Volunteer-

Travel

A study of two commercial
volunteer programmes in
Northern Tanzania

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May 2008

Front page picture, street scene from Arusha city

Abstract

This thesis focuses on two commercial volunteer-travel programmes in Tanzania which are organised by the British-owned agencies i-to-i and MondoChallenge. The fieldwork was conducted in Northern Tanzania from January to August 2007.

The main objectives of this thesis is to discuss the ambiguities of the volunteer-travel concept, the discrepancies between the implementation and conceptualizations of volunteer travel programmes, to present different portrayals of volunteer-travel found in the media and to contextualize the phenomenon of volunteer-travel within a wider tradition of North/South relations.

Both agencies' volunteer-travel programmes have been conceptualized as somewhere in between "community-development" and adventure tourism. I have argued that this ambiguous position is potentially problematic, since commercial practices could be difficult to combine with notions of charity and altruism. Thus, I have indicated that volunteer-travel is a form of commercialized humanitarian assistance.

Acknowledgements

There are many that deserve thanks for their support during the process of writing this thesis. First, I would like to thank all the MondoChallenge and i-to-i volunteers, employees, teachers and other representatives at the host-placements and everyone else I came in contact with during the fieldwork in Tanzania, who have all been very supportive and cooperative. Thank you for being patient, for tolerating all my questions and for allowing me to take part in your experiences. I am grateful to my academic supervision, Rune Flikke, for all the insightful comments and for excellent advice. Jeanne Eirheim has been very helpful during the final stages of the writing process. I would also like to thank friends and family for their support. Thanks to Kjersti, Kjell and Maren for your comments on my drafts. Finally, many thanks to the 4th floor crew.

1. Introduction and methodology

This thesis is based on a study of two separate commercial volunteer programmes in Tanzania which are arranged by the British volunteer-travel agencies MondoChallenge and i-to-i.

In previous academic writing, the subject of volunteer-travel has primarily been portrayed as a sustainable alternative to "mainstream tourism", such as in Stephen Wearing's (2001) "Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a Difference". In this thesis I will question reductionist perceptions of volunteer-travel as a mutually beneficial and sustainable form of performing tourism, where both host community and the individual volunteer end up equally "empowered" (cf. Wearing 2001; Singh 2004). Instead of merely discussing the socio-physiological aspect of volunteer-travel, which appears to be the main focus in most literature on the topic (McGehee 2005; Wearing 2001; Wearing 2004; Singh 2004), I will in this thesis render a critical analysis on how leisure volunteering is actually conducted in the host community and how volunteering is perceived, promoted and talked about among volunteers, organisation employees, placement hosts, in the organisations' own advertisement campaigns and in the media.

Volunteer-travel

New trends in the tourist market have emerged during the last decades. These new forms of tourism, primarily exemplified by ecotourism and community-based forms of tourism, have been linked to current shifts in Western consumption patterns. Mowforth and Munt (2003) refer to these consumption patterns as post-Fordism (Mowforth 2003). The appeal of such new forms of tourism has been interpreted as the Western individuals desire to escape from consumerist lifestyles and is accordingly a reaction to the hedonistic "conspicuous consumption" of mass-tourism, which is frequently interpreted as having negative social and environmental effects

(cf. Stoddart 2004). According to Callanan and Thomas (2005), volunteer tourism is currently fast becoming a "mass niche" within the tourist industry. They claim this niche is an inevitable consequence of "… *a restless society, jaded from the homogenous nature of traditional tourism products, and seeking alternative tourism products*". While they claim cultural- and adventure-tourism was the trend of the early 1990's;"…*the late 1990s and early 2000s are now experiencing the "volunteer tourism rush" influenced by an ever increasing "guilt conscious" society"* (Ibid: 183).

International volunteer-travel programmes have existed for decades in different forms, such as the kibbutz volunteer-movements in Israel, which started in the 1960's (Uriely 2000), but during the last decade this type of vacation appears to have become more popular and widely available than ever before (Simpson 2004). The application process of volunteering through charities or aid-agencies, which do not demand payment for volunteer participants, is a long and complicated procedure; in addition long-term commitment and relevant experience are required (cf. Oxfam 2008). The for-payment volunteer-travel organisation makes volunteering an available option for a wider audience. The placements are short-term and there are low levels of prerequisites for skills and relevant experience among applicants (Callanan 2005). Even the famous travel-bible series *Lonely Planet* have published a guide focusing exclusively on such international volunteer vacations; "*Volunteer: A Travellers Guide to Making a Difference around the World*" (Lonely Planet 2007). Traditionally, volunteer-travels have been linked to pre-university (gap-year) students. As Cousins asserts, the majority of volunteer-travel customers are aged between 18 and 25 years, but recently there has been a rise in the participation of a more mature group of customers, who volunteers as career break or post-retirement (Cousins 2007).

In volunteer-travel, the seemingly contradictory terms "work" and "leisure" are combined (Uriely 2000). Many recently founded volunteer-travel organisations specialize in sending volunteers to placements all over the world, but especially to

countries in the global South. Cousins (2007) reports the biggest share of gap-year holidays are performed in Africa (31 %), followed by South-America (14%). This spatial distribution of leisure volunteer programmes can be linked to the ideas behind the volunteer-travel concept. Simpson states:*"…'third world' volunteer-tourism programmes* (…) *seek to combine the hedonism of tourism with the altruism of development work"* (Simpson 2004:1). Similarly, in Tanzania the recent rise of such volunteer-travel programmes, being a hybrid between a tour-operator and a community-development organisation, can be seen in connection with both the last decades increase in tourism (Honey 1999) and simultaneous boom in NGOs (Kelsall 2005). The reason for indicating this connection is that commercial volunteer-travel agencies primarily arrange volunteer programmes in popular tourist destinations with many tourist attractions (Singh 2004: 185). Additionally, the organisations can gain easier access to host-community placements in countries such as Tanzanian, where there is an abundance of local and international NGOs with a diverse number of functions (cf. Kelsall 2005). Thus, cooperation between international institutions and local grassroots initiatives can be seen as a normalized practice.

In the rest of this chapter I will introduce the context, the method of study, the two volunteer-travel organisations which are the focus of this study and my role within these organisations.

Context and Method of study

Choosing field and organisations

After receiving several emails and given brochures on the streets about international volunteer-travel programmes, I decided I wanted to find out more about this phenomenon. I chose Tanzania because this country appears to be an especially popular volunteer-travel location, since it appears the majority of the bigger volunteer-travel organisations provide placements in Tanzania. I had received several emails promoting i-to-i from Kilroy and STA travel, so this was the volunteer-travel

provider I initially decided on. In addition I sought a different volunteer-travel organisation operating in the same area which could be contrasted to i-to-i. I found MondoChallenge interesting, since it differs from i-to-i primarily in that it is smaller and a self-declared not-for-profit organisation,[1] while i-to-i is one of the largest operators in this tourist niche and a self-declared for-profit organisation. Additionally, MondoChallenge was the only volunteer-travel organisation I contacted that showed any interest in my project, I was even encouraged by MondoChallenge representatives to study this organisation. MondoChallenge provided a higher level of personal customer relations than i-to-i, I was even assigned an intern who would be my personal contact up until project start. In contrast, i-to-i for the most part sent standardized replies by email about volunteer options or FAQ. I wanted to study if or how these seeming differences in corporate ideology manifested itself in the implementation of the volunteer programmes in the host-community.

Since the networks of the volunteer-travel organisations would be the main focus of my study, and these networks were not attached to any secluded geographical location, I did not perceive conducting a multi-sited fieldwork as presenting a problem. Now, in retrospect I still do not think it was a hindrance for my research to move around. Rather I believe following the flow of volunteers coming and going at placements scattered around the highly "touristified" districts of Northern Tanzania provided insights into particularities and continuities in the representations of volunteer-travel.

Method

This thesis is based on a fieldwork conducted in Tanzania from January to August 2007. As mentioned, I have studied the volunteer-travel organisations MondoChallenge and i-to-i, who both arrange volunteer programmes in or around

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[1] "Not-for profit" refers to corporate-motivation rather than actual practice. MondoChallenge is registered as a private limited company in the UK. Thus, not-for profit implies that profit is a lower priority to humanitarian concerns.

urban centres in Northern Tanzania (Arusha and Moshi), close to the boarder to Kenya.

I decided to volunteer short-term (1-2 months) through both organisations, because I wanted to experience being a leisure volunteer, not to mention the fact that none of the two organisations would receive me, at least not for long, if I was not their customer. In addition, I believe that volunteering gave me a better understanding of the experiences expressed by other volunteers. Furthermore, by volunteering I would be guaranteed entrance into the field and attain a less restricted access to the volunteer programmes' networks; I could live and work alongside with the informants.

Most of the data this thesis is based on is a result of the method of participatory observation, but I also performed unstructured interviews and informal conversations with some of the informants. In addition, I have based some empirical evidences of this thesis on reports and blogs written by volunteers, promotional material produced by the studied organisations' and other media and press-releases focusing on the volunteer-travel phenomenon.

Names of informants and placements have been anonymized throughout this thesis.

My personal field-position and field context will be further clarified in the rest of this and in the following chapter. Next, I will give a brief account of the host-country chosen for this study.

Tanzania

Tanzania received independence in 1961, after having been under British colonial rule. The country's first president post-independence, Julius Nyerere, initiated the *Ujamaa* period, referred to as "African Socialism", in Tanzania in the late 1960's (Wikipedia 2008 a). Since the end of the Ujamaa period, the Tanzanian economy has become increasingly liberalized, opening up for an international tourist market. Tourism has become one of the biggest foreign exchange earners in Tanzania, with

the number of tourists entering the country increasing every year. In 2006, 644 124 tourists were recorded as visiting Tanzania, an increase of 5.1% from 2005 (Tanzania 2008). Earnings generated from tourism in 2006 are estimated to be USD 862.0 million (Tanzania 2008). Still, the Tanzanian government has reported it wishes to stabilize the number of tourists at 500,000 a year, as a maximum cap in order to avoid "mass tourism" (Wade 2001). Among the most popular tourist attraction in Tanzania are national game parks and conservation areas such as Serengeti and Ngorongoro, mount Kilimanjaro (the "roof of Africa") and the spice island of Zanzibar (Tanzania 1999).

Tanzania has for a long time been a favoured recipient of foreign aid, partly due to the country's comparably stable political environment. The trend of the development sector of allocating aid through grassroots NGOs since the 1990s, has resulted in a boom in international and domestic NGOs operating in Tanzania (Wikipedia 2008 b). The parallel rise of "briefcase" NGOs in Tanzania has recently resulted in implementations of policies and regulations to restrict NGO "foul play" and promote transparency, such as the 2002 NGO policy (LEAT 2008) or the National Code of Ethics for NGOs (TANGO 2008).

In the next sections I will introduce the volunteer-travel organisations and my role within them, starting with i-to-i:

The organisations

About i-to-i

The British, former stand-up comedienne Deirdre Bounds founded i-to-i in 1995. i-to-i started up providing TEFL courses (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), and currently offers volunteer placements in more than 30 countries scattered across Africa, Asia, central an South America, Australia and New Zealand. i-to-i is held to be one of the largest companies in the niche of volunteer-travel (i-to-i 2008). March

2007 Deidre Bounds sold the company to British travel-agent First Choice for approximately £ 20 million, according to the Yorkshire Post (Parkin 2007). On i-to-i's official website, the company is promoted as;

> *.. a globally recognised responsible travel organization, each year we place over 6,000 volunteers on projects to assist in the development of overseas local communities. We provide fulfilling and life-changing travel experiences to anyone with a desire to get out there and make a difference for the better* (i-to-i 2008 a).

i-to-i's copyrighted company-mottos are *"meaningful travel"* and *"escape to the real world"*(i-to-i 2008 b). Below, a promotional text where the company-image is presented;

> *Imagine a company that helps people to make a connection—a connection to other people, to other cultures and to themselves. Imagine a company that helps you communicate with people who don't even speak your language. Imagine a company with a smile on its face and a twinkle in its eye. Imagine a company that sells life-changing experiences, not meaningless, soul-less, shrink wrapped, age-defying, low-carb, high-protein, low interest, high growth, dual fuel, fast food, throw-away nonsense. Imagine a travel company for the twenty first century.*
>
> *That's us* (i-to-i 2008 c)

i-to-i offers volunteer placements in several African countries, all popular tourist destinations. Currently, in Tanzania i-to-i only arrange placements in the city of Moshi, a relatively small city located in the Kilimanjaro district, Northern Tanzania. The volunteer placements you can choose from in Tanzania are as follows: Coaching soccer, Community work with children, Community work with women, Teaching English and Conservation work. On the official i-to-i website, volunteering through i-to-i in Tanzania is promoted as below;

> *Tanzania.* *Home to perhaps the greatest natural diversity in Africa, it's the ideal place for wildlife spotting with Africa's second largest number of bird species, the continent's biggest mammal population and three-quarters of East Africa's plant species – all of which means* <u>*volunteering in Tanzania*</u> *is ideal for people interested in conservation. However, due to the widespread poverty that plagues the country there are opportunities to volunteer with children in Tanzania and work with grass-roots community projects* (i-to-i 2008 d)

The average fee for a month of volunteering through i-to-i in Tanzania is currently approximately £ 700. You could also choose the "luxury package", which costs a bit more because the volunteer is placed at a local hostel and not in one of the two shared volunteer-houses in lower Moshi. Also, Coaching soccer is £50 cheaper than the rest of the projects, for no apparent reason, since officially none of the host-placements receive any financial aid from i-to-i. The timeframe for volunteering in Tanzania is set at minimum 2 weeks to a maximum of 3 months. However, the average time spent volunteering in Tanzania is on about 3-4 weeks.[2]

i-to-i also runs a registered charity, the i-to-i Foundation (no 1099482), which provides grants to selected projects in areas where i-to-i host-placements are located (i-to-i 2008 e).

Next I will give a short introduction of my experiences as an i-to-i volunteer.

Volunteering through i-to-i

I chose the volunteer placement called "Community work with women" when I initially signed up with i-to-i. This was a quite a random choice, this placement had not been recommended to me. "Community Work with women" was described vaguely on i-to-i's websites, where it is claimed the i-to-i volunteer's role at this placement is to; "…*empower and enrich the lives of women in Africa*" (i-to-i 2008 f). The only information available about what I would actually be doing was an

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[2] According to an i-to-i in-country staff member.

implication that there "would be some teaching involved". I did not get the information about where precisely I would spend the month of volunteering until a week before project-start.

I had been placed at a centre called the One Heart centre, which was a vocational training centre for women, set up by an American lady. There was no clear information posted about what I was supposed to do at the One Heart centre.

The first day as a volunteer with i-to-i, the Overseas Manager accompanied me to my placement in shantytown. While other houses in the neighbourhood were lower standard, brown clay houses, the actual centre was shiny white, making it conspicuous in this dusty environment. It looked freshly painted, with name and motto; *One Heart- Between Women* – and the heart-shaped logo painted in black and red on the outside wall.

When we got inside, I met the blond American lady who founded the One Heart centre and an elderly Tanzanian woman who assisted her at the centre. When the i-to-i Overseas Manager and the One Heart founder discussed the previous meeting they had, it was revealed that the Overseas Manager had arranged for my placement at the One Heart centre during one meeting with the centre's founder, a week prior to my arrival. He later told me he had searched around Moshi for a placement to fit the "community work with women", category which I had chosen pre-departure three months back.

After having discussed terms of agreements with the Overseas Manager, the American lady started informing me about the centre. The One Heart centre is set up as a branch of the American missionary association Fire International (Fire International 2008). The centre provided vocational training for women, mainly in tailoring. At the time of my placement, there were only 5 permanent tailoring students. I would be teaching in the afternoon English classes for some of the day-time students, one of the centre's own teachers and a couple of interested neighbours; altogether 8 students.

The day after, the first days of teaching at the centre, the elderly Tanzanian lady I met the first day told me she would teach alongside me the first couple of days. She informed me she would be there in order to introduce me to how the English classes were normally run. After a couple of days, she was mostly sitting in the background supervising, or I was on my own. The local teacher agreed with me, the current teaching book the centre's founder brought with her from USA was not very suitable for this class. It was a TEFL book filled with not-so-easily translatable exercises such as "*going to the gym*" and "*at the shopping centre.*" I got hold of a local teaching manual, and a general grammar book with more easily adaptable exercises. I stayed at the centre for a month. To assess my own performance; I didn't experience myself as making a huge impact on the English skills of the students during this short-term stay. In my opinion that would require a longer-term commitment, but I still personally considered it a good experience. Further, I did not perceive the project as significantly "empowering" for the group of women that were my students or as "community-development", as implied by i-to-i in the project description. Instead, I perceived my role more as a substitute teacher providing extracurricular English classes.

Next I will introduce the second volunteer-travel organisation I volunteered through:

About MondoChallenge:

MondoChallenge was founded by Anthony Lunch (Managing Director) in 2001, taking over from a small volunteer programme which Lunch had run in Nepal since 1990. The organisation's headquarters is currently located in Northampton (UK.). The motto of MondoChallenge is "*A small step to a meaningful world*". On the official website of MondoChallenge, the organisation is described as seen below;

> ***MondoChallenge sends volunteers** (early retired, career break, post-university, gap year)* ***to help with development programmes in Africa, Asia and South America***. *All of our programmes are community based, meaning that you live and work alongside local people. (…) The project length is anything from* ***1-6 months*** *with flexible departure dates. The* ***average volunteer age is 32*** *and* ***50% are non-UK based***. *Volunteering opportunities include* ***teaching*** *(schools, orphanages),* ***business development**, (HIV/AIDS, agriculture, eco-tourism) and* ***healthcare*** *(clinics).* [Emphasis original] (MondoChallenge 2008)

MondoChallenge claims to be run as a not-for-profit organisation, with very little "*coming off the top*". As stated by Anthony Lunch; *"My vision has always been "People first, money second"* (Ibid.). MondoChallenge do not promise to contribute financially to local partner, even though the occasional provision of materials in short supply at the placements does happen. MondoChallenge, like i-to-i, is divided into one business and one charity division. Anthony Lunch states;

> *Although much of the volunteer contribution must inevitably go to covering our running costs, the MondoChallenge Foundation, our sister charity (no 1106237) fundraises and supports our development projects financially in the countries where our volunteers are working. This funding together with the work of volunteers has already had a huge impact on many schools, orphanages, and small businesses and ultimately the lives of many thousands of people that Mondo has been lucky enough to work with. This is how I planned it, and this is how I intend it will continue* (Ibid.)

Tanzania is the host-country where MondoChallenge has; "…*the biggest programme; with more volunteers, more locations and a wider range of opportunities than any other country*" (ibid). The volunteer placements in Tanzania are promoted by MondoChallenge as seen below:

> *Tanzania is one of the most beautiful and politically stable countries in East Africa. (…)From Zanzibar on the coast, to the fabulous bush scenery near Arusha, there is no better way to experience Africa in safe and happy surrounding* (ibid.)

Even though MondoChallenge projects can be "custom made" if the volunteer has educational or work-related specializations, MondoChallenge currently offers two main types of projects in Tanzania, described below:

Teaching children (primary and secondary schools) and adults in the Arusha region - in the shadows of Mt Meru - as well as other wonderful programs with the Massai in Longido, on the coast at Pangani and in the beautiful Pare Mountains.

Business development in Arusha where volunteers can help with small businesses and micro-finance alongside Chama cha Ongezeko la Mtaji Tanzania (COMT) and assist HIV / AIDS victims with the MondoChallenge HIV Grant Programme (Tumaini Trust fund in Ngaramtoni and UHAI Trust fund in Moshi) (ibid.)

A four-year minimum of business experience is required for the business development projects, thus, the least qualified volunteers end up at teaching placements. In Tanzania MondoChallenge has set the age limit for volunteering to 22 years, whereas in the rest of the host countries the age limit is 18 years. Still, MondoChallenge claim the average volunteer-age is 32 years. On the website, only one indication of the cost of volunteering with MondoChallenge is given, regardless of type of project or country; "*The contribution to MondoChallenge is currently £1200 for a three-month period (less if shorter)* (ibid.)" MondoChallenge recommends long-term placements of 3 to 6 months, especially in particular projects, shorter placements are allowed. Principally, 2-month placements are the minimum length.[3]

Next, I will give a short introduction to my experiences as a MondoChallenge volunteer.

Volunteering through MondoChallenge

My volunteer placement with MondoChallenge was mostly chosen for me by the UK team, based on my age and work-experience.[4] I was placed in village of Longido, a predominantly Maasai area about two hours from Arusha by *daladala*.[5] In Longido I

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[3] I was allowed to stay for one month (which I later extended), due to the circumstances, but I also met other volunteers on placements shorter than two months.

[4] I did not meet the requirements for being a business-development volunteer, so I was placed on a teaching-project.

[5] Local mini-buses.

would primarily be teaching at the primary school. I had been told by MondoChallenge representatives I was supposed to help out in the schools blind unit at Longido Primary, and possibly help out in some of the regular classes, if needed. I could in addition choose to arrange language classes for the Maasai women at the local jewellery market and/or help out at the Boma School,[6] where another MondoChallenge volunteer approaching the end of a 6-month placement was currently teaching.

When I was shown around school the first day, the teacher in charge of introducing MondoChallenge volunteers to the school asked me if I could take his English lecture for a standard 7 class the next day, since he was going away. I agreed, thinking it would be better having an inexperienced teacher than none at all. I asked him what I was supposed to teach this class, he answered, "*oh, anything*". Apparently, there was no fixed curriculum, so I could choose what I wanted to teach. The teacher suggested I could continue with what he had been doing last class; passive/active verbs. He couldn't' find his teachers manual, so I went around campus to find one. Finally, the teacher gave me a student's book, saying I could borrow that until I got one of my own; I was not to worry whether the student needed it himself. The first day in class I introduced myself, got the students to introduce themselves, and continued the grammar practice the mentor teacher had referred me to. In my opinion, the classes went reasonably well, considering I had no formal teaching training or much experience, that the large group of students had varying English knowledge and that my Kiswahili was not exactly fluent.

The agreement between MondoChallenge and Longido Primary was that inexperienced volunteers would teach together with a local teacher, at least to start with, but since the teacher I was assigned to often travelled, I usually taught the class alone. I was in the same class for a period of about 2 months, until another volunteer, staying for 6 weeks, replaced me. Whether my short-term presence was disruptive for

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[6] Small, outdoors classroom built by MondoChallenge, where free, afternoon English classes where arranged.

the class I had been assigned to is hard to tell. The former volunteer had been in this class for 6 months, but starting with me, there was a longer period of short-term volunteers, staying no longer than 2 months each. This might have made the English class course of study fairly fragmented, changing teachers several times in a semester, but it still seemed like the students were amused by having new *wazungu* (European foreigners) coming in every so often.

I didn't experience myself as anything of a disturbance while living in the village, because unlike the "mainstream" tourists who travel in big groups, there were no more than 3 volunteers in Longido at a time during my placement. Many of the people living in the village had probably not even noticed our presence (or were not very concerned with the *wazungu* coming and leaving). Still, because of the amount of attention and curiosity surrounding a lone European staying in a village on the outskirts of the tourist trail I sometimes felt like "matter out of place" (cf. Douglas 2002), especially when returning to Longido after a weekend in Arusha, being the only *mzungu* in the *daladala*. Many were interested to know why I was there and what I was doing, questions which were surprisingly difficult to answer.

In this chapter I have introduced the context, the organisations and my role within these organisations. In chapter two I will contextualize volunteer travel within traditions of tourism. I will render some issues concerning the ambiguous responsibilities of volunteer-travellers and the paradoxical search for "authentic" village life, while also experiencing the "inauthentic" mass tourist life.

2. Volunteer-travel – the voluteer role

In this chapter I will attempt to contextualize the phenomenon of volunteer-travel within traditions of tourism. I will shortly introduce i-to-i and MondoChallenge's volunteer-travel programmes in Tanzania as a background for discussions of the ambiguous role of volunteer travellers, as simultaneously working and on leisure.

"Seeing the country from the bottom"

Alternative ways of travelling are encouraged by the World Tourism Organisation. From the Global Code of Ethics;[7]"*Article 2: 4. Travel for purposes of religion, health, education and cultural or linguistic exchanges are particularly beneficial forms of tourism, which deserve encouragement*" (UNWTO 2001). Further, the word "travel" is often replaced by the word "tourism" when referring to the alleged "beneficial forms" of leisure. Similarly, the volunteer-travel agencies appear to circumvent the "tourism" label in product marketing, instead using terms such as "adventure travel" or simply "experience".[8]

When asked if volunteer-travel was a form of tourism, both i-to-i and MondoChallenge volunteers usually agreed, but added it was *so much more* than tourism. As stated by a newly arrived i-to-i volunteer; the volunteer-travel programme was an opportunity to access "*the country from the bottom*", as opposed to "*just being a tourist*". Volunteers appeared to distinguish themselves from "mainstream" tourists, especially the travellers described as "safari tourists"[9]. This

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[7] UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics is also promoted in the Tanzanian Tourism Act (2007).

[8] An article form the i-to-i website urges volunteers to "*Be a traveller, not a tourist!*" and gives advice on how the traveller can avoid ending up a "tourist". The traveller should "*except things are different*", "*dress sensibly*", "*have respect*" and "*live with the locals*"(i-to-i 2008)

[9] These tourists travelled around Tanzania in safari cars, lived in luxury resorts and observed the country superficially "*through the lens of the camera*" (Bruner 2005:7)

assertion might not be surprising, since "mainstream" tourism is often described condescendingly, as "…*tacky, commercial and superficial*" (Bruner 2005:7), perhaps most of all by those who perceive themselves as "alternative" travellers. This group of alternative travellers contrasted with "mainstream" tourists have been referred to as *anti- tourists* (cf. Torskenæs 2004). The volunteer-travel concept appears to be a form of anti-tourism, where the travellers search for "real" experiences, as opposed to superficial tourist performances. Yet, the volunteer-traveller has a somewhat ambiguous role, as a combination of the roles of exchange-workers, development-workers and tourists.[10]

Next, I will discuss how the volunteer-travel programmes are conducted.

The placements; what volunteer-travellers actually do

Volunteer-travel agencies provide many project-type options, seemingly trying not to restrict themselves to one field[11] of expertise. Instead they offer "a bit of everything"; business and health training, consultancy, education, nature conservation or any other field the individual volunteer might have interest in. Within the organisations I have studied, most volunteers ended up teaching English at local schools. This is probably the type of project that required the least amount of previous experience or specialization.

