

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

■ David Lepoutre wins the first Norbert Elias Amalfi Prize

The Norbert Elias Amalfi Prize, awarded for the first time in 1999 for a first book by a new author, was won by David Lepoutre of Paris, for his book *Coeur de Banlieue*.

The prize was presented to David Lepoutre in Amalfi on 29 May 1999. This is the text of Johan Goudsblom's speech at the presentation:

Norbert Elias was the first recipient of the Premio Europeo Amalfi. He was a truly European sociologist: born in Breslau (Wrocław), he worked in the sociology departments of the Universities of Heidelberg and Frankfurt, then had to go into exile, first to Paris, later to London.

He was an influential teacher of sociology at Leicester University for a number of years, and after his retirement lectured at many universities in Western Europe, having his home base first at Bielefeld, and during his last years in his chosen residence, Amsterdam.

He made a great contribution to sociology, opening up new areas for research and reflection, and breaking through disciplinary boundaries between sociology and related human sciences such as history, psychology, and anthropology. The richness of his work is still being discovered and digested by scholars in all these fields.

Elias entrusted his legacy to the Norbert Elias Foundation. It was his express wish that the Foundation set up a prize to encour-

age and reward young scholars for excellent work in sociology and related fields.

The Board of the Norbert Elias Foundation is delighted that this prize can now be awarded for the first time, here in Amalfi, in close association with the prestigious Premio Europeo Amalfi. We have set up a selection committee, made up of Alessandro Cavalli and Carlo Mongardini as representatives of the Scientific Committee of



David Lepoutre

the Amalfi prize, and the members of the Board of the Foundation, Hermann Korte, Stephen Mennell, and myself. We have followed a procedure similar to that followed for the Amalfi Prize – asking a panel of colleagues to name an outstanding and promising first book in sociology, published in the years 1996–98.

We have received a number of interesting and promising suggestions. On the basis of this shortlist we have been able to make a

unanimous choice: *Coeur de banlieue. Codes, rites et langages*, by David Lepoutre, his first book published by Editions Odile Jacob in Paris in 1997.

Coeur de banlieue is a very well-written, extremely readable study of the street culture of young adolescents – mainly boys aged between ten and fifteen – in one of the large, poor suburbs of northern Paris. Lepoutre takes care not to involve himself in value judgements, and also to avoid sociological clichés (echoed by politicians and in the media) about anomie, disorganisation, and deviance. His work shows intimate familiarity with the social world about which he is writing – familiarity based on perceptive observation in fieldwork. He avoids lengthy theoretical discussions but, in a skilled and sophisticated manner, points to relevant theoretical viewpoints (including those of Norbert Elias) at appropriate moments. We are particularly impressed by his sensitive treatment of language, violence, and codes of honour.

While focusing on the microcosm of the youngsters in the banlieue, Lepoutre goes further than most ethnographers in linking this microcosm to its larger context. He shows how influences from the outside world are selectively received, with positive and negative reactions. Detailed descriptions of street culture, including sports (football and martial arts) and street arts such as rap, break dance, and graffiti, enliven the general picture. And, again, the descriptions are informed by unobtrusive references to the sociological and anthropological literature (both French and English).

This is a first book, and we may look forward to further work in which the author

EDITORS' NOTES

- This issue of *Figurations* is brightened by several photographs. Readers are invited to send us photographs of people and events for future issues.
- We try to include notices on all major books and articles which contribute to the figurational or 'process-sociological' research tradition, and scan Current Contents for this purpose. But the volume of publications is now so great that it is difficult to spot them all punctually when they appear. So once again we appeal to readers to tip us off about their own, and others', publications. Please don't hesitate to e-mail us about anything you spot – it is better that several people tell us about the same publication than that we miss it altogether.
- Because *Figurations* makes no pretence to be a refereed journal, and does not have the resources to provide independent reviews of all publications, we often ask authors to send us notes about their own books and articles. We have therefore introduced a distinction in this issue between the headings Recent Books and Articles – comprising independent reviews and journal abstracts – and Authors' Notes which are contributed by the authors themselves.
- Appeal for Memorial to Ilya Neustadt: Ilya Neustadt, a close collaborator with and supporter of Norbert Elias when he lived and worked in Leicester, is buried in an unmarked grave in the city. A fund is currently being organised to erect a headstone with the simple wording: 'Ilya Neustadt, Sociologist, 1915–1993'. Please send cheques to Pat Mumby, Department of Sociology, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK. Cheques should be made payable to the University of Leicester and marked on the reverse 'Ilya Neustadt Headstone Fund'. The fund will be closed at the end of December 1999 and any surplus will be used to provide an annual student prize.
- Norbert Elias's close friend Renate Rubinstein, the writer and columnist, is to be the subject of a forthcoming biography by Hans Goedkoop, literary critic for the Dutch quality newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*. Mr Goedkoop will be working on the book during his tenure as the first Writer-in-Residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, Wassenaar, in 1999–2000. A short essay on Renate Rubinstein by Elias himself can be found in *The Norbert Elias Reader*, edited by Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell (Blackwell, 1998).

may attempt to link his observations and insights more systematically to long-term developments and to wider theoretical issues. There can be no doubt, however, that this book represents a high standard of research and reporting. We find that it also fits very well with Norbert Elias's ideas about the 'human sciences': it is about real people and the way they cope with the problems they face in a social situation not of their own making.

■ Manners at the Screen: Socialization, Civilisation and ICT

This paper summarises the figurational perspective adopted in an research project in progress on *Lifestyles, Inequality and New Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)* which is being financed by the Asociación Española de Estudios de Mercado, Marketing y Opinión.

To be sure, an array of theoretical perspectives are suitable for the sociological analy-

sis of new ICT, particularly the Internet, and so they have already been developed by researchers – for example the post-structural Foucauldian approach (Jordan) or that using Giddens's approach (Cardoso). As empirical objects of research, while the study of 'virtual communities' is advanced, other aspects are underdeveloped – for example, the socialisation of young people into the new ICT.

