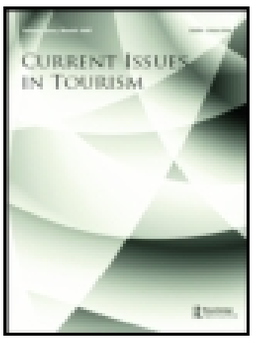
Volunteer tourism impacts in Ghana: A practice approach



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Volunteer tourism impacts in Ghana: a practice approach

Bertine Bargeman[a]*, Greg Richards[a] and Ellen Govers[b]

[a]*NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, Academy for Leisure, Archimedesstraat 17, 4816 BA, Breda, The Netherlands;* [b]*Department of Leisure Studies, Tilburg University, PO Box 90153, 5000 LE, Tilburg, The Netherlands*

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Relatively little empirical research has been conducted on impacts of volunteer tourism in local communities. This paper therefore focuses on the local consequences of volunteer tourism for two projects in Tamale, Ghana: Zion Primary School and Tamale Children's Home. A practice approach provides a useful theoretical framework to investigate how volunteers and local actors interact in these projects. In a practice approach, interactions become central to the analysis, highlighting the ways in which volunteers, local people and the local context mutually influence one another. Observations and interviews with volunteers and local actors were used to identify positive and negative consequences of their interactions, which are strongly interlinked and depend on routines, backgrounds and positions of the actors, and contextual conditions. The consequences of volunteer practices are also linked to other current and future practices. A practice approach provides insights into complex situations and may be more suited to analysing the impacts of volunteer tourism than a traditional mono-disciplinary focus.

Keywords: volunteer tourism; social practice; actor-context approach; interactions; impacts; Ghana

Introduction

In recent decades, tourism has shifted from a mass packaged product towards alternative forms of tourism (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Uriely, Reichel, & Ron, 2003; Wearing, 2001; Zavitz & Butz, 2011), 'new tourism' (Mowforth & Munt, 2003) or 'creative tourism' (Richards & Wilson, 2006). International volunteer tourism or 'voluntourism' can be seen as an increasingly popular new or alternative form of tourism, which is growing rapidly in terms of both demand and supply (Brown & Morrison, 2003; Ong, Pearlman, & Lockstone-Binney, 2011; Sin, 2009; Tomazos & Butler, 2009; Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

The traditional idea behind volunteer tourism is that, contrary to mass tourism, it can and should bring about positive impacts for locals in host destinations, particularly in developing countries (Lacey, Peel, & Weiler, 2012; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Sin, 2009). Nevertheless, most academic studies have focused on the benefits for volunteers (e.g. Andereck, McGehee, Lee, & Clemmons, 2012; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Conran, 2011; Lyons & Wearing, 2008, 2012; Stebbins, 2004; Tomazos & Butler, 2010), while the benefits for the host community are often taken for

*Corresponding author. Email: bargeman.b@nhtv.nl

granted (e.g. Guttentag, 2009; Lilach et al., 2003). Several studies found that volunteers want to learn about themselves and get to know a different culture at close quarters (see Andereck et al., 2012; Brown, 2005; Clifton & Benson, 2006; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2008). In addition, Stebbins (2004, 2009) points to self-interest and altruism as reasons for leisure volunteering (cf. Lyons, 2003) and Söderman and Snead (2008) to the development of social connections and career skills.

Since host countries, communities and institutions have to deal with the impacts of volunteer tourism, it is remarkable that little empirical research on the impacts of volunteer tourism on local communities has been conducted (cf. Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015; McGehee, 2012, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013; Woosman & Lee, 2011; Zahra & McGehee, 2013). Therefore, this paper focuses on the consequences of volunteer tourism for the context in which it takes place: the local community, and more specifically the actors most directly affected; the volunteers and the local employees and children in direct contact with those volunteers. To study the interaction between these groups and the impacts that these interactions create, a practice approach is employed. In this way we hope to be able to provide a more detailed and complex analysis of the effects of volunteer tourism for both volunteers and local actors than previous volunteering studies. Those studies have also paid relatively little attention to the interaction of volunteers and the local actors (cf. Conran, 2011; Lacey et al., 2012; Proyrungroj, 2014). In a practice approach, such interactions become central to the analysis, highlighting the ways in which volunteers, local people and the local context mutually influence one another (see Giddens, 1979, 1994; Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren, 1997; Verbeek, 2009).

