

Business Tourism as an Instrument for Changing the Image and Sustainable Metropolisation of Postindustrial Cities as Exemplified by the City of Katowice in Poland

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Abstract

Postindustrial agglomerations struggling with image deficits and environmental problems are looking for new development paths to take. One of these paths can bring about the development of business tourism, including the industry of the organisation of meetings and events. The unique and attractive character of the place can favour taking such a direction. The business tourism sector can therefore become an instrument contributing to the sustainable metropolisation of the city by building up its position in the global network of flows. The development of the meetings and events sector allows, therefore, for a change of image, for a re-evaluation of endogenous resources, including those relating to the industrial past, and for tapping into the unlimited resources of the global network. Increased attention in this network may lead to an influx of more events, and of investors as well. Replacing heavy industry with an enlarged service sector and modern industry based on flexible and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises fosters sustainable development. The meetings and events industry can become a tool for sustainable development and the promotion of its ideas, related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The trajectory outlined above seems very promising. However, to some extent, it is just a hypothesis. The author undertakes to test it on the example of Katowice, a former industrial city which has decided to follow the route outlined above to become a city that hosts many events, including the COP24 summit in 2018. In the article, the author presents empirical research studies whose authors tried to determine whether the path the city has chosen has a real impact on its image and development. The author also deals with the question of the sustainability of such a development path and the conditions for its self-support in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Keywords

business tourism, meetings and events industry, post-industrial agglomerations, metropolisation, Poland, sustainable development

Turystyka biznesowa jako narzędzie zmiany wizerunku i zrównoważonej metropolizacji miast poprzemysłowych na przykładzie Katowic

Streszczenie

Aglomeracje poprzemysłowe borykające się z deficytem wizerunku i problemami ekologicznymi poszukują nowych ścieżek rozwoju. Jedną z nich może oznaczać rozwój turystyki biznesowej, w tym przemysłu spotkań i wydarzeń, czemu sprzyja wyjątkowy charakter miejsca i jego atrakcyjność. Sektor turystyki biznesowej może zatem stać się narzędziem zrównoważonej metropolizacji miasta pomóc w budowaniu jego pozycji w globalnej sieci przepływów. Rozwój sektora spotkań i wydarzeń pozwala na zmianę wizerunku, rewaloryzację zasobów endogennych, także tych odnoszących się do przeszłości przemysłowej oraz sięgnięcie po nieograniczone zasoby sieci globalnej, gdzie zdobycie uwagi prowadzi do napływu kolejnych wydarzeń, ale także inwestorów. Zrównoważonemu rozwojowi sprzyja zastępowanie przemysłu ciężkiego sektorem usług oraz nowoczesnym przemysłem opartym na elastycznych i innowacyjnych małych i średnich przedsiębiorstwach. Sam przemysł spotkań i wydarzeń może stanowić narzędzie zrównoważonego rozwoju oraz promowania jego idei odnoszących się do celów zrównoważonego rozwoju ONZ (SDGs). Nakreślona wyżej trajektoria jest bardzo obiecująca, jednak po części jest tylko hipotezą, testowaną

przez autora na przykładzie Katowic, dawnego miasta przemysłowego, które postanowiło podążać nakreślonym wyżej szlakiem, stając się miastem goszczącym wiele wydarzeń, w tym szczyt COP 24 w 2018 roku. Autor prezentuje badania empiryczne, których autorzy starali się ustalić, czy obranie takiej ścieżki efektywnie wpływa na wizerunek i rozwój miasta. Autor mierzy się z pytaniem o trwałość takiej ścieżki rozwoju i warunki jej samopodtrzymywania, także w kontekście kryzysu branży turystycznej wywołanego pandemią COVID-19.

Słowa kluczowe

turystyka biznesowa, przemysł spotkań i wydarzeń, aglomeracje poprzemysłowe, metropolizacja, Polska, zrównoważony rozwój

Introduction

One of the consequences of globalisation, which manifests itself in the reduction of barriers to all kinds of flows (Robertson 1992: 8) and in the growing interdependence of phenomena that were previously isolated (Giddens 1990: 64), is the emergence of a global scene with nodal cities as important actors. This scene is a space for global flows. It obeys the logic of the network in which the position of a given actor depends on their ability to generate network traffic, produce and direct new connections, and attract attention. As far as cities and metropolitan areas are concerned, the attentionalist character of the global network (Alexander and Söderqvist 2002: 199) results in constant competition between both individuals and groups. The cities engage in group competition by creating networks of a lower order,¹ aimed at increasing their potential and visibility. This is due to the fact that such increase is followed by a rise in resources, which accumulate in places offering the best conditions for their effective use and multiplication. Therefore, choosing a development strategy focused on metropolisation essentially means trying to build up a position in the network of global flows. This is done by developing nodal functions as part of a knowledge-based economy. On the one hand, this strategy involves the need to possess a certain critical mass of local resources (infrastructure, universities, innovative enterprises and representatives of creative industries), but also, and perhaps above all, the ability to transform these resources into network visibility (attention). The visibility may stem from a certain story about a place, from its specific heritage and distinctive character, and it results in redirecting some of the streams of global flows towards this place. The ability to transform local resources into visibility and a nodal position in the network gives cities increased access to the almost unlimited resources of the global network and can be one of the driving forces of territorial development.

1. The meetings and events industry as a factor contributing to the metropolisation of postindustrial agglomerations

In the world's largest metropolises, the processes of network accumulation are largely automatic. Smaller centres, however, usually require some action on the part of the central and local public authorities (Christofle and Massiera 2009: 5). They need to implement strategies focused on the development of metropolitan functions. This is especially the case in post-industrial agglomerations, for which new resources and development paths are sought (Pyka 2015). A new and attractive image must be formed, resulting from an interesting past which endows a place with a unique character. In such centres, metropolisation strategy entails adopting a consciously implemented development policy, based on culture and the meetings and events sector. On the one hand, focusing on culture allows the regions to modify the awkward image associated with their industrial past. On the other, the rich culture of these centres proves to be a valuable and malleable endogenous resource, with a significant potential for the development of those sectors of economy that are based on knowledge and creativity (Pyka 2018a). As these areas captivate with their ambiguity, a consistent image policy allows them to attract the attention of the network. In some cases, it successfully transforms them into attractive places for the organisation of significant cultural, sporting or business events. Developing the industries of culture, meetings and events thus becomes one

¹ An example here is the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which gathers cities that base their strategy of development in one of seven fields of creativity.

of the key elements of urban development policy, oriented at developing the metropolitan potential and joining the global flow network. The effectiveness of such a strategy can be demonstrated by the fact that, according to statistical data, the sector of business tourism in cities is growing faster worldwide than the whole sector of tourism as such (Cieślakowski 2018: 35).

