[Book review of:] Excitement Processes: Norbert Elias's Unpublished Works on Sports, Leisure, Body, Culture

van Hilvoorde, Ivo

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the world (except perhaps Canada), soccer does not have to compete with the 5000-pound football gorilla. And yet, despite soccer (in general) not being marginalized outside the US, women's professional soccer does not enjoy the respect you might imagine, primarily due to untamable patriarchal elements. So, it's not just economics. But economics can't be ignored. It is interesting to contemplate how US soccer, professional or otherwise, might be perceived differently were it not both an economic and cultural stepchild to football.

Kicking Center is not just a good book but an important one. Allison's careful research and accessible writing could help foster a trend to treat organized sport more like a dependent variable than an independent variable. Typically sociologists will look at sports as a conduit for perpetuating and legitimating various inequalities and injustices. Allison acknowledges that, but also flips the causal connection to examine how organized sport itself is patterned by these inequalities and injustices. Allison reminds us that organized sport, even at the youth level, is not just a set of human interactions and contested terrains of meaning. Organized sport is also a business, largely (maybe primarily) informed by the logic of corporate capitalism. We might want to pay more attention to that.

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Jan Haut, Paddy Dolan, Dieter Reicher and Raúl Sánchez García (eds), *Excitement Processes: Norbert Elias's Unpublished Works on Sports, Leisure, Body, Culture*, Springer VS: Wiesbaden, 2019; 322 pp.: ISBN 9783658149116, $74.99 (pbk)

Reviewed by: Ivo van Hilvoorde, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

It must have been an exciting three months for Jan Haut, when he spent his time in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar, Germany, searching for new Norbert Elias material. The search was initiated based upon Eric Dunning's hint that Elias planned to publish a new book on the genesis of sport as a sociological problem. The search led to the discovery of partly unknown manuscripts, notebooks, drafts and sketches. After a workshop in Marbach, a group of dedicated scholars decided to publish the material, supplemented with interpretations and discussions by a larger group of Elias experts.

The book is structured in six separate parts, including an introduction and conclusion. The introduction summarises some of Elias' main periods, ideas and concepts. This introduction helps the reader to understand the historical timeline and the value of the missing pieces in Elias' work on sport and leisure. The four remaining sections are structured around the four manuscripts that are now published for the first time. These new papers are complemented with essays that reflect on these four papers.

The first paper was written in the period 1960–1963, and is entitled 'Spontaneity and self-consciousness'. The paper immediately draws the reader into Elias' rich and complex thinking. It illustrates the added value of a long-term historical perspective on issues such as the relations and demarcations between work and leisure and spontaneity versus self-consciousness. In his characteristic style, Elias relates these questions to broader issues on developments of modern societies and the interdependencies that these developments generate. Although the text was written in the early 1960s, it invokes many new questions on work and leisure, emotional control from a perspective of civilisation, controlled decontrolling of emotions, aggression and violence. These perspectives remain relevant for current issues, such as the role that modern digital technology plays in the fading demarcation between work and leisure or the role of modern electronic shooting games in our understanding of real versus playful violence. The conceptual framework is still valuable for exploring emotions and behaviour in leisure time and sport.

It is still engaging to confront it with more contemporary examples, for instance when Elias writes on the swinging of the pendulum between emotional spontaneity and self-consciousness in each society. 'The professionalisation and commercialisation of the production of leisure enjoyment for others has led, in societies such as ours, to various types of unspontaneous, highly self-conscious and professional performances of spontaneity' (49). This reminds us of the orchestrated cheering of North Korean girls during the Olympic Games in South Korea (2018).

Although written more than half a century ago, the reader is wondering what direction the pendulum is swinging these days. Moreover, Elias' question as to why emotional spontaneity should be regarded as a thing of value remains intriguing, not only for sports, but also in other domains where self-expression and creativity are valued for different reasons.

The commentaries by Dieter Reicher and Helmut Kuzmics help the reader to understand the value of this missing paper. Reicher interprets Elias' paper as an intellectual laboratory for studying sports, leisure and arts. In a note he stresses the fact that it is an oral presentation, and that Elias might not have had the intention to publish the paper. Nevertheless, he emphasises the importance of the manuscript, because it bridges the gap between the early work of Elias and later publications about sports and leisure. Kuzmics' paper is a thought experiment, to test Elias' theory of utopia, 50 years after the paper was written. Again, this essay illustrates the actual relevance of this work. Kuzmic illustrates this relevance with the example of the increasing competition that people experience within the sphere of work and public life. '[I]t has now become a universally shared conviction and postulate that children of just five years of age should be made fit for learning' (114). He concludes that the distance between real society and utopian society has not shrunk but has perhaps become even larger.

The second paper is called 'Fragments on sportisation'. It is a compilation of extracts from three typescripts, which were intended to be part of a book on the development of sport in England. The book was never published, but the material sheds new light on some core sport sociological debates, such as the role of aggression in the diffusion of sports. The commentaries again help the reader to understand the significance of this essay. Jan Haut makes clear how the examples chosen by Elias (boxing, cricket, greyhound coursing and foxhunting) fit within a broader plan to illustrate the diffusion and

variation of sports. He uses the text to reopen an older debate on the role of tolerated violence in the rise of modern sports. The essay is discussed in the context of the argument put forward by Stokvis (2005) that the level of tolerated violence plays a role, 'but more central for our understanding of the rise of modern sports is the desire to have supra-local, regional and national races and matches for which one had to agree on common rules' (Stokvis, 2005: 113, cited in Haut, 148).

