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Historic Sports Architecture in the COVID-19 Pandemic Time (UNESCO World Heritage Sites)

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Historyczna architektura sportowa w dobie pandemii COVID-19 (zabytki listy światowego dziedzictwa kultury UNESCO)

Streszczenie

W Europie od ponad trzech tysięcy lat rozwojowi poszczególnych dyscyplin towarzyszy ewolucja obiektów sportowych. Dziedzictwo architektury sportowej jako magnes dla turystyki kulturowej jest oczywiste. Miliony turystów odwiedzających słynne miejsca są dowodem na to, jak ważne są one dla naszej tożsamości i tradycji. Najważniejsze zabytkowe obiekty sportowe o rozpoznawalnych walorach traktowane są jako unikalne dziedzictwo kulturowe i zostały wpisane na listę światowego dziedzictwa UNESCO: starożytne rzymskie amfiteatry, termy, antyczne areny, starożytne greckie obiekty sportowe. W roku 2020 wybuch pandemii COVID-19 mocno uderzył w sektor turystyczny i nadal obowiązują ograniczenia w podróżowaniu. Dlatego konieczne jest przygotowanie nowych rekomendacji dla zwiedzających zabytkowe obiekty sportowe. Ważne jest również rozważenie kierunków przebudowy turystyki kulturowej w odniesieniu do zabytków sportu, w tym wpi-

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sanych na listę światowego dziedzictwa UNESCO. Ostatnio wzrosło zainteresowanie dziedzictwem sportowym i wielu turystów chce poznać słynne obiekty historyczne. Pomimo ograniczeń wprowadzanych w czasie pandemii, jest to również obecnie możliwe, jednak potrzebne są nowe działania i polityka, aby spełnić rygory i zalecenia sanitarne oraz odbudować zaufanie konsumentów.

Słowa kluczowe: historia sportu, turystyka kulturowa, obiekty dziedzictwa UNESCO, COVID-19.

Abstract

In Europe, for more than three millennia, the development of individual disciplines has been accompanied by the evolution of sports facilities. It covers the period from the Ancient Olympic Games to modern sports architecture. The sports architecture heritage, as a magnet for cultural tourism, is evident. Millions of tourists visiting the famous sites are the proof how important these places are for our identity and tradition of European civilization. The most important historic sports facilities are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List: ancient Greek and Roman amphitheatres, thermal baths, antique arenas. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the tourism sector hard. It is essential to reformulate present rules of the historic sports facilities visits and to consider the future directions of cultural tourism re-development at the UNESCO Heritage Sites. Recently there has been a revival of interests in sports heritage and many tourists want to explore famous landmarks of the past. Despite the pandemic time restrictions, it is also possible at present. However, new actions and policies are required to meet sanitary requirements and recommendations, and rebuild consumer confidence.

Keywords: history of sport, cultural tourism, UNESCO Heritage Sites, COVID-19.

Introduction

What is sports architecture and what is not? The term is as problematic to define as the word ‘sport’ is. In the popular, everyday meaning it is clear enough and mostly intuitively used. Most people would agree that stadiums are ‘sports architecture’ (in the ancient Olympia as well as in London today), but what about Coliseum in ancient Rome and sports – cultural halls today? They were erected for sports and fun equally. For the purpose of the research on the history of sports architecture the main assumption was that “sports architecture is erected for shows requiring physical power, rules and competition” consequently as the term ‘sport’ is defined by the sports historians and sports theorists.¹As sport itself is not socially, politically, economically, culturally or historically neutral, which many scholars underline, thus, the history of sport and the history of sports archi-

¹ J. Kosiewicz, *Championing Physical Culture Sciences*, “Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research (PCSSR)” 2019/06/01, Vol. 82, pp. 67–93, DOI: 10.2478/pcssr-2019-0014; W. Lipoński, *Historia sportu [History of Sports]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012, p. 18; D.G. McComb, *Sports in World History*, London, UK – NY, US: Routledge, NY 2004, pp. 1–2; J. Nauright, Ch. Parrish (eds.), *Sports around the World: History, Culture and Practice*. UK: ABC – CLIO, Oxford 2012; S.W. Pope, J. Nauright, *Rutledge Companion to Sports History*, London – New York, US: Routledge, NY 2010, pp. 11–12.

ture is the history of our civilization – and this approach was the main assumption for this research study.²

