Summary

The Menacing Pleasure.
Establishing Drug Use as a Social Problem 1890 to 1970

By emphasizing collective definition processes on the basis of a theoretical perspective, the purpose of the thesis is to contribute to an added understanding of the processes whereby observed social phenomena are institutionalized as social problems. These types of processes are accounted for and analyzed through empirical case studies of the problemized use of neurotoxins and stimulants in Sweden during the period from 1890 to 1930, as well as narcotics during the period from 1954 to 1968. On the basis of these case studies restricted in time, where the periods are defined as to the question's impact within the political arena, I show how these phenomena are defined by the different groups of actors and how these conceptualizations have obtained legitimacy and formed the grounds for various action programs. Another aim is to provide an account of the political and bureaucratic formulation of different strategies of control within the relevant areas of these phenomena. On the basis of a comparative analysis, a third aim is to show how the problem determinations from the earlier period have influenced a later period's definition of the problem, particularly in regards to the shaping of the narcotics policy established by a Swedish parliamentary decision in 1968.

The overall problem concerns why, and through what processes, are certain phenomena institutionalized as social problems, while other, similar phenomena, do not achieve this status. If we link the question to the 1960s narcotics discourse we can formulate it as follows: in the face of all of the existing putative bad conditions and problems in this period, why did society react with such force to the use of these selected drugs? Why were other contemporary phenomena such as thinner sniffing, prescriptive drug abuse, suicide, incest,

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traffic injuries, the abuse of women, etc. not awarded the same intensive attention?

The following questions are subsequently related to the processes whereby various problems are institutionalized as social problems. What characterizes and distinguishes this course of events? What actors are involved and what interests do they represent? What are the relations between the different groups of actors? What cultural ideas are evoked by the observed phenomenon and what rhetorical strategies are developed during the course of institutionalization? What is the relationship between the actual phenomenon's quantitative and qualitative status and the course of institutionalization? What is the interplay between institutionalized problem categories and the putative bad conditions brought to the public's attention?

In chapter 1 the methodological approach is described – a *discourse analysis* of the statements produced by the different actors in the different arenas. The analysis of content is specified with the help of two specific interpretive tools: *interpretive packages* and *thought figures*. The substance within the interpretive packages consists of a meaning structure laid bare including both a rational and a symbolic dimension. The former alludes to a discursive argumentation which the involved actors articulate regarding a phenomenon's causes, conse- quences and moral characteristics. The latter embraces the structualizing elements in the form of metaphors used, historical examples referred to, the slogans formulated, the applied illustrative examples, as well as icons used. The concept of thought figures alludes to the fundamental meaning represented by a discourse of a specific phenomenon. In this case the moral polarity is rendered visible in the form of specified conceptual dualities which the analyzed discourse are to a great extent interpretations of. In addition to these specific interpretive tools the analysis is guided and structured by a theoretical frame- work of reference which integrates different elements from a sociological theoretical perspective which emphasizes collective definition processes and social construction. Based upon the work of Herbert Blumer, Malcolm Spector and John Kitsuse, Mark Peyrot, Armand Mauss, Stephen Hilgartner and Char- les Bosk, as well as Joseph Gusfield, a theoretical perspective is formulated which emphasizes the different stages and courses of "claims-making": the actor's profile of interests; the social arenas of the problem activities and the distinguishing characteristics of these arenas in the form of stipulated interest liaisons and the available space for different problem categories; the content of problem determination and the formation of specific references to typification processes and the observed phenomenon's social localization; the relations of

competition within the framework of one of the same problem category and the interplay and dynamics of assimilation which develop between institutionalized problem categories and popularized "problem candidates".

My sources, the empirical material for the three case studies, consists of different texts on the use and abuse of neurotoxins, stimulants and narcotics. Examples of this material are information brochures, pamphlets with advice and tips on the natural and good life, textbooks in health and psychiatry, scientific reports, articles from professional periodicals as well as more popularized work, debate articles and editorials from daily newspapers, TV programs, political investigations, internal bureaucratic memorandums, propositions and governmental acts, protocols from parliamentary debates, etc. In addition, I make use of unpublished sources from various archives. My survey allows me to reconstruct and illustrate previously unknown aspects of the course whereby the use of neurotoxins, stimulants and narcotics has been articulated as a societal menace.

