Introduction
Global Gambling
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'The secret of gambling is that money does not exist as value'
(Baudrillard 1990: 86)

CONSUMPTION

In The Consumer Society (1998 [1970]) French social theorist Jean Baudrillard compared the field of consumption to "a jungle in which the new wild man of modern times has difficulty recovering the reflexes of civilization" (Baudrillard 1998 [1970]: 25). By comparing the field of consumption with life in a jungle, Baudrillard points towards one of the major contradictions of the consumer society. This type of society generates a wealth of commodities, facilities, services and experiences designed to satisfy our seemingly endless needs. At the same time, this array of options raises the question of how to digest, manage and control this overwhelming wealth of opportunities.

In his analyses of consumption Baudrillard builds on classic American social accounts of the rise of the consumer society, such as David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd (1950/1961) and notably John Kenneth Galbraith's The Affluent Society (1958). Riesman claimed that the increasing ability to consume goods and afford material abundance was accompanied by a shift away from tradition or 'inner-directedness.' How to define one's self became a function of the way others lived and of what they thought and consumed. With this 'other directedness' the construction of one's social identity becomes dependent upon the behavior of others. Galbraith contended that the affluent consumer society needed a new way of thinking, a new economic understanding different from a production-centered industrial society. He also argued that economic theory should take into account the importance of advertising in artificially creating high rates of consumption to support high rates of production. Baudrillard concluded from such insights that consumption could no longer be adequately conceived as a function of human needs, but should rather be understood as a function of production. He defined consumer products in terms of a system of signs that shapes and
creates needs, rather than satisfying them (Baudrillard, 1968/1988). Baudrillard imagined the twentieth century’s revolution in consumption as an “equivalent and extension” of the nineteenth century’s industrial revolution (Baudrillard, 1970/1998, p. 81). The masses, which had been transformed into willing (-wage) laborers, had to be transformed into desiring consumers, because the selling of products and articles, at a certain moment in time, becomes more difficult than manufacturing them. The ‘realization of capital’—receiving money in return for commodities at the end of the production cycle—becomes the critical issue for further capitalist development. Without the selling of products, investments will never result in profits. In a ‘post-Fordist’ economy the rationalization of production processes is therefore transferred into the fields of consumption. Consumption is organized in such a way that more people will be motivated to spend more money.

In The McDonaldization of Society, George Ritzer (1993) addressed the rationalization of consumption. McDonaldization refers to “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of the American society as well as the rest of the world” (Ritzer, 1993, p. 1). The production processes of fast-food chain McDonalds, which Ritzer used as a metaphor for contemporary consumption, is built upon the principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through the replacement of human by nonhuman technology. Ritzer derived these principles from Max Weber’s rationalization theory. But in Enchanting a Disenchanted World (2005), a book building upon and extending his work on McDonaldization, Ritzer also reverts to Karl Marx’s theory of commoditization, and in particular Baudrillard’s critical assessment of this theory in view of the rising significance of consumption. Following Baudrillard, Ritzer focuses on the development of the ‘means of consumption,’ which refers to the settings and structures that enable us to consume all sorts of things. The means of consumption are distinguished from that which is consumed. In the words of Ritzer:

Fast food restaurants are different from the hamburgers we eat in them. The means of consumption will be seen as playing the same mediating role in consumption that the means of production play in Marx’s theory of production. That is, just as the means of production are those entities that make it possible for the proletariat to produce commodities and to be controlled and exploited as workers, the means of consumption are defined as those things that make it possible for people to acquire goods and services and for the same people to be controlled and exploited as consumers. (2005, p. 50)

In a similar way gambling enterprises are different from the games they offer. Note that Ritzer’s definition of the means of consumption includes both the consumption sites and the role of the consumer. Ritzer (2005) in particular focuses on the category of the ‘new’ means of consumption, a
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category referring to spectacular settings that have dramatically transformed the nature of consumption in the post–World War II era. Noteworthy examples include theme parks such as Disney’s, fast-food restaurants such as McDonald’s, shopping malls, cruise ships, and casinos. The new means of consumption are, however, not restricted to these spectacular examples but, to an extent, affect many contemporary consumption settings. They seek to control consumers in order to persuade them to spend as much as possible.

