

PHENOMENON OF SPA TOWN AS A HEALTH RESORT AND LEISURE DESTINATION

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Abstract

Today spa towns in Europe (spa resorts, health resorts, hot springs resorts) offer various health treatments, based on traditional balneotherapy treatment (hydrotherapy) as well as modern up to date medical services. In the 21st century the therapeutic climate or the natural resources as natural minerals, thermal or sea water, which are used to treat various health disorders or to achieve wellness and relaxation, are highly valued. European resorts have a long history and tradition, some with roots in ancient Greek and Roman Empire. The first written records about Polish spas reported that in the 12th century warm spring waters had been used for balneotherapy (Cieplice, Łądek Zdrój). The paper presents both an outline of history of spas in Europe and also considers conditions of future development of health resorts in Poland, especially some projects based on geothermal resources.

Streszczenie

Współczesne uzdrowiska w Europie (spa, miejscowości kuracyjne, kąpieliska termalne) oferują kuracjom wielorakie świadczenia zdrowotne, w oparciu o zarówno tradycyjne kąpiele, rehabilitację przez hydroterapię jak i kompleksowe usługi medyczne z użyciem najnowszej wiedzy i technologii. W XXI wieku terapeutyczne działanie klimatu lub korzystanie z naturalnych surowców uzdrowiskowych (wód mineralnych, borowin, leczniczych gazów), pomocnych przy leczeniu wielu schorzeń, w tym chorób cywilizacyjnych i zwalczaniu stresu – są wysoko cenione i zapotrzebowanie na usługi uzdrowiskowe nie maleje. Europejskie uzdrowiska mają długą tradycję, wiele z nich sięga historią do czasów antycznej Grecji i Rzymu. Pierwsze wzmianki kronikarzy o uzdrowiskach Polskich to zapiski z XII wieku na temat Cieplic i Łądko Zdroju. Niniejszy tekst prezentuje zarówno zarys historii uzdrowisk europejskich jak i uwarunkowania dalszego rozwoju uzdrowisk w Polsce, z podkreśleniem geotermalnych złóż, jako podstawy ich zakładania.

Keywords: Architecture of spa; Health resorts in Poland; Sustainable spatial development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term spa itself is associated with water treatment (santé per aqua) also known as balneotherapy. The practice of travelling to hot or cold springs in hope to cure some illnesses dates back to the pre-historic times (Bronze Age) and some recent archaeological discoveries of constructions erected near hot springs in France and Czech Republic had proofed that. Possibly development of these sites was connected with some

religious rituals combined with a belief that bathing in particular spring could result in physical and mental purification [21].

Today there are more than 300 spa towns in Europe (spa resorts, health resorts, hot springs resorts) offering various health treatments, not only traditional balneotherapy treatment (hydrotherapy) [1], [2]. In modern times the therapeutic climate or the natural resources as natural minerals, thermal or sea water,

which are used to treat various health disorders or to achieve wellness and relaxation, are highly valued. The international Spa Association has defined Spa as “health resorts, places devoted to overall well being through a variety of professional services that rejuvenates mind, body and spirit”. Today more and more tourists visit spa in order to benefit a healthy lifestyle: for proper nutrition, exercise, and to take a break from their speedy and stressful life. This trend resulted in growing number of spa resorts to meet endless demand for wellness industry, development of specialized spa (including eco – friendly spas, luxury spas, romantic spas etc), offering variety of wellness programs and treatments (as healthy lifestyles, alternative therapies, fitness programs, weight – loss treatments, detoxify diets, mineral and thermal skin treatments, massage and yoga). Some Club spa and Day – spa associated with hotels located in health resorts offer to their guests on a day-use basis a variety of professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components (as spa menu), also aesthetic/cosmetic procedures. The world wide increasing focus on wellness and health is seen not only in Europe (where therapeutic treatments in spa have been popular since ancient Greek and Roman times), but also in US – where more than 2 000 hot or cold springs are operating or in Japan – where the traditional hot springs bath “onsen” attract many visitors [1], [2].