In Europe, for more than three millennia, the evolution of individual disciplines has been accompanied by the evolution of sports facilities. It covers the period from the Ancient Olympic Games to modern sports architecture. It comprises a wide range of constructions: buildings erected for the needs of the greatest sports events, such as the Olympic Games, as well as sports facilities for child physical education at schools or daily recreation of urban residents.³ To meet these needs, expectations and requirements – the architecture of sports facilities should be extremely diverse. This variety is manifested in a variety of styles, constructions, building materials, forms, and functions – depending on a given era, on the function, on the environmental and landscape features, on the social expectations, as well as on the possibilities of implementation and political situation. Moreover the shape, size and programme of a given sports facility have always depended on the sports discipline and rules. However, their main role is universal: great usefulness for society, involvement in the creation of tradition and identity of the site. They always respond well to extremely strong sports emotions, equating beauty and nobility with the ethos of sports competition – these values remain unchanged. Especially in 2020, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, it was clear how important flexibility and readiness of sports facilities is, when they were to be adjusted quickly and efficiently to their new functions, to meet the challenges of new situations (for example, to be converted into temporary hospitals, or to meet all new sanitary safety restrictions for organized events).⁴

The presented material was prepared on the basis of the statutory research projects (ds-144 and ds-316) carried out at the Joseph Pilsudski Academy of Physical

² Z. Dziubiński, K. Jankowski, *Kultura fizyczna a polityka*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie & Salezjańska Organizacja Sportowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Warszawa 2015, pp. 12–23; M. Polley, *Sports History*, US: The Palgrave Macmillian, NY 2007, pp. 34–39; O. Seippel, *Do sports matter to people? A cross – national multilevel study*, “Sports in Society” 2019, 22, 3, pp. 327–341, DOI: doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1490263, pp. 327–341.

³ B. Fletcher, *History of architecture*, UK: London University College Editorial Office, London 2002, pp. 245–249; W. Lipoński, *Historia sportu [History of Sports]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012, p. 17–21; R. Sherad, *Sports Architecture*, US: Taylor & Francis, New York 2000, pp. 14–21; D. Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, UK: Laurence King Publishing, London 2006, pp. 55–65; W. Zabłocki, *Architektura olimpijska [Olympic Architecture]*, Wydawnictwo Wyższa Szkoła Ekologii i Zarządzania w Warszawie, Warszawa 2016, pp. 12–19.

⁴ A. Assaf, R. Scuderi, *COVID-19 and the recovery of the tourism industry*, “Tourism Economics” 2020, 26 (5), pp. 731–733; DOI: doi.org/10.1177/1354816620933712, pp. 731–736; F. Burni, *Tourism facing a pandemic: from crisis to recovery*, University of Bergamo, Bergamo 2020; DOI: 10.6092/978-88-97253-04-4; D. Parnell, P. Widdop, A. Bond, R. Wilson, *COVID-19 – Networks and Sport*, “Managing Sport and Leisure” 2020, 31, 3, Taylor – Francis Online, pp. 1–7, DOI: doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1750100.

Education in Warsaw. These research projects, focused on the history of sports architecture in Europe, understood as an outline from the ancient times until present times, were undertaken with the help of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education grants. The research focused on the systematic collection and analysis of data related to the history of European sports facilities, in the past and today. To achieve these goals, the research process involved a variety of methods, research techniques and tools to be used: historical research (extensive literature survey connected with the subject), contemporary sports buildings' and facilities' requirements (extensive literature, sports federations regulations and documents survey). The analysis and interpretation of collected data (primary and secondary, qualitative and quantitative) allowed to formulate several final conclusions. Research methods, techniques and tools, data collection, analysis and interpretation as well as formulating conclusions were undertaken and performed according to the theory of methodology of the history of sport as well as cultural and heritage tourism studies, suggested by recognized scientific authorities in these fields.⁵

This article presents selected research results, a synthesis of general character of research studies, supplemented with the analysis of the recent impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the historic sports facilities. The research study was based on the critical review and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative secondary data (different resources), concerning, in particular, the following aspects:

- The history of sports architecture in Europe and other continents;
- The meaning of historic sports architecture, enlisted as UNESCO Heritage Sites for cultural tourism development, on the example of selected UNESCO World Heritage Sites: ancient Roman amphitheatres of the Coliseum (Italy) and El Djem (Tunisia), the antique arena in Arles (France), together with ancient Greek sports and sacral facilities in Olympia, Delphi, Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Thermessos and Hierapolis (Greece, Turkey);
- The impact of COVID-19 on cultural tourism and visiting UNESCO Heritage Sites in 2020;
- The possibility of virtual (online) visits and traditional ones with regard to sanitary restrictions, law regulations and a quest for new solutions – data

⁵ J.T. Dallen, T.S. Boyd, *Heritage Tourism*, NY, US: Prentice Hall, 2003; M. Finn, M. Elliott-White, M. Walton, *Tourism and Leisure Research Methods. Data collection, analysis, evaluation and interpretation*, UK: Pearson-Longman, Harlow 2000; C.M. Hall, *Tourism Planning, Policies, Process and Relationships*, US: Prentice Hall, NY 2018; D.G. McComb, *Sports in World History*, London, UK – NY, US: Routledge, NY 2004; J. Nauright, Ch. Parrish (eds.), *Sports around the World: History, Culture and Practice*. UK: ABC – CLIO, Oxford 2012, pp. 11–12; D. Parnell, P. Widdop, A. Bond, R. Wilson, *COVID-19 – Networks and Sport*, “Managing Sport and Leisure” 2020, 31, 3, Taylor – Francis Online, pp. 1–7, DOI: doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1750100; M. Polley, *Sports History*, US: The Palgrave Macmillian, NY 2007, pp. 34–39; M. Sigala, D. Leslie, *The International Cultural Tourism: Management, implication and cases*, UK: Elsevier, London 2006; M.K. Smith, *Issues on Cultural Tourism Studies*, UK: Routledge, London 2008, pp. 14–29.

