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**Interview with Noel B. Salazar, Cultural Mobilities
Research (CuMoRe), Faculty of Social Sciences,
KU Leuven, Belgium**

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ABSTRACT

Noel B. Salazar received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania (USA). He is currently a professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, and visiting professor at the University of Bergamo, Italy. His fields of research include the anthropology of mobility and travel, the nexus between the local and the global, discourses and imaginaries about otherness, heritage, cultural intermediation and cosmopolitanism. He is the author of *Envisioning Eden: Mobilizing Imaginaries in Tourism and Beyond* (2010) and *Momentous Mobilities: Anthropological Musings on the Meanings of Travel* (2018). In addition, he is co-editor of *Tourism Imaginaries* (2014), *Regimes of Mobility* (2014), *Keywords of Mobility* (2016) and *Methodologies of Mobility* (2017). Dr. Salazar belongs to the editorial board of *American Anthropologist*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology and Transfers*, among others. In addition, he is included in the official list of Unesco and UNWTO consultants and is a member of Icomos-International Cultural Tourism Committee, and Unesco-Unitwin Network “Culture, Tourism and Development”. He has been president of EASA (European Association of Social Anthropologists) and is currently vice president of IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences). Dr. Salazar is also founder of CuMoRe (Cultural Mobilities Research) and EASA’s Anthropology and Mobility Network (AnthroMob).

*The interview was conducted on 01/08/2018 in the region of Douro, Portugal, within the framework of the DOUROTUR research project, of which Professor Salazar is an external consultant.*¹

KEY WORDS

Mobility, tourism, mobility anthropology, tourism imaginaries.

ENTREVISTA A NOEL B. SALAZAR, UNIDAD DE INVESTIGACIÓN SOBRE MOVILIDADES CULTURALES (CUMORE), FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES, LOVAINA, BÉLGICA

RESUMEN

Noel B. Salazar obtuvo su doctorado en Antropología en la Universidad de Pennsylvania (EE.UU.). Actualmente es catedrático en la Universidad Católica de Lovaina, Bélgica, y profesor visitante en la Universidad de Bérgamo, Italia. Sus campos de investigación abarcan antropología de la movilidad y del viaje, el nexo entre lo local y lo global, discursos e imaginarios sobre la otredad, patrimonio, intermediación cultural y cosmopolitismo. Es autor de *Envisioning Eden: Mobilizing Imaginaries in Tourism and Beyond* (2010) y *Momentous Mobilities: Anthropological Musings on the Meanings of Travel* (2018). Además, es coeditor de *Tourism Imaginaries* (2014), *Regimes of Mobility* (2014), *Keywords of Mobility* (2016) y *Methodologies of Mobility* (2017). El Dr. Salazar pertenece al consejo editorial de *American Anthropologist*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology and Transfers*, entre otros. Además, está incluido en

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la lista oficial de consultores de la Unesco y de la OMT, y es un miembro de Icomos-International Cultural Tourism Committee, y de la Unesco-Unitwin Network “Culture, Tourism and Development”. Ha sido presidente de EASA (Asociación Europea de Antropólogos Sociales) y actualmente es vicepresidente de IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences). El Dr. Salazar es también fundador de CuMoRe (Cultural Mobilities Research) y EASA’s Anthropology and Mobility Network (AnthroMob).

La entrevista fue llevada a cabo el 08/01/2018 en la región de Douro, Portugal, en el marco del proyecto de investigación DOUROTUR, del cual el profesor Salazar es un consultor externo.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Movilidad, turismo, antropología de la movilidad, imaginarios del turismo.

Lorenzo Bordonaro [LB]: Let’s start with your education. I was intrigued by the fact that you did not start your university education in the area of anthropology. Your initial BA and MSc were in psychology, then you moved to philosophy. In 1998, you passed to neuropsychology and it was only in 2002 that you obtained a MSc in Cultures and Development Studies. What were you looking for? And what did you find in anthropology?

