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Operation of Small Businesses in Open-Air Markets in Poland Based on the Example of Kraków

Abstract: Open-air markets are traditionally associated with the landscape of Polish towns and cities. In the beginning, they were in the very centre of the city – most often in the market around which the lives of the locals and the newcomers concentrated. With the development of urban areas, open-air markets were moved out of the city centre. They were transformed, though for a long time, also after the Second World War, they were the place of trade primarily in agricultural and craft products. During the People's Republic of Poland, citizens were given the opportunity to buy goods not available in stores. Open-air market places gained a new meaning at the beginning of the socio-political transformation after 1989. They became the places of flourishing small businesses and were less and less associated with the sale of agricultural products and more and more with diverse assortments such as any groceries, clothing, chemicals and cosmetics. At present, in the period of the global economy, which in urban areas is typically expressed through the diminishing of the local economy related to small businesses in favour of the global economy introducing supermarkets, hypermarkets and chain outlets, the functioning of open-air markets takes place in the conditions of increased competition. It consists in particular in price competition and competition in the form of a large assortment of goods in stores mentioned above. As shown in the article, also entrepreneurs conducting business activity at the open-air markets in Kraków feel this competition. It manifests itself in the lack of a sense of stabilisation of small businesses. A large group of the surveyed entrepreneurs are also unable to sustain themselves only from this activity.

Keywords: entrepreneur; Kraków; open-air market; product; purchases; trade

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Introduction

Most of the present open-air markets in Poland show a decline in the number of clients. The number of open-air markets and their commercial space is also decreasing. Under Polish conditions, they are not yet in crisis, but their high position in urban space and economy, as well as consumer awareness, are at risk. It should be borne in mind that small businesses in the form of small shops and open-air markets are an important part of the local economy of towns and cities, displaced by the influx of global economics, with the location of supermarkets and hypermarkets, chain discount stores, international banks, mobile telephony services, etc.

Functioning of open-air markets plays an important role for the population in shaping its local affiliation. Open-air markets, through a rich offer of high-quality local produce, can have a positive impact on the quality of life of the population. They can promote healthy eating and enable a healthy lifestyle in the spirit of "slow life" and "slow food". It is therefore important for consumers to be aware of the benefits of shopping at open-air markets. These may be not only financial benefits but also the mentioned benefits promoting health and social inclusion. Open-air markets are important public spaces in cities not only for shopping but also meeting friends and exchanging opinions. These are the "spaces of dialogue". Apart from customer awareness, the consciousness of authorities shaping and implementing urban policy is also essential. Municipal authorities should support open-air market trade, as well as its revitalisation and promotion.

In the first part, this article provides a brief overview of open-air markets as a subject of research in various disciplines, along with a discussion of basic terminology. The next part deals with the characteristics of the market situation in Poland and Kraków in historic and contemporary terms. The central part contains the description and the results of empirical research concerning the current status of entrepreneurs conducting small trade activities on the open-air markets based on the example of Kraków. The study considers the majority of Kraków open-air markets and one non-Kraków market, located in the nearby town of Wieliczka. The diagnosis of the situation of entrepreneurs trading on the open-air markets was based on interviews conducted with a group of entrepreneurs.

Open-air markets as a subject of study

In order to distinguish traditional marketplaces in which the turnover of goods in the past was related to the trade fair, from the marketplaces with the daily trade offering the diversified structure of the goods sold and the type of shopping facilities, the literature of the subject uses terms closer to the modern realities – bazaar (Gołąb-Korzeniowska, 1997). Taking into account, however, that some markets still function on trade fair days when trade is slightly increased and as a result of the co-occurrence of business conducted by farmers selling their crops and products, craftsmen dealing with their products, as well as regular traders, the terminology used in this study, i.e. open-air market, marketplace, fairground and bazaar, is treated as synonyms and thus is used interchangeably.

