The relevance of practice theories for tourism research

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A B S T R A C T

Practice theories offer a new perspective on tourism, by not focussing on individual agents or social structures, but on social practices as the starting point for theorising and conducting research. Illustrated by the practice of Arctic expedition cruising, we discuss the basic premises of practice theories and their potential applications to tourism studies, including various ways of conceptualising social practices, the principle idea of a flat ontology, the methodological implications and the relevance for tourism policies. Practice theories could contribute to the agenda of tourism studies in three ways, i.e. by enabling in-depth analysis of performed tourism consumption or production practices, by facilitating analysis of change in tourism over time and by unravelling the embeddedness of tourism practices.

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Introduction

The guide steers the Zodiac with ten tourists dressed in heavy parkas and waterproof gear from the ship to the shore. As the Zodiac reaches the stony beach, several people pick up their bag and attempt to stand up. "Remain seated!" orders the guide. "Remember what I explained several times this morning, you slide to this side and disembark, one by one, by swinging both your legs over the side of the Zodiac. Walk to the guide standing there on the beach and stay together so we can brief you on the particularities of this site. Please do not wander off! There might be polar bears around"

Tourism activities, like traveling, sightseeing, hiking, dining or Arctic expedition cruising can be conceived as concerted, ongoing, situated social practices (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). Landing operations, like the one sketched above, are an integral part of the 'doings and sayings' of expedition cruising. Expedition cruising illustrates a number of characteristics of social practices. First, the sense, meanings and competences of expedition cruising as a social practice have to be learned or acquired. Expedition cruise tourists typically are affluent, experienced, middle-aged travellers (Lamers & Gelter, 2012). However, for most tourists expedition cruising entails a number of new actions and procedures that are acquired through instruction, but particularly by trials and errors during the first days of the trip. Second, expedition cruising as a specific social phenomenon exists as long as it is performed and sustained by people with particular skills and practical concerns. The skills and concerns of expedition cruising focus on the provision of qualitatively rich wilderness experiences in small-scale expedition-style vessels, and environmental and historical education in remote marine environments (Dawson, Johnston, & Stewart, 2014; Lamers, Haase, & Amelung, 2008; Scherrer, Smith, & Dowling, 2011). Third, material entities integrated in social practices typically play an important role in warranting its durability and consistency. The role of the Zodiac, devel-

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oped by French marine explorer Jean-Jacques Cousteau, serves as an example. This inflatable rubber boat forms a crucial element in expedition cruise practices as it enables marine exploration and passenger landing operations in remote and pristine beaches. Fourth and lastly, when analysing social practices there is always the need to include the connections and relationships with other ways of 'doing and saying' (Nicolini, 2012). Due to its exploration-style, the integrated practice of expedition cruising is strongly connected to wildlife photography and outdoor adventure sports, like hiking, mountain climbing, kayaking or scuba-diving (Lamers & Gelter, 2012), Zodiac landing practices, hospitality practices, education, and, as we will see, scientific fieldwork activities.

In this article, we will employ the example of expedition cruising to argue how our understanding of tourism behaviours can be deepened by studying them in terms of social practices, as well as provide a more sophisticated starting point for managing or governing tourism practices. We will make use of a number of scholarly traditions that have collectively contributed to what we will here introduce and discuss as a 'family of practice theories' (Nicolini, 2012). In the last one-and-a-half decade practice theories have gradually entered the social sciences and tourism studies. Practice theorists assert that human activities cannot be properly understood by considering human agency and social structure separately. In analysing practices, agency and social structure are seen as influencing each other in reciprocal ways. In other words, agency 'draws upon' the structures of practices, thereby renewing these structures while participating in, enacting and reproducing, social practices (Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 2002). Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu are considered the founders of a movement that laid out the conceptualisation of the agency-structure relation as one of the key themes in social theory (King, 2010). Along with Bruno Latour and other protagonists of actor-network theory (ANT) they have inspired contemporary practice theorists, such as Davide Nicolini, Andreas Reckwitz, Theodore Schatzki, Robert Schmidt, Elizabeth Shove, and many others. These contemporary scholars developed and applied their practice theories in a variety of fields, such as food and health, sustainable consumption, sports, work and organisation, and urban provisioning of energy, water and food.

The term practice is widely used by tourism researchers in a more mundane sense (e.g. Dredge & Jenkins, 2011; Soica, 2016), without connecting to practice theory as such. Applications of practice theories in tourism studies are relatively rare and recent, but they demonstrate the merits of practice theories for understanding tourism production and consumption challenges (Bargeman, Richards, & Govers, 2016; Rantala, 2010; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). Initially, most applications focus on performances of single practices (Rantala, 2010; Rantala, Valtonen, & Markuksela, 2011; Valtonen & Veijola, 2011), while recently some studies focus on more extensive, or combined, tourism practices (Lamers & Pashkevich, 2015; Lamers & Van der Duim, 2016; Verbeek, Bargeman, & Mommaas, 2011). For example, Lamers and Pashkevich (2015) analysed how cruise tourism visitation can be regarded as a bundle of various practices, including arriving, being transported and having a meal, that all need to be consistently and regularly connected in order for cruise tourism to be reproduced successfully. Recently, Souza Bispo (2016) introduced the term 'tourism as practice' but in a rather fragmented manner, which calls for a broader and deeper analysis of the relevance of practice theory for tourism studies.

