

# Figurations

## Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

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### ■ PEOPLE

Quentin Deluermoz on 21 June 2018 defended his habilitation thesis, 'Ordres et désordres au XIXe siècle (France, Europe, empires): une histoire sociale et culturelle, avec un mémoire original intitulé Commune(s), 1870–1871. Une traversée des mondes au XIXe siècle.' The jury, at the Sorbonne, was composed of Sylvie Aprile (U. Paris-Nanterre), Hélène Blais (ENS-Ulm), Christophe Charle (U. Paris 1, garant), Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini (U. Paris 13), Richard Drayton (King's College London), and Vincent Robert (U. Paris 1).

### ■ FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

#### Board members dinner with Joop Goudsblom

The Board of the Norbert Elias Foundation, together with Arjan Post (Secretary), met on January 13, 2018 in Amsterdam. Among the current and future activities of the Foundation that were discussed was the new website. Currently under construction, it will contain several new features, videotaped interviews with members of the Norbert Elias network among them. More information will be available later this year.

In the evening, the Board hosted a special dinner in honour of Joop Goudsblom, one of the original founders and long-standing Board members of the Foundation. The Board expressed its profound gratitude to Joop for his long-term engagement with, and his numerous activities for the Foundation over a period of well over three decades. Joop not only presided over the Board from the beginning, his publications, lectures and other activities played a central role in the rediscovery and belated recognition of Norbert Elias's work, and in the emergence of a research network of figurational or process sociology.

During the dinner conversation, salient episodes in Joop's career came up. He had first heard about Norbert Elias in 1951 in a course given by his sociology professor Ari Den Hollander at the University of Amsterdam. After reading a highly favourable review by the Dutch essayist Menno ter Braak, he borrowed *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* from the library and read it. Originally published before the war, Ter Braak's review was reprinted in his collected works, which Joop read eagerly when he was a student.\* Not long afterwards, in 1956, he met Norbert Elias in person. The encounter took place at the third conference of the International Sociological Association in Amsterdam. Many more would follow and over the years Goudsblom and Elias became good friends (see Johan Goudsblom, 'Guides on my way to Norbert Elias', *Human Figurations*, 5 (2) 2016).

More about this history is evoked in the first volume of Joop's memoirs, *Geleerd. Memoires 1932–1968* (*Learned. Memoirs 1932–68*). They were published in the Netherlands in 2016, and reviewed with great interest and appreciation. Joop is currently working on the second volume. They will be about the period since 1968, when he became professor of sociology at the University of Amsterdam, a position he held until retirement in 1997.

Johan Heilbron

\* Ter Braak's review, and his earlier comment on Elias's essay on 'The kitsch style and the age of kitsch', have now been translated into English by Robert van Krieken and published in *Human Figurations* 7: 1 (2018). See [https://quod.lib.umich.edu/h/humfig/1.1217607.0007.1?\\*rgn=full+text](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/h/humfig/1.1217607.0007.1?*rgn=full+text)

## The Norbert Elias bridge naming ceremony

The famous Vondelpark in Amsterdam now has its Norbert Elias Bridge. Thanks to the resolute efforts of Willem Kranendonk, who made use of the opportunity that the municipality of Amsterdam offers residents to

make suggestions for unnamed bridges. The bridge, deep in the south of the park (for the exact location, see: [https://tools.wmflabs.org/osm4wiki/cgi-bin/wiki/wiki-osm.pl?project=nl%26article%3DFile%253AAmsterdam\\_bridge\\_453%252C\\_view\\_3.jpg](https://tools.wmflabs.org/osm4wiki/cgi-bin/wiki/wiki-osm.pl?project=nl%26article%3DFile%253AAmsterdam_bridge_453%252C_view_3.jpg)), is one to be proud of. It is one the most beautiful bridges, a true national monument and built in a Victorian style out of wrought iron. For the municipality holds Elias as a great sociologist, but also as a famous inhabitant of Amsterdam.

It is very likely Elias crossed the bridge many times, when he had his daily walks in the park. The last twenty years of his life he lived upstairs from Joop and Maria Goudsblom in Viottastraat. Before that, already in the 1960s, Elias had been a frequent visitor to Amsterdam when he gave



guest lectures at the university. Not long after that, it was Joop Goudsblom and Maarten Brands who endeavoured to appoint him as professor. In 1990 he died, at the age of 93, in the upstairs apartment where he had been receiving many colleagues and friends, and where he had an unusually high output. In April this year the Norbert Elias Foundation organised a small ceremony to celebrate the naming of the bridge. Professor Giseline Kuipers of the University of Amsterdam gave a speech in which she showed her indebtedness to Elias and remembered him as a refugee and an exile that eventually found its home in Amsterdam. Secretary to the Foundation Arjan Post typified Elias's work as being full of bridges, and a quartet played two pieces of the music of Mozart Elias loved so much and about which he wrote a probing case study. After that, the visitors joined in a walk to the bridge, where a representative of the municipality officially opened it.

As only a few Dutch people know that Almere, in the suburban agglomeration of Amsterdam, already had a Norbert Elias road. Its location, somewhat uncomfortably, is diagonally opposite the Hannah Arendt street, between the Émile Durkheim street and – a bit closer to *Wahlverwandschaft* – the Max Weber street.

Arjan Post

## ■ IN THE MEDIA

### Elias makes the final of *University Challenge*

*University Challenge* is a high-level general knowledge quiz broadcast on British television since 1963, played between teams of undergraduates from British universities. The 2018 final, broadcast on BBC2 television on 23 April, was contested between teams from Merton College, Oxford and St John's College, Cambridge. The team from St John's won by 145 points to 100, but along the way they faced a round of three questions under the heading 'Sociology', all of which they failed to answer. In Gordon Fyfe's paraphrase, they were:



1. What German word did Tönnies use to mean community? (their answer was *Gesellschaft*!)
2. Which German born sociologist wrote about the growth of a code of manners in his 1939 work *The Civilizing Process*? (no answer)
3. Which sociologist born in Erfurt is best known for the controversial 1905 work wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*? (their answer: Engels!)

This story prompts two reflections: (1) In spite of the team's lamentable ignorance, it is something of a triumph that the name of Elias is now mentioned by the quiz-setters in the same breath as Tönnies and Max Weber; and (2) In view of the teams' staggering (to me) knowledge of very esoteric aspects of astronomy, physics, chemistry, microbiology and (sometimes) literature, it is an indictment of sociologists that knowledge even of the simplest aspects of their discipline is so low.

SJM

## ■ ON THE TRACES OF NORBERT ELIAS IN PARIS

*Adrian Jitschin*

It is known that Elias lived in Paris from October 1933 until August 1935, but it had remained mostly unclear where he stayed and in which environment of the metropolis he lived. This has become clearer over the course of the last year.

We learned from the correspondence that Elias had with Max Horkheimer that he had a permanent residence at the Hotel New-Parnass, 69 Boulevard de Vaugirard. Coincidentally there was a business card of this hotel in the Norbert Elias papers, giving details about the place. The building was next to the Gare Montparnasse and the Cimetière du Montparnasse, where Émile Durkheim, Sartre and Aron are buried, and in walking distance from the Sorbonne and the Jardin du Luxembourg, where most probably the famous pictures of Elias by Gisèle Freund were taken. On the ground floor of the hotel was the Café Tabac,

a popular gathering point for refugees. On the upper floors were aisles with a bank of small rooms; they were only divided from each other by a thin wall, which offered almost no sound insulation. Despite advertising the rooms as being with 'many comforts' – specified as 'baths, telephones and lift' – this hotel was in fact not a place to feel very homely. It was, like other places for refugees, a kind of last resort with limited comfort. Alfred Glucksmann, who visited him there, was 'horrified by the destitute condition' in which he was living (Glucksmann, p. 55).

Elias probably lived at the place together with the sculptor Maurice

Herz. They were collaborating with Ludwig Turek in manufacturing toy elephants, which they hoped to sell (Korte, p. 204). Elias, who had some experience in sales from his time back in Breslau, tried to pass the products to customers – with limited success. Turek later gave a description in his memoirs about 'a fairly large number of the emigrants who were the flying merchants. They ran from door to door with things that were basically in abundance to buy' (Turek, 105). According to Turek, whose statement we cannot confirm by other sources, 'the chubby warm nest of little people was mainly in Montparnasse. There they were to be found day and night in the large cafés, where they lived in their



The building in which Elias lived can be seen on the right of this undated postcard. ON the ground



This is how the place looks now. The building on the right with the hotel sign is currently at the spot where the original building stood in which Elias lived in the 1930s. The Boulevard Pasteur in the foreground leads to the Eiffel Tower about 1 km away.



This business card from the Elias papers gives details about the rooms. Most importantly is the information that the rooms started at 20 Francs, which made it one of the cheaper places at Paris.

large family and cried tears of joy when a brother, whom they had not seen for a long time and whom they believed to have disappeared, suddenly reappeared safely. There they were disgusted and snorted when an enemy sipped his café crème in the vicinity. At night they crept in at two o'clock, when hunger would not let them sleep, to somehow make the necessary two francs for a coffee and a croissant from the cross. There they expected at lunchtime that a benefactor said at the right time, "Come on, let's go eat!". It is unclear whether Turek included Elias in the description when he talked about these 'little people' in exile (Turek, p. 102). During his time in Paris, Elias renewed old friendships and established new contacts. He already knew Gisèle Freund, who had been a doctoral candidate at Frankfurt under Karl Mannheim, and he helped her out to get a doctoral degree from the University of Paris. In 1934 he was able to establish a contact with Célestin Bouglé, who held the chair of sociology at the Sorbonne, and his assistant Raymond Aron, who was working on a book about sociology in Germany. Together they were able to support Freund in finishing her doctoral thesis. Bouglé wrote a short reference for the Dutch Steunfond, which granted Elias a stipend (Korte, p. 203).

