

# Figurations

## Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

### ■ EDITOR'S NOTES

#### An Inaugural in Dublin

I shall be giving my Inaugural Lecture in the Chair of Sociology at University College Dublin on Thursday 6 April, 1995, at 8.00 pm. My title will be *Civilisation and Decivilisation*.

All readers of *Figurations* who are able to come to Dublin then will be most welcome. If sufficient numbers indicate that they are coming, I will organise a small informal conference at UCD the following day, Friday 7 April. That would be an opportunity for people to talk about their current work in a slightly less frenetic atmosphere than at Bielefeld.

I also chose a Thursday for my Inaugural because its proximity to the weekend will hold out the possibilities of (a) somewhat cheaper air-tickets, and (b) sampling the delights of Dublin over the Saturday and Sunday.

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#### And an Inaugural in Hamburg

Hermann Korte will also be giving an Inaugural Lecture, on taking up his new chair in the University of Hamburg. It will be on 20 April 1995, and entitled *On the Writing of Biographies*. Rather than at the University, the lecture will be given at the Literaturhaus in Hamburg.

### An E-mail Figurational Discussion List

Users of the Internet are requested to send their e-mail addresses to Kitty Verrips at SISWO:

(Verrips@siswo.uva.nl)

We should like this information not only as a means of contact in editing future issues of *Figurations*, but also in order to establish our own international e-mail discussion list.

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For this second *Figurations*, we seem to have produced a bumper issue. Following in particular the great success of the sessions at the ISA World Congress of Sociology in Bielefeld, we have contributions from many countries. Please don't expect every issue to be as large, however!

Contributions for the third issue should be sent to me in Dublin by 1 April 1995, either as hard copy, on disk, or best of all by e-mail to:

SMENNELL@ollamh.ucd.ie

In case you are puzzled by the name of the academic staff computer network at UCD, "ollamh" (pronounced "olive") is Irish - i.e. Gaelic - for "professor"!

*Stephen Mennell*

### ■ BEYOND ELIAS:

The XIII World Congress of the International Sociological Association, Bielefeld, 18-24 July 1994.

Nothing could have been more fitting a tribute to the unwavering seriousness of Elias's approach to studying human beings' unavoidable dependence on each other than the five crowded evening Ad Hoc sessions on Figurational Sociology in Bielefeld. A buzz of excitement was evident, as was commitment to testing theory and acknowledging well-founded criticism. If Elias maintained a ruthlessly sociological approach to very real and sometimes painfully observable problems of interdependence, inherited or contested power balances, social selves jockeying for improved position and sometimes seeking to understand the source of their unhappiness, equally there was no mistaking the open-minded and wholly non-devotional enthusiasm which characterized the seventy or more people who turned up evening after evening to sweat it out in midsummer temperatures of around 35°C. I for one am glad that philosophical wrangles, attempts to derail the scientific endeavour by testy invocations of "law-like", non-empirical and therefore unsociological concepts, were few and unsuccessful. Real-life issues compelled attention.

I can only hint at the scope of materials presented. Unfortunately, not every paper can be mentioned. But suffice it to say that extensions, modi-

fications and specific sharpenings-up of Elias's key propositions were very much to the fore. Most speakers took scrupulous care not to misrepresent Elias while recognizing the subtle riches of his insights.

A clutch of papers addressed the question whether processes similar to those observed by Elias in western Europe can be identified in social developments of other regions of the world (Elias himself, it may be recalled, in his 1930s *magnum opus* suggested the testing of such applications but did not systematically follow this project through). Helmut Kuzmics convincingly drew long-term comparisons between Austrian and English historical structural dynamics. We were also led to consider a vigorous plea for the relevance of social-developmental theorizing when applied to Japanese state formation processes (this from Johann Arnason, author of a recent refreshingly tentative and uncompromisingly sociological book on the origins and collapse of Soviet and East European ruling establishments). We considered volatile legacies of Established and Outsider tensions in post-1918 (post-Habsburg) and post-communist Transylvania (from Paul Nixon), the impact of forced migration in shaping embattled self-images among Polish-speaking Silesian communities (Zdzislaw Mach), the potency of Islamic fundamentalism (Dawud Gholamasad), and changing Afrikaaner fortunes and expectations (Berndine Nel).

Terry Wassall and Richard Kilminster provided stimulating and extensive material addressing the sociology of knowledge via Elias's conception of a thoroughgoing science of sciences, the operational net of which includes motivations, techniques, accomplishments, and reflexive interpretations of paradigm communities, their colleagues and sponsors. Nico Wilterdink and Ruud Stokvis provided welcome and belated empirical-theoretical excursions into the distribution of wealth and into advertising and consumerism - issues regularly the subject of passion in other "schools" of sociology or political philosophy; as is perhaps taken for granted, underdog-championing and

"monetarist-salvationist" propaganda are sometimes proffered as detached social science. The impact of long-term trends in the uneven distribution of income and wealth is most certainly observable in the generation of wider social inequalities in industrializing societies, where access to specialized rewards and satisfactions, acquisition of high-status consumer goods and concomitant self-assurance among certain groups proceeds interdependently with the exclusion of others, those who often cannot afford to yield to the advertisers' powerful blandishments, models of conspicuous consumption and sparkling cleanliness which set new standards of general expectation - and provide unforeseen opportunities for some to exert pressures on others. Figurational sociologists with commitments to separating findings from their values or preferences are indeed well placed to conduct further enquiry into a triangle of fast developing experience. This includes consolidation of the nation state, as well as increasing stress on supposed individual "autonomy", an "all-alone" self-motivation which is specious in the face of increasing enmeshment in the often opaque policy-making of international companies possessing enormous financial power and power to influence social selves on a geographic and psychological scale never before witnessed.

