

# Thermal Architecture

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European Thermal  
Heritage Day

Baden-Baden 2020



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SCIENTIFIC  
COMMITTEE OF



2020



## ≈ DOES THERMAL ARCHITECTURE EXIST? ≈

European Thermal Heritage Day Baden-Baden 2020

MARIO CRECENTE

### EHTTA and the development of European Thermal Heritage Day

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) was established in 2009 and certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2010. EHTTA grew out of a European Cooperation project called *Thermae Europae*, and a desire on the part of the project partners to continue to protect and enhance the built heritage of some of the most famous places on the continent, namely the historic thermal spa towns of Europe. The Founding Members of EHTTA were Acqui Terme (Italy), Bath (UK), Ourense (Spain), Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy), Spa (Belgium), and Vichy (France), and they have since been joined by over 40 towns, regions and associations. (Fig. 01 and 02).

The European Year of Culture Heritage 2018 was promoted by the European Union, on the basis of an agreed need to recognise the value of European cultural heritage as an instrument of cohesion and enrichment on social and economic levels. This celebratory Year was approved after intense lobbying by multiple associations and NGOs, and



Fig. 01 EHTTA General Assembly in Salsomaggiore Terme (2016). EHTTA



Fig. 02. EHTTA General Assembly in Ourense (2018). EHTTA



Fig. 03. European Thermal Heritage Day 2018 (Hotel Gellert, Budapest).



Fig. 04: Best practices award in Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development.

papers written by bodies such as the European Heritage Alliance (EHA) and Europa Nostra. EHTTA as member of EHA was happy to support this idea and take it a step further.

The Scientific Committee of EHTTA, at the heart of the Association is dedicated to ensuring that the little-known phenomenon of “thermal heritage” is recognised more widely, as well as valued and protected. In 2018, to support and take part in the “European Year of Cultural Heritage”, the EHTTA Scientific Committee developed the idea of celebrating a “European Thermal Heritage Day”, and this has now become an annual tradition.

The first ever ETHD was held in Budapest, known as the “City of Spas” since 1934, with the support of the European Commissioner of Culture Mr Tibor Navracsics, the hosting town of Budapest and EHTTA Scientific Committee. Representatives of the founder members of EHTTA, new members and professionals, students, tourists, and more important, citizens of the network’s towns took part. Inspired by the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of one of the most famous thermal buildings in Europe, possibly the world, the Gellert Bath and Spa, it was decided that October 12<sup>th</sup> would become “European Thermal Heritage Day” thereafter.

At each European Thermal Heritage Day, there is a central question to examine, relating to the concept of European Thermal Heritage, and as well as a conference to debate and discuss the theme, is a short book has been written to accompany the event. The first, in 2018 in Budapest (Fig. 03) was “Thermal Tourism and Spa Heritage in Europe. The case of EHTTA”, and in 2019, in Spa (Fig. 05), in Belgium, the subject was “What’spa? Spa: a concept to be redefined”. Here, the word SPA and its significance as a complex heritage integrated by natural, cultural, and intangible resources was discussed in the place that reluctantly gave the world its name.

During the two previous European Thermal Heritage Days, the EHTTA Scientific Committee has developed two short essays, published as booklets, and two informative videos, this short paper on Thermal Architecture is the third in the series.

This idea as a cultural and touristic project, was given a “Best Practices in Cultural and Sustainable Tourism” Award by the Council of Europe on the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes in Sibiu (Fig. 04), Romania. It was a great honour to be given this prestigious Award, and it was received with grateful thanks by the Association. This award is shared with the host towns, speakers, participants, and all our colleagues in EHTTA that make the event possible every year.

## European Thermal Heritage Day 2020 Baden-Baden

European Thermal Heritage Day in 2020 examined the subject of “Thermal Architecture”, and originally it was supposed to take place in Baden-Baden, but the restrictions on travel brought about by a resurgence of the COVID-19 virus throughout Europe meant that the event took place mostly online.

Baden-Baden was originally selected as the perfect place in which to talk about the subject for three reasons – firstly, it is physical proof of the traditional German interest in thermalism and thermal spaces (Fig. 06). Secondly, Baden-Baden is located in a region historically dedicated to health and wellness. And last, but not least, the town’s impressive architecture spans the millennia – from Roman origins to the beginnings of contemporary art.

This publication is intended to complement the physical event that was planned in Baden-Baden, and sits alongside



Fig. 05. European Thermal Heritage Day 2019 (Palace Hotel, Spa). EHTTA

a programme of debate, discussion and roundtables, visits and guided tours celebrating not only the sense of local place in Baden-Baden and its own unique style, but also a shared European heritage of thermal architecture which is recognisable throughout the EHTTA network of historic thermal towns.

Thermal architecture is a complex subject to study, and difficult to reduce to this short paper of only three sections, while it is hoped that bringing the subject to a wider audience will open a useful debate. However, the addition of maps and scaled drawings will assist the reader to make comparisons across time and space, and to eventually justify the hypothesis of the existence of “thermal architecture”. The buildings selected to be illustrated in this way are some of the more iconic and representative buildings to be found in the EHTTA network.

By marking European Thermal Heritage Day in this way, and by examining the subject of Thermal Architecture, EHTTA invites everyone, to recognise the phenomenon as a common heritage, because only when it is shared and valued by the community, can it be saved, preserved

and enhanced. From citizens to visitors, managers and technicians to community groups, from NGOs to businesses and municipalities, from children at school who don't yet realise how special are the places where they live, to elderly people who have lived with this heritage their entire lives, thermal architecture can speak to each of these groups.

A related and equally interesting discussion could be had if it was possible to separate architecture and urbanism, but neither time nor space allow that here. It is hoped that a future event based around the subject of thermal towns and urbanism will be held in Saratoga Springs in 2021.

## Introduction to thermal architecture

**D**oes “thermal architecture” exist? This is the question that opens the reflection on European Thermal Heritage Day in this year of the COVID-19 pandemic, a year when the future of many of EHTTA's towns has been put into question, despite them having been places of health and healing for many centuries, and despite having the potential to offer medical solutions to the threat and recovering from the virus.

Examining the legislation in the different countries represented by the EHTTA Network, it can be seen that there are different levels of appreciation and recognition of thermal heritage. From local, to regional and national levels, thermal buildings are listed as monuments of historical significance, or of local, regional or national importance by municipalities, regions or states.

In general, this level of appreciation increases as the age of the building increases, and usually a complex with Roman remains and archaeological values is more widely

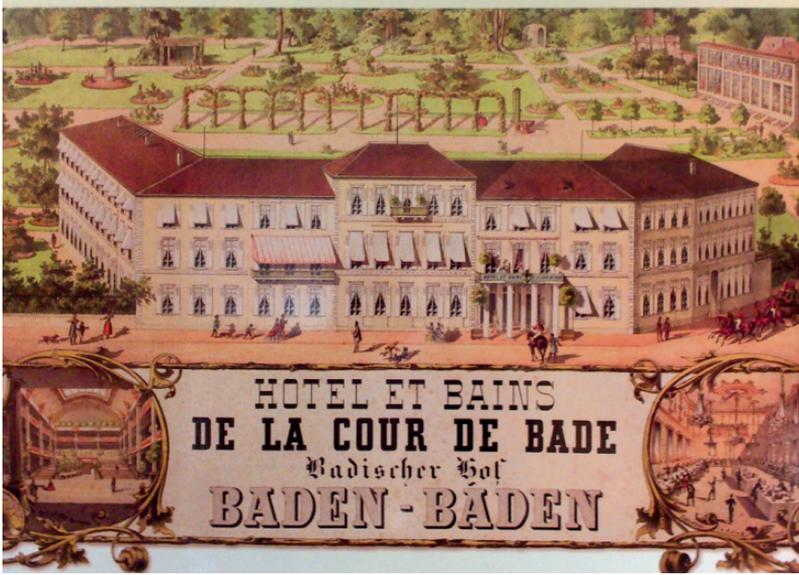


Fig. 06. Badischer Hof. Kunsthalle Baden-Baden. Photo by the author.

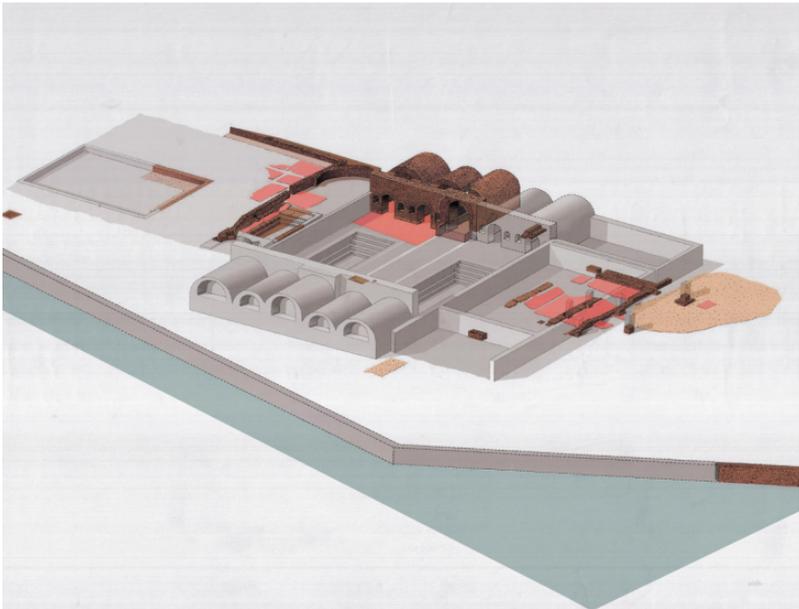


Fig. 07. Roman Spa Hypothesis. Balneario de Lugo.

Crecente, M. & González-Soutelo, S., 2016.

recognized in most of the cases as the example of the Roman Thermas of Lugo (Fig. 07 and 08). This was studied in depth a few years ago with my colleague Silvia González Soutelo (Crecente, M. & González-Soutelo, S., 2016).

On the other hand, the most contemporary buildings, especially those from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as recognised by the Do.Co.Mo.Mo.\* selection. These buildings, which are associated with particularly difficult political periods are often in a bad state of repair, if not completely abandoned, especially in Eastern Europe.

At the top of the pyramid of heritage recognition is the City of Bath, in the UK, itself a whole city inscribed on the World Heritage List for its architecture and setting, and now one of the eleven towns of the “Great Spas of Europe”, aiming for World Heritage listing as a serial transnational property.

The complexity of thermal heritage cannot be understated, consisting as it does of several types of heritage:

- Natural – the water sources and surrounding landscape
- Cultural – the structures and buildings that house the water and the people that came to use them
- Intangible – the practices and traditions surrounding the use of the waters.

These three characteristics merged in the various functional and specific purposes of buildings which were traditionally designed and constructed with care and imagination to manage these precious resources. This became “thermal architecture”. To identify, quantify and characterize thermal heritage, the EHTTA Scientific Committee has structured the analysis of natural, cultural and intangible heritage into 15 categories\*.

\*Do.Co.Mo.Mo. Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement.

