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National identity in the exhibition of the Silesian museum: A case study based on the methodology of dispositive analysis

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National identity in the exhibition of the Silesian museum: A case study based on the methodology of dispositive analysis

This study presents research on the exhibition Encyclopaedia of Silesia at the Silesian Museum in Opava. The aim of the research was to identify the form of Czech national identity that is constructed and reconstructed by this exhibition, by focusing on the elements and narratives through which Czech national identity is presented and constructed. It also examines whether these elements replicate the prevailing ideas and stereotypes related to this identity in society. The research takes the form of a case study based on dispositional analysis, and showed that the narrative of Czech national identity appears in the exhibition. This confirmed that national identity can emerge not only in national museums but also in other types of museum – in this case a regional museum in which national and regional identities are intertwined.

Keywords: national identity, museum exhibition, case study, dispositive analysis, Silesian museum

Introduction

Contemporary museums fulfil important social functions. They not only take care of cultural heritage but are also involved in educational processes aimed at a wide range of visitors. They have a role in the processes of construction and reconstruction of identities, not excluding the identities of the visitors themselves. Visitors' concepts of identity can be confirmed, supplemented, reconstructed or challenged by museum exhibitions. In the current changing times, national identity is a widely discussed topic.

The research focuses on the analysis of the exhibition of the Silesian Museum in Opava, Czech Republic. The approach is based on the assumption that national identity can be constructed and reconstructed in exhibitions in various types of museums, including those that are not considered national museums. Along with this was an assumption that national identity can also enter into a relationship with other identities in an exhibition. The first hypothesis underpinning this study is therefore that in a regional museum national identity can enter into a specific relationship with regional identity.

The second hypothesis assumes that the image of Czech national identity that the exhibition constructs will most likely correspond to the dominant societal discourse that shapes the ideal-typical image of Czech national identity in Czech society and the associated expectations in the

form of characteristics and core elements of Czech identity. The study aims to explore these theses in more depth.

The aim of the research was to find out whether Czech national identity is constructed and reconstructed in the exhibition of the Encyclopaedia of Silesia and, if so, what form it takes and through which elements it is shaped. The research was conducted as a case study over the years 2019–2021.¹ The research process had several phases, and used dispositional analysis as a methodological approach to exhibition analysis. Thus, in addition to the research findings themselves, the study also provides an example of the application of this methodology in practice.

Aim of the research

The aim of the research was to determine the form of Czech national identity constructed by the Encyclopaedia of Silesia exhibition at the Silesian Museum. In the research I was interested in the elements and narratives through which Czech national identity is presented and constructed in the exhibition and whether these elements copy the dominant ideas and stereotypes related to this identity in society.

Research questions

- What form of Czech national identity is constructed and presented in the exhibition Encyclopaedia of Silesia?
- What form do the narratives related to national identity presented in the exhibition take?
- Through the lens of which social actors is the nation viewed in the exhibition?
- Which museum exhibits participate in the construction of Czech national identity and how?

Research design

The study was qualitative, anchored within the paradigm of social constructivism, and conducted in the form of a dispositional analysis of the museum exhibition. Dispositional analysis² is a useful tool for researching practical aspects of museum exhibitions, enabling research to be conducted on various research levels, paying attention to the exhibition itself, its architecture, its exhibits and other accompanying materials, exhibition scenography and the narratives that the exhibition constructs and presents. All the elements of the exhibition, and thus the museum itself, are considered by dispositional analysis in a broad context which is conditioned by the form of the discursive reality itself. Since dispositional analysis sits within the field of discursive methodology, it is also possible to pay analytical attention to societal discourses that are related to the phenomenon presented in the exhibition – that is, to discourses that have an impact on the forms the exhibition and its narratives take.

¹ The study is based on the results of research conducted as part of my dissertation, which was completed in 2022.

² I describe the process of dispositional analysis as applicable to museum exhibition research in KOLAŘÍKOVÁ, Veronika. Museum exhibition in the context of dispositive analysis. In: *Muzeologia a Kulturne Dedicstvo*, vol. 10, 2022, Is. 3, pp. 5-31. doi: 10.46284/mkd.2022.10.3.1

Discursive level of the research

With dispositional analysis, it is important to pay attention to the discursive dimension of the study and the discursive anchoring of the phenomena under analysis. In this study, the discursive level was twofold.