available in different resources: UN WTO sanitary safety recommendations and reports, law regulations, as well as data collected from the UNESCO Heritage Sites, travel agencies, i.e. their offers for tourists during pandemic time restrictions;

- Analysis, evaluation and interpretation of collected and recorded data, assessing the merit of case study, drawing conclusions of general character, writing a report with final findings.

Historic sports architecture enlisted as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Many historical and modern sports facilities seen as outstanding buildings prove to be amazing achievements of civilization in the field of engineering constructions. These impressive edifices are visited by millions of tourists per year, fascinated by their amazing beauty and size. They are explored with respect, curiosity and attention. In ancient times, the Coliseum in Rome with its timeless functional solutions, and in modern times, an innovative sports hall in Raleigh, designed by a Polish architect, Maciej Nowicki, or the Olympic Palazetto Dello Sport in Rome, designed by an architect, Pier Luigi Nervi. Examples of extraordinary aesthetic qualities of various sports facilities built in the antiquity period, which perfectly harmonized with the surroundings, could be admired in Delphi. As far as modern times are concerned, such an outstanding combination of architectural thought and landscape can be seen in the construction of a suspended roof of the Olympic Stadium in Munich.⁶

The most important historic sports facilities with recognizable values are treated as unique cultural heritage. The most outstanding ones, as an important human legacy of the past, are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The list includes: the ancient Roman amphitheatre Coliseum and Circus Maximus in Rome (Italy) and El Djem (Tunisia), thermal Baths in Bath (UK), antique arenas in Arles and Orange (France), as well as ancient Greek sports and sacral facilities in Olympia, Delphi, Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Thermessos and Hierapolis (Greece, Turkey).⁷ It means they are all considered as a landmark, having cultural, historical and scientific significance and requiring legal protection. To be selected as a World Heritage Site, a given historic sports building must be of an outstanding and unique character in terms of heritage values, to serve as evidence of history of civilization on the planet.

⁶ B. Fletcher, *History of architecture*, UK: London University College Editorial Office, London 2002, pp. 1295–1297; R. Sherad, *Sports Architecture*, US: Taylor & Francis, New York 2000, pp. 12–24; P. Stutzerbacher, S. Ulrich, *Architecture for Sport*, US: Wiley Academy, NY 2002, pp. 3–6.

⁷ www.unesco.org, 2020; www.whc.unesco.org, 2020.

All these heritage sites are seen as a strong magnet for cultural tourism and were visited in the pre-pandemic times by millions per year. This fascination with ancient sports architecture could be explained both by the sport history and fascination with building technology of ancient masters. For example, the requirement of spectators safety, when leaving a large stadium, turned out to be perfectly thought out already 2000 years ago. For example, the Romans, to solve this problem for the Coliseum, designed practical vertical and horizontal communication. As a result, both in the 1st century AD and today, the evacuation of audience of more than 50,000 spectators, used to take and still takes only about 8 - 10 minutes. All this is possible thanks to the fact that Roman architects applied the innovative concept of dividing the audience into separate sectors and provided a transparent communication system of staircases and corridors.⁸ The archaeological site of Olympia (Greece) was selected as the ancient Olympic Games were held there throughout the Classical period, every four years from the 8th century BC until the 4th century AD. The site hosted numerous ancient sports buildings: a stadium and a hippodrome (the Classical period, 5th and 4th centuries BC), a gymnasium and a palaestra, bath houses and a vaulted crypt – an archway linking the entrance to the stadium to the sanctuary (the Hellenistic period, 3rd and 2nd centuries BC), temples of Hera (7th century BC) and Zeus (5th century BC). The Delphi (Greece) was selected as a World Heritage Site because of the outstanding beauty of its location at Pleistos River Valley, as well as significant sports heritage: a gymnasium complex with a palaestra, pools and baths, a stadium and a hippodrome (5th century BC).⁹

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) important mission is to seek and encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world – considered as an outstanding value to humanity (UNESCO, 2020). The UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage was adapted and signed by almost 200 states on 16th November 1972. It should be underlined that what makes the concept of World Heritage List exceptional and important is its universal application: the World Heritage Sites are seen as heritage of all humans, irrespective of the territory they are located on. In June 2020, as many as 1121 World Heritage Sites existed in 167 countries, demarcated by UNESCO as protected zones. UNESCO's main mission is focused on protection and on education, but also promotion of historical legacy to the wide public,

⁸ B. Fletcher, *History of architecture*, UK: London University College Editorial Office, London 2002, pp. 306–309; D. Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, UK: Laurence King Publishing, London 2006, pp. 130–132.