The question we pose is: why should the figurational approach be better at analysing the social underpinnings and effects of ICT? The answer is: because it focuses on the key question of the relationship between social interdependence and individualisation processes. Growing interdependence leads to growing self-control. Equalisation, informalisation and self-regulation are interconnected. As a result, greater demands for self-restraint emerge.

In fact the Internet can be understood as the paradigm of those 'very long and differentiated interdependency chains' which 'no longer stop at any particular state frontier but almost literally bind to each other people all over the world' (Wouters, 443). So it

is not unreasonable to expect that the figurational approach will fit this object. However, as Mouzelis and others have pointed out, the hypothesis has to be substantiated in particular contexts. We have to 'look closely at context in time and space' (73).

Following this idea, I chose one concrete dimension and analyse consequences for education and socialisation. Latest data on access of children to ICT at home in several countries (UK, Flanders, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden) show that 9–17 year-olds are intensive users, spending more than half an hour a day on PC use, for games and other uses (Johnsson-Smaragdi *et al.*, Van der Voort *et al.*). As many as 85% of children in the Netherlands have access to a PC at home; the percentage for internet is 20%. In the UK percentages are 50% and 10% respectively.

Interdependence and equalisation

Interdependence is the social cement of the Internet. Virtual communities emerge when 'enough people interact for long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace' (Rheingold, 1994: 5). To achieve a 'critical mass' is a key variable in virtual communities.

Interdependence in the Internet is characterised by equalisation. There are several ways in which equalisation comes into play, fundamentally, through identity and many-to-many communication (Jordan). Egalitarianism in identity is achieved through the reduction of interaction to the screen. First, signs of identity are removed: on the Internet gender, race or age are not evident. Second, means for maintaining hierarchies are absent.

The novelty of Internet, compared to other ICT, is the complete decentralisation of control. It is totally anti-hierarchical. First, it allows greater participation, fostering libertarian, grass-roots communication. Second, it allows the permeability of information so that people can have more information (Jordan).

Nevertheless, equalisation has social limits. New inequalities emerge around the Internet, especially in access to the computers. As Dutton has underlined, there is a clear-cut income effect, more than education or occupation. But also in the Internet, for instance in discussion groups, symbolic

capital is unequally distributed – prestige and status inequalities in ‘virtual communities’ are maintained (Cardoso). But even so, both questions could be approached from the idea of the insiders-outsiders figuration.

Individualisation

ICT brings about a transformation of manners, beginning with the interaction with computers. Computers are close enough to encourage social responses. In fact they are treated as social actors (Reeves/Nass). People are polite to computers. Manners change. But there is a much more interesting consequence of ICT for the transformation of manners.

There are many ways in which ICT means a change in civilising process in the direction of individualisation. ICT, from the Internet to cable communications, makes possible the individualisation of information and leisure. It is one step forward in the individualisation of consumption. Access to the Internet is greater among postmodern consumers (Ueltzhöffer/Aschenberg), who are oriented to aesthetic reflexivity. Aestheticisation brings about the effort of self-discipline by the consumer (Giddens).

What is more interesting in this context is the change in manners associated with equalisation and interdependence. Interaction with people on the net has its own etiquette, or ‘netiquette’. Take for instance a recent netiquette handbook: twelve norms of behaviour are quoted by Morse. As a consequence of equalisation, netiquette is characterised by informalisation. In a context of acute interdependence, ‘manners at the screen’ are nurtured by self-control. As Morse writes, individuals in the Internet must be able to control themselves, to be responsible for their own behaviour. Equalisation means individualisation, and so manners are transformed by ICT.

From what has been said so far, the impression would be that ICT creates a strong individual. But here again the civilising effect of ICT has limits. New forms of technology make possible new forms of individualisation. Paraphrasing Foucault, it is a ‘technology of the self’. A differential building of individuality emerges, so that the sense of self differs from previous constructions of self. ‘Identity is both present in cyberspace and different to non-virtual space; identity is different enough online to

be called something different’ (Jordan). People are only ‘avatars’. In the Internet and e-mail, personal identity is fluid. Identity is in permanent redefinition.

ICT, education and the civilising process

So far I have elaborated on the civilising consequences of ICT in terms of the duality equalisation-individualisation. I have also shown some limits of this civilising process. I have done all of it in an abstract way. Now let us have a look at a particular context: children’s socialisation and education.

It has been argued that ICT brings about independence by freeing young people from the constraints of home and school. There are obvious consequences for education. Individualisation arising from the Internet allows the personalisation of enquiry. On the other side, the anti-hierarchical nature of the Internet makes it possible for children to develop cultures less dependent on parents and teachers. In the end, the result is challenge and resistance to conventional and traditional socialisation, and the individualisation of social control. So ICT means a ‘tectonic shift in the contemporary formation of adolescent identity’ (Holmes/Russell).

But this way of understanding the consequences of ICT for socialisation is probably biased, since once again ICT does not always have a civilising effect. On one side, qualitative empirical research by Noller (196-215) on three dimensions (individualisation, self-responsibility and self-description) showed that only a few young ‘computer fans’ were more individualised. They were oriented to *Fremdzwänge* and not to *Selbstzwänge*.

On the other hand, decivilising processes in the Internet emerge in many other ways. Violence is pervasive in the way young people use ICT: from video-games to the Internet games and neo-Nazi sites. If we look closely at manners at the screen we see that on the internet and in e-mail people are more likely to insult each other than in face-to-face interaction. This ease of being violent is called ‘flaming’ (Jordan, 83).

In this particular context of socialisation and education, as in general, ICT is ambivalent from a figurational point of view. ICT can have civilising and decivilising effects. We can only conclude with the possibility

pointed out by Mouzelis: ‘differentiated personalities, given the adoption of different cultural values, may interpret the growing interdependence in ways that might lead to either self-regulation or self-deregulation’ (Mouzelis, 74).

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■ Elias in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong

The social sciences in Mainland China have gradually resumed development in the past twenty years after a long period of stagnation due to political instability. Opportunities were open again for intellectuals to learn about the outside world. To catch up with the rest of the world, they

were eager to learn theories and research methods of various sorts and in different fields of study. Scholars like Weber, Habermas, Foucault and Giddens then became popular figures, especially in philosophy and sociology.