Noel Salazar [NS]: There are two elements here. One is that, as a child and adolescent, you have a very limited view and understanding of what is possible in terms of professions and careers. The things that you encounter during your schooling are very partial, and the subjects that are covered are very incomplete. When I was in high school, anthropology was something I never encountered. Maybe I was confronted with anthropological things, but nobody ever labelled it as ‘anthropology’. And then there comes the time of attending university and you have a rather narrow view of which fields of knowledge are out there.

In addition, I was raised in Belgium in the Flemish school system. And in Flemish universities, until today, there is no Bachelor programme in anthropology. That simply doesn’t exist. So that means that everybody in Flanders who wants to become an anthropologist needs first to start with something else. And this is exactly what happened in my case. Which was a good thing after all, because I didn’t know about anthropology in the first place. If you look at the history of anthropology as a discipline, this is also how it all started. The founding fathers came from other disciplines and, until today, it is not all that rare that people who become anthropol-

ogists have previous careers or professions. They switch to anthropology, often after having spent some time abroad, and having experienced cultural differences. They want to understand more about this, and that's how they come to anthropology.

[LB]: Is this what happened to you?

[NS]: Yes. My family actually wanted to push me into medicine so that I could become a doctor. I didn't like the idea, not because I didn't like medicine but the prospect that the basic degree for medicine is seven years was daunting, and I said, 'that's too long!' Of course, in the end I spent much more time at universities than 7 years (laughs). And so, I decided to study psychology, clinical psychology, because it was a little bit like medicine, but the study time was two years shorter. What I like about psychology as a discipline, as I was being taught it, is that it has both a scientific, very quantitative approach, but also a very qualitative one, going more in the direction of psychoanalysis.

These two different visions and approaches are something that I have found useful, and I think that my training in psychology has been very useful for later on, in terms of methodology, because I was really trained in a very broad spectre of methods, and also in interviewing because in clinical psychology there is a lot of attention to how you interview people, which in my training in anthropology I have never had. I never was taught how to interview people anthropologically, that's why I took all that from my training in psychology. I also had to learn statistics and all the advanced statistics, such as multi-variate analysis and all those quantitative methods that most anthropologists hate.

But it's very useful to have that background, to understand that some of these methods are useful to answer certain questions, and maybe not too useful for other questions. So, this was my basis. I studied psychology and, on the side, a little bit of philosophy, which has always been an interest of mine because it's a discipline that deals with the big questions but not in an empirical fashion. Instead, it delves into the history of thinking.

[LB]: As a matter of fact, when I read your more recent works, especially those on mobilities, I sense a bigger vision coming out there, an attempt to move beyond empirical facts to grasp some philosophical issues about

mobility, and I was wondering if this was somehow related to your early philosophical training.

[NS]: Actually, I have a book that is coming out this summer, entitled *Momentous Mobilities* (Salazar, 2018). When it was being peer-reviewed, the main criticism was that it was not empirical, at least not empirical enough, and so I had to revise certain parts to make it clear that I did not intend the monograph to be empirical. It has empirical elements, but it's not purely based on just empirical facts. I think it's important in anthropology, as in every discipline, to be open to many different approaches that can enrich our search for answers. If we all stick to only conducting fieldwork, and all doing fieldwork in the same way, that will lead to a limited understanding of the world and its inhabitants. So, I think it's important, and that's why people with a background in other disciplines come in handy. I actually like working with people coming from different backgrounds, because they all bring different forms of expertise, different forms of knowledge, so I think it's important.

[LB]: Let's go back to your trajectory. When and how did your 'conversion to anthropology' happen?

[NS]: I ended up spending seven years at university, first in Belgium, then in the UK, where I did a master's in developmental neuropsychology, which is very much hard-core science. These were interesting times because in the 1990s the neurosciences were rapidly developing. I noticed all kinds of new technologies and methods and lots of data, but the scientists did not know what to do with these data, so the interpretation was missing. You see nowadays in anthropology that there is an interest in the neurosciences, and you even have something like 'neuroanthropology.' So, being immersed in the neurosciences was very interesting for me, but after those two years in the UK I also discovered that this was all too much based on exact sciences and numbers and this was not what I wanted, so I decided to take some time off. I had studied seven years and so, like in the biblical tradition, I took a sabbatical and worked as a volunteer in France and Austria. Through that volunteering, I came into contact with people working for a refugee aid agency.

