



# The tourist syndrome

## An interview with Zygmunt Bauman

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**abstract** This interview with one of the world's leading sociologists, Zygmunt Bauman, explores how his work on liquid modernity, consumerism, space, hospitality, the 'full planet' and extra territoriality impact on tourism theory. This interview launches perhaps a new concept, that of 'the tourist syndrome' and examines the importance of tourism in providing a platform for the exploration of difference and otherness. As with all of his work Bauman is keen to identify the ethical nature of social activities such as tourism.

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The interview took place in Zygmunt Bauman's home in Leeds, UK, on 14 August 2003. It is perhaps a measure of a person's impact on the world when a taxi driver, randomly hailed from a provincial railway station, knows who you are intending to visit simply from the address you give. But when on the return journey, another, equally randomly booked taxi driver asks straight out: 'How was Zygmunt today?' one begins to catch a whiff of celebrity in the air. Unlike so many celebrities today, Bauman's fame is not based on a lucky break or the thinnest achievement, but on solid achievement over a lifetime. His books, too numerous to mention in an introductory paragraph, have come at us in rapid fire over the years with a series of dazzling, sparkling works over the past 20 years or so. He is certainly one of the most important and influential sociologists of our times but he also has the distinction of being one of our best public intellectuals. Fortunately for us he is also an extremely generous man and he made room for this interview in an otherwise packed diary of lectures all around the world.

My main objective in seeking an interview with Zygmunt Bauman for *Tourist Studies* was to introduce him to scholars of tourism who have not read him, or read him widely, in order to inspire a more reflexive *Tourist Studies*, one based on a better grasp of how tourism configures with contemporary societies, especially in the touristic heartlands of the West. Bauman is the so called

'prophet of postmodernity' and more latterly of liquid modernity but, more significantly, he is one of the best analysts of the contemporary human condition. Tourist studies need to address and be inspired by such analyses for many of the reasons I outlined in the essay I co-wrote with Mike Crang in the first issue of *Tourist Studies* – which Zygmunt read as part of his preparation for the interview. The majority of tourist writers I read still cleave centrally to certain of the rather outdated ideas of Urry's *Tourist Gaze* (1990) and MacCannell's *The Tourist* (1976). This is a problem, not least because these books were set in two types of 'solid modernity' – the 1960s and 1970s–80s, and because their notion of tourism was based on distinctions (home/away; everyday/holiday; real/fake; work/leisure) that no longer apply in the way they once did; and also on the centrality of production – which has now given way to consumerism and on a transformation of space that makes the notion of tourism as they had it seriously problematic.

Bauman has written extensively on these transformations but there is a poor grasp of them in the tourism literature. It is surely ironic that Bauman's liquid modernity, which gives rise to the sorts of mobilities, flexibilities and freedoms that fuel the dramatic growth of tourism, if not the touristification of everyday life, has not been drawn on or made much use of by recent writers in tourist studies. Liquid modernity differs from traditional society which was an inflexible, hierarchical social order and solid modernity which cast aside traditional society in favour of what it imagined could be a better egalitarian blueprint for human society. What characterizes liquid modernity by contrast is the *abandonment* of the search for a blueprint, to search out and impose a newer, better solid form of social order. Instead, we have slowly but surely undermined and undone all forms of inflexibility and restraint, most dramatically perhaps with nation state borders and the freedom to travel – whether the cargo is trade goods, information or human travellers. It is precisely this world that we need to grasp, yet, like all liquids it does not hold its shape for long. Transformation and states of becoming are the social realities we have to deal with and Bauman has characterized our central roles as consumers in liquid modernity as rather like tourists. Importantly, Bauman tends to use tourism as a metaphor for contemporary life in Western societies. He has also written interestingly about the post-September 11 world as the symbolic end of the era of space but clearly those essays in his *Society under Siege* (Bauman, 2002) define a world where the anthropology of frontier-lands takes over from the safe hinterlands of secure nation states. We have entered a darker world and a full planet and it will be interesting to know his views on whether or not, and if so how, tourism might figure in this new and challenging world. So I began by asking him for his views on contemporary tourism in relation to his understanding of contemporary society. In thinking about this, it was not long before a new term was coined, 'the tourist syndrome'.

