

Usability in open-air events: The case of *Rally Acropolis* 2021

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Customer experience in public, open-air events

- ▶ **Smooth attendance experience desired & expected for public events**
 - What to expect
 - When to attend & how long to stay
 - How to get to the venue
 - Info for environment, facilities, conditions, safety
 - Info for travelers for remote sites
- ▶ **Happy customers are good for business**
 - Reduced experience potentially limits future growth
- ▶ **Case study : Rally Acropolis 2021**

“Acropolis - Rally of Gods” 2021

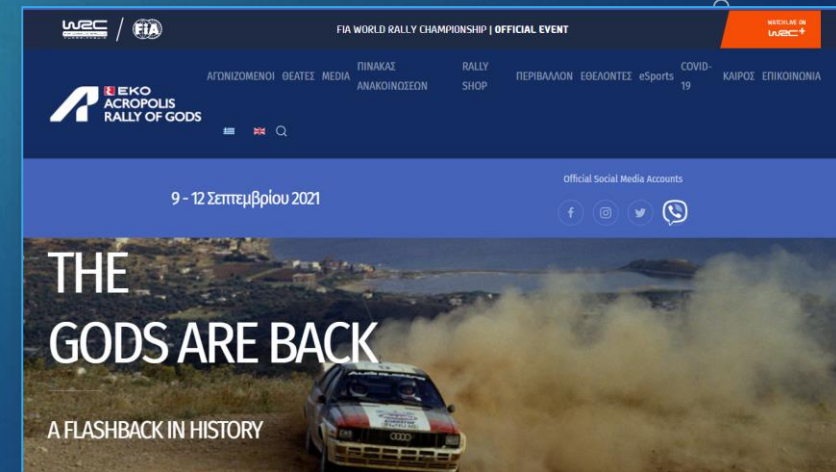
- ▶ First race 1951-52
- ▶ First international competition 1953
- ▶ Included in World Rally Championship (WRC) 1973
- ▶ Voted one of three most difficult races of WRC
- ▶ Expelled from WRC due to financial difficulties 2014
- ▶ Dynamic comeback within WRC 2021



Official portal for teams, athletes & spectators

- ▶ Portal [HTTPS://WWW.ACROPOLISRALLY.GR/PORTAL/EL/](https://www.acropolisrally.gr/portal/el/)
- ▶ Where Special maps used, places not shown on commonly used maps by Google, Apple / Tom-Tom
- ▶ When Official: venue access 3hrs before first car
Actual: on foot anytime but cars blocked far away
- ▶ Time plan Designed for racing crews & professionals
Not very useful for spectators
- ▶ What Missing description of racing stages environment, conditions

Inadequate information detracts from spectators enjoyment and limits attendance



Great spectacle but hard to reach

- ▶ Great spectacle, inline with RA fame among three hardest in WRC
- ▶ Great expectations given the high profile return of RA to WRC under auspices of Sports Ministry and notable sponsors
- ▶ Missing, inaccurate, misleading info for spectators
 - Limited info for what / where / when to watch
 - Access times much higher than expected
 - Missed opportunities
 - Inability to watch some events due to road blocks
 - Side-effect: congestion of fans in midtown during pandemic