Yet another category of papers (from Ali de Regt, John Rundell and Wouter Gomperts) suggestively explored Eliasian expositions on matters emotional, nicely complementing Cas Wouters's extensive writings on informalization processes. The only paper addressing figurational approaches to leisure, to re-presenting mimetic display and changing attitudes among organizers and their publics, was Margarida Lima de Faria's penetrating analysis of the museum experience - again keeping values and preferences quite separate from empirical materials under consideration - where balances between two aims, to educate and entertain, have brought about noticeable attenuations in codes of behaviour deemed tolerable within "temples of culture". (Interestingly, Elias's work was cited in a few Sociology of the Arts presentations elsewhere at the ISA con-

ference.)

As Eric Dunning has often made plain, Elias's theories can stand much testing, modification and perhaps large-scale revision in the face of some of these empirical issues. At Bielefeld they prompted Jon Fletcher, Ian Burkitt, Fred Spier and Joop Goudsblom to reflect non-teleologically on the intertwined processes of civilization and de-civilization, gains and losses in interpersonal sensitivity as humankind adapts to the tensions of power-wielding, convergence and differentiation, symbolic statements of community, manifestations of we-ness predicated upon conceptions of not-like-us they-ness.

In conclusion, Joop Goudsblom's recognition of a threefold challenge embedded within Elias's work surely merits reciting here: (a) to locate and fill in the empirical gaps in Elias's original studies; (b) to explicate the concepts and propositions; (c) to extend research into other eras and areas. All of this can indeed be done with neither misrepresentation nor immunisation of Elias's theories. Bielefeld 1994 certainly provided material intensely germane to Elias's wider concerns and finely wrought accomplishments. The sessions were organised by Stephen Mennell, Joop Goudsblom, but above all by Kitty Verrips, whose assiduous care and attention brought everything to fruition!

*Paul Nixon*

## ■ ELIAS PAPERS IN THE DEUTSCHE LITERATURARCHIV AT MARBACH

After the death of Norbert Elias on 1 August 1990, the Foundation as sole heir had to resolve the difficult question of what should happen to his papers. It was soon clear that this question could only be definitively answered when we had an overall view and listing of the unpublished papers.

With the help of the Bochum University Librarian, Heinz-Georg Halbe, a plan was drawn up for a catalogue of the papers. It became the basis for an application to the Fritz Thyssen Foun-

dation for the financial backing necessary for the work. The application was successful, so during 1992 and 1993 Rudolf Knijff and Saskia Visser were able to compile an accurate catalogue of all the manuscripts, books, notes, recordings and personal documents.

After this work had been completed in the autumn of 1993, the question of what should happen to the papers could be discussed once more. In the meantime, it had become clear that the Elias Foundation could not successfully make use of Elias's Amsterdam residence at 13 J.J. Viottastraat as a permanent home for the papers and for the people who would possibly be working on them. Other possibilities therefore had to be explored. After long discussion and investigation of various alternatives, the trustees finally decided in January 1994 to hand over the entire collection to the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar.

The Deutsche Literaturarchiv was founded in 1955 with the task of collecting and preserving manuscript and printed sources of past and contemporary literature in the German language, and to disseminate them through scholarly work, exhibitions and publications. It is the successor to the Schiller Museum founded at the beginning of the century, and now has at its disposal superb buildings, the most modern storerooms, pleasant working spaces, and also facilities for overnight accommodation. At present it houses more than 600 collections of papers.

The contents of the archive are available for study by any academic or literary researcher, subject to the normal regulations that apply in archives. So the whole Elias collection can be consulted there. As in other archives of this kind, there are regulations concerning access to and utilisation of the materials. For instance, not every document deposited in the archive can be seen or used. This applies particularly to letters and manuscripts to and from people who are still living; in that case, the person in question must grant express permission. Besides that, unpublished manuscripts may not be published, even partially or in para-

phrase, without permission of the copyright holder. The Norbert Elias Foundation is the copyright holder. In order to prevent misunderstanding, it must be pointed out that the contents of the archive have to be consulted at Marbach itself. The existing catalogue is not a mail-order catalogue for photocopies. Anyone working at the Archive itself can obtain photocopies or microfilms of particular items, subject to the regulations applicable in each case.