First, it was necessary to identify what the discursive dimension of Czech national identity is – or rather, to identify what the typical model (in Weber's sense) of Czech national identity constructed and reconstructed in current Czech society looks like.

The second discursive dimension involved viewing this phenomenon in its regional context. The discourse of Czech national identity is influenced by regional socio-cultural specifics, as well as by local forms of identity. This is all the more true when considering exhibitions in a regional museum, such as the Silesian Museum. By its very definition, the museum focuses primarily on describing and presenting the region, and thus on constructing and reconstructing regional identity. This does not mean, however, that national identity is of no importance here. National and regional identities share common elements and can form a specific relationship with each other, which was confirmed in the research findings.

The discursive level of Czech national identity

According to the 2021 Population Census, 83.8% of all persons who completed the voluntary question on nationality and at the same time declared only one nationality (6,033,014 persons) declared themselves to be Czech, 5.0% (359,621 persons) declared themselves to be Moravian and 0.2% (12,451 persons) declared themselves to be Silesian.³ However, it cannot be said that national identity has the same meaning for all people. Czech national identity is discursively anchored and constantly constructed and reconstructed by a variety of elements, social practices, structures and functions. The form that Czech national identity takes and the elements through which it is constructed and reconstructed in Czech society was the subject of my study *Czech national identity and the elements through which it is constructed*,⁴ where you can find deeper analysis.

The discursive level of Silesian regional identity

Regional identity is a type of collective identity that is linked to a specific territory, its symbolism (landscape and natural specifics of the territory, graphic symbols such as signs and flags, the name of the territory) and specific characteristics of a social nature (cultural heritage, architectural elements, human activities, manners and customs, religion, ethnic composition, etc.).⁵ Regional identity, as well as national identity, is connected to collective memory related to local traditions and dialects, as well as to the expected character traits of local inhabitants. Šifta and Chromý talk about regional identity and regional consciousness, which is based on

³ Czech statistical office. *Sčítání 2021 (Národnost)*, accessed 20 May 20th, 2022, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/scitani2021/narodnost>.

⁴ KOLAŘÍKOVÁ, Veronika. Czech national identity and the elements through which is constructed. In: *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 2020, pp. 66–96.

⁵ Cf. ŠIFTA, Miroslav & CHROMÝ, Pavel. Symboly a identita regionu: analýzy a vnímání přírodních symbolů oblastí s intenzivně přeměněnou krajinou v Česku. In: *Geografický časopis*, 2014, pp. 401–415; SEMIAN, Michal. Region ve své komplexitě: diskuze konstruktivistických přístupů. In: *AUC Geographiac*, 2016, pp. 179–188; ŠRAJEROVÁ, Olga. *Historické a aktuální otázky vývoje národnostních vztahů, kultur a identit v národnostně zmiešanej oblasti Sliezska a severnej Moravy*. Opava: Slezské zemské muzeum, 2015.

a person's identification with the territorial community and region in which they live.⁶ Thus, the region is understood not only as a territorial unit, but also as a unit of social organisation which, as a social construct, functions as an instrument of collective identification of people who construct and reproduce that unit.⁷

Historically, Silesia was a territorially variable region characterised by its ethnic and cultural plurality, with a population that was not only Czech (the Czech population was a minority in Silesia until the 1920s) but also significantly German and Polish, with a proportion of other national groups, especially Jews. A specific characteristic of Czech Silesia was that it was an area strongly interwoven with a land identity. The importance of land identity has been great throughout history. Linguistic specifics, along with cultural and social specificities, had already led to attempts to recognise Silesians as a distinct national group before World War I. At the same time, however, there were disputes among patriots about the ethnic character of the Silesian population, with both sides considering their own people to be autochthonous and the others to be later immigrants.⁸

Research process

The dispositive analysis of the exhibition involved several phases, therefore data collection was carried out within several different research samples. The first phase consisted of an analysis of contemporary social discourse related to Czech national identity based on an analytical investigation of the literature and research surveys. It identified the elements involved in the construction of Czech national identity in the Czech environment.⁹ These elements became the basis for the development of an analytical coding key which, by categorising the elements involved in the construction of Czech national identity, enabled this identity to be both described and further explored. This was done in the following analysis of the museum exhibition by paying greater attention to the elements, their character and, especially, their presence or absence in the exhibition.

