Sprawy Narodowościowe: Seria nowa, *2024*(56), Article 3282

To See the Unseen: From History Books to Learning from the Landscape

DOI: https://doi.org/10.11649/sn.3282

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Abstract

The Czech-German borderscape, which has been affected by forced migrations several times over the last hundred years, contains many layers of memory. Some of them can still be identified, while others need to be searched for because their traces have been erased. In this context, this article aims to discuss the possibilities of place-based learning, using a case study from the Ore Mountains: the former town of Pressnitz. The study introduces resources that can be used by educators to promote the understanding of complex processes and global phenomena, such as colonialism, power structures, mobility, globalization, and gender. The analyzed materials include archivalia from Czechia, Germany, and Austria, as well as documents from private collections in various European countries. The existence of regional and global interconnections between the Czech lands (Bohemia) and colonies is surprising, but it can also help educators to support self-identification with the region on a local level through new narratives.

Keywords: traveling ladies' orchestras; imperialism; gender; cultural heritage; forced migration; place-based learning; Pressnitz (Přísečnice)

This research was partially supported by the Faculty of Science, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem (project no. UJEP-SGS-2024-53-004-2).
No competing interests have been declared.
Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.
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Introduction

The Czech-German borderscape offers a great potential for learning about the past and understanding the present. An area affected by forced migration several times over the last hundred years (and thus a post-displacement region), it contains many layers of memory that might provide a sufficient amount of inspiration for problem-based learning and place-based learning. However, a dilemma arises once the landscape has been significantly modified, for instance, turned into an open-pit mining site or a reservoir. In such cases, the traces can only be identified by skilled (and sensitive) landscape observers, or they should be looked for elsewhere. Therefore, one could ask: What remains as visible relics? Where else can documents of a former culture be found and how to use them as resources for learning? What global phenomena, which may seem irrelevant there, can be illustrated on local examples?

This interdisciplinary and international study is based on the practical teaching experience of the author and the field work, including active participation of students from Czechia and Germany (2016–2021; Gymnázium Kadaň & Evangelische Schulgemeinschaft Erzgebirge, Annaberg-Buchholz). After getting to know the area, the students collected data, archival materials, and oral history records. The musical history of the area appeared to be an interesting dimension of their research but was not the core of the school project: the area was not explored from the musicological or culturological point of view. Rather, the place-based activities focused on the interpersonal dimension, as well as transgenerational and multiethnic dialogue in the post-displacement region. As a result, the students created a documentary movie (Hrnčíř&Mala Videography, 2021), for which they had to combine various data sources. In the movie, we can clearly observe their self-reflection and the process of learning *about* the place through the place.

In this article, I focus on the area of Pressnitz (Přísečnice) in north-western Bohemia, in the borderlands of Czechia, drawing on conclusions derived from the project described above. For centuries, this town in the vicinity of the Czech-German (to be precise: Saxonian) border had been known as the Free Royal Town of Pressnitz (Königliche Freie Bergstadt Pressnitz) and was a center of a silver mining. However, in the late eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the economic changes caused a decline in mining and therefore a growing need to find a new source of income. Pressnitzers started to earn their living from music and established traveling ladies' orchestras, which performed around the world and became a unique phenomenon. From the mid-nineteenth century, it was common to see Pressnitz *Damenkapellen*, as they were known in German, in various countries on different continents. Before World War I, Pressnitz was mainly known as the "*Musikstadt*".

In places that have not been affected by displacement of their inhabitants, there would probably be a sign of public appreciation, a sculpture or a memorial of people like those traveling musicians who earned fame to their home region owing to their uniqueness, and also as an expression of local pride or sentiment. However, Pressnitz has been impacted by forced migration several times. Firstly, when its German-speaking inhabitants were expelled in 1945–1946. As a result, the vast majority of Pressnitzers went to Germany, even though they had no ancestral connections to the country. The music expertise, the knowledge of particular practices, and the musical tradition passed on to the next generations. The meanings associated with the souvenirs brought from the overseas tours had also migrated, as had the locally-rooted collective identity of musicianship.

