

NEWSLETTER – JULY 2012

Contents

In Memoriam: Willfried Spohn (6 December 1944–16 January 2012)	2
Willfried Spohn memorial grant	3
Membership of the Board of WG02	4
WG02 Programme for ISA Second Forum, Buenos Aires, 1–4 August 2012	5
Conference Reports	6
<i>40th Congress of the International Institute of Sociology, Delhi, 16–19 February 2012: WG02 session ‘Processes of Civilising, De-civilising and Post Colonisation’</i>	
<i>Norbert Elias and Figural Sociology: Prospects for the Future</i>	
Other Forthcoming Conferences	9
<i>XIV Civilizing Processes International Symposium, Dourados, Mato Grosso, Brazil on 19–24 November 2012</i>	
<i>Habitus, War and Civilisation, Department of Sociology, University of Graz, Austria, 25–27 April 2013</i>	

In Memoriam: Willfried Spohn (6 December 1944–16 January 2012)



Willfried Spohn was a born academic. Luckily for those who knew him, he was also of the right kind – one is almost tempted to say, the rare kind: extremely erudite with an insatiable curiosity about and love of knowledge, yet unbelievably modest about the vast knowledge he himself had accumulated; intellectually generous and giving, always open to new ideas, but serious and careful in carrying them out and putting them to paper; a thoughtful and committed teacher and guide to students and younger colleagues, for whom he never grudged time and resources; a concerned and reflective researcher, for whom institutions of higher education were not only places of learning, but also sites of complex power relations in which one should carefully ponder one's own role, impact, and contribution.

Willfried Spohn had obtained his habilitation in Sociology at the Free University of Berlin in 1984. Between 1989 and 2005, he held numerous positions as a Visiting Professor of International and European Studies and of Social and Political Science at several universities in the USA, among which were New York University, the New School for Social Research, the University of Washington, the University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia University, as well as at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. He was also a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, a Senior Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, and an Alumnus of the Institute for Advanced Study in Konstanz. From 2001 to 2004, he was the Research Director of the EU project EURONAT (together with Bo Strath and Anna Triandafyllidou) at the European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder. From 2009 onward, he was Research Coordinator for the project Europeanisation, Multiple Modernities and Collective Identities – Religion, Nation and Ethnicity in an Enlarging Europe at the Georg-August-University Göttingen. In 2010, he

became Professor of Economic and Social Sciences at the Willy Brandt Centre for German and European Studies of the University of Wrocław.

From the beginning of his career, Willfried Spohn was committed to historical and comparative sociology as one of the most fruitful approaches to social science, and one that he consistently strove to promote both nationally and internationally. Tellingly for this endeavour, Willfried Spohn was a co-founder of the International Sociological Association's Thematic Group 02 Historical and Comparative Sociology, and its President from 2007 until 2010. Since the upgrade of TG02 to Working Group status in 2010, which involved the incorporation of members of the Figurational Sociology Ad Hoc Group, Willfried Spohn had been WG02 Vice-President and an active and enthusiastic member, organiser, and dedicated participant in WG02 activities, in which he promoted the study of Latin America, East Central Europe, and the Middle East, as well as the historical and comparative sociology of religions.

We were looking forward to several sessions Willfried had organised along these lines at the IIS Congress in Delhi in February of this year and at the upcoming ISA Forum in Buenos Aires in August, as well as to several book and research projects that he had started or still wanted to embark upon in his new position at the University of Wrocław. We deeply mourn the loss of a dear friend and a most accomplished and admirable scholar and colleague, all the while knowing that we are all the richer for the knowledge and the wisdom, the kindness and the generosity, the dedication and the perseverance he bequeathed to his friends and family and to his academic community. As long as we still partake of the intellectual legacy he left to us and impart it to others, he will not have died.

