

Working Papers in Language Diversity

Paper 10.

Tourism, Poverty, and Aid: Representations of the Third World Other in Small-Scale Development Project Websites

Kasper Juffermans
Tilburg University

Contact: kasper.juffermans@gmail.com



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Abstract

This paper offers a critical analysis of discourse at the intersections of several topical sites of globalisation: tourism, development aid, and the Internet. The field of investigation are web-sites of Dutch and Flemish small-scale volunteer projects in Africa's smallest country.

The Gambia is visited by more than 100,000 holidaymakers from mainly Western Europe and this counts as a major contribution to the socio-economic development, both for the country as a whole as for individuals employed in the tourist industry and their families. In addition to that, as a spin-off of tourism, hundreds of small-scale development projects have been initiated by 'post-tourists' in cooperation with local persons.

Using a combined corpus linguistic and critical, discourse analytical approach and making extensive reference to selected original text fragments, I problematise the language use in the project descriptions (use of depreciative diminutives, exaggerations of poverty, colonial ideologies of language, etc.) and argue that these innocent linguistic features are indexical of a patronising, but well-disposed attitude toward Gambians. I will explain how such ways of speaking are consciously or unconsciously used as a strategy of othering Gambians as an extremely poor, pre-modern, exotic other.

Without questioning the value of these projects and the benefits of it for persons involved and Gambian society at large, I believe it is necessary to make critical remarks on the discursive practices and style of writing about the Third World Other. Throughout, I will make self-critical reflective remarks on doing ethnography, as, I argue, ethnographers have much more in common with tourists and development workers than they might want to admit.

1. Introduction¹

Edward Bruner, in a critical review of an anthropological film on ethno-tourism in Papua New Guinea², makes the point that “colonialism, ethnography, and tourism have much in common, as they were born together as relatives”, even though ethnographers often regard tourism as an “illegitimate child, a disgraceful simplification and an impostor” because it challenges the authority and privileged position of ethnographers (Bruner 1989: 439). Anthropology’s problem with popular invaders of the field becomes even more clear in a recent discussion in *Anthropology Today* following the BBC2 and Discovery Channel series *Tribe / Going Tribal*, in which we could see Bruce Parry immerse himself (and his camera crew) into exotic and remote communities in places as diverse as Venezuela, Gabon, Ethiopia, Northern India, Mongolia and West Papua.

Now at the end of three seasons (2005-2007), the first edition of *Tribe* received a great deal of (unfair?) criticism from anthropologists. The discussion in *Anthropology Today* seems to be symptomatic of anthropologists’ ironic contempt for popular culture. Pat Caplan who opens the discussion, refutes one after the other the programme makers’ claims that it banishes tribal stereotypes, tells the truth about their changing lives, humanises the visited peoples and gives them a voice, and further weakens their claims that it gives a small impression of what it must be like to live in a different culture (Caplan 2005: 4-5). Felicia Hughes-Freeland, responding to Caplan for not being fierce enough in her criticism, calls the series representationally more primitive than the societies it purports to represent and proclaims that the series could become a textbook example of “how *not* to do anthropology” (Hughes-Freeland 2006: 23, italics added). André Singer is ambivalent in his response, both admitting to agree with much of Hughes-Freeland’s concerns and speaking in defence of Parry, who “is sincere in his desire to understand and attempt to identify with whatever society he finds himself visiting;” while he “makes no claims to any deep anthropological insights or analysis” (Singer 2006). Adam Fish and Sarah Evershed, joining the until then British debate as outsiders, rebut Caplan’s criticism of the programme makers’ claims and argue that *Tribe*, within the time and visual constraints of a 60-minute programme for national television, “maintains an accurate representation of time and space through its long takes, minimal editing effects, and subtle filmic ellipses”, and that it even “examine[s] globalization in depth in every episode” (Fish and Evershed 2006: 23). Fish and Evershed argue that *Tribe* can be appreciated as popular anthropological television and that it is not so much of an abhorrence to anthropology as Hughes-Freeland laments, but is actually an anthropology-worthy account of “an eventful rapport-building first month of fieldwork,” which fits well into the reflexive turn of anthropology (op cit: 22). Fish and Evershed conclude that the fierce reactions of anthropologists responding to anthropological television emanate from “academic elitism, and anthropologists’ paranoia about television” (op cit: 23), and, I would add, popular (semi-)anthropological endeavours in general.

In this paper, I investigate issues of Self and Other representation on websites of Dutch and Flemish small-scale aid projects in The Gambia. My attention was drawn to the existence of these projects a few years ago after a chance meeting with a friendly, retired gentleman on a chartered flight from Banjul to Amsterdam. I noticed that the man, whom I shall

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1. This paper was written in the generous environment of the School of English, University of Hong Kong, while enjoying the luxury of a postgraduate studentship (2006-2007). Parts of this paper have also been presented in Adam Jaworski’s class in Hong Kong in Spring 2007 and at the ICCLING conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa in January 2008 and the GlobE conference in Warsaw, Poland in September 2008. A paper focusing on the aspect of diminutives in this discourse has appeared in *Language Matters* (Juffermans 2008). Critique, comments and suggestions on any part of this paper are cordially invited.
 2. The film in question is *Cannibal Tours* (1987) by Australian filmmaker Dennis O’Rourke.

call Wim, was repeatedly looking at the book I tried to read, Katrin Pfeiffer's book on Mandinka stories (2001). I can't remember whether it was Wim or me who broke the silence to start the conversation that would last until our landing at Schiphol Airport, but I do remember that it somehow started with the mutual recognition of each other as not being ordinary tourists. I told him about my involvement in The Gambia as a student researcher, and Wim told me that he had already visited The Gambia some twenty times since the early 1980s and that he was on the board of a charity that aimed to provide a better future for Gambians through literacy education. Initially, they organised literacy training in English, but they soon realised, he said, that the only viable way to functional literacy skills was to teach Gambians how to read and write in their own language first. This touched upon my own research on literacy practices and the problems of English as a language of instruction in primary education on several levels. Although I was, and still am, largely in favour of their aid initiative, it struck me that Wim admitted to be unaware of any efforts of the Gambian government on the subject of adult literacy education. I was further a bit dismayed with Wim's emphasis on tax benefits and the recovery of 'costs', as well as on his overall pattern of spending in The Gambia. What Wim and I have in common, however, is, among other things, a long-term engagement with the country that started with a fortuitous tourist visit.

In this paper, I examine Wim's as well as 65 other small-scale aid organisations' websites (all found through <http://gambia-hulporganisaties.startpagina.nl/>, see list in *Addendum*), from a critical, discourse analytical perspective (Blommaert 2005; van Leeuwen 2005; Jaworski and Coupland 2006; Slembrouck 1998-2006; Verschueren *fc.*). To help me handle such a large collection of texts, I make use of the corpus linguistic software WordSmith Tools (Scott 1999) of which especially the concordancer, WordSmith Concord, is very useful as a heuristic tool. This kind of computer-aided discourse analysis allows me to look at the texts from simultaneously a macro-level (e.g., to retrieve large-scale lexical patterns and particularities), and a micro-level (smaller scale, contextualised, individual chunks of text) perspective.

In studies of language ideologies (e.g., Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998; Kroskrity 2000), it has often been emphasised that in social science there is no view from nowhere, and that *our* ideologies are as much ideological as *theirs* (e.g., Collins 1998). It is therefore not only honest but also necessary to admit that I am critical of Third World aid in general and that I question the efficiency and necessity of a lot of development co-operation. At the same time, however, I stand sympathetic to the sort of Dutch/Flemish-Gambian intercultural initiatives this paper describes in particular and the 'First World citizen's' personal engagement with the Third World in general.

I mention my attitude toward the discourse examined because discourse studies have a somewhat problematic relation to their research object. Much 'critical' discourse analysis has focussed on racism and could thus afford to take a highly critical, antagonistic stance towards the discourse it analysed (e.g., Potter and Wetherell 1988; Essed 1997; Goodwin and Goodwin 1997). The word critique in critical work on racism means something different from critique in studies of e.g. doctor-patient or business communication (e.g., Tannen and Wallat 1999; Drew 2006). Critique in the latter maintains a relation of mutual regard and can be welcomed or even initiated by the institution investigated to improve on existing communicative practices. Although unsolicited, the critique I formulate in this paper is, at least in intention, more of the latter sort. Rather than formulating harsh criticism and pointing the finger at well-intending initiators of the aid projects under scrutiny here, I would like to point at some general ideological problems regarding the portrayal of the Other on these charities' websites. The issue at stake here should not be seen in such binary simplicity of doing 'good' vs. 'bad'. Rather, what concerns me here is how Dutch and Flemish 'ex-tourists' engage with, describe, and help the Other in a country at the very end of the Human Development Index. Moreover, it needs to be stressed that I focus on the projects' self-promotional websites, rather than on

the project work itself. Ultimately, the critique formulated is also a self-critique, concerning how Westerners in general, including ethnographers, engage with, describe and help (?) the Third World Other.

The remaining part of this paper is organised in five sections. Section 2 discusses what I call 'histories of involvement', i.e. brief explanations on the websites on how and why the project initiators decided to set up a charitable organisation. Section 3 analyses the ideologically marked linguistic forms used on the websites to describe The Gambia, Gambians, and their project. Section 4 talks about (mis)representations of the ethnolinguistic and economic situation in The Gambia. Section 5 discusses the paternalist character of some of the aid projects and the general implications of aid in relation to self-reliance and independence. In a final section, I will return to the discussion of *Tribe* in *Anthropology Today* and reflect on the politics of anthropology its relation to other actors in the field.

Throughout the article, I will make ample references to the original texts on the websites. The extracts are rendered in their original Dutch version with an accompanying translation in English. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. The number between brackets after the extract number corresponds with the number of the project website as listed in Addendum.

2. From tourism to aid, or from a vacation to a foundation

Most project websites include a section that explains how they started. These accounts often mention that the originator(s) of the project went to The Gambia for their Summer holidays, that they were amazed by the natural and cultural beauty of the country, but at the same time shocked by the country's poverty and needs. This, it is reported, results in a strong feeling to have to do something for Gambians. In a self-reflective manner, I should note that this experience is very familiar to me as it was the tourist experience that first put me in touch with the country, before my engagement with The Gambia as an ethnographer.

The following accounts are typical histories of involvement.

Extract 1 (49. Stichting Happy Gunjur)

Tineke en Andries van der Meer maakten tijdens een vakantie in 1999 kennis met Gambia en haar bewoners. Ze waren verrast door de gastvrijheid en vriendelijk[heid], maar ook door de armoede in dit land en ze bes[lot]ten snel weer terug te keren om Gambia beter te leren kennen. Tijdens hun reizen leerden zij Happy kennen, een nu 36 jarig[e] man die toeristen rondleidt. Door Happy kwamen Tineke en Andries in contact met zijn familie en de inwoners van het plaatsje Gunjur. [...] Na een aantal bezoeken aan Gambia kregen Tineke en Andries het sterke gevoel iets te moeten doen voor dit land en daarom hebben zij de stichting Happy Gunjur in het leven geroepen.

Tineke and Andries van der Meer were introduced to The Gambia and its inhabitants during a vacation in 1999. They were surprised by the hospitality and friendliness, but also by the poverty in this country, and they decided to return soon to get to know The Gambia better. During their travels, they got to know Happy, a now 36-year-old man who guides tourists. Thanks to Happy, Tineke and Andries came in contact with his family and the residents of the little place called Gunjur. After a number of visits to The Gambia, Tineke and Andries got the strong feeling to have to do something for this country and that's why they called into existence the foundation of Happy Gunjur.

Extract 2 (19. Stichting JUNE)

Van een vakantie in The Gambia tot een stichting in The Gambia.

Een verslag van ons geweldig avontuur geschreven door Nel Bus. In oktober 1998 zijn we voor het eerst naar Gambia geweest. We hebben niet gekozen, maar een folder gepakt bij het postkantoor, en.....gewoon.....geboekt. Waarom?..... [...] Kortom : Dit landje heeft mijn hart gestolen en ik hoop dat ik daar nog heel lang en ongedwongen kan helpen waar dat nodig is. Waar een gewone vakantie folder al niet toe kan leiden dat weet je maar nooit !!!

From a vacation in The Gambia to a foundation in The Gambia. (my translation)

A report revealing our fantastic adventure written by Nel Bus. We travelled to Gambia for the first time in October 1998. Our choice was not Gambia; we took a folder at the post office, read it and booked. why ? [...] Summary : This land has stolen my heart. I pray to God to be able to continue giving help everywhere in Gambia that is needed. One may never guess where a simple vacation folder can take you ! (website's own translation)

Extract 3 (4. Stichting Wilko Gambia Foundation)

Puur door toeval zijn we in november 2001 een keer naar Gambia (West - Afrika) op vakantie geweest. Wat we hier aantreffen, overtrof onze stoutste verwachtingen voor zover we deze hadden. Een reuze aardige en innemende bevolking enerzijds maar anderzijds een zeer schrijnende armoede. We hebben een enorme cultuurschok meegemaakt. Eén ding was toen voor ons duidelijk: We gaan, waar we kunnen, deze mensen helpen!!!!!!

By pure chance, in November 2001, we went on holiday to The Gambia (West Africa) for a change. What we discovered here, surpassed our wildest expectations, as far as we had any. An immensely friendly and ingratiating population on the one hand but on the other hand a very grinding poverty. We experienced a tremendous culture shock. One thing was clear to us then: We're going, wherever we can, to help these people!!!!!!

