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Tourism and Meeting Incentive Convention Event (MICE) tourism in Europe, systemic shock, structural transformations and resilience

Sylvie Christofle

<a> Introduction

Meeting Incentive¹ Congress/Convention and Event (MICE) tourism is based on participation in various meetings of an associative or professional nature. The main objective of these events is to create, strengthen and multiply community links of intellectual, scientific, entrepreneurial or societal interest. Tourism and MICE Tourism are vectors of the economy and functioning of numerous territories, from global to local. Indeed, prior to the pandemic, *'Travel & Tourism (including its direct, indirect and induced impacts) accounted for 1 in 4 of all new jobs created across the world, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global Gross Domestic Product (US\$9.2 trillion)'* (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2022). Tourism affected an increasing number of territories: *'Between 2008 and 2019, real growth in international tourism receipts (54%) exceeded world GDP (44%)'* (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2020). Europe² is the main host region. In 2019, 744 million international arrivals and \$576 billion receipts were recorded (WTO, 2020). In the European Union (EU), tourism contributed around 10% of EU's GDP and provided jobs to 26 million people, through its direct, indirect and induced effects on the economy (WTO, 2018).

Economic globalisation and political opening up increase and spread leisure, event and MICE tourist flows. Being in essence open to all kinds of material and immaterial exchanges, tourism is sensitive to shocks and crises. As a corollary, the latter affect the tourism sector and host venues (Ritchie, 2004; Ridderstaat & al. 2013; Williams & Bálaz, 2015). However, until now, it was protected by its strong momentum and the nature of shocks. Indeed, in recent years, it had continued growing whilst absorbing shocks of varied scales of natural origin (e.g. Kim & Marcouiller, 2015; Scott et al. 2019; Roselló-Nadal et al. 2020), political and geopolitical (e.g., Fletcher & Morakabati, 2008; Saha & Yap, 2013; Liu & Pratt, 2017; Santana-Gallego et al. 2020), banking, financial, economic (Khalid et al. 2020) etc. Present-day organisations and spaces are exposed to systemic shocks *'resulting from the interactions of a multitude of non-linear elements the occurrence and consequences of which are unpredictable'* (Chandler, 2014). These systemic shocks, on principle complex, upset systemic balances deeply.

As a result, Tourism as a whole and particularly MICE tourism, have been partly thrown out of joint since 2020 by the shock linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and its spate of negative effects which at the same time appear as an amplifying and accelerating factor for the sector's present-day development

process. Responses are being provided to mitigate the shock. Some are situational, others appear as harbingers of structural transformations – potential factors of resilience?

<a> Part 1 MICE tourism, systemic shocks and responses in Europe

 MICE Tourism, target market of European metropolises

MICE Tourism is little known by the general public and much less documented, in academic literature, than leisure, culture, sport... tourism (WTO, 2019). The MICE market refers to 'a specialized niche of group tourism dedicated to planning, booking, facilitating conferences, seminars, and other events. The MICE industry is complex, consisting of participants, sponsors, planners, convention and visitor bureaus, meeting venues, accommodation, and suppliers generally being involved in the planning and execution of an event' (Allied Market Research [AMR], 2022). MICE Tourism used to be known as one of the rapidly growing markets for travel suppliers, closely related with the economy of a territory (Union of International Association [UIA], 2019). The MICE market enjoyed strong growth since the years 1980-2000 owing to globalisation, the expansion of services and international cooperation, the constant development of scientific and technological innovations, and the need of interchange between communities (Christofle, 2014; Getz, 2020). The aim of meetings being 'delivering innovation, knowledge and performance' (Jago & Deery, 2010), the territories' tourism, academic, geopolitical and research & development levels, and the presence of headquarters of national and international companies and organisations are determining factors of MICE travellers flows. Seven European countries are thus among the top 10 in hosting international congresses between 1999 and 2018: France, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Austria (UIA, 2019).