And so, I started working for an agency that deals with refugees, contracted as a psychologist. My task was not to deal with refugees and to assess their mental health. Instead, I had to deal with the people who are helping

refugees, the refugee aid workers. I was sent to detention centres and refugee camps in many different places in Europe and outside of Europe, to assess how those people were doing in terms of mental health. I came across a lot of places where people normally don't come, I thought, because refugee camps are usually not located in the most accessible spots. I witnessed many things that I couldn't frame, but I also saw quite amazing things.

One of the things I noticed in refugee camps in Africa was the presence of a certain type of tourism. There were groups of 'visitors'. The rationale was that these people had donated money and they wanted to 'see' whether the money was well spent. Of course, you could do that by sending one person... but there was apparently the need for some kind of voyeuristic tourism. This sparked my interest, because I couldn't make sense of it. So, I decided to go back to school, and I did a master's degree in applied anthropology that dealt with anthropology and development, basically an anthropological approach to the whole question of development.

This is how I got back to university. It was tourism that got me, and so my master's degree was on tourism organized by development NGOs who were trying to bring people to visit their projects. This is very paradoxical, because tourists can only cope with a very limited amount of unpleasantness when they are on holidays. Holidays are about having a nice time, even if there are many people who pretend to be more serious tourists, who worry about cultures and the like... but the amount of difficult and nasty stuff that people can cope with is always rather limited. I noticed that this type of tourism didn't work, because the people participating in it were confronted with too many difficult things and they didn't like this too much.

This is what my master's thesis was all about. And then I really thought, 'This is interesting. I have to develop this a little bit further'. I wanted to do a PhD and so I started inquiring at the university where I was at and they said, "*ah, very interesting, but we don't have money*", and so I started looking elsewhere, first within Europe. I contacted many scholars, but noticed little interest, and then I started looking further, in Australia, Canada, and the US. I contacted many professors, and, in the end, I ended up in the US.

[LB]: Was it because the anthropology of tourism was not so fashionable at that time as it is today?

[NS]: At that time, it was already changing, but there were very few research groups where scholars were really working on the anthropology of tourism and had this as a field of expertise, because in the history of the discipline tourism was not considered to be a very serious topic of research. It took me quite some time to find a place and I contacted many scholars.

I still remember the advice I received from Edward Bruner, one of the more senior anthropologists who has written a lot about tourism. He said, *“Look, if you are interested in the anthropology of tourism, it is important that you find a department where they give you a very sound training in anthropology, irrespective of any expertise in tourism. Go for a solid training in anthropology, and then you can search for people with an expertise in tourism, whether they are at your university or elsewhere, there is the Internet now, so it doesn’t really matter”*.

And this is actually advice that I took seriously, because I started my PhD in a department where no one had any expertise in tourism, and I was thus forced to look elsewhere for this expertise. That explains why many of my mentors were actually not at the University of Pennsylvania, where I studied. Edward Bruner in Illinois was one of these mentors, but certainly also Nelson Graburn in California was, and still is, one of my greatest mentors, giving me advice from a distance.

[LB]: For your PhD, you carried out fieldwork in two different places, in Tanzania and in Indonesia. How did you choose these places and why?

[NS]: This happened rather by coincidence. In the year that I was applying for PhD programmes, I was still doing my applied master’s in Anthropology, and one of the other students was an older lady who was working for an NGO that was organizing a training for tour guides. In the year that I was finishing my master’s degree, the NGO organised a training for Indonesian and Tanzanian guides in Belgium.