LAS VEGASIZING

Interestingly, Ritzer explicitly regards and analyzes gambling settings, notably the Las Vegas casino-hotel, as ‘paradigmatic’ for the new means of consumption (Ritzer & Stillman, 2001). These megacasinos are not only characterized by the rationalization processes that Ritzer outlined for fast-food chains, but also by the principles of ‘enchantment,’ ‘simulation,’ ‘implusion,’ and ‘surveillance,’ which are equally important features of the new means of consumption. Rationalization serves to expedite consumption, while enchantment lures consumers to these sites. The Las Vegas casinos create spectacular environments by simulating well-known attractions from the past, present, and imagined future. They increase consumption by ‘compressing time and space’ (Harvey, 1989). They implode boundaries between gambling, entertainment, shopping, and tourism. In All Right, Okay, You Win (1992), a popular account of the Las Vegas Strip, David Spanier already regarded the ‘aura of extravaganza’ as its defining characteristic. There, earthly paradise can be enjoyed by masses of people in a temporary but overwhelming illusionary world. Spanier cited a top manager of a Las Vegas casino, claiming: “We are not in the gambling market anymore . . . We are selling entertainment, an environment to have fun in . . . What people are really doing is buying time” (Spanier, 1992, p. 251). According to Ritzer and Stillman (2001, pp. 95–97), surveillance is a striking additional feature of the new means of consumption, for which casinos may also serve as exemplary. Security guards and electronic cameras help protect against the disturbance of normative order and theft, by gamblers as well as employees. In the Las Vegas casinos surveillance is also used in a productive way to keep track of, and dispense rewards to, active players through highly individualized marketing techniques.

Of theoretical significance is that Ritzer (2005) regards the overall process of ‘Enchantment’ as complementary to the process of ‘McDonalization.’ As Weber argued, processes of rationalization often have irrational consequences and side effects. Rationalization may ‘dehumanize’ consumption settings, which would be counterproductive since they would then cease to be attractive. In Ritzer’s account the enchanting of consumer settings leads to the construction of spectacular and attractive ‘cathedrals of consumption,’ countering and concealing the assembly-line-like features of mass
consumption. Enchantment overlaps with processes that have also been addressed with the concept of 'Disneyization' as defined by Bryman (2004). Disneyization seeks to create variety and difference, where McDonaldization weakens likeness and similarity. Important dimensions of Disneyization include 'theming,' which is about wrapping institutions and objects in a narrative that is largely unrelated to the institution or object to which it is applied. 'Hybrid consumption' is another dimension and comparable to the aforementioned process of 'implusion.' It refers to the general trend whereby various forms of consumption are combined and fused, such as shopping, gambling, theater, and dining, for instance. Other features included in Bryman's concept of Disneyization are 'merchandizing,' referring to the promotion by means of certain images, and 'performative' types of service work in which personnel must act in a certain way or display a certain mood.

The spatial dimension of processes such as enchantment and Disneyization is particularly striking. Gottdiener fundamentally addressed this spatial dimension in *The Theming of America* (2001). In this book he discusses the theoretical and historical backgrounds of the pervasive use, especially in North America, of overarching symbolic motifs that define an encompassing built space. According to Gottdiener, the themed milieu increasingly characterizes not only cities but also suburban areas, shopping places, airports, and recreational spaces such as baseball stadiums, museums, restaurants, and amusement parks. Gottdiener relates this cultural process directly to Baudrillard's theory of the consumer society, as well as to the Las Vegas casino. Following Gottdiener, theming refers to a process in which advertising and architecture collude to attract consumers and increase consumption, a process in which ultimately space itself, not merely the products and attractions located in space, is being consumed. The development of urban entertainment districts, as discussed by Hannigan (1998), concerns a specific aspect of theming. Hannigan conceives of these districts as 'Fantasy Cities,' which are not only characterized by themes, but also by aggressive branding strategies, by its day and night operation, its modular composition out of an array of standardized entertainment components, its isolation from the surrounding neighborhoods, and its spectacular simulations of reality. For Hannigan, Las Vegas definitely represents the successful development of fantasy cities.