In the following sections I will present the different types of placements within both i-to-i and MondoChallenge's programmes in Tanzania in order to illustrate what volunteers actually did during an average "workday" at the host placements. Further, I will discuss certain ambiguities of the volunteer role – as a cross between work and leisure.

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[10] According to the Tanzanian Tourism Act (2007), §2: ""*Tourist" means a person who is travelling to a place outside his usual environment for a period between twenty-four-hours and one year and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.*" Thus, volunteers are per definition "tourists"

Next, I will discuss i-to-i Tanzania's placements.

i-to-i placements

Since my own project at the One Heart women's centre was set during afternoons, I could accompany other i-to-i volunteers to their placements before lunch.[12] i-to-i initially started out providing TEFL training and practice abroad, a tradition which has been kept up. Most of the i-to-i placements in Tanzania involve teaching English. Nursery schools are the most common i-to-i volunteer placements. This type of placement goes under both the i-to-i project-categories of "Community work with children" and "Teaching English" (i-to-i 2008 d). Further, nurseries appeared to be the type of project where the youngest volunteers with the least amount of previous experience were placed.

The nursery schools were all located in what appeared to be lower-standard neighbourhoods of Moshi, indicated by the material condition of the schools. Few of the schools had proper buildings, the classrooms were mostly outdoors, tin-roof constructions built as add-ons to private homes. All the schools had boys and girls in mixed classes, the average age being from 4 to 6. The number of students in the classes varied from 30 up to approximately 100.

Usually, the nursery-volunteers workday involved singing English songs, handing out notebooks and marking written exercises. Occasionally, volunteers would lead a class, usually on the individual volunteer's own initiative, but this would always be under the supervision of local teachers. The i-to-i Team professed two or more volunteers should work together at each placement, but exceptions occurred. The nursery-school volunteers often admitted they did not feel very useful at the placements. Still, many i-to-i volunteers assumed the children liked having them

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[11] The "field" referred to here; socio-environmental movements.

[12] Most i-to-i volunteers finished their volunteer workday at lunch-time.

there to play with, even though the lack of a common language restricted communication, a point I will return to in chapter 4.

At the two Secondary schools which hosted i-to-i volunteers, the volunteers had more responsibility planning and teaching classes, individually or in pairs. In addition, one orphanage and two occupational training-centres for women hosted i-to-i volunteers. At the orphanage playing with the children appeared to be the main activity, even though some volunteers tried to arrange classes. At the women's centres the volunteer arranged extracurricular English classes. The women's centres' were the only placements where usually only one volunteer would be placed at a time, such as in my case.

"I'm here to *work.*"

Volunteer Tourism, Wearing asserts, represents a move from the transient "tourist gaze" (ref. Urry 2002) [13] toward an interaction-based form of travel (Wearing 2001). Wearing criticises what he refers to as "mainstream tourism", where the objects of "the gaze" are being exploited by profit-motivated tour-agencies. Wearing quotes Fiske et.al.(1987), who criticize the arrogant commoditisation of "the other" involved in mainstream tourism: "…*their Western-centred discourses. Their wide eyed cameras, constructs the rest of the world as there for us*" (Ibid.145). Further, Wearing argue that while culture is "*packaged, priced and sold like fast food*" in mainstream tourism (ibid: 144), volunteer tourism is based on a "…*dynamic social exchange between the tourist and the host community*" (ibid.:147). Actually, volunteer-travel may only in part represent a "pure" community-based form of tourism, since "mainstream" tourist-activities is still part of the volunteer-travel experience.

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[13] In Urry's classic "The Tourist Gaze" (2002), he distinguishes between two forms of tourist gazes: the romantic, which is solitary and "semi-spiritual" and the collective, which is basically mass-tourism.

For instance, at one of the regular i-to-i Tuesday-meetings, the i-to-i In-Country Team started discussing safari options. The Team-Leader advised the volunteers about local tour-options; "*Tanzania is one of the best on tourism.*" At the same meeting, the In-Country Team-Leader asserted that only Friday-to-Sunday trips were allowed during the pre-arranged volunteer-period, after an incidence where a group of volunteers had travelled to Zanzibar for a week, without notifying their placements. The Team-Leader had received several complaints from these volunteers' host placement representatives. Apparently, the placement-hosts did not see any sense in taking in i-to-i volunteers at all, if they would just take off at any time they pleased.

One of the older volunteers commented that i-to-i Tanzania's Country Manager, Kari[14], had sent her lots of information on safaris pre-departure, including 4 day safaris – which meant she would have to leave the project for more than a weekend. She saw this as communication failure between the different i-to-i offices. She declared it would have been wrong to book such a safari in the middle of her volunteer-placement, instead she claimed; "*I'm here to work!*"

Later in the same meeting, the i-to-i Team-Leader brought up the issue of volunteers swapping placements without informing the Team or the placements. The Team-Leader had received complaints from several placements; "*They* [volunteers] *just change – they wake up in the morning and just go to another project! ... especially in the nurseries, it confuses the children!*" Prior to this meeting, I witnessed one of these incidences where volunteers changed projects impulsively. Early in the morning, the volunteers from the "small house" and the volunteers from the "big house" met up on the way to their placements. One of the volunteers was supposed to go to the nearby Nyota nursery, but since the other volunteer who was placed at this nursery had not shown up this day because he was sick, she decided to join some of the others to a

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[14] Actually the director of two other safari/volunteer businesses: Boma Foundation and Arts in Tanzania, both running before he became i-to-i County Manager.

different nursery instead, she asserted; "*They don't need us there anyway, we just sit there.*" While sitting on a bench in front of the class at Hope Nursery the same day, the volunteer told me her initial placements at Nyota nursery involved less work than this one, this was why she decided to change. This surprised me after having visited Hope Nursery on two occasions; both times we had done nothing but handing out and later correcting student note-books, between times mostly sitting on a bench in front of the class, watching the children and chatting amongst ourselves.

Later on, I visited the Nyota Nursery where the two above mentioned volunteers had left without notifying the staff. They had never returned to their initial placement nor explained their leaving. Currently, a new volunteer had taken over by herself. The head teachers explained what had happened with the previous volunteers to the i-to-i representative that had accompanied the new volunteer her first day; "…*they were here for only 3 days, then they just disappeared!*" From that point she asserted she would only accept volunteers who could commit to the nursery for no less than one month; she did not want to confuse the children by introducing new volunteers to them all the time. For instance, the children at Nyota Nursery had been calling both me and the new volunteer by the name of one of the volunteers who had left. In addition, they asked several times where she had gone. Later, after having spent two days at this placement, I did not understand why the two previous volunteers had left Nyota because they felt redundant; there was only one teacher and 52 children aged 4-6 at the nursery. The new volunteer had been given her own class to teach and she seemed very busy on both of my visits.

The above cases can illustrate the varying level of commitment some volunteers had toward their placement. A reason for the lack of responsibility toward host-community projects might be, since volunteers have paid for this experience, there is an underlying expectation they can personally control what to do during the arranged volunteer-period. There are no contracts, consequently, the volunteers are accountable to no one.

At the meeting that followed, the Tanzanian Team-Leader confronted the above mentioned run-away volunteers and asserted from now on, no volunteers should travel mid-placement. One of the "offenders" wanted to know what the consequences would be in the future for breaking this new rule. The Team-Leader dodged this question, stressing the organisation needed to be "flexible", but added: *"This is the problem of i-to-i…"* In fact, ambivalent volunteer accountability might be one of the greatest problems facing commercial volunteer programmes. The volunteers are the main thrust of the organisations, both financially and as ground-level staff, but the volunteers' paying for the experience might lead to a lack of accountability both "upwards" to the organisation and "downwards" to the host-community.

In the i-to-i pre-departure briefing guide, the issue of volunteer responsibility is raised; *"You should treat it as a job that you have committed to for a certain number of weeks (…) plan your travels in days off or after your placement"*. Nevertheless, the payment suggests volunteers are owed a certain service provided from the organisation. Urry problematizes consumer service-provision in the hospitality industry, which includes the tourist industry. He describes the service provision of this sector as *"highly problematic"*, since it is often unclear to the customer *"…just what the product is that is being purchased"* (Urry 2002:66). Similarly, service provision in the volunteer-travel sector may be problematic, since being placed in a volunteer project alone does not appear to be the only service expected from the organisation.

For example, the i-to-i Overseas Manager received many complaints from newly arrived volunteers at a Tuesday meeting in February 2007; several volunteers said they felt cheated. Apparently, the volunteers considered the money they had paid too much compared to the standard of service they were receiving. Volunteers had complained over low security, no provision of transportation and the lack of certain facilities (i.e. a refrigerator) within the volunteer houses. From this, it appears the volunteer-travel agency struggles to juggle between the service expectations of the

volunteers and their responsibilities toward the host-community placements, a point I will elaborate in chapters 4 and 5.

Next, I will discuss MondoChallenge's placements in Tanzania.

MondoChallenge placements

MondoChallenge provide two main types of placements in Tanzania; teaching-placements and business-development placements. After I finished the volunteer placement arranged by MondoChallenge, I visited other placements which hosted MondoChallenge volunteers at the time. I visited all the business-development placements at least once, and most of the other placements in the Arusha vicinity. When visiting, I usually spent the whole workday with the volunteer. Occasionally I stayed for more than one day, as in the case of the more remote placements, such as the Pare Mountains.

Business-development placements

The business-development projects are probable the placements most in focus in MondoChallenge promotional material. In these placements, MondoChallenge volunteers work with local partner trusts which operate grassroots level in rural areas of Northern Tanzania. Sustained by funding from MondoChallenge, the local trust provides small grants to women living with HIV/AIDS in order to start small businesses.[15] The Tumaini Trust is labelled the "flagship"[16] of MondoChallenge. Tumaini Trust is a community based organisation located in Ngaramtoni, a village just outside of Arusha. Started in 2005, it is the MondoChallenge partner in Tanzania which has allocated the highest number of grants for the longest period of time. By

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[15] Usually selling *mboga* (vegetables), kanga/vitenge (traditional clothing) or other household supplies at a small stand (*kioski*), from the seller's house, door to door or at the local market.

[16] Also the project most referred to on MondoChallenge's charity web site, to attract potential donations

2007, Tumaini Trust has rolled out 5 rounds,[17] and altogether 58 women have received grants. The definition of the volunteer role at Tumaini Trust from MondoChallenge's website is as follows;

> *Volunteers work directly with local board members and community volunteers. Tasks involve the selection of HIV/AIDS affected families to be recipients of small grants, the assessment of their businesses and identification of areas for improvement, training and overall monitoring of the organization* (MondoChallenge 2008)

Other MondoChallenge local partners are the Uhai trust[18] and the Elimu society.[19] There is usually only one MondoChallenge business-development volunteer in each of the community organisations. The volunteer partakes in board-meetings, where the main responsibilities would be to participate in the selection of recipients, evaluation of projects and training. The business volunteer also goes on regular follow-ups rounds of the grant recipients' businesses together with community volunteers (CV's).[20] When initiating a new round, the MondoChallenge volunteer is involved in the search for potential recipients. The volunteer functions as the link between the local trust, which operates grassroots level in the allocation of grants, and MondoChallenge, which exclusively provides the funds for the grant projects. Further, the volunteer writes reports evaluating the grant projects in order update the MondoChallenge UK office on project progress.

Teaching-placements

In addition to business-development projects, MondoChallenge arranges teaching-placements. The majority of MondoChallenge volunteers in Tanzania are on teaching

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[17] In a round about 10 or more recipient received grants, one day of business training (training period was getting re-evaluated for extension in 2007) and follow ups until the recipient was graduated (perceived to manage without TUMAINI trust follow ups).

[18] Located in Moshi, Kilimanjaro.

[19] Located in Usangi, Pare Mountains.

[20] CV's were local community volunteers who had been given training in order to assist in the grant projects.

placements. These placements are chiefly in Primary or Secondary Schools in rural areas in the Arusha vicinity. Usually, each school host only one MondoChallenge volunteer at a time. Occasionally, only one volunteer is placed in each village. Teaching volunteers live in homestays with a local family or in guesthouses. Usually, teaching volunteers stay for shorter periods than business-development volunteers.

Every second Friday, MondoChallenge arranged meetings where the first hour was just for the teachers, followed by a joint meeting with business-development volunteers. During teachers meetings, the volunteers could discuss issues such as methods of teaching or difficulties in adapting to the Tanzanian school-system. I noticed among recurring subjects was the style of teaching. The average class often exceeded 50 students, making it difficult to adapt curriculum level and progression to the need of every student. Volunteers often complained of Tanzanian "parrot-style" teaching; a focus on memorization and repetition, which was perceived to be uninspiring. Apparently, through this teaching style, students where told "it is like this", instead of being presented with an explanation of *why* it is like this.

Another topic often discussed at MondoChallenge meetings, was the issue of corporal punishment, which is practiced in most Tanzanian schools. Some of the volunteers declared they could not sit by and watch students being beaten or pretend they did not see it. This to the extent that some volunteers physically interfered when they saw local teachers hitting a child. One volunteer admitted to having broken a teacher's cane, and on another occasion, to have snatched the cane away from the teacher, turning it back at the teacher in a threatening way as if about to hit.

"Experience life in a developing country first hand"[21]

MondoChallenge volunteers were left unsupervised by organisation representatives, more than i-to-i volunteers. Fewer MondoChallenge volunteers lived together, and

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[21] Quote from the MondoChallenge website under the heading;"*Get involved! Why volunteer?*" and subheading, "*Personal Development*" (MondoChallenge a).

the interaction between organisation representatives and volunteers was less frequent. Most MondoChallenge volunteers went to Arusha during weekends in order to meet other volunteers, dine out and take hot showers; as one MondoChallenge volunteer explained; "*…only time I'm clean is in Arusha… back in civilization.*" During weekends, the volunteers usually stayed in the low budget "backpacker" hotels, but dined at tourist restaurants and lounged by the pool at top-end hotels. A frequent topic among MondoChallenge volunteers was the contrast between the "village life" during weekdays and the recreational "tourist lifestyle" during weekends. Volunteers often discussed adapting to the lack of electricity, to taking cold bucket-showers and to the "primitive" toilet facilities, which was usually just a "hole in the ground", and to Tanzanian "village life" in general. In contrast, while a group of MondoChallenge volunteers were lying by the pool at New Arusha hotel one Saturday afternoon, a volunteer declared; "*This is like being on holiday!"*

The weekday/weekend contrast can illustrate the ambiguities of the MondoChallenge-volunteers' role.[22] The volunteer could "go behind the scenes" to the villages and "live like they do" during weekdays, while living the "mainstream" tourist-lifestyle during weekends. Further, the sites chosen for placements were located at the edges of the most popular tourist routes, close to Tanzania's main tourist attractions. All placements were located within "The Northern Circuit", the area of Tanzania annually receiving the highest number of tourists and consequently having a better infrastructure for tourism than other areas (Wade 2001). Arusha is known as the "Safari Capital" of Tanzania, filled with tour-operators where travellers can arrange safaris to the popular Northern Circuit tourist-sites, such as Serengeti, Ngorongro and Lake Manyara as well as hikes up Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru. Thus, arranging volunteer-travel programmes in the tourist district could make it easy

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[22] Since i-to-i volunteers stayed in the city all week in the two "modern" houses, the weekend/weekday contrast was not as prominent as with the MondoChallenge volunteers.

to "rough it" as a volunteer while simultaneously being a weekend "mainstream" tourist.[23]

During a Saturday night gathering of volunteers in Arusha, the MondoChallenge Country Manager discussed the reason for arranging volunteer-travel programmes close to tourist attractions, he asserted; *"It's not just about helping out the local community."* In addition, MondoChallenge facilitates an experience for the volunteer *"…that's why the projects are here"*, close to or in Arusha, and not in the South, such as Iringa, where tourist-infrastructure is not as extensive, he stated; *"…the volunteer also wants to go to town during the weekends."*

Nevertheless, the volunteer experience is often presented as "more authentic" than "mainstream" tourism experiences. The volunteers could become more *integrated* in the lives of the local people than "average tourists" could, because volunteers, at least during weekdays, "live like *they* do", and not in up-scale tourist resorts far away from the "real lives" of the local population. Living by the standards of "ordinary local-people" in the host-community, eating their food, living in their houses and working alongside with them could serve to separate the volunteer from the "mainstream" tourists. Instead, the volunteer-role could be described as an endeavour to "go native".[24] In fact, volunteers being "like locals" appeared to be used as a compliment among MondoChallenge volunteers, while being "like a tourist" appeared to be an insulting description.

Volunteer-travel as a "quest for temporary integration"

Authenticity has traditionally been a keyword in tourism studies, such as in MacCannell's classical work on "the tourist". Here, MacCannell presents the

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[23] Further, VSO has stressed the most popular volunteer-travel destinations are simultaneously popular tourist-destinations, a discussion I will further elaborate in chapter 6.

[24] For instance, it is claimed on i-to-i's webpage's that the volunteer can "become a local". This promotional text is illustrated by a picture of several maasai women wearing *shuka* standing in front of a *boma* (i-to-i 2008 n).

"modern man" as travellers' "quest for authenticity", in search of a "reality" that presumably lies behind the "staged authenticity" of tourist performances (MacCannell 1989). Bruner criticizes MacCannell for being reductionistic in focusing primarily on levels of authenticity in tourism encounters. Bruner claim that whether the tourist-experience is "authentic" or not is beside the point, if authenticity-quests is not a stated motivation by tourists themselves (Bruner 2005), as indeed was the case with both MondoChallenge and i-to-i volunteers.

 In "Maasai and the Lion King", Bruner distinguishes among three types of tourist performances in Kenya. These performances are presented as historically situated meta-narratives. The first is the *post-colonial*; where a static image of locals, represented by the Maasai tribe, as "noble savages" is paraded in front of the tourist on the lawn of a colonial mansion, with no interaction between the tourists and the performers. The second is the *post-independent*; where "traditional culture" is performed as a part of a nation-building strategy primarily for domestic tourists, as a "thing of the past" in a government museum. The third is the *post-modern*; where Bruner describes an evening at the Out of Africa Sundowner resort, located close to the Masai Mara, where Maasai performers and tourists interact and "move into each others spaces" by dancing together, mixing disco-moves with maasai jumping, and singing Disney songs with Kiswahili phrases (*hakuna matata* – there are no problems). Bruner calls the Sundowner-travellers *post-tourists.* Not preoccupied with acquiring "authentic" experiences, these tourists represent the age of globalization, where nothing is static and no culture "untouched." To criticize the tourist performance at the Sundowner Ranch for being "inauthentic" is therefore beside the point, Bruner states, because this group of tourists are not on a quest for authenticity (Bruner 2005).

In the case of volunteer-travel, however, authenticity appears to be an important characteristic which can elevate the volunteer-experience above "average" and "inauthentic" tourist-experiences. Volunteer-travel could thus represent the forth level of tourist encounters, succeeding Bruner's three levels. In volunteer-travel the

traveller ventures "*beyond the passing gaze*" of the tourist performances, not only quickly looking "behind the scenes" (cf. MacCannell 1989), but remaining there to "…*gain an understanding of host values and traditions*" (Wearing 2001:149). Representing a move away from the post-tourists Bruner describes, volunteer-travellers have more in common with the travellers which in recent travel literature have been referred to as *anti-tourists* (cf. Shymkent Declaration 1999). The anti-tourist is not satisfied with kitsch, banal tourist performances, such as the Out of Africa Sundowner represents.[25] Anti-tourism is a reaction to such "inauthentic" manifestations of consumerist Western lifestyle. As anti-tourists, volunteer-travellers attempt to "escape" modern societies' shallow materialism in order to experience how life could be "without it all". The leisure-volunteer appears to be attempting to become integrated into "the core of village life", experiencing the "real life" of the Other (cf. Said 1994), at least five days of the week. The volunteer-travel phenomenon can thus be said to represents a contrast to the kitsch, *fin de siecle,* post-tourist productions. Instead the "quest for authenticity", as described by MacCannell (1989), appears to be brought a step forward in volunteer-travel, toward a "quest for temporary integration".

In this chapter I have discussed the ambiguous role of the volunteer-traveller. In the next chapter I will discuss the ambiguities of the volunteer-travel agencies' role. I will examine how the volunteer-travel agencies can be said to adopt a conceptual framework from the development sector, which in turn is adapted to suit new demands within the tourist market.[26]

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[25] Playing further on the title of Karen Blixen's famous book "Out of Africa", the MondoChallenge newsletter for June 2007 was called "Out in Africa", implying the backstage-pass *into* African communities available for MondoChallenge volunteers.

[26] The trend I refer to here is anti-tourism, which is described earlier in this chapter.

3. Conceptualizing volunteer-travel

In this chapter I will discuss the tendency within the two volunteer-travel agencies, MondoChallenge and i-to-i, to conceptualize their programmes as "community development". I will argue that this can create an image of the volunteer-travel organisations as providers of development-assistance rather than travel agencies selling leisure-experiences. I will discuss indications of image construction by organisation representatives and in organisation advertisements, in order to illustrate how abstract concepts adopted from discourses of development appear in organisation rhetoric. In addition, I will demonstrate how the volunteer-travellers and the host-placement representatives appeared to perceive the programmes, and how these perceptions may contrast with the organisations' portrayal.

Mediating images

Through the volunteer-travel organisations self-presentations, the language of development, such as "empowerment" and "community development", is mixed with the volunteer-travel sector own buzzwords, such as "make a difference", "challenge", and "experience". This mixing and borrowing of conceptual frameworks appears to mediate the image of the volunteer-travel agencies as forms of community-development institutions. Nevertheless, I would argue commercial volunteer-travel programmes can not be defined as NGOs. In the following section I will discuss which characteristics might serve to separate the commercial volunteer programmes from community-development institutions.

Not NGOs?

Since both organisations of this study conceptualize their operations as "development", I will here discuss why in my opinion neither of the organisations can be defined as development institutions, or more specifically as NGOs. What

actually constitutes an NGO is difficult to define, since it is an umbrella term for a wide range of organisations (Fisher 1997). The focus in this study is the Tanzania branches of volunteer-travel organisations, so I will below refer to the Government of Tanzania's official definition of an NGO;

> *"An NGO is a voluntary grouping of individuals or organizations which is autonomous and not-for-profit sharing; organized locally at the grassroots level, nationally or internationally for the purpose of enhancing the legitimate economic, social and /or cultural development or lobbying or advocacy on issues of public interest or interest of a group of individuals or organizations* (Tanzania 2002: 5)

i-to-i does not fit this definition of an NGO, because of the company's stated profit-motivation. Whether MondoChallenge can be defined as an NGO or not, is more up for discussion, since it is declared a not-for-profit organisation and claim to be involved in development projects.

MondoChallenge is not officially defined an NGO, but this is implied by the claim to provide not-for profit development assistance on community-based projects in the "developing world."[27] Even though the outbound organisation, MondoChallenge UK, is registered a private limited company, it is often referred to as an NGO in external sources. The following citations are from online volunteer-databases;

> *"MondoChallenge is a UK based NGO sending volunteers for short term placements in developing countries"* (Seasonworkers 2008)*; "MondoChallenge is an NGO that started in 2001"* (Kalimpong 2008)*;"MondoChallenge is a charity which sends volunteers […] to help with development programmes in Africa, Asia and South America."*(Working Abroad 2008); *"MondoChallenge is a local NGO, sending volunteers to teach or to assist with business development and medical programmes"* (Warwick 2008)

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[27] MondoChallenge Ltd, Company No. 04151701, Company Type: Private Limited, Company Nature of Business- Other service activities. i-to-i UK Ltd, Company No. 04539983, Company Type: Private Limited Company, Nature of Business - Adult and other education (Companies House UK 2008).

Also the Tanzanian press refers to MondoChallenge as a development organisation. Below, from articles posted in the local newspaper Arusha times;[28]

> *"MondoChallenge, the UK based international development organisation which has been sending volunteers to the school for the past 3 years, contacted Rotary to ask for help in providing the books"* (Arusha Times 2006), *"The British Mondo Challenge, a non governmental organization, has disbursed some Tsh.40,000,000 to 60 small scale family investors in Ngaramtoni area through a local Tumaini Trust Fund of Ngaramtoni in Arumeru district"* (Luka 2007 a), *"A British non governmental organization - Mondo Challenge - has so far spent some Tsh.40 million on social welfare undertakings in northern Tanzania"* (Luka 2007 b)

These Tanzanian news articles point to MondoChallenge's financial contributions to the Tanzanian host communities, which I will discuss in chapter 5. Despite these descriptions of MondoChallenge as a NGO or a charity, the high administrative costs of volunteer-travel programmes, including marketing, personnel to "guide" the volunteers and the cost of overhead at the British head offices might make it a more of a "white elephant"; administrative costs greatly exceed MondoChallenege's donations to the recipient-community.[29] Undeniably, MondoChallenge Tanzanian's in-country programme contains several components that resemble NGO operations.[30] Nevertheless, it is a volunteer-travel agency which provides a service for paying customers. In addition, these customers serve as the staff which are performing the organisation's alleged development-assistance. These traits can be said to represent the main divergence between the activities of commercially run volunteer programmes and those of non-profit community-development institutions. Instead,

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[28] What is more, MondoChallenge Tanzania appears to be registered under the Societies Ordinance in Tanzania, which implies the organisation is a charity. This is indicated in a formal document where MondoChallenge claims to be: "*Registered in Tanzania SO. NO.11459*" Further, the standard organisation information found in MondoChallenge email only refer to the organisations charity-division, MondoChallenge Foundation UK, and not to the business-division, MondoChallenge UK Ltd.: "*MondoChallenge is a not-for-profit organisation sending volunteers to share their skills in developing countries, in both teaching and business development programmes. MondoChallenge Foundation is a registered UK Charity. The registered charity number is 1106237.*"

[29] I will elaborate this point in chapter 5

[30] See chapters 4 and 5.

volunteer-travel organisations can be described as specialized tour-operators who arrange vacations where travellers can serve as "humanitarian assistance" in local community institutions of the "Third World". Thus, volunteer-travel can be described as a "commercialisation of humanitarian assistance".

In the following sections I will elaborate how volunteer programme facilitators present volunteer activities as "community-development".

i-to-i: Working for "Community-development"

Both organisations of this study market and refer to their operations in the host-communities as "community development". The following citation is the Government of Tanzania's official definition of Community-development;

> *…those measures which enable people to recognize their own ability to identify their problems and use the available resources to earn and increase their income, and build a better life for themselves* (Tanzania 1996)

The "community-development" mantra often recurred in i-to-i public forums, such as on the official website, in advertisement campaigns and in i-to-i volunteer meetings in-country. The concept of "development" appeared to be employed in a vague manner, without linking the concept to any specific activity that would result in "community-development" and without defining any actual objectives.

