Tourism and the Millennium Development Goals
Tourism, Local Communities and Development

Edited by
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# Contents

**Citation Information**

1. Tourism, Poverty Reduction and the Millennium Development Goals: Perspectives and Debates  
   *Jarkko Saarinen, Christian M. Rogerson and Haretsebe Manwa*  
   vii

2. The UN Millennium Development Goals, tourism and development: the tour operators' perspective  
   *Marina Novelli and Alexander Hellwig*  
   1

3. The Grootberg Lodge partnership in Namibia: towards poverty alleviation and empowerment for long-term sustainability?  
   *Renaud Lapeyre*  
   13

4. Tourism and development challenges in the least developed countries: the case of The Gambia  
   *Richard Sharpley*  
   29

5. Promoting gender equality and empowering women? Tourism and the third Millennium Development Goal  
   *Lucy Ferguson*  
   43

6. The tourists of development tourism – representations 'from below'  
   *João Afonso Baptista*  
   65

7. Can community-based tourism contribute to development and poverty alleviation? Lessons from Nicaragua  
   *Maria José Zapata, C. Michael Hall, Patricia Lindo and Mieke Vandeschaeghe*  
   80

8. Pro-Poor Tourism: From Leakages to Linkages. A Conceptual Framework for Creating Linkages between the Accommodation Sector and ‘Poor’ Neighbouring Communities  
   *Dorothea Meyer*  
   98

   *V. R. Van der Duim and J. Caalders*  
   123

10. A Situated View of Tourism. The Case of Turkey  
    *Siyami Işık*  
    149
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. The effects of tourism development on the sustainable utilisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of natural resources in the Okavango Delta, Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Joseph Mbaiwa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Balancing people and park: towards a symbiotic relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Cape Town and Table Mountain National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sanette Lacea Ferreira</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Can ecotourism contribute to tackling poverty? The importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of ‘symbiosis’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jim Butcher</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Beyond 2015 – Rethinking the Nexus of Tourism and Poverty Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christian M. Rogerson, Jarkko Saarinen and Haretsebe Manwa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tourists of developmenttourism – representations ‘from below’

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Tourism has become part of the ‘development’ agenda. As an agent of post-modernity, tourism helps increase the commodification of what were previously regarded as un commodified matters of social life. Accordingly, ‘development’ is now a tourist commodity in many localities in the so-called ‘South’, where the tourists in turn assume a moral consumer style. This paper is primarily about (strategic) representations of the tourist-other as a protagonist of assistance in the realm of what I call developmenttourism. My argument is to a large degree empirical, based on two villages in Mozambique. In particular, the two cases studied indicate the interlaced relationship between tourism and ‘development’, and its repercussion on the discursive activity and representations of the members of the two villages. Moreover, both cases analysed in this paper inform the broader non-governmental economic and moral order in which they are situated.

Mbueca

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‘Want to enjoy a little opulence and do your bit for the local community at the same time?’ asked the British newspaper The Observer in an article titled ‘Luxury without the guilt’. The clarification came immediately after: ‘It’s no longer an impossible combination (...) in the Lake Nyasa’s most gorgeous corner, Nkwichi Lodge and the Manda Wilderness project have together assumed a prominent role in the country’s [Mozambique] tourism renaissance’.

Briefly put, in 1994, two British brothers developed an idea for creating a tourism venture that would help ‘local communities’ in southeastern Africa. They mobilised private investors who were willing to invest $500,000US in the project. Their idea was materialised in 2001 when they established a lodge in the pristine and ‘untouched’ Mchenga Nkwichi beach, located at the shore of the Lake Niassa, in the largest but least populated province of Mozambique – Niassa. The Nkwichi Lodge is surrounded by an idyllic landscape that is part of the Manda Wilderness Area – a privately initiated conservation region of 120,000 ha. As advertised in the enterprise’s website, ‘the Manda Wilderness Community Trust works closely with Nkwichi Lodge to ensure local communities also benefit from the growth of responsible tourism in the region’. The Nkwichi Lodge is cited worldwide as an example of good practices in tourism. Indeed, it was
announced the winner of the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2008 for best small hotel/accommodation in the world. The activities offered to the ‘guests’ include canoeing on the lake, snorkelling, and guided walks to the ‘community development’ projects and nearby villages, particularly to Mbueca.

According to the ‘local’ authorities, Mbueca has around 750 inhabitants. As the main ‘community’ attraction, the village does not have electricity, mobile telephone networks, or flushing toilets; households rely on firewood for cooking, and candles and paraffin lamps for light. The village is not accessible by road, only by footpaths. The closest road is at the Manda Mbuzi village, a two-and-a-half hour journey by foot. Farming, fishing, and tourism jobs are the main economic activities in the village (Figure 1).

In April 2008 I came to Mbueca to record the perceptions of the inhabitants about tourism and the tourists who visit Mbueca in particular. In the village, I tried to convert informal conversations into debates around tourism. However, this proved to be a difficult task. Each time we engaged in the topic, the Mbueca residents opted to speak of ‘donors’ (‘doadores’). The word ‘tourist(s)’ was missing from our conversations. Despite my efforts to provoke and induce the use of the word, they persistently used the ‘development’ category. ‘We used to be visited’, the man in charge of the only store in the village said, ‘by donors from the entire world: from Europe, Asia, America . . .’ Days passed without any reference to the tourists.

The reason for this intriguing phenomenon became clear following a personal experience as a ‘tourist’. On one occasion I asked a group of people for someone who could
show me the village. They then called a man who introduced himself with the English version of his (Portuguese) name. He was my guide for the next three hours on a tour into shortage, need, and potentialities for ‘community development’.