*Zygmunt Bauman:* I would like to separate tourism as a metaphor for contemporary living from the tourism as a body of specific persons and a sum total of

certain activities. There are questions such as why large numbers of people are shuttled about on specific days to specific places with specific itineraries. And other important questions – above all why they go, what sort of impact it has on their lives, and what sort of impact it has on the natives living in the destination? This is what tourist studies are about, I think. These phenomena, growing phenomena, are very important politically and economically – above all, economically, but in the long run also socially, because of the impact on the structure of living in the places where the tourists start, the places they arrive, and all along their way.

The world is divided up into those places where tourists are carefully ushered into and through, and those places they are prevented from seeing. Tourists only flow into *certain* places. Our everyday worlds are similarly divided – an effect of tourism or the realities tourism reflects? I remember being met at an Italian airport by a young academic from a local affluent family; she apologized for a long, winding, traffic-clogged route she took to the conference where I was speaking. Indeed, it took her two hours to arrive . . . A taxi driver, though, who drove me back to the airport needed but ten minutes to pass through the dilapidated, slum-like, poverty-stricken streets she probably knew nothing about, and tourists never visited . . .

When speaking of the ‘tourists’ or ‘tourism’ as metaphors of contemporary life, I have in mind certain aspects of the tourist condition and/or experience – like being in a place temporarily and knowing it, not belonging to the place, not locked into the local life ‘for better or worse’. That condition is shared with the modality of ordinary daily life, with the way we are all ‘inserted’ in the company of others everywhere – in places where we live or work; not only during the summer holidays, but seven days a week, all year round, year by year. It is that characteristic of contemporary life to which I primarily refer when speaking of *the tourist syndrome*.

Much follows, of course, from that characteristic. First of all, and perhaps the most important, is the *looseness* of ties with the place (physical, geographic, social): There is no firm commitment, no fixed date of staying; it’s all ‘until further notice’. Presumption of temporariness is built into the way of being and behaving. This is very different from one very important expectation which was so typical of *solid modernity* and the foremost feature of a ‘Fordist factory’ or more generally of panoptical power: The assumption that ‘we will meet again’ – tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, next year, next decade perhaps . . . If people know/believe that they are going to meet again and again and again, they strive to work out a certain *modus co-vivendi*, elaborate certain ways of living together, compose rules (norms) by which, as they assume, all of them will abide by. On the way to such an agreement and even after the deal has been struck there is a lot of conflict, there are explosive skirmishes and protracted battles – but people, like the workers of a ‘Fordist’ factory (once a Ford’s employee, forever a Ford’s employee), fight because they know that happen what might they are bound to live together and in each other’s company for a long time to come;

otherwise, the struggle would be hardly worth the sweat and the pain! On the other hand, people who are hired for a particular fixed-term project and know that they will be kicked out next year if not before, or people who work on a day-to-day basis, have no reason to strike. What for? Striking is important to *elaborate the rules*. But rules are necessary only when the relation is durable. If it is not durable nor assumed to be you just stumble from one episode to another and you make the rules as you go, always ad hoc, local rules with but a butterfly life – like the tourists do . . . Such looseness of attachment – being *in* but not *of* the place – makes tourism a well-aimed and pertinent metaphor for contemporary life.

Another feature of the tourist syndrome is ‘grazing behaviour’. A flock of sheep graze on one meadow, and when the grass is all eaten up they have no reason to stay and move, or are moved, to another. Don’t take here the metaphor literally – the tourists don’t eat up everything they find in the place and empty the shop shelves – but as they eat what they came for they find the supply of tasty titbits fast running dry. What they were seeking were, in the first place, experiences – unlike the experiences they lived through before, unlike everything else they knew; untried tastes, un-experienced sensations. But sensations are un-experienced and tastes are untried only once. Tourists have by definition ‘pure relationship’ to the place they visit – ‘pure’ meaning that it has no other purpose than the consumption of pleasurable sensation and that once the satisfaction wanes, it wilts and fades as well – and so you move to another relationship, hopefully as ‘pure’ as the last one. The world of pure relationships is a huge collection of grazing grounds, and living in such a world is shaped after the pattern of wandering from one succulent and fragrant meadow to another. This is a valid reason for a sociologist, whatever field of human life s/he focuses on, to study the ‘tourist experience’: It grasps in a purified form what in ordinary life is mixed and obscured.

