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BY SARAWAK CONVENTION BUREAU

A photograph capturing a moment of connection between two people. In the foreground, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair is smiling warmly as she places her hand on the shoulder of a man. The man, wearing an orange and black striped t-shirt, is also smiling broadly, looking towards the right. In the background, a woman dressed in traditional Sarawak attire, including a colorful beaded necklace and a patterned dress, stands near a wooden structure. The scene is set outdoors, with natural light illuminating the subjects.

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ICC SYDNEY STUDIO: DELIVERING VIRTUAL EVENT SUCCESS



The outbreak of COVID-19 has had an unimaginable impact on the business events industry. At ICC Sydney, our business is built on bringing people together – for galas, concerts, exhibitions, meetings and conferences. However, in just a few short months this has drastically changed with no events occurring outside digital means.

Like the rest of the world, ICC Sydney has responded quickly to adapt to life online and rapidly reimagining the way we serve our clients to help them continue to connect and engage with their audiences.

While not every event is suited to a digital format, we have been able to work together with many clients to safely and creatively reimagine their events and content to ensure we continue to deliver a diverse range of world class events.

Adapting to life and events online

Looking ahead, it is likely that virtual events will continue to be used in some capacity, even as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis. They can offer a solution for programs or whole events where audiences from around the world may not be able to travel but still need to be able to interact and engage, even from a distance. Event organisers will have to think differently to reach all their audiences as countries will, no doubt, be recovering differently.

“
ICC Sydney is fortunate to have in place a wide digital offering and a skilled team who are already making virtual events happen. This includes live or recorded web streaming, remote presentations, video conferencing, and a number of broadcast studios. This enables us to offer clients a full broadcast quality studio or premier online experience that engages and connects audiences with leading brands and organisations.

”

Our in-house audio visual professionals have delivered and supported several events online since restrictions on gatherings came into force. These include a conference by Salesforce, one of the first to move online following travel restrictions, assisting the Committee for Sydney host a live webinar and live streamed interviews with our CEO, Geoff Donaghy, to broadcasters.

There will be demand for an increasing array of virtual events in various stages of evolution from now until the end of the year. As this demand grows, we will continue to expand our services. We have already built a second studio to enable us to offer more live streaming and video conferencing capabilities. It is positive that in the current climate, businesses and organisations see huge value in continuing to come together, connect and collaborate. In fact, some of our clients are telling us it is now more important than ever.

Looking to the future and industry revival

While there are no directly comparable situations to COVID-19, past experience shows that recovery will come. At the same time, we will all emerge as different businesses which have to think differently in a brave new world.

Meetings in person, networking and mass education will return, but virtual events will exist alongside these.

There will not only be a financial imperative to include online elements, but a connection imperative where, in some instances, virtual events can provide an excellent solution.



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SABAH

Bringing your events into another whole new level.



Sabah International Convention Centre and view part view of the Kota Kinabalu city centre.



“Welcome to SICC and we are pleased to finally showcase this masterpiece that will be among the factors to entice MICE to our lovely destination,” said a representative from the Sabah International Convention Centre.

It was a pleasure to finally do a walk-around the long awaited Convention Centre. This anchor facility will indeed benefit the MICE industry for Sabah and add value to the existing infrastructure that has since been accommodating MICE prior to the completion of the centre.

This was the last industry engagement before Malaysia had implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) that would have the country on limited movement for the next two weeks which has now been extended further. We joined other countries in this global phenomenon that had disrupted many industries in an

unprecedented way. But as painful as it is economically, we will continue to be prepared to rebuild this segment and further add improvements and value to it.

Dubbed as a secondary city in the MICE arena, Sabah pre COVID-19 was highly accessible from North Asian countries allowing the destination to welcome a new segment of MICE groups. In the past 3 years, the state welcomed more than 1,064 group



Delegates hosted to local flavors.



Outdoor Carnival theme and grand stage concert at the Shangri-la's Tanjung Aru Resort and Spa.

ranging from 50 pax to the biggest being 3000 pax. The state also became a preferred location from destination wedding hosting entourages up to 500 pax.

Heightened creativity began to flow as suppliers from the DMCs, Event Organizers and Hotels equally pursued more ideas to ensure each group received the personal Sabahan-hospitality touch. While still ensuring the requirements of each group was accomplished, local flavors were injected to allow culture to be showcased.

From food choices of utilizing local crafters and produce to creating pop-up bazaars bringing small enterprises to display and sell their handicraft, the industry realized that this added touch could bring more meaning to each event. The nature of MICE / Business Events is the transference of benefits. It is for delegates to experience something new, attain new knowledge and to indirectly benefit the local economy of the host destination.

For Sabah, small enterprises were presented with new opportunities to contribute and it was apparent that in appreciation of being given this opportunity, these amateur entrepreneurs will present their best. This indeed was an ideal situation and once that had fulfilled the objectives and fringes of events.

Sabah looks forward to welcoming groups back to this Land Below the Wind, to once again allow delegates to experience our culture, to explore our nature, appreciate our wildlife and simply be Enchanted by Sabah.



Audience engagement in an Ethnic dance.



Pop-up bazaar featuring local craft entrepreneurs at the Shangri-la's Rasa Ria Resort and Spa.

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Australian Conference Continues to Shift Paradigm during COVID-19

The first Social Media and Critical Care (SMACC) conference burst onto the scene in 2013 in Sydney, Australia, by having a costumed wrestler throw the suited and rambling first speaker off the stage in the opening minutes of the event. Ever since, the conference – born from an online community of critical care specialists with a shared belief in free open-access medical education – has been at the forefront of innovation in the world of medical meetings. Alongside three Australian iterations, the event has travelled the world, taking place in Chicago, Dublin and Berlin, where a concert venue was chosen over a convention centre and the 2,500 available tickets sold out within hours of their release, months before the event.

After the final SMACC conference in Sydney in 2019, the event has evolved into a new gathering called Coda, which was

scheduled to take place in Melbourne in September 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic created a moment of pause for events and travel globally.

But, true to form, the team behind SMACC and Coda has used the moment to continue to do things differently, at a time where, as critical care specialists, the expertise and practice of their community is playing a crucial role in ushering the world through the crisis.

"This is a critically important time for us," says Dr Roger Harris, co-founder of SMACC and Coda and Senior Specialist in the Intensive Care Unit at Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney.

"The community, our patients that we serve always rely on us, but now we're having to stand up more than ever because there's an element of putting ourselves in harm's way to help others."

"In terms of Coda, this is the sort of thing that's right in our wheelhouse. Coda as a medical community has always been about medical knowledge and clinical expertise and skill, which is a very important part of medicine, like most medical conferences, but the Coda community and the concept behind it is broader than that.

"It looks at our professional domains within medicine more than just learning and expertise – [it] looks at our professionalism, our advocacy, our scholarship and teaching, our communication skills, all of which, in the current pandemic, are really being brought to bear.

"The teamwork aspects which I think at traditional medical conferences are often really underdone – we focus a lot around data and transferring data at medical conferences ... but in fact ... our community ... really sought out more than that. They wanted medical conferences to be talking about better communications, how do we work better as teams, how do we develop better as individuals, how do we look after wellbeing and how do we really advocate for bigger things in the community," says Harris.

While the pandemic has necessitated a move of conference dates to April 2021, the organisers are looking to use the postponement to give the conference a kind of prelude, so attendees arrive at the conference next April already warmed to topics and primed to participate.

"If you look at the program and it starts on day one, rather than waiting for April to be day one, we've come up with this concept called Coda Zero which is the day zero of the program, which is now. Our four pillars of the program [are] going to come to life in four separate virtual events later this year. We'll lay the foundation for what we want to do in April. It gives us this really great learning opportunity ... people won't come in cold [in April], they'll come in hopefully hot from [the virtual events] and we can really launch the learning way further ahead than we would have done in September."

The day zero concept fits with the conference's existing innovative approach which sees each subsequent day of the event build on the day before it.

"Unlike a normal conference, where you just have random sessions, the idea here is that we look at the program as an opportunity to develop ideas over three days so that you're really taking people on a journey," says Harris.

"And it's even deeper than that – the program changes for each

of those three days – the format changes to reflect the journey. Day one, everything is about narratives – whether we're talking about [conference pillars] Coda Cure or Coda Earth, we're talking about it in terms of deep, rich stories to unfreeze people and to make them start thinking. Then day two, it's more about panel discussions, Q and A, hypotheticals, because it's about co-creation and the power of us working together. And then Day three, the speakers are using a style which is more [like] coaches."

As they plan their Coda Zero virtual events and run twice weekly podcasts called Coda vs COVID, Harris notes the "strange dichotomy" created by the pandemic.

"On the one hand we're learning that we can do a lot of stuff virtually and it's effective, and at the same time it's really highlighting the fact that as social individuals there's a limit to that virtual connection.

"You can have hours and hours of virtual connection and it will not build anything like [what] you can build in terms of trust in five minutes face-to-face.

"The one thing that I think is very difficult to build in a virtual world is the real deep-rooted community connections that we develop in person. In the Coda community, those deep-rooted connections have really fostered trust and it's that sense of belonging and trust in the community that has then leveraged into much bigger things."

Read more about Australia's business events expertise in [Meetings International Business Intelligence Report #13: The Pulse Down Under](#)

»Those Deep-Root- ed Connec- tions Have Really Fos- tered Trust«

A hand is shown holding a forearm, symbolizing support and partnership. The background features a vibrant sunset with orange and red clouds, and a bridge with illuminated towers and lights reflecting on the water.

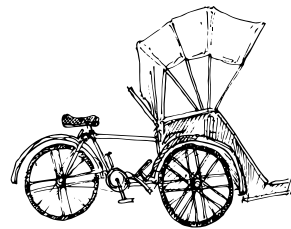
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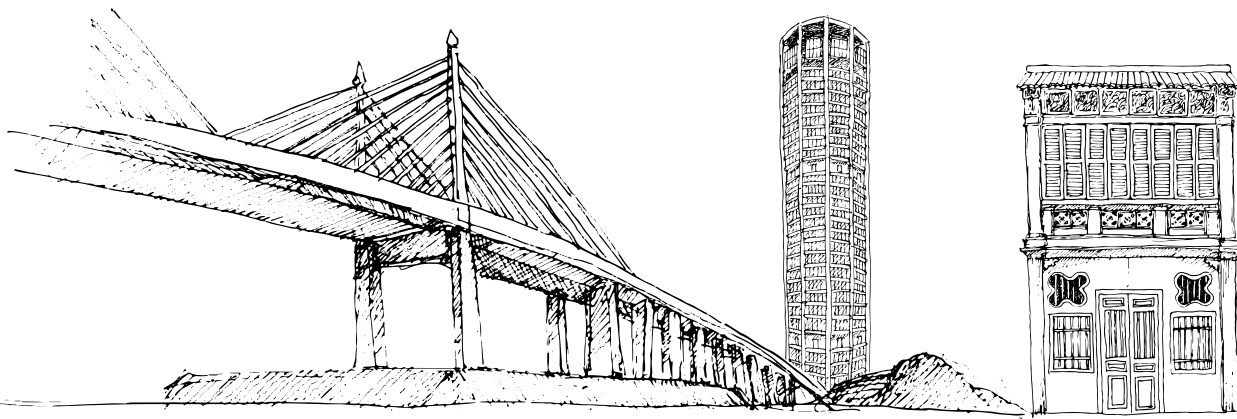
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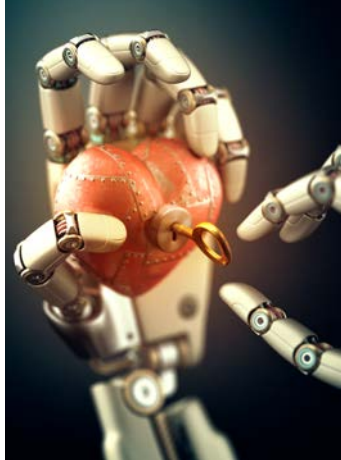
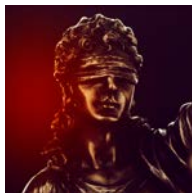
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**The above support is valid between 2021 to 2023 for confirmed international association meetings and corporate meetings with a minimum of 20 delegates.*





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LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE EDITOR IN CHIEF Atti Soenarso
atti.soenarso@meetingsinternational.com

PUBLISHER Roger Kellerman
roger.kellerman@meetingsinternational.com

GLOBAL SALES DIRECTOR Graham Jones
graham.jones@meetingsinternational.com

TEXT Robert Cotter, Geoff Donaghy, Hans Gordon,
Roger Kellerman, Robin Sharma, Atti Soenarso, Rohit Talwar

TRANSLATOR Dennis Brice

PHOTOS / IMAGES Sara Appelgren, Rudy Balasko,
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Basis for
Business



The Art of PIVOTING

THE CORONA pandemic has challenged established norms and accelerated normally slow decision-making processes. Perhaps we are too close to the epicentre of the crisis to understand the significant change we are facing. We who work in the media, in my case since the late 1970s, have lived in constant evolution. I have witnessed the transition from lead compensation to computerisation, from digitalisation to Zoom meetings. Is the end of development nigh? Hardly.

