

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

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■ FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

With great sadness we have to report the death of Maria Goudsblom-Oestreicher, wife of Joop Goudsblom, at home in Amsterdam on 31 March 2009. An obituary appears on p. 15.

The Norbert Elias Prize
Nominations for the 2009 Norbert Elias Prize, to be awarded to the best *first* book by an author published in the years 2007 and 2008, closed on 31 March. Nineteen books were nominated, including no fewer than 11 submitted by the University of Chicago Press. That no doubt reflects the success of Georgi Derlugian, who won the prize for his remarkable book, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, also published by Chicago, in 2007. The jury, consisting of past winners of the prize, are reading the books now. This year's winner will be announced in *Figurations* 32.

■ PEOPLE

- Stephen Mennell retires from the chair of Sociology at University College Dublin this summer. Apart from a change in the telephone contact number shown on the back page, this will not much affect *Figurations*. Stephen has also recently been elected a Member of the Royal Irish Academy.

- Not one but two professors have been appointed in his stead. One of them is

Chris Whelan, one of Ireland's most distinguished sociologists, who comes to UCD after a long career in research at the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. The other is a very familiar name to readers of *Figurations*: Robert van Krieken, who will move from the University of Sydney to UCD at the beginning of September.

• Robert van Krieken was born in 1955 in Hong Kong, and lived in Australia from his secondary schooling. He is currently Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Sydney, and will be commencing as Professor of Sociology at University College Dublin in September. He is author of *Children and the State* (1992), *Norbert Elias* (1998), lead author of the Australian sociology textbook, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (2004) and numerous journal articles on processes of civilisation and decivilisation, cultural genocide, sociological theory, childhood, and the sociology of law. He is also active in the International Sociological Association, including as a member of the ISA Executive.



• A chip off the old block: Roos Wouters' first book is entitled *Fuck!: ik ben een feminist* [Fuck! – I'm a feminist] (Amsterdam: Augustus, 2008). Readers may recall that her father, Cas, writing in a learned journal, once defined a true decivilising process as involving the attitude 'Fuck the rules, watch the traffic!' Roos's title also recalls one of Joop Goudsblom's obiter dicta, that one of America's most successful cultural exports to the world is the word 'fuck'.

■ COLLECTED WORKS OF NORBERT ELIAS: LATEST VOLUME

Edited by Richard Kilminster and Stephen Mennell, published 1 April 2009:

Norbert Elias, *Essays III: On Sociology and the Humanities* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009 [Collected Works, vol. 16]), 312 pp. ISBN: 978-1-906359-03-4. € 48.00.

Collected in this volume is a total of 28 essays on a wide range of topics, more than half of them never before published in English. These are:

- 1 'Figurations', and
- 2 'Social processes', both of them entries for a dictionary of sociology published in 1986
- 4 'Social processes on multiple levels', 1981
- 8 'Address on Adorno; respect and critique' (Elias's speech on accepting the first Theodor W. Adorno Prize of the City of Frankfurt, 1977)
- 9 'Sociology in danger: the case for the reorientation of a discipline', 1982
- 10 'A diagnosis of present-day sociology', 1983
- 13 'The story of the shoelaces: a sociologist on his travels', 1967
- 14 'Social anxieties', 1948
- 17 'Civilisation and psychosomatics', 1988
- 19 'Football in the process of civilisation', 1983
- 20 'Pigeon racing', c. 1967 – a real oddity: from the typescript of an article co-authored with Eric Dunning, which Eric believes to have been published but cannot recall where,

and which the skills of several university librarians have failed to locate.

- 22 'Stages of African Art: social and visual', 1975 – from an unpublished typescript in which Elias elaborates the ideas sketched in the slightly more familiar introduction to the catalogue for the exhibition of his collection of African art that was mounted in Leicester in 1970. (The catalogue introduction precedes it in this volume.)
- 23 'Some remarks on the problem of work', 1984
- 26 'Where two people come together in lawful matrimony ...', foreword to Michael Schröter's book *Wo zwei zusammenkommen in rechte Ehe...*, 1985
- 27 Foreword to *Women torn two ways* – Bram van Stolk and Cas Wouters's book *Vrouwen in tweestrijd*, 1983

An appendix also contains the text of a letter to the editor of *The Listener*, 6 November 1958, responding to a review of volume 5 of Edward Hallet Carr's *History of Soviet Russia*. This letter came to light *after* this volume went to the typesetter!

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

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

You can also buy copies of the volumes on favourable terms direct from the publisher, via the website: www.ucdpress.ie.

Previously published volumes in the series are:

- 1 *Early Writings* (2006)
- 2 *The Court Society* (2006)
- 8 *Involvement and Detachment* (2007)
- 9 *An Essay on Time* (2007)
- 4 Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders* (2008)
- 7 Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* (2008)
- 15 Norbert Elias, *Essays II: On Civilising Processes, State Formation and National Identity* (2008)

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

The next in the series to appear, scheduled for summer 2009, is volume 14, *Essays I: On the Sociology of Knowledge and the Sciences*, again edited by Richard Kilminster and Stephen Mennell.

■ LETTER TO THE EDITORS

After Marbach: two lighter reflections

I recently spent some time at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach, searching in the Elias papers for contacts that he may have had in the mid twentieth century with theoretical biologists. Two serendipitous discoveries in lighter vein are worth reporting in *Figurations*:

Elias's record collection

He may have written on Mozart, but – unlike Adorno – Elias was rather more ecumenical and generous about the American musical legacy. The Marbach archive reveals that his record collection, though small, included Jefferson Airplane (*Woodstock Part II*), The Band, The Police (*Regatta de Blanc*), Frank Zappa, Pink Floyd, Miles Davis, Chicago (*Greatest Hits*) and Crosby Stills and Nash. He also had a volume of *Just William* stories by Richmal Compton. For my money *Outlands d'amour* was a better album than *Regatta de Blanc*, but nevertheless I think this is definitely the list of a hipster.

Standards are falling

We all think university courses are getting easier. Here is the evidence. The reading list for Elias's 1942 course on Social Psychology for the University of London starts by suggesting that students re-read Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Rousseau's *Social Contract*. He then gives 10–12 texts for each lecture. This was an 'extension course' – that is, an extra-mural course for adults. The reading list states that 'Each lecture will be followed by an hour's discussion which together with the sixteen essays [I kid you not – SQ] is an essential part of the course for diploma students'. The fee was £2.

Steve Quilley
Keele University

■ IN THE MEDIA

Nudity and civilisation

The BBC asks questions about nudity and civilisation. But Steve Quilley is puzzled. Why didn't they read Elias, or just ask Cas Wouters?

'Can people unlearn their naked shame?' This recent headline on the BBC website referred to a *Horizon* programme about the origins of the social taboo on nudity and whether it could be unlearned and if so, how quickly and how thoroughly. 'Once we were all happy to walk around naked', the article continued, 'now we're not. But can an experiment in nudity help us understand why we are so embarrassed by being seen in the buff and help shed our inhibitions?'

The first port of call in their quest for answers was evolutionary anthropology. Human beings really are the naked ape. Our lack of hair was an evolutionary adaptation to working hard in hot environments. Hairless bodies and a unique ability to sweat allows our species to lose heat much more efficiently than any other mammal – and it was the key to taking advantage of ecological opportunities on the midday savannah, but also to developing our big brains,

which like all supercomputers, need a great deal of super-cooling. 'Really, without losing hair, without our sweating, we wouldn't have been able to evolve the big brains that characterise us today,' says anthropologist Professor Nina Jablonski of Penn State University. 'Essentially, being hairless was the key to much of human evolution.'

