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Figurational Social and Cultural Sciences (I)

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Abstract: This case study describes the acidification of precipitation, soil and water in the eastern regions of the Dutch province of North Brabant as a result of ammonia released from manure produced in intensive livestock farming, introducing the theme of studying the importance of changing ways in which people interact with each other, with themselves and with their environment, leading to a discussion of the aims of 'Figurational Sociology,' based on the insights and works of philosopher and sociologist Norbert Elias.

Keywords: Norbert Elias (1897-1990); Peter Gleichmann (1932-2005); Johan Goudsblom (1932-2020). Acidification of precipitation, soil and water; Figurational sociology; Figurational social and cultural sciences; Dutch North Brabant bio-industrialization; Sewer construction; The Civilizing Process; Urban wastewater disposal.

Introduction

Eastern villages in the Dutch province of North Brabant often have a characteristic structure. The church and bell tower form the elevated center of a village, visible from afar. Around the front part of the church, and next to the left side of it, is the cemetery. Typical village family names can be found on the gravestones. In front of the high, massive doors of the church is the '*brink*' (the village green or village square) with an extension on the right side of the church building as an access alley to the parsonage. The village square is mostly planted with trees, to cast pleasant shade on those shopping and enjoying themselves on market and fair days. Directly opposite the entrance doors of the church, the '*brink*' is bordered by the town hall, the homes of local notables, perhaps by a bank branch, and by cafés, sometimes also by a restaurant, but always without exception by a chip shop. Surrounding the village green are the houses of civil servants, one or two primary schools, perhaps a secondary school, and there are shops and homes of local merchants. Around this concentric circle around the village square, that is, around this village center, are scattered here and there the farms with their long, low stables, and the villas of the 'new rich'.

One of the characteristic villages in the eastern part of North Brabant is called Sint Anthonis — '*Sint Thunnis*' colloquially. During weekend evenings, the Sint Anthonis village center is also the focus point for young people of neighboring municipalities. Cars, mopeds and bicycles parked on the '*Brink*' then form hedges around a statue of the catholic saint after whom the village is named. This decidedly appears to be a guard of honor around Saint Anthony, but also looks like a tribute for certain animals, one of which is united with the saint in the statue's stone: pigs. East Brabant is literally and figuratively infected with these profitable animals. Literally, because there are more pigs than people in this part of the Dutch province. Figuratively, because the unbridled expansion of the pig population has recently been put to an end. This legal stop sign, in the form of an expansion ban for all pig fattening farms is directly related to difficulties inherent in this type of intensive livestock farming. I am referring here to problems of acid rain and acidification of the soil and of surface water. 'Factory farming' has not only been identified as a local

eastern North Brabant problem but has even been declared an international political issue. For example, a brochure on acid rain shows that in the eastern parts of North Brabant acid precipitation (expressed in acid units per hectare per year) in the 1980s was the highest in the whole of the Netherlands (see *Note 1*). Extremely high acidification values were even measured in and to the east of the 'Peel region.' Acid precipitation, and in direct relation to it acidification of surface water and soil, has consequences for, among other things, forest and heathland stocks in the Netherlands. Trees die and heathlands gradually turn into grassland. It is therefore not surprising that in the eastern regions of North Brabant, in the northern strip of the neighboring province of Limburg and in the southern regions of the other neighboring province of Gelderland, conifers were dying in large numbers due to air pollution, acidification of the lime-poor podzol soils and damage by fungi that can grow on, and in, diseased trees, while symbiotic mushrooms disappeared from acidified soils. For example, fens near Nijmegen were densely overgrown by grass that replaced other plants, so that even Scottish highland cattle and oxen from Eastern Europe had to be 'imported' to eat the grass that rapidly proliferated in forests and replaced heathlands in the '*Hatertse Vennen*' (Hatert Fens) near Nijmegen.

Acidification of Precipitation, Soil and Water

Acidification of precipitation, soil and water in the eastern regions of North Brabant was mainly a result of ammonia (chemical formula: NH_3) released from manure produced in intensive livestock farming — namely pigs, cows, chickens, and turkeys. This manure was partly used to fertilize agricultural land. So-called 'floating stable manure' in particular released a lot of ammonia into the air. According to the 1985 brochure on acid rain from the Dutch Ministry already referenced, spreading this form of manure on the fields leads to large emissions of ammonia. Measures against ammonia pollution were therefore advocated (see *Note 2*).