The content of the i-to-i introduction of new volunteers in Tanzania, which follows, is used to illustrate how a vague concept of "development" is being attached to volunteer activities in encounters between i-to-i employees and volunteers.

The i-to-i orientation meeting

The orientation meeting was held on the balcony of the bigger of two volunteer houses; a white, extravagant looking two-story house that looked conspicuous in this fairly poor neighbourhood in Moshi. Present at the meeting were two Tanzanian and

one European i-to-i staff members and 8 newly arrived volunteers who were staying for periods from 1 week[31] up to the maximum of 3 months.

All the volunteers were given a handout containing topics to be discussed and practical information. The first part of the *Entitlement* section under the heading *i-to-i* included this claim; "*We aim to take part in developing various projects within the Moshi vicinity, by placing volunteers within sustainable projects*". Further, the handout had a section under the heading "*Creating a development mindset*". In this section, the activity of volunteers was presented as "empowering" the host-community, which in the long run would lead to "development". The impact of volunteers in the process of "development" was illustrated with figures, showing the "*Cycle of true development*" (Appendix 1).

During the meeting, when discussing *"The obstacles of effective development"*, the i-to-i Overseas Manager[32] asked the newly arrived volunteers about their views on development. Why is Africa[33] underdeveloped? The first volunteer-answers were; *bureaucracy*, *time*, *corruption*. A volunteer questioned whether Africa *wanted* to change, while another added; "*Maybe they're afraid of change*". A Tanzanian staff member disagreed, he argued change is wanted but there are too many obstacles in achieving it. A volunteer remarked that learning does not just go one way "*...Africa teaches us as well!*" Another added, "*Well, being realistic, but I agree*". The i-to-i Overseas Manager informed the volunteers; they had forgotten *health* as an obstacle of development. A volunteer quickly added: "*AIDS and health.*" A Tanzanian staff members answered; "*…the only way is to educate people*" on the subject of HIV/AIDS. The European i-to-i representative rounded up the discussion; "*We also have malaria, TB. - Malaria is a big killer, often been forgotten. And cholera. There's sometimes a lack of information...*" while laughing, "*…there's a lot of obstacles, is*

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[31] This was an exception; the lower limit is normally set to 2 weeks.

[32] The only non-Tanzanian i-to-i staff-member in Moshi. He described his position as being "the cultural link" between the volunteers and the Tanzanian i-to-i staff.

[33] The use of the terms "Africa" and "Tanzania" were switched back and forth throughout the meeting.

there any more we haven't mentioned?" Further in the introduction meeting, the volunteers were asked about their expectations concerning their own achievements as i-to-i volunteers. The Overseas Manager opened the discussion; "*Tanzania will change you in more ways than one* ". The discussion of *Development* made up most of the orientation meeting. Furthermore *development* was the main topic in the introduction handout.

This case of the introduction meeting exemplifies how i-to-i is portrayed as being actively involved in community-development, here through the presentations of in-country i-to-i representatives. In addition, in the diagrams illustrating "development" from the handout, the volunteer is portrayed as playing a part in the development of Africa on grassroots level. For instance, a portrayal of volunteer-participation in development from the introduction handout reads as follows:

> *Due to your participation the project will be one step along the road of development. The project will benefit from your commitment, dedication, knowledge and language skills. They will be able to continue and envisage their own development through your participation.*

This description appears to be contrary to the Overseas Manager's repeated advice during the discussion that volunteers should "*…be realistic, not idealistic*". Further, the terms "development" and "empowerment" were frequently employed throughout the introduction. Both concepts appeared reified; "empowerment" was presented as the entity that would result in "development". Further, the "tools" of empowerment were "information, advice and skills", tools which appeared to be conveniently held by the "committed" volunteers. According to the i-to-i orientation handout, with the help of volunteers local "individuals and communities" would:

> *…become empowered in the future. Through being empowered they will participate within the decision making process which can change their lives. If this process continues they will be able to empower others to participate.*

In this vague line of arguments, volunteers were presented as the facilitators of this domino-effect of "empowerment" leading to "development", without any concrete

clarification of what volunteers would in actually do in order to achieve this or referring to any results that could serve to validate these claims. This "empowerment" of volunteers to feel they can "make a difference" can be further exemplified by the i-to-i's project introduction of "Community work with women": "*By teaching English, sharing simple business skills and even providing education on HIV and AIDS awareness, you'll provide the tools to build better lives for a multitude of women and their families*" (i-to-i 2008 f).

When this kind of image is presented to the participants, it is no wonder an i-to-i volunteer was shocked when she heard that the company had been bought up by the travel-agency First Choice, which is a package-holiday specialist, since volunteering through i-to-i is presented as anything but a package-holiday. Simpson argues constructing the volunteer traveller as the means to community-development is a typical trait of the gap-year industry:

> *… gap year organizations remain rooted in an essentially externalised conception of development. This model is based on the assumed value of the enthusiastic western volunteer, who becomes the central, and even only, agent of development. In this sense 'active' participation is perceived as predominantly limited to the external, visiting volunteer, rather than being a local prerogative* (Simpson 2004:5).

Still, i-to-i volunteers appeared to scrutinize these portrayals of "development". In a report written by a former i-to-i Tanzania volunteer, the apparent gap between i-to-i's rhetoric and practice is criticized; *"They throw around slogans about development but as far as I could tell, if anything, they were exploiting the local community rather than helping it"*. In the following section I will further elaborate this gap between representations and practices.

Discrepancies between rhetoric and reality

On my "private pages" where individual project details were described at the i-to-i website, a different placement from the one I was ultimately assigned to was listed shortly before project start. My project details and activity descriptions from the "private pages" are given below:

TANZANIA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

KIWAKKUKI (WOMEN AGAINST AIDS IN KILIMANJARO)

Activities

•To learn more of the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS in the Kilimanjaro region
•Awareness Raising – help create awareness of HIV/AIDS within the area.
•Visit homes within the community to provide support and research the problem more
•Assist in the testing of HIV/AIDS
•Assist orphans through financial, economic, emotional and moral support

Kiwakkuki is a Non-Governmental Women's Organisation based in Moshi, which focus on HIV/AIDS related challenges. The above information was replaced with the details of my actual placement at One Heart a few days prior to project start. I later spoke with employees of Kiwakkuki, who denied ever having made an agreement to accept i-to-i volunteers.

Similar incidences occurred to other volunteers during my time with i-to-i;[34] first, a local NGO which provides assistance for women living with HIV/AIDS was entered as the individual volunteer's project information, but upon project start, the volunteer would always be sent to a teaching placement elsewhere. A possible explanation is that i-to-i tried to access the placement prior to the arrival of the volunteer, without any luck. In my case, it appeared the i-to-i Team was searching for a placement to fit the "working with women" project I had chosen, but I doubt NGOs such as

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[34] In addition discussed in BBC's 5 Live report "Mind the Gap", see chapter 6.

KIWAKKUKI would accept inexperienced short-term volunteers, who would need a lot of training and time to adapt and thereby become a burden rather than a resource.

The question is; why was this apparently false information connecting i-to-i to local NGOs listed in the first place?[35] The i-to-i projects called "Community Development" actually referred to English-teaching placements. "Conservation work" was another project category i-to-i claimed to offer in Tanzania on the website, but this type of project did not exist *in situ*. When I first arrived, the i-to-i Team was attempting to arrange volunteer placements at a local environmental NGO, which organized tree-planting projects. As far as I know, only two volunteers went to this placement for a one-day visit, and I never heard anything of it again.

The title of these projects all bear a resemblance to recent trends in the development sector. The i-to-i Team's attempt to join a conservation project corresponded with the project of the Nobel peace-prize winner of 2004, Wangari Mathaai's Green Belt Movement (Peace Price 2008). Further, "women's empowerment" projects, probably especially those which emphasizes HIV/AIDS inflicted women, have for a long time been a donor-favourite within the development sector (Kothari 2005). It seems i-to-i is trying to move into "development" territory, by searching for "legitimate" development-projects rather than merely providing teaching-assistance at small, private schools. Further, it appears i-to-i in practice failed to access these placements. Quite possibly, the local NGOs recognized the limitations of i-to-i volunteers.[36]

Martha Honey suggests some eco-tourism initiatives represent a green-washing of "business as usual", describing them as merely "…*conventional tourism wrapped in a thin veneer of green*" (Honey 1999: 51). The focus on "community-development",

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[35] In the briefing-pack, i-to-i asserts in small print; "*Accuracy of marketing material; we believe and other marketing materials are factual and correct at the time they are made. Every reasonable effort has been made to describe the placement and to provide the amenities described. We cannot be held responsible for any changes that become known or happen after the brochure was produced.* "

[36] This point will further be discussed in the following chapter.

"conservation" and "sustainability" in the construction of i-to-i's image may be equally superficial marketing strategies, used by some volunteer-travel organisations in order to "developmentalize" their operations.

In the next section I will attempt to demonstrate what the hosts, representing the group selected for this "empowerment", said about the contributions of i-to-i volunteers.

i-to-i: host positions

Representatives from several of the i-to-i partner-projects[37] appeared to have similar opinions on the i-to-i volunteers; The placements could manage without the help of the volunteers, but it was fun for the children to have the volunteers there to play with. As an example of this, when I visited one of the i-to-i volunteer placements, Majito Nursery, I asked one of the local teachers how he felt about the volunteers. He asserted it was not exactly a practical *necessity* for the school to host i-to-i volunteers. Still, he believed it was fun for the children to have the i-to-i volunteers there to play with. He added that volunteers could teach the children "different things" (*vitu mbalimbali*), especially English. He told me; "*We are happy they are here*".[38] At other i-to-i placements I got similar answers; the volunteers were not indispensable for the schools as teachers, but the local teachers and students enjoyed the volunteers' company. These statements can illustrate that the hosts did not seem to perceive themselves as the object of "empowerment". Instead, host-placement representatives seemed to see hosting i-to-i volunteers as a pleasant experience, but they could manage without their practical assistance.

In the following section I will go on to discussing how MondoChallenge volunteer-activities, similarly to those of i-to-i, are linked to vague concepts of "development"

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[37] The i-to-i volunteer-placements are referred to as "partner projects" in the orientation hand-out.

[38] "*Tumefurahi wapo hapa*"

and how the concept of "empowerment" is linked both to individual volunteer benefits and to the benefit of the "host-community" as a whole.

MondoChallenge: Whose "empowerment"?

Following Wearing, a relationship of mutual "empowerment" between hosts and guests is what volunteer-travel should ideally be about; an approach where even "average" Western people can "experience life in Third-World countries" while simultaneously "giving back" to the host community (Wearing 2001). Wearing argues: "…*volunteer tourism suggests a symbolic or mutual relationship where the tourist is not given central priority but becomes an equal part of the system*" (Wearing 2001:142).

Nevertheless, some MondoChallenge participants admitted the gain was possibly even larger for the volunteer than for the host community. To exemplify, at the MondoChallenge introduction meeting, the Country Manager and a MondoChallenge volunteer discussed that, next to making an impact on the local community, the volunteer-experience would also "empower" the participant. The Country manger asserted; "…*you almost feel you've gained more when you leave – even though people tell you you are so great to be volunteering!*"

Next I will attempt to exemplify how MondoChallenge host-placement representatives appeared to perceive the alleged mutual gain involved in volunteer-travel.

MondoChallenge: host positions

The MondoChallenge volunteers seemed less disappointed with the volunteer-programme they had signed up for than the i-to-i volunteers. From speaking to placement representatives, MondoChallenge volunteers in addition appeared to receive more positive reviews for their assistance. MondoChallenge contact-teacher at Longido Primary School praised the efforts of previous volunteers in an interview.

According to this teacher, the school performance in English increased after MondoChallenge volunteers started coming, and the students were getting better results in their national exams. Even the teachers at Longido Primary had improved their English skills, he informed me. Further, he claimed the volunteers had; "…*taught us good European methods of teaching, especially for slow learners. They have introduced good methods of teaching.*"

When the local teacher had initially been approached by MondoChallenge some years back (he did not remember exactly if it was 2004 or 2005), the teacher asserted he had been very happy because he knew there would be changes. He explained it was *bahati tu* (just luck), that had brought the MondoChallenge volunteers to Longido. He also explained that teachers from other schools in neighbouring villages had asked him how he managed to get the volunteers to Longido Primary. The school had not been given any restrictions by MondoChallenge personnel as to what the volunteers should do, even though suggestions had been made. Apparently, a MondoChallenge representative had simply told this teacher to *keep the volunteers busy*.

Further, it was not just in providing teaching-assistance that MondoChallenge had been helpful, the teacher asserted; "…*not only teaching, tena wametupa michezo na paper… they have given us gifts as well. Wanasupport karatasi, especially in the visual impaired class, very expensive with paper.*"[39] He also believed the volunteers where learning from the local teachers as well, from"*… exchanging ideas and views mbalimblai, swali ya Maasai na taifa[40] - they are learning*!"

This teacher's statements corresponded with other host-placement representatives portrayals of the MondoChallenge volunteer programme; the volunteers predominantly where praised for their assistance. In the interview referred to above, the teacher praised previous volunteer's contributions to his school, but his approval

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[39] To translate, MondoChallenge representatives had donated paper and games, among other things.

[40] Different views, questions about the Maasai people and the nation.

still seemed more modest than the "empowering" rhetoric used by organisation representatives to describe the potential contributions volunteers could provide toward the whole host-community.

In the following section I will discuss the content of the induction of newly arrived MondoChallenge volunteers to exemplify this rhetorical "empowerment" of the volunteer:

The MondoChallenge volunteer introduction

The MondoChallenge induction of new volunteers was performed by the in-country staff. Most often, MondoChallenge volunteers arrived individually and not in groups as with the i-to-i volunteers, thus, introductions were performed for each volunteer individually.[41]

My introduction meeting was held over lunch at a small café, after the Country Manger had guided me around the village of Longido and the primary school where I would start teaching the following day. As part of the introduction, the Country Manager guided me through issues of cultural relativism. The Country manager asserted one significant cultural difference between Europe and Africa the perception of *time*. He claimed the Western "ruled by the clock" ideology contrasts with the African "time is plenty" ideology. Another difference which was mentioned was Western individualism versus African communalisms ("group culture"). The Country Manager emphasized: "*We can learn a lot from their group culture*", further adding that in international affairs, Tanzania had to adapt to European ideologies, such as the Western time-perception.

Subsequently, the impact of volunteers was discussed, the Country Manager asserted; "*I'm sure MondoChallenge volunteers have made a difference, I've got no doubt we*

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[41] The MondoChallenge volunteer could choose relatively freely which day to arrive, while i-to-i volunteers were given specific arrival-dates to choose from.

have made an impact." The Country Manager further claimed the gap that MondoChallenge fills in the volunteer-travel sector is the prolonged volunteer placement duration.[42] He asked me what the minimum time-requirement was for i-to-i volunteers, which I replied was two weeks. He condemned i-to-i's short-term placements; it was not sufficient for the volunteer "to make an impact". Also, he stressed that MondoChallenge differed from i-to-i in that the MondoChallenge volunteers were relied upon to be independent; "*I'm not here to hold your hand, it's not our style*", the Country Manager told me, yet he added "*…but my phone is always on.*" Seemingly, the MondoChallenge merely functioned as a facilitator, placing the volunteer in an environment with lots of potential for personal growth through assisting in local institutions. After having been "placed" volunteers should find their own path toward contributing to the host community.

The Effectiveness of MondoChallenge volunteers

Being *effective* was a key expression repeated throughout the MondoChallenge induction, but I also frequently heard this term in other organisation forums, such as at the meetings every other Friday. The Country Manager stressed; "*…be as effective as you can, that will help the community*". I was warned about the frustration with "them", the Tanzanians, not being effective enough. Further, it was stressed that being "as effective as you can", was up to the individual volunteer.

The MondoChallenge introduction hand-out refers to the "attitude" of volunteers as crucial for their impact potential. The way to "*reinforce the work of the organisation*" is "*by adopting a positive "can do" attitude that finds solutions, especially when frustrations occur (as they often do) on the project*". This claim appears to shift responsibility from MondoChallenge to the individual volunteer if an "impact" is not made toward the host community. The County Manager asserted that MondoChallenge did not merely focus on volunteers being "happy"; "*… just to make*

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[42] As mentioned, MondoChallenge profess a two-moth minimum.

a volunteer happy, is not enough to make volunteers effective". Further, the Country Manager claimed if a volunteer was *effective*, the volunteer would also be happy.

As mentioned previously, the contact teacher at Longido Primary had been told by MondoChallenge representatives to "keep the volunteer busy", while the above case illustrates volunteers themselves were being told to be "effective". This can illustrate how the organisation constructed the image of the volunteers; their potential to "make a difference" was measured in individual "effectiveness", while the placement representatives were told to keep the volunteer active to make them feel useful.

In the following section I will discuss whether construction of the volunteer programme, as illustrated above, gives the participants realistic expectations. I will tie the discussion to material from the MondoChallenge Friday meetings and promotional documents written by organisation representatives and compare this with participant reports.

Implanting realistic expectations?

At the MondoChallenge meetings, I noticed the organisation representatives always demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm when discussing what had been going on at the different volunteer placements. The volunteers were encouraged to present "wins" at every meeting. "Wins" were short, positive stories, new ideas or project advances that had occurred since the previous meeting. The Country Manager asked;"… *last week, what made you smile, what made you laugh.*" When a volunteer presented a story, the Country Manager would always smile, nod and keep the focus directly on the speaker, while adding positive comments like "great!" and "that's fantastic!" I would argue this praising of volunteer activities was performed in a way that it often appeared to exaggerate the volunteer's contributions toward the host community. Further, constructive criticism of volunteer activities was for the most part not discussed in the meeting arena.

The following excerpt from the volunteer briefing notes for MondoChallenge Tanzania, can exemplify the organisation's image-construction: "*Whether teaching English or adults, or helping AIDS/HIV affected families and providing business skills, we have made a major contribution to improving the lives of those who so badly need our help.*" This excessively optimistic rhetoric did not go unnoticed among MondoChallenge volunteers. Many volunteers reacted to the difference between what they had been told would be going on at the projects and what they were seeing and experiencing "in the field". One volunteer questioned whether the experience of volunteering was actually a "game"; a playground set up by the organisation where Western youth could role-play as "development-assistance" in order to expand their "horizons". The following excerpt is from a report where a business development volunteer scrutinizes the excessively "empowering" rhetoric of MondoChallenge:

> *My chief concern is that by creating elaborate and word-rich systems that give the impression of wonderful and valuable work, **we may actually be doing harm!** I would ask you to seriously consider this from a personal point of view, and whilst it may appear a cross between 'valuable work' and 'a game', it is the height of irresponsibility to ignore the real people's lives beneath the charade, not to mention the goodwill and expectations of those that fund these activities* [referring to the volunteers] (MondoChallenge Tanzania volunteer report, spring 2007)

This volunteer was not the only one to react to MondoChallenge rhetoric. Another volunteer on a teaching-placement explained in an interview how she had been "*filled with so much enthusiasm*" when she initially contacted the MondoChallenge Team UK about volunteering. Further, she asserted the image of the volunteer-programme which had been presented to her was an idealization. Below, quote from an interview where this volunteer explained how she had been disappointed by MondoChallenge's actual programme:

> *I've signed up for it thinking its more like a volunteer organization,*
> *trying to help people, but now that I've done it, I feel they're more*
> *concerned with the volunteers, if they're happy or not in their*
> *placements – since we pay that much money – they are concerned that*
> *we get our money's worth. That's not volunteering, that's not what I*
> *wanted to sign up for*[43]

Further, this volunteer compared MondoChallenge to a safari company, which was primarily concerned with making sure the customers "got their money's worth".

"Changing lives"

I would argue that the image organisation representatives presented in meetings and other official forums, with claims like "*we can change lives!*" [44] served to dissociate volunteer activities from that of "egocentric" mainstream tourists. Contrastive to "hedonistic tourism" the volunteer travels were praised as altruistic. Constructing the image of the organisation as a "community development institution" also appeared to give volunteers certain expectations of the organisations, different from what would be expected of "mainstream" tour-agencies. Exaggerating impact potential is also a much-discussed tendency within the development sector. Crewe and Harrison assert that people working in development/aid often overestimate their own importance, while their projects' effects may be peripheral or even irrelevant for the "recipient" population (Crewe 1998:1). This tendency of overestimating own importance appears to apply for volunteer-travel organisations. Further, this tendency might lead to volunteers having high expectations of how they should be "welcomed" in the host-community and of the "impact" of their own work.

Some MondoChallenge volunteers expressed disappointment when they experienced that their assistance was not sorely demanded in Tanzania. To exemplify, while walking around on the streets of Arusha, a young MondoChallenge volunteer expressed distress over local lack of gratitude for the volunteers' contributions to

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[43] Excerpt from an interview with a MondoChallenge volunteer on a teaching-placement in Tanzania.

[44] Quote from the introduction hand-out

their society. The volunteer explained how his perception of volunteering had changed some weeks into his two-month placement; "*If I'd known then what I know now, I wouldn't have come. (…)I think the Africans would work harder themselves if I wouldn't have been here. I don't think there's such a need for me to stay here*." The volunteer explained he had not been shown any gratitude for his efforts in Tanzania. It bothered him that volunteers were still charged high prices and were not treated with special respect "on the streets". Then, changing his mind mid-conversation when reminded of the shortage of teachers at the Secondary School he was placed at, he asserted; "*Well, actually, I think I could make a difference.*"

While the volunteer programme was constructed by MondoChallenge representatives as development assistance, the host communities appeared to be constructed as the "targets" of this assistance, a point I will elaborate in the following section.

Constructing "the local community"

So far, the presentation of the organisations and of volunteers has been discussed. In addition, the host community appears to be constructed as "suitable targets of intervention" (ct. Kelsall 2005: 118) in organisation rhetoric, seemingly in order to verify the need for volunteer presence (cf. Simpson 2004). In "The Anti-politics machine", Ferguson (1994) discusses the conceptual apparatus used by NGOs to constitute the objects of "development" [45] in exaggerated terms, in order to justify the NGOs use of a standardized program of development intervention (Ferguson 1994:25-88). A similar kind of justification can also be seen in both i-to-i and MondoChallenge. Targets are persistently referred to as "in need"[46] of volunteer

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[45] The term "development" is put in quotation marks throughout the book, "*…as a reminder to the reader that the book aims to problematize this concept*" (Ferguson 1994: xi)

[46] To exemplify, the "the objects of development" are referred to by MondoChallenge as "*…those in need*" (MondoChallenge 2008 a).

assistance. Below I will present an excerpt from the i-to-i project description of "Community work with women" in Tanzania to illustrate such portrayals:

> *Women in Tanzania are gathering more rights and their lives are beginning to evolve beyond the traditional roles of wife and mother. However whilst most women would like to embrace these changes, many lack the skills to take them forward. By teaching English, sharing simple business skills and even providing education on HIV and AIDS awareness, you'll provide the tools to build better lives for a multitude of women and their families* (i-to-i 2008 f)

Here "women in Tanzania" are portrayed as an undifferentiated category having been oppressed, but now struggling to obtain the "skills" which the volunteer conveniently hold the "tools" to provide.

Reification of conceptual target groups such as "Women in Tanzania", as illustrated in this text, is similarly pervasive in the language of development, according to Crewe and Harrison (Crewe 1998:174). Further, Igoe and Kelsall illustrates how; "…"*the people" became a reified concept of marginal communities waiting to be "empowered" by NGO interventions.*" Further, they assert: "*Connections to "the people" are an essential justification for any development interventions in Africa today*" (Kelsall 2005:27).

Even though the "locals" were presented by the volunteer-travel organisations as in need of volunteers, they did not seem to be portrayed as *passive recipients*. Rather, they are portrayed as active participants who "work alongside" volunteers in the pursuit of a common goal of "development" (cf. MondoChallenge 2008; i-to-i 2008 o). Within both organisations, the host/volunteer relationship was presented as a partnership of equals, where the "local" would not be a passive recipient of volunteer assistance, but actively participate, working as a team with the volunteers for the benefit of the whole "community". Next, I will elaborate this notion of local participation.

The Notion of Local Participation

The stress on "local participation" is closely linked to the concept of "empowerment" in the development sector, a concept built on the idea of bottom-up, grass-root development interventions (Moan 2000). This school of development assistance seems to be adopted by this study's organisations, seen in their stress on implementing the volunteer programmes directly in "local communities" together with the stress on "empowerment" and "local participation". "Recipient" placements were by both organisations exclusively referred to as "partners", thereby implying there existed a mutually beneficial relationship between equals working toward a common goal (cf. Manji 1997). Again, this corresponds with a recent trend in development discourse, Crewe and Harrison assert; "…*the language of partnership helps with the problems of legitimacy and accountability that plague development donors*" (Crewe 1998:73).

Further, Crewe and Harrison point out that such "talk of partnership" often fails to address potential conflicts and inequalities between the Northern NGO and their local partner (ibid: 87). Transferred to the volunteer-travel sector, claiming "partnership" similarly serves to legitimate "volunteer intervention", implying a symbiotic relationship between the volunteer, the host-project and the volunteer-travel organisations, as figure 1 from the i-to-i orientation hand-out illustrates (Appendix 1). Similarly, in the MondoChallenge briefing notes it is asserted that "…*working in partnership with local communities benefits all the parties involved*". I would further argue that the volunteers' and the host placement employees' obligations toward the "host-project" differed too much for them to be considered as colleagues working on equal terms. While the "placement" represents the livelihood for the local employees, the volunteer's role is temporary and non-obligatory, as discussed in the previous chapter.

In this chapter I have discussed the organisations' conceptualization of the volunteer-travel programmes. I have attempted to illustrate that an idealized picture of volunteer-travel is being presented to the volunteers, linked to a vague concept of

"development" and portrayed as an equally beneficial activity for all parts involved. While this chapter discusses the conceptualisation of volunteer-travel, in the next chapter I will discuss the execution of the volunteer-travel programmes in Tanzania. I will argue the design of leisure volunteerism programmes have certain inherent shortcomings which may restrict effectively providing "development assistance."

4. Assessing the volunteer-travel programmes

I this chapter I will assess i-to-i and MondoChallenge's volunteer-travel programmes' value as "community-development" initiatives, allegedly beneficial for the host-community and entailing participatory involvement. Further, I will discuss the potential constraints inherent in the programmes that could inhibit them from effectively providing "development assistance".

