

Summaries

The Public Domain. The social construction of public space.

Jack Burgers & Jan Oosterman

The re-evaluation of city-life brought about an increased interest in public space. Competing for private investment, cities boast the quality of their public spaces. It is in the tradition of urban sociology that efforts were made to clarify the notion of an urban public domain. In the most important contributions public space is related to the emergence of the bourgeoisie in the cities of late-medieval Europe. In this article we argue that it makes no sense to evaluate the quality of life in the contemporary city in terms of the bourgeois notion of a public sphere. Every epoch creates its own public space. In the contemporary city the public realm has become a pastiche; a mixture of a variety of historic conceptions.

Elias and the Neo-Kantians. Intellectual backgrounds of *The Civilizing Process*

Benjo Maso

In his later books and essays, Norbert Elias engaged many times in polemics against epistemology. Elias favoured 'a process-sociological theory'. Elias presents his views as contrasted with the philosophical tradition, but this is untenable. In fact, all the objections he raises against philosophers, e.g. his critique of a static approach, or his rejection of the subject/object dualism and the *homo clausus*-conception, are in line with the philosophy of the Marburg School, one of the two most important factions of neo-kantianism in the first decades of this century. Elias' ideas show a marked similarity with those of Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945). Their thoughts are often formulated in almost identical terms.

It is shown that Cassirer's epistemology, based on the idea that advance in knowledge depends on a transition of substantialism to relational thinking, first presented in his *Substance and Function* (1910), also constitutes the theoretical foundation of Elias' *The Civilizing Process*. This does not mean that Elias should be considered a simple follower or imitator. Any attempt to apply Cassirer's philosophical insights to a sociological study poses many problems, which were barely solved at the time Elias wrote his *chef d'oeuvre*. In that respect, *The Civilizing Process* is an original and important book.

However, Elias is not entirely consistent in his application of Cassirer's radical relational epistemology, which he only accepted with some reserves. Like his philosophical teacher Richard Höningwald, Elias seems to have felt that the concept of substance could not be abandoned entirely. It is argued that the most important flaws of Elias' theory of the civilizing process are directly related to the traces of substantialism it contains. A radical relational

revision of Elias' sociological model seems called for.

Wolves and Humans. Changes in a relationship

Lily E. Clerkx

Modern ethologists study the behaviour of wolves, primarily in the northern parts of North America and in Russia. They give a positive picture of wolves and oppose preconceived notions on the behaviour of these animals. One such notion is that wolves attack and eat human beings. On the other hand historians who study European history find evidence that wolves have actually attacked and eaten human beings in the past. I found such documents about Flanders in 1588 and De Peel in 1811. This contradiction led me to place the relationship between man and wolf in a long term perspective. It turns out that the relationship changed as a result of changes in human societies. Both views on the behaviour of wolves are correct but they apply to different circumstances.

Student Fraternities and The Formation of Elites

Serafine Hillege & Meindert Fennema

This article investigates the role of traditional student fraternities ('studenten-corpora') in the elite recruitment in the Netherlands. Our research focuses on the percentage of fraternity board members ('senators') that reaches an elite position in the corporate elite, the administrative elite and the political elite. One of the most striking findings is the prominence of the fraternities of Utrecht and Leyden in the process of elite recruitment. The confessional universities of Nijmegen, Tilburg and the 'Free University' of Amsterdam scored high in the recruitment of the political elite, very low however in the recruitment of the economic elite. 'Senators' from the non-confessional universities on the other hand, were recruited more frequently in the economic and administrative elite than in the political elite. The degree in which fraternity board membership played a role depended on the representation of patricians and noblemen in those boards. The higher the aristocratic representation in the board, the stronger the impact of boardmembership on elite recruitment.

Fragmented Europe: The bourgeoisie, commercial capitalism and state formation in early modern Europe

Maarten Prak

Europe's special place in the world is often thought to be the result of the efforts of one special class, the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie's central role in the development of capitalism and the modern state, crucial processes in the 'Rise of the West', made European social structures unique, as compared to those of other societies. This essay proposes that, contrary to what is generally suggested, capitalism and the modern state did not develop at an even pace and in the same

environments. Early modern Europe harboured, instead, two social systems, one related to commercial towns, the other to territorial states. These social systems had different structures, and thus different mechanisms of operation, that made them, to some extent, mutually exclusive. They were also, again to a certain extent, separated geographically, commercial towns were concentrated in a broad belt that ran from Italy to the North Sea and Baltic coasts, and territorial states were situated to the West and East of that zone of high urbanisation. The two social systems implied different forms of political dominance, and thus different positions for bourgeois elites. In the urban social system the bourgeoisie's dominance was based on the political autonomy of merchant cities; in the states' system on bureaucracies. This pattern is illustrated by empirical evidence from Denmark, the Dutch Republic, France and Germany.