

Review Article: Pacifying Innovations and America's Corporate Colonizing: The Elias–Mennell Civilizing Thesis

PETER CLARK

The American Civilizing Process

Stephen Mennell

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Introduction

Pacifying innovations are central to the century long capacity of American corporations to colonize its indigenous populations and gain considerable and strong positions in the global economy.¹ Pacification is a covert assumption of mainstream North American knowledge making about organizing for profit. Pacification is also implicit in actor network theories of innovation.² Pacifying innovations are desired and presumed by exponents of computer media communication and are subsumed in the plethora of articles about trust. Yet explicit attention to the topic of pacifying innovations is much more overt outside the business school in political science and sociology than inside. Therefore Stephen Mennell's new book on *The American Civilizing Process* is very timely. Mennell applies the civilizing/de-civilizing thesis formulated by Norbert Elias.³

Elias sought to document, explain and anticipate the capacities of nations to develop and sustain the pacifying innovations necessary for nations to sustain their power internally and externally. Elias claims that state formation and pacifying innovations shape the habitus of the people and their attitudes to outsiders. The oeuvre of Elias synthesizes elements drawn from Marx, Weber and Freud.⁴ The attention to inter-group conflict and the role of long chains of economic activity is from Marx. Elias's dystopian attention to inter-group conflict within societies and between nations overturns the politics of hope which became so central during the Cold War. The attention to how the effective state develops pacifying innovations to gain a monopoly of violence is from Weber. Elias rightly adds in the role of the state in gaining a monopoly of taxation. Elias moves freely between the macro level of state and the micro level of people's capacities for self-constraints. Following Freud he maintains that the role of the superego is in controlling whether and how the economy of instincts within all people is controlled by foresight and calculation rather than by explosive passions.⁵

This synthesis is 'proven' by three major pieces of documentary inquiry conducted by Elias over a period spanning more than 50 years. The original studies published in German in 1939 focussed largely upon conflicting North West European nations between the twelfth century and the sixteenth century.⁶ The contemporary implications of pacification and informalization were then essayed decades later in an array of studies. These documented the extensiveness of inter-group contestation between nations and within. Thus in England during the nineteenth century there were inter-group contests between the English quasi-aristocracy at Eton inventing association football and the upper middle class barbarians at Rugby School inventing the feast of body contact now known as Rugby Football.⁷ These sporting innovations owed a great deal to the explosive growth of the British maritime Empire and the role of secular elites in pacifying Britons for their roles as servants and savants in that Empire. Those multi-level pacifying processes are equated with the adoption of manners which are civilizing.

Elias's later study of the German people contended that they never possessed the extensive, integrated empires comparable to the British or French.⁸ Consequently the internal pacifying processes were less developed and very much more fragile. Their potential for a de-civilizing shift was therefore greater. That unfolded in the twentieth century. Although not highlighted by Elias there is an implication that post-1945 Germany was pacified by its lengthy occupation by the USA and the USSR. In fact, Elias dealt very lightly with both the USA and the USSR. Indeed, despite his claims about historical sociology's capacities for foresight, Elias did not anticipate the events of 1989 or the unification of Germany. It is Mennell, a highly capable, self-professed Elias-ian, who has undertaken the task of characterizing and explaining how the civilizing thesis is relevant to Americans and all those non-Americans who wish to know how to understand them and their actions.

This review article is in four main sections: outlining the civilizing thesis formulated by Elias; presenting Mennell's application of the thesis to America; a critical examination of the thesis and its application to America; and the implications for understanding America.

Civilizing Thesis: Elias

In the geographical region of North West Europe between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries Elias and others note that the power of a central authority grew. Then, according to Elias, because of the monopoly over violence by state, the people are forced to live peacefully with one another. This process of pacification of the people moulds the Freudian economy of instincts, albeit unevenly between strata. Pacification creates those social constraints which shape the experience of shame and of internal self-control. Affective dynamics are standardized. Civilized conduct predominates.