And then let us not forget the *frailty* of relationships which tourists enter into wherever they go. This feature of the ‘tourist syndrome’ is intimately connected to what we’ve discussed before: As they are *a priori* temporary and reduced to the consumption of (limited and fast shrinking) sensations, the effort to construct a hard and tough frame of mutual rights and obligations and mutually binding rules of conduct is completely redundant – a waste of time and energy. We don’t trust the relationships to last, we have no idea how long we (tourists, workers, partners) will stay there. Daniel Cohen, the very perceptive clever economist from the Sorbonne, pointed out that a young person who joined the staff of Renault or Ford could be pretty sure that he will retire from the same place at the end of his working life – but the young person who joins Bill Gates’s Microsoft or another Silicon Valley company has no idea what will happen to him in a few months’ time (Richard Sennett calculated that the average length of employment in Silicon Valley is eight months). To be on the move before the ground moves under feet, to be always ready for another run – this is the name of the game. And so, just like during a tourist trip, you can cut out

all the worries about the long term, far-reaching consequences of what you are doing at the moment. In all probability, there will be no such consequences – not for you at any rate. There is no lifelong identity that could be selected at the beginning of life and pursued from then on, no ‘training for life’, no ‘whole life’ skills that can be acquired once and for all and won’t require revision – or forgetting . . .

Living from one moment to another, living for the moment, is a crucial trait of the ‘tourist syndrome’. When you juxtapose the ‘tourist syndrome’ with a ‘pilgrim syndrome’ – with the modality of the pilgrim’s travels, where the significance of every stage is derived fully from the diminishing distance separating the traveller from the previously selected destination – you can see clearly how different the contemporary life is.

*Adrian Franklin:* Yes, you also compare the tourist to the vagabond, another travelling phenomenon of recent years, your point being that although we are all now in a mobile world these two groups travel in vastly different ways: The former celebrating their success and desirability as consumers, the latter admitting their condition of desperation, consumer failure and undesirability.

*ZB:* Yes, there is this alter ego of the tourist, this dark side to the otherwise joyful escapades full of adventure and seeing new sights; the broken-mirror reflection, the caricatured lookalike of tourist ventures: Vagabondage. Vagabonds do not travel by choice (they may only dream of tourist’s ‘I pay, I demand’ freedom); most of them would probably like very much to stay put in the place where they are rather than move on. Alas, they have to move, since they are either expelled from there or cannot make a living. As a rule, vagabonds can’t and don’t stay in a place as long as *they want*, they stay in the place only as long as they *are wanted*. They don’t break relationships because the company of their partners no longer satisfies them. It is their relationships that keep being broken because their own company is no longer desired.

One more essential peculiarity needs to be mentioned. You’ve to decide (and to pay) to seek the wonders and the bliss that the tourist’s life may offer, but in our liquid-modern world you need not move an inch to turn into a vagabond. You are still in the same place, but the place is no longer what it was . . . The company you worked for disappeared, the partner of life (though emphatically not *for* life) has moved out and away, the rules of the game have changed without notice. And you know, even if it did not happen to you yet and you suppress the awareness of its possibility as keenly as you can, that happen to you it may – and at any moment. Dark premonitions blight each moment of joy . . . The figures of ‘tourist’ and ‘vagabond’ mark the two poles of a continuum along which our life and our expectations are plotted.

*AF:* The power of the tourism metaphor works with consumerism just as well as it does with what you have to say about work, workplace politics and so on. In your writings on consumerism you talk about the transition from need

through desire to wish. Do you suppose that we can trace changes in tourism along those lines? So for instance in the old days people used to say you *needed* to get away from your toils in a society of producers, but I'm not quite sure about how desire in tourism differs from wish.

ZB: Basically I think the difference between desire and wish (I owe that extremely pertinent distinction to Harvie Ferguson, (1996) is that desire needs to be planted and cultivated, tended to, groomed; it takes time and effort to tune and hone it . . . Acting on wish does not require such a costly groundwork. Seduction is instantaneous, wish descends from the here and now. Consumers are overwhelmed by the allure and act, so to speak, 'on impulse' . . .

There are permanent tourists, people who are *in general* on the move, people for whom travelling is a way of life. You meet them in any airport – seasoned travellers who in the 'nowherewilles' of which the airports are the most conspicuous examples feel fully and truly 'at home' and behave accordingly. But there are clearly also crowds waiting for charter planes to, say, Tenerife, Majorca, Costa Brava, the Algarve or wherever – visibly tired, feeling a bit lost and certainly unsure of every step they take. It would not be correct, though, to view the opposition between such two categories of tourists and that between 'acting on desire' and 'on wish' as overlapping.

