blomert*  
Quellen für und Einflüsse auf die *Höfische Gesellschaft*, *Claudia Opitz*  
Kulturgeschichte, Hofforschung und die Kunst der burgundischen Niederlande, *Birgit Franke und Barbara Welzel*  
The Keen Observer versus the Grand-Theorist: Elias, Anthropology and the Early Modern Court, *Jeroen Duindam*

II. Kritische Würdigung

Norbert Elias und die Kunstgeschichte, *Jutta Held*  
Hof, Adel und Monarchie: Norbert Elias' *Höfische Gesellschaft* im Lichte der neueren Forschung, *Ronald G. Asch*  
Zu Macht und Romantik der Frauen im Zeitalter Ludwigs XIV: Die *Höfische Gesellschaft* aus literatur- und genderwissenschaftlicher Perspektive, *Renate Kroll*  
Anmerkungen zur 'Soziogenese der Revolution', *Wolfgang Schmale*

III. Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven

Aspects of the relationship between history and sociology: Notes on the Work of E. H. Carr, Philip Abrams and Norbert Elias, *Eric Dunning*  
Geschwisterbeziehungen im Adel und Norbert Elias' Figurations-soziologie – ein Anwendungsversuch, *Sophie Ruppel*

Die Verhöflichung des Lachens:  
Anmerkungen zu Norbert Elias' *Essay on Laughter*, Eckart Schörle

**Helmut Kuzmics and Roland Axtmann**, *Authority, State and National Character: The Civilising Process in Austria and England, 1700–1900*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. xii + 363 pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-3560-4.

This important book is a much-needed translation of the German original, published in 2000 (see *Figurations* 15). It came to hand just before this issue went to press, so we shall discuss it more fully in *Figurations* 28.

Readers should also note the following essay by Helmut Kuzmics: 'Österreichische Identität aus soziologischer Sicht', *Text & Kontext*, Sonderreihe, Bd. 51, *Österreichische Identität*, ed. W. Wucherpennig, 2006: 13–29.

**Helmut Kuzmics**, 'Soziologie als Erzählung: Die Sprache der Soziologie in "klassischen" Beispielen' [Sociology as Narrative: The Language of Sociology in 'Classical' Examples], pp. 51–72 in Esterbauer, R., Pernkopf, E., Ruckebauer, H.-W., eds, *WortWechsel: Sprachprobleme in den Wissenschaften interdisziplinär auf den Begriff gebracht*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006.

Abstract: The development of sociology as a science can be seen as a process of replacement of earlier, mythical forms of thinking about society through a more objective, detached, neutral type of thinking with implications for its basic vocabulary which has to be neutral and purely descriptive as well. According to operationalist positions, but also to a wider range of sociological prose, as Elias indicates in *What is Sociology?* (1978), only terms and concepts modelled on those of the natural sciences seem to deserve credit for approaching this kind of objectivity. This might lead to the notion that both sociological authors' emotions and deviations from the standard 'scientific' narrative – expressed as romance, satire, comedy or tragedy (as argued by Northrop Frye [in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957], and Hayden

White [in *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1973]) – should be regarded only as distortions and aberrations from the scientific path to virtue. This paper argues the converse: taking the emotions of sociologists into consideration and treating their prose as tragedy (Weber), satire (Goffman) and romance (Elias) does not weaken their claim on reporting the truth on society and human entanglements in general, but rather strengthens it. To acknowledge this to be valid does not in the least, therefore, lead to relativism and epistemological scepticism, a position which is avoided in the paper.

**Helmut Kuzmics**, 'Violence and pacification in Norbert Elias's theory of civilisation', pp. 27–45 in Helen Chambers, ed., *Violence, Culture and Identity: Essays on German and Austrian Literature, Politics and Society*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006.

Abstract: The real sociological problem, according to Elias, is not to explain why people beat or even kill other people – the more important question is: How is it possible that so many human beings are able to live in comparative peace and harmony with each other – without permanent fear to be beaten or killed by others? The paper starts by giving an outline of Elias's key concepts referring to the 'European Civilising Process' as a process of structural pacification which punishes violent emotions with feelings of fear, shame and embarrassment. Elias's approach has been criticised for mainly three reasons:

1. as a theory of unjustified, evolutionist optimism, overrating the spontaneous violence of the past, underrating the cruelty of the present;
2. because of its presumed inability to explain the mass political violence and destruction of the twentieth century;
3. because of the hidden normativity of the concept of 'civilisation' or 'civilising processes'.

The paper discusses these criticisms, refutes accusations (1) and (2), and concedes only some truth in (3). It

stresses that civilisation has always, and particularly in the thinking of Norbert Elias, been achieved only by paying a certain price: banning physical violence does not only mean the taming of warriors, but also growing inhibition and joylessness.

**Helmut Kuzmics**, 'The marketing-character in fiction: Len Deighton's *Close Up* (1972) as a sociological description of post-war Hollywood and the process of Americanisation', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 15 (2) 2006: 23–40.

Abstract: Len Deighton's book, although not well known among sociologists, provided as early as 1972 a profound and shrewd analysis not only of the American movie industry, its milieux and culture of deception and their influence on old Europe, but also of the more general mechanisms of a radical marketisation of the self. The novel can, thus, contribute to a better understanding of America's hegemonic position in Europe, insofar as it results in far-reaching Americanisation. The legionary barracks of the Romans, the French Court of Louis XIV and the English Public School have found their legitimate successor in the social fabric of Hollywood and the American spirit of commercial entertainment.