Elias was introduced into China by an historian in this atmosphere in the mid-1980s. Little had been followed up until last year when the Chinese translation of the first volume of *The Civilising Process* was published. The second volume is scheduled to come out this year. Two authors from the Sociology Department of Beijing University contributed altogether three essays introducing Elias's works in two books, one published last year and the other one earlier this year. These two books are intended as textbooks or resource books in teaching Sociological Theories in the department. These achievements, though they remain introductory, are important for the dissemination of knowledge of Elias in China. One of the authors says that he has just completed his PhD thesis at Beijing, part of which includes an analysis of Elias's ideas concerning the body. This work is the first attempt, as far as I know, to study Elias in depth in China.

According to an observer, there is an obstacle that blocks interest in Elias among scholars in China. Elias had some effect on writing history, but this effect has been very limited because, traditionally, history as a discipline of study is not concerned very much with theories. Sociologists doing empirical research are not interested in theory, either. Whereas those who have interest in theory feel that Elias's works are somewhat historical, and too empirical. Elias's situation seems rather paradoxical in the academic scene of China.

In Taiwan, people are more keen on integrating theory with research. They also show more interest in historical sociology. Quite a number of philosophers and sociologists holding teaching and research posts in Taiwan had studied in France and Germany before they came back there. Elias is not a new figure to them.

Elias was introduced in Taiwan at about the same time as in mainland China. In the last thirteen years or so, just about five articles on Elias were published. Elias's article 'The Retreat of Sociologists into the Present' was translated into Chinese. One student did a master's thesis on Elias at the So-

ciology Department in Taiwan National University.

I did my postgraduate studies at Leicester in England, and have been exposed to Elias's works since 1986. I started teaching Elias in Hong Kong in 1990. About two years later, the Sociology Department of Leicester started an MA distance learning programme in sport management. In terms of publication, Professor Stephen Mennell published a journal article in the Chinese language introducing Elias in 1991. I published an article comparing Elias and Habermas's conceptions of power in a Chinese journal of social theory last year. A scholar in Taiwan published a book review on Mozart in the same journal this year; she told me that she was preparing a Chinese translation of that book to be published later. This is where we have got to in Hong Kong.

On the whole, Elias is not yet popular in any these three places. The reception of Elias remains at an introductory stage. Fortunately, more and more of Elias's works are being translated into Chinese. Also, I am looking for an opportunity to join together the effort of several scholars from these three places to publish a collection of essays discussing Elias in some depth. Maybe these small efforts will contribute to raise our understanding of Elias to a higher level.

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■ WORK IN PROGRESS

A Qualification to the Established/Outsiders Theory

Doing ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviewing in a community located in the southern Austrian borderlands it was expected to find a negative attribution of Slovenians, just like 'Yugos' are commonly perceived as 'lazy, dirty and little civilised' throughout Austria. Instead, a very positive attribution of the Slovenians that was independent of the status of the attributing established people was found. This finding contradicts the 'established and outsiders' theory of Elias. Following that theory, the established should depict themselves like the 'minority of the best', whereas the outsiders are depicted like the

'minority of the worst'. I suggest to interpret this finding as follows: The established and outsiders figuration as described originally by Elias works only for a pride-based established community. In our case the old established elite has turned from a pride-based to a shame-based community through large-scale historic shifts, most of which involved setting new borderlines that turned the once centrally located wealthy town into a dead-end-railway-station. In this case of shifting power balances, the lines of self- and other-depiction shift as well: There is a strong tendency of the old established group to depict the former outsiders as the 'minority of the fittest'. That depiction of the outsiders is independent of the status of the person watching, whereas the depiction of the insiders is dependent upon the status of the person watching. The higher the status the more the in-group depicts itself like the minority of the best. The lower the status, the more the in-group depicts itself like the minority of the worst. That status-difference can be explained by the differing role-requirements: high-status people have to – by definition of their position – present a well-to-do public face to the audience whereas low-status people unreflectedly present their own subjective experiences. In applied terms that means that the perception of outsiders, be it outsiders by gender, colour of skin or ethnicity is dependent (i) upon the shame/pride base of the established and (ii) upon the behaviour of either the minority of the best or worst, as explained above. Thus, strategic points for counteraction are (i) leaders of established communities in their chance to start leveling communication, aiming for reconciliation as Scheff suggests in his book *Bloody Revenge* and (ii) people belonging to the best and worst of the outsiders, since they are the ones the perception of the outsiders depends upon.

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RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Jorge Ardití, 'Etiquette Books, Discourse and the Deployment of an Order of Things', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16 (4) 1999: 25–48. See the note on Jorge Ardití's 1998 book *A Genealogy of Manners in Figurations 11*. This article, as the title implies, is in Ardití's more emphatically Foucauldian mode.

Miriam Glucksmann, 'A Contingent Transmission of Sociology: Encounters with Norbert Elias', *Humanities Research* 1, 1999, 55–61.

Miriam Glucksmann, Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, is the daughter of one of Norbert Elias's oldest friends from Breslau, the distinguished physiologist Alfred Glucksmann who – having migrated to Cambridge himself – was instrumental in bringing Elias to England in 1935. Miriam has thus known Norbert as a family friend for as long as she can remember. In this charming essay, she recounts her memories of him, and of intellectual encounters which – though they did not turn her into a 'follower' – clearly made a striking impression.

Robert van Krieken, 'The Barbarism of Civilisation: Cultural genocide and the "stolen generations"', *British Journal of Sociology* 50 (2) 1999: 295–313, and 'The "stolen generations": On the removal of Australian indigenous children from their families and its implications for the sociology of childhood', *Childhood* 6 (3) 1999. See Robert van Krieken's article about his research on the 'stolen generations' in *Figurations 11*.

