Ambiguity and Abjection: Residents' Reactions to a New Urban Casino

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Abstract: While the social and economic costs and benefits of new gambling locations have been studied extensively, less is known about how new venues are experienced in view of city residents' spatial and sociocultural identities. This study examines residents' opinions and expectations on a new small-scale casino in the City of Tampere, Finland, as a case of new gambling opportunities in an urban setting. Nine focus group interviews were conducted with 43 Tampere residents three years prior to the scheduled casino opening. The study points out ways in which the residents struggled conceptually with the casino project. When speaking about it, participants drew on imagery from popular culture, drawing a sharp line between casino gambling and the everyday convenience gambling so omnipresent in Finnish society. As residents of a historical industrial urban region, the participants positioned themselves as critical of the municipality's aims to brand the venue in a larger experience economy entity. By drawing on the concepts of city image and city identity, this study is able to demonstrate that the cultural geographical intrusion of new physical gambling spaces can appear to be harmful to the city character. In this case, that harm is likely to hamper the success of the City of Tampere's experience market, of which the new casino is part.

Keywords: casino, city image, city identity, city residents, gambling, place-belongingness

Introduction

The social and economic implications of casinos are a well-covered topic in gambling studies. Researchers have been able to point out some positive consequences such as economic growth, reduced unemployment, and decreased illegal gambling (Bondolfi et al., 2008; Govoni et al., 1998; Koo et al., 2007). On the other hand, the establishment of new venues has also been shown to correlate with a growth of crime, family disruptions, problem gambling, and overall municipality expenses (Gerstein et al., 1999; Grinols & Mustard, 2006; Room et al., 1999; Welte et al., 2016). Regardless of the conclusions, the generalizations of the findings remain limited. Typically, studies have focused on large-scale casinos, which are tourist destinations in themselves. The implications of smaller casino initiatives outside an Anglo-Saxon context have scarcely been the object of gambling studies.

Eadington (1998) divides casinos into destination resort casinos and urban casinos. Destination resort casinos are typically located in remote areas where the local tourism industry, at times even the local economy, relies almost entirely on the casinos. The positive

economic impacts have been rather easy to argue for large-scale rural Native American casinos (e.g., Evans & Topoleski, 2002), where the opening of the gambling venues has brought about a rapid economic boost in employment and tax revenues. Urban casinos are, for their part, located in cities with a wider variety of other activities in trade, entertainment, and culture. Here, the casinos are not considered as the region's main tourist destinations. Despite the more limited economic impact, urban casinos have also been used as a revitalizing strategy for declining areas (Mazar, 2018) or even as a part of (re-)branding of a city (Gotham, 2007).

In 2021, Finland's second casino will open in the City of Tampere. With a population of 235,000, Tampere is the second largest urban region in Finland and is one of the country's growth centres. After an initial failed plan to establish a casino close to the Russian border that would target tourists, the Finnish gambling monopoly changed its strategy and chose Tampere as a location. This location was selected for its year-round customer base, independent of tourist seasons (Valtavaara & Harju, 2016). Located inland, far from country borders, the Tampere casino will mainly target the local and national market. It is planned as part of a larger

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commercial complex, currently under construction in the heart of the city centre. When finished, this multipurpose arena with a hotel, an ice hockey stadium, commercial space, and private housing will substantially shape both the city's skyline and the entertainment and business industries.

This study focuses on residents' meaning-making of the opening of the new Tampere casino. While gambling itself is a widespread activity among Finns (Salonen et al., 2019), this only applies to convenience gambling spaces. These spaces are part of people's everyday routines, easily accessible and located at the Finnish supermarkets, gas stations, and shopping malls (Egerer & Marionneau, 2019). Brick-and-mortar casino gambling, on the other hand, is geographically very limited as there is only one casino in the country, located in the capital, Helsinki. By unfolding residents' cultural constructs of casino activities and the cultural geographic fit that such activities have for Tampere, we argue this dimension is crucial for the survival of gambling locations as political and value-laden projects. From this perspective, the sustainability of gambling establishments is not measured in a quantified sum of costs and benefits (e.g., Anielski & Braaten, 2008). Instead, our perspective tends towards the less tangible factors of the city image (Gilboa et al., 2015; Peighambari et al., 2016), city identity (McCarthy, 2006), and place-belongingness (e.g., Antonsich, 2010; Kuurne & Gómez 2019).