In terms of the tourism knowledge system (Tribe & Liburd, 2016), the family of practice theories are mainly located in the social sciences disciplinary group quartile, but they have branched off into business administration and interdisciplinary studies, as well as having potential to play a greater role in problem-centred knowledge production. Tourism research based on practice theories seeks to find the middle ground between voluntarist and subjectivist accounts of the social on the one hand, and structuralist and objectivist accounts on the other (Spaargaren, Lamers, & Weenink, 2016). Together with other relatively new non-representational forms of theorisation, such as mobilities studies, the performativity approach and ANT, they reflect a broader meta-theoretical re-orientation in the social sciences and consequently in contemporary tourism studies (see Cohen & Cohen, 2012). This article aims to introduce and demonstrate the relevance of the family of practice theories to tourism studies, by discussing some of the key ontological, methodological and epistemological issues involved, and by inviting tourism scholars to follow the path of exploration and detection as suggested by practice theorists.

The case of polar expedition cruising will be used to illustrate the implications of practice theories for the study of tourism practices. The insights are derived from material collected by the first author, assisted by a colleague, during the Netherlands Scientific Expedition Edgeøya Spitsbergen (SEES) in August 2015, as well as through earlier first-hand experiences (Lamers & Gelter, 2012) and literature (e.g. Dawson et al., 2014; Scherrer et al., 2011). The SEES expedition combined the work of around 50 scientists from multiple disciplines, along with 50 tourists, various media representatives and other officials on a 10-day expedition cruise. During this expedition the first author observed the performed tourism practice within the framework of this joint science-tourism expedition cruise, to understand the interactions between these two practices and the governance implications. The illustration of the SEES expedition is particularly useful since it allows for in-depth analysis of distinctive tourism practices, as well as their embeddedness and connection to other practices.

To overcome the relative obscurity of the family of practice theories within tourism studies the next section discusses a selection of useful concepts and guidelines for organising research on tourism. The article closes with a discussion on key similarities and differences with a selection of other relatively novel social theory approaches in tourism studies, and concludes by suggesting ways forward for amalgamating practice theories and tourism studies.

Practice theories: central concepts, premises and illustration

Defining and conceptualising social practices

What is a 'social practice'? One of the most widely used definitions is provided by Reckwitz, who defined a social practice as: "a routinised type of behaviour which consist of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002a: 249). According to Nicolini (2012: 219) a practice is "real-time doing and saying something in a specific place and time". Generally, practices can be understood as routinised 'doings and sayings' performed by knowledgeable and capable human actors, also referred to as carriers of the practice, involving material objects and infrastructures. In other words, "focusing on practices is thus taking the social and material doing (of something: doing is never objectless) as the main focus of inquiry" (ibid: 221). The relevance of studying particular practices for tourism studies is illustrated by Rantala and Valtonen (2012) and Valtonen et al. (2011) who discuss how sleeping — consisting of the state of 'being asleep' and of the embodied and material habits of 'doing sleep' – should also be seen as an inherent part of (nature) tourists' practices. According to Rantala and Valtonen (2012: 19) sleeping is something that is recurrently enacted and "a skill and technique that must be learned, in so far as it is adjusted to nature and its changing rhythms".

Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) provide a simple conceptual framework for identifying and characterising social practices, as constituted by combining three main elements: 'materials' (e.g. bodies, things, technologies, and tangible physical entities), 'competences' (e.g. skills, know-how, techniques) and 'meanings' (e.g. symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations). It is through recurrent enactments (i.e. practices-as-performances) that a distinct and recognisable conjunction of these elements is established over time, with social practices then becoming identifiable as entities (i.e. practices-as-entities), embedded in broader nexuses or bundles of practices. For example, expedition cruising is generally recognised as an entity in academic, market and policy settings, with its distinct configuration of materials (e.g. small ships, Zodiacs, remote environments), competences (e.g. navigation, guiding, interpretation) and meanings (e.g. environmental sustainability, adventure, safety). At the same time, expedition cruising practices are performed across the world in different ways (e.g. Dawson et al., 2014; Lamers et al., 2008; Scherrer et al., 2011), resulting in different configurations of the three elements. For example, when compared to the Antarctic, Arctic expedition cruises are much more focused on human safety during landing operations due to the presence of polar bears, resulting in the material presence of rifles and ancillary competences of guides.