What we see outlined above is actually a paradoxical situation. The problems surrounding factory farming in the 1970s and 1980s were both planned and unintended consequences of a common agricultural policy of the Member States of the then European Economic Community (EEC) — now European Union (EU). Dutch anthropologist René Jagers (1982) briefly described the 'opening up' of the 'Peel region' and surrounding regions in his book about a North Brabant bandit, nicknamed the 'Black Rider.' By improving the drainage of the 'Peel region' and reclaiming it, this rather inaccessible Dutch region was made suitable for agricultural purposes until the 1920s. The converted and podzol soils were transformed into agricultural and grasslands with the help of fertilization. New roads improved infrastructure, and many small villages were freed from their centuries-long isolation. Yet these lands did not generate any substantial income for the farmers. This only changed after the common agricultural policy of the EEC Member States was launched in the 1960s:

> The main objectives were: 1) to increase the productivity in the agricultural sector, 2) raising the living standards of the farming population, 3) stabilizing agriculture markets and 4) reasonable consumer prices (Verrips & Zwaan, 1979, p. 52; translation J.S.).

The fact that farmers in the eastern regions of North Brabant indeed started intensive livestock farming on a fairly large scale during the 1960s and 1970s, and also set up and expanded their agricultural area for animal feed products (for example maize instead of buckwheat) has everything to do with the opportunities offered by the EEC agricultural policy. All kinds of favorable circumstances then led to a development from small farmers to factory farming: land consolidation, good veterinary inspections, opportunities for renovation of farms, the presence of branches of banks that provided credit, the presence of animal feed distribution companies, regulated export rules, a rapidly growing development of infrastructural conditions for the supply of raw materials and removal of products (for example, slaughterhouses punctually collected the to-be-slaughtered pigs from the farms).

Factory farming in the eastern regions of North Brabant can be seen as *planned* consequences of the policy of the agricultural ministers of the EEC Member States. In this way, land consolidation facilities and claims created the conditions for the transformation of previously highly parcelized landscapes. This was possible thanks to the successful land consolidation of large areas sown with forage crops in the 1970s and 1980s. These large, contiguous areas in turn provided the conditions for efficient harvesting methods by large, tailor-made machines. Slaughterhouses paid fixed and guaranteed prices to farmers for the good ('A'),

the best ('AA'), but also for lower qualities of pork. The quality of the pork supplied was high in these regions of East Brabant. It was, among other things, the result of good veterinary guidance and supervision, punctual delivery of refined animal feed, and modern stables with a sophisticated layout. Looking back, several objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC Member States have been amply achieved, thanks to the efforts of many individual farmers, suppliers, veterinarians and others.

However, the extremely high acidification of precipitation and soil can be seen as *unintended* consequences of the successful development of intensive livestock farming in the eastern regions of North Brabant. According to the classification into types of 'unintended consequences' by British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1986, pp. 13-14), the acidification problem is one of many 'perverse effects' of human actions. The result of the development of factory farming, resulting from a series of rational actions of many farmers (and others) carried out to some extent independently of each other is irrational for each and all of them. The acidification of air and soil, due to ammonia emissions from manure, among other things, affected the atmosphere and quality of life of everyone involved in intensive livestock farming, but also of others. The private interests of farmers were clashing with common interests. And since common interests were threatened (forest conservation, clean air, good drinking water), higher echelons of policy and governance took action. The Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment was not only tackling the acidification problem at state level, but also in an international (EEC) context.

And since measures were taken that hindered the free disposal of farmers over the manure produced on their own farms, measures that affected the farmers' finances, it was precisely those measures where one could have expected actions from farmers. It seemed inevitable that the policy outlined by the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the measures already proposed would provoke resistance from the farmers involved. The farmers' free disposal of the manure produced by their animals, *i.e.*, the use of it at their own insight. judgment and discretion, was (partly) taken away from farmers by higher authorities. In other words: farmers became more dependent on the decisions of others, but as a group they exerted influence on them: unintentionally, as with the ammonia related problems, but consciously through action groups organized to counteract announced measures. An example: in 1986 farmers already took into account the '*Meststoffenwet en Wet Bodembescherming*' (Fertilizers Act and the Soil Protection Act) that came into effect in 1987. Unfortunately, they did so in a 'peculiar' way. The Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* of May 3, 1986, reported that some farmers in East Brabant spread manure on forest land where trees had been cut down. These farmers seemed to buy forest land and cut down the trees with the Forest Act in hand. On these deforested lands, unhindered by legal restrictions, they distributed excess manure.