Katowice is an example of a city that is implementing the strategy outlined above. It is the capital of Upper Silesia, once the largest industrial centre in this part of Europe, and often compared to the Ruhr region in Germany. In the first decades of the twentieth century, people employed in industry made up 87% of the population of Upper Silesia. Of these, 50% were employed in the steel industry and mining. In the late 1970s, employment in these sectors amounted to 850,000 people in Upper Silesia. Almost 40 mines operated in Katowice alone. The political transformation that took place after 1989, compounded by the economic transformation which brought about deindustrialisation, resulted in the collapse of heavy industry and a sharp reduction in employment in this sector. The number of industry employees fell from 112,000 to 40,000 in Katowice alone in the years 1989–2012. This was due, among other factors, to the closure of almost all the mines, the number of which fell from 38 in 1989 to only three today (Tkocz 2015). It was a very difficult period for Upper Silesia and its capital. A profound transformation of the foundations of the economy was required. Replacing the lost jobs with employment provided primarily by the growing service sector became a matter of priority. The sector's share in the economy of Katowice alone increased at the beginning of the 2010s to 76%. The success of the transformation of Katowice is undoubtedly associated with the strategy of metropolisation, which consists of developing functions of a higher order with respect to culture, networking the city in the international dimension, and fostering an image of Katowice as a city of great events. This was accompanied by an influx of foreign investment. An important sign of the metropolisation strategy was the creation of the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union in 2007, which included 14 largest cities of the conurbation around Katowice. The development of metropolitan functions in the field of culture was associated with strategic infrastructural investments. These included the construction of a concert hall as part of the Science and Musical Education Centre SYMFONIA in 2007, the renovation and extension of the Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra in 2014, and finally the revitalisation of the area of the former Katowice Mine and the establishment of the so-called Culture Zone with its landmarks: the Silesian Museum, the International Congress Centre and, above all, the new seat of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra. Katowice's authorities pursued a strategy of internationalisation and building up a position in the network of European cities by applying for the title of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). Though unsuccessful, this bid generated dynamics within the city which culminated in the accession of Katowice to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2015. Having acquired the appropriate cultural infrastructure and exhibition facilities, as well as growing international recognition, Katowice began to attract large events, such as the Womex World Music Expo 2017, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network Annual Conference in 2018, and the United Nations COP24 Climate Change Conference in Katowice in December of the same year. Since 2016, the global Intel Extreme Masters eSports tournament has been organised in Katowice, the second edition of which attracted to the city 173,000 players from around the world. It is already known that, in 2022, Katowice will be hosting the United Nations World Urban Forum (WUF11) held under the auspices of the United Nations Agenda for urbanisation and urban settlements of the UN-HABITAT. The gradual change in the image of the city and its networking makes it easier to attract global business players such as IBM, which launched its service centre in Katowice in 2014. The ongoing metropolisation of Katowice was legally confirmed by virtue of the act of 2017, which established the first Metropolitan Union in Poland (Pyka 2018b), comprising an area of 41 adjacent and neighbouring municipalities and vested with competences in the field of transport, spatial planning, socio-economic development and international promotion. In just over a decade, Katowice has been transformed from a medium-sized city, a capital of an industrial region in economic crisis, into a city rediscovering and valorising its past – a capital of a metropolitan area of over 2 million people and a host of events radiating effects on a global scale.

One of the instruments used in the transformation of the city was the adoption of a strategy aimed at the development of the sector of meetings and events. The sector is a driving force, but also a consequence, of metropolisation. Naturally, the organisation and hosting of great events is important to the extent to which it generates changes in the city, endows it with a new image and

fuels its economy. It should not be surprising, therefore, that after a decade of rapid development of the sector of meetings and events, as well as of business tourism in general, the municipal authorities of Katowice have begun to appraise the effectiveness of the path taken. This reflection became the basis for research carried out by the scientists from the Observatory of Urban and Metropolitan Processes at the University of Silesia in Katowice. The main research questions concerned, first and foremost, the significance of the congress and business events organised in Katowice for the image of the city. The goal was to identify changes in this image, as perceived both by the residents of Katowice and the inhabitants of the metropolitan area, and by visitors from other parts of Poland and foreigners coming to the city. Secondly, it was vital to determine the importance of the development of the sector of meetings and events for the socio-economic situation of Katowice and the region. The perspectives of the participants in the events, of the event organisers, and of local entrepreneurs were studied. The study covered over 2,000 people and applied various research methods and techniques, discussed later in the article.

As the studies have basically established the legitimacy of the strategy for the development of the city adopted by decision-makers – a strategy based, among others, on business tourism – another important question arises, which may be difficult to answer based solely on the research, but which is still worth formulating. This is whether it will be possible to maintain, in the longer run, the current trend of development based on the meetings and events industry, considering the global trends in this sector. The key issues here include the rotation of cities in the rankings of leading destinations due to the trivialisation of some of them, a general decline in the number of participants in individual events (ICCA 2018b), and the growing pressure exerted on the business tourism sector to participate in implementing the UN sustainable development objectives by 2030. The fact that Katowice is a city at the outset of the trend, which will continue to benefit from the effect of “newness” for some time, seems to indicate that the current upward trend may be maintained. Furthermore, the analysis of the statistical data for the sector indicates that a part of the market is currently being taken over by medium-sized urban centres. Aside from the question about the future of the meetings and events sector in Katowice, the author’s main aim is to present the results of the research mentioned above. This is to show the scale of the impact the sector has on the image and the development of the city as viewed by the participants of the largest events hosted in this city in 2018. Before the presentation of these results, however, the reader needs to be familiar with the characteristics of the sector of world meetings and events, and with the challenges it faces at the end of the second decade of the 21st century.

2. The structure and potential of the meetings and events sector against the background of the business tourism industry

There are many ways in which literature defines and classifies activities related to the meetings and events industry against the background of the whole sector of tourism, as well as of the other branches of economy. As issues of definition are not the subject of this article, only basic conceptual distinctions will be made here. According to the classification of the World Tourism Organisation, the events and meetings sector should be categorised as business tourism (in French: *tourisme d'affaires*), which is distinguishable from other forms of tourism, particularly leisure tourism (in French: *tourisme des loisirs*) (WTO 2006). Nevertheless, some researchers place the sector of meetings and events outside of tourism as such, due to the sector’s economic nature (Charié 2006). Other specialists, on the other hand, point out that the events and meetings sector not only belongs to the tourism sector, but also that nowadays a hybridisation of business tourism and leisure tourism can be observed. The melding of the two is associated with the ongoing processes of metropolisation. In broad terms, business tourism also includes business travel and participation in trade fairs and showrooms. Nevertheless, due to the commercial nature of these events and, frequently, a work-related obligation to participate in them, some authors apply a narrower definition to the concept of the industry of meetings and congresses (*Tourisme de réunions et de congrès – TRC*), including meetings of the sectors of business, science or non-governmental organisations (Fabry, Christoffe 2013). Regardless of these uncertainties, instead of the concept