\*What’s spa. Spa: a concept to be redefined. EHTTA Scientific Committee, pages 21, 22

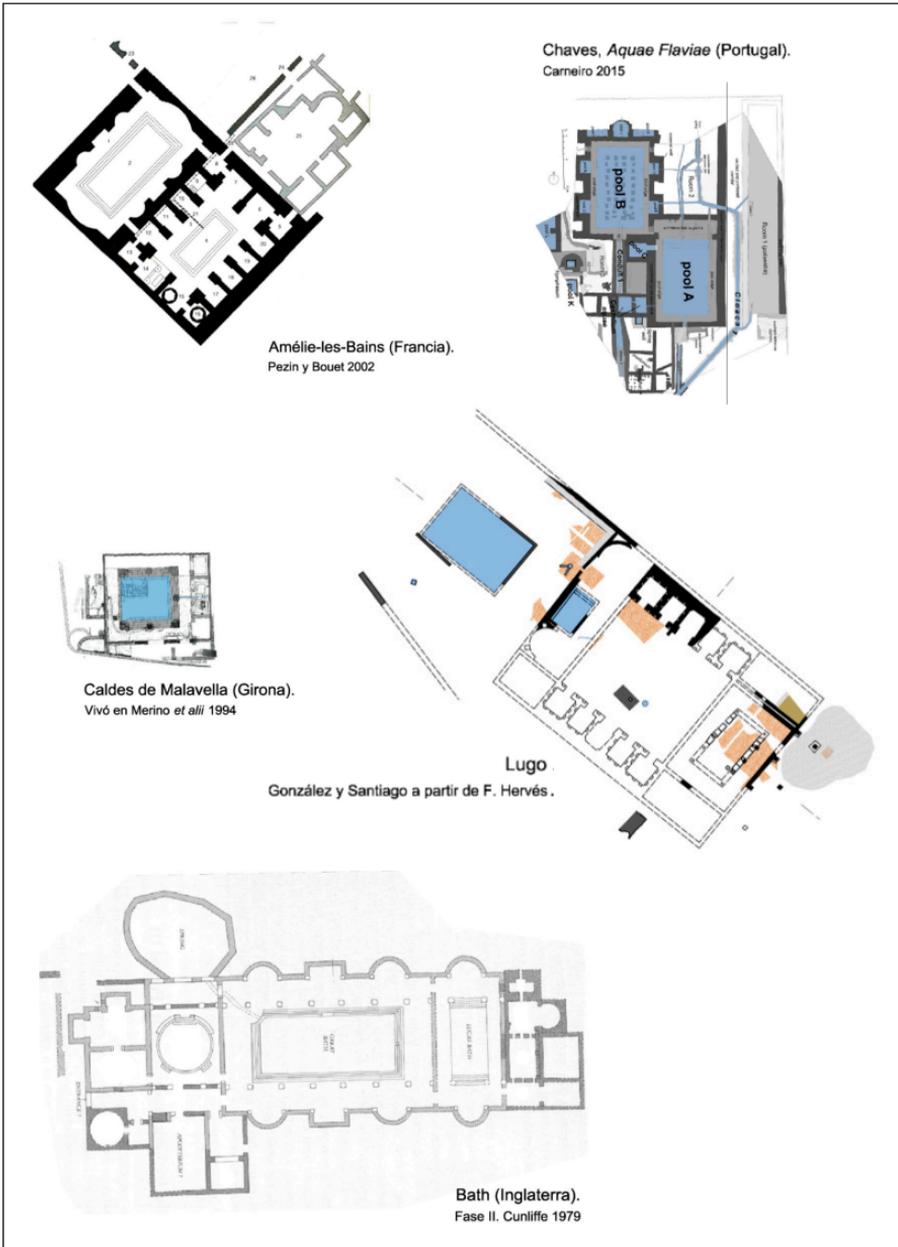
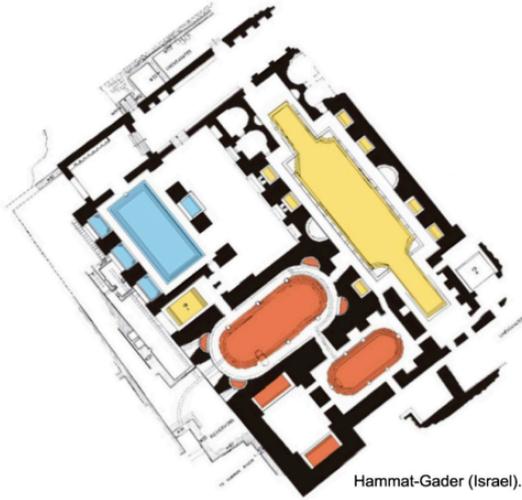
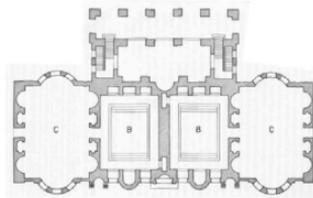


Fig. 08. Comparative map of Roman Spas. Crecente, M. & González-Soutelo, S., 2016.



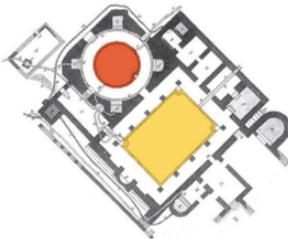
Hammat-Gader (Israel).

Broise 2003 a partir de Hirschfeld *et alii* 1997



Badenweiler (Alemania).

Fase I. Grenier 1960.



Hammam Essalihine, Aquae Flavianae (Argelia).

Broise 2014, a partir de Gsell y Graillet 1893.



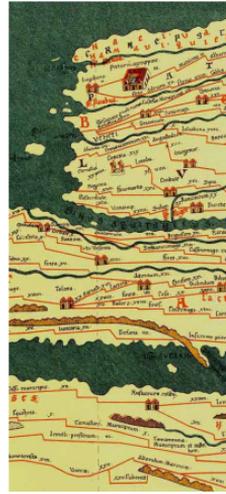


Fig. 09: As Burgas Thermal Pool, Ourense. Elena Repetskaya for Crecente Asociados.

## Chronological sequence

**W**ater is always older than the buildings that house the springs. In Ourense (Fig. 09), the water is more than 15,000 years old, while the original Roman baths (known as ‘As Burgas’) are from the first century AD, and the fountain behind the baths is from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It could be said that the tradition of using the waters for health is timeless. What is then the most valuable asset or resource – the natural, cultural or intangible? Does the unique value of the waters, as a natural resource and its management justify a specific form of architecture?

Many of the spa towns of Europe have Roman origins and sometimes before. The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Peutingerian Tablet (Fig. 10), an early road map of the Roman Empire, shows the importance of thermal architecture, as it is the Roman Baths that are the only buildings in each of the Roman settlements that are illustrated. The “Aquaes”, are the towns which would eventually become the spa towns of Europe.



Fig. 10: Tabula Peutingeriana detail

Later, churches and monasteries took the control of these sacred origin waters, with Christianisation of their powerful attributes, and managed them, with examples from Bath in UK to Cuntis in Spain. Monks also contributed to the development of thermal water use, spreading in Europe under the patronage of different orders, and maybe the way of Saint James also contributed to that process.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, thermal towns expanded all over Europe, and the use of the waters for medicinal purposes and the treatment of diseases became more highly understood and then regulated. The utility and efficacy of the waters for health was officially recognised, and a medical hydrologist would be present at every thermal station and there would be detailed analyses of the waters and their properties. Protection of the sources of these waters followed.

As a result, in these centuries, examples of “thermal architecture” were to be found throughout Europe, partly

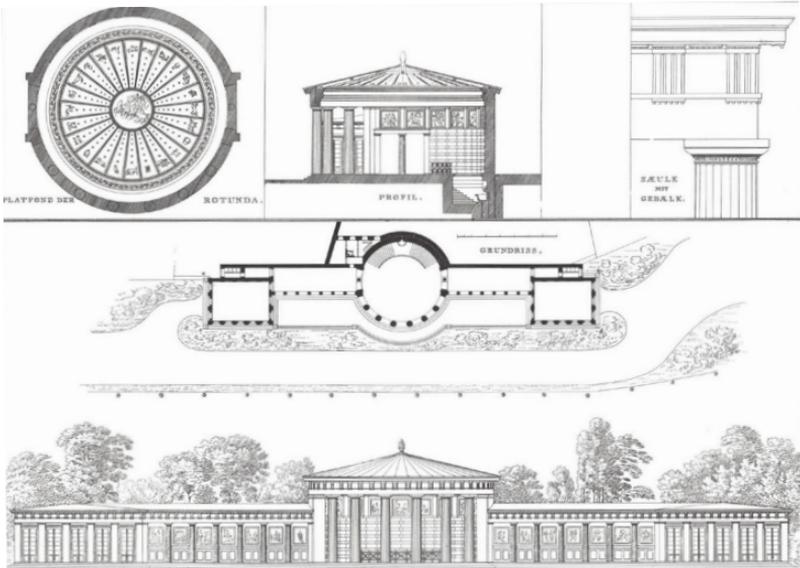


Fig. 11: The Mineralwater drinking fountain at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Platz in Aachen. Schinkel. C.F., 1858.

because architects of the new buildings were inspired by the places they visited with their sponsors; the rulers and elite of European society as they made their way around the spa towns of Europe.

In 1721, "Entwurf einer Historischen Architektur" was published by Johann Fischer von Erlach, which at the time was an influential book on world architecture, with an emphasis on classical buildings.

In the same century, John Wood (born in 1704) was instrumental in changing the entire image and form of Bath in the UK, now regarded as one of the most quintessential spa towns. After his death in 1754, his son, John Wood the Younger continued his father's work in Bath which lasted up until 1782. These two architects began a tradition of understanding the relationship of a thermal town with its public spaces, parks and gardens and its therapeutic

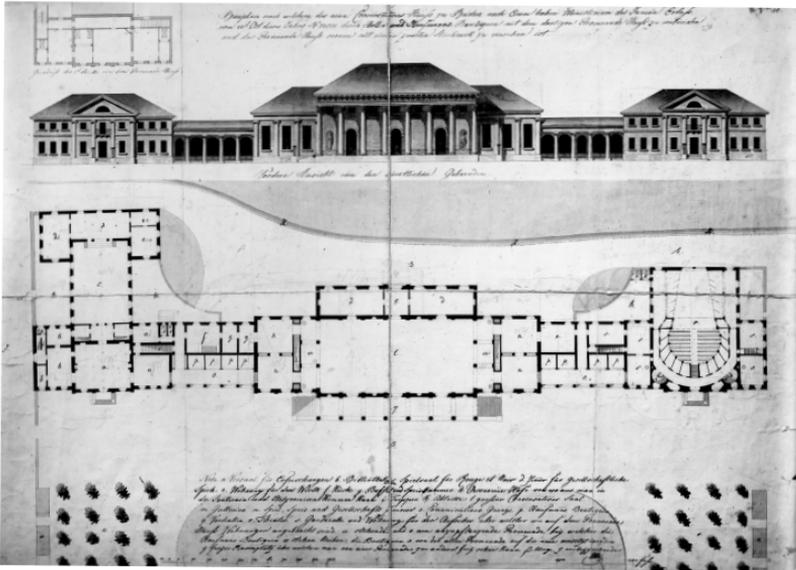


Fig.12: Kurhaus in Baden-Baden. Plan by Friedrich Weinbrenner, third and final draft, ca 1822. Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 498-1 Nr. 441, Bild 1  
Permalink: [www.landesarchiv-bw.de/plink/?f=4-1078185-1](http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/plink/?f=4-1078185-1)

landscape. At the same time others such as entrepreneurs and the Masters of Ceremonies created rules and models of public behaviour and how a polite society should act in these public buildings and spaces.

In 1820 *Elisen Brunnen* (Fig. 11) was built by Schinkel, in Aix La Chapelle, (today's Aachen) representing the architectural probe of the thermal origin of the town, experienced and lived today in the contemporary *Carolus Therme*. Carolus is the emperor that founded the Way of Saint James and created a first idea of Europe, that today reconnects Aachen and Santiago de Compostela.

The classically inspired Kurhaus in Baden-Baden (Fig. 12) was designed by Friedrich Weinbrenner in 1824 and extended later by other architects. In 1872, the gaming ban in Germany provided the impetus for new

developments, and in 1877, architect Carl Dernfeld opened the iconic Friedrichsbad, built in Italian High Renaissance style above the original Roman thermal building. At the time it was the most important and modern thermal building in Germany, and although it drew on treatments and rituals from ancient Rome, it ushered in a new era, of thermal tourism, allowing bigger groups to enjoy the extensive facilities.

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is considered the heyday of the bath culture, spreading thermalism all over Europe and beyond, converting the European thermal towns into a model with replicas overseas.

On the middle of the last century, wars throughout Europe, progress on pharmacological industries, and changes in the model of tourism combined to contribute to the decline of the thermal towns, and the abandonment of many thermal buildings, and even whole towns. Previous studies developed by EHTTA identified 173 abandoned spas in the Czech Republic. In the case of Spain, there were 202 active spas in 1899 (Alonso, et al., 2013) and today only 104 are still active.

The last years of the twentieth century began a process of recovering, that continues today in 21<sup>st</sup> all over Europe, defined by epochs of cyclical economic crisis or expansion, and by the models of public private relations and interventions.

The panorama cannot be complete without a mention of contemporary thermal architecture, which in some cases could provide new prototypes for the future. Architects such as Zumthor in Vals, Switzerland, Nouvel in Dax, France, Grimshaw in Bath UK and Fuksas in Montecatini Terme, Italy, are rethinking and reinventing thermal architecture whilst generating new models for the future.

## Thermal building typologies

The study and documentation of building typology has interested theoreticians of architecture for centuries and, specially, since the Enlightenment. Creating building typologies requires analysing a large set of buildings and comparing many parameters, such plants, exterior composition, inner space, decoration, size, location or relation with the urban environment. In the case of thermal buildings, the development of this kind of studies is still too low.

When defining building typologies from an international perspective, the language used to describe architectural types becomes essential. Some languages have words to refer to concepts that have no equivalent in other languages. Similarly, some languages may appear to use different words to refer to a single concept. Both cases should be carefully analysed. It indicates that these architectural spaces have a strong immaterial value for local population and, event, it can be an indication of the existence of unique architectural typologies.