2. CHARACTER OF SPA ARCHITECTURE

2.1. Spa architecture in ancient Greek and Rome

In ancient Greece the earliest bath constructions were erected about 1500 BC in the palace complex at Knossos on Crete and in Akrotiri on Santorini [5], [21]. Later Greeks established public baths in gymnasium complexes, built pools (*balneum*) near certain natural springs, believing that these sites are sacred and blessed by gods to cure different diseases (for example at Serangeum).

The Romans continued many of the Greek bathing practices, but surpassed them in the size and complexity of bath construction as well as their luxury. The construction of aqueducts made it possible to transport the running water from mountain natural springs to cities, where baths and opulent *thermaes* (Greek *thermos* = hot) were built. In all parts of Roman Empire it was possible to enjoy social life and leisure in baths, which became the symbol of ancient Roman urban culture. These baths were accompa-

nied by libraries, lecture and concert halls, vast gardens decorated with sculptures, colonnades and fountains. The various stages of bath rituals (undressing, bath in hot and cold water, massages, vapour baths, athletic sports) required separate, individually designed space to accommodate all these different functions: entrance hall, *tepidarium*, *calidarium*, *frigidarium*, *laconicum*, *apodyteria*, *palestra* for physical exercises, also shops and dining sites. Even as ruins the Roman *thermaes* are today overwhelming due to their size and magnificence: the *Thermae of Caracalla* in Rome (AD 211-217), the *Thermae of Agrippa* in Rome (20 BC), the *Thermae of Titus* in Rome (AD 80), the *Thermae of Diocletian* in Rome (AD 302), the *Roman Thermae in Bath* (300 AD). The *Thermae of Diocletian* in Rome was the largest bath complex in ancient Rome, covering about fifty acres of land and having capacity for 3000 people. In 1561 Michelangelo converted its *frigidarium* into Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli and since then the vast structure of the outstanding interior has reflected the scale and splendour of the Roman original. Their very special character and form of architecture of ancient *thermaes* inspired architects commissioned in 18th and 19th to design facilities in European health resorts. In Roman ancient empire spa tourism, meaning a travelling to hot springs or sites of other specific therapeutic conditions (as climate) in hope to cure some illness, was also very popular. Taking advantage of the natural hot springs

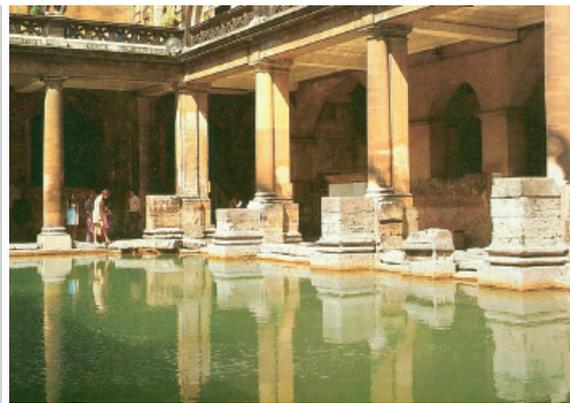


Figure 1. Roman *Thermaes* “Aque Sulis” in Bath (UK), structure founded about 300 AD, is a remarkable example of ancient spa facilities with natural hot water still gushing up and filling the great swimming pool. Today Roman *Thermaes* are considered as unsafe for bathing (heavily contaminated); therefore it serves only as a museum. Natural hot springs are used for bath in the newly constructed *Thermae Bath Spa* designed by arch Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners and opened to public in 2009.
Source: photo by Maciej Piechotka, 2008

Romans developed baths in their colonies (Aix, Aquincum, Bath, Buxton, Vichy, Aachen, Baden), which served not only the local community but also “medical tourists” – the visitors from other parts of empire [4], [21], [Fig. 1].