Secondly, the town was re-populated again in the 1950s, but the number of newcomers reached only a quarter of the prewar population. The traditions they had brought from their regions of origin (such as Central Bohemia, Slovakia, or Eastern Hungary) differed significantly, and a common ground of the new local identity had yet to be invented. Located in a peripheral mountain area near the Czechoslovak-German border, Pressnitz experienced the Iron Curtain effect, even though East Germany was considered a *Freundschaftsland* (i.e. it was part of the Communist Bloc). From the 1950s, the strictly guarded Czechoslovak border brought isolation and functioned as a barrier, particularly for the expellees living in Germany who wanted to visit their former homes in the former Sudetenland (the border region of prewar Czechoslovakia, with mostly German-speaking population until 1945).

Lastly, also the postwar generation of Pressnitz inhabitants was forced to leave – this time due to the construction of a dam in 1969–1970. In the name of "higher societal interest" (a cliché term used by communist authorities to emphasize the subordination of individual interests), the Pressnitz valley – including such localities as Pressnitz (Přísečnice), Reischdorf (Rusová), and Dörnsdorf (Dolina) – was flooded. Since then, almost all visible traces of the town have disappeared, and it has vanished from the public memory.

Even though both societies, Czechs and Germans alike, and especially eyewitnesses from Pressnitz/Přísečnice, were exposed to different socio-political developments under the influence of different geopolitical powers, both of them share the experience of injustice and futile struggle against the bureaucrats (Hrnčíř&Mala Videography, 2021; Kupková, 2020; Kupková & Komarevtseva, 2016). The narratives of what Pressnitz used to be (including stories of the *Freie Bergstadt* and *Musikstadt*, and meanings of home or a place of childhood memories) and what is it now (with the ascribed meanings of a reservoir or a place for leisure activities) differ significantly and are marked by a dissonance that needs to be taken into consideration.

Very few physical relics of Pressnitz can be seen in their original location today (e.g. old roads, railways, and bridges, sculptures, war memorials). What is more, their identification in a forested and protected area (such as a water source protection zone in the vicinity of Pressnitz) depends on the individual's sensitivity and ability to "read the landscape" there.

In turn, the intangible, cultural heritage of Pressnitz needs to be searched for in various European countries, including Czechia, Germany, and Austria. This makes it an extraordinary challenge for teachers, educators, and heritage interpreters who would like to apply the principles of place-based learning. At the same time, it offers unexpected potential for learning and discovery. Therefore, this article aims to discuss the "invisible" legacy of Pressnitz and suggest what can be learned from and about the highly modified landscape of the place. I aim to frame the socio-cultural context of the post-displacement landscape and suggest possible tools and resources that might be used to support the place-based learning approach. As such, then, I do not deliver a ready-to-go unit – with the time plan, the learning objectives and outcomes, and so on.

Learning *from* the Place and *about* the Place

Recently, the dynamics of environmental, social, cultural, and economic changes has been increasing, which questions the role of education and learning as well. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic limited the ability to travel and thus confined many activities – including tourism, heritage interpretation, and education – to the local level. Educators had to focus on local conditions in order to be able to secure the individual's learning process, which, in turn, led to a greater interest in the discovery of local specifics (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022). This attitude allowed students to learn from local examples with such methods as place-based learning and project-based learning rather than from standardized textbooks. These methods, however, cannot fully address current challenges brought by the latest developments, and nor do they provide examples or address issues that would be relevant for each student in terms of their individual interests, abilities, or their studying conditions (Herrera, 2022). Moreover, recent studies point out that the tasks in geography schoolbooks are primarily descriptive and thus do not contribute to the development of higher cognitive functions (such as the evaluation of processes and greater phenomena) and fail to motivate students (Trahorsch & Knecht, 2021). Lastly, standardized textbooks may reproduce oversimplified narratives (e.g. emphasizing a single or a dominant aspect of a global phenomenon or a historical period) which tend to be fixed and long-lasting and thus difficult to change (Kučerová et al., 2018).