City Image, City Identity, and Urban Planning

Every city is a combination of its unique history and its culture, people, physical landmarks, and several other factors. The concept of 'city image' influences how the city is perceived in people's minds (Gilboa et al., 2015), and refers to spatial and tangible dimensions of the city's physical environment, such as its location in the country, its characteristic architecture, as well as its services, transportation, and entertainment facilities. City image can also refer to intangible factors, such as its business opportunities (Peighambari et al., 2016), but generally does not include aspects of the cities' social identities, neighbourhoods, and places (McCarthy, 2006).

The concept of city image partly overlaps with the concept of 'city identity,' but a fundamental difference is that city image is based on *impressions*, while city identity 'relates to a city's history and circumstances, which imbue it with a degree of distinctiveness. In other words, identity relates to the city's character' (McCarthy, 2006, pp. 245–246). City identity is socially constructed and refers to the ways the city is experienced by different stakeholders; for example, the identity of the city as experienced by an entrepreneur is different from that of an unemployed person or a student (Gilboa et al., 2015).

Although a city's image evolves naturally over time, city branding is an attempt to strategically alter a city's image in a specific direction (e.g., Kavaratzis, 2005). Both city image and city identity can be drawn upon and synergized in a city's branding strategy. However, several studies suggest that, in order for city branding to succeed, residents' involvement in city branding processes and their internalization of the city brand is vital (Antonsich, 2010; Eadington, 1998; Kavaratzis, 2005; Kunzmann, 2004). A mismatch between the residents' image of their city and the one officially aspired to would render the city branding futile.

The success and failure of a city branding is typically measured in economic terms (Kunzmann, 2004). The City of Bilbao, Spain, is a textbook example of a successful city branding in relation to a cultural landmark. The opening of the Guggenheim Museum transformed Bilbao, a former declining industrial city, into a world-class cultural destination that brings economic benefits to the region. Bilbao's city image has thus considerably changed by the goals to which its branding aspired. While cities can benefit from global brands, trying to recreate these global success stories can easily result in indifference, which is opposite of the cultural uniqueness, or unique selling points, that city branding hopes for.

The establishment of casinos has also been considered effective at revitalizing or rebranding declining areas (Mazar, 2018), with Atlantic City, New Jersey, USA, as perhaps the best-known example (Karmel, 2008). Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, symbolizes, incorporates, and materializes *The Tourist Casino Destination* per se. Hannigan (2007) has defined a 'casino city' as a city trying to replicate the Las Vegas success story of casino gambling, consumption, and tourism with all its adherent positive by-products. Casino cities hope to become international tourist destinations with the help of luxury products and services combined with gambling venues. However, despite city planners' best efforts, becoming the next Vegas is bound to be an unrealistic plan: casino cities have been instead described as dual cities; that is, cities with graphic downsides—such as increased crime rates and the economic hardship of other local businesses— while casinos may, at the same time, appear to be bringing economic benefits (Hannigan, 2007).

While previous studies have covered various questions related to quality of life and residents' attitudes towards casinos, there is a lack of research into residents' views on casino venues from a city image and city identity perspective. Several studies have mapped the perceived socio-economic impact of large gambling venues from the perspective of city residents (e.g., Kang et al., 2008; Lee & Back, 2003; Spears & Boger, 2002). According to Kang et al. (2008), residents tend to see the economic and social impacts of gambling venues as positive for their community if they experience personal benefits from them in terms of, for example, employment or entertainment. Jawad and Griffiths (2010) note that, while the residents of Swansea, UK, mentioned the economic benefits of the city's first casino, they were still strongly against the opening of a

second casino in their community, due to their overall negative attitudes towards gambling as an activity. These works illustrate how the venue opening, city identity, and views on gambling as an activity are entangled in locals' perceptions of casinos.