Case 1: Athens Syntagma Square

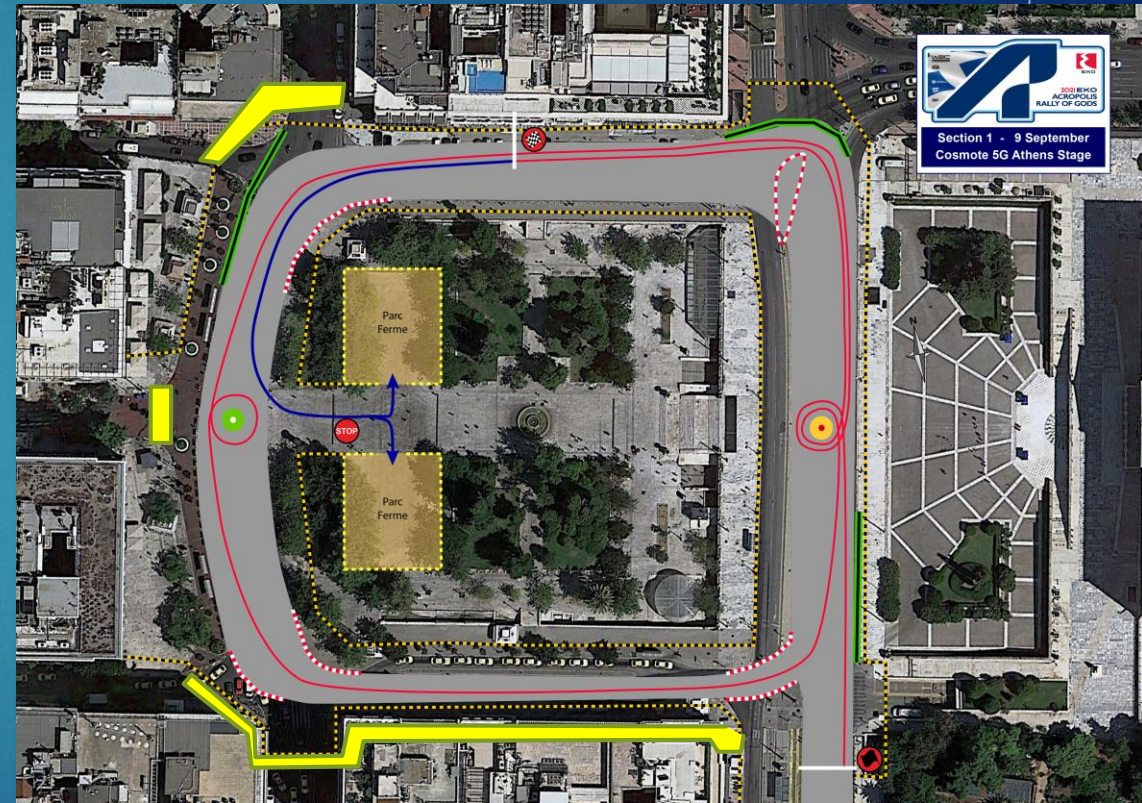
- ▶ Venue Central square downtown Athens (map on next slide)
- ▶ Legend Map has no legend
- ▶ Access Access points closed by police farther & sooner
- ▶ Venue Spectator area limited vs. assumptions from maps
- ▶ Car expo No info when to visit (access blocked off by police)

- ▶ Police closed off access farther & sooner than assumed from maps and official info. Spectators area severely limited (misleading info)
- ▶ **Fans practically unable to enjoy the show**
- ▶ **Congestion during pandemic**

Case 1: Athens Syntagma Square *Official vs. reality*



Official map
Assumed spectator area



After police blocks & construction fences
Available spectator area

Case 1: Athens Syntagma Square *Spectators*



Limited view points, most with restricted view, lead to congestion during pandemic