⁹ B. Fletcher, *History of architecture*, UK: London University College Editorial Office, London 2002, pp. 245–246; W. Lipoński, *Historia sportu [History of Sports]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012, pp. 63–98; D. Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, UK: Laurence King Publishing, London 2006, pp. 55–56.

providing assistance and professional training. The World Heritage Sites are opened to tourist visits as gaining recognition and education is one of the main targets of this project. There are many initiatives aimed to promote UNESCO World Heritage Sites: museums, exhibitions and visitors centres opened at archaeological sites, numerous events and activities (Go UNESCO runs, Go Heritage Runs, Make Heritage Fun campaigns).¹⁰

However, in 2020, in the wake of COVID-19, many governments took measures to mitigate the pandemic consequences by closing cultural institutions for the public. As a result, it led either to the lockdown and closure of cultural World Heritage Sites or several restrictions, issued to limit the visitors' access to many heritage sites. Throughout 2020, the lockdown regulations were changing, depending on the current pandemic situation, individual policies and rules in a given country, in some countries there were even different approaches in certain regions applied (like in Greece in 2020) (www.whc.unesco.org, 2020). It is to be underlined that for some types of the World Heritage Sites (e.g. city centres, historic boroughs, open-air archaeological sites) access for visitors was continuously possible, while some could be temporarily closed (in-door museums, visitors centres) (Table 1, 2).

UNESCO Heritage sites in the pandemic COVID-19 time

In both decades of the 21st century we witnessed, globally, a steady increase in popularity of cultural tourism and its various forms (urban tourism, ethnic tourism, historic sports tourism). There is also a noticeable growing interest in visiting the UNESCO Heritage Sites. The development of international tourism was closely related to the processes of globalization. Gradual liberalization of international trade, facilitation of foreign travel, a growing number of middle class people and their income had a positive impact on the development of mass tourism – both international and domestic. Last year, the United Nation World Tourist Organization (UNWTO) estimated international tourism arrivals at 1.5 billion people, forecasting an increase of 4% in 2020 as an obvious continuation of the trend that has been going on for the last decade. Only a few months ago, in 2019, the world experts were deeply concerned about the excessive growth of tourism in the future and a number of threats resulting from it, especially for the natural environment and cultural values. In the document 'Decade of Action 2020 - 2030' issued by the UNWTO, 17 principles of sustainable tourism development for the next decade were formulated in order to counteract these negative phenomena.¹¹

However, in 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hit the tourism sector extremely hard, in comparison to other business sectors, and strict travel

¹⁰ www.whc.unesco.org, 2020.

¹¹ www.unwto.org, 2020.

restrictions still apply to tourists worldwide. Therefore, it is necessary to verify the previous forecasts and prepare new recommendations for the directions of redevelopment of cultural tourism. In June 2020, the UNWTO published the ‘Tourism Recovery Post COVID-19’ document, whose main motto is ‘Stay home today - travel tomorrow.’¹² It distinguished three pillars which determine the revival of tourism (at the global, national, regional and local levels): health, security and rebuilding consumer confidence. Another recent project of the UNWTO, launched under the title of ‘COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package,’ is focused on other main pillars: economic recovery, marketing and promotion, institutional strengthening and building resilience.¹³ At this critical stage of the pandemic situation, the tourism recovery recommendations include long-term and short-term activities and strategies as well as solutions which might be implemented immediately (for example, technical assistance programmes, trainings) – depending on the specific situation and needs, tailor-made strategies can be offered.

In the “Share Culture Today to Travel Tomorrow” document recently prepared by the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN), it was emphasized that cultural tourism, which includes visiting World Heritage Sites, will be the main driver of the revival of the tourism sector in Europe.¹⁴ It emphasized the following urgent actions that should be undertaken by institutions which are responsible for the development and promotion of cultural tourism (by central and regional governments, local authorities and private sector):

- Constantly improved information and promotion, reaching the widest possible audience, searching for new recipients;
- Continuous implementation of innovative technologies, including an emphasis on virtual messages, expressed by a slogan “Today online visitors to the museum may appear in reality tomorrow”;
- Taking into account the necessity of many changes, including adjustments to existing commercial strategies, the scope and nature of tourist services; changes forced mainly by sanitary safety measures, perhaps a smaller range of activities for older people in the tourist flow, a greater share of families with children, school trips and youth, individual tourists;
- Taking corrective actions together with governments and local administration, non-governmental organizations, foundations, local cultural activists and tour-operators.