So far so good – but why then are we ashamed of nudity if it serves such a practical function? The next subtitle said it all: 'Learned shame'. Participants in the experiment hung around with each other in 'their altogether', unlearning the conventions of modesty and reaching a 'new consensus that permitted them to be naked in each other's company.' By the programme's dénouement 'Phil, 39, from Birmingham and Kath, 40, from Dorset' felt able to walk, completely naked, into the street and take a cab from the taxi rank. This, said the BBC's Paul King, bore out the 'psychologists' theory' that shame of nudity is a social construct and not innate. Eliasians may think that elevating such an insight to the level of 'theory' is perhaps over-egging it a little. Still, it is perhaps comforting that there appears to be such a gap between the common sense of sociologists and that of BBC journalists. Among ourselves, we would probably refine the idea of social convention and talk about 'second nature' – the internalisation of restraints during the course of childhood socialisation to the extent that the prohibitions on certain kinds of behaviour, and the feelings of shame or embarrassment consequent on their abrogation, appear natural, timeless and unavoidable.

But not content with the discovery that our modesty conventions are just that, the programme makers want to know why! Why are human cultures so universally keen on clothing? After all, even the least complex, hunter-gather societies in hot arid climates go in for bodily adornment, even if their understanding of what constitutes nakedness differs from ours. Television is not a medium that one associates with deferred gratification, and it is usually at this point that they wheel on an evolutionary psychologist for some satisfying explanatory pyrotechnics. Sure enough, along comes Professor

Dan Fessler, of the University of California, Los Angeles. In human beings, the long period of ‘hapless infancy’ and the importance of childhood socialisation and cultural learning, make pair bonding between mates a central dimension of the reproductive strategy. But, at the same time, human beings hang around in large groups. This gregariousness, Fessler argues, ‘poses a challenge ... because those groups of course provide a source of temptation. Potentially both sexes can benefit by cheating on their partners ... Nudity is a threat to the basic social contract. They have exposed their body and their sexual selves in a way that presents an opportunity for sexual behaviour outside of the principal union’ As Paul King explains, the prohibition on nudity is a social contract that limits the expression of sexual signalling associated with the naked body – signals that potentially undermine the sanctity of pair bonding. He goes on: ‘Shame is the ideal emotion to enforce that code of conduct. Because it feels unpleasant, we avoid it at all costs.’ That is, if you forget to put on your trousers, you go red – everyone notices, and your shame (and their embarrassment) is compounded.

So there we have it. The taboo on nudity is a social artifice (as Hume would have it) enforcing an evolved social contract. Now this is possibly a good start – as far as it goes. I am fully in agreement with Hume, Darwin, and indeed Norbert Elias, in seeing ‘social artifice’ as being rooted in our evolved sociality of mammalian family life. Human beings have an evolved capacity to project moral value. But the objects of this moral projection are culturally defined and inherently variable. The deontological boundaries of community (that is, who counts as being morally worthy of being taken into consideration) are a function of history and sociology, on the interweaving figurations of interdependent individuals and social groups.

However, *Horizon*’s ‘experiment’ and Fessler’s explanation end up being rather half-baked – a partial and incomplete account only. Surely what is really interesting about the anthropology of clothing is not the either/or of nudity, but the degrees and nuances

of adornment. Adornment is a process. It varies over all of those temporal scales that Eliasians are used to juggling. Over the life course, children are gradually inculcated with more intensive and pervasive prohibitions, covering more areas of social life and socio-spatial contexts. Girls and boys generally experience different regulatory regimes, with girls experiencing more stringent prohibitions and from an earlier age. In complex societies the division of labour generates an equally complex ecology of adornment standard in relation to social status and cultural-economic roles (for example road digger, lap dancer, Olympic swimmer). Finally, individuals in different societies internalise different standards and, of course, standards and social mores change over time.

So, really to get to grips with social conventions in relation to nudity we would need a much more nuanced and empirical historical sociology of adornment. Now Cas Wouters provides perhaps an interesting point of departure for such a study with his investigations of processes of informalisation in Western societies. On this note it is perhaps interesting that the very first online comment on the Paul King’s review of the *Horizon* programme posited a pronounced process of formalisation:

‘In my lifetime, people have become more prudish in one way. In gents’ toilets, it is noticeable how younger men are more prone to using cubicles as opposed to urinals and it would not surprise me if I lived to see them disappear. Swimming pools built during the 1970s would normally have open-plan changing areas, but more recent ones have enclosed cubicles. Although I have no experience of such an arrangement, I have been assured that clothes shops in the 1960s frequently had open plan changing areas. Interesting how we have become more tolerant of most things, [yet] public nudity seems to have gone the other way!’

Matthew Wyatt,
Stevenage

Another comment intimated the importance of state processes of regulation and sanction involved in the current nudity regime:

‘Also, just remember that if you do wander about naked you’re likely to be placed immediately on the sex offenders’ register – so far have we come from a society that can accept nudity!’
James,
Dundee

For most, the topic provided an opportunity for droll and self-deprecating wit:

‘Get all us fat wheezy Brits to run around naked? That will lead to a huge rise in vegetarianism, which means less cattle and less methane. However, we will need a massive injection of cash into the NHS to cope with the increase in Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. If you want a taster, think of *Eastenders* nude – Dot, Pat, Ian. ... yuk!’

Clive Gibson,
Alnwick

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A Civilising Offensive for the Beijing Olympics

Andrew Linklater drew our attention to an article that appeared in *The Independent* (London) on 26 July 2008. Under the heading 'Chinese get guide to polite conversation', Clifford Coonan reported that the people of Beijing were being officially schooled to avoid the topics of sex, religion, age and wage in dealing with foreign visitors. A poster read, 'Don't ask about income or expenses, don't ask about age, don't ask about love life or marriage, don't ask about health, don't ask about someone's home or address, don't ask about personal experience, don't ask about religion or politics, don't ask what someone does.'

That was only one part of the official 'civilising offensive'. Others included a campaign to stop people jumping queues, spitting, littering and speaking loudly. The campaign was reportedly successful: there had been a big reduction in the amount of loud throat clearing and hawking, for example. 'This was proven by Renmin University's "civilised behaviour index", which rose to 73.08 last year [2007] from 65.21 in 2005, as people spat and littered less.'

■ REVIEW ESSAYS

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh, *Naar een Nucleaire Wereldorde* [Towards a Nuclear World Order] (Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt, 2008), 158 pp., ISBN 978-90-5330-610-9.

Ton Zwaan
University of Amsterdam

After the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 the spectre of nuclear warfare has receded into the background of public consciousness and current political debate. With the decline of the global bipolar power structure, which had deeply influenced the world – especially Europe – for more than forty years, the fears connected to that power structure seem also largely to have dissolved. Today the chances of a major confrontation between the former superpow-

ers, including the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, are more remote than ever. And over the last two decades other serious threats have moved to centre stage. Transnational terrorism, low-intensity violent conflicts in various parts of the world, several genocides, possible ecological catastrophes, climate change, and, most recently, the still growing worldwide economic crisis, have received lots of attention in the mass media and dominated many political agendas and debates. However, the fear of nuclear threats did not completely disappear: one of the grounds for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the suspicion that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed weapons of mass destruction. And present day international politics regarding North Korea and Iran partly rest on the assumption that the former already disposes of a limited nuclear capability and that the latter is set to acquire such capability in due time.