The Elias Foundation hopes to have a fruitful long-term collaboration with the Deutsche Literaturarchiv. We have jointly agreed to advertise an Elias Marbach Stipend, which will be jointly financed and awarded once each year. We expect that a conference will take place in Marbach in June 1997 to mark the centenary of Norbert Elias's birth. It is intended that at the same time an exhibition on Elias will be mounted, and that the Deutsche Literaturarchiv will publish one of its renowned catalogues for this exhibition.

*Hermann Korte*

## ■ THE CENTRE FOR RESEARCH INTO SPORT AND SOCIETY

**in the Department of Sociology,  
University of Leicester**

The Centre for Research into Sport and Society was established in 1992. Its immediate roots may be traced to the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, established in 1987, and the MA in the Sociology of Sport launched in 1989. In a deeper sense, its roots are traceable to the pioneering work in the sociology of sport started by Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning in the late 1950s. Commitment to a figurational or process-sociological approach in both teaching and research remains one of the hallmarks of the CRSS.

The CRSS consists of four senior academics, Professor Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, Dr Kenneth Sheard and Ivan Waddington, together with ancil-

lary research and administrative staff. The Centre has two principal tasks: (i) to teach the campus-based MA and the distance learning MSc in the Sociology of Sport and Sports Management, and to teach the growing number of PhD students, and (ii) to engage in sports-related research.

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of our activities is the distance learning Masters degree. From its establishment, the Sir Norman Chester Centre has been inundated with requests for information on football research from the media, students at various levels in the educational system, and a variety of other interested parties. As a consequence, we decided that there must be scope for a Masters course in the sociology of sport. Since our commitment to and use of a figurational approach has been crucial to our football research, we decided to make this central to the new degree and to structure the course in terms of three core dimensions: (i) theories of sport and leisure, (ii) the development of the structure of modern sport, and (iii) issues in contemporary sport. This course has attracted an average of about 12 students a year since it began. This is a commendable performance, particularly in view of the conditions under which postgraduate courses in the United Kingdom have had to operate since the early 1980s. Notwithstanding the fact that the Economic and Social Research Council has granted the course "A" status, only two of our students have been given an ESRC grant over the period of the six years since the course's inception. The rest have had to finance their studies themselves. This is expensive: they have to pay their fees, find full living expenses, buy study materials and either give up or forgo employment. It is therefore not surprising that a substantial number of admirably qualified candidates found themselves unable to take up our offer of a place. A combination of occupational, financial and domestic constraints blocked their path.

It was this frustrated demand which led us to think in terms of more innovative modes of education. The University of Leicester already had three distance learning programmes

leading to masters degrees, so it was hardly surprising that our thoughts turned in this direction. We had three interrelated objectives. First, we wanted to meet this frustrated demand. Secondly, by adding the sports management component we wanted to pursue further an aspect of sociology - the policy dimension - with which our research into football hooliganism had brought us into contact. Thirdly, on the basis of the strength of these courses we wish to advance on a broad research front, focusing on such diverse areas as drugs and sport, sports medicine, physical education, the development of boxing, professionalisation of rugby, sport for people with disabilities, violence and sport, sports management and sport policies. At the moment we are awaiting the response from the ESRC to a request for substantial funds for a comprehensive study of the 1996 European Football Championships which are to be staged in England.

At the moment we have over 200 students in some 23 countries on our distance learning Masters programme. The course attracts students from three main categories - teachers and lecturers in physical education and sports studies, personnel from the sports/leisure industry, and thoroughgoing sports buffs. Where we can we teach the course in association with overseas universities, and we are optimistic that these ties will produce a range of reciprocal benefits. Our first intake of students is now at the stage of presenting their dissertations. The combination of "insider" knowledge of sport and sports-related issues which many of our students possess, and the capacity for detached critical analysis that we endeavour to instil in them, is proving to be immensely productive. Already, we have received a number of dissertations of publishable quality. The future looks bright.

*Patrick Murphy, Eric Dunning, Ivan Waddington*

## ■ ELIAS IN FRANCE:

**Norbert Elias and Political Analysis Colloquium organised by the Political Analysis Group of the University of Paris X Nanterre at the Institut International de Paris La Défense, 7-8 April 1994.**

In France, as elsewhere, the work of Norbert Elias has become known only belatedly, despite Raymond Aron's 1941 review greeting the publication of the first volume of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*. Not until the first French translations in 1973-4 did French academics begin to make - usually unobtrusive and not very numerous - references to his writings. Although uneven, their influence in many of the social science disciplines grew over a period of twenty years. No systematic or collaborative work, however, developed. The colloquium on "Norbert Elias and Political Analysis" therefore marked the beginning in France of thinking about and with Norbert Elias. Even so, it marked not so much a starting point of Elias's influence as the recognition of common research orientations through a meeting of academics with different perspectives but sharing the same interest in an indispensable body of work.