In 2020, more than 80% museums around the world were closed down, travelling was difficult if not impossible, but millions of tourists during the lockdown virtually visited museums and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.¹⁵ In 2020,

¹² Ibidem, 2021.

¹³ Ibidem, 2020.

¹⁴ www.cultural-network.eu, 2020.

¹⁵ www.cultural-network.eu, 2020; whc.unesco.org 2020.

when the museums were closed by law and government regulations, a high demand for virtual access to museums and heritage sites was clearly seen. Despite the serious challenges, the cultural sector tried to create a new offer, attract new audiences and develop new attractions. As for the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, there were several offers of virtual visits, e.g. ‘Mobil-tour in Arles’, video-tours in Ephesus, Olympia and Delphi, accompanied by a special selection of exhibition tours, podcasts and audio-visual recordings, which enabled to visit museums remotely, on line. In all sports historic sites enlisted as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, there were offers of virtual tours and free of charge virtual museum classes with the use of different IT platforms (MS Teams, ZOOM). These projects were of extreme value and importance as most governments around the world temporarily closed numerous educational institutions in an attempt to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ These closures were impacting hundreds of millions of students. Free of charge ‘museum lessons’ could effectively mitigate this educational deprivation and help to facilitate the continuity of education through remote (on-line) learning (Table 2).

However, not all UNESCO World Heritage Sites were closed in 2020 (for example, Olympia in Greece remained opened), some were only temporarily suspended (like Delphi in Greece), due to the various measures against the COVID-19 in the different regions of Greece. According to the available data, in April 2020, 75% of the World Heritage Sites were closed, 15% were partially open and 10% full time open. In November 2020, the situation changed, i.e. 26% of places were closed, 30% partially open and 44% open on a daily basis (Table 1). However, all these historical sports buildings enlisted as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which reminded open or were re-opened, in 2020 could be visited only with the following sanitary norms and restrictions (Table 1, 2):

- The use of facemasks was obligatory,
- Before entering the site, the body temperature of each visitor was measured with a laser (only visitors with the body temperature lower than 37.5⁰ Celsius were allowed to continue their visit),
- Keeping distance between visitors was obligatory – at least 1.5 metres,
- The duration of each visit was limited.

In the opened heritage sites, to answer the pandemic challenges, touring agencies offer private, customised and small-group tours with the use of special means of transport: bikes, e-bikes or social distance buses, ensuring sanitary safety (for example, as it is offered in Olympia and Delphi in Greece). Tourists should be prepared for: contactless payment, obligatory face masks for customers and staff in public areas, sanitized transport vehicles with hand sanitation stands, social distancing enforced throughout a whole sightseeing experience, regular checking of the body temperature.

¹⁶ www.whc.unesco.org, 2020; www.unwho.org, 2020.

Moreover, in most of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, several other facilities and actions were provided to make a given visit COVID-19 safe, for example, hand sanitizers, disposable masks, distancing measures and others (for example, regular, obligatory health check-ups for the museum staff in *Coliseum*, Italy) (Table 2).

There are some more regulations, which are now, however so far – only theoretically, considered to be implemented in the future, for example, obligatory passports proving taking anti-COVID vaccinations - as a condition to be allowed to enter the sites.

These solutions have already been implemented in some short-time strategies which the tourism industry sectors can adapt for their recovery projects in order to better adjust to the pandemic time restrictions, as their immediate response to the situation. However, also other short, medium and long-term actions developed by UNWTO in 2020 should be considered. They include very detailed recommendations (as a proposal of counter shields at hotel receptions), as well as recommendations of a general nature: cooperating with the UN World Health Organization (UNWHO), information and data exchange between tourism sectors, innovative alliances, more sustainable future for cultural tourism, better coordination and information sharing (between government structures, locally and internationally), attracting wider audiences (all social groups: children, the youth, seniors).

Among the immediately available strategies to be implemented for the recovery of cultural tourism and adaptation to the pandemic situation, simple and practical solutions might be helpful, for instance, sanitary restrictions and cleaning protocols at museums and heritage sites, health safety norms at restaurants and hotels (distance and reduction of place capacity, counter shields, hand washing, disinfection), shift from personal interactions to the new technologies to limit personal contact and risk of infection. In the medium and long-term perspective, possibly further strategies might be implemented to improve sanitary safety and restore confidence in travelling, like, for example, advanced technologies, robots, bots, artificial intelligence. All these means require public – private cooperation to make reopening of museums possible. However, these new procedures and challenges can increase prices and harm the business sustainability. Some of the experts believe in full return to the pre-crisis mode and habits of travelling, whereas some others predict that tourists might prefer higher health safety norms also in the future, after the formal pandemic restrictions are abolished.¹⁷

