

What's **spa**?

SPA: A concept to be re-defined

Mario Crecente Maseda

Mónica Carballo Neira

Paul Simons

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SCIENTIFIC
COMMITTEE OF

EHTTA

2019



POUHON PIERRE LE GRAND

≈ INTRODUCTION ≈

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) is an International non-profit Association representing historic thermal spa towns across Europe which aims to encourage, protect and enhance European thermal heritage.

EHTTA was founded in 2009 in Brussels (Belgium) by the towns of Acqui Terme (Italy), Bath (UK), Ourense (Spain), Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy), Spa (Belgium), and Vichy (France). Since its inception, it has grown from its original 6 founder members to become a network of 48 members in 16 countries (fig. 02).

The Association celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 2019, and for that reason a special event has been organised in Brussels, celebrating with stakeholders, thermal communities, citizens, tourists, and European institutions, as well as with the online community of social media friends and followers. A special logo has been designed as part of this celebration (fig. 03).



Fig. 02: EHTTA members (June 2019)

Fig. 03: EHTTA 10th Anniversary



Fig. 04: First edition of the Thermal Heritage Day
(Hotel Gellért, Budapest, 12.10.2018).

Video of the event at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txRkFEIL6VA>



In the ten years since EHTTA was established there have been many important achievements and projects. Especially remarkable is the fact that in 2010, just after EHTTA was founded, the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns was certified by the Council of Europe as one of the 38 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

Among the most important projects in which EHTTA has been involved during these ten years, it is necessary to highlight the “Source Project, the Cafés of Europe”, supported by the European Culture Fund, and the Thermal Heritage of Europe Atlas. The Atlas is being developed by the Scientific Committee with the aim of creating a truly comprehensive, and much-needed database of thermal heritage in Europe based on a Geographic Information System.

In 2018 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Gellert Baths, EHTTA established October 12th as a “Thermal Heritage Day” (fig.04). This year, the second Thermal Heritage Day will be held in the thermal town of Spa (Belgium), one of the founder members of EHTTA and one of the most important thermal towns in the world.

If the capital of Belgium, Brussels, is one of the political capitals of Europe, the town of Spa is the European and World Capital of “Thermalism” name. During the second Thermal Heritage Day, in this unique thermal town, EHTTA will reflect on what the word “spa” means to this important sector.

In the town where the term “spa” was born, EHTTA aims to propose the defence of this noun at a European level. Given that thermalism is a European phenomenon, the noun “spa” should be protected by the European legislation, similar to some of the legal frameworks in our partner countries.

This publication is only an initial approach, a “kick-off” article. To develop it, the EHTTA Scientific Committee carried out a survey with the support of EHTTA members, which will be extended in the future. The objectives are to understand the whole issue, to design a common strategy and to present a specific proposal to the European Union, in the near future.







Fig. 06-01, fig. 06-02, fig. 06-03, fig. 06-04:
Old posters of Spa.

≈ THE TOWN OF SPA THROUGH THE HISTORY ≈

Spa (**fig.05: previous pages**) is located in the Walloon Region and Province of Liège. It has an area of 39.85 km² and a 10,378 inhabitants (in 2018), giving a population density of 260.42 inhabitants per km².

The foundation and evolution of the town is closely linked to the use of mineral waters and hydrotherapy. From the 16th century onwards, Spa is referred to in reference literature about natural mineral waters and in the 17th century the first scientific analyses of the healing powers of these waters were carried out.

During the 18th and 19th centuries Spa, in common with other European thermal towns, became an international meeting place, holding important social and political events. Numerous artists visited Spa, not only attracted by the medical values of the waters, but also by the social atmosphere, and leisure activities (**fig.06-01, fig.06-02, fig.06-03, fig.06-04**).

Spa was one of the pioneers of the modern casino and this tradition has continued to the present day. Spa was also known as the “Café of Europe” because of the way so many layers of society were able to intermingle here. The Waux-Hall, founded in 1770, was one of the first casinos in Europe.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, sporting activities were often organised in Spa. Among all of



Fig. 07: *Livre d'Or (The Golden Book)* (1894).