According to the definition of the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS), there are marketplaces and seasonal marketplaces. Marketplaces are "isolated areas or buildings (square, street, market hall) with fixed or seasonal retail points or equipment to trade, daily or on designated days of the week". On the other hand, seasonal markets are defined as "squares and streets where commercial points are opened for up to 6 months, due to increased buyer traffic (e.g. seaside holiday season) and this activity is repeated in subsequent seasons" (*Rynek wewnętrzny*…, 2013). This study refers to the former of these concepts, that is, open-air marketplaces.

Due to its universal character, the subject matter of the open-air markets is discussed and researched in various fields of science. Geographers in works devoted to trade fairs focus mainly on the functions and role of trade fairs in the spatial and socio-economic structures of cities and regions (Płaziak, Szymańska, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Powęska, 2002a; Werwicki, 2001; Zuzańska-Żyśko, Sitek, 2011). Geography studies also concern trade tourism and the role of markets in transforming border areas (Powęska, 1995; Powęska, 2002b). Economists generally analyse trade in marketplaces as part of the economic system of the country. They also examine the role of the grey zone in market trade, and development of small businesses, including family businesses (Ciechomski, 2014; Dąbrowski, 1996; Peterlik, 2000; Tomalak, Wyżnikiewicz, 1999; Urban, Michałowska, 2013; Wojdacki, 2011). Architects often consider the place of open-air markets in urban planning (Barek, 2010; Gołąb-Korzeniowska, 1995, 1997). Sociologists, in their research on the marketplaces, treat these places as public spaces and deal with the phenomena taking place in such areas (Madanipour, 2003).

The literature analysis of the topic points to a small number of studies devoted to the issues of the attractiveness of shopping and trading on the open-air markets of Kraków. Little research has been done on all the marketplaces in Kraków (Dziechczarz, 1992a). There are single studies on selected markets, among them by T. Dziechciarz (1992b) and Z. Szromba-Rysowa (1993). More often, however, the topic of the role and importance of trade fairs in the spatial structure of the city is undertaken. The work of M. Gołąb-Korzeniowska (1995, 1997) deserves particular attention in those terms.

Specificity of the market trade in Poland in the past and present

From the earliest times, fairgrounds have been an inseparable part of Polish towns and cities, formerly located in the very centre, i.e. In the market square. It was there that the trade fair was held on specially designated days. In the squares the everyday life of the inhabitants and newcomers took place, and the trade and craftsmanship flourished. There were merchant stalls, meat shops and even cloth halls. In many cases, it is the fair functions that have become the nucleus of a central place in a settlement and then the city that was forming there. It is contributed to the fact that in the Middle Ages market towns and cities received special privileges which provided opportunities for urban development and brought profits to residents and income to municipal authorities charging fair fees. Some of the towns have their names related to market functions or the days on which the fair (Polish "targ") took place, e.g. Nowy Targ, Targowica, Targowisko, Targowiska, Środa ("Wednesday") Śląska, Piątek ("Friday"), and others. In the space already shaped by the city, the market square was the place where the town hall was usually located.

However, in many cities, with the demand for greater commercial space and market representative purposes, trade functions were transferred from the market square to other locations. Though not in such prestigious locations as before, the market trade continued to flourish, and marketplaces co-created the character of urban spaces.

During the Second Republic, the so-called gmina (municipal) fairs were organised. They were defined as fairs organised in the premises and other places held by the municipality in the form of a market. The principles of organisation and running of these fairs, which were divided into small (regular and weekly) fairs and large fairs (poviat, voivodeship, indulgence, *kermesse* and annual *jahrmarkts*), were strictly regulated. The primary condition the fulfilment of which enabled the organisation and running of the marketplace as a place to hold gmina fairs was the requirement for the gmina to obtain fair rights (Szafrański, 2002).

In Poland, in the period of the centrally controlled economy, fairgrounds functioned quite well. It was where you could stock up on products that were not available in stores, or on goods smuggled from behind the iron curtain.

The intensive development of trade on the fairgrounds occurred again with the onset of political and socio-economic transformation after 1989. The overall increase in commercial activity of Poles was significant. Their purchasing choices changed, and the variety of domestic and imported goods increased dramatically. On a massive scale emerged the phenomenon of the so-called commercial tourism – from across the eastern border of Poland came people trading a variety of assortment. In turn, a few years later, Poland became an attractive country for Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians, who shopped in local stores. At the same time, very frequent arrivals of the Germans were noted, especially coming to bazaars for shopping. (Kropiwnicki, 2003; Powęska, 2002b).