MICE sector is high value-added tourism. In 2019, it was valued at \$805 billion (AMR, 2020). Compared to leisure travellers, MICE tourists are less cost-sensitive because they usually spend directly only a fraction of the total amount spent on the journey. As early as 1994, Davidson and Cope had found that the ratio of daily expenditure by business or congress tourist to that of leisure was generally between 2:1 and 3:1. Therefore, MICE plays a role in significant contributions to global and local economies (Dwyer et al. 2000; Spencer & Bavuma, 2018). Europe is the global hub of MICE and business travels: indeed, '*the region receives over 50% of global business arrivals*' (European Travel Commission, 2020). In addition, MICE contributes to transportation systems and infrastructure (congress and exhibition - culture venues...) which benefit all tourists (cultural, leisure, etc.) and the local population (Yanase, 2015). MICE also contributes to uplifting the hospitality industry. Most importantly, this form of tourism contributes to leisure tourism (Law, 2002; Christofle, 2014; Lichy & Mac Leay, 2018)

MICE tourism, resulting from in-person meetings planned by academic, socio-professional, political, association... circles, are mostly held in places integrated into the major networks of globalisation and touristically attractive (UIA, 2021). At the same time, its requirements in large infrastructures and high-level services³ explain its preferred location in international metropolises (Rogers, 2013; Getz & Page, 2020). Roughly between 20% and 80% of metropolises' tourist clientele is MICE related. Indeed, in London, MICE accounts *'for 19 per cent of visitors but nearly 26 per cent of spend'* (Kyte, 2012) whereas Geneva is a *'destination essentially linked to business tourism (conventions, international meetings, professional gatherings...)* and *80% of bed nights depend on it'* (Lugon, 2019). Metropolises and capitals concentrate their country's MICE tourist flows (International Congress and Convention Association, 2021). The international congress segment is highly polarized. On the world scale, twenty cities concentrate around half the total of recorded events, and thirteen European metropolises are included in the world's top twenty. In descending order, we find: Singapore, Brussels, Seoul, Vienna, Tokyo, Paris, Madrid, London, Barcelona, Geneva, Lisbon, Copenhagen, Berlin, Prague, Helsinki, Busan, Bangkok, Stockholm, Sydney, Dubai, Montreal (UIA, 2020).

That *'globalised market has become regionalised overnight'* (Ceh, 2020). The pandemic crisis affects MICE Tourism's systemic balance by breaking, complexifying or restricting convention tourism mobilities. The COVID-19 shock has economic, political and social effects beyond the health crisis.

 Impact of the pandemic crisis on the MICE Tourism/Territory system and initial responses

Megacities and large cities are all intertwined (Luhmann, 2020). Consequently, all these global MICE destinations are forming the metropolitan MICE Tourism/Territory System. The latter, based on events hosted, core of the system, feeds and develops on the various interactions (economic, strategic, political, communicational, media-related, urbanistic...) existing among the numerous stakeholders involved in the meeting. They are embedded in multiple intra-network, inter-network and network-territory dynamics at different scales (Christofle, 2010; Ferry & Christofle, 2017). So, *'in this multifaceted global urban dynamics competition, urban agglomerations will aim to act as "gatekeepers" by seeking a strategic role as a global knowledge, innovation or creativity hub'* (Kourtit & Nijkamp 2013). So, crisis management and exit strategies are implemented in a context of globalisation and fierce competition between cities to host MICE. Indeed, beyond the economic aspects, MICE Tourism is a strategic vector of territorial development (Getz et al., 2020). It is an indicator often chosen in world rankings as a sign of high-level metropolitan vitality and attractiveness (Institute for Urban Strategies [IUS], 2021). In that context, European metropolises

are negatively affected by the systemic shock directly impacting the heart of the system – meetings.