We have worked from home for the past 20 years and are used to it by now. It is on our work travels that we meet a lot of people, thus not being able to travel at all for a long period feels odd. We all have very different personalities, which creates different conditions for many people when we are now part of a paradigm shift. In Sweden alone, an estimated 9,000 companies in the hotel and restaurant industry are forecast to fold. If the same figure is applied to the world, that which many of us thought was an upward curve of economic development will instead bring about significant change for whole communities.

We are facing a transition that will have a major effect on large parts of the world as we know it. We are in the midst of a world-historical event that is difficult to get the distance

too because it is ongoing. The changes have been constant for several years, but too many people have not analysed the changes as a regular pattern. Along comes, a pandemic and everything is turned on its head.

It is now all about changing and doing so as early as possible, preferably yesterday. What are your chances of coping with the transition? The survival of the fittest is often explained as the strong survive. But what it means is those who adapt have the highest chance of survival.

It is easy to understand how people feel stressed by the drawn-out uncertainty in the meeting with the unknown. When faced with difficulties, our crisis management strategies are exposed. Some of us handle crises head-on by being strong-willed. Others have a fatalist approach and are more on their guard. When the two strategies can coexist, and even complement each other, then you know that there is an acceptance for differences. What does not work, however, is when the strategies collide. It can happen in a close relationship when you give up on each other, and it is just like in society. It is when you start to blame the other person and deflect everything onto them that things begin to go downhill.

But it is good to worry because worry raises the cortisol levels and

makes you more cautious. If you are completely unafraid, then you are irresponsible. Panic is the problem. The difference itself is never the problem, rather how people react to it.

The need for contact manifests itself, we see that every day. Since the beginning of the 20th century, development has accelerated constantly. This is the first time that we have had to press the reset button. This helps people to rediscover things that got lost in the “normal” life. The new normal is to take back things that mean a lot to us. The coronavirus has decided that for us.

Events, congresses, conferences and many other types of meetings can and shall be implemented both physically and digitally. We now have to up the tempo in a sustainable way and create better conditions for improving global cooperation. Business events are one of the most important keys to a better future.

Nobel Prize winner in literature George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) once said, “Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

Swedish-Indonesian **ATTI SOENARSO** has worked as a journalist for close to 40 years. She has worked for Scandinavia's largest daily newspaper, was TV4's first travel editor, has written for many Swedish travel magazines and has had several international clients. She has travelled the length and breadth of the world and written about destinations, people and meetings.



PHOTO Magnus Malmberg



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BAKERMAN'S

TEXT

Atti Soenarso

PHOTO

Evert van de Worp



The Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC) is the premier organisation responsible for promoting the Netherlands nationally and internationally. It's their work to put the country on the map as an attractive destination using their registered brand "Holland." They focus on the markets for business meetings, conventions and holidays. NBTC receives government funding from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy and cooperates closely with partners within the tourism industry.

ERIC BAKERMANS is the Director of Marketing Meetings & Conventions at NBTC. One of the significant issues for Eric Bakermans and his team is to work together with associations. The department actively seeks contact with Dutch associations and supports them in their bids to host, for example, congresses. The result is a strong bid made by joint forces thus increasing their chances of winning the bid and bringing the conference to the Netherlands.

Eric Bakermans says that NBTC should be the link between the government on one side and commercial partners on the other side, like private venues.

"As a national convention bureau, we are in between. We are here to market the Netherlands as an international meeting and conference destination in which the national part plays the most important role. That's the reason why we have contributions from the Dutch government. Besides that, we need partners and do things that are important to them, and which also serves the interest of the Netherlands as a conference destination.

"We represent the country, and not only the capital or any larger conference cities. We have access to the government with politicians directly – to either get them involved

“Sustainability is one of the so-called pillars of our 2030 perspective”

or to support what we do. And this is something which only we can do. We have direct contact with the Dutch embassies around the world, and can, for example, have smaller events at the residence of Dutch ambassadors.”

The Netherlands has nine top sectors: Agri and Food, Chemistry, the Creative Industry, Energy, High Tech Systems and Materials, Life Sciences and Health, Logistics, Water and Horticulture and Starting Materials. The Dutch Top Sector policy is a modern industrial strategy that stimulates the Dutch knowledge economy. The innovative top sectors are among the world's best and the government wants to strengthen their international position further. NBTC, through the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, has developed acquisition and marketing strategies which target meetings and congresses that match the scope of any of the Top Sectors and the Sustainable Development Goals.

“If we rely upon the top Dutch sectors, we can build further on the Dutch policy. Exporting knowledge is also related to meetings and conferences – because I can also see a conference or a congress as a way of exporting Dutch knowledge on a specific topic, although the event

is taking place inside our country. I think it's a beautiful showroom to do so.”

Being a national convention bureau NBTC also builds trust with their initiative takers, namely those people who are willing to take the risk of organising an international congress. That is a certain risk and will involve time.

“The people working for an association are well-educated, but they have not learned about marketing a destination to get the best out. That's what NBTC is a specialist in. We can help each other, and there is no financial interest.

“I am only interested in one thing, and that's winning the conference, and serving the interests of the association. I know the association is there not for my benefit, but the other way around. We are there for them, and we will help them in the best way possible, in any way possible. It differs per association, of course, without having a hidden or commercial agenda.

“It's all about the people who make a difference in that destination and who are in a position to attract a meeting or a congress to that destination. These people are the starting engines for hosting congresses and





“International business events delegates spend, on average, 20–25 per cent more than other foreign visitors”

meetings – it’s not just because we have the infrastructure. We need to put these people first. All the hygiene factors and accessibility are important, but these are bare essentials, so we need people to take the step.”

Eric Bakermans says that they work a lot on trust. It’s critical that the convention bureau work with the right, trusted partners. That’s one of the reasons why he is not eager to give away their brand to any private partner. They might use it like a seal of approval, which it is not.

“The professors and the board of the association need to be completely assured that they can trust the convention bureau. And getting in touch with the right person as well. Not only with the professional congress organiser, but with the government, if needed. Trust is also of high importance when it comes to long-term relationships.”

The Department of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy supports NBTC in everything they do.

“They are quite aware of what we do and the importance of it in general, as well as meetings and conventions. That is not always the case with other departments.”

An essential part of Eric Bakermans’ job is to get through to the right

person, and to have that person’s knowledge to get the convention bureau further down the lane to either the state secretary or the minister. Sometimes the convention bureau easily gets a letter of support, or the officials sign a bill.

“We too are part of the Dutch policy, and they might think: ‘Okay, we could support not by giving money but by other means.’ So, proving our business case is challenging. However, that’s something we do not keep on knocking. I don’t think that’s anything different than from other destinations. I hope I will get some more time – also via changes within my organisation called NBTC Next – to make our organisation more agile and being able to respond to market changes more quickly.”

Another challenge is to educate the Dutch, in this case, private entities. Eric Bakermans explains that if you are interested or willing to enter the market of international meetings then you should have a financial horizon of at least three to five years. Do not expect any success before that. It’s an investment, and then you will see a return on it, in any way possible.

“We are about knowledge, and not so much about logistics. We have received countless of emails from

“Business events have proven to be key drivers to quality visitors. Beyond that, also an important contributor to our knowledge economy”

venues or hotels which are totally in no way capable of hosting a meeting, and they don't know what it involves. This is also a part of our job, and I think that's something which is open for improvement from our side too, to educate our industry.

“Yet another challenge is funding, but that's an open door. It makes you more creative if resources are limited. Sustainability and travelling are a challenge as our industry by definition is a polluting industry. Without saying give up travel, because in the end, why do we have this meeting here? Because we needed to meet each other in person. I know that the phone doesn't record my facial expressions or that you are nodding. It's within people's nature, and this has been happening since humanity was born.”

To cooperate is a part of Dutch culture, and Eric Bakermans explains why. Suitable land to grow crops is scarce in the Netherlands. There is also water almost everywhere, and a large part of the area is below sea level.

“We must work together to keep our feet dry. Do you know the word ‘polder’? It is formally wetland that may dry. There is now a word ‘poldering’ which is a way of explaining why

the Dutch have to talk all time, or at least be in contact with each other. Otherwise, someone on the other side of the polder thinks: ‘Oh, I can open the logs’, and then the other side will be flooded. Also, one of the main reasons is because we all need to work together. We need to compromise a lot, and we call it the lack of land.”

At the moment NBTC is working on a 2030 perspective. Mona Keijzer, state secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, has given the national convention bureau the assignment to come up with an outlook for 2030, on the Netherlands as a destination in the broadest sense of the word. It's not just about tourism, or meetings and conventions, but in general. It also includes the issues NBTC need to cope with, including spreading arrivals in time and place, over tourism, etcetera.

“It is not necessarily NBTC's vision, but it is a 2030 perspective which is also valid to our work.”

In the shorter term, there is a Holland Congress Alliance, which is a sustainable collective of four cities, convention centres, Schiphol Airport, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, as well as a major hotel chain.

“We have worked together for the last five years with investment from

all sides towards the international association market. For that, we also have a mission and a vision.”

We have interviewed Eric Bakermans on two occasions. We had one meeting before the outbreak of Covid-19 and one virtual meeting in April during the pandemic.

Which are the three main challenges in your work, creating the future of business events in the Netherlands?

“The Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions is all about the development, branding, and marketing of the Netherlands as a destination. Development is, for example, educating emerging destinations in the Netherlands who are interested in developing their city or region for business events. These developments are sometimes also a matter of time and therefore, long-term investments, at first from public sources. It's not just a matter of joining a few activities in our industry, and business will come in by itself. It's a matter of building trust, research and the will from private parties too to reach that goal.

“Branding is something else than marketing. Sometimes it's hard to explain to individual business owners that meeting planners will not be making their choice based only





on the fact that there is a venue or service. You need to build the brand first, what makes your destination special and distinctive? And the visible actions are the marketing part, campaigns, activities, content creation etcetera.

“The challenge of it all is that you work with public and private partners, and their interests have to be captured in powerful cooperation.

What are the plans for the Netherlands at the Expo Dubai 2021?

“The Netherlands will have a pavilion at the Expo and for all the good reasons. The Gulf region is an important area for us. Our companies export for more than eleven billion euro to countries in that part of the world. In the Gulf region are many large investors who also invest their money in the Netherlands. As a result, this

long-term vision for the visitor economy – both for leisure travel as well as business events. More visitors are not a driver anymore for some time now, just as going to one place all together at the same time. Business events have proven to be key drivers to quality visitors. But beyond that, also an important contributor to our knowledge economy. Our sector has made big steps when it comes to sustainability. Are we there yet? Certainly not. But a lot is happening. As an organisation, we plea for better connections in Europe by train, for example. Waste management at large venues in the Netherlands has reached a very high standard. Sustainable food options have become mainstream. In other words: Yes, sustainability is fundamental, and it would be strange if it were otherwise.”

International business events delegates spend, on average, 20–25 per cent more than other foreign visitors. Global business delegates have grown at twice the pace of over-all visitation over the last four years, while expenditure has increased five times faster. The business events sector also claim that economic activity well beyond directly measurable metrics, underpinning knowledge creation and exchange, innovation and investment, among other positive impacts – economic value referred to as ‘beyond tourism’ benefits. International business events bring global expertise, and world-best practises to the Netherlands. How important is this for your country?

“My answer is already given in your question. The fact that Meetings & Conventions form an integral part of the assignment from the Department of Economic Affairs and Climate towards my organisation is, in fact, a token of their interest to co-invest in our approach. Combine this with our other stakeholders in our

“International business events bring global expertise, and world-best practises to the Netherlands”

Not always easy, but in times like this the near future will tell if that challenge has been accepted.”

How do the effects of the pandemic crisis affect the strategic plans of your work?