First there is, elaborated and conducted over a long period of time, the *cult* of certain places as harbours of particularly enjoyable tourist experiences and a ritual of attending such places at specific points of the annual cycle. At a certain time of year bodies should be transported from here to there . . . France is probably an extreme case: On 01 August each year almost the whole population of Paris jump into cars and head for the Côtés d'Azur . . . This is desire at work – carefully and lovingly cultivated over many years until its absence, rather than its presence, looks like norm-breaking.

At the same time, there is a relatively new, more efficient and in total account cheaper technology of triggering consumer expenditure: Conjuring up wishes and prompting to act on impulse. This has been acutely spotted and described by Naomi Klein (2000): The technology of *branding*. You are alerted and right away seduced whenever you see the logo . . . Well, everything can in principle be branded and become thereby effective bait. Drinking water has been already branded, and an unheard-of habit to carry a bottle with you whenever you go and take a few gulps every once in a while immediately followed. Air can be branded, the sand of the beach may be branded. Everything can be made a wish-prompting object, and once the initial investment has been made, a lot of money can be made out of it with little further prompting.

I believe that tourism may be promoted, and will be increasingly promoted, deploying such technology in one form or another. Brands are catching because people, bewildered and confused amidst the flood of contradictory peddling calls, crave for confidence and security of choice. Selecting a branded objects carrying a famous logo known and coveted by many, offers such a confidence

and certainty without the awkward need of testing, trying, researching information, collecting evidence . . . You may breath a sigh of relief when you see a familiar logo, on whichever object or place it has been stamped, whatever your current purposes and preoccupations may be and however the object in question is related to them.

In your book (Franklin, 2003) you asked a very interesting question: Why did people suddenly get interested in the old bread ovens in Lancashire? Well, *anything* could be branded, at least carry a brand of 'tourist attraction' (are not the brown boards near the motorway exits a sort of 'logo' for the tourist industry?), and being branded means to be made into an interesting experience. Something unusual, something you haven't seen before, promising an experience you've not had yet, worth making a journey for . . . Never before you worried and lost sleep at night, to be sure, because you had not seen old bread-baking ovens. You did not develop that sort of desire, you had not been overwhelmed by it – no compulsion, no addiction . . . But now, if advertising has done its job well, you have! At least you may. . . Alongside ordinary signposts showing directions brown billboards (you already know what the brown colour means) are dug in at the motorway exits which beckon to your generalized, diffused desire for attractions. You didn't plan to visit this particular 'you must see' place, perhaps you were not aware that it existed, but suddenly you see those strange names on the brown billboards. Why not stop for a moment, interrupt the journey and drive those 20 extra miles? This is what you *wish*. You had no idea that you 'needed' to see the Lancashire bread ovens an hour ago, five minutes ago, now you know – and you turn your car and go.

That's a growing business. Many places try hard to find something that would make them into a 'must see' tourist attraction, and most will, with due imagination, find that something. Until recently Bradford was a very ugly and dull city – old, abandoned factories, gaping windows without glass, nothing to admire, nothing to put it on the map, the very opposite of the idea of a tourist haunt. Well, the city elders managed to rebrand Bradford itself. If you drive through Bradford, you'd be informed of another unheard-of, unlike-any-other attraction on every crossing and corner.

AF: So wish is replacing desire?

ZB: Not replacing, complementing. Sideways of wishes branch from the beaten tracks of desires . . . There are plenty of people saying 'I must go to the Algarve' or 'to Corfu' or 'to Marbella' – places to which every decent person, every family of Joneses, every neighbour along the street went at least once. You have to take some snapshots or a few videotapes to show that you have been there. But the tourist industry can't settle for that. It is too limited, it leaves no room for expansion. Leaving things were they are, counting on well-groomed desires alone, wouldn't make good business. New business must be created, and be created daily. And the sky is the limit once wish takes over.

