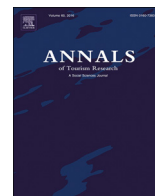


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## A new approach to understanding tourism practices

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## ABSTRACT

In spite of renewed attention for practices in tourism studies, the analysis of practices is often isolated from theories of practice. This theoretical paper identifies the main strands of practice theory and their relevance and application to tourism research, and develops a new approach to applying practice theory in the study of tourism participation. We propose a conceptual model of tourism practices based on the work of Collins (2004), which emphasises the role of rituals in generating emotional responses. This integrated approach can focus on individuals interacting in groups, as well as explaining why people join and leave specific practices. Charting the shifting of individuals between practices could help to illuminate the dynamics and complexity of tourism systems.

## Introduction

Much attention has been paid recently to the ‘practice turn’, and practice theories have increasingly been utilised in the social sciences and tourism studies (Cohen & Cohen, 2019; Røpke, 2009; Spaargaren, Weenink, & Lamers, 2016). As de Souza Bispo (2016) explains, the practice turn emerged in the 1990s, based on the idea that a practice is an organized constellation of human activities. Important aspects of human life were seen not as simply the activity of individuals, but as practices, or the organized context-related activities of groups of people. The practice turn represented a move away from structuralism (also reflected in the poststructuralist turn in leisure studies (Rojek, 1995)), but is also marked by a concern to understand the role of practices as recursive producers and products of social structures. In the analysis of practices, agency and social structure are seen as having a reciprocal influence on each other (Giddens, 1984; Lamers, van der Duim, & Spaargaren, 2017; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & Savigny, 2001). Based on the definitions of Reckwitz (2002) and Nicolini (2012), Lamers et al. (2017, 56) describe practices as routinised ‘doings and sayings’ performed by knowledgeable and capable human actors (carriers of the practice), involving material objects and infrastructures.

Renewed interest in practice theory is particularly significant in the field of tourism and leisure studies, the relevance of which has arguably been diminished by a focus on consumption and individualism (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Focussing on the individual and the consumption of tourism may mean we lose sight of the context of tourism consumption, and the role of individual actors in (re)producing the structures that constrain their travel behaviour. Practice theories offer a potential means of overcoming the actor-structure divide, and tourism and leisure provide interesting fields in which to study such interaction (see de Souza Bispo, 2016; Lamers et al., 2017; Ren, James, & Halkier, 2019). Indeed, tourism and leisure activities often provide the examples of social practices in the mainstream social science literature, as evidenced by studies of practices such as winter sports, cooking, music and film (Shuker, 2017; Southerton, Olsen, Warde, & Cheng, 2012; Thorpe, 2011; Turner, 2002).

Tourism scholars have often referred to practices, as in Jaakson's (2004) analysis of cruise ship passengers on a port visit, hosting as a social practice (Janta & Christou, 2019), the studies by Conran (2011) and Lacey, Peel, and Weiler (2012) of the interactions

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between voluntary tourists and local people, the study by Soica (2016) of tourism as a practice of making meaning, or the study of the tourism entrepreneurial practices (Çakmak, Lie, & McCabe, 2018). In these and many other studies, tourism practices are often interpreted in the broader sense of practice as habitual or routine activities, rather than being connected to formal theories of practice, as we describe in the following section. However, writing about practices cannot be considered the same as applying a practice theory. In some cases reference is made to practice theory, but the implications of using this theoretical base for the study of tourism are rarely discussed (e.g. Crouch, 2013; Laquinto & Pratt, 2019). Although we understand that not every study of tourism practices requires a formal practice-based theoretical framework, in this paper we argue that the application of a theoretically grounded practice approach could help us to understand what happens in different tourism practices and why people join or leave a specific tourism practice (see de Souza Bispo, 2016).

We believe that the study of tourism could benefit by engaging more directly with the theoretical aspects of the practice turn, particularly given the desirability of tackling the actor-structure divide. Instead of placing a strong focus on either the actor- or context-related character of human action, as frequently seen in more traditional disciplinary approaches, practice theories create linkages between the context of acting and the actors or individuals making choices and having needs and motives. As Castells (2010) and Blackshaw (2010) argue, the increased networking of individuals and organisations means that our choices are influenced not just by individual characteristics, but also by our (virtual) connectedness to others, and the mediating effect of technology. This makes the relational context of tourism choices all the more important to study.

Moreover, in the contemporary network society, tourism research faces growing complexity, which as Kuentzel (2000) suggests, challenges societal assumptions about rationality, order, and morality. This makes it important to study the role of participation in creating new social structures or routine behaviours that help individuals to create order and coherence in the complexity of everyday life. At the same time, as Castells (2010) argues, social practices are subject to relentless change, driven among other things by the power of networks to programme and disseminate discourses that frame human action. Recent research by Fisker, Kwiatkowski, and Hjalager (2019) in the context of rural events underlines the importance of linking the global 'space of flows', controlled by financial and media networks, with the local 'space of places' where everyday activities take place. Thus, understanding contemporary tourism activity implies not just a consideration of the fragmentation of individualised consumption, but also the rapidly changing contexts that frame and re-frame our choices.

To explain the dynamics and the growing complexity of consumption behaviour implied by the network society, an integrated practice perspective could provide richer insights into such complexity by providing a more holistic view (Bargeman, Richards, & Govers, 2016). Practice approaches arguably enable us to see the links between actors and structures, for example in how the development of skills changes the context and meaning of particular activities. As McNamee (1994, 297) argues, the practices followed by individuals cannot be understood in isolation from the history and meaning given to those practices by all those involved in them. Tourists may visit a destination alone, and for the first time, but they do so in the company and knowledge of those who have visited before. The social nature of shared practices may become even stronger in the digital age, when we can be accompanied by others virtually. The context of tourism participation also indicates why people value certain forms of participation or activity above others – this lies not just in individual choice, but also in the choices of others in a rapidly changing network of relationships and a community of practitioners. Concentrating on practices should lead to a more dynamic consideration of how participation is shaped by context, and how participation in turn changes the context. This is an important aspect of research on serious leisure, and the building of 'leisure careers' (Stebbins, 2007; Veal, 2017).