Elias's causal explanation focuses upon the partially unintended role of the secular courtly upper classes who found themselves in a period when warfare and the size of political entities was transformed. The small, mercenary armies attached to the Italian city-states were displaced by the national armies of kingly nations like France. Control over violence was centralized and the personal gratifications, pulsating excitements and affective life of warfare became standardized. The courtly upper classes were detached from their warrior habitus and increasingly prohibited from duelling. Yet they aspired to be well regarded in a context where kings and the embryonic governmental apparatus of calculable state strategies were

emerging. Weber emphasized that the most effective states were those that gained a monopoly over the means of violence. Elias rightly adds in the monopoly over taxation. The new courtly upper classes observed that in the reality of their everyday life, the manners they aspired to emulate required them to stop spitting, brawling and urinating in public. The required manners included the use of eating equipment, being less odorous and learning to watch and read social situations as the basis of adjusting their own actions. These became the espoused civilized behaviours.

The civilizing thesis is grounded in Elias's interpretation of fifteenth–sixteenth century books of manners and of the content of the love songs delivered by travelling troubadours. The civilizing thesis does not exclude processes of de-civilizing, although these were most developed in his and his co-workers more recent publishing. Elias does expect de-civilizing to be causally related to reversals in the postulated generative mechanisms. Also, the later Elias became very much attuned to the fragility of the processes of pacification. This is very evident in the edited collection analyzing the situation of the German people in the twentieth century.

Elias observed that in the nineteenth century the self-consciousness of Western European societies centred upon the discourse and belief of their being more civilized than non-Western societies. Europeans generally, but especially the British and the French, viewed many other societies as primitive. This notion influenced the arrangement of anthropological museums. Elias claimed to uncover an evolution of this view of civilizedness from the Middle Ages onward across major European states. Moreover he claimed that its basis—its reality—was in the development of internal constraints and manners whereby people felt embarrassed and ashamed in the presence of uncivilized actions. The European case is most developed for the centuries prior to the settlement of North America and then for the case of the Germans.

Elias sought to demonstrate that the societal configurations associated with the rise of the Western state operated according to a variant of universal history. The civilizing thesis postulates that increases in the scope of national power typically require competing elites to develop forms of internal pacification and calculative restraint which override passionate, visceral response to insults. Consequently, Elias was concerned with the study of organizational innovations interwoven with inter-group tensions, especially with the conditions for their emergence and the factors affecting the forms they took. He postulated that the increasing social constraints and the role of superego shame were interwoven with the emergence of pre-modern North West European states and with long-linked chains of commerce. Each state contained competing strata which were—despite themselves—situated in an ongoing evolution whereby the internal pacification of the state created a trickle down effect of the civilizing process from the highest levels into the bourgeoisie and then the working class. The vehicle of this transformation was manners. Renaissance Europe contained key texts by, for example, Erasmus and Castiglione, on how the upper secular strata should behave and the inner conversations which they should engender in their calculations of future action or reflections on what they had done and thought.

In the 1960s Elias emerged as a cult figure for a niche in sociology whose attention was/is to examine manners and hidden rules in everyday life. The niche was heavily populated by Anglo–Dutch scholars. Dutch scholars made a widely spun contribution which included a recognizable intent to be advisers and consultants

on aspects of the civilizing process. Dynamic shifts in the tendencies towards formalization or towards informalization in manners became of special interest.⁹

Elias did much to develop and defend—even vigorously defend—his variant of sociology against the open systems and cybernetic informed American sociology, especially Parsons. Even so, the civilizing hypothesis was often treated as an entertaining and gossipy analysis of courtly life in historical sociology rather than as a law-like cluster of propositions with much to say about what was possible and impossible in contemporary states. His study of twentieth century Germany edited by Dunning and Mennell does much to correct that impression but is largely unknown.