A new contact was with Klaus Mann. Elias's father Hermann had a business contact in Berlin with Ernst Kohn, whose son Wolfgang Hellmert [actually Adolf Kohn] was befriended by Klaus Mann. With this contact, Elias was able to get a foot in the door of Mann's journals *Die Sammlung* and *Der*

*Ausweg*, in which he was able to publish his two articles on the kitsch style and the expulsion of the Huguenots (see Täubert and Kroll, p. 316).

These 22 months comprise a rather untypical period in the life of Elias, a phase in which he was forced to live close to people from other social classes and other kinds of self-control. It came to an end when he had the opportunity to settle in England. Nevertheless, Elias remained so Francophile that he continued his work on French civilisation which he had begun in Paris.

### References

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 Turek, L., *Klar zur Wende*. Berlin 1949.  
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### ■ LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I would like to reiterate my thanks to Ryan Powell, Sarah Biggins and all those involved in setting up and running the conference in Leeds on 5–6 April in celebration of Richard Kilminster [see conference report below – ed.]. It was moving to see so many people expressing their gratitude for his remarkable contribution to Eliasian and sociological scholarship and to see that Richard is still very much on form teaching-wise. I found attending this conference very stimulating, hence this letter. One issue above all has been on my mind ever since coming away from Leeds – that perennial chestnut of why Elias's ideas have not had wider influence and why significant writers such as Giddens and Bauman, who in resorting for help to continental philosophers, have almost gone out of their way to deny his significance. Bauman's lack of

interest has been of particular interest to me as he interviewed me for my undergraduate place at Leeds and was my teacher. In one of our meetings he was very pleased to present me with a copy of his then recently written article 'The phenomenon of Norbert Elias', which was as I remember very respectful of Elias and his contribution.

I have always admired Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden's *Education and the Working Class* (1962). Their analysis resonated with my own experience of attending Leeds University. I found their account of how difficult it can be for many of those from so-called 'working-class' backgrounds who succeed educationally very poignant. In making this move into more individualised, cold 'middle class' networks of interdependencies, I found myself experiencing significant dissonance as I engaged with long-term aloneness, a style of living for which my collectivised habitus had ill-prepared me. In addition, my accent was wrong, I was not sure what to do at sherry parties, I came across spaghetti that was not on toast and made by Heinz, and was unaware of why books were important. It is not at all surprising that so many who find themselves in this situation drop out.

Whilst these points are specifically about my experiences I believe they can help understand why there has been such resistance to Elias's ideas. By taking such an innovative approach Elias was stretching his bonds with his network of sociological contemporaries to an extent that he was bound to attract resistance. However, by demanding a radical shake-up of those back home he went even further, which may well explain his marginalisation. In 'revolutionising' what we can know and do sociologically, as a refugee with very little resource Elias was very likely to encounter a cool reception and significant resistance. Correspondingly, Elias's sociology has found only patchy support when compared to far less innovative writers such as Giddens and Bauman. One way to change this pattern is to show how an Eliasian approach can make a sociological difference. In order to achieve this,



I think we need to do a lot more developmental work. One aspect of Eliasian sociology which has enormous potential in this respect is his unique analysis of ‘scientific’ linguistic and conceptual development. ...

Unlike so many sociologists, Elias engages with ‘physical science’ or what I prefer to call materials engineering: for me ‘science’ as a concept is too polluted with metaphysical nuances to offer much opportunity for a thorough process analysis – engineering is what they do. If sociologists cannot develop a comparatively autonomous, ‘scientific’, process approach, they have little novel to offer. In *What is Sociology?*, Elias draws our attention to this issue by focusing on early concept formation (force, gravity etc.) as a vital aspect of ‘scientific’ development. Accordingly, if sociologists are to develop sufficient relative autonomy and thereby distance themselves from philosophers, biologists and the rest. from whom many of their notions derive, they need to formulate distinctly sociological concepts. Elias made a breakthrough in overhauling certain process-reducing sociological concepts and coming up with new ones such as ‘involvement and detachment’, ‘habitus’, ‘relative autonomy’, ‘homines aperti’ etc., all of which are more fitted to investigating processual interdependencies rather than causal relations. ... {And} by emphasising ‘comparing’ we get involved in ‘a new means of speaking and thinking’ (*WiS?*, CW vol. 5, pp. 106–8), a more verb-oriented linguistic style. Such a modus operandi would benefit sociological process analysis by making it harder to use philosophically ossifying, noun-oriented (process-reduced) language, which occupies such a large part of what sociologists such as Giddens and Bauman write. Correspondingly, we can even move away from Eliasian noun-oriented notions such as ‘relative detachment’ to a more verb-oriented ‘comparatively detached’.

For an Eliasian approach to be properly recognised sociologists need to be made aware of that it provides tangible advantages in understanding and tackling human problems as compared

with alternative analyses. It seems to me that Elias’s ideas on linguistic/ conceptual development offer real possibilities in this respect as they open up opportunities for a more reality-congruent sociological experience that will facilitate closer and more adequate engagement with human interdependent processes. Then perhaps crypto-philosophers such as Giddens, Bauman and their associates will be sidelined rather than Elias.

*Peter Emmerson*

PhD student  
Department of Sociology  
University of Leicester

Note: Peter Emmerson is a bit more than just a ‘PhD student’ in Leicester; he is a retired teacher who was taught in Leeds by Richard Kilminster and then himself taught Jonathan Fletcher, introducing him to Elias when he was at school in Peterborough. Peter’s letter has been shortened a little.

### Flensburg’s Norbert Elias Center for Transformation Design & Research: Civilising Society’s Relations to Nature?

*Bernd Sommer, Michaela Christ & Harald Welzer*

Global warming, increasing biodiversity loss and ocean acidification, land-use changes and further socio-ecological crises are current manifestations of a destructive exploitation of natural resources on a global scale. Against this background, in the political arena as well as in academia, the question of how modern societies can develop more sustainable relations to nature has become one of the most pressing issues of our time. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the international community of states in 2015, serve as a prominent example: under the heading ‘Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, the transformation of society according to the normative concept of sustainability is seen as a major societal

challenge for the upcoming decades. Very generally, this describes the thematic framework for the activities of the ‘Norbert Elias Center’ (NEC) at Germany’s northern-most university, the Europa-University Flensburg: the NEC aims at contributing to the debate on socio-ecological transformation processes from a sociological perspective. The full title of the Flensburg centre includes the elements of ‘Transformation Design & Research’, which can be understood programmatically: the NEC engages in the historical reconstruction of socio-ecological transformation processes (transformation research) as well as in empirically-informed theorising of the possibilities and limitations of influencing future societal change (transformation design).

### *Process Sociological Heuristics – Why Norbert Elias?*

So far, Elias’s oeuvre has only been marginally received in environmental sociology and related fields; though Elias’s sociology of knowledge (as developed in *Involvement and Detachment*) comprises some promising links and Johan Goudsblom has performed pioneer work in this field. Flensburg’s NEC draws on a process sociological framework for the following reasons: Elias’s sociology is characterised by a thorough consideration of long-term perspectives. This holds true for his ground-breaking work, *On the Process of Civilisation*, but also his *Studies on the Germans*, in which Elias goes back to the Thirty Year’s War in order to explain sociologically the rise of National Socialism in Germany. Such long-term perspectives are missing in most contemporary debates on sustainability and socio-ecological change, but are crucial nevertheless: only by a profound understanding of how the current societal relations to nature developed historically, the possibilities and pitfalls for fostering something like ‘sustainable development’ can be understood. This is why one research area of the NEC deals predominantly with what we call ‘diachronical transformation research’ focusing on the genesis of society’s current metabolism with

nature. Another characteristic feature of Elias' sociology is its focus on the interdependence of socio- and psychogenesis. In the course of his whole work, Elias aimed at overcoming macro/micro, respectively, object/subject dichotomies, in order to conceptualise the interrelatedness of developments on both levels. Again, this perspective is surprisingly absent in the current debate on sustainability. There seems to be no understanding that in a society that is systematically dependent on growth and innovation, something like a 'consumerist habitus' – which frustrates researchers and politicians in the field of sustainability alike – is just functional and cannot be altered by environmental education or consumer information alone.

There is a further element of Elias's work inspiring the work of the Flensburg Center: So far, the social processes that Elias identified as preconditions for a civilising of the habitus – such as increasing societal differentiation and state formation – have developed on a basis that was and is extremely resource intensive. So the crucial question for the work of the NEC in Flensburg is how these societal preconditions for the civilising of behaviour and emotions can be maintained while drastically reducing the usage of ecological resources and sinks. Keeping in mind that Elias himself viewed increased foresight and growing empathy with people independent of their group affiliation as manifestations of the civilising of habitus, it could be argued that a 'sustainable usage' of ecosystems that does not take place at the expense of others – neither of people from the Global South nor of future generations – could be described as constituting more civilised social relations to nature.

#### *Activities and Topics*

So, what exactly does the NEC at Flensburg University do? So far, we have conducted third-party funded research projects dealing with the room for manoeuvre for a more sustainable development in cities and the economy. Additionally, in 2017 we started the study program MA Transformation Studies dealing with socio-ecological

transformation processes from the perspective of social sciences. Finally, a small PhD research group exists at the NEC comprising PhD projects that relate to the topics of the NEC. For further information (unfortunately, hitherto only in German) see: <http://www.uni-flensburg.de/nec/>

### New Research Centre in Berlin: Collaborative Research Centre on the Refiguration of Spaces

The German Research Foundation has just funded a Collaborative Research Project on 'Re-Figuration of Spaces' for between four and twelve years. During this time, researchers from various disciplines such as sociology, geography, architecture, urban planning, the political sciences and communication studies will ask how social dynamics have been changed in recent decades by spatial changes.