I was led to the health clinic and to the Anglican Church, where I learned about some of their limitations. After one hour of touring the two places, another man spontaneously joined us for the rest of the tour. He was the director of the school at Mbuca, which was our next and last destination (Figure 2). When we arrived there he recounted how the school was built by the ‘local community’ with materials and money given by ‘donors’ and by the Manda Wilderness Community Trust, a British non-governmental organisation (NGO). ‘However’, he said, ‘the school is still incomplete. The doors were our most recent improvement, made possible only through the money given by donors. But we need more support to provide better conditions for our children. The urgent needs now are for chairs and to repair the floor’.7 During the visit I was silent most of the time. The director of the school gave a formal speech as a standard presentation. Later, he guided me to his office and kindly asked me to sit on a chair in front of his desk. He asked me to fill out the ‘Visitors Book’ (‘Livro de Visitas’), as if I had just seen an art exhibition or a monument. One of the columns of the book — titled ‘Observations’ (‘Observações’) — was full of English comments made by previous visitors, such as: ‘good’, ‘keep up the good work’, ‘thank you for showing us the school’, and so forth. Moreover, some of the comments ended with a number preceded or followed by a monetary symbol (e.g. ‘$80’, ‘50€’). After I had filled out the ‘Visitors Book’, without having written any number under the column ‘Observations’, I gave it back to him. But then he slowly gave it back to me and repeated something that he had already emphasised during his presentation: ‘the donors used to support us’.8 At that moment something became clear that was confirmed throughout my permanence in the village: whenever the Mbuca residents talked about ‘donors’, they were referring to (those whom I considered) ‘tourists’. However, this finding raised a new basic question; why have people in Mbuca adopted such a category (‘donors’) among the range of other categories? In other words, why have they attached such signification to ‘tourists’?.

![Figure 2](image_url) The school of Mbuca. Photograph by the author. Mbuca, 11 April 2008.

82
Canhane

Around 2000 km south of Mbuca, still in Mozambique, the village of Canhane is developing what is considered the first ‘community-based tourism’ initiative in the country. The Covane Community Lodge is situated seven kilometres away from the village, but in a portion of land ‘belonging’ to the ‘community’ of Canhane (Figure 3). Its infrastructure and the tourism business are owned by the Canhaners. Despite its ‘community’ ownership, the Covane Community Lodge was primarily the initiative of an NGO. In the beginning of 2001, the Swiss NGO Helvetas, based in the capital of Mozambique (Maputo), received funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to ‘develop’ the surroundings of the Limpopo National Park. By October 2002 the Swiss NGO had decided to provide the $50,000US from USAID and an additional $20,000 from their own funds to the population of Canhane. These funds were allocated to support the residents in building and maintaining the Covane Community Lodge, which officially opened in May 2004. The tourism project was planned to provide both a cultural experience to the ‘tourist’ and a benefit for the population of Canhane.

According to data from 2006 provided by the community leader,\(^9\) Canhane has a population of 1105 residents (567 women and 538 men), who are predominantly subsistence farmers, fishermen, or unemployed. At the time when I left the village in December 2008, there were four Canhaners directly employed at the Covane Lodge: two security guards, the driver of the Covane’s truck, and one woman working as a servant.

In February 2008, at the peak of summer, a four-wheel drive vehicle transporting two men crossed the village of Canhane at high speed. At that moment, I was seated close to a lady who was peeling canhu fruits. We were relatively close to the trail that divides Canhane; hence, we were literally immersed by the heavy cloud of red dust left in the vehicle’s trail. The just-washed and still-humid canhu fruits became covered by the dirt from the road, as were we. The children who were playing on the road ran away from it.

Figure 3. Location of Canhane. Diagram by the author.
in a frightened way. The vehicle’s brake lights did not light up at all even as chickens and goats scampered out of its way. The lady next to me kept her calm and told me: ‘If they are going in that direction, they will be staying at the Covane [Lodge]. They might come here to visit the community’. I asked her then: ‘But why would these recklessly disrespectful people want to come here, away from their air-conditioned car, to visit Canhane?’ She spontaneously answered me: ‘because the tourists [turistas] want to see what we are doing with their money’.

She gave me a key to decode the meaning that the word ‘tourists’ carries with it in Canhane: donors. The majority of the residents approve of having tourism activities in the village. When they were asked why, the typical answers I got were: ‘because the tourists support the community’; ‘because it brings benefits to the community’; ‘because the tourists’ contributions are to help the community’; ‘because tourists assist the community’. Therefore, her response represented a generalised phenomenon in the village; that is, the discursive practice that converts the visitor-other into ‘the tourist’ conveys the Canhaners’ normative significations: the category ‘tourist’ embodies an agent of ‘community development’.

Especially among the fishermen who live in the lower part of Canhane, on the banks of the Elephants River, the lodge is called ‘Helvetas’ instead of Covane (Community Lodge). Such connotation is also common in neighbourhood villages. For example, just after I had interviewed the community leader of the village of Cubo, he asked to the person who was accompanying me to help in the translation: ‘I used to see him around [referring to me]. Is he sleeping at Helvetas [referring to Covane Lodge]?’ There is a direct and deliberate association of the lodge, and in particular its visitors, with the NGO. Moreover, not even the repetitive character of the formal appointments the Canhaners have in the village with donors, consultants, and/or ‘development’ experts has led to their adoption of any denomination other than the category ‘tourists’. Although on many occasions these ‘development’ professionals only stay a couple of hours in the village, they are still considered ‘tourists’.