As Shove et al. (2012) indicate, working with only three elements might be helpful when organising empirical research on social change but it does so at the expense of simplifying what social practices are about (see also Spaargaren et al., 2016). A more elaborate conceptual framework is provided by Schatzki (2002), who argues that practices consist of 'doings and sayings' and material arrangements that hang together, organised by practical understanding, general understanding, rules and teleoaffective structures (TAS). Whereas practical understanding refers to particular abilities that pertain to the actions constituting a practice, general understanding is the shared idea of what a practice entails and what the meaning of the practice is, including the mental image of what the practice is about. Rules, according to Schatzki (2002: 79) consist of "explicit formulations, principles, precepts, and instructions that enjoin, direct, or remonstrate people to perform specific actions. To say that rules link doings and sayings is to say that people, in carrying out these doings and sayings, take account of and adhere to the same rules". Finally, practices are organised by what Schatzki calls teleoaffective structures (TAS). TAS is the property of a practice linking its doings and sayings to a range of acceptable ends, purposes, beliefs, projects and tasks that ought to be accomplished, including the manner in which these projects and tasks should be executed.

A general comparison of the conceptual commonalities and differences between these, and other, members of the contemporary family of practice theories goes beyond the scope of this paper (for elaborate discussions see Nicolini, 2012; Spaargaren et al., 2016). Nevertheless, several relevant commonalities and differences for our application to tourism are worth pointing out. Contemporary practice theorists share the idea that there are human and non-human elements that interconnect or organise social practices. For example, while the theories of Shove et al. (2012) and Schatzki (2002) share an interest in the role of material entities in practices, competences (i.e. practical understanding) and meaning (i.e. general understanding), Schatzki's concepts of rules and TAS are particularly relevant for explaining the coherence and consistency of social practices. The relevance of rules is illustrated by the regulations of both state authorities and industry associations regarding the use of rifles, food safety and the maximum number of tourists onshore or per guide in Arctic expedition cruise operations (Dawson et al., 2014). Regarding TAS we observed how in a combined science and tourism expedition cruise the purpose and ends of tourists are different from those of scientists, except for the moments when large iconic megafauna, such as polar bears or whales, could be observed. On such moments everyone would stop their activities and hurry excitedly to the deck of the ship; the TAS of viewing and photographing polar bears appeared to overrule all other possible TAS's. Schatzki thereby offers a richer concept of human agency than Shove et al. (2012), by insisting on a central role for human emotion in social practices (see also Spaargaren & Weenink, 2016). Due to such conceptual differences Nicolini (2012) advises to take a reflective and pluralist stance by acknowledging the multiplicity of contemporary practice theories and by exploiting the strengths of different theories in order to better grasp the nexus of practices we live in.

The flat ontology assumption

A second characteristic refers to the notion that practice theories represent a flat social ontology. A flat ontology entails that practice theories accept no stratification of social reality: the constitution of society evolves through, and takes the form of, a myriad of interconnected social practices being (re)produced in time and space. Embracing a flat ontology implies that no distinction is made into different social levels or realms with distinct characteristics, as for example suggested by micro-versus macro-analyses and by the agency-structure dualism. In practice theories, there are no levels of the social at which a different dynamic takes place. Everything happens in the same 'plenum' (Schatzki, 2016a, 2016b).

Empirical examples used by practice theorists (see for example Spaargaren et al., 2016) show a preference for studying everyday life, ordinary, rather 'small' social phenomena, such as showering, Nordic walking (Shove & Pantzar, 2005), sleeping (Rantala & Valtonen, 2012) or using buckets and spades on the beach (Franklin, 2014). However, in practice theories size and scale refer to the extension of bundles of practices in time and space. For example, we began this article by describing a performed practice of a landing operation, as part of many other practices undertaken during expedition cruising. Since it is ontologically inadequate to distinguish between different levels or layers within the social, practice theorists have invented other concepts that specify what is 'large' and what is 'small'. Particularly Schatzki's concept of 'practice-arrangement bundle' (Schatzki, 2016a, 2016b) is useful for analysing extensive social phenomena, like tourism. Practice-arrangement bundles refer to sets of social practices and material arrangements that hang together and are interconnected in more or less strong and enduring ways. Arctic expedition cruising can be understood as a practice-arrangement bundle of various social practices related to hospitality (e.g. catering, dining, sleeping), information provision (e.g. briefing, lecturing) and visitation (e.g. landing, hiking, photographing), connected to the material arrangement of the ship, the people, the wildlife, the Zodiac, the clothing, the ice-infested ocean and the geography of the landing sites. The SEES expedition incidentally combined the expedition cruising practice-arrangement bundle with fieldwork practices (and materials) from an array of scientific disciplines, leading to a more extensive practice-arrangement bundle.

When practice-arrangement bundles are anchored at specific places, Shove et al. (2012) refer to them as complexes, such as in the case of airports, hotels, theme parks, or tourism destinations. Lamers and Pashkevich (2015) have recently analysed the development of Archangelsk in the Russian Arctic as an emerging expedition cruise destination from a practice theory perspective. By drawing on Shove et al.'s (2012) concept of circuits of reproduction of practices the authors analyse how a range of practices, including transportation, hospitality, gastronomy and information delivery, as well as domestic and local tourism and leisure practices, have to be bundled to allow for recurrent expedition cruise visitation. In the case that well-defined strings of interconnected practices are lightened up by the practice lens, they can be called chains or nexuses (Shove et al., 2012), such as in the case of hotel or cruise company chains.

