Eliasian Themes

Civilising Pressures in Globally Expanding Networks of Functional Interdependence: Power Inequalities and Equalities

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Abstract. Over the past three hundred years, with the emancipation of people as individuals and groups, social definitions of differences in inequality and equality -particularly those in social and political power, wealth and rank - have increasingly shifted from being designated as 'bad luck' in the direction of 'social injustice'. These are now debated as signs of changing social power relations, both in economic and political terms. On a global level, increasing inequality is reported to coincide with the reduction in these relations, while integration coincides with integration conflicts and with part-processes of disintegration, defunctionalisation and decivilisation. These contradictory directions can be understood by analysing them as tension balances. Two key questions are addressed here: Which side is (or becomes) dominant? At what level of integration does this occur? I show how the contradicting trends of integration and disintegration have been co-dominant: growing social interdependencies such as those based upon the controls of fire, agriculture and industry, have coincided with growing 'equality' *and* 'inequality' in power, wealth and rank. They coincided further with rising pressures on everyone involved to take more of each other into account more often, to develop longer-term perspectives, and to identify with other people regardless of their social origins. These pressures in *civilising* directions include the informalisation of regimes of manners and emotions and their internalisation, processes in which people exercise increasing control over their emotions, feelings and displays of superiority and inferiority in particular, resulting in rising levels of ambivalence and higher levels of trust *and* distrust.

Keywords: globalization, civilizing processes, civilising pressures, Norbert Elias, differentiation and integration, disintegration, defunctionalisation, dominant and co-dominant trends, equality and inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Norbert Elias's concept of «functional democratisation» describes an equalisation in social power relations through the differentiation («division of labour») and interweaving of social functions in expanding interdependency networks. This concept was absent in my work until I ran into «functional de-democratisation», about eight years after it was introduced by Stephen Mennell in *The American Civilizing Process* (2007). In a small section of the final chapter entitled «functional de-democratisation», Mennell first draws attention to a sequence of twentieth century emancipation struggles in which the power balance between outsider groups and their established counterparts becomes less uneven. He refers to these trends as «real and important; they played a key part in the process of 'informalisation', and from some standpoints may appear the dominant feature of the last century». Thus Mennell builds up to the introduction of the concept in the title of this section:

> In the counterpoint of history, however, they can be interwoven with contrary trends. Elias paid less attention to the possibility of what may be called *functional de-democratisation* and its effects. Yet in his writings and those of subsequent researchers who have followed his lead, there are important clues as to the genesis and consequences of functional de-democratisation (2007: 311).

This claim, however, is left unsubstantiated. In two later articles, Mennell again uses the term «functional de-democratisation» without providing a more solid empirical or theoretical elaboration (2014a; 2014b). I therefore set out to learn more about both concepts of functional democratisation and functional de-democratisation: their meaning and how they are introduced and used. This exploration was shared with the publication of *Functional democratisation and disintegration as side-effects of differentiation and integration processes* (Wouters 2016). In later years, as I focused on the wider framework of civilisation and informalisation theory, the perspective of the growing dominance of globalisation over nationalisation (Wouters 2019a; 2020), made me realise that this change in dominance implies that the expansion of functional interdependency networks – with differentiation and integration as their general process drivers – have continued onto the global level, the highest possible level of integration. This also implies that, as before, changes towards this higher level of integration are accompanied by integration conflicts: conflicts and counter-trends. Present examples of such counter-trends on lower levels of integration and organisation include rises in social inequality and changes toward hierarchisation or defunctionalisation, coinciding with less egalitarian and more hierarchical manners and emotions. These trends may also include increasing numbers of people living in deserted, derelict buildings of factories and houses in increasingly depopulated neighbourhoods. When they are caught up in counter processes like these, people are more likely to lose their jobs, or if they keep them, they are more likely to be 'bossed around' and snubbed as relationships become more authoritarian, less pacified and less democratic.

When one of those co-existing opposite processes appears, it is tempting to interpret it as a 'reversal' of the dominant trend, but in that case, the word 'reversal' is a stark exaggeration of what actually occurs. These opposing processes of de-democratisation and rising power inequalities are likely to (have) spread in interdependency networks that are characterised by defunctionalisation and disintegration of social functions. Therefore, from this perspective it is theoretically very important to refer to the opposite process of functional democratisation not as «functional de-democratisation» but as *defunctional* de-democratisation, and to realise that spheres of rising social inequality and de-democratisation have spread in expanding interdependency networks *together with* continued social equalisation and «functional democratisation». They co-exist as co-dominant contradicting trends.

To conceptualise changes in the opposite direction of «functional democratisation» as «functional de-democratisation» confuses and obscures our ability to see trends and countertrends by conflating levels of interdependency and integration. Maintaining the word «functional» to describe the opposite trends of democratisation and de-democratisation is part of the problem. This conceptualisation fails to acknowledge the different direction of trends, on the one hand, towards rising equality in relationships via functional differentiation and functional democratisation, and on the other, towards defunctionalisation and greater inequality. Mixing up the direction of trends in this way is combined with mixing up the level of integration at which they occur: the global and/or local

level. This blurs and complicates the focus of research on manifestations at both global and local levels of rising inequality and defunctionalisation, as well as their counterparts of «functional democratisation» and «informalisation». Research that combines and integrates these two areas of focus can be stimulated by achieving greater conceptual and theoretical precision. There still seems to be a lack of clarity around understanding and analysing the growing dominance of globalisation over nationalisation, how to use these concepts and how they fit into Elias's theory, hence my contribution here[1].

The present article is divided into two parts. Part One takes a step back to address the concept of functional democratisation as originally introduced by Norbert Elias in *What is Sociology?* (2012b [1970]). I highlight Elias's careful use of this concept to represent the reduction of power differentials between various groups of people, including governments and the governed, different strata within nation states, and in all relationships between various groups including parents and children and men and women. Social codes of conduct become internalised as part of civilising processes in which people exercise increasing control over their emotions and develop a tendency to identify with other people who are not part of their own group or do not share their social background or status. Functional democratisation and integration have become integral to the habitus of people living in nation state societies.

Having clarified Elias's use of functional democratisation, I consider how broader social processes of differentiation and integration of functions generated rising 'civilising pressures' in which people take more of each other into account more often. This has become a global phenomenon that is not restricted to Western democracies but is part of an all-encompassing Web of Global Interdependencies. This global perceptive is crucial to understand current trends towards inequality and/or equality. From this perspective we can appreciate how long-term processes of differentiation and integration have proceeded out of step with each other. I discuss the example of industrialisation in Britain and compare this to similar processes that have occurred on the global level since the 1980s, with coordinating institutions of integration lagging behind the differentiation of commercial and industrial functions. This occurs within a broader process of pacification in which contrasts in people's conduct diminish and the varieties in their conduct increase. Conflicts between different classes and countries generates pacification of social conduct through growing pressures to avoid displays of superiority and inferiority. But this also generates ambivalence as people become more integrated as the division of functions increases. I argue that both these processes of internalisation and ambivalence are essential components of functional democratisation, yet they are largely absent in Wilterdink's commentary (see note 1).