Extract 4 (45. Stichting GET)

Bezoekers van Gambia, een klein landje aan de Westkust van Afrika, omringd door Senegal, maken direct kennis met vriendelijk glimlachende Gambianen. Onder die glimlach zit vaak bittere armoede. De oprichter van onze stichting, Josée Soppe, werd in 1995 tijdens haar vakantie in Gambia geconfronteerd met die armoede. Zij besloot van haar strandstoel af te komen en wat te gaan doen. Heel concreet door het ondersteunen van een aantal families, en later door het oprichten van de Stichting Gambian Education Trust.

Visitors to The Gambia, a small country on the West coast of Africa, surrounded by Senegal, are directly introduced to the friendly smiling Gambians. Beneath that smile often goes bitter poverty. In 1995 during her vacation in The Gambia, the originator of our foundation, Josée Soppe, was confronted with this poverty. She decided to get out of her deck chair and do something. Very tangibly through the support of a number of families, and later on through the establishment of the Foundation Gambian Education Trust.

Extract 5 (39. Stichting Kalipha)

Voor een Nederlander is het niet bijzonder een plek te zoeken waar je nog nooit geweest bent om je vakantie door te brengen. En dan ineens kom je terecht in een klein Derde Wereld-land in West-Afrika: Gambia. Een groter en schrijnender contrast bestaat nauwelijks. Aan de ene kant is daar dat schitterende land met prachtige witte stranden, zon en die ongelooflijke gastvrijheid. En aan de andere kant is er die enorme armoede in het land. Daar sta je dan als rijke toerist...

Wij wilden graag iets achterlaten, iets waarmee we écht zouden kunnen helpen. Via een vriendin die in Gambia werkt, kwamen we in contact met Kalipha Jobe, de hoofdonderwijzer van een basisschool. Een groot probleem is dat ouders van veel leerlingen het schoolgeld niet of nauwelijks kunnen betalen, en dat er weinig leermiddelen zijn. Voor we naar huis vertrokken konden we direct twee kinderen ondersteunen waarvan de ouders het schoolgeld niet konden opbrengen.

Terug in Nederland kregen we zoveel enthousiaste reacties op ons initiatief, [...]. [Daarom] is in 1998 de Stichting Kalipha opgericht.

For a Dutch person it is not unusual to find a place you've never been before to spend your holidays. And all of a sudden you find yourself in a small Third World country in West Africa: The Gambia. A larger and more distressing contrast is hardly imaginable. On the one hand there is the gorgeous country with its marvellous white beaches, sun and that incredible hospitality. On the other hand, there is the tremendous poverty in the country. And there you are as a rich tourist...

We wanted to leave something behind, something with which we could really help. Through a friend who works in The Gambia, we came in contact with Kalipha Jobe, the headmaster of a primary school. A major problem is that many parents can hardly afford the school fees for their children and that there are few educational tools available. Before we departed, we could immediately support two children whose parents couldn't afford the school fees.

Back in the Netherlands, we received so many enthusiast reactions to our initiative, [...]. [That's why] in 1998 Foundation Kalipha was established.

All the accounts cited above explicitly use the word *vakantie* 'vacation, holidays' to indicate the beginning of their engagement with The Gambia. In this respect, the websites for

Wilko Gambia Foundation and Stichting JUNE mention the high degree of fortuitousness in their initial visit to The Gambia: ‘by pure chance’ (extract 3), ‘we took a folder at the post office, read it and booked’ (extract 2). It appears that for most projects, everything started as just another holiday. As we read on Stichting Kalipha’s website, for a Dutch person it is not so unusual to find a place one has never visited before to spend one’s holidays (extract 5). For Dutch and Flemish tourists, The Gambia is either a first further-away, but not much more expensive, sunshine-guaranteed alternative to Greece, Turkey, or the Canary Islands, or one of the cheaper and nearer (jet lag free) far-away destinations alongside the Caribbean, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Compare extract 6 from Stichting Kinderhulp Gambia and extract 7 from Stichting Sharanie:

Extract 6 (14. Stichting Kinderhulp Gambia)

Een zon zekere vakantie zonder jetlag moest het voor ons worden. Na veel overwegingen werd het 10 dagen Gambia.

For us it had to be a sun guaranteed vacation without a jet lag. After careful consideration it became 10 days Gambia.

Extract 7 (38. Stichting Sharanie)

Het zou eigenlijk Egypte worden, ware het niet, dat we die leuke aanbieding voor Gambia zagen. Tjonge, naar Afrika; dat was wel heftig, maar toch geboekt.

It was actually going to be Egypt, were it not, that we saw that nice promotion for The Gambia. Boy, to Africa; that was intense, but booked it anyway.

For many tourists The Gambia remains a once-only experience, in the sense of *never-again*, or in the sense of a *I’ve-been-there,-ticked-it-off,-what’s-next* destination. Not for the initiators of these aid projects. What they – or we – all have in common, is a long term engagement with regular, i.e. annual or even more frequent, visits to The Gambia and some kind of active involvement with The Gambia back home, e.g. through fundraising activities, and the general management of their foundation/non profit organisation.

Judging by their histories of involvement, on their first visit, many of the project initiators were caught by a simultaneous ‘wow and shock experience’. *Wow* because of the natural and cultural beauty of the country: the sunshine, the yellow sandy beaches, the hospitality and friendliness of the people. And *shocked* by ‘the other side of this beautiful country: a great deal of misery’ (Stichting Baobab), the ‘very grinding poverty’ (extract 3), ‘lack of paid work’ (Stichting The Gambia Children First), or ‘the economic circumstances in which the population has to live’ (The Gambia Support Foundation).

Another important ingredient in the process from tourism to aid is the encounter with an ordinary, or extraordinary, local person (usually a man) who brings his guests, the future project originators, to the real Gambia, away (but not too far away) from the ‘tourist bubble’ (Smith 1977; Jacobson 2003; Van Beek 2007). It is during these excursions that the ‘wow’ and the ‘shock’ are experienced. These personal connections were important enough to two of the foundations to decide to (partly) name the foundation after this exceptional individual. Thus, the foundation Happy Gunjur, was named after Happy, (the nickname of) the tourist guide Tineke and Andries van der Meer met when they first visited The Gambia in 1999 (see extract 1), and Stichting Kalipha was named after Kalipha Jobe, headmaster of the primary school the foundation supports (cf. extract 5). These personal connections provide the basis for institutional connections, in the form of a link with a school, hospital, or community project. Once the personal-cum-institutional link is established, this local contact person becomes the most obvious candidate to function as a local ‘representative’ for the aid organisation, and may even have a chance to travel to the Netherlands or Belgium to raise funds. Note that these personal contacts are very often firmly grounded in tourism, but that the network extends from there, more or less away from the tourist bubble. This, again, is very similar to my own

experience of coming to The Gambia.

The result of all this is a moral engagement with The Gambia and Gambians. Confronted with the “bitter poverty”, the originator of Stichting GET decided to get out of her *strandstoel* ‘deck chair’ and do something (extract 4). In the words of Willy and Kommer van Trigt from the Wilko Gambia Foundation, with seven (!) exclamation marks, “We’re going, wherever we can, to help these people!!!!!!” (extract 3). On the website of the Stichting Care Foundation The Gambia, we read that Garry and Anneke have pledged their heart to this country. Nel Bus of Stichting JUNE writes that “this land has stolen my heart” (extract 2). On the website of Stichting UNAIT too, we read that many visitors have lost their heart to The Gambia. Or in the words of Nel van Cauwenberghe from Stichting Sharanie (extract 8):

Extract 8 (38. Stichting Sharanie)

Op de dag van vertrek, nadat we begeleid werden op het vliegveld, alsof we de koningin waren, zei ik tegen mijn 3 zussen: 'Een gedeelte van mij blijft in dit land, en een gedeelte van Gambia neem ik mee terug !!'

On the day of our departure, after having been accompanied to the airport, as if we were the queen, I said to my three sisters: ‘A part of me stays in this country, and I will take home a part of The Gambia !!’

The solidarity The Gambia can invoke in tourists is enormous. Nel and her three sisters stayed in The Gambia for only one week, and yet Nel reports that this short holiday has changed her life forever. It is this strong feeling to have to do something, born out of a simultaneous wow and shock experience during a first, unsuspecting holiday, that leads to the eventual set up of an aid foundation.

Not all projects follow this pattern of motivation. Arthur and Rob Verhoef’s ARRO Tropical is partly commercial, partly charity, and they admit that their final motivation is not only a shock experience and moral obligation, but also to give their lives a new direction. In The Gambia, they could accomplish their dream and start a little company, change the course of their lives, and at the same time help The Gambia in the form of creating employment and doing classic development aid. The two brothers provide the following account of their involvement in The Gambia:

Extract 9 (2. ARRO Tropical)

Waarom doen we dit? In 1999 besloten we om zo snel mogelijk een bedrijfje voor ons zelf te beginnen. Het bleek al snel dat we met onze mogelijkheden in Nederland niet veel konden doen of we moesten ons flink in de schulden steken. We hebben toen afgesproken dat we verder gingen kijken in de wereld. Na ons eerste verblijf, vakantie, in Gambia waren we verkocht. Mogelijkheden genoeg en een heerlijk warm land met de vriendelijkste bevolking die je je maar voor kunt stellen. Daarnaast ook het gebrek aan financiële middelen en armoede. Een prachtige cultuur en een nog fraaiere natuur. Dus het was niet zo moeilijk. Hier konden we onze droom verwezenlijken en tevens hulp bieden in de vorm van werk en hulp [...] We doen het dus eigenlijk om ons leven een andere wending te geven.

Why are we doing this? In 1999, we decided to start a little company for ourselves as soon as possible. It soon became clear that we couldn’t do much with our possibilities in the Netherlands unless we plunged into debt. We then agreed to look further in the world. After our first stay, a holiday, in The Gambia, we were completely sold. Possibilities enough and a delightful warm country with the friendliest population you can imagine. Besides also the lack of financial resources and poverty. A splendid culture and an even more charming nature. So it wasn’t that hard. Here we could accomplish our dream and at the same time offer aid in the form of work and aid. [...] So we’re actually doing it to change the course of our lives.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to make money and offering aid at the same time. In fact, in most if not all cases, there is some kind of selfish element in the altruism of aid workers. Although I came across statements that presented their engagement as entirely voluntary (Stichting Kinderen in Gambia), I also found accounts that illuminated what being

active as an aid worker in The Gambia gave them back in return: a ‘good feeling’ (Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink), ‘warmth’, a ‘radiant smile’, a ‘dance or song of joy’, and sometimes a ‘prayer’ (extract 10).

Extract 10 (14. Stichting Kinderhulp Gambia)

Het is uitgegroeid tot iets waarop wij erg trots zijn. Wij hopen dan ook nog lang hier mee door te mogen gaan. Veel mensen zeggen jullie stoppen er zoveel uren in maar als je ooit zelf ervaren hebt wat je ervoor terug krijgt (de warmte, een brede glimlach, een dans/lied van blijdschap of soms een gebed) nou dan maken die uren echt helemaal niets meer uit.

It has developed into something we are proud of. We therefore hope to be able to continue this for a long time. A lot of people say you put so much effort (litt.: many hours) in it, but if you’ve ever experienced what you’ll get in return (the warmth, a radiant smile, a dance/song of happiness or sometimes a prayer), well, then all those hours really don’t matter at all.

3. Small scales, big deeds

So far, I have examined the narratives of involvement on the project websites and argued that most projects were born out of a simultaneous wow and shock experience during an initial unsuspecting holiday, which resulted in a moral appeal to do something for The Gambia, which on its turn resulted in the establishment of a charity. Apart from the element of coincidence in the histories of involvement, I have not yet elaborated on why so many projects have arisen specifically in The Gambia.

According to the aid workers, what particularly appeals to them, as we read e.g. on the website of Stichting Nice to be Nice, is the warm-heartedness, friendliness, joviality, and hospitality of the Gambian people. In addition, also the small size of the country is often given as an important asset. As indicated on the Stichting Kinderen in Gambia website (extract 11), the size of the Gambia makes it more manageable (*overzichtelijk*, litt. ‘overviewable’) to carry out and observe the outcomes of a project. The fact that it is perceivably so easy to make an appointment with a secretary of state as it is reported on Stichting JUNE’s website only adds to that. In general, the smallness of The Gambia makes it particularly suitable for small-scale aid projects.

Extract 11 (64. Stichting Kinderen in Gambia)

U zult zich misschien afvragen waarom Gambia ? Misschien was het toeval of heeft het zo moeten zijn, maar als je het land bezoekt wordt je vrijwel meteen gegrepen door de vriendelijkheid en vrolijkheid van de mensen. Gambia wordt ook wel de smiling coast genoemd en doet zijn naam meer dan eer aan. Het is een van de kleinste landen in Afrika en misschien is het daarom wel leuk om hier onze projecten op los te laten, het maakt het allemaal wel overzichtelijker.

You may be wondering why The Gambia ? Maybe it was coincidence, or it had to be this way, but if you visit the country, you will almost immediately be affected by the friendliness and cheerfulness of the people. The Gambia is also called the smiling coast and certainly lives up to that name. It is one of the smallest countries in Africa and perhaps therefore nice to try our projects here, it does make it all more manageable (litt. ‘overviewable’).