**Stuart Carroll**, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. xii + 369 pp. ISBN 0-19-929045-8.

I found this book by chance through an online discussion list, and I hope that it will be reviewed along with other recent books on violence in a future issue of *Figurations*. Carroll appears to be hostile to Elias's interpretation of long-term trends in violence. In response to critics on the discussion forum he writes: 'In the book I hope to show that violence is a diverse and dynamic phenomenon; it is not simply an elemental *Angriffslust* that requires taming; it is not easily pigeon-holed, or reduced to a "pathological" condition. ... [I]t became clear to me that the archives told a different story to that of the grand narrative, a fiction that was given credence by Elias and his followers. Even for the great François Billaud, the reason for duelling's dramatic

and rapid spread had to be associated with the rise of the state: he explained duelling as the revolt of the individual against the inevitable triumph of absolutism.' From this, it rather sounds as though Carroll has fallen into a common trap of misunderstanding about Elias's theory – yet again! – but let us wait for a more detailed look at the book in a future issue. – *SJM*.

## ■ BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS

Several new 'Eliasian' books in English are scheduled to appear almost simultaneously in the course of 2007. They will no doubt be reviewed in future issues of *Figurations*, but to whet readers' appetites we are printing the publishers' blurbs for each of them here:

**Stephen Mennell**, *The American Civilising Process*. Cambridge: Polity, September 2007. ca 400 pp. ISBN 978-07456-3208-7 (hb); ISBN: 978-07456-3209-4 (pb)

Since 9/11, the American government has presumed to speak and act in the name of 'civilisation'. But is that how the rest of the world sees it? And if not, why not?

Stephen Mennell leads up to such contemporary questions through a careful study of the whole span of American development – from the first settlers to the American Empire – in a novel way. He looks at the USA in the light of Norbert Elias's theory of civilising (and decivilising) processes.

He constantly draws comparisons between the USA and other countries of the world. Topics include:

- American manners and lifestyles
- Violence in American society
- The impact of markets on American social character
- American expansion, from the frontier to empire
- The 'curse of the American Dream' and increasing inequality
- The religiosity of American life

Mennell shows how Americans' historic experience is of their country constantly becoming more powerful

relative to its neighbours. This has had long-term and all-pervasive effects on the way they see themselves, on how they perceive the rest of the world, and how others see them.

**Richard Kilminster**, *Norbert Elias: Post-Philosophical Sociology*. London: Routledge September 2007: 224 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-43706-6 (hb) £70.00

The contention of this book is that the selective absorption of ideas and concepts from Norbert Elias's writings into the sociology mainstream in recent years, has unintendedly drawn the teeth of his work. Severed from the broader framework which gave them their full meaning and significance, his ideas have become cleansed of their more refractory and challenging aspects. The book makes explicit the far-reaching and provocative core at the heart of Elias, which is in danger of slipping into oblivion.

Few sociologists of the first rank have scandalised the academic world to the extent that Elias did. Developed out of the German sociology of knowledge in the 1920s, Elias's sociology contains a sweeping radicalism which declares an academic 'war on all your houses'. His sociology of the 'human condition' sweeps aside the contemporary focus on 'modernity' and rejects most the paradigms of sociology as one-sided, economistic, teleological, individualistic and/or rationalistic. As sociologists, Elias also asks us to distance ourselves from mainstream psychology, history and above all, philosophy, which is summarily abandoned, although carried forward on a higher level.

The radical and confrontational character of Elias's work is only just beginning to be appreciated. It embraces scientific attitudes and obligations, including a robust secularism which, taken to their furthest conclusions, represent considerable intellectual, professional and emotional challenges for sociologists. This book braces us for these challenges by reconstructing the origins of Elias's ideas as a 'post-philosophical', workable synthesis of many perspectives on the social world.

*Selected Contents:*

1. Understanding Elias's Language and Style. Modernity or the Human Condition?
2. Origins of Elias's Synthesis. Placing Elias. Elias and Weimar Culture. Elias as a Synthesiser. Elias as an Ontologist. Philosophy Reframed. Modes of Persuasion.
3. Norbert Elias and Karl Mannheim, Closeness and Distance. Intellectual Affinities. Relationism. Evaluating. The Zurich Congress 1928. Issues of Theory and Practice.
4. The Civilising Process: The Structure of a Classic. Introduction. The *Kultur/Zivilisation* Antithesis. The Process of Historical Retrieval. Accumulating Explanatory Levels. Socioanalysis, 'Redemption' and Progress.
5. Involved Detachment: Knowledge and Self-Knowledge in Elias. Introduction: After Weber. From Distance to Detachment: Mannheim, Kris, Schutz and Elias. Involvement and Detachment as a Balance. Secondary Involvement: Epilogue: Detachment in a New Key?
6. The Symbol Theory: Secular Humanism as a Research Programme. Introduction. Situating The Symbol Theory. Anthropological and Philosophical Approaches. The Modern Synthesis in Evolutionary Biology. Recent Evolutionary Theory and Anthropology. Notes.
7. Concluding Remarks: The Fourth Blow to Man's Narcissism?