This multi-disciplinary colloquium was focused on the political dimension of the Eliasian analyses. But did it have to be limited to that dimension? To the organisers - themselves political scientists - it seemed that Norbert Elias's entire *oeuvre* could be approached and comprehended from that angle. In the words of the programme inviting participants to the conference:

It is not stretching the coherence of his thought to assert how much Norbert Elias has from the start contributed to political thought. Examining such themes as state-formation and the structure of absolutist power is enough to convince one of that. More significant, however, are his arguments linking the development of manners, the internalisation of constraints and the transformation of the personality structure to the monopolisation of legitimate physical violence. They con-

siderably extend the field of political analysis. The sociological theory of figurations completes the task of persuasion by presenting societies in terms of relations of interdependence and power balances. Finally, his discussions of the growth of national differences, and of the limits and uncertainties of the civilising process form another vital thread. These are some of the directions that the colloquium ... is intended to explore collaboratively. The programme is designed to demonstrate the continuing and various ways through which these ideas can be put to the test and subjected to criticism.

The two days of the colloquium were organised around several themes. First of all, some papers were directly concerned with Norbert Elias himself. They outlined the socio-biographical conditions for the production of his *oeuvre* (Bernard Lacroix, Philippe Chailan, Alain Garrigou), or his intellectual relations with other authors (Jacqueline Blondel), or considered some conceptual aspect of his thought (Catherine Colliot-Thélène). Other papers centred on subjects studied by Elias. One group of contributions concerned the development and interpretation of state-formation processes (Eric Dunning, Moncef Djaziri), national cultures (André Burguière), and international relations (Guillaume Devin). Another set was devoted to manners and civilising processes: papers on the psychic economy (Guillaume Courty, Claudine Haroche and Ana Montoia), on individuation (Charles Henry), and on decivilising processes (Stephen Mennell). Finally, a last group of contributions dealt more broadly with the uses of Eliasian thinking (Johan Goudsblom), and more precisely and in detail with developments in such empirical topics as "*savoir-être*" (Frédéric Neyrat), violence (Jacques DeFrance), the profession-alisation of politics (Eric Phélippeau), or the institution of the Presidency in France (Delphine Dulong).

The quality of the papers and the favourable reception of the colloquium fully lived up to the organisers' hopes, and the proceedings will shortly be published. The hope now

is that a better knowledge of the works of Norbert Elias will help to reinforce that intellectual boldness that he sought, and to orientate and stimulate research in the social sciences *sans frontières*.

*Alain Garrigou and Bernard Lacroix*

## ■ BULL'S SKIN AND BONE:

### Figurational sociology in Spain

Between 1982 and 1994, almost all Norbert Elias's books were translated into Spanish, and several of his articles have appeared in Spanish journals such as *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, *Revista de Occidente*, and *Archipiélago*. In 1994 a special issue of *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, the most important social science journal in Spain, was devoted to Elias, with contributions by several Spanish sociologists (Ramos and Béjar, eds., 1994). For the first time Elias's work has been included as one of the classics in the sociology of knowledge in the sole textbook on that subject written by Spanish sociologists (Lamo, González and Torres, 1994). Although only one book from the wider "Elias school", Abram de Swaan's *In Care of the State* has so far been published in Spanish (in 1992), all these publications together are enough to make figurational sociology accessible to a great number of researchers and students.

These are facts. Yet one has the impression that it has all been a supply-driven process, since the demand remains low. Figurational or process sociology has not become a fashion - or, more technically, a paradigm - in Spain in the same way as rational choice theory has, following the hegemony of American functionalism, German critical theory and "Habermasianism", or French Marxism and (post)structuralism.

But, anyway, why did it take so long? Why in the 1980s and not before (or later on)?

The usual explanation for Spanish intellectual exceptionalism generally - not just in sociology - is the isolation

of Spanish intellectual life under the authoritarian Francoist regime until the 1980s. That would apply in this case too, were it the case that figurational sociology had already been spreading elsewhere. But, as we all know, figurational sociology has only recently joined the sociological mainstream; so Spain is not so different in this respect from many other countries. Yet there are still some special reasons why Elias's ideas could not be successfully received in Spain any earlier.

Even though Spain was in the avant-garde of the political monopolization process - the formation of European nation-states - Catholicism ran against individualization and psychologization in Catholic-authoritarian countries. Rising secularization and democratization have contributed to social rationalization and reflexivisation. Significantly enough, reflexive (and reflexivizing) sociology is now present in our theoretical landscape (Lamo 1991).

Surely a principal component in the theoretical delay we are talking about was the weakness of Spanish theoretical sociology. Recent efforts (e.g. Lamo and Rodríguez Ibáñez, 1992) have been made to strengthen theoretical interest in sociology, and thus to assist the reception of new approaches like figurationalism.

Finally, apart from the factors I have mentioned already, an increasing interest in historical sociology - in Spain as elsewhere (Juliá, 1994) - has certainly contributed to the interest in process sociology.

Elias's work has, I think, been read in Spain in two different ways. First, some Spanish critical theorists have moved towards figurationalism. Historical materialism has been dropped, or has been made to evolve towards a rational choice Marxism. Its place has been silently taken by Foucauldianism (or, generally speaking, pan-textualism) and, to a much more minor degree, by figurationalism. In this first approach, the state and disciplinary regimes are a key variable: control and resistance in society are emphasised. Political consequences and normative horizons are addressed (see

Varela and Alvarez Uría, 1989). I would call this the macro/political approach.

