



Winter is upon us, but...

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Yesterday was the first day of winter. Not in the calendar sense, of course, but merely the first proper snowfall. Now that 2020 is finally about to meet its much-deserved end, one feels that seeing the city wake up in pristine white feels somehow refreshing, if not cathartic.

And so it's no surprise, perhaps, that everyone's social-media this morning would explode in joyful winter moods. After all, it has not exactly been the kind of year everyone will have fond memories of. Having said that, we may also have learned some invaluable lessons in 2020, lessons that have the power to change our lives for the better, in many important ways.

Creative Renaissance

2020 has been all about uncertainty, fragility, restrictions and loss. On the positive side, as irony would have it, it might just be one of the best human qualities that whenever (extreme) hardship hits, we are often inspired us to work together, to look for means and ways out of the impossible-to-solve problems, even hopeless situations, in search of the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel.

Similarly, one of the most extraordinary outcomes of the "pandemic new normal" is perhaps best explained by how it has channelled our creativity towards looking for solutions and exploring new creative opportunities, made infinitely more interesting and impactful by modern technologies and the many, wonderfully diverse media platforms out there. Just imagine how different the experience of the past few months would have felt only two decades ago.

Still, having spent far too much time in lockdowns and isolation this year, it's hardly surprising that a lot of us already miss feeling part of a shared experience, be it a concert, a festival, a conference we used to attend on a regular basis or even meeting colleagues at work. For now, even a dinner in town with friends is too much to ask for. In short, a lot has changed since March this year and it will take a while before we understand the full implications of those changes, spreading across industries, job markets and, ultimately, lifestyles. The same is true of the way we look at cities, especially those that would historically pride themselves on hospitality and their "tourist destination" or "host city" status.

The Age of Urban Introspection

Over the past few months, Kraków may have done more to better understand the core ingredients of its identity and the key drivers of its success (and failure) than in the past few years. This is hardly surprising, given how much has changed across the full spectrum of events and services that define Kraków's annual calendar, or, as I'd like to call it, the city's vibrant, positive energy.

Like with so many other historical cities out there, the pandemic has forced some major structural changes on city administrators, starting from the need to rethink the role of and the existing strategies around domestic and international tourism (incl. the entire hospitality industry), all the way to the city's cultural-events calendar and the key communication platforms available (in Polish, English and other languages). An interesting example of a recent



collaborative initiative aimed at solving a bigger challenge in the hospitality sector is the letter of intent signed in September between the city of Krakow and Airbnb.

To develop enough structural resilience, historical host cities in particular now need to act fast (significantly faster than in the past) and be much more flexible and adapt to change. With the 2020 incarnation of the VUCA reality taking its toll, sometimes quietly and sometimes with entire city budgets facing dramatic future decisions, any type of complacency towards fit-all development strategies is simply no longer an option. The overall quality and innovativeness of the municipal, stakeholder-specific communication interfaces will come to play an ever more important role. In other words, many old questions will need compellingly fresh answers, starting with: Who are your most important stakeholders (and industries) that your city likes to prioritize, why and how?

In the meantime

In the meantime, a lot of positive changes have already been set in motion in Kraków, with the city discovering new ways to regain a foothold as the global host city for industry conferences and congresses or creating new platforms for cultural activities. In addition to the various initiatives planned by the public administration, the private sector, the city's think-tanks, startups and associations are also busy brainstorming solutions that will ultimately make the city not only better prepared for future crises but also more inclined to work on ever more sustainable development ecosystem for Kraków's many, diverse creative industries.

And one last thing. If you'd like to see what's happening in the city these days, these are some of the places to go to:

1. [Karnet](#)
2. [International Cultural Centre](#)
3. [Villa Decius Institute for Culture](#)

...to mention only a few.

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