The training consisted in offering lots of courses and lots of input, but also giving the guides the experience of being a tourist in Europe. I found that very interesting, I was fascinated by this training, and the fact that they had invited these Indonesians and Tanzanians together. What is it

that unites these two groups? I became kind of curious to know what would happen after this project. Would these two groups stay in touch with one another? What would they do with the knowledge from the training? And this is actually how my PhD project started.

[LB]: In your first book, *Envisioning Eden* (Salazar, 2010), which is based on your PhD research, the notion of imaginary is central. Why is this concept so important for tourism studies and mobility studies? I was also very intrigued in this book by your claim that anthropologists — often unwillingly — contributed considerably to the creation of the tourist imaginaries.

[NS]: Imaginaries is quite a difficult concept to explain, probably because what the concept tries to explain refers to things that are somehow invisible. It's a concept that I started developing after reading a lot of French authors. '*L'imaginaire*' is a concept that is quite well developed in French scholarship, in different fields, in philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychology, anthropology... there's quite a number of French authors that wrote about this, already a long time ago. I started thinking about this concept and how it can be useful in tourism, because in tourism there is a lot of research on the tourist image and the destination image by scholars doing research on marketing. I was frustrated by reading this scholarship and noticing that a lot of this research is actually limited to the image, to the visual representation and not to what is behind that. Basically speaking, imaginaries refer to the processes that are at work and that are linked to how people construct ideas about other people and other places. This, of course, is quite important in tourism. Why? Because the ideas that we have about other people and places seem to be very robust. Once these images and ideas are formed, it seems to take an awful lot of energy to change them.

In the places where I conducted research, I became very interested in trying to retrace where the mainstream ideas and images about these destinations originate. Historically speaking, how were these images constructed? And, from this construction, how does it come that these imaginaries are so widespread? There is also circulation involved. In addition, if people at a certain destination, or tourists, somehow disagree with the dominant imaginaries, is there anything that can be done to change them?

These are all questions I dealt with. It's not an easy subject to study because imaginaries are, at the end of the day, in people's heads. Right now, we don't have methods to get into people's heads. Of course, we can take scans and there is neural imaging, but we are not there yet at actually localizing the imaginaries in the brain and how they are formed, which would enable us to trace their genealogies.

This is of course where anthropology comes in, as a discipline that is very useful to study imaginaries, but also as a reflexive discipline that can teach us a lot about the origins of imaginaries, because in many tourism destinations, the imaginaries are, to a large extent, also based on knowledge that was produced by anthropologists themselves. It has been interesting to see how anthropological knowledge has been recycled to a certain extent by people working in tourism to consolidate a certain idea, a certain image of the destination.

[LB]: It emerges clearly in your book that the construction of imaginaries also works the other way around: for example, in Tanzania younger people were imagining Europe or the US as migratory destinations, and their imaginaries about these places were also built through historical and social processes, the media, and the tourists themselves.

[NS]: This is why, in my own work, I always stress that I am talking about tourism imaginaries and not tourist imaginaries, because tourist imaginaries are imaginaries that actually pertain to tourists. I am interested in imaginaries at work in tourism. Tourism is about encounters, and these encounters involve different groups of stakeholders, and all these groups have imaginaries about the joint activity they are in, and also about each other and about the places, cultures or societies where all these stakeholders come from.

To a certain extent, all these imaginaries encounter each other, and they can also clash with each other. In my book, I describe various instances where imaginaries clash. This is interesting because we can learn a lot from encounters that go wrong and where people are confronted with each other's underlining ideas that underpin how they look at other people and other places. Because imaginaries are not innocent. We have them in our heads, but they also influence how we behave towards others and how we expect others to behave towards us.

[LB]: Let's talk about another concept that is central in your work. **Mobilities**. This concept greatly attracted your attention recently and has been the topic of several of your more recent publications. You are also the founder of AnthroMob the Anthropology and Mobility Network within EASA. What do you think is new in mobilities studies, what is the main difference from previous globalization studies? How much do you think mobility is a key concept to describe and understand the contemporary age?