**Cas Wouters**, *Informalisation: Manners and Emotions since 1890*. London: Sage, October 2007.

This highly original book explains the sweeping changes to twentieth-century regimes of manners and the self. Broad in scope and deep in analytic reach, it provides a wealth of empirical evidence to demonstrate how changes in the code of manners and emotions in four countries (the USA, England, Germany, and The Netherlands) are characterised by increasing informalisation and an 'emancipation of emotions'. This return of emotion to the centre of personality coincides with the fading importance of introductions, the growth of the right to privacy, diminishing social and psychic distance between people, a stronger taboo on displays of superiority and inferiority, and a shift from



rules for avoiding certain *people* to rules for avoiding certain *emotions* and their expression. As well as features of manners that are distinctively German, English, Dutch, and American, there are also strong similarities in the changing class and personality structures in the four countries.

In his thought-provoking discussion, the author traces:

- The increasing scope for behavioural and emotional alternatives in public and private manners, such as the use of more evocative and informal language, Christian names, instant intimacy and enmity, personal pronouns, and social kissing.
- The ascent and integration of a wide variety of groups – including the working classes, women, youth and immigrants – and the sweeping changes this has imposed on relations (and feelings) of social inferiority and superiority
- The shifts in self-regulation that require manners to seem ‘natural’, at ease and authentic, while avoiding traces of feelings of superiority and inferiority
- Rising external social constraints towards being unconstrained, reflexive and considerate, showing presence of mind, role-taking, and the ability to tolerate and control conflicts, and to compromise
- Growing interdependence and social integration, declining power differences and the diminishing social and psychic distance between people

Continuing the analysis of *Sex and Manners* [see *Figurations* 24], this book is a dazzling work of historical sociology and a fascinating read.

**Katherine D. Watson**, *Assaulting the Past: Violence and Civilisation in Historical Context*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. ISBN: 1-84718-105-8

This book offers an important contribution to the comparative history of interpersonal violence since the early modern period, a subject of great contemporary and historical importance.

Its overarching theme is Norbert Elias’s theory of the civilising process, and the chapters in the book recognise, as he did, that changes in human behaviour are related to transformations of both social and personality structures. Drawing on a vast range of archival and written records from five countries, the contributors explore the usefulness of the theory – the subject of much debate over the past two decades – to explaining long-term patterns in violence, but also point to the need for further empirical and comparative studies, to reflect current thinking and developments within historical, criminological, and sociological methodologies.

In approaching the subject from a variety of perspectives, *Assaulting the Past: Violence and Civilisation in Historical Context* presents a comparative and qualitative assessment of violent behaviour and the experience of violence. Approaches used include the empirical and the theoretical, and the book is strongly interdisciplinary, drawing on the history of crime, history of medicine, criminology and legal history. The volume seeks to offer new insights on violence, the individual and society, to further illuminate the links between state formation, social interdependency and self-discipline that are so integral to the theory of the civilising process.

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## ■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

**Sabine Delzescaux**, *Norbert Elias: Civilisation et décivilisation*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002. ISBN: 2-7475-3718-8

This important addition to the literature on Elias in French has not previously been recorded in the pages of *Figurations*. The original PhD thesis of 2000 on which it was based was indeed noted in *Figurations* 13, but it has been subsequently published by L’Harmattan. – *SJM*

## ■ WORK IN PROGRESS

**Amanda Rohloff** (Victoria University of Wellington) ‘Moral panics as decivilising processes? An Eliasian approach’.

Applying the ideas of Norbert Elias to the sociology of moral panics, this article assesses whether moral panics may be short-term processes of decivilisation arising alongside, and partly as a result of, civilising processes. Examining the models of Stanley Cohen (*Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the mods and rockers*, 3rd edn, London: Routledge, 2002), and of Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda (*Moral panics: The social construction of deviance*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994) the article identifies possible symptoms and outcomes of moral panics to be compared with some of the symptoms of decivilising processes as proposed by Stephen Mennell (‘Decivilising processes: Theoretical significance and some lines of research’, *International Sociology*, 5 (2) 1990: 205–23). The following is a summary of this comparison.

For a moral panic to occur there must be an initial concern over a (real or imagined) problem. For the issue to be recognised as a problem, the state must be either unwilling or unable to address the issue, or else be unaware of it. Here we see the *perception* that the state is weak or weakened with regard to the problem. Indeed, this may be regarded as a symptom of the problem. For example, during the Satanism scare, the state was believed to be weakened by the allegedly corrupt conspiratorial network of Satanists within government departments and other highly influential professions.

This model of moral panics as decivilising processes suggests that civilising and decivilising trends occur alongside one another and that civilising can give rise to decivilising. For example, one indicator of moral panic is disproportionality – the ‘problem’ becomes amplified and exaggerated (or in some cases invented). The civilising trend of increased division of labor – resulting in increased bureaucratisation, specialisation and expertisation – has

culminated in the growth of expert systems of knowledge (as opposed to 'local knowledge'). This reliance on 'expert' information can result in it becoming increasingly easier for people to be fooled by political rhetoric, expert claims, and other claims to authority, as well as the media, as people do not have the specialised knowledge to critically assess and question claims. Thus, when claims are invented, exaggerated, or distorted, people may come to believe a threat to be a greater danger than it actually is. This can make the level of danger increasingly incalculable when the information we receive about social problems may be unreliable.