Next, I address Wilterdink's claim (2020) that there is a consensus among scholars that the overall direction of a long-term trend across the globe is one of increasing inequalities. I highlight the role of trust in cooperative relations and how higher levels of trust *and* distrust emerge. In a similar way, increasing functional differentiation can also give rise to rises in power inequality as well as equality, a point missed by Wilterdink. I argue for a more balanced approach to the study of long-term trends marked by power inequalities *and* equalities. Such an approach demonstrates that, in the long run, de-functionalisation and growing inequalities have not become dominant trends over the growing equality accompanied by expanding and strengthening global networks of interdependency. On the contrary, being part of these expanding functional networks has a survival value for participants. I suggest this more measured approach is preferable to a more one-sided and simplistic view of a parallel rise or fall in functional democratisation, or 'functional de-democratisation' as he (following Mennell) prefers to call it.

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[1] My colleague Nico Wilterdink published a paper (2020) in defence of Mennell's term «functional de-democratisation». My initial impulse was to simply not respond and thus act according to the German proverb 'Who builds his house on the street, must let the people talk', and leave it at that. However, only days after I had read Wilterdink's publication, Mennell broke his silence by sending me an email in which he writes about Wilterdink's article in *HSR* that he «had quite a bit of input into discussing it in advance», and also that «you [I] should regard it as my [his] reply as well as Nico's». This message helped me to change my mind, and so I set about addressing several of Wilterdink's (and Mennell's) misunderstandings and omissions from my position on various issues, including the utility of the concept of «functional de-democratisation», the extent to which power inequalities characterize human history and whether this trend is mitigated or accompanied by trends towards power equality at the same time. This article was originally a response to Wilterdink's text published in HSR (2020), which could not be published in the same journal as a right of reply, so I uploaded it to my website www.caswouters.nl (with many thanks to my daughter Julia).

Part Two addresses Wilterdink's commentary on my position in more detail, emphasising differences as well as similarities in our position in an attempt to illuminate some of the difficulties and opportunities presented by working with Elias's approach. This discussion sheds light on this theory as well as on global processes in the history of humanity. I have referenced and quoted specific points Wilterdink makes where necessary. Nevertheless, the reader is encouraged to absorb Wilterdink's commentary (2020) to appreciate the differences (including omissions) and similarities in our positions, and to notice that disagreement is created where basic agreement and/or even complementarity is possible. In addition, I argue that Wilterdink creates a caricature of my position which he is then able to criticize with ease, and that in doing so he reveals a genuine and regrettable lack of understanding of my arguments. And he achieves this without a single reference to my article. Part Two is therefore seriously polemical, but also seriously constructive.

PART ONE

1. Functional democratisation: a polyvalent concept

In *On the Process of Civilisation* (2012a) [1939], Elias apparently does not use «functional democratisation», but he does refer to everything it would come to entail when the concept was introduced in 1970, such as declining differences in power and conduct, the reduction in contrasts which occurs with the differentiation of social functions in every major wave of the civilising movement. One exception was mentioned in 2007 by sociologist and photographer George Cavalletto, who claims Elias did use it, though just once and only in passing (2007: 246). Indeed, I found it at the end of a paragraph on the nineteenth century, in which Elias focuses on the change of skills needed for success or failure in life for aristocratic courtiers in comparison with those for the rising commercial and industrial bourgeoisie: «...capacities such as occupational skills, adeptness in the competitive struggle for economic chances, in the acquisition or control of capital wealth, or the highly specialised skill needed for political advancement in the fierce though regulated party struggles characteristic of *an age of increasing functional democratisation*» (2012a: 468 my italics). In what follows, Elias continues to compare major differences in the social pressures on «the aristocratic courtier's personality structure» and on «the rising bourgeois strata», but leaves the «age of increasing functional democratisation» to stand alone, unexplained. Was it really used just once, in passing, and then lay dormant for 30 years?

By comparing editions, I found that this characterisation was added in 1982 in the Pantheon Book edition, «Translated by Edmund Jephcott with some notes and revisions by the author» (Elias 1982: 306). So Jephcott allowed Elias to 'sneak in' his concept into the first English translation of Part Two of *The Civilising Process* (published as *Power and Civility*, a title that probably was forced upon the author).

When he introduces the concept in *What is Sociology* (originally in 1970), Elias presents it not only as a *long-term trend*, but also a common trend *in many and various countries* : «there was a structural parallelism in their overall development as societies», an all-pervading social transformation of a survival unit, a transformation in which he emphasises the *reduction of power differentials* between governments and governed, between different strata, and in all social relationships between different groups, «even down to those between men and women, parents and children» (63). Functional democratisation, writes Elias, «refers to a shift in the social distribution of power that can manifest itself in various institutional forms, for example in one-party systems no less than in multi-party systems» (63). Again and again, in slightly different formulations, Elias repeats: «Central to this whole transformation have been impulses towards growing specialisation or differentiation in all social activities. Corresponding to these have been impulses towards integration of the specialised activities – integration that has often lagged behind the differentiation». With their integration and because of their particular specialised functions, «all groups and individuals become more and more functionally dependent on more and more others. Chains of interdependence become more differentiated and grow longer; consequently they become more opaque and for any single group or individual, more uncontrollable» (2012b: 63-4).

For Elias, functional democratisation is paramount among the structural properties of a particular phase of development that enables people to become aware of themselves as society. «It permeates the whole gamut of social bonds» (2012b: 64).

I think it is highly probable that this permeation explains why functional democratisation as a rise of social equality is not just related to functional differentiation and interweaving, but also to the civilising pressures on everyone involved to take more of each other into account more often, and to develop longer-term perspectives. These pressures re-surfaced and their continued persistence may also explain why the emancipation of people from groups that were extremely oppressed, is continued without much 'de-emancipation' even in countries that have experienced «de-democratisation». There too, the *Black Lives Matter*, the *#MeToo* and the *LGTBQ+* movements show that their emancipation continues to be vibrant and strong. They indicate that the reduction of power differentials can only develop into functional democratisation when the new power ratios with their corresponding new codes of manners, morals and sensitivities, are transformed and incorporated into the entirety of standard codes and thus more generally experienced as self-evident, authentic and natural. This internalisation and incorporation of codes in individuals and interdependent groups are inherent parts of civilising processes. They are relatively autonomous, which implies they do not simply rise or fall in parallel with every rise or decline in equality or inequality, whether occurring in the shift from one level and scope of functional multi-level interweaving to another, or in the formation of larger attack-and-defence organisations, nowadays increasingly involving a shift from national and multinational units to global ones. In intimate relationships, for example, the basic functions of men and women for each other have not changed much. What has changed significantly is the value partners attach to these functions and to the division of labour between them. But overall, these changes have increased the importance of avoiding displays of superiority and inferiority between partners, usually women and men, and also between them and their children. The importance of avoiding these displays has certainly not decreased. And in welfare states, across the board, this also applies not only between intimate partners but in most social relationships of work and play. Between people competing and cooperating at various levels in the multitude of their functional organisations, the importance of avoiding these displays still seems to be rising, often together with inequalities in pay and opportunity. Between functional democratisation and its opposite exists a wall of ingrained civilisation. Even small declines hit on the wall of ingrained habits and values (Wouters 2012; 2019b). I think Norbert Elias had this wall in mind when he coined his concept of 'functional democratisation'.