Based on the previous explanation, we can distinguish three ways in which practice theories could add value to the research agenda of tourism studies (cf. Lamers et al., 2017; Rosetto, 2012). Firstly, practice theory can help to explain why individuals perform specific tourism activities, by providing in-depth analyses of both the actor- and context-related factors influencing practices. As Crouch (2009, 84) remarks, "in fact, the power of structural context has persisted more strongly in tourism studies than in other arenas of cultural studies". Secondly, practice theories not only contribute to our understanding of decision-making by individual tourists, but also illuminate how group dynamics and communities of practitioners in tourism practices work. Tourism currently lacks theoretical tools to account for the actions of groups of tourists, beyond the classic structures of class, age, income, etc. Moreover, growing attention for relationality in tourism (McLeay, Lichy, & Major, 2019; McNamee, 1994; Rihova, Buhalis, Gouthro, & Moital, 2018) calls for an approach that can link individual action to group dynamics as well as structures. Thirdly, because of their strong emphasis of routine behaviour and dynamic character, practice theories could improve our understanding of how tourism practices are adopted, maintained or ceased in the long run. It is important to understand why people repeat certain forms of tourist behaviour and why they may abandon a practice in favour of another. The concept of repeat visitation is a fundamental element of many tourism studies (e.g. Bargeman, Joh, & Timmermans, 2002; Gitelson & Crompton, 1984), but much of this research concentrates on the use of repeat visitation as a segmentation tool, rather than examining the mechanisms driving repeat visitation, or routine forms of behaviour.

Although a practice approach arguably has advantages for tourism research, there are also challenges in application. Warde (2005) underlines that practice approaches are very heterogeneous, and Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012, 6) argue that the practice turn is "a diffuse movement, the shape and extent of which remains to be seen". Choosing which of the many practice theories to adopt can therefore be difficult, as it supposes a certain level of knowledge of their varying origins, orientations and implications. As Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, and Yanow (2009) argue, it is important to retain a theoretical base, a link to theories of practice. Yet many studies that use the concept of practices, including most in tourism and leisure studies, are not specific about their use of the term. Understanding more about the origins, intentions and applications of different practice theories could help to inform the choice of theoretical perspectives and methodologies. In this paper we set out to analyse different approaches to social practices, their strengths and weaknesses and their potential contribution to tourism studies. Based on this analysis we propose a practice perspective

that can be of use in linking actor and context and increasing our understanding of how tourism practices develop in the long run.

### Background to practice theory approaches

In this paper the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984) forms an important starting point, as many current practice approaches are based on this theory (Southerton et al., 2012; Spaargaren et al., 2016). The central notion of Giddens' structuration theory is the 'duality of structures'; through their agency actors are both guided by and reproduce structural conditions. Giddens (1984) argues both actors and structures are essential to understand social practices, as both condition the existence, content, duration and frequency of practices. A famous example used by Giddens is speaking a language, which is only possible because people apply the rules and structures of the language. Simultaneously, while speaking, these rules and resources are reproduced or maybe adapted through smaller or larger changes in the structure of the language. Thus, according to Giddens, social practices become the mediating concept between action and structure and form the central unit of analysis in understanding human agency. People are engaged in multiple practices during their everyday life, such as speaking a language, cooking, consuming, working and travelling (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001; Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2014).

Practices are ways of acting that are characterized by a routinized use of specific rules and resources, and which show continuity and regularity over a period of time and in certain space contexts (see Røpke, 2009). In this sense they are steered more by practical than discursive consciousness ("what is simply done" versus "what can be said"), and travel routines constitute order and coherence in the complexity of everyday life (Bargeman & van der Poel, 2006; Edensor, 2001). As Kuentzel and Heberlein (2008) demonstrate in the case of sailing, the routine of boating behaviour cushions participation against major life events such as residence change, a new job or divorce.

The actions, interactions and behaviour in a practice are, therefore, determined by characteristics of the actor and conditions of the context. Various actors can be distinguished in a practice, such as tourists, entrepreneurs and residents of a holiday destination. Practices have actor-related characteristics, which are features of the individuals (e.g. backgrounds, motives, experiences, preferences, social networks, lifestyles), who play a role in the constitution of the practice. These variables give actors the ability to perform certain practices and make performing other practices less likely. The context of practices is determined by three types of conditions: material or physical, time-spatial and structural (see Bargeman et al., 2016; Giddens, (1979, 1984); van der Poel, 2004). Material conditions can be related to the physical characteristics of supply for practices, such as the environmental performance of a holiday destination and the attractions in a theme park. Time-spatial conditions include aspects such as seasonality or the distance to the holiday destination. Giddens (1979, 1984) uses cultural and power dimensions to clarify the notion of structural conditioning. The cultural dimension of a practice is related to factors such as the image of a holiday destination and promotion of certain holiday trips and knowledge of the 'rules of the game' (e.g. knowing how to behave as a tourist). The power dimension links to resources for action, such as prices, services and quality.