Many individual people in the Netherlands, and far beyond, were thus connected through new chains of dependency and influence. Chains of connections between individual urban and rural people with each other are undergoing constant change over time. These processes of influencing each other, the processes of changing interdependencies between people, do not only take place at national or supranational levels. Within agriculture, for example, relationships between farmers and employees, farmers and spouses and parents-in-law and children were changing rapidly. Since the transition from a small farm to a factory farm, all kinds of dependencies and influences on those involved have changed in form, content and intensity.

Dutch Anthropologist Ans Hobbelink has investigated and described such changes at farms on the sandy soils in the municipality of Aalten in the Dutch province of Gelderland. She concludes in her master's thesis:

> The process of disappearance of multi-generational households, the changing business practices and socio-economic developments in the countryside — which are intertwined — have led to this. Dependency relationships have changed, which has consequences for young farmer's wives, an expansion of choices and a strengthening of their position of power. (Hobbelink, 1979, p. 52; translation J.S.).

The gradual mechanization, intensification, commercialization and other processes of change on farms therefore have distinctive components of continuous change in the interpersonal relationships on and around the farms. In other words, the ways in which people interact with each other and with themselves are

also constantly changing, paralleling the ways how people interact with their environment, so in this case with changes at the level of farm management. The various forms of coercion arising from the practice of certain agricultural and livestock farming methods (and the associated use of resources) simultaneously influence and depend on interpersonal relationships and forms of coercion prevalent within farming families. The layout of the stables, but also the layout of the homes on the farms and the associated living and working relationships are a reflection of this.

An interesting news item in the coverage of (then) Dutch Queen Beatrix's visit to the North Brabant village of Deurne during the Queen's Day celebrations there in 1986 was that farmers in the vicinity of Deurne had been asked not to spread manure on the fields on that holiday. After all, the bad smell would certainly have spoiled the festivities! Anyone who knows the eastern regions of North Brabant knows that such smells were not unusual in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. So, in addition to the environmental problem of manure, its smell was unpleasant for many. On some days in rural life, the stench of pig feces and pig urine was unbearable and an annoyance to many.

Wastewater Disposal in the Cities

Similar annoyances also existed in the larger cities, not only in the Netherlands but worldwide, two centuries ago. With increasing residential density in the cities and in their homes from about 1800 to about 1880, the increase in the stench of urine and feces became a terrible annoyance and even unbearable for city dwellers in Western Europe. In cities and towns, it was not animal feces, but human feces and urine that produced the stench. Even though some improvements in urban sanitation had come about at the beginning of the nineteenth century, mainly due to fear of infectious diseases like cholera (Goudsblom, 1979), hygiene in the larger cities of Western Europe was still poor in the middle of the nineteenth century. The stench of the many feces in the open air made it necessary to take the construction of sewers in cities seriously. That the process of introducing (or sometimes improving) 'wastewater disposal' could not be completed without social struggle is evident from an instructive explanation of the 'relocation of physical activities' by German sociologist Peter Gleichmann (1979). Through legal obligations, city residents were forced to 'entrust' their feces and urine to the sewers that were constructed in the cities. In fact, city residents lost free access to their own urine and feces, thus losing the opportunity and the rights to use these substances at their own discretion.

But this was not all. City administrators were often expected to ensure that people in the cities paid taxes for the 'services provided.' City officials were opposing the surreptitious withholding or failure to disclose feces and urine by imposing fines. Through the threat of punishment, feelings of guilt were evoked about and among those who did not comply with city regulations relating to the removal of human excreta. According to Gleichmann, many traders collected human excreta — this had been done in the cities for a long time — to sell them to farmers. Farmers around the big cities used the human feces collected in the cities as fertilizer on their land. So, in the past, there were city residents who earned a living by collecting poop and other household waste with a horse and cart. However, these types of work were being displaced by canalization and sewage system construction.