As a result of those challenges, educators started to develop their own worksheets, tasks, and training materials that focused primarily on the home region, in order to consider the local reality and try to link it with the global dimension meaningfully. The interest in local specifics – including teaching and learning about local heritage – and the need for sharing good practice have grown.[1] At the same time, this situation has questioned educators' knowledge of the place and required them to extend their comfort zone: they could no

1 In Czechia, some of the recent examples of learning materials inspired by the local environment include: Dvořáková and Gregorová (2023), Hájková (2022), Kotěra (2021), Kupková and Brichová (2021), Hýsek (2020).

longer rely on "traditional backup" in the form of standardized textbooks and pre-made materials. It should be noted that their endeavors have not always been successful in making meaningful connections between local particularities and global issues. Indeed, this aspect appears to be a great challenge for educators today, particularly from the didactical point of view, as it requires an interdisciplinary perspective (Global Education Network Europe, 2022; Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic, 2023; UNESCO, 2011). It also requires heritage interpretation and teacher training, and this need has been addressed in recent national and European guidelines and policy documents – the Global Education Strategy introduced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí České republiky, 2018), Engaging Citizens with Europe's Cultural Heritage (Interpret Europe, 2017), and Guidelines on Innovative/Emerging Cultural Heritage Education and Training Paths (Baatz et al., 2023).

Place-based learning (PBL) involves interdisciplinarity (Kühnlová, 2007; G. A. Smith & Sobel, 2014) and tries to connect the local with the global, the near with the far, and the obvious with the unknown. It also contributes to the social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development of the individual's personality in a holistic manner, and it offers educators an opportunity to gradually adjust the complexity of the learning process (Galkute et al., 2023). Therefore, PBL may fulfill the aims of transformative and value-based learning (Fliegener & Ilmer, 2023) and contribute to changing the status quo and the "business-as-usual" attitude in terms of sustainable way of life (Pettig & Ohl, 2023), highlighting the action-oriented approach and thus the empowerment of young people, which is a necessary precondition for learning for sustainability (Blum et al., 2021; Činčera & Medek, 2023; Sass et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2017).

Place-based learning also promotes the local environment as a source of learning and meaningful relationships between various actors in the local community (Jančaříková, 2022). It has been observed that learning about local heritage provides a sense of continuity (Pineschi, 2023), which might be important particularly for post-displacement regions. A recent discussion in the field of geography and environmental education points at the concept of sense of place and its intangible dimensions, such as place attachment, individual symbolic meanings, and group identity (Ardoin et al., 2012; Koupatsiaris & Drinia, 2024; Rubáš & Matějček, 2024). Both community involvement and sense of place further support interdisciplinary exploration – thinking of particularities, processes, and different perspectives where human relationships cannot be separated from the place (Borovinová et al., 2020; Schild, 2016). Moreover, learning from the place contributes to solidarity and empathy, and develops competences for democracy (Council of Europe, 2013) and active citizenship (Čermák, 2023). Although community actions may seem insignificant in school curriculum documents, a daily involvement of a number of participants can already make a difference, significant both in environmental and socio-cultural terms (Bednarz et al., 2013). Lastly, the more the learners engage in such activities and benefit from their relevance, the more successful and effective the learning process is.

Such multi-dimensional educational activities may pose an extraordinary challenge for each educator who wants to implement place-based learning. Still, the first step might be, for instance, to introduce relevant local examples in each lesson. This decision depends on the educator's knowledge of the place, which requires continuous learning and conscious reflection on fixed mindsets and narratives (Herrera, 2022). If possible, the next step might be to learn about the place through students' direct contact: hands-on experience or a thematic unit. Entering public space provides opportunities for cooperation with other community partners (e.g. historians, museologists, archeologists, entrepreneurs, local representatives), potentially leading to its long-term continuation in the future. This also allows students to learn to evaluate both the geographic and time dimension of a particular phenomenon. The most advanced form of PBL could be that of a school educational program (Kulich et al., 2023) including continuous community involvement of students with other local actors. In other words, learning *in* place, study *of* the place and learning *from* the place enable learners to understand greater phenomena and processes that have been specific to the location.

Such an interdisciplinary educational approach towards the place not only contributes to an overall personal development of learners, but also reacts flexibly to the changing world (Fryč et al., 2020), including the need of re-contextualization of the natural and (dissonant) cultural heritage of a place (Kisić, 2016; L. Smith, 2012; UNESCO, 2003). It puts schools in the center of community life (thus potentially raising its attractiveness), promotes learning as social interaction with others (Rutten & Boekema, 2012), and strengthens active citizenship, intercultural competences, democratic principles, and sustainability (Bendl & Rubáš, 2023). It could be argued that some school subjects (e.g. geography) or some educators deal with various interdisciplinary phenomena and adopt PBL as a matter of course (Bednarz et al., 2013; International Geographical Union, 2016; Marada et al., 2017; Mehren, 2021; van der Schee, 2012). In the following section, I suggest that cross-sectional links are also possible in other subjects.