2.2. Medieval decline of Roman spa tradition

The legacy of ancient Rome was 950 baths, accordingly to the inventory made in the 4th century (Moffet 2003). The collapse of Roman Empire in AD 337 after the death of Emperor Constantine resulted in decline of *thermaes* and baths. In the Early Medieval times a general belief was developed that public baths might be responsible for spreading different diseases and immorality and as a result public baths were closed. Nevertheless the official ban on public bathing, issued by Roman Catholic Church, people continued to travel to hot and cold natural springs (Spa in Belgium; Cieplice, Łądek Zdrój and Kolobrzeg in Poland; Karlstad in Bohemia). In the 12th century with the rise of bourgeoisie, economy strength of towns and urban culture commence – public baths were built, however, never reaching the grandness of ancient Roman structures [4], [21].

2.3. Renaissance, Baroque and Enlightenment spa architecture

During the Renaissance, together with revival of other ancient traditions, spa culture was booming, but drinking water rather than taking baths was fashionable. In the 16th century in Poland Wojciech Oczko, the medical adviser of king Stefan Batory and author of the first Polish survey on spa (“Cieplice”, published in 1578) was responsible of promotion and development of several spa towns: Drużbaki, Szkoło, Lubień, Mikulińce and Swoszowice [4]. In the 17th and the 18th centuries, the epoch of Enlightenment and Great Travels, the members of European upper class travelled to popular health resorts in hope to spend a nice time in the prestigious spas and to cure some illnesses. For example the coastally located Scarborough Spa in England, being famous of acid waters, and Bath Spa developed by Romans were visited by royals such as Anne, Queen of England and members of high society. The wealthy and famous expected not only the spa medical facilities, but also an elegant, adequate to their position luxury accommodation, places to dance, to dine, concert halls and vast parks with promenades. John Wood, architect commissioned by financier Ralph Allen, transformed Bath into “social capital of England” and set the new

tone for other European spas which follow successful example. His greatest achievement in Bath was the famous giant urban layout composed of squares, crescents and circuses (The Circus (1754), the Royal Crescent (1775) and Queens Square (1728)). This urban and architectural idea was copied later, executed on smaller scale, by his son at Buxton Spa [5], [10]. This time the remarkable development was also experienced on the continental Europe, especially by Aachen spa in Germany, due to the energetic spa doctor – Francois Blondel, who promoted effectively drinking natural spring water and designed himself many spa facilities [4]. Many fashionable spa buildings in Aachen were designed by architect Jakob Couven in 1782 – 1786 (for example Neue Redoubt), becoming a model architecture for buildings in other European spa towns and widespread during the 19th century (Kurhaus in Baden – Baden, Kurhaus in Wiesbaden, Wandehalle in Bad Kissingen) [10].

2.4. Health resorts architecture of the 19th and the 20th centuries

In the 19th century the revival of balneology as an accepted medical practice continued, resulting in foundation of numerous health resorts along sea coasts (Blackpool, Brighton, Bain-les-Bain, Cannes, Nice, Margate, Scarborough, Sopot, Krynica Morska, Chłopy, Międzyzdoje, Świnoujście), in mountains (St. Moritz, Baden-Baden, Davos, Wiesbaden) and lowlands of Central Europe (Busko, Ciechocinek, Nałęczów) [4], [21]. This time in the most of European countries taboos against bathing disappeared and the doctors widely promoted the benefits of bathing. As a consequence the health resort visitors called spa towns a *ville d'eau* (town of water). The spa facilities of Bath, Karlsbad, Marienbad, Baden-Baden, Busko, Ciechocinek, Łądek Zdroj, Duszniki, Cieplice, Kudowa, Krynica Zdroj were enriched with new structures of “bath houses”, drinking halls, *inhalatoriums*, vast parks decorated with promenades, fountains, waterfalls, statues, altanas, kiosks and different elegant pavilions or observation towers. As physical exercises were intensively promoted also tennis courts and mini golf courses were provided in spa parks together with children playgrounds. In most spa towns the infrastructure was on high level (running water, sewages, later electricity). Public transport was provided by cable cars. Knowledge about healthy diet resulted in construction of “milk cottages” of characteristic architecture inspired by traditional Swiss rural style. Visitors to European spas enjoyed Neoclassical architecture



Figure 2.