In the case of Canhane, the dominion of ‘development’ is transferred to the sphere of leisure activity (the ‘donor’ is called a ‘tourist’), while in Mbuessa the reverse happens (the ‘tourist’ is called a ‘donor’). Both discourses are important because they are not passive; that is, they inform practice and make a ‘reality’. Fundamentally, a social science perspective from anthropology implies observing what people do and say and using their categories to understand it. Where do these conceptions come from? How do they relate with the ‘place-in-the-world’ (Ferguson, 2006) that Africa has come to occupy in the new global order? In sum, what do these two cases – which seem to counter each other – tell us?

The category ‘tourist’

According to Buzard (1993), the word ‘tourist’ is a late-eighteenth-century coinage especially used for those touring areas such as the English Lake District (p. 1). Robert Aubin (1944) confirmed this, attesting that the word was first planted in the language in 1780 with the announcement of a poem called ‘Ode to the Genius of the Lakes in the North of England’ written by an anonymous poet (p. 334). In particular, from the time of the formation of a ‘tourism social science’ (Nash, 2007, p. 1) in the 1970s there has been an effort expressed in many research reports, scientific articles, state institutions, monographs, and tourism literature to achieve a universal concept of what constitutes ‘the tourist’. However, since German sociologists’ (Knebel, 1960) attempts to define ‘the
TOURISM AND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

tourist’, inconsistencies can still be found, and none of the generalised conceptualisations has been widely adopted (Cohen, 1984, p. 374). As Crick (1989) noted, a ‘fundamental uncertainty remains – namely, about what a tourist is’ (p. 312).

I believe that the ambiguity that surrounds the universality of its meaning is due principally to the inconsequent task of defining such a ‘fluid’ figure in the present era, which is characterised by the end of pre-allocated and static reference groups (Bauman, 2000, p. 7). The high-dynamic stage of modern society calls for a rethinking of concepts in an attempt to frame their stable meanings. As Hall (1996) has argued with regard to ‘race’, a concept can be attached and detached from so many different places, groups, and ideas that it operates as a free-floating signifier (Dixon & Hapke, 2003, p. 143).

The purpose of this paper is not to contribute to a (universal) definition of what constitutes ‘the tourist’. Rather, this article addresses the emerging de-differentiation of the meaning of ‘tourist’ from the perspective of the ‘hosts’ (Smith, 1989). The world is now dominated by infinite exchanges of symbols, peoples, values, images, goods, and narratives, leading to the unbinding of processes that define contemporary social life. Using Urry’s (1990/2002) own words: ‘post-modernism involves a dissolving of the boundaries’ (p. 74). Therefore, the increase of interwoven proceedings and the disintegration of clear borders between what were previously differentiated social activities have led to the reproduction of categories of activity (McCabe, 2005, p. 87) that express, reflect, and reproduce de-differentiation. It is in this sense that modernity assists in the emergence of new kinds of de-differentiated others.

Taking the above into consideration, we find that what is important is not so much the universal definition of the ‘tourist’, but what the category represents in different contexts (what it incorporates and excludes) and, particularly, what it camouflages. The principle behind the classification of the ‘donor’ in Mbueca and the ‘tourist’ in Canhane informs the way in which definitions of reality are constituted and maintained through linguistic processes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The rhetoric of ‘donor’ and ‘tourist’ must be deconstructed and attention paid to whose voices are speaking and whose interests are being served (Cox, 1995). Following this line, and thus taking the perspective that in contemporary societies power takes essentially the form of representation, I suggest that behind the speaking subjects of discourse expressed at the ‘local’ level lies a fundamental truth: (many) ‘local communities’ in the ‘South’ have become subjugated producers, product, and sellers of tourism and ‘development’.

The roles of discourse

Through resorting to the subject of madness, Foucault (1972) considered discourse as ‘the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects’ (pp. 32–33). For Foucault, discourse makes its objects through meaningful social interaction. In this sense, we might think of discourse as a material practice in which we make sense of the world, shaping our perceptions of social relations. The Foucauldian employment of the term encompasses not only communicative practice, but also the ideological systems that animate the structures of social practice; that is, discourses shape the ways in which we apprehend the world (are prescriptive) and exist to express certain realities in accordance to ‘higher’ ideological principles. However, these ‘higher’ effects are neither homogeneous nor static, as societies are not. Picard (1996), for example, noted that the meaning associated with the Balinese expression for ‘touristic culture’ (‘budaya wisata’) has shifted from identifying a threat to Balinese society to describing a positive feature of modern Bali (p. 165). As Ferguson (1990/1994) clearly confirmed: ‘discourses have important and very real social consequences’ (p. xv).
However, language as discourse is limited. That is to say that by disciplining our thinking, language includes certain possibilities of knowledge – generating certain realities – but also excludes others. Discourse constructs its own conventions by constituting frameworks of sensemaking, producing meanings and making sense of reality through the way it rules in or rules out certain ways of thinking (Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, the important question must be: ‘what was being said in what was said?’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 28). Scholars have pointed that in order to understand discourse as a social practice, it must be examined in the commonplace occurrences of everyday life (Marston, 1989, p. 439). It is this latter suggestion that I want to grab hold of by adapting Foucault’s question to the main topic of this paper: What was being said when the Mbueca residents referred to the ‘tourists’ as ‘donors’ and the Canhane residents referred to the ‘donors’ as ‘tourists’? It is thus to the sense behind such categorisation that I now turn.

**Discourse of development**

Categorising the world and its constituents through language and words is an essential feature of the legitimation of knowledge. Some years ago, the Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano held a rally in the northern city of Nampula, in which he presented the ministers of his government. His speech was made in Portuguese, with direct translation into the regional dialect, Emakua. After he presented the minister of culture, the translator hesitated, and said: ‘he is the minister of fun’ (Couto, 2005, p. 128). The absence of equivalence is not an outcome of a minority of the dialect Emakua, but another way of interpreting the world and, in turn, of producing and maintaining different forms of knowledge: words are essential tools in our conception of worlds.

