



Gambling Research Track – Abstracts

Keynote:

Internet Currencies and Capitalisms: Anthropological Questions for Gam(bl)ing Research

MINNA RUCKENSTEIN

Finnish National Consumer Research Centre
minna.ruckenstein@ncrc.fi

The Internet is a vibrant arena of economic development and transformation that brings people together in efficient and innovative ways. By doing so, web encounters enable the exploration and implementation of monetary and non-monetary transactions without the need to build costly new facilities; people across the world can use the Internet as a test site for creating and developing new kinds of exchanges for value creation. Anthropologists, together with other social scientists, have started to pay attention to these contested forms of production, distribution and consumption. Studies of virtual worlds suggest that the methods and findings of classical anthropological studies can fruitfully be extended to the study of old and new currencies, forms of capitalism and gam(bl)ing. This keynote outlines directions that emerge from these developments. The discussion demonstrates how the cultural understanding of the economy forwards the study of economic and social transactions in and around money games.

Commentator: OLLI SOTAMAA (University of Tampere)

olli.sotamaa@uta.fi

Bios

Minna Ruckenstein is a Senior Researcher at the Finnish National Consumer Research Centre in Helsinki and the President of the Finnish Anthropological Society. Her ethnographic research has focused on children's uses of virtual pets and virtual worlds. Recent articles contribute to the study of childhood from the perspectives of money, value creation and innovation. Published books include co-edited *Rahan kulttuuri* [The Culture of Money] (2009) and co-written *Forget Innovation* (2011). In 2011 she received the ITRA/BTHA and Brio prizes.

Olli Sotamaa is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of Information Sciences, University of Tampere. Over the last decade he has published extensively in the field of game studies, contributing to the topics of player production, player-centered design, game reward systems, mobile games, social games, digital distribution, and player study methodologies. His current research interests include co-production, game development cultures and creative labor.

Paper Session 1: Gambling Games in Culture and Society

Chair of Session: TBA

Commentator: TBA

The Introduction of the Legal Roulette and the Changing Finnish Consumer Culture in the 1960s and 1970s

RIITTA MATILAINEN
University of Helsinki
riitta.matilainen@helsinki.fi

The presentation concentrating on the introduction of the game of roulette in Finland in the 1960s and in the 1970s exemplifies how the concept of consumption can bring new dimensions to the fore in gambling studies. This micro-historical study of a new legalized form of gambling, and of related discourses and practices in a particular context of change, offers a chance to analyze the Finns' changing consumer and leisure cultures.

Before the introduction of legal roulettes in the 1960s very few Finns had played the game. Due to images of luxurious casinos in Monte Carlo and continental Europe, and of roulette being an upper-class game played by Russian aristocrats, the game had to be democratized without losing the exciting elements of luxury and exclusiveness. Roulette fitted poorly the 'tamed' image of Finnish gambling under the state's patronage. Interestingly, the contemporary media considered roulette a sign of Finland finally measuring up to the Western European standards and to the "continental" way of life. However, there was an interesting discrepancy between the image of the roulette and the reality since the price of the chip was very low and so were the winnings. Of interest are also class and gender aspects concerning the roulette. Roulette was marketed as a form of gambling especially suitable for middle and upper classes. Many of the first croupiers were women contrary to practices in many other European countries.

Bio

Riitta Matilainen (MA, Soc. Sci) is a doctoral student in the Department of Political and Economic Studies at the University of Helsinki. She is currently working on her thesis about the experiences of Finnish gamblers in the twentieth century. She is particularly interested in the themes of consumption, gender, and class related to gambling.

Play Becomes Reality: Finnish Poker Professionals and Contemporary Culture

PIA LINDEN

University of Jyväskylä

pia.p.linden@jyu.fi

Gambling has always been seen as a risky, even sinful pastime. However, during the last decade poker became a popular form of gambling in Finland. The extraordinary emergence of the old card game was in part a result of media coverage, and due to the global poker hype, poker millionaires got to the media headlines. With that, online poker became a summer job for students, average players wanted to be poker stars and professional poker player's occupation became youngsters' dream job. This kind of stir in gambling culture and working life refers to changes in society and its far-reaching impacts need to be noticed in research.

When putting aside the moral issues of gambling and looking behind the traditional values of work, it can be seen that playing poker has much in common with contemporary culture's neoliberal working ethos: the same kind of values – independency and money, entertainment and risk taking – are expressed and idealized in both. However, responsibilities culminate with individual's self control more than ever, as consumption and therefore also gambling and poker have become means of self-realization. This presentation points out that gambling and, in this case, poker, is far-reaching phenomenon and impact much further than just gambling or gaming culture. The presentation is based on a doctoral thesis on poker as work, consumption and lifestyle and studies the topic through interviews of professional poker players.

Bio

Pia Lindén (M. Soc. Sci, Sociology) is a doctoral student in the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä. She has studied issues related to gambling, online poker, poker professionals, gender, working life, and consumer culture. She continues with these topics in her doctoral thesis.