Every practice has certain consequences for the actor and/or context which can be intended and/or unintended (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Intended consequences are expectations or purposes of actors with regard to their actions, for example the happiness stimulated by a successful holiday, learning new things or group cohesion. On the other hand, unintended consequences may also arise, which can be positive and/or negative, such as the carbon emissions caused by flying to a holiday destination, homesickness or the damage to local cultures produced by tourism. In general, practices will be reproduced in the absence of negative outcomes for the individual actor or the group responsible for maintaining the practice. In the practice approach (Giddens, (1979, 1984)) de-routinisation of the practice is influenced by interrelated changes on the actor- or context side, such as changes in background characteristics, innovation of leisure and tourism facilities or societal changes. After adaptations, new routines can arise, and re-routinisation can occur. An important implication of the practice approach is that the participation of actors cannot be seen in isolation from decisions and outcomes in other related practices.

Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour have also theorized the interconnectedness between actor and structure. However, Giddens' structuration theory seems the most systematically developed practice theory (van der Poel, 2004). Giddens, along with Bourdieu is among the 'first generation' of practice theorists, whose work provided the basis for a subsequent second generation, including Shove, Schatzki and Reckwitz (Hui, Schatzki, & Shove, 2017). According to Elder-Vass (2010), many authors have criticised Bourdieu for his apparent denial of conscious decision-making by actors, which is linked to Bourdieu's very strong focus on the role of the 'habitus' (a corollary of dispositions) in human behaviour (Archer, 2003). Furthermore, Bourdieu is less clear than Giddens in his explanation of the workings of practices and the differences between actor and structure (Elder-Vass, 2010; Lash, 1994). In tourism and leisure research, most scholars have only used parts of Bourdieu's theoretical framework (see Horolets, Stodolska, & Peters, 2018; Lee, Dunlap, & Edwards, 2014). The actor-network theory of Latour (2005) has also been debated because of its principle of symmetry: practices consisting simultaneously of human beings and objects with agency (van der Duim, 2005; van der Duim, Ren, & Jóhannesson, 2017; Warde, 2014), while in the structuration theory of Giddens objects do not have the capability to act.

Giddens' structuration theory is also criticised for the very broad character of his theoretical framework, the status and function of virtual structure and its components (e.g. rules and materials), the degrees of freedom for action, the conflation of agent and structure, the conceptualization of agency and the lack of conceptualization of the space dimension (Archer, 2010; King, 2010). It goes beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on these criticisms, but a number of scholars of consumption, leisure and tourism studies have tried to overcome some of these limitations in developing a practice approach based on Giddens' structuration theory and with help of other members of the second generation (see Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren, 1997; Spaargaren et al., 2016). They have developed and operationalised the core elements of Giddens' theory, as we discuss in the next section.

## Approaches to the study of tourism practices

A variant of practice theory that is strongly influenced by Giddens' structuration theory is the social practices approach of Spaargaren (1997). We selected this approach because we consider the conceptualization of consumption junctions by Spaargaren (1997, 2006) as an important advance in understanding what happens in the tourism practice itself. Consumption junctions are (physical or virtual) settings or specific contexts in (tourism) practices where actors from the demand and supply side come together or interact (e.g. travel agency, holiday destination, airlines, websites of airlines and tour operators, hotels) (cf. Bargeman, Richards, & van Charante-Stoffelen, 2018; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008).

Spaargaren (2006) argues that consumption junctions are the most promising places to analyse the matches or mismatches in the interactions between demand and supply, for example between tourists and tour operators and travel agents.

Thus, inspired by Giddens (1979, 1984), neither demand nor supply, but consumption junctions in social practices are the units of analysis in Spaargaren's (1997) approach. Interactions in practices are influenced by actors with their individual lifestyles, concerns, motives, portfolio (i.e. knowledge, skills, experience) and routines, and characteristics of systems of provision (systems, institutions, structures, obligations) with their respective rules and resources. In addition, Spaargaren distinguishes modes of access (demand side, individuals) and modes of provision (supply side, providers). Interactions or consumption junctions between actors (modes of access and modes of provision) can either go well, or problems can arise. A successful interaction can be interpreted as a 'good fit' involving a positive outcome, while an unsuccessful interaction suggests a 'poor fit' or 'misfit', and a potentially negative outcome. Moreover, these matches or mismatches determine the consequences of (tourism) practices (satisfaction, pleasure, frustration, etc.), which can determine participation in future tourism practices.

Verbeek (2009) applied Spaargaren's approach in analysing the 'confrontation' between supply and demand at the consumption junctions of sustainable Alpine holiday practices. She identified fits and misfits between tourists' lifestyles, identities and routine behaviour, and the activities of producers such as travel agencies, tourism businesses supplying environmental travel information and railway companies. Verbeek concluded that tourists will only choose sustainable Alpine tourism products, such as environmental-friendly transport modes, if these 'fit' their holiday practice and can be embedded in their lifestyles and routines (see Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). Verbeek (2009) argued that different tourist types have their own mode of access to sustainable Alpine holidays, having different concerns, background variables and using different modes of provision. For example, for tourists wanting to arrange their sustainable Alpine holiday themselves, the availability of holiday packages (including a train journey and accommodation) does not fit with their preference for independence and surprise. However, people with a less environmental-friendly travel style lack the knowledge, experience, and time to travel sustainably on their own, and for them holiday packages with green travelling options and information can facilitate an easy, comfortable, safe, predictable and relatively sustainable option. Verbeek also points to two other factors which hamper environmental-friendly cross-border Alpine holidays: the nationally organized system of provision of the transport industry (i.e. country-based transport infrastructures, and ticket systems), and the sectorial organization of the tourism industry.

Although the social practices approach delivers the theoretical framework required to develop a context-specific analysis of the interaction between actors (modes of access) and structures (modes of provision) involved in tourism practices, Spaargaren (1997) does not offer a concrete conceptual toolkit to analyse the operation of consumption junctions, as Verbeek (2009) also concludes. Moreover, Spaargaren's (1997) theory makes clear why practices change or not, but the dynamics of practices are less concretely developed.