Elias gives little credence to the independent civilizing influence of religion or religious ideas. It should be noted that Mann emphasized the significance of the normative pacification of Europe by the twelfth century of Christianity and its institutional bases. These extensive networks established a diffuse ideological power necessary to the rise of so called early modern Europe in the period addressed by Elias. Mann claims that these normative pacification innovations were gradually replaced by the shared norms of the state networks and their infra-structures. These views of religion have considerable implications for the American case as will emerge later.

Elias was certainly opposed to the sociology typified by Parsons and cybernetic modelling. He sought to identify those historically grounded forms of social and economic conditioning which he contended were imprinted onto the habitus of people. Ironically his ‘reality’ view of sociology shares some—though certainly not all—features with critical realism¹⁰ and its critique of the structuration theory constituted by Giddens.¹¹ Giddens dealt critically with Weber and Marx and largely disposed of Freud. Structuration theory has become one of the significant protective belts in organization studies but is now under robust attack from the critical realists. Potentially the oeuvre of Elias is fruitful for the contemporary debates, especially because Mennell has applied an Elias-ian perspective to the case of America circa 1650s–2010.

Elias commented that the processes of pacification and increasing self-constraint would continue. Therefore, in the twenty-third century analysts might look back at the past three decades as late barbarism.

Mennell’s America

Mennell has robustly put the American processes of civilization through the demands of Elias-ian analysis. His account very largely follows the narrative order preferred by Elias in his original study and in his later examination of ‘the Germans’. Mennell’s objective is to evaluate how far the American case confirms the thesis originally formulated from the European case. The tendency is to emphasize Euro–American similarities.

First, how do Americans interpret civilization and being civilized? Mennell commences with the American Enlightenment because, after Independence, its leading contributors in the field of political economy had an exceptional opportunity to implement their republican and federal ideas (Chapter 1). He observes that from those moments American civilization became suffused with the sense of superiority over Europe. Progress was taken for granted. The notion of minimal government with its implication of self-governing gained a strong, albeit contested position. Significantly ideas about human nature were strongly debated. Mennell

contends that the dominant political economy underestimated the continuing need for effective state monopolization over the means of violence at the federal level. Even so, he concludes that the American Enlightenment—worth noting—had immense long-term consequences for world history.

How did and do Americans distinguish fellow Americans from outsiders (Chapter 2)? Americans define *we*-image and *we*-feelings very strongly and are equally vigorous in defining outsiders. Their inventory of outsiders commenced with the native Americans from the colonial period onward. Very quickly slaves were added to the list, most strongly in the South. Distinctions between the South and North were a constant theme. Europeans aroused considerable emotional attention. Much of this attention was negative. Despite variations and contradictory tendencies, attention focussed upon any sign—however slight—of anti-Americanism.

Second, how do American manners and the social constraint of self-constraint compare with Europeans? Mennell concludes (in Chapter 3) that American manners are very similar to those found in Europe except that there is more extensive avoidance of overt expressions of social superiority. The similarity is that there has been considerable evolution of social constraints towards self-constraint and a capacity for calculating the future. They use forks differently and have a more heightened sense of personal presentation, especially of teeth.

There are Euro-American differences in social stratification because in the USA there is no single and dominant elite setting model for others to follow (Chapter 4). Rather there are multiple elites arising in different regions and domains. Both multiple quasi-aristocracies and other groups have had an impact. None acquired a national definition of the 'good society' because there were cleavages, competition and conflicts. There is not and has not been a homogeneous American habitus. There are multiple status ladders. So although there has been extensive emulation—for example of celebrities—this has not arisen so much from status competition.

The Civil War was the most dramatic example of internal conflict.

Third, Mennell concludes that the market has been the major influence in imposing a severe incentive for self-discipline (Chapter 5). He suggests that the market has been the central institution imprinting itself on the varied American habitus. The notion of imprinting should be noted. It is a bio-social concept. American society is pervaded by a social and cultural marketplace. It is suggested that all Americans are courtiers although the parallel is not exact. In order to explain this conclusion the main themes of Elias are invoked: market discipline, being other-directed, and the pressure of credit worthiness. Mennell briefly notes the extensive critique of Elias's theory of the market and notions of how credit could act as an external constraint by Newton.¹² In the first half of the nineteenth century American credit worthiness was enhanced by being a member of an identifiable guild or sect who use initiation, ethical probation and election to membership. Overall, Mennell emphasizes a requirement for caution about the effects of market constraint on the development of self-discipline.