Florida (2012) discusses the importance of urban planning in view of the so-called creative class, which consists of well-educated creative professionals with good income. According to Florida, the creative class is at the core of the competition between cities for new businesses, investments, and tax revenues. Creative professional jobs are not as tied to a certain place as typical working class, service, or agricultural jobs. Therefore, the creative class can more freely choose their place of residence and commercial activities, and as a result, their residential choices are the ones that attract new businesses and investments to the region. Florida also points out that the creative class is not interested in the physical tourist attractions or sports stadiums that many cities focus on developing when choosing a place to live. For the creative class, the '3T's'—technology, talent, and tolerance—can be the most meaningful aspects of a city. Cities with a large proportion of the creative class often effuse an image of tolerance and diversity (Florida, 2003).

Florida's argument about the creative class generating growth in city regions inevitably leads to questions of belongingness and for whom cities are planned and marketed. Antonsich (2010) discusses the concept of place-belongingness as it relates to personal, intimate feelings of '*I belong here*' but also to the politics of belonging, which are discursive practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion. Even when marketers have visions of promoting new commercial projects to attract new residents, and keep the current ones happy, eventually people choose their place of residence for various other reasons (employment opportunities, quality of life, and so on), as well as the individual's biography (Savage et al., 2005).

In sum, acknowledging elements of residents' life circumstances and notions of belongingness tends to make city branding strategies more sustainable. Nonetheless, such an acknowledgement is often a neglected dimension when city leaders and administrators introduce new commercial enterprises in the city planning. Residents' city image and city identity constructs offer valuable insight into how new gambling enterprises settle in new environments in a sociocultural sense.

Historical Context of the City of Tampere

In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, Tampere was first and foremost an industrial city with most of the country's textile, wood processing, and metal industry located in the city (Haapala, 2005). As an industrial worker's town, Tampere became the centre of many of Finland's important political events in the early 20th century. In 1905, during the general strike, the famous Red Declaration was proclaimed in its central market square; in 1918, during the Civil War, it was a strategically important communist stronghold (Tepora & Roselius, 2014). While certain paper, textile, and forest industries continue to function in the city, its current growth has been built on mechanical engineering and automation, information and communication technologies, and health and biotechnology (Business Tampere, 2021).

The city's current technological development can partly be related to the founding of the University of Tampere (Sipilä, 2005). As the most important industrial centre in Finland since the late 19th century, a need for a technical higher institution had emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, which led to the founding of a new university in an exceptionally homogenous, non-academic environment. Over the years, the university has grown into the second largest in Finland. Today, over 37% of the Tampere residents have a university degree (City of Tampere, 2020). With a strong university emphasis on media and journalism, both public services and commercial audiovisual media companies have broadcasting studios in Tampere. The cultural life has grown with many famous events and museum locations, especially in the 2000s, which has allowed Tampere to project an image of a city for the creative class (Bottà, 2020). While the shift from a 20th century industrial town to a city with a population of versatile backgrounds has been particularly conspicuous in the case of Tampere, the 21st century gentrification processes follow a similar pattern in other larger Finnish cities (see Ehrström, 2016; Jauhiainen, 1997).

Seven Tampere-based real-estate business operators, one of which was a 100% city-owned amusement park, competed against each other to host the new casino. As the winning bid, the forthcoming casino will be opened as part of a brand-new consumption and leisure-time venture of the Tampere Deck and Arena, unofficially called the 'Experience Arena,' which is being built around the central railway station. In addition to a multipurpose arena for major sports events, concerts, and conventions, the complex also houses a hotel, several restaurants, plenty of commercial space, and around 1000 residential apartments (SRV, 2021). The casino will have a selection of over 100 electronic gambling machines, several table games, and poker tournaments. It will employ 80–100 people (Valtavaara & Harju, 2016). The Tampere casino plans were not introduced to the residents at any stage of the bidding process. Nor were the plans discussed at the city council, although the city actively promoted the casino project by putting together the casino application for the gambling monopoly on behalf of the real-estate operators.

Data and Methods

Nine focus group interviews with 19 women and 24 men living in Tampere were conducted in 2018 (two years after the decision to establish the casino, and

around three years prior to the expected opening). The interview protocol consisted of two parts: the first concerned the casino project, and the second was more generally about the regulation of gambling and gambling provision in Finland. The latter part allowed participants to reflect on the casino project from an overall gambling policy perspective.