The most famous market of those days was the 10th-Anniversary Stadium, built in 1955, where the most important national sports events were held until the end of the Polish People's Republic. In 1989, in exchange for the maintenance of the facility, the stadium was leased by the capital city of Warsaw to the company "Damis" for commercial purposes. On the crown of the stadium the company established "Jarmark Europa" withover 5,000 business entities, which made it one of Europe's largest trade fairs. About 250,000 people worked at the Stadium. In 1997, the turnover of the market amounted to PLN 1.9 billion, and the value of exports was USD 400,000. It meant the Stadium was one of the top five largest companies in Poland. In Małopolska, however, the "Tomex" market square in Kraków-Nowa Huta was founded in 1990, with around 700 retail outlets and 2,000 business entities (Dzieszyński, Franczyk, 2006).

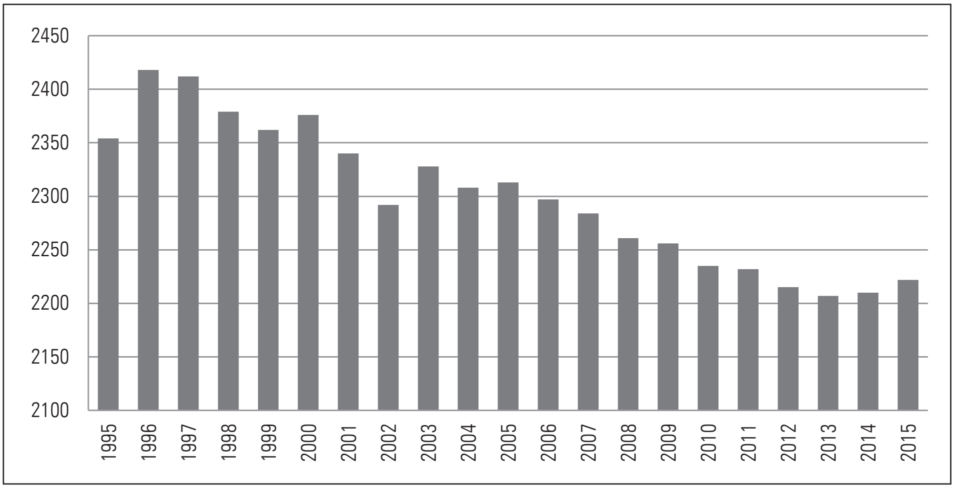
The bazaars developing during the transition period had a certain macroeconomic importance for the Polish economy, as, according to J. Kropiwnicki (2003), they had a strong influence on the size of Polish exports and the current account balance with foreign states. They also played a major role in the development of the small and medium-sized enterprise sector and had a significant impact on the production of goods and services and, consequently, on the size of the GDP. At the same time, they accumulated unfavourable phenomena such as economic and social life disfunctions, e.g. drugs and stolen cars trafficking, illegal immigration, organised crime (Kropiwnicki, 2003).

Today, most of the fairgrounds operate daily. There is an increasing variety of assortment. Not only farmers are selling their crops and artisans selling their products, but more and more often there are permanent stalls or halls with stands in the fairgrounds, as well as small shops where trade is conducted, not necessarily directly by the owners or tenants of the objects but also employees.

At present, there are 2,222 permanent markets (as of 2015, LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland). However, for almost 20 years a systematic decline in the number of marketplaces, with a slight improvement in the last 2–3 years (Fig. 1) has been observed.