At this point Perrow's¹³ account of nineteenth century America is drawn in to emphasize the role of corporations. Perrow claims that early nineteenth century legislation provided the legal framework which enabled corporations to be lightly regulated and to be able to off-load the costs of their actions onto society. Corporations, according to Perrow, colonized America by socializing employees and consumers. Although not highlighted by Mennell, it was American corporations who became very major players in the development of those social sciences which espoused soft

control and hegemony rather than overt conflict. The corporations became agents of pacification.

Fourth, how did the elimination contests over territory in America (Chapters 7 and 8) compare with the European examples? Is the Elias model confirmed? Mennell claims that there were strong underlying similarities between Europe and America. However, this conclusion understates the extent to which his account highlights the typical American experience of possessing higher power chances than those of their neighbours whose territories they progressively occupied. Six maps astutely chart American expansion across the continent.

The elimination contests in the colonial pre-Independence period involved three frontiers for the British settlers: the American Indians, rival European powers, and then within the British world. The initial collection of private British colonies on the eastern sea board coexisted for a short time with the American Indians. Initially their power ratios were not dissimilar whilst the primitive gun warfare was only slightly developed. Also the colonists were hemmed in by the claims of the French and Spanish states to the rest of the continent. However, the power ratios tilted strongly towards the settlers whose high rate of population increase also became consequential. The indigenous population withdrew westwards, especially so after the settlers dependence upon Indian trade rapidly diminished.

The elimination contests between the British, French, Dutch and Spanish provided the British with a strong defensive position and numerous offensive possibilities within the North Atlantic and Mediterranean and then India.

After 1763 the settlers were in a strong defensive position relative to all European powers except that of the British Crown–Parliament. The rising power of the Crown–Parliament after 1660 had resulted in the revoking of private monopolies. By the 1750s nearly all the colonies had become royal provinces with royal governors. Yet royal control and British law and authority did not penetrate very deeply and was certainly uneven. Meanwhile in Europe the main trend was for previously private monopolies of force and taxation to be transformed into public monopolies. In the British case Parliament had very much greater constraint on royal power than in the continental powers. In the British case its state formation process formed the background to the early stages of state formation in British North America. In Europe as the number of big states with internal pacification increased so did the scale of the wars between them. Britain and France were locked into worldwide maritime and colonial rivalry as part of their struggle for dominance in Europe. By the 1770s British North America was the most populous with 30 times the population of the French territories to the west. However, the posting of an army to British North America would require the raising of taxes. The American Revolution is a conflict over the control of conquests and the British attempt to create its own empire. Mennell barely examines this elimination contest.

Mennell focuses attention on how quickly the newly independent United States of America acquired huge territories by purchase (e.g. French Louisiana) and by persistent occupation of Spanish territories to the West and South (e.g. Florida). The Spanish–United States treaty line of 1819 was continually breached (e.g. California). Most historians portray this process as an integral feature of the American civilization process (e.g. Munroe Doctrine). In this elimination contest the Americans were the post powerful force and the Spanish were weak. By the turn of the twentieth century the USA had fought Spain and acquired a strong navy.

During the whole of the nineteenth century the American Indian population was denuded of safe, commercially valuable territory. Americans promoted a composite nationality and developed powers of central government.

Fifth, the processes of internal pacification and the integration struggles within a nation are inseparable and rarely proceed smoothly (Chapter 9, and also Chapter 6). The main theme is the production of longer chains of independence—largely through unplanned processes—but these create enchainment and conflict.

In America a major struggle interwove the many cities and the multitude of small towns within the hinterlands of the federal state system. Small town America is imprinted on the American habitus. Also immigration has provided many criss-cross currents and tensions. The growth of the role of the police force within civil apparatus of ruling adapted the British template and was quite separate from the military links of the French and Italians. Mennell contends that civil bureaucracy was much more politicized than in Europe.