The focus on explaining the dynamics of social practices by Shove et al. (2012) is therefore an important criterion for using their approach in this paper, because it can strengthen our understanding of the dynamics of tourist practices. Moreover, this approach could be interesting, because Shove et al. are not only inspired by Giddens (1984), but also by Reckwitz (2002), Schatzki et al. (2001) and Latour (2005), although Shove et al. (2012, 9–10) do not follow Latour's idea that practices comprise the actions of various entities (i.e. materials and artefacts) as well as people. Shove et al. analyse the dynamics of social practices, and they also take a different approach to operationalizing the practice concept. In a series of studies Shove et al. analysed how practices emerge, are continued, change and die. They describe the development of a practice as comprising three types of elements or qualities which are actively integrated: meanings, materials and competences. Furthermore, they conceptualize two types of practice: the practice-as-performance (the immediacy of doing) and the practice-as-an-entity (patterns exercised and reproduced over time). Because their aim is to study the dynamic character of practices in relationship to the three elements, the practice-as-an-entity is seen as most relevant in their theory.

By focusing on meanings, materials and competences Shove et al. (2012) avoid the division between actor and context, as suggested by Giddens (1979, 1984). (Symbolic) meanings refer to motivations, states of emotions, aspirations and ideas of people, for example the motives and aspirations of tourists going on holiday. The materials focus on tangible physical characteristics of the practice, such as resources, infrastructure and objects (e.g. facilities and amenities at a holiday destination). Understanding, skills, know-how and background knowledge can be conceived as 'competence' elements, for example tourists knowing how to behave in an unfamiliar holiday setting or appreciating different forms of art and culture. As Shove et al. (2012, 15) indicate themselves, working with only three components or elements "is at the expense of simplifying what social practices are about" (cf. Spaargaren et al., 2016: 7). However, the elements described by Shove et al. (2012) are more well-defined than many of the actor- and context-related variables which can be derived from Giddens' (1979, 1984) theoretical framework, although they show some linkages with the categories of variables distinguished by Giddens.

In their study of cruise tourism practices along the Russian Barents Sea coast, Lamers and Pashkevich (2015) demonstrate the utility of practice theories for tourism studies, based on the work of Shove et al. (2012). They show that the 'practice bundle' of cruise

tourism entails various practices (such as arriving in port and taking shore excursions), whereby each practice forms a particular configuration of materials, meanings and competences. Materials in these practices include maritime facilities, vessels, onshore transport infrastructure, vehicles and attractions. According to Lamers et al. (2017), meanings and competences related to arctic cruise practices have to be learned or acquired through instruction. These practices are performed and sustained by people with particular skills and knowledge, which focus on the provision of rich wilderness experiences in small-scale vessels and education in remote marine environments. Lamers and Pashkevich (2015) conclude that various actors are involved in making arctic cruise tourism practices consistent and recurrent, including local tour companies, authorities, bus companies, museums, restaurants and tourists. Inspired by Shove et al. (2012), they describe how the dynamic character of arctic cruise tourism practices is explained by meanings, materials and competences and how these practices are linked to other tourism-related activities. Because they aim to analyse the connections between and the dynamics of tourism production practices, Lamers and Pashkevich (2015) are less focused on what actually happens in arctic cruising practices and the complex and mutually dependent interactions between actors in a tourism practice (cf. Rihova et al., 2018). Nevertheless, Lamers and Pashkevich's (2015) research aim can be conceived as complementary to our objectives.

Our discussion of the social practices approaches of Spaargaren (1997, 2006) and Shove et al. (2012) suggests that both approaches can help us better understand why individuals participate in (certain) tourism activities. By conceptualizing consumption junctions, Spaargaren (1997) places more emphasis on the interactions within a particular practice than Giddens, for example. However, Spaargaren pays less attention to the concrete ingredients of consumption junctions or practices. Shove et al. (2012), inspired by Giddens and other first-generation practice scholars, provide us with a useful conceptual toolkit to better understand different types of practices and their dynamics by defining the roles of meanings, materials and competences. However, this approach is particularly focused on the streams or trajectories of performances, which may distract attention from the conceptualization of practices-as-performances in which different actors meet and interact. Therefore, in order to better understand what happens in tourism practices and the relationships they generate, we propose a new practice model based on the ideas of Randall Collins (2004) about the role of rituals in social groups, as described in the next section.

### Tourism practices as rituals

As suggested by Weenink and Spaargaren (2016), the work of Collins (2004) provides a well-developed explanatory mechanism for the functioning and development of 'rituals', which have similar characteristics to (tourism) practices. In this mechanism, situations or ritual interactions are the centre of practices (as in Giddens' theory) instead of the individual. An important added value of Collins' (2004) theoretical framework for our study is his focus on interactions that construct experiences, meanings and emotions (cf. Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016), which could be conceived as complementary to the concepts delivered by Spaargaren (1997) and Shove et al. (2012). Recently, Sterchele (2020) has argued that it is surprising that Collins' IR theory remains underutilised, given the growing focus on emotions, feelings and affect in tourism studies (cf. Cohen & Cohen, 2019; d'Hautesserre, 2015; Li, Scott, & Walters, 2015; Tucker, 2016).