We can draw a parallel here with what was happening in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. 'Quirky' farmers who dumped excess manure in ditches, for example, not only received fines, but also received disapproving reactions. Such farmers were forced through punishment to feel guilty for violating the applicable provisions, just as was the case with late nineteenth-century city dwellers who did not care about provisions regarding the disposal of excrement and urine. Major changes apparently do not come without effort, resistance or additional guilt and social pain when violating applicable laws.

According to Gleichmann, the fact that people have indeed, very generally speaking, developed feelings of guilt and social pain when removing feces and urine from cities (and villages) is evident from the terminology used relating to these matters, applied in the present. Words like (in the Netherlands) '*stadsreiniging*' (urban cleaning), '*kanalisering*' (canalization) or (in Germany) '*städtische Abwässerbeseitigung*' (urban wastewater disposal) with the neutral character that these words carry, do not indicate the removal of excrement from houses and cities. Many terms describing the removal of feces and

urine are euphemisms and do not evoke painful feelings. The use of these words implies that one does not wish to be reminded of the exact activities they indicate. Using such neutral terms for cleaning up poop and pee reflects a certain civilization standard. The socialization of defæcation processes has led to people developing feelings of shame, social pain, shame, embarrassment and guilt regarding these activities, which they then had to take into account when interacting with each other.

Let me clarify this statement with another aspect of the socialization of defæcation processes. Regarding the causes of the irritating stench in nineteenth-century cities, Gleichmann (1979, 254-255; translation J.S.) quotes someone who stated in an 1886 report on workers' housing in Strasbourg, France:

> Of course, there have been bear pits, latrines, and manure trenches near houses in the cities for centuries. But for the majority of city dwellers, and especially the people in rural areas, it was possible to meet their needs at anytime and anywhere. When we would enter one of their houses, [we would notice that] the corridor used as a pissoir leads to a dirty, scary garden where toilets spread their scent.

In the nineteenth century, people in the larger cities could not ignore the stench of urine and feces. In marketplaces and other public spaces, but also in and directly around houses (as shown in the above quote), the odors and the penetrating stench evoked feelings of disgust. People simply could not avoid becoming aware of the stench produced by themselves, by acquaintances and by strangers.

With the removing of the old-fashioned cesspools from the gardens and backyards to the outside walls of the houses, and later into the interior space of houses, the act of defæcating and peeing gradually disappeared from the sight of strangers and acquaintances. Regulations and the construction of sewers and canals outside the houses went hand-in-hand with 'sewage canalization' inside the houses. With the external 'wastewater drainage,' the development and use of the water closet installed in the houses also came to the fore. Urinating and defæcating were increasingly banned in places other than the now 'relocated' toilet, and were associated with timidity and feelings of shame, and even with social fears.

This development from an outside cesspool to an internally relocated, roomed toilet was accompanied by the disappearance of (fairly) public performances of defæcating and peeing of mutually known but also of mutually unknown people. On a psychological level, the relocation of physical activities meant that people also consciously privatized themselves in this regard, and that they started to behave more shamefully and more painfully aware of the exposure to such activities by others.

With all kinds of city regulations relating to water supply and 'wastewater drainage' to and from houses, and with building regulations and precise location determinations of toilet rooms and ventilation ducts, people also increasingly knew 'their place' when defæcating and peeing. In the nineteenth century, urinating and defæcating in the larger cities had therefore changed from a personal necessity of the individual into a social problem. But with municipal regulations for efficiently 'solving' the stench problem, people's (rather) open-minded approach to their daily needs also disappeared. The privatization and relocation of the provision of everyday excretion needs has meant that people can nowadays no longer sense that city dwellers once used to worry about, for example, the ownership rights of human excreta. After all, we are only too happy that our needs disappear so quickly (out of sight): via the sewage system. Dealing with excreta has become so indirect that people who come into direct contact with excreta through their work (nurses, for example) become particularly acutely aware of the current standard of shame and social painfulness. On the other hand, all kinds of nicknames for those who have more direct contact with excrement (of others) are an indication of the height of our thresholds and feelings in this regard. People in Western Europe, living in the present, are so conscious of the norms of isolation from others in attending to their needs that they even close the lock on the toilet door when no one else is in the house. The chemical industry does good business with scent diffusers banishing the slightest form of poop or pee smell from the 'smallest room.' Disposable diapers indicate what to do with anything that has come into contact with the poop and pee of babies, small children and incontinent people. Countless other examples can be cited that illustrate present norms of dealing with excreta in contemporary society.