The importance of the material dimension

Particularly relevant for tourism studies is the fact that all practice theories acknowledge the important and co-constituting role of material objects, technologies and infrastructures in social life. In tourism studies the crucial role of objects and infrastructures has particularly been emphasised by ANT inspired scholars like Ren, Jóhannesson, Franklin, Simoni and Van der Duim (see Van der Duim, Ren, & Jóhannesson, 2012). By handling humans and artefacts on a symmetrical footing (see Gad & Jensen, 2010), the spectrum of what tourism is and who its actors are, is broadened.

However, beyond this broad consensus there are significant differences among practice theorists in the way they conceptualise the material in relation to the social. For example, on the one hand, both Reckwitz (2002a, 2002b) and Shove et al. (2012) argue for an interpretation that is very much aligned with the independent role of objects vis à vis human agents in material semiotics. Shove et al. (2012) put their material element on a par with the human dimensions of meanings and competences. Schatzki (2002), on the other hand, stipulates the crucial differences between human and non-human activity chains, and contrasts his formulation of practice theory with Latour's (2005) material semiotics perspective. Although the plenum of the social is populated by practice-arrangement bundles that always and inherently represent the going together of social practices and material arrangements, for Schatzki it is human agency that makes the difference. Schatzki (2002) sees the material arrangement as being employed, manipulated and constructed by human participants in the doings and sayings that make up the practice. Despite these conceptual differences Nicolini (2012: 8) summarises the discussion by stating that "all practices approaches suggest that we need theories that take into account the heterogeneous nature of the world we live in, which includes an appreciation that objects and materials often bite back at us and resist our attempts to envelope them with our discourses" (Nicolini, 2012: 8).

It is not difficult to conceive the dominant role of materials and non-human agency in Arctic expedition cruise practices, whereby ice-strengthened vessels are used to navigate through dynamic ice-infested waters. One could argue that it is largely due to the inhospitable biophysical environment – and the desire to avoid other ships to guarantee the wilderness experience – that tourism practices in these settings are performed in flexible ways, directed by the captain and the expedition leader. For example, it is quite common that planned landings will be called off or aborted on the sighting of a moving polar bear in the vicinity. More delicately, during the SEES expedition it was interesting to observe how the geography of sites mediates the performance of combined tourism and science activities. For example, expedition cruise tourists typically do not know whether they are capable of joining a strenuous mountain hike or whether they should opt for a more leisurely beach walk. A common tactic of expedition guides therefore is to make the group hike up a hill in a fast pace during the first

landing of an expedition cruise, to check the fitness of the preselected group and allow participants not capable of keeping up to return to a more leisurely group. The mountain slope thereby assists in selecting participants.

Zooming in and out on the plenum of practices

How can tourism researchers effectively apply practice theories in their studies, and how do researchers themselves connect to the practices they study? Nicolini (2012) suggests two modalities of looking at and investigating practices: analysing them with the practice-lens 'zoomed in' and taking a view on the plenum with the practice-lens 'zoomed out'. His 'theory-method package' suggests to first 'zooming in' on the details of the accomplishment of a practice. However, the study of practices cannot be limited to that. It also requires that we appreciate how local activities are affected by other practices. According to Nicolini (2012: 229) practices can only be properly understood when studied relationally, as part of a nexus of connections: "to understand what happens here and now, we also need to understand what happens somewhere else – next door, or much further afield". Taking a view of the plenum is instrumental for identifying smaller and larger bundles of practices and the patterns they weave through time and space. By interchangeably 'zooming in' on distinct social practices and 'zooming out' on the plenum of practices larger practice-arrangement bundles can be analysed effectively (Nicolini 2012).

Practice theorists generally agree that 'zooming in' on situated practices is inevitable in order to understand social practices, as performances, bodily presence, emotions or practical intelligibilities, which form the heart of the matter. Without 'thick' descriptions of the life of situated practices, no valid sociological knowledge on the constitution of social practices is possible. In the process of reproduction, social practices create meanings, symbols, ways of using things, emotions, projects and programs to be further developed. Social practices are at the origin of the social and studying them in detail informs researchers about the ways things are. Analysing the configuration of social practices involves taking a closer look, which means getting engaged and experiencing first-hand what it is like to be a participant to the practice. For example, the first author joined the SEES expedition to perform this expedition cruise together with the other participating scientists, tourists, media representatives, guides and crew. Practice-based researchers share this "methodology of following" (Routledge, 2008: 204) with ANT and mobilities researchers (e.g. Buscher & Urry, 2009).