In building his interaction ritual model, Collins is inspired by theories of Durkheim (1912) and Goffman (1959). From Durkheim he derives macro- and meso-scale concepts such as physical assembly (e.g. gatherings, crowds), the intensification of shared experience (collective effervescence) and ideas about social mechanisms (e.g. group solidarity, shared symbolism and moral beliefs, individual emotional energy through interaction). From Goffman he borrows concepts related to human behaviour on a micro level, such as symbolic and focused interaction, emotions, situational co-presence and frontstage versus backstage. Based on these concepts Collins (2004) identifies the conditions that are required for a ritual or practice to succeed, and therefore to be continued. In his model four types of ritual ingredients result in a state of collective effervescence (arousal, joy, enthusiasm among group members) which consequently leads to several ritual outcomes of which 'emotional energy (EE)' is the driving force for creating and continuing ritual practices (cf. Rihova et al., 2018). Emotional energy gives a feeling of enthusiasm, excitement, achievement and exhilaration which induces action. In order for emotional energy to be generated, Collins argues that there needs to be physical co-presence of participants (e.g. communion during a football match, cruise, group travel), a shared mood (e.g. anger, happiness, sadness) and a common focus of attention (e.g. common goal, action). This also requires that some form of barrier or 'liminal space' is present to those outside the ritual (e.g. festival ground, football stadium, camp site, hotel, cruise ship, theatre) (cf. MacCannell, 1976; Turner, 1979). When all these ingredients are present, a successfully performed ritual should, besides EE, also generate group solidarity (e.g. feeling of membership or belonging), standards of morality (e.g. ideas of wrong or right) and collective symbols (group emblems, visual icons) (cf. Peperkamp, 2018; Sterchele & Saint-Blancat, 2013). Thus, Collins' ritual ingredients and outcomes can improve our knowledge of what happens in tourism practices.

Collins (2004) also argues that rituals are linked together into 'Interaction Ritual Chains' (IRCs) (cf. Nicolini, 2012). People invest financial and time resources in rituals or tourism practices from which they expect to attain high levels of emotional energy. If this expectation is met, it stimulates them to repeat the ritual or participate in a tourism activity again, entering into a chain of successive new rituals, while failed rituals drain emotional energy (diminishing group solidarity and respect for group symbols) and are discontinued. Thus, people are drawn to practices that yield the best emotional energy payoff and avoid interactions with a lower emotional return. In a tourism context this may provide a particularly useful explanation for repeat visitation. Some tourists return year after year to the same holiday destination, and gain a high level of emotional energy from being at exactly the same location and with the same 'holiday neighbours'. In this case a tourism ritual chain or 'travel career' is developed, in which routines play an important role (Bargeman & van der Poel, 2006). Ideas similar to IRCs can be found in Stebbins' (2007) concept of 'serious leisure', that emphasises the increased skill level acquired by repetitively performing leisure activities and Borgmann's 'focal practices' which

would bring an engagement of body and mind (see [Arai & Pedlar, 2003](#)). Perhaps because of the tendency towards repetition and the development of knowledge and skill in tourism consumption, rituals have often been seen as an important element of travel (see e.g. [Cohen, 1979](#); [Lett, 1983](#); [Turner, 1979](#)). Nevertheless, in comparison with the theories of these scholars, [Collins' \(2004\)](#) conceptualization of IRCs seems to be very relevant for studying tourism practices in which routines and repetition play an important role in decision-making.

In addition, [Collins' \(2004\)](#) concept of IRCs is interesting because it represents a fundamental shift in thinking. It goes beyond the traditional approach of learning or skill acquisition to explain (tourism) behaviour, because the knowledge acquired by actors is just one factor affecting the linkage of different practices (see [Shove et al., 2012](#)). Nevertheless, Collins' concept of IRCs can be criticised for over-reliance on emotional energy, which is seen as the only driving mechanism for ritual behaviour ([Boyns & Luery, 2015](#)). Furthermore, [Collins \(2004\)](#) can also be faulted for a lack of attention to contextual factors, by concentrating mainly on physical co-presence ([Mouzelis, 1995](#)). Since the formulation of [Collins' \(2004\)](#) original model, in addition, social, cultural and economic changes have raised other potential questions about the role of rituals and emotional energy, for instance related to the use of the Internet and virtual experiences.

### Towards a practice model for tourism studies

Based on our review of different social practice approaches, we argue that the work of [Spaargaren \(1997\)](#) and [Shove et al. \(2012\)](#) provide interesting frameworks for understanding contemporary tourism behaviour and practices. However, both approaches focus mainly on the development and conceptualization of the actor- and context-related factors influencing the practice. The practice itself is less strongly developed, despite Spaargaren's effort to conceptualize the notion of consumption junctions. We argue that the interaction ritual theory of [Collins \(2004\)](#) is closest to resolving this issue. Whereas [Spaargaren \(1997\)](#) and [Shove et al. \(2012\)](#) can further our understanding of factors influencing the practice, [Collins' \(2004\)](#) model can add useful information on the actions of individuals interacting in rituals or tourism practices. It also allows us to highlight the role of emotions in tourism practices, and thereby pay more attention to the emotional and affectual turn in tourism studies ([Buda, d'Hauteserre, & Johnston, 2014](#)). Although Collins pays much attention to the role of emotional energy derived from the successful combination of ritual ingredients in the practice, he more or less neglects the role of contextual factors. Therefore, a combination of the social practice approaches of Spaargaren, Shove et al. and Collins' interaction ritual model can aid our understanding of why and how people interact in tourism practices. This combination helps us better understand what the intended or unintended outcomes of interactions in tourism practices are, both on an individual and group level.

A practice perspective for tourism should not only offer opportunities to examine what happens in everyday practices, but also why and how people join or leave a tourism practice and ultimately break down their routine pattern. In their study [Shove et al. \(2012\)](#) connect changes in meaning, materials and competences with behaviour patterns exercised and reproduced over time (practice-as-an-entity), but they do not make a strong linkage with the immediacy of doing (practice-as-performance). An important added value of Collins' theory compared to the approaches of [Shove et al. \(2012\)](#) and [Spaargaren \(1997\)](#) is that it also increases our understanding of the role of routines in tourism behaviour. By concentrating on Collins' notion of IRCs, we can analyse how individuals flow from one tourism ritual or practice to another, steered by the levels of emotional energy they acquire, which also provides an explanatory mechanism for the continuation of tourism practices (such as participation, visitation) in the long run (cf. [Sterchele, 2020](#)).