[NS]: Well, I always try to stress when we talk about mobility and mobility studies that, in essence, we're not talking about anything 'new'. I've always made it clear in my writings that, when it comes to anthropology, anthropologists have always been dealing with mobility, from the very beginning. Actually, if you look at the founding fathers of the discipline, they were very firmly engaged with mobility. Malinowski studied the *kula* ring trade and how objects move around, and how these objects are given meaning by people, and how the different directions in which these objects are circulating are meaningful in different ways. So, that was all about mobility. In the USA, Boas conducted a lot of research on migration and he was very interested in the way migration changed people, even in a physical way.

You thus see that this interest has been around. Of course, what has maybe changed is the kind of conceptual framework that we use to make sense of movement and the fact that maybe the types of movement have changed. We have had quite some developments in transport and communication technologies. This has led to different ways in which people move around and stay in touch with each other.

To a certain extent, I think these developments have made movement become more important, and also more important on the academic agenda. But, technically speaking, people have always been moving, and people have always been hindered in their movements by all kind of circumstances. One of the things that anthropologists have brought to interdisciplinary mobility studies is stressing that if you talk about people moving this always also goes hand in hand with immobility. There are people or structures that are not moving to make the movement of other people possible.

Take a simple example, we are here at the Douro river, with ships arriving, and so we have here immobile structures that allow the mobility of the

ships, because the ships need infrastructure for people to go on and off the boat. And you also need people working there, people not moving to handle all the people who come and go. You always have this binary at work. I think this is something that anthropology has brought to the table. When you were asking about what is new in mobility studies, of course scholarship is developing, and scholars are coming up with new frameworks.

One of the things that I am now trying to include in my own work is paying much more attention not just to movement itself and the structures and relationships, but what movement does to people. What does it do to your body, what does it do to your perceived self if you move, if you move in certain ways and if you don't move? I think that this type of questions will receive more attention in the future than they have received so far.

[LB]: How does this focus on mobility, how researching the way mobility takes place and transforms people, challenge and change the traditional toolkit of anthropology? How do we study mobility as anthropologists, in terms of research methods, in terms of ethnography?

[NS]: We dealt with that question in EASA's Anthropology and Mobility Network, and we organised a conference in Oxford a couple of years ago on methodologies of mobility, where we asked the participants to reflect on that question. You can study mobility using very traditional methods of anthropology. That's one way of doing it. You can opt to study mobility by not being mobile yourself. You stay wherever you are, and you basically observe all the mobility happening around you.

Another strategy is to become mobile yourself, and to follow objects or people. That's of course much more experiential, that's a way to try to understand what it does to people when they move around. This option comes with a lot of methodological challenges, but it's not impossible. There's quite a few anthropologists, for example, who recently have been following groups of people who have been trying to enter Europe, over land, over seas, and who have joined these people from Africa, from Syria, walking, by boat, and who have experienced these trips themselves. This is a very rewarding but also a very difficult way. This does not mean that to study and understand mobility we need radically different tools. I mean, mobile tools are useful but are not necessary. I think it's more interesting to have a combination of methods available. I always tell my own students

that our methodology should be determined by the research questions we have. It's our research questions that require certain tools and methods and their preference over other methods. It's the research question that determines the kind of method you use.

[LB]: Mobility has become a very political and touchy issue, especially in recent years, marked by the immigrant and refugee crisis, and by the raising of new walls in several places in the world. I remember when I was carrying out research with aspiring migrants in Guinea Bissau (Bordonaro, 2009), young people had this expectation of mobility and migration, as a path to modernity and to progress. Actually, most of these aspiring migrants in the Global South are actually stuck in a sort of involuntary immobility, as Jørgen Carling wrote (Carling, 2002). We know perfectly that the current refugee and migrants' crises are just the tip of the iceberg, and that access to mobility is not granted to all...