When researchers want to understand and explain extensive social phenomena, like tourism, or processes of social change, it is advised that the practice-lens is being alternated between zoomed in and out modality. This alternating modality allows for tackling various relevant questions and research strategies. First, it allows us to follow closely the trajectory of a specific social practice. By studying the 'life of practices' (Shove et al., 2012), based on historical records, researchers try to find out how and when a practice emerged, how it developed, matured, aged and perhaps disappeared or dissolved into other practices. Historicising social practices provides knowledge about the robustness or resilience of the practice and about the contextual conditions under which it prospers (Wertheim-Heck & Spaargaren, 2015). Particularly relevant for tourism could be investigating how specific practices 'travel' through time and space and with what other kinds of practices they tend to team up, or not. For example, expedition cruising is claimed to have started in the Antarctic with Lars-Erik Lindblad and the building of the Lindblad Explorer in the 1970s, a tailor-made expedition ship for exploring Antarctic waters (Headland, 1994; Lamers et al., 2008). In the Antarctic context, expedition cruising connected predominantly to the material remains of the historical practices of whaling, sealing and exploration, as well as to current scientific practices and research stations of numerous countries, as an attraction to visit, as a source of interpretation and as a partner in the logistics of goods and people. The so-called Lindblad model of expedition cruising was followed by other companies, not only in the Antarctic, but also in other remote marine destinations, such as the European Arctic. By 'zooming out' a bit further, it becomes clear that with the growth and spread of expedition cruising its practices became increasingly codified in operational procedures and codes of conduct, first by the Antarctic tourism industry association, the Association of Antarctica Tour Operators and later on by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, their sister organisation (Haase, Lamers, & Amelung, 2009).

Second, the alternating modality allows for analysing the dynamics of social change as they originate from the fact that practices are part of complexes or practice-arrangement bundles. Understanding the kind of relationships that exist in time and space among practices is of particular relevance for understanding institutional changes in contemporary societies. Schatzki (2016a, 2016b) provides us with a series of concepts that capture the variety of changes happening in larger practice-arrangement bundles, such as association, aggregation, disassociation, dissolution, absorption, diffusion, circulation, solidification, persistence, bifurcation, differentiation, interweaving, convergence, divergence and separation (see also Spaargaren et al., 2016). Next to analysing patterns of change in bundles of practices, research in the 'zoomed out' modality looks at the way practices hang together and become standardised via shared rules, values, emotions, material objects, software, contracts, spaces, competences or TAS. For example, as expedition cruising and scientific practices are becoming connected in more intricate ways, they increasingly precondition and mutually affect one another. During the SEES expedition we observed how differing objectives (i.e. TAS) and rules systems complicated this process at first. For example, insurance rules stipulate that tourists should always be accompanied by an armed guide in the vicinity of the ship, while armed scientists can operate more freely on Svalbard. This hampered the participation of tourists in scientific practices and disappointed some tourists for whom this was a key reason to join the expedition. Due to the clear communication and smart planning of the expedition leaders, these complications gradually dissolved over time as participants obtained general and practical understanding of each other's activities, as key objectives were met, and as various interaction modes were developed for tourists and scientists to carry out their tasks in mixed groups.

The role of qualitative methods in practice research

Practice-based research is valuable for its unpacking of social phenomena, including tourism practices like volunteering (Bargeman et al., 2016), cruising (Lamers & Pashkevich, 2015) or experiencing nature (Rantala, 2010). Zooming in on tourism practices necessarily entails a preliminary focus on ordinary tourism activities at hand. According to Schmidt (2016), participation of researchers in the social practices they investigate is a prerequisite. His praxeological epistemology seeks to carve out the peculiarities of social practices by focusing on situated, observable and meaningful social enactments that are not only performed linguistically but also by implicit bodily movements and the agency of material artefacts. Thereby, he expresses a clear preference for ethnographic methods, such as participant observation. Only by actively participating in the practices under study, researchers gain practical understanding and are able to acquire inside knowledge and skills in relation to the nature of the practices, their rules and TAS.

More generally, consensus seems to exist on the primacy of qualitative methods. The tacit and pre-reflective nature of social practices inspires some authors to theoretically argue against the use of quantitative survey methods (Arts et al., 2012; Nicolini, 2012). Through participant observation, focus groups and interviewing, or other methods developed by ethno-methodologists (Garfinkel, 1984), the researcher is able to record in detail the physical aspects of local context, the objects and material elements involved and the configuration of the practice as enacted by the participants of the practice (Souza Bispo, 2016). Others, however, maintain that practice theories are tolerant to all types of research methodologies (Spaargaren et al., 2016), including quantitative methods and forms of (practice-based) social simulation modelling (Holtz, 2014). Although we prefer a pragmatic approach with regard to the use of more qualitative or quantitative research methods, we recognise that qualitative methods allow for revealing the rich detail of practices and the ways they unfold. Qualitative methods are indispensable when seeking to describe the emotions involved, the shifting of performances from front-stage to back-stage and vice versa, and for investigating the things being taken for granted or made into objects of reflection and discussion. Moreover, the practice of doing social science that is added to the performance requires reflection from the participants involved. Qualitative methods allow for such reflexivity.

Obviously the 'methodology of following' (Routledge, 2008) opens up a number of questions about research engagement and positionality (see also Dredge, 2015). To investigate the SEES expedition a deliberate decision was made for an ethnographic research approach consisting mainly of participant observation during the expedition and six semi-structured interviews with key organisers over a period of one year, from the preparatory meetings six months before until the preliminary results meeting six months after the expedition. No formal interviews were taken during the ten-day expedition, to capture the performance of science and tourism practices without too much formal interference. The strategy of the two ethnographers was to be part of the performance of practices and to record 'doings and sayings' by splitting up and always taking part in different activities or situations, and to take extensive handwritten notes. In other words, they performed their roles as ethnographers, they had ears and eyes everywhere in the expedition, they could informally interact with most of the participants, and reflect during and after the expedition on the observations and conversations. The researchers explained to the participants on board about their research approach and would further discuss practice-based observations or insights when requested. During the preliminary results meeting, six months after the expeditions, the first author gave a presentation to most of the scientists and many of the tourists on the main insights drawn from the practice-based analysis, which resulted in valuable and constructive feedback.