“The line-up is never straight. A strategy is always long-term, but there will be curves and bends on that road. Of course, the current situation is forcing us to adapt to what is happening now and what will be our shorten mid-term offensive action. We are currently working on a sustainable recovery offensive plan to create maximum cohesion with provincial and regional initiatives to revive the visitor economy. This is all in the works as we speak. But there will be a moment in time when this situation is behind us, and we’ll be returning to our long-term strategy to keep the Netherlands liveable, popular and valuable as a business events destination.”

is developing our economy as well. Many countries in the region work together with us in other fields.

“The Gulf region is also of great importance to another reason. Countries in the region are also large consumers of freshwater and energy. They import a larger part of their food consumption needs. Their natural resources which have made them rich and prosperous are getting exhausted slowly but surely. How they deal with water, energy and food must change they think. Financial resources are available in abundance, knowledge and skills often not. Dutch companies, scientists and educational institutions do have this available. As a result of this, many opportunities lie ahead.”

How important is sustainability for developing business events in the Netherlands?

“Sustainability is one of the so-called pillars of our 2030 perspective, our

“The challenge of it all is that you work with public and private partners, and their interests have to be captured in powerful cooperation”

industry, and you will see that this value is very much acknowledged.”

How do you measure the economic impact of business events? What kind of challenges do you have to tackle?

“We know quite well what the direct economic value is. However, it is my deepest wish and goal also to be able to measure the ‘beyond tourism’ added value. In what way and into what extend is the impact to be measured when it comes to our knowledge economy. This has proven to be a very complicated matter. One or two European destinations have published useful data from which we can learn too. Still, it’s something which will involve a huge series of interviews, educational guesses, time and above all money to conduct an overarching research effort. And this is where the shoe pinches. It’s a project which requires a long-term perspective. Measuring and charting indirect societal and economical impact will involve several years. Commercial entities do not have a direct interest gain on this, so it’s something which consists of the involvement of public organisations.”

How important is your network overall for your development of new knowledge?

“I am in particular proud of my collaboration with my European peers, united in the Strategic Alliance of the national convention bureaux of Europe. Together with co-founder Matthias Schultze, the Managing Director of the GCB German Convention Bureau, we have achieved already a lot, and we also find each other united when it comes to projects now and in the future.

“Secondly, it’s our partner network in the Netherlands. The city convention bureaux, the hotels, venues, DMC’s and PCO’s have proven to be very loyal to us and each other over the past 20 years. It’s always a sheer joy when we are abroad to market the Netherlands as a business events destination.”

What do you think will happen in five to ten years when it comes to business events in the Netherlands?

“It is my firm belief that the Netherlands is not an island as a matter of speech. We’re part of something bigger, and we’re used to doing business

worldwide. We must; it is in our DNA. So, developments in our branch will not be limited to just the low lands. Our community is not isolated but part of a European and global network. We’re facing challenges in many fields that are just the same in countries around us. Look at developments in technology, demography, mobility and sustainability. The current corona crisis will most certainly have an impact on the business events industry. The recovery process alone is going to take months if not longer. Unprecedented and disruptive, but we must and will overcome. Or better said, as in the motto of our Dutch province Zeeland: ‘We struggle and emerge’.”

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United Kingdom

Area Lockdowns

Nationwide lockdown with start 23 March 2020 to TBD

Quarantine measures

National movement restrictions: banned

Restrictive measures mandatory between 13 May 2020 to TBD.

In England it is now permitted to leave the house more than once a day for exercise with no time limits as long as social distance is maintained. Message changed from "stay at home" to "stay alert" although Scotland, N Ireland and Wales are preferring to stick with the original slogan. Travel for exercise allowed in England and N Ireland but not Scotland or Wales

Non-essential shops closure: closed

Restrictive measures mandatory between 13 May 2020 to TBD.

People who cannot work from home are now encouraged to go back as long as safety measures are implemented. Construction and manufacturing were specifically mentioned. This applies to England only.

Events stop: banned

Restrictive measures mandatory between 24 March 2020 to TBD.

Limited socialising (just 1 other person) allowed in open spaces respecting 2m rule, only in England. N Ireland allows small groups (4-6 people) to meet outside, again respecting distance rules.

Other: closed/cancelled

Restrictive measures between 29 March 2020 to TBD.

Northern Ireland strengthens regulations regarding movement restrictions, bringing it into closer alignment with the rest of the UK.

Border restrictions

International movement restrictions: free

Restrictive measures recommended between TBD to TBD.

Suggestion: people discouraged from travel except for essential cases

Airlines

Flight restrictions: partially cancelled

Restrictive measures recommended between 11 May 2020 to TBD.

Not yet implemented but suggestion that travellers to the UK may have to self-quarantine for 14 days after arrival.

British Airways

British Airways to suspend flights to Sydney, Hong Kong from early April ([click to read more](#))

easyJet

easyJet grounds all its planes because of COVID-19 ([click to read more](#))

British Airways

British Airways are suspending flight operations from London Gatwick (LGW/EGKK) from 31st March according to sources close to the airline. ([click to read more](#))

Aurigny

Aurigny suspends all its remaining flights to London Gatwick Airport until at least end of May after COVID-19 causes lack of demand ([click to read more](#))

EasyJet

EasyJet cancels all flights throughout April 2020 ([click to read more](#))

British Airways

British Airways to suspend direct flights between London and Tokyo after 8 April ([click to read more](#))

Jet2

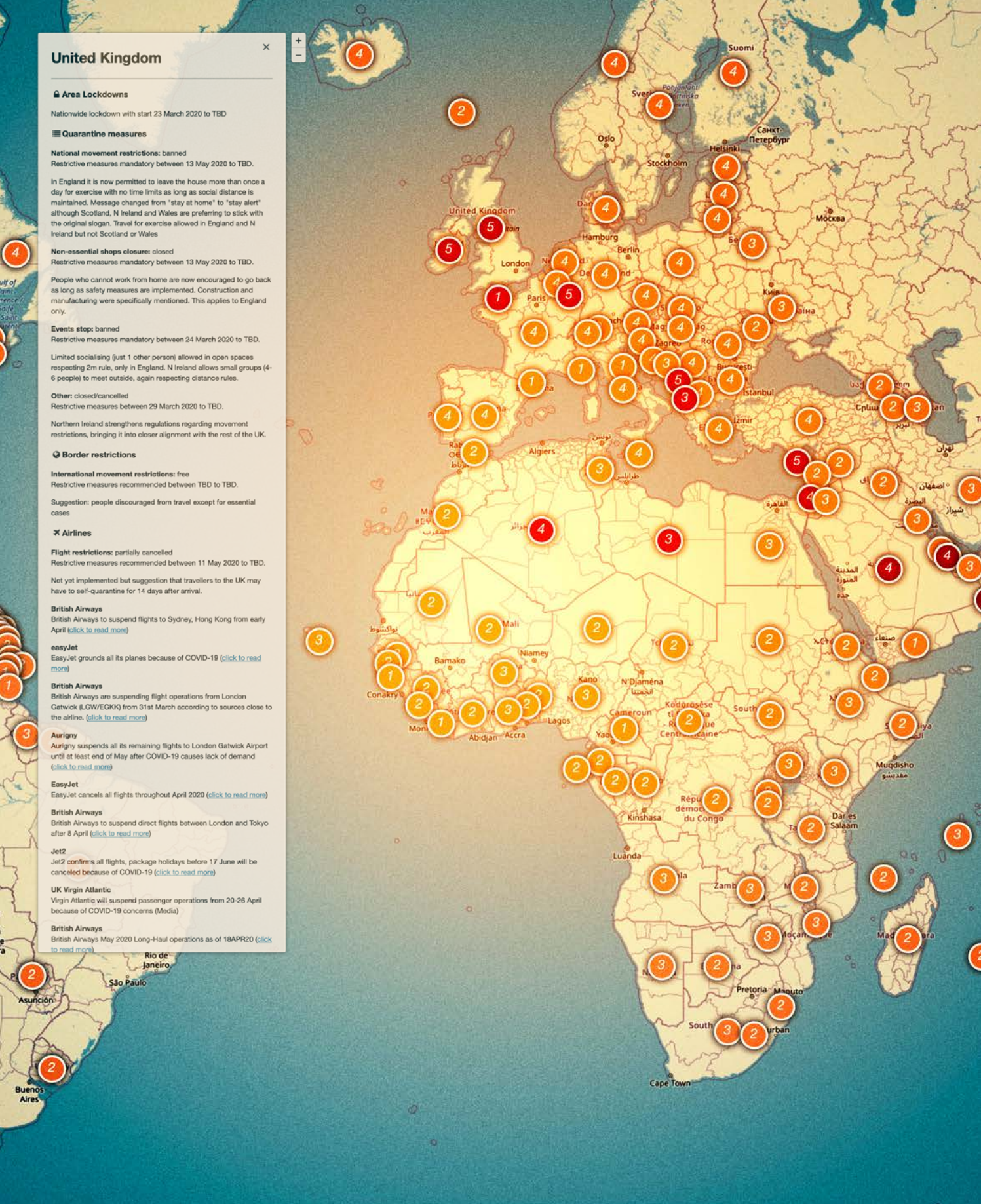
Jet2 confirms all flights, package holidays before 17 June will be canceled because of COVID-19 ([click to read more](#))

UK Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic will suspend passenger operations from 20-26 April because of COVID-19 concerns (Media)

British Airways

British Airways May 2020 Long-Haul operations as of 18APR20 ([click to read more](#))



New Tool Kickstarts GLOBAL BUSINESS AFTER COVID-19

THE SWEDISH company Safeture has launched www.openupforbusiness.com website to provide people with free access to accurate and real-time information on virus restrictions so they can plan their next business or family trip. It is the first interactive mapping tool to help viewers see which Covid-19 restrictions apply to specific countries and is available to embed on other sites free of charge.

The map includes information about area lockdowns, quarantine measures, flight restrictions, school closures, and links to more information. The data is continuously monitored and updated by Safeture analysis team, a critical step since each day, there are enough updates to fill a 1,000-page book, equivalent to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.

"The more people that get access to this information to make the right decisions, the faster the economy can begin to recover. Let us open up for business", says Magnus Hultman, CEO of Safeture.

"We have access to a ton of critical data, so it makes sense for us to package it together and make it free to the world. Countries are slowly beginning to ease restrictions, so it is critical businesses. It was important for us

to provide this interactive map for free and make the coding available for embedding on other sites to help the world get back on its feet and open up for business.

"We now have a full global pandemic forcing the world into lockdown. But each country and even regions have their approach to lockdown restrictions, making it difficult to keep track of the range of rules. Slowly, the world is easing its restrictions, and our free tool gathers all the available restrictions data from around the world and collects it all on one interactive map, which is the first of its kind."

According to the OECD, the global economy misses out on around USD25 billion if the economic output decreases ten per cent each day under the current Covid-19 restrictions.

Safeture, founded in 2009, is a Software as a Service (SaaS) company based in Sweden. The company offers a complete cloud-based platform designed to manage employee safety and risk/crisis management. Through world-leading technology and innovative solutions, Safeture help more than 3,000 companies and organisations to protect what matters most – their employees.

Safeture Enterprise gives larger corporations the ability to effectively automate safety and security while seamlessly integrating the software to become a natural part of their internal processes.

The Safeture share is listed on NASDAQ First North Growth Market in Stockholm.





PHOTO Sara Appelgren

HANS GORDON, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Authorised Psychologist, specialised in Aviation Psychology. Authorised psychotherapist, since 1987 running *Gordon Consulting*. Has for decades been engaged by airline companies, among them SAS and Thai Airways International.

Egoism, Fanaticism AND POPULISM

A place of refuge from the miseries of life



Man's body is naked and vulnerable, exposed in its softness to every assault. With care and cunning, he may be able to fend off things which come near, but it is easy to reach him from a distance; spears and arrows can transfix him. He has invented shields and armour, and built walls and whole fortresses around himself; what he most desires from all these precautions is a feeling of invulnerability."

From *Crowds and Power* by ELIAS CANETTI

THE NEW-BORN BABY lies suckling at its mother's breast. Barely a few hours old, the child cannot yet distinguish or experience anything that could be described in structures. Existence is a boundless 'everything.' As there is nothing external contra internal, the experience could be described as psychotic with no tangible 'reality.' In classical psychology theory, some refer to this boundless state as a dreamlike primary process. Fragrances, sounds and light consist of

unspecified signals that are linked to variations of somatic impulses that are related to cold, heat and pain, but also to stillness and calm.