Manuela Boatcă
Free University, Berlin
Secretary/Treasurer

Willfried Spohn memorial grant

In memory of Willfried Spohn, co-founder of our working group and a scholar of East Central Europe and Latin America, WG02 offers two conference grants per year of €500 each, intended to enable junior scholars to present their research at international academic gatherings. Ideally, these should be the ISA or IIS World Congress, the ISA Forum, or an ISA Interim Conference, but other events organized by WG02 members or dealing with WG02 research foci can also be taken into consideration.

Applicants should:

- be members of the Working Group 02 Historical and Comparative Sociology
- have an academic degree in Sociology (preferably PhD)
- present a paper at the academic event for which they require the grant
- have a research focus on Latin America and/or East Central Europe

Applications, including a CV, proof of the conference paper being accepted, and the upcoming conference programme should be sent to wg02@gmail.com at least two months before the event using the subject line 'application Willfried Spohn memorial grant'.

Membership of the Board of WG02

Under the provisions of the Statutes of WG02, and after consultation with the Board, Stephen Mennell as President made the following two appointments consequent upon the sad death of Willfried Spohn.

Robert van Krieken becomes Vice-President of WG02. Robert is already Vice-President of the ISA for Membership and Finance. He is Professor of Sociology at the University of Sydney. Although Dutch by birth, he has spent most of his life in Australia, and returned there in 2011 after serving for two years as Professor at University College Dublin. He lists his interests as ‘social change, socio-legal issues (practical and theoretical), family law, the changing formation of identity and the self under varying social and historical conditions, power and social control, changing patterns of state formation, technology and social relationships, application of social theory to current societal transformations, celebrity as a social form, globalisation.’ His latest book is *Celebrity Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012). More details at <http://robertvankrieken.net/>; email: robert.van.krieken@sydney.edu.au.

Sujata Patel (University of Hyderabad) has joined the board to fill the place vacated by Robert. She combines an historical sensibility with four perspectives – Marxism, feminism, spatial studies and post-structuralism/post-colonialism, and her work covers modernity and social theory, history of sociology/social sciences, city-formation, social movements, gender construction, and caste and class formations in India.

WG02 Programme for ISA Second Forum, Buenos Aires, 1–4 August 2012

The programme is given on the next page. Please note that session 149 on Modernities in Theory, has been cancelled.



[Start](#) | [Browse by Group](#) | [Author Index](#)

WG02 Historical and Comparative Sociology

[Wednesday, August 1, 2012](#)

9:00 AM-10:30 AM

[Wednesday](#) | [Thursday](#) | [Friday](#) | [Saturday](#) | [top](#)

- 45 **Modernizations and Modernities in Global Contexts: South-South Dialogues**
Session Organizers: Manuela BOATCA and Willfried SPOHN

10:45 AM-12:15 PM

- 96 **Process-Oriented Methodology and Theories in Historical and Comparative Sociology**
Session Organizer: Fumiya ONAKA **Chair:** Fumiya ONAKA

12:30 PM-2:00 PM

- 149 ~~**Modernities in Theory: Perspectives of/from the Colonized Others – Invitation Only**~~
~~**Session Organizers:** Sujata PATEL and Manuela BOATCA~~

2:30 PM-4:00 PM

- 193 **Social Positioning in Comparative/Historical Perspective**
Session Organizers: Manuela BOATCA and Vilna Bashi TREITLER **Chair:** Trica KEATON

[Thursday, August 2, 2012](#)

10:45 AM-12:15 PM

[Wednesday](#) | [Thursday](#) | [Friday](#) | [Saturday](#) | [top](#)

- 282 **Case-Based Comparative-Historical Investigations: Different Purposes, Different Strategies, Different Outcomes**
Session Organizer: Ewa MORAWSKA

12:30 PM-2:00 PM

- 326 **The Sociogenesis of Environmental Injustice and Inequality in Latin America: Historic-Comparative Sociological Approaches**
Session Organizers: José Esteban CASTRO , Gustavo ANTON and Lorena BOTTARO

[Friday, August 3, 2012](#)

9:00 AM-10:30 AM

[Wednesday](#) | [Thursday](#) | [Friday](#) | [Saturday](#) | [top](#)