What Can we Learn about (from, in) a Place That Has "Disappeared"?

Learning in and from the local environment is not a revolutionary idea, but can such educational activity also happen in a place that has been strongly modified, as in the case of Pressnitz? Although there is not much left on site, there are exciting stories and phenomena to be discovered in a variety of resources that combine the tangible and intangible dimension of the legacy of the town. The selected archival documents, such as newspaper advertisements, postcards, business cards, personal correspondence, diaries, or other ego-documents containing personal stories, as well as particular objects, e.g. musical instruments or souvenirs from other continents (Table 1) – together with the last physical remains on site – could form a sufficient base for PBL, even though the town itself does not exist anymore and the last eyewitnesses of Pressnitz live elsewhere.

Table 1: Selected archival documents and objects illustrating the tangible and intangible dimensions of the cultural heritage of Pressnitz as resources for place-based learning

<table>
<tr><td>(a) Advertisements</td><td>

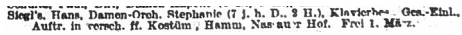
Advertisement for female musicians (*Pressnitzer Zeitung*, 1908)</td><td> 
Advertisement of the Damen-Orchester Stephanie, Kapellmeister Hans Siegl (*Der Artist*, 1908)</td></tr>
<tr><td>(b) Postcards, promotional business cards</td><td>
Business card of the Elite-Damen-Konzert-Orchester, Kapellmeister Hans Pöschl (Private collection, V. Kupková)</td><td>

Photo of the Damen-Konzert-Kapelle Stephany, Kapellmeister Hans Siegl (*Rund um den Keilberg*, 1971)</td></tr>
<tr><td>(c) Postcards (private correspondence)</td><td>
Postcard sent from Brighton (Gustav Knebelsberger) to Hagen (Emilie Knebelsberger), 20.03.1901 (Private collection, E. Trefná)</td><td>

Postcard sent from Lake Garda to Interlaken (Emilie Knebelsberger), 17.07.1909 (Private collection, E. Trefná)</td></tr>
<tr><td>(d) Diary</td><td>"***Stuttgart, 12.12.1866**. Hier im Theater gewesen […] es ist groß, hat vier Galerien und ein großes Parterre, aber wenig Logen."*
"***Würzburg, 12.10.1867**. Alte gotische Stadt, in der es mehr Kirchen gibt als Häuser."*
"***Alexandria, 11.7.1869**. Zur Kleopatra-Säule geritten […] Auch befindet sich die Ruine des Schlosses der Kleopatra noch in einem ziemlich erhaltenen Zustand."*
(Diary of Moritz Wirth, as cited in Bartusch, 2005)</td><td>"***Kairo, 10.3.1871**. Die Sklaverei ist noch immer nicht ganz ausgerottet. Wenn man hier die armen oberägyptischen Schwarzen betrachtet, so hat es bei uns ein Hund oft viel besser als ein Mensch. Es wäre an der Zeit, dass diese Tyrannei aufhören möchte."*
(Diary of Moritz Wirth, as cited in Bartusch, 2005)</td></tr>
</table>

(e) Souvenirs[2]	Japanese mask, formerly in the Municipal Museum in Pressnitz (Náprstek Museum of African, Asian and American Cultures, Prague, inv. no. 54.898)	Buddha statue, delivered by the Pressnitzer J. Hassner (Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna, inv. no. 69761)

All these objects are inextricably linked with Pressnitz. Some of them were found in Czechia: promotional business cards and postcards from private collections, souvenirs from tours identified in the Náprstek Museum of African, Asian and American Cultures in Prague; others in Germany: the diary of Moritz Wirth in the Sudetendeutsches Haus in Munich, and in Austria: souvenirs for the royal collections identified in the Weltmuseum in Vienna. Today, it is difficult to place them in the right context in which they had been acquired or to identify their geographical origin because they have remained in storage for decades. Consequently, we need to ask some questions: What kind of socio-cultural processes made it possible to obtain such objects? What global phenomena can we read between the lines? And how to use these resources to support learners' place-based learning experience?