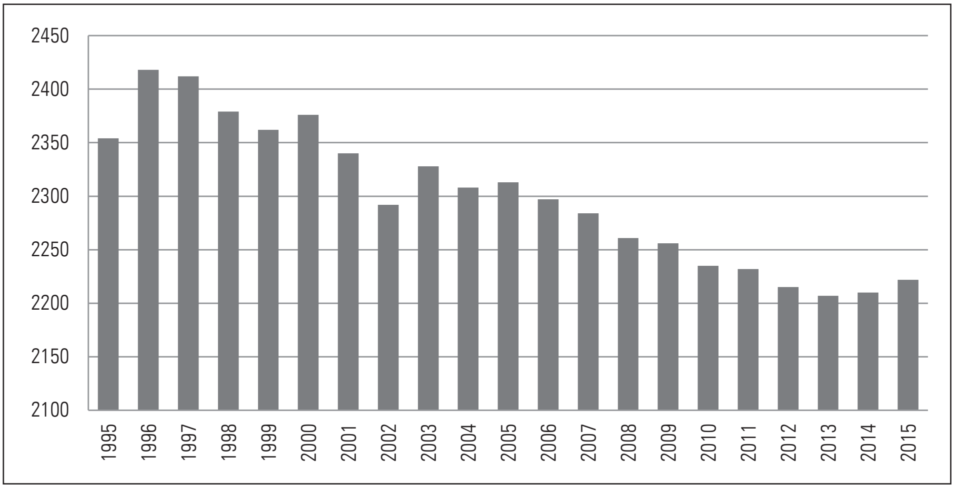
The fairgrounds in Poland have approx. 14.6 million m^2 (as of 2015, LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland) of the total area. Due to the decreasing number of fairgrounds this number has also been decreasing, with a slight increase in the last 2–3 years (Fig. 2). With the total area of the fairgrounds decreasing, their sales area is also decreasing. In 2005 it amounted to about 664,000 m^2 to fall to about 652,000 m^2 (LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland).

Fig. 1. Number of open-air markets in Poland in the years 1995–2015



Source: own work based on LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland

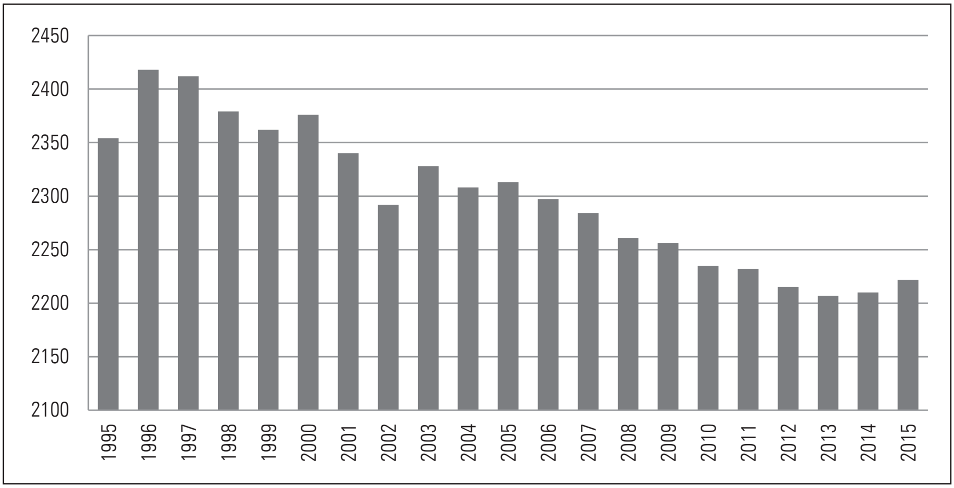
Fig. 2. Surface area of open-air markets in Poland in the years 1995–2015



Source: own work based on LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland

The particularly noticeable shrinking of the fairgrounds activity is indicated by the decreasing number of fixed points of sale on the fairgrounds, which are active in the cities and are used by people making daily purchases. In the last 20 years, this decrease was almost 40% (Fig. 3). However, in the Małopolskie Voivodeship for the same period, it was down by as much as 60% (based on LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland).

Fig. 3. Fixed point retail outlets at the fairgrounds in Poland open daily in the years 1995–2015



Source: own work based on LDB, Central Statistical Office of Poland

While statistical data describing the negative dynamics of the number and general area or sales area of the fairgrounds are not alarming, the data showing a significant decrease in the number of fixed-point retail outlets on the sites raise some concerns about the condition of this kind of activity in the future.