Assisted by Albin Body, the painter Antoine Fontaine, spent 12 years on this monumental fresco.

Today it is on view in the Winter Gardens of the Pouhon.



them especially remarkable was the first Belgian car racing, organised in 1896 –a precursor of today’s “Formula 1 Grand Prix”–.

In the beginning of the 20th century, many political events took place in the city, such as the abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II, the establishment of the headquarters of the armistice commission of the allies during the winter of 1918-19 and the Spa Conference in July 1920.

Between 1751 and 1939, two lists with the name of individuals who attended Spa were published each year. This information was used by Antoine Fontaine in 1894 to paint a large painting with some of the most illustrious visitors to the town (**fig.07**), which today can be seen in the Pouhon Pierre-le-Grand.

Spa is a member of the “Great Spas of Europe”, a group of eleven spa towns across seven countries that has been nominated to UNESCO for inscription on the World Heritage List as a transnational serial ‘property’.



TABLE
DE
PIERRE LE GRAND
POUHON
1717

≈ SPA, THE EPONYMOUS SPA TOWN ≈

It is commonly held that the name “SPA” comes from the acronym of “Salus per Aquam”, a supposed Latin text that Romans used to explain their bathing traditions and their concept of “health through water”.

Since neither Latin epigraphy nor the archaeological remains are preserved, there is no real evidence for this, and there is similarly no Latin original text to prove that this concept existed in Roman times. Today it looks more as a commercial message!

What is proven is that the Roman used thermal waters in baths and drinking and they were the first to establish purpose-built thermal infrastructure for health purposes in the forms of baths, steam rooms, drinking fountains and pipework and aqueducts etc to carry the waters. Often “Acquae” identifies places with natural mineral waters used by local populations and connected with Roman gods and local divinities.



Fig. 09: Leopoldo II Pavillion, 1878, Spa. Source: Lunweg



Fig. 10: Detail of a thermal stablishment in Spa. Source: Lunweg



Fig. 11: Source du Tonnelet, Spa. Source: Lunweg



Fig. 12: Géronstère spring, Spa. Source: Lunweg

Alternatively the word Terme, or Termas could be used to refer to a place with a complex utilising tap or natural spring water which is heated, and associated with organized programs with, baths, saunas, or showers, for relaxation, exercise or wellbeing, and especially socializing.

The only proven origin of the word Spa, is related to the Belgian town, which historically attracted English visitors, who went on to incorporate into the English language the concept of bathing, wellness, socialising and other leisure activities that were associated with this town. This is maybe the best exponent of the magnificent thermal character of the town **(fig. 08, fig. 09, fig. 10, fig. 11, fig. 12)**.

According to the Great Spas World Heritage Site nomination dossier “as early as the 17th century, the word “spa” was already used in England to designate a mineral spring or a source with medical properties similar to those of Spa. One hundred years on, it designated a town having one or more sources of recognised therapeutic value and then, in the 19th century, in English-speaking countries, it came to refer to a thermal resort with accompanying leisure facilities”.

Journal du Voyage en Italie, par la Suisse et l'Allemagne (1580)

Michel de Montaigne

Northanger Abbey and Persuasion (Bath, 1818)

Jane Austen

Marienbader Elegie (1823) (*Marienbad Elegy*)

Goethe

Pickwick Club (Bath, 1837)

Charles Dickens

(*Fumée*) (Baden Baden, 1867)

Ivan Tourgueniev

Igrok (The Gambler) (1867)

Fiódor Dostoievski

Die Welt von Gestern (Baden bei Wien, 1914) (*The World of Yesterday*)

Stefan Zweig

Die Schwestern oder Casanova in Spa (1918)

(*The Sisters or Casanova in Spa*)

Arthur Schnitzler (1918)

Der Zauberberg (1924) (*The Magic Mountain*)