We propose an integrated practice approach for tourism studies which combines the essential elements and strengths of the practice approaches of [Spaargaren \(1997\)](#) and [Shove et al. \(2012\)](#), and [Collins' \(2004\)](#) ritual chain model. Although some studies have applied Collins' model to leisure and tourism ([Simons, 2018](#); [Sterchele, 2020](#); [Tutenges, 2013](#)), here we integrate practice approaches to tourism with the work of Collins. In our proposed perspective, participation and interaction in tourism practices themselves could be studied in detail by using the ingredients of [Collins' \(2004\)](#) ritual chain model. The mutual relationship of these factors determines the amount of individual emotional energy and other (intended/unintended) consequences, which can be derived from interaction rituals (or consumption junctions) in practices. Subsequently, these ritual outcomes or consequences influence whether individuals engage (again) in a certain activity or not, and whether this will lead to a (new) ritual chain. To further specify the driving forces of (interactions in) practices, such as personal characteristics and contextual conditions, we can use aspects of the modes of access and provision as defined by [Spaargaren \(1997\)](#) (for example portfolio, rules, resources) and the elements of [Shove et al. \(2012\)](#) (knowledge, meanings, materials), which are (partly) derived from [Giddens \(1979, 1984\)](#).

In the current paper our main aim is the conceptual development of an integrated practice approach model. It is not possible within the limitations of a single paper to empirically validate our conceptual model, but we have drawn on a range of previous studies to develop an illustration of how elements of the model might be applied. This work analysed the social mechanisms during a cruise using Collins' conceptual framework, supplemented by insights derived from social practice approaches. Between 2016 and 2018 our research team gathered data via face-to-face interviews with 48 Dutch cruise passengers ([de Baar, 2018](#); [Hofman, 2018](#); [Post, 2016](#); [Vermeulen, 2015](#)). Both first-time and repeat cruise passengers from different age groups were selected as respondents and approached via the face book page of cruise lines and via cruise vlogs uploaded on YouTube. Due to privacy issues it was not possible to directly study the on-board practices. The respondents took part in various cruise trips to destinations including Northern Europe, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. The recorded interviews were transcribed, thematically coded and transferred to data matrices for analysis.

The practice of 'going on a cruise' provides an initial example to illustrate how our integrated practice approach to tourism could be applied. In a future publication we hope to offer more empirical evidence to establish the applicability and utility of this proposed

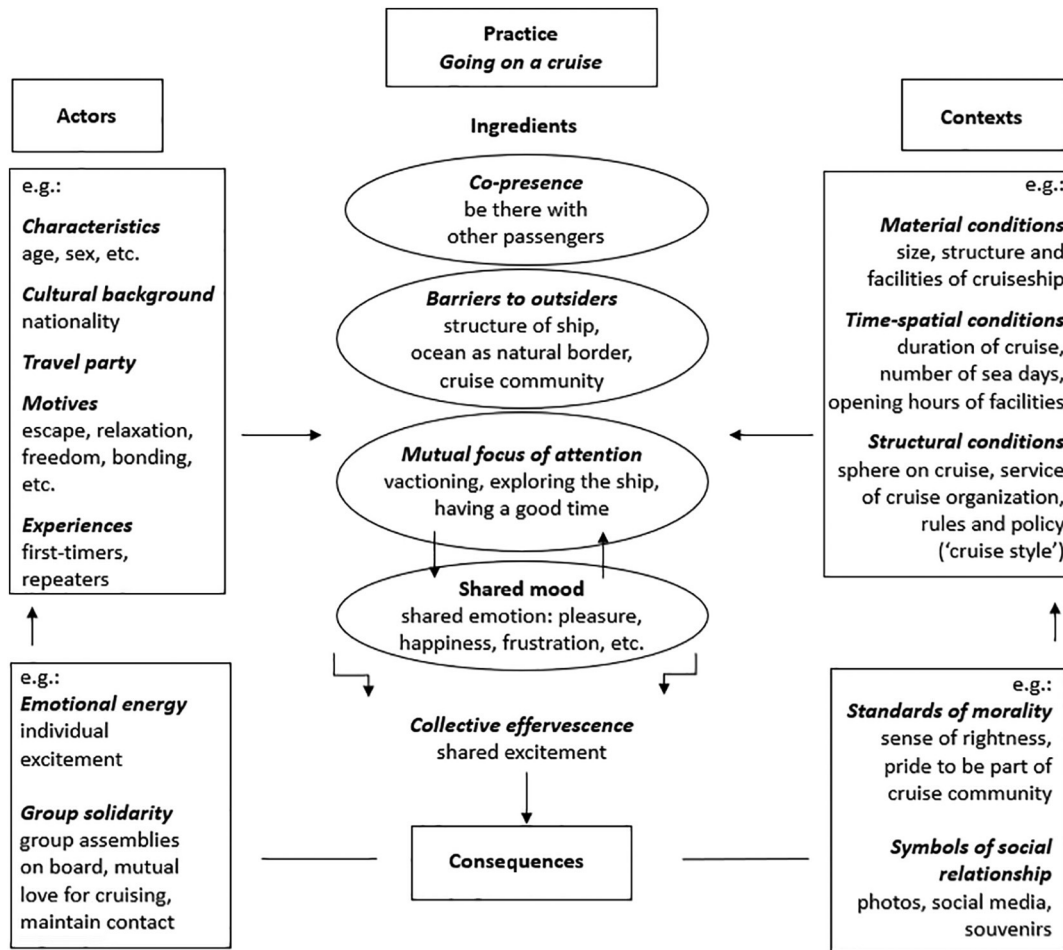


Fig. 1. Practice model based on Collins (2004), Giddens (1979, 1984), Spaargaren (1997) and Shove et al. (2012), applied to cruising.

approach. Fig. 1 shows that various actor- and context-related factors (derived from Giddens, 1979, 1984; Spaargaren, 1997; Shove et al., 2012) could influence the ritual ingredients and collective effervescence of the passengers in the cruise practice (Collins, 2004). The consequences of the cruise practice for the passengers (emotional energy, solidarity, etc.) are linked to their future propensity for cruising consumption (feedback loop from ‘consequences’ to ‘actor’ in Fig. 1).