The second approach has tackled the micro-level. Self-monitoring, self-control and so on are the key-words here. The state is a second-order variable. Psychological consequences are evaluated. This is the micro/sociological approach (see Béjar, 1992). The reception of figurationalism has only just begun. Up to now, figurational sociology in Spain has been flawed by a lack of empirical and comparative élan. Both of these blatant weaknesses are common in the practice of other theoretical approaches too. As far as I know, with only a couple of exceptions, no research has yet been undertaken on Spanish history or society by Spanish historians or sociologists which takes into account Elias's approach to any great extent - whether it be in the sociology of sport, historical sociology, sociology of literature or whatever. The two exceptions which must be mentioned are Gil Calvo (1991), who devotes some pages to a figurationalist approach to leisure and fun; and Béjar (1992), who has analyzed present-day women's magazines: it is her contention that there is a correspondence between these and the traditional manners books analyzed by Elias.

The way I would assess the situation of figurational sociology in Spain is to say: the bull is perhaps at present nothing but skin and bone, but it is becoming strong and brave enough to fight and survive in any theoretical arena. ("Bullskin" used to be a name for the Iberian peninsula. Don't panic at my metaphor: the bullfight is not the subject of the sociology degree or PhD in Spanish universities!) Figurational sociologists can learn a lot from Spanish culture by studying not very well-known social figurations and an idiosyncratic civilizing process - not only in Spain, but also in Latin America. Spanish sociology can benefit from the figurationalist framework, which has proved to be a powerful analytical and empirical tool.

*Francisco Javier Noya*  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

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## Elias's Books in Spanish

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- Humana conditio*. Barcelona, Península, 1988.
- Sobre el tiempo*. Madrid, FCE, 1989.
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- Mozart: Sociología de un genio*. Barcelona, Península, 1991.
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## ■ OBITUARY

### Rudolf Knijff 1956-1994

Rudolf Knijff, who died of AIDS on 28 September 1994, over the past fifteen years devoted an important part of his life to Norbert Elias - first to



Elias personally, then, after his death in 1990, to his memory and his legacy. That was no sinecure. Norbert Elias was an extraordinary man; and it was part of his extraordinary qualities that he could be very demanding. This put a heavy burden on Rudolf, especially at the beginning when, in 1981 as a 25 year-old student in political science at the University of Amsterdam, he found himself posted to the ZIF in Bielefeld to act as secretary, assistant, and general factotum to Norbert Elias - seven days a week, twelve hours a day. Understandably, he experienced moments of despair, all alone in the distant Teutoburgerwald. However, as he himself noted in a written memoir of the period, he found ways to survive, such as taking an occasional weekend off to go to Amsterdam. This was very much against Norbert's wishes; but Rudolf stuck to his guns.

This firm attitude enabled him to carry on working for Norbert for almost ten years. When Norbert first settled in his apartment in Viottastraat in Amsterdam, Rudolf came to live in with him. Later he came in only a few days a

week; for the rest of the week another assistant would work for Norbert. Those other assistants never stayed on for more than twelve months however, while Rudolf kept going for many years. He was the pivot on which the household turned.

He performed his task with great devotion. It was mainly thanks to his good care that there was order - not only in the chaos of Norbert's papers but in the entire house, from the kitchen to the wardrobes. Visitors always met with a good reception - Rudolf always saw to that, with a watchful eye on the supplies and a keen sense of quality.

His position was far from easy. I often admired him for the way he managed the balance between being attentive and maintaining dignity and self-respect. He had carefully drawn the boundaries between what could and could not be expected of him. A certain brusqueness sometimes helped him to maintain those boundaries.

Underlying Rudolf's longstanding relationship with Norbert were genuine affection and admiration for Norbert's work. Over the years Rudolf gained a thorough and intimate knowledge - not only of Norbert's published and unpublished writings, but of his entire way of working and thinking.

Rudolf was the one who was present when Norbert died, four years ago. After that he rendered invaluable assistance in ordering and listing the legacy - an extensive job in which he took upon himself the special task of sorting out and cataloguing the library. Fortunately, he was able to finish that task.

I always enjoyed working with Rudolf, and appreciated the mixture of personal commitment and detachment, of formality and friendliness that emanated from him. It was heavy blow to the Norbert Elias Foundation when it became clear that we would gradually be deprived of his services, which were so vitally important to our small foundation. We shall always continue to be reminded of the many contributions he made.

Johan Goudsblom

## ■ EMBODYING SOCIOLOGY

If the body has historically been something of an "absent presence" in social theory, the work of Norbert Elias occupies a similar position in social studies of human embodiment. This has prevented a dialogue between areas of study which have much to contribute to each other and, more importantly, to the development of sociology.

This lack of a dialogue is surprising for two reasons. First, the fluctuating conditions and implications of human embodiment are central to Elias's theory of civilising processes and his sociology of knowledge. Despite this, only a few sociologists of the body have engaged seriously with Elias's writings. Second, both figurational sociologists and many sociologists of the body share a dissatisfaction with the fragmentation of the human sciences and the binary oppositions and philosophical dualisms characteristic of much social theory. These joint concerns have, however, yet to tempt the bulk of figurational sociologists toward the covers of the written flesh.