None of the project originators mentions to have received any formal training in development assistance prior to their Gambian holidays. For most of them, it is their Gambia journey that turned them from tourists into development workers. The Gambia is not too difficult as a tourist destination in political (i.e., it is safe and peaceful), socioeconomic (i.e., there is no famine or extreme poverty), and linguistic (i.e., they speak English) terms, and is moreover a not too far away and a very price-competitive destination for the Dutch and Flemish parties concerned (i.e. only a six-hour charter flight from Amsterdam or a direct scheduled flight from Brussels with a stop in Dakar). For these self-made new players to the aid industry, this is the ideal playground to experiment with their charitable ideas and ambitious plans.

We are dealing with small-scale projects in a very small place in Africa (cf. Wright 2004). Not only The Gambia itself is small, but also almost everything that can be found in The Gambia is small in the perception of the Dutch and Flemish aid workers. The idea of The Gambia as a small place in which there are only small things articulates itself in the abundant use of diminutives on the project websites. Dutch is one of those languages that can morphologically express the smallness of things. In English, to specify that a tree is small, it is necessary to use a premodifier, such as the adjective *small*, i.e. *small tree*. In Dutch, there are three ways to do this: first of all, like in English, with the premodifier *klein* ‘small’, i.e. *kleine boom* ‘small tree’, but also with the diminutive suffix –je (sometimes –tje, –etje, –pje, –kje), i.e. *boompje* ‘small tree’, and finally by combining both procedures, i.e. *klein boompje* ‘small, small tree’.

The diminutive-formation is very productive in both spoken and written Dutch, and is a very natural phenomenon to approach the world from a Dutch language perspective. Diminutives are most common for words that stand for things that often occur as small things, e.g., *drankje* ‘drink+DIM’, *partijtje* ‘party+DIM’, *zoentje* ‘kiss+DIM’, *vriendje* ‘friend+DIM’, *klusje* ‘job+DIM’. Diminutives are semantically odd, but grammatically perfectly applicable for words that stand for things that are usually not small. The websites featured many of these ‘marked’ diminutives, such as,

(1) in the domain of education: *schooltje* ‘school+DIM’, *schoolgebouwtje* ‘school building+DIM’, *dorpsschooltje* ‘village school+DIM’, *basischooltje* ‘primary school+DIM’, *kleuterschooltje* ‘nursery school+DIM’, *lokaaltje* ‘classroom+DIM’, *klasje* ‘class(room)+DIM’, *toiletgebouwtje* ‘toilet building+DIM’, *speeluintje* ‘playground+DIM’, *schoolbankje* ‘school desk+DIM’, *schoolkindertjes* ‘school kids+DIM’;

(2) in the domain of health care: *ziekenhuisje* ‘hospital+DIM’, *hospitaaltje* ‘hospital+DIM’, *kliniekje* ‘clinic+DIM’;

(3) in the domain of professions: *ateliertje* ‘workshop+DIM’, *fabriekje* ‘factory+DIM’, *kantoortje* ‘office+DIM’, *winkeltje* ‘shop+DIM’, *bedrijfje* ‘company+DIM’, *marktje* ‘market+DIM’, *busje* ‘bus+DIM’; and

(4) in the domain of living: *woonhuisje* ‘private house+DIM’, *schuurtje* ‘shed/barn+DIM’, *dorpje* ‘village+DIM’, *vissersdorpje* ‘fishing village+DIM’, *achtertuintje* ‘backyard+DIM’, *kindje* ‘child+DIM’, *kindertjes* ‘children+DIM’.

The frequent use of diminutives betrays not only a cognitive perception, i.e. that things are perceived as ‘small’ in The Gambia, but also an ideological stance towards Gambian things more generally. That things in The Gambia are considered and described as small, is not a neutral description of things in the world but reveals an attitude towards those things. It could be argued that the frame of reference against which The Gambia is perceived is that of a suburbanised post-industrial Netherlands and Belgium where indeed villages, hospitals, and sometimes schools too, are fairly large. Against these points of reference, villages, hospitals, and schools in The Gambia are indeed small. However, the rural primary school where I did research in 2004-2005 (cf. Juffermans 2005) certainly was not any smaller than the primary school I attended in the Netherlands in the late 80s, early 90s. Yet I cannot recall my old school often being called *schooltje* instead of just *school*.

There is a tendency to scale down normally non-diminutive nouns such as schools (*schooltje* 219x), houses (*huisje* 11x), hospitals (*ziekenhuisje* 14x, *hospitaaltje* 5x, *kliniekje* 4x) factories (*fabriekje* 2x), markets (*marktje* 5x), and companies (*bedrijfje* 27x) (frequencies measured with WordSmith Tools and apply to the aggregate corpus of 375,000 words). On the FAQ section of Stichting Evenaar’s website (extract 12), the small-scale of the project is established through the use of diminutives in both the questions and answers: *ziekenhuisje*, *bedrijfjes*, *huisjes*, *autoverhuurbedrijfje*. Note that in the final sentence, when reference is made to a company in the Netherlands, no diminutive is used. The natural (linguistic) form for

a company in The Gambia is *bedrijfje*, while in speaking about The Netherlands it is *bedrijf*, without diminutive suffix.

Extract 12 (33. Stichting Evenaar)

* *Hoe komt het ziekenhuisje in Gambia aan z'n geld? [...]*

* *Wat voor soort bedrijfjes zijn dat dan? [...]* We investeren dus bijvoorbeeld in vissersboten, landbouw, een bakkerij, het maken van houtsnijwerken, maar ook in het bouwen van een restaurant en huisjes op het strand die door toeristen kunnen worden gehuurd. Ook hebben we een autoverhuurbedrijfje.

* *En dat levert genoeg geld op? Ja en nee. We hebben afgesproken dat het ziekenhuisje nooit meer mag uitgeven dan dat er verdient wordt. Wordt er weinig verdiend, dan kunnen sommige dingen niet gedaan worden. Je kunt natuurlijk altijd wel meer geld gebruiken. Maar dan moet je er dus voor zorgen dat er meer verdiend wordt. Geld verdienen is niet altijd even makkelijk in Gambia. En als je een nieuw bedrijfje opzet duurt het natuurlijk altijd even voordat het goed loopt en winst maakt. Tot die tijd kun je dus ook nog niet veel uitgeven. Dat is wel eens moeilijk om uit te leggen aan de mensen die geld gegeven hebben om zo een bedrijfje op te zetten. Maar als je dan uitlegt waarom wij zo werken begrijpt iedereen dat wel. In Nederland maakt een bedrijf ook vrijwel nooit in het eerste jaar al winst.*

How does the little hospital (*ziekenhuisje*) get its money? [...]

What kind of little companies (*bedrijfjes*) are you dealing with? [...] We invest for instance in fishing boats, agriculture, a bakery, the making of wood carvings, but also in the building of a restaurant and little houses (*huisjes*) on the beach that can be rented by tourists. We have a little car rental company (*autoverhuurbedrijfje*) as well.

And does that yield enough profits? Yes and no. We agreed that the little hospital (*ziekenhuisje*) can never spend more than is being earned. Are the earnings low, then some thing can't be realised. You can of course always use more money. But then you have to make sure that more is being earned. Earning money isn't always easy in The Gambia. And if you set up a new little company (*bedrijfje*) it of course takes a while before it runs well and makes profit. Until that time you can't therefore spent a lot. It is difficult sometimes to explain this to the people who have given money to set up such a little company (*bedrijfje*). But if you explain why we work like this everybody understands it. In the Netherlands too a company (*bedrijf*) hardly ever makes profit in the first year already.

In the project description of Stichting Picca (extract 13), *schooltje* and *gebouwtje* are used in relation to the project's school where it is supposed to evoke a sense of sympathy. *Ganse school* 'entire school' and *school*, in grammatically non-diminutive form, are used when the landlord and the government are blamed for not acting in the best interest of schools in The Gambia.

Extract 13 (51. Stichting Picca)

Na ons tweede bezoek aan Gambia en het schooltje is er nogal wat veranderd. We kregen daar echter eerst heel slecht nieuws te verwerken: het schooltje had namelijk helemaal geen gebouwtje meer! De eigenaar had de ganse school op straat gezet, omdat er achterstallige rekeningen waren, maar vooral omdat hij uiteraard meer geld kan krijgen als hij de klassen aan verschillende families kan verhuren.... Ja, blijkbaar kan dat zomaar in Gambia en doet de overheid ook niets om de scholen in deze te beschermen.

After our second visit to The Gambia and the little school (*schooltje*), a lot has changed. We had to endure very bad news first: the little school (*schooltje*) did not have a little building (*gebouwtje*) any more. The owner turned the entire school out into the street, because of overdue accounts, but especially because he could of course get more money if he could rent the classrooms to different families.... Yes, apparently that's possible in The Gambia just like that and the government does nothing to protect the schools in this matter.

Diminutives in the corpus serve a double function: (1) they portray Gambian things and structures as small and sympathetic against which the aid initiatives can stand out as something grand and important; and (2) they put the achievements of the project itself into perspective. This seemingly contradictory stance in the discourse can also be observed in the Dutch expressions *zijn steentje bijdragen* and *het is slechts een druppel op een gloeiende plaat*. The first saying, *zijn steentje bijdragen* (extracts 14-16), is roughly equivalent to the English expression 'to contribute one's mite' but uses a building metaphor and literally trans-

lates as ‘to contribute one’s small stone’. *Steentje* is the diminutive form of *steen* ‘stone, brick’. On ARRO Tropical’s website, it is asserted that offering aid is often about simple things such as working tools or assisting with the payment of the electricity bill, and that that is the small-scale manner they try to contribute their *steentje*.

On the website of Stichting Geef Gambia Toekomst then (extract 14), the problem of accessibility to health care is treated. Knowing that the problems of health care in The Gambia are only as trivial as the cost of medicines and transport to health centres, makes Pieter and Henny Goedhart want to ‘contribute their mite’ to health services in The Gambia. Notwithstanding the modesty in this expression, the name of their organisation, *Geef Gambia Toekomst* ‘Give Gambia Future’ is ambitious to say the least. Also in expressions on the websites of Haskerdijken-Bakalarr (extract 15) and Bijiloproject (extract 16), grand plans and high goals are coupled with modest expressions and Dutch sobriety: they write that they hope to contribute their *steentje* to respectively the general development of local children and to making life more pleasant in faraway Africa.

Extract 14 (48. Stichting Geef Gambia Toekomst)

De mensen kunnen naar een healthcenter gaan of naar het gouvernement ziekenhuis in Banjul. Een consult na uren wachten kost slechts vijftien eurocent. Maar de medicijnen en de reis er naartoe is vaak al het probleem, dát kunnen zij niet betalen. Daarom lopen zij te lang door met hun kwaal en uiteindelijk wordt dit voor enkelen fataal. Doodsoorzaak 1 Malaria 2* Tuberculose 3* AIDS Dat is de reden dat wij, als het in onze mogelijkheid ligt, ook ons steentje bij dragen aan de gezondheidszorg in The Gambia.*

The people can go to a health centre or to the government hospital in Banjul. A consult after hours of waiting time costs only fifteen euro cents. But the medicines and the journey there is often already a problem, they can’t pay it. That’s why they keep going with their ailment and eventually this becomes fatal some of them. Cause of death 1* Malaria 2* Tuberculosis 3* AIDS. That’s the reason that we, if it’s within our possibility, to contribute our mite as well to health care in The Gambia.

Extract 15 (42. Haskerdijken-Bakalarr)

Uiteindelijk hopen wij op deze manier in Bakalarr niet enkel de taxichauffeur die onze auto zal kopen blij te maken, maar ook een steentje bij te dragen aan de ontwikkeling van de kinderen aldaar.

Eventually we hope in this manner in Bakalarr not only to make the taxi driver happy who will buy our car, but also to contribute our mite to the development of the children over there.

Extract 16 (5. Bijiloproject)

Zo hopen wij toch een steentje bij te dragen om het leven in dit kleine dorpje in het verre Afrika wat aangener te maken.

Like this we hope to contribute our mite to make life in this small village in faraway Africa somewhat more pleasant.

The second expression often used on the websites to relativise the project’s own realisations is that the assistance offered by the foundation is only a *druppel op een gloeiende plaat* (extracts 17-20). According to the *Van Dale Groot Woordenboek Nederlands Engels*, this saying translates into English as ‘(just) a drop in the ocean’. The original is metaphorically much stronger than its English equivalent, for in its literal meaning, the drop does not fall in the ocean but on a ‘glowing plate’. The conceptual metaphor employed here, is that The Gambia is a glowing plate, and that Gambians are in the most deplorable situation of having to live on that glowing plate and therefore desperately need relief. Feeding into this metaphor is the hot – and, during the tourist high season, also dry – climate of The Gambia. Interestingly, Fred and Ivonne Hulsebos from Kinderhulp Gambia deny that their work is only a drop on glowing plate (extract 18). A message left behind on the guestbook of Gerard Dunnink’s Gambia Project (extract 19) imaginatively extends the metaphorical idea of the drop on the glowing plate, arguing that many drops can become a whole pool of water and thus cool the plate down (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 53).

