

# Harm to others – a "neo-retro" perspective

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## A "new" perspective

- Alcohol's harm to other people than the drinker and to society is a neglected perspective.
- Ideological shift or neo-retro perspective on harm?
- What is new?
- Standard themes of the temperance movement 100 years ago: other people than the (male) drinker become victims.
- The convenient expression "harm to others" is new.
- The HTO perspective broadens our view of how what happens before harms have developed/before they have become serious. harm develop by emphasizing that alcohol-related harms are **inherently interactional**.

## Harm as interaction

- The most important message: alcohol-related harms are **inherently interactional**.
- Harms emerge and develop in social interaction btw. people.
- Harms spread into multiple sites in society.
- Family members, close people, friends, people caring for close relatives, unknown people are affected by people who abuse alcohol.
- Also taxi drivers, restaurant personnel, nurses, social workers, the police, security personnel are affected.
- The HTO perspective helps to trace and notice harm, and understand how it comes about and spreads in social interaction.

## Political potential (1)

- A powerful political tool for the public health lobby in the struggle against the (inter)national alcohol industry.
- Jealousy towards the success story of tobacco policies.
- Smoking disturbs; drinking has become customary, even an almost binding norm.
- Smoking disturbs in a concrete, direct and visually obvious way.
- The link btw. drinking and harm was supposed to be much more vague, complex and indirect.

## Political potential (2)

- Presently, the contrast btw. smoking and drinking is weaker than 20 years ago.
- Alcohol's HTO people has become an accepted standpoint.
- The most active parties: voluntary organizations and NGOs.
- The HTO perspective was not included in EU's Alcohol strategy (2006), although two expressions were suggested, i.e. "passive drinking" and "environmental alcohol damage".
- In WHO's Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (2010) the HTO perspective is mentioned.

## Remark no. 1

- The HTO perspective means different things in different countries or regions.
  - Countries influenced by values of the temperance movement.
  - Mediterranean countries.
  - Several African and South-East Asian countries

## Remark no. 2

- The public health perspective: problem drinkers should not be stigmatized for their drinking
- Alcoholism = a disease and/or an expression of social disadvantages.
- -> the alcoholic was considered to be a victim.
- The HTO perspective tends to put the problem drinker and those around him/her **against** each other.
- -> an accusing finger is pointed at the drinker, while "the others" are (innocent) victims.
- Reality is often more complicated. People close to the problem drinker may be innocent, but they may also be guilty or partly guilty.

## A wish

- The HTO perspective should not be used to stigmatize and punish people suffering from alcohol problems.
- Hopefully, it will broaden and deepen our knowledge of where, when and how alcohol-related problems emerge and spread – and whom they affect.
- That knowledge is needed when reducing alcohol problems in our immediate surroundings and in society at large.



## Publication

- Katariina Warpenius, Marja Holmila, Christoffer Tigerstedt, toim.: Alkoholi- ja päihdehaitat läheisille, muille ihmisille ja yhteiskunnalle [Harms from alcohol and drugs to close people, other people and society]. THL, Helsinki 2013, 219 pages.
- English summary (10 pages).
- Web publication <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-245-519-2>.

# Harm from alcohol to "close people" and "other people"

- Problem drinking parents and their children
- Problem drinking husband and/or problem drinking wife
- Problem drinking elderly parents and their caring children
- Problem drinking strangers in public places
- Problem drinking people in night time life
- Drunk drivers and other road users

## ”Society”

- Are there any services for people take care of their substance abusing relatives?
- What kind of and how much harm do social workers and nurses experience from problem drinking clients?
- The relation between alcohol consumption and sickness absences
- The relation between alcohol consumption and disability pensions
- Estimating monetary costs due to harms from drinking and drugging

## Other groups not covered in the book

The following professional groups are continuously affected by harmful drinking:

- Taxi drivers
- Security personnel
- The police
- Restaurant personnel
- Home care personnel
- Etcetera
- How much do small children and teenagers tolerate their parents' drinking before it is perceived as a harm?

# Alkoholi Suomessa

Karlsson, Thomas ym., toim. (2013): Alkoholi Suomessa, Kulutus, haitat ja politiikkatoimet. THL:n raportti 13, Helsinki.

Länk:

- [https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/104455/URN\\_ISBN\\_978-952-245-896-4.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/104455/URN_ISBN_978-952-245-896-4.pdf?sequence=1)

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