When the mother offers the baby her breast it is like holding out something that is part of the baby itself. The fragrances from the breast send signals that help the child shape its mouth and start to feed from something that is a part of everything, and the child is also a part of everything because everything is related to

everything. Freud likens the child's situation with that of an unhatched chick. Other researchers of early infancy have described it as the newborn child being enclosed inside an autistic shell, a shell that protects it from excessive signals from the surrounding world. Should this barrier be penetrated from outside by loud noise or flickering light, the child may react through organismal stress and organismal distress.

physical or perceived psychological obstacles along the way.

This early development stage is, of course, sensitive. The mother and child must float softly and gently together in harness with the internal rhythms and tensions of their respective bodies. But what about the father? Where does he come into this interplay, and what is his primary role? Naturally, he can assist and sometimes even replace the mother,

the defences fall, things could become angst-ridden and lead to serious mental health issues.

Life for the Homo Sapiens, the present human being, is in no way easier than for any other animal on our planet. As individual beings, we are vulnerable to all kinds of threats, both external and internal. And we are operation controlled. The libido is permanently set on pleasure and enjoyment. If not kept under shackles, it could become a completely dominant force in our lives. We probably think we are entitled to have our needs satisfied and tend to go through life, taking increasingly higher risks because we have no wish to follow the flock meekly. The crowd requires an altruistic will and attitude to stick together, primarily through the family than other groups (friends, school, working life). This is where guilt feelings are implanted. Without guilt feelings, there is no morality, and without morality, there is no altruism.

Instead, a primitive form of egoism rules. Socially developed egoism is self-fuelled by narcissism. Narcissism stands for self-love, the desire that is primarily directed at one's self. It is a natural stage of early infant development that quickly moves on to the desire for external objects; first the breast then the mother's facial features followed by the father's, and then the combination of all that, something best described as symbolic representations of what one still sees as the one and only.

Narcissism should be seen as the uploading of an inner world of experiences that can either be directed outwards towards the surrounding world or, if obstacles exist, inwards towards oneself. This makes egoism an expression of self-centred narcissism, a desert island in a pulsating, complicated and overly contradictory

“Socially developed egoism is self-fuelled by narcissism”

It goes without saying that the infant needs to be piloted safely before being able to navigate through a complex and mystifying world all by itself. The primary tools used by the child are the mouth and throat, followed by the eyes. The child looks at the mother's face during breast and bottle-feeding. The eyes and brain record the mother's eyes and mimicry, the mouth especially, which can take on different forms and, together with the eyes, magnetically attract the child's attention.

The driving forces, the amounts of energy in both mother and child, are usually divided into two primary forces: libido and aggression. The libido is the collector and bearer of all things perceived as pleasurable and enjoyable. The mouth is the first erogenous zone and thus the centre of lifelong oral activity (soon to be followed by more). The aggressive component is also vital as it acts as the engine behind the physical movements, that which takes a grip to prepare for the road ahead and overcome any

but he has another role to play in the coming separation process by adding external existence to the internal. While the mother also participates in this process, it is more often facilitated by the coming and going of the father figure with his different vocal levels, unfamiliar eyes and mouth movements.

The child development thus switches from a symbiotic phase through several intensive psychic processes to a more autonomous plateau upon which the rapidly maturing child learns to stand on its own two feet and make its judgments. There are several things in the sensitive interplay with the surrounding world that could misfire, and many risks arise along the way. The idea that is required most of all, and is best implanted during the early weeks and months by the mutual actions of everyone concerned, is basic trust. Without it, the child will continue its journey on wobbly legs with inner insecurity and a growing need to resort to internal psychological defences. If



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and conflict-filled world, where the invitations of the flock or crowd do not have enough magnetic pull. The flock usually drags with its cultural demands, which always entails a form of personal degradation, with the possible exception of those who get to sit on a throne or stand on a stage from where they can milk the adoration. They do not like being subordinate to the group. Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der*

All our large world religions and smaller non-denominational churches belong here. We humans have reached the stage where we can work all day in scientific laboratories and educational institutions but still seek out environments in which we can devote our time to worshipping something that only exists in our fantasy world. This is part of the ancient human need to find hope and comfort amidst all of life's contradic-

and has different cultural traditions. By projecting evil onto others, they whitewash themselves of any shame and guilt. Good is here, and the abominable is over *there*.

This way of acting has paved the way for the concept of *populism*. Populism stands for a simplified, naïve view by a majority of the people in a flock who are opposed to particular groups like, for example, the ruling class or people with a different political opinion. This is a variant of collective egoism, also based on narcissistic needs but shared with others in the congregation (flock) of which you are a member. These days you hear a lot about far-right and far-left populism. This is because populists usually seek their connections at the extreme ends of the political scale.

Thus, the narcissistic, egoistic person strives to extend their protection barrier right up against that they perceive as being a threat. This usually makes them highly sensitive to criticism. Any direct criticism of their position will generally lead to powerful counter-reactions bordering on the fanatical. *Fanaticism* is thus a social reaction and in addition to that part of human psychology, something far removed from humility and thoughtful wisdom.

The unprotected infant travels down life's journey in what could be described as a complex and invariably unwelcoming archipelago full of reefs and sudden depths amidst a host of attractive islands, skerries and glittering bays. Over the years, the need for protection against the ever-increasing menace grows and grows. Look, a refuge! And another one! How fitting! How nice! Or maybe not.

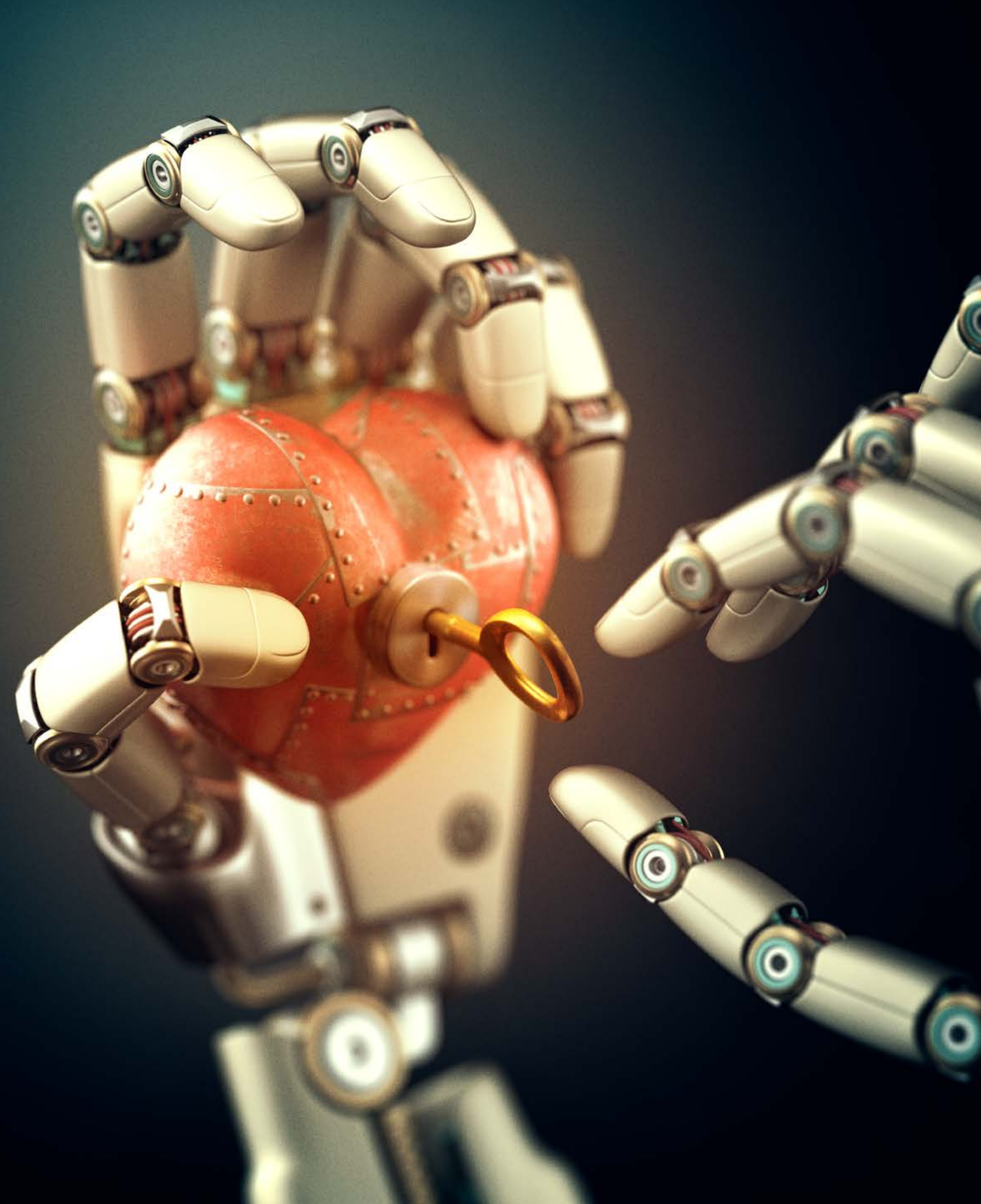
“By projecting evil onto others, they whitewash themselves of any shame and guilt”

Kultur) gives a good insight into this subject.

Exaggerated egoism is thus a self-imposed refuge that lies in the outer fringes of social interaction. It offers the opportunity to close the door on all things human and hang a sign on it saying: Do not disturb! But not everybody who seeks such a refuge wants to isolate themselves. For thousands of years, groups have been formed for the sole purpose of remoulding reality to suit their illusionary ideas, a world in which everyone is welcome provided they are prepared to play along with the group's ideology and fantasy of how it all began. Despite Homo Sapiens being gifted with brains that have enabled amazing creative achievements in communication, art, culture and technology, we humans are somehow still very adept at creating myths and fairy tales that are as far removed from scientific proof as it gets.

tions and conflicts and more obvious physical threats, like dangerous animals (poisonous reptiles, spiders, etcetera, insect-borne diseases and large mammal predators), alongside earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and hyper dangerous micro-organisms (bacteria and viruses). This makes us fragile and vulnerable. The threat is also enhanced by the knowledge that we have a limited life span and will one day die.

By connecting with others of a similar nature, we try desperately to form a common counterforce to the threats. We are basically flock animals and can always look to the herd for protection. A flock can reinforce its protection barrier by identifying other human groupings as its greatest threat. Modern history has the “Arian race”, who's mission it seems is to eradicate anyone of the Jewish faith along with anyone who looks different to them, wears different clothing



Virtually Real?

“Virtual meetings will replace real meetings
when virtual honeymoons replace
real honeymoons”

“This is what I shared with our national newspaper, The Australian, in an interview about how the business events industry is coping with Covid-19 and why I remain confident that we will return from this crisis stronger than ever.”

*Geoff Donaghy, CEO, ICC Sydney & Group Director
Convention Centres ASM Global (Asia Pacific)*



Sustainability

A BRAND FOR THE THAI BUSINESS EVENTS

TEXT

Robert Cotter

TAKING UP the mantle of both spokesperson and figurehead for the most critical concern of the younger generations, teenage Swedish activist Greta Thunberg has rapidly become a household name and one of the most recognisable faces of our age. Moreover, the passion of her protests on how pressing an emergency climate change has become, and how fervently young people feel about it, has managed to sway the attitude of governments, international organisations and the corporate sector around the world away from a singular focus on growth and towards one of building a new and genuinely sustainable economic framework.

Global in essence and bringing together the world's leading thinkers, the meeting industry is in a prime position to be at the forefront of helping steer the way to this new framework. Both directly tackling issues of

climate change in how it operates and promotes industry standards, as well as helping share ideas and unearth the technological solutions needed to address climate change, and that government and major institutions can endorse and promote. While states with advanced economies, such as those in Scandinavia, northern Europe and the US, have already been able to realise significant progress in making their meetings and the wider industry more sustainable, others with economies that have been rapidly developing have until now been placing notably lesser importance on their sustainable credentials.

Thailand is one such state. Its rampant economic growth over recent decades has come at the cost of equally widespread environmental degradation. The country's *Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021)* recorded a

“We then simplify and develop our standards to fit with the national context”

bleak picture of significant declines for every measurable environmental criterion, from air quality, declining wildlife populations and deforestation to water scarcity, soil erosion and waste issues. Today, the jewel in the country's meeting industry crown, Bangkok, has become a city deemed at risk of sinking from excessive groundwater removal as a result of its construction boom. The city's levels of air pollution have been recognised as a significant health issue that will only be alleviated by 2029.

Addressing all of this, the country's meeting industry, spearheaded by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), has responded to these challenges and the climate change *zeitgeist* of the emerging generations. It has of late not only been placing a much greater emphasis on sustainability at the heart of the industry but also setting in motion several commendable initiatives to help bolster its importance.