The key phase of the research was based on a dispositional analysis of the Encyclopaedia of Silesia exhibition, which, with its exhibits, represents the main research sample and thus the main source of data. For the purpose of the analysis, a comprehensive archive of data was first created, including photo documentation of the exhibition and exhibits, museums texts and large-format photographs, including other materials (printed guide, annual reports and the museum's website). Data was collected in the exhibition in 2019.

From the standpoint of dispositive analysis, when analysing museum exhibitions and their meanings, it is necessary to pay attention to the analysis of social structures – under which we can imagine the exhibition itself, which appears to visitors as an external objectified structure – and the discursively anchored theme of the exhibition, including the discursive anchoring of the given theme in society (in this case we are talking about an ideally typical form of Czech national identity). Analytical attention must also be paid to the analysis of social actors. Social actors are primarily represented in this study by the authors of the exposition. Dominant social discourses in society are not the only influence on the form of the exhibition: the main influence comes directly from the employees of the museum, who themselves may be influenced by

⁶ ŠIFTA & CHROMÝ. Symboly a...

⁷ ŠRAJEROVÁ. Historické a...

⁸ KOLÁŘ, Ondřej & JANÁK, Dušan, et al. *Polská a německá menšina ve Slezsku a na severní Moravě*. Opava: Slezská univerzita, 2019, p. 13.

⁹ For more information see KOLAŘÍKOVÁ, Czech national...

various social discourses. As part of the discursive analysis, it was therefore necessary to pay attention to them and their motivations when creating the exposition. Interviews and written communication with museum staff were an integral part of the data collection, which took place between 2019 and 2021. There were repeated interviews with museum historian Ondřej Kolář and the author of the libretto and the exhibition design, Pavel Šopák. An interview was conducted with Kamila Poláková, Deputy for Professional Activities of the Museum and information was obtained from curators who participated in the creation or revision of the exhibition, who were asked to fill in a questionnaire or participate in a semi-structured interview (Ondřej Haničák, Denisa Hradilová, Jiří Juchelka, Marek Pietoń, Sylva Pracná, and Miroslava Suchánková).

Data archive: introduction of the analysed exhibition

The Silesian Museum is the oldest public museum in the Czech Republic, founded in 1814,¹⁰ and the third largest museum in the country. The museum manages 37 buildings, dominated by the Historical Exhibition Building from 1895 which, since 2012, has been hosting an exhibition called Silesia. The museum received the Gloria musaealis award¹¹ in the same year for the exhibition and the reconstruction of the Historical Exhibition Building. The exhibition consists of three units: Nature of Silesia, Encyclopaedia of Silesia and History of Silesia. In relation to national identity, the cultural and historical section of the Encyclopaedia of Silesia is the most significant. It offers the widest range of topics that refer to both regional and Czech history, culture and everyday life, as well as customs and holidays.

The exhibition is shaped in the form of a glossary of concepts typical of Silesia – keywords representing typical Silesian phenomena. The concept for the exhibition was authored by Pavel Šopák, who wanted to go against the Hegelian model of developmentally conceived exhibitions when thinking of the concept of the new exhibition. Instead, he proposed the concept of alphabetically organised encyclopaedic keywords in which no keyword and its associated phenomenon would be preferred over another, and which together would compose a picture of Silesia and its typical phenomena.¹² The intention behind sorting keywords in this way is to encourage visitors to play with concepts, ideas and associations associated with the displayed exhibits.

According to Šopák and Kolář, the aim was to select keywords that are characteristic of the region and its lifestyle (Silesia, Mining), as well as more general keywords (City, Church) that represent certain spheres of cultural, social and public life during different periods. After naming all keywords, the curatorial teams worked on individual sections of the exhibition and soon the idea of a dynamic exhibition emerged – an exhibition whose keywords would continuously change and be updated. And so, in 2017 the first major transformation of the exhibition took place and new keywords were added. Partial transformations occurred in 2019 and subsequently in 2021. At the time of data collection the following keywords were present in the exhibition: Architecture, Housing, Theatre, Photography, Communication, Church,

¹⁰ In 1814 the museum was founded as the Gymnasium Museum in Opava. The name was changed to the Silesian Museum after 1989. For more on the history of the museum, see ŠOPÁK, Pavel (ed.). *Muzeum českého Slezska: Slovníková příručka*. Opava: Slezská univerzita, 2014.