of *business tourism*, the concept of *meetings and events industry* is increasingly used, in order to reflect the dynamic development of the sector and in acknowledgement of its growing importance for the economic development of cities and regions (Cieślakowski 2018: 36). The terminological diversity outlined here also stems from the fact that organisations in the business tourism sector develop their own classifications of the industry, and also their own methodological approaches in the study of its evolution. For example, in creating its annual statistical reports, the ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) takes into account recurring events attended by at least 50 participants from at least three countries. Nevertheless, the analyses of this organisation focus on the market of NGO organisations (*association meetings market*), which are analysed independently of the meetings of international governmental organisations. In the approach proposed by the ICCA, the international meetings market consists of corporate meetings and non-corporate meetings. The latter include the meetings of governmental organisations and agencies mentioned above, but also meetings of international non-governmental organisations (ICCA 2018a). The UIA (Union of International Associations) has developed its own methodology for studying the sector of meetings and events as well. It applies more stringent criteria in defining and researching the “meetings” sector. The meetings should last for at least three days and bring together no fewer than 300 participants from at least five countries, the foreign guests representing a minimum of 40% of all persons participating in the event (POT 2019). From the perspective of the research problem undertaken in this text, the terminological conventions mentioned above are of secondary importance. The author will use the concept of the meetings and events industry. The basic question remains in what way the development of broadly understood business tourism and, more precisely, the industry of meetings and events, allows former industrial cities and agglomerations to enter the path of metropolisation and to change their image in order to become nodes in the network of global economic flows, and thus to attract specific resources. In this approach, all those events may be relevant which cause the inflow of actors and resources to a given urban centre, and which increase its internationalisation and strengthen its position in the network.

When analysing the evolution of the meetings and events sector, not only is the quantitative trend important, but so are the changes in the decision-makers’ approach to the sector itself. Their growing awareness of the role it plays is just as significant. The example of France can be cited in this context. Until the 1980s, the organisation of meetings and events in a city was treated there as a matter of secondary importance, unrelated to its traditional functions and therefore not requiring attention or special treatment. The change of the approach in France was related to, among other things, the decentralisation reforms of the 1980s, and the partial taking over by the local government elites of the responsibility for local and regional development. The meetings and events sector then started to be treated as a lever for territorial development, opening up access to external resources. Free from the limit of seasonality inherent in classical tourism, this sector began to appear as an effective link between leisure tourism, business and internationalisation (Christoffle and Massiera 2009: 11). The recognition of the business tourism sector as an important element of the urban development strategy was also connected with a rapid increase in the turnover of this sector of the economy. The increase went hand in hand with the development of the global economy, as a result of a decrease in transport costs, freedom of communication and the flow of various types of resources. Data collected by ICCA since 1963 show an average of 10% annual increase in the number of recorded meetings, which means that their total number doubles every 10 years on average. However, it should be emphasised that the continuing upward trend, including in the number of participants of meetings in the entire sector, is accompanied by a change in their character. Although the number of meetings is constantly growing – the number of recurring meetings included – they have become smaller in the number of participants, and tend to last shorter. The share of annual (i.e. recurring) meetings increased from 36.1% in the years 1963–1967 to 59.8% in the years 2013–2017, while, in the same period, the average number of participants per event dropped from 1,263 to 409, and their average duration decreased from almost six (5.78) days to less than four (3.65) (ICCA 2018a). The good condition of the sector can also be confirmed by the annual increase in its expenses, which rose by 4% only between 2017 (EUR 10.6 billion) and 2018 (EUR 11 billion). Research conducted among the ICCA members also showed that, in 2018, their income increased compared to the previous year by about 8–9%. The largest increase in income

was recorded in rental (45%) and gastronomy (33% – food and beverages) (ICCA 2019a). As regards the meetings sector divided into industries, meetings in the field of technology record the highest growth dynamic, exceeding that of medical meetings, which still occupy the largest share in absolute numbers (16.6%).

Looking at the performance of the meetings and events sector in geographical terms, it should be noted that the most popular destinations change every five years on average. Although Europe remains the area where the largest number of meetings is hosted, its market share dropped from 71.8% in the years 1963–1967 to 53.6% in the years 2013–2017. In the same time period, Asia's share in the meetings and events market recorded by ICCA increased from 8.4% to 18.5%. In the ranking of cities according to the number of meetings held in 2018, the leading positions were occupied by, respectively, Paris, Vienna, Madrid, Barcelona and Berlin. The leaders in the ranking of countries are, respectively, the USA, Germany, Spain, France and the United Kingdom. Among the cities receiving the largest number of participants, the ranking of the top five is similar. These are, respectively, Barcelona, Paris, Vienna, Munich and Berlin (Munich replaces Madrid here). When countries are ranked according to the number of participants, the list is again similar and includes, respectively, the USA, Spain, Germany, France and Canada, which replaces the UK in the fifth position (ICCA 2018b).

Poland is far from the top positions in the rankings indicated, but owing to the fall of communism, the accession to the European Union and the metropolisation of the largest Polish cities, the country is not only noticeable in the rankings, but also advancing in them. Considering only the post-communist period, the number of meetings held in Poland, as registered by the ICCA, increased from 149 in the years 1993–1997 to 1039 in the years 2013–2017. Thus, Poland has advanced to the 19th position in the group of 20 countries of the world receiving the largest number of meetings – replacing Argentina at this rank. Poland managed to maintain the 19th position (11th in Europe) in 2018 as well, when it also reached the 25th place in the world in estimated numbers of participants. The largest Polish cities and metropolitan areas are beginning to attract a large number of events. This results in increasing visibility, reflected in the rankings. In the ICCA report for 2018, Warsaw was ranked 29th, Kraków 45th, Poznań 120th, while Wrocław and Gdańsk took the 180th and 196th positions, respectively (ICCA 2018a). According to the Polish Tourist Organisation's classification, in 2018 alone, 22,152 meetings were held in Poland – an increase of 4.72% compared to the previous year. The largest percentage of events (36.7%) were related to the trade and service sector, followed by meetings of groups in the humanities (16.5%). More than half of all the events considered were congresses and conferences (55%) (PTO 2019).