Chapter 2 is a theoretical prologue. Here the various sociological perspectives that have been applied to describe, define and explain social problems are critically reviewed. Amongst the perspectives we can distinguish two principle categories: theories which regard social problems as expressions of bad social conditions and theories which emphasize the establishment of social problems through collective processes of definition. The former is usually regarded as an example of objectivist attitude, while the latter is viewed as a manifestation of an subjectivist way at looking at social problems. Instead I use the terms *essentialism* and *constructionism* in order to reveal the epistemological difference which can be traced within the two principle categories. My interest is primarily directed towards the constructionist theories and the chapter concludes with the synthesis of the theoretical elements previously mentioned.

Chapter 3 is comprised of a case study of the problemized use of neurotoxins in Sweden, primarily morphine and cocaine, during the period extending from 1890 to 1930. Amongst the ominous pictures depicted the risk for moral degeneration and a socially useful individual's depravation as a result of morphine's enslavement stand out most clearly. The risk is accentuated by the conviction as to the scope of the hereditary degeneration whereby chronic intoxication is to a great extent regarded a result of innate defects. In addition, the use of neurotoxins was considered as a link in a deteriorated genetic process which subsequently posed a threat to the "folk material" in general. Together with hereditary factors, the destructive influences of modern urban life are regarded as leading to abuse and chronic intoxication.

During the 1920s a new societal danger in a large part of the western world appeared on the scene – the abuse of cocaine. The circumstances which provoked concern were a result of a fundamental shift from the medical use of cocaine and its connected side-effects, to the use of the drug as an out-and-out stimulant. This transformation was a question of motives, methods of taking in the drug, social localization and social function. Cocaine became a social drug, sniffed in the company of friends, and the abuse was to a large degree localized amongst young people in bohemian circles, the working class, and the so-called underworld. The problem was to a large extent seen as a result of the *infectious element*, the social contagion emanating from the constellation of a new method of taking the drug (sniffing) and its localization amongst the youth of the under-class. In Sweden it was particularly the police authorities who raised the alarm. Their descriptions and explanations were conveyed and intensified in the daily newspapers, and whose penetrating coverage told of a mysterious and threatening dark world. The National Swedish Board of Health in its function of public control authority moved to action with the aim of checking and regulating the use. The police authorities and the the National Swedish Board of Health are in this context clear examples as to how authorities can act as "claims-makers" and in that way answer for important elements in the process of establishing the problem.

Even if it was primarily an international concern which left its mark on the picture of the menace, risk judgements, problem determination and defensive measures, in the mid-1920s in Stockholm a type of drug abuse not usually associated with the Swedish scene at that time actually existed – illicit traffic in drugs, drug peddling, its localization amongst young people and socially marginal groups, the social solidarity and cultural identity created and strengthened through the abuse of the drug. The results of a nation-wide investigation of the narcotics trade and use in the autumn of 1925 witness as to the pervasiveness of the picture of the menace and an early and deeply rooted conviction as to the necessity of imprisonment and other coercive measures in combating the illicit trade in and use of narcotics. International control measures, initiated by the United States and departing from the American situation, made an early appearance. The period dealt with in this case study can be characterized as the *narcotic problem's first generation.* During this period attention was drawn to the undesirable aspects of the use of neurotoxins, primarily through the agitation of the medical corps, the National Swedish Board of Health and police authorities. A specific definition of the problem was accepted, decisions were made as to measures to be taken, and the responsibility for the organization

and implementation of these measures was placed with the the National Swedish Board of Health and the police authorities.

In chapter 4 the controversial question of the use and misuse of everyday stimulants such as tobacco and coffee, during the period extending from 1890 to 1930 is dealt with. The agents were problemized within the same cognitive and moral frame of reference as neurotoxins. A number of Sweden's most prominent medical practitioners and psychiatrists, together with teachers and a few politicians, bore the responsibility for the "claims-making". The harmful effects of the excessive use of tobacco and coffee in the form of physiological, psychological, moral and economic risks were established and information was conveyed through information pamphlets, calenders and newspaper articles. In regards to cigarette smoking, the moral decay which threatened young boys who allowed themselves to become trapped with this bad habit was emphasized. But despite a successful agitation activity, the question of excessive use of tobacco and coffee was not generally recognized as a social problem. Four principle inter-connected reasons had a crucial influence upon this *incomplete process of problem determination*: the actor's inability to concur upon a program for action; the temperance movement's non-engagement; the considerable economic interests of the state in combination with the documented difficulties in maintaining a prohibitionist act concerning tobacco, as well as problems connected to, and amalgamation with, other problem complexes at that time.