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, commercial volunteer-programmes can be seen as easily available and structurally simplified "development" projects which in addition generates a profit. Still, building a tourism-programme on the conceptual framework of "development-programmes" might not in practice be as straightforward as it is implied in advertisement campaigns. Similar to Ferguson's (1994) analysis of development projects, I would argue programme shortcoming should not be attributed to the intentions of the participants, but to constraints inherent in the commercial volunteer-programme structure. Thus, good intentions alone may not necessarily cause the most beneficial outcomes.

To demonstrate "insider" assessments of international volunteer-travel programmes, I will base some of the discussions on the "Codes of Conduct" promoted by Comhlámh.[47] These codes propose a number of criteria which can serve to set standards for volunteer-travel programmes.

The problems of volunteer-travel programmes

Volunteer-travel is often praised as a favourable and "sustainable" tourism alternative. According to Wearing, the negative impacts on the host-community often

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[47] The Irish association of Development Workers.

associated with mass tourism, are in volunteer tourism replaced by positive impacts for host and guest alike (Wearing 2000). Still, I would argue if volunteer-travel is perceived merely as an ethically superior form of performing tourism, many of the practical problems involved in the programmes will inevitably be overlooked. Instead, if the volunteer-travel programmes are analyzed according to the claims professed in their advertisement campaigns; as community-development projects allegedly benefiting the host, entailing mutual interaction and practicing participatory involvement, programme shortcomings can more easily be identified. I will in this chapter try to demonstrate some constraints of volunteer-travel programmes, starting with the issue of short-term volunteers' environmental and social adaptation.

Adaptation

Working as a volunteer short-term may be problematic for a number of reasons. Volunteers' period of environmental and social adaptation can count as one of the problems of short-term volunteering. In short-term volunteer-placements, there is not much time appropriated to adapt or adjust to either new tasks or to the new social environment. In a report on international volunteer-programmes commissioned by Comhlámh[48], short-term volunteer placements are defined as less than three months, medium-term placements as 3-12 months, while long-term placements are defined as more than 12 months.[49] By these definitions, all i-to-i placements count as short-term, while MondoChallenge in addition arrange medium-term placements.

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[48] Comhlámh, the Irish Association of Development Workers, is funded by Irish Aid and was established in 2004. The organisation aims to "…*encourage good practice in the overseas volunteering sector, and to support volunteers in a longer-term commitment to development.*" (Comhlámh 2008)

[49] From the report "*The impact of international volunteering on Host Organisations*" (Comhlámh 2008) The report is based on research from 2006 on host-organisations and host-projects in India and Tanzania, which have Euro-American sending-organizations. 22 volunteer-travel organisations, similar to MondoChallenge and i-to-i, participated in the survey. The research was performed by FRONTERA a UK-based management and development consulting company. Since the research is based on interviews and focus-group sessions involving in-country host organisation representatives, the Comhlámh report can provide a different view on volunteer host-organizations than the participant/observer approach this thesis is based on.

The i-to-i placements were set at a minimum of two weeks up to a maximum of three months. Still, the i-to-i Overseas Manager did not consider two weeks to be sufficient. He asserted i-to-i volunteers usually stayed in Tanzania for four to five weeks (this would normally include "safari -time"). Further, he stressed that volunteers ought to stay for at least four weeks. The volunteer needed minimum a week to "settle in", and would start "mentally preparing" to leave the last week of the placement. During this time, the volunteer would thus be more distanced from the volunteer role and consequently less effective for the host-placement.[50]

In contrast, the MondoChallenge Country Manager calculated that a volunteer would need three weeks to get "comfortable" within the placement. During these first three weeks the volunteers would not be able to contribute significantly to the host-placement.

Further, the Country Manager of another volunteer programme in Moshi, which placed volunteers for periods of 3, 6 or 9 months, told me in an interview that he considered even three months to be insufficient for teaching-placements, the main reason being the differences between the teaching systems of Tanzania and the UK. Still, he stressed a three-month placement would be more "sellable", i.e. short-term placements could attract more customers. In addition, short-term placements would be easier to arrange for the in-country agent, seeing as three months is the maximum stay on a tourist visa in Tanzania.

The above comments can illustrate how the overseas representatives of the volunteer-programmes perceived adaptation issues in short-term placements, even though different standards of "short-term" were set as sufficient for "making a difference". Still, often even these overseas employees stayed on short-term contracts. The i-to-i Overseas Manager position had 6-month contracts at a time, with possibility of extending the stay. The contracts of the Country Manager-position of

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[50] These comments somewhat contrasted with i-to-i promotional material, where it is claimed; "*Whether you volunteer for one week or six months, you will make a difference to communities abroad.*" (i-to-i 2008 g)

MondoChallenge were seemingly more flexible, but could also be as short as six months. It thus appears that those in charge of guiding the volunteers had barely "settled in" themselves.

I would assume that proper, in-depth training of the volunteers could make their adaptation-process easier, thus make the volunteer more "effective". In the next section I will discuss the practice of training the volunteers.

Training of volunteers

The Comhlámh report refers to two different types of volunteer training; pre-departure training and in-country training. In-country volunteer training is further divided into two subsections: "Structured training", which has clear objectives and involves a briefing on relevant topics by in-country representatives in order to prepare volunteers for their placement, and "informal training" which involves field-training and/or assigning mentors to guide the volunteers while in placement (Comhlámh 2008). According to Comhlámh, not providing sufficient training can limit the volunteer's potential of providing effective assistance toward the host-project. In addition, when little preparation is provided, the volunteer may initially need more assistance from host-placement representatives. Hosting volunteers could thus increase the workload of host-placement representatives rather than serving as a relief.

Next, I will describe the volunteer-travel agencies' volunteer-training programmes, starting with i-to-i.

i-to-i: Volunteer training and guidance

In the case of volunteer-travel agencies specializing in short-term placements, such as i-to-i, there is not much of a window for extensive in-country volunteer training. Still, there are possibilities for pre-departure training. i-to-i provides an online TEFL-

course (Teaching English as Foreign Language) pre-departure, which is included in the volunteer-programme, but this course is optional.[51] The volunteer is in addition sent a briefing pack pre-departure. i-to-i's briefing pack for Tanzania 2007 included glossy brochures with general, standardized guidelines for volunteering, safari-options and a blue t-shirt with the company's motto "meaningful travel" an the hand-shaped logo printed on the back. No area specific language-training was encouraged or provided pre-departure. The one-afternoon i-to-i volunteer introduction meeting, discussed in the previous chapter, was seemingly the only "structured training" provided by i-to-i in-country.

When the volunteers were initially brought to their placements by the i-to-i in-country team, the team left immediately after having introduced the volunteers to the host-placement representatives. To illustrate, below, an excerpt from an email written by a former i-to-i volunteer describing her first impression of i-to-i;

> *So, basically, when I got here, there was a house where volunteers lived, had their dinner cooked and a local guy who took you to a school and said, "This is where you will be teaching". I hadn't signed up to teach actually, I had signed up for community-development with children.*[52]

Further, volunteers where seemingly not assigned mentors in-placement, but since the volunteers shared houses in the same neighbourhood, and the i-to-i in-country team were often present, assistance from in-country i-to-i representatives could be easily available. In addition, every Tuesday evening, joint meetings were held in the larger of the two volunteer-houses. At these meetings, volunteers and in-country agents could discuss current topics concerning the programme. Still, representatives from the host-placements were not invited to attend these meetings.

Next, I will describe MondoChallenge Tanzania's volunteer training practices.

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[51] The volunteer is given 6 months to complete the course, and is assigned a teacher who comments on each completed module by mail.

[52] From the email; "*i-to-i bitching!*"

MondoChallenge: Volunteer training and guidance

The MondoChallenge volunteers were as i-to-i volunteers sent briefing-notes pre-departure. MondoChallenge's briefing-notes were more descriptive of the placements and area and were partially written by former volunteers. The notes contained detailed information about the actual placement, describing activities, contact persons and general information about the location. MondoChallenge did not provide TEFL or any other teacher training pre-departure, but the briefing-notes included a section of advice and references to teaching manuals. The briefing-notes also included a language-section, which encouraged volunteers to learn the local language. The "structured-training" provided for MondoChallenge volunteers in-country was based on the briefing notes and performed by the Country Manager for each volunteer individually, as described in the previous chapter. The MondoChallenge volunteer introduction, counting as the only in-country "structured training", was performed in one afternoon. Thereafter, the host-placement representatives would be responsible for further instruction of the volunteers.

MondoChallenge urged partner-schools to assign a mentor teacher to each volunteer. Below, an excerpt from a MondoChallenge report sent to the schools which hosted volunteers;

> *The mentor teacher you have assigned to the volunteer will be very important in helping the volunteer adapt to their new surrounding as quickly as possible. The mentor teacher will also help prevent the volunteer of feeling "alone" in surroundings he or she is not familiar with.*[53]

The MondoChallenge organisation-representatives were not as "available" as the i-to-i in-country team. The MondoChallenge in-country office was based in Arusha city, at least one hour away from many of the placements. The only regular contact between volunteers and staff-members where at the MondoChallenge volunteer

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[53] From the report: "*Volunteer Placement Program Working in Partnership with Your School*"

meetings, which held every second Friday at restaurants in Arusha city. As with i-to-i, host-placements representatives were not encouraged to attend these meetings.

As noted in the Camhlámh report (2007), communication between host-placements, the volunteers and the volunteer-travel organisation could be restricted due to the lack of a common language. Next, I will discuss the language issues within the programmes.

Language Concerns

Since the volunteer-travel organisations' primary "input" for achieving their stated goal of community-development is integrating Western individuals into host community work-placements (cf. Simpson 2004), the success of the programme could be deemed to stand or fall on the level of successful communication between the programme-participants, especially between the host-placement representatives and the volunteers. Thus, an obvious obstacle for short-term volunteer-programmes is the volunteers' lack of knowledge of the Tanzanian national language, Kiswahili, additionally since many of the host-placement representatives (especially at the i-to-i placements) did not speak English.

In the Camhlámh report, the lack of language skills is identified as the number one obstacle limiting the efficiency of volunteer-travel programmes.[54] In the report it is claimed even attempts to learn a few phrases would contribute a lot to strengthening the relationship between volunteers and host-placement representatives.

Next, I will present language issues within the two volunteer-travel programmes, starting with i-to-i.

i-to-i: language concerns

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[54] Number two is the varying "cultural sensitivity" of volunteers, such as compliance to local dress-codes, which was urged by both organisations.

The gaps in communication between volunteer and host-placement representatives, can illustrate constraints to providing efficient assistance though participatory involvement in volunteer-travel programmes.

Language barriers between volunteers, students and local teachers seemed apparent at many of the i-to-i placements. This was especially noticeable at the nurseries, where the local staff often appeared to have a limited English vocabulary and the students had only just started learning a few English words. The local staff would at times almost refrain from any communication with the i-to-i volunteers beyond greetings, prompt task-instructions and good-byes. Thus, volunteers were primarily given practical tasks, which did not involve extensive instruction, such as marking books[55] and distributing pencils and notebooks. Further, if a volunteer would be leading a class, as happened occasionally, there would always be a local teacher supervising and translating for the children. Further, the volunteers at times tried talking strictly to the children, when they were not sitting still, shouting or in any other way "misbehaving". Since the children did not understand the words, they would, apparently, pretend not to notice the volunteer's tone of voice and continue uninterruptedly until a local teacher regained control of the class.[56]

One of the i-to-i in-country representatives arranged Kiswahili classes every weekday on volunteer demand, but few volunteers took advantage of this option. Several volunteers expressed that going to these classes would not make much difference, because of the limited knowledge of a foreign language it is possible to attain during the average i-to-i volunteer-placement period of 3/4 weeks.

Next, I will present the language concerns within MondoChallenge volunteer-travel programme in Tanzania.

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[55] If it was exercises which did not require Kiswahili-knowledge, such as maths, English or art exercises.

[56] Often children only took orders from local teachers and ignored volunteers, several volunteers attributed this to the local teachers' use of corporal punishment.

MondoChallenge: language concerns

As noted, the MondoChallenge briefing pack included some basic Kiswahili phrases and during induction, the volunteers got "tested" on their memory of these phrases. Still, the organisation did not provide language training beyond this, even though further training was encouraged. If MondoChallenge volunteers wanted to learn Kiswahili while staying in Tanzania, they would have to search for classes themselves, as some did.

Since many MondoChallenge volunteers were on medium-term placements, they had better opportunities to "pick up some phrases along the way" than the shorter-term i-to-i volunteers. Still, few MondoChallenge volunteers attempted to learn the language pre-departure. Below, excerpt from an interview where a teaching-volunteer described problems of communicating with local staff and students at the school where she was placed:

> *…my Swahili is really bad, if I was gonna come back, I'd make sure I*
> *knew Swahili first – they* [MondoChallenge representatives] *tell you*
> *"oh, it's* [language] *not really important", but it IS – when you come to*
> *someone's country, like – they should have language classes– that*
> *would make you such a better teacher.*

Another teaching-volunteer similarly saw her limited local-language skills as a problem at her placement. She currently tried to learn Kiswahili, but had no language training prior to arrival in Tanzania and did not attend "structured" Kiswahili classes. The teachers at the placement could speak English, but the children, aged 4-6, were only just beginning to learn English. Therefore, the volunteer could assist only in the few English classes. Still, there was always another teacher present to translate when necessary. The volunteer stated that since Kiswahili was the language primarily used for teaching, she sometimes felt "a bit useless" at the placement. At times she would just be sitting on a bench, observing the other teachers classes.

This MondoChallenge volunteer acknowledged that the communication gap, due to limited knowledge of the local language, restricted the amount of assistance she could

provide toward the host-placement, but she believed it would be a support for the school for her just to be present, watching over and playing with the children.

Still, after the inevitable departure of this volunteer, there ought to have been room for consideration of what the effect would be for the school and the children if she would not be replaced. In the next section I will discuss the issue of temporality within commercial volunteer-programmes.

Project-sustainability

Problems of project-discontinuity

Since the Brundtland commission was convened in 1983, the concept of "sustainable development" has become a buzzword of the tourist industry (World Tourism Organisation 2008). Still, it appears this concept is attributed a great number of meanings, but generally entailing the minimization of tourisms negative side-effects for the host-destinations. In many cases sustainability-claims appears to be employed by tour-agents more as an empty promotional strategy rather than as an actual practice (Mowforth 1998:122). Further, Honey argues a "green-washing" strategy is often promoted within the eco-tourism sector; company rhetoric is "greened" in advertisement, while only cosmetic changes are made in the actualisation of the tour (Honey 1999:53). Similarly, even though maintaining "sustainable projects" is professed a primary objective of the volunteer-travel sector, it seems this focus on "sustainability" can be questioned in programme actualisation. Further, it appears there are certain constraints inherent in volunteer-travel programmes that could make sustainability, if understood as long-term project viability, hard to obtain in practise.

One of the potential constraints of project-sustainability appears to be the difficulty of keeping a steady flow of volunteers to host-placements. Thus, unstable consumer markets appear to be a controversy of the volunteer-travel sector since it is primarily the volunteer, as customer, who decides which placement he/she wants and over

which time-span. Project-sustainability thus depends on customer demands within the countries from which the volunteers are recruited. To ensure projects viability, hosting volunteers should thus not be an absolute necessity for the placements.

Next, I will discuss the sustainability of the volunteer-projects, starting with i-to-i's programme in Tanzania.

i-to-i project-sustainability

i-to-i host-placements receive volunteers only when a volunteer selects a matching placement-category from i-to-i's project-menu.[57] When a certain project-category for various reasons has no applicants, there can be long intervals with no volunteers at the corresponding host-placements.

When my volunteer time was up at the One Heart women's centre, as mentioned a "community-work with women" placement, I asked a member of the i-to-i Team who would replace me at the centre. He explained that no-one was set to take over, since there had been no applicants for this particular project-category. I tried to convince him to send some of the "community-work with children" volunteers who where crowding up the small nursery classrooms, since I believed these volunteers could be more useful at the One Heart centre, where they would be in charge of the voluntary English-lessons. Further, since many volunteers had complained they did not feel "needed" at the nurseries, sending them to the One Heart centre might even make the customer more content by being "needed".[58] Apparently, this was more easily said than done. The UK office had received several complaints from volunteers who had been placed at a project that did not fit the category they had originally signed up for. Subsequently, the i-to-i Tanzania team had been reprimanded by the UK office for

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[57] These categories are described in chapter 1.

[58] As discussed in chapter 3.

these complaints, and consequently they were now sticking to i-to-i's regulations, one of the team members explained to me.

When I returned to the One Heart women's centre after about two months, the centre currently hosted two i-to-i volunteers. I came in during class and saw only two students where left of the group of eight which I had initially been teaching. The new volunteers explained there had been a one-month gap from I left to their arrival, so the students had stopped coming in. It seems the students got tired of coming all the way to the centre in vain since no teacher would show up.

This was not the only time volunteer requests appeared to be put above project-viability. Below, an excerpt from a report written by a former i-to-i Tanzania volunteer which further illustrates this issue;

> [i-to-i] *made no contribution to the running of the school; they had no-one here to oversee the work that the volunteers were doing, to help them or the project to grow and no structures in place to ensure the sustainability of projects. For example, I was teaching 50+ small children in a local church, but then at the end of my placement the local man working for i-to-i found a project closer to the volunteer house and so left the original nursery because it made it easier for him to take volunteers to the new one. So after I left suddenly these kids were left again with no classes.*

In this report it is indicated that the convenience of the i-to-i volunteer and the i-to-i staff was put first, even though the agency claim to always be involved in "sustainable projects", as this advertisement text illustrates: "*When you volunteer with us you become a part of a wider movement toward sustainable development and ensure that projects can continue their worthwhile work in the long-term*" (i-to-i 2008 g).

Further, these cases of project-discontinuity exemplifies how i-to-i's programme-practices conflicts with their marketing strategy. As indicated in the above quoted volunteer statement, i-to-i appears to show more concern for the customer than for the sustainability of host-placements. However, a paradox within this particular sector of

tourism is that such a consumer-focused strategy appears to conflict with customer demands. The "product" the volunteer is buying is, in a way, taking part in a project which will allegedly to "make a difference" for the host-community. Thus, if the customers observe that they are being prioritised before the host-placement, this might be perceived as a broken promise, as illustrated in the volunteer report quoted above. Thus, by putting the imagined demands of the customer first and having a loose commitment toward host-placement, the organisation is contradicting the promises of "doing good" that might have initially attracted their clients.

Next I will discuss the issue of sustainability within MondoChallenge's programme in Tanzania.

MondoChallenge project-sustainability

As i-to-i, MondoChallenge professed to be involved in "sustainable projects". Still, I would argue limitations inherent in MondoChallenge's programmes could make this statement difficult to guarantee. For instance, it might be difficult to keep a steady flow of volunteers at all times, because as mentioned, the organisation cannot control there will always be applicants for the projects.

MondoChallenge had a different approach to placing volunteers than i-to-i. MondoChallenge volunteers did not as i-to-i volunteers choose a vague project-category with no exact information what kind of project it was and which activities would be involved. MondoChallenge listed all their "partners" by name, and made suggestions about which placement would suit the skills of each volunteer best. By doing this, it appears MondoChallenge could as far as possible limit the pitfall of having too many on one project and none at another, such as occurred at i-to-i placements, since they could keep track of which projects where "empty" and which were "full" and thus more evenly distribute the applicants.

Still, this would not be a sufficient guarantee that there would always be a volunteer at every "partner" project. Since the organisation role is to facilitate the volunteer trip

for paying customers, they could try to influence the volunteers' decision but not decide for them. Further, as noted by Cousins (2006), there tends to be more applicants for gap-year programmes during periods such as public holidays and the beginning or end of a semester. Due to such seasonal variation there would inevitably be gaps between volunteers at some placements from time to time. Such gaps would be difficult to prevent while still maintaining a long and assorted list of local partners for prospective volunteers to choose from.

As noted in chapter two, differing volunteer accountability toward their placement can represent another drawback of volunteer-travel programmes. Next, I will discuss the issue of volunteer accountability within MondoChallenge's projects.

MondoChallenge: controversies of volunteer commitment

Another problem of leisure-volunteerism is the volunteers' varying sense of commitment toward host-placements. As noted, the MondoChallenge volunteers were predominantly left to "figure themselves out" and define their own role at the placement. Since at times there was no clearly defined host-placement supervisor to report to and take orders from, the organisation could not give any guarantee that all volunteers would have a high level of commitment toward their placement. For instance, some volunteers might refuse to perform tasks assigned by host-placement representatives, which could lead to a disruption in the distribution of responsibilities from one volunteer to the next within the placements.

To illustrate, the Office Manager of an Arusha-based NGO which hosts MondoChallenge volunteer, claimed in an interview that MondoChallenge volunteers had been "very helpful". However, he added that a couple of the former MondoChallenge volunteers who had been placed at this NGO had refused to act as his subordinates. Apparently, one volunteer claimed the UK-based Managing Director of MondoChallenge, Anthony Lunch, was his "real" boss, thus the only one he would take orders from. Another volunteer had suddenly stopped showing up for

work at the NGO. Apparently, he had changed to a different placement without informing the Office Manager.

Still, the case of the formerly mentioned NGO illustrates that not all "partner" projects would suffer a lack during periodic gaps between volunteers. Bigger, self-sustained placements, such as this NGO, would not be too affected by a "volunteer-draught". The Office Manager asserted there had often been gaps in the flow of MondoChallenge volunteers since the NGO first started hosting volunteers in 2002, but considering the size of the organisation and, as he put it; their "normal day to day activities" at the office, such gaps would not pose a big problem for the NGO. The MondoChallenge volunteer currently placed at the NGO believed a discontinuity in the flow of volunteers would be a greater problem at a school placement, where gaps between volunteers might leave a class with no teacher mid-semester.

Further, the Office Manager reported he did not have continuous contact with MondoChallenge representatives even when hosting their volunteers. Additionally, there were no mechanisms in place for him to carry out regular assessments of the performance of MondoChallenge volunteers. Both volunteer-travel organisations evaluation practices will be discussed in the following section.

Evaluation of volunteer-programmes

Based on the research report previously mentioned, Camhlámh (2007) has developed 11 main principles that volunteer-sending organisations should consider in the implementation and assessment of volunteer-travel programmes abroad. One of these principles involves guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of volunteer-programmes. Three indicators of how to provide such ongoing monitoring and evaluation are presented:

> I. *The organisation makes provision for regular monitoring and evaluation of volunteer experiences in programmes.*

II. *The organisation makes provision for monitoring and evaluation of host-project experiences of placement programmes.*

III. *Feedback from monitoring and evaluation exercises is used to inform project revisions and developments* (Camhlámh 2007)

In the Camhlámh Code of Practice it is recommended that both project-hosts and volunteers should be included in programme assessments. Thus, it is important to note who is prioritized in project-evaluation. Further, within both MondoChallenge and i-to-i, there appears to be a tendency toward prioritizing volunteer-experiences in programme evaluation. Still, the volunteers own performances are not formally assessed.

A potential problem of leisure-volunteerism appears to be the organisations' reluctance to constructively assess their volunteer-travel programmes, at least to openly do so. This lack of transparency in evaluating volunteer-programmes can be linked to the fact that negative reviews might chase potential customers away. As the Country Manager of a currently closed gap-year programme told me in an interview; there is an abundance of volunteer-travel organisations around who offer similar placement opportunities. These organisations are competing for the same customers; opening up for critical revisions of volunteer-programmes may be "bad publicity" which could make potential customers go elsewhere. Hence, "good news" are the only news.

Another reason for not "coming clean" about negative reports, might be that it can change the way volunteers perceive their own role as providing charitable assistance for the host-community by means of their mere presence and good intentions. Thus, the volunteers might reconsider their self-perception if their performance would be monitored throughout their placement by host-placement representatives. If host-placement representatives were involved in structured evaluations and monitoring of volunteers, as they seldom were, this might also contribute to strengthening volunteer sense of commitment, and thereby contribute to solving the problem of volunteer accountability. Still, this practice might turn potential customers away, since such

volunteer-monitoring could make the whole experience appear more obligatory and less like a leisure-adventure for potential volunteers.

Next, I will discuss the two organisations' evaluation practices, starting with i-to-i.

i-to-i project-evaluation

The only "structured" in-country evaluation of i-to-i's volunteer-programme in Tanzania was a SWOT analysis. [59] The survey contained 8 points: *1.Findings, 2. Strong points, 3. Weak points, 4. Opportunities, 5. Threats, 6. Recommendations, 7. Comments/Conclusion* and *8. Problems encountered*. Only volunteers were given this survey. Each volunteer was supposed to return the survey to the i-to-i team before leaving the project. At a Tuesday meeting, the i-to-i Team-Leader explained; "…*when you feel you are not using your skills, we need some changes – this – the analysis – will help to change those problems*." This survey's stated aim was to identify the volunteers' experiences of the programme. No similar survey was given host-placement representatives. Nor was there any organized monitoring of volunteer day-to-day activities in place.

The i-to-i Team did visit the volunteer placements, but these visits where short, and, as the time when my placement was visited, consisted merely of informal conversations with host-placement representatives. For instance, one i-to-i volunteer explained the i-to-i in-country Team were too focused on the "appearances" when they visited placements. Apparently, when the i-to-i Overseas Manager visited her placement at Ujirani Secondary School, he only came in "snapping photos", then left without talking either to the volunteers or to the local teachers.

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[59] A swot analysis aims to identify **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats involved in a project, the form was first distributed in February 2007.

When the i-to-i volunteers finished their placement, they were sent a standardized email from the UK head-office, encouraging them to fill out a project-evaluation form:

> *We would really appreciate some feedback on your experience. This will help i-to-i, the in-country team and of course the projects to understand what volunteers have enjoyed most about their placement and where there might be room for improvement.*

The five questions asked where: "*Please rate the service provided by the in-country team. Please rate the worthwhileness of your project. Please rate the accommodation during your stay. How well did we prepare you for your placement? Overall how satisfied are you with your i-to-i experience?*" The respondents were asked to rate these questions using numbers from 1-10, where 1 equals "dissatisfied" and 10 equals "delighted." Rating with numbers would help identify *if* the volunteers were satisfied or not, but not specify *why* they felt this way, which would make identification and revision of programme shortcomings difficult. Still, it was stated in the same email that the feedback would benefit the host-placement: "*Your feedback is extremely important and it will make a real difference to your project!*" [60] The focus is again explicitly on the volunteers' experiences. There were no similar forums where host-project representatives' could assess volunteer-performances or the volunteer-programme as a whole. Furthermore, I could not find any published reports or results from actual i-to-i volunteer-programme evaluations on i-to-i's website besides an abundance of general articles arguing why volunteer-travel is a beneficial activity for traveller and host alike.