3. Global challenges to the meetings and events sector and its importance in relation to the UN SDGs until 2030

The growing potential and scale of the meetings and events industry sector, and, therefore, also its impact on the society and the economy, goes hand in hand with the growing self-awareness of the industry representatives regarding their social and environmental responsibility. As a result, the industry's potential contribution to the achievement of the UN's 2030 sustainable development goals is now to be considered. However, such consideration would not be possible without developing a measurement methodology and conducting reliable research to determine the scope and level of the sector's impact on the environment beyond the dimension of pure tourism. It turns out that the meetings and events sector, treated as part of the tourism sector, generates multiplier effects in over 30 sectors of the economy related to it. These range from transport to communication, construction, gastronomy, safety, culture, and sport (Khoreva et al. 2019). An interesting methodology for studying the impact of the event industry has been developed by researchers from Oxford Economics. They distinguish three basic groups of impact factors. The first group consists of direct impacts. These include the number of events, guests and exhibitors, followed by direct spending by exhibitors and participants, and the expenses associated with the meetings. The group of direct impact factors also includes the number of jobs supported by the sector and the GDP it generates (direct GDP and employment). According to the Oxford Economics' data for 2018, the meetings

and events sector generated EUR 115.9 billion of direct expenditure, created 1.3 million jobs and generated EUR 66.7 billion in GDP. This places the industry on a position equivalent to the 72nd ranked national economy in the world. The second group consists of indirect impacts related to the so-called supply chain. Examples here include energy, food and specialised services related to marketing, equipment maintenance, cleanliness and technological support, as well as financial, accounting and legal services. The last group comprises “induced impacts” related to the expenditure derived from the salaries of the event sector employees, such as hotel employees, and their consumption. The Oxford Economics researchers have attempted to calculate the overall impact of the events sector, taking into account all the three groups of factors. They estimated it at EUR 275 trillion in expenditure, 3.2 million jobs and EUR 167.2 trillion in GDP. This is a potential equal to the 56th national economy in the world, ahead of the economies of countries such as Hungary, Kuwait and Ecuador (Oxford Economics 2019). An interesting approach to analysing the impact of the event industry was proposed by scientists from the University of Technology in Sydney, who conducted research during five international events which took place in this city in the years 2009–2011. Their goal was to identify not only the economic but also social benefits resulting from the development of this sector of the economy. They distinguished four basic groups of effects and benefits, to which they assigned 12 impact indicators. The following benefits and effects were distinguished:

- a) general benefits and outcomes, such as assimilation of new ideas, knowledge and perspectives by the participants;
- b) individual benefits and outcomes gained, including new contacts and development opportunities;
- c) benefits and outcomes gained by the host destination, such as new opportunities for local organisations, associations and the private sector;
- d) benefits related to the ways in which the effects and benefits mentioned above are used (how individuals used benefits and outcomes), that is, for example, the way in which knowledge acquired during the meetings is used in practice.

Furthermore, five impact dimensions have been identified in the analysis of the indicators for each of these groups, i.e. intrinsic, practical, social, economic and attitudinal. The research results point to a long chain of connections and impacts (long-tail) of the events industry, which enriches Australian human capital with competences, the latest knowledge, global networks and cooperation projects generating innovation (Edwards, Foley, Schlenker 2011).

The dynamic growth of the meetings and events sector is also a serious challenge for the sector itself and its environment. The continuous increase in the number of events and the fast rotation in the rankings of preferred destinations translate into increasingly fierce competition on a global scale for drawing the greatest number of the most attractive events. The sheer size of an urban centre and its infrastructure are no longer sufficiently attractive. As distance itself ceases to be of key importance, soft factors such as the nature of the place, its atmosphere, its culture and the specific “story” about it also come into play. One of the most effective ways to communicate the attractiveness and specificity of a place is digital instruments, including the use of social media. It should not be surprising, then, that, among the key challenges for the meetings and events sector, its representatives point to “digitalisation” (ICCA 2019a, UFI 2019a). Broadly understood, digital tools not only allow for effective territorial marketing on a global scale, but are an additional convenience for participants during events, which affects the assessment of the events. According to ICCA, more than 60% of congress locations offer free Wi-Fi with the rental price, half of which guarantee a broadband connection of at least 5Mbps. Organisers increasingly frequently offer online services with the use of social media and interactive maps and reach out for Big Data technologies in an effort to anticipate the needs of guest customers. This is confirmed by a survey conducted by UFI in 2019, according to which 50% of the members of this organisation developed additional digital services to accompany existing events and meetings, in the form of applications, digital advertisements and visual communication systems. In addition, 28% of them reported the digital transformation of their own enterprise and its internal processes (UFI 2019a).

The meetings and events sector is developing dynamically and provides development opportunities. At the same time, through the enormous flows of people and the consumption they generate,

it exerts a significant pressure on the environment. The implementation of sustainable development assumptions in the functioning of the meetings and events industry is probably the greatest challenge for the sector. Therefore, the Sustainable Development Goals, defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN in its resolution of 25 September 2015, are becoming an important reference point for the industry. The implementation of the SDG assumptions can be considered at three levels. Firstly, as a tool for changing practices among the organisers of events and meetings, secondly, as a way to promote specific destinations and make them stand out as socially and environmentally responsible, and thirdly, as an instrument for raising awareness and shaping attitudes in the field of SDGs among the participants of meetings and events.

The activities of the sector of meetings and events pertain primarily to Goal 12 of the Agenda, which mentions the assurance of sustainable consumption and production. However, among the specific actions recommended in this document, one should also indicate Action 8.9, relating directly to the sustainable tourism industry and its impact on local labour markets, local culture and products (*By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products*). Increasingly, organisers of large events reach for a wide range of initiatives and activities that can reduce any negative impact on the environment. These include, for example, the use of energy-saving devices and renewable energy sources, appropriate water and waste management systems, and the purchase of local food products. Copenhagen is often given as an example of a city which has adopted holistic thinking about the city's tourism sector as part of the "Tourism for Good" project. Copenhagen hotels, conference centres, NGOs, universities, etc. were included in this project, and have adopted the SDGs as their common reference point (ICCA 2019b). The creation of a database of good practices corresponding to the specific SDGs, undertaken by UFI (*The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry*), was an interesting initiative. It turned out that, in addition to the aforementioned Goal 12, to which 70% of the reported initiatives referred, among the other frequently invoked goals there were: Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), Goal 17 (partnership in achieving goals), and Goal 13 (action with respect to the climate). During the events organised by RAI Amsterdam and ICC Sydney, joint efforts were made to reduce food waste by partially redistributing it, and to transform non-edible waste products into fertiliser. Another interesting example is the waste management policy introduced by the Oregon Convention Centre. This policy was adopted in contracts signed with suppliers, who committed to complying with certain principles, e.g. exclusion of non-recyclable products and waste segregation, and paid a deposit (Waste Diversion Deposit) which was returned after the supplier fulfilled the obligations (UFI 2019b).

The gradual penetration of thinking in terms of the SDGs into the meetings and events industry has led to attempts to develop common standards and indicators of "responsible and sustainable destinations", the measurement of which would allow cities to monitor the results and compare them within the sector. These are certification or accreditation systems such as: ISO 20121, the Event Sustainability Management system, and the Green Meeting certification, Green Globe. However, the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI) is currently probably the most recognisable tool for assessing the social and environmental responsibility of actors in the meetings and events sector. It allows for the assessment of cities and organisers in four main dimensions, i.e.:

- city environmental strategy and infrastructure
- city social sustainability performance
- industry supplier support – restaurants, hotels, etc.
- convention bureau strategy and initiatives.