Once the charity has been established and the first project has been carried out, the ini-

tiators soon discover their own limitations and come to realise that it takes more than a small foundation to change the world. Notwithstanding this ineluctable prudence, the originators still find enough personal and interpersonal satisfaction to go on with their work. The *maar toch...* ‘but still’ in extract 17 marks this discursive ambivalence and refers to either the perceived results of the individual projects the foundation has already carried out or to the good feeling lending aid provides the aid workers (extract 20).

Extract 17 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)
Het blijft een druppel op de gloeiende plaat maar toch.....
It remains a drop on a glowing plate, but still.....

Extract 18 (14. Stichting Kinderhulp Gambia)
... en geloof ons het is echt geen druppel op een gloeiende plaat.
and believe us, it's really not just a drop on a glowing plate.

Extract 19 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink, Guestbook, original punctuation and capitalisation)
Hoi,hier ook een reactie van mij. Het is geweldig werk wat je daar doet,wat voor ons gewoon is,is daar en druppel op een gloeiende plaat.ga zo door,super. Maar alle druppels bijelkaar [sic] kunnen uitgroeien tot een grote plas. Plaate
Hi,here a reaction from me too. It's great work you do there,what is ordinary for us,is a drop on a glowing plate there.go on like this,super. But all drops taken together can grow out to a giant pool.
Plaate

Extract 20 (35. Gammol vzw)
Natuurlijk beseffen wij dat wij deze wereld niet kunnen veranderen, natuurlijk weten wij dat hetgeen wij (met uw hulp) ginder doen slechts de spreekwoordelijke druppel op de hete plaat is, maar eveneens hebben wij het ongelofelijk goed en dankbaar gevoel om deze druppel te mogen zijn.
Of course we realise that we can't change this world, of course we know that what we do (with your help) there is only the proverbial drop on the hot plate, but at the same time we enjoy the incredibly good and rewarding feeling to be this drop.

The question whether it is really only a *steentje* or an entire wall the aid projects contribute, or if it is only a drop or a big chilling splash on a glowing plate, is further dealt with in other pronouncements across the websites. In extract 21, taken from Samma Deema, different scalar units apply to The Gambia and the Netherlands. What is something little for a Dutch person means an awful lot to someone from The Gambia.

Extract 21 (16. Stichting Samma Deema)
Wat voor ons in Nederland een schijntje is, betekent in Gambia gigantisch veel. [...] Weinig betekent al zoveel!
What is a mere pittance for us in the Netherlands, means an awful lot in The Gambia. [...] Little already means so much!

To recapitulate, on the one hand there is the sense of the projects as being only a very small scaled, almost futile, contribution to a complex problematic social reality that is largely beyond immediate control of the aid workers and not immediately susceptible to any structural change. On the other hand there is the sense that the projects are sorely needed and that without the respective aid projects (and your help), Gambians would be far worse off, and unable to manage for themselves. This second element of the aid discourse portrays Gambians as helpless victims of world poverty. Both discourses are not internally contradicting, but are part of the same discourse that simultaneously evaluates Gambians as in need of help, and the aid workers as doing a tremendous but very harsh job.

4. (Mis)representations

4.1. Tribal imaginaries

The idea that Africa consists of different ‘tribes’ is one of those ideas that has by now become fairly well rejected among the present generation of Africanists. Whereas Archie Mafeje opened his classic essay on *The Ideology of Tribalism* in 1971 saying that “few authors have been able to write on Africa without making constant reference to ‘tribalism’” (Mafeje 1971: 253), today, more than three decades later, few authors writing on Africa still do refer to tribes or tribalism as valid concepts to describe African society. The concept of tribe “oversimplifies, mystifies, and obscures the real nature of economic and power relations between Africans themselves, and between Africa and the capitalist world”, “draws an invidious and highly suspect distinction between Africans and other peoples of the world”, and is further “an anachronistic misnomer which impedes cross-cultural analysis” (Mafeje 1971: 261). If tribe ever was an adequate concept to describe traditional or pre-colonial African societies (op cit: 258), on the premise that these traditional African ‘tribes’ were static, homogeneous, and the largest sociocultural and political units of classification, then it most certainly is not applicable to most of contemporary Africa.

The concept of tribe is socio-culturally highly inappropriate and even offensive for people in a country like The Gambia, where most villages and urban neighbourhoods are tremendously multilingual and multiethnic on both individual and community level, and where there is no ethnic central authority besides or beyond the national government and its regional representatives. In contemporary Gambia, ethnicity is nothing more than one category of identity along with nationality, religion, gender, age, and class.

Mafeje is right to assert that the only reality tribalism has in a post-colonised and urbanised Africa, is as “an ideology in the original Marxist sense”, i.e. as “a mark of false consciousness on the part of the supposed tribesmen, who subscribe to an ideology that is inconsistent with their material base and therefore unwittingly respond to the call for their own exploitation” (op cit: 259). The idea of the non-Western world being organised in bio-historically unitary and culturally static tribes has by now become fairly well abandoned among social scientists and has been replaced by socio-culturally more sensitive and sensible concepts such as ethnic groups, socio-cultural groups, ethno-linguistic groups, speech communities, and communities of practice.

In descriptions on the websites of The Gambia and its language and/or culture, however, there is a significant preference for the scientifically obsolete concept of tribe over ethnicity or ethnic group. A concordance check shows that on the aggregate 66 websites, overall 70 instances of *stam** ‘trib*’ were found (see extracts 22-29), while *etn** ‘ethn*’ occurs only four times.

On the website of the Stichting Happy Gunjur (extract 22), we read that the foundation has been set up by locals and that it stands in close contact with the *dorpsoudsten* ‘village elders’ and the local *stamleiders* ‘tribe leaders’. If one thing is completely untrue about ethnicity in The Gambia, then it is that these so-called tribes are subject to a sort of central authority.

Extract 22 (49. Stichting Happy Gunjur)

Deze stichting, opgezet door lokale bewoners, staat in nauw contact met de dorpsoudsten en de plaatselijke stamleiders.

This foundation, set up by the locals, is in close contact with the village elders and the local tribe leaders.

What has arguably happened here, is that a colonial idea about Africa, i.e. that African

societies are organised in tribes, has been applied to describe the social reality of a society that is at first sight easily categorisable alongside those societies known from old books or stories, and new television series such as *Tribe*, or on Dutch/Flemish television *Groeten uit de rimboe/Toast Kannibaal* (see Eindhoven et al 2007). Although these books and series have their own representational problems, a major difference between these tv series and the accounts on the project websites, is that the former are, at least in intention, about isolated, pre-modern, largely tribal societies, whereas the latter deal with communities in a connected, modern, post-tribal, however poor and exotic (to Westerners that is), place as The Gambia.

It is not only the mere use of the term ‘tribe’ instead of the social scientifically more up-to-date ‘ethnic group’³, that makes the qualifications of the Gambian ethnolinguistic situation highly ideological. On the website of Support Education in The Gambia (extract 23), The Gambia is described as a place where tens of tribes peacefully live together notwithstanding the fact that all of these tribes have their own different language, habits and customs. The implied natural condition in this climate of diversity is one of war and conflict. From a Dutch perspective it appears peculiar that there are so few ethnicity-related problems in The Gambia and that diverse peoples can get along so well despite their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. Similar statements regarding the peaceful nature of The Gambia against the backdrop of diversity were found on the websites of Stichting UNAIT (extract 24), Stichting Baobab Nursery School and Stichting Kambengo (extracts 29 and 30 further down).

Extract 23 (65. Support Education in The Gambia)

Bevolking: [...] Tientallen stammen wonen vredig naast elkaar, dit ondanks de verschillende gewoonten, gebruiken en het feit dat elke stam haar eigen taal heeft. De Mandinkastam vertegenwoordigt het overgrote (40%) deel van de bevolking. Gambianen zijn uiterst vriendelijk en gastvrij. De sfeer in het land is prettig en ongehaast, de criminaliteit bijzonder laag. Helaas kan maar 37% van de mannen en 22% van de vrouwen lezen en schrijven.

Population: [...] Tens of tribes peacefully live aside each other, this in spite of the different habits, customs, and the fact that every tribe has its own language. The Mandinka tribe represents the major (40%) part of the population. Gambians are extremely friendly and hospitable. The atmosphere in the country is pleasant and unhasty, crime is exceptionally low. Unfortunately, only 37% of men and 22% of women is able to read and write.

Extract 24 (22. Stichting UNAIT)

Ruim de helft van de bevolking spreekt naast zijn stamtaal dan ook Engels. Net zoals de verschillende stammen in Gambia vreedzaam naast elkaar wonen, wonen ook moslims en christenen vreedzaam naast elkaar.

Well over half of the population speaks besides his tribal language also English. Just like the different tribes live peacefully next to each other, also Muslims and Christians live peacefully next to each other.

This preoccupation with peaceful multiculturalism must be understood against the background of two flows of globalisation (Appadurai 1996). First, against the news coverage of Africa in the Netherlands and Belgium that has a general focus on longstanding conflicts and crises of democracy: post-Mobutu DR Congo, Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, the diamond conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia, Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, the war in Sudan, et cetera. In this reporting, multiculturalism is often pointed at as a final explanation for the unrest. Second, this should also be understood against the presence of various categories of migrants in the Netherlands and Belgium, including third generation migrants (sic!) from mainly Turkey and Morocco and refugees from among the above African countries and elsewhere. In both the

3. Here it should be noted that colloquial Dutch (including Flemish) appears to be more conservative or inert in adopting socially and politically corrected words in the ethno-cultural domain for terms such as *stam* ‘tribe’, *primitief* ‘primitive’, *ras* ‘race’, and *neger* ‘negro’ – the latter in Flanders sometimes even in its diminutive form, *negerkes* ‘little negroes’.

Netherlands and in Belgium, the multicultural society is normally presented as a problem, or as a cause for many of the problems Dutch and Flemish society are confronted with. In the Dutch/Flemish imagination, war and conflict are inevitable when too diverse peoples (are forced to) live together. That this is not the case in The Gambia, is believed to be extraordinary and urges to tell a story of successful diversity and peace in spite of multiculturalism.

4.2. Tribal languages and dialects

The tribal imagination of The Gambia finds its match in hierarchical conceptions of language as revealed in many of the project websites. On the website of the Stichting Laat Gambia Leren (extract 25), a terminological distinction is drawn between languages and dialects: English qualifies as a language (i.e., the official language), whereas what local people speak are only dialects. The same distinction is drawn on the Riky Overmars Foundation's website (extract 26), where *taalniveau* 'level of language proficiency' is contrasted with *inheems dialect* 'indigenous dialect'. The former implies the level of English, not of language(s) in general. It is ironic that the English language proficiency of Gambian teachers is criticised in terms as blunt as *slecht* 'bad' by people who have not even bothered to prepare a parallel English version of their website. Although there are obvious problems with English as a medium of instruction in Gambian schools (cf. Juffermans 2005), it is normally not the teacher's level of English that poses the major problem in this matter. Further deplorable in this quote is that there is an undertone of blame in the finding that 'only the indigenous dialect' is spoken at home. A similar attitude toward local languages was found for instance on vzw GamBel's website (see extract 27).

Extract 25 (59. Stichting Laat Gambia Leren)

Taal: De officiële taal is Engels, de verschillende stammen hebben allemaal een eigen dialect.

Language: The official language is English, the different tribes all have their own dialect.

Extract 26 (47. Riky Overmars Foundation)

Hoewel er op school wel Engelse les gegeven wordt, is het taalniveau van de leerkrachten vaak slecht en daarnaast wordt in de compound alleen maar het inheemse dialect gesproken.

Although English lessons are taught at school, the level of language proficiency of the teachers is often bad and in addition to that, in the compound only the indigenous dialect is spoken.

Extract 27 (43. vzw GamBel)

Onderwijs: op de lagere scholen wordt in het Engels les gegeven. Aangezien veel kinderen voordat ze naar school gaan alleen hun stamtaal geleerd hebben, beginnen zij met een flinke achterstand.

Education: in the lower basic schools lessons are taught in English. Since many children before they go to school have only learned their tribal language, they start with a considerable disadvantage (achterstand, litt. arrears).

In the above extracts, a strong hierarchy is projected upon the languages in The Gambia. At the top of this social pyramid there is English which is worthy enough to carry the name *taal* 'language'. Somewhere in the middle there are the larger 'tribal languages' that are worth mentioning, i.e. Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, and sometimes also Serahule and Jola. At the lower echelons of the language ideological pyramid there are those smaller ethnic groups such as Serrer, Manjago, Aku, Bambara, Balante, Karoninka and Bainunka that are small enough not to be named in the language and ethnicity section of the websites. Extract 25-27 are very clear-cut in their hierarchical portrayal of languages as they jump straight from English to the disparaging label of 'tribal languages' and even lack the middle category of local languages that are worthy of mention. Extract 28, taken from Tuinbouwprojecten, is typical in its depiction of the languages of The Gambia.

Extract 28 (21. Tuinbouwprojecten)

Taal. Engels is de officiële taal in Gambia, met name bij de overheid, het onderwijs, de rechtspraak en natuurlijk in de toeristencentra. Ruim de helft van de Gambianen spreekt naast de eigen stamtaal ook het Engels. Ook in de binnenlanden kan men over het algemeen goed met Engels terecht. Typisch is dat de officiële naam niet Gambia is, maar The Gambia. [...] De belangrijkste stamtaal is het Mandinka. Deze taal wordt ook veel gebruikt als mensen van verschillende stammen met elkaar spreken. Vooral in de steden heeft ook het Wolof deze functie. Verder zijn het Fula, het Serahuli en het Jola nog belangrijke stamtalen. Ook het Frans wordt veelvuldig als handels- en omgangstaal gebruikt. Met name in de toeristen centra waar veel Franssprekende Senegalezen werken.