¹¹ Czech Association of Museums and Galleries. *Národní soutěž muzeí Gloria musaealis: Přehled oceněných projektů 2002-2018*, accessed October 30th, 2020, https://www.cz-museums.cz/UserFiles/file/2019/Gloria/Vysledky_GM_2002_2018.pdf

¹² ŠOPÁK, Muzeum českého..., p. 88

Landscape, Forest, City, Hospital, Trade, Families, Glass, Death, Silesia, Textile, Mining, Organ, War and Village.

The exhibition is systematic, using the order of exhibits according to themes. The exhibition combines dominant formalist elements (showcases with exhibits) and contextual elements (e.g. reconstruction of twentieth-century housing). Museum texts are placed within the section of a given keyword and there is also textual information for each keyword on a touchscreen computer, but this mostly copies the museum texts rather than supplementing and developing them in depth. In contrast to the Czech-language descriptions of the exhibits and the exhibition texts, the computers also offer texts in English, German and Polish. A printed guide is also available in these languages.

The visitor route, which in the context of dispositional analysis can be perceived as a non-discursive practice, is clearly defined in the exhibition. The visitor enters the exhibition and must traverse the entire exhibition from beginning to end: there are no intermediate exits or shortcuts. One advantage of this design is that, thanks to the exhibition's thematic ordering, visitors can pay attention only to the topics that interest them. Another advantage is the possibility of easily incorporating new research findings or discoveries from archaeological research, as well as new collections and topics that the curators deem appropriate to add. There is also the possibility of displaying exhibits for a limited period of time if they cannot be displayed for longer due to preventive conservation. In this way, the exhibition can be kept up-to-date, alive and thus attractive for repeat visits.

From a museological point of view, an exhibition divided into several keywords is a challenge that brings not only the mentioned advantages but also possible risks. For example, in order for any renewal to function as intended, the exhibition concept as a whole must be kept in mind when updating the keywords – otherwise, there is a risk that the narrative will dissolve into little eloquent units that work separately but not together. Unfortunately, that is what happened in this exhibition. Visitors may find it difficult to interpret such an exhibition, as they cannot rely on a comprehensible narrative that guides them through and gives context to the presented phenomena. In the past, the exhibition included a basic narrative guide provided by a timeline (panel display) which presented the history of Silesia from prehistory to the twentieth century. However, this part of the exhibition was closed down and the space made available for short-term exhibitions.



Fig. 1: Entrance to *The Encyclopaedia of Silesia* exhibition in *The Silesian Museum* exhibition. Introductory text panel and large-format photographs of the landscape and the city of Opava. The rear display case on the left contains a model of a timbered house. Photo by V. Kolaříková.



Fig. 2: Entry to the part of the exhibition with the keyword *Village*. A display case with folk clothing and a large-format photograph of village housing.
Photo by V. Kolaříková.



Fig. 3: Entry to the part of the exhibition with the keyword *Landscape*. A large-format photograph of the restored pilgrimage church of Saint Mary, the Help of Christians (Zlaté Hory) and a display case with religious objects: a prayer book, a rosary, pictures of Saint Mary, commemorative mugs from pilgrimage sites, etc.
Photo by V. Kolaříková.

The data analysis procedure

All the data were analysed using MAXQDA software, which is suitable for analysing interview transcripts and other texts (text panels in the exhibition, annual reports and other documents) and visual material (photographs of exhibits and exhibition scenes). Exhibits, as types of materialisations, were analysed both as separate objects and as parts of exhibitions and narrative exhibition units. Attention was paid to the description of the materialisations (type of exhibit, material, etc.); their location in the exhibition; and their function, meaning and social context, including their position within the discursive level.