Our data showed that the practice or interaction ritual of ‘going on a cruise’ can be conceived as an escapist act in which cruise tourists are temporarily part of a secluded social system, the ‘cruise cocoon’ (Post, 2016). This cocoon is bounded by the physical structure of the ship and isolated by the ocean, functioning as a clear barrier to outsiders, strengthening the cohesion between the passengers during a relatively long period. The mutual focus of attention, for most interviewed passengers, was having a good time on the cruise ship (comfort, quality, relaxation, security) which strengthened their shared mood (pleasure, happiness). Together these cruise ingredients created an ambience of emotional experience, which was described in terms including “fun”, “fantastic”, “lovely”, “time flew by”, “awesome” and “amazing” (see Post, 2016: 34). The interviews indicated that interaction between cruise passengers and a positive balance of ritual ingredients during the cruise result in rewarding consequences such as emotional energy (individual excitement, positive feeling and memories), solidarity (collectively becoming part of an ‘ambience’, keeping contact after the cruise) and symbols (contact through social media, exchanging pictures, buying souvenirs). All these consequences prolong the positive experiences of the passengers, not only during the cruise (physical co-presence), but also by keeping contact through social media afterwards. Social media made it possible to connect the physical cruise practice with the online context, strengthening the chain of interactions over the longer term.

The studies by Post (2016) and Vermeulen (2015) highlighted the active and conscious role of cruise passengers themselves in shaping the cruise experience, which was more important than external factors in determining the quality of experience. Nevertheless, many actor- and context-related factors influenced the cruise practice (see de Baar, 2018; Hofman, 2018). For example, the data emphasised the role of individual characteristics and travel party composition in the selection of on- and off-board activities (the ‘portfolio’, see Spaargaren, 1997). Cultural background also influenced individuals’ behaviour on the ship and how cruise passengers assessed each other (Post, 2016). The interviews revealed that perceived similarity between cruise passengers contributed to them getting along and experiencing rewarding social interactions (‘meanings’, see Shove et al., 2012). Furthermore, underlying context-

related interactions in the cruise practices, such as the cruise ship's size and design which offered freedom to spend time according to one's own preferences ('materials', see [Shove et al., 2012](#)) were important. The services and opportunities provided by the cruise organization (e.g. interest and help by crew, professionalism, diversity of food and beverage) also positively influenced the cruise experience ([de Baar, 2018](#); [Hofman, 2018](#)). On the context-side ([Spaargaren's \(1997\)](#) modes of provision), the customer-related services of the crew were also found to increase passenger comfort, perceptions of quality, feelings of having a good time and pleasure (creating a mutual focus of attention and shared mood) during the cruise ritual. Based on the matches or mismatches between actions and feelings of passengers and crew during the cruise practice, the ritual ingredients determine the state of collective effervescence and emotional energy (cf. [Tutenges, 2013](#)). Therefore, the cruise experience can be conceived as a co-production between passengers and staff, which is facilitated by the crew through their high level of service and emotional labour. Thus, although our research emphasises the interactions between passengers (in line with [Collin's](#) argument), our model also offers the opportunity to analyse the relationships between passengers and cruise staff.

The data showed that both repeaters and first-timers had the intention to cruise again in the future (see [de Baar, 2018](#); [Hofman, 2018](#); [Post, 2016](#); [Vermeulen, 2015](#)). In line with [Collins \(2004\)](#), emotional energy had a powerful impact on the respondents and induced them to repeat the cruise ritual to have the same positive experiences again, creating cruise ritual chains. Interestingly, one effect of the cruise ritual is an increasing level of loyalty to a single cruise company, not only in terms of service quality, but also because repeat passengers have learned to perform key aspects of the ritual successfully, which also helps to distinguish them from first-time passengers (for example in knowing how to navigate the meal plans and entertainment offers of the ship). Changing ship destinations enables the cruise company to facilitate passengers in repeatedly experiencing the same ship, but with the additional motivation of seeing different destinations. Additionally, the results also indicated other driving mechanisms for ritual behaviour. Factors such as travel party, the level of comfort and services offered on the ship, and feelings of solidarity, in combination with the ritual ingredients outlined by [Collins](#), also determined future ritual behaviour. We can argue that repeaters were involved in already established 'cruise tourism ritual chains', while the first-timers indicated they were developing a new routine in their travel behaviour. The importance of the cruise ritual chain is already being highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, when in spite of multiple outbreaks on cruise ships, bookings continued. It would be useful for future research to examine the aspects of the cruise ritual that are able to attract cruise passengers to repeat the ritual even after the pandemic.

## Discussion and conclusion

In tourism studies, as in many other areas of the social sciences, a practice turn is evident, which is generating more research on practices (see [Lamers et al., 2017](#)). In this paper we have attempted to outline the main approaches to practice theory that has been applied in tourism contexts, and to detail their attendant strengths and weaknesses. In our view, all of the different practice approaches outlined here have merit, and some are particularly suited to specific tourism contexts, including [Collins' \(2004\)](#) approach to interaction rituals, which is not inspired directly by practice theory.