When Elias introduced this concept in 1970 there was a certain ambivalence about it. While it is presented as an important theoretical concept, in many places where it could have been elaborated upon, Elias seems to have forgotten about it. An example is in the chapter in which he presents his «game models» (Chapter 3). In a note (p 63) the editor (Stephen Mennell) claims that these «game models» explore «the theoretical significance of this kind of process», but Elias does not mention the concept itself. This is strange, but the same thing happens with his concept of «functional democratisation». After having captured various interconnected trends under the conceptual umbrella of 'functional democratisation' in chapter 2, Elias again mentions all of them in Chapter 5, but here again without reference to the concept. This time, among the trends mentioned he again includes «the long civilising trend towards more even and more thorough control over the emotions, and for people to identify more readily with other people as such, regardless of social origins», but now they serve as a prelude to the introduction of his well-known «triad of basic controls»:

> Although there has been a progressive reduction in inequality between and in countries since the end of the eighteenth century, it is absolutely certain that no one consciously planned it or intentionally brought it about. The [sociological] problem then is this: how can we account for the fact that during this time mechanisms of interweaving, though unplanned and uncontrollable, moved blindly towards greater humanisation of social relationships? (...) How can we explain, for example, the fact that despite all regressions, societies always regain their course leading to greater functional differentiation, greater multi-level integration and the formation of larger attack-and-defence organisations? (Elias 2012b: 150-1)

Particularly the latter question could have been followed by the hint of an answer that involves «functional democratisation». That would have been appropriate because the 'course' Elias mentions here, has explanatory

power relating to the connection of this specific type of social equalisation[2] with expanding interdependency networks and long-term civilising processes. From them, Elias could have described and explained functional democratisation, but he did not. It suggests an ambivalence about using it.

In 1987, three years before his death, Elias uses the concept in connection with the continued integration of practically all social classes in states such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark or France. These

> have developed continuously as relatively autonomous organisational units over several centuries, and in the past century in particular there has been a strong advance of functional democratisation, integrating practically all classes into the state structure. These developments have brought about a deep-rooted predisposition of the individual personality structures of people of all classes to live together in this specific form, as Danes, Dutch or French. (2010: 196)

Here, functional democratisation is mentioned in the same breath as integration, so we have to guess its exact meaning, but from the whole context it is clear that Elias understands both functional democratisation and integration as directly related to the deeply-rooted national and social habitus and we-image of all the inhabitants of these states. In sum, the differences and inequalities of class have been transcended by the equality guaranteed by the rule of law and ingrained in their social personality structure as members of the same survival unit.

2. Differentiation and integration of social functions: from nationalisation to globalisation

From the lust for life and the fear of dying, social competition continued to be major process drivers of the ongoing differentiation of social functions, sooner or later to be followed by their coordination and/or co-operation on higher levels of social organisation and integration, thus increasing overall complexity: the higher-level synthesis of all social organisations, political and/or military as well as commercial organisations. This interweaving of social functions continued to occur on all levels of societies, from small groups to whole survival units, and it propelled the expansion and increasing density of interdependency networks across the planet. In other words, when these process drivers increasingly reached the global level, the processes of differentiation, integration, and increasing complexity also continued on that level. Today it seems that the process of globalisation has become more powerful than nationalisation was during the time when conquering and colonization were still widely considered viable options. These options lost viability, particularly after WW II and in the process of decolonisation. It shows how, on the whole, processes of social interweaving proceeded together with increasing pressures on everyone involved to take more of each other into account more often, and to develop longer-term perspectives. In short, they are increasing «civilising pressures».

Functional democratisation – as introduced by Elias – is not restricted to the West or to any specific political system, whether a democracy, a court society or a tyranny. Changes in the network of interdependencies are decisive, since the level and range of functional democratisation varies with differentiations in size, density and complexity of these webs of human bonds in survival units. Therefore, the West is no longer the point of reference for understanding functional democratisation because that point has shifted to include the entire expanding global web. States have become increasingly interdependent with many other states, the distribution of power between them has become less unequal, and this makes it confusing to speak of de-democratisation in a single state, or a couple of states, or even to speak of 'the West' without explicit reference to its place and origin within the framework of the *Web of Global Interdependencies*. This *WGI* has become an all-embracing point of reference, if only because states have lost much of their survival function as decisions of survival importance have clearly expanded the borders of individual states.

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[2] In 1990 I did something similar by writing «social equalisation» where I probably would have used «functional democratisation» after 2016. I wrote: «to what extent will such a trend [increasing gap in income and wealth between rich and poor states] prevent a global process of social equalisation and informalisation from becoming dominant? Will the trend towards 'diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties' between *classes* […] continue on a global scale between *states*? What are the chances that the structured changes in the West will spread to the global level? These questions demand a comparison of the development of the relationships between the classes in the West and that between rich and poor states on the planet». (2020: 300).

In this one Web of Global Interdependencies (WGI), China, Russia, and the USA find themselves in a competition-and-co-operation relationship that is in some ways reminiscent of that between England, France and Germany in Europe before, in and between the two World Wars, and now again within the EU, after Brexit in and outside the EU. We live within and are part of global processes that seem to have become the *dominant* trend for the entire world, for the whole World Wide Web of Interdependencies. In my 2020 paper I tried to explain why we, as sociologists and as inhabitants of the earth can no longer find a credible basis for our process analysis if it is not viewed from a global perspective and placed in a global context. A global perspective on interdependences became increasingly necessary and is now indispensable for understanding international relations, whether political, diplomatic, commercial or financial. As the political scramble for land became increasingly impossible, it was transformed into a scramble for low-wage production and other exploitation chances with economic and geopolitical benefits, such as building pipelines (gas, oil), roads and infrastructure (new 'silk routes'), thus establishing and expanding interdependency networks between commercial transnational corporations as well as national and international political organisations of countries and states across the world. It was also a transformation in which the main players on the world's stage transformed from politicians, the heirs of aristocrats, in the direction of the 'moneycrats'.

In *What is Sociology?* Elias uses the industrialisation of Britain to shed light on what he calls his «model» of differentiation and integration of social functions. This framework clarifies the similarity between what happened during the industrialisation of Britain and what has happened since the 1980s on a global scale: in both periods, the vast differentiation of functions entailed by industrialisation and then later by industrial, commercial and financial globalisation, proceeded for a long time rather wildly, that is, before co-ordinating and integrating functions developed or emerged. «Ever so often», Elias writes,

> the functional differentiation of society lurches forward, outstripping the development of the integrating and co-ordinating institutions of the time. In the industrialisation of Britain, the great leap forward just before and after 1800 is an example of how processes of differentiation can go out in front in this way. The corresponding development of co-ordinating institutions was notoriously slow. (Elias 2012b: 136)

Just as in Britain around 1800, the corresponding developments of coordinating institutions today are notoriously slow, but now on a global scale. Probably as far back as the early 1980s, the differentiation of commercial, financial and industrial functions spread in large waves, again rather wildly, across the world with some internal coordination but without an adequate development of coordinating diplomatic and political institutions[3].