Palace Hotel Patria located in Krynica Górská, (one of the oldest mountain health resorts in Poland), was designed by arch Bohdan Pniewski in 1933 and owned by the most famous Polish tenor Jan Kiepura. It still has its primary function, being memento of the chic past, “golden decades” of spa town. Designed in the monumental modernistic style, this elegant hotel has received the elite of the Polish high society: artists, politicians, landlords, film stars, businessmen together with royalties (as the Dutch Crown Princess Juliana together with her husband). Today “Hotel Patria” is the property of Joint Stock Company “The Health Resort Krynica – Żegiestów”.

Source: Photo by Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2009

(mainly inspired by Palladian style), mosaic floors of interiors inspired by ancient Romans, marble walls, arched openings and domed ceilings, elevations and interiors decorated by Corinthian columns (for example in Henryk Marconi “drinking house” in Busko Zdroj or indoor swimming pool in Łądek Zdroj). The formal and functional solutions of some spa architecture were similar to solutions known in ancient Roman baths – as use of separate building for different functions, also formality, symmetry, opulent interior design, and use of luxurious materials – all these ideas were copied from ancient Roman *thermaes*. It has to be mentioned that in the 19th century kurhauses were exclusively designed for various social interactions under one roof (with lounges, gaming parlours, reading and dining rooms, often concert hall or theatre), accommodation and baths were located separately (for example “Friedrichsbad” in Baden-Baden designed by architect Friedrich Weinbrenner and erected in 1822-1824). In the late 19th century, when bathing became more popular – many spa towns invested in opulent thermal baths in order to remain attractive for tourists (Baden-Baden, Karlsbad, Krynica Zdrój, Łądek Zdrój).

In the 20th century European spas continued to develop, based on hot or cold natural springs, healthy

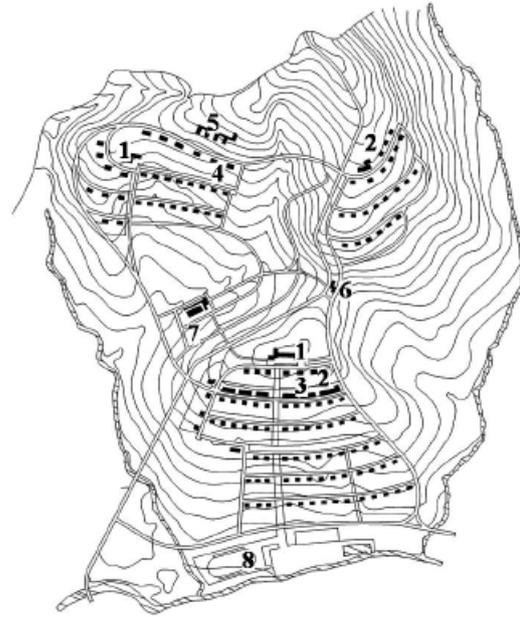


Figure 3.

Istebna health resort located in the mountain region in the south of Poland (arch. B. Hein, arch. W. Ostrowski, 1932) was planned on the area of 240 hectares, included full program for modern spa town: 1 – main kurhaus, 2 – hotels, 3 – shopping area, 4 – sanatoriums, 5 – school with dormitorium, 6 – bus station, 7 – spa central park, 8 – sport and recreation grounds.

Source: on the base of archives drawn by arch. M. Piechotka, 2012

sea or mountain climate, medical treatments, promotion of special diet and physical exercises of various kinds. This time health resorts were generally perceived as elegant and prestigious sites, their guests expected different attractions, some of character vary far from medical treatments – as gambling casinos and horse racing courses, fishing and hunting possibilities, tennis and golf courses, skating and skiing facilities, cultural and sport events, theatre, cinema, concerts, dancing and dining in elegant restaurants. The elegant, modern and stylish architecture was expected to fulfill these expectations and monumental modernistic edifices designed by world famous architects were the answer (as “Palace Patria Hotel” by arch. Bohdan Pniewski, 1933 and “New Cure House” by arch. Romuald Gutt, 1932 – both executed in Krynica Górská or New Drinking Hall in Bad Wildbad designed by arch. Reinhold Schuler and arch. Otto Kuhn, 1933) [Fig. 2]. In Poland new spa town was planned in Istebna accordingly to the modern urban ideas (arch. B. Hein, arch. W. Ostrowski, 1932). [Fig. 3] After the Second World War in many