The Thermal Architecture Map that accompanies this book relates each building to a specific category, on the basis of the pilot project “Thermal Heritage of Europe Atlas” developed in 2016-2017 by the EHTTA Scientific Committee. This project defined a data model with 15 categories organized into three basic thermal components (natural, cultural and intangible) overlying the municipalities (basic unit) (Crecente et al. 2019). For the purpose of studying Thermal Architecture, the component to analyse is Cultural Heritage, which encompasses 9 categories (3. Fountains; 4. Spas; 5. Hotels; 6. Villas; 7. Leisure; 8. Landscape; 9. Services; 10. Industry and 11. Research). In the buildings included in the Thermal Architecture Map, the categories represented are 3, 4, 5 and 7.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the great baths and kurhauses became recognised leisure buildings, it signalled the moment when thermal architecture could be described as an established architectural genre. This is where the implied question can be raised – if thermal architecture exists, what are the prototypes of that architecture? great baths, kurhaus, trinkhalls, casinos, thermal hotels, villas, parks, gardens, cable cars, funiculars etc, all contribute to the rich panorama of thermal architectural types.

We suggest two possible approaches to the deeper study of thermal architecture; firstly, by looking at it from the perspective of specific uses – originally as an architecture dedicated for health, secondly and later as an architecture for leisure. Remember also that not only water defines thermal architecture, as these communal buildings are needed for social activities.

The complexity of Roman thermal water buildings is a reminder of the difference between the two types of buildings. The Thermae, using ordinary water for recreation, and the Balnea, using thermal waters for health and perhaps even worship and spiritual cleansing.

It is also possible to imagine that the practical difficulties and issues surrounding the management of the natural resources of thermal waters, muds and gases influenced building design. Their specific nature, the complexity of collecting distributing and maintaining these elements would all have had an influence.

Thinking in terms of their functions, buildings for health or buildings for leisure could signal the difference. Other ways of classification could be to distinguish those buildings which house water, and those that do not. For example, the Kurhaus in Baden-Baden was built without a water supply and exists purely for social and leisure activities, even today.

On this basis the Great Spas of Europe studies propose such a classification, and this can be seen in the next chapter of this booklet.

Up to this point, we have simply described the complexities of function on these thermal typologies, now we go with the analyse of form. The complexity of Roman thermal buildings is often expressed in a form radiating from a central core and focal point.

An impressive example of centralized architecture, which presents the public baths as the iconic centre of the building plan, can be seen reflected in the Wojciech sanatorium baths complex in Łądek Zdrój in Poland (Fig.13 and 14), previously known as Bad Landeck.

The first Kurhaus to be designed in the new fashion was built in Wiesbaden by Christian Zais in 1810. In 1905-07 a new building was designed by Friedrich von Thiersch, which included the great dome in the centre.

In Aachen the Palatium Chapel, the mineral fountain in the Friederich Wilhelm Platz in Aachen, designed by Karl Friederich Schinkel between 1823 and 1826, is also a remarkable example of centralised architecture.

The iconic thermal building in Baden-Baden, the Friedrichsbad, is layered around a central scenic dome, which dominates the floorplan is at the heart of the visual image of the complex. It is interesting to note that the modern Caracalla therme, opened next to the Friedrichsbad in 1980 is a type of new contemporary thermal building with a central domed bath.

Is it possible to propose that “thermal architecture” is a variant of the model of centralised architecture, or is it only connected with the water buildings, or with a specific period of the new Renaissance?

What is the influence of styles and epochs, in the proposal for the same type of function, that was developed

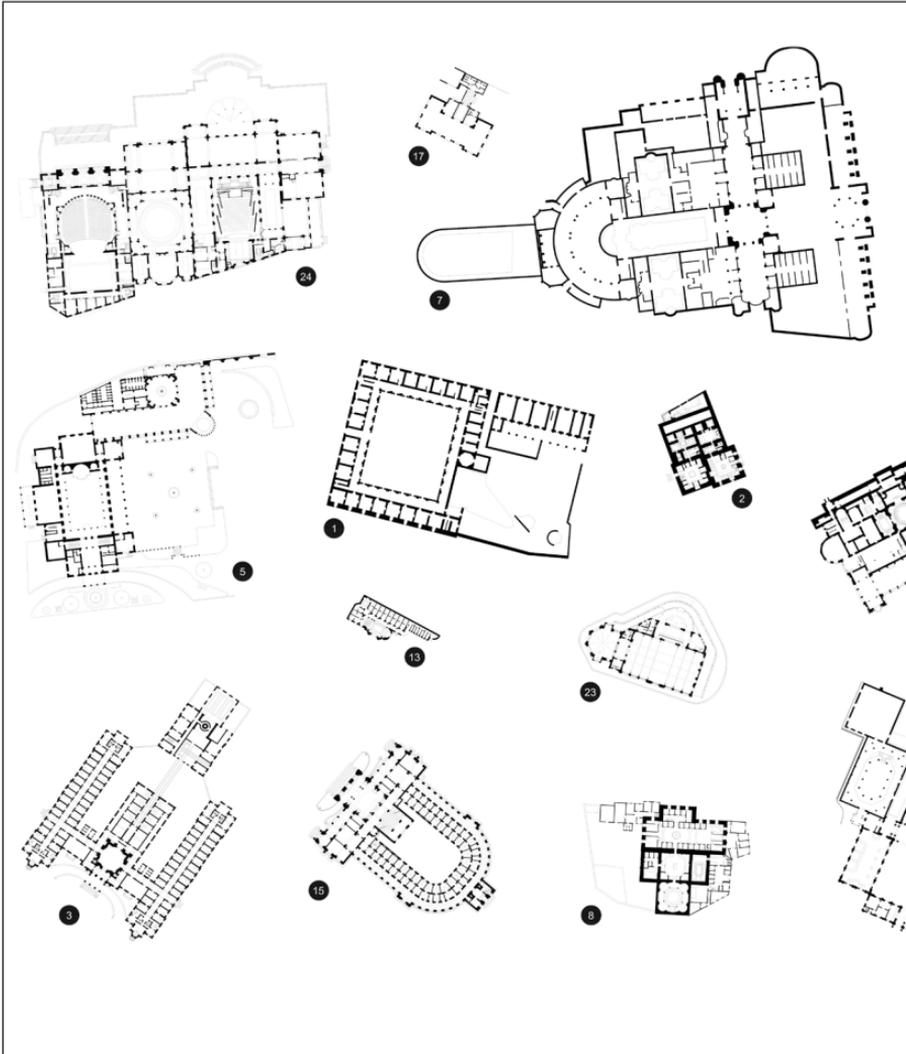
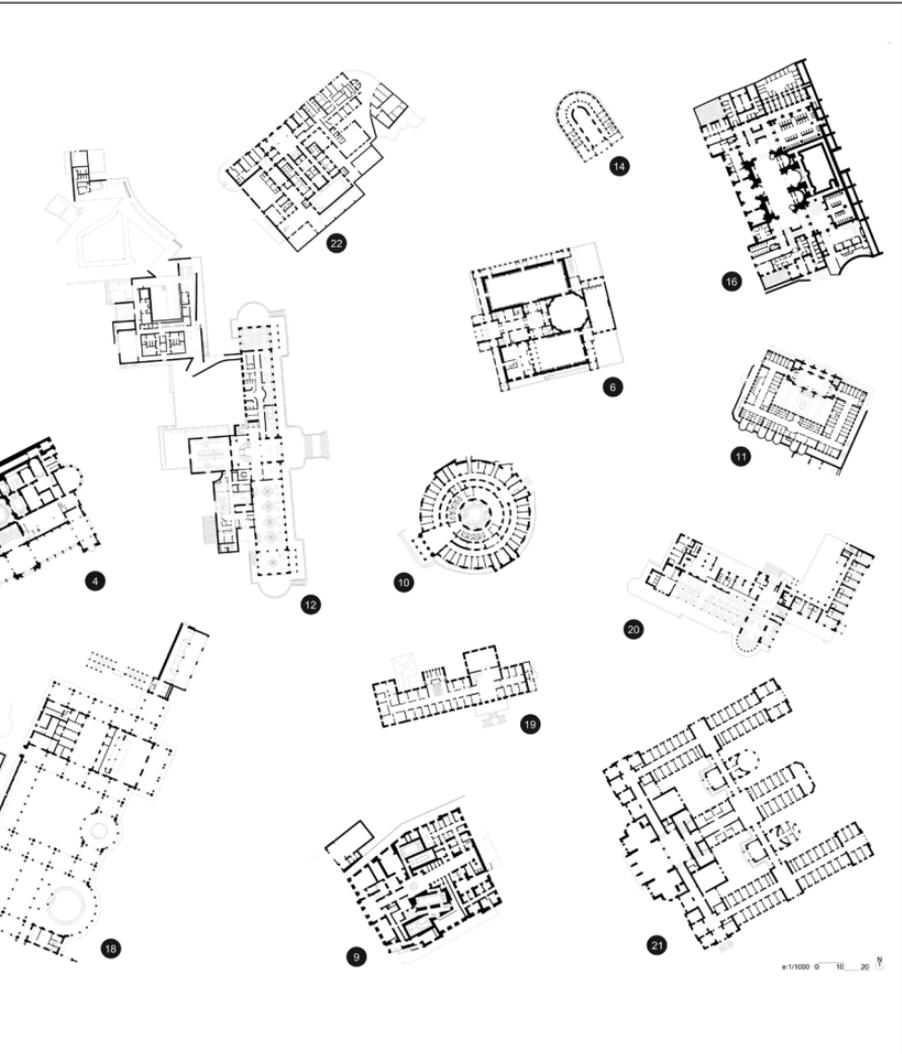


Fig. 17: Thermal Architecture Map: 1. Spa Lago de le Sorgenti (Acqui Terme); 2.Kadi Bath (Afyon); 3.Kaiser Wilhelms Bad (Bad Homburg); 4.Friedrichsbad (Baden-Baden); 5. Kurhaus (Baden bei Wien); 6. Assembly Rooms (Bath); 7. Géllert Hotel (Budapest); 8. Eski Kaplıca (Bursa); 9. Hospital Termal Rainha Leonor (Caldas da Rainha), 10. Zdrój Wojciech (Łądek Zdrój); 11.Termas Romanas (Caldes de Montbui); 12.Grandes Termes (Châtel Guyon); 13. Vidago Palace (Chaves-Verin); 14. Royat (Bains de St Mart); (Clermont Metropole);



15. Agioi Anargyroi Hydrotherapy Centre (Isteia Aedipsos), 16. Imperial Spa (Karlovy Vary Region); 17. Thermal Baths (Le Mont Dore); 18. L'Orangerie (Mondorf-les-Bains); 19. Terme Tettuccio (Montecatini Terme); 20. Gran Hotel Balneario de Cabreiroá (Ourense); 21. Pärnu Rannahotell (Pärnu); 22. Terme Berzieri (Salsomaggiore Terme); 23. Queen Amelia Baths (São Pedro do Sul); 24. Pouchon Pierre le Grand (Spa); 25. Convention Center of Vichy (Vichy).

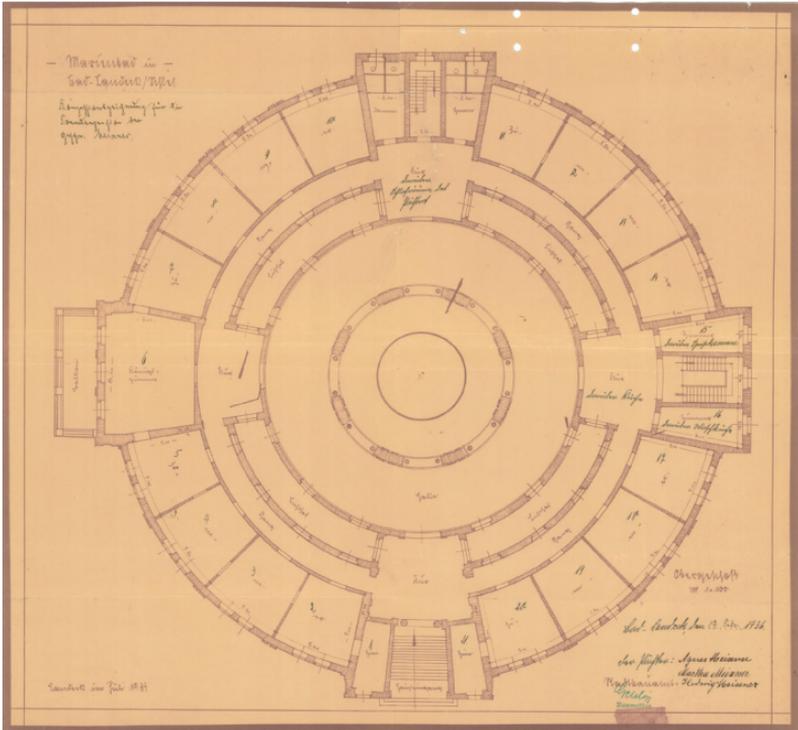


Fig. 13: Zdrój Wojciech in Łądek-Zdrój, designed by Herman Völkel in 1877.  
Council of Łądek-Zdrój

from the beginning of the use of thermal waters, and the social palaces for groups and communities?.