During a moral panic the problem may be stereotyped and folk devils created. This process may involve folk devils becoming increasingly dehumanised and seen as the 'other' – a resultant decrease in mutual identification between the folk devils and 'the rest of us' – thereby legitimating the use of more 'cruel' measures in these exceptional times.

With a moral panic, the demand for immediate action to address the problem before it is too late may result in solutions proposed and accepted without thorough investigation. Indeed, during such processes one may witness an increase in the 'fantasy content' and a decrease in the 'reality congruence' – where people are so desperate for action that they are prepared for the state to use any means necessary, even at the cost of the temporary abandonment of certain civil liberties that would usually be celebrated. In contrast, if it is believed that the state is not responding adequately to the problem, we may witness the re-emergence of violence into the public sphere – where people take the law into their own hands. For example: parents kidnapping their (believed to be) 'brainwashed' 'children' from New Religious Movements for the purposes of 'deprogramming'; and vigilante crusades against paedophiles. For a full version of this article, please contact the author: amanda.rohloff@vuw.ac.nz. Comments and suggestions are most welcome.

This article is an initial investigation only. Having identified the potential for

convergence, I intend to further develop and test these ideas using a specific example. Thus far, I have been unable to find any instances where Elias has been applied to moral panics (or a related area). If anyone knows of any, I would be very interested to hear from them.

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## ■ RECENT CONFERENCES

### The Art of Polyphony: Group Analysis as a Model for the Civilising of Conflicts

*Conference of the Seminar for Group Analysis, Zürich, 23–25 February 2007*

Norbert Elias was a theoretician who sought to integrate psychoanalytic knowledge into sociological models. With S. H. Foulkes he was one of the six founders of the Group Analytic Society in London (see Hans-Peter Waldhoff, 'Unthinking the Closed Personality', [www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](http://www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)). Group analysis is one way in which sociological and psychoanalytical knowledge have been brought together, incorporating psychodynamics and social relationships into psychoanalytic practice. But sociology and group analysis have gone their own ways, although their affinity and exchange of ideas are visible from time to time. The Zürich Seminar for Group Analysis was founded especially by Jewish emigrants with support from German-speaking members of the Group Analytic Society, London. Its silver jubilee was an occasion for examining its roots, among them the theory of civilising processes. The basic multi-perspectival and unauthoritarian character of Group Analysis was the standpoint from which to study its suitability for the civilising of conflict, by making apparent the dominant role played by the deep-seated and often unconscious dimensions of it.

In my own presentation, for example, I sought to describe the difference between earlier, more point-like patterns of civilisation and more integrated patterns. An example on the theoretical level is Elias's integration of sociol-

ogy of knowledge and psychoanalytic problematics, which a splitting of the image of humankind into conscious and unconscious strata attempts to prevent. Aspects of Swiss and Turkish state formation were compared in the light of Vamik Volken's contrast (in *Das Versagen der Diplomatie: Zur Psychoanalyse nationaler, ethnischer und religiöser Konflikte* [The Failure of Diplomacy: The Psychoanalysis of National, Ethnic and Religious Conflicts], Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 1999) between official and unofficial strategies of diplomacy.

### Tenth Civilising Process Symposium, University of Campinas, Brazil, 2–5 April 2007

The Tenth Civilising Process International Symposium – 'Sociabilities and Emotions' held at State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil, 1–4 April 2007, was a great success. The academic standard was notably high in all the various types of forum: four lectures by international professors (Johan Goudsblom, Cas Wouters, François Dépelteau and Ramon Spaaij), one 'Debating Table', ten 'Thematic Tables', 32 paper presentations and workshops, and six mini-courses within the conference.

The event was attended by researchers from several Brazilian states, including Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, São Paulo, Paraíba, Piauí, Mato Grosso do Sul, Bahia and Pará. It also drew researchers and students from well-known institutions in Argentina and Mexico. They greatly contributed to the event, notably in discussions on figurational sociology and Elias's theory of civilising processes. Elias's theoretical-methodological model led to discussion on themes such as education and schools, violence, childhood, memory, history, emotion, health, sports, leisure, technology, work, Protestantism, native people, social representations, sociological theory, among others. It is important to remember that the discussions were also carried on in the corridors of the event and during the four dinners that were promoted by the Tenth Symposium with the purpose of bringing the participants closer and solidifying the academic relations.

Plans are already afoot for the next three symposia in the series. As for the XI and XII Civilising Process International Symposia, our colleagues from Argentina (Prof. José Antonio Castorina, Prof. Carina V. Kaplan and Prof. Victoria Orce) have declared their interest in organising a symposium at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) are also investigating the feasibility of their department organising one. And the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD) has already declared interest in hosting the XIII CPIS.