Following authors such as Ritzer, Bryman, Gottdiener, and Hannigan, commercial gambling can nowadays be regarded as one of the highlights, sometimes even as the ultimate form of contemporary consumer culture. Although these authors, when discussing gambling, mainly refer to Las Vegas as archetypical, many of the outlined features regarding rationalization and enchantment can be discerned in the less spectacular but ubiquitous gambling forms, such as urban casinos, betting shops, racetracks, bingo halls, amusement arcades, and lottery shows on television. As Ritzer himself has argued, McDonaldization—and this supposedly goes for the complementary process of enchantment too—is not a uniform process, nor are its settings, services, goods, and consumers (Ritzer & Oviedo, 2000). McDonaldization
has a variety of ‘trajectories,’ there is great variation in the degree to which organizations can be McDonaldized, and consumers do not always simply act in accordance with the demands of McDonaldized companies. The same applies to the commercial gambling forms addressed in this volume. Although the present volume does not include a chapter on Las Vegas—there are several excellent accounts addressing the gambling capital of the world (Gottdiener et al., 1999; Rothman, 2002; Schwartz, 2003; Raento & Flusty, 2006)—this volume is concerned with the process of ‘Las Vegasizing.’ In this process gambling facilities in many regions of the world follow a logic of development comparable to Las Vegas’s, and follow—often to a lesser extent of course, its examples. However, the dynamics of development as well as the outcomes may differ significantly. This volume therefore adopts a bottom-up approach. The focus is on how processes of legalization, liberalization, and commoditization in gambling are framed by specific jurisdictions, gambling organizations, and local circumstances, stressing the dynamics, controversies, and great variety of global gambling forms. Without doubt, the many features of Las Vegas—style gambling, as outlined by Ritzer and Stillman (2001), are affecting the development of gambling in many regions of the world. But it is far more accurate to speak, in this respect, of ‘glocalization,’ a concept coined by Robertson (1992) to express the unbreakable unity of globalizing and localizing pressures (Terry & West, 2004). Globalization is a one-sided concept that always has localization as a complementary process. Global gambling forms often compete with traditional games and national institutions; they are adapted to local situations, sometimes actively resisted, or transformed into something new, leading to emergent gambling forms that feed into the global gambling repertoire. Indeed, Las Vegas—style gambling is perhaps better understood as one of many possible forms, as a specific—North American—gambling form, albeit a very powerful one. In discussing the global–local nexus, notably in relation to sports betting on the Internet, gambling scholar McMillen (2003, p. 61) concludes that “we cannot assume that the globalization of gambling is a uniform process that interacts with and influences all local cultures equally. Nor can we assume that resistance, accommodation, and agency are equal among every particular local culture.”

It is the overall process in which commercial gambling forms develop that is the object of this volume. Framing gambling as a commercial commodity that is part and parcel of the global entertainment economy is basic to ‘Las Vegasizing,’ and its features characterize the recent development of gambling in many world regions (Thompson, 1998). This volume seeks to understand and further research the cultural dimensions of the global spread of commercialized gambling in all its diversity. As such the authors of the subsequent chapters are addressing specific forms of gambling that are part of the entertainment industry. In his classical anthropological account of gambling, in his essay on the Balinese cockfight, Geertz (1973) showed how gambling mirrored the status hierarchies and collective experiences of a local
community. He made clear how the cockfight and its associated gambling practices were inextricably interwoven with the whole of a traditional society. However, commercial gambling in modern societies is something different. Gambling is differentiated in a specialized economic sector, in which the positions of operators, regulators, and consumers are organized in relatively autonomous social, political, and economic subsystems. Elsewhere I have described this institutional development of modern gambling in terms of a process of ‘autonomization,’ a change that claims pleasure is the primary motive for gambling and a regulated commercial gambling industry that has a growing share in and influence on society at large (Kingma, 2004, p. 63). Gambling organizations and their products have become ubiquitous and almost continuously available, and the returns of most gambling markets have grown enormously. Gambling is among the fastest growing industries in the world, and is also represented by a specialized and multidisciplinary field of gambling studies (Dombrink & Thompson, 1990; McMillen, 1996; Eadington & Cornelius, 1997; Reith, 2002; Schwartz, 2003; Smith et al., 2007). The gambling industry also represents increasingly complex organizational networks, including operators, regulators, researchers, consultants, and gambling addiction treatment specialists. The most recent development is the virtualization of gambling through forms of remote gambling, such as Internet gambling, which has had the consequence of challenging traditionally tight state sovereignty in many national gambling jurisdictions.

ENTERTAINMENT

With the rise of the postmodern consumer society gambling has become increasingly regarded as an acceptable leisure-time pursuit. Gambling might, at least in some modes, be regarded as ‘edgework’ characterized by voluntary risk-taking as an end in itself, similar to other kinds of risky leisure pursuits such as skydiving, mountaineering, or drug-taking (Lyng, 2005). Paradoxically, gambling in its commoditized shapes is marketed and presented as a ‘safe risk’ in which the risks of gambling are largely—claimed to be—brought under control (Gephart, 2001). At the same time there is a growing awareness and care for the negative side effects, relating to crime and addiction. But the negative side effects of the expansion of commercial gambling do not necessarily undermine the expansion and treatment of gambling as an entertainment market, if we consider the gambling industry to be part of what Beck has described as the Risk Society (1992). In that case gambling is regarded as a type of ‘risky consumption’ (Cosgrave, 2006). Gambling organizations—lotteries, casinos, amusement arcades, betting shops, and bingo halls—offer risks for consumption, but also project risks onto their environments due to the possible dangers and harms related to gambling addiction and crime. These organizations bring promises of financial gain to operators, local communities, and states as well as to the gamblers, but
at the same time these ventures are associated with the possibilities of the negative consequences of financial loss, corruption, theft, the disruption of family lives, and even the suicide of gambling addicts. In a coevolution with commercial gambling the problem of, and care for, pathological gamblers has also emerged (Castellani, 2000). Contemporary gambling organizations are therefore increasingly associated with, and involved in, risk regulation and risk management.