Next, I will present MondoChallenge's programme-evaluation practices.

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[60] This email also encouraged volunteers to promote i-to-i in the future - for payment: "*Get involved - You can also be a part of i-to-i by attending fairs, exhibitions or workshops where you can tell your story and inspire others - and you'll get paid for it too!*"

MondoChallenge project-evaluations

The MondoChallenge business-development volunteers were requested to send reports to inform the UK office about the progress of the grant-projects. One MondoChallenge volunteer placed at the Tumaini Trust conveyed critical reports were being held back by MondoChallenge officials. He claimed criticism of the volunteer-programme was being suppressed. In a report sent to the UK office, the volunteer claimed that within MondoChallenge;"**…***there has been a concentration on success, rather than a culture of concern for the less successful*" The volunteer had found reports previous MondoChallenge volunteers who were placed at the Tumaini Trust had sent to MondoChallenge's UK head office. In his opinion, they were just reporting the "happy news", not the whole story of what was "*really*" going on in the grant-projects.

Further, the MondoChallenge volunteer asserted the organisation had a too narrow focus in project-assessments:"*Without simple and effective controls which basically fund 'past' performance, rather than optimistic future forecasts, it is hard to see any improvement in performance*".[61] These statements imply MondoChallenge only presented the "sunshine-stories" from the projects, which could further justify continued project-practice and obviate any need for drastic revisions. The volunteer further expressed that silence surrounding programme flaws and failures and the "*…vast gap between rhetoric and practice*" would be "*...very much against the best interests of the people here, especially the poorest!*"[62] Apparently, this volunteer had been told not to send any more critical reports to the MondoChallenge UK headquarters.

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[61] Excerpt form the report "*Two sides of Reality- a Matter of Conscience*" written by a MondoChallenge Business-development Volunteer approaching the end of a six-month placement.

[62] Ibid.

As i-to-i volunteers, MondoChallenge volunteers were sent an end-of-placement evaluation form by email. Still, the content of MondoChallenge's form was more elaborate than the i-to-i surveys. Furthermore, different forms were given to volunteers on different types of projects, business-development and teaching placements volunteers were given separate forms, even though the forms where standardized for all the in-country branch locations of MondoChallenge.

I was sent a teaching-programme evaluation form. This form was divided into three main sections; *teaching issues*, *volunteer issues* and *the future*. Each section contained several questions on topics ranging from teaching quality, staff morale and need for equipment at the school to questions about accommodation, food and the part the organisation representatives had played in induction and support. Finally, the volunteer was asked to present travel advice for future volunteers, evaluate his/her own contribution as a volunteer, and give notice of whether the volunteer would like to be involved in MondoChallenge projects or with volunteer-recruitment (PR) in the future.

The MondoChallenge evaluation form contained several levels of assessments of the volunteer-programme, including self-reflection, and could thus give the organisation a lot more to go on in revising the programme than the limited i-to-i surveys. Still, it appears host-project representatives where not offered similar structured way of assessing the programmes or the volunteers performances.

"Speaking for others"

According to Escobar, evaluation of development programmes often embody a *"…indecency of speaking for others"*. For knowledge gathered from development project-evaluations to be useful, Escobar asserts, the evaluation must begin with the beneficiaries' own self- understanding, and then "proceed to build a system of communication" involving all programme "stakeholders" (Escobar 1995:152). In volunteer-programmes, these "stakeholders" are volunteers, in-bound and outbound organisation-representatives and host-project representatives. As mentioned, both

organisations' project-evaluation included different project-participants highly asymmetrically. It appears "local partners" had no say in evaluations. Also, the evaluation forms (especially i-to-i's) where phrased in a manner that did not leave much room for any critical scrutiny of the programme-structure in general (i.e. measured in level of success in terms of volunteer-satisfaction).

Further, Maia Green (2003) argues that international development practices are conspicuously uniform despite the new trend of participatory planning. She asserts: "*Development management entails the social constitution of projects as slices of manageable reality in which, in short term, outputs can be achieved*" (Green 2003:140). The tendency toward standardization of development problems and solutions, Green argues, is a consequence of the social construction of "manageable realities" through specific techniques of audit and control within projects (Ibid: 124). Similarly, evaluation of volunteer-travel programmes appear to shape social complexities into "manageable realities" (not to mention "marketable realities"), thus solvable in terms of the agencies available resources, i.e. "enthusiastic volunteers".[63]

Putting restrictions on who have a say in the construction of the evaluation framework, what (or who) is being evaluated and who have access to evaluation "results", can serve to legitimate the continuity of volunteer-travel programmes without any drastic, for not to say costly, programme-revisions. In sum, following the Camhlámh report (2007), concerns that can be raised in volunteer-programme evaluations are: who are performing the evaluations, who was involved in designing the outline of the evaluation-forms, what is the evaluation-focus, what are the returned forms used for (in terms of programme revision), who are involved in reviewing returned evaluation forms and who are the evaluation results made available to (for instance by publishing results on the organisations web-pages).

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[63] See chapter 3.

Further, it appears host-project representatives were seldom implicated in administrative decision-making within the volunteer-programmes at all, despite the claims of "partnership", a point I will elaborate next.

Decision-making in volunteer-programmes

Similar to recent trends in the development sector (cf. Green 2003), volunteer-travel organisations profess *participatory involvement* of the host community (cf. Simpson 2007). Again, certain limitations inherent in the programmes might prevent a symmetrical involvement in decision-making between all "stakeholders". One possible constraint against such symmetrical involvement is due to the structure of the volunteer-travel organisations. The volunteer-travel organisations are divided in two organisational divisions; administrative sending-organisations (the European headquarters) and executive branches (in-country operations). Communication between the organisations and the host-placements appears to go primarily through the in-country branch. Thus, there appears to be little or no communication directly between the grassroots "partners" and the administrative headquarters.

Centralized decision-making

As with development agencies volunteer-programme decision-making concerning administrative budget, project funding and to a variable degree the content of the programme itself are decided primarily by administrative headquarters (the sending-organisation). This makes the host-placement at best one link removed from the volunteer-programmes primary decision-makers.[64] Furthermore, host-placements have little involvement in the recruitment of volunteers, since this is done though the sending organisations, seldom even involving the volunteer host-organisation. To

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[64] Further, direct communication between host-project and sending-organisation could be difficult considering few of the host-placements appeared to have access to computers.

demonstrate the asymmetrical involvement in volunteer-recruitment, the under-prioritizing of host-placement preferences can be considered. The preferences of host-placement representatives from both i-to-i and MondoChallenge were clear: they wanted "expert" volunteers with relevant experience (such as nurses, trained-teachers and IT specialists) and knowledge of the local language who could commit long-term, a trend which is in addition stressed in the Camhlámh report (2007).[65] Yet, these "expert" volunteers appear to be in short supply.[66] Further, it appears to be a structural constraint of commercial volunteer-travel organisations that participant-recruitment cannot be too selective. The organisations need to cover administrative costs, and in addition make the volunteer-programmes profitable. Thus, being more selective than the headquarters, host-placement representatives are not involved in the volunteer-recruitment process.

Further, the fact that host-placements have little participatory involvement in volunteer-programme decision-making, whether in evaluation, programme construction or volunteer recruitment, as shown in this chapter, can serve to falsify the claim that there is a harmonic model of partnership between the volunteer-travel organisation and the host-placement. The issue of project funding and sponsorships represents another crack in the partnership-claim presented by the organisations.

A trait that separates volunteer-travel organisations from development agencies is that volunteer-travel organisations ideally do not contribute to the "recipient community" neither by technical, monetary or material means, but rather by means of a provision of work-assistance performed by individual volunteers in local-community institutions. Ideally, the volunteer travellers contribute to the local community just by offering work commitment to their host-placement over a certain time span. Still, the volunteers were continuously bombarded with requests for funding and sponsorship

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[65] This also leads to the topic of "resistance"; some potential placements refused to host unqualified volunteers. For example, one school refused to host unqualified MondoChallenge teaching volunteers while an orphanage refused to host i-to-i volunteers

[66] I would assume most "expert" volunteers would rather choose to volunteer for not-for-payment organisations.

by host-community representatives. In the next chapter I will discuss dilemmas arising from the evident socio-economic inequalities between hosts and volunteers. I will attempt to promote an actor-oriented approach (cf. Long 1992) to illustrate how the different agents appear to pursue different interests in volunteer-travel encounters.

5. Monetary controversies within volunteer-travel programmes

In this chapter I will discuss the monetary issues that arise within commercial volunteer programmes. I will divide the chapter in two parts in order to compare i-to-i and MondoChallenge self-presentations, practises and individual volunteer contributions. In the first part I will focus on the ethical concerns of the for-profit agency, i-to-i, where none of the profit flows to the host-community. In the second part I will focus on the not-for-profit organisation, MondoChallenge, which in addition to providing volunteer-assistance, provides small donations to the host-community partner-institutions.

Volunteer-travel agencies and the problem of profit

One of the main controversies of the volunteer-travel sector appears to be the mixing of charity and business aspects, since these concepts can be perceived to represent contrasting ideologies, i.e. altruism and cynicism. The issue of volunteer payment can erode the image of the organisation as an ethical institution if it is perceived to be primarily profit-motivated. Justifying volunteer payment thus appears to be a major concern within the volunteer-travel industry. Promoting volunteer-travel as a form of humanitarian assistance in itself might not have been perceived as problematic if the organisations did not profit from these programmes. This may be especially problematic if the hosts are not given a percentage of the profits.

The for-profit volunteer-travel agency

Ideally, volunteer-travel is a more "globally aware" alternative to the "exploitative" mass-tourism industry (Wearing 2001). Nevertheless, i-to-i is a self-declared for-

profit agency. Moreover, i-to-i is owned by the package-holiday specialist First Choice. In fact, I would argue i-to-i's volunteer programmes are arranged quite similarly to the package-holiday they are supposed to be an alternative to:[67] most of the travel-arrangements are made for the volunteer pre-departure and most of the prepaid payment never reaches the host-country. Thus, the biggest earners from the volunteer-travel programmes are undeniably the British owners. This might not be perceived as problematic if the agency did not claim to arrange "community development" programmes, a claim which implies there should be some benefit involved for the hosts.

In the i-to-i media-pack, it is stated:"*i-to-i itself is an ethical business, not a charity*" (i-to-i 2008 h). It is further asserted the agency does not fund host-placements by any financial or material means: "*We work alongside projects and communities, we don't control them and we don't financially support them*" (ibid). Thus, host-community benefits are derived entirely from individual volunteer contributions.

Against aid-reliance

Not funding host-community projects is justified on the i-to-i website by claiming it may lead to "aid reliance";

> *Against aid reliance.*
>
> *We do not give direct funding to the projects we work with. Many experts believe that the constant flow of financial aid into the developing world causes an over-reliance on foreign aid, which harms the long-term stability of developing economies. It is your time and effort (rather than cold hard cash) that makes a difference. We truly believe that by working together and forging relationships with the developing world, we can make a real and lasting difference* (i-to-i 2008 i)

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[67] Nevertheless, mass-tourism is criticized by i-to-i, see chapter 1.

The argument of "aid-reliance" implies that while there's no problem for i-to-i to make money from the volunteer-programmes, the volunteer-hosts should not because money is a destructive force for the "developing world". In another article at the i-to-i website under the heading "*Isn't it better to give money*?" the aid-dependency defence for not sharing the programme-profits with the host-projects is further stressed:

> *If money is paid directly to projects then they become dependent on the West for funding. If that country or project becomes unpopular then the money dries up and they are no longer able to continue with their good work. Supplying projects with enthusiastic volunteers creates a constant supply of helpful hands.*[68]

Even though i-to-i claims to be an "ethical business", the "aid-reliance" argument is still adopted from the development sector. This argument can serve to muffle the clear asymmetry in material benefits involved for the project-hosts and the i-to-i sending-agency. Further, if the relationship between i-to-i and the host-projects was defined as a "business relationship" or even a "partnership" and not as a one-way "development intervention", i-to-i would appear more as an "unethical" business for not sharing profits. Thus, the "aid reliance" argument implies that if i-to-i assisted by financial means, this would inhibit the host-community from reaching the goal of "sustainable development". Instead, what would lead to "community development" is "time and effort" represented by the "constant supply of helpful hands", i.e. the volunteers (cf. Simpson 2004). This argument can serve to legitimize i-to-i's intervention in the host-community, while allowing it to reap all the financial benefits of the programme.

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[68] Elsewhere it is also claimed i-to-i the local community will benefit even though no direct funding is made: "*When you travel with us, you will stay in locally run accommodation and travel on locally owned transport. In this way we can ensure that the part of your placement fee assigned for transport and accommodation goes directly into the local economy. That means that before you've even lifted a finger on your project, you've already made an important contribution to the local economy*" (i-to-i 2008 j)

Where does the money go?

Although i-to-i informed the volunteers that the host-project would not receive financial support, the issue of where the volunteer payment goes was frequently posed by i-to-i volunteers during my fieldwork. Already during the first-day briefing, the topic was brought up. Actually, "Where does the money go?" was the first subject on the introduction-meeting agenda. The answer provided in the introduction handout: 1/3rd of the volunteer payments will stay in Tanzania for administrative purposes and volunteer arrangements such as accommodation, food, salaries etc, while the other 2/3rds goes "back to the UK".

Even though i-to-i does admit to being for-profit, several i-to-i volunteers reacted to the fact that i-to-i did not fund the host-projects. In a blog entry on i-to-i's website, "*Can i-to-i really market themselves as offering "meaningful travel?",* an outraged i-to-i volunteer wrote;

> *Did you know that TWO THIRDS of your fee doesn't even leave the UK? Did you know that very little money is reaching the communities it should be reaching and that many projects are not only underfunded but poorly managed and in some cases are doing more harm than good??*[69]

This comment can illustrate the apparent clash between the notion of "making a difference" versus the practice of "making a profit". It is further indicated these notions represents a dichotomy of doing good and doing harm.

In "The root of all evil" Macfarlane (1985) illustrates how the pursuit of profit and capitalism has come to connote an evil "dark force" in European cultures since the introduction of Christianity. Further, Macfarlane argues:

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[69] i-to-i blog-entry posted 20th august 2007 in an i-to-i forum.

> *"Money" which is a short-hand way of saying capitalist relations,*
> *market values, trade and exchange, ushers in a world of moral*
> *confusion. This effect of money has been most obvious where a*
> *capitalist, monetary economy has clashed with another, opposed,*
> *system* (Macfarlane 1985: 72).

Similarly, i-to-i appears to move into an ambiguous moral territory by selling leisure experiences advertised as humanitarian assistance. Mixing charity and business aspects can be interpreted as having moral connotations, since these systems appears to represent two potentially incompatible systems of exchange (or "economic spheres" cf. Bohannan 1969). Earning money from programmes labelled "community development" can be problematic because the activity (humanitarian assistance) and the motivation (profit) can be seen to represent contradictory concepts: avarice and generosity (or contradictory Christian values: "vice and virtue" cf. Parry 1989).

Feeling conned

Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimlett point out the fact that travellers are quick to judge other travellers for being easily exploitable and careless toward the environment and the host community (Bruner 1994:448). In the case of i-to-i, by contrast, the volunteers appeared to contemplate their own naiveté for having chosen this for-profit organisation.

After a regular Tuesday-meeting, the i-to-i Overseas Manager explained the volunteers had complained: "*I think they feel conned.*" Apparently, there had been reactions not only to the level of service volunteers were personally receiving from the i-to-i Team, as discussed in chapter 2, in addition, there had been reactions to the level of service i-to-i provided toward the host-placements. The volunteers expressed disagreement over i-to-i's policy of not providing any financial or material assistance to the host-placements, many expressed frustration, indicating they did not want to be a part of some cynical capitalist corporation.

On another occasion in the i-to-i house, I had a discussion with the house chef and maid about their wages. Later, when talking about this with the young volunteer who was placed at the Nyota Nursery, she seemed shocked over how little the Tanzanian

staff earned; "*Like, you come here thinking you're going to do good, but in reality you're doing the complete opposite – they* [i-to-i] *rip you off, and they use you – they use the people here!*" i-to-i volunteers often portrayed the agency as exploitative for being run as a for-profit business. Many admitted they felt deceived by i-to-i's grand marketing campaigns. A former i-to-i volunteer wrote in a report;

> *As I said, I was under no illusion that the driving force or philosophy behind this company was based on altruism, but if you are going to use slogans such as "sustainable development", then I, for one, believe you have a moral obligation to at least give that the slightest bit of consideration.*

Further, another young volunteer placed at Jitolea Secondary School expressed: "*…maybe we are a little naïve coming here, thinking the organisation is after making a difference for the country, but its really just a profit-organisation.*" These volunteers' statement further suggests a perceived incompatibility between "making a difference" and "making a profit" within volunteer-travel programmes.

Thus, i-to-i volunteers appeared to distance themselves from i-to-i's alleged "capitalist exploitation" of the host-community. Next, I will present a conversation with an i-to-i in-country employee which can further illustrate this perception.

"I see my job as selling my soul to the devil"

One Sunday while driving home from a camping trip with an expatriate society based in Moshi, the i-to-i Overseas Manager got questioned about his work-place by two other expatriates who were working at the KCMC referral hospital. At first, the Overseas Manager defended the company, saying he was working with "community development" and claiming the organisation had a positive impact on the local community. Still, the Overseas Manager defined i-to-i as a tour-company, which in addition offers the opportunity to "do good". Further, the Overseas Manager was questioned about the agency's motives:

> Expat 1: "*Coming in for two weeks is more disruptive than helping*"

> Expat 2:*"… so the primary beneficiaries are the organisation? In UK?"*
>
> Overseas Manager:*" – yes basically"*
>
> Overseas Manager: *"The primary goal* [of i-to-i] *is satisfaction among the clients…they* [volunteers] *are described as customers"*
>
> Expat 2:*"…so the customer himself changes, it's a missing link between tourism and aid?"*
>
> Overseas Manager:*"I'm dealing with their* [volunteers] *mindsets before they come, I deal with their personalities – their views on Africa."*
>
> Expat 1:*"I think it can even be damaging for the kids* [children at the placements]*, they* [volunteers] *come out here spoiled and brattish!"*

The Overseas Manager stressed the sending agency's focus was on pleasing the "customer" and not the "local community" which i-to-i claim to arrange the volunteer programs on behalf of. Further, we discussed what volunteers could gain from the experience. It was suggested volunteering is perceived as "cool" among Western youth; to volunteer in an African country was referred to as a "moral boost" for the volunteer:

> Expat 2: *"… so, it's like a fashion accessory?"*
>
> Expat 1: *"Yeah, like "I helped an African baby"…."*

After this criticism of i-to-i's operations, the Overseas Manager contemplated; "*…who is benefiting most, volunteer or student? Development is like a marathon.*" Finally, he stated dramatically; "*I see my job as selling my soul to the devil.*" This statement indicates the company was perceived to be "evil" by camouflaging business aspects behind the rhetoric of providing humanitarian assistance. Further, this criticism can be linked to perceptions on the morality of commercialisation. Making something relatively singular into a sealable commodity represents a degradation of its value, a process which has moral implications (cf. Kopytoff 1986).

In the conversation with the Overseas Manager, it is implied that i-to-i have taken western youths desire of a "moral boost" by "helping the poor" and converted it into a business concept. As stated on the organisation's websites: "*Volunteer-travel or*

voluntourism is a relatively new form of travel that allows normal people to make an exceptional difference to the planet in a safe, responsible and supported way" (i-to-i 2008 g). This promotional article seems to present volunteer-travel as an easily accessible stage where altruistic acts can be performed. Adapting a charitable role into a mainstream pre-packaged tour accessible for "normal people"*,* as the above discussion illustrates, can similarly be seen as an immoral conversion. The volunteers have not "earned" the right to act charitably through merit and hard work, but rather bought their way to this status. The expatriate's description of leisure volunteerism as a "fashion accessory" appears to underline the perception of the volunteer-travel agency's paradoxical commodificiation of "charitability".

The product the company has advertised is to some extent the notion that individual volunteers can make; *"…an exceptional difference to the planet."*[70] However, to experience having made a difference depends on the responses of the recipients of these alleged charitable acts, the hosts, a point I will elaborate next.

i-to-i volunteer contributions

Volunteers as resources

Some host-placement representatives did little to hide that they hosted i-to-i volunteers in order to obtain material and financial resources. However, i-to-i warned the volunteers about contributing financially to their host-placements in the pre-departure briefing pack;

> *You may wish to buy things while you are at the project, and this is fine. However, any large donations you make to the project could mean that future volunteers are expected to provide things in the future and the projects may start to see you as a source of money rather than help.*[71]

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[70] This further implies to volunteering in a "developing" country is serves to define the volunteers' social position (cf. Bourdieu 1992). I will elaborate this point in chapter 7.

[71] i-to-i pre-departure briefing-pack for Africa page 33.

Volunteers are here portrayed as being resources by means of their work-capacities, but several volunteers expressed they assumed this was not the placements primary reason for hosting volunteers. For instance, a young volunteer placed at the Heri Njema Nursery explained she didn't think the Tanzanian head-teacher needed i-to-i volunteers for their work-assistance; she could manage with the staff she already had. While pointing at some colourful chairs a former volunteer had bought, she explained she thought the volunteers where welcomed because the head teacher saw them as "resources", as a way to "get stuff" for the school. Later, just before leaving, she bought playground toys for the nursery.

Sponsoring

The i-to-i volunteers did not only buy materials for the schools, in addition they sponsored children from the host-placements. Individual sponsorships could involve paying school fees, buying school uniforms and shoes, schoolbooks and dictionaries. Sponsoring a child by paying school fees was particularly popular; almost all the i-to-i volunteers sponsored at least one child, mostly in nursery schools. Because all the i-to-i nursery placements were privately owned, the nursery school fees varied, depending on the school standard and location. The fees at the i-to-i nursery placements varied from around 30 000 TZS a year (currently 17,5 Euro) to about 10 000 TZS (currently 5,6 Euro) a month.

The majority of the i-to-i volunteers were dissatisfied with the organisation's lack of material contributions to the host community. Thus, sponsoring was perhaps a way to dissociate from i-to-i and "make a difference" for the host-community independently. Further, the volunteers often continued sponsoring after returning home, thereby they could keep in contact with host-community representatives long-term.

Perceptions of reciprocity

In "Picturing Pity" Gullestad (2007) presents a chronological analysis of how Norwegian missionaries portrayed their African "subjects" for a Norwegian audience.

Gullestad argues the Norwegian missionaries wanted to see "deep gratitude" in return for their donations to the Cameroonian recipients. Showing gratitude was a way for aid-receivers to reciprocate the donations, since it could serve to legitimize the missionaries' positive self-image. If the missionaries did not experience this gratitude on the part of the recipients, they could become uninspired and in addition lose the interest of home-based donors (Gullestad 2007: 275).

Similarly, the experience of gratitude on the part of hosts appeared to be important among i-to-i volunteers. Many volunteers where prepared to donate to their placements; some even fundraised among friends and relatives pre-departure. One i-to-i volunteer bought English dictionaries for the students at Ujirani Secondary School, where she was placed. This volunteer bought about 150 books for the form 1classes, but did not have the money to buy books for the rest of the classes, she asserted: "*If I'd had the money, I would have bought books for form 2 as well.*" Further, she explained she had been very disappointed when the school's principal had complained about her only giving books to form 1, and not to any of the other classes or to any of the faculty members. Apparently, the principal had told her: "*What does the school get? The kids just take the dictionaries home?*" She explained that the principal had been*: "…really in my face, he just squashed the moment. He wanted more, more for form 2. He was really mad about it. It upset me because it was friends and families' money*."

I would argue this case can illustrate how volunteers and host-project representatives appeared to have different views on the content of their reciprocal relationship. As Heuman has argued in a study of working vacations, host-hospitality, perceived as the reception and entertainment of guests, can be divided into two extremes: "Traditional hospitality" which is characterized by protection, reciprocity, and a batch of duties for both sides and "commercial hospitality", which is a service relationships where the contact between tourist and the local residents is primarily mediated by financial exchanges (Heuman 2005). Heuman locates host-hospitality toward volunteer travellers as somewhere in between commercial and traditional

hospitality. Further, since i-to-i promotional material informs the volunteers that "giving time" alone would greatly benefit the host community,[72] to give material donations might have been perceived by i-to-i volunteers as an additional pleasant surprise for host-project representatives, rather than their sole motivation for hosting volunteers, hence the volunteers emotional reactions to their material contributions being taken for granted by the hosts.

The issue of contributing time or money was also a concern within MondoChallenge Tanzania's volunteer-programmes. In the next section I will discuss the monetary concerns within this not-for-profit volunteer-travel organisation.

The not-for-profit volunteer-travel organisation

MondoChallenge seem particularly sensitive to the issue of profiting from their volunteer-programmes. As mentioned, MondoChallenge is declared a not-for profit organisation, but it is still a private limited company which holds paid employees.[73] The fact that the MondoChallenge volunteer-programmes were income-generating is not denied by the organisation. Rather, it appears to be defended by the claim that money is not the primary motivation of the organisation.

People first, money second

In the words of MondoChallenge Tanzania's Country Manager, employee salaries were cut down to an absolute minimum and not much was "coming off the top". He asserted the primary goal of MondoChallenge was *development in the local community*". Further, he stressed; "*It really is about the people!* " In fact, not being profit-motivated is the official motto of MondoChallenge Ltd. Below, Managing

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[72] To exemplify, this statement is posted on the i-to-i websites:"*Who benefits most - the traveller or the project? The answer is undoubtedly the project, although we can not and should not shy away from the benefits to the volunteer. All experiences are a two-way process after all*" (i-to-i 2008 k).

[73] In an article from Comminit, MondoChallenge Managing Director Anthony Lunch agrees MondoChallenge is a type of "entrepreneurial cross-subsidy" (Lowenstein 2002).

Director of MondoChallenge Anthony Lunch's presentation of the organisation's motivation and contributions, posted on the organisations official website:

> *My vision has always been "People first, money second". We are NOT a funding organisation, but I know from experience that the small amounts we do provide go much further than many international aid programmes!* (MondoChallenge a)

The company motto of MondoChallenge; *People first, Money second*, can illustrate how the organisation's image is dissociated from an "exploitative capitalist" label by stressing an idealistic people-focused motivation.[74] Volunteer payment was consequently referred to as a "contribution" by MondoChallenge representatives, as illustrated on the website:

> *This contribution (which is less than many other organisations) helps fund our programme costs, including some development work abroad (e.g. school buildings and equipment). It covers the costs of our Project Managers in each country and covers UK admin costs. Our aim is to be sustainable and professional and we cannot do this without the volunteer contribution* (MondoChallenge a)

By using the term "contribution" the organisation could appear detached from a "business" label, since this word implies the customer is not paying for a service, but rather helping the organisation continue their charitable operations.[75] In the briefing notes, this point is again exemplified in a statement written by Anthony Lunch:" *You originally chose MondoChallenge because we are not a commercial organisation as in the case with so many others*".