The participants in the study were recruited via e-mail from a list of participants of a previous Finnish population survey who had given their consent to be contacted for additional interviews (see Salonen et al., 2017; Salonen et al., 2019). Three hundred thirty-one Tampere residents had expressed their interest to participate for further studies. For practical reasons we contacted only the 243 persons who had included an email address and sent them an email invitation with a link to participate in a focus group. Based on an earlier focus group study with a similar recruitment strategy in the Helsinki region (Egerer et al., 2018), we expected a rather small number of volunteers. For this reason, the groups were formed by chance: the participants could sign up for the focus groups by choosing a date that suited their schedule.

All groups were a mix of women and men over the age of 18. While we did not ask participants specifically for their age, persons of all age groups seemed to be represented. Groups had 3 to 7 participants, with an average of four participants; interviews lasted from 60–100 minutes.

Focus group interviews can potentially provide insight into how people reason around topics that are rather distant or abstract (Liamputtong, 2016). This method served our aims since the casino is not yet built and there is only one other casino in Finland. Envisioning a currently non-existing casino in their own hometown and speaking about casinos more generally as phenomena were likely to be a rather abstract and unfamiliar discussion topic for the participants.

The interview protocol included three images taken from the city's original casino application. The first picture was an illustration of the 'Experience Arena,' portrayed as a large roulette table at night. The second picture presented an electronic gambling machine with a winning line of five Tampere coats of arms. The third picture showed several poker chips with the text 'Casino Tampere All In.'

After seeing the images, participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of the casino and its implications for Tampere. We introduced some questions to direct the discussions but told the participants that they did not have to follow the protocol (see Fig. 1).

After discussing their views on the pictures, the participants were shown a promotional video that was compiled from architectural illustrations of potential locations for the casino, portraying the city almost entirely at night (City of Tampere, 2016). Along with uplifting music, the video also included stylish pictures that showed people having a good time inside a casino.

In the video, the lifestyle of the 'golden era' of Las Vegas casinos was drawn upon through images of luxury cars and yachts. The cars in the video were luxury models of Mercedes-Benzes, Audis, and BMWs. To highlight the extraordinariness of the casino, women in the video wore cocktail dresses and most of the men wore suits—one man wore an all-white suit and another a bowler hat. Both the pictures and the video clip displayed the imagery of a nighttime economy. The video also disclosed the names of the proposed locations and real-estate operators.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. We used an inductive approach when first looking for the main themes, 'letting the material speak to us.' Our aim was to gain insight into the underlying cultural dimensions that the participants were drawing on when they spoke about the casino project. We thus began by coding the interview data loosely in broad categories (e.g., pro, against, casino, gambling) and sharpened the categorization after highlighting repeated and overlapping themes (e.g., meaning-making of gambling + Tampere connotations). The analysis was performed by the Atlas.ti software (see Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

Questions for discussion after showing the participants three pictures.
1. Have you heard about the plans to open a casino in the city?
2. What kind of thoughts do these pictures raise?
3. What positive and negative impacts could the casino bring?

Questions after showing the video.
1. What is the message in the video?
2. How would the alternative locations shown in the video suit the casino?
3. How does Tampere appear in the video?

Fig. 1. *Interview Protocol*

Due to the prospective nature of the study, a follow-up study will be conducted after the casino opening. This is a qualitative study, which focuses on the meaning-making logic and not on opinions. The 43 persons interviewed in this study are not representative of the population of Tampere.

Results

In the interviews, city image and city identity constructs appeared in several entangled ways: in speculations regarding the casino's role in Tampere, the branding strategy of the City of Tampere, and casino gambling as a local and global phenomenon. The relationship between the residents and the casino project was negotiated in four main dimensions: (a) residents' self-understanding, (b) the contract between

the municipality and its residents, (c) city image, and (d) evaluations of the pros and cons. Even if many possible positive effects were mentioned and the conversation tone was often humorous and light, the four meaning-making dimensions make up a whole that resists, pushes away, and more or less 'abjectifies' the casino project as a whole (see Kristeva, 1982). Below we account for the main traits in this conversation.