[NS]: Of course, not all people can move equally and easily. It also comes with a lot of assumptions. This has been repeated in scholarship: the importance of the idea that the ideal is to be mobile, as a kind of norm that we all need to aspire to. I have actually made the point that the ideal should not be to be mobile, the ideal should be that people have the freedom to decide whether they want to be mobile or not.

However, we seem to be living in an era in which there is a dominant discourse that seems to be pushing people into being mobile, that this is the norm. It's very weird, because if you look at the statistics, if you look at the numbers of people moving around, migrants and other mobile categories, you see that these numbers are not that big. The number of people actually moving is not that big compared to the number of people that remain immobile.

Despite this, there is the perception that if you don't move, that you are not doing things the 'right' way. This comes with all kinds of associations, like being modern, like the idea that being a good citizen means to be mobile. In different contexts, this gets different interpretations.

Think of the European Union. The EU is, of course, all in favour of mobility, because mobility is a way to make people become more European. The more people leave their country and spread around in Europe and taste other parts of Europe, the more they will become European. There is thus a political agenda behind this. But there are a lot of contradictions

in the European context. Certain mobile groups, for instance, are being labelled ‘migrants’, which has a bad connotation. In EU discourse, this label is restricted to non-Europeans who are mobile within Europe. On the other hand, European citizens who are engaging in the same mobile practices are called mobile EU citizens, which sounds much more positive. There is something about mobility, namely that this concept still has a very positive ring to it.

Some scholars have therefore argued that mobility is maybe, to a certain extent, a concept that has come to replace globalisation. Globalisation, as an academic concept, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, was a very positive concept too, until we started to delve into all the negativity that is attached to globalising processes. When globalisation as a concept started gaining more negative traction, the concept of mobility started becoming more widely used. Many people are thus seeing mobility as a kind of replacement for globalisation, which is an interesting way to explain how also in academic discourse people shift and use different discourses to talk about the same things.

[LB]: You recently wrote an afterword (Salazar, 2017) on tourism and violence for a special issue of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, in which you highlighted the often invisibilised negative and violent effects of tourism in local destinations. We are here in the Douro region, in Portugal, a country that reported a massive growth in tourism in recent years. This is clearly welcomed by public institutions as *the* solution for a country in a difficult economic and financial situation. However, this is bringing about Barcelona-like situations of over-tourism in Lisbon and Porto. What are your thoughts on tourism as an economic development strategy?

[NS]: We should always be very cautious not to be lured into thinking that tourism is a cure-all, that bringing tourism to a place will magically solve all the problems. There are enough cases in history to prove that this is not a good strategy, because tourism is a very volatile economic activity. If you organise tourism, there are a lot of other factors that you can never control. There are a lot of things happening outside of tourism, outside of your destination, even outside of your country, that can have a huge impact on the tourism in your destination.

So, when you are thinking about tourism in economic terms you should always think of tourism as part of a package that includes many other

elements. I think it would be very stupid to replace one dominant regional economic activity, like agriculture, with another activity, like tourism. It would be much wiser to actually think of many different economic activities. Tourism can play a role, but placing all your bets on this one horse is not a good strategy. Also, not here.

We should always be thinking about multiple ways to create added value in a certain place. Because the question of tourism is always related to why tourists would want to come and visit. What is of interest to them? And here we come back to the importance of imaginaries. What kind of imaginaries do tourists already have about this region? Do they actually have any imaginaries at all? If they have them, do we like the images and ideas they have? Do we want to change them? Do we want to continue presenting this region as it has been presented for quite some time, or do we want to develop new imaginaries?

There are many strategic decisions that need to be made and these are not only related to tourism, because many of the people living here don't have anything to do with tourism. We should thus always be thinking beyond the narrow tourism-only option and involve other stakeholders. It's of course very easy to just limit your thinking to tourism. However, if you want to create something successful and lasting, it involves a bit more work and a bit more thinking.

[LB]: I especially appreciate your answer. We are presently researching tourism in a region, the Douro, where the 'development-through-tourism' ideology has become totally dominant. In a territory that has been marked by years of depopulation, migration and poverty, tourism is being proposed today as *the* solution, as the unique development strategy. Do you think there are specific declinations of the tourism industry that can be adapted to rural destinations, for example the Douro region?