Mennell observes that the Civil War (1861–5) was the most dramatic internal struggle. He argues that the Civil War was an instance of temporary disintegration in which the Southern stranglehold on federal politics was terminated by their withdrawal from Congress. That enabled the remaining Northern senators to enact a massive amount of legislation that mobilized their resources and infrastructure for the War. The North required the banking community to play a central role in financing their position. The Homestead Act, higher protective tariffs, Land Grant for education and infrastructure (e.g. railways) massively enabled the evolution of corporate America and underpinned its future, rapid growth. The economy boomed. Both the North and South faced elimination tournaments within. The post-bellum period of reconstruction was intended to be one of national integration but it closed with a political compromise in 1877. However, private corporations became footloose in moving across America in the newly integrated market for distribution. Mennell concludes that the army played a very small role because of the exceptionally low level of the military participation ratio: about one-tenth of 1% for long periods. This changed dramatically after 1940 and through the Cold War into the current period.

Mennell observes that for Europeans the enduring religiosity of Americans is frequently overlooked and when noticed is perplexing (Chapter 10). Secular Europe might be considered to be the exception. So he is proposing that religiosity is a topic for further research. Meanwhile it is argued that substantial parts of the American religious marketplace permit relatively high levels of emotional release and fantasy. These can be regarded as part of the growing variety in the generic informalization processes. Mennell emphasizes the low degree of monopolization of the means of orientation in the religious field and regards this as part of relatively authoritative model-setting centres in American society.

Because America has high inequality and lacks the state institutions associated with welfare, Mennell refers to the 'Curse of the American Dream' (Chapter 10). Elias observed that the poor are both a resource and a threat to pacification. America seems to have resisted the collectivization processes.

Sixth, in the closing section Mennell claims that America inherited most of its social conventions from its European parent society and yet is ahead of Europe in the avoidance of overt expressions of social superiority and inferiority (Chapter 12). America is ahead in standards of cleanliness as a badge of social respectability. There are similar Euro-American thresholds over shame. Mennell

concludes that markets were and are the crucial institution setting standards and enforcing conformity. Additionally, American corporations have been able to offset the disruptive costs of economic action to a very high degree.

Elias's Contribution Considered

Elias's intellectual life in Germany was formulated in the decades during which Marx's controversial theories were already well known and the theorizing of Freud and Weber was available as the leading edges of social analysis. The analytical synthesis by Elias was original in both its empirics and theory building. As such it was in the tradition of a grand narrative. Elias, very largely working alone for a long period within his career—albeit in the proximity of Mannheim and Walter Benjamin—tends towards a covering law model in which certain generative mechanisms are presumed to be driving state formation and social identity, specifically the tendency towards self-constraint and calculation. Elias hoped to occupy the heartland of twentieth century social theory. However, he did not build up a school during his full time career although he did eventually establish a high reputation. The research programme associated with his theorizing owes much to Eric Dunning initially and then an array of scholars, including Stephen Mennell.

There are problems with the claims for causality. Elias focuses excessively upon the role of the royal courts and the pacification of certain behaviours, especially duelling amongst the aristocracy, both in the late middle ages and in twentieth century Germany. This is not a conception of multiple, diffuse powers. Elias minimizes attention to the role of the Christian Church in shaping templates of manners in North Western Europe. Given the role of the Catholic Church and of monasteries in shaping European conceptions of temporality, the future and the emergence of history as a discipline this neglect is remarkable. Europe developed strong secular positions in the post 1848 generations and that is in stark contrast to the churching of America.