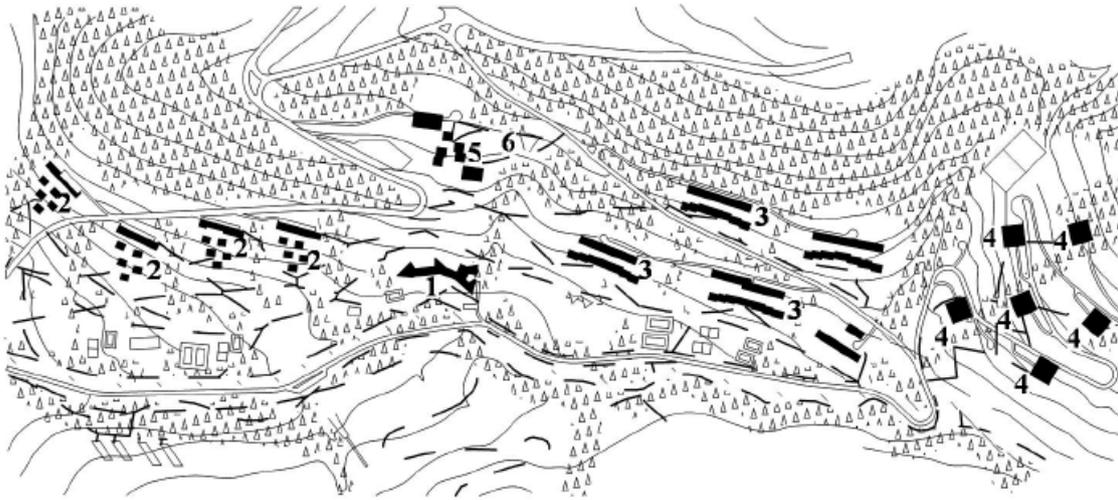


Figure 4.

Jaszowiec health resort located in the mountain region south of Poland (arch J. Kotela, arch Cz. Kotela, arch J. Winnicki, arch Z. Winnicki, 1961 – 1968) was planned on the area of 105 hectares, located near Wisła and Ustroń already existing winter sport resorts. New spa town program encompassed: 1 – main kurhaus, 2 and 3 – complex of sanatoriums and spa hotels , 4 – housing estate, 5 – shopping centre, 6 – cultural centre and sport facilities.

Source: on the base of archives drawn by arch. M. Piechocka, 2012

European countries the spa popularity continued, especially when subsidised by governments. For example in the years 1945 – 1990 in Poland, as in all other USSR satellite countries, taking a cure treatment in spa (about 14-21 days long) was fully covered by public health care as mandated by state legislation. Sponsored by government, numerous investments in spa towns were executed: as sanatoriums in Zakopane, Krynica Zdrój, Świeradów, Żegiestów, Kudowa, Ciechocinek, Busko, Nałęczów, Kołobrzeg. The new spa located in mountains was planned in Jaszowiec (arch. Cz. Kotela, I. Kotela, J. Winnicki, Z. Winnicki, 1961 – 1968), Polańczyk and Połczyn Zdrój (arch. J. Czerny, J. Podstolski, S. Labuz, 1975 – 1980) [Fig. 4]. In the last two decades a revival of spa towns has brought new prestigious investments in many health resorts in Poland as “Amber Hotel” located in Międzyzdoje (arch. T. Spychała, 1966) or Dr Irene Eris SPA in Krynica Górská [13], [14], [15].