<c> Major impact of the pandemic crisis

Indeed, from the first quarter of 2020 until the end of 2021, 2022... depending on the country, traffic and events have been blocked, prohibited or drastically restricted, leading to considerable reductions in congressional and corporate mobility. In the sole segment of international congresses, the drop has been extraordinarily tough: 400 events have been recorded in 2020 against 12,000 to 15,000/year, each bringing together up to several thousand participants (UIA, 2019). The MICE market fell to \$215.1 billion in 2020 (AMR, 2021).

More globally, according to the World Travel-Oxford Economics report (WTTC, 2022), 'the Travel & Tourism sector suffered a loss of almost US\$4.5 trillion to reach US\$4.7 trillion in 2020, with the contribution to GDP dropping by a staggering 49.1% compared to 2019 relative to a 3.7% GDP decline of the global economy in 2020'; the share of the Travel & Tourism sector in the contributed global GDP dropped from 10.4% to 5.5% in 2020. 400 million international arrivals have thus been counted in 2020 and 415 million in 2021, as compared to 1.460 billion in 2019 (Statista, 2022a). In Europe, international tourism arrivals decreased by 70% in 2020 compared to 2019 (WTTC). According to WTO, overall contribution of tourism to total GDP in Europe went from 9.5% to 4.9%. As a result, the economy of European metropolises has been impacted, the loss only partially mitigated by a local and national leisure tourism.

This systemic shock is unprecedented in view of the suddenness, extent, duration and scale of the crisis, and its multidimensional consequences on MICE system and host cities. Indeed, in order to avoid mass contaminations and saturation of healthcare facilities, the responses of the authorities were to cancel gatherings or introduce increasingly reduced capacities according to the pandemics' waves, together with travel restrictions and lockdowns. Events were postponed or cancelled, leading in 2020 to the collapse of the market, still disrupted in 2021 and 2022 (Explori, 2022). Since 2020, relaxed regulations alternate with constraints, causing complete or partial interruptions of the in-person event activity. The lack of coordination of the crisis' management at various levels of governance - European Union, countries – is an aggravating factor for international MICE (OECD., 2021). Indeed, the latter is based on planned group events, with an organisation significantly less flexible than the leisure tourism market. Most events are decided upon and organised from several months to several years in advance and involve a complex chain of players. Regulatory stability and medium and long term visibility are indispensable. Therefore, the persistence of measures prohibiting/restricting gatherings, the crisis and national and international regulatory instability since a number of years, have a strong impact on MICE tourism and international destinations (Lopez, 2022).

<c> Major responses

Various responses have appeared to cushion the shock, avoid the dismantling of the sector and systemic impacts on territories. Two main types of stakeholders have particularly reacted. They are on the one hand, the supply stakeholders, and on the other hand, the authorities. The main responses to the crisis have been reactive and adaptive to the shock; others carry the first signs of structural transformation - resilience capacity avenues?

At the level of actors in the sector (professional congress organizers, convention and exhibition centres, hotels...) and cities - Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) - convention and visitors bureaus, the immediate responses were redirecting promotion actions towards the national market and events limited in size, in response to mobility and capacity restrictions. Crisis management policies also included adopting flexible prices and terms of event cancellation and postponement (Christofle, 2021). It is important to reassure clients and restore their trust. Very soon, and still nowadays, these stakeholders began communicating actively via the Internet, newsletters and digital social networks, because staying in contact with clients is essential (Ceh, 2020). A key element concerns health protocols and hygiene, safety certifications. The major point of adaptability is the shift from in-person to virtual events during the crisis and the introduction of phygital⁴ ones (Christofle, 2021; Legkau, & Tichaawa, 2022). Combined with an increasing interest in organisational and territorial sustainability, the phygitalisation of events, beyond the technical factors, gives rise to questions on the present and future implications of these disruptions on the market and territories, and their resilience. More fundamentally, questions arise on the future of the MICE - metropolises articulation and interactions between MICE Tourism/Territory system actors.