Characteristics of the market trade in Kraków

In 2015, Kraków had 27 permanent fairgrounds located in gmina and private areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Fairgrounds in Kraków

Name of the fairground (optional name)	**Location**	**Surface area (m^2)**	**District**
Rynek Kleparski (Stary Kleparz)	St Filip Street	6 079	District I Old Town
Nowy Kleparz	Długa Street	4 348	
Plac Nowy	Estery Street	2 855	
Krakowskie Kwiaciarki	Rynek Główny (Main Market Square)	310	
Unitarg (Hala Targowa)	Grzegórzecka Street	5 409	District II Grzegórzki

Plac Imbramowski	Imbramowski Square	21 810	District IV Prądnik Biały
Azory	Chełmońskiego Street	584	
Plac Nowowiejski („Novum Plac”)	J. Lea Street	2 206	District V Krowodrza
Giełda Rotunda	Oleandry Street	1 730	
Plac Rydla	Młodej Polski Street and Jadwigi z Łobzowa Street	1 813	District VI Bronowice
Plac Targowy KPPU (Centrum Giełdowo-Handlowe Balicka)	Balicka Street	80 602	
Plac Na Stawach	Senatorska Street	3 211	District VII Zwierzyniec
Rynek Dębnicki	Dębnicki Square	1 599	District VIII Dębniki
Targowisko Borek	Orzechowa Street	4 802	District IX Łagiewniki – Borek Fałęcki
Manhattan	Białoruska Street	3 120	District XI Podgórze Duchackie
Beskidy	Beskidzka/Witosa Street	3 360	
Targowisko	Na Kozłówce Street	744	District XII Bieżanów – Prokocim
Jerzmanowskiego – Nowy Prokocim	E. Jerzmanowskiego Street	3 820	
Tandeta	Krzywda Street	26 312	District XIII Podgórze
King	Krzywda Street	3 584	
Efekt SA	Półłanki Street	72 590	
Centrum – Kalicki	Ch. Botewa Street	2 200	
Złoty Wiek	ks. K. Jancarza Street and Nagłowicka Street	2 886	District XV Mistrzejowice
Piastów	Piastów residential district	4 176	
Tomex	Bieńczycka Street	21 588	District XVI Bieńczyce
Bieńczyce (Bieńczycki Plac Targowy)	Kocmyrzowska Street	5 730	
Bulwar (Mogilski Plac Targowy)	Wandy residential district	4 193	District XVIII Nowa Huta

Source: own work on the basis of: *Raport o stanie miasta* (2013, 2016)

Over the last dozen or so years, the number of trade fairs and the total sales area at the Kraków fairgrounds decreased (Table 2) (data available only for gmina markets). This process was accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the number of supermarkets and hypermarkets. For example, in the years 2009–2014 the number of supermarkets within the city limits rose from 66 to w118, while the number of hypermarkets increased from 18 to 23 (*Statistical Yearbook of Kraków*, 2011; *Statistical Yearbook of Kraków*, 2015).

Table 2. Number and sales space of the Kraków fairgrounds in the years 2000–2014

Specification*	Year							
	2000	**2005**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
Number of permanent open-air markets	33	18	17	17	16	16	16	16
Sale area of permanent open-air markets (000 m^2)	120.9	92.6	84.6	85.2	83.9	83.3	83.3	83.3

*Refers to open-air markets in gmina areas

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Kraków*, 2011, 2013, 2015

The development of large-scale trade constitutes the essential competition for open-air markets, which traders in Kraków are trying to resist. However, this is not always effective. As indicated by the research conducted by the project of the Central Market Revitalisation and Promotion of Traditional Trade Fairs in Central Europe, the number of clients at the Kraków fairgrounds is decreasing (www.centralmarkets.eu).

The authorities of the city of Kraków appreciate the role of the fairgrounds in shaping the urban structure and a particular atmosphere of the city with unique tourist values. In 2013 they signed a partnership agreement on the project "Central Markets Revitalisation and Promotion of Traditional Trade Fairs in Central Europe". The aim of the project was to revitalise, strengthen and integrate trade fairs and project partners by spreading knowledge and introducing innovative activities resulting from international cooperation. The project was financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); Priority 4 – Raising the competitiveness and attractiveness of cities and regions; Action 4.1 – Development of polycentric settlement structures and regional cooperation.