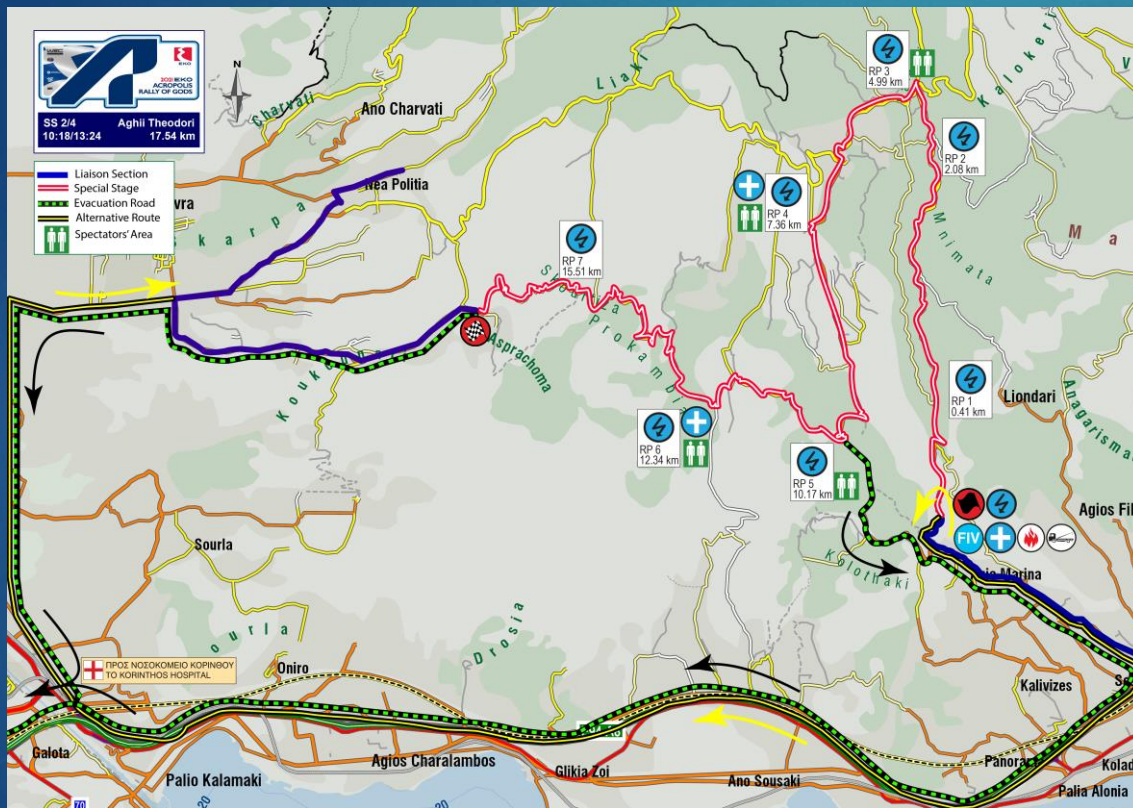
Case 2: Special Section Aghii Thodori

- ▶ Venue see map on next slide
- ▶ Legend Clear
- ▶ Access Road access closed off many hours before event
Some roads closed for duration of section prevented attendance of subsequent events
- ▶ Program Official: Assumed access 3 hours before first car
Actual: Continuous access on foot
- ▶ Road blocks Police blocks 4+ km further than assumed from maps
Some access roads blocked entirely between SS
- ▶ **Fans walked 4+km in blazing heat. Police advised “*about 1 km*”.
Many missed start. Hard for kids & senior citizens. Disappointment.**

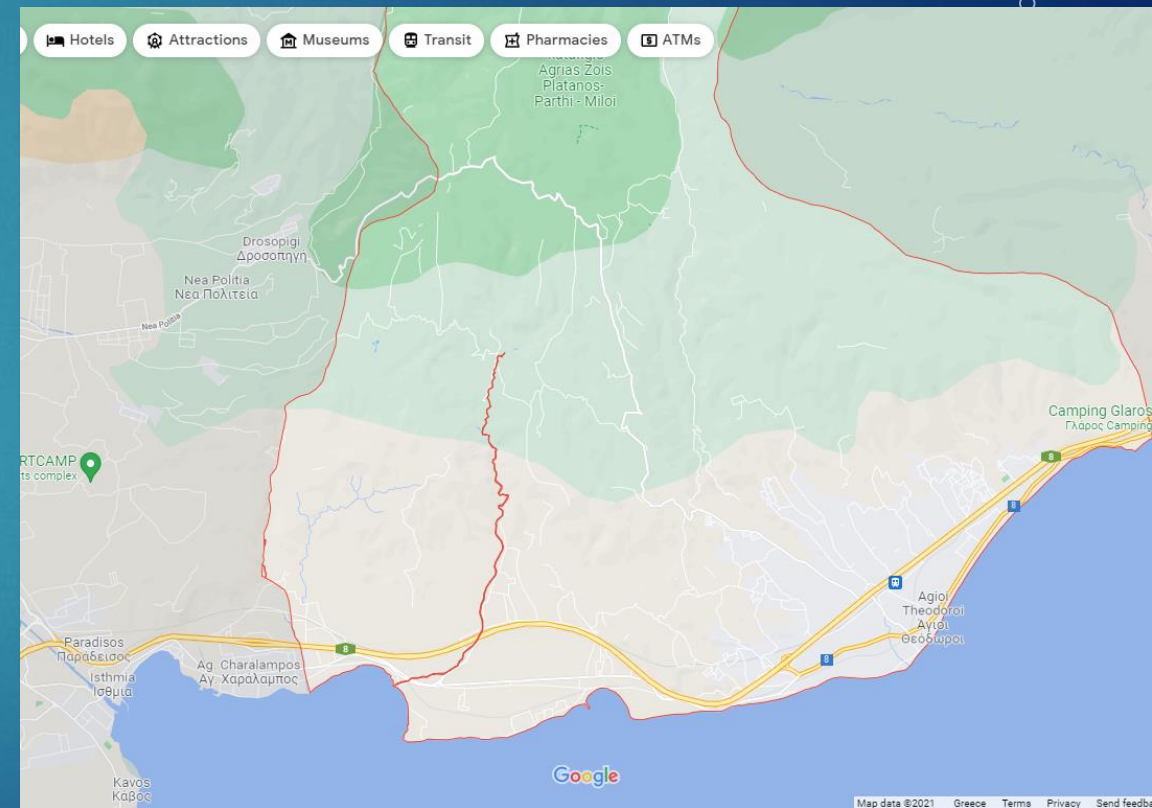
Case 2: Special Section Aghii Thodori Maps – Official vs Google