- 441 **Policies on Inequality, Racialization and Migration**
Session Organizers: Vilna Bashi TREITLER and Manuela BOATCA **Chair:** Vilna Bashi TREITLER

10:45 AM-12:15 PM

- 522 **Latin America: Modernizations and Modernities in Global Contexts – Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives**
Session Organizers: Manuela BOATCA and Willfried SPOHN

12:30 PM-2:00 PM

- 569 **The Politics of Development and Social Struggle in Latin America: The Sociogenesis and Psychogenesis of Political Consciousness**
Session Organizers: José Esteban CASTRO and Juan Carlos MARÍN

4:15 PM-5:45 PM

- 608 **WG02 Business Meeting**

[Saturday, August 4, 2012](#)

4:15 PM-5:45 PM

[Wednesday](#) | [Thursday](#) | [Friday](#) | [Saturday](#) | [top](#)

- 762 **Inequality, Racialization/Ethnicization, and Migration**
Session Organizers: Vilna Bashi TREITLER and Manuela BOATCA **Chair:** Scott POYNTING

Conference Reports

40th Congress of the International Institute of Sociology

Delhi, 16–19 February 2012

WG02 session ‘Processes of Civilising, De-civilising and Post Colonisation’

Conference report by Fumiya Onaka, Japan Women’s University

During the 40th IIS congress in Delhi, the session ‘Processes of Civilising, De-civilising and Post Colonisation’, proposed by Stephen Vertigans and Robert van Krieken, was held on February 19 afternoon as one of WG02 sessions. Because of the tragic loss of Willfried Spohn, who was the planned chair, the role was taken by Irena Veljanova, University of Western Sydney.

It consisted of four presentations as follows:

- 1 ‘Ecologisation, moralisation and civilisation: on the development of climate change as a social problem’ by Amanda Rohloff, Brunel University, London
- 2 ‘Socio-cultural network analysis exemplifying process-oriented methodology’, by Fumiya Onaka, Japan Women’s University, Tokyo
- 3 ‘Doxic experiences of health: on ‘civilised’ and ‘backward’ health related behaviors of Macedonians in Australia’, by Irena Veljanova, University of Western Sydney
- 4 ‘Encounters and recognitions, as proceeding and as methodology in the process of civilising’, by Gilles Verpraet, CNRS Sophiapol, University Paris Ouest

The session was well attended by researchers from all over the world and there were valuable questions and answers. One of most remarkable arguments from the floor, which fitted both the congress setting and the session title was that there might be no term which precisely corresponds to ‘civilisation’ in Indian language. It could be translated by the word ‘samskriti’, but its true meaning is ‘culture’.

Norbert Elias and Figurational Sociology: Prospects for the Future

Copenhagen, 2–4 April 2012

For the first time ever a major international conference on Norbert Elias was held in Denmark, supported by the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen and the Norbert Elias Foundation. The conference was organised by Lars Bo Kaspersen, University of Copenhagen and Norman Gabriel, University of Plymouth. Norman is a visiting lecturer at the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen where he has been teaching Elias’s process sociology for MA students for the

last 10 years.

The focus of the three-day conference was on the development of figurational sociology in relation to other disciplines. In ‘What is Sociology?’, Elias argued that sociology needed to develop new ways of ‘thinking’ about its relationship with other disciplines. Since that time, we have seen a rapid expansion of many new academic disciplines, yet there has not been sufficient time to consider the theoretical implications of what this would mean for the future development of a figurational sociology.

Even with most Danes on holiday an overwhelming number of people signed up, approximately 95 enrolled and about 80 participants turned up for the three days of the conference. There were participants from 18 different countries and we were delighted to welcome many newcomers to the Eliasian perspective. The conference brought together sociologists, together with other important and relevant cognate disciplines – such as history, political science and economics – to explore attempts that integrate different disciplinary perspectives. Keynote speakers included Richard Kilminster (University of Leeds), Abram de Swaan (University of Amsterdam), Stephen Menell (University College Dublin), Andrew Linklater (Aberystwyth University), Stefanie Ernst (Universität Münster), Steven Quilley (Keele University), Johan Goudsblom (University of Amsterdam), and Søren Nagbøl (Aarhus University). Besides these eight keynote speakers we had 14 panel sessions! An impressive number of presentations (approximately 60) offered a variety of thought-provoking perspectives on figurational sociology. Such was the enthusiasm that some of the participants at the last sessions on Thursday afternoon had to be dragged away from their conversations.