3. Pacification: diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties

Functional interweaving coincides with a reduction in power potentials between groups and with a 'diminishing of contrasts' in their conduct: «Things once allowed are now reproved» – a sentence in one of Elias's sources used by him as a motto of the whole direction of changes in the codes of conduct from the late Middle Ages

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[3] I elaborate on this skewed growth in my article *Have Civilising Processes Changed Direction?* (2020). Donald Trump's attempts to stop and reverse this development have stimulated growing awareness of this skewed growth. Accordingly, after his presidency, an acceleration in the rise of coordinating diplomatic and political institutions can be expected. In April 2021, during a meeting of the IMF, the US Minister of Finance Janet Yellen proposed to agree on a worldwide minimum profit tax for international companies as an attempt to counteract the tendency for multinationals to 'shop around' for the best tax rates in countries that offer tax advantages, thereby halting the race to the bottom between countries that have been offering these advantages for years. The US also made the unsolicited concession that tax must be levied in the country where the profit was made and not in the off-shore tax havens that companies now use to deposit their profits. Among the signs in a related direction is the increasing attention given to the globalisation of state–market relations (Montani 2019) and the global trend from internationalisation of national laws towards a constitutionalisation of international law as exemplified in the supranational government of the European Union (Jakubowski and Wierczyńska 2016; Kassoti 2017; Phirtskhalashvili 2018).

into nineteenth-century Europe. And this functional interweaving and its related reduction of power potentials between groups not only coincided with 'diminishing contrasts' – to a large extent running parallel with functional democratisation on the level of codes of manners and emotion regulation – but also with «increasing varieties» in the regulation of conduct and emotion; that is, with informalisation. In the following quotation, Elias connects and intertwines vital parts of his theory on the process of civilisation. First, he brings the «diminishing of contrasts» as well as the «increasing varieties or nuances» under the theoretical umbrella of advancing functional interdependencies:

> With the advancing division of functions and the greater integration of people, the major contrasts between different classes and countries diminished, while the nuances, the varieties of their moulding within the framework of civilisation, multiplied. ... The more are the strong contrasts of individual conduct tempered, the more are the violent fluctuations of pleasure or displeasure contained, moderated and changed by self-control, the greater becomes the sensitivity to shades or nuances of conduct, the more finely tuned people grow to minute gestures and forms, and the more complex becomes their experience of themselves and their world at levels that were previously hidden from consciousness through the veil of strong affects...

Elias continues by connecting changes in functional interdependency, social structure, conduct, sensitivity and the whole personality structure under the umbrella of a pacification process:

> In the wake of this *pacification*, the sensitivity of people to social conduct also changed. Now, inner fears – the fears of one sector of the personality for another – grew in proportion to the decrease of outer ones. As a result of these inner tensions, people began to experience each other in a more differentiated way which was precluded as long as they constantly faced serious and inescapable threats from outside. Now a major part of the tensions which were earlier discharged directly in conflicts between people, had to be resolved as an inner tension in the struggle of the individual with himself. (2012a: 460-1; my italics)

The pacification of conflicts between different classes and countries continues as pacification of social conduct via increasing pressures to avoid displays of superiority and inferiority and internalise them as inner conflicts.

This regularity can be observed in all established-outsider figurations when both groups become more interdependent and more involved in a process of emancipation and accommodation. It was the case, for example, between men and women when the social controls of chaperonage diminished and the demands on the self-control and self-steering of women *and* men increased; and when the segregation («apartheid») between groups of different skin colour diminished, the control of social tensions via social segregation became increasingly dependent upon the individuals themselves and their ability to turn them into internal controls. In this process they became inner tensions that could be released somewhat by developing higher levels of sensitive, flexible and reflexive self-steering, thus turning civilising pressures to some extent into civilising pleasures.

4. Internalisation and a latent or open ambivalence

The civilising pressures of pacification that tends towards 'diminishing contrasts' involving an internalisation process also helps understanding of another change that accompanies the advancing division of functions and the greater integration of people: «in the struggles of highly complex societies, each rival and opponent is at the same time a partner on the production line of the same machinery», and «they become more and more ambivalent, at one and the same time opponents and partners»[4]. Elias compares this open or latent ambivalence with the «pure

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[4] In German «Good Society» (*Gute Gesellschaft*) before WWII, an uncompromising attitude prevailed and was kept alive by its members: an element of a warrior code – revitalised by the *Freikorps* in the Weimar republic (see Elias 1989, Fletcher 1997, and Jitschin 2021) – that kept a relatively strong division between opponents and partners, friends and enemies. The word *Kompromißler* was used disparagingly to describe people who were thought to lack the strength of will to resist a compromise, and would thereby lose honour. Only after WWII was this middle-class habitus revised. A clear example of this process is found in the frequently reprinted *Man Benimmt Sich Wieder (Good Manners are Back Again)*. After depicting a skilful negotiator as a *'typischer Kompromißler'* [typical compromiser], the author continues:

life-and-death enmity» in «primal contests» between invading nomads and groups of settlers without a trace of mutual dependence (2012b: 71-5). When chains of mutual interdependence are relatively short, he writes, «rapid switches from one extreme to another also occur more frequently, an easy changeover from firm friendship into violent enmity» (2012a: 352).

Both this internalisation as well as this ambivalence (also described in Section 6 of my 2020 article) are crucial to understand and explain Elias's introduction of the concept of functional democratisation. As I see it, he introduced «functional democratisation» as sort of synthesis of the social equalisation rooted in the reduction of power potentials that come with advancing functional differentiation and integration, as well as with the «diminishing contrasts» and «increasing varieties» in codes of conduct. Elias used «functional differentiation and integration» as two concepts that refer to general process drivers, while their side-effects on codes of behaviour and emotion regulation are referred to as «diminishing contrasts» and «increasing varieties». The latter two are twin concepts that relate to each other in a similar way as «functional democratisation» (diminishing contrasts) and «informalisation» (increasing varieties and rising levels of consciousness). They have their roots in the same overall social transformation. However, in Wilterdink's commentary, both these connections and their origin are largely absent.

5. Power, inequality, equality, trust and distrust in social hierarchy and stratification

From a global historical perspective, one can observe that more and more people have come to live in survival units with the spread of more productive and commercial functions that protect material security together with the spread of more diplomatic and political functions that protect physical safety. Thus, the size of these functionally interconnected units increased. With size, possibilities for the rise of equality as well as for inequality increase. The connection between increases in size and spreading inequalities is found in functional differentiation that results in an expansion of power differences, while their organisation and institutionalisation results in a further differentiation of social status and privileges in social stratification; that is, in hierarchies with an increasingly large distance between the top and the bottom and a broader delegation of power over its positions.