Using archival documents for education requires including them in the entire process in a meaningful way (Derikartz et al., 2022; Diener-Staeckling et al., 2022; Trahorsch & Frolík, 2020). They might help to stimulate the students' interest in the topic and motivate them to collect pre-information and pre-concepts which may be later developed and worked on; such materials might also motivate them to reflect on current issues. Ideally, this can lead to a further discussion (in the case of Pressnitz: e.g. "How do the eyewitnesses perceive their former home?" "What other traces of Pressnitz can be found and where?") and

2 As used here, the term souvenirs refers to a variety of objects of exotic origin that Pressnitz musicians brought from their European, Asian, and African tours. Depending on their savings and income, they bought various items for themselves and for their family and relatives. Some of the objects served as an expression of their status (exotic jewelry or the latest fashion accessories worn on public occasions in Pressnitz), while others confirmed their identity (like musical instruments, which expressed their aspiration to be perceived as musicians that had seen the world). They were often used for decoration in Pressnitz households and public spaces (e.g. restaurants). Also, some of the *Kapellmeister* acquired such objects and delivered them, for instance, to the Weltmuseum Wien in Vienna or the Municipal Museum in Pressnitz. Such practices of commodification of cultural heritage show a close link between the imperialist discourse of "explorer" and "collector" – which used to prevail in the countries without their own colonial possessions – and the mindset of ordinary people. It is therefore possible to speak about an active involvement in colonial practices.

investigation. Each student is invited to bring their own experiences (e.g. the place where they live, personal interests, skills) and interact with the visible features. The educator then guides the students' learning process by asking questions and builds a bridge between the school and the community by providing contacts and connecting the learners with experts. Moreover, to strengthen the relevance for each learner individually, examples of personal stories, including narrations, memoires, and oral histories, may be used in order to find common ground and improve the learning effect (Čistecká, 2019; Dohnal, 2004; Märc, 2006; Ptáček & Růžička, 2012; Vaněk & Mücke, 2010). Students can thus link their own experiences and identify easier with a particular issue, which may make them more willing to engage actively afterwards (Medek, 2023; Rubáš & Matějček, 2024). Personal stories may thus be a powerful tool to promote mutual understanding and intercultural and interreligious sensitivity, and to strengthen the sense of belonging to the community.

Each educator starting working with stories – through objects or places – needs to be aware of not only the socio-political context of their origin (whose voices were heard vs. whose were silenced) but also the aim of the learning unit and the desired impact on students' personal development. What is more, the awareness of local conditions – in terms of existing stories which might be used (e.g. historical legends, diaries, narrations of eyewitnesses, interviews) – is crucial to support a democratic discussion. In contrast to the grand historical narratives, personal stories help to mediate the individual perspective and familiarity with ordinary people, which, in turn, may lead to greater empathy and develop critical thinking skills (Čistecká & Matějček, 2021). There might be relevant stories to learn from any landscape – even in a strongly modified place in a post-displacement area. The role of the educator should therefore be to identify the relevance of such stories and their educational potential. Accordingly, the following section suggests how this can be done in practice – trying to inspire rather than generalize.

Combining the Local, Regional, and Global Dimensions in Place-Based Learning

Although history of Pressnitz includes a number of various topics which might provide a basis for place-based learning (e.g. centuries of mining tradition, aristocratic legacy, or periods of war and decline), in this article I focus on one of the recent and significant aspects in terms of Pressnitzer identity: musicianship. I briefly present this topic – mainly on the basis of a book by Dorothea Kaufmann (1997) – and explore its learning potential.

The central part of the Ore Mountains (mainly Pressnitz, Reischdorf, Dörnsdorf, Kupferberg, Sonnenberg, and Schmiedeberg) used to be a "focal point of ladies' orchestra" (*Illustrirte Zeitung*, 1861; *Democrats and Chronicle*, 1897). Around the mid-nineteenth century, records in the local register already mentioned an occupation called "*Musiker*". Going on tour, however, was not a form of recreation but rather was done to help the family budget. The number

of traveling musicians (predominantly women) had risen continually, reaching its peak at the turn of the twentieth century. The *Damenkapellen* usually consisted of between six and eight members, who were often relatives and neighbors; the director, *Kapellmeister*, used to be a man, but there were also examples of entirely female orchestras (Kupková, 2023). However, this phenomenon has drawn little attention, probably due to its low cultural status (which makes it a case of gender inequality and a historical gap) (Kaufmann, 1997). The female musicians were mostly between 13–18 years old and, on average, spent about two or three years on tours (Kaufmann, 1997). To prevent homesickness and maintain their long-distance relationships, some musicians exchanged postcards. Such private correspondence contained personal messages and the current address of the orchestra (Table 1 (c)).