As part of the project, in 2013 the survey of trade fairs among sellers and buyers was conducted. It was followed by the first edition of the Krakow Market Square Festival "Kraków's Fair", which was positively evaluated by market traders, buyers and the media. Next, a city game about marketplaces "Krakow Fair" was conducted for over 200 participants, and promotional materials for domestic and foreign tourists were published, including a non-standard offer to visit squares in the form of a Quest – a puzzle-solving tour. Additionally, the project team took part in project partners' meetings in Pecs, Ustii and Turin, presenting Kraków and its solutions for market promotion and management (www.centralmarkets.eu). The purpose of joining the project was primarily to promote Kraków's open-air markets among residents and tourists. As indicated by the research carried out within the project, at the analysed marketplaces – Stary Kleparz, Nowy Kleparz, plac Na Stawach, Rynek Dębnicki, Hala Targowa, Plac Nowy – low price is not necessarily the most important for buyers. It is important for respondents, however, combined with the quality of products and their freshness. For the customers of the squares, it is imperative that they know the farmer they are buying the products from and the fact that they can talk to them. They want to make sure that what they pay for is indeed healthy and organic and not from the wholesalers (www.centralmarkets.eu).

Characteristics of own research

Empirical research discussed in this publication was conducted in most of the Kraków trade fairs at the turn of 2014 and 2015. The study was undertaken in two stages.

In the first stage an inventory of 20 fairgrounds was made (19 of the surveyed squares are within administrative boundaries of Kraków and 1 in the nearby town of Wieliczka). The purpose of the inventory was to identify the dominant assortment structure in the Kraków market trade. The inventory was conducted according to the following procedure: 1) the fairgrounds were covered with a square grid of 20×20 m^2); 2) for each square, the dominating assortment was determined; 3) the squares were then counted in groups corresponding to the prevailing assortments: a) fruits and vegetables, b) flowers, cuttings, gardening tools, c) dairy products, d) groceries, e) new clothes, f) second-hand clothes, g) domestic detergents and cosmetics, h) household appliances, i) furniture, j) toys and stationery, k) books, magazines, CDs.

In the second stage, interviews were conducted using questionnaires on 16 of the open-air markets (15 in Kraków and 1 in Wieliczka). Interviews were conducted with randomly selected 184 entrepreneurs. The purpose of the research was to diagnose the condition of small entrepreneurship functioning on the fairgrounds in the opinion of entrepreneurs. The questionnaire mainly included closed questions.

The research was carried out with the help of the students of the Institute of Geography of the Pedagogical University in Cracow, specialising in Spatial Economy. Due to logistical reasons, inventory and interviews were not possible at all the Kraków squares. However, inventory of 19 squares (plus 1 for Wieliczka) out of 27 and interviews at 15 (plus 1 for Wieliczka) out of 27 fairgrounds was considered sufficient to conclude all the Kraków marketplaces. The number of sites where both inventorying and interviewing took place was 14 (Table 3).

Table 3. Marketplaces of Kraków*

Marketplace	Inventory	Interviews with entrepreneurs
Rynek Kleparski (Stary Kleparz)	1	1
Nowy Kleparz	0	1
Plac Nowy	1	0
Krakowskie Kwiaciarki	0	0
Unitarg (Hala Targowa)	1	1
Plac Imbramowski	1	1
Azory	1	0
Plac Nowowiejski („Novum Plac”)	1	1
Giełda Rotunda	0	0
Plac Rydla	1	0
Plac Targowy KPPU (Centrum Giełdowo--Handlowe Balicka)	0	1
Plac Na Stawach	1	0
Rynek Dębnicki	1	1
Targowisko Borek	1	1