Although the primary goal of the certification and rankings system is to measure and control the results achieved, gaining prestigious titles and leading in the rankings is also becoming an effective tool of marketing, and an element which offers a competitive advantage, and thus tends to attract still more events. Copenhagen, mentioned earlier, is a good example here, as it makes an excellent use of the second place it has reached in the GDS-Index marketing. Displaying social and environmental responsibility can be an effective promotion tool. It may also serve as a bargaining chip in discussions with international organisations which are looking for destinations that fit their strategy of thinking about the future of the planet.

When considering the possible contribution of the meetings and events sector to achieving the objectives of the Sustainable Development Strategy by 2030, not only should possible changes in the practices of the meeting organisers and their partners be taken into account, but so should the scale of the impact of the external sector. Given the UFI data, which indicates that approximately 32,000 events take place annually, with around 303 million guests and 5 million exhibiting companies directly involved, immediate access to an extremely large auditorium is at stake here. With its wide chain of service providers and partners, representing the public sector, non-governmental organisations and business, the sector of events offers great opportunities for exerting collective impact on the awareness and attitudes of people. They, in turn, can communicate these attitudes to their environments (2019b). Thus, the meetings and events sector can realistically contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. To make this possible, certain conditions must be fulfilled, though, which were formulated by the authors of the report presenting the results of the GDS-Index for 2019 in the form of recommendations. The basic condition is to fit the 17 SDGs into a framework for the functioning of the meetings and events sector. It is necessary to measure the positive and negative effects of events reliably, based on scientifically developed data, as a condition for making effective adjustments. Cooperation is needed among a wide range of stakeholders, whose ideas, conclusions and concepts should be considered in inclusive discussions. Finally, the authors of the report recommend advocating a nutritional revolution based on local products. The awareness of the participants of the events should be refashioned, so as to generate demand for sustainable and socially responsible products and services. Finally, adopting the logic of sustainable development requires the incorporation of these values in an authentic and coherent story about a place, supported by data and specific actions. Achievements and success should be reported and promoted through, among other measures, participation in rankings and applying for certificates and awards (GSDI 2019).

On the basis of the points considered above, it is concluded that the meetings and events industry can become not only an important factor in local and regional development, but also a source of broader strategies for a “sustainable” transformation of the city – a transformation which would extend beyond the sector of tourism. This is conditioned by the mobilisation of actors operating in this sector and its environment to cooperate as part of a joint strategy linked directly to the SDGs. Such cooperation is enhanced by the actors’ awareness that only coherent and complementary activities that take into account social and environmental responsibility can bring about an increase in the competitiveness and attractiveness of a given destination while maintaining its ecological values. However, the cooperation in question is not something obvious, which might occur automatically. The results of studies conducted in France and Canada confirm that while cooperation among public actors is relatively frequent, the inclusion of private entities is by no means universal (Christofle and Massiera 2009: 14). It is clearly connected with the issue of the impartiality of the public entities that manage, among other things, exhibition infrastructure. However, it is also related to the private sector’s desire to maintain autonomy. The leading positions of these two countries in the rankings of hosted events are not a factor in such cooperation, though the gradual erosion of the position of Western countries in the rankings shows the consequences of such a state of affairs.

4. The meetings and events sector in Katowice and the change of the city’s image and potential

The modern meetings and events market is increasingly opening up to medium-sized cities, which have a “human scale” and which can tell their story in an appealing way. Their weaknesses can actually be an asset, because such locations can change into living laboratories where the participants of events are able to witness changes taking place and even become involved in them. Should not the organisation of the COP 24 Climate Summit in December 2018 in Katowice, the capital of what was once the most industrialised region in Central Europe and a hard coal basin, be considered an example of this potential? The trends in the sector, outlined earlier, favour such an approach. They include, on the one hand, a continuous increase in the number of events, but on the other, a decrease in the size of events, as shown by the number of participants, shorter

duration, rapid rotation of popular destinations in conditions of strong competition and, finally, the search for new and original places resulting from an increasing ease of travel.

Katowice, whose transformation process is described in part one, is undoubtedly a beneficiary of the dynamically developing business tourism sector. According to the data from the Katowice Convention Bureau, a total of 6,170 business meetings took place in the city in 2018 alone, of which slightly more than a quarter lasted for two days or longer. The events attracted 758,000 persons in total, whose expenses in Katowice amounted to nearly 190 million PLN (EUR 44 million) (Cieślowski 2019). Therefore, one aim of this article is to demonstrate how the events industry, developing with the support of the Katowice municipal authorities, influences the position of the city, its economic potential, including local business, and its external and internal image – including the local identity of its inhabitants. The results of the research carried out by the team of the Observatory of Urban and Metropolitan Processes, commissioned by the City of Katowice, will be presented here. The city authorities recognised the need to collect reliable data to assess whether a development path based on the events industry would bring about the expected results. The research was conducted in 2018 and included four large events, in which the number of participants ranged from 3,500 people to nearly 170,000 (Tab. 1). In order to obtain a holistic view of the matter, the image of the city was examined from the perspective of three groups of respondents, i.e. representatives of event organisers, direct participants in the events and local entrepreneurs. A separate methodological approach was applied to each group, with research methods and data collection techniques adapted accordingly. In surveys conducted among local entrepreneurs and event organisers, the selection of individuals for the study was intentional and the technique of IDI (individual in-depth interview) was used. Along with interviews with four representatives of event organisers, 32 local enterprises were surveyed in the study, representing industries such as trade, hospitality, gastronomy, medical services, transport services, and also cultural institutions. However the basic source of empirical data consisted of questionnaire-based interviews (PAPI, or paper and pencil interview) conducted on a sample of 1,115 event participants composed of – for each event – equal numbers of Katowice residents, inhabitants of the other municipalities in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union, and people from elsewhere in Poland and abroad.² The research also assumed the use of an Internet questionnaire (CAWI, or computer-assisted web interview). However, this proved possible only with participants of the Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) tournament, which was related to the nature of the event (e-sports) and the profile of its participants, from whom a total of 885 electronically filled-in forms were collected. However, due to the lack of empirical data for the remaining events collected using this technique, the CAWI results could only serve as a reference in the analysis of PAPI results taken from the IEM event.

Due to the comprehensiveness of the issues covered in the research, only problems directly linked to the impact the events sector has on the image and development of the city will be discussed below. For example, issues related to reasons for participation in the event, or the evaluation of the organisation of the event itself, are not discussed here.³

Among the participants of the events, a majority had already visited Katowice before, although first-time visitors also constituted an important group (between 16.0% and 22.0%). One event stood out here in particular – the European Congress of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. Approximately one in five respondents participating in this congress was visiting Katowice for the first time (22.1%). This was most true of foreign guests, the majority of whom (61.4%) were visiting Poland for the first time. The foreign guests of the four examined events decided more often than Poles to stay in the city for a longer time (three to five days) and were mostly accommodated in

² The selection of samples was to ensure that they are typologically representative. In the case of each of the events, the study included about 280 people, with 70 representing each of these groups: the inhabitants of Katowice, those of other parts of the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union, participants from other parts of Poland and foreign guests. In each of the groups, the researchers strove to include equal numbers of men and women and persons in each of the five age groups.