Current social, political and technological changes, as well as uncertainties and conflict around the world all point to a fundamental issue: the relationship between people and the spaces they live in is being renegotiated and transformed. This involves processes characterised by tension and conflict. The main features of these processes can be captured by the concept of 'refiguration of spaces'.

Refiguration finds its expression both in emerging spatial planning practices and in the fight for the preservation of traditional uses of space. With this in mind, the CRC is taking an interdisciplinary approach to analysing spatial structures and new spatial knowledge, thus offering an integrative perspective on the analysis of the current transformation of the social order. A special focus of the first year will be the relationship between refiguration of spaces and cross-cultural comparison. There will be a guest scholar and fellowship programme for international scholars.

Further information on the Collaborative Research Project can be found at: <http://www.pressestelle.tu-berlin.de/>

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### Gianfranco Poggi's personal account of meeting Norbert Elias in 1963

Gianfranco Poggi sent us this excerpt from an autobiographical essay that he wrote for a Festschrift in his honour (Marzio Barbagli and Harvie Ferguson, eds, *La teoria sociologica e lo stato moderno: Saggi in onore di Gianfranco Poggi*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010). It relates his first encounter with Norbert Elias in 1963, who in view of his own earlier difficulties was perhaps unsurprisingly sceptical about the chances of a foreigner gaining a post in a British university. The excerpt also mentions two younger members of the Department of Sociology at the University of Leicester who gained great distinction: Martin Albrow (1937–) and Keith Hopkins (1934–2004). Keith was the very embodiment of the Eliasian view that the scope of the discipline of sociology extends to all human society, past, present and future, for he was a classicist whom Elias and Neustadt appointed to teach the sociology of the ancient world. In 1963, he left Leicester for a post at the LSE, and subsequently went to Brunel, before being appointed Professor of Ancient History in the University of Cambridge (1985–2000). Gianfranco's remarks also throw light on the fluidity and informality of the sociology labour market in Britain in the early 1960s, to spark the envy of early career sociologists of today. Here is what Gianfranco remembers:

'One evening in the spring of 1963 Pat and I were having dinner at a trattoria, in Siena. We found ourselves chatting to a young English couple, whose male component turned out to be, of all things, a sociologist – Keith Hopkins, then of the LSE. During that summer we went on a short trip to England and called on the Hopkinsons; they invited us to dinner, together with two other sociologists, Norbert Elias and Martin Albrow. The talk turned to the then

flourishing condition of sociology in Britain: it was being seriously promoted by universities old and new, including Edinburgh, which in the current issue of the *New Statesman* was advertising a lectureship in a Sociology department then in the process of being established by Tom Burns. I wondered aloud what might happen if I were to apply.

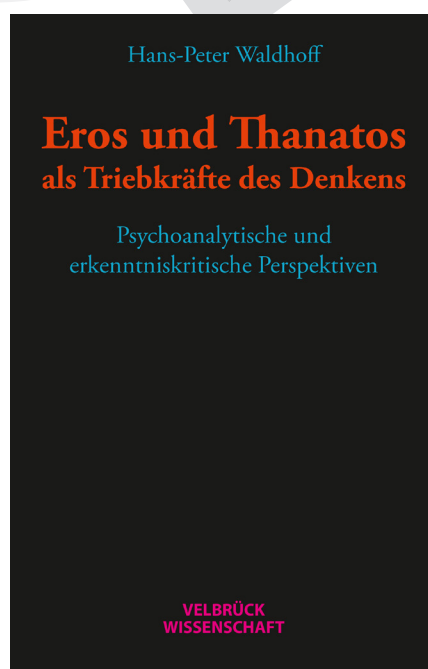
‘The consensus was that I would be taken seriously, on account of my Berkeley PhD and my book in the making. This was intriguing enough to somebody who, from Italian experience, assumed automatically that academic advertisements were a joke, all appointments being of course rigged. But probably what decided me to apply was an astonishing remark from Elias, that well-known student of manners, to the effect that of course I would never make it through an interview. Actually, I never disproved him. For although, once I had applied, things started happening rather fast on the Edinburgh–Florence axis, I never did go through a proper, formal job interview in the British academic pattern. Tom Burns met me in Paris for a lengthy, informal chat (during which, on strict instructions from Pat, I managed for the first and last time in my life to keep my mouth shut for lengthy periods); and shortly after that I was offered a lectureship. Having got as far as that almost as a dare, and at any rate more from curiosity than any other motive, Pat and I decided that I might as well accept, and move to the other end of Europe.’

## ■ REVIEW ESSAYS

Good and Evil tackled with sociological empathy: Two closely related essays by Hans-Peter Waldhoff and Christien Brinkgreve

Arjan Post

**Hans-Peter Waldhoff**, *Eros und Thanatos als Triebkräfte des Denkens: Psychoanalytische und erkenntniskritische Perspektiven* (Weilerswist-Metternich: Velbrück Verlag, 2017). 100 pp. ISBN 978 3 9583 2137 3.



**Christien Brinkgreve**, *Het raadsel van goed en kwaad: Wat mensen beweegt*. (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2018). 200 pp. ISBN 978 9 0450 2938 2.

In his new German book *Eros and Thanatos as the Driving Forces of Thought* Hans-Peter Waldhoff continues his explorations of civilising versus de-civilising processes. The gist is that in modern, so-called Enlightened societies individuals are prone to disown destructive impulses as well as their own transiency. Highly specialised science disciplines in particular strive for ‘rational’ and impersonal ‘models’, as nowadays psychology or economics. As Waldhoff warns, this suppression returns in the form

of a ‘mortifying tendency’ (*Abtötung*, Georges Devereux). Dominant ways of thinking bolster the omnipotence of numbers and cases. With that, they contribute to reductionism, reification, alienation and depersonalisation. Ultimately, as the thesis implies, this entails a socio-political reality in which de-humanisation and exclusion may usher in homicide, suicide or terrorism. By drawing on examples from a myriad of scientific disciplines and literature, this essay explores the intercourse of knowledge (and the denial of it: *Nichtdenken*, ‘not thinking’) and behaviour. Although Waldhoff’s perspective is apt to favour powerful ideas over power and dependence relations, this daring enterprise raises many interesting questions. Not an unimportant one: what to do about it?, is touched upon rather early in his exposé. The antidote for the tendency of reduction lies in synthesis and dialogue, or ‘pluralistic thought’. In this, Waldhoff’s plea for groups analysis rings again – alongside Norbert Elias’s stance against the ‘atomistic fallacy’ of science and philosophy, one could add. After all, individuals can only be understood as part of social figurations.



Remarkably, almost at the same time Christien Brinkgreve published her new Dutch book *The Riddle of Good and Evil*, dealing with fairly the same huge topics. Although Brinkgreve has



a far more personal, impressionistic approach ('empathic sociology' as a reviewer baptised her method) close to literary non-fiction, she is more set for catching and detecting evil. However, in the end she fails to construct a profile of torturers. Meanwhile her focus is on the interweaving and trespassing of antagonisms of death and life, destruction and vitality, science and literature. Eros and Thanatos do not shape a clear distinction; for one reason because they reside in one person at the same time, for another because death can be a deliverance. Reasoning from there, it is the human bonds and the 'contact' people make with each other and themselves which allow for élan vital – with the note that also wars, vengeance, and atrocities intrinsically are driven by very much the same energy. Modern arts can testify how rage allows for creation.

Where Waldhoff sheds light on the deceitfulness of supplanted or 'masked' feelings and thoughts, often resulting in the very reversal of Eros and Thanatos (the misuse of authority, 'reason', and 'uncivilised' civilisation), Brinkgreve has ambivalence under scrutiny. Yet, both qualify for the psychoanalytic tradition of unveiling the unconsciousness in order to control 'what drives people'. Waldhoff suggests forms of (self)communication and displays several models based on empathy, whereas Brinkgreve calls for 'mood management' (*stemmingswerk*) and connections that finally constitute happiness. Since nowadays Western culture is preoccupied with decay and mortality, she repeats: don't forget 'natality'.

## ■ FIGURATIONAL JOURNALS ONLINE

Human Figurations: Long-term Perspectives on the Human Condition, vol. 7, no. 1, May 2018:

[https://quod.lib.umich.edu/h/humfig/11217607.0007.1?\\*rgn=full+text](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/h/humfig/11217607.0007.1?*rgn=full+text)

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Note: Menno ter Braak's 1940 review of Elias's *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, which has often been referred to, is here translated into English for the first time by Robert van Krieken.

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(UNIMEP), Brazil, and this issue contains an #educational dossier' on Norbert Elias. Contents are as follows:

**Tony Honorato and Magda Sarat**, Apresentação do Dossiê Educação: pesquisas a partir das teorias de Norbert Elias

**Tony Honorato**, Pesquisas com Norbert Elias em História da Educação

**Horacio González López and Irene Marquina Sánchez**, Las paradojas del heroísmo y de la civilización en Ignacio Manuel Altamirano

**Gilmar Alves Montagnoli, Célio Juvenal Costa**, Educação, justiça e configuração social na América Portuguesa no Século XVII

**Cynthia Greive Veiga**, Organização da nação e monopolização do ensino pelo estado: homogeneidade cultural e exclusão socio racial (Brasil, séculos XIX e XX)

**Maria Teresa Santos Cunha and Márcia Regina Santos**, Preceitos para bem viver: um estudo sobre manuais de civilidade e etiqueta na década de 1950

**Magda Sarat and Renato Suttana**, Norbert Elias e Mozart como outsiders: memórias de infância e figuração social

**Edilson Fernandes Souza, José Luís Simões and Marcos André Nunes Costa**, Atividades miméticas e dispositivos de controle no Colégio Americano Batista no Recife

**Cristiane Fernanda Xavier**, Sociologia de um educador – Paschoal Lemme e a educação de adultos

**Deane Monteiro Vieira Costa**, Civilizar o campo: educação, saúde e iniciação profissional nos cursos de alfabetização da Professora Zilma Coelho Pinto, no Estado do Espírito Santo (1947–63)

**Alonso Bezerra Carvalho and Carlos Fonseca Brandão**, As paixões, as pulsões e as emoções humanas em Aristóteles, Freud e Norbert Elias: uma reflexão para a educação contemporânea



**Karen Worcman and André Oliveira Costa**, A construção do Eu nas narrativas de vida

**Alexandre Fernandez Vaz**, Duas leituras de um movimento: Norbert Elias e Theodor W. Adorno, sobre o processo civilizador

PDFs of all the above articles can be downloaded from:

<https://www.metodista.br/revistas/revistas-unimep/index.php/comunicacoes/issue/view/218>

## ■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

**Florence Delmotte**, 'Norbert Elias, Catherine Deneuve et l'égalité des sexes', *La Vie des idées*, 24 avril 2018. ISSN : 2105-3030. URL: <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Norbert-Elias-Catherine-Deneuve-et-l-egalite-des-sexes.html>.