Further, a newly arrived MondoChallenge volunteer seemed to agree with this. While having dinner in Arusha, she explained that she had looked up many volunteer-travel providers on the internet. She explained that when she logged onto most organisations' websites, she had been requested to fill in forms where the first

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[74] This motto together with the "live as they do" ideology can serve to place the organisation in an NGO category. According to Kelsall and Igoe NGO where initially perceived as "close to the people" and therefore capable of "putting the people first". (2005:12). Still "the people" is a vague and monolithic category.

[75] In comparison, i-to-i refers to the volunteer as "customer" and to itself i-to-i as a "company" or an "agency".

question had been "…*gimme your credit card number*" in order to continue the application process. She claimed she could tell by MondoChallenge's website that this organisation differed from the money-focused ones. Despite this, many of the MondoChallenge volunteers questioned where their "contribution" actually went, some even declared they had asked the organisation to give them an itemized budget for the use of their payment.

Donating time or money

As the i-to-i volunteers, MondoChallenge volunteers were advised not to donate money directly to the volunteer-hosts or to other local residents. It is stressed in the volunteer briefing notes for 2007 that if volunteers want to give money this should rather be done through the organisation, by donating to their charity section, the MondoChallenge Foundation: "*If you wish to donate money to your project you can do this through the MondoChallenge Foundation* […] *any donations of material and equipment to your project are done only after consultation with the UK office*". A MondoChallenge employee explained this practice; if a volunteer gave money directly to one host-community resident, others from the community might want a "piece of the pie" and start to hassle all future volunteers for funding. Further in the volunteer briefing notes, Managing Director Anthony Lunch explains why volunteers should restrict financial contributions;

> *Whilst many volunteers wish to contribute something financially to their projects, we request that you do NOT give money directly to projects, or your host family, as this creates a culture of expectation which can place pressure on future volunteers. It is much better to be appreciated for your work than your money.*[76]

This excerpt can illustrate that it was held by MondoChallenge officials that contributing financially should be a secondary form of "giving back" to the host-

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[76] Anthony Lunch in MondoChallenge Briefing-Pack for Tanzania (2007).

community. Most volunteers also seemed to favour contributing to the host-community by "donating time" rather than donating money.

Preventing pressure

MondoChallenge tried to prevent project-hosts from pressuring volunteers for money by distributing an official statement around to the schools which hosted volunteers. Below, an excerpt from this statement:

> *It is important that the volunteers are valued for their skills, not their money. To quote one of our volunteers, "volunteers have deep hearts, not deep pockets". It is vital that no teacher at a partner school approach a volunteer for money, whether it be for personal sponsorships, money for the school or money for any other cause If you do have specific requests for funding for your school, please address these to the MondoChallenge Management Team in Tanzania by way of a letter.*[77]

Despite the distribution of such statements, MondoChallenge representatives acknowledged it was difficult to prevent volunteers being asked for money. I was told by the Country Manager at the induction meeting that if I was approached for money at my placement, I should:"... *get it in writing"* and report back to him. Furthermore, he stressed that the school I was placed at *did* receive donations from MondoChallenge, which I, in turn, had "contributed" to through paying MondoChallenge for arranging my volunteer placement. Thus, I should not feel obliged to give since I had already given through MondoChallenge. Previously, MondoChallenge had supplied this school with brown paper, school uniforms, desks and they where currently supporting two orphans.

What constitutes "real" contributions?

Even though MondoChallenge attempted to discourage project-hosts from asking volunteers for funding, many MondoChallenge volunteers admitted they felt pressured to provide donations during their placement. In addition, this pressure

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[77]MondoChallenge Volunteer Placement Program Final Version (2007)

appeared to make the volunteers uncomfortable. For instance, at a MondoChallenge meeting held early in March 2007, a representative from the Arumeru district Ministry of Education had been invited to discuss the topic of "Efficiency in Education". During his speech, he hinted that volunteers were needed in Tanzania for their financial contributions to the host-placements, he asserted; *"The volunteers can help out to make classrooms."* An outraged volunteer shouted back at him: *"We're not here to give money! We're here to teach English!"* Nevertheless, despite the volunteers' apparent preferences and contrary to the warnings of the organisation, several volunteers still chose to contribute to local residents by monetary means.

Further, not all MondoChallenge volunteers believed the best contribution they could personally provide for their hosts was to teach English for a couple of months. In an interview with a MondoChallenge volunteer on a teaching-placement, I asked what contribution he believed volunteers could make toward the host-community. The volunteer answered he hoped to personally be able to contribute a little bit, at least to have made a small difference to someone at the Primary School. He stated he was aware that his two months of English-teaching was not a huge contribution compared to what he could have done. He claimed volunteering *is* selfish; if he really wanted to help the local community, he would have stayed home, continued working and donated his salary to the school. If he had donated the salary he would have earned during the time he spent volunteering as a teacher in Tanzania, he could have paid the salary of several local teachers for years. That would have been the most efficient and selfless way to help the host-community, he asserted.

According to Mauss, gift-exchange builds ties between donors and recipients through the socially acknowledged obligation to reciprocate (Mauss 2002). The volunteer role allowed the volunteer to "give" in face-to-face interaction with the receiver. Thus, the volunteers' efforts would be reciprocated first-hand in the form of solidarity or being shown gratitude. Further, Mauss asserts the notions of generosity and self-interest is interlinked in the act of giving (Mauss 2002: 87). The above quoted volunteer implied volunteering was not as charitable and selfless as the organisation would

have it, because he thought his "gift", i.e. providing free English lessons, would have been more beneficial for the receiver in a different form, through distanced gift-transfer, i.e. paying local teachers' salaries long-term. Still, by distanced gift-transfer the volunteer could not be granted the experience of (imagined) temporary, honorary community-membership. In that respect volunteering could be construed as a "selfish act".

Next, I will discuss MondoChallenge's financial contributions toward the host community.

Managing funding: MondoChallenge business-development projects

Most of the MondoChallenge donations to Tanzanian development-programmes were channelled through community-based trusts. As mentioned in chapter 2, in the business-development projects, MondoChallenge worked with community-based partners in the implementation of rurally based women's entrepreneurship programmes. These local trusts where established on local initiative prior to partnering with MondoChallenge. At the time of my fieldwork, MondoChallenge had four grant projects running, and was in the process of initiating two additional projects. Some standardized guidelines characterized these grant projects. The MondoChallenge UK office contributed £ 500 to the local partners for each new round of grant projects. This sum was to cover both administrative costs and the actual grants.

The grant recipients were almost with no exceptions financially challenged local women who were affected by HIV/AIDS.[78] After potential recipients had been found, the business-development volunteer wrote a recipient-profiling report categorizing the women by location, situation, dependants, health, next of kin and the type of

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[78] Referred to by MondoChallenge representatives as PLHA (People Living with HIV/AIDS).

business the women had proposed. The CV's, board members and MondoChallenge business-development volunteer subsequently arranged a meeting where the profiling-report was used as a basis for selecting grant recipients. The women who where selected where usually the ones perceived to be in the most difficult financial/social situations, but still trusted to be prosperous in business because they possessed certain qualities.[79] Usually, there were about 10 recipients per round of grants and approximately one or two rounds a year.[80] The size of the grant varied according to the potential of the individual woman's business proposals, but it was usually below 100 000 TZS.[81]

To recapitulate descriptions from chapter 2, the role of the business-development volunteer, as presented by MondoChallenge, is to be involved in selecting recipients, "…*the assessment of their businesses and identification of areas for improvement, training and overall monitoring of the organisation*" (MondoChallenge 2008 b). Further the business volunteer has to: "…*make a financial contribution (for 2007, this is £1200/ USD1950 for a three-month stay, less if shorter) to help fund our programmes, which have contributed to development projects in various countries since 1990*"(Ibid.). Since MondoChallenge provided £500 to the local partners for each new round of grants, this would mean £700 of a volunteers' three-month placement fee would remain at the UK office. There was seldom more than one round per six months and business-development volunteers often stayed on six-month placements, this would leave MondoChallenge UK with £1900. In addition, the volunteer contribution did not cover costs for accommodation, food and air-fare or in-country transportation.

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[79] For instance, "charisma" and "energy" were mentioned as criteria for selection by a MondoChallenge volunteer.

[80] This is difficult to say for certain, since most of the grant projects where recently initiated.

[81] 100 000 TZS is currently 53 Euro [25.03.2008]

Distributing contributions

MondoChallenge hosted 15 volunteers in Tanzania during the time of my fieldwork, only three of which were on the "funded" business-development placements (MondoChallenge b).[82] The rest of the volunteers were on "un-funded" placements, such as the teaching placements, which received almost no financial or material assistance from MondoChallenge. In addition, the volunteer contribution for these programmes was the same as for the business-development programmes. Even though MondoChallenge did fund selected host-projects, the numbers presented still imply the larger percentage of the earnings generated from the volunteer-programmes in Tanzania went to MondoChallenge UK Ltd.

In addition to being sustained by volunteer contributions, the MondoChallenge Foundation organized fundraising events in the UK, attracting former volunteers as well as "external" donors. On the charity website the grant-programmes are presented as the primary receivers of the charity's donations. "*So far we have raised more than £150,000 to support education and business-development in nine countries across the developing world*" (MondoChallenge Foundation 2008). Thus, the donations given to the charity alone could sustain the grant projects, without adding the volunteer contributions. Overseas administrative costs for the volunteer-programmes, at least in Tanzania, are low; the organisation kept few employees, no cars and a modest office.[83] Further, it is uncertain whether MondoChallenge's alleged local partners in Tanzania where aware of the amount the volunteers where charged for being placed at their institution.

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[82] In May 2007 MondoChallenge had four Tanzania-based employees, two of which where Tanzanian, three business-development volunteers on "funded" projects, and 13 volunteers on un-funded projects.

Negotiating terms of "partnership"

Several development critics and researchers argue that the rhetoric of "partnership" and "participation" only reaches a certain point, while the final decision usually lies with "…*the ones with the money*" (Manji 2003; Crewe 2002; Kelsall 2005). In addition, the relationship between MondoChallenge and their local partners might not be transparent. As Gullestad puts it "…*many local people are afraid of voicing feelings of resentment publicly because they fear that outside aid might dry up*"(Gullestad 2007: 281).

It appears the local partners had only restricted access to MondoChallenge funding. For instance, one host-partner representative expressed frustration over difficulties in attaining MondoChallenge funding for his NGO. Apparently, when he first came in contact with MondoChallenge, he had told the MondoChallenge representative: "*Our problem is capital*", to which the MondoChallenge representative had responded:" *I don't have capital, but what I can do, I can send a volunteer to help you.*" In the initial phase of the partnership, this NGO had received funding from MondoChallenge, about 5 million TZS and a computer to start up a microfinance program, but lately the NGO representative asserted he was struggling to get MondoChallenge to contribute in buying the NGO a vehicle. He told me: "*I must walk to look for clients. It is very unfair. They* [MondoChallenge employees] *use millions to get to the Pare Mountains, but I should walk.*" This kind of asymmetrical access to financial means resembles similar and frequently criticised trends in the development sector. As the Kenyan scholar Firoze Manji states:

> *No matter how sympathetic the donor may be, the fact that the Northern NGO is the one with the money means that the Southern NGO must be the one with the begging bowl. No matter how good the personal relationship between the Northern NGO and the Southern NGO, the latter must accept the humiliation of being the receiver of charity. Perforce, there is a relationship of unequals* (Manji 2003: 78)

Similarly, MondoChallenge UK acted as the primary decision-makers of the projects, as noted in the previous chapter, controlling how funding should be spent. Further,

according to Mauss, charitable donations with no-strings-attached is a contradiction in terms: "*The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it*" (Mauss 2002:83). Thus, being on the receiving end puts the recipient in a symbolic debt to the donor. The recipient therefore has no warranted "right" to project decision-making. Further, most of the volunteer-placement hosts did not receive funding from organisations other than MondoChallenge.[84] As mentioned, the host-partners had restricted access to MondoChallenge money, they where warned not to ask volunteers to contribute, and in addition had little or no control over how MondoChallenge used the money generated from the volunteer-programmes.

To further illustrate how differences of interest were negotiated in volunteer/host encounters (cf. Long 1992), a MondoChallenge business-development volunteer claimed his co-workers at the partner trust where getting "greedy". The CV's had recently started to receive low salaries for their work on the grant projects, the MondoChallenge volunteer claimed this had made the CV's too "money-fixated"; in it for the money and no longer for charitable motives (for "the people"). Further, he claimed the board members contacted the UK headquarters for every "paperclip" they bought. The volunteer also accused the board of wasting money on unnecessary expenses, such as tea and doughnuts at their weekly meetings, money which could have been spent on "…*those who really need it*", i.e. the grant-recipient. Still, the socio-economic difference between the MondoChallenge volunteers and the local partner associates was evident. The fact that MondoChallenge volunteers are willing to pay more than the whole budget of the local partner in order to work for them in itself reflects this difference.

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate difficulties of implementing volunteer-travel programmes in both rural (most MondoChallenge projects) and urban (most i-to-i

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[84] In addition, a volunteer claimed that a local vocational training centre in Longido had been told by a MondoChallenge official not to take donations from another Canadian NGO operating in the village, because this MondoChallenge official wanted the centre to be run exclusively on MondoChallenge funding.

projects) communities in a "developing country", without money being an issue. The organisation's efforts to make obvious socio-economic inequalities irrelevant in volunteer/host encounters appeared an almost impossible endeavour. Further, I have discussed the moral and ethical concerns of Western agencies making a profit from the provision of supposed community development-work in a Third World country. In fact, most public criticism of the volunteer-travel sector criticizes the agencies profit-making from the "good intentions of gullible Western youth", i.e. their wish to contribute to a greater cause. In the next chapter I will discuss such critical media portrayals of the volunteer-travel sector and their promotional counterparts.

6. Media and Marketing

In this chapter I will discuss advertisement and media representations of volunteer-travel. I will start by analysing the content of the volunteer-travel agencies own promotional material. Thereafter, I will discuss media presentations of volunteer-travel, first the travel press' positive reviews followed by British investigative press' critical scrutiny of the volunteer-travel phenomenon. Subsequently, I will present i-to-i and MondoChallenge's responses to this media criticism. In conclusion, I will present a BBC 5 Live report which criticizes i-to-i and similar agencies. This program was partially recorded in Moshi the spring of 2007.

Constructing the product: "Change the world five days a week; see the world the other two"[85]

Tourist-marketing can serve as guidelines for consumers as to which objects, or tourist-attractions, are worthy of the "tourist gaze" (ref. Urry 2002). An analysis of tourist-marketing content could thus reveal an idealized image of the tourist product. Further, since tourist-marketing is aimed toward certain consumer-groups, marketing content could tell a tale about the consumer. As Beerli, Meneses and Gil claim (2007), there tends to be a congruity between the tourist-destination's image and the consumers' self-concept. The choice of leisure can thus indicate how consumers wish to perceive themselves, a point I will further elaborate in the following chapter. Hence, the task of the tourist industry is to identify the target-groups' idealized self-perceptions in order to build a tourist-product which suits market demands. Consumers' preconception of the tour is formed through tourist marketing. An analysis of volunteer-tourist marketing could thus give an insight into the "First

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[85] Headline quote from i-to-i (i-to-i 2008 l).

World" ideological construction of the "Third World" as a tourist product, and the volunteer's role within this space.

According to Echner and Prasad, the promotional material employed in tourism marketing relies on certain contextual myths in order to construct an idealized, romanticized image of tourist-experiences and destinations in order to make potential customers visualize themselves in the role of "being there" (Echtner 2003). I would argue that volunteer-travel marketing draws heavily on a mythical image of "the volunteer" as a role where even "average people" can escape from their daily routine and transform themselves into adventurous philanthropists "doing their part" for world-development.

Echtner and Prasad (2003) claim "First-World" tourist-marketing reproduce a colonial imagery of the "Third-World". Echtner and Prasad identify three main country "clusters" of Third-World marketing, where similar representational patterns can be recognized. In the cluster of countries they call "frontier" destinations, which include Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya and Namibia, they claim to have identified a pattern where hosts are presented as uncivilized, tribal and primitive, while local nature is presented as wild, savage and pristine. The host populations, which are mostly males wearing "tribal" clothing, are pictured as solitary "props"(cf. Bruner 1994) in a wild and "dangerous" landscape, as passive objects to be gazed upon. They claim this Third World marketing attempts to target a "*Western obsession with primitivism*". Further, they state: "…*the myth of the uncivilized is the very essence of how the First World travel industry wants these Third World frontiers to remain*" (Echtner 2003: 678).

Echtner and Prasad claim the content of tourist marketing reflects an asymmetrical power relation, since it is the "First World" that defines the image of the "Third World" (ibid.). This article builds on marketing material from the "mainstream" tourist industry. I would argue that the marketing of volunteer-travels differs slightly, because it represents a specialized "niche" which targets a narrower audience. The colonial imagery of the wild and uncivilized Africa still appears to be reproduced in

volunteer-travel marketing, but these images serve as illustrations of the volunteers "spare-time" leisure-activities (such as the headline quote above illustrates), and come as an addition to the images of the "actual" volunteer experiences from the host-placements.

Further, I would argue that volunteer-experience representations found in marketing more closely resemble a reproduction of missionary imagery than the colonial imagery of "mainstream" tourist representations (cf. Echtner 2003), since volunteer-travel marketing seems to construct the customer not only as an "explorer" or "adventurer", but also as one possessing positive humanitarian qualities like "compassion" and "idealism" (cf. Appendix 2). The hosts, in contrast are presented as vulnerable "targets" anticipating "First World" assistance. Parallels can be identified between the marketing of volunteer-travel and what Gullestad (2007) in "Picturing Pity" refers to as "mission propaganda." She claims Norwegian missionaries' visualize a "call from Africa" through texts and photographs which are aimed toward an audience "back home". Mission publications are intended to persuade and encourage. Gullestad argues: "…*the missionaries needed to effectively persuade the audience at home that the people in Cameroon needed to be saved*…" in order to "…*encourage them to support the mission spiritually and financially*" (Gullestad 2007: 18). While the mission is portrayed as a "regime of Goodness" the people of Cameroon are pictured as "stylized types" constructed to elicit a mix of compassion and pity among the Norwegian audience (Gullestad 2007).

Similarly, volunteer-travel marketing content appears to reproduce images of relations between "rich" and "poor" countries as the relation of "benefactors" and "beneficiaries." In volunteer-travel marketing, I would argue volunteers are portrayed as "non-religious" missionaries, seen for example in the slogans "*A small step to a fairer world*" (MondoChallenge) or "*Make a difference*" (i-to-i). An image is constructed of volunteer-travellers as globally conscious idealists and the "target" community as a place where the volunteers are able to initiate worldwide "change", i.e. the tourist-destination is a stage where a globally reaching "difference" can be

made. This marketing strategy is comparable to Cause Related Marketing (CRM). According to Lingen, to render CRM strategies": ….*are thought to result in the company being viewed in a more positive light by consumers while increasing their revenue stream. In theory, this is the perfect marriage between non-profit altruism and for-profit corporate goals"* (Lingen 2008: 407).

Next I will present the two volunteer-travel organisations of this study's marketing campaigns, starting with i-to-i.

i-to-i marketing

In the slogan "*Escape to the real world"* (i-to-i) volunteer-travel destinations are referred to as the "real" world. In the promotion of i-to-i's Tanzanian placements in the *Media pack* (2007) it is stated:" *Less developed than some of its neighbours this is the place to discover the <u>real</u> Africa"*. It appears from this that Tanzania is presented as "real" because it is "less developed".

Under the heading "*Volunteering abroad, what's the point?"* at the i-to-i website the importance of volunteering is stressed:

> *Your help is needed*
>
> *Many people may think that the need isn't that great or that people should learn to help themselves but the truth is that the need for your help is enormous. Without the help many of these vital projects would have to close down and that would be disastrous for both local communities and endangered environments.*
>
> *It's easy to underestimate how low the quality of life is for those in the developing world, especially if you're living comfortably in a first world country, far from the realities of the real world.*
>
> *Consider this:*
>
> *90% of the world's income is earned by the top 10% of the world's highest earners*
>
> *Every day 800 million people go to bed hungry*

The three richest people in the world have assets worth more than the combined GDP of the 48 poorest countries (United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 1998)

Rainforests are being destroyed at a rate of an acre and a half a second (Rainforest Action Network) 30,000 children die each day due to poverty (i-to-i 2008 m).

This promotional article appears to be aimed toward a certain consumer group by appealing to people's social and environmental conscience, further justifying the need for volunteers by referring to UNDP and RAN reports. It is implied that because of suffering due to poverty, it is a social responsibility for privileged First World youth to volunteer through i-to-i. i-to-i's volunteer-travel programmes are presented as playing an essential part in global development, and it is made to seem as if a lack of volunteers would have "disastrous consequences" for both "local communities" and "endangered environments", what is more, the need appears urgent, thus eliciting customer action (cf. Wikipedia 2008 c).

Next I will discuss the content of MondoChallenge's marketing campaigns.

MondoChallenge marketing

MondoChallenge appear to employ a more moderate marketing strategy than i-to-i. Still, similar patterns can be traced between the two organisations. The MondoChallenge volunteer is represented as more "ascetic" than the i-to-i volunteer, but similarly idealistic, and the "local community" has a equally important place: "*All of our programmes are community based, meaning that you live and work alongside local people* […] *We may not be able to promise a hot shower but we can definitely promise an unforgettable and truly rewarding experience!*" (MondoChallenge 2008). The volunteer is portrayed as becoming an integrated part of the local community through working and living by the same "simple" conditions as the locals. The material standard (lack of shower) is presented as irrelevant in achieving a "truly rewarding experience", which appears to be the experience of being integrated into a Third World community.

Further, in MondoChallenge advertisement campaigns, as in i-to-i marketing, volunteering seems to be presented as an altruistic endeavour toward Third-World development. Below, an excerpt from a MondoChallenge promotional article, under the heading "*Why volunteer?*"

A New Challenge

- *Make a real contribution to world development*

- *Work in an ongoing project helping to provide support and training to those in need*

- *Help us to ensure our projects develop and grow for the benefit of the whole community* (MondoChallenge 2008)

Again, similar to i-to-i marketing, the MondoChallenge volunteer is presented as a resourceful initiator of community/world "development." Local/global scales appear mixed by using reified concepts of "world" and "community" simultaneously. However, what the term "community" actually entail is vague in much volunteer-travel marketing. To illustrate how "community" becomes a reified entity in representations of "humanitarian assistance" by referring to development theory, Moan and Stokke (2000) state: "…**"***Community" is a concept often used by state and other organizations, rather than the people themselves, and it carries connotations of consensus and "needs" determined within parameters set by outsiders"* (Moan 2000: 46). Or as Blackstock states, there is rarely one 'community voice', such as it is often presented in community-based tourism initiatives. Thus, "community" is not a uniform bloc (Blackstock 2005)**.**

Similarly, in MondoChallenge's volunteer-programmes, the "local community" appears to be presented as a unified society in needs of help from "first world" volunteers. Further, it is stated on the MondoChallenge website that the organisations send volunteers to work "alongside local people" with "local partners",

further listing a number of community-based organisations as evidence of this.[86] A long list of local partners could serve to legitimize the organisation's community-based operations for its potential customers.

Mowforth and Munt discuss how association with socio-environmental organisations in "Third World communities": "…*allows operators to tap the conscience of the new-middle class tourists from the First World*" (Mowforth 1998: 200). Furthermore, they claim the, "… *appeal to escapism from the daily routines*" in such specialized ("niche") tour-operators marketing campaigns, incurs the same level of commoditisation of tourism products (wildlife, scenery, local community) as mass-tourism (ibid). In contrast, Wearing argues volunteer-tourism experiences represent a different travel-ideology than mass-tourism, or specifically a move beyond the; "…*consumerism, commoditisation and determinism*" which allegedly constitutes mass-tourism (Wearing 2002:34).

I would argue that the volunteer-travel advertisement of "real Third World local communities" connotes a humanitarian idealism, while the mass-tourism advertisement of fancy beach resorts connotes hedonistic self-indulgence. Still, spotlighting Third World "social realities" as the target of the "tourist gaze" (cf. Urry 2002) does not necessarily in practice build mutual social ties between hosts and guest. This is to say, even though the volunteer-travel destination may be Third World "local communities" and not safari game-parks or beautiful beaches, the tourist product may be just as reified and the actualisation of the tour may be just as "shallow" and consumer-focused as "mainstream" tourist activities.

In conclusion, both i-to-i and MondoChallenge's appear to engage in forms of Cause Related Marketing (CRM) by appealing to the consumers' social conscience in claiming the volunteer-travel programmes serve a greater humanitarian cause (cf. Lingen 2008). Their advertisement campaigns appear to appeal to "escapism" from

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[86]One of the Tanzanian "partners" listed which was listed at the time of my fieldwork, an environmental organisation, had never received any MondoChallenge volunteers.

the "soulless" First World materialism[87] by promising the "idealistic" traveller safe, short-term integration in a "real" and "poor" Third World local community where he/she will be an "equal", but still a resourceful asset who can initiate "change", i.e. "development" with a potential global reach.

The Politics of Representation: "Humanitarian vacation" or "New colonialists"

The organisations' own promotional campaigns are not the only public media where volunteer-travel programmes are presented; volunteer-travel has also received attention in the travel press and the more recently in the investigative press. In this section, I will distinguish between two main positions of volunteer tourism presentations in the media; the *romanticizing* (or *orientalizing* cf. Said 1978) and the *moralizing* (comparable to the post-development school, cf. Escobar 1995).

In her study of eco-tourism, Honey asserts that the travel press is known as the "good news" branch of journalism with;"…*more cheerleaders than critics.*" Honey warns that because travel journalists are often subsidized by the tour-operators they write about, the travel press can easily become a low-cost public-relations arm for the tourist industry. Honey asserts criticism in the travel press is only permitted if it is "balanced" by positive comments (Honey 1999:46). Similarly, until recently, much of the "First World" literature about volunteer-travel has given positive reviews of this tourist-niche.