In that connection, what have been the responses of national authorities? The quick and brutal collapse of the MICE market - transportation, accommodation, catering, convention venues etc. – brought about increased visibility of the sector, previously neglected or under-estimated by public authorities (Legkau & Tichaawa, 2021). The political crisis management resulted in exceptional support measures to protect companies, destinations and jobs. It is difficult to determine the share of pro MICE measures versus responses in favour of the entire tourist sector. As an example, in Spain, they included the suspension of repayment of loans previously granted by the State Secretariat for Tourism and the postponement of the payment of interests and/or capital of loans by regions for companies and the self-employed. In France, measures in favour of MICE concerned, among others, creating solidarity funds, employer contributions exemption, covering part-time unemployment, etc. (O.E.C.D., 2021). Companies have made a wide use of these aids. For example, in Portugal, '72.1% of companies have used some kind of public sector assistance mechanisms' (Palrao et al, 2021). Support schemes have been

varied and numerous, yet in an uncoordinated manner at the level of each State, each also individually handling mobility restrictions, border closure/opening... Responses were more coordinated at the infra-State level: regional work groups bringing together public entities and the private sector (Belgium), Tourism Industry Events Response Group (United Kingdom) etc. At European Union level, various measures were taken, including financing facility support measures, non-specific to the tourist/MICE sector, but the sector's economic players and member States could benefit from them⁵ (S.P.B., 2021). *In fine*, the recovery expected to occur after a few months in 2020 didn't happen and the situation stays tense nowadays.

The total of aids varies according to territories but is, on the whole, considerable; these measures, as well as the responses of the sector's players and those of territories, met their goal, the collapse of the MICE market has no doubt consequences on companies, jobs and territories, but has not caused the dislocation of MICE Tourism/territories system in Europe. Beyond the crisis management policies, the main point, in terms of management and governance, is to establish a closer dialogue between the sector and territories actors and the authorities. Both the tourism sector and MICE seem to be recognised better; the European Union is aware that its *'tourism strategy is not fit for the new challenges facing the sector'* (European Court of Auditor, 2021).

In the end, political and strategic responses have been deployed by MICE tourism actors, professional associations, and the authorities. Local stakeholders have mostly reacted in an organisational, promotional and communicational manner. Financial assistance has been the authorities' initial political response. State bodies have realigned their main policies on the sector's needs (O.E.C.D., 2021). In a number of countries, MICE players and those of destinations wish to take advantage of the opportunity to influence the policies of public authorities (Legkau & Tichaawa, 2021).

2020 was a year of upheavals that laid bare the vulnerabilities of tourism and particularly of MICE tourism. 2021 marked the second year of crisis, with strong disruptions in supply and demand. In 2022 and 2023, the congress, convention and event professional and territorial world is looking for satisfactory markers (Wagner, 2022). The question arises about current or future structural transformations, factors of resilience and vulnerabilities. Indeed, beyond the pandemic shock, destinations and MICE Tourism are facing other, more long-term challenges related to green and digital transformation, sustainability etc. New visions may emerge, entailing new approaches, problems and challenges for more resilient public policies

<a> Part 2. Systemic resilience principles and smart tourism' evolutions - Proposal for a conceptual framework for a more resilient MICE Tourism/Territories System (TTS)

 Resilience and structural smart tourism' evolutions: MICE TTS at a crossroads

International metropolises seem to define a new approach to globalisation by placing resilience and urban wellbeing at the centre of their concerns. The term resilience is widely used but it is a variable-geometry concept (Thoren, 2014). Fundamentally, there is a gap between a vision of resilience as a return to the previous condition after the disruption(s) and another one, whereby the previous condition is not/can no longer be a goal in itself, because the systemic shock has disrupted the situation. We consider that MICE TTS will never return to the situation "as usual" despite what some of the actors in the system, notably the authorities, seem to believe (Knezevic Cvelbar et al. 2021). Indeed, the issue is not to reflect on recovery plans but on reconstructing a model. Such reconstruction will in no way rest on traditional patterns reactivated when the crisis ends. MICE TTS is undergoing organisational and spatial changes, both imposed and accelerated by the pandemic's systemic shock, under the pressure of the digitalisation of events and taking sustainability into account. The authorities' changing perception of the sector, following the spate of impacts of the crisis on the economy of territories, may lead to envisage new lines of action, even new approaches in the governance of MICE destinations, all of it likely to reinforce resilience capacities or bring forward new vulnerabilities.