As you know, the state-of-art shopping malls are aimed at ‘accidental buyers’ – people who go there just for a spot of entertainment without the intention to buy anything specific – pushed not by a need clamouring to be satisfied but pulled by a diffuse longing for recreation. People who stroll through the shopping mall with that sweet music in the background, this enchanting and intoxicating array of colours and smells – are not seeking objects, but sensations: They are pining for an adventure, they covet to be seduced – they are waiting for a wish to arrive like the scribes suffering of ‘writer’s block’ wait for the moment of inspiration. And the wish would surely oblige – courtesy of shopping mall designers and managers, eager to take the waiting out of wanting.

*AF:* I want to go back to your point about the *social* ramifications of tourism. Obviously one is the way in which it has transformed localities but I would be interested in your thoughts on its wider structuring or ordering effects. Especially, for example, on globalization. In your book on globalization (Bauman, 1998) you include an intriguing chapter on tourists and vagabonds and clearly tourism and vagabondism are social aspects of globalization and also your notion of a ‘full planet’. But do you think tourism was a necessary ordering of globalization? So, for example, John Urry and Scott Lash (Lash and Urry, 1994) made the case that innovators like Thomas Cook were as important as Henry Ford as key authors of modernity. Getting the world moving was a profound thing to do in many ways because it created markets where there were none, it created a world that could be known in advance before you travelled. With Thomas Cook you could get the guidebook before you travelled, you could get the money arranged, the tickets arranged. It created the demand to travel widely and freely – for women alone and safely for the first time for example. It is the sort of model, not just of people travelling but a kind of global organization or ordering. Surely the world became more systematically and routinely connected and perhaps establishing norms of connectivity?

*ZB:* No doubt the point is valid and grave, but I wonder to what extent the pioneers of ‘standardized’ tourism may be charged of the advent of extraterritoriality – but particularly of promoting intra-planetary connections. Standardization stamps uniformity where connections would be, sameness over differences, uniformity over exchange. The annual flood of German tourists to Rimini, Italy, could add a few German-language advertisements to the Rimini streets – but it hardly affects German–Italian ‘connections’. By design or by default, Thomas Cook taught and trained his clients to expect the same kind of service, hotel rooms, facilities, gadgets wherever they go, and everything else on top in a thoroughly sanitized and ‘detoxicated’ form. Travelling businessmen and globetrotting academics proved to be diligent pupils and trainees. Planet-wide chains of Holiday Inns or Sheratons are there not to bring the far away life closer, but to supply an extraterritorial enclave, the reassuring sameness amidst variety – impermeable and invulnerable, immune to the local idiosyncrasies or



allowing its strictly measured volume – only as much of (tamed) idiosyncrasy as is un-intimidating, comfortable.

This is hardly a fulfilment of the nineteenth century ambition to travel to learn, travel to understand, travel to get in touch with alien people and to embrace and imbibe and assimilate the untold riches stored in their heads, in their timeless cultural lore . . . Rather, the opposite, really. One meets the natives in the shops at the other side of the counter, in the restaurants bringing dishes from the kitchen. Or you watch the natives as a spectacle – selling their ‘otherness’ to tourists, making their living by selling their culture as spectacle. Hardly a ‘contact between civilizations’, let alone an exchange between cultures. You may go hundreds and thousands of miles, in order to find yourself in cosily familiar surroundings, comfortably secure because familiar, with a few ‘local touches’ sprinkled over it to justify the expenditure. Powerful minds are working on that, trying to strike the right balance between security of the familiar and adventure of the strange. Success or failure of the tourist industry hangs on that balance. The right proportion of genuine or pretended ‘otherness’, source of pleasurable experience of novelty, challenge and adventure, and reassuring familiarity, source of the security feeling, that’s the name of the tourist game these days. That’s what I suspect most of the R&D money in the tourist establishment is invested in.

Myself, I happen to travel a lot, lecturing in all sorts of universities, in all sorts of countries. Apart from Albania I have been to universities in all the European countries. But wherever I go, whenever I give a lecture, the questions are always the same. I don’t feel like really being in a different country . . . I meet each time, I suppose, an audience as ‘extraterritorial’ as myself, the guest. And I believe that the feeling is reciprocated. I guess that people who ask the questions probably find it easier to communicate with me than with their next-door neighbour. We all, complete with the language we use, the topics we debate, the style of expression, the fashion of narrating the world, formulating problems, constitute a world in its own right, but loosely tied to our respective physical environments.