To understand the meaning of words one has first to consider them to be the words of someone, informed by significations brought by the context in which they are applied. Words are agile ingredients of language appropriated differently by people, fundamental to the construction of social reality (Gergen, 1999; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004). The categorisation of ‘tourist’ as ‘donor’ (Mbueca) and ‘donor’ as ‘tourist’ (Canhane) thus reflects the world-as-it-is (re)presented by the speakers. More precisely, the use of one word to encompass ‘tourists’ and ‘donors’, the intertwining character of their meanings, informs the way the speakers make sense of, and/or perform, the world of which they are a part.

Many authors have noted that the power of the ‘development industry’ (Fisher, 1997) rests on a historically produced discourse (Dubois, 1991; Escobar, 1988; Ferguson, 1990/1994). Indeed, the ‘discourse of development’ has emerged from the worldwide political rearrangement that occurred after World War II. Ever since the post-war transformations, the ‘development’ institutions have elaborated and circulated a particular discourse that justifies and legitimises ‘development’ interventions. In the view of many critics, the ‘development’ apparatus identifies ‘problems’ resultant from an idealised way of progress, which in turn requires the intervention of ‘development’ agencies (Ferguson, 1990/1994; Rahmema, 1992) that assume the ‘technical’ solutions to the ‘problems’ that they produced. James Ferguson (1990/1994), for example, has demonstrated how the ‘discourse of development’ has constructed the African country of Lesotho as a particular kind of object of knowledge that validates ‘development’ interventions. Arturo Escobar (1988) has exemplified how the ‘development’ knowledge organised the construction of the problem of hunger in the ‘Third World’, with a particular focus on Colombia. He explained how some institutions utilised a set of practices in the construction of this problem in such a way that they could control policy themes, enforce exclusions, and affect social relations. In the
same way, Avilés (2001) has shown how institutions devoted to international ‘development’ have created a discourse that influences the conduct of the ‘Epidemiological Profile’ of El Salvador.

The ‘discourse of development’ generates a structure of knowledge, and by that shapes the ways in which the ‘realities’ are perceived and defined. In some cases the ‘development’ knowledge has become globalised in such a way that it has achieved the characteristic of ‘world opinion’ – Africa as ‘Third World’ is one such example (Escobar, 1988). The reproduction of this discourse produces knowledge within a narrow framework. As the Mozambican writer Mia Couto said, ‘Africa is still seen by the world as an exotic place, of an elder telling stories close to a fire, of the wizards, of the witchdoctors’ (Zanini, 2008, p. 30). According to Couto, these images and the associated categorisations of ‘Africa’ ignore 50 years of independencies, urbanisation, industrialisation, and the emergence of some of the most energetic metropolises in the world. The globalisation of such images means that ‘Africa’ as a category ‘enters Western knowledge and imagination (...) through a series of lacks and absences, failings and problems’ (Ferguson, 2006, p. 2); ‘where a “traditional African way of life” is simply a polite name for poverty’ (Ferguson, 2006, p. 21); and so, ‘Africa’ acquires the attribute of a ‘developing’ case seeking a ‘development’ solution. The obvious problem here is that such images do not just distort social ‘reality’; they also shape it. More fundamentally, it is in these terms that ‘Africa’ becomes a discursive and imaginative ‘reality’ within which, and according to which, some people live.

The concept of ‘Third World’ – introduced into the literature of the social sciences by the French economist and demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952 – is now a term of reference that is appropriated by the ‘discourse of development’. The original meaning of the concept – used by Abbé Sieyès (1748–1836) to signal the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a political force in the eighteenth century (Mintz, 1976, p. 377) – was then converted into new significances, essentially expressing shortage, poverty, the exotic, and ‘underdevelopment’. The concept and its new meanings have spread as a fictitious construct and have become an omnipresent reality. Discourses, as Said (1978) noted, are not innocent explanations of the world. They are a way of ‘worlding’ (Spivak, 1987), of appropriating the world through knowledge. Wide-reaching connotations of Africa as ‘Third World’ have thus induced and legitimised the interventions of ‘development’ institutions in order to resolve the problems that the (working) concept brings with it. In this view, the so-called ‘Third World’ ‘is being swept by a non-governmental, associational, or “quiet” revolution that at least one analyst believes may “prove to be as significant to the latter twentieth century as the rise of the nation-state was to the latter nineteenth century”’ (Salamon, 1993 in Fisher (1997, p. 440)). Moreover, it was in this line of thought that Ferguson (2006) mentioned the advent of what he termed ‘non-governmental states’ in Africa.

Mozambique is part of the ‘Third World’ framework. The country was under an international embargo in 1983, which was only lifted after it agreed to join the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1984. This was the time when Mozambique started to benefit exponentially from international donations. The country was pressed down by a deep economic crisis due to the civil war (1975–1992). Until that time independent Mozambique had never authorised the presence of international NGOs. However, in 1984 the USA demanded that two NGOs – Care and World Vision – be authorised (Hanlon & Smart, 2008, p. 35). Over the next five years, 180 international NGOs were established in Mozambique (Hanlon, 1991, p. 207). Since then, whenever Mozambique resisted adopting the internationally driven policies of structural adjustment largely imposed by the World Bank and IMF, it suffered more international embargoes, such as in 1986 when all humanitarian food supply was stopped (Hanlon & Smart, 2008, p. 36).
To put it in another way, the ‘needed’ aid flowed only as long as Mozambique agreed to a set of economic and political policies imposed by the ‘North’. This situation has led to the institutionalisation and increasing professionalism of ‘solidarity’ in the country; it rooted the ‘aid-dependency model’ (Moyo, 2010) in almost every domain of the nation. Consequently, Mozambique became a donor-oriented world of ‘development’ programs and projects. The Mozambican Prime Minister Luisa Diogo confirmed this more recently:

‘Mozambique has been helping itself through its integrity in the implementation of the [international] reforms, programs and projects (...) [but] we need more resources [donations] to continue presenting good results’ (Anon, 2008). Since 2004 more than half of the Government Annual Budget of Mozambique has come from foreign ‘development’ donors, international organisations, and governments – known as the G-19. Their contributions attest to the heavy dependence of Mozambique on international donations and in turn show the influence foreign ‘development’ institutions have on the country.