(a) Residents' Self-Understanding

The casino was at odds with the residents' understanding of their hometown. The casino was seen as non-compliant with Tampere as a city concept. When assessing the impacts of the casino, the participants emphasized the 'down-to-earth' image of Tampere and would stress the forthcoming casino as a foreign addiction in view of the city's *true* identity. As residents of Tampere, the participants felt that they were the real experts on the essence of the city. The participants described themselves as Tampere residents in terms of ordinary people 'wearing comfy sportswear instead of showing off.' For them, 'Tampere is all about red bricks and workers' (Female, Focus group #1).

Many of the participants mentioned that they had never been to a casino, and they would emphasize the fact that their views were 'based on their own notions and apprehensions,' as opposed to knowledge or experience. Both the casino images and the city's marketing material incorporated imagery from popular culture, drawing on James Bond movies and Las Vegas aesthetics. The images of luxury and exclusiveness portrayed in the marketing material triggered thoughts about whether the participants would feel comfortable paying the casino a visit:

> Oh, no! The way people were illustrated [in the video] in the possible locations, they looked kind of … very important … Really, when you look out the window, the streets and the people … I don't know how many VIPs from the video you'd even find on the streets. But you've got to polish the image, I know. But I just don't see Tampere in that way. (Female, Focus group #9)

To the participants, it seemed clear that they were not the target audience of the promotional material. Yet, despite their doubts, the participants thought that locals were far more likely to be casino patrons than international tourists. The discrepancy between the exclusive marketing and ordinary people was strongly emphasized in the boundaries drawn spatially between places 'meant for locals' on the one hand, and 'meant for more high-status people' on the other. The casino project embodied a foreign city element targeting the extraordinary:

> I'm not their target group … Not in any way. When you think about the celebrities who visit such places. I doubt I'll ever set foot in there. (Male, Focus group #5)

The positioning of themselves as critical bystanders whose views have been disregarded in the city decision-making processes was particularly distinct when talking about the oddity and foreignness of having a casino in the city:

> This just shows sort of robbery mentality. Näsinneula [The Tampere landmark observation tower] doesn't fit here. (Male, Focus group #1)

Analyzing the many techniques used for refusing the casino as a phenomenon and as a city element, one can turn to Kristeva's concept of abjection: the casino appears to be something that 'disturbs [the] identity, system, and order'; it is something that does not respect the 'borders, positions, [and] rules' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4) of the city image and identity of Tampere.

(b) The Contract Between the City of Tampere and its Residents

In addition to feeling neglected and unable to identify with the promotional material, the participants pointed out the one-sided decision to build the casino. They expressed that it was solely a top-down administrative decision, which is a truthful depiction of the matter: the residents had little or no information about the casino plans nor the attempts to alter the city's image through city branding. Although the building of the arena was a heated topic locally, the participants felt that the casino and cutbacks on other investments were topics that were overshadowed by or hidden in the discussions on the overarching arena project. As a result, the decision to have a casino in Tampere was never opened up for public discussion.

The unsatisfying communication between the city and the residents was also expressed as disappointments in the city decision makers' priorities:

Male 1: *Other things are being cut back, but still, there's money to invest in this.*

Male 2: *Yes, and the role of an ordinary person is to be the victim of cuts rather than enjoy the fruit of the city's successful business.*

(Focus group #6)

The discussions about residents being ignored in the casino plans and its adherent city branding strategy were mixed with talk about gambling-related harms. Together, these discussion traits position the participants as removed from the casino project. The project seemed more like a betrayal of the residents by the municipality:

> I feel a bit sold off. I mean, has the city sold out itself? Is it even a right thing to do that they [the

gambling monopoly company] chose Tampere? (Female, Focus group #9)

This denial of civic participation in the city planning is a disruption in the residents' feeling of belongingness to their hometown (e.g., Antonsich, 2010). While the casino is a mismatch to their understanding of Tampere's identity, here the lack of an open democratic discussion between citizens and decision-makers becomes the main object of criticism.