“The key challenge in the past was the lack of awareness on the importance of sustainability over business operations. Which led to the difficulty of persuading the operators to practice sustainability in their management and operation, and if they did,

the question was how such practices would contribute to their commercial viability,” says Khun Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya, President of TCEB.

“In recent years, the most pressing issues to be resolved are how to make the practice of sustainability sustainable in the long term and translate them into serious-business implications which will encourage them to continue. In terms of organisers, the most pressing issues are how to develop their capability and creative ideas in delivering services that achieve sustainable outcomes, and finding partners throughout the value chain to adopt the practice in the same vein is also another main pressing issue.”

To tackle the scope of such issues hindering sustainable practices from becoming firmly embedded in the country's meeting industry, the convention bureau took the step of looking towards nations more advanced in terms of both training and education. And to begin developing its tailored platform for Thai meeting industry practitioners as a first step in embracing sustainable practices.

“We are influenced by Danish practices for general sustainability

issues and we also work closely on education courses with a variety of US MICE associations,” says Khun Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya. “However, if earning international credentials is the first step, it will deter Thai MICE operators as it is time-consuming and incurs huge costs. We thought that to make a start with our version, and it would enable them to make a real first stride, like establishing a foundation or a testbed first before they can make a further move.

“In the development process of our standards/awards, it is a requirement that related international standards, guidelines and practices be studied and used as the fundamentals. And we then simplify and develop our standards to fit with the national context. For example, TCEB has developed the national-level MICE sustainability standard named *Thailand Sustainable Event Management Standard* (TSEMS), which is based on ISO2012, aimed at helping Thai MICE operators to provide their service sustainably systematically.

“In the near future, too many standards at both national and international levels may confuse the operators. For now, we prefer to focus on our two national standards, which

mean for business

highlighted last year how sustainability performance impacts business value

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MICE SUSTAIN

MICE
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Develo

are the *Thailand MICE Venue Standard* (TMVS) and TSEMS. Still, we also have plans to create a TSEMS checklist specially designed for venues.”

In advancing their customised checklist of suitable standards and sustainable practices for the Thai industry, TCEB has taken something of a triple-helix approach. Not only to engaging with the industry’s supply chain partners but also with politicians and the academic sector to ensure that its actions and outcomes are founded on a multi-sectoral

global issue as it is a core element of the United Nation’s MSD mission,” says Khun Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya. “Besides, the MICE industry involves the international market, which is becoming more aware that our industry is a high resource consumer, and corporate social responsibility has been their norm. Responding to the global trend will make the Thai MICE industry stand out and enhance our country’s competitiveness.”

Aspiring to enhance Thai compet-

income inequalities through our ‘Farm to Functions’ programme.”

“We also take part in the *Global Destination Sustainability* (GDS) Index. With its four main criteria of environmental, social, supplier performance and DMO/CB performance it has served as one source of our guidelines,” says Khun Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya. “TCEB utilises these as a guideline for our strategic planning and we are proud that Bangkok has been ranked second in Asia for two years in a row (2018–2019) for a sustainable destination in the GDS-Index with good score in DMO/CB performance criteria. We deem all four criteria highly important, and we can use them to shape the future of sustainability in different cities in Thailand.”

The *Farm to Function* (2016) and *Food Waste Prevention* (2018) programmes have proved to be both popular and successful within the industry. The former being a world-first collective community engagement programme by the convention bureau and Thai MICE operators to support local farmers. And the latter a 9-point commitment programme to cut food waste and save on food costs that have had tangible results for some Thailand’s leading hotels that participate in it. Yet these are just two pillars of what has been a wide-ranging MICE Sustainable Destination Master Plan running from 2016–2020 and that is now scheduled for renewal to cover 2020–2024.

There have also been initiatives to promote carbon-neutral events in partnership with the *Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organisation* (TGO), seek optimal matchmaking and value in the supply chain. Also, the continuation of the *MICE Sustainability Forum* that was established in 2008 to update sustainability trends and best practices. More than a

“Thailand is a serious player ... Sustainability will become a brand for the Thai meeting industry”

approach.

“We have been working with the academic sector by signing MOUs with more than 100 universities across Thailand to make sure that key trends and significant elements of business events have been introduced to our future MICE personnel. We have set up four academic clusters in every key region of Thailand, the central part, the North, the East, the North East and the South, which we are working closely with to advance sustainability. They are sitting as a TSEMS committee, participating and serving as instructors in a variety of TCEB sustainability education courses. Several pieces of research related to MICE sustainability also have been developed and shared.

“With our politicians, we make them realise that sustainability is a

itiveness further when it comes to its sustainability allure, TCEB has also set its focus on several global sustainability benchmarks that it believes can elevate its standing. It has consolidated them with some unique industry initiatives.

“Among the many education courses, standards and other initiatives, we focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3.1, Global Food Loss and Waste. And we have supported venues in reducing food waste through the ‘Food Waste Prevention’ programme. We also focus on SDG 13, Climate Action through Carbon Neutral Event, a project by which we measure the carbon footprint of events held in Thailand. SDG2.4.1, Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture, and SDG10.1, reduce

**“Our meeting industry will be a key player
in convincing the world that our industry can boost
economic growth and professional development
based on sustainability”**

decade after the establishment of this forum and with it having a notable influence on the annual *Incentive Travel and Conventions, Meetings Asia* (ITCMA) that is annually hosted in Bangkok. The convention bureau launched a new initiative at the end of 2019 that are now feeling confident, and it will take them to the next level in the coming decades.

“After ten years of promoting green meetings that we later developed into sustainability and now believing that the foundation is strong enough for us, we have designed a meeting and incentive (MI) support package, ‘Meet Sustainable’, based on sustainability. It is the first time that we have transformed our development into a marketing product, highlighting our thought-leader role for the MICE industry. We reward MI groups holding events in Thailand with at least two out of the seven required sustainable practices.

“As we are promoting this support campaign worldwide, we deem all markets our priority targets whom we encourage to see with their own eyes that Thailand is a serious player in sustainability. And that we can environmentally contribute to their

event’s profile,” says Khun Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya.

“The main goals in the next five to fifteen years are Thailand becoming globally recognised as a destination championing and successfully practising sustainability in the business events industry. It is becoming one of our strengths in attracting events. We are also setting our sights on all five MICE cities by supporting them to adopt and showcase how they can deliver sustainability. Above all, we are working our way to making Thailand a leading international sustainable MICE destination that is the catalyst for the growth of a sustainable economy, society and environment for the better world.”

The activism of Greta Thunberg and her global message that the ‘house is on fire’ is also aimed at creating a sustainable economy and better world for future generations. What is crucial when the house is on fire is that its occupants and owners are aware that it is and are ready to turn on the hose of sustainable actions to dampen and then gradually extinguish the flames.

“Sustainability has been firmly established as a global issue and

addressing it will raise the profile and capability of the Thai meeting industry in the global arena,” says Khun Chiruit Isarangun Na Ayuthaya. “Our meeting industry will be a key player in convincing the world that our industry can boost economic growth and professional development based on sustainability. ‘Sustainability’ will become a brand for the Thai meeting industry.”

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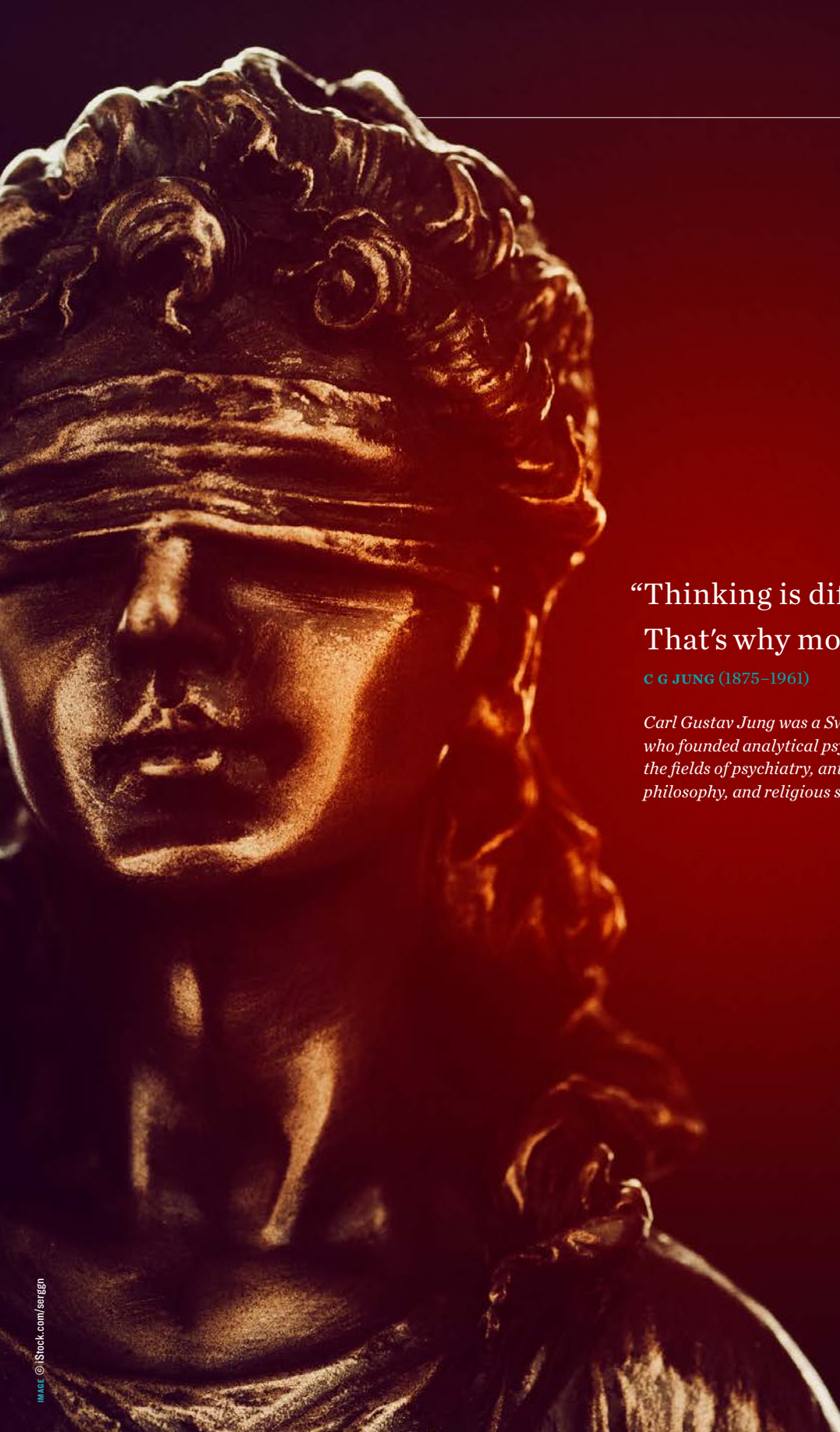
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“Thinking is difficult.
That’s why most people judge”

C G JUNG (1875–1961)

Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. His work was influential in the fields of psychiatry, anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and religious studies.



Create Solutions THAT MEAN WE EMERGE WITH A COLLECTIVE DESIRE TO SUCCEED

THE HAGUE Convention Bureau, part of The Hague & Partners, won 92 international congresses in 2019, a 48 per cent increase compared to 2018.

International congresses won across the city last year achieved an estimated economic impact of €48.79 million for the destination.

Provisional numbers from the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions (NBTC) show that The Hague achieved nearly 213,000 congress days in 2019, an increase of nine per cent compared to the previous year.

“These figures are a testament to the collaborative approach we are seeing across the venues, hotels and suppliers throughout our city. Our excellent transport links, well-established infrastructure and reputation for the delivery of high-profile events

are all helping us increase our presence across the global congress market. The Hague is the International City of Peace and Justice where every day, tens of thousands of people are working together towards a better, safer and more just world,” says Bas Schot, Head of The Hague Convention Bureau.

A key factor in the convention bureau’s success has been its growth in the market, focus on knowledge infrastructure and direct engagement with associations to drive new congresses to the city.

“The convention bureau’s involvement in the number of congresses taking place in the city is increasing,” says Marco Esser, Director of The Hague & Partners. “In 2019 we were involved in 76 per cent of all congresses that took place here. That is a

“Our long-term strategy is the development of repeat business”

considerable growth compared to only 40 per cent involvement in 2018.”