Joseph Maguire, (1999) *Global Sport: Identities, Societies, Civilisations*. Cambridge: Polity Press. ISBN 0-7456-1532-5

Global Sport by Professor Joe Maguire is an exciting contribution towards sustaining the idea that sport is central to sociology and equally, that figurational sociology has something distinctive to offer the sociology of sport. The frame of reference adopted by the author is global. He argues that modern sport is global and has a pervasive influence, affecting policy formation in areas as diverse as education and health, affecting national prestige and political relations. In this fashion his work greatly contributes to the globalisation debate and the increasing intensification of global interconnectedness. Using the figurational approach, Maguire develops a five-stage model of the global diffusion and emergence of modern sport. This long term process of the formation of global sport has emerged from the past through structured processes. However these processes also indicate that new varieties of sport cultures have emerged alongside a reduction in the contrasts between sport cultures. This argument is a subtle and interesting development of the Eliasian concepts of increasing varieties and diminishing contrasts and established-outsider relations. These concepts help us make sense of the global diffusion, patterning and differential popularisation of sports.

The book itself is divided into two parts. Part One maps out the broader historical and conceptual contexts of the global sport process and outlines, in preliminary form, Maguire's five stage model. This model essentially combines globalisation processes identified by Robertson with phases of sportisation. While there is not a precise overlap, there are common patterns. However, Maguire's essential point of departure is that an understanding of the global sportisation formation is bound up in an inter-civilisational analysis. He argues that the present global sport formation has arisen out of an interweaving between the intentional acts of individuals and social groups that are grounded in the relatively unplanned features of inter-civilisational processes. Building on this 'theoretical' base he leads us into Part Two, an exploration of the range of cultural flows that contour and shape global sport. Focusing on the interconnected patterns that sportisation processes flow from, in particular sports,

capital, personnel, technologies, landscapes and ideologies, we are treated to a series of substantively based case studies which probe the intensification of global flows that characterise the global sport formation. Here there is a unique consideration of how sport impacts upon our embodied identities which in turn is embedded in wider 'local' and national cultural processes. A feature of Maguire's work and indeed of figurational sociology as a whole, is the grounding of theoretical concepts in reality and social life. In this vein, he subtly explores the contradictory role that global sport plays in binding us to habitus memories and 'invented traditions', yet also exposing us to the values, feelings and images of the 'other'. This involves changes at the level of personality, body department and social interaction

Global Sport helps us to more adequately understand the power dynamics and interdependency chains within which we are located. It is a must for both undergraduates and postgraduates in sociology, media and cultural studies, history and geography, and to those involved in sport and leisure. Maguire gives us some insightful conceptual tools and a grounded sociological base from which we may deconstruct, construct and develop a global sport formation that is less wasteful of human lives and resources.

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Willem Mastenbroek, 'Negotiating as Emotion Management', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16 (4) 1999: 49–73.

The study of the sociogenesis of negotiating skills demonstrates the civilising of emotions. Courtly civilising processes were supplemented by an inter-courtly process that worked towards the renunciation of violence, deceit and humiliation. The changing ways in which people learn to deal with emotions were crucial. Over the years people learnt to become more versatile, they learnt to deal with their feelings and responses. Our understanding of this individual learning process can be improved by clarifying the collective learning process as it has developed over the past twenty centuries in the West.

This paper describes how negotiating was

experienced in early days. Luckily, some authors from ancient times provide us with penetrating insights. Their testimonies clarify in what direction behaviour and underlying emotions changed over time. Negotiating has become common practice in some societies. Actual problems in the theory and practice of negotiating are better understood when we recognise the changing pattern of emotion management in the development of this precarious skill.

Mestrovic, S.G. *Postemotional Society*. London: Sage Publications, 1997

'Postemotionalism', writes Mestrovic (p. 93), 'alerts one to the possibility that an uncivilising [*sic*] process runs concurrently with the civilising process. The perversion, disgusting habits, explicit violence, and other barbaric phenomena that have been banned from public life in Western, industrialised nations not only reappear but seem to grow stronger with time in the private realm of fantasy. "Other people's" barbaric reality – such as murders, rapes, and genocide – are watched on television by voyeurs bent on the civilising process. This voyeuristic, vicarious aspect of contemporary life seems to have escaped Elias completely.'

Au contraire, large chunks of Elias's writings – not to mention extensive research by those working under his influence – seem to have escaped Mestrovic completely. Where has he been these last twenty years?

Steven Russell, 'Reintegrative shaming and the "frozen antithesis" Braithwaite and Elias.' *Journal of Sociology* 34 (3) 1998: 303–13

This paper compares the use of the notion of 'shame' in criminological theory of John Braithwaite and the theory of civilising processes elaborated by Norbert Elias. It examines Braithwaite's suggestion that there are some deep 'resonances' between Elias's work and his own and concludes that their work diverges considerably, not only in terms of their fundamental understanding of the meaning of shame itself, but also in terms of their broader theoretical assumptions and perspectives, their intentions

and the uses to which their work might be put.

Dennis Smith, 'The Civilising Process and The History of Sexuality: Comparing Norbert Elias And Michel Foucault'. *Theory and Society* 28 (1) 1999: 79–100.

This paper, derived from one which Dennis Smith presented at the Elias centenary conference in Bielefeld in June 1997, has three tasks. The first is to demonstrate that a high degree of overlap in argument and method exists between two major works by thinkers who are usually regarded as being fundamentally opposed in their approaches to understanding society. The two are Norbert Elias's *The Civilising Process* and Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, especially the second and third volumes entitled, respectively, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*. The second task is to identify the modifications in Foucault's treatment of history, power and knowledge which occurred between his earlier work, for example *Madness and Civilisation* and *Discipline and Punish*, and his later work, especially *The History of Sexuality*. The third objective is to set out a research agenda which confronts some of the main issues arising from a consideration of some important remaining differences between Elias and Foucault.

Abram de Swaan, 'Widening Circles of Disidentification: On the Psycho- and Sociogenesis of the Hatred of Distant Strangers – Reflections on Rwanda', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 14 (2) 1997: 105–22. Not noted previously in Figurations, this article forms a diptych with De Swaan's earlier essay 'Widening Circles of Identification' (*Theory, Culture and Society*, 12 (2) 1995: 25–39), and points forwards to his current think about decivilising and dyscivilising processes.