Thomas Mann

Kurgast (Baden, 1925) (*A Guest at the Spa*) **Hermann Hesse**

(*Badenheim*) (1939) **Aharon Appelfeld**

L'Année dernière à Marienbad (*Last Year in Marienbad*)

Alain Resnais (Marienbad, 1961)

La città delle donne (*City of Women*)

Federico Fellini (1963)

El Balneario (1986) (*The Spa*)

Manuel Vazquez Montalban

(*Black eyes*) (1987)

Nikita Mikhalkov

À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs (1999)

(*In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*)

Marcel Proust

≈ THE COMPONENTS OF A SPA TOWN ≈

Europe's splendid and numerous historic spa towns have been around for a long time –with many of them having their origins in Roman times or even before–, despite their splendour and plenitude came in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

They have an extensive track record of welcoming visitors –the sick and those that seek relaxation and social interaction (in itself a long story that is part of Europe's identity, and which is little known)–.

They are places of innovation, of scientific experiment, of literary inspiration and architectural merit. Beethoven met Goethe and walked and talked with him in Karlovy Vary. Mary Shelley and Jane Austen were inspired to create their most vivid characters in Bath. Napoleon and Josephine danced and delighted the court in Vichy. Casanova honed his reputation in Spa (and is listed on the famous *livre d'or*) (fig.13).

BASIC UNIT	
1 Municipality	Basic characteristics of study area
NATURAL HERITAGE	
2 Springs	Natural mineral water springs (thermal lakes and thermal ponds included) and others natural resources as peloid deposits situated within the municipality and their characteristics.
CULTURAL HERITAGE	
3 Fountains	Fountains, buvettes and colonnades which provide a “public drinking facility” and are situated within the municipality and their characteristics
4 Spas	Spa facilities situated within the municipality, which provide healing treatments for health, usually following an examination by a medical practitioner, and/or bathing facilities for leisure and wellness, both being based on the natural mineral waters. Include specific medical treatments and benefits associated with each particular source used by the spa and any methods, processes or particular equipment developed for the application of these treatments.
5 Hotels	Public tourist accommodation establishments situated within the municipality and their characteristics. This class includes all types of tourist accommodation which can be offered in public houses (Grand hotel, hotel, bed and breakfast/inn, resort hotel, suite/apartment hotel, motel, guest apartment, hostel, campground, other).
6 Villas	Listed historical villas or terraced/detached houses used as private tourist accommodation establishments situated within the municipality and their characteristics.
7 Leisure	Establishments for leisure time situated within the municipality and their characteristics (wellness centre with tap water, assembly room, casino, opera, theatre, cinema, bandstand, dancing hall, museum, gallery, golf course, racecourse, tennis court, outdoor swimming pool and other sport facilities).
8 Landscape	Elements of natural, cultural and urban landscape situated within the municipality and their characteristics (garden, park, greenhouse, prospect/observation tower, promenade, farmland, woods, hills and mountains, rivers, lakes and coasts, natural protected areas, historic and cultural sites or other).

Fig. 14: The 15 thermal categories of the Thermal Heritage of Europe Atlas data model.

9	Services	Public services and infrastructures related to transport, public health, administration and religion situated within the municipality and their characteristics (airport, heliport, railway station, bus station, port, dock, post office, hospital, healthcare centre, cemetery, laundry, religious or administrative building, university or other). No tourist services - there is a specific category of "Tourism".
10	Industry	Industrial activities directly related with thermal heritage, as exploitation of mineral waters situated within the municipality and their characteristics (bottling plant, peloids industry, cosmetics industry, mineral salt industry, historical power station, printing/publishing industry, glass industry, ceramics industry, foodstuffs (spa related), pharmaceutical products or other) within the municipality.
11	Research	Research centres directly related with thermal heritage (medical hydrology, archaeology etc.) as well as documentation centres and archives situated within the municipality and their characteristics.
INTANGIBLE HERITAGE		
12	Immaterial	Immaterial heritage related to the municipality (legends, myths, traditional medicine and pharmacology, language, literature, music, dance, rituals, culinary arts and traditional dishes, cinematography, scientific and others)
13	Events	Principal annual events related to the municipality (feast days and religious festivals, markets, music, movie, art, literature or food festivals, sport events, congresses, debating societies, summits or other).
14	Image	Permanent image elements used to promote the thermal values of the municipality (symbols, brands, logos, guides, posters, local money, local press, traditional souvenirs, postcards, local stamps and others)
15	Tourism	Establishments related with tourist promotion strategy, tourist development strategies (development opportunities portfolio, if developed) or tourist services different from accommodation (restaurant, historical cafés, tourist office, interpretation centre, tour operator, travel agency, guided tour company, adventure tourism company, convention centre, professional congress organizers, catering services, equipment hire company, private bus/coach company or other), situated within the municipality