Selected documents shed light on the story of Emilie Knebelsberger, a Pressnitz female musician (violine player) who traveled around central, eastern, and northern Europe between 1898 and 1911. As a member of the *Damenkapellen*, teenage Emilie exchanged hundreds of postcards with her siblings (also musicians), friends, relatives back home, as well as her admirers. Based on this collection of private correspondence – along with other materials from the period – it is possible to reconstruct the route of each orchestra she played in. For instance, when Emilie's brother was writing her from Brighton, she was performing in Hagen (1901). Similarly, she received a card from him in St. Petersburg, while he was performing in Paris (1903). Such postcards contain not only unique images of those towns and cities from the period, but also short messages that illustrate life on tour as a youngster.

What played a crucial role on their long and often dangerous travels was good relationships among the members of an orchestra, mutual trust, and working as a team. However, press materials and memoirs also provide reports of break-ups and fatalities far away from home. Writing about his tours, Kapellmeister Moritz Wirth mentions in his diary (Table 1 (d)), for instance, that improvisation is needed and "it works quite well, even though there are no virtuoso musicians in the orchestra". On the other hand, he also notes the difficulties and tensions, writing that he is "fed up with the leading position in the orchestra", whose enthusiasm is just declining (1872, Cairo). It should be noted that the *Kapellmeisters* had to manage not only interpersonal relationships but also other challenges, namely contracts in the host destinations, including accommodation and travel arrangements, and negotiations of payments and promotion (Table 1 (a), (b)).

Interestingly, long before Pressnitz had a railway (1872), Pressnitz musicians had been performing in other European and non-European countries, in the Balkans, the Middle East, and even during the opening of the Suez Canal. "At 2 p.m. came all the royal ships and the celebrations began" (17 November 1869), noted Kapellmeister Wirth, adding that he "would probably never experience such a festive and unique event again" (20 November 1869) (dairy of Moritz Wirth, as cited in Bartusch, 2005).

The mobility of Pressnitzers was possible only due to the close ties between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and colonial powers and their participation in imperialism, and due

to the changes brought about by the industrial revolution. Wirth's observations provide evidence of the societal power structures at the time (Table 1 (d)). He observed, for instance, the ongoing slave trade and noted that "some people are treated as animals, or even worse" (1869, Alexandria). In his view, "it is about time that slavery was prohibited" (1871, Cairo). Nevertheless, Pressnitzers used to play music for colonial officials in seaports (e.g. Turkey), for members of the royalty and local aristocrats (India), or in restaurants and hotels (Indonesia, Egypt). From today's perspective, it would be possible to describe them as the lowest of the privileged. Although Pressnitz musicians were seen as servants of members of the upper class and the royalty, they experienced insecurity on a daily basis and struggled to earn enough money to support themselves and their families back home. In comparison with the locals in places like Alexandria, however, they still enjoyed a better social status, more rights and freedoms.

The various souvenirs that Pressnitz musicians brought from their foreign tours (e.g. in Thailand, Indonesia, China, Japan, or Oceania)[3] served as an expression of their economic status and confirmed their identity of musicians that "have seen the world". Some of the objects remained in Pressnitz (as exhibits in the Municipal Museum or decoration in households), while others were shipped straight to royal institutions (documents in the Schönbrunner Tiergarten, Vienna).[4] The custom of bringing objects of exotic origin back home (some of them presented in Table 1) can serve as an example of commodification of cultural heritage and the (probably unconscious) role of Pressnitzers in colonial practices. Johann Hassner, a *Kapellmeister* from Pressnitz, established a successful trading business operating between South-East Asia and Vienna (1895, Tiergarten Schönbrunn), delivering not only religious objects (Table 1 (e)) but also live animals. Under the socio-cultural and political circumstances of the pre-World War I era, such practices used to be common and followed the overall European trend of "explorers" and "collectors", characterized by colonial and imperial attitudes. However, from today's perspective, they might be ethically problematic and point at the role of informal colonial empires (Rupnow & Singerton, 2023; Schasiepen, 2024) – such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and their participation in colonialism. This might also question the fixed narrative of "colonial innocence" (Hrešanová, 2023), which is rooted deeply in the Czech socio-cultural context (Boučková & Krajhanzl, 2024; Karásková-Skoupá & Křížová, 2020; Metelec, 2024; Slačálek, 2024).