Despite the cold weather we all enjoyed wonderful Copenhagen. The first day of the conference venue took place in Vartov – a part of the Danish Free Church associated with the very important nineteenth-century Danish priest N. F. S. Grundtvig. He contributed to the Danish liberal democratic constitution of 1849, Danish nationalism, education and the Folk high schools. In the evening we moved to the Monk Cellar under the oldest part of University of Copenhagen (founded in 1479). Here a huge buffet was served (including wonderful venison) but disappointingly only 40 bottles of wine were consumed! Days two and three took place at the Social Science Faculty Campus placed between the Botanical Garden and the lakes. The conference dinner the second night took place at the atmospheric Actor house – a part of the Royal Theatre – near the harbour front. We all enjoyed the four-course meal with spectacular views across the harbour.

We would like to thank very much the support from the Department of Political Science, Department of Sociology and the Norbert Elias Foundation. A special thanks to the wonderfully efficient student assistants, under the leadership of Kathrine Nistrup, who helped to make the conference such a success, and to Administrative Secretary Mette Cruse Skou who made it all possible.

Lars Bo Kaspersen and Norman Gabriel

And a student's eye view of the conference:

I had the great opportunity to take part in the three-day Norbert Elias conference on development of figurational sociology in relation to other disciplines, which gathered much of the international Elias community in Copenhagen. The discussions spanned numerous fields, with paper presenters and keynote speakers passionately elaborating their Elias-inspired research within for example environmental politics, education, history,

organisational studies, immigration, and public spaces. Professor Lars Bo Kaspersen welcomed the participants on behalf of Copenhagen University (Department of Political Science/Sociology) and the Norbert Elias Foundation. The three days were organised around plenary sessions with keynote speeches and parallel sessions that centred on various social themes. As a student one mainly comes across Elias on a theoretical level, but at the conference one encountered how figurational sociology is extensively used as an analytical tool within various fields, which can be drawn upon and applied in highly diverse contexts. In particular, the keynote speech by Professor Stephanie Ernst on a process-oriented methodology was fascinating, and a great inspiration on how to go about operationalising research. Overall the many presentations demonstrated the large potential of figurational sociology to integrate a range of disciplinary perspectives.

The first day I had the pleasure of guiding the presenters to the venue. Walking through the old city of Copenhagen, talking with people whose names are referenced in my curriculum, needless to say, was quite an experience. As a student one is constantly reminded of the importance of moving from theory to practice. This can sometimes be challenging to fully grasp in one's everyday studies when working with abstract and weighty theories. At the conference however, this process was illuminated and I was captivated by the presenters' ability to apply Elias's framework to different kinds of research. Observing the participants enthusiastically scribble down each other's comments and suggestions I experienced the multiple functions of the conference; both as a producer of new knowledge and tester of theory but also as a platform for networking and exchanging experiences. Attending the conference created incentive for my own work and restored sense in the sometimes abstract studying of social theorists like Elias.

Although such may be the case for many schools; I ended the conference with an impression of a strong theoretical community that possibly feels ignored in some regards, but at the same time expresses a closeness and intimacy that can be difficult to become a part of. I observed a clear hierarchy among the participants, and within the community there seemed to be one way of interpreting Elias, and preferably buying into the whole package. Thus, presenters were quickly corrected or opposed if their arguments were not in accordance with the agreed interpretation. As a sociology student experiencing an academic community up close was indeed fascinating and quite educative, and even though I find a figurational perspective highly intriguing and relevant for much research; I wonder if and how an Elias perspective combined with other theoretical perspectives may benefit the community as a whole.