No wonder then that the ‘local communities’ in Mozambique have adopted and appropriated for themselves the ‘discourse of development’ as a way to be included in the network of ‘global existence’. The ‘industry of aid’ has become the main ruling force in Mozambican society, therefore spreading the ideas of its dominance all over the country and shaping the discursive production. In this vein, I believe that the similarity between the words previously quoted by the Mozambican Prime Minister and the discourse formally spoken to me by the director of the school of Mbeueca (‘But we need more support to provide better conditions for our children’) is more than a simple coincidence. In truth, these are words informed by the formative ‘discourse of development’ that has been institutionalised in the country’s post-independence regime, particularly in the last two decades. ‘Donors’ (‘doadores’), ‘human-animal conflict’ (‘conflito Homem animal’), ‘capacitating’ (‘capacitação’), ‘community participation’ (‘participação comunitária’), ‘community development’ (‘desenvolvimento comunitário’), ‘NGO’ (‘ONG’), ‘local development’ (‘desenvolvimento local’), ‘facilitators’ (‘facilitadores’) and ‘poverty eradication’ (‘erradicação de pobreza’) are just some examples of terms that are part of the common discourse in many of the remotest villages in the country. Some of these are concepts expressing problems; others are simply working concepts. However, the spread and inclusion of such concepts, obviously strongly reliant on ‘development’ institutional support, into all the domains of Mozambican society exercise constraint upon other forms of discourses and, thus, other forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1972, p. 219). The system of rules that emerges through discourse is said to be responsible for the organised ways of using concepts, of referring to objects and people, and of thinking in strategies (Díaz-Bone et al., 2007). It is this character of producing normative orders of knowledge that establishes a dominant construct of ‘reality’, defining ‘the problems’ and their ‘solutions’. To put it simply, the new concepts that are now part of the common rhetoric in all of Mozambique carry with them meanings in which the ‘development’ and non-governmental ideology is the legitimate framework for handling them.

Discourses do not only make possible certain ways of thinking, but also certain ways of acting and being (Phillips et al., 2004, p. 638). By adopting the ‘discourse of development’, ‘local communities’ are making a decision about, using Bauman’s (2000) expression, ‘being and nothingness’ (p. 173); that is, ‘local communities’ are reaching a position in the new global inequality order by being the representatives of the antithesis of modern societies: ‘underdevelopment’. However, there is an existential price: by accomplishing inclusion via their adherence to the ‘discourse of development’, the ‘local’ reality is transcended and reified in accordance with the ‘development’ rationality, which in turn is extended to the crux of the ‘community’ rationality itself. The members of the ‘local
communities’ become, as Mia Couto put it, ‘those who look to a mirror that was invented by others’ (Zanini, 2008, p. 30). As a result, while making claims of inclusion through strategically embodying and reproducing hierarchies of inequality, some members of these ‘communities’ become trapped to essentialised notions of themselves as ‘underdeveloped’.

The ‘development’-alisation of tourism: developmenttourism

‘Development’ strategies based on tourism are very much part of the neoliberal plan (Smith & Rosaleen, 2003). Faced with a contemporary world ruled by consumption, in which every matter is subject to the same principle of evaluation as all other items of consumption, ‘local communities’ commodify their ‘underdevelopment’ distinctiveness in order to place themselves in the global consumer market. Tourism emerges as the proper vehicle for that. For the sake of this argument, let me return to the village of Mbeuca.

When I first arrived in Mbeuca, the ‘external’ positive image of ‘responsible tourism’ that floated over the region hid conflicts, particularly between the Mbeuca residents and the managers of the Nkwichi Lodge. ‘The donors come here because of us: they want to help us, not the lodge at the beach. They must not interfere in our relation with the donors’, an inhabitant of Mbeuca said to me. The origin of the quarrel can be traced back to when a group of ‘donors’, after visiting the village, promised $820US to the population. When they returned from the village tour, they delivered the money to the managers of the Nkwichi Lodge. However, ‘that donation never arrived here. They [the managers of the lodge] kept it for themselves at our expense’, one of the brothers of the régulo of Mbeuca told me. On the other hand, the British national in charge of the ‘community development’ policy of the Nkwichi Lodge argued: ‘if we give that money directly to them [Mbeuca residents], it will never be used to improve the school and the church, which was the tourists’ wish. They have to present to us first how, and on what, they intend to spend the money’. The lodge then assumed the powerful position of intermediate and ruler between the ‘donors’ and the ‘local community’.

However, the supposed dispossessed entity in this relation (the ‘local community’) also showed its power attributes through its ability to negotiate its position (in tourism) by using the authority of ‘development’. ‘We now want to have more fathers … two fathers!’, the régulo of Mbeuca said to me. He was referring to another investor in tourism with whom he was negotiating. At the time when I was in the village, I was told that an Italian man who had been living in Maputo for five years was invited to build a lodge on a beach within the jurisdiction of Mbeuca. This was also part of the ongoing animosity. ‘We know’, the brother of the régulo insisted, ‘that the Nkwichi Lodge doesn’t like that! They want to be here alone. But the new lodge will be better for us because it will bring more donors and more development to our community. We are the ones who need support, not them!’