Gambling may indeed be as old as mankind, but its popularity, game types, artifacts, organizational forms, and moral understandings differ greatly across history and cultures (Binde, 2005). In the context of the development of modern societies, nation-states, and capitalist as well as socialist economies, gambling was highly controversial and in many cases largely, but seldom completely, prohibited (Collins, 2003). Gambling was condemned on religious, moral, social as well as economic grounds. Where the exploitation of gambling was allowed, it was regarded as exceptional, for instance, in the case of a state lottery or in a marginal area, such as the state of Nevada in the United States, Monaco in Europe, or Macau in Asia. Collins (2003), who investigates the morality of gambling, argues that a moral case for banning gambling is untenable in a society committed to democratic values. States have legalized gambling activities as a source of revenue generation, although the shape of gambling policy and the types of gambling activity legalized vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The move into gambling is an example of the state moving into culture, and culling an activity that it had for the most part defined as deviant and illegal (Cosgrave & Klassen, 2001). Cosgrave and Klassen (2001) argue that the liberalization and legitimation of gambling must be seen in the context of broader social and economic forces related to the deregulation of markets. The significance of the state’s role in gambling enterprises demonstrates the changing shape of the state and its relationship to citizens in neoliberal societies.

It is not only the element of chance that makes gambling controversial but also the involvement of money. Money makes gambling particularly consequential. Notably, Goffman (1967/1972) defined gambling in terms of its ‘consequentiality’ and ‘fatefulness.’ Goffman, who conducted ethnographic research and also worked as a pit boss in a Las Vegas casino, contended that the possible significant consequences gambling actions might have for other domains of the gambler’s life made these actions relevant for character building and identity formation. Conceived this way it is not the transaction of the gamble but the action of gambling that is important. From the perspective of everyday life, what is also meaningful seems to be the possibility of wish fulfillment ingrained in the fantasies of gamblers rather than the realization of such fantasies, a mechanism that Campbell (1987) historically traced and theorized as ‘imaginative hedonism.’ What is consequential for other life interests and for the future is not so much the amount of money you win, but rather the amount of money you can afford to lose. This loss is the price paid for enjoying one’s self.
Thinking of money one can hardly imagine an activity in which money is converted as directly and quickly into pleasure and entertainment as in gambling games. In gambling games the ‘exchange-value’ of money is instantaneously converted into its ‘use-value’—mediated by chips, jetons, or lottery tickets—for producing the pleasurable experiences of play. This transformation involves a radical turn in the meaning of money. Gambling can, on the one hand, instrumentally be regarded as a means for enrichment, as a potential source of income. With reference to the ‘abstract and generalized’ meaning money has acquired in capitalist societies (Simmel, 1990), gambling can even be seen as an alternative to labor or capital investments. On the other hand, gambling can also be expressly identified with the objective of pleasure, as an end in itself. Gamblers can lose their sense of the exchange-value of the money wagered. This is what Baudrillard considered when he observed in his notebooks that “the secret of gambling is that money does not exist as value” (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 86). The ideal of gambling for its own sake, and not for the money, may be more or less comparable to the ideal of l’Art pour l’Art in the literary field. But just as in the literary field, and the arts more generally, this ideal should not be regarded as a natural self-evident condition—as inherent to art or play, but as a social and often controversial construction (Bourdieu, 1992/1996). Precisely the controversial character, as well as the remarkable advance, turns gambling into a strategic object of research. Games formerly labeled as deviant have now become common sources of pleasure and entertainment. How is this possible? How has this been achieved? The fascinating aspect of gambling from a sociological viewpoint does not so much reside in the extraordinary aspects of gambling, but all the more in the normalization of this activity (Dombrink, 1996). Gambling transforms from a dubious and marginal social activity into ubiquitous and acceptable, sometimes even highly respected, entertainment markets. This is anything but the ‘natural’ condition of gambling. The reconstruction of gambling as a respectable entertainment market should be regarded as a remarkable cultural, political, and economical achievement. This reconstruction should, however, also be regarded as context dependent and is not irreversible. Gambling in society seems to follow cycles of acceptance, frenzy, repudiation, illegality, and then again acceptance (Rose, 2003).