³ The problematic issues of the research conducted at the request of the city of Katowice also included problems which are not presented in this article, such as the reasons for the participation in events, the sources of information about the event, the characteristics of the participation (number of days, accompanying persons), the assessment of the event (organisation, access to information, attractiveness of the programme, atmosphere, accompanying events), the organisation of their journey and stay in the city. More in the report: Rafał Muster, Robert Pyka, Łukasz Trembaczowski, Agata Zygmont, *Impact of the Congress and Business Events Sector in Katowice on the City's Development and Image*, research report, City of Katowice, 2018.

Tab. 1. Basic information about the events included in the research conducted by the Observatory of Urban and Metropolitan Processes

	Intel Extreme Masters	Health Challenges Congress	European Economic Congress	European Congress of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
Edition	5	3	10	8
Main organiser	ESL; Intel	PTWP SA Group	PTWP SA Group	Regional Chamber of Commerce in Katowice
Event Date	24–25 February; 2–4 March 2018	8–10 March 2018	14–16 May 2018	17–19 October 2018
Duration	5 days	3 days	3 days	3 days
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-sport fans, • computer players environment, • producers of computer games, hardware and software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circles of professionals in health services, • academic circles • people interested in health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representatives of state authorities, • representatives of the European Commission, • entrepreneurs • academic circles • representatives of economic self-government • people interested in economic issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representatives of local authorities • representatives of the European Commission, • entrepreneurs (mainly representatives of small and medium enterprises) • academic circles • representatives of economic self-government • people interested in the issues connected with small and medium-sized enterprises
Approximate number of participants	169,000	3,500	11,500	6,500

Source: Muster et al. 2018.

Katowice itself (above 80%). The Polish participants in greater numbers stayed in other cities of the agglomeration, which might be attributed to the availability and price of places to stay in the region. The vast majority of participants in the four events decided to stay in a hotel. The choice of a city to stay in and the duration of the stay directly impact on the income of the enterprises operating in the city, and thus also the condition of its economy. For the same reasons, other forms of activity besides participation in the event and the places and facilities they had the opportunity to visit were also found to be important. The most frequent activities besides attending the events themselves included spending time in pubs and restaurants and walking around the city. These were followed by shopping and visiting shopping malls. Only one in ten respondents reported taking part in a cultural event – a concert, film show or performance. Although the participants in the events devoted relatively much time to consumption, in the broader meaning, a large section of them decided to explore the city. In the case of each event studied, more than half of the respondents listed the Spodek as their favourite place in Katowice. Despite its being the oldest facility in the Culture Zone, established in the revitalised area of the former Katowice coal mine, it is still the landmark of the city for many. It is now integrated with the International Congress Centre (ICC), in which all four of the events discussed took place. As other favourites, the respondents most often cited other features of the Culture Zone, e.g. the concert hall of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (NOSPR) and the Silesian Museum. These are new facilities, which are clearly turning into Katowice landmarks. The Silesian Provincial Park, called the “lungs of the city” and covering an area larger than Central Park in New York City, enjoyed similar popularity. Furthermore, among the frequently indicated attractions there were Mariacka Street, where restaurants, clubs and pubs are densely located, Nikiszowiec, a historic miners’ residential estate, and the Valley of the Three Ponds, a recreation area for Katowice’s residents. What is immediately striking when generally

considering the forms of activity undertaken in the city by the participants of the congress events studied, is the low level of interest in what the city has to offer culturally.

The main goal of the study was to determine the impact that the organisation of meetings and events in Katowice has on the perception of the city, which has struggled with a problematic image stemming from its industrial history. Although the industrial character of the city is now a thing of the past, the image tends to persist, especially in the minds of those who have never seen it or who visited it many years ago. Those who visit the city on the occasion of one of the events held there have an opportunity to revise their stereotypical image and to counteract its diffusion in their social networks. It was therefore crucial to get the respondents' opinions on the specific features of the city and to determine whether they intended to return. The results indicate that Katowice is an attractive city, as the vast majority of respondents (from 86.9% to 93.6%) reported a willingness to visit the city again. The IEM participants dominated in this group, which may be related to the fact that they availed themselves of the city's attractions much more often than the participants of other events. As the purpose of their next visit, the respondents most frequently cited participation in another congress or business event. However, a similar percentage of them wanted to return to Katowice to be able to take tours of the city and take part in its cultural events, especially those connected with music. The respondents were then asked to evaluate the city according to specific functions. Treating these assessments as items on an interval scale and assigning numerical values to them (from 1 for "very bad" to 4 for "very good"), the average scores for each of the functions were calculated. Katowice received the highest evaluation for consumer availability and shopping opportunities (average rating between 3.7 and 3.8). Much more importantly, though, the city also received high marks for its climate and atmosphere (average between 3.4 and 3.6), and for the friendly attitude of its inhabitants (average of 3.6). Katowice received a lower, though still objectively high, average rating in terms of security (between 3.4 and 3.5). On the other hand, the respondents rated the public transit connections relatively low (average between 3.4 and 3.6) as they did the ease of getting around the city (average between 3.3 and 3.5). Cleanliness was the function rated the lowest. The event participants' ratings ranged between 3.2 and 3.3 here, though it should be remembered that on the scale used, the value of 3 points still means "good". An interesting observation is that foreign guests generally rated Katowice higher than did visitors from other parts of Poland. One possible explanation for this is that, during their stay in the city, Polish respondents were unable fully to abandon their previous, stereotypical image of Katowice. Meanwhile, foreign guests visiting the city for the first time were largely free from stereotypes in their perception.

An issue of primary importance in the research was to determine whether, in the respondents' opinion, holding large events in Katowice affects the economic situation of the city, its metropolitan area, and the region, and whether it contributes to a change in their image. The inhabitants of the metropolitan area of Katowice, particularly those living in the city itself, recognised that the prestige of the events organised in Katowice has a positive impact on the image of the city and its surroundings. They were aware that further development of the meetings and events sector in Katowice means that the city, the agglomeration and the region will all become increasingly known to the world. Therefore, in the opinion of the respondents, the authorities should support the organisers of such projects, as they are a source of pride for the inhabitants of the agglomeration and the city and influence their urban and metropolitan identity. The majority of the respondents said that the congresses and business events taking place in Katowice contribute to the revival of the city centre, but also to that of the agglomeration and the region as a whole. As they stated, these events foster economic development, contributing to the increase in the number of jobs, and benefit companies operating on the local market. Almost all respondents (from 93.0% to 99.5%) said that Katowice was a city suitable for organising large events. This opinion was most strongly held by the residents of Katowice and the municipalities belonging to its metropolitan area. This is particularly important, as it is the residents who are most often exposed to various types of inconvenience associated with the organisation of such events in a city. However, the results of the research show that the majority of Katowice residents are not bothered by negative impacts or inconvenience resulting from organising events in the city. Respondents who did point to certain difficulties often mentioned traffic jams, more crowded streets, shops and restaurants, or dirtier streets and pavements.