Practice theories and (tourism) policies

The relevance of practice theories for tourism studies also extends into the realms of policy and governance. Shove and colleagues (Shove, 2010; Shove, 2014; Shove and Walker, 2010) have convincingly argued that practice theories can provide an alternative to the dominant psychology and economics driven rational-actor perspectives in policy designs. Practice-arrangement bundles, including in tourism, are complex configurations. Therefore, interventions focused on isolated behaviours are argued to have limited success. Various tourism practices, or the more extensive practice-arrangement bundles and complexes, may lead to impacts that are societally undesirable, such as environmental degradation, or more desirable, such as sustainable development. Practice theories may assist in identifying, delineating, deconstructing, contextualising and comparing such practices in order to advise more effective policies, or highlight how more desirable social practices might emerge and can be fostered by policy. According to Evans, Southerton, and McMeekin (2012), practice-based policy analyses can show how desirable practices can be organised as durable entities, how undesirable practices can be de- and reroutinised (Spaargaren & van Vliet, 2000), as well as what the implications are of practices as they are performed. According to Spurling, McMeekin, Shove, Southerton, and Welch (2015) change agents, such as policy makers, can intervene in practices in various ways. First of all, by changing the elements of or modify the practice (Shove et al., 2012), for example by substituting unsustainable forms of transport by green forms of transport (materials), generating awareness of particular types of undesired behaviours (meanings) or transferring skills (competencies). Second, practices can be modified by changing the ways in which practices interlock in practice-arrangement bundles.

The latter is well illustrated by the example of expedition cruising. During the process of applying for permits for the SEES expedition, the Governor of Svalbard, the authority representing the Norwegian state on the Svalbard archipelago, expressed concerns about the combination of tourism and research. In a letter from the Governor's office to the organisers of the SEES expedition this was phrased as follows: "The combined concept of tourism and research is new to the governor, and gives

rise to concern if it generates increased traffic in vulnerable areas. We will therefore appeal to limit traffic in such areas".[1] As the Governor could not oversee the implications of combined science and tourism practices-as-performed it was decided to stick to the understanding of expedition cruise tourism and scientific fieldwork as practices-as-entities, resulting in a decision to allow the expedition based on separate permits.

Similarly, Lamers (2016) have analysed how various practices can be deliberately coupled by change agents to generate sustainable tourism outcomes. Based on Schatzki's conceptual framework, the authors conceptualised conservation-tourism partnerships, developed and implemented by the African Wildlife Foundation in various Eastern African countries, as deliberate attempts to create connections between existing practices and material arrangements in order to tackle societal challenges. By comparing two cases in Kenya, the authors argued that tourism-conservation enterprises emerge out of connections between three existing practices: conservation practices of NGOs, livelihood practices (pastoralism) of local communities and business venturing practices of tourism entrepreneurs. These three constituting practices hang together through a new hybrid nexus of practices, so called connecting practices, such as the brokering of the partnership, the funding and building of a lodge, the zoning of land, the communicating at trust meetings and the sharing of benefits. When the connecting practices manage to survive and prosper, the original practices undergo gradual changes as they become more and more attuned to the rules and TAS of the larger practice-arrangement bundle.

Practice-based analyses can also influence tourism policy and governance by providing critical feedback. For example, practice-based analyses stress that transitions in practices cannot be fully planned, predicted or managed and call for more adaptive approaches that follow practices over time and across space. Adopting a practice-based perspective challenges the dominant paradigms that inform and legitimise policies of both state and non-state actors (see also Dredge & Jenkins, 2011). Schmidt (2016) suggests to follow Bourdieu's 'negative' way of praxeologising the social, whereby existing modes of governance are shown to rest on core assumptions that can be criticised on scientific grounds. For instance, Lamers (2016) argue that a practice-based perspective on the governance arrangements of conservation tourism partnerships can generate in-depth insights for policy evaluation that remain undisclosed when analysed with the rational actor perspectives that have informed the various groups when forming these partnerships in the first place. Social science researchers do not write the scripts for the future reproduction of the practices under study and they do not control the impact of their knowledge. They do however share responsibilities for the future state of social affairs and for the possible impacts and consequences of their research. By making the pre-reflective nature and the multiple realities (Law & Urry, 2004) of tourism practices visible practice-based researchers contribute implicitly to tourism policies. Reflecting on these impacts and consequences, by actively using the practice lens, should be part and parcel of making practice-based research more policy relevant.

Discussion

Practice theories have gradually entered tourism studies and resemble a number of other novel theoretical approaches that have increasingly influenced tourism studies, notably the performativity approach and ANT. In this section we will briefly discuss the links of practice theories to these two adjacent contemporary theoretical fields.