A decriminalization, a commercialization, and a positive (re)definition of gambling as innocent entertainment are stressed by a controversy about vocabulary. Respectable operators and regulators denominate their industry by ‘games of chance,’ ‘entertainment,’ ‘customers,’ ‘guests,’ and ‘consumers’ rather than ‘gambling’ and ‘gamblers,’ as these last words carry connotations of excessive and irresponsible gambling for money. Therefore, they often prefer the word ‘gaming’ over ‘gambling.’ The ‘euphemisation’ of gambling—the redefinition and taming of gambling as innocent entertainment, through the tempering of gambling norms, the confinement, and the stylization of gambling—is controversial, susceptible to contradictory interpretation and strategic manipulation (Kingma, 1997, p. 179). In general, the
‘creative consumption’ of products and services is crucial for understanding consumer behavior (McCracken, 1990; Willis, 1990; Featherstone, 1991). Meaning is not inherent to commodities, but produced through usages. To address this dynamic, Willis applied the concept of ‘grounded aesthetics.’ This is “the creative element in a process whereby meanings are attributed to symbols and practices and where symbols and practices are selected, reselected, highlighted and recomposed to resonate further appropriated and particularized meanings” (Willis, 1990, p. 21). Indeed, from the literature on gambling a long list of diverse and often contradictory motives for gambling behavior can be deduced (Smith & Preston, 1984). Virtually any meaning can be associated with gambling, ranging between extremes such as self-destruction versus self-esteem or individual thrill seeking versus extensive socializing. However, the same creativity in interpreting and constructing gambling facilities applies to the producers of entertainment facilities, and to the operators and regulators of the gambling industry. They frame gambling behavior through time-spatial arrangements, the rules of the games, price setting, advice—notably 'responsible gambling'—restrictions on access and premises behavior, codes, and procedures of competition, advertising, and supervision. This could, in an analogy with the creative consumption of consumers, be referred to as a process of ‘creative production,’ which in itself is worthwhile to study but may also teach us something more about the cultural dynamics of the consumer society in general. In this volume gambling will primarily, but not exclusively, be perceived from the institutional perspective of the production of an organizational field, rather than from the standpoint of the consumer of gambling games. The focus will, in short, be on the development of the ‘means of gambling consumption.’

OUTLINE

This volume offers a range of cultural perspectives on gambling organizations. With this, the volume seeks to explore, and draw attention to, new directions in the field of gambling studies, a field that is currently dominated by legal, economic, and psychological research. From the perspective of gambling studies there is a special need for new directions. In her review of the gambling literature, Reith (2007, p. 25) remarks, for instance, that “we need more of the kinds of information that numbers alone cannot give us; to go beyond counting and begin to look at processes, meanings, and social contexts.” Social and cultural perspectives can be regarded both as alternatives and as complements to the mainstream gambling studies. They are alternatives because they place gambling organizations in a new and different light, and offer new insights and interpretations for the construction of gambling organizations, and the controversies that these organizations are dealing with. They are complements because they show that gambling
organizations are more diverse and complex than the usually straightforward accounts of jurists, economists, and psychologists seem to suggest.

In some respects the chapters bring to the surface submerged traditions in gambling studies, as is the case with historical and ethnographic aspects. In other respects new and promising approaches are adopted, as is the case with influences from technological, geographical, and cultural studies. The varied case studies draw upon various theoretical and methodical approaches. They are the outcome of historical, anthropological, and sociological research. Serious attention is drawn towards the rituals, symbols, meanings, values, legitimations, relations—formal as well as informal—and the spaces and artifacts involved in the (re)production of gambling organizations. The case studies provide rich and detailed descriptions, and they stem from a wide range of global regions, including Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Although the global influence of commercial gambling is evident, at the same time the case studies stress the unique local qualities of gambling organizations.

The volume follows a logic of scope, and is organized into parts on 'backgrounds,' 'scenes,' and 'contexts.' The backgrounds part offers insights into the histories, innovations, and constitution of the gambling industry. The scenes part addresses the understanding of the routines, the experiences, and the appearances of everyday gambling practices. The context part makes clear that contemporary gambling organizations affect and penetrate our societies at large, often in many and profound ways, for example, through advertising, the way gambling is confronted in family life, and the public debate on problematic gambling communities.