Wilbert van Vree, *Meetings, Manners and Civilisation: The Development of Modern Meeting Behaviour*. London: Leicester

University Press, 1999. xiv + 370 pp. ISBN: 0-7185-0123-3

Wilbert van Vree's *Meetings, Manners and Civilisation* is one of the most important products of the 'Amsterdam School' of sociology to have appeared in English in recent years. It is an example of the best kind of sociology, but one of the rarest: the kind that can be read with enjoyment by the general reader for interest and enlightenment. Anyone who can be described as the general reader is also quite likely to be the general attendee at and general participant in meetings of every kind; and thus many of the fascinating questions discussed here will chime with personal experience. We take too much for granted in our everyday lives, and Van Vree makes us think afresh about many aspects, large and small, of how meetings take place in modern society. Why, at least in the richer countries of the world, can we complacently assume that no matter how severely they may disagree, participants in a meeting are unlikely to come to blows or to draw weapons? What is the significance of the chairman's authority, and how was it established? What is the origin of the chairman's gavel? How does the problem of confidentiality relate to the rise of the meeting as a typical way of doing business? Or, indeed, what is the significance of men not wearing hats in meetings?

The fascinating details with which Van Vree's book is studded form parts of a larger picture. He works on a broad canvas, and this is a work of major scholarly significance. The author shows how the rise of 'meeting regimes' is linked to many issues of central theoretical interest to historians and sociologists. He demonstrates, for instance, how the development of rules of order in meetings is tied to the long-term processes by which states were formed, how it was linked with religion, and with the intrigues of royal courts. He shows how meetings were themselves a means of instilling discipline, how Calvinists used them for this purpose, and how there thus emerged a 'Protestant meeting order'. The Dutch Republic is seen to be a 'game' of meetings, in which there was formed a 'meeting class' with its code of 'meeting class manners'. The book is replete with comparisons of meeting manners in Britain, Germany, France and the USA as well as in The Netherlands. There are quite marked differences in national styles of meeting manners, and, for instance, the stridently adversarial debating style of the Brit-

ish House of Commons – which rather alarmed many overseas viewers when parliamentary proceedings came to be broadcast on satellite television – is very long-established.

To readers of *Figurations*, it will be obvious that *Meetings, Manners and Civilisation* is a major application and extension of Elias's theory of civilising processes. As more and more people became enmeshed in ever more extensive webs of interdependence, as they were forced increasingly to live at peace with one another, their emotional makeup or 'habitus' gradually changed: from generation to generation they slowly developed higher standards of habitual self-constraint. In other words, as people became more and more interdependent with each other, and as power ratios between individuals and between groups and categories became somewhat more equal, a process of mutual pacification could be observed. These processes, as Van Vree lucidly demonstrates, were very clearly at work in the formation of 'meeting regimes'. Today, as he notes, the conduct of meetings is often more relaxed in style than was once common. This is a reflection of an 'informalisation' process widespread in western social life generally, which other Amsterdam sociologists have studied extensively. Paradoxically, though, it has been observed that the more 'informally' people behave in their dealings with each other in meetings – or in other contexts – the greater, rather than the less, the necessary degree of habitual self-restraint. The less rigid the social rules, the greater the demands imposed on emotion management.

One might ask in conclusion why this imaginative and original book about meetings should come to us from The Netherlands. After all, meetings are a pervasive part of business and social life in all industrial or post-industrial societies. Yet my impression is that most studies of meeting behaviour by English-speaking social scientists are either pragmatically concerned with helping businessmen or the parties to conflict to negotiate more effectively, or they focus on the microscopic linguistic details of behaviour in meetings. They take the very institution of meetings for granted. Perhaps Wilbert van Vree, almost in passing, shows why the Dutch should take a regime of meetings for granted only at their peril. In Holland, the sea posed a perpetual danger, a danger which could only be met collectively. The

dykes and canals which kept the land from flooding could only be maintained by common effort. Such were the realities of Dutch everyday life, and a regime of peaceful meetings emerged there at a remarkably early stage. Meetings, one may reflect, are a social activity *sui generis*, and in understanding them there is little room for Anglo-Saxon gut-reaction individualism of the kind that contends that 'there is no such thing as society'.

[Based on Stephen Menell's Foreword to the book]

Cas Wouters, 'Changing Patterns of Social Controls and Self-Controls. On the Rise of Crime since the 1950s and the Sociogenesis of a "Third Nature"'. *British Journal of Criminology*. 39 (3) Summer 1999: 416–31.

This attempt to explain the rise in crime rates since the 1950s in all Western countries focuses on changes in the pattern of social controls and self-controls, as well as changes in the balance between these two types of control. Between the 1950s and 1980s, the old conviction that being open to 'dangerous' impulses and emotions would almost irrevocably be followed by acting upon them, was destroyed. This conviction expressed a fear that is symptomatic of rather authoritarian relationships and social controls as well as of a rather rigid type of self-control, dominated by an authoritarian conscience. As social and psychic distance between people diminished, overcoming this fear came to be taken for granted. Social emancipation and integration demanded psychic emancipation and integration: only a more ego-dominated self-regulation allowed for the reflexive and flexible calculation that came to be expected. In these processes, increasing numbers of people have become aware of emotions and temptations in circumstances where fears and dangers had been dominant before. This paper aims at suggesting an explanatory connection between these social and psychic processes and the rise in crime rates in all Western countries since the 1950s. The central hypothesis is that as more calculative and flexible self-controls have come to be socially demanded, most people made these acts more likely in general, and more likely in particular to be committed by those sections of the popula-

tion that are relatively deprived.

Cas Wouters, *Informalisierung: Norbert Elias Zivilisationstheorie und Zivilisationsprozess im 20. Jahrhundert*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag: 1999. ISBN: 3-531-22182-5

This volume is one of a new series of 'study texts' in sociology. Cas Wouters here updates and supplements many of the essays which were published in Dutch in his book on *Love and Death*. The book begins by giving an overview of Elias's theory of civilising processes and then poses the question of whether informalisation represents a change in the directions of Western civilising processes. Subsequent chapters deal with informalisation in the relations between social classes, and in relations between the sexes, and the informalisation of mourning practices. The book concludes with a discussion of informalisation and social stratification in global perspective.