The usefulness of a practice approach for analysing volunteer tourism impacts is illustrated by investigating two volunteer projects in Tamale, Ghana: a primary school and an orphanage (see Govers, 2010). The analysis was focused on the following research question: How can a practice approach be used to analyse the interactions and social impacts of these interactions between local and tourist actors in the context of volunteer tourism? Before reflecting on the methods used to answer this question, we will give a brief overview of the literature on impacts of (orphanage/school) voluntourism and practice approaches.

Literature review

Volunteer tourism

According to TRAM (2008), 1.6 million people engage in a form of volunteer tourism every year (see Richards, 2008). Volunteer tourism is defined by Wearing (2001, p. 1) as:

> … Encompassing those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society and environment.

Wearing's definition makes clear that the central idea behind volunteer tourism is that it has positive impacts on the host community (cf. Conran, 2011; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Sin, 2009; Stebbins, 2004; Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Weaver, 1995). According to Swarbrooke et al. (2003), a volunteer holiday can improve education, understanding between cultures, job opportunities and stimulate small (tourist) businesses. Guttentag (2009) remarks that voluntary work can contribute positively to the host society. For instance, it can bring benefits for the tourism sector and a better understanding between cultures (see also Simpson, 2004; Wearing, 2004).

However, Guttentag also indicates some negative impacts, such as instigation of (unwelcome) cultural changes, disturbing the progress of work, decreasing employment opportunities and reinforced rationalizations of poverty (cf. Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Lyons & Wearing, 2012; McGehee, 2012, 2014; Sin, 2009; Woosman & Lee, 2011). Zavitz and Butz (2011) also demonstrate that international volunteering does not reliably support social development in host communities or meaningful trans-cultural understanding between locals and volunteers (see McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). Based on a recent study by McGehee (2014) growing pains such as the exploitation of host communities, volunteers and the environment; and poor project work conducted by volunteers can be added to this list.

In the current study an orphanage and primary school were investigated to study the impacts of interactions between the volunteers and local actors (employees and children). Until now few empirical studies have addressed impacts of working in orphanages or schools on a micro level (see Carpenter, 2015a; Raes, 2013). Although there is much media coverage of orphanage tourism, studies of the impacts of long-term orphanage volunteer tourism in developing countries, and particularly volunteering in schools, are scarce. Orphanage tourism can be conceived as a form of volunteer tourism in which tourists donate money and goods, attend performances of orphans or volunteer on a short-term basis at orphanages as part of their 'authentic' holiday (Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015). Many organizations like UNICEF (2011) warn of the detrimental consequences this growing phenomenon can have on children's emotional and physical well-being. According to Carpenter (2015a), well-meaning volunteer tourists are actually fuelling the growth of orphanages in countries like Ghana and Cambodia, stimulating objectification, commodification and exploitation of the orphaned child (see Raes, 2013). Some orphanages train 'their orphans' (many of whom are not real 'orphans' and do not belong in orphanages) to entertain and attract tourists and donors to collect money for profit, which creates dependency and undermines families (cf. Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015; Lacey et al., 2012; McGehee, 2012; Raes, 2013). Other negative consequences of orphanage tourism may be that the short-term volunteers and visitors are largely untrained and unqualified to work with children with their complex needs and demands. Moreover, they form emotional bonds with the orphans but disappear suddenly (see Raes, 2013). However, another study of Carpenter (2015b) concludes that children in Cambodia's orphanages are often faring well. Emond (2009) and Guiney (2012) point out that living in an orphanage contributes to the well-being of the children, because they have educational opportunities, nutrition and friendships. According to Rogerson and Slater (2014), particularly long-term international volunteers facilitate a beneficial and healthy environment for the children by giving individual attention and support and organizing movement exercises.

As a relatively new field of interest the literature on orphanage tourism has not yet focused on the interaction between local actors and volunteers on a micro level, but has a more general research focus on particularly the negative sides of orphanage tourism and on the motives of volunteers (see Carpenter, 2015a; Proyrungroj, 2014). There are few empirical studies on interactions between volunteers and teachers and children at (primary) schools in the Global South. Only indirectly is teaching by volunteers related to teaching a language at an orphanage or school for orphans or disabled children (see Carpenter, 2015a). Against this background, this paper explores both the positive and negative impacts of the interaction between (long-term) international volunteers and local actors in both an orphanage and primary school in Ghana by using a practice approach.