As noted by Toubin et al. (2012) among others, the concept of resilience is widely discussed and has been widely modified since its first definition issued from the physics of materials. The notion can be envisaged as an '*umbrella concept*' (Klein et al., 2004), a '*boundary object*' (Brand & Jax, 2007) and even a '*bridging concept*' (Beichler, et al., 2014). Resilience is fundamentally a concept for risk management (Dauphiné & Provitolo, 2007). This notion is very popular in academic, institutional and operational literature and encompasses a wide range of interpretations. It is brought up in response to multiple issues, of varied temporalities: short term in the case of brutal shocks, long term in response to slow changes. Another driving concept in public policies is that of sustainability. Even though the values conveyed and temporalities are different⁶, envisaging a nexus between the two (resilience of the MICE activity/sustainability of the city) can generate fruitful reflections. Actually, for several researchers, resilience is a necessary condition to sustainability (Folke et al., 2002; Klein et al., 2004). Thus, resilience – management of disruptions, exogenous and endogenous shocks/ability to adapt to better resist risks and shape change (Adger, 2003; Hudson, 2010; Fabry & Zeghni, 2019) - *and* sustainability – a balanced environmental, social and economic development -, can be envisaged as vectors of public policies in an uncertain environment.

In view of the complexity of contemporary urban systems and the transformative evolution of tourism included MICE, we envisage resilience in a continuum of reflections around the notions of 'smart development', 'smart city'

(e.g. Caragliu, 2011; Caragliu & al., 2020; Duygan & al., 2022). Indeed, European capitals and major metropolises are, at different levels, smart cities based on a '*mix of human capital (e.g. skilled labour force), infrastructural capital (e.g. high-tech communication facilities), social capital (e.g. intense and open network linkages) and entrepreneurial capital (e.g. creative and risk-taking business activities)*' (Kourtit & Nijkamp, 2012). The concept of smart city has given rise to lots of academic discussions (e.g. Albino, 2015; Myeong & al. 2022). The expression has become widespread. Smart city is becoming a model of city with a management optimized by information and communication technologies in networks, big data etc., in line with modes of governance and citizen participation in a sustainable vision of territories (Peyroux & Ninot, 2019; El Hilali & al., 2022). Strings of smart city indicators/dimensions are flourishing. According to Boes, Buhalis and Inversini (2016), the smart city takes into account technology, entrepreneurship and innovation, social capital, human capital and the organisation of the implementation of these strategies. World rankings of smart cities are based on '*governance, urban planning, technology, the environment, international projection, social cohesion, human capital, mobility and transportation, and the economy*' (Statista, 2022b), in which European metropolises are high up: London, Paris, Copenhagen, Berlin, Amsterdam, Oslo, Stockholm, Vienna...

Nevertheless, MICE, on the themes of resilience, smart development, smart city and even smart tourism city (Gretzel & Koo, 2021), is rarely or never brought up by city specialists and those in tourism (El Hilali & al., 2022). Yet, MICE Tourism is a stakeholder in the present-day changes of practices and territories linked to technology and sustainability that upset its organisational, economic and territorial model. Are these factors of resilience? Risks of disarticulation? Or even avenues of opportunities? The systemic shock brings to the fore changes, initiated years ago: digitalisation of the event sector, intense international competition, changing lifestyles, societal challenges that crystallize, like, for example, the Flygskam (flight shaming) movement (Christofle, 2021). The change is accelerating at a rapid pace due to the crisis. MICE is subjected to a real disruption of its model (Ceh, 2020) and destinations must adapt, and even reinvent themselves (Postma & Yeoman, 2021).

