

Book Reviews

1. Integrated Resort Casinos: Implications for Economic Growth and Social Impacts

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Reno, NV
Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming

ISBN-13: 978-0-9796873-1-0
ISBN-10: 0-9796873-1-4

310 Pages. No index.

Reviewed by Betty McNeal

Integrated Resort Casinos, Implications for Economic Growth and Social Impacts examines the conflicts and complications surrounding a proposed but never built resort casino in the country of Slovenia. So alarming was the situation that a conference of scholars took an in-depth look at the outcome and their papers form the basis of this book.

Two prominent casino corporations on opposite sides of the Atlantic strove seriously to create the largest integrated resort casino in Europe but somehow things went awry. U.S. based Harrah's Entertainment (HET) and Hit, d.d., of Slovenia, spent considerable time researching and negotiating, but the goal of a new gaming destination resort was not achieved.

Commercial gambling was not new to Slovenia; it had a history half a century long. But the integrated resort project seemed radical. The leap from slot parlors and saloons to a resort destination catering to international, affluent vacationers seemed like a long shot. The necessity for adding large scale, richly appointed restaurants, entertainment shows, and retail shopping to go along with gambling seemed a bit reckless to a society whose attitudes toward gambling were becoming more conservative.

The book concentrates on the Slovenian experience, not casino resorts in general. Top experts in social, economic, legal, moral and problem gambling issues participated. Resort destinations are reviewed and analyzed and obstacles that prevented the Slovenian project's realization are highlighted.

Part I distinguishes destination resorts from other types of casino gaming to put the reader on notice that this project was not a run-of-the-mill operation. Part II aims right at Slovenia to focus on regulation, social costs of gambling and the overall tourist industry. Part III shows the impact of Christian theology and the opposition of the church often to the very idea of gambling.

Part IV again discusses Slovenia and the climate of legal and regulatory aspects in which the intended project was nurtured. Amendments to the Slovenian Gaming Act and the Slovenian Gaming Tax Act surface here. Part V ends the discussions with chapters on problem gambling and arguments on addiction treatment and efficient management of uncontrolled gambling.

Each contributing scholar's bio is given in a footnote. Chapters are well documented; many of the titles of non-English references are translated. More than just talk, the presentations include statistics, comparisons and costs. Though the discussions pro and

con are enlightening, no clear conclusions were reached as to why this resort did not materialize and succeed.

Still, this is an important case study. It will interest casino owners and managers, governments and gaming regulators in places considering high-end casino amenities and multiple entertainment venues. The caveats and cautions exploited here will become guidelines to prospective entrepreneurs eyeing the destination resort as a major income stream. The case can also be revisited by Harrah's and Hit, d.d. should they wish to revive this endeavor if conditions become more favorable.

2. Casino State: Legalized Gambling in Canada

James F. Cosgrave & Thomas R. Klassen, Editors

© 2009, University of Toronto Press

ISBN: 978-0-8020-9688-3

268 pages; Indexed

Reviewed by Betty McNeal

Gather a near dozen of Canada's most prominent scholars competent to weigh in on the status of gambling in that nation and the results are bound to be worth knowing. The contributors include a sociologist, a criminologist, psychologist, political scientist, a gaming editor, a government official, a research institute fellow and similar experts. The outcome is a well-written, in-depth collection of facts, explanations and cogent observations on Canada's unique handling of gambling as both government operator and revenue collector. In addition similar problems to other jurisdictions are highlighted, such as casino-related crime, youth gambling, expansion problems and civic morality.

The writing is supremely academic, dense in fact, so don't choose this title for a breezy read. The scholars have analyzed the issues on a high level of complexity and condensed an involved history and extensive developments. Four- and five-syllable words dominate the text and abstractions win over concrete language. Each 20-or-so-page essay seems like a mini-thesis. But that is also the book's selling point. Under this single cover one gains a compact view of the legal, social, political and economic aspects of gaming in Canada including the tensions and tactics, policies and problems. The province of Ontario is singled out for extensive discussion. There is even a comparative section on gaming in Australia being an area of similar U.K. origin.

If gambling in the US has been your area you may want to spend time contrasting the US system of private ownership of casinos accompanied by government regulation to Canada's provincial ownership of casinos plus an extra layer of provincial rule when it comes to regulation. This double oversight from a single source would appear to be a conflict of interest and raises the issue of the line between social responsibility and gaming revenue. Discussion of Australia's gaming beginnings in government monopolies and not for profit ventures such as community clubs and charities shows another contrast of interest.

Notes follow each chapter. Statistics and tables add illustrative material. An extensive, 30-page bibliography assures the validity of the data and makes a convenient reference list for those who wish to follow up on their own.