Peace and justice, legal and finance, cybersecurity, renewable energy, IT and tech, life science, and the Impact Economy are key sectors for the destination, accounting for over 91 per cent of all acquired conferences in 2019.

“People are increasingly looking for less busy destinations, where there is still a lot to see and do, and our town offers that. It is a royal city, a city by the sea and a city of peace and justice,” says Bas Schot.

The Hague & Partners is an umbrella organisation, including The Hague Marketing Bureau, The Hague Convention Bureau and The Hague Business Agency. Together the three organisations made a considerable contribution to the economy of the destination in 2019.

“I am happy about the outstanding results of 2019 of the work of The Hague & Partners. More companies, more conventions and more visitors are important for the economy of our city. Not only because visitors like to spend their money here, but also because it creates important jobs for our inhabitants,” says Deputy Mayor

Saskia Bruines (Economics) of the Municipality of The Hague.

The Hague is the third-largest city in The Netherlands, the International City of Peace and Justice, the world’s legal capital, and the second seat of the United Nations. Tens of thousands of people are working here on innovations that are geared towards building a better, safer and more just society. It is also home to entities operating in new energy, cybersecurity, legal and finance, IT and tech, Impact Economy, social entrepreneurship and humanitarian affairs. They form and define the basis of the extensive and specialised knowledge infrastructure.

The Hague historically attracted international organisations working in the field of peace and justice. Security and cybersecurity were the natural progression of this specialism and played an important role. Due to its status as the International City of Peace and Justice, The Hague naturally attracts global organisations, talent and innovators that want to make a difference. This has added to the development of the city as an essential hub for cybersecurity in Europe and a flourishing cluster around security and new technology.

The Hague is a content-driven city, and many past association events have been in the areas of its key sectors. The town plays host to several well-known organisations in the technology and law cluster, including NATO, NCIA and Eurojust. The city is also home to many other organisations working on digital issues related to policy, security, law, ethics, norms and standards, and accountability. The destination is an innovation hub for these areas of expertise.

“Through the initiation of connections on a structural level between local stakeholders working across sectors and clusters that are key to our city, we have developed and enhanced a reliable knowledge infrastructure,” says Bas Schot. “Our city has always had a focus on hosting events relevant to the expertise of its stable industry clusters. This is a real win-win for all parties: the organisers can tap into our sector network, opening doors for speakers, delegates, sponsors and more. Our knowledge clusters benefit from contributing to industry-specific events, and further enhancing The Hague’s expertise in these areas.”

The Hague Convention Bureau is working closely with partners,



“The global spread of Covid-19 has demonstrated how connected we have a desire to be”

organisations, knowledge institutions, start-ups and NGOs in the city, as well as with The Hague Business Agency, which promotes the city as a destination for foreign direct investments. Through the city and with the regional investment promotion agency Innovation Quarter, the key focus sectors have been identified by the municipality.

“The city has a thriving business climate and an ecosystem that is reflected in our success and numbers. More than a hundred multinational companies, 115 foreign embassies, 200+ institutions and organisations, such as the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the International Court of Justice and Europol are all based here,” says Bas Schot.

On the question what the convention bureau has done to grow the direct engagement with associations to drive congresses to the city, Bas Schot answers:

“Our greatest success has come from the development of relationships. We make the connections between associations and local stakeholders, which has enabled us to drive more congresses to the city. To achieve this, we have embarked on traditional marketing and sales activity such as fam trips, trade shows and

trade missions. We have also sought and delivered additional creative solutions to the development of key relationships.

“Furthermore, we work with partners to deliver international, industry-specific sales representation and PR. Being proactive in this process, we have also developed new ideas such as our cooperation with Ottawa in Canada, which has seen two similar destinations come together to share ideas and even work together on specific projects and client events.

“We have a subvention fund that supports associations looking to hold events in the city. While it is open to all, there is higher weighting and opportunity for those events that fall into or sector focus and knowledge infrastructure. The whole process is simple to apply for, but we help the buyers through each stage of the, supporting them and maximising their chances of benefiting from the fund.

“Ultimately, it all comes down to personal relationships and the development of ongoing communication. If that means a trip to an association HQ in Brussels or even further afield, we are more than willing to make an effort for the long-term benefit of the city. Key to this is our desire to bring together local stakeholders, experts

and the associations themselves. This allows our local knowledge to filter into an association’s long-term plans and ensure our city is a vital part of their conferences and knowledge development going forward.”

Do you have any long-term strategy for attracting more business events?

“Our long-term strategy is the development of repeat business. Through stronger, strategic client relationships and the development of city-wide networks, we can attract long term business to the city rather than one-off events,” says Bas Schot.

“Through the development of smaller events, the support of the organisers and the development of a city infrastructure that supports the events, we create specialisms that in turn, deliver long-term repeat business. One such example is the Impact Summit Europe. This has led to The Hague becoming a centre of excellence for Impact Investing and Impact Entrepreneurship events. Similar success has been seen in the peace and justice, finance and security sectors. As the home of Europol, for example, we are ideally suited to security events, which return time and again because of our local expertise and access to leading speakers and knowledge. As long as we

continue to support this knowledge with superb logistics, event infrastructure and accessibility, the events will continue to return.”

How important is it not being the number one congress city in the Netherlands when it comes to increasing the business events for the town?

“Being a ‘second-tier’ city is of huge benefit to us. Most of the major European hub cities have been used time and again by event organisers. Delegates have seen them all and

Which are your three most significant challenges?

“Capacity is an issue to some extent. As a DMO we would always like to see more hotels and venues. We have what we need to deliver on our specialism. More exhibition space would probably be of help when it comes to competition with some other larger cities, but our specialisms mean it is not a deal-breaker.

“We have a bit of a perception challenge in terms of what the city

What will happen in five and ten years when it comes to business events in The Hague?

“Answering this question in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis makes this the hardest question to answer as the future is currently tough to discern. Covid-19 means there will be a shift towards home-working and therefore, more virtual events and hybrid meetings. However, there will still be a need to meet. One too many education can be delivered quickly through a good internet connection, but we are a tribal species that always benefits from many to many interactions. Future events will, therefore, need to include increased networking and sharing if they are to achieve high attendance.

“The global spread of Covid-19 has demonstrated how connected we all are, but it has also shown how connected we have a desire to be. Cities and DMOs need to respond to those long-term needs for people to gather and develop infrastructure that still supports meetings, but ultimately, we need to be flexible. Now is not the time to worry too much about a ten-year plan. It is the time to work together through the current crisis and create solutions that mean we emerge with a collective desire to succeed,” says Bas Schot.

“The industry needs to shape its future through the eyes of the delegates”

are looking for something different. For us we are incredibly accessible, the centre of The Hague is within comparable distance from Schiphol Airport as the centre of Amsterdam, and there are so many other benefits to organisers.

“Another key factor is our size. A large event held in town feels like it ‘owns’ the city and is welcomed by everyone. Stakeholders and partners become truly invested when a particular event is in The Hague, meaning suppliers are more flexible and understanding of a specific event’s needs. In some instances, this can also lead to very competitive rates.

“Finally, we can focus on our niche business and ensure that it delivers for clients and events in the city. Rather than looking for any business, we can look for the business that matters most and fits best with The Hague. The result is that events feel genuinely at home here.”

is, where it is and what we offer. In a country as small as the Netherlands, it is easy for a destination like Amsterdam to be the main focus and external voice. There are still a surprising number of people who don’t know our destination, and they don’t know what we offer and why we are ideal for specific events.

“We also need to talk more about our non-business offering. Despite being a walking city with miles of beaches, bars and a great cultural offering, we tend to be known a little too much for our business-focused, legal and security offering. As our core sectors that is not a huge problem, but we need to educate both organisers and delegates on that fact that there is far more here than they realise.”



Brisbane Capitalises ON THE RAPIDLY-GROWING DIGITAL ECONOMY

BRISBANE'S innovative capabilities are grounded in a competitive business, world-class research and development, a highly skilled workforce, and leading education institutions. At the heart of Brisbane's innovation is its human capital, the people with the skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial know-how to transform ideas into products and services that will benefit businesses and the community, not only in Australia but the world. Along with the talented people, the city boasts well-established infrastructure to support education, training, research and development activity, and a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors.

The Australian city's innovation environment has global companies with headquarters in Brisbane, home-grown businesses that are export-oriented, and key knowledge precincts and research centres with global reputations. The city also boasts a range of service providers offering technical expertise and training to support various industries. Brisbane's liveability and continued growth

ensure the attraction and retention of talent and investment to the city.

The city is home to some very well-known universities including The University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, and Griffith University. These institutions are an essential asset to Brisbane's knowledge economy and form the foundation of the city's research capabilities.

From research to commercialisation, Brisbane's research and development (R&D) strengths are internationally recognised. The R&D ecosystem is categorised by strong collaboration between the public and private sectors, linkages with national and global research, R&D infrastructure, and support from industry and all levels of government.

As the commercial hub and driver of the Queensland economy, Brisbane, with its well-resourced and globally-connected research and development sector, leverages international investment to commercialise innovation in new life sciences/biotechnology, digital industries and

clean technologies, serving a diversity of industries and markets, both in Australia and overseas.

The Digital Brisbane Strategy aims to kick-start a business revolution to ensure the city capitalises on the rapidly-growing digital economy, including the online market, valued at \$US20 trillion, and future-proofs its living standards.

The strategy sets clear five-year targets, including doubling the number of Brisbane firms selling products and services online, a 35 per cent improvement in productivity growth achieved through digital technology, and support for 50 promising local digital start-up companies.

Specific initiatives of the strategy include:

- A new *Digital Business Power-up Program* to help more than 4,000 businesses with face-to-face digital training and information forums and a further 30,000 people through web-based support tools per year.
- Launch of the *Coderdojo* program in city libraries to encourage

“The *Digital Brisbane Strategy* aims to kick-start a business revolution”

hundreds of young people to learn how to master digital coding.

- Cyber City Program that is focused on a new “way-finder” system that integrates mobile digital technology with signs, maps and city venues, ready access to *Wi-Fi services* across the city, and continued improvements to connectivity, digital services, and data access across the city.

Life sciences/biotechnology The Queensland life sciences industry employs more than 14,000 people, invests \$650 million in research and development, and has an estimated combined income of \$4.4 billion. Queensland has niche strengths in agriscience, bio commodities, and tropical health. Substantial investments are developing these strengths to help new industries and to foster innovation in traditional sectors, positioning Brisbane and Queensland as an international centre of excellence for science and technology. Brisbane’s Princess Alexandra Hospital campus brings together some of Queensland’s leading institutes such as the Translational Research Institute and the Pharmacy Australia Centre of Excellence.

Clean technology Consistent with global trends, the most important growth in commercialised clean tech activities in Brisbane is related to the energy sector. There has been significant investment in renewable energy projects in recent years, and this is being encouraged and assisted by government policies to attract investment in the sector by local, national and international firms. Carbon capture and storage pilot projects, funded by both industry and government, are being undertaken. At the same time, Queensland’s strong growth in the energy and resources sector has resulted in increased demand for remote energy, waste and water treatment technologies.

Outside of the energy sector, there is a range of research activity and small innovative cleantech and bio-tech firms associated with the dynamic, mostly university-based research sector in Queensland. The destination has access to specialised knowledge and skilled workforce through premium research and development institutes at world-renowned local universities.

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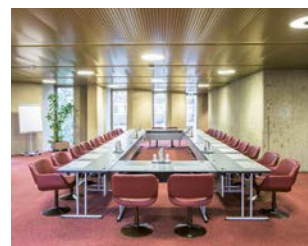


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Leeds Digital Festival MOVED ONLINE AMIDST COVID-19 OUTBREAK

THE LEEDS Digital Festival, which is the UK's largest tech event, is hosting its spring event online, as a response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Virtual events are set to go ahead in April, with the physical festival expected to take place in the autumn instead.

Delegates were able to log in online and take part in several sessions. From social media masterclasses through to SEO strategy, web development education and automation talks, the festival did cover all areas of digital marketing and strategy through an online platform.

"The Covid-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on the meeting industry, with the postponement or even cancellation of thousands of events across the world. In this current climate, it's incredibly encouraging to see how a local, home-grown event such as the Leeds Digital Festival can adapt and change practices to continue to run in spite of this. We are pleased that all of the knowledge sharing, learning and networking will still be able to take place, as it is more important than ever for professionals in this industry," says Claire Heap, Head of Conference Leeds.

"We're very much looking forward to seeing the Digital Festival go truly digital at the end of this month, really providing a shining example of our strength in the digital sector as a city, and also for the rest of the event when it happens again later this year."