Cas Wouters, 'Die verlegte Rue d'Amour: Über Hans Peter Duerrs Kritik an der Zivilisationstheorie von Norbert Elias', *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 12 (1) 1999: 50–57. A shortened version of this article can be found in *Figurations* 9.

■ AUTHORS' NOTES

Johann P. Arnason, *Social Theory and Japanese Experience*. London, Kegan Paul International, 1997. xix + 559 pp. ISBN: 0-7103-0485-4.

This book approaches the debate on Japanese modernity and its prehistory from a civilisational perspective, i.e. with reference to distinctive and persisting civilisational patterns as well as long-term civilising processes. Both these dimensions of historical experience have been thematised by authors working in the field; it has proved more difficult to integrate them into a unified theoretical framework. The constitution and continuity of a Japanese civilisational tradition is analysed in relation to the Chinese model which dominated

the region: in the course of the seventh-century transformation of Japan, Chinese ideas and institutions were appropriated in such a way that space was left for a simultaneous reconstruction of Japanese identity, and an imaginary link to archaic origins was institutionalised as a counterweight to the cultural identification with an external but never politically dominant centre. This complex constellation should be seen as the civilisational background to the long-term dynamics of state formation, which in turn was central to a broader set of civilising processes.

The trajectory of state formation in medieval and early modern Japan is discussed with reference to Norbert Elias's work on parallel developments in Western Europe. Elias's analysis of feudal institutions as a context and counterpart to state formation, rather than a total social order, is a very useful guide to the much-debated question of contrasts and similarities between Japanese and Western feudalism: the two cases can be compared with regard to the changing relations between evolving state structures and the feudal setting to which state-builders had to adapt while making strategic use of some of its aspects. Efforts to monopolise violence and appropriate resources are as central to the Japanese experience of state formation as the Western one, but they sometimes took significantly different directions and led to different results. The early modern phase of the process (from the sixteenth-century unification to the collapse of the Tokugawa regime in 1868) was of particular importance to more recent developments, but comparisons with the absolutist state in Europe must be handled with care. The Tokugawa power structure was in some ways markedly less effective in monopolising violence and taxation; these weaknesses were, however, counterbalanced by other mechanisms of control which were in certain respects superior to Western regimes of the same epoch.

In the last section of the book, Japanese patterns of modernity are analysed from a state-centred perspective. It is not being argued that a grand strategy of the Japanese state explains all distinctive aspects of advanced modernity in Japan. But it can be shown that a developmental state, capable of re-examining its policies and redefining its relationship to domestic forces as well as the outside world, was the most central component of a more complex pattern. In particular, the specific features of capitalist

development in Japan are best understood in terms of a changing relationship to the state which initiated the capitalist transformation, intervened to regulate its unfolding dynamic, and adapted to its autonomous logic in inventive ways. The Japanese case is particularly instructive for the ongoing debate on state autonomy and its multiple meanings; in the last chapters of the book, this problematic is discussed in relation to Michael Mann's theory of the modern state and its social crystallisations.

Reinhard Blomert, *Intellektuelle im Aufbruch: Karl Mannheim, Alfred Weber, Norbert Elias und die Heidelberger Sozialwissenschaften der Zwischenkriegszeit*. 1999.

The 'Institut für Sozial- und Staatswissenschaften' (InSoSta) at Heidelberg University was created in 1924 by Alfred Weber out of the old University Seminar on National Economy. This book recalls this nearly forgotten institute, which was the most attractive institute for social sciences during the twenties in Germany. It deals with its teachers, amongst them the director Alfred Weber, the social scientists Emil Lederer, Carl Brinkmann, Arnold Bergstraesser, Karl Mannheim and, as student of Alfred Weber and assistant of the Privatdozent Karl Mannheim, Norbert Elias, who spent six years at Heidelberg, which transformed the young philosopher into a sociologist.

The three branches of the social sciences – national economy, politics (state science) and (cultural) sociology – were interconnected through the curriculum, and in some cases through the persons who taught it. The book shows the theoretical impact of the leading scientists, the controversies they had with each other (especially Weber and Mannheim) and gives an impression of some of the works of the students.

The main conflict at the institute, typical of the problems of the social developments of the time, broke out through a controversy about relativism. It shows the opposition between two approaches: the neoplatonic approach of Alfred Weber, which represented the mainstream at that time (with, for example Jaspers and E.R. Curtius) and a distinct functional approach on the other

part, represented by Karl Mannheim, developing the functional aspects in the work of Max Weber. Elias as the youngest and lowest ranking of the academic hierarchy was intended to set out a functional but especially historical approach, which has to be seen as the conclusion of the debate, initiated by Max Weber.

The newly found text of the proposal for the Habilitationsschrift which Elias had begun to write with Alfred Weber, 'Zur Entstehung der modernen Naturwissenschaften' is appended to the book.

Stefanie Ernst, *Geschlechterverhältnisse und Führungspositionen: Eine figurationssoziologische Analyse der Stereotypenkonstruktion*. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag 1999, 364pp. DM 48, ISBN 3-531-13322-5

Prejudices and stereotypes are on the one hand almost a widespread explanation for women's under-representation in senior leadership. On the other hand, argues Stephanie Ernst, stereotypes have been underestimated and reduced to socio-psychological issues. Stereotypes are being legitimated in so far as one thinks that they refer to something that is true. In contrast to these common explanations the author outlines the specific function of stereotypes in leadership positions, for example in business leadership.

Using Norbert Elias's theory about power balances between established and outsiders Ernst criticises what seems to be common sense and what is reduced to functionalistic explanations. The author follows the long-term forward and backward movements in the construction of bourgeois professions, of educational and academic life and summarises the conditions of the inclusion or exclusion of women and men in leadership.

She refers to etiquette books from the eighteenth century up to the present day career guides. This is possible because these specific genres offer orientation on how to succeed and to rise socially. They serve as media for self-understanding and coping with ambiguity while society is changing and providing new possibilities for formerly excluded people, including women. It becomes clear that the ambivalent and inter-

dependent process of establishing bourgeois professions and higher education is connected with the construction of gender differences. The blame gossip formerly directed against 'inferior' women has also been internalized by women and women as well as men have had to overcome many stereotypes – for example the incompatibility of family and business life, the neglecting of the family through so called 'egoistic' career-women, and so on. Ernst's thesis is that these ambiguities express the situation that women in leadership positions find themselves in, the process of transition from once having been outsiders in the business world to moving now towards being the established in certain leadership posts.