(c) Tampere's City Image

The possibility that the casino images in the promotional material might become a reality was seen as an undesirable path for the city, one that would risk much of its humble charm. The participants abjectified the casino as an alien artefact that would spoil Tampere's city image, in the eyes of both locals and non-locals. By recognizing the marketing objectives of taking advantage of casino images from popular culture, the participants could carry on the story of the glamorous casinos presented to them while simultaneously criticizing its lack of compatibility with the city's essence. Exclusive images that emerged from the marketing material struck the residents as the opposite of the essence of Tampere:

Female: *We're the wrong target.*

Male 1: *For me, those pictures resemble an utopistic, Las Vegas-style business hub. It just doesn't fly. It's really plastic and superficial, though wrapped in the coat of arms of Tampere. It's building up this business image, I guess.*

Female: *Exactly. Fancy life and everything. How sweet it is, it's what you see in movies. Fancy dresses and money and not a care in the world.*

Male 1: *Well, maybe. Just maybe, it [the casino] could fit here, although I'm not fully hoping for that. Tampere is a quite small town, rustic. It just feels too vain. A need to get everything that shines.*

Male 2: *Hope it never gets to that. It's far from the Tampere I know. Luxury cars and lots of bling-bling, so impersonal. The best thing about Tampere is missing. The range of all kinds of red brick buildings, all that is wiped out. Nothing positive about that.*

(Focus group #2)

The participants also opposed the image in the city's promotional material that presents Tampere as a large metropolitan city. They were much keener on keeping the city as it is, instead of handling the ambiguity created by the casino and the city images evoked in the promotional material. The residents saw Tampere as easily approachable for people who live in regional, mostly rural, areas. The 'down-to-earth' image of Tampere was understood as ordinariness and everydayness of the people living in Tampere and

nearby areas. They pointed out that the material represented 'Tampere turned into Monaco' (Male, Focus group #1), worrying that Tampere would 'lose its personality' (Female, Focus group #2).

(d) Evaluations of the Pros and Cons

All focus groups cherished the idea of the casino bringing economic synergies for the city. The kind of entertainment and leisure tourism envisioned by the participants was built around 'friends coming to town to have fun' (Female, Focus group #5) and 'men wearing pinstripe suits and smoking cigars' (Male, Focus group #6). The groups speculated that the casino could bring more jobs, boost other businesses, and, perhaps, make Tampere an attractive, alternative destination for a night out. Yet these economic benefits were weighed against the participants' knowledge of gambling problems caused by the more familiar convenience gambling. The marketing material was interpreted as *an attempt* to pursue an image of a dynamic metropolitan city, while the forthcoming (casino) gambling problems were considered as *self-evident facts* waiting ahead. Casino gambling–related problems were considered harsh for an individual problem gambler as 'some gamblers get addicted [to gambling] for a fact,' which leads (inevitably) to 'a short-term loan after another' (Focus group #8) because 'in real life, it's not like you just stop by, put a few coins into a slot machine and then leave and go home' (Male, Focus group #6). Some participants also expressed their concerns of new types of financial crime that could come along with the casino:

Male 1: *The one thing that comes to my mind … money laundering. I mean, if the stakes are high, so's the cash flow. What about organized crime then?*

Male 2: *I guess so. If there's one thing that will never disappear, it's cash. You just carry cash in and out. I don't know how it goes but whatever you win … the winnings are legitimate.*

(Focus group #6)

Yet, in weighing the casino's benefits and costs, the groups were able in this matter to name the ambiguity brought by the casino, without needing to reject it in its entirety.

Discussion

This study has inquired into how the residents of Tampere view the new casino. When the participants of this study discussed the new casino, they would draw on pop-cultural notions of casino gambling on one hand, and the city image of their hometown on the other. In this juxtaposition, they alienated themselves from the project in three ways (Table 1).

The first way of alienating themselves from the project was through the city image. The participants positioned their hometown as a down-to-earth and

humble city compared to the anonymous global metropolis evoked in the marketing material.

Secondly, the casino became an intruder by targeting a rich and famous clientele, while dismissing ordinary people (i.e., the residents of Tampere). Into this dichotomy also falls the breach of the democratic contract between the city and its residents, as the participants problematized the city administration's decision to exclude locals and override ordinary people's opinions about an issue with the potential to create harm and expense for the social and health sectors.