The different manners in which sustainability is taken into account by stakeholders' strategies has an impact on MICE TTS's resilience. The policies adopted by the authorities and supply stakeholders reinforce it on the medium and long term, whereas those of demand stakeholders could be sources of vulnerability for the system. Indeed, metropolitan governance and MICE TTS players turn towards territorial and organisational management, a factor of resilience and sustainability. Paris, Barcelona, Brussels... are taking steps to obtain ISO certifications. The most popular of which is the ISO 14001 standard (global environmental management standard) and ISO 20121 (Event Sustainability Management Systems): local authorities, event subcontractors: catering, logistics,

signage..., location managers: congress venues, exhibition parks, function venues, hotels... We'll observe the emergence of labels devoted to local authorities and aligned, for example, on the ISO 26000 international standard or "sustainable innovative destinations" in line with the ISO 20121 international certification. Finally, more comprehensive approaches, at a national scale, are being adopted. As an example, a *green growth pact* has been signed in France in 2022 by professional event associations and State authorities to accelerate the sector's transition towards a circular economy (M.E.F.R., 2022).

The crisis and its multidimensional consequences, including the exponential growth of Smart MICE and the sustainability demands have a determining impact on the behaviour of clients. Smart MICE is based on *'high-tech service industry, smart experience enhancement and complex business network. Technologies in Smart MICE are applied for infrastructure and framework, feedback and experience'* (Liu et al., 2020). At the same time, in the western world and in Europe, the crisis tends to make *'sustainability a high global priority'* within MICE (Explori, 2022). In consequence, companies' travelling budgets are in sharp decrease. A great number of business organisations have turned towards virtual events and are satisfied with this format which generates lower costs (transportation, accommodation...)

The digitalisation of MICE at all levels - organisation/logistics, marketing etc. (Liu et al., 2020) - is not new. The disruptive point is the abrupt shift from in-person meetings to virtual and hybrid. The shift towards a hybrid format of meeting is a factor of resilience insofar as it allows quick and easy adaptability, a changeover in case of disruption or unexpected occurrence. At the same time, owing to heavy investment (TV studios, platforms, digital solutions, staff training, re-design of fairs, stands...), European metropolises are assured to retain the leadership over second-rate destinations (Ceh, 2020). So, the hybrid format allows the return of delegates in person, with direct exchanges, fluidity and the interest of the face-to-face and, at the same time, an online audience made up of people interested in the meeting but who, for reasons of time, money, energy, geopolitical situation (visa...), do not travel. Nevertheless, hybridization is not only a question of technical means, it involves a professional challenge to engage the attention of online participants (Singapore Tourist Board, 2021). Therefore, in a period of uncertainty, two points are to be taken into account for the resilience of event destinations: hybridization and innovation (formats, contents, monetisation but also artificial intelligence, virtual reality - metavers etc... Lee et al., 2021).

The structural transformations of the MICE Tourism Territories system can prove to be efficient approaches in terms of resourcefulness and adaptability, and at the same time resilience factors on the long term. The model which is developing has implications on the city. Less physical events means a lower environmental burden (pollution, transportation...), less economic benefits, less exposure, different interactions among participants and a strategic impact to be re-assessed.

However, an analysis of trends tends to confirm that, although the corporate/training market has partly shifted towards the virtual format, the market of associations meetings (symposium, congress etc.) is resilient in physical format. Indeed, the community aspect is fundamental. Nonetheless, clients are open to the hybrid format and have become more demanding on sustainability criteria (UIA, 2021).

 Proposal for a conceptual framework for destination governance policy for a more resilient MICE tourism/territory system.