LA PERLE DES ARDENNES

SUPERBE CASINO
SPORTS & DISTRACTIONS



TRAITEMENT *DES* AFFECTIONS
DU CŒUR • RHUMATISME • ANÉMIE

BAINS *CARBO GAZEUX NATURELS*
DE TOURBE FERRUGINEUSE

EAUX MINÉRALES
DE CURE ET DE TABLE *SPA MONOPOLE*

LEZARD & C^{ie} Succ^{rs} de M^{rs} St Anne ROUILLON

Old poster of Spa.

They thrived in Roman times, they reinvented themselves as hubs of Enlightenment in the 18th century, new spa towns sprang up when the railways reached them in the 19th century, and in the 21st century, they are dusting off the old image of fusty unfashionable places full of sick people to become wellness resorts, full of “immersive” – literally – experiences for younger people looking for healthy breaks that are good for body, mind and soul.

Today, they continue to fulfil a function that has been present throughout European history and culture. The importance of these towns, as a shared European phenomenon justified the first objective of EHTTA, the European Historic Thermal Towns Association, which was to become a Cultural Route, certified by the Council of Europe, in 2010, and ratified in 2018 for another three years.

The EHTTA Scientific Committee has studied which components are usually present in a spa town and has established 15 thermal categories corresponding to three basic thermal components (natural, cultural and intangible) that characterise the complex thermal heritage, overlying the municipalities which are now qualified as historic thermal towns (fig.14).



Fig. 16, fig. 17: Old pictures of European thermal towns



Baden bei Wien

≈ THE CONCEPT OF 'SPA' ≈

Thermalism and many of the related concepts (as it is the case of the word spa) is waiting for a global study capable of putting a value on its role in the tourism sector, its potential for rural revitalisation and its benefits for heritage conservation.

From the point of view of Balneology and Medical Hydrology and Climatology, the need of a comprehensive definition is also highlighted by different authors. "Definitions arising solely from just the agents or modalities used in Balneology and Medical Climatology do not meet these criteria. One of the main reasons for that is that they differ significantly from region to region or country to country, respectively." (Gutenbrunner et al, 2010).

The EHTTA Scientific Committee defends the idea that the original definition of the word SPA should be retrieved and protected. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, a spa

Fig. 15: Definition of “spa” in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

“Spa, spring or resort with thermal or mineral water used for drinking and bathing. The name was taken from a town near Liège, Belg., to which persons traveled for the reputed curative properties of its mineral springs.

The practice of “taking the waters” for therapeutic purposes reached its heyday in the 19th century, but springs have been considered places of healing at many times and in all parts of the world. The founding of Bath in England is attributed in legend to Bladud, son of Lud Hudibras and father of King Lear, who in 863 BC was cured of disease by immersion in the steaming swamps. Roman colonists developed a considerable spa there and also at Buxton, Derbyshire. After the departure of the Romans the baths seem to have been long neglected, but many churches were built on sites of ancient places of healing throughout Europe, and cures were attributed to immersion in fonts fed by the springs beneath the sanctuary. In the early 18th century some Roman baths were rebuilt, many new “watering places” were established, and spas became fashionable secular centres of resort for the upper classes at the most seasonable times of the year. For the ill and infirm many spas provided year-round treatment centres under varying degrees of medical supervision.