Finally, the participants made a distinction between the city image of their hometown, with its everyday convenience gambling, and the Las Vegas–style gambling environment as presented in the city marketing.

The abject is something that disturbs the usual order (Kristeva, 1982). Here, the abject is represented by the casino, which is experienced as disturbing the city residents' image of the city, their feelings of belonging to Tampere, as well as their view of everyday gambling culture in Finland (Table 1).

Table 1

The Casino as Abject

	Residents' normative image	Construct used for expressing ambiguity and abjection towards the new casino
City	Finnish, down-to-earth, and humble	• Nordic growth centre • Global anonymous metropolis
Residents	Workers and ordinary people	• VIPs, rich people, city administration
Gambling	Convenience gambling in shops and kiosks	• Currently available 'time-out' gambling positioned as something totally different • Las Vegas–style gambling environment as something foreign

While still being humorously called 'the Manchester of Finland,' in reality Tampere has long ceased to be an industrial worker's town. It is now an urban centre whose growth is based on technology, research and development, and services. Likewise, the socio-economic structure of Tampere's population has diversified; now ranging, for example, from the 'creative class' to students and people working in the service sector.

The place-belongingness of residents involves a cultural boundary-making that keeps unwanted influences and obstructions on the outside. Yet place-belongingness is also a matter of politics of belonging: it is either exclusion or inclusion. Starting from these terms, including the residents in the planning of such projects sounds, thus, not only desirable (Antonsich, 2010), but in the light of this study, also possible. Participating in city planning gives residents a chance to feed fewer tangible concerns (e.g., residents' self-understanding and the city image) about the process of establishing new casinos.

An adjusted, 'glocalized' Tampere version of the global Las Vegas casino concept might not only trigger a more favourable welcome from the locals, but might also create a great selling point in the experience economy market that emphasizes the uniqueness of consumption (Sidali et al., 2015).

How desirable this is from the vantage point of gambling harm prevention, is, of course, another question. Because of how their city's image evolved historically, some cities might be a better fit for casino development. Then again, some cities might not be

suitable for a casino under any circumstances. While not talking about Tampere per se, our respondents were very clear that an amusement park visited by families does not qualify as a location for a casino at all. Not only from perspective of gambling harm prevention, but also because opening a casino might spoil the image of a family-friendly destination. Therefore, family-friendly locations should refrain from activities considered intrusions on that image.

Conclusions

This study holds valuable lessons for the further development of gambling research, and we draw two main conclusions.

Among the residents interviewed for this study, the casino project was seen as an outside intrusion of an alien gambling culture into the midst (literally and figuratively) of their city. Firstly, the phenomenon of casino gambling was not seen as a typical kind of Finnish—not to mention Tampere—gambling, even though physical gambling machines are widely available and online casino gambling is popular in Finland. In gambling research, this matter would typically have been conceptualized as a question of low social accessibility to casino gambling venues (e.g., Abbott, 2007). Social accessibility is one factor, which mediates the relation between availability, gambling participation, and possible problem gambling. Yet, from the perspective of place-belongingness, the physical and social proximity (e.g., Kuurne & Gomez, 2019) of the gambling venue turns the gaze towards possible sociocultural contamination of local space. In this

framework, it becomes thus possible to grasp gambling harm in a wider dimension than only in terms of problem gambling and its toll.

Furthermore, a mismatch between the casino and city identity—not a general negative attitude towards gambling (cf. Jawad & Griffiths, 2010)—led the participants to oppose the plans for the new casino. Clearly, factors unrelated to gambling are important for residents' approval or disapproval of gambling venues in their local region. The social accessibility is thus not only a matter of (gambling) culture but can in fact be highly local. An overall conclusion of the study is therefore that gambling location establishments should be evaluated on their cultural spatial contexts from the perspectives of the local residents in whose living environment they will become a part. A small urban casino might be rather insignificant to the local economy and to the daily lives of the locals, but this study demonstrates that the significance lies elsewhere; that is, in the compatibility of the casino with the city's identity.

This has been a first attempt to grasp new physical gambling venues in a novel framing, the frame of the local residents. More research is needed on how gambling venues impact people's perception of spatial hometown safety, well-being, and comfort.

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