Figurational Social and Cultural Sciences

General conclusions that are important for gaining insight into current manners within Western European societies can be drawn from the above without too much effort. At the end of last century, rather blind processes of soil and air pollution and acidification were inseparably linked to the — fairly — planned processes of bio-industrialization. And even though the relocation of physical activities related to excretion needs can be understood as a series of consecutive, planned actions, it also appears that unplanned consequences have arisen in the process of constructing sewers, indoor toilets, *etc*. Processes of privatization and developments of intensification of feelings of shame and social pain related to certain physical activities have had a blind course. No one has consciously mapped out an unfolding of human behavior and feelings with regard to meeting physical needs.

It should not surprise us that these and similar insights appear again and again in the work of historians, sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists belonging to the school of figurational sociology — like sociologist Gleichmann, cited above (compare Flap & Kuiper, 1979). Dutch sociologist Johan Goudsblom has listed the basic principles of this school within the social sciences (Goudsblom in Cruson & Zwaan, 1976, p. 638; translation J.S.):

> The point is, first of all, that people are at all times connected to other people, whether they want it and know it or not, and that they are exerting all kinds of forms of pressure and coercion on each other. Second, that people and human societies are constantly changing […]. Third, how people's social actions proceed is largely determined by their mutual power relationships. Because these power relations are rarely the result of conscious planning and consultation by all involved, the development of societies and of the individuals who form them proceeds largely blind and unplanned. Fourth […]: All this applies to every sector of human societies.

In the past in Western Europe, people behaved differently and had different feelings and thoughts about it. The fact that all kinds of 'things' are as they appear to us in the present is not the planned or controlled outcome of one or more past planners. It is the result of many influences of individual people on each other, and also the result of many changing interdependencies between individual people and groups, figurations, of people. In the sections above, we saw that people were gradually expected to no longer relieve themselves openly and in public, but only in the roomed toilet. This has meant that people have had to 'restrain' themselves more often, or 'hold out' their distress for longer. People more and more needed to feel and behave more controlled in this regard. Postponing activities directly related to physical needs is not strange to us now, but it was so to our distant ancestors. We force ourselves, plastically speaking, to postpone defæcating or peeing to a greater extent than they did (for example until we have entered a 'bathroom'). We behave in a more controlled manner in these matters, or, if you like, in a more civilized way.

Figurational social and cultural scientists have drawn our attention to such interweaving of social and individual developments. If we imagine a network of people under the concept of figuration (*i.e.*, people who interact and depend on each other), then one can say that figurational social and cultural scientists are always interested in the continuous changes of social figurations in connection with continuous changes in behavior, feelings, ways of thinking of the people involved forming these figurations. In other words: "Every long-term change in a figuration leads to one or another long-term change in the behavior and mentality of the members of this figuration" (Flap & Kuiper, 1979, p. 242). This is not about identifying sudden changes. It is precisely the gradualness of continuous changes in social figurations that figurational social and cultural scientists investigate, in connection with all kinds of political, economic, but also psychological processes of continuous change. The work of philosopher and sociologist Norbert Elias is a textbook example for these social scientists.

Norbert Elias: *The Civilizing Process*

For centuries, books have been circulating on methods of studying forms of society. Many items from this category can be thrown straight into the trash. However, there are also a number of books that command respect in many places in and outside the scientific world. One of these is Norbert Elias's two-volume book

The Civilizing Process (see Jitschin, 2021) — first published, in German, in 1939 (Elias, 1939ab), and in English translation four decades later (Elias, 1978, 1982).

The first part of Elias' report on his investigations into civilizing processes in Western Europe clearly reveals that all kinds of morals and norms are subject to change over time. Using texts from etiquette books that have appeared on the markets in Germany, France and England since the late Middle Ages, Elias showed that civilized behavior from earlier times now seems rather childish or even comical to us. The reason for this lies in the fact that standard and accepted behavior from, for example, three centuries ago has gradually been modulated into more 'sensitive' behavior. Norms and morals related to, for example, vital activities such as sleeping, eating, or the above-mentioned defæcating and peeing, from previous centuries are now regarded by present Western Europeans as 'uncivilized' behavior. *The Civilizing Process* (Elias, 1978, 1982) shows that many feelings of Western Europeans are linked to behavior "that was felt to emphatically remind us of the 'animal' nature of people" (Blok, 1978, p. 140). Codes of conduct regarding such bodily activities show us the ever-changing thresholds of shame and painfulness. If other or more nuanced codes appear in the etiquette books over the centuries, we can conclude from this that there have been changes in feelings regarding the described activities.