Spa therapy is based on both the drinking of and the bathing in certain waters containing properties believed to be of medicinal value. Mineral springs usually contain noticeable quantities of salts in solution—including carbonate and sulfate of lime, common salt, iron, and sulfur. Magnesia and many trace minerals, notably lithium, also constitute medicinal waters. In addition to solid constituents, gas is present in many waters in considerable quantities. There is a little oxygen and a good deal of nitrogen in some of them. The quantity of hydrosulfuric acid, even in strong sulfuric waters, is small, but the volume of carbonic acid present is often large, giving a noticeable effervescence. Thermal springs are derived from two sources: meteoric waters that rise from considerable depths along fissures of penetration; and volcanic waters, which reach the surface in the form of either geysers or hot springs. Most thermal water contains mineral substance in solution.

The spas of Europe and the United States with the greatest popularity were those with thermal springs. Bathing in warm

water has an undoubted therapeutic effect as an aid to relaxation, although the skin does not absorb any of the salts or gases. Sulfurated waters such as those at Aachen, Ger., Baden, Austria, and White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., are used for some skin conditions. Drinking mineral waters may, at the least, provide a general washing out of the digestive system, and the alkaline waters of Vichy, Fr., Ischia, Italy, and Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic, may act as purgative agents. The highly carbonated salt springs at Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and at Wiesbaden and Baden-Baden, Ger., have long been used for rheumatic and neuralgic conditions. Drinking mineral water, carbonated or not, has become so popular that a considerable business of bottling and exporting has grown up on both sides of the Atlantic; it has a practical importance in aiding digestion that is much greater than one would expect from its small mineral content.

It is likely, however, that most of the medicinal effects of spa therapy result from the environmental factors of the location and facilities of the spa. The beautiful town of Bath has the only thermal springs in England, which usually yield more than 500,000 gallons daily at a temperature of 120° F (49° C). The waters are drunk medicinally and used for hydrotherapy treatments, and the Georgian Pump Room, with its fountain, has long been a rendezvous for visitors who are “taking the waters.” Many European spas are located in forested alpine settings such as Sankt Moritz, Switz., Évian-les-Bains, Fr., Badgastein, Austria, and Bormio, Italy. Japan has several thousand hot springs, many of which have been converted into spas or public baths.

An individual who goes to a spa usually finds a different climate, diet, and style of living than he is used to. In a new and probably cheerful society, a person is more relaxed and may take more exercise in the open air. For many persons the therapy of the waters is secondary to the company in which they are taken, and it has long been so at spas. After the American Civil War a spa at French Lick, Ind., enjoyed enormous popularity as a meeting place to arrange marriages. Saratoga Springs declined as a spa in the early 20th century but still attracts thousands of visitors to its racecourse each year. For the diseased and convalescent many spas offer medical therapy, and for all persons the spa has been and continues to be in a variety of ways a place of healing.”