We believe that an integrated practice approach, which combines the essential elements of social practice approaches and [Collins' \(2004\)](#) ritual chain model, could make a significant contribution to the study of tourism. As our cruise case indicates, this approach could better capture the complexity of contemporary tourism behaviour and practices than more traditional approaches. However, the development of a more holistic approach will probably be most successful in cases where clearly defined and delimited practices can be found. The operationalization level of the tourism practice or the research question implies which variables can be included in the model and analysed from different disciplinary perspectives which can improve our understanding of a certain practice. For example, our model as depicted in [Fig. 1](#) can be adapted for a sub-practice of cruising, such as visiting a new destination as a shore activity and the consequences of this practice for passengers and the local environment. Within the scope of our paper and related to the research agenda of tourism studies described in the [Introduction](#) section, our example focused on a practice in which the mutual interaction between cruise passengers played a central role. However, our approach could also be applicable to study for example the relationship between passengers and cruise staff, as both actors play an important role in the model. In fact, it appears that the cruise ritual is supported by the interaction of what might traditionally be seen as 'consumers' (passengers) and 'producers' (crew), indicating the possibility of using the model to study co-creation processes from a different perspective. A potential future refinement of the model would be to make a clearer distinction between roles of different actors, because the current approach considers both consumers and producers in the practice, although their roles are clearly not equal.

Additionally, the proposed approach yields a richer explanation of the relationships between structure and agency, adding important contextual information to the actor-related variables. Using an integrated practice approach improves our understanding of how participation is shaped by contextual factors, and how the context itself is changed by individual choices and group interactions, creating intended and unintended consequences both for the actor- and context side of the model. Our preliminary data suggest that cruise tourists' experiences not only depend on their own background features and motives, but also on the actions of others in these or earlier cruise practices (such as cruise staff, travel agencies and shop owners in port destinations) and the effect of these actions on the actor (e.g. degree of emotional energy and solidarity between the passengers) and context (e.g. consequences for the cruise ship, organization or the cruise sector). Thus, an integrative practice perspective arguably offers the opportunity to study the behaviour of individuals or groups at a micro level while at the same time taking account of the contextual complexity and dynamics that operate on the meso and macro level. This is important not just in throwing more light on the influence of social groups as a context for individual choices, but also the role of history on current choices. As [McNamee \(1994\)](#) argues, practices develop through a collective history of participation, and are not dependent on physical contact between the participants.

Thirdly, the practice approach we propose can focus on a single (communal) practice as an exemplar, as well as offering the



opportunities to study how individuals shift or migrate from one practice to another. By using Collins' (2004) mechanism for the functioning and development of rituals we believe that our practice perspective offers an important and original contribution to the examination of the role of everyday tourism activities or practices in creating new social structures and temporal nodes in the network society (cf. Kuentzel, 2000; Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016). Our cruise tourism example showed that not only emotional energy but also other ritual outcomes, actor- and context-related factors, and the mutual relationship of the ritual ingredients contributed to repeating the cruise experience. Thus, different factors, ingredients and outcomes in the cruise ritual or practice determined future ritual or routinised behaviour. Of course, we are aware that our proposed approach still needs to be applied across a number of different tourism practices to evaluate the generalizability of the different concepts it encompasses and the model as a whole. Does the concept of IRCs provide a general framework that explains behaviour across different groups and tourism and tourism settings? Or are there particular situations in which our IRCs-based approach fits better or worse? These questions would benefit from further research, which should seek to generate more insights on the relationships between the elements of the model and their interaction.

A particular strength of the proposed model is that by seeing the tourist as a person situated at the intersection of an array of practices, and therefore social networks, we can pay more attention to how different tourism practices emerge, are maintained and eventually are transformed or wither away (cf. Collins, 2004; Shove et al., 2012). In tourism studies, shifting between practices is clearly evident, as the activities participated in change over the life course of an individual, or for example when people move into a new geographical, social or cultural context. Until now, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of routines or practices-as-an-entity in tourism behaviour (see Bargeman & van der Poel, 2006; Shove et al., 2012), and there is arguably more room for this in future tourism research.

Furthermore, Collins' (2004) concept of IRCs has the potential to explain virtual practices, because we think that tourism practices performed individually and online are usually linked to or form a chain with tourism practices which are performed offline and in a group. For example, in our cruise tourism study we found that the interviewees tried to continue the cruise practice at home by making contact via social media. In a study on the development of hybrid event communities based on Collins' theoretical framework, Simons (2018) found that visitors of a leisure event constantly shift between the offline (the event itself) and online context (via social media), developing online and offline rituals chains or practices. Thus, the interaction ritual chain can move from the group event to online rituals and vice versa. This example indicates that new practices and experiences related to the Internet and social media could be explained by Collins' approach.

We realize that the theoretical framework we propose has implications for the research methodologies used to examine tourism practices, which also depend on the specific problem being studied. To better understand and analyse a single (communal) practice we can for example 'zoom in' by conducting a case study, as in the current study, or surveys or mixed-methods analysis. Participant observation and face-to-face interviews also seem very appropriate research methods for analysing social practices (cf. Nicolini, 2012; Spaargaren et al., 2016), and such methods probably offer fruitful channels for future research.

To conclude, this paper proposes an integrated practice perspective for tourism in which the practice models of Spaargaren (1997) and Shove et al. (2012) are combined with Collins' (2004) theoretical framework. This integrated approach can help explain why individuals participate in specific activities, how group dynamics develop, and also how practices are adopted, maintained or discarded in the long run. The linkage of practices into chains is also useful in explaining the role of skill and routine in the selection of tourism practices by individuals. So, we can use it to view the individual as a dynamic actor in a series of practices, both helping to shape those practices through their participation as well as being shaped by the practices they participate in. A stronger research emphasis on tourism practices and the shifting of individuals between these practices to form a sort of 'tourism practice career' could be very relevant in tourism research in a complex and rapidly changing society.

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