Mbeuca thus exemplifies how the halo of ‘(under)development’ in tourism can reproduce a complex relation of power among the ‘donors’ (tourists), the tourism managers, and the ‘local community’. However, it also shows how the placement of tourism as a potential ‘development’ tool and the ‘discourse of development’ (e.g. ‘… more development to our community. We are the ones who need support’) can be used and appropriated as a ‘community’ strategy within a consumption-driven framework to govern relationships of authority and legitimacy. In other words, the ‘local community’ of Mbeuca has obtained its (tourism) value by self-consciously representing a ‘development problem’. The authority of the ‘development’ ideology is used by, and within, the producers of tourism (including the ‘local community’) as a legitimate competitive force. Therefore, and taking the hypothesis of post-modernisation as a process in which ‘difference’ has become a
dominant strategy (Isin, 2002, pp. 122–123), the important point is that the differentiated combination of tourism and ‘development’ morals allows the materialisation of the underdevelopmentness quality of the ‘community’ on the market. The discursive practice of referring to ‘donors’ as ‘tourists’ is as much a strategic representation ‘from below’ (Robins, 2001, p. 846) as a reflex of the tourism and ‘development’ order in which Mbuena has been placed. Such representation forms part of the hegemonic strategies of establishing sense and control of the visitor-other, in accordance to the interests of the tourism and ‘development’ industry, as well as those of the ‘local community’.

As in Mbuena, this post-modernist facet of what I call developmenttourism is also characteristic of Canhané, and is expressed, among other ways, through the way it brought into existence a new ‘local’ poetic of representations. A South African consultant who carried out research in Canhané in 2005 wrote: ‘many people in the village [Canhané] reported that they had seen tourists in the village over the past week’ (Spenceley, 2006, p. 113). The consultant was hosted at the Covane Lodge the month prior to the interviews. She stated that, ‘none [of the tourists during that period] had undertaken the village visit. Therefore it appears that estimates from villagers were exaggerated’ (Spenceley, 2006, p. 113). However, what she did not realise was that the Canhaners were including her and other ‘development’ experts, who visited the village during that period, into the category of ‘tourists’. In this sense, the Canhaners invert the perception held by the Mbuena residents; that is, for the inhabitants of Canhané the ‘donors’ (and all professionals associated with the ‘development’ sector) are ‘tourists’. In the same way, at the beginning of October 2010 I was told by the staff of the Covane Lodge that, ‘lots of tourists will come here next Tuesday: it will be a busy time for us’, 18 People in Canhané were also commenting on it. The day before the ‘tourists’ arrived I met the driver of the Covane Lodge’s truck at his house, and I asked him about if he knew exactly who they were. ‘Yes’, he said, ‘we already know them: they are a group of consultants from the NGO Technoserve’. 19 He added later, ‘it’s a group of tourists that work on the relation between the lodge and the community: they come here to help the community’.

As in Mbuena, the ‘community-based tourism’ project in Canhané gives evidence to the way its inhabitants have adopted and put into practice the principle that their tourism value lies on their being potentialities for ‘development’. In both villages, ‘community development’ is the legitimate tourism product. Therefore, its members use the (‘underdevelopmental’) nature that has constituted them as ‘hosts’ to attain a position in the global tourism market: they capitalise on the ‘underdevelopmental’ value of their tourism constituency. This means the transformation of shortage and neediness into an instrument of ‘local empowering’, signifying thus hopes of inclusion in the new neoliberal and non-governmental order in which they are situated. More specific to the matter of this article, what I suggest is that ‘development’ should be seen as the structuring element of the modalities of tourism in Mbuena and Canhané; it is something that has been incorporated into them and not something that stands outside of them. In these modalities of practice, tourism and ‘development’ operate side by side, share the same vision and goals, and are therefore both perceived by the inhabitants as undifferentiated. Moreover, this is explicitly and strategically manifested through their discursive representations of the ‘tourist-others’ as protagonists of assistance.

The meanings of aid attached to the word ‘donor’ in Mbuena and ‘tourist’ in Canhané are compatible with the interests of the inhabitants of both villages. In the same way as Sampson (1996) addressed the integration of ‘the language of projects’ in the civil society of Albania, the use of the words ‘tourist’ and ‘donor’ in the two villages in Mozambique can be mapped out according to the ‘interests’ of the residents: it involves the disposing and manipulation of representations in favour of one’s own context. Likewise, Butcher suggested ‘it could be that communities in the developing world will adopt [new rhetoric]
(…) in order to gain access to (…) funds’ (Butcher, 2007, p. 125, italics are mine). If it is true that the involvement of ‘development’ in tourism is to a certain degree a response to the existing consumer expectation and to a macroeconomic order, then it is also correct to say that this depends on the protagonists of the encounter at the ‘grassroots’ level. Their actions, which show a strong commitment to the ‘development’-alisation of tourism, foster the means by which tourism becomes dedifferentiated in their villages.