In his critique, which this article was originally written to address, Wilterdink references many academics to back up his statement that 'there is consensus among scholars about the overall direction of the long-term trend' of increasing 'inequalities of power, privileges, and social status'. Perhaps this is the case, but this ignores the issue of how these increasing power *inequalities* relate to the increasing power *equalities* that accompany the cooperation that becomes necessary between more and more members at more and more levels of expanding networks of functional interdependence. Increasing numbers of people interconnected in a survival unit are not only bonded to each other in internal inequality by their hierarchical positions, but also by a certain level of internal equality. A fully top-down command structure cannot be viable because cooperation in and between all levels of organisation demands a minimal degree of power delegation and cooperation. This includes a degree of power delegation which is also an extension of trust and an inclusiveness in the direction of equality. In other words, any hierarchy of unequal positions cannot be effective and/or productive without a certain level of equality and mutual trust, and this equality emerges from the institutionalisation of a certain balance of trust and distrust between the people cooperating at various levels within their organisations. Without a certain minimal level of trust, all co-operation erodes and tends to become self-destructive, whereas successful cooperation contains the pressure to develop trust to a higher level, thus also pushing the tension balance of trust and distrust towards a higher level, usually with more of both.

This expression '*typischer Kompromißler*' is used deliberately because it is taken to be a reproach in our country, whereas a 'good compromiser' to most other peoples is a highly respected and very esteemed man, whose person and '*kompromißliche*' abilities are in demand and praised. As against what once used to be the case, we have to become clearly aware of this sharp contrast between German and foreign views on the importance attached to 'partly giving in'. We view, or used to view, rigid insistence upon a total claim as proud, brave and masculine, whilst the rest of the world views it as foolish and destructive, because it blocks any negotiation from ever producing results that are satisfying for both parties, while it generally rules out living together harmoniously (Meissner, 1951: 242; also quoted in Wouters 2007: 115-6).

Among the scholars Wilterdink cites to back up his consensus claim about the overall direction of the long-term trend of increasing «inequalities of power, privileges, and social status» is the sociologist Johan Goudsblom, who writes that, in the long run, «a cluster of five closely interrelated trends has been dominant in human history»:

> As a direct result of agriculture there was a trend towards higher production of food ... leading to an *increase in numbers* of the human population and to an increasing *concentration* of people in ever more densely populated areas ... there were processes of *specialisation* as to social functions and of *organisation* in increasingly large units such as states, markets and religious cults ... [giving] rise to increasing differences in power, property and prestige, ... a process of social *stratification*. In a way these five trends represent variations of the theme of differentiation and integration which Herbert Spencer (1874) indicated as the twin motive forces underlying evolution in general. (1989: 23)

Here, Goudsblom indeed mentions the trend of social stratification, «increasing differences in power, property and prestige», but is «increasing differentiation» equal to «increasing inequality»? Wilterdink seems to take for granted that they are identical. But this differentiation *also* implies «increasing equality». Moreover, as mentioned at the end of Section 2, Elias's 'model' of functional differentiation and integration implies that even functional differentiation that proceeds rather 'wildly', as it did in Britain around 1800 and on a global scale since the 1980s, can be expected sooner or later to be followed by a «corresponding development of co-ordinating institutions». These developments are part of the *competition and interweaving mechanism* (Wouters 1990) and can be expected to bring corresponding changes in power balances, towards both increasing and decreasing equalities *and* inequalities.

6. Functional interweaving – the balance of equality and inequality

Levels of the balances between cooperation and competition, equality and inequality, trust and distrust between partners and opponents, will tend to rise as their functional interdependence rises. As this development proceeds towards a higher level of 'functional trust', it may result in a degree of functional democratisation.

Looking at human history as a whole, expanding social interdependency networks based upon the control of fire, subsequently upon the control of fire and agriculture, then of fire, agriculture and industry, and then with the addition of electricity, have coincided with two contradicting trends:

1) integration and disintegration, and 2) growing «equality» and «inequality» in power and rank. These contradicting trends have been *co-dominant*[5].

A balanced study of these trends is lacking and the same goes for a study of changes in the balances of equality and inequality, trust and distrust, and the ambivalence of being partners as well as opponents at different levels of hierarchy, social stratification and ranking.

It is of course possible to see functional democratisation as co-dominant with de-democratisation, but it seems obvious that in the long run functional democratisation has had the upper hand. Processes of social integration and equalisation will have persisted together with the expansion and integration of survival units. Their continued expansion and integration are well documented, for example in Turchin's table (*Table 1*) on the increasing scale of human cooperation, but it is not always clear that this necessarily means that their disintegration in the long run has been less dominant than the continuation of their functional interdependence. The same goes for realising that regained dominance of the trend of functional interweaving will in many cases have coincided with rising civilising pressures on displays of superiority and inferiority, working in the direction of rising levels of mutual identification

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[5] From my book *Civilisation and Informalisation*: «The trends of functional democratisation and informalisation or, in other words, of decreasing contrasts and increasing varieties, present an example of a different type of balance; the relation between both sides of the balance is of a different order. Perhaps they can be characterised as co-dominant trends. The rise of ambivalence that is identified as a civilising force, as a motor driving towards diminishing extremes in conduct, is in fact the product of a rise in both trust and distrust resulting in higher levels of trust. In this process, acting upon feelings of distrust and suspicion is becoming increasingly counterproductive» (Wouters 2019: 172-3).

and mutually expected self-restraints. This means that at least within a survival group an identification with other members of this we-group will temper and keep the more extreme displays of superiority and inferiority among members more under control, particularly with respect to killing and enslavement.

The sociologist Wilbert van Vree indicates the importance and the power of the two contradicting co-dominant trends and of the size of competing and collaborating groups:

> The growth of human societies from foraging bands of several tens to a large federation of nation-states of hundreds of millions of individuals during the last 12,000 years coincided with ever-improving collaboration skills. The process of social integration was driven by the differentiation of social functions and particularly by competition and conflict between human groups, usually taking the form of warfare. In his study *Ultrasociety* (2016), Peter Turchin shows that in the long run, groups that outcompeted other ones had learned – among many other things – how to more effectively coordinate the actions of growing numbers of people. According to Turchin this 'collaboration' between larger groups of people can imply self-imposed bottom-up arrangements as well as coerced top-down arrangements and everything in between. In the first case we de facto see an increase in levels, number and types of meetings, and in the second case an expansion and differentiation of authoritarian forms of leadership. (...) When power differentials between rulers and ruled and between social strata decreased, the 'meeting-isation' trend was dominant, whereas the 'autocratisation' trend was dominant when power differentials increased. In the long run, meeting-isation was the dominant trend, but autocratisation always was present as counter-trend, sub-trend or dominant trend. (van Vree 2019: 296-7)

Table 1. Increasing scale of human cooperation (in Peter Turchin: *Ultrasociety*).