Van Benthem van den Bergh's concise book describes and analyses in broad outlines the development and meaning of nuclear arms from their first beginnings in the last years of the Second World War up till today. The author is very well informed about all the major issues, has followed carefully the main political, military and scientific debates, and develops his own arguments in a clear and convincing way. So far in the history of humanity nuclear weapons have only been used once, in the American bombing of the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 8 August 1945. An estimated two hundred thousand people lost their lives, and many more were seriously injured. The bombs led directly to the Japanese capitulation and the end of the war in the Pacific. Arguing against other interpretations, mainly that the US had used the bombs also to scare Stalin's Russia, Van Benthem van den Bergh maintains that these indeed were the main aims of the US government at the time. However that may be, nobody could fail to notice at the time that a horrible 'super-weapon' with an enormous destructive potential had been developed. And it would not disappear again.

For a few years after 1945 the USA, together with Great Britain, held a

world monopoly of nuclear weapons, but already starting in 1949 the Soviet Union, and later also France and China, developed their own arsenal of nuclear weapons. According to the author the notion of 'weapon' is in fact misplaced. Although states may possess or want to acquire nuclear arms, it has become increasingly hard to imagine that they will ever use them. Especially since the political and military elites of such states are at least up till now much aware that any first use of nuclear arms by them will inevitably be followed by a similar or even more devastating attack on themselves, their own cities and country by their opponents. Because nuclear arms (e.g. long range missiles with nuclear warheads) are widely spread across the territory of a country, may be moved around rather quickly in case of a threat of war, and may also be launched from submarines and warplanes, it is impossible to destroy them all in one first strike. So every sufficiently developed nuclear state has a so-called second strike capability: the capacity to respond in kind. This has become known as 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD).

This paradoxical insight – that any use of nuclear arms by any state against any other nuclear state, will inevitably end with its own massive destruction – was certainly not clear right from the start in 1945 to everybody concerned. Van Benthem van den Bergh shows convincingly that the Cuba crisis of 1962 was a decisive turning point in this respect. At the time the USA and the USSR came closer than ever before or since to a major military confrontation, possibly including an escalation into nuclear warfare. Luckily, both sides realised in time that they were on the brink of a world disaster of unprecedented proportions, backed down, and came to an acceptable political solution. Although the rivalry and competition between the two superpowers certainly did not vanish, initiatives from both sides were developed to prevent any major confrontation in the future and joint measures were taken to enhance security. A hot line between Moscow and Washington was installed in 1963, many efforts were made to prevent any unintended or unauthorised use of nuclear arms, and in 1968

both sides signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty against the further spread of nuclear arms.

In this context Van Benthem van den Bergh develops his main thesis: the possession of nuclear arms by the superpowers can be considered at the global level as a functional equivalent of the monopoly of violence on the level of the national state. The effect is that it forces the powers concerned to restrained and careful behaviour regarding the use of violence towards each other. The risk that such violence might escalate to nuclear war is simply too big. In the words of the author the effect of this 'certainty of uncertainty' may be considered as a strong incentive to avoid the use of large-scale violence, and thus as a civilising force. This central idea of the book to my mind deserves to be pondered over and over, and should be prominent in any discussion about nuclear arms.

Naturally, there are also other points of view. In some military and political circles there are still debates about the possibilities of a 'limited' or 'tactical use of nuclear arms'. On the other hand, peace movements and also some (former) establishment groups plead for a total ban on nuclear arms and still seem to believe that a world free of nuclear weapons is a possible option for the future. Van Benthem van den Bergh convincingly shows that both positions are unrealistic and untenable. Furthermore, the author discusses the gradual spread of nuclear arms to India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and possibly Iran, notwithstanding the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but also cases in which states have declined to remain nuclear states, like Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan after 1991, or have renounced their nuclear development programs, like Libya. According to the author we are gradually heading for 'a nuclear world order' in which quite a few states can dispose over nuclear weapons but in which they will all find increasingly that such arms mainly force them to more caution and restraint in international politics. However one may feel about his views, Van Benthem van den Bergh has written an important book, which should be read and discussed by everyone who cares about the future of humanity.

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

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh
Den Haag

Some time ago I read a report in the *International Herald Tribune* about research by a group of American psychologists on the growth and decline of the mental capacities of human beings. One conclusion struck me: people could grow intellectually until they were eighty-five. But that was a specific kind of growth: improving the faculty of making connections between different fields of intellectual or scientific endeavour – that is, synthesis (or, more conventionally, wisdom). Norbert Elias was not only a living example of such growth, he insisted time and time again how necessary synthesis was for the development of the sciences (see for example 'The Great Evolution' in *Involvement and Detachment*, vol. 8 of the Collected Works) and how it was neglected because of the reductionist assumption of the priority of analysis (and specialisation). Joop Goudsblom deservedly called the posthumously published *The Symbol Theory* 'an attempt at a great synthesis'.

Elias had already proved this capacity for synthesis in *The Civilising Process*, especially in the synopsis of Part Four. He also exemplified that synthesis requires extensive but relatively slow intellectual development. His *Early Writings* (vol. 1) took only one slim volume. He wrote *The Civilising Process* at an age at which Mozart had already died. The Second World War and later his outsider position in Leicester no doubt interrupted his publishing more. Still, it is striking that he wrote the bulk of his later work after he turned seventy (1967). He became famous, beginning in Holland, even later. Of the essays published in *Essays II*, only one was published before 1967, to which two unpublished lectures should be added.

Two aspects of Norbert Elias's work can be distinguished and admired. First, for his empirical-theoretical work of

process sociology, in which sociology stands not for a single academic discipline but for the human sciences as a whole. In this sense he has proved to be a source of inspiration spreading out over the world as a whole. Second, for his concern for the inadequacy of the human means of orientation, both on an individual and on a social level. The importance of the latter has become clear in the poverty of the analytic knowledge of 'experts' of the origins of and remedies for the current economic-financial crisis. Elias focused with more success in his *Humana Conditio* on the impenetrable problem of war. At the individual level he tried to provide a more realistic and less fearful image of death. This is represented by *The Loneliness of the Dying* (in Holland his only book to be twice reprinted) and the essay 'Fear of Death' in *Essays II*. It closes with a short piece on the perspective of 'a world society without war' with the theme made popular by Obama: Has Hope a Future?

Elias's production would have been miraculous if one did not know him and his dedicated work discipline. He knew he still had more to say than he would be able to, and therefore wanted to continue working until the end. But even so, he always gave time and friendly advice to his friends and pupils. I, for one, always returned heartened and stimulated from a conversation with him (usually during lunch in the Amsterdam Hilton, within walking distance from where he lived).

Essays II came as a surprise to me. Of the eighteen essays, I had possessed and read only seven. Every reader of *Figurations* will discover some new Elias treasures in this volume. My favourite is perhaps 'What I mean by civilisation', his reply to Hans Peter Duerr, less than six pages to four books, and one of the few direct polemics he ever wrote. The last sentences are wonderful: 'What Duerr has to say is full of sound and fury. Much ado about nothing.'

The editors of volume 15 must have thought long and hard about the title *Civilising Processes, State Formation and National Identity*. But I don't think it sufficiently fits the contents. State

formation is part (Three) of the Civilising Process, while national identity is an aspect of nation building. For Elias national identity is not the fixed property that politicians claim, but reflects the differences in habitus to be found by comparing nation-building processes. The title is not wide enough: essays 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16 are covered by it; 4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18 not (see the list at the foot of these reflections). Of course, all essays are in one way or another about civilising processes.

This brings me to a suggestion to the editors of the Collected Works. Surely for the non-initiated, the contents of Elias's collected works may be confusing and disorienting. That they may cover a range of different topics, though tied to an overarching theoretical perspective, may not be immediately clear. The wide span of Elias's process approach made him investigate many subjects, which always yielded important new insights. Few authors benefit so much from Collected Works as Elias. It may therefore be helpful to new readers to provide in the last volume a classification of his work. Perhaps each editor could provide his own classification, as it will be very difficult to agree on one authoritative classification. And if necessary, classification attempts could be discussed at a conference that promises to be quite lively.