The data were repeatedly searched, rethought and coded over time. I also returned to the data in light of the interviews conducted over time and the new information gained from them. The coded data was then sorted into categories. The individual codes and the resulting categories were continuously compared with the categories of the coding key,¹³ including discursively anchored elements of Czech national identity, so that the presence or absence of these elements in the exhibition could be determined. The form of the resulting research categories shows that the presence of some categories resulting from the dispositional analysis corresponds to the categories or subcategories belonging to the coding key. But at the same time, and this is important, space was also left for the emergence of completely new categories.

¹³ The theoretical background devoted to the elements of the Czech national identity, which became the source for the creation of the coding key, I devoted here: KOLAŘÍKOVÁ, Czech national...

Thus, the coding key was a functional coding tool that provided the research with a foundation based on already established data, the analysis of which created a discursive framework for the research, but one with sufficient flexibility to search for possible additional categories.

The categories revealed by the analysis were then sorted into subcategories, which were named and assigned to main categories. The resulting main categories were given names which accurately represented their informational content. In summary, the dispositional analysis revealed several key categories and elements in the exhibition that construct and present Czech national identity through specific exhibits, museum texts and their associated narratives.

Final categories

The research uncovered five main categories: Czech Village and its Traditions, Significant Historical Periods, German and Polish Influences, Religion, and Industrialisation and Modernisation of Society. An overview of all categories and their subcategories is presented in Table 1.

Tab. 1: *Elements Contributing to the Construction of Czech National Identity in the Encyclopedia of Silesia*

Category name	Subcategory name					
Czech Village and its Traditions	Traditional crafts	Agriculture as a traditional source of livelihood	Czech rural landscape	Rural living and folk architecture	Traditional folk costume	Czech language
Significant Historical Periods	Earlier history	Austro-Hungarian Empire	First Czechoslovak Republic	The period of normalisation and the prism of communism	(Separate) Czech Republic	
German and Polish Influences	Polish influences	German personalities	German cultural influences (music and theatre)			
Religion	Objects related to the Catholic Church	Sacred architecture and places of pilgrimage				
Industrialisation and Modernisation of Society	Development of medicine and psychiatry	Mining	Leisure time	Modern trade	(Modern) City	

Research findings

Although on a cursory visit to the museum it may seem that the presence of the concept of national identity in the exhibition is only slight and there is no separate keyword in the

exhibition that deals with the issue of nationality,¹⁴ the research results show that the exhibition does open up the topic of Czech national identity, despite the fact that this was not the main curatorial intention. The answer to the main research question is thus clear: an image of Czech national identity is constructed by the exhibition, even though it does not create a unified national narrative that is explicitly presented to visitors, for example, through accompanying texts or repetitive displays with labels explicitly depicting the issue. References to Czech national identity appear in the exhibition as segments intertwined with the individual exhibition keywords rather than as a single coherent and clearly presented continuous narrative. This is related to the intentions of the creators of the exhibition, who tried, successfully, to break up the classical chronological national narrative. According to Kolář, the aim of structuring the exhibition in this way was to defy the classical linear narrative of Czech history and to show the phenomena of the region and different periods more selectively. It was not only an attempt to break the chronological national narrative, but chronological narratives in general. This does not mean, however, that such an exhibition cannot contain an overarching narrative that links all the presented keywords through an intertwining context. Indeed, an overarching narrative was part of the original conceptual intention of the exhibition, although unfortunately it was ultimately not fulfilled. As Šopák himself pointed out, in contrast to the original intention, the exhibition gradually began to take shape in a non-conceptual manner, with each curatorial team working on its keyword independently. This is evident in the form of the narrative, which is fragmented into several separate parts.

Despite this, references to Czech national identity shape the national narrative, which turns to the history of the nation, to the Czech – or often Czechoslovak – past, and to the everyday life of people in the past. Revealing the level of Czech national identity and its interpretation in the exhibition depends to some extent on the viewers themselves. As Šopák also pointed out in a research interview, national identity is part of the exhibition:

but it is exclusively the activity of the viewer: for example, the keyword language [which was present in earlier iterations of the exhibition] was implicitly linked to national identity, but I, as the author, do not have to say to the viewer: see, here lies identity – it is up to the choice, to the completion or retelling of the story of history by the visitor himself.¹⁵

Despite all this, thanks to the analytical work, we can discern in the exhibition the elements and related narratives through which Czech national identity is constructed, reconstructed and presented.