The various resources mentioned above not only put microhistories of Pressnitzers (understood as the stories of a particular person or group) in the regional context of Central Europe, but also provide a link to global reality – in this case: overseas territories.

3 Náprstek Museum of African, Asian and American Cultures in Prague, a collection from the former Municipal Museum in Pressnitz, established in 1914 and relocated to Prague in the 1950s; the collection was re-discovered in the depot in 2023.

4 Private correspondence of Veronika Kupková with Dr. Gerhard Heindl, Schönbrunner Tiergarten, Vienna (27 February 2024).

Discussion

Going back to place-based learning, Table 2 presents how archival resources could be used to support this approach in the educational process. In each case, the table suggests how the resources mentioned above (in Table 1) may be relevant for the learners, and how they could illustrate the global phenomena involved or those which might be revealed. It is necessary to adjust the activities to the age of the learners and to supplement the archival documents and objects with meaningful practical tasks. Also, dilemmas or biases for further discussion and follow-up tasks illustrate the ambivalence of each phenomenon. The educator may apply a look-back perspective on the resources and analyze how much information it is possible to extract from them before and after the activity.

Table 2: Educational usage of selected archival material concerning Pressnitz (the author's own proposal)

Resources (type)	Relevance for students	Greater phenomenon (lower secondary school)	Greater phenomenon (upper secondary school)	Dilemma (inner conflict)
(a) Advertisements	• Age (the female musicians were mostly 13–18 years old) • Applying for a job	• Stereotypes, prejudices (gender) • Critical thinking (reading)	• Gender (social roles, female vs. male artists) • Critical thinking	• Children's rights • Hopes and expectations vs. risk and dangerous reality
(b) Postcards (promotional business cards)	• Age (the female musicians were mostly 13–18 years old) • Playing a musical instrument	• Teenagers and work (working voluntarily vs. obligatory work, child labor in the past and nowadays) • Working conditions and workers' rights	• Gender inequalities (social norms and roles, societal hierarchy, women's rights, women as artists vs. male artists)	• (In)visibility of women in history • Public forgetting vs. public memory
(c) Postcards (private correspondence)	• Forms of communication with our friends/siblings • Visible relics of railways, a former train station	• Inventions that caused the industrial revolution	• Mobility (interconnections, intercultural learning, intercultural sensitivity) • Various forms and aspects of globalization	• The impact of globalization, e.g. on local culture
(d) Diary	• Writing an own diary (blog, social media platforms)	• Personal interest, self-development • Self-actualization, identity	• Imperialism • Power structures • White supremacy • Exploitation	• Invisible power structures • Neocolonialism • Understanding the interconnections
(e) Souvenirs	• Being a tourist abroad (also buying souvenirs from my trips)	• Learning about other cultures (stereotypes, prejudices) • Intercultural sensitivity (understanding)	• Colonialism • Formal vs. informal colonies • Commodification of cultural heritage	• Colonial innocence of the Czech lands • Post-colonialism and the debate on decolonizing European museums • Our own responsibility

Table 2 suggests how the selected archival resources might be connected to greater phenomena and applied in learning about the place. Learning from the place requires a critical attitude, the ability to reflect on global issues and local processes, as well as practical action. Therefore, in the case of Pressnitz, practical engagement could eventually take the form of, for instance, a clean-up day on site, a cultural event like a performance or concert featuring the same playlist as Pressnitz musicians used to play, a documentary movie where the last eyewitnesses tell their stories,[5] or any other practical engagement with the community (Blum et al., 2021; Vogelsang & Meyer, 2023). Such forms of active involvement of students in their local reality contribute to their overall personal development in terms of knowledge, competences, skills, emotions, and behaviors (Kupková & Hielscher, 2020; Trahorsch & Frolík, 2020).

Conclusion

This article has discussed the ways of experiencing and presenting history in the post-displacement region of the Central Ore Mountains in Czechia. The paper has introduced the case of Pressnitz, including examples of various archival documents from Czechia and abroad, along with other resources that might be used in formal and informal learning. In doing so, their use in educational activities has been suggested (Table 1, Table 2), applying place-based learning and an interdisciplinary learning approach, which addresses topics across school subject boundaries. The remains of Pressnitz, a place that has been strongly modified, and its tangible and intangible heritage may illustrate how regional and global phenomena are connected. Moreover, the study of archival materials sheds light on the entangled history of the Czech lands and former colonies, providing examples of close ties between the inland regions on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and overseas territories.