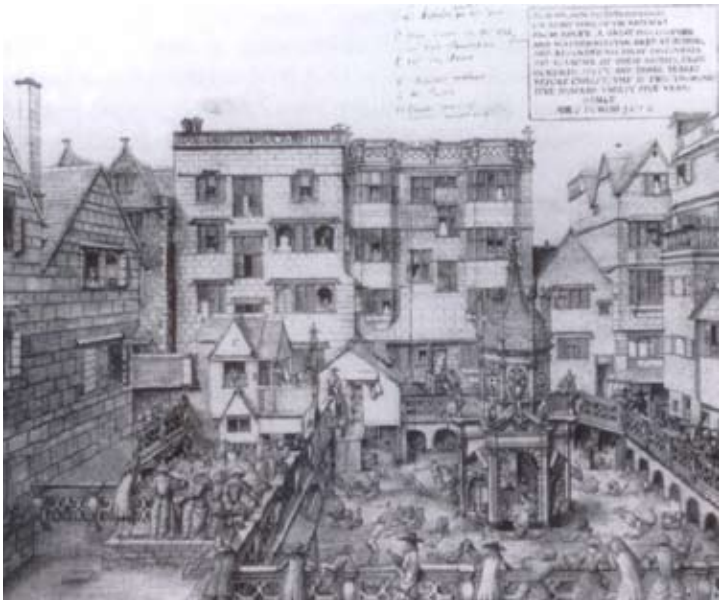


Fig. 18, fig. 19: Old pictures of European thermal towns



Evian

is a ‘spring or resort with thermal or mineral water used for drinking and bathing (...) to which persons travelled for the reputed curative properties of its mineral springs’. (fig. 15) (fig. 16, fig. 17, fig. 18, fig. 19)

There is a problem with the global use of language that does not consider the local singularities, as well as the capacity of the North American mass culture of imposing its own values on the world. The Global Wellness Summit was created at the beginning of the 2000’s and it is based in Florida (United States). Through its research reports and trends reports about the wellness sector, this organisation has become the main source of information at global scale. Nevertheless, these reports barely analyse the sector of “spas” (according to the meaning of the word spa in the Encyclopaedia Britannica) and the only related information is presented in the section “hot springs”, which doesn’t really explain in full what a spa is.

This long task of investigation and research must begin by clarifying the terminological problem. Gradually, parallel products that are not based on the resource of mineral-medicinal waters, have been included in the global concept of health or wellness spaces related to water. Additionally, the term “spa” is so misused that it can be found referred to a wide variety of goods and services, like detergents, jeans, soaps or beauty products for pets. As a result, the terms “spa” or “thermalism” run the risk of losing their original meaning, while generating consumer confusion, and what is worst from the European perspective, losing an original and valuable European cultural, medical, and economic resource.

Fig. 27: Terms used in different languages to name a spa

TERM	COUNTRY
Kurort	Austria
Centre de Bien-être Centre wellness Spa	Belgium
Toplice	Croatia
Lázn	Czech Republic
Thermal resort Thermal center	France
Gyógyfürd	Hungary
Uzdrowisko	Poland
Estabelecimento termal	Portugal
Balneario	Spain
Kaplica İlica	Turkey

All cultures have taken advantage of their mineral-medical thermal resources and they have created various practices with specific names in their respective languages. This linguistic richness is an important cultural resource, as it allows knowledge and understanding of the different ways in which thermal resources have been used throughout history and around the world.

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association's Scientific Committee, in the context of its continuous research and analysis work, aims with this publication to start a discussion about the concept of spa. For this purpose, a specific questionnaire was designed. It was called What´spa Questionnaire, a pun made of the question "What is a spa?" and the name of the most globally popular messaging app (**fig. 23**).

In addition to some participatory experiences with local people from thermal towns and thermal tourism agents, (**fig. 24, fig. 25, fig. 26**) the questionnaire was sent to all EHTTA members with a double objective. On one hand, to identify all the terms used in Europe to refer a spring or resort with thermal or mineral water used for drinking and bathing. And, on the other hand, to inquire if these names are protected by the law (**fig. 27**).



Fig. 23: What'Spa logo



Fig. 24: What'spa participatory session in Caldas da Rainha (11.01.2019).

Video of this experience at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK-9uuBKKac&feature=youtu.be>



Fig. 25: What´spa participatory session in Fitur - Madrid (24.01.2019).



Fig. 26: What´spa participatory session in Engghien les Bains (23.01.2019).

Fig. 28: Main national legal framework related to thermal waters in Europe.