Although Elias highlighted the lengthening chains of commercial interdependence he was not attracted to an analysis of the world of work. Certainly not to the study of firms or of work related occupations. Nor to examining the professional managerial class who Scott¹⁴ and Shenhav¹⁵ reckon made post-bellum America. It is ironic that Mennell should address these areas via the attempt by Perrow to demonstrate that it is American corporations who colonized America and then many global populations. Perrow highlights the capacity of American corporations to shape spaces like shopping malls, to orchestrate spatial movement and to construct consumption. Not surprisingly a massive output of American cultural analyses has emphasized how post-bellum corporations, their owners and professional employees (e.g. engineers) *forcefully* pacified employees at work, shaped their consumption—even the funeral journey—and constructed entertainment and sport. The three ring circus, an American innovation, was *designed* to provide continuous visceral excitement in the spectator role.¹⁶ American Football is a warrior game in which the intervals between the nine second violent plays are full of inter-spectator analysis and talk. American Football embodies and displays key forms of calculation during the game and is a metaphor for regulating labour markets in the search for performativity. Arguably the absence of trade unions has much to do with ways in which the organic intellectuals of the American Enlightenment found Herbert Spencer more relevant to their future than Marx.

Elias edges towards a strong vision of social conditioning and of process sociology. However, there is process reduction, especially in the lack of attention to the competing and conflictual temporal rhythms. The interface between historical time and temporality in sociology is insufficiently problematized compared to Braudel.¹⁷

Arguably the clearest and most fruitful comparison is with the approach of Braudel. Neither Elias nor Mennell deal with Braudel even though he may be one of the best known for his comparative historical analysis of the North Atlantic world. Braudel's perspective on civilizing was formulated in the 1930s when sociology and history were being drawn into a rhythmic political economy by Bloch and colleagues who founded the Annales School in France. Braudel entered from the perspective of economics and history, yet soon became intertwined with French sociology, especially Durkheim and later Halbwachs. Braudel, like Elias, was attracted by the combination of detailed micro-level sources (e.g. Venetian commercial records) and by the grand narrative. He insightfully used film to record the archives of Italian merchants from the sixteenth century as one key pillar in his analysis of the decline of the Mediterranean world in the reign of Philip 2nd. In the post-1945 decades, Braudel vigorously positioned himself within an epistemic community at the core of French intellectual thought about science and the humanities. His interest in time was much more developed than in Elias. He confronted Gurvitch's¹⁸ useful and robust sociological critique of the temporal assumptions of all historians.

Braudel offers a very strong socio-political theory of markets, consumption and moral orders and had much to say about America and its differences from Western Europe. He examined the American case extensively and offered a very carefully argued case for extensive American differences. Braudel became a famous exponent of world history during the Cold War era and is memorialized in the USA at the Braudel Institute on the Binghamton Campus of the State University of New York.

Elias and Braudel share both an emphasis upon the sedimented influence of slow moving long term social processes on the present and their desire to construct a variant of grounded theory from extensive micro-macro studies. Elias has contributed a rich abstractive edge to the analysis of elimination contests amongst groupings and strata within and between national societies. His examination of the Germans provides many examples of how the distinctive configuration of elite power groupings of the twentieth century was an outcome of historical events such as the Thirty Years War of 1618–48. The role of military strata was very considerably consequential and quite different to the American experience reported by Mennell. Elias's contribution with Dunning to the historical sociology of English winter ball games exemplifies how distinctions between strata *might explain* why the barbarous game of rugby originated amongst the lesser gentry and new bourgeoisie and did not originate at Eton where gentlemen played the non-contact game of soccer. As noted earlier, Mennell does not discuss how the warrior-like sport of American Football originated within the elite American universities in the post-bellum era.

Mennell: Unresolved Issues

Mennell has applied the Elias thesis and revealed a raft of problems which are relevant to the sociology of globalization, innovation studies and examining Americans

and the role of America. This section contends that problems are useful and fruitful. Mennell's approach, like that of Elias, can be assessed relative to the contemporary approaches in comparative sociology and historical analysis. Four areas of problems are evident.

First, there is a problem of causality and comparisons between time-place periods as cases.¹⁹ These problems are augmented by pick-and-mix difficulties in selecting historical processes from diverse national and regional settings. Moreover, Mennell faces the unenviable task of weighing and judging differences within America, assessing their tendencies and then comparing these with the diversity of European experiences. Consequently, explanatory power is insufficiently optimized.