2.5. The modern spa architecture

The architectural appearance is one of the important part of spa resort image and could help building its prestige and often becoming a landmark of certain health resort. As spas all over the world over are doing amazingly well, creation the spa architecture, these “temples of delight” are commissioned to the most famous architects, intended as the masterpiece

of art. The belief is that well known names and outstanding design could attract even more visitors in future. And it is very true: the bath complexes near Reykjavik (Iceland), several projects of spa in mountain ski resorts (as Kaprun), spa hotels located along the Spanish sea coast (as Corunia) are proof that spa visitors highly appreciate these beautifully designed ultra modern structures, being outstanding examples of the contemporary art. Among the most interesting recently completing spa projects one could mention: Tschuggen Bergoase Spa Grand Hotel (Switzerland) by arch. Mario Botta, Vigilius Mountain Resort (Italy) by arch. Matteo Thun, Therme Vals (Switzerland) by arch. Peter Zumthor, Mavida Balance located in the heart of Alpas Sport Region – Zell am See Kaprun (Austria) by arch. Niki Szilagyi and arch. Evi Marklestetter, Therme Aqualux (Austria) by arch. Titus Walter Pernthaler, Termaria Casa del Agua (Spain) by arch. Manuel Casabella, Termaria Relax Park Torrevieja (Spain) by arch. Toyo Ito, Thermae Bath Spa (UK) by arch. Nicholas Grimshaw, Blue Lagoon (Iceland) by arch. Sigridur Sigborsdottir and VA architects. All these projects are a perfect examples of what architects and investors were trying to create: an experience of very special character, in which the spa guest could feel luxury in minimalist interiors, touch of modern technology and eco – friendliness in design (dominant materials are natural wood, stones and glass) [1], [2].



Figure 5.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

Fig. 5, 6 and 7 Blue Lagoon Spa near Reykjavik (Iceland), by arch Sigridur Sigborsdottir and VA Arkitekts was completed in 2007. This spa operates on the base of geothermal sea water of about 40°C, silica mud gives the water its characteristic colour. Spa complex includes swimming area, and technical facilities, restaurants and spa clinic. Architects tried to show the mystery of the lava river landscape, using minimalist forms and local materials as lava pieces and the moss covered stones – materials typical for this region of Iceland.

Source: photo by Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2013

3. CONTEMPORARY HEALTH RESORTS IN POLAND

3.1. Spa towns in Poland – legal regulations

In Poland, there are currently over forty health resorts (owned by municipalities, cities or state), which must meet the conditions imposed on by the Law of 28 July 2005 on health resorts, spas, spa areas and spa municipalities [20]. Polish spa towns, classified by the law as health resort towns (or districts), must by different law regulations compulsorily include into their functional programme several facilities as sanatoriums, convalescent hospitals, hotels, B&B services and various spa facilities providing stimulating recreation activities (as spa parks) and medical treatment (as bath houses or *inhalatoriums*) [17], [18], [19], [20]. Other strict conditions to be taken into account, if resort wants to be formally reg-

istered as a spa town, are a special location with an excellent quality of natural environment, beneficial for health climate, magnificent nature, mineral water springs or peat. Due to these requirements most of the Polish spa towns are located in Lower Silesian Voivodship or along the Baltic Sea Coast (in the north or in the south provinces). According to the law regulations the health resort is considered to be the area dedicated to the use and protection of the natural medicinal resources [3], [11].

As to geographical location health resorts in Poland can be divided into lowland spas, situated 200 meters above sea level (there are 16), foothill spas, located 200 meters above sea level to 400 meters above sea level (there are 14), the mountain spas, located 400 m above sea level (there are 8) and coastal spas, located within a distance of 3 km from the sea coast line (there are 6) [3], [20].

Health resorts in Poland are the integral part of the

national health care system; they are organized in the way which allows providing health care. All spas in order to ensure proper treatment, rehabilitation and prevention must have, in addition to natural therapeutic agents – necessary facilities, equipments, recreation areas – all composed in harmony with the landscape. These include hospitals, sanatoriums, bathing establishments, pump rooms, spring water, the spa parks, lawns, public gardens, sports and recreation areas. All sanatoriums offer comprehensive treatment, wide services including all necessary diagnostic tests and doctor consultations before medical treatment applied to have it adjusted to the individual needs of patients [3], [4], [11].