Looking at the map of maps which can be found in the annex to this booklet, the collection of representative buildings of our towns, first point emerging its typologies by uses: Great baths (Bad Homburg, Karlovy Vary), Halls and Assembly rooms (Bath, Spa), Hotels (Cabreiroá, Parnu, Vidago), Opera and Congress whalls (Vichy).

Also, climate, topography, surroundings, rivers and forests, master plans for the town, and others configure the result we share in individual plans



Fig. 14. Adam pool, Łądek-Zdrój. EHTTA

in the map, as a initial basis for a discussion that could be the subject of continued future debate.

## Discussion

**T**he first discussion should examine the name itself: thermal architecture, which is defined and supported by global references, as debated at the International congresses in Thermal Tourism supported by UNWTO in 1999 and 2010, and international ISO standards. Spa architecture in its contemporary sense is, in many cases,

the wrong term to use, as it creates misunderstandings, because it is related to many types of buildings with different waters and uses. Adopting international agreements and memorandums that prioritise the natural conditions of the resource's natural mineral waters, could be an objective, now that there is much debate about the necessity of more sustainable tourism, in the context of global climate crisis.

Another important point of the discussion is the different languages and importance of translations: Can it be said that “Kurarchitektur” is the same as “Spa Architecture”? Are Armenbäder and Bauernbäder poor peoples' baths, and are Fürstenbädern the baths of royalty?

Discussions about a complex heritage with natural, cultural and intangible values, with local perceptions and specific values and feelings, show that it is important that all of these values and nuances can be appreciated in translations of different languages, but more studies are needed in this area.

The candidacy of the Great Spas of Europe (Fig. 15) emphasises the appreciation of these thermal architecture types as a particular European phenomenon of global significance. The arguments presented in the nomination dossier could help to valorise other spa towns in Europe and beyond.

Recognising the complexity of these extended resources and the variety and diversity of thermal architecture, could give those involved in debating the value of cultural heritage, a starting point to prioritise future actions to do with the preservation of thermal buildings and urban form in all the spa towns of Europe.

Encouraging the process of recognition of a living heritage that needs to be alive, to maintain the health of those that use the water, and to make sustainable use of these extensive public and private institutions that have evolved over centuries is also a necessity.

As contemporary practice and architecture intermingle with the original buildings and urban landscape, and help spa towns to revive and recover, new uses for the historic buildings will be the key to their continuing success, as the uses are the instrument to bring past to the present.

## Conclusions

The principal objectives of the celebration of the European Thermal Heritage Days are:

- Recognize the European significance of Thermal Architecture & Heritage.
- Show that is a remarkable and unique European phenomenon.
- Highlight the existence of sites that have to be revalorized.

Thermal buildings and their form and design depend on the location of the natural resources – the mineral and thermal waters themselves – in conjunction with and dependent on traditions and uses, practices and knowledge, financial resources and the creativity of architects, local entrepreneurs, doctors, artists and scientists.

Thermal architecture was originally a European phenomenon, and an ancient one at that, but in more recent times, it has spread all over the world, with fantastic examples of thermal architecture being found from Rotorua in New Zealand, to Saratoga Springs in New York State in the United States of America amongst others (Fig. 16).

In Western Europe recognition of this architecture as a specific Heritage is underway –but there is a risk of losing many important examples of thermal architecture in eastern and southern Europe through neglect or inappropriate “improvements” are superimposed on the rich built heritage

that already exists. The renaissance of thermal towns is another good area of future study.

The highest level of recognition, or “label” that can be achieved for any built heritage is that of inscription on the global list of World Heritage Sites. Baden-Baden is one of the serial nominations of the “Great Spas of Europe” for inscription by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The highest accolade that could possibly be bestowed on Thermal Architecture.

The “map of maps” (Fig. 17) that accompanies this text presents “Thermal Architecture” in graphic form showing all the examples of important thermal architecture in EHTTA towns drawn with the same graphic criteria, on the same scale and orientation, to provide a comparison of form, plan and structure.

COVID-19 both in Europe and globally, has impacted tourism in the thermal towns sector, and led to serious debate about how to recover from the economic crisis that has resulted from the pandemic. Architecture and urbanism, buildings and towns are all having to be rethought, along with so many aspects of tourism especially the safe management of large groups of people.

Sustainability of tourism and economies will be at the heart of possible solutions to the current crisis, and transport solutions will be a key part of that. Many European spa towns experienced success or a revival when the railways reached them, and rail is an important part of the story of European thermalism. This will be celebrated next year, as 2021 is the European Year of Rail.

The promise offered by the thermal towns and the surrounding landscapes that can be used for exercise and well-being is one of hope for recovery both in terms of physical and mental health, but also for tourism and the economy. These places have survived pandemics in the



Fig. 16: Saratoga Spa State Park.  
Mario Crecente

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Fig. 15: The Great Spas of Europe logo

past and have been destinations of health since Roman times and sometimes before. They can also be part of the future of health and wellbeing, and their longevity and unique proposition, all wrapped up in stunning thermal architecture should remain a draw for generations to come.

The next European Thermal Heritage Day in 2021 will focus on urbanism and its relationship with the therapeutic landscape, hopefully, if conditions after the pandemic allow, in a thermal town which represents an exceptional example of the thermal landscape that surrounds many of our historic thermal towns. The spa town selected as a prime example of the European tradition in the United States of America is Saratoga Springs.

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## ≈ GREAT SPAS OF EUROPE ≈

PAUL SIMONS

WITH BARRY GAMBLE

AND CHRISTOPHER POUND

### Description

**T**he Great Spas of Europe is a transnational serial property of eleven towns located in seven European countries: Baden bei Wien (Austria); Spa (Belgium); the 'Bohemian Spa Triangle' of Karvoly Vary, Františkovy Lázně and Mariánské Lázně (Czech Republic); Vichy (France); Bad Ems, Baden-Baden and Bad Kissingen (Germany); Montecatini Terme (Italy); and the City of Bath (United Kingdom).

European spa towns are centred on natural 'curative' mineral water springs that act as nuclei for a specialised urban form and function designed for the combined medicinal, social and leisure use of mineral water. The spatial planning and architecture of this urban typology facilitated such a combined use, and has no earlier parallel. The specialisation of each function, and its integration into specific buildings and spaces, is a defining characteristic. A 'Great Spa' is distinguished from any other spa town by its dimension, complexity and integrity of the various elements.

The eleven towns possess both archaeological



Fig.01: The model spa town of Františkovy Lázně. Jas Air / CZ Karlovarský kraj

testimony to ancient origins, and modern interventions that facilitate a living spa tradition that continues into the twenty-first century. Their predominant heritage, however, relates to their collective heyday that spans the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The European spa evolved as a new, unique, and widespread urban typology, which today we can consider in terms of a distinctive historic urban landscape (Fig. 01).

The principal spa ensemble includes springs and their various styles of taps, fountains and pavilions, the pump rooms and drinking halls, bathing and treatment facilities, colonnades and galleries, hospitals and sanatoria, assembly rooms, casinos, theatre and concert houses, arcades of shops, hotels, lodging houses and villas, churches and supporting infrastructure such as salts extraction and funicular railways. This is set within a green environment of promenades and parades, parks and gardens, pleasure grounds, rides and woodland walks.



Fig. 02: Tržnicolonnade, Karlovy Vary. Živýkraj, Karovarskýkraj

The Great Spas of Europe illustrates a new typology of historic urban landscape - the European spa town. Each component spa town displays variations on a common structure that is characterised by functional zoning. This zoning is influenced by geographical and topographical constraints and historical geopolitical and socio-economic influences. It displays ensembles of exceptional buildings (including architectural prototypes) and spaces (particularly green spaces) that are functionally linked to meet the daily needs of spa guests (Fig. 02).

## Anatomy of a spa

The historic urban landscape of a 'Great Spa' is summarised diagrammatically in figure 03. The simplified diagram acts like a theoretical concentric ring (or concentric zone) model. The broad structure of the Great Spas of Europe is thus seen to comprise a distinct spa quarter centred on the springs, from which other zones with specific features radiate outwards. There are, of course, many variations on such zones due to



Fig. 04: Spa quarter, river Lahn, Bad Ems. City of Bad Ems.

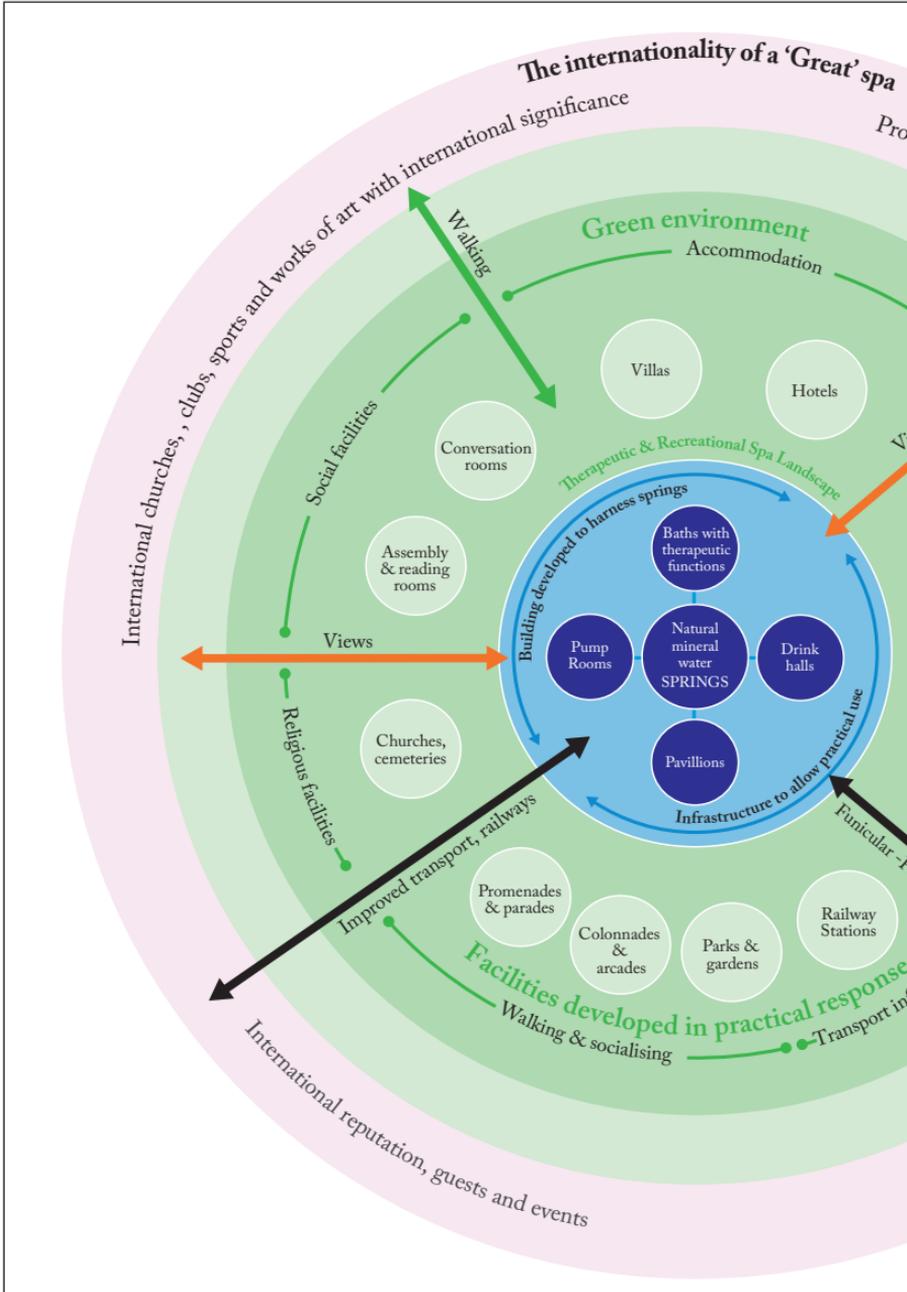
geography, topography and diverse historical context.