The resilience-based governance develops reactive capabilities, enabling the system to withstand shocks, and also proactive capabilities. The latter, on the longer term, *'make it possible to limit the potential damages and losses related to significant disturbances. Besides, disturbances create new opportunities to reinforce the destination via learning'* (Fabry & Zeghni, 2019). As stressed by Zeghni (2015), this type of destination governance is built around processes of interactions by different types of stakeholders unconnected with the central authorities, at multiple levels. The goal is to succeed in integrating disruptions into the city's development trajectory. For MICE TTS's resilient public policies, avenues can be envisaged for a smart and sustainable MICE Tourism in the integrative approach of the smart tourism city (Gretzel & Koo, 2021). Towards the smart MICE tourism city?

The systemic modelling is an approach 'for supporting groups to use clean questions and metaphor models to better understand one another and to develop the skills and capability to collaborate meaningfully' (Romero-García et al., 2015). We use this approach to develop a conceptual decision support tool to formalise a participation process for the planning and territorial management of MICE tourism, in a multi-criteria and multi-actor context. In this global approach, policies and strategies are set up at the metropolitan level, including crisis management in order to guide responses, and strengthen the resilience of territories. Indeed, owing to globalisation, the recurrence of crises in tourist mobility is to be envisaged (Hopkins, 2021). The point is for the authorities to adopt a concerted management and governance taking into account the players in the MICE Tourism/Territories system, stakeholders in the sector (companies, professional associations ...) and in territories (DMOs...), universities, tourists, and even city residents (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). The circulation of information/data and of knowledge/know-how/technologies can also help to find lines of action concerning the major present-day MICE/territories challenges: digitalisation, environmental responsibility, site adaptation, hybridization, editorialization and evaluation of events, adaptation of the offering.

As Carayannis & Campbell (2017) put it, a solution would be to *'bring together and connect the diversity, heterogeneity and pluralism of the different*

ways of knowing and innovating in an architecture of evolving networks'. The key point of the approach would be that players in metropolitan governance consider MICE Tourism as an essential component of the place, an economic and societal lever, and not a mere adjustment variable of public actions. Therefore, in a smart MICE tourism city policy, the sector is to be considered on the same level as health, waste management or mobility, in a holistic perspective (Guo & al, 2014).

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for destination governance policy for a more resilient MICE tourism/territory system

Our proposed policy model for a resilient MICE TTS (see Figure 1) is inspired from the quintuple helix model (Carayannis & Campbell, 2017), and, more specifically, the quintuple helix tourist model (Perrain & Jean-Pierre, 2019). This work follows on from that of Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff (2000) on the Triple Helix model in which the helix represents interconnected and interwoven sectors of activity, a formalisation to symbolise relations between university, companies and local government/public institutions (Nieddu, 2002). To these three core sectors are added the fourth helix (knowledge society/knowledge democracy: civil society) and the fifth (ecological transition: natural environments), in a construction in which knowledge is a resource: *'Knowledge, as a resource, is created through creative processes, combinations, and productions in so called "Knowledge models" or "Innovation models" and thus becomes available for society: we can also call this the creativity of knowledge creation'* (Carayannis et al., 2012).

The quintuple helix model is an interesting base for developing a smart and resilient governance destination policy model adapted to MICE metropolises. However, as observed by Perrain & Jean-Pierre (2019), some specificities of tourism modify the stakeholders in this model. Indeed, to start with, *'the questions of promoting the destinations and their attractiveness are central issues'* for event destinations and, on the other hand, supply stakeholders are heterogeneous: they bring together local SMEs and major international groups with different territorial logics. Finally, MICE Tourism differs from numerous other tourist forms insofar as it is less dependent on a "natural environment"; its physical support is represented by DMOs which promote the city and would integrate sustainable development issues.

Within the knowledge society, which is the encasing frame of its development, the smart MICE tourism city would be characterized by a collective construct co-elaborated between the metropolitan governance, the university, companies – MICE tourist industry, DMOs, the civil society (city residents and event tourists) (see Figure 1).