Language. English is the official language in The Gambia, in particular in government, education, jurisdiction and of course the tourist centres. Well over half of all Gambians speaks besides the own tribal language also English. In the interiors too, English is generally well understood. Typical is that the official name is not Gambia, but The Gambia. [...] The main tribal language is Mandinka. This language is often used if people of different tribes speak to each other. Also Wolof, especially in the cities, has this function. Further important tribal languages are Fula, Serahuli, and Jola. French as well is frequently used as a trade and contact language. In particular in the tourist centres where many French-speaking Senegalese are working.

Though few of the websites are comprehensive in their listing of languages and ethnicities in The Gambia, there are confident claims about the number of and the relation between languages and ethnicities in The Gambia. On the website of Stichting Insight The Gambia, for instance, we read that there is a straightforward one-to-one relation language-ethnicity: ‘the different tribes all have their own dialect’ (extract 25). Note the lexical choice for dialect instead of language: dialects of what larger language unit? Rather than using the word dialect in this usual sense, the juxtaposition tribe-dialect here is used in contrast with nation-language. On the website of Stichting Baobab Nursery School, the more politically correct word language is used, but here the relation ethnicity-language is determined on one-to-two: fifteen different tribes and about thirty different languages (extract 29). Since only Wolof, Mandinka, Fula, Jola and Serahule are named, this makes us wonder what the other nine or ten are and whether there are neatly two languages per ‘tribe’ or how else the thirty languages are distributed over the fifteen ‘tribes’.

Extract 29 (43. Stichting Baobab Nursery School)

Het land wordt bevolkt door een vijftiental verschillende stammen, die tezamen ongeveer dertig verschillende talen spreken. Overal wordt Engels als voertaal gebruikt. Daarnaast spreken velen de taal van de Wollof. Naast de Wollof komen in The Gambia de volgende stammen voor: Mandinka, Fula, Jola en Serahuli. De stammen leven vreedzaam met en naast elkaar.

The country is populated by a fifteen different tribes, that speak altogether about thirty different languages. English is used everywhere as a lingua franca. In addition to that, many speak the language of the Wollof. Besides the Wollof, there are the following tribes in The Gambia: Mandinka, Fula, Jola and Serahuli. The tribes live peacefully with and along each other.

4.3. Colonial discursive remains

The use of ‘tribes’, ‘tribal languages’, and ‘dialects’ is reminiscent of colonial discourse on language in Africa. Although the Dutch and Belgians had their colonial history elsewhere, this colonial discourse on language and ethnicity, is easily revived and transplanted to accounts of The Gambia in the project websites under scrutiny here. Not only the word choices bear colonial connotations, also the characterisations of the different ‘tribes’ could have been taken from a colonial report. In descriptions such as the one from Kambengo (extract 30), or Mission House The Gambia (extract 31), entire ethnic groups (‘tribes’) are essentialised as being either rural cattle breeders and agriculturalists or urban traders. Although there is some distant truth in such statements, it lacks descriptive subtlety and ignores post-colonial and post-tribal

characteristics of the described groups. Gambian Fula, for instance, are often migrants from Guinea-Conakry and are well-represented as shopkeepers of small and middle-sized enterprises in both urban and rural Gambia, as well as in the taxi business, still they are never described as ‘tribe of taxi drivers’. The Serahule are, apart from being ‘a tribe of agriculturalist’ also characterisable as a ‘tribe’ of international businessmen with small diasporas in places as faraway as Gabon, Angola, and Madagascar.⁴

Extract 30 (31. Stichting Kambengo)

In Gambia wonen verschillende etnische groepen, waarvan de Mandinka met 44% de grootste is. Verder zijn er de Fula (ongeveer 18%) en de Wollof, die de derde groep vormen met ongeveer 12% van de bevolking. De Mandinka en de Fula leven merendeels op het platteland en bedrijven landbouw en veeteelt, terwijl de Wollof meer in de stedelijke gebieden te vinden zijn, waar zij zich veelal met de handel bezighouden. De verschillende stammen leven in goede onderlinge verstandhouding en zij houden er een zogeheten 'joking relationship' op na, dat wil zeggen dat men over en weer grapjes maakt over de veronderstelde stereotiepe kenmerken.

In The Gambia there are different ethnic groups, of which the Mandinka, with 44%, is the largest. Further there are the Fula (approximately 18%) and the Wollof, who form the third group with approximately 12% of the population. The Mandinka and the Fula predominantly live on the countryside and practice arable and animal husbandry, while the Wollof are principally found in the urban areas, where they commonly conduct business. The different tribes live in good mutual understanding and hold joking relationships, which means they make little jokes back and forth about the supposed stereotypical features.

Extract 31 (15. Foundation Mission House of The Gambia)

Taylor is op zijn reizen door Gambia ook in het dorp Koina terecht gekomen, 70 kilometer ten noordoosten van Mansajang waar de gemeenschap bestaat uit Moslims van de stam der Serehoule. Een stam van landbouwers. [...] De Fula's zijn een stam die voornamelijk leven van hun vee.

On his journeys through The Gambia, Taylor has also arrived in the village of Koina. 70 km north east of Mansajang where the community consists of Muslims of the tribe of the Serhoule. A tribe of agriculturalists. [...] The Fulas are a tribe that predominantly feed on their cattle.

To cite from the website of Tuinbouwprojecten again (extract 48), the ‘Out of Africa’-hypothesis is applied to the Fula who are observed to be ‘lighter’ in complexion than Gambians of other ethnic groups, and therefore supposed to have roots out of Africa. This theory originates from the colonial scholarly interest in the migration of African peoples (e.g. the Bantu migrations) and the social-Darwinist discussion on the hierarchy and superiority/inferiority of ‘races’. That elements from this old, racist, discussion are revived on a small-scale aid project website illustrates that the contemporary, lay European way of thinking about Africa is still very much rooted in colonial discourses. The inevitable question whether the entire enterprise of these aid projects and development aid in general should be seen as a neo-colonial endeavour is something I will return to later.

Extract 32 (21. Tuinbouwprojecten)

De Fula leiden een zwervend bestaan. Ze hebben een opvallend lichte huidkleur, zodat hun oorsprong zeer waarschijnlijk niet in Afrika ligt, maar dat ze afstammen van de Arabieren. Er worden binnen de Fula-stam negen sterk verschillende dialecten gesproken. Achttien procent van de Gambiaanse bevolking behoort tot de Fula.

The Fula lead a nomadic existence. They have a strikingly light skin colour, so that their origin lies most probably not in Africa, but that they descend from the Arabs [sic]. Within the Fula tribe, nine sharply differently dialects are spoken. Eight teen per cent of Gambian population belongs to the Fula.

4. In Hong Kong, I ran into a Gambian (Serahule) businessman who claimed to travel and do business between Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. According to him, there were other Gambians moving in similar transnational trajectories.

4.4. Exaggerating poverty

The Gambia ranks 155th out of a total of 177 on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and is according to those measures one of the poorest and ‘least developed’ countries in the world (UNDP 2006). Given this fact, it is a bit presumptuous to title a subsection ‘exaggerating poverty’. I wish to underscore that I do not intend to trivialise or deny the reality of poverty. Poverty in The Gambia is real and ugly, and there is nothing noble about being poor. Aid in general is an attempt to alleviate part of that poverty and the aid projects should be commended for those good intentions. The point here, however, is that aid organisations depend on a discourse of extreme poverty to justify the support of present sponsors and appeal to potential new sponsors. This (mis)representation of The Gambia is of course not void of ideology and is crucial in our understanding how the Third World Other is represented by First World citizens.

A rather innocent example can be found on the website of the Stichting Baobab Nursery School (extract 33). It is claimed that in the provinces, 23 per cent of the population falls under the category of ‘very poor’ and 18 per cent of ‘poor’. First of all, no reference is given to how these numbers were obtained, and also no further information is given about the situation in the urban areas. This quote talks about 41 per cent of the rural population, implying, wilful or not, that 59 per cent of that same rural population is not poor. In the explanation surrounding these numbers, it is said that the very poor population has an income with which it is not possible to satisfy even the primary necessities of life. Further, a dubious budget of D300 (shockingly translated as €8) is quoted as a typical monthly rural household budget for food. What is left out in both the description of the ‘very poor population’ and the monthly budget statement, is that the rural population could have and in fact has alternative, i.e. non-monetary, sources of food supply. Whatever is cultivated on the lands or rice fields surrounding the village, or whatever proceeds one’s cattle and livestock brings is not captured by the here adopted UN categories of poverty. Omitting these non-monetary sources of food distorts the image of poverty in rural Gambia.

Extract 33 (43. Stichting Baobab Nursery School)

Op het platteland staat 23% van de bevolking als zeer arm en 18% als arm te boek. De zeer arme bevolking heeft een inkomen dat hen niet in staat stelt in hun eerste levensbehoeften, met name op het gebied van voeding, te voorzien. Ook de arme bevolkingsgroep leeft nog onder de armoedegrens, maar is wel in staat aan het dagelijks benodigde voedsel te komen. Op het platteland wordt ruim 300 Dalasis (€ 8.-) per huishouden per maand besteed aan voedsel.

In the provinces, 23 per cent of the population is classified as very poor and 18 per cent as poor. The very poor population has an income that does not enable them to support their primary necessities of life, especially in the field of nutrition. Also the poor section of the population still lives under the poverty line, but is capable to get the daily required food. In the provinces, over 300 Dalasis (€ 8.-) per household per month is spent on food.

It is less innocent when houses are labelled as *krotten* ‘shacks’, entire neighbourhoods as *sloppenwijken* ‘slums’, or children seen in the streets as *straatkinderen* ‘street kids’. These words are connotatively rich and therefore highly ideological lexical choices. The problem here is that these words may not immediately be recognised by many readers as problematic in this context as they fit well in the European idea about Africa and the Third World. Slums and shacks are very natural collocations with aid and Third World.

One of the three subprojects of the Stichting Help Gambia op Locatie (extract 34) consists of the construction of four new houses in Kerr Serign on the Atlantic coast that are to replace what is referred to as *krotten* ‘shacks’. Although the houses in question may in fact have been in a bad, ‘tumbledown’, condition, a description of them as ‘shacks that have to pass for houses’ in coordination with a claim about the health of the people that live in them,

does more than only describe the state of the houses. What is implied is that these houses cannot really be regarded as houses. Further, the coordinating structure of both constituents in the sentence suggests there is a causal relation between the poor housing conditions and the supposed bad health of the people that live in them.

Extract 34 (27. Stichting Help Gambia op Locatie)

Een derde project wat in voorbereiding is, betreft het bouwen van 4 woningen. [...] De krotten die voor huizen moeten doorgaan staan op instorten en is het met de gezondheid van zowel de kinderen als de ouders zeer slecht gesteld. De bestaande bouwvallige woningen moeten in zijn geheel worden gesloopt aangezien renovatie onmogelijk is gebleken. Nieuwbouw kan tegen lokale prijzen en wordt in eigen beheer zonder tussenkomst van andere partijen of aannemers op locatie uitgevoerd.

A third project that is in preparation, concerns the building of 4 houses. The shacks that have to pass for houses are inclined to collapse and both the children and the parents are in bad health. The extant tumbledown houses have to be entirely demolished since renovation proved to be impossible. The construction of new buildings can be done on location against local prices and on our own account without intervention of other parties or contractors.

One should raise the question here whether building new houses for individual families is a too radical interference in the lives of people, and what the immediate and long term effects of this aid will be for the community as a whole. It could further be questioned if the price of €62,300 (D2,300,000) that is quoted further down the text is really a 'local price' or rather a price that accommodates towards the price and luxury expectations of the Dutch aid workers, but that is beyond the scope of this investigation. What is relevant here, is that it takes a lot of discursive work (i.e., exaggerating poverty) to justify this type of aid activities.

Sloppenwijk 'slum' in conjunction with children or *straatkinderen* 'street kids' is a central theme in the work of Stichting Sharanie (extracts 35-38) and Stichting the Sheepfold. What is attempted here is to create a textual equivalent of the shock experience the project initiators experienced on their first visit to The Gambia. For those readers in the Netherlands and Belgium that do not have the chance, or the interest, to travel to The Gambia themselves, the descriptions of poverty on the websites provide a literary substitute for the culture shock that can be experienced in real life. Since most sponsors have not and will not travel to The Gambia, at least not before they start donating money to one of the charity, the textual and visual description of poverty should be shocking enough, or evoke enough sympathy, to result in a moral engagement with The Gambia without even knowing any Gambians personally.

Extract 35 (38. Stichting Sharanie)

Laat kinderen onder de 8 jaar uit de sloppenwijken van Gambia naar school gaan, zodat ze niet van de straat geplukt kunnen worden. Stel ze veilig, voor het opkomende sekstoerisme. Tegelijk leren ze lezen en schrijven, wat weer nodig is voor hun toekomst !!! Want kinderen zijn onze toekomst !!!

Let children under 8 from the slums of The Gambia go to school, so they can't get picked up from the streets. Safeguard them for the rising sex tourism. At the same time they learn to read and write, which is necessary for their future !!! Because children are our future !!!