I think this applies also to travelling businessmen in no small measure. Wherever they go they discuss exactly the same problems in similar terms (banks that want to show themselves to be indispensable to travelling businessmen because of their knowledge of ‘local specificity’ can find little to emphasize in their commercials except the different depth of bowing practised in different lands). Languages may be different, but then there are translators.

*AF:* When I was reading your essay on tourism I got the feeling that you saw it as a rather dismal or disappointing leisure. And today you’ve contrasted the traveller as being a more heroic character, trying to make contacts, connections, learn. In *Globalisation* (Bauman, 1998) you contrast the consumerist world of tourists in their extraterritorial spaces with the unwanted and shunted-about shadow lands of global vagabonds – refugees, dissidents, illegal immigrants and

so on with their heavy ties to territory. But in your later book *Society Under Siege* (Bauman, 2002) you begin to talk of the need for a global political order in which modes of travel and *hospitality* may become reconfigured. Is there a better world than the world of tourism and vagabonds?

ZB: I wouldn't personally use the term 'dismal'. I don't think the way people live today is dismal . . . People are doing their best, to the best of their abilities and the resources at their disposal (however meagre), to make a decent living, to live with dignity. And I don't hold a grudge against people wanting to satisfy their curiosity of the world, for example, in tourism! What I am afraid of, what I am wary of and of which I am suspicious, are the substitutes, that mislead, misdirect and mis-channel the potentially creative impulses into a sideway or downright blind alley.

In my little book about community (Bauman, 2001) I discuss the dangerous phenomenon of fraudulent substitutes for the absent real thing (substitutes that in fact make the real thing yet more absent) a bit more widely. There are 'substitute communities' which I call 'cloakroom', or 'peg' communities. I call them that because they remind one of the kind of two-hour community that is created in cloakrooms of, say, theatres; people come to the theatre, all go to the cloakroom, all hang their overcoats or anoraks on pegs, go to performance, and when the performance is over they pick up their coats, each one hereafter going in his/her own direction. They would probably never come together again. There are such 'cloakroom communities' wrapped around celebrities or celebrity events, around a paedophile freshly released from prison – any 'event' with a short attention-life expectation will do. The need they answer is genuine. People do long for communities they miss. They want the real stuff, but real stuff being unavailable, they settle for substitutes – frail, fragile, fissiparous formations that would fall apart tomorrow once new headlines appear in the newspapers and everybody is cajoled, forced to forget yesterday's passions to make room for new ones. Substitutes mitigate, attenuate the pain, the suffering caused by the absence of the real stuff. If bread is missing, you would chew grass to calm the pangs of hunger . . . Substitutes are instant cures. They do not treat, but exacerbate the disease and make it more difficult to cure, as the energy which could be channelled into therapy is diverted.

Tourism is such a substitute, a substitute satisfaction of a genuine need – that could otherwise prove creative and deeply ethical: The need to top up the proximity of otherness with recognition of shared humanity and enrichment of its contents. The other, to use one of Kant's expressions is 'sublime' – facing the other is a sublime experience, a mixture of fear and awe. We tend to be afraid of the strange and unfamiliar while being attracted to it – a very ambiguous and ambivalent feeling, a combination of *mixophobia* and *mixophilia* which I described in the book mentioned earlier (Bauman, 2001). Politically, ethically, socially it's a very, very important experience – to be attracted by otherness, to be inclined in some sense to get to know something you didn't know before,

to go where you were not before, and so on. In our times particularly, crowded together on a full planet, we face the need to rise to that challenge more than ever before. A couple of hundred years ago we had reason to rise from the level of local community to the then not-yet-imagined community of the state, of the nation. Now, we have to make another step, a giant leap as a matter of fact – to rise to the level of *humanity as such*.

Strangers, aliens, ‘foreigners’, people of different forms of life, are nowadays the one case in which you can say that we are going to meet tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, next year and as far in the future as our fantasy may reach. And so, as always in such situations, we have to work out the ways of reconciling natural attraction with natural repulsion – the mode of coexisting. Curiosity of the ‘otherness’ could be a very helpful motive, an excellent springboard to gather momentum in that long and arduous venture. It is, though, diverted sideways – capitalized upon in the service of commercial goals and used up, exhausted in the process. You spend the whole supply of curiosity in the trip to Algarve, where you drink the same beer you drink at home (and even meet the same neighbours because you probably travelled on a charter plane). There is something you can write home about – cars, for instance, are driven on the right (that means wrong) side of the road. Substitutes create an illusion that certain impulses are satisfied while they are being wasted. The impulse which could be used for other, imperative purposes is frittered and exhausted. The impulse however is profitable enough for the tourist industry to be up in arms to prevent us from using these impulses for non-tourist purposes – which from the point of view of that industry would be a real waste.