The vocabulary used in travel press reviews is similar to that used in the volunteer-travel organisations own promotional material (meaningful travel, make a difference etc). Below, headlines from news articles on the subject of volunteer-travel (or "voluntourism"): LA Times: "*Voluntourism: Vacationers go the extra mile to do*

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[87] See the presentation of i-to-i in chapter 1.

good" (Yoshino 2007), MSNBC: "*Voluntourism trips for do-gooders: When sipping margaritas and sunburning yourself poolside loses its lustre*" (Dalton 2008) Desert News:"*Voluntourism' becomes popular: Vacations with a humanitarian focus can be satisfying*" (Carpenter 2007). The positive sides of volunteer-travel, as presented here, have in addition been the focus in other writing on volunteer-travel, such as Wearing "Volunteer-travel: Experiences that make a difference". This book, Wearing claims, is an: "*…attempt to encapsulate the enthusiasm and positive attempts to use tourism as a means of support for both youth and communities.*" Further, Wearing states: "*In a global society that increasingly finds dogma and marketing used to install values and exploit social relations, volunteer tourism represents both an opportunity and a means of value-adding in an industry that seems to represent consumer capitalism at its worst*" (Wearing 2001:ix). Similar patterns can be traced within this apparent "pro-voluntourism" genre; it is praised as an humanitarian endeavour which benefits the host rather than falling into the destructive "conspicuous consumption" customs linked to "mainstream" tourism.

However, since 2006, critical media coverage of "voluntourism" started to appear in the investigative press, especially in the British media. This series of "anti-voluntourism" articles paints a darker picture of the volunteer-travel industry than previously seen in the travel press. These articles do not contrast voluntourism with "mainstream" tourism. Instead, voluntourism is contextualized as a part of a capitalist exploitation of the naïve wishes of "First World" youth to help "Third World" communities and the subsequent exploitation of these communities.

This critical focus increased significantly after the volunteer-sending organisation Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), a UK registered charity (No 313757), published criticism of commercial volunteer-sending organisations. VSO claimed commercial volunteering makes no real contribution to host-communities, and that this type of travel is most beneficial for the volunteer-sending company and the volunteers themselves. This is revealed by the fact that these commercial volunteer organisations shy away from the areas where volunteer-assistance could be of most use, allegedly

because these areas are not simultaneously popular tourist destinations (Gabriel 2007). This debate was brought forward by several British newspapers. Thus, a vocabulary linked to volunteer-travel very different from that used in the "pro-voluntourism" literature started to appear. The following news article headlines illustrate the difference between the travel press "cheerleaders" and the investigate press' critics of voluntourism: Black Britain: "*Development charity says 'volunteer tourism' is bad for Africa*" (Gabriel 2007), The Observer: "*How to avoid the gap year rip-offs*" (Griffith 2007), The Guardian:*" You're better off backpacking - VSO warns about perils of 'voluntourism'*" (Ward 2007), The Times; "*Gap years create 'new colonialists': According to a leading charity, Gap year volunteers may do more harm than good*"(Freon 2006). Below, excerpts from two articles covering the "gap-year rip-off" debate, the first posted in The Guardian:

> *Roll up for the holiday of a lifetime, yours for £2,500 - the chance to work for nothing in a third-world slum. Last week, 'the big gap-year rip-off' hit the headlines, after one of Britain's leading charities struck out at tour companies charging school leavers large sums in return for the opportunity to do charity work abroad. Worse, said Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), much of the work carried out by the earnest youngsters is of little us* (Griffith 2007).

Further in this article, volunteers are advised to "*critically assess the promotional literature and seductive websites that abound in the field*" (ibid). This is followed by guidelines for deciding which aspects the volunteer should address before embarking on an organized volunteer-travel programme abroad. Some of the questions are: "*Is the sending organisation a non-profit or a commercial company? Is it happy to supply specific cost breakdowns? How does it justify charging £2,500 when the average daily spend of a budget traveller in that country might be less than £7?*" The article below, posted on The World Volunteer Web, scrutinizes the "real" motivation of volunteers and sending agencies and the actual "difference-making" potential of the commercial volunteer-programmes:

Charities are all too familiar with the fact that high-profile, high-tragedy crises tend to generate legions of offers from well-meaning members of the public to go and volunteer in the afflicted area, without having the skills or resources to be effective. […] Last year, VSO warned that gap year volunteers risked becoming the "new colonialists" if they didn't change their attitudes to the developing world and stop putting their needs above those of the communities they profess to help (Klaushofer 2007).

In this article volunteer-travel is described as the opportunity for such "well-meaning legions of youth" to go to crisis-inflicted areas, for payment, even though they do not posses required skills or resources fro efficient contributions. Thus, they are becoming "the new colonialists". The director of VSO, Judith Brodie, explains in a press-release that the sending-agencies often pay little attention to whether the volunteer-travel programme is actually beneficial for the host community. Below, her explanation for why volunteers risk becoming "the new colonialists", from The Times: "*It's an 'all about us' attitude. There seems to be a colonial attitude, whereby it is assumed that just because a young person is from the UK, they will be of benefit to their host community*" (Frean 2006).

Neutralizing the charges

Immediately after VSO launched its criticism of the volunteer-travel industry, several articles addressing the issue were posted on i-to-i's web-pages. Below, an introduction to this series of defence-articles:

There has been a great deal of dispute in the media recently about the pros and cons of volunteering overseas and the differences between charity organizations such as VSO and commercial volunteer-travel providers such as i-to-i. In addition to this dispute, there has been criticism directed at volunteer-travel providers and the 'worth' of the work done by the volunteers they send to projects overseas. We wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the differences between these volunteer-programmes and the benefits of volunteering with both types of organizations to help you make an informed decision and choose the right opportunity for you.

In this series of in-house articles i-to-i justify their position against the VSO criticism. i-to-i didn't merely declare their knowledge of this criticism, they "solved" the problem by claiming to fill a different gap in the volunteer-travel market than VSO, as the article quoted below illustrates:

What are the differences?

Organizations such as VSO will always be limited in their reach by funding - volunteers require local payment, airfares, insurance etc, and funding will clearly limit the number of projects and countries that can receive such volunteer support. i-to-i has no such limits - as long as projects are local initiatives, sustainable and with clear goals, the self-funding nature of i-to-i means that a huge and potentially unlimited number of destinations and projects can benefit (i-to-i 2008 k).

In this article, the customers-financed way in which the company is run is turned to its own best advantage. Whilst VSO is a charity which depends on external funding to cover running costs, [88] i-to-i does not depend on the grace of donors to survive. Still, I would argue it is no less risky to depend on the grace of the market; customers can as easily turn their backs on an organisation as donors could. Also, the quality of the support for the "target-communities" might differ. VSO-volunteers stay on 1-2 year contracts, are recruited more selectively and receive a more extensive training.[89] In comparison, i-to-i are just about indiscriminating in their recruitment of volunteers, volunteers stay on 2 week to 3 month placements and i-to-i merely offer a one-day training of their volunteers (see chapter 4). However, i-to-i's policy of indiscriminate recruitment is scored up as a benefit in the article below:

What does i-to-i offer?

Over the last 10 years, another significant and equally valuable method of contributing to development overseas has emerged and one which has been carefully designed to be inclusive in terms of who can contribute.

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[88] VSO volunteers do not pay a placement fee, the volunteers are also compensated for travel costs such as flights, health insurance and given an allowance by their employer whilst overseas (VSO 2008).

[89] Ibid.

*Organizations such as i-to-i, developed out of the belief that nearly
everybody, irrespective of previous experience and age, does (with
some guidance) have a huge amount to offer to communities and
development projects overseas. This belief was born out of discussions
with local projects and initiatives on the ground and has been
developed to great effect* (i-to-i 2008 k)

Here, it is claimed it is the right of every "First World" youth to be given the
opportunity to contribute to "development overseas". As a conclusion to the in-house
article series addressing the VSO debate, i-to-i posted its own assessment guide: "*5
top questions to ask when considering your volunteer-travel organisation*". To
exemplify, question 1 and an excerpt of i-to-i's answer is posted below:

1. How do you ensure a project is sustainable and worthwhile?

*Since 1995 i-to-i has been committed to community engagement
ensuring that any project that we provide volunteers for has asked for
the assistance and is sustainable. Our aim is to provide long-term
support, sending a steady flow of volunteers to established and
worthwhile projects.*[90]

By referring to i-to-i's history and company policy, the question is answered in a way
that makes i-to-i pass its own test. Still this might be considered "empty rhetoric",
since the argument that i-to-i sends a "steady flow" of volunteers has in several cases
been proved wrong, such as presented in chapter 4.

MondoChallenge on the other hand, appeared to embrace the criticism posted by
VSO. Below, MondoChallenge's prompt reply to the VSO debate;

*MondoChallenge welcomes recent scrutiny in the press on the value of
volunteer-programmes abroad. Like VSO, we urge prospective
volunteers to examine the sustainability and cost of projects before
getting involved* (MondoChallenge 2008).

The MondoChallenge response of "welcoming" the VSO criticism can be seen as a
strategy which serves to distinguish MondoChallenge's volunteer-travel programmes

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[90] The rest of the questions: "*2. What checks do you have in place to protect children and vulnerable adults? 3. How do I
know my money is safe with you, what if you go out of business – are you insured? 4. Where does my placement fee go? 5.
What training and support do you provide?*" (i-to-i 2008 k).

from the "populist" ones, such as the i-to-i's. Instead, MondoChallenge professes to be a more "ethical" volunteer-travel alternative. This claim is further justified by the sponsoring of "ethical volunteering", a volunteer-travel guide site: "*MondoChallenge is the only volunteering organisation of its kind to sponsor the Ethical Volunteering Guide, encouraging good practice and maximum benefits for volunteers and host communities*"(ibid).

Ethical Volunteering is a site which: "*…offers advice & information for people who are interested in international volunteering and want to make sure that what they do is of value to themselves and the people they work with*"(Ethical Volunteering 2008). Still, sponsoring this site alone might not serve to exempt MondoChallenge from the VSO criticism. As Mowforth and Munt (1998) have argued, the recent rise of "codes of conduct", such as the one proposed by ethical volunteering are voluntary, self-regulatory initiatives, and may be: "*…abused by the industry as marketing ploys or as veils extending over many of its impacts*" (Ibid :121). Furthermore, on Ethical Volunteering's site MondoChallenge's volunteer-programme is nowhere explicitly recommended.

"Cashing in on Compassion": the BBC 5 Live Report

In May 2007 I was contacted by a reporter who told me a BBC team would come to Moshi in order to record a radio program about the gap-year industry,[91] which would be focusing on i-to-i's volunteer-travel programme in Moshi. At the time, I was volunteering with MondoChallenge, the reporter called in the middle of a MondoChallenge Friday meeting. She had been given my number by a former i-to-i

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[91] The term "gap-year" usually refers to a practice in the UK of taking a year off to go travelling or working aboard before going to university, but as Simpson states: "*Gap years are becoming increasingly popularized as 'career breaks'* [the customer group MondoChallenge claim to target, being a "career break specialist"] *and so the demographics of the gap year are expanding"* (Simpson 2004).

volunteer who I had previously talked to about her dissatisfaction with the organisation. The reporter asked if I knew the salary of the local i-to-i staff members, what I had found unsatisfying during my placement with i-to-i and finally, if I could refer her to any unsatisfied former i-to-i volunteers. When I returned to the MondoChallenge meeting/dinner, the attendants seemed interested in hearing about the "angling" of the BBC reporter's questions. One volunteer admitted she had been close to signing up for i-to-i, she seemed relieved that she had finally chosen MondoChallenge. Further, the UK office later requested that I inform them when the programme was broadcast.

In June 2007, the BBC 5 Live report entitled "Mind the Gap" was broadcast. BBC reporter James Silver's introduction to the program: *"On today's program; how some in this unrelated branch of the travel industry began cashing in on compassion"* (Silver 2007). The program criticized commercial volunteer-travel companies, primarily referring to i-to-i. The report claimed that volunteers get ripped off by having to pay huge fares which make the sending-agencies rich, while the supposed "recipients", the hosts, obtain no benefits whatsoever. Below, I will present an abbreviated version of the BBC 5 Live program:

Introductory, the BBC reporter paints a dark picture of the volunteer-travel industry: *"It's an arrangement which can leave local communities feeling both patronised and exploited "*, *"more than 40,000 young Britons went abroad for volunteer work and life experience in exotic corners of the world, as well as the chance to spruce up their CVs"*, *"Today over 70 companies, most of them commercial businesses have sprung up to deal with the growing demand. A decade ago this sector scarcely existed"* (Silver 2007).

Further, the program reported how the i-to-i Moshi division tried to search out and keep their "local partners". The manager of an orphanage located just outside of Moshi, Mama Lynn Elliot, explains how i-to-i had tried to "access" her orphanage in order to use it as a volunteer-placement: *"I tell them, my children, they are not a zoo. You do not just come here and make money out of my children."* Moreover, the

Tanzanian former i-to-i In-Country employee, Denis Macinula, explains how i-to-i makes their placements sign exclusivity contracts: "*The contract was for the sake of making sure that a placement or a project does not receive volunteers from other organisations.*"

Continuing this line of criticism, the founder of the non-profit volunteer organisation Quest Overseas, Michael Amphlet, portrays i-to-i as both commercial and unethical: "*Their marketing is so slick and so positive. (…)There have been many, many complaints. But what they're very good at is certainly making sure that information doesn't go out into the wider marketplace.*" Further, Michael Amphlet presents the moral concerns of short-term volunteer placements: "*If you are going to go and volunteer as a teacher for 3 months which I would argue is the absolute minimum cause that's the average term time, and who in their right mind would go and teach anyone for 3 weeks? That's morally reprehensible. You start to develop a relationship with your children, and then, buff, you're off.*" In conclusion, Michael Amphlet pinpoints the selfish dimension of short-term volunteering: "*Yeah, you want to go and do something worthwhile. You want to go and experience something completely different. Do you notice how many you's are in there? You, you, you!*"

A spokesperson for Tourism Concern (cf. Tourism Concern 2008) Patricia Bonnet, discusses the ethics of leaving the volunteer-travel industry unregulated, "*A code of practice is needed, because it is only too obvious that if this business is unregulated rather scary things can happen. One host community told us that, if anything, it actually costs $2 a day, to keep the volunteer housed, fed, watered and transported, $2 a day in East-Africa, and yet each volunteer was paying £2000. And the actual community never got proper funding over and above that $2 they were getting to house each volunteer.*"

Furthermore, statements of several disappointed i-to-i volunteers' are presented. For instance, one volunteer said: "*I'm very, very, very absolutely disappointed. In everything they have completely let me down. If anybody were telling me they were considering doing a placement with i-to-i I would tell them absolutely not!*" Another

volunteer explained that she felt cheated because i-to-i did not share volunteer-payments with her placement: "*I was so angry when I got back. Of all the money I'd paid, none of it went to the orphanage. I just kind of assumed like, reading the website and everything, you thought, well, we're paying that much, some must go toward it.*" A third volunteer presented a similar portrayal: "*I believed that a third of the overall money that I gave to i-to-i when I was back in England would be reaching Tanzania and it would be going directly to the projects that we're all on, and I've seen absolutely no evidence of any money that I or anyone else has paid to i-to-i having ever reached these projects.*"

In conclusion, BBC reporter James Silver criticized volunteer-travellers self-centred motivation for volunteering abroad. He asserts the volunteer-motivation involves gaining "*…a life enhancing experience and adrenalin buzz, or simply something to impress future employers.*" Conclusively, Silver describes volunteer-travel as "*…Western kids slumming it in style.*"

As I have attempted to illustrate in this chapter, there is a tendency in the Western media narrative representation of volunteer-travel either to *romanticize* (as in the travel press and the companies' own promotional material) or to *moralize* (such as in the investigative press). While the romanticised media narrative constructs leisure volunteer-programmes on a face-to-face interactional level as a harmonious, equally beneficial relationship between "host" and "guest" alike, the moralizing media narrative brings "global forces" into the equation and portrays leisure volunteer-programmes as a symptom of cynical capitalist motives, representing a continuance of a colonial exploitation of the "Third World". The moralizing media narrative constructs the volunteer-travel agencies as capitalist corporations manipulating naïve, but well-intentioned Western youth. The volunteer is portrayed as a helpless pawn in these corporations social, cultural and economic exploitation of the similarly powerless "Third World" community (here: Tanzania). Further, according to existentialist perspectives of tourism (cf. Steiner 2006), while the romanticising narrative proposes that an escape from Western consumerism is obtainable through volunteer tourism, the moralizing narrative breaks down this illusion by

contextualizing volunteer-travel programmes within the same "exploitative" capitalist systems in which the travellers are paradoxically attempting to escape by choosing this alleged "sustainable" tourism-alternative.

In the next chapter I will attempt to further elaborate narrative representations of volunteer-travel and contextualize volunteer-travel programmes within global discourses of North/South relations.

7. Contextualizing Volunteer-travel

As I have indicated earlier, in volunteer-travel promotional presentations, the traditional tourist relationship between "guests" and "hosts" has been transformed into a relationship of "Western benefactors" and "Third World beneficiaries". Through presenting this image of North/South relations, I have argued that volunteer-travel programmes have been constructed as "community development" rather than "tourism". In this chapter, I will attempt to contextualize i-to-i and MondoChallenge's volunteer-travel programmes within a wider tradition of Western narrative representation of "humanitarian assistance" toward the "Third World". I will argue that volunteer-travel representations have been constructed for a Western audience and that these representations are reproduced in the effectuation of volunteer-travel. Further, I will try to identify to what extent volunteer-travel programmes can be construed as re-narrating Western stereotypical relational representations of "us" versus "them", as a continuance of a colonial ideology (cf. Said 1994). Further, I will present different stances which can serve to nuance such "moralizing" portrayals of volunteer-travel encounters.

Introductory, I will discuss central theoretical perspectives on tourism which can serve as a background for the interpretations of the volunteer-travel phenomenon that follows.

Tourism Studies: Authenticity and commodification

As stated by Cole (2007); "*Authenticity and commodification are central to academic debates in tourism*". There are many perspectives on the issue of authenticity. One classic is MacCannell's "the tourist" (1992) where he argues that the quest for authentic experiences are the tourists' primary goal, while in more recent studies, such as Bruner (1994), measuring the "authenticity" of (post-modern) tourist

performances is presented as irrelevant. Further, authenticity in tourism research is often linked to cultural commoditisation. As Taylor (2001) states, a quest for "authenticity" in tourism is a form of exoticism. Many scholars have stressed the commodification (and staging) of cultures that seemingly takes place in tourist productions. For instance, MacCannell has referred to touristic "culture consumption" as modern societies version of cannibalism (MacCannell 1992).

The effects of such "cultural commodification" have often been interpreted as socially and culturally destructive for host-populations, such as Steiner and Reisinger (2004: 312) state: "…*the way* [tourist] *products are packaged, promoted, and sold leads to harmful commercialization of destinations, product commodification, and disintegration of local cultures*." Further, Malcolm Crick argues that the "…*places in the glossy brochures of the travel industry do not exist; the destinations are not real places and the people pictured are false*" as a "*playground for the Western World*" (Crick 1989:329). Crick further argues that the socio-economic realities of the host destination populations are hidden from the gaze of tourists, he states: "*One cannot sell poverty, but one can sell paradise*" (ibid). However, in volunteer-travel this statement does not appear to apply. The portrayals in volunteer-travel marketing campaigns highlight, or even exaggerate, the socio-economic conditions of the host destination, which can serve to justify the need within these communities for a provision of leisure volunteers as humanitarian assistance.[92]

Further, by claiming to take the traveller "behind the scenes", in presenting the socio-economic realities of the hosts as the tours main attraction, volunteer-travel agencies can be said to have taken the touristic "staged authenticity" (cf. MacCannell 1992) a step further toward a "staged integration", as indicated in chapter 2. As Taylor (2001:13) states: "*…as these Goffmanesque performances increasingly come to be exposed as false, the industry seeks to create ever deeper forms of ``staged authenticity'' by drawing tourists into more deviously contrived ``back regions''.*"

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[92] See chapters 3 and 5.

However, I would argue the advertised volunteer-travel practice of exposing the "real lives" of local residents through living and working in local communities, as opposed to staying in secluded tourist resorts and being waited on and performed for, does not in itself define volunteer experience as the ultimately "authentic" tourist experience. Instead of "staging" the primitiveness of the host through tourist performances, what seems to be the central staged dimension of volunteer-travel is the *role* of the traveller, as benefactor, in relation to the host, as beneficiary. Thus, the presentation of volunteer-travel as mutually beneficial, symbiotic encounters between hosts and guests (cf. Singh 2004, Wearing 2001), might serve to reproduce historical stereotypical representations of the West in relation to the global South (Simpson 2004). I will discuss such historical and cultural contextualizations of the volunteer-travel phenomenon in the following sections.

Volunteer-travel as commercialized humanitarianism

Mowforth and Munt discuss the increased popularity of socio-environmental movements in Western countries since the mid 1980's. They argue the rise of such movements and subsequent increased media visibility of environmental disasters is what initiated the eco-tourism alternative (Mowforth 1998). I would argue that volunteer-travel is built on notions of *humanitarianism* in the same way ecotourism is built on notions of *environmentalism*. Thus, instead of, or in addition to, working with socio-environmental movements, volunteer-travel organisations link their activities to local grassroots institutions, such as women's centres and orphanages, where a humanitarian concern for "the people" replaces the environmental concern for "the nature" as seen in ecotourism. The fact that tour-companies would even come up with the idea of "selling" a temporary role in which the individual can act as a "humanitarian assistance" for an "underdeveloped community", entails that the agencies have identified a "humanitarian yearning" within Western societies (cf. Kennedy 2004). Further, the fact that this role is referred to as "volunteer" in itself indicates a link to humanitarianism. The leisure volunteer does per definition "work" without being paid. Still, the fact that this work-placement is provided by a

commercial company for payment can make the humanitarian (or altruist) aspect of the term ambiguous.[93]

In "The dark sides of virtue" Kennedy discusses the "…*efforts of well-meaning people to express their humanitarian yearnings on a global stage*" (ibid:xv). He scrutinizes the hegemonic idea of human rights and how international development institutions, such as the UNHCR, have "professionalized humanitarianism". Kennedy further argues that Western "humanitarian impulses" take many forms; "*The impulse to do good, to remake the world more fairly, to strengthen the hand of tolerance and understanding takes shape for each of us in the available cultural and professional vocabulary. Humanitarianism begins as an impulse – and becomes known as a practice*" (Kennedy 2004:xiv).

I have previously defined volunteer-travel as a "commercialization of humanitarian assistance", where the volunteer role can be seen as "…*an effort to make the humanitarian desires real*" (ibid.) and available for the general public. Similar to development institutions, the volunteer-travel concept is shaped by an available "cultural and professional vocabulary" demonstrating how to actualize humanitarian impulses, thus reflecting current trends in Western (popular) culture. For instance, "humanitarianism" expressed through individual volunteerism has received a great deal of media coverage in the last years, as the "Goodwill Ambassadors" for the UN[94] or the gap-year adventures of celebrities. For instance, both British princes have volunteer-travelled. William volunteered through Raleigh International in Chile in 2000, where he assisted in the building of a school (Bennett 2007), while Harry short-term volunteered in an orphanage in Lesotho in 2004 (Bartham 2006). Similarly, in constructing leisure-volunteerism as a humanitarian endeavour, the volunteer-travel agencies grant even "normal" Western individuals the chance to serve as goodwill ambassadors helping out in "developing" communities.

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[93] Which may also be the reason why the volunteer payment is such an issue, as discussed in chapter 5.

[94] Such as the American actress Angelina Jolie's visits to UNHCR refugee camps (UNHCR 2008)

Next, I will discuss how such representations of humanitarians can become reproduced in the execution of volunteer-travel programmes.

"Touristic tautologies"

The image of "humanitarianism" appears to be reproduced in the execution of volunteer-travel programmes. This reproduction through performance has been referred to by Caton and Santos as tourisms *hermeneutic cycle*, here referring to tourists' tendency to take photographs that resemble the pictures which are found in promotional brochures (Caton 2008). Similarly, Salazar refers to the convergence between tourist-promotion and execution as tourisms *self-fulfilling prophecies*. Salazar states:

> *The guarantee offered by the industry that what is marketed and sold will be seen and experienced becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, directing expectations, influencing perceptions, and thereby providing a preconceived landscape for the tourist to discover. Clichés and stereotypes like the ''noble savage'' or the ''exotic paradise'' are used to misrepresent local communities and raise unrealistic expectations in those who visit them. Before setting foot on Tanzanian soil, tourists already have a mental image of what it will look like. These impressions are the result of years of exposure to glossy picture books, travel magazines, and television documentaries about Africa* (Salazar 2007: 840).

Further, Salazar argues that the mission of tour-guides is to facilitate the tour so that the tourists will experience the idealized tourist-images which were presented to them by the outbound tour-agency pre-departure. [95] Salazar calls this a *touristic tautology,* where host-destination tourist-facilitators try to manipulate the tourists' experiences to reflect images found in the outbound tour-agents promotional material (Ibid). To render examples of such touristic tautologies within the volunteer-travel sector, the in-country representatives of MondoChallenge and i-to-i appear to mediate the image of the volunteer programmes as "empowerment" and "community development",

which is in convergence with the organisations' promotional material, as discussed in chapter 3.

Further, as Crick argues (1989), the individual tourist will perceive the tour as satisfactory if his/her self-image is reflected through the tourist-experience. If the volunteer tourists' fantasy is being able to "make a difference" for a community afflicted by hardship, as stressed in volunteer-travel advertisement, the tour facilitators mission would be to build the programme in an attempt to influence the volunteer experience so the participants would leave with the impression of having achieved just that.[96]

In the following section I will further elaborate the topic of volunteer identity.

Volunteer identity

The study of tourism, like studies of most other leisure activities, has often been linked to Bourdieu's perspectives on social-class differentiation. For instance, the fact that "alternative travellers" (imagined as adventurous, broadminded, intelligent…) often distinguish themselves from the "mainstream tourists" (conceived as narrow-minded, unadventurous, unintelligent…) is by Mowforth and Munt (1998) linked to notions of cultural and social capital (129-143). They assert that travel is regarded as "character building" for the traveller;" *tourism as a commodity embodies "sign value", an important means of stocking up on cultural capital*" (ibid: 132). Similarly, even though most literature on the topic of volunteer-travel has focused on the programmes' reciprocal benefits for visitor and host alike, the identity, motivation and social values of "the volunteer" appear to be the main concern (Anderson 1999; McGehee 2005; McGehee 2002; Wearing 2001; Wearing 2004; Campbell 2006). The socio-psychological change-potential for programme participants seems to be

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[96] As I have described in Chapter 3, when discussing organisation employees exaggerated enthusiasm over volunteer contributions to their placements.

especially popular approach to the study of volunteer-travel. For example, Wearing uses terms like *personal development*, *interpersonal awareness and learning*, *confidence* and *self-contentment* when discussing the "developing of self" through volunteer-tourist experiences (Wearing 2001: 123-139). McGehee and Santos (2004:774) similarly refers to volunteer-tourist experiences as "consciousness-raising experiences".