¹⁷ A. Assaf, R. Scuderi, *COVID-19 and the recovery of the tourism industry*, “Tourism Economics” 2020, 26 (5), pp. 731–733; DOI: doi.org/10.1177/1354816620933712; F. Burni, *Tourism facing a pandemic: from crisis to recovery*, University of Bergamo; Bergamo 2020; DOI: 10.6092/978-88-97253-04-4; K. Herman, Ł. Drozda, *Green Infrastructure in the Time of Social Distancing: Urban Policy and the Tactical Pandemic Urbanism*, “Sustainability” 2021, 13(4), p. 1631, DOI: 10.3390/su13041632 (*Sustainable Special Issue: Landscapes in the Time of Social Distancing: Pandemic and Design of the Urban Environment*, February 2021); S. Iguman, *If visitors will not*

It is believed and supported by the UNESCO World Heritage Sites management boards that the present virtual offers of museums can spark interest in visiting the facilities in real life. This expectation is expressed and summarized by the slogan of the spot prepared jointly by the UNWTO and CNN (Cable News Network), currently in 2020, broadcast on many channels and in many countries: “Plan your dream trips today, the departure will be tomorrow.”¹⁸ Another UNESCO campaign called “Next Normal...” is believed to be the response to COVID-19, focused on the challenges and the question what “back to normal” should mean in the future, in the post-COVID-19 era.¹⁹

Final conclusions and discussion

The year 2020 will remain in our memories as a symbol of an unprecedented health crisis that affected communities, tourist industry, along with culture and its essential part – UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The consequences are painful in terms of economy, culture and education. The shortages of income mean also limits of sources to cover conservation of valuable ancient sports relics.

Nevertheless, there are also some positive aspects: for a number of locations, the pause in visitors and a limited tourists flow mean a blessing recovery time for nature and chance to perform restoration works on these cultural sites.

Some new activities from the part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites managements are being developed, e.g. virtual visits, audio post-casts, online exhibitions, re-opening the sites with the strict sanitary restrictions and safety regulations (Table 2). All these are meant to cope better with the exceptional pandemic situation, like, for example, a new campaign “Accessing World Heritage Sites Safely from Home” launched recently, in November 2020, by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.²⁰ The role of digital technologies as an innovative approach to virtually open the museums for visitors is unquestionable. These efforts, supported and guided by the UNESCO mission, could mitigate some constraints imposed by the lockdown in many aspects, especially in culture and educational integration of excluded groups.

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre is monitoring on the global maps of the World Heritage Sites closures caused by COVID-19. The number of close-up

go to Heritage, Heritage must go to visitors. Digitalisation Heritage in time of Corona, [in:] F. Burni (ed.), *Tourism facing a pandemic: from crisis to recovery*, University of Bergamo, Bergamo 2020, pp. 165–175; DOI: 10.6092/978-88-97253-04-4; D. Parnell, P. Widdop, A. Bond, R. Wilson, *COVID-19, networks and sport*, “Managing Sport and Leisure” 2020, 31, 3, Taylor – Francis Online, pp. 1–7, DOI: doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1750100, pp. 1–7.

¹⁸ www.edition.cnn.com, 2020.

¹⁹ www.whc.unesco.org, 2020.

²⁰ Ibidem.

sites constantly varies and it depends on the particular situation of each country (or even more specifically, with a given region, as it is in Greece). Promoting and enabling access to culture and education, for example, to the historic sports architecture, during the time of self-isolation has great importance for millions of students around the world, especially as far as their wellbeing at the difficult confinement time is concerned.

Above all, an important question arises, namely how today we could plan cultural tourism development and redevelopment, after the pandemic crisis. In the past, planning in detail was a common practice, now we are aware of the fact that many factors are unpredictable and planning is difficult, if not impossible. It seems that the only answer, however of only a general nature, is flexibility, readiness for changes and quick adaptation to new circumstances, even necessity of improvisation in certain areas. Creativity, imagination, innovations and new technologies might be a substantial help in shaping a new offer for cultural tourism, ensuring sanitary restrictions and providing attractions. Therefore, it is necessary to verify the old forecasts and prepare new recommendations for the directions of cultural tourism redevelopment. It is to be underlined that planning heritage tourism redevelopment requires solving several problems, such as demands for sanitary safe hotels, restaurants, retail, public transport, museums and heritage sites. Bearing these in mind, it will be difficult to formulate general solutions and possibly the situation of each town and each heritage site must be evaluated individually.

Clearly, there has been a revival of interest in sports history and, consequently, in historic sports architecture. The curiosity of visitors is focused on sports events and glory (Olympia in Greece), unique beauty of location (Delphi in Greece) or outstanding technical solutions in the sports buildings (Coliseum and Circus Maximus in Rome, Italy). In the 21st century many tourists (both domestic and foreign) want to explore the remaining landmarks of the sport's past – with curiosity, respect and attention. Now, as it seems, it is also possible despite pandemic time travelling restrictions. However, new actions and policies are required to meet sanitary recommendations. To rebuild consumer confidence and to enable the recovery of cultural tourism, there are important new ideas in travelling organization, legal regulations, health safety restrictions (like small groups or individual sightseeing offered now by some of the touring agencies in Ephesus, Turkey), advanced technologies (virtual tours in museums and sport heritage sites) and activities limited only to those that could take place in open-air settings (for example, archaeological sites in Delphos, Ephesus, Olympia, Rome) (Table 2).