With the Weinstein affair, there has been much debate about male sexual drives. Cathérine Deneuve provoked further controversy by making remarks that seemed relatively more sympathetic to the male angle. Florence Delmotte argues that the sociology of Norbert Elias is a precious resource for understanding this already historic moment, beyond the media opposition between freedom to annoy and moral duty to denounce [male chauvinist] pigs. (In French, #balancer les porcs was the equivalent of #MeToo.)

**Akira Ohira**, *A Study of Norbert Elias*. (Tokyo: Seibundo, 2018). ISBN: 978-4-7923-3375-1. 311 pp.

We don't have a transliteration of the Japanese title of Akira Ohira's latest book, but in English translation it means *A Comprehensive Study of Norbert Elias* or just *A Study of Norbert Elias*.

The title of each chapter is as follows:

1. On *The Civilizing Process*
2. On *The Court Society*
3. On Norbert Elias's sociological theory: quest for figurations

4. Norbert Elias's theoretical innovation in *The Established and the Outsiders*
  5. Norbert Elias as sociologist of sport
  6. Norbert Elias and Mozart
  7. The Significance of Norbert Elias's sociology in *The Symbol Theory*: language, time, knowledge, art and science.
  8. On *The Loneliness of the Dying*: the sociology of ageing and dying
  9. Norbert Elias's stance as sociologist in *The Germans*
- Appendix: On Elias's early and late essays).

Although few of us in the West will be able to read it, this book is very clearly a major contribution to making Elias's work known in Japan.

**Claire Pagès (ed.)**, *Elias et les disciplines* (Tours, Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2017). 176 pp. ISBN: 978-2-86906-657-1.

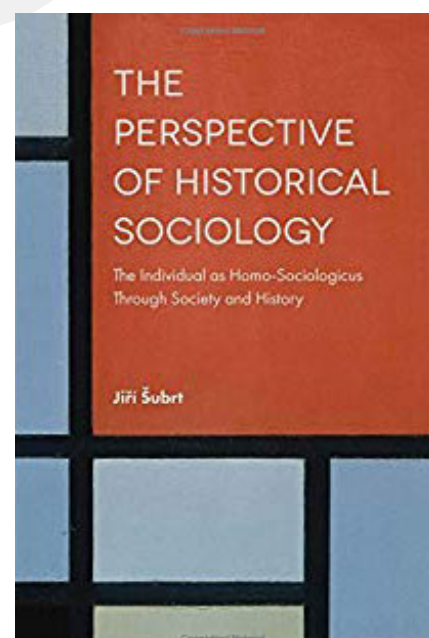
Elias's originality is to affirm the historicity of affectivity: the progressive monopolisation of physical violence by the state has induced a slow transformation of the psychic economy and led socialised individuals to adopt forms of self-constraint. This processual history, however, experiences stasis and reflux, and even phases of 'decivilisation'. To understand them, Elias takes into account the singularity of historical situations as well as the multiplicity of



causes shaping the customs of nations. Thus he entrusts to the collaboration of the disciplines (of sociology with history as well as with psychology) the task of grasping all the human facts which contribute to the constitution of modernity.

Having identified Elias's thought and the objections it raises, this book shows that it offers valuable support for those working to diagnose contemporary social pathologies, deriving from the constitution of human beings as 'individuals'.

**Jiří Šubrt**, *The Perspective of Historical Sociology: The Individual*



*as Homo-Sociologicus Through Society and History* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2017), xii + 294 pp. ISBN: 9781787433649.

**Abstract:** This book provides a comprehensive overview of the range of themes which make up the field of historical sociology. Jiří Šubrt systematically discusses the main problems of societal development, long term process and changes in the key areas of social life. These include not only temporalised sociology, evolutionary theory, civilisational analysis, societal systems, structures and functions, but also modernisation and revolution, risk, crisis, catastrophe and collapse, wars, conflicts and violence, nations, nationalism and

collective memory. This study does not ignore the fundamental dichotomy underlying the discipline, which is between individualism and holism. At the heart of this book lies the human individual as related to social and historical development. The key question is who or what is responsible for the process of human history: society or the individual? The author concludes by offering an approach which may help in resolving this dilemma.

**Ksenia Kirillova, Dan Wanga and Xinran Lehtob**, 'The sociogenesis of leisure travel', *Annals of Tourism Research* vol 69 (March 2018), pp 53–64.

**Abstract:** Tourism literature explored tourist-related phenomena from a micro- or individual-level perspective, investigating behaviour in the context of one's preferences and without considering the larger societal forces that shape these tendencies at a macro level. Drawing on Elias's figurational sociology, Russia's contemporary history (1955–2016) and biographical-grid interviews with 27 Russian citizens, this research provides a figurational analysis of the meaning and practices of leisure travel. Based on nine identified themes arranged chronologically across three periods (Soviet Russia, transitional period, modern Russia), the sociogenesis of leisure travel is explained. Results provide insights into factors that underlie the reality for tourists, based on which they form their motivations, preferences, and behaviours. Tourism research needs to move beyond sedentarist theories and the West/East dichotomy.

**Pontus Strimling, Mícheál de Barra and Kimmo Eriksson**, 'Asymmetries in punishment propensity may drive the civilising process', *Nature Human Behaviour* vol. 2 (2018), pp. 148–55.

**Abstract:** Norms about hygiene and violence have both shown a tendency to become increasingly strict, in the sense that the handling of bodily fluids and the use of violence have become increasingly restricted. The generality of this directional change across a large number of societies has not been

captured by previous explanations. We propose an explanation of the directional change that is based on the aggregation of everyday interactions. This theory posits that directional norm change can come about if there is an asymmetry in punishment propensity between the people who prefer stricter norms and those who prefer looser norms. Asymmetry in punishment can arise from underlying asymmetry in the threat perceived, where a stricter-than-preferred behaviour is perceived as inherently less threatening than a looser one. We demonstrate the logic of the theory using a formal model and test some of its assumptions through survey experiments.

**Jonathan Seelye Martin**, 'Monopolising Violence: *Gewalt*, self-control, and the law in Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneasroman*', *The German Quarterly, Special Issue: The Politics of German Literature* 91:1 (Winter 2018) pp. 18–33.

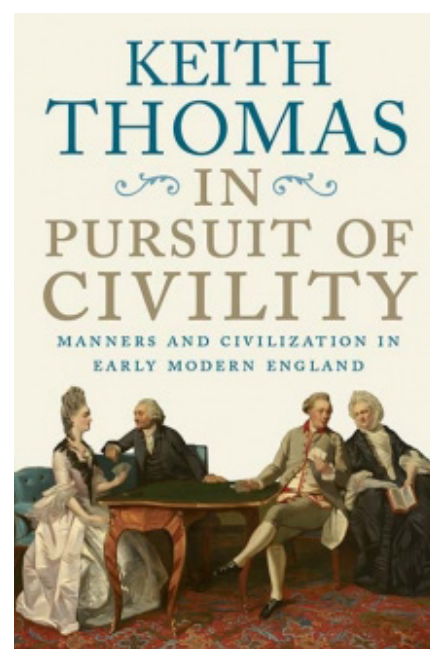
**Abstract:** Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneasroman* is one of the first courtly romances in the German language. Until now, the role of the law in the text has gone largely unexplored; this article argues that the *Eneasroman* functions as an integral part of the twelfth-century legal system in order to promulgate a reduction in violence and project an idealised monopoly of violence as its final goal. It further argues that this is part of the programme of courtliness, understood in line with Norbert Elias and Stephen Jaeger as emphasising self-control in the courtly warrior and reducing violence. Courtliness is thus viewed as a largely fictional precursor to the modern state monopoly on violence with correspondences in real twelfth-century legislation, primarily that of the *Landfrieden*. A study of these issues grants us a better understanding of the development of law in medieval society on its way to modernity.

**André Oliveira Costa**, 'Notes on the Established-Outsiders figuration: A psychoanalytical approach' *Psychology Research* 8: 2 (February 2018) pp. 53–9.

**Abstract:** The influence of psychoanalysis in the work of

sociologist, Norbert Elias is notorious and recognised by himself. The established and the outsider figuration shows how individuals are in relationships of interdependence with each other, allowing the dissolution of the antithesis between individual and society. In this paper, we propose to consider how the concept of figuration can contribute as an operator for the field of psychoanalytic practice. So we will seek to articulate psychoanalysis and Norbert Elias's sociology through the concept of figuration, as a methodological operator that helps us understand the subjective processes in psychoanalytic practice.

**Keith Thomas**, *In Pursuit of Civility. Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England*.



(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) 480 pp. ISBN: 9780300235777. What did it mean to be 'civilized' in early modern England?