Performativity studies and social practices research

According to Cohen and Cohen (2012), performativity is a longstanding but still relevant approach of crucial significance in the re-orientation of contemporary sociology and tourism studies (e.g. Edensor, 2001; MacCannell, 1978; see also Franklin & Crang, 2001). Both performativity and practice research draw their inspiration from Erving Goffman's performance approach to social interaction (Spaargaren et al., 2016). Related to tourism, numerous authors have explored the metaphor of performance to investigate how tourism can be studied as a set of activities (e.g. Coleman & Crang, 2002; Edensor, 2001; Haldrup & Larson, 2009). By looking at the contexts in which tourism is regulated, directed and choreographed, or alternatively how tourism is a realm of improvisation and contestation, Edensor (2001) considers the constraints and opportunities that shape the ways in which tourist space and performance are reproduced, challenged, transformed and bypassed. Just as practice theories argue that camping, sailing, backpacking and other tourism activities should be studied in terms of practices, performance studies claim that most everyday tourism practices can be analysed as performances. Both practice theories and performance studies focus on what people do, not in a detached way but through ethnographic involvement.

However, whereas performance studies predominantly focus on what practice theories would denote as practices-as-performances, practice theorists are also particularly interested in practices-as-entities and in the ways in which they manage to attract recruits that become more or less faithful practitioners or carriers of the practice (Shove et al., 2012). Agency, therefore, should be discussed and accounted for both in relation to social practices and in relation to how embodied human actors participate in these practices. As Spaargaren et al. (2016) argue, the added value of practice theories is their claim that both accounts of agency cannot be developed independently. In other words, individual human actors or agents exert agency, perform practices and have distinct lifestyles. The skills, capacities, competences, values and emotions involved can be observed, measured and monitored in tourism studies. However, they cannot be analysed and properly understood

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[1] Extracted from a written communication of a policy officer on behalf of the Governor of Svalbard with the organisers of the SEES expedition during the permitting process. Document on file with the first author.

when they are treated in isolation, without taking into account the social practices they connect to and originate from. Practice theories argue that the very capacity of individual tourists (or tourism entrepreneurs) to act upon and to intervene in the world is produced in and through existing configurations of social practices. Practices produce human agents as much as human agents produce practices.

Actor-network theory and social practices research

The second contemporary theoretical approach within tourism studies that comes close to practice theories is ANT. Authors such as Ren, Jóhannesson, Franklin, Simoni and Van der Duim have inspired tourism studies by utilising insights from ANT (Van der Duim & Ren, 2012; Van der Duim, Ren., & Jóhannesson, 2013; see also Van der Duim, 2007). Both ANT and practice theories are relational materialist theories that enable radical new ways of analysing tourism by insisting on a flat ontology, by critically investigating social-material dimensions and by providing toolkits for generating more telling analyses of the heterogeneous relations in tourism, based on a firm grounding in empirical case studies (Souza Bispo, 2016). Similar to the recent interest of practice theories in larger social phenomena (like many tourism associated problems) (Lamers, 2016; Schatzki, 2016a, 2016b), Latour has argued that "there are two different ways of envisaging the macro-micro relationship: the first one builds a series of Russian Matryoshka dolls – the small is being enclosed, the big is enclosing; and the second deploys connections – the small is being unconnected, the big one is to be attached" (Latour, 2005: 180). It is the second approach that ANT puts forward that closely resembles the argument of extensiveness in practice theories.

Due to their empirical inclination, most often manifested in the application of an ethnographic methodology, ANT and practice theories are powerful devices for providing in-depth descriptions of tourism practices, making visible the many small steps through which a particular order is (re)produced, or not. A strong argument for ANT and practice studies in tourism is their ability to expose contingencies and deconstruct the usual common-sense categories of analysis, consequently demonstrating the underlying complexities of tourism activities (Ren, 2010, 2011). They both are what Law (1994) has termed a 'modest sociology' by not resorting to perspectives, but insisting on the actual existence, workings, and consequences of an enacted, partial and mutable reality (Van der Duim et al., 2013). They are both able to deliver (thick) descriptions by primarily making use of qualitative data and techniques, following similar ethnographical approaches of 'following the actor' or 'following the practices'. Interestingly, as practice theories and ANT adhere a relational view, they both focus on controversies and encounters (Jóhannesson, Ren, & van der Duim, 2015) and the connectivity (or the lack of it) between practices (Spaargaren et al., 2016).

Despite these similarities, as already discussed in the above, particularly Schatzki (2002: 199) has convincingly shown how crucial differences exist between ANT and practice theories, especially by pointing out that actor-network theorists insist on ascribing a paradigmatic human type of doing, i.e. intentional agency, to a wider variety of non-human entities than is customary in social science practice. According to Schatzki (2002: 200), "certain differences among entities must be respected, and not every word used for humans should be applied to nonhumans indiscriminately". Clearly, in Schatzki's conceptualisation of the material versus the social, in his emphasis on the general and practical understanding of participants in a practice, as well as on the role of TAS and emotion, human agency is recognised and defended in a much more explicit way when compared to ANT or versions of practice theories of that are closer to material semiotics (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002b; Shove et al., 2012).