The third case study is accounted for in chapter 5 and concerns an analysis of the Swedish narcotics discourse from 1954 to 1968. It was first at this time that young people's use of marijuana and amphetamines became an issue for parliamentary debate in Sweden and in 1968 the parliament passed an act embracing an extensive program of measures against the abuse of narcotics. The period can be characterized as the *narcotic problem's second generation*. The policies established during the early decades of the 20th century were subsequently modified and an intensified agitation took place, and the problem determination, measures to be taken and the institutionalized responsibility for the problem were revised. The period culminated in the transition to a new *problem cycle*, with the legitimation of a new problem determination and the establishment of more current policies. The discourse analysis in the case study primarily includes a content analysis based upon 214 newspaper articles and 231 articles in periodicals which concern pharmaceutical preparations and narcotics. Three interpretive packages are uncovered, which I designate as the *control and sanction strategy*, the *care and reform strategy* and the *legalization strategy*. The various strategies are connected to policy demands

which are in turn based upon specific problem definitions and demands for measures which the different actors articulate and pursue. The care and reform strategy, as well as the legalization strategy, includes groups of actors, primarily cultural workers, editors/journalists and some social medicine practician, who represent and apply an international re-interpretation and a new definition of the narcotics problem and their related critique of the individuals and institutions that had, right up to the mid-1960s, an absolute monopoly upon the definition of the problem and the policy measures instigated to combat the problem. The result of this trial of strength between the different interest groups was a compromise. Ingredients in the problem determination and policy measures were a mixture of elements from both the control and sanction strategy and the care and reform strategy. Supporters of the legalization strategy had a degree of public opinion success, but the strategy did not influence the political tendency to increase repressive measures within the penal code and preventive and rehabilative measures within the social field. The 1968 parliamentary decision can be seen as a *synthesis* between demands for more stringent control and sanction measures on the one hand, and a program of care and reform measures on the other hand. This attempt to find a balance between the two central lines in the narcotics discourse was thwarted already in December of that year when the government passed a decision regarding a program which stressed an immediate reinforcement within the area of control and sanctions, while most of the care and reform measures were left to eventual implementation in the future.

In chapter 6 the *moral polarity* of the discourse is exposed. The first stage in the analysis involves a *synchronic analysis* of the two historical period's respective discourses. From the controversies regarding neurotoxins and stimulants from the decades around the turn of the century the following thought figures are distinguished, which are grouped together on the basis of a normative consensus in regards to moral ideals and lifestyle:

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natural – artificial
cultivation – degeneration
moderate – excessiveness
duty-fullfilment – pleasure-seeking
freedom – coercion
conformity – anomie

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In a second stage a *diachronic analysis* is applied where the first historical period's thought figures are compared with the moral dichotomies which

distinguish the narcotics discourse during the period from 1954 to 1968. The comparative analysis shows how the thought figures of the first historical period are reproduced in the latter period's discourse. But the meaning has in part shifted and the analysis concentrates upon both the correspondence and discrepancies between the discourses. The discrepancies are most clear in connection with the question of the thought figure cultivation – degeneration, in the sense that degeneration is no longer thought of as a result of innate defects but is seen as a consequence of environmentally acquired deficiencies. Another aspect of this thought figure concerns the idea of cultivation which alludes to enlightenment's project, where the rhetoric, clothed in explicit moral lectures, is toned down. Information measures, with the aim of convincing with facts rather than steering with values, is a characteristic of the latter period's discourse. In addition, the duality freedom – coercion has received a more prominent position. In particular the aspect of voluntary care, in contrast to compulsory institutional care supported by the legislation for the mentally ill, is accentuated for the purpose of helping abusers of narcotics with their addiction. But the narcotics discourse of the 1950s and 1960s is also a discourse of new and different thought figures. These can be seen as a result of the care and reform strategy's and the legalization strategy's efforts to find support for new definitions of the problem. It concerns the introduction of different moral themes and new ways of understanding a phenomenon which until that time were interpreted with the aid of a moral code which determined the establishment of the problem during the decades around the turn of the century. The analysis distinguishes the following moral themes:

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affinity – alienation
idealism – materialism
solidarity – egoism

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In the way that the concepts are used in this context, the thought figures can be regarded as the problem definition's *moral essence*. They form a focal point where the moral positions developed in the discourses concerning neurotoxins, stimulants and narcotics are concentrated. If we link this line of thought to "claims-making" as the deciding aspect of problem establishment, this appears as a process whereby putative problems become the object for normative classification and structuralization. The concept problem determination, the term for an institutionalized problem definition, can subsequently be translated to the concept of *collective representation* – a comprehension category which

on a symbolic level expresses the winning "claims-makers" moral interpretation of the phenomenon in focus.

The concluding chapter is a *theoretical epilogue*. By way of introduction, factors are discussed which the three case studies revealed as crucial for the problem establishment: *qualitative changes* amongst the observed phenomenon, where changed *social localization* stand out as an important variant, the *process of typifying*, as well as the tendency towards *assimilation with already established problem categories.* These factors, together with *the actor's interest relations and available resources* are fundamental for a successful "claims-making"-process. Taking as my point of departure in the question of qualitative changes amongst phenomenon such as "claims-making's" initial phase of anxiety, discontent and indignation, I subsequently discuss the constructionist perspective's central question: What is the relationship between objective conditions and the collective definition of these conditions as a social problem? According to the critique formulated by Steve Woolgar and Dorothy Pawluch, much of the work being done within the constructionist perspective can be characterized as "ontological gerrymandering". They further argue that the researchers claim that the actual phenomenon is constant, while definitions vary. Subsequently, as the phenomenon does not vary, then the variation in question of the definition must be a consequence of the social circumstances within which the "claims-makers" act. In order to verify this relationship, one works with implicit statements regarding the actual phenomenon's nature and/or with predictions which one has awarded an unreflected objective status, while the "claims-makers" predictions and demands are designated as social constructions which require explanation. This critique has led to an increased differentiation within the constructionist project, within which Joel Best has distinguished two central directions: a *"strict" constructionism* with pronounced ethnomethodological emphasis and a *"contextual" constructionism* with the ambition of judging the plausibility of formulated predictions in relation to the actual phenomenon's status.

Both of these directions are compared here with my theoretical perspective with the intention of investigating the possibilities for transcending the problem with the actual phenomenon's facticity vis-a-vis the collective process of definition through which it is recognized and perhaps established as a social problem. With reference to the results from the case studies, a theoretical direction is accentuated here which departs from "claims-making". The door is left open for the question of the variable and problematic relationship between the actual phenomenon and the process of definition. The field of vision is

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widened to include the following issues: the actor's structural localization and interest relations; the interplay with other problem categories and the different arena's specific conditions; as well as regard for the cohesive and dialectical relationship between cultural notions and the actual phenomenon in question. This direction allows an increased modulation and a higher degree of variation with regards to the results of the analysis: some social problems, more than others, can be designated as social constructions. In this context the concept of construction is used in the sense of, to build, to produce, to join together, rather than in the sense of to make up, to fabricate in order render visible "claims-making" and its reciprocal relations to the social environment in which the discourse takes place and the social phenomenon which is the object of the discourse.

In the concluding section "claims-making" is clarified as an *intermediate action level* which mutually connects the level of social structure with the cultural representation's symbolical level. This is carried out with reference to the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, and to the work of Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, both which, in my opinion, are in agreement in regards to the social "double character" of *objective facticity* and *subjective interpretation and action dynamics*. Against this background, the "claims-making's" construction of collective representations of the problemized use of neurotoxins, stimulants and narcotics are understood as categories of comprehension, or institutionalized cognitive systems, which are implemented in order to interpret, classify, and normatively structure these phenomena. Through the comparative historical analysis, based upon three case studies, it was demonstrated how these collective representations were generated and transformed and how they constituted the political and bureaucratic formulation of different strategies for combating these social phenomena in Sweden during the period extending from 1890 to 1970. Hopefully I have subsequently contributed to a better understanding as to why and how these analyzed forms of drug use were established as social problems during this historical epoch.