¹⁴ As Kolář pointed out, the discussion about whether nationality issues should be addressed in a separate keyword was opened in 2018. However, finally, a keyword related to the topic of nationality or considered Germanness did not happen. Kolář sees the importance of such a keyword especially with regard to visitors who do not come from the region and thus do not have much insight into local history. The keyword could help them to understand the phenomenon that in the past the boundaries between the ethnicities/nationalities Czech / German / Polish were not completely clear in the region, where these identities were intermingled. Haničák also sees the future existence of the keyword Nationality as an important possibility, as he believes the keyword would provide an opportunity to show something quite important for the region: “*Four nationalities meeting in such a narrow space, I don't think there is a similar situation in the Czech Republic and its history. Also, national frictions and rivalries were one of the basic drivers of human events and historical realities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. And this, I think, should be demonstrated somewhere in the exhibition. So I think that should be the subject of some future revision of the exhibit, this should be there.*”

¹⁵ This and other passages from interview transcripts have been translated from Czech into English.

The Czech village as the basic starting point of Czech identity

The image of Czech national identity constructed by the exhibition is based on a number of elements that have long been involved in the creation of Czech identity and its perception by the public in contemporary social discourse. The narrative of Czech national identity is divided into several key narratives in the exhibition which correspond to the analysed research categories. The dominant narrative line associated with Czech identity is the theme of the Czech village. The exhibition builds on the historical representation of the village with its idealistic landscape character, dominated by references to the late eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. It thus draws logically on the so-called era of Czech national revival. Although the Czech national revival as a theme is not explicitly named, the exhibition builds on it in its romanticising images and reconstructs an image of national identity by idealising the Czech village, its beauty and historicity.

In the context of the historical narrative of Czechness, the exhibition presents the Czech village with its landscape. The landscape can be understood as a factor influencing people's livelihoods through agriculture, hunting and processing wood from the forest. The Czech Republic is one of the ten most forested European countries. Forests currently cover a third of Czech territory; roughly 75% of them are commercial.¹⁶ And it is precisely the topic of forests that forms the basis of this category. The landscape can be also understood as a place of spiritual consolation – pilgrimage sites and spas, or spaces suitable for leisure and tourism.

The Czech village category is closely connected with the theme of architecture, especially folk architecture, which is presented by original wooden buildings. The key exhibit is a model of a timbered house made of wood and straw from the nineteenth century; its construction refers not only to typical building materials but also to craftsmanship. The model is connected to the phenomenon of Czech national identity, also thanks to the fact that the phenomena of material culture, which typically include village houses and folk clothing, began to be widely used in the nineteenth century in the construction of national identity and are still part of the construction of this identity today. The village house was presented together with folk culture at the time of the rise of nationalism at a number of ethnographic exhibitions (e.g. the General Land Centennial Exhibition in 1891 or the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in 1895) and later also at folklore events and celebrations that played an important role in the construction of the idea of the nature of Czechness and in the process of acquiring this identity. As Pavlicová¹⁷ points out, in the social appeal to folk traditions, we see revivalist, awareness, educational and aesthetic functions, but at the same time cultural-political or political functions can be associated with it. We are thus witnessing the process of construction of national traditions and symbols that have retained their meaning to this day. It is interesting that in many places today these constructs are built completely artificially and detached from their original historical tradition. As an example, Woitsch¹⁸ describes a developer's construction of timbered houses in the area of northern, northeastern and central Bohemia which are used for by tourists who are lured to these places by fictional advertising about a typically Czech cottage. The myth of the traditional or folk Czech cottage, deeply rooted in Czech society, is more of a construction than an accurate

¹⁶ ANDĚRA, Miloš & SOVÁK, Jan. *Atlas fauny České republiky*. Praha: Academia, 2018.

¹⁷ PAVLICOVÁ, Martina. Folklor a folklorismus v historické a sociální perspektivě. In: *Lidové tradice jako součást kulturního dědictví*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2015, p. 198.

