

# Editor's Introduction

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2015, and now 2016, are tumultuous times for Syrian immigrants, forced to leave their homes and flee, en masse, to 'foreign lands' perceived to be more secure, safer and offering some measure of hope for the future. As this issue is released, in Western Europe, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is poised, through a June referendum, to take a decision on its' status within the European Union. Political hacks are already ramping up the 'Brexit' rhetoric around terms like independence, national sovereignty, foreigners, national interest, compromise, immigrants and integration. More detached and sociologically-inclined observers, however, note the links between the national habitus and the success, or not, of the integration of immigrants, integration being much more than simply living apart together in modern multicultural societies. Interdependence, not independence, is at the heart of the issue, a term very familiar to those readers with knowledge of the work of Norbert Elias. Equally recognizable is the importance of a diagnostic approach to understanding the social dynamics involved in the greater power chances of one group over another.

32 years ago, Norbert Elias was invited to contribute to a conference, held in Amsterdam, Holland, on racism and discrimination. Translated and published here in English for the first time, this lecture was prescient. For, as Elias noted in his opening remarks, in 1984 English natives were closing their doors to relationships with Asians and Africans, Turks and Spaniards. And mutual resentment was increasing. Elias too noted the dynamics of the situation in Holland: in the increasing closure of the native Dutch population, in the relationships against minorities, and the increasing closure of relationships. In point of fact, the term 'racism' masked a problem for him: major differences such as those outlined above were not a function of skin colour or some genetic component but rather the form of behaviour: something learned as he put it. As Post emphasises in his foreword to the translation of the Prinsehof lecture, Elias may well have been the first to suggest the option of integration, a long-term process that could take three to four generations, and that involves demands on both established and outsider groups to form some degree of co-identification, in Elias's words, some change in their own social identity. Those readers interested in identity, at the level of individuals and 'nations', will find the Prinsehof lecture provocative, as will those more au fait with Elias's work on Involvement and Detachment. For in it he lays out a series of 'therapeutic suggestions', practical recommendations if you will, around the management of relations between established and outsider groups. Perhaps for the first time, we see an explicit inclination towards bridge building in this piece and, in the ensuing Q&A, some personal insights into Elias's experiences of integration/assimilation and stigmatisation/shame.

Goudsblom takes up the mantle of examining shame through the figurational lens, an emotion, he describes, as having a history. Elaborating on Elias's theory of human beings and their emotions, Goudsblom contends that shame is a contradictory signal of 'social pain'. In addition, no emotion of a human adult, shame included, is ever entirely unlearned. Human emotions have behavioural, physiological and affective components. Bearing that in mind, Goudsblom sets out to address a set of four inter-related problems: how do we recognise shame; when does shame occur; what are the functions of shame, and; are these manifestations, occasions and functions always the same or have there been changes over time, related as he contends to processes of civilisation. Without taking refuge in impenetrable or relatively detached sociological

jargon – in point of fact quite the opposite – Goudsblom also argues that claims of shame to be the master emotion may be exaggerated, not least because shame is derived from fear for loss of respect and affection. It is more than almost any other emotion an exclusively social one, arising and functioning in social interaction.

As with the learning processes associated with shame, involving stages or phases, in a similar vein Wouters makes the case, eloquently in this issue, for understanding love, and making love. Here Wouters, known more widely for his development of the theory of informalising processes, seeks to understand recent changes in romantic and sexual relations of young people from an historical perspective, specifically since the 1880s when social codes changed towards greater leniency (or informalisation) between men and women, boys and girls, parents and children. Wouters' paper sketches some significant moments in the interrelated processes of sexualisation and eroticisation and posits a theory about why, today, love has become more difficult, lasting love in particular. Rising demands and expectations, not only in levels of equality and intimacy but also in what constitutes a satisfying lust-balance, explain the new emphasis, in this century, on the love side of this lust-balance. And, if Wouters is correct, children and teenagers who are raised on a certain level of equality, openness and intimacy will expect to develop a similar, or even higher, level in relations of love in their own generation, akin to a figurational ideal. There is, in short, a social and sociological history to love.

Using Elias's concept of figuration, Gilbert examines the genesis of existentialism through an exploration of the intellectual context of Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard, in particular, structural shifts in the make-up of Denmark's court society during the nineteenth century. In this regard, process sociology is shown to have applications to social and intellectual movements. Gilbert holds that Kierkegaard's productivity and genius emanates from the subtle and emergent socio-historical contingencies, not just on the level of networks, but in the very personality structures of Danish intellectuals. In this Gilbert takes a contrary position to Collins on intellectual creativity. Undoubtedly his contribution will spur further debate on methodology but also on who constitutes significant thinkers in the philosophical networks under examination, and why. For as Gilbert contends, Elias's work can and should be applied to the sociology of ideas if we are to more fully unlock the complex social dynamics that define the creative production of ideas.

If ideas are critical to an understanding of social progress, then Lempert highlights a critical issue in the promotion of 'social progress' or 'social justice': there is little agreement among social scientists as to whether cultures really do have the potential to transform their social and political systems. Indeed, the same can be said of the countless organisations that make claims of social justice: few define what that means or call upon agreed measurement standards. Lempert revisits the myth of social progress in two ways: first, by examining the historic and religious origins of the idea of measuring human progress and, second, by seeking to test the idea empirically. Lempert presents a twenty to thirty year retrospective case study of social innovations through university education that demonstrates the difficulty, if not impossibility (or paradox), of actual social transformation. Here, having an insider perspective on the development of the 'Democratic Experiential Education' model, he argues that many of the changes that have taken place in higher education (at two major universities, Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley) have fulfilled the goal of achieving efficiency or adaptive political objectives but without any fundamental social progress. Even though the democratic experiential education approach potentially offered the greatest benefits to communities and to students, these were the very groups with the least power chances in the university and society and that were largely unorganised, the paradox being that the disempowered could not 'lift themselves up by their own bootstraps' when faced with other competing interest groups with greater power resources. In so doing, Lempert invites us to consider whether social progress is occurring, as an empirically observable and verifiable process, or if the idea is an ideological justification or even veneer for contemporary cultures and social changes, however temporary, that serve existing technological, social and economic needs.

The final paper in this first issue of 2016 examines the risks of corruption and the development of self-control by public officials in Denmark, Finland and Latvia. Šņitņikovs explains corruption through the use of sensitising conceptual tools from process sociology, in particular civilising processes, and changes in the direction of stricter self-control in conjunction with state formation. Through interviews with public officials, he argues that as state institutions develop, demands arise for a kind of conduct in state administration. This ethical habitus has a key role to play in the prevention and management of corruption. Šņitņikovs takes us from explanations of corrupt behaviour to distinctive aspects of the role and work of public officials, especially discretionary practices. From here, data from interviews with officials in the three countries exemplify the shift towards greater self-control, notably in Denmark and Finland, while in Latvia external control appeared to be more prominent. Šņitņikovs's main contention is that the civilising process strengthens the self-control of public officials and raises the 'moral costs' of committing a corrupt act while the length and continuity of state formation processes are further factors in the development and stabilisation of ethical self-control.

Once again, this diverse range of contributions highlights the extent to which tenets of process sociology are applied to a widening array of social phenomena. The allure of Elias's ideas is to enable the reader to connect apparently unconnected social phenomena – from self-control of public officials (civil servants) to love, social progress and shame. In fact, he always suggested that the overarching theory of civilising processes had the status of a working hypothesis that required continual testing, refuting and refining in order to maintain a two-way traffic between theory and evidence. This issue is one step in that direction.

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