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Portal info

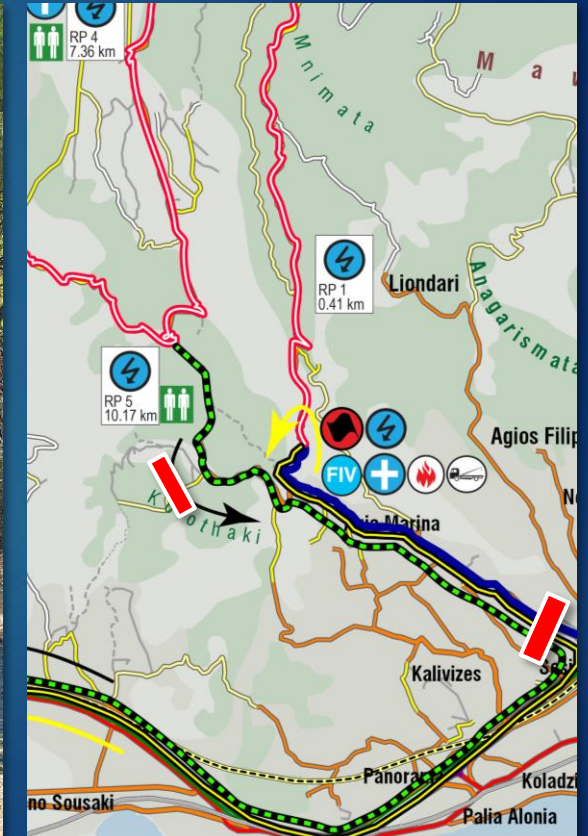
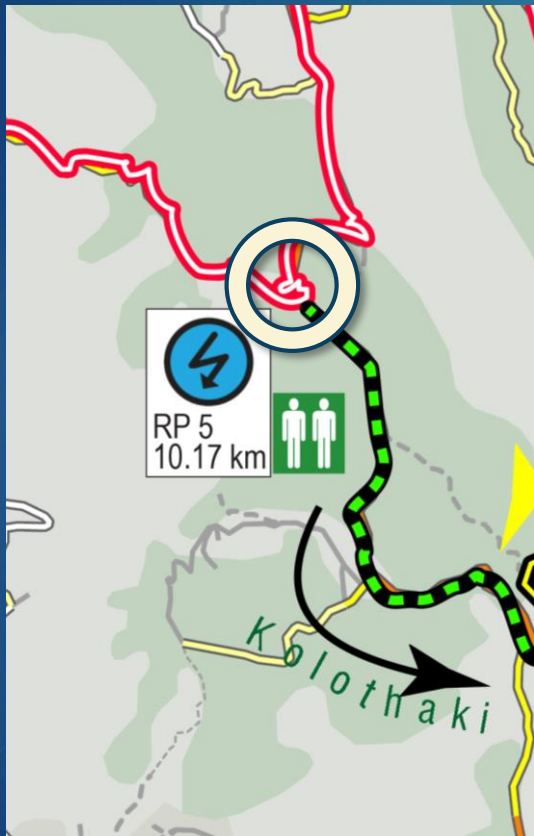


Official map, detailed



Google Maps, no detail in remote areas

Case 2: Special Section Aghii Thodori Access – Official vs actual



Spectators area – assume clear access

Police blocks 

Case 2: Special Section Aghii Thodori

Spectator area access & location

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Case 2: Special Section Aghii Thodori *Great Spectacle for brave & persistent*



Hazards not mentioned in official portal (dust baths, hurled stones, risks of traction loss)

Case 3: Specialty Press portals

4Wheels: «Absolute Spectators Guide»

- ▶ Most respected publication & portal for automobile enthusiasts
- ▶ Detailed access instructions for selected special sections (race stages)
- ▶ Description of sections & proposals for fans
- ▶ Map coordinates on selected points 🙌
- ▶ Instructions to access selected spectator points
- ▶ Safety warnings 🙌

BUT ...

- ▶ **Access plans based on local POI; if you know, you'll likely don't need**
- ▶ **Info partially outdated by police restrictions. Confusion, delays and in few cases inability to reach spectator points**

Summary

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- ▶ Great teams, impressive cars and fun spectacle
- ▶ Rally Acropolis returns to WRC after seven years absence
- ▶ Major international motor sports event with government support
- ▶ Big media hype & top production but limited attention to fans' needs
- ▶ Omissions & inaccuracies in official communications
 - Hindered attendance
 - Some missed opportunities
 - Unexpected lengthy walks in hot weather
 - Potentially discouraged from attendance next year
 - Undesirable crow congestion amidst pandemic

Lessons learned

- ▶ Public, open-air events should focus more on spectator requirements
- ▶ Event organizers (like RA) & specialty media will benefit from usability screening – use common sense and preferably engage specialists
- ▶ Attention required to facilitate attendance & increase safety
- ▶ Information provided should ...
 - focus on user needs (what / where / when / how / ...)
 - be coordinated with local admin and police and updated regularly

Thank you

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