3.2. Spatial characteristic of spa towns in Poland

Many of survived to the present day health resorts in Poland are the result of “golden centuries” of spas developed in the 19th or 20th century (Ciechocinek, Naleczów, Busko-Zdrój, Krynica Górska, Konstancin-Jeziorna). Carefully planned and later meticulously maintained historical spa layouts, health resort buildings surrounded by vast green areas of historic parks, served well in the past and today serve to the same primary function and multiple purposes: medical treatments, recreation, culture, entertainment, rehabilitation and physical activity [4], [8]. Especially historic spa parks, due to their extraordinary beauty, contribute significantly to raising the aesthetics values of the health resorts and are often treated as “a showcase” of spa town. Moreover, as spa parks have a long history and often have been founded at the same time as health resort, they are often encompassed together with spa buildings by the state register of monuments. It means they serve not only to the daily recreation needs of patients and residents, but also are an important historical document of spas, becoming often a tourist attraction [9]. Contemporary concern and care for cultural and natural heritage in health resorts is also an expression of the belief that a beautiful landscape favours the healing process, helps the sick to get well in harmony of body and spirit. Undoubtedly, the wonderful scenery of vegetation, outstanding monuments of architecture make spa towns the favourite sites not only for medical tourists but also for visitors searching the tranquillity and special cameral atmosphere for holiday staying. Spa parks are also important as places for daily recreation for the local population, stimulating leisure activities and helping to recuperate good physical and mental condition [11], [12], [22].

4. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF POLISH SPA DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Use of geothermal waters as a base for spa development

Poland possesses large geothermal resources to be found within about 80% of its territory and geothermal waters from springs and wells are currently used in eight spas and water centres (aqua parks) mainly in the south provinces of Poland [7]. The tradition of the use of the geothermal resources for balneotherapy has roots in Early Medieval epoch, when warm spring waters were known in Cieplice, Łądek Zdrój and other locations in Sudety and Carpathian Mountains. At present there are 36 health resorts using underground waters for balneology and bathing and eight spas which are using geothermal waters issued by natural springs (Ciechocinek, Konstancin, Cieplice, Duszniki, Łądek Zdrój, Ustroń, Zakopane, Iwonicz). In 2001 three new geothermal plants have been opened (Podhale, Pyrzyce and Mszczonów) and several other projects are in progress intended to use the geothermal water for recreation (aqua parks) and balneotherapy. The most promising conditions and prospects for new spa towns founded on the base of geothermal resources are connected with Polish Lowlands and Podhale Region. The possible new locations of geothermal spas are: Nowogród, Szczecin, Stargard Szczeciński, Chłociwice, Czarnków, Wągrowiec, Kolo, Uniejów, Poddebice, Skierniewice, and Żyrardów, Kraków, Mysłenice and Sucha [7]. The geothermal health resorts located in Uniejów, Poddębice, Kraków, Zakopane and Sucha are already under construction on the base of new legal system regulating spas operating in Poland. On the base of geothermal natural resources rheumatism, skin disease, respiratory system and many other illnesses could be treated and it is believed that there are exceptionally great possibilities to develop geothermal health and recreation water centres. For example the Zakopane project is intended as one of the most modern geothermal centres in Europe, project includes a complex of rehabilitation and recreation treatment (indoor and outdoor swimming pools, conference centre), serving about 1000 people per hour [7].

4.2. Conditions of spa development in future

Health resorts in Poland have a long history, tradition, and – as it seems – promising future, as we can observe a growing need for this type of services in ageing Europe. On the other hand investors express