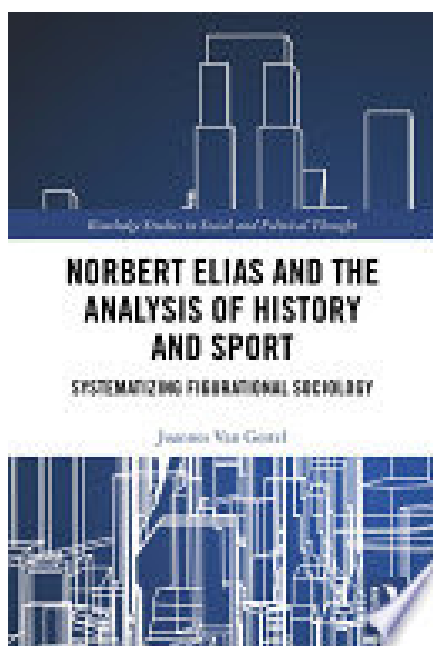
Keith Thomas's seminal studies *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, *Man and the Natural World*, and *The Ends of Life*, explored the beliefs, values and social practices of the years between 1500 and 1800. *In Pursuit of Civility* continues this quest by examining what the English people thought it meant to be 'civilised' and how that condition differed from being 'barbarous' or 'savage'. Thomas shows how the upper ranks

of society sought to distinguish themselves from their social inferiors by developing distinctive forms of moving, speaking and comporting themselves – and how the common people in turn developed their own forms of civility. The belief of the English in their superior civility shaped their relations with the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish. By legitimising international trade, colonialism, slavery, and racial discrimination, it was fundamental to their dealings with the native peoples of North America, India, and Australia.

Yet not everyone shared this belief in the superiority of Western civilisation. *In Pursuit of Civility* throws light on the early origins of anti-colonialism and cultural relativism, and goes on to examine some of the ways in which the new forms of civility were resisted.

With all the author's distinctive authority and brilliance – based as ever on wide reading, abounding in fresh insights, and illustrated by many striking quotations and anecdotes from contemporary sources – *In Pursuit of Civility* transforms our understanding of the past. In so doing, it raises important questions as to the role of manners in the modern world.

**Joannes van Gestel**, *Norbert Elias*, *Social History and Sport* (London: Routledge, 2018) 170 pp. ISBN: 9780815380665.



In times when the social sciences have become increasingly fragmented and more focused on 'the pieces of the puzzle'; the puzzle, as a topic in its own right, has slowly been moved towards the background. Nonetheless, as humanity becomes ever more globalised, there is a greater need for in-depth discussion on the theory behind the direction of humanity in history and the interrelationships between the different areas in which humans associate themselves with, including that of leisure and sport.

At its heart, *Norbert Elias, Social History and Sport* explains both the course of history and how the roles that leisure and sport have occupied in it should be investigated. Exploring this from Norbert Elias's figurational (or process sociological) standpoint, Van Gestel offers a unique perspective as it approaches the theoretical concepts and ideas by systematising the views of the iconic scholar and offers new insights into his central theory. Furthermore, drawing upon theoretical principles that are universal to humans rather than relative to a case study, Van Gestel offers an applicable guideline which explains phenomena beyond specific cultures or circumstances that have so far been a customary practice by process sociologists.

**Sally Hester and Allison Moore**, 'Understanding children's participation through an Eliasian lens: Habitus as a barrier to children's everyday participation rights', *International Journal of Children's Rights* 26: 3 (2018).

Abstract: In this article, we will present our research findings and argue that whilst a focus on the rights of young children to participate has helped to influence the development of participatory approaches in a range of children's settings, aimed at enabling their opinions to not only be heard but be acted upon, this does not seem have spread into areas of children's everyday life. Thus, in their everyday life interactions children's rights continue to be denied or given entitlement in the basis of assumptions about the social category to which they belong. Furthermore opportunities continue

to be missed to make links between the everyday and the societal, political and legal contexts by those wishing to further children's participation rights. This has implications for children's developing citizenship and their ability to participate in wider society.

Drawing on the sociology of Norbert Elias, we will argue that some of the barriers to children's participation in and control over their everyday lives are attributable to their positioning as 'children' in opposition to 'adults' and the concomitant assumptions about their capacities, or lack thereof. These assumptions are evident in a variety of formal discourses underpinned by developmentalism and protectionism, including law and policy, but they are also internalised and perpetuated in what Elias called the 'habitus'; unconscious and embodied behaviours and dispositions that have been shaped by wider social structures.

**Remus Crețan and Ryan Powell**, 'The power of group stigmatization: wealthy Roma, urban space and strategies of defence in post-socialist Romania', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2018) DOI:10.1111/1468-2427.12626.

Abstract: Recent research on Roma stigmatisation has tended to focus on the marginal socio-economic and spatial position of Roma people within European societies, with poverty, persistent inequalities and substandard housing conditions (for example, ghettoisation) highlighting their differential treatment. Central to such accounts are group images and stereotypes of Roma as 'benefit scroungers' and/or 'beggars' lacking notions of self-restraint and social responsibility. This body of research is hugely important in terms of its contribution to an understanding of the complex dynamics of marginalisation and stigmatisation of poor Roma households. Yet not all Roma are characterised by poverty and economic hardship. This article explores the neglected experiences of wealthy Roma within urban spaces in Romania. It draws on empirical evidence from interviews with Roma families, leaders and local authorities. Our analysis



exposes the way in which Roma are vehemently stigmatised regardless of their economic position or housing circumstances and highlights deep underlying sentiments towards them within Romanian society. We critique Wacquant's concept of territorial stigmatisation by applying it to wealthy groups out with typical areas of relegation (for example, Roma ghettos) within the specific urban context of post-socialist Romania. While our analysis points to the internalisation of stigma, we also identify distinct defensive strategies wealthy Roma employ to counter and avoid stigmatisation. We suggest that a focus on the neglected spaces of wealthy Roma groups can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the distinct urban power relations that shape Roma stigmatisation, reveal how this long-term process has recently been accentuated within Europe alongside a more overt populist and anti-Roma political agenda, and contribute to the development and refinement of Wacquant's thesis.

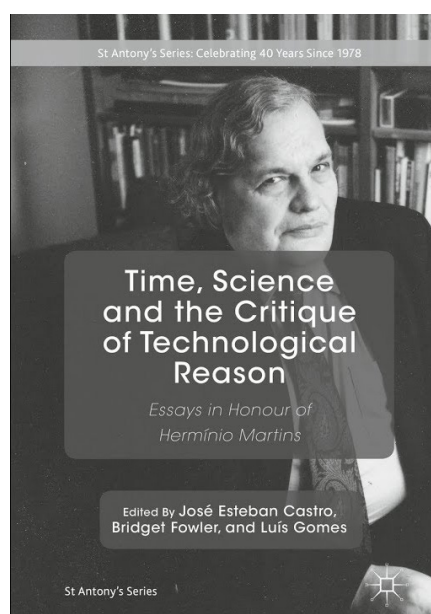
**Richard Crisp and Ryan Powell**, 'Youth unemployment, interdependence and power: tensions and resistance within an alternative, "co-produced" employment programme', in Bevir, M., McKee, K. and Matthews, P. (eds) *Decentring Urban Governance: Narratives, Resistance and Contestation* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 38–63.

**Jack Black**, 'The United Kingdom and British Empire: A figurational approach', *Rethinking History* 22:1 (2018) pp. 3–24.

**Abstract:** Drawing upon the work of Norbert Elias and the process [figurational] sociology perspective, this article examines how state formation processes are related to, and, affected by, expanding and declining chains of international interdependence. In contrast to civic and ethnic conceptions, this approach focuses on the emergence of the nation/nation-state as grounded in broader processes of historical and social development. In doing so, state formation processes within the United Kingdom are related to the expansion

and decline of the British Empire. That is, by focusing on the functional dynamics that are embedded in collective groups, one is able to consider how the UK's 'state' and 'imperial' figurations were interdependently related to changes in both the UK and the former British Empire. Consequently, by locating contemporary UK relations in the historical context of former imperial relationships, nationalism studies can go 'beyond' the nation/nation-state in order to include broader processes of imperial expansion and decline. Here, the relationship between empire and nationalism can offer a valuable insight into contemporary political movements, especially within former imperial groups.

**Bridget Fowler, Jose Esteban Castro and Luis Gomes eds**, *Time, Science and the Critique of Technological Reason: Essays in Honour of Herminio Martins* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018) 390 pp. ISBN: 9783319715186.



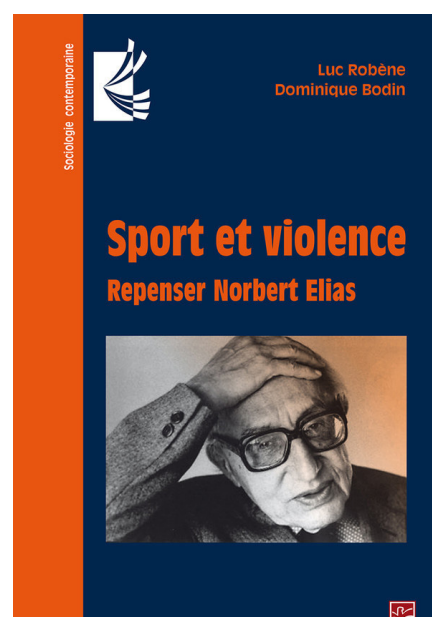
This festschrift commemorates the legacy of UK-based Portuguese sociologist Herminio Martins (1934–2015). It introduces Martins's wide-ranging contributions to the social sciences, encompassing seminal works in the fields of philosophy and social theory, historical and political sociology, studies of science and technology, and Luso-Brazilian studies, among others. The book features an in-depth interview with Martins, short memoirs, and twelve chapters

addressing topics that were central to his intellectual and political interests. Among those that stand out are his critique of Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, his work on the significance of time in social theory and the interweaving of techno-scientific developments and socio-cultural transformations, including the impact of communication and digital technologies, and of market-led eugenics. Other themes covered are Martins's work on patrimonialism and social development in Portugal and Brazil, and his analysis of the state of the social sciences in Portugal, which reflects his highly critical appraisal of the ongoing marketisation and neoliberalisation of academic life and institutions worldwide.