An Organising Committee for the next symposium is already being formed, with members including:

Adriane Luisa Rodolpho (EST),  
Altina Abadia da Silva (UFG-Catalão),  
Carina V. Kaplan (UBA),  
Deoclecio Rocco Gruppi (FAG/UNI-CENTRO);  
Gláucio Campos de Matos (UFAM),  
Hilde Eliazar Aquino López (Un. Marista de Guadalajara),  
João Paulo Pooli (ULBRA/UCS),  
Joelma Cristina Parente Monteiro Alencar (UEPA),  
José Luis Simões (UFPE),  
Luiz Francisco de Albuquerque de Miranda (UNIMEP),  
Magda Sarat Oliveira (UFGD),  
Maria Beatriz Rocha Ferreira (FEF/UNICAMP),  
Marizabel Kowalski (UFV),  
Ricardo Lucena (UFPB),  
Tatiana Savoia Landini (UNIFESP),  
Tony Honorato (UNESP-Fclar/Uel)

Suggestions are invited for the general theme of our next CPIS: please email [tony@ufpr.br](mailto:tony@ufpr.br)

Ademir Gebara  
Regina N. Pagani  
Tony Honorato

## ■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

### Conference to mark the completion of the Norbert Elias *Gesammelte Schriften*

*Deutsche Literaturarchiv, Marbach an der Neckar, Germany*

To mark the completion publication by Suhrkamp of Elias's collected works in German, a conference will be held on 14–15 September 2007 at the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach, where his papers are now housed.

#### PROGRAMME:

*Friday, 14 September*

16:30: Presentation of the *Gesammelte Schriften von Norbert Elias*

Welcome by Dr Ulrich Raulff (DLA, Marbach) und Professor Hermann Korte (Norbert Elias Foundation)

Presentation of the 19 volumes by Bernd Stiegler (Suhrkamp) and Annette Treibel-Illian (chairman, Editorial Board)

Address by Professor Wolf Lepenies (Fritz Thyssen Stiftung)

Talk by Wilhelm Voßkamp: 'Wish-dream and Nightmare: Arkadias and Utopias in Norbert Elias'

Break for Refreshments

19:30 *Die Ballade vom Armen Jakob*. Performance of the short satirical opera, with libretto by Norbert Elias and music by Hans Gal, by members of the Staatstheater Stuttgart. Introduced by Hermann Korte.

*Saturday 15 September*

9.30 Presentation of the 2007 Norbert Elias Prize for an author's first book.  
10.00 Workshop: Norbert Elias, Human Scientist: New contributions relating to his Life and Works: Co-ordinator: Annette Treibel

*Morning (chair: Stefanie Ernst)*

John Goodwin: 'My dear Norbert: Ilya Neustadt's correspondence with Norbert Elias in Ghana, 1962–64'

Ward Berenschot: 'The Coming of the

Chamchas: State Formation and Neighbourhood Politicisation in Gujarat, India'

Nina Baur: 'Markets as Figurations'  
Mohamed Soffar: 'Reading Norbert Elias in Arabic'

*Afternoon (chair: Annette Treibel)*

Anke Barzantny: 'Mentoringprogramme für Frauen aus figurationssoziologischer Sicht – eine Maßnahme zur Aufhebung der Etablierten-Außen-seiter-Figuration in der Wissenschaft?'

Bowen Paille: 'Must we go on concentrating the new urban outsiders? Processes of educational (de)segregation seen through the eyes of Norbert Elias'  
Giseline Kuipers: 'The Sense of Humour and the Self: on Cultural Variations and Fluctuations in the Evaluation of Humour'

Tabea Dörfelt: "'Warum können wir uns nicht vertragen?": Die Ballade vom armen Jakob as an example for the poetic reflection on human behaviour by Norbert Elias'

16:00 Close

Social Science History Association,  
15–18 November 2007  
*Palmer House Hilton, Chicago*

It is proposed to organise a session on 'Comparative studies and the theory of civilising processes'; likely participants are Stephen Mennell, Cas Wouters, David Matsinhe, Bo Paille, Andrew Stebbins. Website: [www.ssha.org](http://www.ssha.org)

Civilising and Decivilising Processes: A Figurational Approach to American Studies

*Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Frankfurt, 22–24 November, 2007*

#### PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

*Thursday, November 22, 2007*

18:00 Loïc Wacquant (Berkeley / Paris) 'Decivilising the Penal State' (to be confirmed)

*Friday, November 23, 2007*

The Formation of the State and of Individuals

9:30 Stephen Mennell (Dublin)



'The American Civilising Process and its Decivilising Underbelly'  
 10:30 Dietmar Schloss (Heidelberg)  
 'Norbert Elias and the United States: The Public Discussion about the Shape of the Republic in the Early National Period'  
 12:00 Cas Wouters (Amsterdam)  
 'Status Competition and the Development of an American Habitus'

Challenges to the Civilising Process  
 14:30 Kirsten Twelbeck (Hannover)  
 'Self-Denial, Citizenship, and America's "Second Founding"'  
 15:30 Anthony V. Baker (Campbell University School of Law) "... violation of law ... contempt of justice ...": Figurations and the Nat Turner Rebellion'  
 17:00 Günter Leyboldt (Tübingen)  
 'Emerson and the field of Transcendentalist Intellectual'

*Saturday, November 24, 2007*  
 Civilising Projects? Religion, Literature and the Arts  
 9:00 Peter Schneck (Osnabrück)  
 "'Toiling the literary field': Walter Besant, Henry James and the Sublime Economy of Literature"  
 10:00 Francesca Sawaya (Oklahoma)  
 'Patronage and Modern American Literature'  
 11:30 Biljana Oklopčić (Osijek)  
 'Women's Education in the US South as Civilising Project: Its Literary (De)Construction in William Faulkner's Snopes Trilogy'  
 12:30 Ruxandra Radulescu (Bucharest) 'A Figurational Approach to Native Bodies in Louise Erdrich's Novels'

Theoretical Reflections  
 15:00 Winfried Fluck (Berlin) 'Multiple Identities?'  
 16:00 Closing Remarks

Further details of this conference can be obtained from [c.buschendorf@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:c.buschendorf@em.uni-frankfurt.de) and/or [a.franke@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:a.franke@em.uni-frankfurt.de)

## ■ OBITUARY

### Peter Reinhart Gleichmann (1932–2006)



Peter Gleichmann, who died on 13 November 2006, was Professor of Sociology at the University of Hanover from 1978 to 1997, and one of the principal champions of Norbert Elias in Germany.