In this context, the perspective of local company owners and managers is worth presenting, as is that of the event organisers (also mostly entrepreneurs), with whom several series of individual in-depth interviews were conducted. Respondents from these groups generally expressed optimism resulting from the observed improvement in their company's economic situation as compared to previous years. The event organisers also indicated that their undertakings were profitable. In this respect, the respondents pointed to the positive change in the image of Katowice that has been observed for several years, from a city associated with heavy industry to a city of modern business and services, hosting large international trade fairs and congress events. In their opinion, the attractiveness of the city is also increased by interesting leisure activities and a rich cultural life, which exert a positive impact on its image. The events organisers also emphasised such advantages of the city as a good road infrastructure and high-class, well-equipped congress and exhibition facilities. Entrepreneurs pointed to the decidedly positive impact of the development of the meetings and events sector in Katowice on local entrepreneurship. In their opinion, the hotel industry, transport services and gastronomy, as well as entities related to these industries, such as companies organising tourist trips around the region, are beneficiaries of the development. The fact that event participants often have persons accompanying them contributes to indirect benefits noted by many other industries. With reference to the situation of their own enterprises, the respondents mentioned an increase in revenue ranging from a few to several dozen percent during events taking place in Katowice. They also drew attention to the "boomerang effect", that is, the return of the same customers to Katowice who repeatedly avail themselves of their services. The entrepreneurs are trying to adapt their inventory to the needs of the event participants coming to Katowice by investing in new devices and proposing new products. This applies primarily to the event organisers, who develop various types of undertakings accompanying their events in order to increase their attractiveness and ensure greater media coverage. Respondents from this group also noted the development of workshops offered during the events. Owing to their practical dimension, workshops are very popular among participants. Entrepreneurs strive to provide for upcoming events by asking employees to track the events market. Nevertheless, it appears from the entrepreneurs' responses that changes in their companies dictated by the city's growing industry of events are not very extensive, i.e. they do not translate into expanding their operation into new industries, building new facilities or hiring new permanent staff. With respect to the latter, what we are dealing with is, in fact, a flexible and temporary increase in a company's human resources. Event organisers are generally satisfied with the cooperation with the city authorities, and thus do not anticipate moving the events to another city, convinced that Katowice offers very favourable conditions.

5. Summary and conclusions

The meetings and events market is an important economic sector today, going by its direct economic impact in terms of the GDP generated. The tourism industry in 2019 generated 7% of global trade and globally employed one out of ten people (COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism2020). On the other hand, its importance is associated with the possibility of influencing the minds of hundreds of millions of event participants and people involved in their organisation by promoting among them attitudes and practices conducive to the implementation of the SDGs. Awareness of the responsibility for the implementation of the assumptions of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development is one of the motives for contemporary transformations and trends of change within this sector. The development of the meetings and events industry can also be an effective tool for transforming formerly industrial agglomerations which struggle with an image deficit through consciously embarking on the path of metropolisation. The goal of this strategy is to integrate a given centre into the global resource flow network and redirect some of its streams towards that centre by attracting attention and generating new network connections. Generating movement within the network in which metropolises and metropolitan areas are the nodes requires the ability to mobilise the endogenous resources of a given centre. These may include the unusual and intriguing nature of the place, which results from the interweaving of its specific past with a future outlined by transformation processes – among them, the development of metropolitan functions, including in the sector of meetings and events. Bending network flows so that they run through a given centre

(which assumes the role of a network node) can provide it with access to almost unlimited external resources. These, in turn, can accelerate further image changes and metropolisation. As in other post-industrial agglomerations, Katowice city authorities have decided to adopt such a strategy (Pyka 2018a).

The main aim of this text has been to demonstrate the importance of the meetings and events sector in the context of contemporary global challenges and to present it as a vehicle for the transformation of formerly industrial agglomerations, as exemplified by one specific city. The city here is Katowice, once the capital of the largest heavy industry centre in Central Europe, which, as the recent host of the COP24 climate summit and the future host of WUF11, has focused on the meetings and events sector as part of its transformation strategy. Therefore, the first and basic research question concerned the extent to which the development of the meetings and events industry in Katowice fosters positive changes in the city's image, in the perception of both the residents of the area and guests from elsewhere in Poland and abroad. The second question concerned the significance of this sector as a generator of economic development of the city. The condition of urban entrepreneurship was treated as the indicator here. The third question was prospective in nature and concerned the factors that may allow the city to maintain and strengthen its current upward trend and its position as a centre that hosts major international events. It was assumed, however, that the third question cannot be answered solely on the basis of research, also because of the COVID-19 pandemic which hit in 2020 and had a devastating impact on the global economy and employment. Nevertheless, certain recommendations and hypotheses may still be formulated in this matter.

The overall picture of Katowice which emerges from the research is very positive. Local entrepreneurs speak directly about the successful transformation of the city's image into that of a modern metropolis. The respondents' declared desire to return to the Katowice area allows us to predict measurable future benefits to the city, with respect to both its image and its economy. Katowice attracts visitors with its atmosphere, the positive attitude of its residents and its numerous amenities, including the availability of services. Guests of events held in Katowice feel safe there, which is an advantage the city has over other European agglomerations of this size, which may struggle, for example, with the threat of terrorism. The answer to the first research question posed is therefore positive, as the results of the study clearly confirm a constructive change taking place in the image of the city in the eyes of both domestic and foreign event participants.

The opinions of guests to the city are confirmed by local entrepreneurs who point to the unequivocally positive impact of the development of the meetings and events sector in Katowice on the increase in their companies' revenues and their overall economic situation. Although the participants view the events as conducive to an increase in the number of jobs and companies operating on the local market, entrepreneurs from Katowice are more restrained in their view of such growth. Due to the episodic nature of the events and meetings taking place in Katowice, the changes introduced in local companies are flexible and do not involve large and stable investments in staff or widening the scope of operations. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurs are trying to anticipate upcoming events and to adapt their operations to the needs of guests. Thus, the results obtained also provide a positive answer to the second research question: in the opinion of the respondents, including local entrepreneurs, the meetings and events sector developing in Katowice does have a positive impact on the economy of the city.