Manhattan	1	1
Beskidy	1	1
Targowisko	0	0
Jerzmanowskiego – Nowy Prokocim	1	1
Tandeta	1	1
King	0	0
Efekt SA	1	0
Centrum – Kalicki	0	0
Złoty Wiek	1	1
Piastów	0	0
Tomex	1	1
Bieńczyce (Bieńczycki Plac Targowy)	1	1
Bulwar (Mogilski Plac Targowy)	1	0
Plac targowy w Wieliczce	1	1
TOTAL	20	16

* Additionally the market in Wieliczka was included

Source: own work

Conditions of doing business on the fairgrounds of Kraków in the opinion of entrepreneurs – research results

Basing on the inventory of the Kraków and Wieliczka marketplaces, the structure of the dominant assortments was determined. Among the goods sold, the following are predominant: new clothes (32.9%), fruit and vegetables (25.6%), and groceries (22.0%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Dominating assortment on the market places of Kraków*

Dominant assortment	Participation of the dominant assortment
New clothes	32.9
Fruit and vegetables	25.6
Groceries	22.0
Domestic detergents and cosmetics	4.7
Flowers, cuttings, gardening tools	4.2
Second-hand clothes	2.6
Dairy products	2.4
Household appliances	2.3
Toys and stationery	1.4
Furniture	1.0
Books, magazines, CDs	0.9

* Additionally the market in Wieliczka was included

Source: own work based on the inventory

As noted above, interviews and inventory were not possible at all Kraków trade fairs. For the 14 marketplaces on which the inventory and interviews were conducted, the structure of the dominant assortment was similar, with the majority of new clothing (41.5%), groceries (21.3%) and fruit and vegetables (18.8%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Dominant assortment at 14 market places of Kraków*, where inventory and interviews were conducted

Dominant assortment	Percentage of dominant assortment
New clothes	41.5
Groceries	21.3
Fruit and vegetables	18.8
Domestic detergents and cosmetics	4.8
Flowers, cuttings, gardening tools	3.4
Household appliances	2.8
Second-hand clothes	2.5
Dairy products	1.8
Toys and stationery	1.4
Furniture	1.1
Books, magazines, CDs	0.5

* Additionally the market in Wieliczka was included

Source: own work based on the inventory

As noted earlier, the selection of a sample of respondents – interviewed entrepreneurs – was random. The predominant type of commodities traded (Table 5) does not adequately reflect the above-listed structure of dominant stocks, although the shares of clothing, groceries, and fruit and vegetables as dominant stocks are high. As the main goods, the mentioned respondents sell fruit and vegetables (40.2%), followed by new and used clothing (24.9%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Structure of the dominant assortment traded by respondents

Dominant assortment offered by respondents	Percentage share in the total number of respondents
Fruit and vegetables	40.2
New and second-hand clothes	24.9
Flowers, cuttings, gardening tools	14.3
Groceries	13.2
Dairy products	7.4

Source: own work based on interviews

The vast majority of surveyed entrepreneurs are not self-employed (64.1%). Family members (51.6%) are predominant in this group, as well as in the general studied group, while the non-relatives share is only 12.5%. 35.9% of the respondents are self-employed.

Most respondents have been running their business for a long time. Only 25% of them can be regarded as short-term entrepreneurs because they have had their business for no longer than five years, and nearly half (46.7%) for over ten years. The time structure of the respondents' activities on a particular market is somewhat different. The respondents who stand in a given market for not very long, i.e. max five years, predominate (47.8%), although a large group has been active there for more than a decade (30.4%)

(Table 7). A relatively high share of people currently active in a given marketplace, with a significantly lower proportion of the total number of people doing business in general, can be attributed to the instability of this kind of companies and the high rotation of entrepreneurs in a given open-air market.

Table 7. Time of doing business by respondents

Own business activity by respondents	**Total**			**At a given market place**		
Years	0–5	6–10	over 10	0–5	6–10	over 10
Percentage share in the total number of respondents	25.0	28.3	46.7	47.8	21.7	30.4

Source: own work based on the interviews

A confirmation of the unstable situation of entrepreneurs operating on the fairgrounds is the respondent's declaration, of which only less than half (43.5%) feel the stability of their business (they have regular clients, so they do not have to worry about the future of their income). 40.2% of the respondents declare a lack of stability, worrying about the future of their business. As many as 16.3% of the interviewees did not comment on this issue, and hesitation may indirectly indicate a lack of established situation. It should be noted that out of the total number of surveyed entrepreneurs, as much as 15.2% declared that they were unable to support themselves on the activities carried out on one or more fairgrounds. The rest of their income comes from other sources.