However, to make the re-opening of sports heritage sites safe and possible, the actions supervised by the government to support these strategies might be crucial: the tourism industry (hotels, restaurants, transport, travel agencies) and cultural institutions (museums, heritage sites) need credible measures including interest-free loans, guaranteed loans, non-refundable subsidies, funds to develop marketing and strengthen the cultural identity, free webinars and trainings, help

to adapt and implement new technologies (audio-video tours), support and help to create intensive promotion and branding of these destinations which might be, despite pandemic restrictions, strong attractions for cultural tourists. It is to be underlined that the recovery of cultural tourism requires strong support at the national and international level, technical assistance programmes coordinated by the relevant international institutions, such as the United Nation World Tourist Organization (UNWTO), the United Nation World Health Organization (UNWHO), the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) and the United Nation Education Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Table 1. Monitoring trends of World Heritage Sites closures in 2020

Trends	1 st of April 2020	23 rd of November 2020	Difference
Sites opened	10%	44%	+34%
Sites closed	75%	26%	-49%
Sites partially opened	15%	30%	-15%

Source: prepared on the base of UNESCO statistic data (www.en.unesco.org, access: on the 27th November 2020). Note: the information was based on the major trends observed at the national levels in 167 countries having World Heritage Sites (tourists visits suspended on the World Heritage Sites due to the pandemic COVID-19 safety restrictions).

Table 2. Ancient Greek and Roman sports architecture in the selected World Heritage Sites and their offer for visitors in the pandemic time of COVID-19 (visits possible in – situ and virtually)

Country [1]	World Heritage Site (year listed) [2]	Historic sports architecture [3]	World Heritage Site offers for tourists in the pandemic time of COVID-19 (available in – situ and virtually), November 2020 [4]
France	Arles (1981)	Roman Amphitheatre (1 st century AD), Bath of Constantine (4 th AD)	In November 2020, visiting archaeological sites, museums, visitors' centres was possible, however only in small groups limited to 20 people. Several custom - tailored private, and semi – private tours were offered: 'Arles Small Groups Segway and Walking Tours', 'Arles Private Tour with a Specialist'. Virtual, on – line visitors were offered the following: a photo gallery, video tours (in Hebrew, Spanish, French, English, German and Russian). Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, several rules were applied and required to follow when visiting the site: wearing face masks as obligatory, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor's limits on the site [whc.unesco.org , 2020].

Table 2. Ancient Greek and Roman sports architecture... (cont.)

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Greece	Delphi (1987)	Stadium (5 th century BC and 2 nd century AD), hippodrome (5 th century BC), baths and pools (4 th century BC), gymnasium (4 th century BC), palaestra (4 th century BC)	<p>In November 2020, due to the second nationwide lockdown in Greece (until December 7) the museums and visitor centres were closed to the public.</p> <p>Instead, tourists were offered remote, on – line virtual visits such as a photo gallery, video tours (in English, German, Russian, Japanese).</p> <p>Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, several rules of behaviour were required of visitors: wearing face masks as obligatory, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor’s limits on the site [whc.uneco.org, 2020].</p>
	Olympia (1989)	Stadium (8 th century BC and 4 th century AD), hippodrome (5 th century BC), baths (3 rd BC), palaestra (3 rd century BC), gymnasiums (2 nd century BC)	<p>In November 2020, visiting archaeological sites, old and new museums and a visitors centre was possible. Also several private, and customer - shaped tours were offered: ‘The Lighting of the Olympic Flame,’ ‘The Olympic Private Tour with a Specialist’.</p> <p>Offered for remote, on – line visits were: a photo gallery, Digital Exhibition, video tours (in Hebrew, Spanish, French, English, German and Russian).</p> <p>Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, several rules of behaviour were applied and required to follow when visiting the site: wearing face masks as obligatory, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor’s limits on the site [whc.uneco.org, 2020].</p>
Italy	Rome, Coliseum (1980), Circus Maximus (1980)	The Roman Coliseum Amphitheatre, known also as the Flavian Theatre (1 st century AD); Circus Maximus (6 th century BC)	<p>In November 2020, due to the second nationwide lockdown in Italy (until December 3) the archaeological site, museum and visitors centre were closed to the public.</p> <p>However, private tours up to 20 people were possible on the site on the condition that the arrangements were made in advance: ‘Coliseum, Forums, Palatine’, ‘Coliseum, Palatine, Roman Forum, Domes Auraca Private Tour with a Specialist’, ‘Circus Maximus Experience’, ‘Ancient Rome Segway Tour’. However, all the events like theatre performances, sound and light shows were suspended due to the COVID – 19 government policy.</p> <p>Offered as remote, on – line visits were: a photo gallery, a video tour (in Hebrew, Spanish, French, English, German and Russian).</p> <p>Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, visitors were required to follow several rules on the site: obligatory face masks, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance (minimum 1.5m), visitors limit on the site, at the entrance body temperature was checked (visitors whose body temperature was below 37.5⁰C were let in) [whc.uneco.org, 2020]</p>

Table 2. Ancient Greek and Roman sports architecture... (cont.)