Extract 36 (38. Stichting Sharanie)

Maar wat een armoede; wat moest hier nog veel gedaan worden !!! De sloppenwijk stond op mijn netvlies gebrandt [sic]. Kleine kindertjes in hun t-shirtje, op blote voetjes in het hete zand. Met dikke snotterbellen [sic].

But what a poverty; what a great deal of work needed to be done here !!! The slum was indelibly printed on my memory. Little children in their little T-shirts, on bare feet in the hot sand. With snotty noses.

Extract 37 (38. Stichting Sharanie)

Project 1 Kinderen uit de sloppenwijken naar school laten gaan. Dit project bestaat er voornamelijk uit, om kinderen onder de 8 jaar, uit de sloppenwijk van Gambia te halen en naar school te laten gaan. De regering heeft GEEN geld om deze jonge kinderen te laten leren. Ze zwerven op straat rond met alle gevolgen van dien. Kans om opgepakt te worden en voor het sekstoerisme gebruikt te worden is dus

groot !!! Hier moet je NIET aan denken, het zal je kind maar overkomen !! Als wij ze naar school kunnen laten gaan, zijn ze veilig en leren ze bovendien lezen en schrijven, wat belangrijk is voor hun toekomst !! We zoeken het eerst naar kinderen die het hardste lezen en schrijven; waarvan de ouders bijvoorbeeld door aids, of op andere wijze zijn gestorven; kinderen waarvan ouders ziek zijn en geen inkomen hebben. Die dus ook geen kans zien, om de kinderen naar school te laten gaan enzv. In de sloppenwijk is elke dag er 1 !!!!! Het is overleven elke dag weer !!

Project 1 Sending children from the slums to school. This project mainly consists of getting children under 8 out of the slum of The Gambia [sic] and send them to school. The government has NO money to let these children learn. They wander around in the streets with all its consequences. Chances to get picked up and be used for sex tourism are thus high !!! You DON'T want to think about this, this could happen to your child !! If we can send them to school, they're safe and in addition they learn to read and write, which is important for their future !! We first look out for children that need it the most: of which the parents have passed away, for instance through AIDS or in a different way; children whose parents are sick and don't have an income. Who thus don't see a chance to send their children to school, and so on. In the slum every day is a day !!!!! It's about surviving every day again !!

Extract 38 (38. Stichting Sharanie, accompanying pictures)

Dit zijn zwervende kinderen op straat die toeristen aanklappen in de hoop op een betere toekomst. Hettie en kinderen uit sloppenwijk.

Wilma met 2 kinderen in de sloppenwijk. Wat een snoepies !

These are kids wandering on the streets that accost tourists in hope for a better future.

Hettie and children from the slum.

Wilma with 2 children in the slum. Aren't they sweeties !

Extract 39 (38. Stichting Sharanie)

Wilt u ook een kind uit de sloppenwijk van Gambia een levenskans bieden ?? Dit kan door hem/haar naar school te laten gaan !!! Adopteer een kind en U krijgt naam, adres en een foto van het kind, zodat U er zelf contact mee kunt onderhouden, indien U dit wenst.

Do you too want to offer a chance of survival [life] to a kid in the slums of The Gambia ?? You can do this by sending him/her to school !!! Adopt a child and You will receive name, address, and a photo of the child, so You can maintain contact with him/her, if You wish.

A lot of hyperbolic speech forms are used to legitimate the work the foundation is doing. Different linguistic levels are applied to establish this exaggeration of poverty. On the level of orthography, we note the many double, triple, and even quintuple exclamation marks, and the capitalisation of *GEEN* and *NIET* in extract 37. On the level of word choice, we witness the already mentioned use of diminutives: *kleine kindertjes* 'little children+DIM', *t-shirtje* 'T-shirt+DIM', *blote voetjes* 'bare feet+DIM' (extract 36), *snoepies* 'sweeties' (extract 38), and the repeated use of the pejorative *sloppenwijk* 'slum' throughout. On the level of content, in extracts 35 and 37, readers are scared about the danger of sex tourism and child prostitution, which is indeed a problem in The Gambia, but not in the manner and to the extent that children are at constant danger to be picked up by a sex exploiter the minute they set foot in the streets. Also the evocation of AIDS and orphanhood in extract 27, which is not nearly as serious a problem in The Gambia as elsewhere in Africa, is a distortion of reality. In The Gambia, (juvenile) homelessness is not nearly as problematic as Stichting Sharanie (and Stichting the Sheepfold) want to make us believe. The Gambian strong family structures will always take on the children of deceased relatives, so that in reality virtually no Gambian children will be left behind to roam about, steal, and sleep in the streets. This is often overlooked (or suppressed) in the discourse of the development projects. The only place where we see (kids acting as) street kids, begging for alms, is around the major hotels, in the tourist bubble. This underscores that the aid projects have their roots in tourism and continue to operate in close proximity to it.

Finally, readers are appealed to in the polite *U*-form (with the somewhat archaic capital letter) that their contribution is absolutely necessary to educate children in the Gambia. It is only through their (symbolic) adoption of children, that Gambian children can have a

chance in life, or even a chance of survival (depending on the translation of *levenskans*, extract 39). The Dutch agency in making education work in The Gambia is emphatically underscored here. It is true that the entire nursery school system in The Gambia is dependent on private funding, for both the infrastructure and the remuneration of human resources and that a great deal of these funds emanates from small-scale charities such as Stichting Sharanie. What the project initiators do not know, however, or do not disclose, is that public (lower basic) schools are free for girls and that the boys' fees are only the price of a packet of cigarettes. That many parents cannot send their children to expensive private schools is true, and that some parents find it difficult to pay for the school uniform is true as well, but that many children are therefore denied education, is a dreadful misrepresentation of the educational situation in The Gambia.

An even more striking example of misinformation about education in The Gambia was found on the website of Stichting Kambengo (extract 40), where it is downright asserted that only 55 per cent of Gambian children receive education, and that of that number another percentage skips entire terms to work on the land.

Extract 40 (31. Stichting Kambengo)

Tegenwoordig volgt ongeveer 55% van de kinderen lager onderwijs. Doordat sinds enkele jaren het lager onderwijs op de overheidsscholen voor meisjes gratis is geworden, is het analfabetisme gedaald. Maar de kosten voor boeken, schriften, pennen en voor een schooluniform blijven voor rekening van de ouders. En omdat veel kinderen in het regenseizoen onontbeerlijk zijn voor het werken op de landbouwgronden, volgen sommige kinderen maar een of twee kwartalen per jaar onderwijs.

Presently, about 55 per cent of the children receives education. Because since a couple years primary education in public school has become free for girls, illiteracy rates have dropped. But the costs for handbooks, exercise books, pens, and school uniforms remain at the expense of parents. And because many children are indispensable in the rain season for working on the farmlands, some children only go to school one or two terms per year.

Although it is true that The Gambia has not yet fully achieved universal primary education, the percentage of children presently receiving education is much higher than the dramatic 55 per cent put forward in the extract above. And although it is an additional problem that the child's educational interests at times conflict with the family's agricultural activities, this type of absenteeism could hardly account for pupils staying away for entire terms. The rainy season already coincides with the long summer holidays (July – September), and the Department of State for Education has in the past years worked towards regionally flexible term dates to tackle this problem further. The additional problems of the purchase of a school uniform or of the highly subsidised school books are not of that nature that it in practice hinders children from going to school. Most schools are lenient and aware of these problems and do not deny access to children without a proper uniform or a fresh copy of all the textbooks needed.

The exaggeration of poverty in aid discourse is perhaps a necessary means to achieve a higher goal in a Machiavellian sense. The voice that exaggerates poverty and emphasises complete helplessness may be the voice needed to convince potential donors to donate money to support the project. Yet, the evocation of street kids, orphans, shacks and slums may lead the attention away from any real problems The Gambia faces. The problem of education in The Gambia, for instance, is not so much one of access, but one of quality. The exaggeration of poverty, together with the ethnolinguistic misrepresentations, is part of a witting or unwitting strategy to describe life in The Gambia as the ultimate opposite of that in the Netherlands and Flanders. Instead of building bridges of understanding for a Dutch/Flemish audience, Gambians are represented on the charity websites as an incomprehensible, exotic Other.

5. Aid, agency, self reliance and in-dependence

In this last section I will make two seemingly contradictory claims. First, I will argue that although lip service is paid to self-reliance and local agency, many of the aid projects display a rather (neo-)colonial attitude to the Third World Other. Second, I will show that at the same time Gambians are not powerless aid recipients but active participants in this intercultural venture.

To illustrate the neo-colonial character aid can take, I have selected six extracts from the Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink⁵ (extracts 41-46, see also extracts 17 and 19). The first peculiarity about this project is already in its name: the initiator of the project has chosen to name it, in all immodesty, after himself, and repeatedly refers to the project as his personal project: *mijn project* 'my project'. Many of the peculiarities of aid discourse discussed above are present in these extracts: pejoratives, diminutives, hyperboles, and direct address to potential sponsors. What is most distressing here, however, is the style and targets of the aid activities itself.

Extract 41 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)

Elk jaar in de maand November ga ik naar Gambia. Ik doe daar allerlei dingen om een aantal mensen het leven iets aangenamer te maken, zoals lesmateriaal kopen voor scholen, gereedschappen en vee kopen voor landarbeiders en boeren, voedseltransporten doen in de armste gebieden, medicijnen kopen voor kleine medische centra en een kraamkliniek, studiebijbels kopen voor een hervormde kerk etc etc

Every year in the month of November I go to The Gambia. I do all sorts of things there to make the lives of a number of people a little more pleasant, like buying teaching materials for schools, tools and cattle for farmers, food-aid transports in the poorest areas, buying medicines for small medical centres and a maternity clinic, buying study bibles for a protestant church etc etc

Extract 42 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)

Als je in Serekunda rijdt(de grootste stad van Gambia met enorme sloppenwijken) dan zie je overal mensen langs de weg bezig met hun eigen bedrijfje. Je kunt het eigenlijk geen bedrijfje noemen. Er staan bijvoorbeeld bij een jongeman een paar fietsen en je ziet dat hij bezig is met de reparatie van een fiets hier en daar ligt wat oud , zeer slecht gereedschap. Hier verdient deze jongeman dan de kost mee. Wij nemen deze man dan mee naar een groothandel en gaan nieuw gereedschap en onderdelen die hij, na overleg, het meest nodig heeft, kopen. Zo deden we dat ook bij een automonteur. Deze mensen help je dan enorm vooruit met goed gereedschap en een beetje materiaal

If you drive into Serekunda (the largest city of The Gambia which huge slums) you see people running their own little businesses at the side of the road. You can't actually call it a little business. There are for instance a few bikes near a young man and you see that he's busy repairing a bike and here and there lie a couple of old, very bad tools. This is how the young man makes his living. We take this man to a wholesaler and buy new tools and parts that he, after consultation, needs most. We did the same thing with a car mechanic. This way, you help these people tremendously with good tools and some materials

Extract 43 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)

Toen ik van vakantie terugkwam had ik vier brieven uit Gambia op de deurmat liggen. In een (1) van de brieven zat een foto bijgesloten. Deze jonge boer/veehouder toont zijn koe die hij vorig jaar november via ons project heeft gekregen. Hij schreef mij dat hij heel blij was en dat het allemaal goed ging met de koe.

When I came back from vacation I found four letters from The Gambia on my doormat. One (1) of the letters included a photo. This young farmer/cattle breeder shows the cow he received from our project last year. He wrote that he was very pleased and that the cow was doing fine.

Extract 44 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)

Zo maar een sloppenwijk in rijden tussen de middag en aan 40 of 50 kinderen een eenvoudige rijstmaaltijd (40 Eurocent) of een half stokbroodje met ei (15 eurocent) geven. als toetje allemaal een

5. Later, the website was updated and the project was renamed as the Stichting Samen Sterk voor Gambia 'Foundation Together Strong for Gambia'. The core of my criticism remains valid on the updated version of the website as well.

banaan (7 eurocent). Dit deden we bijna dagelijks.

Drive in a random slum around noon and give 40 or 50 children a simple rice meal (40 Eurocents) or a half loaf of bread with egg (15 eurocents). As desert a banana for all (7 eurocents). We did this almost every day.

Extract 45 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)

Ook hebben we weer een aantal fietsen gekocht voor kinderen die erg ver van school wonen en ouderen die nu op de fiets naa[r] een plaatselijke markt kunnen Om hun goederen te koop aan te bieden. Soms lopen deze mensen 15 kilometer of meer om bij een markt te komen. (10)

We bought a number of bicycles again for children that are living faraway from school and the elderly that can now go to a local market by bike To offer their goods for sale. Sometimes these people walk for 15 kilometers or more to get to a market.

Extract 46 (10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink)

Alle kleine dingen die we ook gedaan hebben, zijn te veel om op te noemen. Aan het eind van ons verblijf was het geld op en konden we terug zien op een goede periode in Gambia. Natuurlijk ga ik in 2006 weer naar Gambia. Ik hoop van ganser harte dat u dan ook weer een bijdrage levert aan mijn project aldaar. een donatie uwerzijds opent een andere wereld voor diegenen die het ontvangen.