Dedifferentiation between tourism and ‘development’

In theory the dedifferentiated character of tourism found in both villages is in the spirit of the present age (Doquett & Evrard, 2008, p. 187). Indeed, post-modernity, it is said, is characterised by the quality of dedifferentiation, an increasing dissolution of borders between differences (Lash, 1990). In such an unbounded world dominated by infinite exchanges and interwoven processes, the present is often regarded as expressing rootlessness (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p.110), and even the idea of home, historically essential to defining the tourism experience, is redefined. In this vein, Jean Urbain gave an example of how the porosity between the everyday and the elsewhere of holidays is increasing. When he was working on ‘holiday homes’, he met a woman who told him: ‘Since I moved into an individual house, each evening when I come home I feel like I’m on holiday’ (Doquett & Evrard, 2008, p. 187). She was putting herself on holiday in her everyday life. The world has become an infinite collection of possibilities (Bauman, 2000, p. 61) as individuals can place themselves in the skin of ‘tourists’ everywhere, even ‘at home’. Her observation then reflects a broader issue; that is, in post-modern societies the borders between ‘at home’ and ‘away’, everyday and extraordinary, settled and ‘mobile’ are progressively blurring. As the distinction between home and away began to dissolve, so too the distinction between work and pleasure began to disappear (Lash & Urry, 1993; Rojek, 1995). Such mergence has enabled many people to be able to holiday through ‘working’. This can be clearly found, for example, in those who spend long-term vacations in the ‘South’ volunteering to save animals in danger of extinction, work at orphanages, and build schools. In the ‘modern way of being-in-the-world’ (Bauman, 2000, p. 157) the extraordinary could also mean the everyday, and as Esman (1984) noted in relation to Louisiana Cajuns in USA, individuals can be ‘tourists within their own culture’ (p. 465).

All this comes down to saying that where there once had been a world of structural differentiation, there is now a world of dedifferentiation, in which the ‘tourist’ is reproduced in unlimited fields of life. The extension of this perspective has led Urry (1995) to proclaim the ‘end of tourism’. Historically, scholars have been accustomed to thinking of tourism as an external force acting upon a pre-existing object (Wood, 1998, p. 223). Urry’s (1995) fatalist perspective is thus justified by the perception of the disintegration of ‘tourism’s specificity’ for the reason that everyone is a tourist all the time, now that tourism is nowhere yet everywhere (p. 148). In turn, the ‘touristic modes of staging, visualisation and experience become increasingly central to other areas of social life’ (Wood, 1998, p. 229). As consequence of the post-modernist paradigm of ‘fusion’, the ‘tourist gaze’ became partly indistinguishable from all sorts of other social practices (Urry, 1990/2002, p. 74). Thus, many scholars support the view that the distinction between the ‘hosts and guests of tourism are no longer so easily perceived’ (Halvaksz, 2006, p. 101). Ryan, for example, noted almost two decades ago that a blurring of the boundaries between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’ often occurs when ‘tourists’ continuously return to a particular destination where they have established strong relationships with the inhabitants. Consequently, these ‘guests’ ‘become part of, but not from, the host community’ (Ryan, 1991 cited in O’Reilly, 2003, p. 308). Parallel
TOURISM AND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

to this, a growing body of literature has been produced about the blending between tourists and social scientists, which could be placed within the methodology trend of ‘self reflective ethnography’ (Hertz, 1997; Nash & Wintrob, 1972; Wolf, 1996). As ‘tourism and other aspects of culture are becoming “dedifferentiated”’ (Wood, 1998, p. 223), new interwoven modes of tourism practice arise. Moreover, it is the creativity of post-modern tourism, partly driven by economic determination, and the dedifferentiated character of its nature that inform the ‘development’-alisation of tourism; that is, the integration of the ‘development’ discourse, knowledge, and action into the tourism experience.

The way in which ‘development’ and tourism merges into each other (development-tourism) is informed worldwide by the engagement of multiple players. The private sector, governments, NGOs, media, the ‘tourists’, and the ‘hosts’ all assist in the creation and promotion of tourism as a ‘developmental’ act. For instance, not long after the tsunami hit the coastlines of the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004, the president of the Pacific Asia Travel Association said: ‘if you want to help us, book your trip now’ (Cater, 2006, p. 29). Cravatte and Chabloz (2008) have shown how some French associations use tourism to support sustainable ‘development’ in ‘southern countries’. Focusing particularly on the village of Doubou in Burkina Faso, the authors analysed the ways in which the NGO Tourism & Développement Solidaires embraced and put into practice the feeling of solidarity between the ‘tourists’ and the inhabitants of the village visited. Kate Simpson also gave eloquent evidence about the currently intimate relation between tourism and ‘development’. Focused on a specific ‘gap year’ industry – its targets were young people who took a ‘gap year’ between school and university – the author examined the way ‘development’ is promoted and sold through international volunteer tourism. Accordingly, the ‘gap year’ industry creates and promotes a ‘geography of need’ in which the ‘enthusiastic western volunteer (...) becomes the (...) agent of development’ (Simpson, 2004, p. 685). In a broader sense, Butcher and Smith (2010) addressed volunteer tourism in the ‘Third World’ as indicative of ‘post-development’ politics based on the construction of (ethical) identity through the act of consumption, rather than on collective politics, progressive oriented. However, although the existence of a growing body of literature criticising, advocating or simply noticing tourism in the ‘South’ as a potential means of ‘development’ (Ashley & Roe, 2002; Mowforth & Munt, 1998/2009; Salazar, 2004; Scheyvens, 2007; Sharpley & Telfer, 2002; Wearing, 2001) there has been, to my knowledge, no work done on the merging character of both sectors.

To that end, the conduct of tourism in Mbuya and Canhane, which expresses dedifferentiation between tourism and ‘development’, and ‘tourist’ and ‘donor’, should not be interpreted merely as a ‘local’ phenomenon. Instead, both reflect a post-modern phenomenon in which tourism consumption is projected into the moral agenda; an outcome of the calls for a new (‘Western’) moralised concept of leisure travel, or what Butcher (2003) called the ‘moralisation of tourism’.