Dominic Malcom, author of the second commentary, is also triggered by the text to comment on this argument – not surprisingly, as he was one of the actors in this debate (see Malcolm, 2002). After expressing his initial disappointment about this manuscript because of the incoherence in the text, the lack of a sense of purpose and innovation, Malcolm uses the manuscript to reflect on his debate with Stokvis on the centrality of violence in the development of modern sport. According to Malcolm, the new material seems to provide elements of support for Stokvis' contentions that the desire to suppress violence was not the prime mover in the modernisation of folk games (166). At the same time he makes clear that in some cases, such as cricket, the phase of diffusion may be fundamentally shaped by issues of violence control.

This section on 'sportisation' is partly a technical, academic debate and an interesting puzzle for Eliasian scholars. On the other hand, these perspectives offer the general reader a broader view on the role of violence in the evolution of different sports, but also on civilisation processes with regard to current and future developments of new sports. For example, it offers a framework to question the type of violence and level of civilisation that is illustrated in modern games and e-sports (where 'virtual killings' are normalised).

Section three of the book continues with some of these issues and is called 'Sport, violence and state formation'. It is based upon two of Elias' documents, dealing with English and French versions of boxing and duelling. The manuscripts were probably produced at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. In France, boxing retained many of the characteristics of lower-class fighting, whereas in England boxing became highly regulated in an earlier phase (178). Elias uses these differences to shed light on issues of power, monopolisation of violence and state formation.

The commentaries are written by James Sharpe, Paddy Dolan and Raúl Sánchez García. In their essays, Sharpe and Sánchez García illustrate how the new manuscripts deepen our understanding of the civilising process. At the same time, the authors remain critical. Sharpe is aware of the modern interpretation of Elias' work as pretty shaky history, but still, 'good to think with' (232). Some of the commentaries really help us to better understand Elias' manuscripts. Dolan's essay is a good example of this. Dolan makes clear how the manuscript on boxing can be seen as a continuation of his earlier work on sportisation processes and how it relates to *Quest for Excitement* (Elias and Dunning, 2008).

The fourth and last section is based upon a German presentation by Elias on the 'Rediscovery' of the body. The text was meant for a lecture at the seminar 'Die Wiederkehr des Körpers' at the Freie Universität Berlin in 1981. This section, with a commentary by Michael Atkinson, is a pleasure to read. Elias takes the time to question and criticise the title of the seminar. He makes clear that it is not the body that is rediscovered, 'but the physical dimension of the human being as a subject of academic reasoning' (278). According to Elias, this is questionable and misleading because it is based upon the

acceptance of the dualistic nature of the human being. This is not only a philosophical or anthropological argument put forward by Elias, but an important question as to how the human sciences should collaborate to study the body as a complex process, instead of a thing, that can be distinguished from the 'psychic' or the 'mental'.

In his commentary, Michael Atkinson states that Elias' life-long theoretical agenda smashed disciplinary boundaries, and he makes clear how valuable this interdisciplinary thinking is for a broad variety of contemporary issues. Elias' thinking has highly influenced generations of sport sociologists and can even be seen as a precursor to Latour's notion of the body agency within his actor–network theory. 'But yet again, sociologists of sport have not pursued the sort of material-biological significance of the body (*en masse*) that Elias articulates in his unpublished essay, save perhaps for the separate works of Joseph Maguire and Eric Dunning' (299). With this lecture (which he never gave for health reasons) Elias shows his interdisciplinary power and it reminds the reader of the need for interdisciplinary research. As Atkinson states: 'there are often scarce grounds for interdisciplinary teams to conceptually meet and research on the same theoretical (even theoretical) playing field. Needed here are truly interdisciplinary research agenda[s] with interdisciplinary implications' (300).

Atkinson argues that no sub-discipline is as influenced by Eliasian theory as the sociology of sport (298–299). One of the reasons for this is that sport provides an ideal context for linking the biological with the affective and the social. The focus on processes and the interdisciplinary perspectives on the body are still valuable and important to understand sport-, health- and movement behaviour in a broader context and without some of the limitations that are inherent in monodisciplinary perspectives. Several authors make clear that there is also a need for interdisciplinary science to understand contemporary issues. Atkinson gives the example of attention deficit disorder (ADD). Even – apparent clinical or medical – issues such as ADD should also be considered from a social and historical perspective.

In a concluding essay Stephen Mennell underlines the fertility of the general processual approach, the avoidance of static conceptualisations and the sheer synthetic power of Elias' thinking (313). I agree with Mennell that the significance of the work is accentuated by the commenting authors, brought together by the editors. The essays place the new pieces of the puzzle within the broader evolution of Elias' work and thinking. I'm not sure if I agree with Mennell's lamentation that 'it is a great pity that Elias only just lived into the computer age, because his method of working was ideally suited to a technology that makes possible endless and seamless revisions' (311). In some respect, this would have made the editor's job much easier, but at the same time it would have devalued the work of the historian or sociologist who wants to know how the work and thinking of Elias changed and developed.

As Mennell notes, the commentators are not uncritical and slavish disciples of Elias, but all in different ways illustrate the potential, and still current, value of Elias' work. I can only underline Mennell's compliment that the editors of the book have done a marvellous job of deciphering as much as they have. They have found the right match between manuscripts and commenting authors. The commentary papers are highly diverse in terms of style and perspective. To me this diversity adds to the quality of the

book, because it illustrates the richness and still current value of Elias' work and the enormous variety of perspectives and questions that his work can still generate.

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