Social scale (people)	Polity types	Times (kya)
10s	Foraging bands	200
100s	Farming villages	10
1000s	Simple chiefdoms	7.5
10,000s	Complex chiefdoms	7
100,000s	Archaic states	5
1,000,000s	Macrostates	4.5
10,000,000s	Mega-empires	2.5
100,000,000s	Large nation-states	0.2

Among the groups that survived the calamities and catastrophes of human history (those who did not, generally remain obscured from view), defunctionalisation and growing inequalities did not on the whole – nor in the long run – become dominant over the growing equality that accompanied the expansion and strengthening of interdependency networks. As all groups and individuals became more and more functionally dependent on more and more others, everyone bonded in such a network will have become somewhat less inclined to use violence for solving conflicts or use other forms of constraints that would disturb the mutual interests and the equality of their bonds – including hierarchical bonds – as these interests and bonds will have found a well-grounded place in their 'survival menu'. And finally, it seems good to remember that a significant number of newcomers to a group usually do not come from outside, but are born into it.

Apparently, this consensus among scholars about the overall direction of the long-term trend of increasing 'inequalities of power, privileges, and social status' does not include all scholars, and it seems at least premature. Indeed, it is one-sided to focus on the rise of inequalities without a serious study of the surplus of life chances and possibilities of rising equality that follow from being functionally interconnected in the survival units that have been expanding across the globe. Being connected within an expanding functional network has survival value for nearly all of its members, if only because the risk of being killed or assaulted would be smaller for members than for non-members. As a rule, for most people membership is simply a necessary condition for survival, and in that sense all are equal. As members, particularly if they can communicate in more or less the same language, people are less easily killed or assaulted than non-members, who are experienced as potential enemies and 'less equal'.

To conclude this discussion of functional democratisation, I repeat that the process is connected with an increasing expansion and density of networks of functional interdependence in which both equalities *and* inequalities increase – organisation demands co-operation – and cooperation demands some degree of power delegation which is also an extension of trust and an inclusiveness in the direction of equality.

In contrast to this conclusion, Wilterdink equates a rise or decline in equality or inequality with a simple parallel rise or fall in functional democratisation or «functional de-democratisation». He could not have drawn this conclusion if he had taken into account the possibility that, as it emerges, functional democratisation may develop a degree of relative autonomy via internalisation. Through internalisation, power changes *between* people are connected with and transformed into changes *in* people, changes in their affect economy, their feelings and sensitivity to expressions of superiority and inferiority, and in their overall psychic (or psychological) structures. This relation between social and psychic structures is indicated as the connection between changes in power balances and in more or less ingrained hierarchical or egalitarian regimes of manners and emotions. Trends in an egalitarian direction will increasingly trigger and coincide with an informalisation of the regimes of conduct and emotions. Wilterdink does not seem to notice this connection. He accepts and uses informalisation mainly as a descriptive term, thus depriving the concept of much of its explanatory power[6], as I will show here and in Part Two of this paper. In addition, he does not seem to recognise changing *balances* of power and instead emphasises social inequality, focusing on inequality with equality as an exception. Trust and distrust are absent from his account, and the same goes for people experiencing functions of partners and opponents interchangeable or overlapping, which means he also doesn't take intensifying ambivalences into account. Without an eye for these balances, historical social research into civilising processes is seriously handicapped and will remain more limited in comparison to the wider and more comprehensive approach suggested here.

In Part Two I will illustrate some of these limitations, simultaneously mapping out a more comprehensive approach, and show how Wilterdink's polemic creates disagreement where basic agreement and/or overlapping perspectives might be possible. Already in the abstract of his article, this tendency is clearly present in his opening sentence, stating that his paper responds «to an essay by Cas Wouters' and aims to clarify historical trends of increasing and decreasing power inequalities». This may suggest my aim is different, but I do share this aim. The main difference in this respect is that my focus is on *power balances*, on how trends of increasing and decreasing power inequalities *and* equalities become part of social and psychic habitus via habitus formation and internalisation. Both are processes that imply continued civilising pressures. This perspective opens the possibility to explore how trends towards increasing or decreasing egalitarian and/or hierarchical regimes of emotions and behaviour are connected with processes of pacification and informalisation. Both processes depend on the internalisation of social codes relating to how to live in more equal relationships by increasingly and almost automatically avoiding manners and emotions that express degrees of inequality that have become tabood via increasing sensitivity to expressions of superiority and inferiority. *#MeToo* and Putin's War provide examples of wide-spread moral indignation ignited by a social and individual habitus having developed in this direction of rising demands on social and self-regulation. In his abstract, Wilterdink also criticises my «claim that 'functional democratisation' was a dominant trend in the whole of human history», but when he writes (in the last sentence of his abstract) that «both functional democratisation and functional de-democratisation can be discerned, which take place on different integration levels and along different axes», this sentence contains a clear indication of major similarities in our positions. However, without further explanation of connections with civilising pressures, Wilterdink's concepts of power and

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[6] The same casual way of depriving the explanatory power of the concept of informalisation is introduced by Wilterdink and Van Heerikhuizen in *Samenlevingen* (1985: 139, 141), their Dutch introduction into sociology. Similarly, Randall Collins refers to my book *Informalization* (2007) but fully ignores the research evidence on which it is based and my demonstration of its explanatory power. He does this by (1) reducing it to a descriptive level: «Formality and informality are folk concepts; hence informalisation might simply be taken as whatever departs from the rules of behaviour institutionalised in the past», and (2) he continues with a kind of 'rob-and-run sociology': «To give it more sociological substance, formality and informality can be stated in terms of the basic processes of interaction rituals (IRS)» (Collins 2011: 160).

power (in)equality, remain rather empty, rendering only the bones without the flesh and blood of «human beings in the round».

PART TWO

7. Limited indices of functional democratisation and informalisation

In his effort to relate the story of the origins of «informalisation» as a concept in the 1970s Wilterdink describes informalisation as «a process in which the rules of everyday social interactions have become less strict, less rigid, more flexible, less bound to status differences, and more dependent on varying social situations». Indeed it is, but Wilterdink leaves out two connections that I present as central to informalisation. The first is its connection with changes in power balances in an egalitarian direction and increasing pressures to trigger and coincide with an informalisation of the regimes of conduct and emotions. Wilterdink's presentation of the origins of informalisation does not pay any attention to between the rapid decline of uneven power ratios all over Dutch society and the relatively strong wave of informalisation that swept the country. The second connection relates to the first and consists of an important exception: the informalisation of codes of manners and emotion regulation would not have happened without being rooted in a trend that went in an opposite direction to the trend towards greater leniency. This exception is the trend towards stricter, more rigid and elaborate constraints on displaying superiority and inferiority feelings. Every emancipation movement, whether of women, the working classes, or people with a darker skin than Europeans, harbours a multitude of examples. Precisely this reduction of power differences and its mounting pressures on avoiding these displays are the pacifying and civilising pressures that informalisation and functional democratisation have in common, because the informalisation of manners and emotions (increasing varieties) and the diminishing contrasts of behaviour – from which functional democratisation may develop – have roots in broadly the same civilising pressures.

