

CALL FOR PAPERS

Colloquium of the University of Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Thematic Meeting of the Kettil Bruun Society.

Conference Hotel Majvik, Helsinki, Finland 14-17th October 2012

ADDICTION:

WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF THE CONCEPT TODAY?

Background

Addiction is a concept that has relatively recently – within two or three decades – become a common expression that covers no longer only traditional substance use but a wide and growing range of behaviours like gambling, gaming, internet use, even eating disorders, shopping, shoplifting, sexual behaviour and others. The increasingly widespread use has been observed in the public media, in expert discourses, in popular culture, in the world of commercials, and even in everyday talk. The concept of addiction is being introduced in the international classifications of diseases, and addiction is the topic of many research and prevention programmes today.

There is no consistent and commonly agreed neurobiological theory of addiction, although recent brain research has made great progress in identifying some of the mechanisms that make people behave in a way that they recognize as harmful and would rather want to stop. There are well-known similarities in the brain functions concerning the satisfaction of very different types of desires, but nevertheless the evidence is far from convincing to prove that from a biological point of view harmful repetitious behaviours could be lumped together as a singular disorder.

The issue is further complicated when we account for cultural factors. Addiction can be said to be caused from culture in the sense that addicted behaviours are transformations of culturally modified desires. We do not call dependence on proper nutrition, clean air and water an addiction unless their object is a pleasure that results from cultural practices, like preparing food, raising endorphine levels by physical exercise, or getting intoxicated in one way or another.

A third complication arises from the fact that treating excessive behaviours as a syndrome of an underlying disorder individualises the problem and medicalises societal reactions to it. This is why public health experts were cautious of the concept “combined approach” when it was part of the World Health Organization discourse on drugs, tobacco and alcohol in the 1970s, while at the same time recognizing the need to include alcohol in the policy agenda on illicit drugs and psycho-pharmaceuticals. Instead of paying attention to the supply side, policies framed as prevention of addictions focus on identifying high-risk individuals and preventing their harmful behaviour.

Also the conditions of prevention and treatment are very different concerning different types of behaviour. Preventing obesity involves measures that are very different from those that arise in substance use prevention, for example.

The most extensive body of research exists for alcohol and alcohol dependence. The next large research area will most likely concern *gaming, especially gambling*. In this developing area the lessons learned from alcohol studies are particularly relevant, because we need new understanding of the pathways from non-problem use to problems and addiction. Alcohol research experience is of great

methodological and theoretical help in this area. Also the policy issues are relatively similar, with wide public and private economic interests involved in both the alcohol trade and in the gambling business. Moral and philosophical issues are also similar, concerning individual freedom of choice and the public good.

Objective

The Colloquium and Thematic meeting provides a platform for discussing the usefulness of framing consumption risks as addictions, or even as different aspects of a singular phenomenon. Critical and careful analysis of evidence, reflexion on the moral and practical implications of the concept in different contexts, and the way forward need to be given a proper and free space of interchange between different points of view. It might be envisioned that some sort of consensus emerges that could be useful for policy-makers, but this CFP is not foreseeing that as necessary.

Size and structure of the meeting

We aim to attract about 30 – 40 interested experts from several fields to participate and papers will be pre-circulated. We aim to keep the number of presentations moderate, hoping that participants will read as many papers as possible in advance of the occasion. Presentations will be organised in sessions of 1,5 hours with two or maximum three papers per session, chair and a discussant will be assigned to each session.

Time and venue

The meeting will start on Sunday evening October 14th and last until lunch on Wednesday October 17th. The venue will be a conference centre near Helsinki.

Organization

The conference will be organized by the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies in collaboration with The Kettil Bruun Society, The Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies and the National Institute of Public Health.

Programme Committee

Pekka Sulkunen, chair (CEACG, University of Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies)

Franca Beccaria (KBS President, Eclectica, Turin)

Matilda Hellman (CEACG, University of Helsinki)

Mikko Salmela (University of Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies)

Kerstin Stenius (National Institute of Health and Welfare, Helsinki)

Conference fee and registration

The conference fee covers meals, the conference tour and dinner and conference services.

Conference fee for early birds is 300 euros payable **before** 30.6.2012

Conference fee (regular) is 400 euros payable 01.07-16.09.2012.

Accommodation in the conference Hotel Majvik (Helsinki/Kirkkonummi, Finland) will be reserved by participants and paid directly to the hotel. Single room in Majvik is 103 euros/night and double room 83 euros/night/person (breakfast included). Detailed information will be issued together with the letter of acceptance of the registration.

Majvik is on the shore of Espoonlahti, only 25 kilometres from downtown Helsinki, Finland.

More about Majvik: <http://www.majvik.fi/en/>

Limited amount of support for conference fees and travel is available for researchers who otherwise would not be able to participate. Requests should be submitted together with the abstract and registration.

More details: matias.karekallas@helsinki.fi

Deadlines

16.04.2012 Registration and abstract submission (matias.karekallas@helsinki.fi)

01.05.2012 Letter of acceptance of the registration

30.06.2012 Payment of early bird registration fee 300 euros

16.09.2012 Payment of regular registration fee 400 euros

16.09.2012 Free cancellation ends