Whilst each spa town is different all developed around natural ‘curative’ hot and cold mineral springs of variable composition and application. The springs are therefore in the middle of the concentric ring. Where the source is singular, or where several sources are co-located in a cluster, the form of the spa quarter tends to be broadly monocentric: examples include the City of Bath, and the principal spa quarter at Bad Ems. Where there are a number of sources, the form of the principal spa quarter tends to be polycentric: for example linear and distributed for a kilometre or more along a fault line along the river valley at Karlovy Vary, at Bad Kissingen a second spa quarter developed along with the integration of brine into the spa culture when water was then pumped to the more distant spa quarter in the south, apparently randomly distributed over several square kilometres as at Františkovy Lázně, or a much larger area such as in the

town and adjacent forest in Spa. Sometimes, thermal water was historically piped from the source to a somewhat distant spa quarter that was developed in a more suitable space, for example, in Baden-Baden. Depending on mineral content and temperature, some water sources were suitable for drinking, some for bathing, and some for inhalation. Such applications clearly determine the types of spa buildings that are found in the different spa towns. Each spa town shares common elements, yet their structure and spatial layout varies. Some towns have springs known to ancient tribes and the Romans, like the City of Bath and Baden-Baden, and have grown organically with major planned spa developments taking place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Others are spa 'new towns', like newly designed Františkovy Lázně, a plan that was approved in the early 1800s, and Mariánské Lázně, created from the ground up in 1817-22, its urban layout well-preserved with springhouses, pump room and promenade laid out transverse to a generous landscape park surrounded by planned guest houses arranged in this way for the first time in history. Such towns may also include broad tree-lined avenues, for example in Montecatini Terme, designed to provide views that connect with landscape features.

Ensembles of spa buildings include architectural prototypes such as the 'kurhaus' and 'kursaal', pump rooms, drinking halls ('trinkhalle'), colonnades and galleries designed to harness the natural mineral water resource and to allow its practical use for bathing and drinking. The Great Spas of Europe displays exceptional examples in a range of architectural styles (Fig. 04).

'Taking the cure', externally and internally, was complemented firstly by exercise. Facilities developed in practical response within, and around, the spa quarter



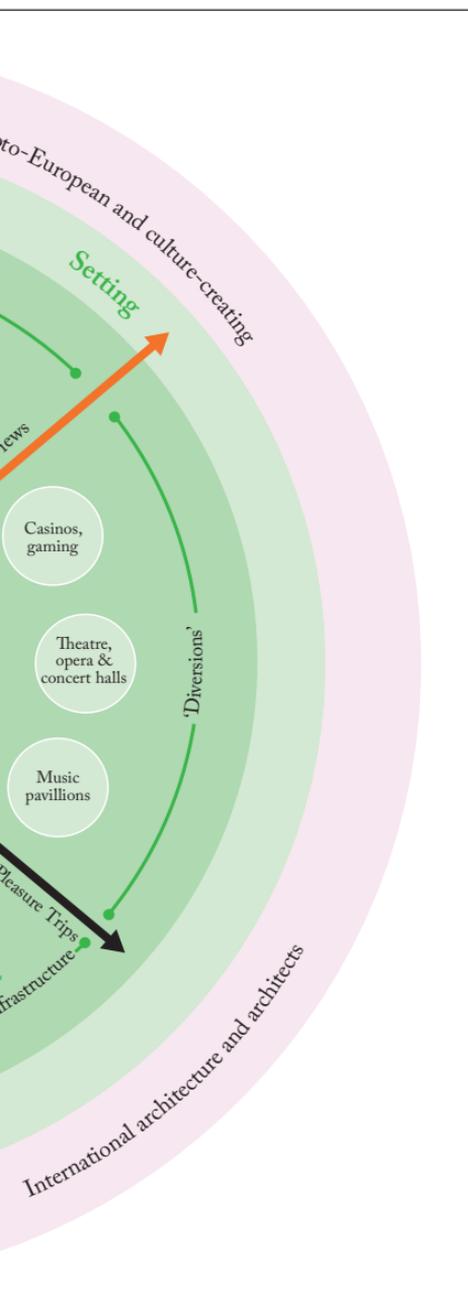


Fig. 03: Theoretical historic urban landscape of a "Great Spa".

and involved: walking, or promenading, whilst commonly drinking the waters (importantly to meet, and be seen by, others) along paved and covered colonnades and galleries, those in the series representing many architectural exemplars, such as in Karlovy Vary and Vichy; strolling in landscape gardens and kurgartens, such as in Baden bei Wien, one of Austria's most beautiful gardens, or in Bad Kissingen where the kurgarten has preserved its original measurements; gentle riverside walks (for example Vichy, Baden-Baden and Karlovy Vary) or walking networks of formal park-like pathways and woodland trails which remain as popular today as they ever were (for example the level former moorland of Františkovy Lázně and the gently sloping forests in Spa; in each case the paths linking springs); or more strenuous steeply wooded trails that ascended rocky hillsides and cliffs (such as in Bad Ems) — where perhaps a donkey, or a funicular railway, might be opted for to join others at hilltop scenic overlooks and restaurants. Sports facilities, such as golf, tennis, horseracing and others, were also provided for. A number of courses and courts remain in use and are historically distinguished as some of the first to appear in their respective countries (for example Baden-Baden).

Next came the all-important social activity. Spa gardens and cure parks were early developments designed for public social interaction. Facilities also developed for mixing and socialising in conversation and assembly rooms. The earliest examples, and indeed those that may be considered prototypes, can be found in the City of Bath and Spa. Such socialising was completed by 'diversions' such as in casinos. Gaming was endemic throughout Europe, and the creation of casinos (and sometimes their prohibition) played an essential role in spa life, for example

in the famous casino in Baden-Baden. They were also crucial to the economic viability of the spas, and host some of the earliest examples in the world (for example Spa and Bad Ems). Elaborate theatres, opera houses, concert and dance halls, may be encountered in most of the series. Hotels, lodging houses and villas form discrete zones within both the urban spa quarter and in the more distant therapeutic and recreational spa landscape (for example Spa). Some hotels are monumental in scale and architecture (for example in Karlovy Vary), whilst numerous villas display a wide range of international architectural styles. Their ubiquitous high quality, sheer numbers, and high rate of authentic preservation, is a distinctive attribute of the Great Spas of Europe.

The spa historic urban landscape also includes certain infrastructure that is especially linked to spas, such as hospitals based on mineral springs (for example the Royal Mineral Water Hospital in the City of Bath), and funiculars (for example at Bad Ems and Montecatini Terme) that accessed lookout towers, restaurants and specific features of interest. Rivers were used for public transport and as tourist attractions in themselves, for example the steamboat line in Bad Kissingen. Railways were also extended to spa towns to promote better access and increased visitation (several spa railway stations are included, for example Bad Ems, with its associated station quarter of hotels and villas).

Buildings and spaces connect visually and physically with their picturesque setting of idealised nature, a green environment used regularly for exercise as a contribution to the therapy of the cure, and for relaxation and enjoyment.

Following the description of the historic urban landscape of a 'Great Spa', specific elements have been grouped, as follows:



Fig. 05: Tettuccio Thermal Baths, Montecatini Terme. Photo Rosellini

## Location and Setting

**S**teep forested hills that surround many of the spa towns provide an impressive background. As the late eighteenth century Romantic Movement became established, an appreciation of landscape aesthetics encouraged a greater value to be placed on dramatic or picturesque landscapes (for example Baden bei Wien, Bad Ems, Baden-Baden and Karlovy Vary). The romantic landscape of Helenental (Baden bei Wien) was transformed into the attractive landscape park with paths and views- an example for the landscape gardens at Bad Ems.

Settings of the component parts are generally consistent with each other, with most towns lying in a river valley below high ground or below a steep edge of a plateau. Two towns are exceptions to this: Vichy lying in a broad river valley, and Františkovy Lázně built on relatively level ground. Setting variously contributes to significance and

distinctive character of the whole property. For of the spas the setting of the spa ensemble is now modern commercial or suburban development. The topographical setting of each spa town influences its form and character and contributes to historical context. For example, Montecatini Terme is framed by high and steep hills to the north, its principal boulevard being purposely aligned with the old defended hill town of Montecatini Alto perched high on the rim overlooking the new spa town. This aspect of setting adds drama and 'background' to the spa. It also provides a seamless belt of greenery that reaches out from this 'garden spa' to create a 'landscape spa'. At the same time, there is an impressive prospect from the high ground over the spa town and beyond to the expansive plain (Fig. 05).

## Springs

**S**prings (mineral water sources/outlets) are the catalyst for a pioneering and innovative urban structure demonstrated by the Great Spas of Europe. They are at the functional centre of a model of spatial organisation, built features and open spaces that exemplify processes that served, and continue to serve, curative, therapeutic, recreational and social functions.

Spa towns coalesced around these springs. Depending on the variable qualities of the spring and its water (capacity/flow rate, pressure, purity, chemical composition, temperature, taste, clarity etc.), a range of specific conditions or clusters of ailments were targeted. Spa doctors specified the healing properties and recommended procedures for 'taking the cure'. This was either externally (by bathing) or internally (by drinking, and inhaling) and involved a highly structured and timed daily regime. These

parameters directly influenced urban form and prompted architectural prototypes.

The effective and safe harnessing of spring water, together with facilities to promote its daily use, were essential to the thousands of spa guests who came to 'take the cure' daily - often for weeks, months or the entire annual season. Spa guests might visit different springs in the same resort, for different purposes, or visit multiple resorts depending on what each had to offer. Capacity planning was vital, and spas thus developed, or were planned, very much akin to modern tourist resorts in terms of visitor hospitality. The European spa - particularly the Great Spas of Europe - provided models for the latter.

The Great Spas of Europe represent a large-scale, sustainable, natural healing resource. More than 160 springs and gas-sources, together with 10 peloid (mud or peat) deposits, are used for therapeutic procedures. The genesis of such a large amount of springs, distributed across a wide-ranging geological context, differs significantly from a hydrogeological point of view, including chemical parameters, temperature, and the yield of spring structures.

The use of thermal water in certain spa towns has undergone changes over the centuries. Some facilities and features (for example in the City of Bath and Baden-Baden) document a long duration, from the Romans to the present. In other spa towns the age of principal features is more recent (for example Františkovy Lázně, or the early twentieth century regeneration of the Great Spa tradition at Montecatini Terme).

Distribution systems of mineral water primarily comprise pipeline networks (for example Baden-Baden and Karlovy Vary) with, for example, an exceptionally well-preserved example at Bad Kissingen. This transported brine from the

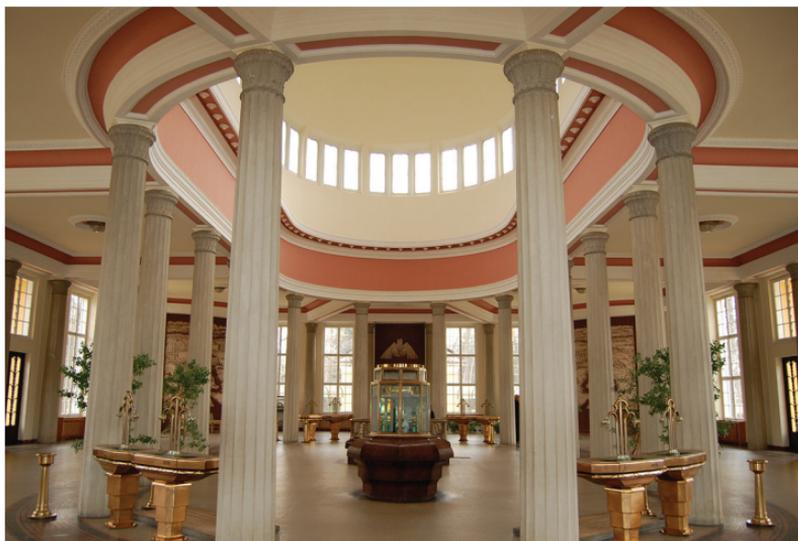


Fig. 06: The Glauber Springs Hall, Františkovy Lázně. Lubomír Zeman.

upper to lower spa quarters and the graduation tower, and mineral water to the Kurhaus and later the Brunnenhalle and large hotels. Systems also included sophisticated accumulation tanks, systems for heating or cooling the water (the springs in Bad Kissingen and Spa were cold, so bathing was introduced over 500 years and 200 years ago, respectively, by heating the water in baths) or moor (such as in Františkovy Lázně), disinfection devices (for example in the City of Bath) and, last but not least, special medical equipment and devices (historical examples still seen in hospitals, institutions and museums in most spa towns) (Fig.06).

An important advancement of all Great Spas is the existence of protection zones for exploited curative sources. Protected areas normally cover up to several hundred square kilometres. Protective conditions differ considerably in each protected area but the common principle is the same - to maintain the quantity and quality of the water resource, permanently.

## Urban ensemble of a Great Spa; with specific references to 'spa architecture'

**T**he approach to urban design in spa towns can be seen to be concentrated on thermal architecture and activities to provide an efficient building ensemble as a cultural space or 'civic space'. Most of these buildings and their associated functions are directly linked with the springs but also centred on the main promenade. Spa buildings are completely in harmony with their surroundings of parks and gardens, and surrounding landscape. Parades and promenades lead from the springs and fountains to parks and gardens.

Bathhouses date from the classical world of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome; extensive remains of Roman baths survive beneath nineteenth century baths in the City of Bath and Baden-Baden. The first spa district in Baden-Baden (on the market square, from the Roman period to Weinbrenner) was complemented by a more generous and landscaped spa district in which the thermal water is delivered in lengthy pipework. No large bathhouses with distinctive architectural character or style were constructed in Europe during the Middle Ages. Although some developments take place from the late seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, it is particularly after 1800 when specialisation in public spa buildings takes place.

