

Historical cities in search of a premium tourist

2020-04-29

On 11 March 2020, the second edition of the international conference In Search of a Premium Tourist, part of the Historical Cities 3.0 project, was held at the ICE Kraków Congress Centre.

The conference, which was originally scheduled to span two days, was shortened due to the preventive measures taken across the country to avert the spreading of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. The modification of the agenda allowed for including one more conference panel in the proceedings.

The presented panels covered the following themes:

Panel I: MANAGING TOURIST EXPERIENCE

Panel II: THE CITY OF FESTIVALS OR THE FESTIVAL CITY?

Panel IV: OUTDOOR SPORTING EVENTS. WHO ARE THEY REALLY FOR?

The conference was attended by the following special guests: HE Leslie Scanlon – the Ambassador of Canada to Poland, Andrzej Gut-Mostowy – the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Economic Development, Robert Andrzejczyk – the President of the Polish Tourism Organisation, and prof. Jerzy Hausner Cracow University of Economics.

As Mayor Anna Korfel-Jasińska emphasised while opening the event, the conference was held in a peculiar time. The Secretary of State, Andrzej Gut-Mostowy, referred to the current situation as well, announcing the preparation of a support package. Important and encouraging words were said about the integration of the tourism industry.

Prominent experts and authorities from Poland, Germany, Canada, Scotland, Italy, Ukraine, Belgium, and the USA shared their observations in the introductions to panels and in the case studies.

“The key to launching a premium travel product is understanding the behaviours and preferences of the visitors, since it is the experience during the travel and the stay that determines regarding a product as one in the premium category which allows for charging a higher price,” said dr Bartłomiej Walas from the Department of Tourism at the Municipality of Kraków.

It was also highlighted how important the data provided by tourists is and what conclusions can and should be drawn from it.

“The IT revolution which we are currently witnessing consists in the integration of the consumers’ personalised data with the global big data databases for the purpose of offering a flexible tourist travel managed by the tourists in real time. In this new world, the DMOs have to once again adjust not only their role and function, but also acquire new skills (the interpretation of quantitative data and drawing conclusions from many sources of data) and enter into partnerships with new tourism market actors (tourism applications, streaming platforms, or

residents' associations)," said prof. Zmyślony from the Poznań University of Economics and Business.

During the discussion, emphasis was put on the role cultural events play in developing a premium offer, which role was aptly summarised by Robert Piaskowski, the Plenipotentiary of the Mayor of Kraków for Culture. *"Festivals have the exceptional capacity to change cities. They create an atmosphere of cross-cultural contact, build the city's brand, are an important investment in the symbolic and cultural capital of the residents, and cities are the most attractive during their festival season, when their communities gather and experience social rituals, participate in cultural events, when their context is the city space."*

The intensive and dynamic day of the conference brought much interesting information and many valuable discussions which were keenly talked over and continued by the 170 participants behind the scenes even when the speeches were over. The panels and studies of cases from Dubrovnik or Montreal took into account various conditions of tourism management in order to seek common tools for sustainable development. The importance of city residents was also emphasised.

"The right to the city consists predominantly in the development of the city being decided by the creative potential of its permanent residents. It is them who have a real impact on the way the city functions," stressed prof. Jerzy Hausner from the Cracow University of Economics.

We would like to thank all the representatives of local authorities, non-government organisations, and the tourism industry who came to the conference, as well as all those who were not able to be with us on that day despite their willingness to participate.

The conference culminated in a supper in the beautiful and artistic interiors of Gallery of the 19th-Century Polish Art in the Cloth Hall (*Sukiennice*). Surrounded by art, the organisers thanked the guests and invited them to the next edition of the conference.

The results of the conference will be published in a special publication and will include the issues of congress tourism which was supposed to be the topic of a panel discussion as well.

The Historical Cities 3.0 project was initiated and is carried out by the City of Kraków. The project participants comprise of the total of 15 Polish and European cities. Its chief aim is the exchange of knowledge and discussion of problems, experiences, and solutions adopted in historical cities with respect to the development of tourism for the search of common tools for sustainable development. Modern tourist movements present a number of challenges aimed at reconciling the quality of life of the residents with the attractiveness for the visitors.

The conference was held under the patronage of the Organization of World Heritage Cities and its partners were the Embassy of Canada, the Conferences and Congresses in Poland Association, the Małopolska Tourist Organization, and the Kraków Chamber of Tourism. The media partners included MICE Poland, Wiadomości Turystyczne, Wasza Turystyka, Kraków.pl, Lovekraków.pl, Radio Kraków, TVP3 Kraków, Gazeta Wyborcza.



**Magiczny
Kraków**

The current situation across the world has a dramatic impact on the tourism industry, however, that does not render the issues discussed during the conference irrelevant.