The practice approach

A practice approach arguably provides a structured overview of the actors in the specific context of their interrelationships (see Verbeek, 2009). According to RØpke (2009, p. 2490), there is renewed interest in practice theory or a 'practice turn in contemporary theory', which aims to bridge the structure-actor dualism (see Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2005, 2014). Such studies that challenge the actor-structure divide are useful because they help us to appreciate the ways in which actors affect their context and vice versa. Volunteer tourists, for example, are not only changed by their experiences of the destination, but their actions also have an effect on the people in the destination, which in turn affects the overall volunteer experience. In our study an integrated practice approach was adopted from the structuration theory of Giddens (1979, 1994). This theory has already been successfully applied by other academics in studying (leisure) practices (see Bargeman, 2001; Spaargaren, 1997; Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000; Verbeek, 2009; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). Because of its ability to provide insights into complex situations, the practice approach seems a more interesting tool to apply to the impacts of volunteer tourism than a more traditional disciplinary focus on one dimension of these impacts. By focusing on both actor- and context-related aspects we develop a more holistic approach to volunteer tourism practices, which reveals some hitherto undocumented consequences of these practices.

Practice theory centres on the social practices that people are engaged in during their everyday life (RØpke, 2009; Schatzki et al., 2001; Shove et al., 2012; Southerton, 2012; Warde, 2014). Spaargaren (1997) refers to social practices as activities that are ordered across time and space, driven by a routinized use of specific rules and resources, and shared by groups of people (cf. Kuentzel, 2000; RØpke, 2009; Verbeek, 2009). For instance, practices such as working in an orphanage or teaching at a primary school have actor-related characteristics, which are features of individuals (e.g. backgrounds, experiences, life styles, routines) who play a role in the practice, and structure-related factors, which refer to the context in which the practices occur (see Giddens, 1979, 1984). Thus, social practices become the mediating concept between action and structure (RØpke, 2009). According to Giddens (1979, 1994), actor and structure are connected variables that are both valuable for the existence, content, duration and frequency of practices. Thus, practice theory creates linkages between the context of acting and actors or individuals making choices and having needs and motives.

Because Giddens' structuration theory (1979, 1994) only provides a general framework and does not focus on the content of and interactions within practices, the work of Shove et al. (2012) has been used to enlarge our knowledge about volunteer tourism practices. According to Shove et al. (2012), 'elements' or qualities are necessary to understand practices and relationships between actors and contexts. They distinguish three types of elements which are actively integrated in practices: materials, competences and meanings. The materials include tangible physical characteristics of the practice such as objects, tools, resources, infrastructure and the physical environment. Examples related to the two volunteer practices are money and donations, goods like toys and lesson materials, availability of local staff, and the community in which the orphanage and school are located (cf. Emond, 2009; Guiney, 2012). Competences refer to skills, understanding, know-how and background knowledge of the actors in the practice, for example the skills needed to work with young children (see McGehee, 2014; Raes, 2013; Shove et al., 2012; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). (Symbolic) meanings focus on aspirations and ideas, states of emotions and motivations of the actors (see Shove et al., 2012). In this paper we will relate the

meaning elements to perceptions of care, bringing-up and education, and trans-cultural understanding, as studied by McIntosh and Zahra (2007) and Zavitz and Butz (2011).

Materials, competences and meanings can also be used to analyse 'interaction junctions' within practices. Interaction junctions can be defined as crossing points in time and place at which different actors interact with others involved in the practice (cf. Spaargaren, 1997; Verbeek, 2009; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). This is the case when, for example, a volunteer and a staff member of the orphanage work together to clean and change the children. The interaction between actors can be successful or not. A successful interaction can be interpreted as a 'good fit' involving a positive outcome, while an unsuccessful interaction suggests a 'poor fit' or 'misfit', resulting potentially in a negative outcome. An example of an unsuccessful interaction leading to additional consequences is when a volunteer is taken on to teach in a school, while many local teachers remain unemployed. In this situation the knowledge and skills of the available local employees and volunteers (combination of competence and resource element, see Shove et al., 2012) are not divided optimally and result in an unsuccessful interaction and additional misfit. At the same time a positive consequence can be that both children and teachers acquire extracurricular knowledge from the lessons of the volunteers, which refers to the competence element in practices (see Shove et al., 2012).