Mennell makes no attempt to diagrammatically explicate the model of mechanisms which informs Elias's theorizing and empirics. This is a relatively common practice as shown by Gorski's²⁰ critical analysis of the assumptions about the role of the state in pacification in the sociology of Michael Mann. Diagrammatic reasoning can provide a much sharper way of discussing claims about causality and explanations.

Mennell consciously follows the sequence of argumentation adopted by Elias. An alternative, possibly more fruitful approach would have been to commence with Chapters 7 and 8 because these show how the formation of the American state seems to have unfolded and refolded. If the book had been ordered in this way then I imagine that most American readers—because of their view of Europe's war-torn history over the past millennium—would have been assailed by the vivid contrast between the American experience and the European experience of the elimination contests amongst nations as reported by Elias and Mennell. There are of course many savage events in Mennell's account of the American elimination contests. Indeed Mennell should have made much of the position of slaves and non-white populations transported from Africa. Yet, one of the most savage American contests was their own Civil War when over 600,000 died. This may be compared to remarkably low military death rate for the American state since the Civil War and during the twentieth century. America's civilian death rate in wars is—compared to European nations—staggeringly miniscule and remarkably different. America and Europe occupy almost opposite ends of the spectrum. America is exceptional in these respects and they are central to the Elias–Mennell thesis. It follows that we should therefore expect many other differences. Consequently, if the Euro–American experiences are as similar as Mennell suggests then the explanatory model requires substantial revision.

Second, organizational innovations and their diffusion across national boundaries are persistent themes for Mennell. Recent research suggests that innovations tend to unravel and to be selectively transformed by users especially when crossing national boundaries.²¹ The current view is that America possesses a diversity of organizational innovations few of which are distinctly European.²² Unfortunately Mennell frequently relies upon a germ-like model of innovation diffusion to characterize social processes. Elias constantly criticized the forcing of biological analogies onto social processes.

Third, there are numerous surprising omissions. The topic of pacification is and has been of major interest in political science and sociology. Indeed the recent post-1989 failure of neo-conservative claims about the market and the experience of East European states have led to the sub-field of transitology as a specialist examination of failures. Pacification has been central to an array of post-Weberian theories which are barely mentioned. Pacification is also a central issue in actor network

theories about technological innovation and in the claims made about power processes and obligatory points of passage.²³

There is virtually no attention to the American system of manufactures and design or to the American consumer or to the extensive role of marketing and public relations since the 1880s. Consequently the American practice of designing future space is un-developed. Temporality, always an awkward area for Elias because of his narrow commitment to the philosophy of time, is barely mentioned. Nor are the unrecognized features of American temporality. There is slight attention to the emergence of American Football and the possibilities of comparison with European soccer and ... even rugby football. The American three ringed circus, designed by P. T. Barnum to maintain spectator excitement should be relevant to an Elias-ian perspective. Mennell does cite Perrow²⁴ approvingly but does not sufficiently address the role of the professional managerial class and their elimination struggles with labour and capital. Instead Mennell uses Perrow to highlight the absence of a courtly influence and the presence of market influences. However, the theorizing of the market is insufficiently sensitive to the largely unregulated power of American corporations and their capacities to structure the market and to shape the expectations of consumers. Their role in shaping the funeral trajectory is both revealing of their hegemony and sets the scene for the role of the spectator-entertainment industries.