Gleichmann was born in Berlin, but his family came from Suhl, Thuringia, in central Germany. His great-grandfather was an arms manufacturer, in protest against which his grandfather became a Lutheran pastor in a small town, in reaction to which calling his parents refused to be married in church – something quite unusual at that time. Both his parents were doctors. Peter Gleichmann followed the pattern, defying his authoritarian father's wish that he pursue a medical career and instead first studying architecture and then embarking upon an academic career.

So opposition and calling things in question was a family tradition, as his younger brother Ulrich – a well-known cardiologist – made clear in his eulogy. He also referred to the fate of their maternal grandfather, a doctor, who came into conflict with the henchmen of the Third Reich and met his death in 1945.

Their brother Reinhard died in 1944 from meningitis, and Peter himself in the late 1930s suffered from polio, often a fatal illness, although in his case the after-effects were relatively mild. Against the background of being born in 1932, as the eldest of an eventual five siblings, and a childhood passed

through dictatorship and war, bodily suffering and death through illness or violence cast a shadow over his life.

Later, as a sociologist, Gleichmann placed great value in speaking directly, without euphemism, especially on questions of violence and death. In his academic life, among other things killing, death and above all mass murder – and decivilising processes in general – became central to his work.

Gleichmann spent the last years of the war in Schulpforta, an almost 500 year-old aristocratic school with a long humanistic tradition that had been transformed into a Nazi elite school. 'Schulpforta gave us knowledge, early self-reliance, manners and discipline', said his brother Ulrich.

After the war, the Gleichmanns came as a refugee family to Hanover. Outwardly, at first glance Peter's life now ran along peaceful and ordered lines. He finished his schooling in a traditional *Gymnasium*, where for the first time there were two young women in his class; one of them, Renate Röver, later became his wife. Both studied architecture, and Gleichmann went on to study sociology. He and Renate had three children.

A second look shows, however, that peaceful, orderly lines were perhaps necessary, but at the same time too narrow for Gleichmann. The Hanover Institute of Architecture had links with that in Graz, Austria, and there followed jobs in various architecture and planning offices in Finland and The Netherlands. Finding these too narrow, he widened his experience of town, regional and environmental planning. These led him to embark on sociological studies first at Göttingen and then at Hanover, where he became a lecturer in 1960, taking his doctorate in 1962 and his *Habilitation* in 1968. He was a visiting lecturer at the Universities of Manchester and Leicester – where he met Norbert Elias, whose sociology had a profound influence on him.

In 1976–7, Gleichmann was a guest professor in Aachen. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, the current chairman of the German Sociological Association, remembers:

One might observe that not only had Norbert Elias analysed court society with figurational sociological insight, but had also – after his happy return from exile – made himself a central figure in his own ‘courtly’ figuration. And Peter Gleichmann in certain ways embodied the sociological structural discovery that such a centralized figuration with expectations of affection and competitive tensions sharpens on the one hand the capabilities for sensible observation, but can on the other hand also become a source of suffering from society and from one-self. Throughout, Peter Gleichmann maintained a semi-detached character, through a not always freely chosen sense of ‘strangeness’; as René König put it perfectly, every sociologist has to be something of a ‘Jew’, if he or she is successfully to be able to objectify the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life.

With this semi-detached position Rehberg has hit upon a *Leitmotiv* that, in various ways, is almost always discernible in memories of Peter Gleichmann. It was captured in the title of his Festschrift, *Detached Involvements (Distanzierte Verstrickungen: Die ambivalente Bindung soziologisch Forschender an ihren Gegenstand, Festschrift für Peter Gleichmann zum 65. Geburtstag*. Berlin: Edition Sigma 1997 – see *Figurations* 8).

Peter Gleichmann was often inspiring company. Richard Kilminster recalls:

*I have long admired Peter's originality and independence of mind. He and I have exchanged some stimulating correspondence over the years. We agreed about the significant traces of the Wissenssoziologie present in Norbert's outlook. I also remember vividly sitting next to Peter at a conference of the German Sociological Association Theory Group in Bremen in the early 1980s. He gave a continuous commentary in my ear about the political and sociological inclinations of all the speakers and questioners. He would say, 'ah, this chap is a conservative – see his tough body armour (in the Reichian sense)! It was most illuminating!*

But he could be very direct. One of his former students remembers how:

*A young student had presented the introduction to her Diploma dissertation to Professor Gleichmann and asked for his opinion. The gist of his reply was: 'Your introduction is very good, and especially very sociological: no one will understand it.'*

And Helmut Kuzmics remembers being very nervous when he was invited to give an introductory lecture for his guest-professorship in Hanover about his book *Der Preis der Zivilisation*. Peter Gleichmann was the one to have invited him, so he was quite surprised, that he criticised it severely, regarding it as too ‘economistic’. But in the event Peter ‘was then, and always thereafter, a caring and considerate host’.