Nevertheless, this situation is beginning to change. Recent studies on embodiment are increasingly sprinkled with references to Elias, and there is evidence of developing contact between the body and figurational sociology. While Bryan Turner's influential *The Body and Society* (1984) cites *The Civilising Process* as a formative source (before constructing instead a theory based on Hobbes and Parsons), Theweleit's (1987) study of fascist bodies engages more substantially with Elias by analyzing "armoured" flesh. Moving into the 1990s, Featherstone's collection (1991) actually contains pieces by Elias and Mennell, while Shilling's *The Body and Social Theory* (1993) includes discussions of "civilised bodies". Most recently, Falk's (1994) dissatisfactions with "civilising theory" do little to dissuade him from engaging in sustained dialogue with Elias.

In view of these developments, I want to identify three areas well suited to facilitating further interchanges be-

tween figurational sociologists and sociologists of bodies. My hope is that intelligent debate will contribute toward a sociology which recognises how "societies of individuals" develop histories, actions and philosophies which are, irreducibly, embodied.

1) *Consumption, culture and community.* Eliasian analyses of sport, food, and established-outsider relations share with social studies of the body an interest in the links between cultural categories, ritual activities and sensory experiences. Falk's study of the mouth, for example, is central to his charting the move at a sensual level away from "close contact" to "distance contact" senses (Falk, 1994).

2) *Embodying the sociology of knowledge.* Elias's sociology of knowledge shares an affinity with studies which examine forms of knowing and changing bodily orientations (e.g. Laqueur, 1990; Miles, 1992). These suggest that analyses of the evolutionary "lift off" provided by symbol emancipation should be complemented, and interrogated, by a focus on the continued implication of the body in symbolic schemes, forms of reflexivity, and ways of knowing. The metaphorical shift from *corpus mysticum*, to the King's two bodies, to the social body, for example, can be seen as but one manifestation of a deeper bodily change from medieval forms of "carnal knowledge" to modern modes of "cognitive apprehension" (Mellor and Shilling, forthcoming).

3) *Bodies and self-identities.* Goffman's writings on impression management and self-identity have been historicized by Elias's *The Court Society* and Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man*. Contemporary discussions about the reflexive self, representations of the body, emotion work and body projects would profit from being placed in a wider corporeal and historical context. (In this respect, it is an interesting exercise to read Giddens's work on modernity and self-identity through the spectacles provided by Elias's analyses of the sequestration of "animal nature" and death). It also remains for figurational sociology to examine how the

plethora of options, choices and uncertainties which surround contemporary relationships between bodies and self-identities impact upon such issues as the armouring of the body, affect control, and the many trials presently facing civilising processes.

Chris Shilling

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## ■ ALPBACH EUROPEAN FORUM

The Alpbach European Forum held its 50th international forum from 20 August to 2 September 1994, with lectures and seminars by prestigious speakers from within and without the academic world, on the theme *Time and Truth*. The programme included "Intellectual Profiles" of two European intellectuals who made important contributions to this theme - Albert Einstein and Norbert Elias. The lecture on Elias was delivered by Peter Gleichmann.



## RECENT BOOKS

Helga Nowotny and Klaus Taschwer, eds., *Macht und Ohnmacht im neuen Europa: Zur Aktualität der Soziologie von Norbert Elias*. [Power and Powerlessness in the New Europe: The Present Significance of the Sociology of Norbert Elias] Vienna, WUV-Universitätverlag, 1993.

This book arose out of a conference organised by its editors in Vienna on 20-22 May, 1992. The purpose of the conference was to explore the problems arising from the process of European integration, especially for Austria, and the contribution made by Elias's thinking to a better understanding of the process. The conference opened with an address by the Austrian Minister of Science, Dr Erhard Busek, and attracted considerable interest in the Austrian media. It was held at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Vienna, with the support also of the Austrian Ministry of Science, the Österreichische Nationalbank, and the Norbert Elias Foundation.

The papers included in the book are as follows (German titles in English translation):

Helga Nowotny (Vienna) *Introduction*  
Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh (The Hague): *Integration and disintegration processes in Europe today*

Anton Pelinka (Innsbruck) *Ethnic conflicts in Europe: the problem of identity*.

Nico Wilterdink (Amsterdam) *The emergence of Euro-Nationalism?*

Reinhard Blomert (Berlin) *The role of a changing Germany in Central Europe*  
Helmut Kuzmics (Graz) *English and Austrian national character*

Annette Treibel (Bochum) *Established and outsiders: the dynamics of migration processes*

Eric Dunning (Leicester) *Sport in the process of European integration*

Mario Erdheim (Zürich) *The unconscious in the civilising process*

Hermann Korte (Hamburg) *Glimpses*

*over a long life: Norbert Elias and the theory of civilising processes*  
Albert Reiterer (Vienna) *Austrian nation, German culture, European identity?*

Rainer Bauböck (Vienna) *Established and Outsiders*

Hans-Peter Waldhoff (Hanover) *International migration as a civilising process?*

Helmut Kuzmics and Ingo Mörrth, eds., *Der unendliche Prozess der Zivilisation: Zur Kulturosoziologie der Moderne nach Norbert Elias* [The Never Ending Civilising Process: The Cultural Sociology of Modernity after Norbert Elias] Frankfurt and New York, Campus Verlag 1991. ISBN 3-593-34481-5. DM 38 (paper).