In the mutual interaction of people, the ways in which they ate, slept, made love and their other forms of behavior that were more or less standardized in the society in which they found themselves, were fraught with many forms of feelings of shame, timidity and pain, and were thus shielded for the eyes and other perception organs of other people (out of shame or out of piety). For example, as we already saw above, defæcation behavior has been almost completely relegated to an enclave of shielding from others over the past 150 years. Our contemporary norms and morals force us to defæcate 'secretly,' and many of us would even prefer (just like in exciting but unrealistic Western movies) to keep behavior related to defæcation or bladder relief completely secret from others. Only children still shout loudly and uninhibitedly about what they are going to do in the 'bathroom.'

The Civilizing Process shows that coercions from others, in other words social coercions, in many areas, were transformed into self-compulsions in a more nuanced manner. These self-compulsions now often function as distance-creating compulsions in social interactions with others. 'Higher degrees' of self-control and self-direction in these and similar areas of social interaction among people, as well as more controlled behavior in these areas, also create, as it were, 'higher degrees' of distancing and maintaining distance from other people. According to Elias, it is precisely in this way that one of the strongest 'engines' of civilizing processes in Western Europe lies. Elias showed that members of the higher echelons of the European states 'developed' new standards of behavior and morals and norms in order to distance themselves from members of lower levels in the various states. Changes that we notice in manners books of different times (in earlier centuries these books were written mainly for members of the upper classes) therefore go hand-in-hand with changes in 'distancing.' Later, emerging bourgeois groups, like the nobles in previous centuries, wished to distance themselves from lower esteemed classes, and in turn also 'designed' new morals and norms (or adopted them from nobles, which forced the nobility to distance themselves differently again).

With these developments in codes of conduct, painfulness, shame, embarrassment and guilt thresholds, behavioral controls, self-compulsions, self-direction and self-control changes, the desires of the people involved changed, but also the fears to which they were exposed. With the gradual civilizing of more sections within the various Western European states, societies and forms of society, of more and more individual people, more, different and nuanced forms of civilizational fears also developed: fears of loss of status, fears of damage to honor and good name, fears of contagious diseases or behavior that was seen as contagious (alcoholism or 'W*anderlust*'). All these 'new' civilizational fears were not noticeable in the Middle Ages. Only with the plague did fear of contagious diseases spread (Goudsblom, 1979). If such fears existed at that time, they did not exist to the extent that they existed, say, eighty years ago, or during the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

An example. Elias described the history of knife handling. In the Middle Ages, the fork had not yet been 'invented' and was therefore not yet in general use. Knives were often the only cutlery when eating and reducing meat dishes to manageable and edible proportions. Spoons were used for other food items

(Mennell, 1985). Gradually people had to use knives more discreetly, and after the introduction of the fork it became improper in higher or noble circles to bring a knife into his or her mouth. Knives also changed shape over centuries: from handy to aesthetic instruments. The (function of the) knife gradually disappeared from public life. Nowadays, for example, in butcher shops the knife set is handled out of sight of meat buyers, in a hygienic back room. These days, carrying a knife in your pocket, on the street or in (other) public places, is out of the question — and if you do carry a knife in your pocket, you must have evil plans. While this trend towards the more civilized use of knives first occurred in higher circles, where people wished to distance themselves from others, in the present a good standard regarding their uses has been learned by everyone.

With trends towards more sensitive handling of knives, feelings of pain in this regard also developed. Someone who picks at his toes with a knife is considered uncivilized. This certainly applies when she or he is not doing this in her or his own living room, but in the doctor's waiting room. In parallel with this, certain civilizational fears also developed. Knives are taboo in social interactions between people, because when a knife is pulled out, where-ever, it evokes unpleasant, fearful and scary feelings and associations. We pass on these (alleged or real, but in any case, civilizational) social pains to our children, together with the associated (civilizational) fears. We do this consciously, but at other times most certainly also without planning. Those 'knife handling' related feelings of fear and shame form part of the civilizing process of our next generation(s).