Part I starts with a chapter by Riita Matilainen about the founding of two Finnish gambling monopolies. From the perspective of this volume the chapter offers a good start because one of the preconditions of a commercial gambling industry obviously resides in the presence of legal gambling corporations. In many jurisdictions legalization involved the development of monopolies. These monopolies immediately point towards the close relationship between gambling and the state. The state not only legitimates and regulates, but often also actively provides gambling opportunities, and shares in or distributes the returns. However, the role of the state can be more or less prominent, and the way gambling monopolies emerge and develop can be rather diverse. In these respects Finland represents a unique case. In a straightforward historical account Matilainen explicitly relates the development of the Finnish monopolies on betting, lotto, and slot machines to the development of the Finnish consumer society and welfare state. She argues that the cultural and moral reevaluation of gambling in Finland should be understood as part and parcel of wider social and economical transformations. Of particular significance, regarding the dynamics that in the 1930s led to the founding of Finnish gambling monopolies, were the legal controversies over chance and skill and were interactions and forms of cross-border gambling with neighboring country Sweden. Matilainen draws
our attention to a dynamic of ‘economic nationalism,’ in which countries provide their own gambling opportunities in order to prevent money from flowing out of the country. In this respect the animosity between Sweden and Finland, specifically concerning Gymnastics, was highly influential to the organization and meaning of commercial gambling in Finnish society. Matilainen indeed makes clear that a proper understanding of gambling cannot exclude a sound analysis of its historical backgrounds, if only to remind us that the Internet was preceded by newspapers and mail in facilitating international competition and cross-border gambling.

In Chapter 2 the focus shifts from the state to the industry, which constitutes an equally important background to commercial gambling. In a sophisticated theoretical account, Richard Woolley and Charles Livingstone discuss the popularity of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) in Australia, in particular the so-called poker machines. Adopting insights from Actor-Network-Theory, the authors discuss the development of the market and the innovation of slot machines, which are fabricated by a globalized industry. This analysis leads us deep into the EGMs interior construction as a consumer commodity, which to most of us usually, and sometimes even literally, appears as a ‘black box.’ One of the significant transformations in these seemingly unchanging artifacts is the transformation from a relatively simple stand-alone ‘machine’ into a complex networked ‘device.’ Woolley and Livingstone argue that, among others, this change induced an enormous increase in the options for meaningful interactions by gamblers. They make clear that the EGM provides for a relatively ‘open space for meaning-making activity.’ In the second section of their account Woolley and Livingstone follow Cornelius Castoriadis’s cultural theory of consumption. This section offers a complementary account in which they argue that the space for meaning making provided by the EGM suits the urges and objectives of the gambler, who is not simplistically seeking money or superficial thrills but, just as any consumer, seeks to create meaningful experiences. This search for experiences could be conceived, in terms of Castoriadis, as a ‘vocation,’ as some sort of ‘duty’ the consumer must fulfill in the context of the consumer society. Woolley and Livingstone are thus deeply concerned with the sociological understanding of the interactions between the gambling industry and consumer culture.

In Chapter 3 the background of global gambling is extended with the involvement of the civil society, nongovernmental organizations, and interest groups as well as the wider (voting) public. In an elegant account Jeffrey Sallaz compares the legalization of casino gambling in regions as diverse as South Africa and California in the United States. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, Sallaz analyzes how in these regions certain groups were involved, in interaction with the state and gambling corporations, in the formation of a new gambling field. He shows in particular how various resources, in terms of Bourdieu, ‘cultural,’ ‘symbolic,’ ‘political,’ and ‘economic’ capital, were employed in strategies to legitimate casinos. In
California, Indian Tribes succeeded in 1998 in gaining support for casinos by converting economic assets into public trust, through advertising campaigns. They won the sympathy of the public that could vote on the casino issue in a referendum. In their campaigns the Tribes proposed a limited casino market. In South Africa the ANC legalized casinos in 1996 by converting its political power, through mobilizing elites and commissioning reports, into financial returns, to be generated by a competitive gambling industry. In this case Sallaz draws particular attention to the constitution and the consequences of a decisive report on gambling policy. This chapter not only offers a clear understanding of the disparate contexts and outcomes in these comparative cases, but also vividly pictures the complex dynamics and unexpected turns followed by the groups and individuals involved. Sallaz thus demonstrates the methodological value of comparative analysis and the strength of Bourdieu’s framework for analyzing the cultural dynamics of gambling policies.