In his critique Wilterdink rightly reports that «functional democratisation» was the term Elias proposed to refer to an 'overall trend' of decreasing power differences, but without justification he proceeds to select only two aspects of the overall trend as «crucial», restricting his view to the reduction of power differentials between (1) governments and the governed, and (2) between different strata. This limitation disregards the fact that Elias not only refers to decreasing power differences between «different strata» but also to a higher level of these differences; that is, between «all groups and strata – as long as they remain within the constantly changing functional orbit of society» (2012: 63). Wilterdink fails to see that Elias includes power differentials within the survival unit as a whole, between all groups, down to women and men, parents and children. He also disregards what Elias mentions as: «(3) Transformation of all social relationships in the direction of a greater degree of reciprocal, multipolar dependence and control» (*ibidem*). Furthermore, Wilterdink ignores Elias's notion of an overall network of interdependencies with greater functional differentiation, greater multi-level integration and the formation of larger attack-and-defence organisations. Instead, he flattens all this out to the level of two groups, governments and the governed, and 'more powerful groups' of social classes in relation to 'less powerful groups' – no children, no women and men, no parents, and no people 'in the round', only in one or two of their 'aspects'. In addition, civilising pressures, and processes such as continued internalisation and intensifying ambivalence are absent, and the same goes for Elias's panoramic view on structural change in whole figurations of interdependent groups and survival units.

Functional democratisation, Wilterdink writes, occurs when «less powerful groups become functionally more important for more powerful groups» and functional de-democratisation occurs «when less powerful groups become functionally less important for more powerful groups or when relatively powerful groups strengthen[7] their

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[7] Note how in this conceptualisation the established groups are active compared to the passive outsider groups who 'become less important'. This partisan formulation does not fit into a more detached sociology of structured changes in established-outsider

functions with respect to less powerful groups» (p. 352). These simple, flattening generalisations – or 'definitions' – belong to a rather abstract type of sociological thinking. It is not clear what they refer to. Are these less and more powerful groups players on a national, international or a global field? Are they in the same survival unit, and if so, at what point in place and time?

Wilterdink writes that when the prefix «functional» precedes de-democratisation, it «indicates that the process comprises *much more* than political or institutional de-democratisation, which is one of its possible manifestations» (p. 352, my italics)[8]. In a similar way, when used with democratisation, this prefix indicates *much more* than political or institutional democratisation. Because this notion of 'much more' is left unspecified, these statements lack both empirical precision and theoretical focus. We are left with questions such as: Does 'more' perhaps relate to civilising pressures? And: Is there a relationship between these terms and declining or increasing functional differentiation, or with expanding or shrinking levels of organisation and/or levels of complexity?

8. What is 'the dominant trend'?

Wilterdink argues that I am «suggesting that differentiation and integration always and everywhere implicate functional democratisation», and that functional democratisation would always and automatically bring about informalisation (2020: 349). However, in fact I agree with any critique of this position, and because Wilterdink's critique is couched in vague terms such as 'he seems to assume' without evidence and offends academic standards by not providing a single quote from my text, the only possible response is simply to state that I did not suggest nor think this. The same goes for his critique that I suggested that «functional democratisation is a fundamental, essential, natural, dominant process in the whole of human history, inextricably bound up with differentiation and integration (and civilisation and informalisation)». I did not. However, after making this assumption, Wilterdink describes it as «a far cry from empirical and historical sociology … metaphysics in the Comtean sense» (p. 370). I agree with such criticism. But on this point, too, the issue is that I do not hold this position.

Wilterdink also writes: «Here and at other places, he mentions differentiation, integration and functional democratisation in the same breath, suggesting that these three processes are inherently interconnected, so that differentiation and integration *imply* functional democratisation» (p. 354). I do use this combination in *one* place in my article, but to demonstrate the opposite of Wilterdink's apparent assumption: «Whether on the level of towns and cities, schools and universities, or business firms and corporations», I write, «the same story can be told again and again from the perspective of integration and functional democratisation, as well as from the perspective of disintegration or defunctionalisation» (p. 310). This comes close to one of Wilterdink's own formulations:

> As I have argued in this article, processes of functional democratisation and functional de-democratisation do not exclude one another; they can go together on different levels, in different respects, along different axes; they have gone together in different societies and periods, including the recent decades; and it is likely that they will continue to go together, in various ways, for the foreseeable future' (p. 370).

This is basically the same message as contained in my first article on this topic in 2016.

However, Wilterdink apparently thinks I assume processes of informalisation (and by implication, civilisation) will continue «if and only if functional democratisation is *the dominant trend*» (p. 349). I do not assume this for several reasons. One is that I consider (t)his formulation of «functional democratisation as *the dominant trend*» to be a reification and/or a personalisation of this very trend, suggesting it could be as dominant as a process driver.

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figurations.

[8] Wilterdink emphasizes this possibility in contrast to Elias who emphasizes that the «shift in the social distribution of power», as related to functional democratisation, «can manifest itself in various institutional forms, for example in one-party systems no less than in multi-party systems» (63).

In my view functional democratisation is largely a derivative trend[9] with a limited relative autonomy as one of the possible side-effects of relatively more dominant life process drivers: (1) functional differentiation, (2) functional integration and (3) increasing complexity in the survival unit under focus. But when defunctionalisation comprises «the whole function-structure of an integrated social unit, as in the territories of the former Western Roman Empire» (words derived from Elias), «functional democratisation» of course ceases to be dominant. It could only exist, if at all, at the periphery of the empire. However, in the course of history, «among the groups that succeeded to survive, defunctionalisation and growing inequalities did not, on the whole, rise to dominance over 'functional democratisation' – the growing equality that accompanies the expansion and strengthening of interdependency networks» (my text, quoted from my 2020 article, p. 307).

To see functional democratisation as *the dominant trend* demonstrates another misrepresentation of my position. Wilterdink attributes this formulation of *the dominant trend* to me, and then opposes it because «it is questionable (...) to conclude that overall functional democratisation was *the dominant trend* in Western Europe in this early modern period» (Wilterdink 2020: 357 my italics). He is correct to question this as a dominant trend. However, I did not write about functional democratisation as *the dominant trend* but instead about «processes of differentiation, integration, and functional democratisation having been dominant over the whole of human history» (p.308). But his formulation leaves aside two process drivers and selects just the side-effect trend[10]. If Wilterdink had written «*a* dominant trend» instead, then the thesis of functional democratisation as entailing «*a* dominant trend in human history» could be defended because with the expansion of societies and their survival units, there is a co-dominant expanding need to integrate more members via their cooperation with each other on more levels of its organisations. This brings all of them, to varying degrees of course, under increasing civilising pressures such as developing a longer-term perspective and taking more of each other into account more often. The many tensions in these developments often create a variety of more or less strong co-dominant countertrends of separation, disintegration, integration conflicts, and defunctional de-democratisation. However, Turchin's table is included in this article because it allows a quick, simple and clear impression of how dominant integration processes entailing certain degrees of functional democratisation, have been. But isolating this process as «*the* dominant trend» does not make sense and has never been my position.