The collection of essays includes contributions by Richard Kilminster 'Karl Marx: New Perspectives' and Stephen Mennell's 'The "Modelling of Speech" in America and Britain'.

**Dominique Bodin and Luc Robène**, *Sport and Violence: Rethinking Elias* (London: Routledge, 2016) 178 pp. ISBN: 9781138213005.

**Dominique Bodin and Luc Robène**, *Sport et Violence: Repenser Norbert Elias* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2018). 273 pp. ISBN 978-2-7637-3882-6 (pb); 978-2-7637-3883-3 (pdf).



The aim of this book, in discussing Elias's theory, is not to refute it.

Tendentially, the theory works with its weaknesses and strong points and it has been enriched by a number of authors over time. The objective of this volume is to discuss the blind spots and, more simply, what is too often taken for granted: namely the obvious pacifying effect of sports and/or produced by sports. This analysis has been guided by two perspectives: the sociological one which questions the ‘naturalisation’ of sport which is also the naturalisation of the ‘wildlings’ which have to be civilised, and the other which comes from philosophical anthropology and attempts to comprehend the long term characteristics of this union – or disunion – of sport and violence. This book was previously published as a special issue of the *International Journal of the History of Sport*.

**Marc Joly**, *Pierre Bourdieu* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018). 414 pp. ISBN: 978-2-271-11867-7.

Marc Joly is well known to readers of *Figurations* for his commitment to and sterling work in promoting the sociology of Norbert Elias. Here, however, he provides a comprehensive view of the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002).

Joly argues that, for all his fame, Bourdieu’s work remains poorly understood, especially in France, where it is regularly the subject of ideological quarrels.

To see Bourdieu in broader perspective, and to enlighten the debates, Joly proceeds in three stages. He first shows how Bourdieu, from the early 1960s, gave himself the means to theoretically refashion the European sociological tradition while ensuring that sociologists acquire an appropriate scientific ethos. He then interprets the power of the ‘Bourdieuian’ conceptual framework – the habitus–field–capital triad – in the light of the historical and epistemological characteristics of sociology, understood as a social science *par excellence*, the ‘science of science’ and the matrix of a new humanism. Finally, he examines the theoretical and political resistance that Bourdieu’s scientific approach has constantly aroused.

I think I can discern a distinctly Eliasian perspective running through the book – but that, and much else, would be clearer if the book had an index. In my view, no academic book should ever be published minus the essential tool – the vital study aid – of an index. The absence thereof seems to be more frequent in French and German books than in English, but may generally be becoming commoner, perhaps because of the extra cost an index represents in these straitened times for publishing. (Of course, authors should *always* index their own books ...).

SJM

**Peter Ludes**, *Brutalisierung und Banalisierung: Asoziale und soziale Netze*. [Brutalisation and Banalisation in asocial and social networks] Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018. 39 pp. ISBN 978-3-658-21766-2 (pb) ISBN 978-3-658-21767-9 (eBook) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-21767-9>

Peter Ludes’s short essay in the Springer ‘Essentials’ series attempts to



clarify key trends, combining insights from the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. Five chapters inquire into the Evil of Banality, Collective Myths, Inclusion and Exclusion, Fiction and Factualness, and Ten New Commandments.

The first decades of the twenty-first-century supposedly built information

highways to global knowledge societies. Yet, new scopes and modes of dis-/information and ex-/communication have caught us in partially brutalising and banalising asocial and social networks. They function as counter powers to previously highlighted processes of rationalisation and civilisation. These countertendencies pervade basic perception patterns and social interdependencies in all realms of life and death. They open up new social horizons as well as professional surveillance. Collective myths of free and unconstrained communication veil these processes and remain unquestioned in many social scientific, journalistic and social media accounts. Hateful antagonisms require detached and transdisciplinary inquiries.

**Stephen Mennell**, ‘Liminality and the frontier myth in the building of the American Empire’, in Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen and Harald Wydra, eds, *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), pp. 112–29.

**Abstract:** In this article, the westward expansion of the USA in the nineteenth century and the central place often allotted to the frontier in the American national experience are re-examined in the light of the concept of liminality. Connections are tentatively drawn between that idea, stemming especially from the work of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, and the famous ‘frontier thesis’ of another Turner, Frederick Jackson Turner. A further element in the discussion is the idea of decivilising processes, derived from the writings of Norbert Elias. In conclusion, it is argued that the frontier, whether as actual liminal experience or as myth, has had lasting consequences for American habitus and for the USA’s position in the world.

**Bowen Paule and Mustafa Emirbayer**, 2016. ‘Beneath rationalization: Elias, Foucault, and the body’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 19: 1 (2016): 39–56.

**Abstract:** Elias and Foucault ended up making the same core discovery about the same fundamental social

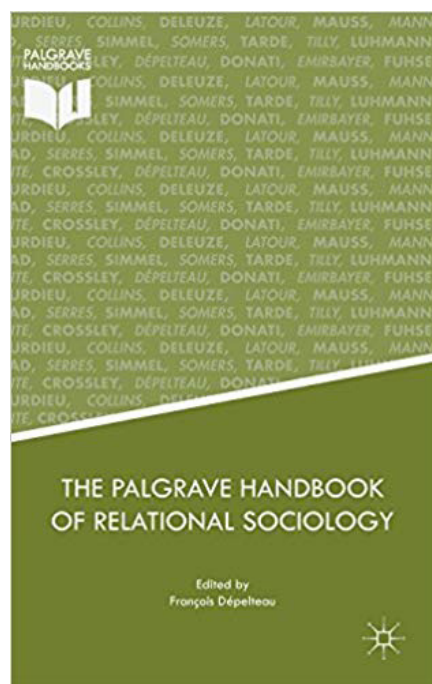
process, which we term the ‘social constraints towards self-discipline’ process. We show how three distinct biographical and intellectual factors were important in guiding them toward this discovery: (1) their shared exposure to philosophical traditions associated with Heidegger’s break from Husserl; (2) their common, sustained contact with ‘clinical’ practices; and (3) the traumatic events each experienced in relation to intentional injury and death.

**Steven Meredith**, ‘Established as Outsider? Figurational “Binds” and “Bonds” in a Welsh Working-Class Community’, unpublished PhD thesis, Cardiff University 2018.

This thesis is about how people living in a typical urban working-class community located in South Wales get on with each other. Reflecting upon the empirical data collected over three years of ethnographic fieldwork, it tells the story of ‘Ashmill’ and the relationships which have developed among generations of residents. The focus is on ‘Blackacre’, a council estate geographically situated at the heart of Ashmill, its residents tending to be regarded as ‘rough’ and ‘antisocial’ by residents of the surrounding neighbourhood. The thesis presents an intensive case study of the community figuration of Ashmill, and makes theoretical–empirical contributions which may have resonance with similar communities. Council estates, as a result of deliberate policies and their unplanned consequences, have come to be seen as ‘residualised’ places for ‘problem’ people, who are frequently stigmatised as ‘chavs’: [C]ouncil [H]oused [A]nd [V]iolent. This thesis considers how this came to be, indicating the long-term, processual, relational, and transformational character of the problem which is investigated in this thesis using a figurational-sociological framing, specifically through the analytical lens of Elias and Scotson’s (2008 [1965]) established–outsider model. Analysed figurationally, the stigmatisation of Blackacre and its residents as ‘rough’ and ‘antisocial’ can be understood as the outcome of long-term processes in which interdependent residential groups have become trapped in a power

dynamic. A double-bind situation develops, involving feelings mutual fear and resentment between some residential groups, whilst also creating affective bonding among others. The established–outsider model is elaborated and adapted using ‘relative deprivation theory’ as developed by Lea and Young (1984). This more directly connects relational phenomena producing feelings of resentment between working-class residents with the generation of crime and violence. This thesis, therefore, presents an example of ‘sociological criminology’, synthesising figurational sociology and left realist criminology with the aim of adding to the corpus of reality-congruent social scientific knowledge on collective processes of status honour and stigma.

**Francois Depelteau (ed.)**, *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology* (Springer International



Publishing AG: Cham, 2018) 686 pp. ISBN: 9783319660042.

This handbook on relational sociology covers a rapidly growing approach in the social sciences – one which is connected to the interests of a large, diverse pool of researchers across a range of disciplines. Relational sociology has been one of the key foundations of the ‘relational turn’ in human sciences since the 1980s,

and it offers a unique opportunity to redefine the basic epistemological and ontological principles of sociology as we know it. The contributors collected here aim to elucidate the complexity and the scope of this growing approach by dealing with three central questions: Where does relational sociology come from and what are its principal concerns? What are the main theoretical and methodological currents within relational sociology? What have we studied in relational sociology and what are the results?

**Michael Mann**, ‘Have wars and violence declined?’, *Theory and Society* 47: 1 (2018), pp. 37–60. [Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-018-9305-y>].

Abstract: For over 150 years liberal optimism has dominated theories of war and violence. It has been repeatedly argued that war and violence either are declining or will shortly decline. There have been exceptions, especially in Germany and more generally in the first half of the twentieth century, but there has been a recent revival of such optimism, especially in the work of Azar Gat, John Mueller, Joshua Goldstein, and Steven Pinker who all perceive a long-term decline in war and violence through history, speeding up in the post-1945 period. Critiquing Pinker’s statistics on war fatalities, I show that the overall pattern is not a decline in war, but substantial variation between periods and places. War has not declined and current trends are slightly in the opposite direction. The conventional view is that civil wars in the global South have largely replaced inter-state wars in the North, but this is misleading since there is major involvement in most civil wars by outside powers, including those of the North. There is more support for their view that homicide has declined in the long-term, at least in the North of the world (with the United States lagging somewhat). This is reinforced by technological improvements in long-distance weaponry and the two transformations have shifted war, especially in the North, from being ‘ferocious’ to ‘callous’ in character. This renders war less visible and less central to Northern culture, which has



the deceptive appearance of being rather pacific. Viewed from the South the view has been bleaker both in the colonial period and today. Globally war and violence are not declining, but they are being transformed.