These examples illustrate that by examining what happens at such interaction junctions, the cause of some of the consequences of the practice can be determined. Thus, interactions in the practice between actors with their specific backgrounds (competences, meanings) and within a certain context (materials, resources) lead to fits and misfits, which will determine the consequences of the practice. To describe the existing interaction junctions and relevant elements as clearly as possible the practices of Tamale Children's Home and Zion Primary School will be discussed separately in the results section.

Methodology

The empirical study in Ghana was conducted over an eight-week period in March to April 2010 (see Govers, 2010). This research can be defined as a cross-sectional case study with two cases, Tamale Children's Home and Zion Primary School (see Bryman, 2008). These projects were selected because they represent two very common forms of volunteer tourism and attract a constant flow of volunteers (see Raes, 2013; Rogerson & Slater, 2014). Moreover, Ghana is one of the most popular destinations for volunteer tourism (see Matthews, 2008; TRAM, 2008). Tamale Children's Home is an orphanage with 25 children aged between two months and four years old and Zion Primary School educates 67 children between 6 and 12 years old. The location at the outskirts of Tamale and the situation in Tamale Children's home (including a lack of toys and playground facilities, low hygiene standards, shortage of money) determine the way (volunteer) work can be performed in the orphanage. Also Zion Primary School is located in a relatively poor community in Tamale. First contacts with these projects were initiated by a Dutch (Voluntary Childaid) and a Ghanian (REVSODEP) volunteer organization.

Our intention was not to compare the two cases, but rather to generate a broader view of possible impacts of volunteer tourism. Furthermore, the fieldwork focused on an exploration of the impacts, as perceived by the people involved, and why and how these impacts evolved as an outcome of the coupling of actors and context in the practices. Therefore, qualitative methods including participant observations and face-to-face interviews were used to analyse the practices and their consequences.

The observations were a very useful form of data gathering and analysing the practices, as the actors expressed their feelings in normal work circumstances. In line with the research aim, during the observations the researcher focused on the actions of the different actors in the practices: the volunteers, Ghanaian employees and children; the interactions between these actors; and interesting elements of the context of the practices. To be 'accepted' by the different actors, the orphanage and school were visited regularly. Building a relationship with the local respondents seemed beneficial for the observations (and later for the course and content of the interviews). In Tamale Children's Home observations were performed in the hallway or playroom, or by sitting or walking around. In order not to disturb the children, at Zion Primary School the researcher decided to observe the actors in the classroom from the courtyard, which was a suitable option due to the openness of the school building. Interesting issues from the observations were translated into interview topics (see Govers, 2010).

The 16 face-to-face interviews probed respondents' perceptions of the volunteer work and its impacts. Interviews were held with staff members of Tamale Children's Home, teachers of Zion Primary School and volunteers working in the volunteer projects, because these actors interact with each other in the different interaction junctions in the practices. Based on these encounters we could derive positive and negative consequences to answer our research question. During the fieldwork period two male volunteers and one female volunteer, all about 20 years old, were teaching at Zion Primary School. As Simpson (2004) found, most of the volunteers were inexperienced and unqualified; however, the female volunteer had previous teaching experience. All three (Dutch) volunteers were involved in our research. The four respondents among the employees at Zion Primary School are qualified teachers between 35 and 42 years old and with 10–20 years of teaching experience. At Tamale Children's Home two German girls (both aged 23) were interviewed and one girl (aged 24) with Belgian nationality. This preponderance of young female volunteers is in line with the findings of Andereck et al. (2012) and TRAM (2008). The six female Ghanaian respondents among the staff members of Tamale Children's Home are older (between 50 and 60 years old) and have a lot of work experience. The interviews did not include children, because they were considered too young to communicate with (2 months to 12 years). Information about the role of children in the two practices was gathered in an indirect manner, through observations and interviews with the other participants.

The informal interview style preferred by Ghanaian respondents produced interesting and informative data. 'Informal' means that the respondents were interviewed in their own work environment which created an open and confidential atmosphere (see Gibbs, 2007). Although the study started deductively because of time constraints, by using a more iterative strategy as occurs in a grounded theory framework the researcher was able to adjust the data collection to the context of the practice (cf. Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Nevertheless, a topic list was developed in relatively simple English, with a focus on the interactions between different actors in the volunteer practices. For interviewing the international volunteers, semi-structured interviews were held.