It is interesting to note that, despite a significant proportion of people concerned about the future of their business, a small percentage of them decided to change their assortment to increase revenues. Only 19.6% of the respondents took such a test. It may indicate a weak level of entrepreneurial behaviour of those interviewed.

Studies have shown the attachment of entrepreneurs to a place. Only 14.7% of the respondents trade in a place other than a given market. An important reason for being attached to a given square is a fixed place (38.5% of respondents), which is connected with considerable fees, but also a feeling that at a particular position the trader has the most customers (19.0% of those surveyed). The closeness of the place of residence is also important, as pointed out by 22.2% of the respondents. Out of the total number of the interviewees a vast majority, as much as 67.9%, are residents of Kraków. Among other inhabitants, the majority are the people of the Kraków Poviat.

Market places have changed their character over the years. From places where mainly farmers traded their crops, they have become places for business or simply self-employment. of the total number of respondents, only 31.0% call themselves farmers. However, of the group of traders dealing in the following assortments: a) domestic fruit and vegetables, b) imported fruit and vegetables, c) flowers, cuttings, gardening tools d) dairy products, e) groceries, 43.7% consider themselves farmers (Table 8).

The vast majority of the respondents declare a sense of threat to their activity from supermarkets, hypermarkets and discount stores (81.0%). Only 7.1% of respondents do not feel threatened. As much as 12% did not have a say on this issue, which can be indirectly regarded as a lack of sense of stabilisation.

Another reason for the feeling of a lack of stability by the surveyed entrepreneurs at the fairgrounds is the fact that the number of customers has decreased in recent years.

Such an observation was made by as many as 65.2% of all respondents. However, 21.2% of the interviewees did not observe the loss of customers and 13.6% did not give their opinion.

Table 8. Share of farmers among respondents by selected assortments

Trader by assortment	Participation of farmers among those trading the selected assortment
Domestic fruit and vegetables	19.7
Imported fruit and vegetables	4.2
Flowers, cuttings, gardening tools	9.2
Dairy products	6.3
Groceries	4.2
Total	43.7

Source: own work based on the interviews

In recent years, open-air market customers have become much more demanding due to the viable choice of shopping venues in the city space, the increasing range of goods to choose from and price competition. As most respondents observed, customers are now much pickier than they used to be (75.0%). Only 9.2% of the interviewees did not notice this fact, with 15.5% having no opinion at all.

Conclusions

The character of Polish, and therefore Kraków's, fairgrounds has changed. We will find there fewer and fewer agricultural and craft products. Increasingly, these are clothing, all kinds of groceries, household detergents and cosmetics, etc. They are usually sold by individual businessmen who often run a family business. Less and less often, sales are made directly in the market yard, and trade in small shops built especially on the fairgrounds is becoming increasingly popular.

Kraków is losing fairgrounds and overall market retail space. According to the opinions given by the respondents in the surveys described in this publication, the number of customers making purchases at the Kraków fairgrounds is decreasing. The loss of population on the fairgrounds of Kraków, Poland and Central Europe is confirmed by other studies, e.g. within the Central Markets project.

Entrepreneurs running their business at the fairgrounds express a feeling of instability. According to them, the number of people shopping at the fairgrounds is decreasing mainly due to the growing competition from the increasing number of supermarkets, hypermarkets and discount stores, offering customers a wide range of goods at competitive prices.

It is crucial to remember that fairgrounds are important spaces in cities not only for economic development, i.e. shaping the local economies of cities. They are also critical for social development as these are public spaces, where the city dwellers not only make purchases but meet with friends and participate in the life of the local community.

It is therefore important for the city authorities to be aware of the need to counter displacement of market trade by other forms of trade, especially by large-scale stores and discount stores, and to support, revitalise and promote local market trade.

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