Place-based learning has recently appeared as an effective tool to deal with the current challenges[6] of the quickly changing world, such as local diversity in the global context or rethinking biases, and a tool encouraging learners to apply their experience or take action. In this way, PBL is linked to education for sustainability. Such culturally responsive teaching and community involvement can be employed in both lower and upper secondary education, as well as in non-formal learning. Learning about the heritage of a place may be supported by microhistories, which can make the invisible phenomena perceptible again. The role of the educator is to make meaningful stories accessible to the learners, as well as to rethink the understanding of the local situation in the regional – Central European – and global context. The story of Pressnitz clearly shows that an international and intersec-

5 *Přísečnice žije – Pressnitz lebt* [Pressnitz Is Alive], documentary movie (Hrnčíř&Mala Videography, 2021).

6 The word challenge is used here instead of the common phrase "global problems", which tends to disregard some aspects of socio-cultural reality, e.g. gender, power structures.

tional focus is essential here. Moreover, the learners' own experience with the landscape can be brought in so that they can rethink it from a new perspective. Also, the sense of belonging and the sense of community, particularly crucial for post-displacement regions, should not be overlooked in learning. Access to the invisible legacy of Pressnitz requires the ability to read the strongly modified landscape, as well as the capability to understand the multi-layered transnational history of the place.

Acknowledgements

The author kindly thanks Dr. Helena Heroldová, Dr. Eva Ulrichová, Dr. Eva Dittertová, Mgr. Adriana Stříbrná, Mgr. Adéla Tůmová, Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures (Prague); Mona Hedemann, University Library Multimedia Centre, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg; Dr. Vlasta Kostlánová, National Library of the Czech Republic (Prague); Dr. Raimund Paleczek, Sudetendeutsches Institut (Munich); Natalie Paloma Maierhofer, BA MA, Weltmuseum Wien (Vienna); Dr. Gerhard Heindl, Schönbrunner Tiergarten GmbH (Vienna); Günther Schipper, Heimatverband der Preßnitzer & Heimatstube Preßnitz (Lohr am Main); Christine Rummer, Heimatverband der Preßnitzer (Lohr am Main and Stuttgart); Hans Müller, Heimatverband der Preßnitzer (Lohr am Main and Munich); Erika Trefná, Josef Trefný (Přísečnice and Lovosice).

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Zobaczyć, co niewidoczne. Od podręcznika historii do nauki z krajobrazu

Abstrakt

Krajobraz czesko-niemieckiego pogranicza, który w ciągu ostatnich stu lat kilkukrotnie dotknęły przymusowe migracje, zawiera wiele warstw pamięci. Niektóre z nich są nadal widoczne, innych zaś trzeba szukać, ponieważ ich ślady zostały zatarte. W tym kontekście niniejszy artykuł omawia możliwości metody *place-based learning*, „edukacji opartej na miejscu", wykorzystując studium przypadku z Rudaw, z dawnego miasta Pressnitz. Opracowanie przedstawia materiały, z których mogą korzystać edukatorzy, aby uczyć rozumienia takich złożonych procesów i globalnych zjawisk, jak kolonializm, struktury władzy, mobilność, globalizacja czy płeć. Analizowane materiały obejmują archiwalia z Czech, Niemiec

i Austrii, a także dokumenty ze zbiorów prywatnych w różnych krajach europejskich. Istnienie regionalnych i globalnych powiązań między ziemiami czeskimi a koloniami jest zaskakujące, ale może również pomóc edukatorom wspierać samoidentyfikację z regionem na poziomie lokalnym poprzez nowe narracje.

Słowa kluczowe: żeńskie orkiestry wędrowne; imperializm; płeć; dziedzictwo kulturowe; migracja przymusowa; metoda *place-based learning* (PBL); Pressnitz (Přísečnice)

Citation

Kupková, V. (2024). To see the unseen: From history books to learning from the landscape. *Sprawy Narodowościowe: Seria nowa*, *2024*(56), Article 3282. https://doi.org/10.11649/sn.3282

INSTITUTE OF SLAVIC STUDIES
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
1954-2024

Publication History: Received: 2024-05-27; Accepted: 2025-01-20; Published: 2025-04-25