Based on the gathered data an observation report was constructed with details of dates, conversations, interactions, different actors and so on. Completely transcribing the interviews made the information verifiable and decreased the loss of information (see Bryman, 2008; Gibbs, 2007). With the help of the coding program MAXQDA the theoretical concepts were linked to the interview fragments by using codes and labels. Consequently, a data matrix was constructed for each case, which facilitated the interpretation

and comparison of the results (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). These results will be used below to highlight the main theoretical concepts related to practice theory.

Results: impacts of voluntary work

Zion Primary School

Important misfits in the practice of Zion Primary School are related to the competences of the volunteers (see Shove et al., 2012). A misfit arises because the volunteers' background knowledge of teaching in general and the Ghanaian Education System specifically do not match the context, which is the lesson plan of Zion Primary School (cf. Carpenter, 2015a; Zavitz & Butz, 2011). In the Ghana Teaching System, teachers should follow a lesson plan which prescribes what is taught every week. The interviews with volunteers and local teachers and observations showed that the rather inexperienced and unqualified volunteers do not stick to this system and prepare their own lessons (see McGehee, 2014; Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Raes, 2013). Some volunteers also have misperceptions about the relevance or complexity of subjects they teach or think they should teach (cf. Guttentag, 2009). Consequently, the knowledge, skills and perceptions of the volunteers do not match with the Ghanaian teaching system or the specific knowledge needs of the children:

> There was a volunteer who taught a lot of history and the teacher here, and the children, they had never heard of certain things before, like the Second World War and stuff, that was just a complete mystery to them! (Maarten, volunteer ZPS)

The local teachers indicate that when the volunteers leave they have to catch up on the content the children missed, also because the teachers have too little knowledge to continue with the subjects the volunteers were teaching. According to the local employees, this problem tends to grow, because of a lack of collaboration and communication between the school and the voluntary organization about which classes volunteers are needed in. Therefore, the volunteers themselves decide on the classes they would like to teach. The consequence of these misfits in the interaction between volunteer and children and teachers is an educational backlog or negative impact for the children at Zion Primary School.

Moreover, this negative impact increases because of difficulties in the communication between the local teachers, children and volunteers, as the volunteers do not have the skills to teach in the local language and the children do not understand English very well (cf. Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Guttentag, 2009). All interviewed teachers indicate that a language barrier exists:

> The volunteers had a problem with the children, because most of them do not understand a little bit of information, because the whites have a different pronunciation. Then it is very difficult for the children to understand them. (Suelihu, teacher ZPS)
>
> They talk in Dagbanli to me and then I just talk back in Dutch, or in English or I just guess what they say. (Thirza, volunteer ZPS)

Nevertheless, the fact that volunteers do not teach in line with the Ghanaian teaching system and the prescribed syllabus has positive consequences as well. A positive consequence that can be derived from the interview data is that children and Ghanaian teachers acquire extra-curricular knowledge, because of the presence of the volunteers (see Lilach et al., 2003). Another positive consequence of volunteers teaching is that these young whites excite

the local children and parents who encourage their children to go to school when they are teaching (see Clifton & Benson, 2006). It seems that the local actors attach great importance to the lessons of the volunteers, although the children have to get used to a new teaching volunteer every time.

Additionally, one can derive another positive consequence related to the meaning components which play a role in this practice (see Shove et al., 2012). The Ghanaian teachers indicate that interaction with the white volunteers leads to more understanding for whites and one volunteer suggests that the views of teachers and children are broadened by exchanging and discussing opinions and thoughts, which can be conceived as a fit of their interaction (see Conran, 2011; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Ruhanen et al., 2008). Simultaneously, differing cultural perceptions of upbringing and teaching between volunteers and local teachers cause (mis)fits in the interaction between the volunteers and the children. Because of their cultural background the volunteers indicate that they give the children more personal attention and use a softer approach towards them, which creates a more affectionate atmosphere:

> The way they play with the children … Not in this school, we don't do that. So the children feel like at home. That what their parents have been doing to them, the volunteers are doing it. So the children will see the school as their home. So that will be the positive. The way they mingle with the children … that is because of their culture. (Alhassan, teacher ZPS)

While Ghanaian teachers often use their cane, volunteers punish the children in other ways, according to the practice of their home culture. From a western perspective the way in which the volunteers act can be conceived as positive. However, all interviewed Ghanaian teachers agree that caning is perceived by the children as the only real punishment. A negative consequence of volunteers using alternative punishments is that they are not able to control the children in their class, which was also visible during the observation (see Guttentag, 2009). According to the local teachers this situation was growing worse because the volunteers were unqualified to work with the children, as explained before:

> Four children are walking outside class, one is going to the toilet outside and one other is climbing out of the window and waving at me. The children in the class are noisy. Thirza (volunteer) is shouting 'stop it!!!'. (Observation of researcher, ZPS, March 2010)

Positive and negative consequences of interactions at Zion Primary School can also be linked to situations in which resources like donations, goods and employment opportunities play a role (see Shove et al., 2012). At Zion Primary School, the positive consequence of the donations of the volunteers is according to the Ghanaian teachers an increase in teaching materials such as exercise books, furniture, pencils and uniforms (cf. Emond, 2009). However, the teachers say that the most important consequence of voluntary work is the financing and construction of a new school building. Volunteers also financed the finishing of the classrooms so that the children can be taught in all weathers (see Guiney, 2012). However, a further consequence of these donations is that Zion Primary School is not perceived by volunteers to be as deprived, since they have a new school building. The interviewed volunteers do not think it is necessary to financially contribute anymore, but give their money to another school that needs it more, in their view.

Other positive and negative impacts related to the resources of this practice have to do with the availability of staff. At Zion Primary School, the tasks of the local teachers are

taken over by the volunteers (see Jago & Deery, 2002). Volunteers with little or no formal training come to the school to take over the class of a qualified Ghanaian teacher, who does not have to teach for the duration of the stay of the volunteer. This means that the teachers take fewer lessons or come to school less often. Thus, the stay of the volunteers affects the employment opportunities of the local staff in a negative way. A positive impact of volunteer workers taking over a class is that children always have someone to teach them, as stated by the interviewed Ghanaian teachers. According to them, it is common in Ghana for teachers to leave their class during school or not to show up at all, while volunteers are always there and very punctual.

Tamale Children's Home

In the practice of Tamale Children's Home comparable (mis)fits can be distinguished, although the data show a stronger focus on issues related to availability of staff and volunteers and their time schedules. The staff of the orphanage indicate that reducing the shortage of staff and workload in the orphanage is one of the main benefits of volunteer tourism (see Lilach et al., 2003; Ong et al., 2011; Simpson, 2004). However, the volunteers say there is no lack of staff, but they only perform essential tasks, leaving the rest to the volunteers. This misfit results in a decline of the productivity of the staff members during daytime. The interviewed staff acknowledge that they leave some work to the volunteers, which reduces their workload at these times, but they justify this in terms of the inequality between the total working hours of staff members and volunteers:

> When the duty of the volunteers starts, all the work is done. Then they come in and they are ready to sit down and play with the children. The volunteers know nothing about the work, they only play with them. (Mary, staff member TCH)

Although the local staff are obliged to work day and night, the interviews with the volunteers showed that they do not want to work at night (see Zavitz & Butz, 2011) but at moments convenient for them. Moreover, as indicated by Wisner et al. (2005), volunteers want enough free time to enjoy while in Ghana, which is confirmed by the interviews. The staff members underline that holiday motivations and experiencing a new culture seem more important to the volunteers than their work, which creates many negative feelings between staff and volunteers (cf. Barbieri et al., 2012; Holmes et al., 2010; Söderman & Snead, 2008). Furthermore, the high turnover and relatively short stay of volunteers in general forces the staff members to repeatedly explain everything to the new group of unqualified volunteers, contributing to their frustration and anger (cf. McGehee, 2014; Raes, 2013; Rogerson & Slater, 2014; Simpson, 2004; Zavitz & Butz, 2011).

These resource and knowledge elements of the practice (see Shove et al., 2012) can also be linked to the perceptions volunteers and staff members have of each other's work pressure. The interview data show that the actors perceive differences in work pressure, involving much irritation between both groups and also results in some misfits. Staff members perceive that they work very hard, but the young volunteers consider that they are busier than their local colleagues. The staff members indicate that they have to perform the most important and heavy tasks when the volunteers are absent, for instance during the night and at breakfast. This results in the belief that volunteers should do most of the work when they are present. On the other hand the volunteers perceive that the local staff wait for them to come to care for the children. During the shift of the volunteers staff members have the opportunity to watch TV or to sleep:

> A baby was crying all the time and then we came in and one staff member said: 'Oh there you are!' … The baby is crying since two hours! And we said … Oh you are sitting here with five staff members directly in front of the baby, why don't you pick it? No, we don't want to. (Katharina, volunteer TCH)
>
> Five children are playing in the playroom with Katharina (volunteer) next to them. One Ghanaian staff member is lying down on a bench in the playroom. Fanny (volunteer) is holding a baby with her in a chair … . (Observation of researcher, TCH, March 2010)

Besides different perceptions of work pressure, both volunteers and staff at Tamale's Children Home give examples of misunderstandings or confrontations arising from different approaches to working with children, which can also be linked to the meaning aspects of this practice (see McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Shove et al., 2012; Zavitz & Butz, 2011). The miscommunication between the actors results in feelings of annoyance, anger or frustration. One of these misunderstandings has, according to staff member Rebecca, to do with the fact that the volunteers change the children every time they are wet:

> The child is wearing a nappy. If the nappy and the pants are wet, you remove the nappy and then wear the pants alone. But they will remove ALL! And you know why we don't do that? Because we don't have soap. If you know, the dress is not soiled, you don't remove. When we tell her, don't remove it, she will not listen. She wants to do what she wants. That's really a problem with them. (Rebecca, staff member TCH)

Because of a lack of money and materials the staff members do not change the children more than twice a day, while the volunteers indicate that they want to change the children when they are wet, as is 'normal' in their own culture. According to the staff the volunteers should follow the Ghanaian work methods (cf. Palacios, 2010). While several authors (see Devereux, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008; Ruhanen et al., 2008; Simpson, 2004) suggest that intercultural interaction between different actors leads to adaptation, this consequence is remarkably absent in this case. The volunteers regularly fail to do as they are told and although the orphanage staff do sometimes appreciate the new ideas or work methods of the volunteers, both groups of actors do not adapt their work methods. Nevertheless, staff member Lilian points out that she has learned something from the volunteers:

> For instance they don't like beating the child, you know. They lock the child in the room. Therefore, when the child is disturbing, either lock him or her in their bed for some minutes. In Africa, and also in Ghana the measure they take is pwoef pwoef, they give them some strokes. That is the way here, but it is not the best way. (Lilian, staff member TCH)

The staff argue that the misunderstandings about the way 'the other' handles the children depends on the context or culture the volunteers come from (see Lilach et al., 2003). In Tamale Children's Home, the observations show that the volunteers play with the children, caress them and give the children personal attention (see Carpenter, 2015b; McGehee, 2012; Rogerson & Slater, 2014). In the interviews the volunteers indicate that the children have a more affectionate environment as a result of their work. One volunteer explained that the Ghanaian culture is more focused on meeting the basic needs of children than on caressing and playing (see Clifton & Benson, 2006; Wang, 2010), which is also underlined by volunteer Fanny:

> That they get some love and something like that. Because, they never get love. Nobody is playing with them or giving them love or making fun with them or something like that. When the staff members clean them, it is like working in the factory. (Fanny, volunteer TCH)

The staff members think that it is very important to play with and caress the children, but they feel they are too busy to do this, and therefore leave this to the volunteers. Volunteers also buy medicine for the children and take them to the hospital.

Many interviewed volunteers support the orphanage and school by donating materials (see Wisner et al., 2005). In Tamale Children's Home, donations of toys and clothing, food, furniture and materials for childcare such as diapers are very important. The fact that volunteers donate materials and support the projects financially has positive consequences for the children, since the health of the children living in the orphanage has improved and the hygiene standards in Tamale Children's Home have been upgraded (see Emond, 2009; Shove et al., 2012; Zahra & McGehee, 2013). However, according to the volunteers the staff members of the orphanage do not handle the donations properly. Donations are taken home by the poor staff members, who let their own children play with them or sell the donated materials at the market. Moreover, the director and staff members of the orphanage store a lot of the donations. A negative consequence related to the resource element as described by Shove et al. (2012) is that volunteers are less motivated to donate to the orphanage (cf. Carpenter, 2015b). They are disappointed that the donations disappear and do not get to the children:

> There were some toys I brought from Germany, but the next day everything was gone. And we had collected some money in Germany, for the orphanage, but now we have given the money to another project. (Katharina, volunteer TCH)

Conclusions

As indicated recently by many authors little empirical research has been conducted on the impacts of volunteer tourism on local communities, and the interaction between (long-term) volunteers and local employees of orphanages and primary schools in particular (cf. Carpenter, 2015a; McGehee, 2012, 2014; Proyrungroj, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). Therefore, we focused on the consequences of volunteer tourism for two projects in Tamale, Ghana: Zion Primary School and Tamale Children's Home. By using a practice approach, we were able to simultaneously consider the social impacts of volunteer tourism on the local context of the projects as well as the volunteers and local actors involved.