The answer to the third question, regarding the chance of maintaining or enhancing the dynamic development of the events and meetings industry in Katowice, is more complex and ambiguous. According to the statistical data quoted and the resulting trends in the meetings and events sector, including the relatively frequent rotation of "fashionable destinations", medium-sized cities like Katowice are finding it increasingly easier to break into the market. With their accessibility in terms of transportation, good exhibition infrastructure and air of "newness", they can attract events of global importance. However, the key question is what should be done to prevent the city from being just a single flash in the pan. It seems unlikely that Katowice, after hosting two UN summits (in 2018 and 2022), will be granted a third opportunity to host this most important international organisation in the near future. Two significant factors may determine whether the current trend will be maintained in Katowice. Firstly, to what extent will the city authorities be able to pursue a conscious policy in this respect (Cieślowski 2018)? This will mean monitoring local and national factors,

and generating a local and regional system of cooperation between the actors (Christoffle and Massiera 2009) directly and indirectly involved in the operation of the events sector. Their cooperation may raise Katowice to the level of the global players in the sector in terms of its standards as a destination.

Monitoring the internal factors denotes here the ability to identify and reduce one's shortcomings, and to mobilise and emphasise the city's assets. This study can be a useful source of recommendations. The first of these concerns the small number of guests participating in the city's cultural events. Effective measures should be taken to promote the city's cultural attractions among the participants in events. Closer cooperation between the event organisers and the city is needed, in order to harmonise the repertoire of municipal and regional cultural institutions with the calendar of congress and business events, as well as to develop joint information materials for the participants, presenting the cultural attractions of the city. The fact that most participants of the events are accommodated outside Katowice reduces the positive economic and image-related effects these events have on the city. This means that Katowice loses tangible potential benefits. It will therefore be necessary to expand the hotel base in Katowice. This measure, combined with a richer schedule of cultural events, could increase the revenues of local business, thus reinforcing the economic and image related impact of events. On the other hand, the large number of guests of congress and business events accommodated outside of Katowice contributes to the diffusion of the benefits of these events throughout the metropolitan area and the whole region. The drawbacks noticed by entrepreneurs mainly concerned the flow of information between entrepreneurs and the city authorities, as well as between companies and the participants of events. It turns out that companies seek information on upcoming events on their own – consequently, not all of them are identified. Therefore, one of the recommendations for the city is to post up-to-date information on the planned events in one dedicated place (on the city's website or a dedicated website). The second recommendation is a response to the problems reported by companies with reaching the event participants with their goods and services. This indicates the need to develop collective promotional materials containing the city's cultural and service resources. Mobilisation and marketing of the area's resources translates into the need to develop a coherent and reliable story about the place. The uniqueness of Upper Silesia and Katowice, which is the capital of this region, stems not only from their spectacular transformation, which today may impress people with their modernity. It also results from the path that this region has taken, the fact that today's changes are rooted in the region's unique and colourful culture – the turbulent and difficult history has branded its inhabitants with a complex identity, strong work ethos and sense of family attachment. Monitoring nationwide factors requires allowing for the variability of the political situation. Its nature, dictated by the existing state of affairs, may turn out to be fatal if the city authorities choose to put all their eggs in one basket – in this case, by choosing one particular political option. It is an open secret that one of the elements contributing to the success of Katowice in acquiring global events is the favour of the central government, which sought to attract the largest events – together with the city authorities. The situation may change, however, with a change of national political leadership. Many still remember Euro 2012, which bypassed Katowice and its agglomeration, despite the presence of a large and historical stadium in the region.

Strengthening the position of Katowice as an internationally important place in which significant events are organised means continuing along the path presently followed by the city leaders. Its status is associated not only with the number of events and guests received, but also with measures taken to implement the SDGs in the city itself and in the events industry, of which one marker is its position in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) ranking. However, as the example of Copenhagen and other cities shows, it is not possible to do this without developing deep cooperation between the city authorities and local and regional partners – from hotels and exhibition spaces, to local service and food providers, to universities. It is worth noting in this context that some of the drawbacks identified in Katowice are related to lack of coordination and information flow between events organisers and local enterprises, cultural institutions and the city authorities. The digitisation of the events sector, signalled as another key challenge, may come to the rescue here. It is easy to imagine a mobile application based on a common database powered by all partners, that would allow actors in the sector to coordinate their activities, and at the same

time serve as a guide for guests. The application would gather information on the possibilities of participating in city life. In the case of Katowice, an important role in this partnership may be played by the largest universities located in the city, which have so far been hardly visible in the context of the larger events hosted here. Meanwhile, the research (ICCA 2018a: 19-20) identifies cooperation with universities as an increasingly important global trend, as they are becoming venues for the organisation of many meetings and indeed may take away market share from hotels and congress centres. However, building such a cooperation network is extremely difficult, perhaps even harder than creating a modern infrastructure or hotel base. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that, within the meetings and events sector developed in Katowice, creation of a cooperation system for achieving the SDGs will be of key importance. This statement takes on additional meaning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and its strong negative impact on the tourism industry which could cause the equivalent of 305 million job losses (International Labour Market 2020). It seems less probable that the sector will recover in a short time, as it was hard hit by the measures taken to stop spreading of the pandemic. Thus, tourist numbers could show a decrease of up to 78% in 2020, which would cause a reduction in visitor spending from \$1.5 trillion in 2019 to as low as \$570 billion in 2020, which represents seven times the impact of September 11 (COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism 2020). According to UFI's "Global Exhibition Barometer" data provided by a survey conducted in June 2020, 73% of companies worldwide representing the exhibition industry declared "no activity", although in January 85% of companies had declared their activity to be "normal". The revenues of the sector in 2020 may represent only 39% of those from 2019 which will lead to a loss for 39% of these companies. It shouldn't be surprising that the "Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the business" is treated by companies taking part in the survey as the biggest threat for the sector (UFI Global Exhibition Barometer 2020).

Business tourism in the city of Katowice was also significantly impacted when the first anti-Covid measures were applied only a few days before the 2020 Intel Extreme Masters eSports tournament, which was held this year without the direct participation of visitors who had come from all over the world. Many others events and congresses were cancelled or postponed, such as the European Congress of SMEs and the European Economic Congress, which was organised this year in hybrid form, privileging on-line participation and reducing direct and physical attendance.

On the other hand, it is said that the present crisis can foster change in the tourism industry by converting the present disturbance into transformative innovation (Sigala 2020) taking into account the SDGs in the context of a "growth paradigm" revision. We still lack knowledge of how exactly to take advantage of the present situation seen as an opportunity for a resetting of the next tourism industry normal, which may be a mix of the classic tourism with e-tourism (Gretzel et al. 2020), and which can build a sustainable and responsible new travel experience that is safe for host communities (COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism 2020). What is sure is that the tourism sector will have to change profoundly in order to survive, which means a new mindset for tourism stakeholders, resulting in novel tourism services (contactless journeys adhering to the principles of a health-first approach), visitors' experiences (recalibrating priorities, changing lifestyles), and security measures (e.g. digital health passports and certifications) that can be derived from essential healthcare operators (Sigala 2020). The first opportunity to test the theses posed above will be the organisation of WUF11 in Katowice in 2022. They will also be tested by the position of Katowice on the map of "sustainable destinations" within the next five years.

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