Stuart Clarke, Festival Director of the Leeds Digital Festival:

"We had over 240 events submitted for this year's festival, so it was disappointing when the Covid-19 crisis forced a postponement of physical events. However, you can't keep the Leeds digital community down and when we decided to put on an online festival. We were overwhelmed by the level of support we received."

April's online Festival was featuring over 50 virtual events and did provide a key role in bringing the sector together.

"We will also be back for our two-week physical Festival from 21st September, where we can continue to celebrate and collaborate," says Stuart Clarke.



PHOTO Sara Appelgren

In a survey of 22,000 business people ranking top leadership gurus, **ROBIN SHARMA** was #2, with Jack Welch. Sharma's books have sold millions of copies in over 60 countries. His new book is "The Leader Who Had No Title: A Modern Fable on Real Success in Business and in Life" (Simon & Schuster). Robin Sharma founded the Titan Academy and his blog is at robinsharma.com.

The 5 Devils of Fear

AND HOW TO DISSOLVE THEM

IF YOUR FEARS scream loudly daily, you will not be able to hear the softer whispers of your higher angels of bravery, creativity, prosperity and impact. You're meant to shine. To have a meeting with greatness. And to reveal the most excellent version of the grandest vision of yourself to the world. (In the way that feels most honest to you.)

What a majestic call you have on your life. How blessed you are.

As human beings, I do not believe that the primary purpose of being here on the planet is to watch mindless television, play violent video games or follow the trainwreck lives of certain celebrities on social media.

I strongly believe that we are on this earthwalk to maximise our slumbering potential. And to realise our smoldering luminosity.

I deeply think that we're most alive in the amount that we capitalise on all that we truly are (that's been lost to a cold world that has shuttered our minds to wonder and shackled our hearts to love).

I viscerally sense that few outer things matter as much as exploiting the remainder of our lives in devoted pursuit of authentic personal

mastery. (Outer things never fulfill inner longings.) And to then radiate that magic that we discovered was within us all along for the benefit of all those who our lives intersect with. (To lead is to serve, yes?)

So that our modelling of possibility gives others the hard-tactical evidence that helps them make their ascent as well.

(Pro Tip: Humans generally only try to achieve what leaders of the herd have shown them is possible; and via the power of mirror neurons, which are the brain cells that formed in our primitive ancestors so that they could automatically copy the survival innovations of the chief, such as a new tool or a better way to hunt, we mimic the behavior of those we admire. So, your stepping up to your mastery matters for the rest of us.)

"What's your real point Robin?" you ask gently, and sagely.

It's this ... We are not born into limitation. We are taught to doubt, educated to make excuses and trained to fear.

Through the messages of our earliest teachers we are schooled strictly on how the world works, the ways we must operate to fit in with the group

and the manner in which we must think in order to stay safe.

And via the hurts that we all collect as we advance through life, our brains actually lose their capability to express our natural genius (trauma repressed creates the mental blocks that restrain our access to the advanced perception all great masters inhabit).

The suffering that is part of a life richly lived causes our once wide-open hearts to close, limiting not only our joy and wonder but also the passion that drives elite productivity and heroic performance.

So, what's the workaround to turn limitation into freedom and tiny thinking into boundless belief in your potential, your talents and the fantastic future that destiny has in store for you?

It's to rescript your current identity, via morning meditation, visualization, affirmation and contemplation, so you become the kind of person that has the power to carry your highest reality.

Part of this mindset transformation work involves defeating The 5 Devils of Psychological Sabotage. Let's go through each of them:

Devil #1: Excuses

Your excuses are liars, your doubts are thieves.

The more times in a day that you rationalise why you can't become all that you wish to be or handcraft the life that your best self wants, the more you'll hardwire the neural circuit of that belief into your brain.

And that which you keep practicing is that which you'll become a pro

Devil #3: Gossip

Speaking about people who are not present amplifies what you speak of within your own thinking.

Talk of someone else's misdeeds, weaknesses or blindspots and you'll be cementing these within your own mentality. And your daily behavior will always reveal these deepest (mostly unconscious) beliefs.

that fuel your joy, you'll grow bored. And apathetic.

Scared people generally complain about how bored they are, by the way.

They are so terrified of living their genius and honoring their original gifts that they've suppressed their ambitions. And have no energetically imagined future that gets them out of bed before the sun comes up and inspires them to present their finest creativity to a most welcoming society.

**“We are not born into limitation.
We are taught to doubt, educated to make
excuses and trained to fear”**

Please consider these five devils that sabotage a pristine mindset, especially in challenging times. And then stay committed to doing the morning mastery work to ensure that they never affect the heavens of potential that your life is meant to materialise.

at. We become amazing at the things we repeat.

If you keep excusing away your power to do remarkable things, grow stronger amid adversity, and live the life of your ideals, you won't do the work required to realise these feats.

So, your very mental habit will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. And, actually, limit the glory of your potentially awesome reality.

Devil #2: Blame

Blaming others is giving your primal power to the people and conditions that you blame.

We reinforce our psychological victim stories and procrastination patterns to the point where they actually become our identity the more we blame.

You begin to take back your power to be the creator of your bravest life and the generator of your wildest dreams once you stop blaming that which is outside of you for the things you are currently experiencing.

Devil #4: Complaint

Complaining is a meek form of anger. The more you grumble about what's not working for you, the more you'll be training your brain to look for those things in your environment.

Human cognition is built in such a way, through a system called The Reticular Activating System, that we actually only see the things outside of us that fit with the story we've sold ourselves.

Complain about how little money you have and all you'll see is more scarcity of prosperity.

Complain of how mean people are and you'll notice more mean people.

Complain of the lack of opportunities and you'll witness more closed doors.

Devil #5: Apathy

Your brain requires novelty to become fully engaged. Without a mighty mission to give your days over to, high value targets that electrify your enthusiasm and meaningful pursuits



Historical Virtual Meeting FOR ALZHEIMER AND PARKINSON 2020

KENES GROUP ranks among the world's leading Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs). They bring their clients the confidence that comes from hosting over 3,800 conferences around the globe, for over 160,000 participants a year. Founded in Tel Aviv in 1965, and headquartered in Geneva, the company is the only global PCO dedicated to medical and scientific events. The company boasts a team of over 350 professionals, in 19 locations on four continents, and more than 100 long term clients.

The 2nd AAT-AD/PD Focus Meeting 2020 took place in April and for

the first time was held as an entirely virtual event. Over 1,140 healthcare professionals from 56 countries attended the meeting during the four days of the streaming.

The meeting was scheduled to take place in Vienna, Austria. Yet, with mass lockdowns around the world amid a global pandemic, it was clear that the physical meeting would be called off. However, the PCO, together with the scientific committee, reacted quickly with a creative solution for an entirely virtual meeting.

Converting a meeting under three weeks into a complete virtual

experience was possible due to the flexibility of the IT team at the company. Working around the clock, the team assisted personally 250 speakers to pre-record their lectures. Fourteen forums and Meet the Professor sessions were live-streamed during the event, adding new content to the custom platform daily.

"Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. The science of finding solutions for patients with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases has always been our DNA. Even in difficult times, the science remains our priority. Exchanging data and

sharing novel insights must not wait, and that's why we were exhilarated when our team suggested converting a meeting for over 1,000 participants into an online experience. In this way our community could continue their work safely and responsibly," says Ori Lahav, VP Clients & Operations at Kenes Group.

"We are in this situation together, no matter where we are in the world. Once we announced going entirely

no matter how simplified it was. That required us to quickly change tactics and make available our IT team to mentor, support, and record 250 sessions around the clock," says Ori Lahav.

What happened to the economy for the associations moving from IRL meeting to virtual?

"The key to turn a live event into a virtual experience is the timing. It depends on when the decision is

learning for a while. What it entails is starting the education before the event, continuing with a hands-on or similar component during the live meeting, and completing the education on the specific topic/technique/etcetera after the conference. I do believe that the future will hold a combination of physical and virtual experiences similar to that.

"In the short run, we are working closely with our partners and suppliers, and all of us are trying to be flexible and adaptive to the situation. There is a Force Majeure in most countries right now, so everyone understands the situation, and we all try to come out of it as well as possible. In the long run, we do expect regular business to return, and maintaining partnerships is of the utmost importance.

"We are doing what is needed to keep all our talents onboard at this tough time. In countries where the local government offers support, we are applying for it. And of course, we follow the rules in each country, so our teams work from home, like everyone else. That has not been an issue as we can work from any place, anytime, as events require that of us constantly."

Are you planning to go ahead with the planning of your events for 2021?

"Absolutely. Full-on."

"Even in difficult times, the science remains our priority"

virtual, we received very positive feedback, including continued registrations and new supporters. That was truly inspiring for all of us."

The first AAT-AD/PD Focus Meeting 2018 was held in Torino, Italy, with 1,337 participants. The event is focused on showcasing the latest breakthroughs in treatment, translational R&D, early diagnosis, drug development, and clinical trials in Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other related neurological disorders.

The biggest challenge turned out to be entirely unexpected. The goal for this event was to keep the scientific program, as much as possible, as it was planned for the live event.

"That meant that we had to pre-record a few hundred speakers. What we wanted to do was to automate the process with easy and intuitive instructions and a simple click on a link. However, our team quickly realised that many speakers did not feel comfortable with the technology,

made to secure as many of the already registered delegates as possible. Also, while maintaining support from companies.

"We expected about 1,800 delegates to attend the event onsite. Once we decided to go entirely virtual, we did expect cancellations, and we got some. That was genuinely understandable. To our surprise, we kept on receiving new registrations too. In total, we received about 200 new delegate registrations in the two weeks leading to the event. We even received a few comments that they would not be able to attend if it was taking place in Vienna, Austria and that this option suited them better."

Is this a start of new thinking for the associations concerning more virtual meetings in the future?

"I believe there will be more focus on hybrid events in the future."

A new vision?

"I am not sure if the vision is truly new. We have been offering blended

The image is a digital graphic with a dark, textured background. A world map is visible, with continents highlighted in glowing orange and red. In the upper left, there's a vertical bar chart with segments in red, orange, and yellow. In the lower right, a green dashed line graph trends upwards. The central text is white and bold, with a red horizontal bar above it. Three small white plus signs are to the left of the bar.

+++ LIFE AFTER CORONAVIRUS



The Economic and Social FOOTPRINT OF CORONAVIRUS

TEXT

Rohit Talwar

WILL NEW WAYS of organisational thinking and working take hold or be abandoned as soon as the coronavirus lockdowns are lifted?

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has been with us for just a few months, and we are just weeks or days into different degrees of lockdown globally. However, we are already beginning to develop insights on the possible emerging futures of business, work and the workplace once we move beyond the current situation. Already, many entities have had to reshape themselves to a model where the bulk of their workforce is operating from home. For some, a total rethink of their strategy, business model, technology platforms, operating design, supply chain, and partnership ecosystem has been necessary. Here are ten shifts that organisations are having to embrace that could have lasting impacts.

1 The New Leadership Leaders are beginning to appreciate the importance of flexibility and experimentation in everything from business models and distribution systems to the organisation of work and the management of a largely home-based workforce. Empathy and emotionally literate leadership skills are becoming critical. The crisis is highlighting those who can engage, motivate, and lead when all staff

engagement is done via video and telephone. In video mode, we may well be missing some of the subtle cues we might pick up in physical interactions.

Instead, the best leaders are learning to acknowledge their fears, uncertainties, and adaptation challenges, and to ask deeper questions that allow people to share their concerns and needs in a rapidly changing environment. With many roles coming under greater scrutiny in a cost control focused environment, for some in management and leadership roles, the situation is quite exposing as it reveals that their jobs lacked substance or impact.

2 Innovation Necessity is becoming the mother of invention. Radical new ideas are emerging for every challenge. At the macro level, previously unthinkable ideas are being considered and actioned, such as the notions of guaranteed basic incomes, compulsory health testing of an entire nation, total population lockdowns, and global flight bans. Organisationally, for many, innovation has become a true survival priority rather than just a budget line item.

The need for new ideas at speed is driving rapid experimentation, and the results are often incredible. For example, massive global

self-organising networks have formed to share data, algorithms, and computing resources to tackle different aspects of modelling the behaviour of Covid-19 and to generate, simulate, and test alternative medical solutions and response strategies. Similarly, prototypes for essential medical equipment are being designed and 3D printed in days rather than months or years.