In both volunteer projects we found (mis)fits in complex interaction junctions in which actors with different perceptions, knowledge and skills attempt to work and have to deal with specific contextual conditions, resources or materials (see Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren, 1997; Verbeek, 2009). For instance, in line with Lilach et al. (2003), in both projects the volunteers reduce staff shortages and reduce the workload (cf. Ong et al., 2011; Simpson, 2004), and ensure the children have a teacher or caretaker more often, which can be seen as positive consequences of voluntary work. However, simultaneously, negative consequences arise because volunteers take over the tasks of the staff members and the regular teachers, and act in their own (European) way (cf. Zavitz & Butz, 2011). Their presence decreases the productivity of the staff members and leads to frustration among all actors because of their different perceptions about work pressure, working hours and child contact.

Another interesting linkage between positive and negative consequences is related to the transfer of knowledge and the adaptation of work methods, which can be conceived as meaning elements in the practices (see Shove et al., 2012). Particularly the interactions and exchange of cultural values at Zion Primary School have created more intercultural understanding. Nevertheless, volunteers and staff at both projects do not adapt to each

other's work methods, because they prefer their own habits or they do not have the skills or money, in the case of the Ghanaian informants, to take over the work methods of the volunteers (cf. McGehee, 2014; Raes, 2013; Ruhanen et al., 2008; Simpson, 2004). In the end, the practices in the volunteer projects do not change that much, although the local staff and teachers appreciate the more affectionate and softer approach to the children by the volunteers.

Donations by volunteers affect both practices in terms of resources or material conditions (see Wisner et al., 2005). Besides improving the circumstances in both practices, volunteers in Tamale Children's Home use their money to improve health or hygiene standards. The donations are regarded by the local actors as the most important consequences of volunteering. However, because the donations are handled improperly by the orphanage staff the volunteers decided to reduce their donations, which is an example of a positive impact of volunteering that also leads to a negative consequence.

Discussion

In contrast to many previous studies, a practice approach shows the many recursive consequences of volunteer tourism that are interlinked and are influenced by the way interaction junctions occur in the practice related to different materials, competences and meaning (see Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren, 1997; Verbeek, 2009). The results presented in this paper indicate that several (un)successful interaction junctions during volunteer work involve both positive and negative consequences. Moreover, positive impacts of volunteering may eventually lead to negative consequences, and vice versa. This complicates conventional debates about whether volunteer tourism is 'good' or 'bad' for the destination.

From a practice approach perspective, these linkages between positive and negative consequences depend on the specific constellation of actor- and context-related factors, which play a role in the different interaction junctions in the volunteer projects. Because of many routines in the practices, the different backgrounds (knowledge, skills, meanings) of the actors, and relatively inflexible and bad contextual conditions (resources, materials) the current practices persist (see Giddens, 1984).

Taking a practice approach lens, the examples illustrate two additional issues. Firstly, the actions of the volunteers also affected the Ghanaian context, because by decreasing or stopping their donations to the orphanage or school, volunteers may also influence donor organizations, which may end their support for these projects too. Secondly, these examples show that practices are strongly linked to each other. The fact that orphanage staff take donations home or sell them because of their financially poor situation can also be linked to the donation practice by the volunteers and their decisions to reduce their donations. Changing attitudes of volunteers towards these financial donation practices may also have a wider effect on their own future volunteering activity and donations to other volunteer projects, and so on. This endless linkage of practices, which can include all domains, practices or 'rituals' in life forms chains or networks of practices or rituals, as described by Collins (1993, 2004) and Shove et al. (2012).

At the end of this paper, we can conclude that compared to alternative approaches the social practice approach assists us in understanding more comprehensively the interaction junctions that arise between volunteers and local actors in volunteer projects. Focusing on the interaction practices between volunteers and staff in the school and orphanage allows us to analyse linkages between negative and positive consequences of volunteer work and possible influencing factors. Furthermore, the practice approach could offer important added value, because of the central position of analysing routines, dynamics and chains

of practices within the theoretical framework. Approaching social practices as networks or chains has not previously had a lot of attention in the academic literature on volunteer tourism or in the field of leisure and tourism in general.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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