¹⁸ WOITSCH, Jiří. Ta naše chaloupka česká? Proměny mýtu lidové architektury. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, 2008, pp. 30–33.

reflection of reality. According to Woitsch,¹⁹ there is basically no such thing as a typical Czech cottage. Since the end of the eighteenth century, regionally varied architectural types of country house have appeared and, in addition, various pan-European approaches to traditional village building culture have been intermingled. Therefore, it is not possible to claim that there is, or ever has been, such a thing as a typical Czech cottage. Nevertheless, the village house became a symbol of Czechness, thanks to the fact that it symbolised the life of the rural population and its culture. In the era of a gradually modernising society – and especially in industrialising cities – the village became the city's idealised and supposedly harmonious opposite. The attention of revivalists was mainly devoted to the traditional and pre-industrial ways of life of rural people. The villager was perceived as the custodian of the Czech language,²⁰ and thus as a *true Czech*.

Another important topic which falls under the Czech village category is traditions. Traditions are presented by folk costumes and traditional local crafts, which are presented in a wide range of exhibits. With these examples, the exhibition contributes to the construction of one of the typical Czech self-stereotypes – the idea of golden Czech hands²¹ (i.e. Czech manual skills reflected in crafts). It also presents everyday life as a representative element of the Czech Republic and its culture, although this presentation is carried out with an emphasis on the area of Czech Silesia.

The exhibition also works with the concept of the village in relation to the Czech language, thus building on the ethno-cultural concept of nation anchored in the cultural and geographic environment of Central Europe. This is based on the standard notion that Czech national identity is linked to language, culture and common history, rather than to the state and its territory.²² The exhibition presents books by important Czech authors, books about gardening, poems by P. Bezruč, printed materials written in Czech and theatre posters. One noteworthy example is the poster for Smetana's opera *Prodaná nevěsta* (The Bartered Bride), which was performed in Prague as the first Czech national opera in 1866 and then in Opava in 1919. Theatre that is also linked to language had a specific significance in the past for the development of national identity.

Until the seventeenth century, theatre in Czech lands, understood as a fiction taken from everyday reality, was performed only occasionally. Since it reflected people's social life, their work and the rhythm of nature, folk theatre became a welcome and expected social event, a celebration. Thanks to the gradual professionalisation of the European theatre, a higher theatrical culture began to emerge, and the theatre increasingly began to turn to profit. Theatre

¹⁹ WOITSCH, Ta naše chaloupka..., p. 30.

²⁰ By the end of the eighteenth century, Czech countries were part of a large German cultural region. The inadequate status of Czech language became a symbol of the obstacles to the vision of a modern society of equal citizens. New intellectuals felt a sense of injustice that led to a desire to fight for linguistic equality. However it was not easy to elevate the Czech language to an official language. At the end of the eighteenth century, Czech was the language of villagers, not the language of science, art, bureaucracy or nobility. The Czech revival was thus based on the folk environment. Rather than military leaders or politicians, it was driven by new young scholars (e.g. philosophers and artists) who, in the process of finding their place in society and their identity, began to turn precisely to national identity, represented by the Czech language. For deeper analysis of the connection between Czech language and identity, see KOLARÍKOVÁ, Czech national..., p. 77.

²¹ More about this Czech self-stereotype cf. KLEPETKO, Roman. Současná role národní identity, aneb proč (ne) stavíme národní památníky. In: *Kulturní studia*, 2014, pp. 64–79; LABISCHOVÁ, Denisa. Češi, Slováci a jejich sousedství: Identita – stereotyp – historické vědomí. In: *CIVILA – odborná revue pro didaktiku společenských věd*, 2013, pp. 46–54.

²² Cf. HROCH, From ethnic...; KOHÁK, Domov a...

gradually became a commodity and in the nineteenth century. In Czech lands, however, this development was delayed, and in the eighteenth century folk theatre culture still flourished, especially in villages.²³ But professional theatres also developed, especially in cities where theatres and theatre associations were mainly run by Germans and plays were usually performed in German.²⁴ The fact that, in addition to theatre plays written in Czech, we also find posters for Polish and German plays in the exhibition demonstrates the multicultural character of the society of that time and the fact that Czech was not the dominant language of culture. The exhibition in the accompanying texts points out that the Czech-speaking theatre was mainly supported by association activities. In the multicultural environment of German, Polish and Czech theatre, Czech professional theatre began to fully develop only after 1945. The exhibition also focuses on puppet theatre, depicting scenes from Czech folklore and fairy tales – for example, the archetypal figure Hloupý Honza (Dull Johnny), the devil (a typical character of Czech fairy tales), and a kingdom with a dragon.