Peter Gleichmann's search for semi-detached positions led to a careful degree of approach in some cases, where considerable mutual distancing and distrust had reigned originally, for example with some highly qualified representatives of “critical theory” in Hanover, where relations became respectful. The political scientist Joachim Perels recalls in his funeral oration ‘a great substantive affinity’, especially in the ‘observations of the unloosened despotic state violence of the Hitler regime.’ According to him,

*Peter Gleichmann was a reserved man, who knew [how] to show involvement and intimacy in [his] detachment. He was strongly interested in the other person and his involvement. This became particularly clear ... when Peter Gleichmann was preparing the large conference on mass killings, which took place in Loccum in 2001. In intensive personal contact with the speakers from various fields – an example of real interdisciplinarity – he succeeded in articulating the central problem so sharply that the conference and the book publication resulted in a comprehensive analysis of the anti-civilisatory structures of the twentieth century.*

His ‘detached involvement’ seemed on the other hand sometimes to make him shy away from those who came too close. Johan Goudsblom remembers:

*I remember in particular one of his first visits to my house in Amsterdam.*

*We had a long talk in my study, in which we exchanged our experiences in meeting and reading Elias. We spoke German most of the time, and at the end Peter said something like: 'ich habe noch nie ein so einleuchtendes Gespräch geführt'. ... Later our relationship became more guarded, 'behutsam', ... especially after he was nominated for the chair of the sociology of 'bouwen en wonen' at the University of Amsterdam. I shall never forget the moment when I heard that the appointment had come through, and I immediately reached for the telephone to tell the good news to Peter; to my surprise, I met with a long silence: he was not at all pleased. ... Looking back on my relations with Peter Gleichmann, I find some cause for regret. The initial auspices were more favourable than how it worked out after all. But such is life. And death.*

Peter Gleichmann did indeed take up the chair in Amsterdam, but stayed only a brief time before returning to Hanover.

But that is not the note on which to end this obituary. Gleichmann fruitfully sublimated the force of semi-detachment: in his writings on social and psychic constraints, but above all in his outstanding talent for *wissenssoziologische* insights. He covered all the causes of suffering in body, mind and society, and transformed suffering into knowledge. He had a gift for the outsider's, for marginalized perspectives. He took particular care of foreign students. He promoted the reception of French sociology because he felt it was unjustly marginalized. He took a keen interest in Germany's smaller neighbouring states, such as Poland and The Netherlands. The same ‘view from below’ led him to show that buildings should be made fit for people, not the other way round. In his architectural sociology it led him to address the tabooed ‘natural functions’, and later to speak about violence and death.

He did not only criticise over-involved, ideological writings under the guise of sociology, but also those over-detached positions, who failed to notice the relationship between an author in the human sciences and the humans he described in his work. Hans-Heinrich

Nolte, an historian who specialises in world-system theories, recalls for example how Peter Gleichmann's insistence on feelings being important in the human sciences helped him to become clear about himself.

One last anecdote: when he was in hospital after a serious operation and strictly forbidden to do any work, he smuggled out notes written on a paper napkin to his long-time student assistant Gabriele Overlander, a former nurse, who was then writing the thesis about her former profession that became her successful book *Die Last des Mitfühlens* (Frankfurt: Mabuse, 2000). She still has the napkin.

During his final illness, which came after 14 years of various very severe illnesses, I edited a collection of his essays – *Soziologie als Synthese: Zivilisationstheoretische Schriften über Architektur, Wissen und Gewalt* [Sociology as Synthesis: Essays on Architecture, Knowledge and Violence in the Light of the Theory of Civilising Processes, Wiesbaden: VS – Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006 – see *Figurations* 26]. He died just before I could present him with a copy of the book, though he saw the proofs. At his funeral, I placed copies in the hands of his wife Renate and their daughter Iris.

Hans-Peter Waldhoff

[Translated and edited by Stephen Mennell]

## Anne Witz, 1952–2006



Photo: Sue Scott

All who took part in the brilliantly successful and enjoyable conference on

'Elias in the Twenty-First Century', at the University of Leicester, 10–12 April 2006 [see *Figurations* 25] will be shocked and saddened to learn of the death of its principal organiser, Dr Anne Witz.

At the time of her terribly premature death at the age of only 54, Anne was Reader in Sociology at Leicester (a title hallowed, of course, by Elias himself). But I first knew her when she was an undergraduate in Exeter in the 1970s. She resurfaced in my life and in Exeter in 1986–8, when she replaced me there while I was away on research fellowships. After Exeter she held posts in several universities, and we met up again when she had just moved to Leicester.

I suppose Anne must have heard a bit about Norbert Elias from me in her undergraduate days, though that was back in a period when I myself was only just encountering him and his work. When she arrived in Leicester as Reader, however, she became seriously interested in this major figure from her new department's history, and proposed holding a conference in 2004 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his own arrival there. In the event, it was delayed until April 2006, but that did not matter: it was a huge success, and her co-organisers – Eric Dunning and Jason Hughes – would be the first to attribute the major share of the credit to Anne.