Contents of Essays II
(Collected Works, vol. 15)

- 1 Civilisation
- 2 What I mean by civilisation: reply to Hans-Peter Duerr
- 3 The civilising of parents
- 4 *L'espace privé* – 'private space' or 'private room'?
- 5 Foreword to Horst-Volker Krumrey, *Entwicklungsstrukturen von Verhaltensstandarden*
- 6 Technisation and civilisation
- 7 Power and civilisation
- 8 Processes of state formation and nation building
- 9 Towards a theory of communities
- 10 Afterword to Meike Behrmann and Carmine Abate, *Die Germanesi*
- 11 Inquest on German Jewry
- 12 The charismatic leader
- 13 Gentlemen and tarpaulins

- 14 Drake and Doughty: a paradigmatic case study
- 15 Public opinion in Britain
- 16 National peculiarities of British public opinion
- 17 Fear of death
- 18 Has hope a future?

Norbert Elias, and Eric Dunning,
Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process. (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008) pp.320, ISBN 978-1-904558-43-9.

Katie Liston
University of Ulster

Uniquely among the Collected Works, this is an enlarged edition of the original. Only two of Elias's books were co-authored, and Dunning is the only one of Elias's co-authors still alive. For this reason, his retrospective comments on the text are a rare (and sometimes very personal) insight into the production of the 1986 original and to Elias's and his theoretical considerations at the time of writing. This 2008 edition is a much-needed and welcome revision, which includes the addition of a previously unpublished discussion (chapter 5) by Elias entitled 'The genesis of sport as a sociological problem, part 2', and the updating by Dunning of chapter 12 on 'Football hooliganism as an emergent global idiom'. There is also an added postscript by Dunning on gender (chapter 11), and he has inserted extra notes to Elias's essays (using the initials (EGD)). Appendix II includes a provoking commentary by Elias on the Oedipus legend, in which he argues that legends can help us to understand human relationships (such as that between father and son) that exist at various stages of social development. 'In this respect, the Oedipus myth evidently symbolises a relatively late stage in the development of a society in which, at an earlier stage, neither the killing of the young son nor the killing of the old father was a crime' (p. 294). Personal revelations include Dunning's disclosure that he was not the first student to raise the question with Elias of whether sport might be a respectable topic worthy of sociological research. This honour goes to one David Moscow it seems. 'He and I [Dunning] were

been university sportsmen, and the idea originated by Moscow and developed through discussions between the two of us and Elias was that we should research collaborative theses: Moscow on his sports (tennis and athletics) and I on mine (football and cricket)' (p. x). But Moscow failed to secure funding for his study.

Under Elias's co-supervision, Dunning went on to complete his MA thesis entitled 'Early Stages in the Development of Football as an Organised Game' in 1961. Eric Dunning was one of my doctoral supervisors, and I was encouraged (or rather, politely constrained) to read this thesis, and it is interesting that, in the acknowledgements, he himself describes the thesis as 'an essay in developmental sociology'. The collaboration between Elias and Dunning culminated in *Quest for Excitement*, which is, at one and the same time, a groundbreaking text for figurational studies of the sociology of sport and, perhaps, more importantly, an important contribution to sociology in general. Using sport as the medium through which to examine longer-term social processes, Elias and Dunning argue that in highly constrained, 'civilised' societies, sports – as well as a spectrum of other cultural and leisure activities – are to be understood not in terms of 'relaxation' but rather of the need for pleasurable excitement and its pleasurable resolution.

I assume that most readers of *Figurations* will be familiar with the key theoretical points of Elias and Dunning's work. Therefore, I focus my attention on some of the notable revisions to the latest edition.

Chapter 5, 'The genesis of sport as a sociological problem, part 2', was originally intended to be part of the 1986 version; Elias, however, had lost all the citations from it. Stephen Mennell's selfless tracing of these has permitted the publication of this chapter, which seeks to elucidate the complexities or the particular characteristics of sport which account 'for the fact that, as a form of pastimes, it appeared, at least chronologically, as a companion piece of the form of work and production characteristic of societies in a proc-

ess of industrialisation' (p. 135). This chapter also sets out the argument for a relational approach to the study of sport – that is, rather than conceptualising 'sport', 'industry' or 'education' as separate objects of study, Elias sensitises us to the characteristics of the society where sport first developed. Put differently, he argues against the idea of 'history without structure, a collation of details determined more by traditions and transient fashions than by systematic cross-fertilisation with any consistent theory' (p.138). Today, of course, Elias's work is equally noted for his critique of the atheoretical approach to history and of the related tendency of sociologists to research 'structures without history'.

Dunning's postscript to chapter 11 is a revealing insight into the difficulties of practising the balance between involvement and detachment, not least in terms of grappling with the 'rational and emotional dimensions' of his involvement with his wife, from whom he was divorcing at the time of writing the original chapter and, related to this, what he describes as 'the painful realisation that a substantial amount of exploitation and taking for granted of females has always undergirded male participation in sport' (p. 258). Given the less than fruitful exchange that took place subsequently between Dunning (with Sheard, and later Maguire) and feminist writers on sport, this is a remarkable admission. So too is the short account of his socialisation of the idea that men should not strike women.

If our understanding of the sport–gender nexus is to be extended, then I have no doubt that Dunning's postscript will prompt some reactions in feminist and figurational academic communities, for his relational and processual work on gender has run counter to the now-dominant trend in which most of the empirical research on women's sports has been conducted by women on women and a similar pattern is evident in research on men in sport. It is as if the structural imbalances in sport (differential rates of participation and organisational capacity between the sexes) have found an almost opposite expression in research on gender and sport: today, we arguably know far more, empiri-

cally at least, about women's gendered experiences in sport than we do men's, and this is almost certainly the case in Western Europe. Dunning's approach to the relationship between sport and patriarchy is exemplified best in the three case studies in this chapter: the development of modern combat sport; the emergence and relative decline of the macho subculture in rugby union; and, the phenomenon of football hooliganism in Britain.

Chapter 12, 'Football hooliganism as an emergent global idiom', is totally rewritten in order to take account of the globalisation of football and football-related violence, and to address what Dunning describes as spurious criticisms of the work on football hooliganism started by the Leicester School in the 1970s. This chapter includes commentary on what Dunning describes as seven main academic approaches to the study of football hooliganism, including the anthropological, post-modernist, Marxist, ethogenic, reversal theory and social psychological approaches, and the application of aspects of Weberian/neoMarxist ideas by individual researchers such as Bairner, King and Robson. Dunning claims that figurational sociologists were, in fact, 'among the first sociologists to recognise that football hooliganism is not and probably never has been solely working class' (p. 283).

Conceived in these terms, *Quest for Excitement* was and is a pioneering text, and the authors' interest in wider and more fundamental issues above and beyond a series of unconnected social and psychological data is palpable as is their desire, as Elias expressed it much earlier, to pass on knowledge 'to younger men and women understanding and able enough to take it up and use it in their own way' (in a response to Bryan Wilson, 7 June 1952, *Figurations* 22 (2004)). That *Quest for Excitement* has become the basis for subsequent quests for knowledge by generations of figurational sociologists and those from other paradigms is testament enough to its eminence within the sociology of sport and leisure. If there is one query, however, it is this: the effusive descriptions of Professors Stephen Menell, Ivan Waddington and Pat Murphy as

'very good' and 'talented and committed sociologists' respectively (p. xvi) might be a case of the old Irish proverb finding expression in practice: the English always credit themselves with the qualities they find in others!

