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ADDICTION LIVES: SUSANNE MACGREGOR



Addiction Lives records the views and personal experiences of people who have especially contributed to the evolution of ideas in addiction science. To suggest an interviewee, send a statement of up to 50 words summarising the person's exceptional contribution to the field to the Addiction Lives Editor: Prof Virginia Berridge, Centre for History in Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 15-17 Tavistock Place, London WC1 H 9SH, tel +44 (0)207 927 2269, email Virginia.Berridge@lshtm.ac.uk.

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: 10.1111/add.14740

INTERVIEW SUMMARY BY VIRGINIA BERRIDGE

Susanne MacGregor trained in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh and then did her PhD in Political Sociology there.

She worked initially at the Medical Research Council (MRC), University of London Social Psychiatry Unit at the Institute of Psychiatry University of London led by John Wing. She worked for two years on a DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) project with David Tidmarsh, a psychiatrist looking at the needs of homeless single men at Camberwell Reception Centre. A large proportion of attenders were mentally ill, some with alcoholism. Very few then took drugs or were 'pathological gamblers'. The reception centres were eventually closed down and responsibility passed away from local to central government; since then the problem of homelessness has only increased. The book from this project -- *The Spike* -- never saw the light of day because Tidmarsh pulled out.

Susanne moved to the department of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck College University of London under Professor Bernard Crick. She was invited to bid for a contract to evaluate a new crisis intervention service in London for 'multiple drug users'. This was City Roads, an innovative multi-disciplinary project offering 3 weeks in a residential setting for people who had overdosed, mostly on barbiturates. The researchers on the project were Anne Jamieson and Alan Glantz and together they published a book called *Dealing with Drug Misuse: Crisis intervention in the city*. City Roads has recently closed down.

This set the theme of her work, which has been applied social research in the field of illicit drugs, with a particular focus on service development and advising governments what to do. She became scientific adviser to the Department of Health's Homelessness and Addictions Research Liaison Group, commenting on applications and monitoring some projects, notably John Strang's development of a new form of service provision in Manchester: a hub and spoke design. Dr. Dorothy Black was the influential civil servant in the Department of Health at the time.

At Birkbeck, she invited the Drug Indicators Project, led by Richard Hartnoll, to move there when it lost its home at UCH (University College Hospital). Hartnoll moved on to be research director at EMCDDA in its early days. Tim Rhodes and Robert Power were also colleagues. She was a board member at ISSDD (Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence).

In the 1980s, the field began to expand in particular after the arrival of HIV/AIDS. She led the evaluation of the Central Funding Initiative, which pump primed the development of services outside London. Betsy Ettorre and Ross Coomber worked on this evaluation.

In the early 1990s, she moved to Goldsmith's College as Professor of Social Policy, where she carried out a number of projects examining the transition to community care for the drug and alcohol service sector. After a funding crisis at Goldsmith's, she moved to Middlesex University as head of the School of Sociology and Social Policy. A very large group of social scientists located there included leading figures in criminology such as Jock Young and Roger Matthews, who also worked on drug use.

Here she continued her work on services and in particular community based provision, an evaluation for the Central Drugs Coordination Unit at the Cabinet Office which looked at local Drug Action Teams. This went alongside the other demands of academic life, not least as chair of the Social Policy and Social Work panel for the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

Her research work culminated in being invited to be the programme Coordinator for the DH (Department of Health) Drug Misuse Research Initiative, which lasted for about ten years. This was an exercise in research management from inception of the programme through to publication with about 24 projects in all and expenditure of £3.6 million. Her role was one of knowledge translation. The role of the DH was diminishing during this period as the National Treatment Agency (NTA) became established and the Home Office developed a huge programme of research. In phase two of the programme she moved to LSHTM, (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) to attachment to the History Centre there. Her research continued, including an internal review of research on drugs funded by government departments and continuing work with colleagues at Middlesex.

Her aim has been to link drugs to wider issues of social policy, something not always easy to do in the UK, although it is normal in other European countries. In the UK the tendency to place faith in large RCTs (randomised controlled trials) and in health economics has crowded out more nuanced in depth investigations. She has had a particular focus in her career on knowledge translation and also a role as an enabler of the careers of others who have gone on to be leading researchers in the field, many of whom are mentioned in the interview.

**LINK TO FULL INTERVIEW, CONDUCTED BY VIRGINIA BERRIDGE, ON THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY
OF ADDICTION WEBSITE:**

<https://www.addiction-ssa.org/knowledge-hub/topic/addiction-lives>

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Susanne MacGregor (editor), *Drugs and British Society: Responses to a social problem in the 1980s*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

This edited collection adopted a social rather than medical perspective on drugs and emphasised that policy and practice should be based on reliable and detailed evidence and the informed judgements of people with a thorough understanding of the issue. 'Drugs' was placed in historical, social and political context. Chapters included 'The public debate in the 1980s' pp1-19 and 'Choices for policy and practice' pp170-200. Other contributors were Virginia Berridge, Richard Hartnoll, Martin Plant, Lee O'Bryan, Angela Burr, Betsy Ettorre, Stephen Tippell, Robert Power and John Strang.

Susanne MacGregor (editor), *Responding to Drug Misuse: Research and Policy Priorities in Health and Social Care*, Routledge, 2011.

This book brought together research findings from the Department of Health's Drug Misuse Research Initiative which was linked to the government's ten year drugs strategy Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain. The chapters place the findings in the context of policy, practice and service development. Contributors reflect on current debates for drug strategies. Topics discussed include recent trends in drugs policy and how these link to crime; responses of dedicated drug treatment services; service users' perceptions and suggestions for improvement; and the impact of drug misuse on children, families and communities. Contributors include Karen Duke, John Macleod, Duncan Raistrick, Gillian Tober, Christine Godfrey, Tim Weaver, Nicola Metrebian, Michael Donmall, Tim Miller, Polly Radcliffe, Alex Stevens, Joanne Neale, Christos Kouimtsidas, Colin Drummond, Michael Crawford, Sue Patterson, Kostas Agath, Vikki Charles, Martin Frisher, Ilana Crome, Jim Orford, Alex Copello, Daniel Clay, Judy Corlyon, Brynna Kroll, and Andy Taylor. Chapters discuss patterns of drug taking and use of services, care coordination, waiting for treatment, early exit from treatment, barriers to effective treatment of injecting drug users, prescribing injectable opiates, CBT, service user involvement, comorbidity, services for BME families, parental drug misuse and services for their children.

Susanne MacGregor, *The Politics of Drugs: Perceptions, Power and Policies*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

This book explores the complexities of drugs policy in Britain, focusing on developments since the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. It covers debates at national level and local experiences, set in international and European context. Institutions and networks are examined to illustrate their roles as vehicles for ideas and interests within the policy process. The roles of key actors – including politicians, media and advocacy organisations – are analysed as well as the influence of evidence in shaping policy. It summarises reflections from years of research and involvement in the drugs field as well as research conducted specifically for this book.

Accepted Article