Anthropology of Online Poker: Themes and Observations from Research

JUKKA JOUHKI

University of Jyväskylä

jukka.jouhki@jyu.fi

Anthropologists have a long history of studying the "non-Western" and "pre-modern" cultures located far away from their familiar Euro-American cultural sphere. However, for a few decades now, anthropology has turned its gaze on the "Western" subject as well, using its staple methods, ethnography and participant observation, to examine "modern" society. Although the main focus of anthropology still remains in the "non-Western Other," there are fruitful paths taken by anthropologists interested in new cultural phenomena of the contemporary (information) society. The spread of Internet has meant the spread of culture to new areas/spaces of experience where new systems of meaning have emerged. Games, gambling, and - in this case - online poker are among the many recent cultural formations anthropology can provide valuable insight for. In my presentation I will discuss my research on online poker and shed light on how an anthropologist can approach the subject that has

gathered much interest in social sciences. I will discuss my observations on what I view as the four key themes, the four M's, of online poker: morality, money, marginality, and manhood.

Bio

Jukka Jouhki (PhD, Docent) is a cultural anthropologist working as a Research Fellow at the Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä. Jouhki's background is in classical anthropology but in recent years he has become more interested in human-technology interaction in Western and non-Western societies. Among other themes, he has conducted research on subjects such as South Korean new media culture, mobile communication, and social change in India as well as online poker as an emerging cultural phenomenon.

Paper Session 2: Gambling and the Media

Chair of Session: TBA

Commentator: TBA

“To Spend Your Lives in Sin and Misery in the House of the Rising Sun”: The Images of Gambling in Popular Music Lyrics

MATIAS KAREKALLAS
University of Helsinki
matias.karekallas@helsinki.fi

Gambling is usually associated with some powerful and ambivalent images. These images, such as life-changing wins, risk-taking, addiction, transgression and glamour, have been commonly utilized in popular culture. Some gambling studies have recently focused on how these images are constructed, mediated and recreated in literature and movies, but music has been mainly disregarded thus far.

The purpose of this paper is to incorporate popular music into the contemporary discussion of cultural images in gambling. Music is a powerful tool for self-expression and identification and it appeals to individual's most fundamental emotions and needs. This paper addresses the following questions: "What kind of images are attached to gambling in popular music lyrics?", "How are the places of gambling represented in the lyrics?", and "How do these images influence gambling culture and general perceptions of gambling?"

By analyzing popular music songs that include gambling-related narratives and representations of gambling places (such as "House of the Rising Sun" that is referred to in the topic), this paper illustrates the ambivalent or contradictory images attached to gambling. On the one hand gambling is glorified, but on the other hand it is considered dangerous. Gambling is also commonly represented in the lyrics as a transgressive behaviour, an addiction, or through religious notions such as a vice or a sin.

Bio

Matias Karekallas (M.Sc., Human Geography) is a doctoral student at the Department of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki, with background in Cultural Geography. He is presently writing his doctoral thesis on the images and places of gambling. His other research interests focus on various phenomena of popular culture, especially popular music.

Gambling in Game and Play Metaphors of Politics

MARKUS MEURONEN
University of Jyväskylä
markus.meuronen@jyu.fi

Game and play metaphors have often been used to depict political action and political institutions in Finnish editorial cartoons. These metaphors include those of sports, theatre and also gambling. However, in the past of political studies, gambling has been given only a marginal role as a metaphor of extreme risk taking in politics. In this study the author asks how different forms of gambling are used to depict politics and what do these uses tell about the conceptualization of gambling itself.

The study concentrates on Finnish political cartoons from the 1940's to the present day. The discussion about the cartoons reveals that the meanings of different gambling metaphors are not restricted only to the category of the extreme. Rather, it becomes evident that gambling metaphors can possess same connotations as the other game and play metaphors do. Moreover, gambling seems to introduce some of its own distinct meanings to the category of game and play.

Bio

Markus Meuronen (MA) is a doctoral student in Political Science at the University of Jyväskylä. He is currently working on his thesis about the conceptual history of gambling.

Gambling in the Social Media

JANI KINNUNEN
University of Tampere
jani.kinnunen@uta.fi

Most of the traditional gambling games are pure games of chance. Playing them doesn't require any kind of social interaction between players. Nevertheless, gambling often takes place in social situations, e.g. around the same table or within talking distance to other players. Social interaction doesn't take place only during playing but also before and after the games. Even if it's not necessary in order to play, social interaction is significant for players' gambling experiences.

Online gambling was previously regarded as a social activity. Players didn't have means to interact with other people in online gambling sites. However, as internet, in general, has

evolved towards more social environment, also online gambling has accommodated new dimensions of sociality. Players can communicate during playing and they can interact with each other in multiple gambling-related online forums and communities outside the actual playing. Gambling and social media are integrated by many ties.

The aim of this presentation is to study the interconnectedness of gambling and social media. By using examples from Facebook, I will show that gambling is a fundamentally social activity. Facebook is an important platform for playing and for gambling-related communication. Gambling can be a way to maintain friendship ties in players' social networks and gambling-related communication in Facebook is connected with players' identity construction.

Bio

Jani Kinnunen (M. Soc. Sci) has worked as a researcher at the Game Research Lab of the University of Tampere, Finland, since 2007. His background is in Sociology and Media Culture Studies. He has participated in several research projects about gambling and gaming. Currently he is writing his doctoral thesis about social aspects of gam(bl)ing.