In Part II the research lens shifts from the backgrounds concerning the constitution of commercial gambling to the actual scenes and settings of gambling practices in which gambling relations are routinely reproduced. The microscope is, metaphorically speaking of course, in this part more appropriate than binoculars. This second part of the volume starts with Chapter 4 by Richard Marksbury, who takes the reader to the blackjack table as a typical microspace of North American, in this case especially New Orleans, urban casinos. Marksbury illuminates the standpoint of classical anthropology and its method of ethnography, and argues how this standpoint could be applied to the corporate world of casinos. He makes clear that casinos should, from this perspective, be understood and studied ‘as cultures,’ rather than as organizations that merely ‘have cultures.’ As a culture, a casino, and what occurs inside, should be approached as a particular form of human expression. Marksbury argues that this approach makes gambling just as valid an object for ethnographic research “as kinship systems on Tahiti.” Marksbury illustrates this position with a detailed analysis, based on extensive participant observation, of social interactions at the blackjack table. He follows Goffman’s classic definition of ‘action.’ Our attention is drawn to the distinct social situation created by the table, the dealer, the players, and observers of the game. This setting appears as a social equalizer. Status differences that are relevant outside of the casino and the game do not seem to apply anymore. Besides blackjack the players “may share little to nothing in common.” Although social bonding primarily takes place through the game, the game does leave some additional time for superficial associated social interaction. In his analysis of the blackjack setting Marksbury draws our attention to the social significance of position one and seven on the blackjack table, in blackjack jargon subsequently addressed as ‘first base’ and ‘third base.’ Overall, Marksbury pictures and advocates the casino as an exciting and challenging place for ethnographic research.
In Chapter 5 Wuyi Wang and Peter Zabielskis describe and explain the extraordinary operational system of VIP-customer services in the traditional Macau casinos. ‘Extraordinary,’ that is, from the perspective of Western business models typical of, for instance, Las Vegas’s casinos. Macau’s traditional VIP system is, however, in line with long-standing Chinese philosophies and business practices, which are based less on formal contracts and more on personal relationships. Wang and Zabielskis describe the complicated VIP system in great detail. They argue how in the 1980s the ‘VIP-representative,’ who acts as a subcontractor and recruits and guides the high-stakes gamblers, became a key figure in this system. The VIP-representative facilitates the gambler and makes money with so-called ‘dead chips.’ The whole system works on trust based on personal relationships, called guanxi, and honor, called mianzi. In a sharp theoretical account Wang and Zabielskis build on Mauss’s theory of ‘gift giving’ and Bourdieu’s theory of ‘capital conversions’ to explain how within this system personal relationships are cleverly, but not always overtly and directly, converted into economic resources and vice versa. Making money and making friends are in this case intimately connected. Wang and Zabielskis explicitly relate the system to Chinese traditions and business practices. With Macau’s VIP system they clearly demonstrate that despite globalizing trends, capitalism, and indeed commercial gambling, is not a uniform phenomenon. It is always embedded in, and affected by, local circumstances. Interestingly, since 2002 Macau’s gambling monopoly has been broken, and Nevada gambling corporations have entered the lucrative market. This leaves Macau with two contrasting and competing business models for casinos. Wang and Zabielskis make some calculated guesses as to where this might lead the traditional VIP system and Macau’s gambling market.

In Chapter 6 Sytze Kingma, the editor, analyzes the spatial dynamics regarding the segregation, confinement, and concentration of gambling games within Dutch casinos. The spatial organization of casinos is closely associated with the construction of pleasure and entertainment. Kingma analyzes this process of creative production following Henri Lefebvre’s framework for spatial analysis. This framework consists of a three-part dialectic between ‘perceived space,’ ‘conceived space,’ and ‘lived space.’ Each of these concepts refers to a different perspective on space. Kingma argues that casino space is deeply involved in defining entertainment and in producing pleasurable experiences. At the same time, the (re)definition of gambling as entertainment affects the construction of casino space. This reciprocal process concerns many aspects, ranging from urban planning and architecture, via advertising, access policies and the arrangement of gambling areas, to the servicing and surveillance of gamblers by casino personnel. While casino design favors entertainment in many ways, it does not simply determine casino experiences. Kingma explicitly demarcates Dutch casino space vis-à-vis Las Vegas–style casinos. He further maintains that the ‘full meaning’ of gambling as entertainment is only realized in the
performance on the gambling floor of the casino. This includes both the performance of gamblers and casino personnel. He suggests that servicing and surveillance addresses and reveals certain aspects of the 'lived space' of Dutch casinos, such as the 'informalization' of manners, tipping strategies, the perception of skill, and addiction. Although casinos are predominantly perceived as facilities for pleasure and entertainment, this is a heavily managed image. However, what exactly constitutes pleasure and entertainment in the context of casino gambling is not self-evident and is in many respects controversial. This chapter therefore highlights the ambiguous nature of gambling and casino space.