The form of the spa town was intended to cultivate sociability. Characterised by the baths and drinking places linked to assembly rooms, colonnades, promenades, parks and gardens. These spaces provided a venue to meet other visitors, to be seen, but also spaces to enjoy away from the company providing privacy and contemplation. Thermal architecture, social buildings, promenades and gardens had a close relationship with nature and the surrounding

countryside. Together they form a healing landscape.

The Great Spas of Europe were established, and thus evolved, as healing environments. Spa buildings are intentionally designed to create a comfortable and confident sense of place. This determined the choice of architectural styles, and the relationship of urban spaces to the surrounding landscape.

The Great Spas of Europe displays exceptional examples of 'thermal Architecture' (German: Baderarchitektur) in a range of architectural styles. 'Thermal architecture' is the collective term for a genre of buildings that provide facilities for the spa function: buildings connected to 'curative waters' and buildings for sociability, leisure and pleasure that originated with the European spa phenomenon. Many of these buildings are special structures not seen in other towns. These include drinking halls, pump rooms and treatment rooms, conversation rooms or halls, assembly rooms etc. The City of Bath played a decisive role in the development of thermal architecture. Such buildings appeared at the end of the seventeenth century (for example in Bath, Spa and Bad Ems), had their heyday in the nineteenth century, and last flourished in the 1920s and 1930s (for example Montecatini Terme and Bad Kissingen) (Fig. 07).

Ensembles of spa buildings in the Great Spas of Europe include architectural prototypes popularised across Europe, such as the spring pavilion (for example in Františkovy Lázně, Spa and Vichy), pump room/drinking hall or 'trinkhalle' (for example in Bath, Baden-Baden, Baden bei Wien, Bad Kissingen and Vichy), colonnades and galleries (for example in Mariánské Lázně, Karlovy Vary, Montecatini Terme, Františkovy Lázně, Vichy and Bad Ems). These were designed to harness the natural mineral water resource and to allow its practical use for drinking and



Fig. 07: The Waux Hall, Spa. David Houbrechts.



Fig. 08: The Wandelhalle, Bad Kissingen. Alexandra Nadler.

exercise as part of the 'drinking cure'. This development represents a step change in the introduction of new types of spa building. Early public spa buildings dedicated to sociability and entertainment include the conversation house/assembly rooms/'kurhaus' (the earliest examples being the Assembly Rooms at the City of Bath, the Spa Waux-Hall and the Bad Ems Kurhaus) and 'kursaal', another architectural prototype, (for example City of Bath, Bad Ems, Spa, Baden bei Wien, Bad Kissingen, Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně). These often included the casino - its modern gaming form being substantially originated in the spa towns (exemplars in Baden-Baden, Spa, Vichy and others). The largest enclosed foyer (Wandelhalle) in Europe, with its adjoining spring hall (Brunnenhalle) is in Bad Kissingen, and forms a stylistic transition from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. Modern spa architecture appeared in the later 1930s. More recent additions, including those from the 1960s and 1970s that may be seen in some Great Spas (for example Karlovy Vary and Baden-Baden), are joined by twenty first century additions (for example in the City of Bath and Bad Ems) that represent a continuing living tradition (Fig. 08).

All Great Spas contain a range of architectural styles that are influenced by chronology, geography, geopolitics and local factors. Many buildings are designed by architects of international or national acclaim, enlisting an architectural language that reflected the then values of 'cultured living' in Western and Central Europe. This draws generally on classical architectural styles that reflect the glory of a classical past and principally that of ancient Rome; also, after the decay of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century, of ancient Greece. When we look at the numerous nineteenth century buildings, the ideals of the Renaissance have been set to one side, Gothic and



Fig. 09: The Ball Room, Assembly Rooms, City of Bath. Bath & North East Somerset.

Baroque styles were generally rejected, and fashionable architectural values and styles became confused. At the end of the nineteenth century other architectural styles began to make an appearance and particularly with the introduction of new building materials such as iron and steel, and concrete (the earliest examples are in Bad Kissingen and comprise the Wandelhalle, built in concrete, the Kurhaus, assembled in pre-cast concrete parts and the former cast-iron spring house, some of the first spa buildings utilising these materials) (Fig. 09).

There are some building types that are seen in other towns, but that are nonetheless an essential part of the spa ensemble. These include churches (commonly multi-denomination due to a preponderance of international guests and a general spirit of tolerance), theatres (sometimes initially incorporated into the kurhaus), pavilions and kiosks in gardens and parks, and observation towers that provide prospects in the surrounding landscape. Spa architecture is different to seaside resort architecture and,



Fig.10: The Swan Lake, Mariánské Lázně. Lubomír Zeman.

since the early nineteenth century, the apparent parallels of architectonic expression reveals spa towns as both origin and influence.

## The green environment of the ‘therapeutic and recreational spa landscape’

A distinctive attribute of the Great Spas of Europe is that the urban space connects physically and visually, via parks and gardens, to a picturesque setting of idealised nature. The characteristics of such a landscape generally include magnificent scenery, hills or mountains, attractive views, water and trees. These make contributions to a ‘sense of place’ and this includes feelings of warmth, identity, rootedness, and authenticity. At the same time, complex cultural values are associated with landscape around spa towns including the role of the landscape as a contribution to the ‘cure’ (Fig. 10).

In many Great Spas, avenues and promenades lead from the springs to peripheral gardens and kurparks, and then onwards via pathways into the surrounding countryside. In Baden bei Wien paths represent varying degrees of severity and were historically way-marked to indicate which was appropriate for the condition of patients. Woodland trails remain as popular today as they ever were (for example in Spa where the oldest of the routes, created in 1749, is the 'Tour des Fontaines' where historic paths connect several important springs in the gently sloping forests that are set away from the main spa quarter). More strenuous steeply wooded trails ascend high hills (for example at Montecatini Terme) and rocky hillsides and cliffs (for example in Bad Ems) — where, for some less energetic (or perhaps just beginning the cure), a donkey, or funicular railway (Baden-Baden and Montecatini Terme), might have to be chosen to join others at hilltop scenic overlooks with cafes and restaurants. Karlovy Vary has some 130km of historic therapeutic trails, whilst a similar network was cut through the forests around Mariánské Lázně (where four of these routes survive and are way-marked and promoted). Walking networks of formal park-like pathways are a distinctive feature of the Great Spas of Europe too.

Such walks offer a range of opportunities for exercise. The Great Spas of Europe contains a number of rivers, and they provide the distinctive character of a strong natural element in an urban setting. They also provide both opportunities and constraints. Complementing spa gardens (for example Baden-Baden, Baden bei Wien, Bad Kissingen and others), gentle but long riverside walks are very much part of spa life (for example in Vichy, Baden-Baden, Bad Ems and Karlovy Vary; in the latter, the River Tepla - Czech for 'warm' - is heated by numerous thermal springs and, therefore, does not freeze even in the

harshest of winters). Some rivers, for example the Lahn (a tributary of the Rhine) in Bad Ems, were once highways for spa guests, long before the arrival of the railways. They remain popular with cruises and, as in many spa towns, the river was very much part of spa life. In Bad Ems, an ornate pedestrian ‘spa-bridge’ spans the River Lahn to connect the old spa quarter with a new spring harnessed in the mid-nineteenth century. The river both constrained and influenced the placement of many spa buildings in the narrow valley. It is an omnipresent picturesque feature — present in views within the town and a dominant one from the many prospects on the flanking high hills. The river, like others in the series, has been partially reclaimed (including several springs that once emerged within the river bed) and partially ‘canalised’ by the creation of its masonry ‘banks’ as it passes through the town.

Sports facilities, such as golf, tennis, horse racing and others, are also characteristic of wider spa provisions. A number of courses and courts remain in use and are historically distinguished as some of the first to appear in their respective countries. Baden-Baden is an exemplar, its racecourse founded in 1858, and facilities in the Lichtentaler Allee such as the tennis club founded in 1877 (which held the Baden-Baden International Tournament from 1896 to 1966) and the golf club founded in 1901 by an English vicar (golf being earlier played informally in the Allee). Besides the healing aspect and meeting other spa guest, tourists went out into the surroundings to visit monuments, ruins and natural phenomena such as the caves in Bad Ems and waterfalls and water features such as the Kaskadental in Bad Kissingen. Views to, and from, the picturesque natural, and cultural landscape were key to the original designs of the spa town as a historic urban landscape. They remain so today.

## Spa infrastructure

A range of original infrastructure survives in Great Spas, but only that which is particularly distinctive and relevant to the spa ensemble is described.

In some of the Great Spas early spa hospital buildings survive. In the City of Bath are a number of important examples: Hospital of St John the Baptist, St Catherine's Hospital, Bellots Hospital and the Leper Hospital survive from the twelfth, fifteenth and seventeenth centuries (but now in new uses); the Royal Mineral Water Hospital, a product of enlightened thinking from 1739 and one of the first of its kind as a 'National Hospital'. This hospital is of world importance because of its role pioneering the discipline of western diagnostic medicine.

Vichy was one of the first French spa towns to introduce special baths for the poor (Fig. 11).

The Great Spa historic urban landscape also includes infrastructure common to many spas, such as funiculars (for example at Bad Ems, Karlovy Vary and Montecatini Terme) that accessed lookout towers, restaurants and specific features of interest that include monuments, castle ruins etc. Steamboat shipping on the Rhine was popular before the introduction of railways that, from the 1840s, opened new markets and attracted more and different visitors (it was also a catalyst for developing the tourism market). Railways were extended to spa towns wherever possible, an action mostly by private initiative which usually guaranteed economic success. Those spas located near a main route (for example City of Bath, Baden bei Wien and Baden-Baden) gained early connections (in the 1840s, for example the branch line from Baden-Oos to the city centre from 1845), whilst Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Bad Kissingen were connected much later (in the 1870s). These



Fig. 11: The Leper Hospital, City of Bath. Christopher Pound.



Fig.12: The funicular railway, Montecatini Terme. George Tatge.

railways were the main transport means for spa guests for a century or more, and direct trains crossed national borders (for example Baden-Baden with Paris, since 1869, and Karlovy Vary with Vienna, Oostende, Cologne and Paris). From 1914 there were direct train connections from Bad Kissingen to Paris, Strasbourg and Vienna. These railways remain in use today (Fig.12).

## Internationalism, scientific, artistic and literary values, events and cultural tradition

**T**he Great Spas of Europe can be viewed as ‘culture-creating’ resorts: in terms of science (medicine, geology and hydrology); high-art (music, literature and painting); and a cultural tradition that lays at the foundation of modern tourism.

At their scientific core, spa doctors, physicians and balneologists brought forward advances in medicine, medical diagnostics and analytical chemistry of world significance. They devolved to being different with new forms of medical practice, and substantial evidence of their houses and places of work survive. The springs, and their geological and hydrological characteristics, also became the subject of seminal works, too (for example in the City of Bath, Spa and Montecatini Terme) (Fig. 13).

The Great Spas of Europe attracted an unusual and exceptional concentration of leading artists, composers and musicians, writers and poets who found inspiration and a congenial place in which to work and perform. If Vienna was home to Mozart, Beethoven and Strauss, The Great Spas of Europe provided their workplace.

“Taking the cure” became predominantly the regimen and behavioural etiquette of the middle-class adult, rarely of



Fig. 13: Villa Biedermann, Baden bei Wien. Romana Fürnkranz.

children, often in less than robust health. They also featured state charity and fashionable philanthropy that admitted the poor. These were also places for walking, gathering and socialising (they remain so) and included gathering spaces (promenades and open spaces, such as in Františkovy Lázně), riversides (for example in Vichy, Bad Ems and the City of Bath) or enchanting hills (for example in Spa and Bad Ems) with medieval walls and old castles (such as Baden bei Wien and Baden-Baden) retained as picturesque ruins to entice the traveller with interest in antiquity and a sense of place. Such popular, fashionable, ambitious, trend-setting and high-capacity resorts, with high standards of hospitality, became important centres for diplomatic activity that helped to shape modern Europe. Hotels and palatial villas, the conference centres of their time, are testimony to such historic events that changed the world set against a backdrop of unique thermal architecture within a therapeutic landscape (Fig.14).



## ≈ THERMAL ARCHITECTURE ≈ ≈ OF BADEN-BADEN ≈

ANDREAS FÖRDERER

**F**or 2000 years, the chemical content of the thermal water in Baden-Baden has never changed– what changed was the use of it and its social function. If you look at these people around 1850 in the Baden-Baden drinking hall (Fig. 01), drinking thermal water three times daily for a whole month, people today are as far away from the practices in the 19th century as these people were as far away from the Romans, using the same hot water in Baden-Baden for their sauna-like bathing.