## ■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

Robert van Krieken provides below a translation of the review by the Dutch criminologist W. A. Bongers of Elias's *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, published in Dutch in 1940. His translation of Menno ter Braak's review has also just been published in *Human Figurations* 7: 1 (see above). Tragically, the two Dutch writers who so favourably reviewed *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* both committed suicide upon the German invasion of the Netherlands in 1940.

**Norbert Elias**, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziorganische [Sic] und Psychogenetische Untersuchungen. I, II Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes* (Verlag Haus zum Falken, Basel 1939). *Mensch en Maatschappij* 16(4) 1940: 283–4.

In the limited space available for a book review in *Mensch en Maatschappij*, one has to remain content with drawing attention to this very important book. It would otherwise be entirely worthwhile to devote an extended article to it.

The book's subject is behaviour, the manners of the civilised person in Western society. More precisely: how has, from the medieval barbarian, a person emerged who behaves in an entirely different way. To make this comprehensible, the author has to dig deeply and answer questions such as: how did medieval society (national economy) turn into one based on money, how did absolutism emerge from a society in which the state was extremely weak?

The first volume concerns 'civilisation' in the sense of 'good manners', an interesting enough topic in itself, but even more compelling when placed in its societal context. It is a marvellous

contribution towards disrupting the gentleman's delusion that his good manners are innate.

The focal point of the book lies in the second volume. The portrayal of feudalism and its transformation into a new type of social organisation, the rise of the new state form, can only be described as monumental. What is most important about the book, however, is the portrayal of the enormous changes in another area, which arise from the former, namely in relation to people's behaviour and their psyche. How the internalised self-discipline characterising modern society has grown out of the external compulsion to which the medieval person was subjected. From a sociological perspective, this exposition can only be assessed as brilliant. In the absence of any human intention, by itself as it were, society and the person himself were transformed. 'Through people, not by people' (heterogeneity of aims) – 'Durch die Menschen, nicht von den Menschen (Heterogenie der Zwecke)'. This reviewer knows of few works where the connection between sociology and psychology is so aptly established.

Reading this book is not only recommended for psychologists, it is also necessary for sociologists and historians, in so far as the latter are not so narrow-minded as to pay no attention to sociology.

*W. A. Bongers*  
Deceased, 14 May 1940

**Steven Cock**, 'The sportisation of swimming: A sociological examination of the development of swimming as a modern competitive sport, c.1595–1908'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chester, 2012.

**Abstract:** Modern competitive swimming is a highly structured, organised, codified and regulated sport. This has not always been the case. The aim of this thesis has been to examine the long-term development of competitive forms of swimming throughout the periods between the late sixteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite some recent historical analyses, the emergence of

swimming as a modern competitive sport is an under-researched topic. There are no sociological analyses relating to the development of competitive swimming and significant gaps within much historical research. This thesis has been conducted from a sociological perspective in order to test the relative adequacy of Norbert Elias's concept of sportisation. Figurational sociologists have often examined the concept of sportisation in relation to the development of contact sports such as boxing and rugby. Some authors have sought to criticise figurational sociologists for over-emphasising issues relating to the increasing control of violence when examining the development of such activities. In this manner, there is scope to contribute to existing empirical and theoretical knowledge by testing the relative adequacy of the concept of sportisation in relation to the long-term development of the predominantly non-contact sport of competitive swimming. To this end, data have been examined from a range of documentary sources. Various swimming-based texts, treatises, periodicals and magazines were examined at the British Library and Colindale Newspaper Library in London. The original minute books of the Amateur Swimming Association and its predecessor bodies have also been analysed. In addition, a range of digitised source material has been examined from several electronic databases. It has been argued that the development of modern competitive swimming was an unplanned and unintended outcome resulting from the complex interweaving of wider social processes in England throughout the periods between the Middle Ages and the early twentieth century. The earliest reported swimming contests took place in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the form of a cash wager between two or more individuals. These events were less structured and regulated than modern forms of competitive swimming. Betting upon the outcome of such events was deemed to be an appropriate means to experience heightened levels of tension-excitement within the context of an emerging society in which people were increasingly expected to demonstrate greater self-control over their behaviour

and emotions. More organised forms of competitive swimming gradually emerged during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The emergence of an increasingly complex network of clubs, societies and associations at local, county, district and national levels facilitated such developments and contributed to the emergence of standardised rules and regulations within the emerging sport of swimming. Such developments have been explained in relation to ongoing processes of state-formation, pacification, lengthening chains of interdependence and a gradual lowering in the threshold of repugnance within England in the period between the Middle-Ages and the early twentieth century. In this manner, it has been argued that the concept of sportisation is an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining the long-term development of the modern non-contact sport of competitive swimming.

**Martin Jacques**, 'Civilisation state versus nation-state: China confronts Europe with an enormous problem – we do not understand it'. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 January 2011.

This newspaper article from 2011 was recently drawn to our attention by Andrew Linklater. Jacques argues that the West fundamentally fails to understand China, because it is a 'civilisation state' rather than a 'nation state' of the kind Westerners habitually think in terms of. Jacques does not refer to the theory of civilising processes, but, in shorthand, his argument relates more to the (original) second volume of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* than to the first. But it also calls to mind the failing that is almost universal among Americans (and widespread elsewhere) of talking about 'nation state' when they mean just 'state', and about 'nation-building' when they mean 'state-formation'. The concept of 'nation' refers to a sense of a we-identity among people who live within a territory, but that typically comes about (if at all) when the process of state formation is fairly well advanced.

In the case of the USA, the confusion of 'nation-building' with state formation is

often linked to the constitutional sense of 'state', which means something equivalent to 'Province' or *Land*. However, I think it has a deeper cause. For the central meaning of 'state' for sociologists is that given in Weber's famous definition: 'an organisation which successfully upholds a claim to binding rulemaking over a territory, by virtue of commanding a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence'. By that measure, the USA itself may be regarded as a failed state. (For a more nuanced version of that point, see Pieter Spierenburg, (2006) 'Democracy came too early: a tentative explanation for the problem of American homicide', *American Historical Review*, 111: 1 (2006), pp. 104–14.) Perhaps that is too provocative; but the confusion of meaning can have practical consequences: when the State Department says that the USA 'does not do nation-building' (as in Afghanistan), it appears not to understand the dynamics of processes of internal pacification.

*SJM*

**Johan Huizinga**, *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1936).

As Joop Goudsblom pointed out many years ago,\* the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga was a considerable early influence on Elias, notably for his book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Steve Quilley recently drew our attention to another of Huizinga's books, from 80 years ago, in which he uses the concept of habitus and discusses how habitus undergoes change.

The relevant section, on pp. 231–9, begins thus: 'It is not from intervention by social organisations that we must expect deliverance. The foundations of culture are not such that the organs of society, whether they be nations, churches, schools or parties, could reaffirm or strengthen them. What is required is an internal regeneration of the individual. The spiritual habitus of man himself will have to change.' As will be evident, the tone – with a term like 'the spiritual habitus of man' – is very different from Elias's.

\* See Johan Goudsblom, 'Zum Hintergrund der Zivilisationstheorie von Norbert Elias: Das Verhältnis zu Huizinga, Weber und Freud', in Gleichmann, Goudsblom and Korte, eds. *Macht und Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 129–47.

## ■ RECENT CONFERENCES

### The Quest for Socially and Culturally Diverse Societies

15 July 2017, Waseda University, Japan

The Symposium 'The Quest for Socially and Culturally Diverse Societies', under the auspices of the School of International Liberal Studies of Waseda University brought together international and Japanese scholars whose investigations analysed questions on the development of the Japanese we-identity from a figural perspective.

Part one was chaired by Prof. Ohira Akira. Prof. Julian Manning (Nihon University) and Prof. Raúl Sánchez García (Universidad Europea Madrid) delivered oral presentations during this part.

Julian Manning's 'The uses and abuses of culture: ethno-nationalism and multiculturalism' offered a critical assessment of the relationship between the concept of culture and the development of ethno-nationalism. The idea of culture as a solid, unchanging reality that bounds people from common ethnic origins together reproduces the agenda of biological determinism. That is why Prof. Manning defined culturalism as the new racism. Multiculturalism as a political philosophy has failed to promote integration because it maintains the idea of culture as a fixed reality. Taking into account Eliasian approach to society as processes of interdependent heterogeneous individuals, Manning considered culture as diverse and in constant development. This basic tenet could provide a solid basis for the project of interculturalism would solve many of the pitfalls of multiculturalism.

Raúl Sánchez García's 'Civilizing-Decivilizing and Formalizing-Informalizing Balances in the Development of Japanese Martial

Traditions' empirically tested this fourfold classificatory scheme in the development of Japanese martial traditions: (1) Sengoku Period (1467–1603) as an example of deciv-informal trend in which the expansion of martial techniques and tactics grew exponentially in a crude and violent way; (2) Tokugawa Shogunate (1603–1867) as an example of civ-formaliz trend in which martial techniques and tactics were systematized but also tamed; (3) Showa Period before WWII (1926–1945) as an example of decivilising-formalising trend in which martial traditions were used by the State to foster a nationalistic-militaristic ethos among Japanese citizens; (4) 1970s–1990s Period as an example of civ-informal in which Mixed Martial Arts such as kickboxing, K-1 and PRIDE only apparently increased the level of violence, becoming successful representatives of spectacular, professional combat sports model.