Waddington, I. and Smith, A.
An Introduction to Drugs in Sport: Addicted to Winning? (London: Routledge, 2009) 270 pp. , ISBN 978-0-415-43125-5.

Katie Liston
University of Ulster

Over the last decade Ivan Waddington, originally a member of the Department of Sociology and the Centre for Research into Sport and Society (CRSS) at Leicester, has established himself as the world's leading sociological expert on drugs in sport. Since I reviewed his earlier book *Sport, Health and Drugs* (2000) for *Figurations* 14, I have had the very good fortune of working with him and the co-author of this latest monograph, Andy Smith, both of whom are members of what is now the Chester Centre for Research into Sport and Society.

This book was originally intended to be a revised and updated version of *Sport, Health and Drugs*, but it has become a rather different book. Waddington and Smith have omitted health-related issues and replaced these with six new chapters on drug use in sport, two of which were co-authored with Dominic Malcolm (Loughborough University, chapter 9) and Dag Vidar Hanstad (Norwegian School of Sports Sciences, chapter 10). In essence, this monograph sets out to open up the issue of drug use in sport using by drawing on elite-level case studies that have remained, to a greater or lesser degree, below the sociological radar until now. The authors also draw the important conceptual distinction between doping and behaviour involving the use of performance-enhancing drugs; Waddington and Dunning have argued that 'doping' is more usefully employed to describe the un-informed or non-consensual use of drugs, as in the cases of animals in sport or of athletes in particular socio-economic-political systems like

the former East Germany.* The other notable feature of this text is the use of process sociology as its theoretical underpinning, implicitly for the most part, but explicitly in chapter 10, which includes a concise explication of Elias's game models and its application to the emergence of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Such is the expertise with which complex conceptual tools such as involvement-detachment, figuration and power ratios are employed below the surface and in an accessible and illuminating manner that some readers may undoubtedly ask 'where is the sociology?' A similar point has been made about the light-touch sociological penmanship of Abram de Swaan's *Human Societies*, while Joop Goudsblom's sociology has been described as 'minimalist art'. Figurationists have a tendency to write sociology in something close to everyday language, but it is depressing that other sociologists cannot recognise sociological content unless it is wrapped up in pretentious concepts and clumsy writing.

Probably the most important figural concept to be employed throughout *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport* is involvement-detachment. Waddington and Smith argue that the topic of drug use in sport arouses strong emotional reactions, 'and this in turn has often been associated with a tendency to substitute moral opprobrium and condemnation for relatively detached analysis and understanding' (p. 6-7). For them, high levels of emotional involvement constitute a poor basis for policy formulation. That is seen very clearly in chapter 1, where it is argued that the general public's and so-called experts' attitudes towards drug use are often inconsistent, such is the social value attributed to sport. The resulting danger is that value-driven policies can generate undesirable consequences. In their words, 'we should not simply assume, ostrich-like, that policies necessarily have only those consequences which they were intended to have and no others, and ... we should be sufficiently open-minded to recognise that some of the consequences may actually be the opposite of what was intended' (p.15). Chapter 2 exposes the inconsisten-

cies in one of the principal objections to drug use in sport – concern for the health of athletes. Here, Waddington and Smith unravel the complexities by demonstrating: the fact that athletes take, and are expected to take, serious risks with their health; that there is widespread and legal use of drugs in the sporting context which can have very dangerous side effects; and the close relationship between drug manufacturers in the Western world and sporting organisations. They conclude that health considerations are 'a convenient and useful but essentially secondary justification' (p. 34) for a ban on drugs, in contrast to other social values, shared more or less by people around the world: the fair play ideology and the 'spirit of sport' (chapter 3). Chapter 4 evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of existing theories of drug use in elite-level sport. In so doing, it points to the value of asking the right questions, for it is not sufficient to ask why athletes take drugs: 'rather we need to ask why athletes have, over the past four decades, *increasingly* used drugs'; arising from this, there is a clear need for theories that 'account for the growing *demand* for illegal drugs by athletes' (p. 49) and the related increasing supply of drugs to these athletes. The remainder of the text sets out to address these very questions.

Chapter 5, 'Drug use in elite level sport: toward a sociological understanding', is probably the clearest exposition of the sociological underpinning to Waddington and Smith's later case studies, and it is here that they make a compelling argument for a processual and developmental approach to understanding the issue. It is their contention that an analysis of the structure of sport and wider social processes is central to understanding this issue in greater depth, all the time drawing on reality-congruent knowledge. Rather than reducing the issue to the pharmacological revolution or risk-taking, for example, Waddington and Smith reveal the interdependence of processes of de-amateurisation, politicisation and commercialisation in sport. In short, for Waddington and Smith the illegal use of drugs has been associated with two major processes: the medicalisation of life (the increasingly widespread

acceptance of drugs in everyday life); and the increasing competitiveness of sport where a premium is placed on medal-winning and record-breaking performances in particular. One outcome of the combination of these processes has been the emergence of sports medicine (itself regarded as a legitimate development). Another is the increasing use by athletes of performance-enhancing substances to boost performance, which is normally regarded as illegitimate, and forms the ideological basis for the social issue of drugs in sport. Conceived in these terms, the relationship between elite level athletes and sports medicine practitioners is central to our understanding of this problem, and chapter 6 focuses on changing relationships between sports physicians and elite level athletes. Chapter 7 offers a case study of British sporting nationalism and drug use in British sport. This is a highly original contribution, which sets out some of the methodological problems with the existing data and questions what conclusions can be drawn from these data. There is also a short commentary on the expression of British sporting nationalism in the public rehabilitation of former Olympic medal-winning athlete, Linford Christie. Chapter 8 examines drug use in professional cycling, chapter 9 turns attention to professional football and, as we noted above, chapter 10 considers the establishment of WADA using game models. Chapter 11 considers the relevant data on precise levels of drug use in modern sport and their implications for anti-doping policies in sport. The book concludes with a consideration of new directions in anti-doping policy, including harm reduction and the ending of the ban on performance-enhancing substance. These two concluding chapters are a distinctive addition in light of their relevance to debates on policy. They, along with the other case studies, make short thrift of any claims about the failure or inability of figurational sociology to be relevant to 'real life'.

When reading Waddington's earlier book, *Sport, Health and Drugs*, I was taken aback by the apparent ease and simplicity with which he cut through the ideological quagmire surrounding drugs in sport to reveal the inconsisten-

encies that lie at the heart of any such emotive issue. As an athlete, competing then at international level, I had invested, emotionally and psychologically, in the culture of sport. But, as I continued to read and digest his commentary, I became convinced by the merit of his arguments, not least for their reality congruence. This time round, for me the striking feature of *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport* is its explication of the differences between a social and a sociological issue and, following on from this, the merits of a thoroughly sociological model under-

pinned consistently by a theoretical framework. New arrivals to sociology and the sociology of sport will no doubt also be struck by Waddington and Smith's focus on the networks of relationships in which athletes are involved and the implications arising from this for proposed solutions to the 'problem'. As they acknowledge themselves, there is no silver bullet and 'it may well be that we are forced to accept "the least bad of an array of very bad options" (Goode, 1997, cited in Waddington and Smith, 2009: 234)'. The high level of detachment main-

tained by them throughout the book is to be applauded, though it contrasts sharply with their personal accounts of the relative achievements of Aston Villa and Tottenham Hotspurs in the Premier League. It seems that figurational sociologists are human after all!

Reference

*Eric Dunning and Ivan Waddington, 'Sport as a drug and drugs in sport', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38 (2003), pp. 351–68.