Conclusion

The view of the ‘development’ organisations as voluntary, non-profit, independent, or ‘third’ sector (Fisher, 1993; Korten, 1990; Salamon, 1994) that are also separate from market principles contributes to perceptions of the ‘development’ ideology as part of a moral segment of society. These perceptions are linked with oft-stated aims of ‘doing good’, helping the ‘needy other’, and ‘community development’ in the ‘Third World’. What I am trying to demonstrate is that these ‘developmentalist’ moral conjectures are now also at the crux of particular forms of tourism and thus have become commodities themselves. The provision
of the ‘community’ experience to the tourists in the villages of Canhane and Mbueca intersects with the dominant ‘development’ ideology that hovers over the most part of Africa. Particularly, historical occurrences in Mozambique may inform contextual conditions that have fostered the straight relationship between ‘development’ and tourism in the country. Indeed, after the country’s independence, ‘during the 80s and beginnings of the 90s, the external tourism was dominated by businesses and was basically dominated by the accommodation of the members of International aid’ (Guambe, 2007, p. 43).20

As tourism diversifies, the representations of ‘tourists’ also vary. In this article I approached the emergence of such representations by resorting to the people who ‘visited’. The tactful response and adaptation of the residents of Canhane and Mbueca to the simultaneous presence of tourism and ‘development’ in their villages have led to the representations of ‘donors’ as ‘tourists’ (Canhane) and of ‘tourists’ as ‘donors’ (Mbueca): tourism and ‘development’ became dedifferentiated. These two cases in Mozambique also suggest that developmenttourism should not be simply seen as an imposition by the ‘North’ into the ‘South’: it is in some degree facilitated by the mutual interests of the participants. Conventionally regarded as a ‘problem’, particularly in its mass form, the ‘tourists’ are now advocated as a solution for the ‘local communities’ in the ‘Third World’. The figure of the ‘tourist’ has assumed a ‘developmental’ and moral consumer style, and is strategically constituted into a sort of aid provider (e.g. ‘the tourists support the community”).

However, both cases of dedifferentiation must be seen in the light of the broader moral and economic order in which the ‘local communities’ in Mozambique, and all of Africa, are situated. This means those who seek to put their ‘underdevelopmentness’ up for sale, to profit from what makes them different, find themselves having to do so under the universally recognisable terms in which their difference is represented (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009, p. 24). The commodifying impact of ‘underdevelopmentness’ can be interpreted as a way of ‘community empowerment’ in the sense that it generates market mentalities, and that the ‘local communities’ become more integrated in a worldwide (market) system. However, one may also consider that such commodification processes increment their dependency status from the wider system where the ‘local communities’ are now located and on which their residents have to rely; meaning subordination to a transcendent and totalising form of market logic. More precisely, the representations of ‘donor’ and ‘tourist’ in Mbueca and Canhane are a reflex of the market, ruled by tourism and ‘development’ principles, where the members of the ‘communities’ act, as product, producers and sellers. The cases of Mbueca and Canhane, and the dedifferentiated ‘tourist’, thus inform the wider context in which they operate, and demonstrate how ‘development’ in the ‘Third World’ has become part of the entertainment industry, which in turn reflects the incessant creation of new consumer markets and products induced by the expansion of neoliberalism. Arguably then, the advent of developmenttourism in the ‘South’ and the consequent transformation of the ‘host’ into the donee signify the setting in place of modern mechanisms of dependency and economic expansion coded by the ‘development’ rationale.

Notes
2.  In the Chinyanja dialect spoken in the region, ‘nychenga nkwichi’ means ‘squeaking sands’. Nkwichi is an onomatopoeia that imitates the sound made when one walks barefoot on the white and thin sand of the beach; ‘It makes’, a resident of the village said, ‘a sort of “nkwichi, nkwichi, nkwichi” sound. So we started to call it Nkwichi beach’ (conversation with Mbueca resident, 6 April 2008).

4. This article is necessarily empirical in nature and is mostly supported by primary data. It draws upon research undertaken by the author, namely 14 months of fieldwork in Mozambique between 2006 and 2008. The data produced here comes from three principal sources. First, extended periods of participant observation in which the events of each day were documented along with residents’ interpretations. Second, semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis, but also in group sessions, most of the times taking the form of conversations. Third, archive research and extensive bibliography analysis, primarily in Mozambique, South Africa, Portugal and Germany. Finally, in this article I extend the space of ‘problematisation’ further than one single case study in order to accomplish holistic and cross-cultural comparative perspectives. I refer to two cases in Mozambique which were under direct observation. More precisely, I completed fieldwork in the village of Canhane in October and September of 2006, between January and March of 2008, and between September and December of 2008; my fieldwork in the village of Mbueca was in April and May of 2008. This method bears upon an understanding of tourism that may be gained from a critical analysis of an array of multi-‘local’ angles, together with an assessment of the global forces at work.

5. Translations from Portuguese (national language of Mozambique) and Shangane (dialect spoken in Canhane) are my own.


7. Presentation made by the director of the school of Mbueca, Mbueca, 11 April 2008.

8. Conversation with the director of the school of Mbueca, Mbueca, 11 April 2008.

9. In Canhane people mainly use two expressions to define the individual recognised as the ‘local’ authority: (1) ‘Lider comunitario’, which is Portuguese. It is literally translated into English it means ‘community leader’; (2) ‘Hosi’, which is Shangane. This denomination has a broad sense which includes both space delimitation and the main ruler of a village.


15. Conversation with one of the supervisors of the Nkwichi Lodge, Mbueca, 17 April 2008.


18. Conversation with a group of employees at the Covane Lodge (the manager, the security guard, and a servant), Canhane, 12 October 2008.


20. Portuguese in the original.

References