This collective, at the heart of the spatial resilience system, acts prior to the economic reflection and tourist development. Unlike the classic helix model, the smart MICE tourism city is placed at the centre of the innovation process, and the metropolitan governance plays a role of facilitator/leader and keeps a balance between the various actors. The collectivity's value proposition consists in easing the division of roles between the system's various stakeholders (territory players, sector players, civil society, university), and being vigilant on the coherence of the offering with regard to the general interest and the territory's resilience. The University is a resource of new competencies (re-engineer educational pathways and develop targeted programmes for new critical competencies) and new knowledges; for example, an important point concerns the lack of reliable data on the MICE market. In particular, accurate counts of participants to MICE tourism and their expenses directly allocatable to the meeting and the destination would help decision-makers to better evaluate the impact of the MICE event and make more informed decisions. MICE tourist companies include both SMEs, convention centre, major international groups (Hotels...). Adapting the MICE offering to global trends and to the demand's needs entails an indispensable support by the authorities to the sector's SMEs in regard to access to digitalisation and environmental transition (OECD, 2021). Associating major groups is a way of linking them to the territorial base and spreading knowledges and technologies. Delegates, event tourists and city residents bring social capital and are information producers (applications, digital social networks etc.). These data help to reshape the MICE tourist experience and hone and personalized customer pathway. DMOs, and particularly convention bureaus, reveal the value of the collectivity. These, trusted third-parties in Europe, aggregate public and private offerings (transportation, accommodation, convention centres etc) to the requirements of each profile (congress organiser, event agency, company...) thus making interactions between actors in the MICE Tourism Territories system easier and more efficient. To their traditional role of vectors of fine-tuned knowledge of the territory and tourist enhancement, DMOs could add a strategic role of guidance within the framework of smart territorial policies, which are factors of spatial resilience.

<a> Conclusion

In view of the foregoing developments, the process to improve MICE Tourism Territory System's resilience can be envisaged as making it possible at the same time to manage disturbances (*short-term resilience*) and maintain the system in the "ideal" sustainability trajectory (*long-term resilience*) linked to a system status indicator (the MICE activity's economic growth). Resilience defined as the ability to absorb then recover from disruptions, allows to maintain or adapt the trajectory of an urban system of which the components and functioning can be approached according to the principles of sustainable development and smart

tourism (Gretzel et al., 2015) with an open and reflexive vision of public policies. As a recommendation, we proposed a conceptual framework for destination governance policy for a more resilient MICE tourism/territory system. The interrelation and interaction of stakeholders is an essential element of governance policy for a smart MICE tourism destination coinciding with digitalisation, sustainability, technological and societal innovations. This dynamic holistic integrative framework can thus stimulate an optimised system resilience.

Taking tourism and particularly MICE fully into account in reflections, strategies and holistic policies would allow greater resilience of systems to potential and inevitable disruptions. Then the resilience of the system helps, faced with various kinds of shock, including systemic, to avoid break-up, brutal change or collapse phenomena (Toubin et al. 2012).

We can think, like Stathopoulos, that *'the resilient city is flexible and transformable. Risk is part of its foundations, just like the resources which can come out of it... The crisis is a revealer of opportunities'* and even, in future, of a regenerative MICE tourism (Germain, 2022) with an approach intervening at the scale of systems: dialogue, experimentation, co-creation, inclusion... Towards smart MICE tourism cities?

NOTES:

¹ Travel offered by a company or an organisation to some of its employees (marketing staff, executives etc.) as an incentive or a reward

² World Tourism Organization's statistics include Turkey and Russia within Europe

³ Easily accessible, high-quality accommodation/catering, congress and exhibition centres, highly skilled professionals etc.

⁴ Part of the audience is present; another part follows the event on line.

⁵ We'll mention among others the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII), Liquidity Measures for SMEs, the Temporary Framework for State Aid, the Coronavirus Banking Package, Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), Eurogroup Financial Emergency Fund, Next Generation EU Recovery Instrument.

⁶ The reference to resilience is being often perceived as a shorter time frame than that of sustainability.

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