Part two was chaired by Prof. Shuichi Wada. Prof. Tomochika Okamoto (Tsukuba University) and Akio Koyabu (Waseda University) presented during this part. Even though the two oral presentations in this part were in Japanese, they provided some handouts in English.

Tomochika Okamoto's 'On History Education at School as the Apparatus of Cultural Integration' proposed an analysis of history text-books used in Japanese junior high-schools. He presented insightful findings on the relationship between history education in Japan and nationalism. Up to the Second World War, Japanese school education aimed at building a strong national consciousness, connecting Japanese citizens to the figure of the Emperor as the center of the State. Even though some changes were introduced after the war, the content of the books maintained ethnocentric views. However, despite the influence of political conservatism in the country, the introduction of the guidelines for school education in 1989, promoted students' independent thought and introduced a more critical scope in the text-books. Akio Koyabu's 'Social participation, formation of human relationship, fear

of crime, generalized trust and income inequality' analysed the relationship between changes in the we-identity of Japanese communities and the perception of threat and fear. Despite the fact that crime had been steadily decreasing since 2002, the social perception is that the situation has become worse. Although the author did not make it explicit, the implications of this study for clarifying questions of decivilising and informalising trends are of the utmost interest.

The oral presentations of the symposium were included afterwards in a printed volume called *Norbert Elias and his Sociological Perspective: Civilization, Culture and Knowledge* (2017), as part of the series that Prof. Akira Ohira, acting as editor, has been publishing with *DTP Publishing* along the years.

*Raúl Sánchez García*

## Civilization and Technological Developments

*University of Amsterdam, 4–6 November 2017*

*Technisation and the dark side of civilising processes*

Although technology is sometimes still regarded, even by sociologists, as isolated from social and psychic processes, more and more evidence points in the opposite direction. Technological development, or 'technization' as Elias called it, affects production methods, power ratios and lifestyles as much as the social habitus. At the same time, civilisation provides for technization: these processes are intertwined. From here many questions arise. One of the most compelling is, what exactly is the impact of the new global information and communication technologies on human behaviour and self-restraints. In what respect do they contribute to civilization and de-civilization?

This was the central topic in a three days conference (4–6 November 2017) to celebrate the second luster of the 'Kring van Amsterdamse Sociologen',

the *alumni* circle of sociologists from the University of Amsterdam. A vast variety of topics passed under the heading of 'Civilization and Technological Developments'. A range of speakers touched upon many important issues: the emergence of a virtual world and its implications for sociological analysis; the unintended consequences of social media and the rise of populism; reality construction on the internet; the (possible) role of politics in the direction of technological developments; the digital provision of medical and health information and its influence on proto-professionalisation; the emergence of 'smart cities' and 'smart services'; and the ways media channel and feed on anxieties and resentment.

Two contributions pre-eminently focused on civilizational issues in the Eliasian sense. Referring to the old critique that the civilisation theory was 'immunised' against empirical refutation, Bart van Heerikhuizen expressed in a personal and theoretical reflection the sense of a recent de-civilization spurt. Social media may function as a catalyst in this, since they no longer seem to expand global identifications (as internet pioneers used to dream of), but conversely facilitate the entrenchment in 'bubbles' of like-mindedness. That would imply not the lengthening but rather a shortening of chains of interdependence, with the implication that circles of mutual identification tend to shrink. Van Heerikhuizen regaled his audience with telling examples of decivilizing tendencies, including public performances of the new president of a former superpower.

In the final talk Robert van Krieken elaborated on changes in communication technology and their interaction with changes in social relationships and trends in civilization and de-civilization. As Elias stressed right at the beginning of his essay 'Technization and civilization' (1986), technological development not only requires standards of civilized conduct, but also can bring about 'barbaric' behaviour. These counter-spurts can take place at 'newly-reached' stages of technization. Drawing on many thinkers



– ranging from Nietzsche and Max Scheler to René Girard and the Dutch writer Menno ter Braak – Van Krieken unfolded his view on the ‘dark side’ of civilizing processes. Nietzsche had already noticed that when the Christian ideal of equality collided with the reality of inequality and powerlessness, dominant value systems may break down. But they also pave the way for resentment, ‘the most dangerous of all explosives’. However, as Van Krieken advanced in a Tocquevillean paradox, feelings of injustice may well up especially within democracies. Civilizing processes can go hand in hand with functional democratization, which can be a driver of resentment at the same time. When this continues, partly due to the efforts of ‘resentment entrepreneurs’ and via social media, it could lead to de-civilization.

All in all the talks bared a sense of inescapable and gloomy changes: there is something new under the sun, and it is hard to see it as progress.

*Arjan Post*

## The Sociology of Sociology in Long-Term Perspective: Conference in Honour of Richard Kilminster

*University of Leeds, 5–6 April 2018*

The eternally youthful Richard Kilminster actually turned 75 on the day following this conference in his honour. A large number of his family,

colleagues, friends, and former students assembled to mark the occasion.

Organised by Ryan Powell (one of Richard’s former PhD students) and Sarah Biggins from the University of Sheffield, along with John Lever and Stephen Vertigans, the conference began with lunch – how very civilised! In his opening ‘Laudatio’, Stephen Mennell stressed how Richard, in order to establish the solid foundations of what he had labelled a ‘post-philosophical’ sociology on Eliasian lines, had had to labour long and hard at mastering great tracts of philosophical literature. The task may have seemed unrewarding, given that the goal was to show how little philosophy had to offer a sociological understanding of social reality, but Richard’s work had in effect saved others (like Stephen himself) the need to repeat the labour. And Richard had achieved this – especially in his two books *The Sociological Revolution* and *Norbert Elias: Post-Philosophical Sociology* – against the background of ‘social theory’ being dominated by philosophoidal thinking, including on the part of his supervisor, friend and head of department, Zygmunt Bauman. In his reply, Richard presented a more detailed intellectual autobiography, going back to the heated debates about Marxism and sociology that engulfed British sociology in the 1960s and 1970s, discussed in his first book *Praxis and Method*. Even then, Richard’s career seemed to have unfolded on the principle of ‘know thine enemy’. Half a century later, those debates must

seem like ancient history to sociologists now starting their careers, yet they remain in many ways quite formative.

The first day of the conference closed, very typically of Eliasian conferences, with drinks, then dinner at Browns restaurant. In spite of any hangovers, the second day opened with reflections from Richard’s students and peers.

The other papers presented at the conference were:

Alan Scott, ‘Against fashion, against philosophy’

Nico Wilterdink, ‘The unfinished sociological revolution: Progress and regression in sociological theorising’

Andrew Linklater, ‘Involvement and detachment: critical theory, cosmopolitanism and process sociology’

John Lever and Ryan Powell, ‘Problems of involvement and detachment: Norbert Elias and the investigation of contemporary social processes’

John Connolly, Paddy Dolan and Stephen Vertigans, ‘Perceived state legitimacy and figurational sociology: emotional responses to Irish hunger strikes’

Phil Sutton, ‘Sociology of knowledge and knowledge of sociology: a textbook presentation’

Cath Morgan, ‘Knowledge, social process, power: integrating figurational sociology into a BSc Criminology degree’

Steve Loyal, ‘From praxis to process: the sociology of Richard Kilminster’

Marc Joly, Plenary Lecture: ‘The threefold calling of sociology’

## ■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

### Seventeenth International Symposium on Civilising Processes

*Londrina/PR, Brazil: 15–19 October 2018*

The Research Groups led by professors Tony Honorato (UEL-Londrina) and Célio Juvenal Costa (UEM-Maringá), will organise the 17th International Symposium on Civilising Processes that will take place in the Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), Brazil, 15–19 October 2018.

UEL is located in the city of Londrina, Paraná State, in the southern region of Brazil. In the University, the



local Organising Commission, constituted by members from UEL and UEM (Universidade Estadual de Maringá), will have the support of the Postgraduate Programs of both Universities, besides the Research Group on Civilising Processes and the Laboratory of Studies on the Portuguese Empire (LEIP).

The 17<sup>th</sup> SIPC will occur in the month of October 2018 and will have the presentation of research in the following formats: Conference, Coordinated Tables, Oral Communication, Workshop and Mini-Courses. The event is hoping to gather up to 200 researchers from different fields of knowledge, in forty hours of academic activities.

For further details, see <http://www.sbhe.org.br/sites/default/files/Newsletter%20n%201%20SIPC%202018.pdf>

**Global Interdependencies: What's new in the human society of individuals? The political and academic relevance of Norbert Elias's work today**

*Brussels, Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles, 5–8 December 2018*

The next 'big' Elias conference will be organised by the Research Centre in Political Science (CReSPo) and the Institute for European Studies (IEE) of Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles (USL-B) in Brussels, Belgium, on 5–8 December 2018.

For further details, see the conference website:

<https://eliasbrussels2018.wordpress.com/>

## Reinventing Elias: International Pre-Conference PhD Workshop

*Stephen Mennell and Robert van Krieken*

Brussels, Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles, 4–5 December 2018

This workshop will examine the particular contribution made by Norbert Elias and scholars using his work in sociological research. Students will become familiar with the key concepts in Elias's work, including processes of civilization, decivilization, figurations, the theorization of court society, process sociology and relational theorizing. The seminar will also examine the critical engagements with Elias's work, and reflect on the various ways in which Elias's sociology of civilization and decivilization can be applied to current issues in social science. Topics will include court society and modernity, civilization and the making of the modern self, genocide, cultural genocide and decivilization, recent developments in international relations, and 'celebrity society' as court society in an age of mass communication.

There is no charge for the workshop, apart from a small charge for light refreshments, although participants will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation costs. Enrolment in the workshop will be limited to 20 participants, and *the closing date for applications is 30 September 2018*. Those who would like to take part should send an email to Robert van Krieken ([Robert.van.Krieken@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Robert.van.Krieken@sydney.edu.au)), briefly stating their interests and what they are currently working on.

## ■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

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

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