In Part III we move away from the commercial gambling settings and direct our attention to the ways in which gambling organizations affect the larger society. For this perspective we need a kind of 'radar' as metaphoric research equipment, rather than the microscope used in Part II or the binoculars in Part I. Radar enables us to scan a huge terrain and to penetrate (non)gambling locations and institutions. In Chapter 7 Per Binde discusses the controversies over gambling advertising in Sweden. Advertising is perhaps the most telling institution of the consumer society, and a means by which the gambling industry communicates with large audiences. Until the 1980s, gambling advertising was minimal and unwanted in Sweden. But together with the liberalization of gambling, promotion and advertising have become prominent features of the industry. Binde addresses in particular the controversies this has raised concerning lottery advertising. He focuses on the allegations that gambling adverts often convey misleading messages. Following the marketing literature on advertising he finds it important to distinguish between 'objectively' and 'subjectively' misleading advertising. From a cultural perspective, he also distinguishes between the 'real'—factual—world of the gambling games, and the 'dream' world of gamblers, who often associate optimistic ideas and images with the gambling products. In this respect Binde discusses a range of persuasive elements of gambling advertising, ranging from the idea that 'winning is easy' to the feeling that 'you might be lucky.' He argues that it is difficult, especially in view of the subjective dimension, to draw a sharp line between advertising that is misleading and advertising that is not. Advertising agencies usually explore the leeway in between these extremes. Binde finds it particularly problematic to argue that gambling advertising is misleading just because it stimulates 'wishful thinking.' He nevertheless offers a series of measures that would be relevant to 'responsible advertising' policies, one of which is providing accurate information about the costs and chances of winning to the gamblers. Overall, Binde develops a nuanced perspective on gambling advertising in which he stresses that gambling products are related less to money and more to the selling of 'fantasies' and 'hope.'

In Chapter 8 the household is put forward as another highly relevant context for the consumption of gambling products, not only because the household as the ultimate consumption unit is increasingly penetrated by
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gambling products through the use of electronic media, but also because households regulate its consumption. In this chapter Anita Borch reveals how Norwegian couples manage gambling consumption, specifically male betting on football matches, in view of their household and private relationship. Borch builds her analysis on Marcel Mauss’s theory of ‘gift giving’ and Bakthin’s theory of context. She argues that the household comprises a complex set of material as well as symbolic exchanges in which partners balance their gambling relative to the totality of exchanges and their understanding of ‘fairness.’ This ‘balancing’ is guided by a set of rules that are both universal and contextual. Together with the balancing of gambling consumption the couples reproduce basic economic, social, and symbolic features of their household. Borch illustrates the operation of balancing rules empirically with a detailed discussion of four couples who did not experience serious gambling problems. Four balancing rules are highlighted, concerning individual versus common and relieving versus draining projects, the role of private space, and the implicit ideas about ‘equality.’ Of methodical interest is that Borch argues and shows how balancing mechanisms already operate in the interview setting. A focus on the gambling context of households and primary relationships is of special importance because with the spread of commercial gambling the regulation of gambling becomes, relative to government regulation, increasingly dependent upon self-regulation by consumers.

In Chapter 9 Fiona Nicoll discusses the public debate on EGMs in Australia and the cultural ambivalence between the popularity of these machines on the one hand and the often troubled image of these machines and their players on the other. She refers to the ‘cultural economy’ of gambling, which is about the way in which symbolic signs and cultural values frame and intervene in the gambling economy. Drawing on theories notably from Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Sarah Ahmed, Nicoll offers a vivid and critical, sometimes provocative, account of the cultural assertions and assumptions guiding the public debate on EGMs, and the way in which this may be related to the wider society. Nicoll wonders, for instance, why, in public debate as well as in academic research, the ‘problem gambler’ is far more prominent than the ‘recreational gambler,’ and how this might affect consumer behavior and the objectives of gambling policies. The search for the problem gambler can, for instance, be seen as productive in sustaining the ‘happiness’ of the recreational gambler. Nicoll also draws our attention to the affective connotations and symbolic presentations of EGMs as expressed in debates, advertisements, and the design of these machines. Nicoll is further particularly concerned with the way in which Australian politics addresses gambling in Indigenous Aboriginal communities. These politics are framed in discourses of ‘practical reconciliation,’ in which Indigenous communities must do something in return for government benefits. As a consequence, however, these communities are to a considerable extent still treated as dependent and vulnerable. With her critical analysis Nicoll is asking and searching for
more positive and just ways of presenting, researching, and organizing gambling in Australian society.

In this introduction I have not tried to give a complete overview of the gambling field or its literatures. Likewise, this is not the aim or pretension of the volume. I started with the debate on the commoditization of culture, in particular the McDonalization thesis, and how it relates to the organizational field of gambling. My objective was to make clear that this volume is concerned with specific gambling forms and developments that concern gambling, organized in the shape of commercial entertainment. My objective was also to briefly indicate how the various chapters relate and contribute to the understanding of this global development. As this overview clearly indicates, the gambling industry represents a complex field of research and can be studied from diverse cultural perspectives. Gambling organizations comprise many detailed as well as generalized cultural aspects, and they are influenced by gambling as well as affecting gambling in various cultures and world regions. The chapters of this volume only represent a part of the possible routes that have or could be taken towards an understanding of contemporary gambling cultures. The authors and studies are brought together in the hope that this selection will inspire and challenge researchers and gambling specialists across the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