So the impulse is genuine and so is, as I would say – I would risk this old-fashioned word – the ‘need’. I think there is a genuine need inscribed in the evolution of the human species evolved, or arising from the way in which humanity made itself. We are ‘transcending beings’ which constantly look forward beyond the border they have drawn, beyond the limits they set, and we need this propensity of transcending today because we are facing a truly life and death challenge. Either we all teach each other and learn from each other, or we will live unhappily ever after, if we stay alive, that is. Curiosity of the other and the impulse to transcend our reciprocal otherness comes handy under those circumstances. But it keeps being used up, diverted, channelled away squandered by the commercialized pseudo-multiculturalism which boils down to the waiter’s different skin colour and different spices in the food – in lieu of genuine conversation or a real attempt to get an insight into the other’s life and thought.

*AF:* So if we were to produce a global politics, you know the global will, and hospitality in the world of human beings and humanity, and providing the tourist industry couldn’t stop it, or undermine it by distracting us, I mean what would travel, how do you suppose people’s curiosity would be satisfied?

*ZB:* I wonder whether the ‘humanity building’ cause could be promoted better by staying in your own urban environment . . . Whenever you travel tourist-mode today, the odds are that you’ll land in that extraterritorial ‘nowhereville’. As far as really getting to know the other is concerned you gain little or nothing at all and your time and money are wasted. On the other hand – if you venture to Leeds city centre . . . I happen to live in a sedate, conservative and middle class or lower-middle class area where people take care to observe the norm and be seen as observing it. They beware the alien ways . . . But in other places of Leeds people, ethnics, religions, life styles mix daily and happily and do it matter-of-factly, as part of their daily routine. The areas where the university students live are thoroughly mixed, you know, and mixed in a genuine way – not just statistically, but socially: People meet in the same shops, in the same cinemas, on the same street, in the same discotheque – at work and at leisure, in the public realm and privately. They talk to each other, exchange views, they get to know each other and respect each other’s otherness. Soon they stop noticing the colour of skin. It doesn’t matter any more.

Let me repeat – the city environment continuously generates a curious blend of mixophilia and mixophobia. There is mixophobia – the fear of the rough areas, of no go areas, of proximity of alien characters, obtrusiveness of alien customs. And there is mixophilia – sincere curiosity of the fascinating secrets which all otherness holds and the desire to learn them, to know and to see at close quarters how other people live, what they think. Paradoxically, the chance of meeting the other (I mean genuinely meeting, not mis-meeting) may be greater when you stay at home in the big cities than when you go a thousand miles away in order to land up in a Holiday Inn. When I ponder the prospects of humanity, I derive more hope in this ‘globalization coming home to roost’ . . .

*AF:* So it’s the young who will pioneer it? They’re the ones who will make the change, they’re the ones who will dare to go and dare to transgress.

*ZB:* Oh yeah. And they behave differently when they walk the streets. I see very many groups of young people which are of mixed race – mixed everything, as a matter of fact. But I seldom see groups of older people of the same mixture, you don’t find it. All these American films which are politically correct you always see . . . whenever a group of people is shown there are bound to be one or two blacks, a couple of Hispanics, perhaps a sample of ‘native nations’ thrown into the bargain – depending on the current balance of forces. The ‘really existing street’ looks different. On the other hand, however, it’s very seldom that you find a group of young people which is uniform. Not in places like Leeds at any rate. I think that by design and more yet by default our cities, particularly our big cities, are schools or training grounds of living with strangers – living with difference. Strangers that you routinely meet and mix with stop being samples of civilizations at war and turn into individual human beings with their individual charms, vices or oddities. Rubbing each other’s

elbows inside the city crowd seems to be a most promising way to ‘achieving humanity’.

AF: There’s a challenging thought to bring us to a close. Zygmunt, thank you very much.

ZB: What’s your drink? You are not in a car?

AF: I’d love a drink.

ZB: Gin and tonic?

AF: Fantastic!

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