Being a student I have not yet had the opportunity to participate in many conferences of a similar magnitude. These usually have high fees, may only welcome paper presenters – or I've simply been occupied with my studies. Sadly, I don't think my situation is unique. This is unfortunate as my experiences from the Elias conference are indispensable and ended up shaping the foundation for my bachelor's thesis. I therefore emphasise the importance of student participation in such events. Taking part in and experiencing ongoing academic discussions and debates are important to bridge theory with practice, but it is also inspiring and motivational, and it provides the student with a broader social context for his/her educational abilities.

Kathrine Nistrup Madsen
BScSoc Student
Copenhagen Business School

Other Forthcoming Conferences

XIV Civilizing Processes International Symposium

This will take place in Dourados, Mato Grosso in Brazil on 19–24 November 2012. The deadline for abstracts is the 30 June and the second edition of the conference newsletter plus other important information can be accessed at <http://www.ufgdgrupoelias.com/>.

Habitus, War and Civilisation

*Department of Sociology, University of Graz.
Graz 25–27 April 2013*

Call for papers

This conference is to honour Helmut Kuzmics on the occasion of his retirement from his chair at Graz in May 2103. Over the last decade, Helmut's work has centred especially on matters relating to war, but over the course of his career he has written on a wide range of topics, including national habitus, the arts, mass media and culture, and sociological theory. We shall welcome papers, or proposals for conference sessions, on the whole range of his work. In the area specifically of war and the bellicose side of social life, we already envisage several sessions:

Proposed sessions centred on war

Today, interstate wars merely disappeared or transformed into terrorism or into violent inner-states antagonisms of far remotes 'failed states'. However, this does not mean that war (and the potential of it) has lost its significance for modern societies. Twenty years after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, more states than ever are acquiring nuclear weapons, a new kind of arms race with conventional weapons can be observed in parts of the world, and popular culture is still obsessed with war (as in movies and computer games).

Merely 30 years after Elias's *Humana Conditio* it seems that sociology itself has not changed fundamentally. Following Saint Simon, sociology is still concerned with the paradigm of modern society as a peaceful place. Thus, the aim of the conference is to confront sociological thinking with war and its social consequences. The conference is open for proposals for plenary sessions. The following sessions are proposed by the organizers.

1. *War and its effect on societies in a very long-term perspective*
What are the effects of war on historical civilisations as well as on the modern world? In order to explain societies better, are there war-orientated points of view in sociology that are able successfully to rival functionalism or economic-centred paradigms?
2. *Nuclear deterrence: Making unsafe places safer or even more insecure?*
Political science has much to say about the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, what is the sociological perspective? How are aggressive impulses and hate towards others regulated differently in the nuclear age? Is such a kind of weaponry constitutive for modern societies?

3. *War, emotions and 'habitus'*

In order to understand war crimes and atrocities, a micro-level perspective on the battlefield uncovers the fundamental importance of emotions like fear, comradeship etc. Emotions are also central to understand public opinion and its judgement about a 'just' war. In this session, the interconnection of war, emotions and 'habitus' will be discussed.

4. *War, the economic system and financial markets*

What are the relations between capitalism, tighter nets of economic interdependencies and war? Does the current world economic crisis lead towards situations that will make war between great powers more likely? Or is it true that the conditions are very different from the world of the 1930s?

5. *Rituals of civilizing interstate violence*

The mass media focus on sport, the Eurovision Song Contest, beauty contests, the Nobel prizes, film prizes and many other cultural contests as rivalries between nations. Does modern civilisation develop certain sets of rituals helping to constrain violent impulses on the international arena? Does IR (International Relations) neglect these contests as important institutions?

The conference will consist of plenary sessions with speakers and panels of discussants.

The deadline for establishing further plenary sessions is 31 October 2012.

The deadline for registering for the conference, and for submitting abstracts of papers, is 31 January 2013.

To register, please send an abstract to following email address: dieter.reicher@uni-graz.at