■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, ed., *Norbert Elias und die Menschenwissenschaften: Studien zur Entstehung und Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1996.

Not previously reported in *Figurations*, this book is the product of the conference on the work of Elias held in Essen in 1991. Besides papers actually presented at the conference, it also contains articles by Merz-Benz and Schöttker, and a German translation of Kilminster's essay on Elias and Mannheim.

■ RECENT CONFERENCES

La santé et la presse – Entretiens Franklin 4, Paris, 8–9 April, 1999

The Entretiens Franklin are devoted to problems of public health, and the fourth annual meeting focused on issues of information about health and medicine. Under the chairmanship of Patrick Champagne (Centre de sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture), this colloquium studied the main changes in the coverage of medical issues in the press, and particularly the increasing number of health scares and scandals. Several of these cases, such as the contaminated blood and the asbestos scandals, were analysed in detail. The development of popular medical knowledge was shown to be linked to transformations in the field of journalism in general and in particular to

medical journalism's becoming more specialised and increasingly recruiting its writers from among the medically qualified. Various case studies showed complex aspects and effects of the increasing prominence of these issues in the media.

Viewed as a process, the production of medical news is subject to the general constraints which govern journalistic strategies in a competitive world, and more specific constraints related to the important effects of health information on the behaviour of consumers. Anticipating the effects and reactions which can for example cause panics and bankruptcies no doubt plays an important part. This sensitivity to information probably explains the attempts made to 'manage' news rationally, as seen in the creation of new public health agencies.

A strictly ideological dimension of discourse about health was seen through a study of the demonisation of the 'lobbies', namely the economic interests acting covertly against the achievement of public health objectives. A round table brought together researchers, journalists and broadcasters for a fruitful and unusual exchange between parties normally much given to mutual mistrust.

At the gala dinner which, as usual, ritually concluded the colloquium, the theme of 'What is Drug' was proposed for the fifth Entretiens Franklin, which will be held in April 2000.

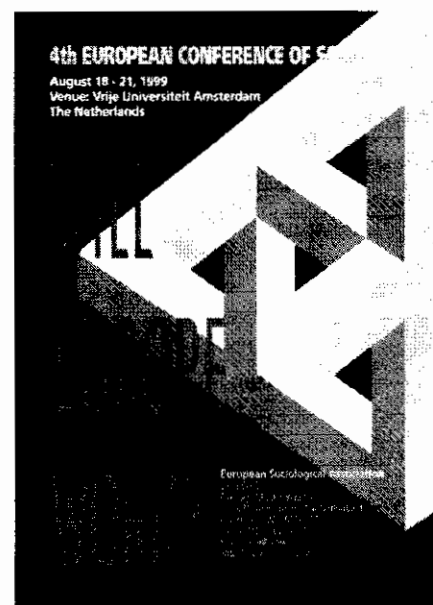
Alain Garrigou
Université de Paris X – Nanterre

**ESA Amsterdam 18-21 August 1999
Will Europe Work?**

The fourth conference of the European Sociological Association was held in Amsterdam on 18–21 August 1999. The theme chosen this year as we approach the millennium was 'Will Europe Work?'. The conference was well attended by sociologists from all over Europe as well as from other continents. The participants in the *Figurational Studies* sessions included at least one person from every continent.

The *Figurational Studies* sessions (as they were newly christened by Kitty Roukens, to avoid confrontation) were almost non-stop and included many excellent papers.

Abram de Swaan gave the opening plenary address, on the political sociology of the world language system. He summarised his argument for *Figurations* as follows. His lecture, entitled 'Vicious Circles and Virtuous Squares, on the political sociology of the world language system' was a foretaste of his forthcoming book, *Words of the World*. Humanity is fragmented into some



five thousand mutually unintelligible language groups. As they are connected by multilingual individuals, these groups nevertheless form a surprisingly coherent system. The many thousands of mostly unwritten, small peripheral languages are connected in clusters to a central (state or national) language. At the transnational level, the central languages are each connected to one of a dozen supercentral languages. These are linked together by a single hypercentral language at the hub of the system: English. A simple measure, the Q-value, characterises both the position of a language within this system and its utility as a means of communication.

These notions were applied to the language constellation of the European Union. For constitutional reasons all official languages of the member states are languages of the EU. Moreover, a latent 'voting cycle' operates in the Parliament, preventing any stable solution from being adopted. However, an informal culture may well develop and allow two, or at most three languages to be used in ordinary sessions, in committee meetings and in corridor conversations. In 'civil Europe', the first second language is already English, which is increasingly taught in secondary schools. In national societies an uneasy equilibrium of 'diglossia'

between English and the indigenous language(s) is emerging.

The first session was titled the *Sociology of Emotions*: Stephen Mennell presented a paper on the Protestants as Established and Outsiders in the Republic of Ireland and Cas Wouters gave a very interesting and innovative paper on new rituals in dying and mourning.

On Thursday we had two sessions. The first one was on *De/Dyscivilisation* processes. Abram de Swaan presented a paper revisiting his concept of Dyscivilisation and Dennis Smith discussed postmodernity and decivilising processes in postwar Europe in which he compared Elias and Bauman.

In the third session we had three great papers and between Natan Sznaider and Eric Dunning an extremely interesting discussion evolved. Richard Kilminster's paper on 'The Narcissisation of Contemporary Societies' seemed a little misplaced in this session but it was an extremely novel paper. Natan Sznaider presented a paper on the Holocaust entitled 'Compassion; Cruelty and Indifference: the example of the Holocaust' and Eric Dunning then presented a paper on Bauman, Goldhagen and Elias on the Holocaust.