All the small things we also did, are too numerous to recite. At the end of our stay the money was used up and we could look back at a good period in The Gambia. Of course I'm going back to The Gambia in 2006. I wholeheartedly hope that you contribute again to my project there. A donation on your part opens a whole new world for those who receive it.

Aid can hardly get any more patronising and self-laudatory than this: taking a random workman out of his workshop to buy him new tools, giving a cow to a random farmer, driving into a random 'slum' and handing out free lunches, or giving school children and elderly persons bicycles as a present, and even organising food-aid transports into the interior of the country. No doubt the young farmer or the cycle repairman will be happy with the generous presents from Gerard, as will the urban children with their free meal, or the school children who received a free bicycle from this generous white man. Who would not be grateful and happy when receiving gifts in such an unexpected way? And no doubt handing out gifts will make Gerard and his fellow travellers feel good about themselves. Who would not feel good when put in a position to see so many happy faces?

But is this aid? To what development does this contribute? Is this the kind of aid Gambians need? Does this alleviate poverty in any structural sense? Are rural Gambians that poor that it needs some Dutchman to organise food-aid transports for them? Are families that poor that they have to rely on strangers feeding their children in the streets?

I would say that Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink is about a Dutch Santa Claus handing out gifts to random people and that it has little to do with responsible, structural post-colonial aid. The project's relation with Gambian subjects is still very much colonial. Gambians have no voice or participation in determining what and how projects are carried out, have no say in what is important to them and most importantly, the project does not emphasise, or even reflect on, issues of self-reliance and independence. The project is a sheer pastime for Gerard Dunnink and his associates and does not give much thought to any of these issues as long as it makes Gerard, his travel partners, sponsors, and Gambian aid recipients feel good. The 'feel good' dimension of aid work in general should never be underestimated, but takes a very prominent and raw shape in Gerard Dunnink's project.

The neo-colonial nature of Gerard's and other aid projects is more structural than just ignoring self-reliance or denying agency to Gambians. What is most problematic is that many organisations take action on their own, without involving locals on the level of decision making and the design of the project. Moreover, rarely if never are local experts consulted, or is advice being sought from government departments or already existing local CBO's and NGO's. Ultimately, this contempt for local initiatives and already existing structures of unaccountable and uncoordinated aid projects undercuts the independence and initiative of the state.

With independence in 1965, The Gambian government became responsible for the good organisation of all public affairs, including at the very least national security, medical care, education, as well as the maintenance of the road infrastructure. As can be expected for a country that the UNDP (2006) describes as 'least developed', there are structural problems with all of these domains. The whole idea behind the word 'developing' in developing countries is that they still need to develop or make progress, especially in these domains. In so-called developing countries, hospitals are typically understaffed, ill-supplied with medicines, short of beds, and technologically unequipped to perform demanding surgery. Schools are typically understaffed, classes are overpopulated, textbooks are ill-supplied and not up-to-date, school furniture is typically inadequate, buildings are poor, and modern teaching materials such as computers are simply not provided. Roads are too often unpaved or with a lot of potholes if paved, and sometimes impassable after heavy rains.

The Gambia does encounter some of these typical problems, but not all, and has of course some more specific problems as well. Classes, for instance, are not as overpopulated as has been reported elsewhere. Eddie Williams (2006), for instance, notes that in Zambia and Malawi classes can go up to 200 pupils. Augustin Simo Bobda (personal communication) has reported similar situations in Cameroon. The Gambian classrooms and school buildings I have seen were generally in fairly decent conditions. A specific problem education in The Gambia faces is due to its narrow stretched-out topography and the urban-rural divide: many teachers only want to work in the urban west of the country and absent a lot or even resign when they are posted in the provinces. These problems are difficult to overcome, but are primarily the responsibility of the Gambian state. And in fact, solutions for problems are being suggested and implemented all the time. I already mentioned that The Gambia adopted a free-for-girls education policy to improve the gender balance in schools. The problem of provincial teacher postings is being dealt with by the introduction of a provincial allowance for rural teachers.

What I want to suggest, is that even though small-scale aid projects make great things happen for individual schools, in the long run, the government's responsibility and independence is undermined when they carry out some of the basic responsibilities of the state. At present, the government does not finance any nursery schools. All nursery schools in The Gambia entirely rely on private funding (e.g., from aid projects) and school fees for the operation of schools. Stichting Laar Gambia Leren announces that it is looking for sponsors to pay the salaries of school personnel (extract 47).

Extract 47 (59. Stichting Laar Gambia Leren)

Ik zoek sponsors voor het betalen van de salarissen van de leerkrachten van The Jiboro Nursery School. Sponsors voor het betalen van de kokkin en het eten wat de kinderen krijgen voordat ze 's middags weer naar huis gaan.

I'm looking for sponsors to pay the teachers' salaries at The Jiboro Nursery School. Sponsors for paying the cook and the food the children get before they go home in the afternoon.

The long term effect of this type of aid is that the Gambian government is relieved of its responsibility to pay teachers, because it can rely on charitable organisations to do it for them. Although small-scale initiatives can be a good contribution to the development of a country as a whole, one should be cautious for their side effects: reduced local responsibility and a growing reliance on the aid projects. In this manner, aid projects do not contribute to the development of The Gambia as an independent country, but hamper it by fostering a neo-colonial relationship. This cannot possibly be a desired outcome of the aid projects. And it is not, as we can read on the website of Jamarek Tours (extract 48).

Extract 48 (13. Jamarek Tours)

Iets doen dus, maar wat en hoe? Natuurlijk eraan gedacht om direct geld te sturen maar helpt dat structureel? Eigenlijk niet! Het zou beter zijn om mensen hun eigen brood te laten verdienen en zichzelf

daardoor te kunnen laten voorzien in hun eigen levensonderhoud . Na enig overleg met mensen die al werken/wonen in Gambia ben ik tot het volgende plan gekomen. Start een commerciële onderneming in Gambia, gesponsord vanuit Nederland, en laat in beginsel onder Nederlandse leiding deze onderneming uitgroeien tot een zelfstandige economische eenheid. Leer de mensen daar deze toko te runnen en hun verantwoordelijkheid te dragen en voorzie hen van de middelen om succesvol te zijn. Dat is het advies wat ik kreeg en waar ik volledig achter sta!

So do something, but what and how? Of course thought about sending money directly but does that help in any structural way? Not really! *It would be better to let people earn their own living and thereby to enable themselves to be provided (let provide) in their own livelihood.* After some consultation with people already working/living in The Gambia, I came to the following plan. Start a commercial enterprise in The Gambia, sponsored from the Netherlands, and let it grow, in principle under Dutch direction, to an independent economic unit. Teach the people there how to run this toko (*general store) and to take their responsibility and provide them with the means to be successful. That's the advice I got and what I fully support!

The idea behind Jamarek Tours is to help people in a structural way, rather than just sending them money. After consultation with 'people already working/living in The Gambia' (note that it does not say after consultation with Gambians!), a plan was thought up. In all six components of the plan, there is an active role for the Dutch and a passive role for the Gambians: it is the Dutch who start, sponsor, and direct the enterprise, it is also the Dutch who teach Gambians how to run it and how to take responsibility for it, and finally it is the Dutch again who need to provide the means to be successful. Apparently, success does not come from within. Nevertheless, in the third point, reference is made to independence. The Dutch should 'let it grow' 'to an *independent* economic unit'. The idea is that after setting the whole thing up, providing whatever is necessary, and after teaching the locals how to responsibly run such an enterprise, the Dutch could eventually step out and leave the enterprise to prosper. There is a bit of contradiction to this whole enterprise, because how can one expect to establish independence and self-reliance with so little initial agency built in the entire project?

The sentence on the second and third line of the extract is revealing in this respect. The sentence is grammatically messy in the use of agentives and passives, and was therefore awkward to translate. First of all, the words *eigen* 'own', used twice, and *zichzelf* 'themselves' refer to the agency of Gambians: they have to do it themselves, earn their own living, provide in their own livelihood. What is grammatically expressed here is the value of self-reliance and independence. This is contradicted by the use of the causative auxiliary *laten* 'to let', which can have both active ('allows to', 'permits to', 'does not prevent to') and passive meanings ('makes', 'has', 'gets to', 'orders to'). Whether *laten* 'to let' in our sentence takes an active or passive meaning is not unambiguous. The subjectivity, or agency, in this sentence, is with the Dutch, either as passively allowing Gambians to earn their living or provide in their own livelihood, or by actively creating possibilities for it. The *eigen... laten... zichzelf... laten... eigen*-sequence is thus internally inconsistent as the two causative auxiliaries neutralise the effect of the agency words *eigen* and *zichzelf*. I take the problematic grammar of this sentence to be symptomatic for the internal contradictions in the aid enterprise that stresses an active, independent role for Gambians but at the same time only grants Gambians a very passive, recipient role in the process. This too, bears embarrassing resemblances to the practice of anthropology that is often very progressive and leftist in its programme but often inevitably much more colonial in its practice.

The following description from the website of a project for a school for the mentally handicapped shows an insight in the negotiating and the division of roles in lending help. Extract 49 describes how a Dutch couple that lives in Banjul is approached for assistance by the father of Badou, an 8-year-old boy with a disability.

Extract 49 (62. School Verstandelijk Gehandicapten)

Toen kregen wij bezoek van Badou's vader, die ons om hulp kwam vragen. Dat verbaasde ons niet, daar

waren we eigenlijk wel op voorbereid. Maar we waren wel verrast toen we hoorden waarvoor hij financiële hulp nodig had: hij vroeg of wij konden helpen met de aanschaf van een televisie, want dat was leuk voor de kinderen. Wij hadden dit niet verwacht, maar voor hem was dit kennelijk een eerste prioriteit. Toen we hem vroegen waarom Badou niet naar school ging, antwoordde hij dat hij geen geld had voor het vervoer. Wij zijn het er na enig praten over eens geworden dat we eerst zouden zorgen dat Badou weer naar school kon gaan, dat vond zijn vader bij nader inzien ook belangrijk. [...] Badou gaat nu dus weer naar school. Hoe het verder met hem zal gaan, weet niemand. [...] [G]elukkig voor Badou heeft hij een vader en moeder die goed voor hem zorgen. En misschien komt die televisie er ook nog wel een keer.

At that moment, we were visited by Badou's father who came to ask us for help. That didn't surprise us, we were actually prepared for it. However, we were surprised to hear what kind of financial support he needed: he asked if we could help him with the purchase of a television, because that was nice for the children. We didn't expect this, but for him this was apparently a first priority. When we asked why Badou didn't go to school, he answered that he didn't have the money for the transport. After some discussion, we agreed that we would take care of Badou's education first, that was, on second thought, important to his father as well. [...] Badou is thus going back to school now. Nobody knows how he'll do in the future. [...] [F]ortunately, Badou has a father and mother that take good care of him. And maybe they will get that television after all some day.

For the record: this is not the project of the website itself, but a related story written by two indirectly involved friends. Although this story is about a private initiative and not a structured aid project, it is interesting because it shows that part of the aid work is delivered on demand (Badou's father came to ask us for help), but that there is also a moment of negotiation and exchange of ideas before something is delivered. Here, the main agency in initiating something is with the Gambian father while the main agency in deciding what form the aid should get is with the Dutch couple.

To present an extreme case of Gambian agency, I need to return to Jamarek Tours. In extract 48 above, the initial idea of starting a project was developed. The toko, as the enterprise was then called,⁶ has become a tour company offering tailor-made trips for small groups of tourists and reserves part of the profits for charity. At the time the announcements below (extracts 30-52) were added to the website, the tour operator had ceased its activities because the car had been 'stolen' by the project manager.

Extract 50 (13. Jamarek Tours)

Door omstandigheden (auto gestolen door 'bedrijfsleider') kunnen wij helaas geen boekingen meer aannemen...

Owing to circumstances (car stolen by 'project manager') we can unfortunately no longer accept any bookings.

Extract 51 (13. Jamarek Tours)

Helaas . . . Ik heb het geprobeerd. Wilde gewoon een aantal kinderen helpen. De auto die mede door sponsoring naar Gambia is gebracht is inmiddels gestolen en doorverkocht door de man hieronder afgebeeld. Door de advocaten die liegen en bedriegen, corruptie en intimidatie is het tot op heden niet gelukt de auto terug te krijgen. Zo kunnen we geen omzet meer genereren en dus ook geen hulp bieden aan de kinderen die het echt nodig hebben. Het is triest dat door toedoen van een man zoveel kinderen zonder opleiding of hulp komen te zitten....

Sadly . . . I have tried. Just wanted to help a number of children. The car that we brought to The Gambia partly through sponsoring has been stolen and resold by the man portrayed below. On account of lawyers that lie and deceive, corruption, and intimidation, we have up till now not succeeded to get the car back. Like this, we can't generate any turnover nor therefore offer any help to the children that really needed it. It is sad that by the agency of one man so many children end up without education or help....

6. In Dutch, *toko* stands for a usually small, packed store where all sorts of things are sold and is often run by foreigners. Note that *toko* is an Indonesian loanword and that Indonesia was a Dutch colony (Dutch East India).

Extract 52 (13. Jamarek Tours)

DRINGENDE OPROEP !

Ik weet dat de man Pa Laity Chorr wonende te Barra die de ellende heeft veroorzaakt meerdere 'sponsors' heeft in Nederland. Graag zou ik met deze sponsors in kontakt komen ...

URGENT APPEAL !

