

Introduction

In 2023 a small team of people established the *Tourism's Horizon: Travel for the Millions initiative* (TH:TM). TH:TM is a loose group of associates – primarily but by no means exclusively working in universities – with two aims. One is to promote good writing and discussion on the cultural and economic advantages of tourism (which is certainly not the sole preserve of academics) at a time when the news surrounding it is often pessimistic. The other aim is to provide a bridge between the academic scene and the public: less ivory tower, more Athenian Agora.

We instigated our *Tourism Interviews Project* in the Summer of 2023, the results of which are presented here. It's been about a career-length since something approaching 'tourism studies' took off, and most of our respondents are at the latter or emeritus stage of their academic careers – people who have spent decades thinking and writing about the industry. The aim was to provide them with a chance to reflect, and in turn to prompt reflection within the academy and beyond.

We approached a number of people from around the world, and ended up with six respondents. Whilst our respondents have worked and studied widely, both geographically and conceptually, there is a strong European emphasis. This reflects the reality of the project and its resource limitations, but also that academic publishing and the production of knowledge generally has been based around the more developed economies in Europe, North America and Australasia. Things have changed (and bear in mind the experts in our project would have started their career some decades ago), albeit educational opportunity continues to be heavily skewed to the wealthy. We anticipate and hope that similar projects in the future will feature experts emanating from the continents of Africa and Asia, and we hope to address this deficit ourselves in future interviews.

Notwithstanding this, the aftermath of Covid-19, and the debates around the ostensible lessons to be learned from it, plus the emphasis on tourism's 'overtourism' problem, in academia and media alike, make the current moment an important one in which to take stock and reflect.