■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Norbert Elias, 'Power and Civilisation', *Journal of Power*, 1: 2 (2008), pp. 135–42.

This is the text, newly translated from German by Edmund Jephcott for inclusion in the *Collected Works of Norbert Elias*, of a lecture that Elias gave on 27 October, 1981, at the University of Graz, Austria. For the new *Journal of Power*, published by Routledge and edited by Mark Haugaard at the National University of Ireland Galway, Elias's lecture is prefaced by a short introduction by Stephen Mennell (pp. 131–4). The full text is also published in *Essays II: On Civilising Processes, State Formation and National Identity* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2008 [Collected Works, vol. 15]), pp. 93–104.

Abstract:

Elias's 1981 lecture contains a mature restatement of ideas that he first put forward in *The Civilizing Process* more

than four decades earlier, especially the connection he traced between processes of habitus formation on the one hand and of state formation on the other. But he also draws into his presentation ideas that he developed in his middle years, notably the theory of knowledge and the sciences that he advanced in his book *Involvement and Detachment*. For Elias, neither 'civilisation' nor 'power' are fixed things or qualities. 'Civilisation' relates to ongoing historical processes in the course of which people's social habitus is gradually transformed in the direction of more habitual and reliable self-restraint. 'Power' is always a relationship, a ratio between parties linked together in all forms of social (including political) interdependence. The two are linked through processes of state formation; the gradual monopolisation of the means of violence by the state, exerting steady pressure upon people to live in peace with each other. As violence

and danger diminish in everyday life, individuals grow less fearful and more rationally restrained in their social demeanour. Nevertheless, the potential for violent confrontation still exists in international politics between internally pacified states.

Stephen Mennell, 'An Exceptional Civilising Process?', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 9: 1 (2009), pp. 97–115.

Abstract:

The claim to a nation's 'exceptionalism' can only be assessed in relation to a specific theory. This article discusses the history of the USA in the light of Norbert Elias's theory of civilising (and decivilising) processes. Although, unlike many Western European countries, the USA never had a single monopoly 'model-setting elite' and had no nobility, it did have several competing aristocracies. The

Northern *Bildungsbürgertum* dominates perception of the USA at the expense of the Southern *Junkers*, whose political and cultural legacy nevertheless continues to be of great significance, notably in the comparatively high level of violence that afflicts present-day America. The peculiarities of state formation processes - the formation of a (relatively) effective monopoly of the legitimate use of violence - in the USA and their continuation in empire formation are examined. Ironically, the USA has become a model-setting elite for the whole world at a time when its popular egalitarianism represents a kind of false consciousness in a factually increasingly unequal society; when the USA may be undergoing a process of de-democratisation; and when American misperceptions of the wider world, together with diminishing foresight by American governments, are becoming a serious problem in world politics.

Hermann Korte, 'Und ich gucke mir das an': Angela Merkels Weg zur Macht - Eine Fallstudie. ['I am watching': Angela Merkel's ascent to power - A case study], in: Martina Löw (ed.), *Geschlecht und Macht* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009).

This article looks at the remarkable career of Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel from her childhood in the former GDR to occupying, politically speaking, the most powerful position in the new Federal Republic of Germany. The article charts Merkel's political career and rise to power in greater detail, from the moment of the fall of the Berlin Wall and her involvement in one of the newly emerging political groups in the early transition period, to becoming a member of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) under Helmut Kohl, and finally discussing the remarkable circumstances that were to permit Merkel's final ascent to power. Merkel's rise to power, so the article argues, has not been subject to systematic sociological analysis. This is a missed opportunity, which the article tries to rectify by analysing those Eliasian constellations that provided the opportunity for Merkel to become German Chancellor.

Kees Schmidt, 'Sociologie van de volte' [A sociology of social density], *Sociologie* 3:3 (2007), pp. 323-49.

In this essay a rough sketch of a sociology of social density is given. It is argued that a sociology of density has to reckon not only with the number of people (their biomass) but also with the nature of their activities and possessions (their 'sociomass'). Therefore, and because of the social nature of population growth, the term social density is used. As a result of long-term extensive and intensive growth, the social, built and natural infrastructures of today's world are more pressurised than ever before. This raises the question of the social and environmental limits to this development. The first section of the essay summarises research on the consequences of density and crowding in rodents and primates. Then the complexity of the human world is addressed. A distinction is made between social density and the experience of it as adding to or diminishing human welfare. One of the key problems of a sociology of social density is how objective and subjective density are related and in whom and in which circumstances negative experiences occur. In the article the following questions are discussed: What is social density? How did and do people cope with it, individually and collectively? Are there limits to social density? In the concluding observations, it is suggested that the experience of social density as 'too many and too much' is related to class divisions in contemporary post-industrial societies. Finally, it is concluded that increasing social density has made and will make an ever growing appeal on the human capacity for control as manifested in technology, organisation and civilisation. Learning processes are absolutely essential for the further development of this capacity.

Carsten Kaven, *Die Durchsetzung der Reformpolitik in China: Analyse eines Ereignisses* (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2009). ISBN: 978-3-8258-1712-1.

This book is inspired by Elias's thinking although the title does not contain his name. Some of his concepts like *Machtbalance*, *Verflechtungszwang*

and *Spannungsachsen* are used in the analysis. The study analyses a historical event from a historical-sociological perspective: the enforcement of reform policy in communist China in the mid/end of the 1970s. Thus, the aim is to judge about this issue: Should this event be interpreted as a result of deliberate policies of actors or is it rather the effect of long-term processes? To achieve this purpose, an analytical framework is applied that combines theoretical reflections as well as empirical research. [From Elias-I Blog]

Carsten Kaven, *Sozialer Wandel und Macht: Die theoretischen Ansätze von Max Weber, Norbert Elias und Michel Foucault im Vergleich* (Münster: Metropolis, 2006). ISBN: 978-3-89518-557-1.

This book deals with the relation of two concepts of social theory: power and social change. In doing so, it aims at a contribution to a historical-sociological modelling of social change and social processes. Such modelling should be able to indicate the role of power within concrete social change as well as to define the unity of relevant social processes. For this purpose, Max Weber, Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault, who developed competing notions of power and social change, are criticised, refined and updated systematically. [From Elias-I Blog]

Patricia M. Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence and State-Making in Modern China* (Harvard East Asian Monographs). (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2007).

In the introduction to her book, Patricia Thornton draws on Elias's theory of civilising processes and the part played in it by state-formation processes. Its relevance to China is captured in Confucius' dictum *zheng zhe zheng ye*, which roughly means 'to govern is to coerce with force or authority', or, as it is often rendered, 'to govern is to rectify' (p. 3).

Marc Joly, *Le mythe de Jean Monnet: Contribution à une sociologie historique de la construction Européenne*. (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007). 238 pp. ISBN: 978-2-271-06575-9.

Blurb:

Jean Monnet, 'founding father' of the European enterprise? Marc Joly takes the scalpel to this idea, analysing it as a political myth produced by directing elites of the European Union. In doing so, he clarifies the genesis, functioning and ideologies of the 'European power'.

Jean Monnet's institutional conceptions were ideally suited to the quest for legitimising a new type of power, emancipated from democratic rules of control and national ideologies. His inspiration was to invent a winning formula: to build a political Europe via economic intergration.

Confronting the myth of Monnet with Elias's theory of civilising processes, Marc Joly's stimulating study confronts the unspoken aspects of the present crisis.

Paddy Dolan and John Connolly, 'The civilising of hurling in Ireland', *Sport in Society* 12: 2 (2009), pp. 196–211.