I know that Pa Laity Chorr, living in Barra, the man who has caused the misery, has multiple 'sponsors' in the Netherlands. I would like to get in touch with these sponsors ...

From Henk's point of view, the Dutch founder of Jamarek Tours, this is a clear case of theft. The company's car has been stolen by the project manager who is named and portrayed on the website in the style in which *wanted* criminals are usually portrayed. Henk further blames deceitful lawyers, corruption, and intimidation and does not hide his disappointment and anger with the whole situation: he tried to do good, but was deceived in the end. Whereas in the initial project description (extract 48) all the control was with Dutch Henk, now in an almost Marxist logic, the production means have been taken away from Henk by Gambian Pa. As a result, the entire project has been put to a stop.

This incident shows how much this and other aid projects as well, are rooted in tourism. One of the phenomena surrounding Gambian tourism is 'bumsterism' (see Nyanzi et al. 2005). Bumsters, also known as hustlers, are young men that hang around hotels to offer their services as guides to tourists, and ultimately often cheat on them after having gained their confidence. This cheating can be as harmless as a bumster misinforming tourists about the price of a particular product they buy under their guidance (after which he comes back to collect the overcharge), to stories that his wife cannot breast-feed the newborn baby while he has no money to buy the expensive substitute powder milk, to even encouraging tourists to start a charitable organisation from which he can profit from. The entire phenomenon of bumming/hustling is more complicated than this, and it should be emphasised here that there are degrees of dishonesty, and also degrees of naivety on the part of tourists.

If we can go by Henk's version of the facts, Pa's cheating the charity by reselling the car is a typical act of a bumster. He probably embarked on the aid project not with a well-intentioned Gambian associate but with a dishonest bumster who was apparently never interested in anything else than what the project had to offer him personally (and perhaps his family). Presumably Pa neglected the humanitarian dimension of Henk's involvement in The Gambia and never regarded Henk as anything else than a returning tourist to make advantage of.

To make a reflexive remark here: I too, as an ethnographer, after seven visits to the country, have been outsmarted by bumsters on a number of occasions. And although I do get better at recognising their tricks and dealing with them, it is telling that I too am often regarded as nothing else than a tourist. This brings us back to the quote I started this paper with: "colonialism, ethnography, and tourism have much in common, as they were born together as relatives" (Bruner 1989: 439). No matter how badly ethnographers, in the privileged position of being travellers/explorers for a living, may want to deny their kinship with tourists and colonialists, Gambians have a one-word-fits-all: *tubab*.

6. Discussion: Discourse, anthropology and the Other

Anthropology can be an excellent discipline to study processes of intercultural contact, but is ill-equipped to analyse products of (inter)cultural representation such as anthropological television and the aid project websites I looked at. Discourse analysis does a much better job analysing such products because it retains a much closer relation to its data, both in the process of analysis and in the presentation of its findings. When a theorist is not compelled to stick with its data, gross distortions and pre-investigated, biased ideas risk to enter the realm of scholarly

discussions (see Schegloff 1997 and Verschueren 2001).

The crisis in anthropology is grasped by Fish and Evershed, if we recall the discussion on *Tribe* in *Anthropology Today*, with which I began this article, as a type of academic hyper-criticalness and disconnectedness with ordinary people (2006: 23). A quote from the Discovery Channel weblog is telling:

I really think you don't understand the average person [...] The average person would rather have his eyes gouged out with an ice cream scoop than watch a responsibly produced documentary. Remember – we are talking about the average person here... Most people I know think I'm a dork because I watch the Discovery Channel. Imagine what they would think of a responsibly produced documentary!

(as quoted in Fish and Evershed 2006: 23n5)

Overall, anthropology's monopoly to represent or interact with different peoples and cultures is over. Anthropologists are no longer the only authoritative voice about other cultures in the world. As Eindhoven, Bakker and Persoon, in a Dutch response to the discussion of *Tribe*, indicate (Eindhoven et al 2007: 9-10), anthropologists have never been the only players in the field. In the colonial days, anthropologists 'accepted' the presence of colonial and missionary settlements. Their very presence was often made possible through these channels, and anthropologists have further made advantage of those contacts in terms of both power/knowledge and infrastructure. Colonial anthropologists were very much part and parcel of the colonial apparatus, often occupying scientific, administrative and religious roles at the same time.

Post-colonial anthropologists have worked hard to get rid of their colonial image, generally by adopting progressive, egalitarian, often Marxist ideologies. Now that the traditional anthropological field is 'intruded' by tourists, amateur development workers, and programme makers, they condemn the commercial activities of intruders' as harmful for the supposed authenticity of the people they study, and obscure and deny any kinship with these non-scientific competitors. It would be good to acknowledge the similarities alongside the differences between the practice of anthropology and related actors in the field. I hope to have shown that it is possible to remain critical towards (mis)representations of the Other in popular media such as the aid project websites, while at the same time not condemning the entire genre, and introspectively evaluating one's own relation to the Other.

In this paper, written in the margins of my investigations into language, literacy and education in The Gambia, I have examined an exclusive genre of websites of small-scale aid projects set up by Dutch and Flemish individuals in The Gambia. I have described how the aid projects originated from tourism, how diminutives and recurrent sayings are used to scale Gambian things down while at the same time stressing the need for the presented project, and in the last section I have talked about (mis)representations of poverty and of the ethnolinguistic identity of Gambians. In all these sections it is Dutch or Flemish aid workers writing about or representing Gambians. Most of these pieces of writing are intended for a Dutch and/or Flemish audience and are often inaccessible to those local persons involved in the project on the ground. Without local access and feedback, enormous distortions arise in the image presented of Gambians and The Gambia. Gambians are presented as an exotic, small, hungry people that are still organised in tribes, that speak dialects or tribal languages, and as being so poor they cannot even send their children to school, and as people that are constantly worried about how to survive rather than how to live their lives. The Gambia is presented as a small, faraway, godforsaken country with hardly any medical, educational and social facilities, in short as a country that is completely hopeless were it not for the benign but arduous efforts of Dutch and Flemish altruists. In the last section, I have argued that the discourse on the websites denies Gambians any sense of agency and self-reliability. Yet at the same time, in its practice, as we are sometimes reported, Gambians can take an active role demanding for aid

(followed by a moment of negotiation) or (mis)appropriating the assets of the charity.

To conclude, anthropology should be more than a mere study of *elsewhereness*. It is, at least in potential, a critical study of human action and interaction in the world. We are living in a world wherein it has become possible for many (Westerners) to travel to virtually any place of the world and become a first-hand explorer during one's holidays. In the complexity of the present, charter tourists travelling to Third World countries can decide to become returning development workers while continuing to enjoy the pleasures of resort tourism. Anthropology's problem is not that its territory is invaded by intruders *tout court*, but that it had assumed the territory as its own. Anthropologists have to learn to accept and appreciate the presence of others in their field, perhaps even learn to co-operate with them, and above all, start investigating rather than condemning them.

Addendum: List of the project websites

Websites accessed in March 2007. The texts on which the analysis is based form a corpus of 375,000 words. *Stichting* ‘foundation’ is the Dutch term for charitable organisation in the Netherlands. In Flanders, the abbreviation *vzw*, for *vereniging zonder winstoogmerk* ‘non-profit organisation’, is used. In the glosses, foundation is abbreviated as F. and non-profit organisation as npo. No gloss is given if *Stichting* or *vzw* is the only non-English word in the project name. The NL or FL between brackets indicates whether the project is a Dutch (NL) or Flemish (FL) initiative.

Startpagina.nl ‘start page’: <http://gambia-hulporganisaties.startpagina.nl/>.

1. Afrika voor Beginners ‘Africa for beginners’, www.afrikavoorbeginners.be (FL)
2. ARRO Tropical, members.home.nl/arro (NL)
3. Stichting Aye Borrii ‘F. It Rolls’, www.ayeborrii.org (NL)
4. Stichting Wilko Gambia Foundation, www.project-gambia-wilko.nl (NL)
5. Bijiloproject, www.bijiloproject.net (FL)
6. Stichting Djappoleen, www.djappoleen.nl (NL)
7. Stichting Future For Young People, www.futureforyoungpeople.nl (NL)
8. The Gambia Support Foundation, www.gambiasupport.nl (NL)
9. Stichting The Gambian Children First, www.gambianchildren.nl (NL)
10. Project Gambia Gerard Dunnink, gambia.oene-info.nl (NL)
11. Stichting Handen Ineen voor Gambia ‘F. Hands Together for Gambia’, home.hetnet.nl/%7ehah (NL)
12. Stichting Humanitaire Hulp Gambia ‘F. humanitarian aid Gambia’, www.stichtinghumanitairehulpgambia.nl (NL)
13. Jamarek Tours ‘Peace Only Tours’, www.jamarek.org (NL)
14. Stichting Kinderhulp Gambia ‘Child aid Gambia’, www.kinderhulpgambia.nl (NL)
15. Foundation Mission House of The Gambia, www.freewebs.com/gambiamission (NL)
16. Stichting Samma Deema ‘F. Better Future’, www.stichtingsammadeema.nl (NL)
17. Stichting Hand to Hand, www.stichtinghandtohand.nl (NL)
18. Palmtree Production, www.palmtree-production.com (NL)
19. Stichting JUNE, june-gambia.nl (NL)
20. Stichting The Sheepfold, www.stichtingthesheepfold.com (NL)
21. Tuinbouwprojecten ‘Horicultural projects’, www.tonnie.info (NL)
22. Stichting UNAIT, www.unait.nl (NL)
23. VZW De Gambiavrienden ‘npo friends of Gambia’, users.telenet.be/vzw-degambiavrienden (FL)
24. Stichting Yagana World For The Poor, www.yaganaworld.com (NL)
25. Ziekenhuis Bouwen ‘Building a hospital’, ziekenhuisgambia.punt.nl (NL)
26. Read to Grow, www.readtogrow.nl (NL)
27. Stichting Help Gambia op Locatie ‘F. Aid Gambia on location’, helpgambiaoplocatie.nl (NL)
28. Stichting Solar Cookers voor Ontwikkelingslanden ‘F. solar cookers for developing countries’, home.planet.nl/%7Egorg (NL)
29. Stichting Companions ‘F. Companions’, <http://freewebwork.nl/companions> (NL)
30. Stichting Care Foundation The Gambia, www.carefoundationthegambia.nl (NL)
31. Stichting Kambengo ‘Unity’, www.kambengo.nl (NL)
32. Stichting Tanka Tanka ‘Bush Taxi F.’, www.newcampama.nl (NL)
33. Stichting Evenaar ‘F. Equator’, www.stichtingevenaar.nl (NL)

34. Foundation Adult Education The Gambia / Holland Foundation Adult Education, www.faeg.nl (NL)
35. Gammol vzw 'Gambia-Mol npo', www.gammol.be (FL)
36. Stichting Nice to be Nice, www.nicotobenice.nl (NL)
37. Stichting The Future in our Hands, www.freewebs.com/janendidi (NL)
38. Stichting Sharanie, www.sharanie.nl (NL)
39. Stichting Kalipha, www.stichtingkalipha.tk (NL)
40. The Swallow, www.theswallow.org (FL)
41. VZW GamBel 'npo Gam(bia)-Bel(gium)', www.gambel.be (FL)
42. Haskerdijken-Bakalarr, members.home.nl/mrgombert (NL)
43. Stichting Baobab Nursery School, www.gambiahulp.nl (NL)
44. Stichting Insight The Gambia, www.insightthegambia.nl (NL)
45. Stichting GET (Gambian Education Trust), www.stget.org (NL)
46. Gambia One World Linking Association (GOWLA), www.gowla.nl (NL)
47. Riky Overmars Foundation, www.stichting-rof.org (NL)
48. Stichting Geef Gambia Toekomst 'Give Gambia Future', www.geefgambiatoekomst.nl (NL)
49. Stichting Happy Gunjur, www.happygunjur.nl (NL)
50. Helping Hands vzw, www.antwerpenbanjul.com (FL)
51. Stichting Picca 'F. Bird', www.picca.be (FL)
52. Stichting Scholenplan Gambia 'School Plan Gambia', www.scholenplangambia.nl (NL)
53. Unity for Kids, www.unityforkids.nl (NL)
54. Stichting Bakoteh, www.bakoteh.com (NL)
55. Stichting Baobab, www.stichtingbaobab.nl (NL)
56. Stichting Bouwen 'F. Building', www.stichtingbouwen.nl (NL)
57. Stichting Etten Busura Gambia, www.gambia.nl.nu (NL)
58. Stichting Hulp aan Gambia 'F. Aid to Gambia', www.tanji.nl (NL)
59. Stichting Laat Gambia Leren 'F. Let Gambia Learn', <http://members.home.nl/g.geerbont> (NL)
60. Stichting Mansakonko, www.mansakonko.nl (NL)
61. Stichting Mariamakunda, www.gambia-mariamakunda.com (NL)
62. School Verstandelijk Gehandicapt 'School for the Mentally Handicapped', www.henkjonker.nl (NL)
63. Stichting Vrienden van Gambia 'F. Friends of Gambia', www.vriendenvangambia.nl (NL)
64. Stichting Kinderen in Gambia 'F. Children in Gambia', kindereningambia.nl (NL)
65. Support Education in the Gambia, www.seig.nl (NL)
66. Tumani Tenda Development Fund (TTDF), www.tumanitenda.nl (NL)

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