COUNTRY	NATIONAL LEGISLATION
Czech Republic	Act No. 164/2001 Coll. on Natural Curative Resources, Sources of Naturally Occurring Mineral Water, Natural Curative Spas and Spa Facilities and Change to Some Related Acts (the Spa Act).
France	Code de la santé publique
Greece	Law 3498/2006 on the development of Spa Tourism and other provisions. Law 4582/2018 aw covering thematic and special interest tourism, the upgrade of tourism training and the strengthening of entrepreneurship in tourism
Italy	Law of 24 October 2000, n. 323. Reorganization of the Thermal Sector
Poland	Act of July 28th, 2005, On spa treatment, spa resorts, spa protection areas and spa communes.
Portugal	Decreto-Lei n.º 142/2004 of 11 June.
Spain	Royal Decree-Law of April 25, 1928- Statute on the exploitation of Mineral Medicinal Water Springs * * This Royal Decree is in force in Spain, except on that Autonomous Regions that have legislated in this field.
Turkey	Law on Geothermal Resources and Natural Mineral Waters (No: 5686, Date: June 3, 2007

≈ LEGAL FRAMEWORK ≈

The global scenario of the international regulations in the spa field is very heterogeneous and reflects the socio-economics and culture from the different countries (Valeriani et al, 2018).

Through the What'Spa Questionnaire, a list of national legislation relating to thermalism in many countries has been produced (fig. 28).

After analyzing this legislation, and according to the What'Spa Questionnaires received, the term 'spa' (or its equivalent in the local language) is protected in only five of the countries studied.

France: “établissement thermal”.

Greece: “Units of thermal healing”,
“Centers of Thermal Tourism / Thermalism”.

Italy: “terme”, “termale”, “acqua termale”,
“fango termale”, “idrotermale”, “idrominerale”,
“thermae”, “spa (salus per aquam)”.

Poland: “Health Resort”.

Portugal: “Termas”, “estabelecimento termal”
and “SPA”.

An interesting model is the case of Portugal, where the protection of the terminology is only possible inside an “Estância Termal” (a thermal area recognised by the national government).

≈ CONCLUSION ≈

As we present in this essay, the term SPA was born in Europe, in a small Belgian town located in a valley in the Ardennes Mountains. Based in its success among English and foreign visitors from the mediaeval times, the name of Spa became an eponym for thermal towns across Europe and beyond.

The original definition of this word in the English language, if we take into consideration the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is clear: *Spa, spring or resort with thermal or mineral water used for drinking and bathing. The name was taken from a town near Liège, Belg., to which persons travelled for the reputed curative properties of its mineral springs.*

However, the current situation in Europe is not so clear, with a common misuse of the term SPA. It is often used to designate wellness facilities that offer beauty and relaxation treatments based on water, even though this water might not be natural mineral or thermal water. In addition, the word is being used also for all kind of products and services that are not related to the general concept of human wellness and health (detergent, products for pets, soaps, etc.).

As a result, this lack of a common definition is creating confusion among consumers and potential clients, and what is more important, damaging and affecting a specific public and valuable resource of European culture.

While in some countries the word used to name a spa in their languages is protected by law (Italy, Portugal), in other cases what is regulated is the activity developed

≈ CONCLUSION ≈

in these spaces. Nevertheless, there are many cases in where local spa traditions have been abandoned because it is thought that global franchise models could be more attractive for wellness tourism clients.

At this point the value of Europe's precious Thermal Heritage resources must be remembered. They can contribute to health, as well as to develop inner European areas, and to support a really sustainable tourism in hundreds of towns which are currently in need of specific attention and development.

It is not only about the word spa, is about a concept that represents not only a place or a service, it is a way of living that creates cities for health, enjoyment and wellbeing, born from precious natural resources, and based in the specific European values of culture, democracy, and social integration.

Spa is a particular European phenomenon, exported historically all around the world, and towns based on the European Thermal tradition can be found from Saratoga Springs in USA, to Rotorua in New Zealand. This model was presented in EHTTA's book "THERMAL TOURISM AND SPA HERITAGE IN EUROPE. THE CASE OF EHTTA. European Historic Thermal Towns Association" written for the European Year of Culture Heritage 2018. In this 2019 book, we asks for a global recognition from European Institutions, beginning with the question of what's in a name, or in other words:

What'spa?.

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AUTHORS:

Mario Crecente

PhD Architect

Vice President Scientific Committee

Mónica Carballo Neira

Chief of tourism area

Cecente Asociados

Paul Simons

Architect ICOMOS UK

President Scientific Committee



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