9. Bringing equalisation back into view

As intellectuals we are increasingly capable of overcoming what initially seemed to be what Johan Goudsblom has called «a disastrous squint that makes us see both sides of every coin simultaneously»: increases and decreases

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[9] It was expressed in the title of my 2016 article: *Functional Democratisation and Disintegration as* Side-Effects *of Differentiation and Integration Processes*, and also in an email I sent to Wilterdink (1st March 2017): «Elias never claimed or suggested that this long-term process [functional democratisation] ever led to anything, it is rather the other way around: it is the lengthening and thickening of chains of interdependence» that leads to decreasing power differences and contrasts in conduct «that may become part of social habitus and then be called 'functional democratisation'». This becoming «part of social habitus» is another reason why the reversal of «functional democratisation» cannot simply be «functional de-democratisation». And «As long as the integration of their social functions does not reach a higher integrative level and is disturbed by disruptive integration conflicts, disintegration and defunctionalising processes, it may remain unclear and undecided whether a process of functional democratisation will become dominant» (email of 27/02/17 to Wilterdink, Alikhani and Mennell).

[10] Blurring the differences between process drivers and side-effects may also contribute to a partial understanding of globalisation. The transfer of industry and finance from industrial countries to low-wage countries has resulted in a loss of economic prosperity and in a degree of de-democratisation in the industrial countries. This can be understood as (the results of) globalisation entailing de-democratisation. But this view of globalisation is limited to economic and political changes in parts of the world, and it remains limited in comparison to an encompassing theoretical perspective on global functional differentiation and integration. This more encompassing view includes an understanding of how these processes are connected to new and higher levels of global interdependence, their inherent changes in global balances of power, and their inherent expansion of civilising pressures. The latter include a widening identification with more and more people across the world and increasing demands on conduct via changes in prevailing social standards of living together on all levels of human organisation. On this level, the concept of globalisation encompasses the widest possible scope of humanity and its history (Cf. Wouters 2019c).

in equality *and* inequality, integration *and* disintegration, and in functional democratisation *and* defunctionalisation, possibly all as dominant *and* co-dominant trends.[11] The main difference is perhaps that Wilderdink writes «functional de-democratisation» where I prefer to use the term «defunctionalisation» or possibly, in the right context, just de-democratisation.

Wilterdink does acknowledge that «integration can have both equalising and disequalising effects» (p. 362), but he still seems to have an issue recognising the equalising effects of differentiation and integration. He writes, «there is more to say for the opposite thesis: differentiation and integration are fundamental to increasing power differences (...) growing differences of power, property, and prestige» (p. 361), and continues to elaborate these increasing differences. Its opposite, increasing power equality, and the possibility of changing balances of power equality and inequality as highlighted here in Part One, is left almost unattended, and when he does address it, the context is disintegration. In the formation of large empires, kingdoms, and European colonies Wilterdink sees integration processes as resulting mainly in rising inequalities. Social equalities, on the other hand, seem mainly to spring from the disintegration of these formations, particularly when this disintegration results in a larger number of smaller dominions (city-states) with fierce competition between them. Wilterdink takes this analysis further through to the nineteenth century, bringing the masses into view as well as the growth of more mutual, less one-sided interdependencies between governments and the governed, dominant and dominated classes. He distinguishes three phases of functional democratisation from the second half of the nineteenth century to the present, and I agree with this analysis. However, as it remains largely if not wholly unconnected with civilising pressures and processes, I would avoid words that imply civilising pressures and internalisation, and instead refer to them as phases of social equalisation.

In his last paragraph, Wilterdink uses the term «functional de-democratisation» to characterise developments since the 1980s, describing it as «apt» because «it represents a reversal of the previous dominant trend of functional democratisation and can be explained from the same theoretical perspective» (p. 366). However, despite writing this, Wilterdink refrains from actually doing it. Thus, the term stands apart and remains unconnected to theoretical analysis and explanation. He does refer to an overall increase in economic equality between countries since the 1980s, while within most countries economic inequality increased at the same time. Western dominance in the world economy has diminished over the past 40 years, following the decline of European political power in the post-war years of decolonisation. Wilterdink further writes that President Trump's policies «have strengthened de-democratisation» (this time omitting the preposition *functional*), and that the present dominant development is moving «into the direction of renewed functional democratisation». Although couched in a predominantly descriptive framework, this is an unmistakable reference to theory. It raises the questions of whether, when and where the development in the direction of «functional de-democratisation» has been dominant? And whether this renewed dominant direction once again represents a «reversal of the previous dominant trend» of «functional de-democratisation»? This would be unlikely because on most national levels and on a global level, the process of de-democratisation did not become dominant. The term «reversal» applied to the period since the 1980s, when de-democratisation seemed on the rise to become a dominant trend, also suggests either–or thinking accompanied by a descriptive use of a theoretical concept. I would suggest a theoretically more dynamic and less bipolar analysis which I have put forward elsewhere (Wouters 2019).

10. *What if we just reject and avoid these concepts?*

At the 18th International Symposium on Civilising Processes 2020, in Bogota convened remotely, I simply stopped using the concept of 'functional democratisation' whilst preserving an integrated theoretical focus.[12] No-

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[11] Cf. an aphorism of J. Goudsblom: «Objectivity: the disastrous squint that makes us see both sides of every coin simultaneously» (1958:7). Wilterdink and I have a history of polemical discussion (see Wouters and Mennell 2015), and we were both pupils of Goudsblom. Joop died on 17 March 2020.
[12] My lecture was on 18-11-2020, a day before Wilterdink's article was published (I have not received a draft or the final publication). Of three lectures at the following link, mine starts after one hour: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZOibeI5YBs

one noticed, and more importantly, nor did I. It is tempting to never use the concept of 'functional democratisation' again. It is possible. However, would it then still be possible to explain the long-term changes in the direction of increasing social equality in societies all over the world «from oligarchic rule by small privileged dynastic-agrarian-military groups» to «oligarchic rule by parties, whether the regime is multi-party or one-party» (Elias 2012b: 60)? Without the theoretical connection of the civilising pressures of spreading functional interdependencies and their internalisation, many questions would remain unasked, or answered with some deficiency. And the same goes for statistical data produced more recently: without these theoretical connections, they too would be seen as largely ephemeral, quickly 'overtaken by time', and fall into a void. For these reasons I decided to continue using the concept of 'functional democratisation', with some qualifications.

Wilterdink suggests I adhere to a Parsonian or Mertonian type of functionalism (p. 352) but does so without acknowledging the questions and complications I mention and also expresses disappointment about my reservations towards the concept of «functional de-democratisation»: «One might expect» he writes, «that this extension of Eliasian theory would be welcomed, or at least accepted, by other sociologists who are interested in long-term social developments and work in the same theoretical tradition. Wouters, however, sharply criticises...». Finally, he declares: «it makes no sense to avoid and reject the notion of functional de-democratisation». I hope to have clarified why this is not the case [13].

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[13] Alikhani told me to simply write de-democratisation, to have dropped the prefix 'functional'.

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