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Turkey	Aphrodisias (2017)	Stadium (1 st century AD), baths of Hadrian (2 nd century BC)	<p>In November 2020, the archaeological site, museum and visitors centre were opened to the public.</p> <p>Moreover, some private tours up to 20 people were possible on the site on the condition that the arrangements were made in advance: ‘Private Day Tour to Ephesus’, ‘Aphrodisias and Ephesus Private Tour’, ‘Hierapolis – Aphrodisias – Ephesus Private Tour’, ‘Ephesus – Aphrodisias – Semi Private Tour’, and several offers of multi-day & extended tours, for example, ‘Ancient Two Cities Tour: Aphrodisias and Ephesus’.</p> <p>Offered as remote, on – line visits were a photo gallery, numerous video tours (in Arabic, French, English, German and Dutch).</p> <p>Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, visitors were required to follow several rules on the site: obligatory face masks, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor’s limits on the site [whc.unesco.org, 2020].</p>
	Ephesus (2015)	East Gymnasium, Vadius Gymnasium and Harbour Gymnasium (2 nd century AD), Baths of Varius, Scholastica Baths, Harbour Baths (2 nd century AD), palaestra (2 nd century AD), Ephesus Stadium (1 st century AD)	<p>In November 2020, the archaeological site, museum and visitors centre were opened to the public.</p> <p>Moreover, some private tours up to 20 people were possible on the site, on the condition that the arrangements were made in advance: ‘Day Tour of Aphrodisias and Ephesus’, ‘Ancient Ephesus and House of Virgin Mary Private Tour’, ‘Ephesus - Hierapolis – Aphrodisias Private Tour’ and several offers of multi-day & extended tours, for example, ‘Pamukkale, Aphrodisias and Ephesus Tour’.</p> <p>Offered as remote, on – line visits were a photo gallery, numerous video tours (in Arabic, French, English, German and Dutch).</p> <p>Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, visitors were required to follow several rules on the site: obligatory face masks, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor’s limits on the site [whc.unesco.org, 2020].</p>
	Hierapolis (1980)	Baths, pool, library, gymnasium (2 nd century BC)	<p>In November 2020, the archaeological site, museum and visitors centre were opened to the public. The combined ticket to visit Pamukkale hot pools and the archaeological site of Hierapolis was available.</p> <p>Moreover, some private tours up to 20 people were possible on the site, on the condition that the arrangements were made in advance: ‘Day Tour of Pamukkale and Hierapolis’, ‘Ephesus – Hierapolis – Aphrodisias Private Tour’ and several offers of multi-day & extended tours, for example, ‘Pamukkale, Hierapolis, Aphrodisias and Ephesus Tour’).</p>

Table 2. Ancient Greek and Roman sports architecture... (cont.)

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Turkey	Hieropolis (1980)	Baths, pool, library, gymnasium (2 nd century BC)	Offered as remote, on – line visits were a photo gallery, numerous video tours (in Arabic, French, English, German, Russian, Spanish, Japanese and Dutch). Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, visitors were required to follow several rules on the site: obligatory face masks, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor’s limits on the site [whc.unesco.org, 2020].
	Termessos (Tentative Lists)	Gymnasium (3 rd century BC)	In November 2020, the archaeological site, museum and visitors centre were opened to the public. Moreover, some private and semi-private tours up to 20 people were offered to visit the site, on the condition that the arrangements were made in advance. Excursions called ‘Termessos Tours’ were organized from major cities and popular holiday villages: Antalya, Alanya, Kemer – Beldibi, Side, Belek, Olympos and many others. Moreover, the site offered guided tours, including some hiking experience in the Thermessos National Park (Taurus Mountains). Offered as remote, on – line visits were a photo gallery, numerous video tours (in Arabic, French, English, German, Russian, Spanish, Japanese and Dutch). Note: due to COVID-19 very strict sanitary discipline, visitors were required to follow several rules on the site: obligatory face masks, hand washing and disinfection, keeping social distance, visitor’s limits on the site [whc.unesco.org, 2020].

Source: prepared on the base of UNESCO statistic data (www.en.unesco.org, access: the 27th November 2020). Note: the detailed information about current museum offer was based on the information provided by a given World Heritage Site Centre (www.whc.unesco.org, access: the 27th November 2020).

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