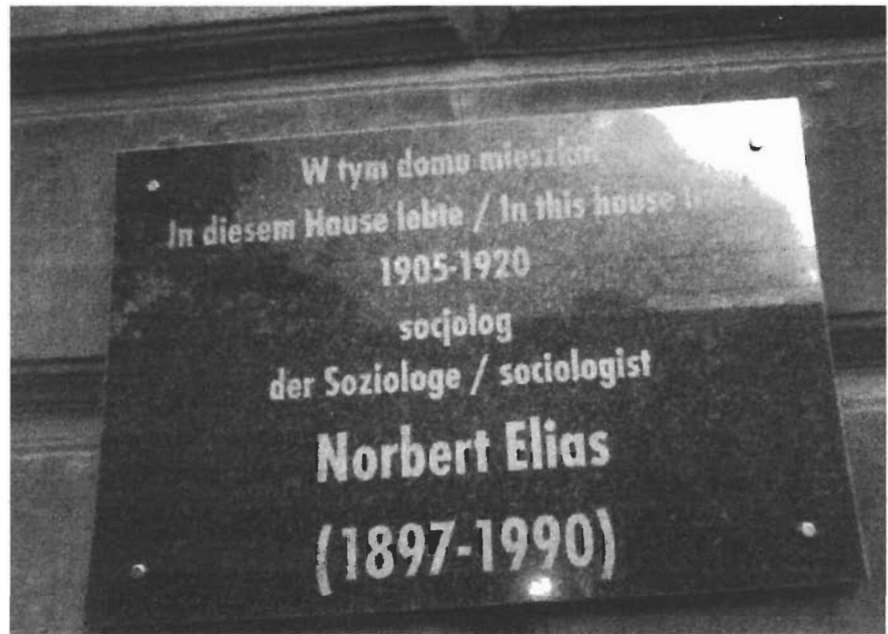
Zdzislaw Mach and Jason Hughes spoke in the fourth session on Friday morning. Mach gave a paper entitled 'The Decomposition



Professor Christien Brinkgreve

of National/Political Identity in Post-communist Societies', and Hughes gave an entertaining paper on the use of tobacco in Civilising Processes.

In the fifth session Nico Wilterdink talked on the causes of crime, provoking some se-



The plaque on the house in which Norbert Elias lived

rious criticism. Rafal Mazanek presented what I would consider to have been the best paper of all the sessions. It was full to the brim with fascinating ideas, very cleverly thought out and extremely well planned, written and presented and led to a lively discussion.

The final session was held very late on Friday evening which most people regretted. They had had their fill during the day and were tired. All the same it was well attended and as usual three extremely interesting papers were presented. First came Tim Newton's paper entitled 'Crossing the Divide: the natural and the social'. Christien Brinkgreve gave her paper on 'Women's emancipation and standards of emotional control' which led directly into Stefanie Ernst's paper on 'Negotiating gender and leadership in traditional and modern etiquette books'.

The Figural Studies sessions were certainly a great success, with numerous new faces among the familiar ones. Figural sociology made its mark at this thoroughly enjoyable conference.

Aoife Rickard
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Norbert Elias in Wroclaw/Breslau 24-25 September, 1999

Among the thirty or so participants in this enjoyable conference, organised by Herman Tak and Don Kalb, were several of us who had been drawn especially by curi-

osity to see Wroclaw, Norbert Elias's home town – then, of course, the German city of Breslau, but in Poland since the realignment of the borders at the end of the Second World War. The opening highlight was the unveiling by Hermann Korte of a plaque on the wall of the apartment block in Podwale Street, where Elias lived for much of his youth (his actual birthplace has been long since destroyed). The apartment faces the city moat, and the street is pleasantly tree-lined, though with trams clanking along it and with no doubt far heavier traffic than early in the twentieth century. Another plaque a few metres away, kindly translated



Herman Korte unveiled the plaque

for us by Rafal Mazanek, reveals that the building housed the headquarters of the local Communist youth movement for several decades after the war.

Breslau, like so many German cities, was badly knocked about by Allied bombing, and then scarred like so many Polish cities by charmless post-war workers's flats. But the old town has been magnificently restored, the Poles having lavished as much care on it as they have on more historically Polish cities. Thus, for example, the rather stately building that housed Hermann Elias's clothing factory still stands on the main square by the Town Hall.

After the unveiling began the conference itself. Dr Peter Ohr, the German consul in Wroclaw, was the opening speaker, and he was followed by Jörg Hackeschmidt on Elias's youth in Breslau and Lukasz Kaminski on Wroclaw since the war. Much discussion again centred on the puzzling question of why, late in his life, Elias took such pains to hide the fact that he had been a leading figure in the Zionist youth movement *Blau-Weiß*. Dinner followed in the appropriately-named restaurant *The Polish Court*.

On the Saturday, Dr Jan Waszkiewicz of the Silesian regional government opened the proceedings with some interesting remarks about potential usefulness of Elias's ideas in social planning, and the rest of the day focused especially on their relevance to understanding post-Communist Europe. Nico Wilterdink spoke about the theory of state formation and its implications for the contemporary world order. Christien Brinkgreve and Selma Sevenhuijsen presented a thought-provoking paper on 'Trust, Familiarity and Otherness: How to think about trust through the work of Norbert Elias'. This paper was intended as a contribution to a discussion with Piotr Sztompka, who has been studying the growth of trust in Poland since 1989 – before which society was marked by a very low degree of trust. Piotr intended to be at the conference, but was unwell and unable to come.

Bram de Swaan presented a further refinement of his ideas concerning decivilising and dycivilising processes, Ton Zwaan gave a foretaste of his forthcoming book in a paper on nationalism and decivilising processes in Eastern Europe, and Zsusa Ferge discussed civilisation and the welfare state in east central Europe. Eric Dunning – arriving belated, having missed his plane the



The house on the main square where Herman Elias' factory was

previous day – provided a rousing finale, championing Elias's sociology against rival contemporary theorists.

All in all, a thoroughly worthwhile and valuable conference, albeit occasioned by a plaque! One sad note, however: the Department of Sociology at Wroclaw University was entirely unrepresented: apparently its members are unaware of Elias's work and his local connections.

SJM

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

International Conference: Norbert Elias and Social Anthropology 21–22 September 2000

French Society of Ethnology and University of Metz (France)

The work of Norbert Elias has attracted the attention of historians, political scientists