To illustrate how volunteer-travel participants talked about their own role and experience of volunteering, I will present excerpts from individual, unstructured interviews with three MondoChallenge volunteers, each on teaching placements in Tanzania. All three volunteers where European or North-American, on career-break, and had volunteered in Tanzania for at least one month.

When I asked about their personal motivation for volunteering with MondoChallenge in Tanzania, the volunteers answered:

> Volunteer 1: "*I wanted to come away – come to Africa – I wasn't really sure why – I didn't just wanna come away and travel, I knew I wasn't gonna be happy with just backpacking. I like going to places long-term, stay somewhere, feel like I get to know it a bit, don't think you can learn anything in just a couple of weeks.*"

> Volunteer 2: "*To help a little bit....*" She further explained she became motivated to volunteer after having worked for very rich employers who "*…had everything they needed –they took everything for granted – I knew they would be fine without me, if not me then someone else.*"

> Volunteer 3 explained he chose to volunteer through a friend's recommendation. He chose Tanzania because; "*…people are grateful for help here[97]…Initially, I wanted to go to India, but I heard it would be better here, that people would be more grateful and welcoming for your help in Tanzania. A friend told me that in India they took people helping them for granted.*"

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[97] See the discussion of "gratitude" in chapter 5.

When I asked why they believed people in general want to volunteer in Africa the volunteers answered:

> Volunteer 1: "*I think people go with the feeling they wanna help*". Further, when I asked why she believed people choose to volunteer in Africa, she explained, "*…you see so much on TV, told so much of what's going on.*"

> Volunteer 2: "*You see Africa in the media, the portrait of how it's like – seems like an obvious place to choose if you want to help, not like volunteering in a school in England, they wouldn't need it too much*"

> Volunteer 3: "*You can not generalize about people's motivation. I've seen a lot of bullshit volunteer organisations that care more about their organisation than the impact on local people – I'm happy with my experience*" Further, he stated: "*My conclusion is that people do that* [volunteer] *for themselves, so, they should stop bullshitting about how they are gonna save the world* […] *they need volunteer experience on their résumé, for a good CV.*"

When I asked about the volunteers' perception of their own contributions and achievements through participating on the MondoChallenge volunteer programme, the volunteers answered:

> Volunteer 1: "*Hopefully I taught the kids something – just a little bit*"

> Volunteer 2 explained she thought she could inspire the children at her placement by showing: "*Care and love and that kinda stuff I think…*" Later into the interview she commented: "*Just your presence there helps them to see there are options, you know, like there's more than just this village*"

> Volunteer 3: "*- not much… might improve some kids English and their self-confidence, my contribution is very limited.*" Further, he explained how the school needed more teachers, but not him in particular: "*…my function is needed, but me personally… I could come from Timbuktu and be black - that would be the same… they just need English teachers*"

When I asked what the volunteers believed volunteering would give them personally, the volunteers answered:

> Volunteer 1: "*Don't think I've changed... I came quite naively when I first came, if I was to come again... there's so many things you can do*" Further, she explained volunteering had changed her plans for the future: "*Maybe this would change what I wanna do, teaching and maybe some kind of charity – It's a good opportunity to do something different*".

> Volunteer 2: "*I'm definitely putting myself out of my safety zone – I think the more you do that, the bigger your safety zone gets – I used to be quite shy, but I pushed myself, challenged myself. You can grow as a person, I suppose.*" Further, she explained how volunteering had given her a different perspective on what she referred to as the "Western civilization's" "shallow" and "consumeristic" lifestyle*:" I was really fashion focused, after staying here, I would go back saying; "why did I ever need that wardrobe?"*"

> Volunteer 3 answered he hoped he had been able to teach the students at his placement something, while his personal gain would be "*…learning a lot from the experience*"

These volunteer comments can illustrate how volunteers had nuanced perceptions of the volunteer experiences. Nevertheless, some of the general claims brought up in scholarly literature on the topic can still be identified in these comments, like the motivational whish to "make a difference" for people who need and appreciates the help, and the perception of attaining increased social awareness through the volunteer experience. In addition, the comments of volunteer 3 can illustrate some general negative representations of volunteer-travel, such as being motivated by self-interest, in order to get a "good CV". To further illustrate such negative stereotypical representation portrayals; in Chapter 5 I quoted an expatriate who said volunteer-travelling is "like a fashion accessory" while in chapter 6 the BBC 5 live reporter calls volunteer-travelling a "*chance to spruce up their CVs"* and a chance to "*impress future employers*". Such portrayals appear to indicate volunteer-travelling is a form of social-class differentiation, and not just an "awareness-raising" experience on a strictly personal level. For instance, a CV can be seen to represent a tangible display

of social capital (cf. Bourdieu 1984) and volunteering is portrayed as something which can "boost up" a CV, or as the expatriate quoted in chapter 5 said, through the act of volunteering the participants can gain a "moral boost". The indication that to volunteer can serve as a justification for an individual's moral qualities, seems to further imply participation in volunteer-travel programmes is a means to social capital.

While in most volunteer-travel literature the benefits to the volunteers are presented on an individual, socio-psychological level, such as "developing the self" and "consciousness-raising", host-benefits are presented on an more abstract communal level, in terms of "community development" (McGehee 2005; Wearing 2001; Wearing 2004). The focus on "community" as a monolithic entity can further illustrate how the image of the *destination* is constructed as an arena where Western individuals can perform "humanitarian" activities. Next I will discuss such narrative constructions of volunteer-travel destinations.

Destination definitions

Scholarly definitions of volunteer tourism can in themselves illustrate how the image of the host-community is constructed. For example, McGehee and Santos refer to hosts as "others in need": *"Volunteer tourism: Utilizing discretionary time and income to go out of the regular sphere of activity to assist others in need"* (McGehee 2005:760). Similarly, Wearing refers to the volunteer tourism hosts as affected by "material poverty":

> *The generic term "volunteer tourism" applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve adding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society and environment* (Wearing 2001:1)

In this definition Wearing implies host-destinations are in need of volunteer tourists because of their material poverty.

Further, when *destinations* are referred to in volunteer-travel representations, local and global scales frequently appear intertwined. As I have previously mentioned, volunteer-travel programmes are typically advertised by providers as contributory to "world development".[98] Still, the volunteer programmes are small-scale; they are implemented on grassroots level and involve a small number of participants, aspects which are nevertheless in addition stressed in volunteer-travel advertisement. To rhetorically "scale up" the impact of volunteer programmes to reach a global level could illustrate the ideas of "North/South" relations inherent in the discourses of volunteer-travel. To illustrate, I would argue if a local teacher would be teaching a class, this activity would in all probability be referred to merely as "teaching", while if a volunteer-traveller, often even being less experienced and skilled, would be teaching in the very same class, this volunteer's activity would be presented by the volunteer-travel agencies as "community development".

"Third World geographies"

In the romanticizing volunteer-travel narratives, the "Third World" appears to be constructed as a stage for Western humanitarian intervention. This image can be said to have longstanding historical roots. Western humanitarian interventions in the "Third World" have appeared throughout modern history in different forms, such as in the through missionary, development and charity-interventions (Malkki 1996). Volunteer-travel can be seen to represent a commercialized continuance of such humanitarian interventions. For instance, Simpson argues volunteer-travel programmes in the Third World produces a 'geography', which entails: "…*a construction of the world where there are simplistic boundaries between two places i.e. that of the north and south*" (Simpson 2004: 682). She further suggests:

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[98] Such as in the MondoChallenge slogan "A small step to a fairer world".

> *Gap year projects create a publicly accepted 'mythology' of development. The notion of the 'third world' is highly important in the popularity of gap year programmes. Indeed, the very legitimacy of such programmes is rooted in a concept of a 'third world', where there is 'need', and where European young people have the ability, and right, to meet this need* (Ibid.)

Further, as Tanzanian scholar Issa Shivji argue, current humanitarian interventions in African countries, represented by Northern NGOs, can be seen as a unintentional continuance of an exploitative and patronizing colonialist ideology (Shivji 2007). Additionally, as Simpson (2004) indicates in the above quote, such relational representations can be traced in the volunteer-travel phenomenon. Next, I will try to identify some perceptions of volunteer travel as continuing a colonial legacy.

Colonial legacy?

The perception of Western superiority, or more specifically the presentation of Westerners as possessing superior knowledge and expertise as opposed to the "ignorance of natives", can be said to represent a *colonial legacy* (Crewe 2002). A connection between colonialism and volunteer-travel programmes has been identified to by several writers on the volunteer-travel phenomenon as well as programme participants. The idea that inexperienced Western individuals placed in "Third World" local communities can by means of "good-will" and "enthusiasm" alone initiate "community development", can exemplify this point. As a MondoChallenge business-development volunteer argued in a report "[…] *there is no ready assumption by local people that eager young people from rich countries actually know better how to do things*".

Further, to recapitulate views presented in the previous chapter, the moralizing narrative refers to leisure volunteers as neo-colonialist: "*In the coming months, thousands of students will fly to developing countries determined to help the world's poor, but, according to one charity, the gap year is fast becoming another form of colonialism*" (Hammond 2006). Similarly, the both volunteer-travel programmes studied was linked to colonial ideologies by several of their volunteers, which can be

exemplified in the terms some chose in describing the programmes, such as "imperialism", "quasi-colonial" and "charity tourism." Even in the Lonely Planet volunteer-travel guide, the question of whether volunteer-travel is "new-age colonialism" is posed:

> *International volunteering is part of a long tradition of people from the West setting off to help and change the countries of the Global South (aka the developing world) and have adventures while they do it. Where once these people where missionaries and soldiers, colonialists and explorers, teachers and entrepreneurs – now they are international volunteers* (Lonely Planet 2007) [99]

This excerpt illustrates that even in the normally "romanticizing" travel literature, such as the Lonely Planet, links between volunteer-travels and colonialism are identified. Still, the "moralizing" positions where the hosts are portrayed as passive "victims" did not seem to correspond with hosts' self-perception.

Conclusively, I will elaborate some perspectives which can serve to nuance the moralizing/romanticizing volunteer-travel representations.

Host perspectives

As mentioned, most literature on the topic of volunteer-travel focus on the volunteers' individual benefits versus the hosts communal benefits. Still, the question of how those who serve as hosts in volunteer travel programmes actually perceive the volunteer-travel programmes is rarely posed, be it "exploitative" or "empowering".

Crick proposes that studies of tourism-encounters should stress: "…*how people in different cultures perceive and understand tourists as a species of foreigner, what*

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[99] Whether volunteer-travellers are becoming" new age colonialists" is here defined though the individual volunteers attitude toward the host; "…***ask them to be your teachers instead of forcing them to be your students***" (quote Dr. Kate Simpson, who set up the "ethical volunteering" site, see previous chapter) (Lonely Planet 2007:10). Further, the reader is referred to the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for more information. The Lonely Planet Guide lists both i-to-i and MondoChallenge in the organisation index.

motivations they attribute their behaviour and how they distinguish among types of tourists" (Crick 1989:330). Similarly, in a study of backpacking, Maoz proposes "the gaze" in touristic encounters is not a one-way process. She builds on Urry's perspective on the tourist gaze when she argues there exists a "mutual gaze" between hosts and guests. Thus, the "tourist gaze" goes both ways. Urry claim the "tourist gaze" is equivalent to "looking at mad people behind bars". Instead, Maoz asserts that the hosts are aware of the tourist gaze, i.e. what the tourists expect to see: *"The locals tend to mirror what the tourists want, and the "culture" they play out is that of the Western imaginary"* (Maoz 2006:225).

Supposedly, the difference between local residents and tourists' gaze is that tourists are rarely aware of being the object of the locals gaze. In contrast, local residents are continuously aware of being the object of the tourists' objectifying gaze, Maoz asserts. Thus, authenticity-seeking travellers may not be aware of the more subtle versions of "staging" (cf. MacCannell 1989) or "cushioning" of impressions (cf. Crick 1989:327) that take place in community-based tourism encounters. In addition, local residents' gaze is built upon previous encounters with travellers: "*Unlike the Western tourists, whose gaze is constructed mainly by the media before the encounter takes place (…) the locals construct their gaze upon previous and numerous encounters with tourists. Consequently, their gaze may be closer to reality*"(Maoz 2006:229). Similarly, as discussed in chapters 2, 4 and 5, the volunteer-travel hosts saw the "enthusiastic volunteers" come and go, some perceived as helpful, some less so.

I do not by this claim that the volunteer-hosts mirrored the romanticized preconceptions of the volunteer-traveller by praising them for their remarkable contributions to the local community. There is no uniform "community voice". Further, the "true motivations" of hosts are difficult to define not just because there is no one shared opinion, it might in addition be an enactment of impression management (cf. Goffman 1971). Nevertheless, as I mentioned in chapter 3, the host-placement representatives' views on the volunteer-travel programmes did not appear

to coincide with the oppositional romanticizing/moralizing views presented in the previous chapter.

After several conversations with host placement representatives of both organisations, it did not seem as if they saw themselves as being exploited by the organisations, such as seen in the moralizing perspective of volunteer-travel. Additionally, they did not appear to perceive the programmes as significantly "empowering" their lives, as the romanticising perspective of volunteer-travel indicates.

Local residents' evaluation of volunteers

Further, Maoz recognizes that backpacking has often been interpreted as a less harmful alternative to mass tourism, at times even interpreted as enhancing the quality of life for the hosts. However, she argues that alternative tourism may not in actuality be less harmful or more sensitive to local customs than mass tourism (Maoz 2006). For instance, Honey asserts that her Zanzibari informants insinuated that backpackers who live in cheap guesthouses or with local families and strive to learn from the local residents are perceived the most intrusive of visitors (Honey 1999:90). Similarly, McGehee argues that local residents can often be patronized in volunteer-travel programmes: "*Cases abound of organisations that may have the best of intentions but a total lack of understanding of how their actions affect the dignity of local residents*" (McGehee 2007:2).

Maoz further claim that hosts often perceive the travellers as a means to material resources:…" *residents evaluate tourism in terms of social exchange and are likely to support it only when they expect the benefits to exceed the costs*" (Maoz 2006:224). Nevertheless, alternative long-term travellers (such as back-packers and volunteer-travellers) are often held to be "cheap" by residents in the host community because they demand to be treated as locals and insist on paying local fares (cf. Torskenæs 2004). This may be so because alterative travellers make a distinction between themselves and gullible "milk -cow" tourist. Nevertheless, I heard Tanzanians working in the service sector complain about the stinginess of volunteers compared to

"average" tourists. For instance, a MondoChallenge volunteer told me about an incidence where a taxi driver had become infuriated because she had bargained for the taxi-fare, and shouted back at her that the volunteers' cheapness make them much worse than the "mainstream" tourists.

In this section I have presented the host in volunteer-travel programmes as the "local community", next I will demonstrate some perspectives of the Tanzanian state as the volunteer-travel host.

The state as host

I would argue that the "host" in volunteer-travel narratives can be conceptualised on three general levels: 1) as individual, 2) as local community ("the people") and 3) as state. In my perception, it is the host as *community* which is predominantly referred to as the "beneficiary" in volunteer-travel narratives, while the host as *individual* is presented as a member of a group which have been selected for "empowerment" and the host as *state* is peripheral. Further, the volunteer-travel programmes appeared to "bypass" the state, similarly to trends seen in the development sector (Kelsall 2005:148), by implementing projects grassroots and seemingly not reporting their actual operations to local officials. [100]

Honey states; "…*tourism is now viewed as Tanzania's best hope for development, and ecotourism* […] *is widely hailed by government and tourism officials as the model Tanzania is pursuing*" (Honey 1999: 255) Further, from a functional-economic stance, volunteer-travel programmes appear not to be favoured by the Tanzanian state over other tourism initiatives, in addition considering that the volunteer-travellers paid most of the expenses prior to their arrival in Tanzania. The Tanzanian government's stated goal is to attract luxury tourists, not long-term budget travellers.

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[100] For instance, at the time of my fieldwork, most volunteers and overseas employees had tourist visas because it appeared to be difficult to obtain a working-permit for these ambiguous NGO/tourist-organisations. Further, not involving local authorities was by some volunteer-programme participants justified by arguing African states are corrupt.

Short-term luxury tourists generate more foreign exchange and Tanzania: "…*seeks to offer a low-density, high-quality, and high-priced tourism experience*" (Wade 2001).

Further, Honey points to a paradox in the Tanzanian tourist market: the form of tourism perhaps seen as the most "immoral" of all, sports-hunting tourism, may not only be the most beneficial for the local economy, but also the least destructive for the local environment. While Honey asserts hunting safaris may be "morally reprehensible", she recognizes that this type of tourism has proved more economically and ecologically beneficial for Tanzania than photo-tourism, bringing in more foreign exchange and in addition it has been proved to curb poaching (Honey 1999:244).

Honey further points to the paradox that camera-tourism involves more pollution, more garbage, more damage to roads and permanent structures, i.e. lodges, and more harassment of wild animals than hunting tourism (Ibid.). In light of Honeys arguments, and since volunteer tourists simultaneously act as photo-tourists, as discusses in chapter 2, the claim that volunteer-travel is a more favourable form of tourism because the concept is perceived to be "morally superior" can be questioned. Still, this view does not take the social impact of direct interaction between local residents and travellers involved in volunteer-travel programmes into the equation. For, as I have previously mentioned, local volunteer-programme participants almost with no exceptions expressed that hosting volunteers was an enjoyable experience, where they could get to know people from different areas of the world.

In this chapter I have attempted to elaborate some of the main points brought up in this thesis. In the following section I will present a brief conclusion to this thesis.

Conclusive remarks

In this thesis I have tried to render a critical analysis of how volunteering is actually conducted in the host community and how volunteering is perceived, promoted and talked about among volunteers, organisation employees, placement hosts, in

advertisement and in the media. By demonstrating different perspectives on the topic, I have attempted to nuance some recurrent trends in the representations of volunteer-travel, such as whether volunteer-travel can represents a "good" tourism-alternative or a "bad" development-project. To quote the volunteer tourism specialist Nancy McGehee, often, conversations about volunteer tourism: "…*would boil down to one basic (and some would argue decidedly un-academic) question: "Is volunteer tourism a good thing?" As expected, the answer was never simple*" (McGehee 2007:3). I will not conclude whether the volunteer-travel programmes discussed in this thesis are "good" or "bad", my mission has been to promote transparency, not pass judgements. Some recommendations for improving the volunteer-travel programmes could be to promote mechanisms which could assure a higher level of congruity between volunteer-travel advertisement and practices, further involve the host-placement representatives in programme decision-making, such as in setting standards for volunteer-recruitment and minimum duration of volunteer-placements, and increase the monitoring and preparation (training) of volunteers.

Appendix 1: Chapter 3, i-to-i in-country orientation hand-out, pages 16-17

Creating a Development Mindset

Development has become an important concept within the 21$^{st\ Century}$. For true development to work groups need to work together in partnership so that individuals and communities are able to create sustainable livelihoods.

Rather than being in separate spheres of influence, i-to-i volunteers (V) and partner projects (P) need to interlink. So through this process, individuals will hopefully become more effective in their planning and implementation.

- **Partnership in Progress**

I-to-I

V   P
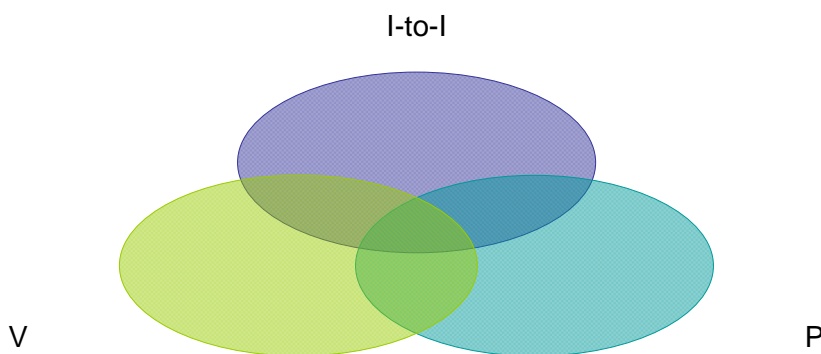
- **The Cycle of True Development**

By providing extra information, advice and skills, individuals and communities will become empowered in the future. Through being empowered they will participate within the decision making process which can change their lives. If this process continues they will be able to empower others to participate. That sounds straight forward but there are obstacles in place.

Participation

Development
Advice/Information
skills

Empowerment
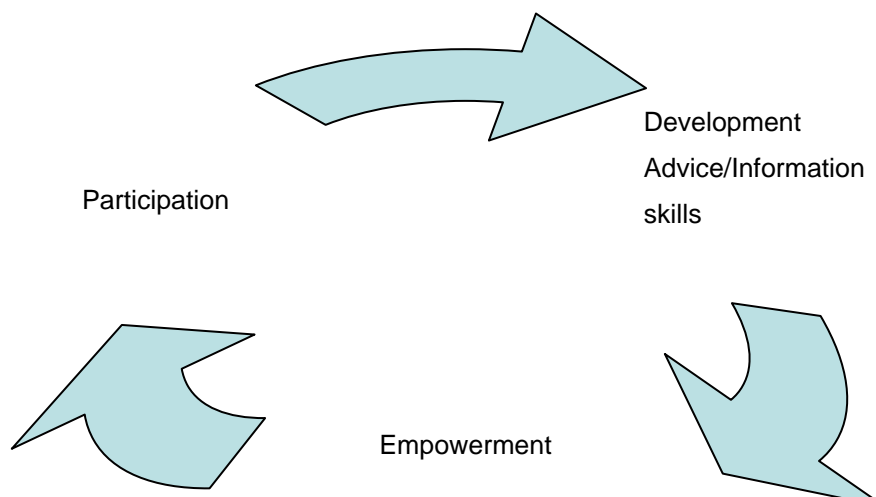
- **Hitting the target**

    1. **At Home**

The individual (You) is at the centre of the target and you are trying to influence the international arena for example the G8. You are challenging them to work in partnership and assist them in changing the mindset of Developing Nations, i.e. Tanzania to participate in development at the local level, i.e. Moshi. This is done through protesting, undertaking development courses, writing to politicians or working within NGO's (Non Government Organziations). It is a smaller target to hit and can be frustrating and time consuming. You are making an impact which can lead to some change but you need other individuals to challenge the people at the top.

    2. **Within Moshi**

You have now arrived in the local arena i.e. Moshi. Within this locality you can make more of an immediate impact with the project partner than being at the very centre. However there are two things to remember. Firstly, the bigger the target the greater the moral responsibilities in providing wise advice/information to partner projects. Secondly "a one size fits all policy" may not work so you will have to adapt to your ideas within a Tanzanian context. When you arrive back at the very centre you will be able to educate others through development education via your experiences of local development.

Individual

International

National

Local
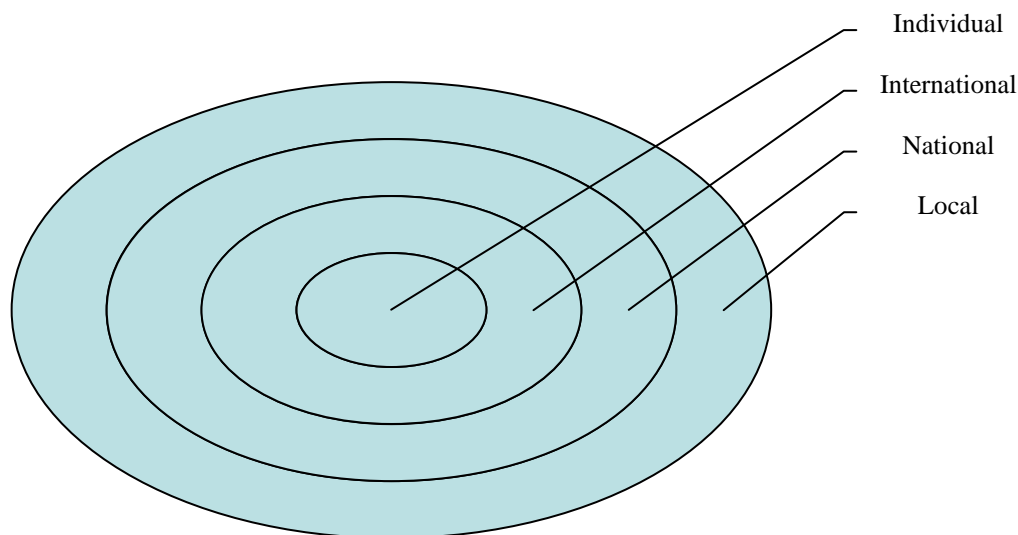
- Discussion

    1. What are these obstacles of effective development?

Appendix 2: Chapter 6: Tourist Marketing representations

Representation (text and picture): Attractions:	Frontier: Ecuador, Kenya, Namibia. Nature: Wildlife, parks/reserves, landscape	Volunteer Travel: (i-to-i East Africa projects) Local community: Living with/assisting hosts
Actors (status): Hosts	Mostly solitary males, in tribal dress, facial expression stoic or slightly smiling	Mostly women and children (vulnerable groups), often in crowds, smiling/laughing
Tourists	Adventurers, explorers, nature lovers – mixed gender groups	Idealists, resourceful, adventurers, confident. Smiling, working, playing mixed gender groups, mostly young
Actions (role): Hosts	No interaction: objects to gaze upon.	Interaction, receive assistance, be educated, become "empowered"
Tourists	Discover, observe	Provide training/assistance, experience, self-challenge
Atmosphere/setting:	Natural, pristine, strange, wild	Streets of the local community, schools, fun, educational.

Figure adapted from Fig. 1 in "*Context of third world marketing*" Echtner and Prasad (2007), the "frontier" field from Ecthner and Prasad, illustrating "mainstream" safari-tourism. The "volunteer travel" field is added to illustrate recurring patterns which can be traced in volunteer-travel marketing.

Volunteer-travel in pictures:

Pictures collage of the Kenya/Tanzania projects from the i-to-i 2007 promotional brochure.

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