In my view the evolution of so-called “thermal architecture” is not so much a history of changing architectural styles or of building types evolving in a specific way, but a history of changing mindsets leading to changing functions and transforming continuously the spa town. Architecture linked to the incidence of thermal water is always architecture linked to a very specific situation, and Baden-Baden is a perfect example of that. The



Fig. 01: Inside the Trinkhalle, around 1850

geographical situation, the historical situation, fashion, the evolution of public transport, the political situation, medical developments, investments, single personalities - everything played and still plays a role.

The first idea may be also that thermal architecture is always where the hot springs come directly to the surface, but like in many other cases, in Baden-Baden this is not binding in every case: You can see on the map (Fig. 02), the old spa district where the springs are. At the starting point of the blue arrows, you have the 'Florentinerberg' with the springs. Thermal architecture is concentrated here, starting with the Roman finds, up to the modern thermal baths. But already at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thermal water was also being transported outside the old town in wooden tubes - to the drinking hall in the new spa

district or hotels, and that's where those arrows point-away from the water sources.

Within 1,500 listed cultural monuments in Baden-Baden, you have some fifty outstanding buildings, At least from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of them are in direct connection to the spa town as a living and evolving organism around the thermal springs.

For the Great Spas of Europe (GSE) nomination dossier, we had developed a differentiation for the ensemble of buildings in a spa town, and I will follow this scheme – even if as we will see it is a generalization which is not always helpful: For example some hotels had a direct connection to thermal water but in the GSE structure they are put into the category “buildings for accommodation”. In my contribution I will now nevertheless mainly focus on those “buildings directly connected to curative waters”.

We start with Roman findings which are documented in two areas (Fig. 03). Near the Stiftskirche right in the city. In the old city centre, near Friedrichsbad, other findings have been made and it is likely that the city lies over further Roman remains dating back at least to the first century, but this is not yet known.

These are important ruins and finds but it is clear that in Baden-Baden we did not have exceptional Roman Baths like those in Italy, Bath or Treves.

As the town was burnt down by the troops of Louis Quatorze in 1689, there is little evidence of the medieval use of thermal waters in Baden-Baden in terms of architecture, but we do have the written sources, telling about life in several bath houses in the town.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Margrave of Baden built the so-called princely baths (Fig. 04), but we know little about its use and function in the new castle which lies in the direct neighbourhood of the springs. This bath had more a

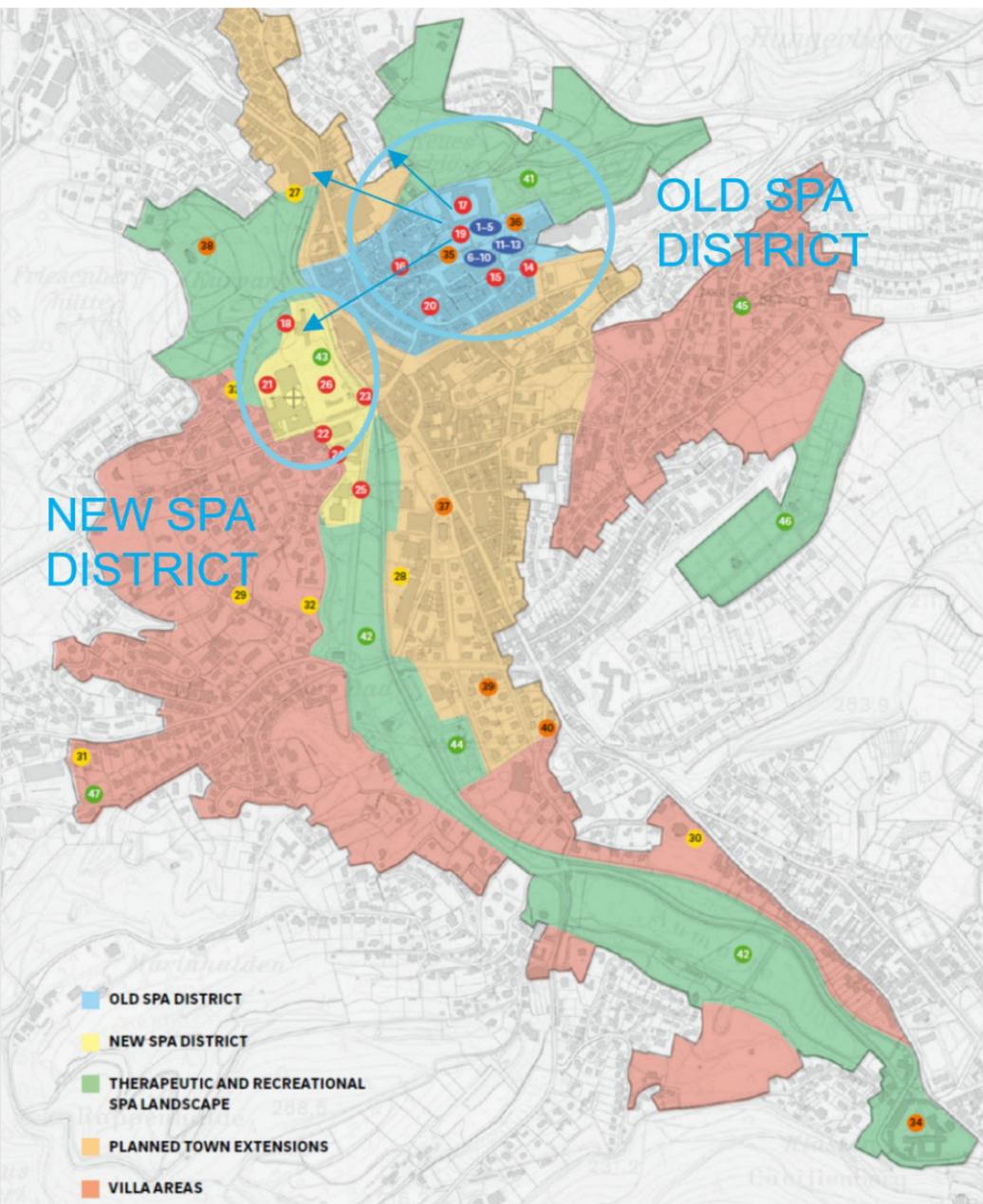


Fig. 02: Map of Baden-Baden with the most important historic monuments

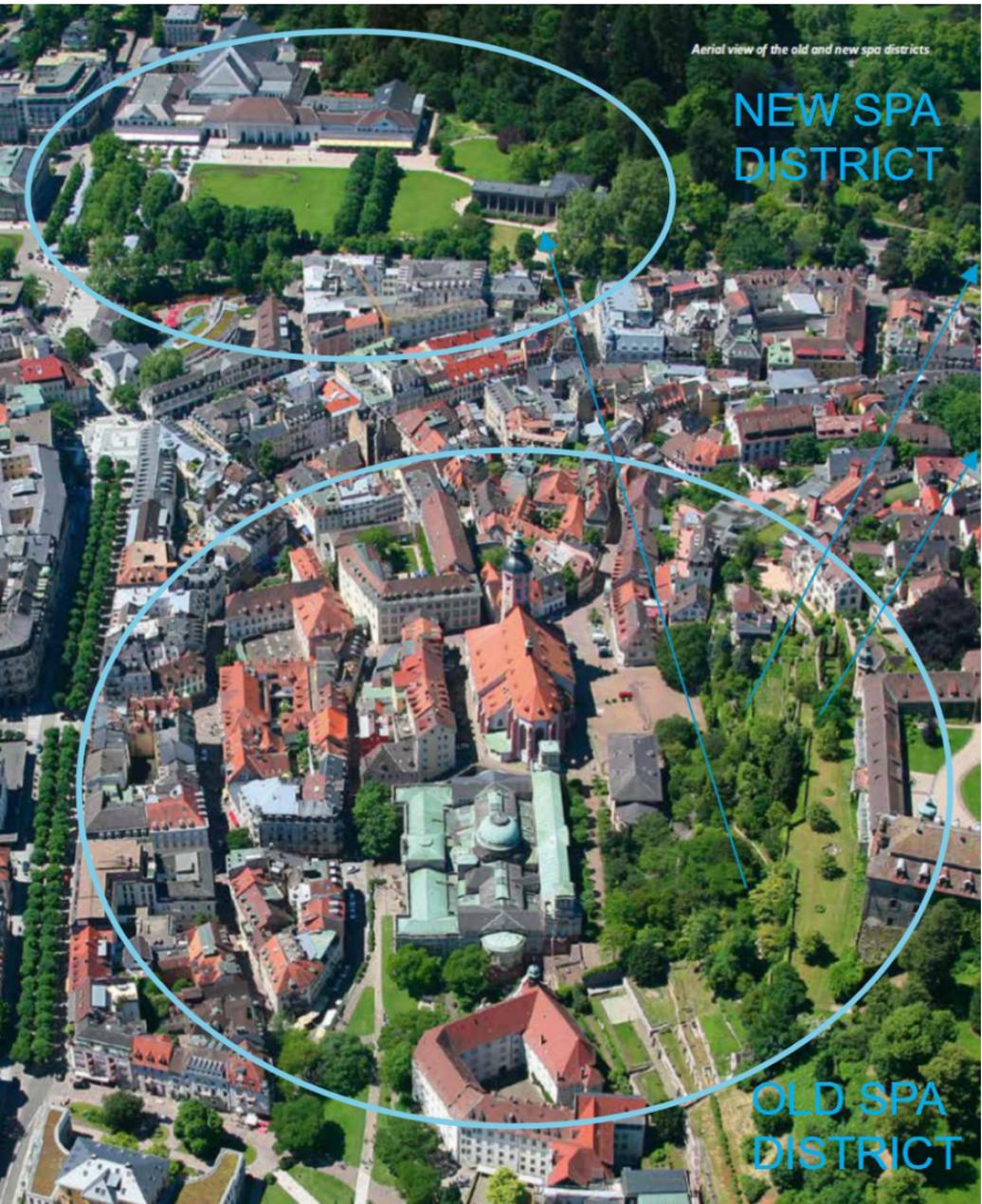


Fig. 02b: Aerial view of the old and new spa districts.

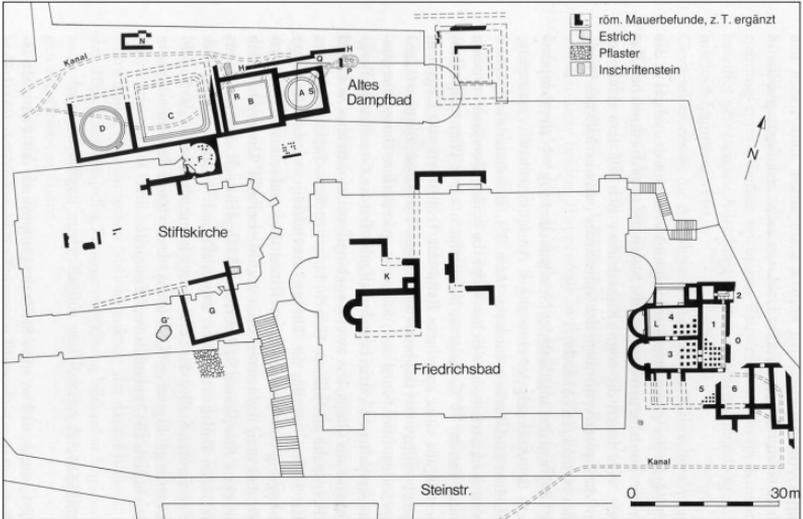


Fig. 03: Roman ruins



Fig. 04: So-called princely baths. Bernd Hausner

representative than a real bathing function.

It is right at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1804, that a curious building was erected close to the castle. It was destroyed some decades later to build the Friedrichsbad.

It was called “Museum” (Fig. 05) and had a mixed function. It looks like a small temple, and in the mainroom, in the middle, you have the Roman finds of excavations which had already been made at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the left side you had a small drinking hall and at the right side of the main hall, you had a kind of show room for the main source. This was like a sanctuary for the thermal water of Baden-Baden and its history, restarting the identity of Baden-Baden as a spa town. In my opinion this quasi-religious role of thermal water is important for the secularized 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is evidence to a new mindset.