This volume (arising out of a symposium in Linz in 1990) aims at clarifying the contribution of Elias's work to an understanding of modernity, and explicitly addresses the critique which treats it restrictively as a pure "history of manners". The book contains an introduction by the editors, contributions to a methodological reconstruction of some of Elias's main theses (by Bogner, Rehberg, Kiss, Fröhlich), on the formation of a bourgeois "habitus" in the transition to modernity (Smudits, Girtler, Vowinckel, Mozetic), on forms of self-restraint and self-control in modernity (De Swaan, Kuzmics, Hitzler, Blomert), on the civilised body (Barlösius, Lüdtke), and a bibliography of Elias's work from 1921 to 1991.

Wilbert van Vree, *Nederland als vergaderland: Opkomst en verbreiding van een vergaderregime* [The Netherlands as a Country of Meetings: The Rise and Diffusion of a Meeting-Regime] Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff - ISBN 90-01-91940-5; Dfl.59,-

This book elaborates upon Norbert Elias' theory of civilisation through investigating the holding of meetings during the state formation process in

the Netherlands as compared with other western countries. The following thesis is demonstrated: as larger groups of people have become more interdependent and/or the differences in power between people have diminished, they are increasingly forced to solve societal problems by means of discussions and agreements which demand an ever more precise, even-tempered and all-embracing regulation of behaviour and emotions.

It is shown that in meetings people force each other to nuance and differentiate their behaviour, especially their use of language, as they represent more people and have to show consideration for more people in their deliberations and decisions. This "meeting constraint" was weaker when networks of interdependencies were smaller and more unstable and/or the balances of power were less equal.

How the holding of meetings developed in the Republic of the United Provinces (circa 1600-1800) draws attention to an important long-term process: holding meetings frequently and regularly, peacefully and on equal terms, became a weapon of defence and a weapon of attack as well as a distinguishing feature of the Dutch upper class. By excluding others from political meetings, this upper class succeeded in giving its manners an exclusive and superior character and enabled it to characterize itself as a "meeting estate".

From the end of the eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century one-trend was dominant: the "parliamentarization" of meetings. From the end of the eighteenth century this process regained momentum with the creation of the nation state: an increasing number of groups and sections of the population was integrated in local, regional and national meetings through representation.

As differences in power and tensions between social groups diminished in the second half of this century, the formal rules on what one could and could not say during a meeting became more lenient; the informal rules, on the other hand, became stricter. This process of the "informalization of meet-



ing behaviour" is studied with reference to manuals on how to hold meetings which were published in the Netherlands from the beginning of this century. These manuals show that the professional world has undergone a process of "meetingization" and meetings have "professionalized" at an accelerated pace as the competition between states became less violent. The "meetingization" of professional life can be regarded as the most recent stage in the creation of an upper class that is forced to take more aspects of more people increasingly into account if it wishes to maintain its position of power.

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Han Israëls, Mieke Komen & Abram de Swaan, eds., *Over Elias: Herinneringen en anekdotes* [Concerning Elias: Recollections and Anecdotes] Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 1993. x + 125pp. ISBN: 90-73052-73-4

This small book was created in memory of Norbert Elias by his many Dutch friends. It contains 26 contributions from former colleagues, students and research assistants at the University of Amsterdam - among them Abram de Swaan, Joop Goudsblom, Cas Wouters, Ruud Stokvis, Rudolf Kniff, Anton Blok, Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh, Saskia Visser, Nico Wilterdink, Bram van Stolk.

Several papers contain rich accounts of conversations with Elias on issues relating to his sociological theories - for example, Wouters on decivilising processes, *Selbstzwang*, involvement-detachment, and the impressions Elias made upon him as a student in Amsterdam. Anton Blok writes about Elias's frustrations at feeling misunderstood by his contemporaries; There are interesting insights into Dutch views of Englishness (Elias the English Gentleman, by Eric Backer) and of Germanness (tensions in Marburg about Elias's contribution to the 1988 Psychosomatic Research Conference - Herman ten Kroode). Other contributors give a number of biographical and quite intimate vignettes which vividly reveal traits of person-

ality and character - van Benthem van den Bergh on an autosociogenesis of Elias, accounts of travel with Elias (Johan Heilbron and Rudolf Kniff), Cas Wouters on Elias's guilt about his mother's death at Auschwitz and how he coped with private emotions. And there are impressions of his working schedule in later life when he was heavily reliant on research assistants. Joop Goudsblom's recalls their first meeting in Leicester, and Maria Goudsblom-Oesterreicher the day of his funeral and the renewal of bonds between his friends.

In addition to those who have contributed to the book themselves, there are references to many others from the wider Elias circle (in Britain, Germany, Austria, US) and their association over the years.