their interest in the context of promising benefits in comprehensive use of geothermal resources. Especially new spa located near political, economical and business centres (city agglomerations) might be very promising line of business, as urban citizens long for recreation and biological recreation – luxurious attractions they could afford. Moreover, both already existing spa towns and new spas will help to struggle difficult economic condition and to increase development of region and local community. The new spa towns foundation will result in new jobs creation, in hotel base development, catering and other services, probably also in agro – tourism and food production. It is to be underlined that also production of mineral waters is a growing industry and today their sale faces the boom in Poland. All in all, spa towns in Poland are great opportunity for regional and local development and the only limitation, as it seems, is insufficient promotion of potential possibilities and lack of funds for investments. It is a good news that recently Polish Association of Medical Tourism (PAMT) in cooperation with different organizations abroad has been trying to promote “Medical Holiday Packages” in Polish spa towns, for short or longer stays, combining the medical treatment with tourist excursions or leisure holidays. Throughout partnership with Polish spas they offer a wide range of treatments as neurosurgery, aesthetic medicine, dentistry, orthopaedic, eye surgery (and other surgeries in the chosen field) and naturally rehabilitation care – all on high standards of patients care and at affordable cost (prices are about 60-80% lower than in other European countries) [6]. Intensive promotion campaign of Polish spa includes, beyond medical offer and luxurious accommodation, underlining their special spatial character, tranquillity and historic tradition including memento of past royalties, powerful politicians, famous writers and artists. For example it is underlined that the king Jan III Sobieski used to drink mineral waters in Horyniec, famous singer Ada Sari visited Szczawnica, and Jan Kiepura was an owner of hotel in Krynica Zdroj, Bolesław Prus and Stefan Zeromski were famous guests of Nałęczów. Effects of these promotion efforts are already visible. The Polish Association of Medical Tourism reported that in 2012 the foreign patients spent about 190 m of Euro in Polish spa (the global market of spa services is estimated up to 75 bn of Euro) [6]. Poland is considered as remarkable tourist attraction and medical tourism has still chance to compete with Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary (Central Europe countries which have recently significantly invested in their spa towns and promotion of services).

5. CONCLUSION

It seems that the sector of recreation and therapeutics has great prospects for development as demand for spa treatment in Poland and Europe is still growing and natural conditions for climatotherapy, balneotherapy, thalassotherapy together with recent investments in geothermal resources make it possible. Naturally our spas should carry out the modernization of facilities in order to upgrade their services to achieve the European and world standards and to meet expectations of their future guests. The necessity to adjust health resorts spatial standards and services to higher standards have been already realized and many spa towns are very successful, having numerous visitors from abroad (Germany, Czech Republic, Russia, UK, US, Canada, France, Sweden and Norway and other Scandinavian countries). Many of these guests are the Poles living abroad. This success is achieved due to variety and quality of treatment services, modern equipment and technologies, experienced English, German and other foreign languages speaking staff (doctors, nurses and physiotherapists), highly professional medical staff, high quality and volume of accommodation, richness of catering services, wide promotion and reasonable prices and last but not least – excellent urban layout of spa, as spa greens, resort parks, historical architecture have always been consequently protected and carefully maintained on the ground of legal regulations: Act of Construction Law on Building Law dated 7th of July 1994, Act of Constitutional Law on Environmental Protection dated 14th of April 27 2001, Act of Constitutional Law on Protection and Conservation of Monuments dated 23rd of July 2003, Act of Constitutional Law on the Nature Conservation dated 16th of April 2004 and Act of Constitutional Law on Health Resorts, Spa Districts and Spa Municipalities from 28th of July 2008 [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. All these factors built patients' confidence and satisfaction of curing results. Naturally the process of further development of spa towns in Poland requires further and consequent continuation of improvements, the transformation relating to ownership status and changing financial rules (as privatisation and re-privatisation) – performed on the base of amended legal regulations. Moreover the development of balneology and spa services in Poland requires the clear and supportive policy, support from government, local authorities and NGOs. For example the Economic Chamber – Polish Spa was founded to represent spa interests, to participate in legislation process and the elaboration

of better spa standards, to act for the sustainable development and promotion of existing health resorts, to initiate new projects and to establish new spas.

Discussed issues in this text undoubtedly do not cover all questions related to the sustainable planning of spa towns. However, as the author hopes, the synthetic applications may be useful for future planning projects concerning health resorts development as multi functional health resorts space requires a very careful and thoughtful planning. One can expect such commissions as the very special role of spa towns and medical tourism in Polish economy was underlined in the “Strategy for the development of tourism in Poland in 2007 – 2013”, recognised as highly competitive tourism product, which should have priority in local and regional strategies of spatial development policy.

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