Conclusion

Using expedition cruising as an example, this article showed the relevance of practice theories for tourism studies and of social practices as the adequate starting point for both theorising and carrying out empirical research. Although this relatively novel approach offers fresh horizons for tourism studies, to date its deployment in tourism research has been limited, partly due to the fact that the scope of the paradigmatic claims of practice theories are still ambiguous. The family of practice theories does not (yet) offer an irrefutable paradigm (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Owing possibly to its profound re-orientation of perspective and its relatively new introduction into the tourism knowledge system (Tribe & Liburd, 2016), practice theories have so far, similar to ANT, found relatively few followers in present-day tourism studies (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Souza Bispo, 2016).

To change this situation, the obvious way forward is to develop the approach by using it (see also Nicolini, 2012). Therefore, to conclude, we suggest three ways in which practice theories could particularly contribute to the agenda of tourism studies and policy, i.e. by allowing for in-depth analysis of performed tourism consumption or production practices, by facilitating the understanding of change in tourism by analysing tourism practices over time, and by unravelling the embeddedness of tourism practices in extensive networks of practices.

First, practice-based tourism studies will increase our understanding of the constitution of distinct or novel tourism practices, such as the expedition cruising example discussed in this article. This is particularly relevant when obtaining in-depth understanding of tourism practices that represent societal innovations (so-called 'best-practices') that could potentially lead the way to more equitable, effective or sustainable outcomes (for example see Verbeek et al., 2011) or, contrarily, to unequal, unsustainable or in any other way societally unacceptable outcomes (e.g. sex tourism practices). We have shown that contemporary practice theories provide various but related conceptual frameworks for identifying and understanding social

practices, such as Shove et al.'s (2012) elements (i.e. materials, competences and meanings), or Schatzki's (2002) organising principles (i.e. practical and general understandings, rules, and TAS). The former provides an easy entry into practice-based analysis on tourism (see also Lamers & Pashkevich, 2015) and resembles ANT approaches in which human and non-human elements and agency are treated symmetrically (Rantala et al., 2011; Ren, 2011; Van der Duim, 2007). The latter becomes useful when engaging in questions of how and why these elements combine, interconnect and align, while reserving a central role for human agency in the Giddensian tradition (Schatzki, 2002). For example, the concept of TAS is particularly helpful in discussing the goals of particular tourism practices, their directionality and the kind of affects and emotions that play a role in the enactment of the practice (Spaargaren & Weenink, 2016), such as the excitement tourists experience when observing whales or polar bears.

Practice theories could thereby strongly contribute to the performativity tradition in the sociology of tourism (e.g. Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Edensor, 2001), but also to the more recent interest in the role of emotions in tourist experiences (e.g. Lin, Kerstetter, Nawijn, & Mitas, 2014; Nawijn & Fricke, 2015). In contrast to the more individualist psychological approaches for understanding tourist experiences, a practice-based perspective sees the role of emotions in tourist experiences as a property of social practices. The sociological perspective on the role and relevance of emotions in tourism could benefit from a connection between practice theories and Goffmanian and Durkheimian social theories in a way as suggested by Collins' (2004) theory on Interaction Ritual Chains.

Second, understanding how tourism products, as well as extensive tourism networks more widely, are connected to, and embedded in, practice-arrangement bundles helps to unpack the complexity of tourism and to identify innovative and robust ways of governing tourism development. Focusing on the (lack of) interconnection between practices makes it possible to identify potential interventions for steering towards sustainable, equitable or effective outcomes. Tourism products are typically made up of extensive bundles of various practices, such as being transported by Zodiac, having a meal and photographing polar bears, which need to be regularly performed and consistently configured in order to be reproduced successfully (see also Lamers & Pashkevich, 2015). Practice-based tourism research with the practice lens in the 'zoomed out' position aligns (and builds upon) recent articulations of network theories, including ANT approaches (Nicolini, 2012; Van der Duim, 2007) and Manuel Castells' concept of network-making power in the network society (Castells, 2009). In other words, the extensive character of tourism presents an ideal testing ground for practice theories and could contribute to major new insights.

Third, and related, practice theories can be deployed for analysing change and innovation in tourism, and for identifying ways in which for example more sustainable tourism practices, or networks of tourism practices, can be realised. Particularly, Shove et al.'s (2012) conceptual framework provide an insightful approach for understanding reproductive challenges or innovations in tourism practices over time, by analysing changes in, and interactions among, the elements of materials, meanings and competences. Practices do not appear out of the blue but are shaped by the elements of both previous and co-existing practices. Understanding their historical trajectories is crucial for analysing changes in tourism practices. For example, some of the practices that make up the current practice-arrangement bundle of expedition cruising historically have been shaped elsewhere. Studying 'the dynamics' of tourism practices (Shove et al., 2012) implies taking a comparative and historical perspective diving into the trajectory of specific practices and their changing embeddedness in wider practice-arrangement bundles.

Acknowledgements

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