This essay examines the sport of hurling in Ireland through the theoretical framework of sport and leisure developed by Elias and Dunning. Through an analysis of newspaper reports of games, of rulebooks and codes of play, as well as historical data on increasing social differentiation and integration, we argue that hurling has undergone sportisation and civilising processes. However, due to the unevenness of wider figurational shifts these processes have been non-linear and fragile. Gradually, we see increasing numbers of rules, as well as increasing severity of punishment for the breaking of specific rules relating to violent play. The level and extent of violent conduct also appears to change with both players and spectators becoming more self-controlled. The increasing emotional restraint of spectators and players can be explained by the changes in the overall structure

of Irish society during this period, particularly from the 1960s onwards with increasing interdependencies between people.

Mart-Jan de Jong, *Icons of Sociology* (Amsterdam: Boom Academic, 2007). 511 pp. ISBN: 978-90-473-0007-6.

This new textbook in sociology, written in English, and published in 2007 contains eleven chapters, dealing successively with Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Parsons, Elias, Mary Douglas, Peter Berger, Bourdieu, and Habermas. The author is a Dutch social scientist teaching at the Roosevelt Academy in Middelburg. His book stands in the tradition of Lewis Coser's *Masters of Sociology* and Raymond Aron's *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* with their intellectual portraits of great sociologists.

Stephen Dunne, 'The politics of figurational sociology', *Sociological Review*, 57: 1 (2009), pp. 28-57.

Abstract:

Figurational sociology is so often said to distance itself from the political issues of the day. Whilst this is certainly true with regards to the present day, it in no way follows that figurational sociology seeks to distance itself from politics as such. On the contrary, as will be shown within this paper, politics is and always has been a central concern for figurational sociologists. This political concern, however, is an exclusively long-term concern; figurational sociology purposively postpones present political engagement for the sake of developing a sufficiently detached sociology that would eventually facilitate in the delivery of effective practical and political measures. This paper discusses the stakes involved in, as well as the reasoning behind, the assignment of such a place to politics. It gestures towards two distinct and separate concepts of social control that exist within figurational sociology and then proceeds to offer a critical consideration of the consequences that can be derived from any temporal demarcation of the political done on their basis. The paper ultimately suggests that figurational

sociology's position on politics raises a series of as yet unanswered questions, questions that can no longer remain unanswered by the contemporary figurational sociologist.

Lars Bo Kaspersen and Norman Gabriel, 'The importance of survival units for Norbert Elias's figurational perspective', *Sociological Review* 56: 3 (2008), pp. 370-87.

Abstract:

In this paper, we argue that Norbert Elias's concept of survival unit is a distinctive part of the development of his figurational sociology and one of the most consistent contributions to relational thinking. The survival unit is a particular form of figuration which provides security and the material foundations for life such as food and shelter. Every human being is born into a survival unit. This unit is a relational concept which cannot be conceived outside a relationship with other survival units.

By introducing the concept of survival unit Elias overcomes one of the key problems in relational sociology: how to demarcate primary social relations. Elias argues that human societies from very early on have been divided into survival units. These survival units are demarcated and constituted in their relationship to other survival units. Consequently, their boundaries are generated in a confrontation with other survival units.

This relationship can be peaceful or conflict ridden but in the last resort it can end with violent confrontation. Only the survival unit with the ability to defend a domain of sovereignty will survive. This observation places Elias among the few sociologists with an understanding of the role of warfare in social relationships.

Hans-Peter Waldhoff, 'Unthinking the Closed Personality: Norbert Elias, Group Analysis and Unconscious Processes in a Research Group: Parts I and II', *Group Analysis: the International Journal of Group-Analytic Psychotherapy*, 40 (3): 323-43 and 40 (4): 478-506.

At first, Elias's approach to psychoanalysis and group analysis was emphatically thought out and scientific, even when he submitted to experiencing it personally. In this article, a number of hitherto unknown documents will be discussed which reveal Elias as being in the triangle between psychoanalysis, group analysis and sociological research, but above all in a bipolar tension field which he describes in numerous variations and which can be characterised as moving between an intellectually distanced, scientifically disciplined procedure appealing to the conscious ego on the one hand, and a more strongly emotionally involved technique such as free group association, which takes the unconscious into account, on the other.

Part II records and discusses the development and dynamics of the first Congress Group ('C-Group') of the Group Analytic Society, again with reference to previously unpublished verbatim records, and which highlight especially the relationship between Foulkes and Elias.

Brett Bowden (ed.), *Civilization: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2009). 1,779 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-46965-4 (hb set) £650.00.

Blurb:

Especially since the end of the Cold War, the concept of 'civilisation' has been frequently deployed by those who seek to describe and explain the world in which we live. The events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent 'war on terror', have further elevated the concept's use in the discourse of politics and international relations. There has, for instance, been feverish speculation and increasingly heated rhetoric about struggles 'for civilisation' or a possible 'clash of civilisations', particularly between the West and the Islamic world. The term is used both to describe – and to cast value-laden judgements about – people, places, and events. It is often misinterpreted and misapplied, sometimes with dangerous consequences. In response to the revival and misuse of 'civilisation', this new four-volume collection from Routledge

Major Works meets the need for an authoritative reference work to make sense of a vast and growing scholarly literature. It brings together canonical and the best cutting-edge research to provide a comprehensive overview of the origins, contested meanings, contextual applications, and general history of this critical concept.

The selected readings include extracts from the work of Norbert Elias, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell.

Order it for your library – it's too expensive for any individual to buy, and perhaps for most libraries during the current collapse of capitalism!

Tom Inglis, *Global Ireland: Same Difference* (London, Routledge, 2008). 290 pp. ISBN 0-415-94423-6.

In his latest monograph, *Global Ireland*, Tom Inglis offers a revealing insight into the impact of globalisation on Irish culture, and more specifically, the Republic of Ireland. This book has taken about five years to complete. Given what we now know to be a global economic recession, whether he meant to or not Inglis captures a culture in flux, stretching across the boom–recession cycle of the early years of the twenty-first century. He makes clear that his approach to globalisation focuses on the impact of social and economic transformations on popular culture and everyday life. In other words, his work is not yet another investigation of the Celtic Tiger in solely economic terms. Rather, his contribution to understanding the impact of globalisation is to place 'average' Irish people at the centre of his attention. After all, people are at the heart of global flows and it is they who 'struggle to be the same but different' (p. 2): the same as other Irish people but different from other people; the same as other people, for example, seen in the sharing of a family name usually, but each family member being unique at the same time; and, different from other people at the local and national levels yet sharing much with humanity as a whole.

Inglis argues that 'the absence of physical affection, an obsession with sex,

and an emphasis on self-denial have been central to what makes the Irish different' (p. 4) ... It is this peculiar form of self-repression and surrender that is at the centre of Irish "craic" (fun) which revolves around witty conversation, banter and repartee, laughing at life, drowning sorrows but, most of all, a relentless teasing and making fun of oneself and others' (p. 5). Yet, while these features of the Irish habitus have remained relatively enduring, at the same time the Irish are becoming more like the rest of the West – more open, liberal-individualist, secular and urbanised. Inglis's strength is his tackling of this interaction between global and local cultural elements. Chapter 1 offers some background to the Irish people as a whole and the collision between Catholic and consumer capitalisms, out of which he argues that the freedom to choose has become the Irish moral centrepiece. What makes the Irish different, then, from others? Inglis's claim is that they manage to live successfully in these two different worlds by retaining a 'strong sense of self and identity which has enabled the Irish to enter the global marketplace ... without the same emotional costs' (p. 30). In short, what makes the global personal in his study are the ways in which Irish people's 'immersion in Catholic culture which emphasised sameness is being eroded by their immersion in a consumer culture' (p. 33).