One amusing feature of the book is that, printed in boxes on the bottom right-hand corner of the recto pages, are Bart Jonker's photographs of Elias lecturing in Bamberg in the early 1980s. If you flick the pages through your fingers, Elias moves!

Ann Buckley

## ■ CULTURE AND IDENTITY: CITY, NATION, WORLD

**The Second Theory, Culture and Society Conference, Berlin 10-14 August 1995**

Following the huge success of the first large-scale conference organised by the journal *Theory, Culture and Society* in Pennsylvania in August 1992, Mike Featherstone and his colleagues are arranging another gathering of the best and brightest, this time in Berlin.

The conference will be held at Berlin's International Congress Centre near Alexanderplatz. Hotel rooms will be available at reasonable prices at ICC and nearby - and at discount prices in the Lichtenberg quarter. We are promised "an outdoor party, live music, food on the Saturday night on Kather Kollwitzplatz in Berlin Prenzlauerberg, ... dinners, tours in the city arranged throughout the conference". Oh, and did I forget to mention that all

the current issues in social and cultural theory will be under discussion by day and by night?

Seriously, though, most recipients of this newsletter will be regular readers of *Theory, Culture and Society*, and many of us will have published in it. It has indeed served informally as the English-language "house journal" for Elias enthusiasts ever since it was launched in 1984 - though of course it publishes articles from many and varied schools of thought. The TCS 1992 conference was enormously stimulating and enjoyable, so I for one am looking forward to Berlin.

Details of the conference can be obtained from Professor Mike Featherstone, School of Human Studies, University of Teesside, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 3BA, UK. Fax: +44-642-342396; e-mail: TCS@tees.ac.uk

SJM

## ■ BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION:

**Study Group for Figurational Sociology**

We are happy to announce the formation of a Study Group for Figurational Sociology, to be affiliated to the British Sociological Association. The Co-ordinator is:

Dr Paul Nixon  
181A Gilbert Road  
Cambridge CB4 3PA  
UNITED KINGDOM  
Tel/Fax +44-1223-60927  
E-mail: AAB3@hermes.cam.ac.uk.

We shall be holding a number of sessions at the forthcoming BSA annual conference, which will be held at the University of Leicester, from 10-13 April 1995. Details will be circulated in the near future. All those (including colleagues from abroad) interested in being associated with this venture are invited to contact Paul Nixon at the above address. Suggestions for particular themes would be especially welcome.

■ EUROPEAN SOCIETIES:  
FUSION OR FISSION

European Sociological Association,  
Budapest, 28 August - 2 September  
1995

The second conference of the European Sociological Association will be held in Budapest August 28-September 2 1995 around the theme of *European societies: fusion or fission*.

Kitty Verrips, Stephen Mennell and Joop Goudsblom will be requesting sessions for figurational/process sociology as a sub-theme. That will give us a maximum of four 2,5 hours sessions (2 on Thursday, 1 on Friday, 1 on Saturday).

*Call for Papers*

We therefore request all readers of *Figurations* who would like to participate in these sessions to contact Kitty Verrips at SISWO as soon as possible after they receive this issue, giving the title and a brief abstract of the paper they would present. We have to send the programme for our proposed

sessions to the Programme Committee by 1 January 1995.

Membership of the European Sociological Association is US\$40 a year, but we have as yet no details of the conference fee. The ESA plans to organize what they call "research networks" - something along the lines of the ISA's Research Committees. We shall keep any eye on developments.

■ MEETINGS IN AMSTERDAM

The Dutch working group "Figuratiesociologie" [Figurational Sociology], based at the SISWO Institute in Amsterdam, is planning to have four meetings on the theme "the applicability of the theoretical notions of figuration studies in everyday life". To that end, speakers will be invited who have experience in business advising, ecological problems, economic networks, and the problems of crime and punishment.

Meetings will be held in the SISWO building, Plantage Muidergracht 4, Amsterdam from 3-5 pm on Fridays. The dates are 20 January, 10 March, 21 April, and 16 June, 1995.

■ CONTRIBUTIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in early May 1994. News and notes should be sent to the Editor, Stephen Mennell, in Dublin, by 1 April 1995.

Annette Treibel has agreed to act as Corresponding Editor for Germany, Helmut Kuzmics for Austria, Kitty Verrips for The Netherlands; Francisco Javier Noya for Spain; Franco Ambrogetti for Italy. Volunteers are sought from other countries to expand our international coverage.

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Researchers, institutes or libraries who would like to receive this newsletter should write to the *Figurations* address file manager: Judith van Rooyen, SISWO, Plantage Muidergracht 4, 1018 TV Amsterdam, The Netherlands, fax \*3120 6229430. E-mail rooyen@SISWO. UVA.NL. *Figurations* will be sent to them free of charge.

We should like to have on file not only an accurate and comprehensive mailing list, but also our readers' telephone and fax numbers and their e-mail addresses. Please fill in the form below and return to Judith van Rooyen, SISWO, Plantage Muidergracht 4, 1018 TV Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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