4. 2 Temperance movements

In this section, the issues in focus are the structures and goals of the temperance movements in Sweden and the Netherlands and their impact on the developments of alcohol policies. Usually the development of temperance movements is divided into a first generation that emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century and a second generation that emerged during the second half of that century.

The first generation of temperance movements can be characterised as part of the civilising process in which members of the lower class tried to adjust to the moral standards of the higher social classes and at the same time the middle class tried to lift the moral standards of the lower (van der Stel 1995; Gerritsen 1993). During the first half of the nineteenth century temperance movements in both countries aimed at combating alcohol abuse and especially abuse of liquor, not use of alcohol in itself, and in both countries, temperance movements regarded the consumption of beer as means to reduce consumption of liquor (Johansson 1995: 5; van der Stel 1995: 148).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a new type of temperance movements emerged. The goal for their actions shifted from moderate drinking to absolutism and from the individual drinker to the availability of alcohol in society. These goals required political action, so the movements adopted a new strategy, namely influencing politicians. The main targets for demands from the temperance movements for control of alcohol during the nineteenth century were the pubs. Pubs were central social meeting points (the others were the churches) and had a monopoly position in the recreation of the working classes (Gerritsen 1993: 163). While beer and wine were important provisions (in the absence of drinkable water), liquor was primarily consumed for intoxication, which worried those who wanted to raise the moral standards of the ordinary people. Eventually the movements became divided into a moderate wing that advocated regulation or abolition of liquor and a radical wing that advocated prohibition of all alcoholic beverages.

Sweden

In Sweden, several absolutist movements were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century. The largest of these, the International Order of Good Templars (IOGT) was founded in 1879 and would become the largest temperance movement. Other movements were the National Temple Order, the Temple Order (both separatist factions from the IOGT), the Blue Ribbon Association (religious), the White Ribbon (for women) and Verdandi (socialist). Despite their different backgrounds they stood united behind the demand for prohibition, and from 1908 they co-ordinated their actions for prohibition. The temperance movement reached its peak in numbers (330,000) around 1910, followed by a loss of members, primarily in urbanised areas (Johansson 1995: 176). In the political arena, prohibition gained strong support among the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the free church movements, especially in rural parts of the country, and the Farmer's Party. Besides political action, temperance movements established local branches throughout the country, organising study circles, libraries, adult education, sports clubs,
magazines, etc. As such the temperance movements became an important part of social life, especially in the rural parts, and fulfilled the function of the pubs as social meeting points (Daun 1989: 219).

During the period 1900-1920, the alcohol issue was intertwined with the struggle for political rights by the labour movement and liberal middle class. Together with the temperance movements, they demanded a "local option" on alcohol prohibition, as adopted in some American states. By local referendums, citizens would be able to directly vote on the sale of alcohol and was a form of general municipal suffrage. The prohibitionists regarded the local option as one step on the road to the national prohibition of all alcoholic beverages. However, they were confronted with strong opposition from the alcohol industry and the labour movement that foresaw unemployment among their members.

After the enactment of general suffrage in 1918 (also for women and to municipal elections 14 the call for local options declined and eventually lost its importance for the Social Democratic Party, which contributed to the rejection of total prohibition by the referendum in 1922 (Johansson 1995). However, despite the fact that this was a serious blow to the temperance movement they continued their struggle and would remain an important actor in the alcohol policy arena until the 1960s.

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Obviously, the temperance movements in Sweden succeeded in getting and keeping the alcohol issue on the political agenda, even when the Social Democratic Party lost its interest in the question.

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the second generation of temperance movements followed the lines of pillarisation. Consequently, a liberal movement was established, a socialist movement, some Protestant movements and a Catholic movement. Several of these movements became divided due to controversies about prohibition. The IOGT established its first lodge in the Netherlands in 1903 but would never become an important movement in the Netherlands. It did not fit into any pillar, nor could the organisation attract members among liberals who were against prohibition.

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In their heydays 1910-1925, temperance movements together had about 150,000 members (Gerritsen 1993: 162). They adopted their strategies and means from England and the US. Petitions were filed to put pressure on politicians and, as in Sweden, teetotaller MPs kept the alcohol issue on the political agenda. Local option was an important goal and in 1914, a petition for local option with 670,000 signatories was presented to the Queen. 17

The Dutch temperance movements also tried to unite their forces by establishing the National Commission against Alcoholism (NCA) in 1909, which became a platform for organisations against alcohol and alcoholism from all pillars. However, both moderate and absolutists were included and consequently, the issue of national prohibition was not on the agenda of the NCA.

After attempts to achieve the possibility for local options had failed, the struggle for state regulation of alcohol rapidly lost its place on the political agenda. One reason was the very sharp decline in alcohol use among the population. 18 This was certainly an effect of the fact
that temperance movements were part of the pillars, which was a very effective mode of informal social control. However, temperance was not a goal in itself but a means to promote the emancipation of the members of the pillars. Significant for the importance of the temperance issue was the fact, that despite the sharp separation of pillars, they were able to co-operate at least at the local level (van der Stel 1995: 155).

The temperance movements did not succeed in getting the Dutch state to control production, distribution, or consumption of alcohol. However, they succeeded in establishing informal control of alcohol (moderate drinking or absolutism) among the members of pillars.

14 In 1909, general suffrage for men to the Lower House was enacted but not to municipal elections.

15 In 1953, the number of members of absolutist temperance movements was still substantial (236,800) but the ways to pursue temperance were not as emotional as before and their activities were more directed towards education and information (Höjer 1955: 49).

19 Another explanation could be the sharp increase of taxes on alcohol after the First World War, which was followed by the emergence of a black market. However, when taxes were lowered in 1929 this did not influence consumption (van der Stel 1995).

16 The Catholics, for example, were prohibited from joining the IOGT. Catholic alcoholics had to be saved by a catholic temperance organisation (van der Stel 1995: 234).

17 Approximately one quarter of the adult population.

18 Gerritsen (1993) has shown that in spite of different models of control of alcohol in the US, England, and the Netherlands, about the same decrease of consumption was achieved in the twenties.