Inglis clarifies the conceptual importance of the driving material (economic) and cultural forces in understanding globalisation in Ireland (chapter 2), the culturally distinctive position of Ireland on the global stage (chapters 3 and 4), the similarities between cosmopolitans and locals living in Ireland and Western societies more generally (chapter 5) and, how these changes are reflected in the small Irish town of Ballivor, located approximately 40 miles from Dublin city and with a population of about 300. The cultural map of this town is marked inextricably by the local school, the Gaelic Athletic Association club and a transnational company, while the local post office and public house are the main centers of 'creolisation' – 'the coming together of local, national and global cultural strands to form a new, ever-evolving, cultural fabric' (p. 227).

It is here, in particular, that Inglis's gift for delving into the social tissue is best exemplified for we see the ways in which that which makes the Irish different – the longer lasting and deeply embodied personality structure shaped principally, though not entirely, by the Catholic Church – is being eroded, to a greater or lesser degree, and reflected in the everyday lives of those 'natives' and 'blow-ins' living in Ballivor. This change is not unilinear, of course, and glocalisation reactions can be seen in the ways in which the local GAA club 'keeps Ballivor different from other villages in the West' (p. 255), amongst other things.

Whether as a teacher or writer, Inglis's gift is that he has always managed to convey the practical relevance and application of complex sociological ideas with clarity and precision and, furthermore, to express this in language that is equally accessible to the academic or wider public audience (see his earlier books, *Moral Monopoly*, *Lessons in Irish Sexuality*, and *Truth, Power and Lies*). In his study of Ballivor, the accuracy with which he captures aspects of the Irish habitus leaves the local reader wondering whether the book was written by a ghost writer and as an autobiography. Like any good storyteller, he also reveals as much about himself as he does his subject matter for, in this case, the two are inextricably interwoven. That he has attained such a level of detachment from his subject matter is to be commended.

Katie Liston
University of Ulster

■ BOOKS RECEIVED

We intend to review these books in the next issue of *Figurations*, and regret the delay in doing so.

Annette Treibel, *Die Soziologie von Norbert Elias: Eine Einführung in ihre Geschichte, Systematik und Perspektiven* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für

Sozialwissenschaften, 2008). 113 pp. ISBN 978-3-531-16081-8 (pb).
Sophie Body-Gendrot and Pieter Spiereburg (eds), *Violence in Europe: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2008). X + 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-387-74507-7 (hb); 978-0-387-74508-4 (e-bk).

Olle Edström, *A Different Story: Aesthetics and the History of Western Music* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2008). 309 pp. ISBN 978-1-57647-123-4 (hb).

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

XII International Symposium on Civilising Processes

Recife, Brazil, 10–13 November 2009

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

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

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

Workshop No. 44:
Sociology and History of the Mechanisms of Depacification of the Political Game

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

The organisers of this workshop are: Paula Cossart (Gracc, Université Lille III, cossart.paula@free.fr) and

Emmanuel Taieb (IEP of Grenoble, emmanuel.taieb@iep-grenoble.fr)
XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology

Göteborg, Sweden, 11–17 July 2010

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

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

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

■ OBITUARY

Maria Goudsblom-Oestreicher (1936-2009)

Maria Goudsblom died at home in Amsterdam on 31 March 2009, after a long battle with cancer. Maria was the beloved centre in two families: naturally in her own family of Joop, Clara and Frank, but also in what Cas Wouters was the first to call 'the figurational family' consisting of the ever-spreading international network of researchers working with the ideas of Norbert Elias.

Maria was born in Karlsbad (Czechoslovakia), to the Jewish family of Gerda Margarethe Oestreicher-Laqueur and Felix Hermann Oestreicher. Her father was a doctor. They came as refugees to the Netherlands and were forced to move from place to place several times. In November 1943, along with her mother and father and her older sister Beate – her twin sister Helly remained behind in hiding – Maria was deported, first to the Dutch concentration camp Westerbork and then to Bergen-Belsen. When British troops were approaching Belsen all four members of the family were put on a train that crisscrossed through Germany with unknown destiny until it met the Russian army not far from Leipzig. Both parents died within the following weeks from typhus fever and the privations they had suffered. Maria rarely spoke about this, and never with bitterness. But she worked for many years to decode her father's handwritten 'concentration camp diary' and prepare it for publication. It was published by Hartung-Gorre Verlag in 2000.*

Maria studied social psychology at the University of Amsterdam, and it was there that she met Joop. They were married on 28 November 1958, and they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at a wonderful party in the Vondelkerk on 28 November 2008. By then, Maria was visibly ill, but she was able to present a slide show of the wedding, with an amusing commentary.

Maria found employment as a social psychologist, but after the birth of her second child she decided not to continue her career. But she was always closely involved in Joop's intellectual



Photo: Søren Nagbøl, September 2008

work, and she had a deep familiarity of her own with the writings of Norbert Elias. Almost always with Joop at conferences, she was very far from being a 'trailing spouse'. She had a mind of her own, and though she did not intervene very often in the proceedings, when she did speak out it was always incisive, sometimes with devastating impact on those on the receiving end. And for the last decade of his life, Norbert Elias was technically Maria's tenant in the upper-level apartment at J. J. Viottasstraat 13. When, as happened occasionally, Elias displayed his cantankerous side, it was Maria who went upstairs and sorted him out.

Meanwhile, downstairs, visitors from near and far would sit round the table

in Maria's kitchen, eating a prolonged breakfast and enjoying conversations that would range from trivial gossip to huge problems of human society and sociology. Thus for decades was Maria a central figure in the figurational figuration. The web of friendship and collaboration now spans the globe, and will endure long beyond Maria's lifetime. She hosted for many years the annual board meeting of the board of the foundation in early January, supporting it with solid winter meals, good wine and young Genever. Often she informally took part in the board's discussions and helped it to come to substantial decisions.

During the last years of her life Maria devoted herself to the work of the



Joop and Maria together in Joop's study

Board of the Foundation Beate Oestreicher Friedenswerke (BOF). The endowment of BOF came from the legacy of her older sister Beate, who prescribed its purpose of funding projects of organisations aiming at 'peace' as defined in her own spirit.

After her illness was diagnosed in 2007, Maria and Joop made good use of their remaining time together, spending a lot of time at their farm in Ommen, of which they were so fond, and going on cycling expeditions, while Maria continued to play tennis. It was a great pleasure for us to have Maria with us at the conferences in Hamburg and Berlin in 2008. The last few months were of course awful, but her funeral at the Oosterbegraafplaats on 6 April – standing-room-only – was a great tribute to Maria's life. The speakers were: Helly, Maria's twin sister, who movingly recalled the events of their childhood; her tennis partner and friend, the historian of Indonesia Frances Gouda; Rosemarie Silbermann, a representative of Amnesty International who amusingly recalled Maria's sometimes ruthless commitment to that cause; the historian Maarten Brands; and then Joop Goudsblom, who described Maria's courage through her final illness, reading her email messages to her friends when she learned that her illness was incurable; and Clara, who thanked those who had nursed Maria.

The Norbert Elias Foundation has suffered a great loss with Maria's death.

We express our deep sympathy to Joop, Clara and Frank.

Elke and Hermann Korte
Barbara and Stephen Mennell

* Felix Hermann Oestreicher, *Ein jüdischer Arzt-Kalender: durch Westerbork und Bergen-Belsen nach Tröbitz – Konzentrationslager-Tagebuch 1943–1945*, edited by Maria Goudsblom-Oestreicher (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 2000).

■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

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

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

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