The process of innovation is also being reimaged. Before the crisis, we had witnessed a continual growth in different facilitated innovation approaches. This is now being embraced in the virtual space. The need for variety in the online meeting experience is driving organisations to learn and trial a variety of approaches to generate and deliver innovations faster, from online sprints to crowdsourcing.

3 Culture, Empowerment, and Trust Major cultural challenges are emerging for predominantly office-based organisations where the physical environment helped shape and reinforce culture. They are learning to introduce virtual mechanisms to replace informal chats, the fly by conversation, serendipitous water cooler encounters, and lunch and learn sessions. With most organisations still bedding down to the new ways of working and trying to react to market uncertainty

and volatility, management is often highly preoccupied with the now, the near, and the next. Rapid waves of redundancies are also flattening some management structures and increasing spans of responsibility.

These changes and the speed at which events are unfolding have driven greater delegation of authority

are being placed on hold, with the emphasis and resources shifting to truly transformational opportunities that could prove more fruitful in the new economy, using technologies such as artificial intelligence.

With meetings moving online, the willingness to learn and experiment with more participatory and collabo-

to raise our scientific literacy to understand concepts such as the basics of the coronavirus, exponential growth, and the science behind social distancing.

At the macro level, leaders and employees alike are having to learn about notions like scenario thinking as they prepare for a wide range of possible futures. These range from scenarios for the evolution of Covid-19 over the next few days, weeks, or months through to the different possible economic outlooks for markets, nations, and the planet. The removal of commuting time is also offering us the chance to learn new skills from mastering meditation and flower arranging to data science, artificial intelligence, and behavioural economics, the take-up of online courses is on the rise. The benefits of a workforce that is constantly learning could become evident across many aspects of what organisations do in the future, from strategic thinking through to experimenting with new technologies and approaches.

“At the macro level, previously unthinkable ideas are being considered and actioned”

to enable individuals to respond to a rapidly changing reality. Allowing staff to take more responsibility, show more initiative, and make more decisions should also highlight the extent to which greater trust can be invested in the workforce going forward. The changes will also highlight where the trust needs to be backed up by training, coaching, and review as people learn to operate with less supervision and instruction.

4 Prioritisation and Decision Making The sheer scale of change and differing levels of impact are driving organisations to get smarter about project and task prioritisation. Many are taking the opportunity to challenge the near- and medium-term value of every initiative and evaluate their chances of success under different post-pandemic scenarios. Focusing on the vital few is freeing up time and allowing the potential acceleration of pivot projects that respond to the changing opportunity landscape. In many cases, large digital transformation projects

are being placed on hold, with the emphasis and resources shifting to truly transformational opportunities that could prove more fruitful in the new economy, using technologies such as artificial intelligence. With meetings moving online, the willingness to learn and experiment with more participatory and collaborative decision-making approaches is growing. The simple act of a moderator controlling who can speak at any time in a group video chat changes the nature of discussion, people can finish their points without interruption, and everyone's voice can be heard. The loudest voices need not dominate. The crisis is also driving a willingness to experiment with crowdsourcing, collective intelligence, and group decision-making tools that offer a range of different and engaging ways of getting to decisions, appreciating differing perspectives, and reaching buy-in or consensus.

5 Learning The situation is driving learning at every level. This starts from basic adaptation challenges such as how to work productively while your children are across the room doing homework or playing. The need to use remote working tools, in particular, is forcing people to acquire greater technology awareness (see below). At a broader level, there is a strong imperative

6 Digital Literacy By the end of the crisis, we could well see a more digitally capable workforce, which could have massive benefits in terms of delivering technology change programmes. Many are investing some of the time saved on commuting to deepen their digital literacy, from learning productivity functions in Word and Powerpoint to taking online classes in the technologies that could form part of their next task or job.

7 Productivity and Efficiency Many are reporting that productivity and efficiency are improving through the reduction of workplace interruptions, cancellation of projects, and greater attention on clear communications. Individuals

can focus more effectively on the task at hand and learn the skills required to enhance their productivity. Research on telecommuting has consistently supported the idea that remote workers are more productive than their office-based counterparts. The coronavirus pandemic may be a significant tipping point in the work-from-home trend if the majority of companies decide their employees should remain remote.

8 Flexibility and Adaptability Organisationally, firms are having to adapt both what they do and how they do it, at speed. For example, around the world we see convention centres being repurposed as hospital, restaurants pivoting to cater for essential workers and takeaway delivery, and event organisers repositioning exhibitions and conferences as online offerings and community building activities. Others such as grounded airlines are having to face the challenge of laying off large numbers of flight crews or repurposing them to work on critical service innovations. That is including supporting healthcare professionals in non-clinical roles in caring for Covid-19 patients, and training that will help differentiate them when the recovery starts.

Managers and workers have to find workarounds of how to do things they previously took for granted or never had to worry about. Organisations are constantly changing priorities, reshaping, cutting headcounts, and freezing hiring. In response, individuals have to take on new roles, tasks, and responsibilities at speed and learn to develop a rapport with others who they may not previously have encountered or managed. This is driving the demand for training in collaboration, cultural awareness, flexibility,

adaptability, coping with chaos, and decision making under uncertainty.

9 Collaboration and Ecosystems New partnerships and collaborations are becoming commonplace, as evidenced by the unusual alliances forming between Formula One race teams and aviation equipment manufacturers to design and develop new ventilator solutions. How many other real-world challenges could these new ecosystems be harnessed to address?

Governments are working with the public, voluntary, and private sector to address challenges on a previously unseen and unimaginable scale. For example, over 750,000 people have volunteered in days to support the UK National Health Service and wider society. In everything from transporting patients to delivering food to people in self-quarantine and calling those in isolation. Similarly, a range of resources and facilities have been mobilised to take all of the homeless off the streets within days. That is something that was previously considered a five to ten-year challenge. Again, the question arises as to how many of these new solutions and ways and mobilising resources at scale could become part of the fabric of civil society going forward?

10 Foresight, Scenario Thinking, and Resilience For many, the crisis has highlighted the need to be better prepared for the unexpected as well as our “assumed or preferred future.” This is driving demand for skills in horizon scanning for future risks and opportunities. From being a “nice to have”, scenario planning is becoming a critical tool to explore different possible ways in which

developments might combine and play out in the coming weeks, months, and years.

Some are also learning to use these future insights and scenarios to expand the range, and severity of risk impacts factored into their resilience and recovery plans. For many, there is also a growing recognition at national and entity-level that well thought through and properly tested contingency plans, supporting resources, and mobilisation protocols have to be in place to respond quickly, effectively, and assuredly to avoid having to make too many decisions from scratch in the middle of an unfolding crisis.

The situation has presented organisations with a “not to be wasted” opportunity to acquire new approaches, ways of thinking, and skills that can help navigate the current crisis and lay the foundations for the next future of work.

Questions:

- How is the balance of conversation and focus shifting in your organisation between addressing immediate operational challenges and thinking about future scenarios, strategies, and the organisation of work?
- How are you and your organisation managing the mental health risks associated with the lack of work-based social interaction through the switch to home working?
- What approaches, skills, tools, coaching support, are you and your organisation deploying to maximise productivity?
- Which changes that you see being implemented now to ensure operational continuity do you expect to remain in place post-pandemic?



PHOTO Sara Appelgren

ROGER KELLERMAN Publisher, business intelligence analyst, trend creator, educator and networker. Has over 30 years' experience of the global meeting industry. Founder of Mötesindustriveckan. twitter.com/thekellerman

10,000 PAGES LATER

WE HAVE JUST produced our hundredth edition of *Meetings International*. It is hardly a world record for a publication from a global perspective, but for us, that is precisely what it is. Over the years, together with my co-workers, I have produced a further 300 magazines, but they were not *Meetings International*. It grew from an idea I had along with my wife Atti Soenarso, legally responsible editor-in-chief. We aimed to produce a ground-breaking magazine for the business events industry, the likes of which had never been seen before.

A concept that revolved around the question: what is the meetings and events industry seen through the eyes of the individuals involved? What part do they play in progressing the industry from a broader perspective? Our curiosity in the possibilities afforded by business intelligence coincided with the start of the EIBTM trade show in Geneva, Switzerland in 1989, the show that eventually became IMEX Frankfurt. The show in Barcelona, today known as IBTM World, we have been a part of since it began in 2004. We have always regarded trade shows as ideal places for networking and knowledge sharing, and we have always prioritised them.

Likewise, we have found it vitally important to be a member of global organisations in the areas we cover. First, it was MPI, Site and ICCA. I

brought MPI to Sweden in 1994. I was on the board for 17 years and also took part in international work. To broaden the perspective even further, we have learnt a great deal from people in organisations like UIA, AIPC, IAPCO, ASAE, GBTA, UFI, INCON, PCMA, ECM, IACC, Best Cities, JMIC and GMIC, with apologies to any I have forgotten. But what a journey we have been on. A trip that is still providing new insights.

Admittedly, the first issue of our international edition did not come until 2008, but without the first twenty years of travelling the world knowledge sharing and networking, there would not have been a *Meetings International* at all.

We have now done 75 magazines in Swedish and 25 global editions. Besides, we have also done destination reports from several countries and cities along with Business Intelligence Reports, fourteen to be concise. The reports would not have been possible without the networks we are a part of and the meetings venues we have visited over the years. So, where do we go from here?

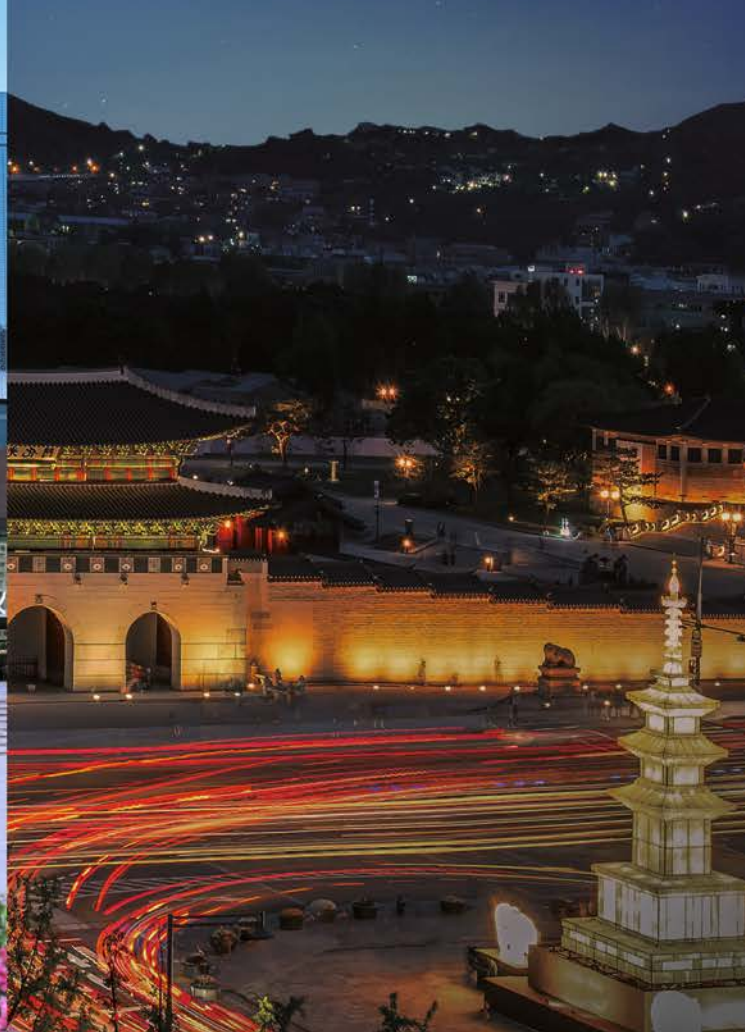
Knowledge always requires a top-up, networks need to be developed and broadened. Here are no strikes, dark clouds or Covid-19 to put a spanner in the works. Also, unexpected obstacles cause us to think in new ways, to find new routes, such as

increased digitalisation, for example. But the significance of the personal meeting can never be replaced by a digital meeting. Never.

Which is why we have just started planning for the next 10,000 pages brim full of new knowledge and insights. We are planning further meetings with interesting people in destinations the world over. People who contribute in various ways of creating a better life for their fellow human beings. There are plenty of great stories just waiting to be plucked and passed on to a readership. We are always curious about what we have missed. Or, as a philosopher may once have mused: the more we find, the more there is to find.

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As the world goes through this difficult time, we are all challenged to innovate and overcome many disruptions. Team Holland is working hard to plan and navigate the future by finding creative solutions for you. Innovation is at the heart of the Dutch “can do” attitude and together we will be stronger and better.

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