[NS]: When we are talking about tourism, we are always talking about the movement of people. Tourists come from somewhere to your region. This is quite crucial, because when you think of tourism as an economic activity, the tourists pay quite a bit of money to actually get access and to be transported to your destination. And that means that a lot of the money the tourist is paying to come to your place is not coming to you or to your community but it's going to all the transport stakeholders that actually bring the tourists to your place.

These are elements over which you have little control. So, the few things you have control over, if you have control over them, is what tourists actually do at the destination. But the access issue is of course key. If people have a limited amount of holidays, they have to divide these days wisely, and this is also why in a lot of destinations in the world people are trying to develop packages that are not concentrated in one region, or one community or one place, because stakeholders are very well aware that if they think only of themselves and their own economic benefit they will not obtain their piece of the pie.

The only way is by collaborating, and this collaboration can involve different regions within a country, sometimes it can go beyond national borders, but collaboration seems to be crucial. If you want to develop tourism, you need to understand first how tourism is structured, where the money flows to, how tourists get access to your place, and all that involves a lot of expertise that local people usually don't have.

So, you need to collaborate with many different stakeholders to obtain the expertise and then to come up with strategies. This implies that maybe the original plans need to be changed, for example because tourists cannot stay at your destination longer than you envisioned. It's a matter of understanding what is possible and what kind of realistic objectives can be achieved.

[LB]: We are constantly presented with data from international organizations showing how tourism has increased enormously and is one of the fastest growing and largest economic sectors in the world today. Actually, the number of tourists seems to increase constantly. Why? Why is tourism so appealing, and to people from different regions of the world? Are there sociological or historical reasons behind this? What is your opinion?

[NS]: Well, it's not clear, and it's not even sure that there is really an increase. What is definitely true is that there are shifts in who is travelling and where people are travelling to. And this will keep on shifting. This explains why, even if you have a successful product, next year it may be over. Because tourists, for all kind of reasons, may decide to go elsewhere and operators may decide, for all kind of reasons, not to include your destination in their packages any more.

But, of course, people like to go on holidays, and tourism is one of the prime ways to spend a holiday. What are the ingredients of a touristic

holiday? People give that many different meanings, but almost always it includes having a good time. If you are creative, you can offer many different options to people to choose from. Some people need to do a lot of activities in order to have a good time, some people don't want any activity, they just like to relax on the beach.

There are many different ways of organizing tourism products and activities, but people want to have a good time. No matter the kind of activity, most people are still interested in having encounters, encounters with new places, with old places that they like returning to because they had previous encounters that were so nice that they keep on returning to those places, and in those places they have encounters with people. As long as destinations can offer that to people, namely encounters that people find meaningful, tourists will keep on coming.

[LB]: So, do you think that at the root of tourism there is this kind of 'human' need for encounters?

[NS]: Yes, and, once again, these encounters can take many different forms. There are people who take their holidays as an opportunity to encounter or re-encounter themselves. They don't want to meet a lot of other people, they just want to have time to spend on their own, to read a book in silence, to go walking. That's also an encounter. And so there must be destinations that offer that too. There are tourists who are interested in discovering places, who are interested in learning about the culture and history of places. And there are others who are more interested in meeting people. And these people are not necessarily the local people at a destination. There are people who are more interested in hanging out with people from their own country or region at a holiday destination.

And so, there are many different forms in which these encounters take place. But I do believe that many forms of tourism have to do with encounters that people can have during this leisure time. Trying to offer this to tourists during their holidays at a destination is what tourism is all about. And, of course, tourism keeps on evolving and destinations keep on inventing new kinds of encounter, and this is the way to keep tourism going, to keep on offering tourists new as well as old things, because if you would offer only new things, then people interested in the old things would be disappointed. And so, I think tourism is and should always be a mix of many different elements.

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