In a discussion of *The Civilizing Process*, a member of the Dutch *Sociaal Analytische Werkgroep* (Social Analytical Working Group) stated as early as 1949 (Grewel, 1949, p. 106; translation J.S.):

> Not a hundred but thousands of examples can be given that illustrate all our customs, manners, customs, morals, taste, manner of doing, moving, facial expressions, gestures, way of expressing ourselves, articulating, and yes, our thinking habits, our mental and emotional attitude. There is no way to avoid it completely; in many respects and in many areas, we would not know how we could do or be different — and therefore we are not or do not 'different.' […] As there is more division of labor, the interweaving of people becomes stronger. However, in the long run, the socially higher classes also become increasingly dependent on the lower classes. And then the higher up will also be ashamed of the lower.

These last lines refer to changes in the behavior, feelings and ways of thinking of members of a higher class compared to members of lower classes. Yet this does not only happen at this particular social level, because the statement also applies, for example, within family situations. Parents are becoming increasingly dependent on children. And to continue the parallel: then parents at times also start to feel ashamed of their children.

I have illustrated this aspect above, using the Western European history of knife handling. Yet parenting situations often also involve prestige issues. After all, disciplining children to a certain level of civilization also includes teaching them to maintain a certain decorum. Because the duality of 'social compulsion to self-compulsion' always forms part of the perspective it must be stated that raising children leads, as it were, not only to certain behavioral automatisms, but it also forms part of discriminatory mechanisms. Or, in Grewel's (1949, p. 112) words, "The psychogenesis of norms and standards is an abbreviated repetition of their sociogenesis."

The second volume of *The Civilizing Process* (Elias, 1982) concerns political changes associated with the above. Forms of continuous changes already discussed here at social and individual levels can be distinguished from developments at political levels. But these distinct processes of unfoldment are in fact inseparable processes at different levels of abstraction. Trends of integration from smaller social units to larger and increasingly and more extensively integrated social units, state formation processes and processes of increasing internal pacification within state borders, are interrelated trends within the 'overarching' overview of the 'civilizing history' in Western Europe, as described by Elias. Developments of state monopolies on the exercise of (physical) force and violence and tax collection cannot be separated from developments of continuous changes in power relations between states, or of increasing stabilization of central organs of administration or policy. These developments are in turn closely related to the ways in

which people who shape social units maintain their own lives and organize their living and working conditions.

This has already been mentioned in the first sections of this case study with regard to the environmental issue of factory farming. The ways in which farmers in the eastern regions of North Brabant have made useful use of the measures taken at national level and in the EEC to improve farmers' business operations were successful. Flourishing 'companies with factory farming' emerged from small farms. But there were also negative consequences to this transformation of farming. Gradually, nuisance arose for other people and for the environment. Environmental defense groups have addressed the problem of acidification of soil and water. As a result, measures have been proposed, within the EEC and at the Dutch national policy level, to limit not only nitrogen oxides (chemical formula NO_x) emissions into the air — mainly produced by the combustion of fossil fuels). Emission of ammonia should also be severely limited.

Norbert Elias convincingly showed that all such matters cannot be separated from shifts in standards of human feelings and behavior and thinking, or in what they experienced and experience as a life assignment. One could argue that *The Civilizing Process* provides a 'holistic view' of what has happened in Western Europe over the past centuries. Elias' work certainly provides a fascinating history of civilizing processes in connection with state formation processes. And the work shows the intimate connection of developments on a social and psychological level. It offers us many insights into why Western Europeans are, think and feel the way they are, think and feel.

In a next paper I would like to pay attention to a downside of this whole:

> The conception of the individual as *homo clausus*, a little world in himself who ultimately exists quite independently of the great world outside, determines the image of man in general. Every other human being is likewise seen as a *homo clausus*; his core, his being, his true self appears likewise as something divided within him by an invisible wall from everything outside, including every other human being. (Elias, 1978, p. 249).

Notes

1. Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer, 1985, pp. 10, 14-15, 17, 19 and 23.

2. Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer, 1985, p. 26. Compare also Kapteyn, 1996.

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