Fourth, the fitting of America into the Elias thesis fails to strengthen the attack on process reduction. The weak periodization is unfortunate and consequential. Mennell underplays the decisively future oriented tendency of American practices of calculative rationality. This means that the history break of the post-1945 decades led by the management and social sciences is not clearly understood. Their critique of history was not trivial. Moreover, the opening of history by many sociologists retains an uncritical position on the role of history in European culture. That problem besets the perspective of Elias.²⁵

American Civilization Unfolding and Refolding

The twentieth century elimination contests surrounding America provide a key opportunity to test and refine the Elias–Mennell thesis. The American case can test and refine the original model so that the problematic elements can be removed or replaced. After the war-torn twentieth century the American case is of particular interest.²⁶ America's post-1865 repertoire for internal pacification through the consumer-polity and then externally through corporate colonizing and the market empire had become globally consequential by the 1930s. Post-1945 the repertoire was dramatically refolded in the Cold War. The Cold War was a time–place period which involved major elimination struggles between the USA and USSR.

These macro level tournaments engendered distinctive configurations of problem solving including the massive lengthening of those scientific, military and commercial value chains enabling time–space distancing.²⁷ The battle wagons employed by the USA included Big Science, massive protection to patented scientific knowledge (e.g. pharmaceuticals) and the promotion of both Operations Research and every form of formalized co-ordination technology (e.g. MRP2) which improved the performance of the military and its extensive civilian supply chains. Corporate America sought to enrol its employees and customers. Thus the macro level of the American policy of containment of the USSR and communism led to the creation of market opportunities for its allies. It also led to the platform

of soft power for corporate management recently examined by Boltanski and Chiapelli.²⁸

Certainly the American position in the Cold War and its subsequent unfolding requires considerably more explicit inclusion. One aspect is the occupation and reconfiguration of Germany and Japan after 1945 during the Cold War and the relevance of this to the position of France and Britain in losing their empires. The pacifying innovations for undertaking the exnovation of fascism in Germany have transformed the situation reported by Elias.²⁹ German access to markets, especially to the American markets, has enabled key sectors of the economy and has sustained regions. Equally, the position of the USA in the Mediterranean zone has involved major attempts to eliminate the communist incursion in Italy and to promote the political-military role of Turkey and Israel. In Italy the linkage between the communists and catholic parties has been sundered. That fissure has probably enabled the emergence of the autonomists and the theory of the multitude promoted by Hardt and Negri.³⁰ This seemingly paradoxical element is better understood as a neat illustration of the non-linearity at the core of the complexity theories.

The meso level at which complexity theories emerged just prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall resolved some of the constraints inherent within the first cybernetic revolution and much of Cold War Operations Research. Complexity theories shifted the centre of analytic gravity from the hegemony of engineers to the emerging power grouping from the life sciences. This latter part of the Cold War was a significant triumph of forms of manners which were much less formal, much more social and networked, and in which heterarchy continuously emerged, especially in certain American regions. Those autonomist tendencies were well articulated within the academic capitalism and its innovative linkages into corporate capital. Those new social networks became durable in the form of computer mediated communication. Moreover, there was a very distinct and extremely significant Japanese penetration which circulated innovations in coordination and in defining actionable knowledge.

Certain enduring structural repertoires within America have moved at a slow pace of unfolding and transformation. The American funeral has, since the era of Civil War reconstruction, been part of a solid temporal frame ordering America life. Embalming the dead and situating their normalized bodies in expensive open caskets connects the finitude of the final viewing, pacifies grieving and symbolizes the very notion of reconstruction and 'can do' which Americans espouse. Yet embalming has been unfolding for approximately two decades and cremation has largely been the new form albeit in combination with considerable aesthetic and costly embellishment. Perhaps the most enduring meso level feature—so far—has been the three key American sports in which they are most often world beaters: baseball, football and basketball.

The point to be made is that the project which Elias originated is being fruitfully transformed. Mennell has made a robust application from within the epistemic community of Elias-ians. However, fuller development requires more attention to the notion of pacifying innovations and their role in corporate colonizing. Also, Elias's claim that the macro level of inter-state elimination tournaments has different implications for the growers and the shrinkers has considerable relevance. That perspective suggests a different view of empire from that of both Ferguson and Hardt and Negri.³¹ Perhaps the pained claim that business school faculty are becoming hired hands is an unwitting acknowledgment that the duelling egos within business schools are being civilized—or not.

Notes and References

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