The main reason for the delay was that Anne's health had begun to decline. She had had Hodgkins disease as a 19-year-old – I remember that as a dreadful time – though drastic treatment pulled her through and she had more than three decades of fulfilled and productive activity. But the treatment had left a legacy, and in 2003 she underwent open-heart surgery. Then last year she arrived at the conference straight out of hospital, 48 hours after having undergone a mastectomy. Few people knew it: she was her usual exuberant and funny self, though fretting that it had resulted in participants not receiving conference packs. As her friend Sue Scott (Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at Keele University) says below, Anne was 'someone who could

light up a room with her smile and her intellect', and that is how I shall always remember her myself. A month or two after the conference I invited her to a dining members' guest night at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. She was looking forward to it, and had bought what she characteristically called 'a posh frock', but she wasn't able to come: she went into hospital for more heart surgery. On 11 December 2006, to my absolute disbelief because I had seen her survive so much, she died. She is very greatly missed.

SJM

*Sue Scott wrote the following obituary for the University of Leicester:*

Anne graduated in Sociology from the University of Exeter in 1977 and, after a period of teaching sociology in the Department of Hotel and Catering Management at the then Manchester Polytechnic, she went to Lancaster to do her PhD, under the supervision of Sylvia Walby, graduating in 1987. After temporary posts at the Universities of Lancaster and Exeter she moved to the then Birmingham Polytechnic in 1988 and from there to the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Birmingham in 1990. Anne took up a senior lectureship in Sociology at Strathclyde in 1996 moving from there to her Readership at Leicester in 2001.

Anne's early publications focused on the gendered medical division of labour, developing a feminist analysis of occupational closure [see the Working Paper, *Midwifery and Medicine: sexual divisions and the process of professionalisation* (1985)]. Her PhD thesis was published as *Professions and Patriarchy* (London: Routledge, 1992). While at Lancaster she also worked with Jane Mark-Lawson on a historical sociology of patriarchy and women's labour in nineteenth-century coalmining [*From 'Family Labour' to 'Family Wage': the case of nineteenth-century women's labour in coalmining* (1986)]. Anne was committed to feminism, and to re-envisioning sociology through a feminist lens, but she was also committed to sociological theory and to ensuring that feminist sociologists did not simply throw the theoretical baby out with the patriarchal bathwater. She was



comfortable thinking through theory and used writers such as Simmel and Bourdieu, and more recently Elias, to think with. Her work on health professions led her into a broader analysis of gender and organisations, the best-known manifestations of which are *Gender, Careers and Organisation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) written with Susan Halford and Mike Savage, and *Gender and Bureaucracy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) which she edited with Mike Savage.

I first met Anne in 1986 and our paths crossed regularly at BSA and Medical Sociology Conferences, we became closer in the mid nineties and as well as being a wonderful friend she was an extremely stimulating sociological companion – we shared an interest in the sociology of the body and a commitment to its grounding in a feminist understanding of gendered bodies as against a tendency for increasingly free floating theorisations. Around this time Anne wrote two excellent papers, one, with Alex Hughes, 'Feminism and the matter of bodies: from de Beauvoir to Butler', published in *Body and Society* in 1997, and the second 'Whose body matters? Feminist sociology and the corporeal turn in sociology and feminism', published in 2000, also in *Body and Society*. Anne worked well alone but she was also an excellent collaborator and her last and greatest writing collaboration was with Barbara Marshall from Trent University in Canada. They worked together with obvious pleasure and produced amongst other things an excellent book *Engendering the Social: feminist encounters with sociological theory*, co-authored with Barbara L. Marshall (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004). Anne was not only a theorist, but also undertook empirical research. One example was a study of new forms of work in the service sector, with colleagues at Strathclyde, funded by the ESRC, in the course of which she developed the concept of 'aesthetic labour'. More recently she was developing a research proposal, on the cultural economy of interior design, with a colleague at Leicester, Jennifer Smith [wife of Joe Maguire, a familiar name in the pages of *Figurations*]. Anne also had strong international links, primarily in Europe and espe-

cially in Germany, where she was the Marie Jahoda Visiting Professor at the University of Bochum.

As well as being an excellent scholar Anne was an inspiring teacher and supervisor; she pushed students hard, but also gave them a great deal of support. Those taking her courses would have had to work very hard to avoid developing a sociological imagination. Anne was also an extremely good citizen often taking on more than her fair share of administrative responsibility and doing a great deal of external examining - including being an 'A' level examiner for some years. She organised many conferences and summer schools both in the UK and overseas. We were both members of the organising committee for the British Sociological Association Conference held in Glasgow in 1999. She was a joy to work with, always ensuring that we were on track and most importantly that our ideas were helped along by good food and wine. This conference produced a collection edited by John Eldridge, et al, eds *For Sociology: Legacies and Prospects* (Durham: Sociology Press, 2000).

Anne's health began to fail early in 2003, after she had only been at Leicester for 18 months; despite this I'm sure that she has left a lasting and positive impression on her colleagues in the Sociology Department and in the wider University. She was a special person, someone who could light up a room with both her smile and her intellect. She is a great loss to her sister, to her friends and colleagues and also to sociology and the academic community more generally. Up until a few months before her death Anne was working on her next monograph – *Engendering Embodiment* – which sadly she will never finish. However, some of her friends and colleagues are planning a memorial conference and an edited collection which we hope will include an extract from her manuscript.

Sue Scott  
Keele University

## ■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in November 2007. News and notes should be sent to the Editors by 1 October 2007.

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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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