With the construction of the Kurhaus 1821-24 the social venues of the spa town were already being placed outside the old town. But it is only in 1839 when the Trinkhalle (drinking hall, Fig. 06) was built, that the waters were made available beyond the old town boundaries. The Trinkhalle is a combination of a source pavilion and a covered gallery. As previously illustrated the water had to be transported here in wooden tubes. With its big staircase, its sanctuary-like main room and the high colonnades, everything about its design is a little bit too big even if the drinking cure was fashionable, and crowds had to be managed. But this drinking hall also had a kind of representative function for the theme of thermal water as a genius loci. Even if, in all other new leisure facilities in Baden-Baden, the thermal water was missing, it was and remained for the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century, the turning point of the spa town

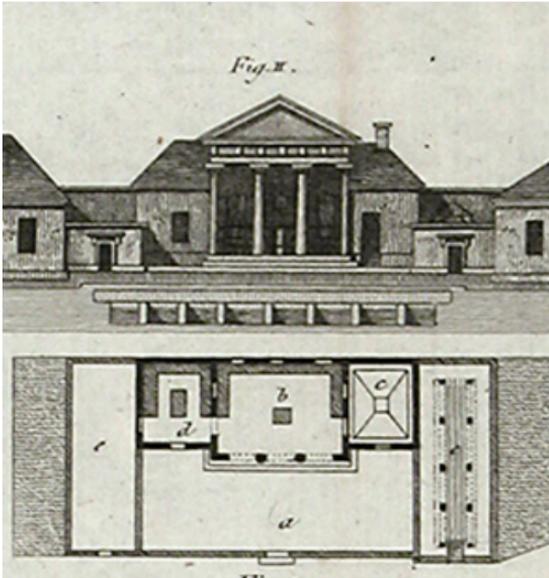


Fig. 05: So-called museum.

obtaining the image of a new society and the scene for new public experiments. In this setting the drinking hall seemed to become a focal point like the church in the middle of the medieval town.

For the next step in the development of thermal architecture it is important to know that the prohibition of gaming in the German empire in the year 1871 caused a big problem for the self-conception and the financing of Baden-Baden. The Bénézet family's Casino and all the leisure activities around had already stolen the focus away from the town's thermal water. This led to a large amount of investment and to an architecture where the societal role of the spa is underlined. You see the Friedrichsbad (Fig. 07), a palace-like building of enormous size, with big staircases, public rooms and many features which are not necessary for a public bath. It was planned between 1869 and 1877 by Karl Dernfeld, a local architect, who had seen the Roman

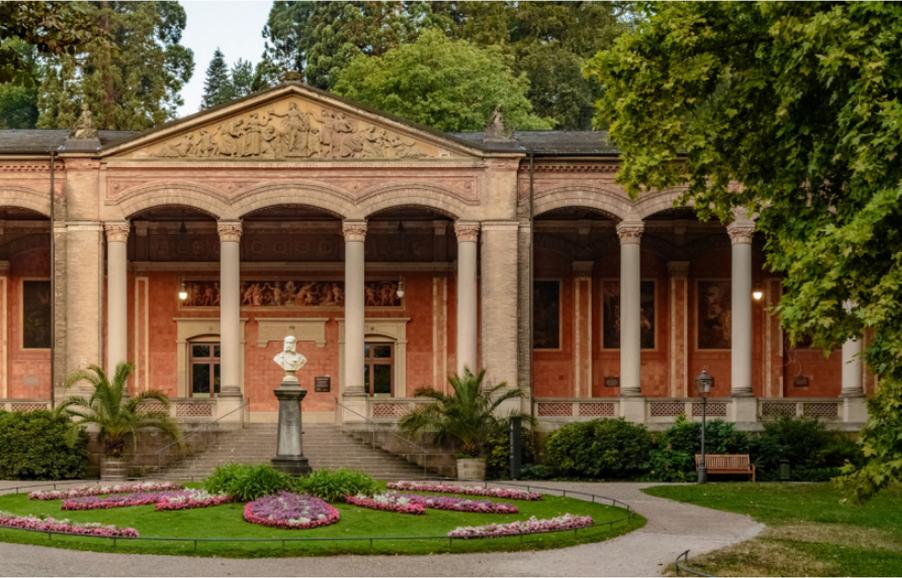


Fig. 06: Trinkhalle. Torben Beeg

thermae in Italy and contemporary baths in Budapest, Karlovy Vary and Vichy.

Here you have some insights of the Friedrichsbad in its time (Fig. 08), showing it like a mixture of theatre and stage, illustrating the societal role of thermal architecture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the drinking hall, as a stage for the emancipated bourgeoisie as a class to come here, this was a palace for individual people to care for their bodies. This represents another change of mindset at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

While the Friedrichsbad is still running today, some other buildings in Baden-Baden connected to thermal water have been replaced by newer ones, the latest being the Caracalla-Therme built in 1983.

I come now to the so-called buildings for leisure and pleasure. The Kurhaus (Fig. 09), built in 1821-25 by the local



Fig. 07: Friedrichsbad. Torben Beeg

architect Friedrich Weinbrenner seems to be a prototype of thermal architecture, but unfortunately, there is no thermal water in it. Other Kurhauses at other spa towns had integrated springs, drinking halls etc., but this Kurhaus is just a multifunctional building offering a choice of leisure-time facilities. At the beginning there was a restaurant, a reading room, a dancing hall and a theatre all gathered together in this one building.

With the arrival of the Parisian Bénazet family, gambling became predominant, leading to the replacement of the theatre by a casino in the fashionable Napoleon III style (Fig. 10) – and it is still running today as a casino. At least here the influence of international guests on the shape of the so-called thermal architecture is evident, altering thermal water from the main point of attraction to one of many features of the thermal microcosm.



Fig. 08: Inside Friedrichsbad, around 1880.

The Bénazet family did not hesitate to invest the money gained from the Casino in a new theatre nearby, designed by Parisian architect Charles Couteau. They invested in spectacular representations and concerts as well, knowing that the healing effect of thermal water did not always fulfil the promises given alone and that other activities and ‘diversions’ were necessary to keep the curists occupied.

In Baden-Baden hotels, guest houses and villas are directly connected to the nucleus of the spa town. They are not only a private dimension of the public space but complementary to the spa infrastructure. In the case of the grand hotels and the prestigious villas, they themselves formed microcosms within the bigger microcosm of the spa town. And so, for example in the Hotel Badischer Hof, thermal water in the individual bathrooms was a big attraction to visitors. The hotel also



Fig. 09: Kurhaus. Iris Geiger-Messner

had its own restaurant, park and reading room, so it was like a small spa town within the spa town.

Another facet of Baden-Baden is the churches of various faiths, reflecting not only the needs of international guests and citizens in Baden-Baden, but demonstrating and affirming for every visitor the mindset of Baden-Baden as a Mecca for a tolerant open-minded society. The curated effects and attraction of thermal water being the same for everyone, were celebrated as a link between all kinds of nations and faiths and thus generating the spa experience as a proto-European one.

I hope you noted that I am not a fan of the idea of special building types of thermal architecture. Nevertheless the example of Baden-Baden shows how the existence of thermal water and its use over centuries influenced the



Fig. 10: Casino. Photographer Iris Geiger-Messner

mix of buildings in a spa town. Beginning at the latest in the 18th century, with forerunners like Bath and Spa, the use of thermal water was increasingly becoming just one element of a holistic spa experience. So what is interesting in thermal architecture is not only the evolution of buildings directly connected to thermal water, but also the evolution of spa towns being themselves a type of architecture or settlement with a very special mix of different single buildings together with multifunctional buildings as well as with connecting walking paths, parks and gardens, which all together form a functional ensemble with an emphasis on public spaces.

With this vision in mind, the architectural styles and building types prevalent in Spa Towns appear to be arbitrary elements in a constantly evolving organism.



## ≈ THERMAL ARCHITECTURE MAP ≈

**T**he elaboration of thermal maps that are presented in this publication is the synthesis of a choral work developed in various phases. Its result can be observed at the Thermal Architecture Map.

The origin is an idea of Mario Crecente, Phd Architect, Vice-President of the EHTTA Scientific Committee, who made a previous selection of possible buildings to include in this map. This preselection was thought based on the list of EHTTA members, the architectural relevance of buildings and its possible availability of planimetry.

Afterwards, graphic documentation was requested to every town where those buildings are located. Seeking to obtain maximum precision of drawings, vector files were asked (.dwg) because of being the most extended planimetry format in architecture sector, or exceptionally, images of maps when information in other format does not exist.

Altogether, 48 requests were made, of these, 26 towns replied to the requested information and provided their vector format maps or images. This search was complemented by consulting the Mario Crecente's archive and personal library, from where maps in image format were obtained. For both formats, a previous filtering was necessary owing to the low quality of some few files and some building was discarded. The following list shows the origin and the format of the 24 maps finally selected in order to document their source.

≈ THERMAL ARCHITECTURE MAP ≈

NAME	BUILDING	COUNTRY	SOURCE	FORMAT
1. <i>Acqui Terme</i>	Spa Lago de le Sorgenti	Italy	Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio	JPG
2. <i>Afyon</i>	Kadı Bath	Turkey	Afyonkarahisar Governorship	DWG
3. <i>Bad Homburg</i>	Kaiser Wilhelms Bad	Germany	Stadtarchiv Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe	JPG
4. <i>Baden-Baden</i>	Friedrichsbad	Germany	Municipality of Baden-Baden	DWG
5. <i>Baden bei Wien</i>	Kurhaus	Austria	Municipality of Baden bei Wien	JPG
6. <i>Bath</i>	Assembly Rooms	United Kingdom	Bath & North East Somerset Council	PDF
7. <i>Budapest</i>	Gellért Hotel & Baths	Hungary	bathsbudapest.com	JPG
8. <i>Bursa</i>	Eski Kaplıca	Turkey	Municipality of Bursa	JPG
9. <i>Caldas da Rainha</i>	Hospital Termal Rainha Leonor	Portugal	Caldas da Rainha Tourism Office	JPG
10. <i>Lądek Zdrój</i>	Spring "Wojciech" (Marienbad)	Poland	Municipality of Ladek-Zdrój	JPG
11. <i>Châtel-Guyon</i>	Grandes Termes	France	Municipality of Châtel-Guyon	JPG
12. <i>Chaves-Verin</i>	Vidago Palace	Portugal	Vidago Palace Hotel	DWG
13. <i>Clermont Metropole</i>	Royat (Bains de St Mart)	France	Route des Villes d'eaux du Massif Central	JPG
14. <i>Istiea-Aedipos</i>	Agioi Anargyroi Hydrotherapy Centre	Greece	Municipality of Istiea - Aedipos	JPG
15. <i>Karlovy Vary Region</i>	Imperial Spa	Czech Republic	Government of Karlovy Vary Region	DWG
16. <i>Le Mont Dore</i>	Thermal Baths	France	Route des Villes d'eaux du Massif Central	JPG
17. <i>Mondorf-les-Bains</i>	L'Orangerie	Luxembourg	Municipality of Mondorf-les-Bains	JPG
18. <i>Montecatini Terme</i>	Terme Tettuccio	Italy	Terme di Montecatini	DWG
19. <i>Ourense Province</i>	Gran Hotel Balneario de Cabreiroá	Spain	Elisa María Gago González	JPG
20. <i>Pärnu</i>	Pärnu Rannahotell	Estonia	Municipality of Pärnu	DWG
21. <i>Salsomaggiore Terme</i>	Terme Berzieri	Italy	Emilio Faroldi	DWG
22. <i>São Pedro do Sul</i>	Queen Amelia Baths	Portugal	Termas de S. Pedro do Sul	DWG
23. <i>Spa</i>	Pouhon Pierre le Grand	Belgium	Municipality of Spa	DWG
24. <i>Vichy</i>	Convention Center of Vichy	France	Vichy Destinations	DWG

Every received maps, was re-elaborated in software CAD by architects Sara Prieto and Rubén Santiago from Crecente Asociados so as to give it a common format according to the scale of representation of 1:250, despite finally printing it in 1:1.000 scale.

In the case of vector files, they were edited to make a simplification of those drawings which were provided with high level of detail and their elements were organized according to a predetermined structure.

In the case of maps in image format, they were redrawn by hand based on such an image, taking into account the structure of file CAD and obtaining the vector format map, as a result.

The structure of CAD file that was used, differentiates the lines and shadings in the following layers:

- Woodworking line
- Discontinuous line
- Planting line
- Section line
- Furniture
- Shaded walls
- Shaded pavements

The selected representing criterion, shades in black colour, the parts of the plant which were sectioned to let a quick reading of the spaces to the scale of representation. The ladder lines, ramps or level changes are represented by a black colour line whereas woodworking lines are represented by grey colour and bottom line thickness. Such a grey color is used for discontinuous lines that appear with a hyphened line representing beams or domes which are above section line, but are of interest for building understanding.

Finally, all plants are oriented with the north towards upper part. For those maps in which the north does not appear defined, Google Earth available orthophotographs are used to situate buildings in their real position.

After having obtained the 24 vector format buildings maps, with correct orientation and scale, a random composition is done to distribute them in paper size 720 x 380 mm that folded has the same dimension than the book you have in your hands.

Consecutively, a correlative number is assigned to every map in accordance with the alphabetic order the name of the city occupies. This number relates front and back of Thermal Architecture Map.

On the other side, an every building photograph and information of interest are provided: town and country where is located, name with which building is known, link to EHTTA website where complementary information can be found, work category according to what Mario Crecente has established, and author and creation year to conclude. All that is accompanied by a supporting guide plan where a specific building can be placed in European Continent.

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