Exhibitions, national identity and the way presenting *Czech* history

The concept of Czech national identity, and thus the ideal typical model of Czechness in the narrative of the exhibition, takes the form of a Czech person who uses the Czech language and resides in the picturesque Czech landscape (especially the rural landscape), and is thus a holder of Czech history and tradition. This is a Czech who is part of Czech history, which, however, if we look at the problem through the rhetoric of modern nationalism, is not in fact only *Czech* national history. However, the exhibition does not elaborate on this issue and does not in any way problematise the continuity of *Czech* history.

Earlier history appears only marginally in the exhibition, through only a few exhibits that are not united by a narrative line (medieval halberds, spearheads and arrowheads, a European chainmail shirt from the fifteenth/sixteenth century, etc.). Within the section on Dynasties, the topic of the Přemyslid Dynasty is briefly outlined in the text on a computer screen. However, the exhibits themselves do not open up their story. The exhibit does not mention Great Moravia or refer to the Hussites – a pre-Protestant Christian movement, despite these belonging to an era that many researchers suggest that are important for Czech people.²⁵ The Battle of White Mountain is not to be found in the exhibition either. The only reference to the time after this battle is the exhibited book *Temno* (*Darkness*) by Alois Jirásek; however, it does not open any narrative and is rather randomly placed in a bookcase representing the style of living in the 1960s.

Other periods that are anchored in social discourse as key stages of Czech history are the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918) and the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938). The visitor passes through both periods in the exhibition as periods presented through Czech optics. Apart from the presented figures (such as architect Leopold Bauer or Field Marshal Eduard von Böhm-Ermolli of the Austro-Hungarian Army), several exhibits referring to the Austro-Hungarian Empire period are more related to people's everyday lives than to the representation of the monarchy or its political consequences – despite the fact that the Austro-

²³ KOPECKÝ, Jan. České lidové divadlo v kontextu evropské divadelní kultury. In: *O barokní kultuře: sborník statí*. Brno: Universita J. E. Purkyně, 1968, pp. 105–114.

²⁴ HAVLÍČKOVÁ, Margita, PRACNÁ, Sylva, & ŠTEFANIDES, Jiří. Německojazyčná městská divadla na Moravě a ve Slezsku (1733–1944). In: *Theatralia*, 2010, pp. 47–71.

²⁵ Cf. HOLÝ, Malý český..., ŠUBRT, Jiří & VINOPAL, Jiří, et al. *Historické vědomí obyvatel české republiky perspektivou sociologického výzkumu*. Praha: Karolinum, 2013.

Hungarian Empire represented a revolutionary time in terms of national identities.

In earlier times the nationalist principle was not applied: it was not part of social reality. However, as Gellner points out, this has started to change due to the modernisation of society.²⁶ Following the Vienna Arrangement (1815), a political system organised on nationalist principles was not immediately established because dynastic interests, religion and territorial continuity were prioritised over ethnicity and language. However, the social conditions established by modernity began to open the door to nationalism. During the time of Austria-Hungary, nationalism began to assert itself and national identities began to take shape more significantly, which also affected Czech national identity. By 1914, the inhabitants of Western and Central Europe took nationalism for granted and in 1918 nationalism manifested itself as a principle of political legitimacy. Nevertheless, the segment of the exhibition presenting the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy does not address questions such as the construction of national identities or the associated phenomenon of nationalism as a separate topic. Probably also due to this, the given historical period is not presented in the exhibition in relation to the stereotype of the 'German oppressor', but rather presents the period as an obvious part of Czech history.

The period of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) is presented in the context of the prevailing social discourse as the Golden Age. According to Kohák, the perception of the First Czechoslovak Republic as a good era in Czech history is typical for the Czechs.²⁷ It is depicted through an idealised image of a time when people living in cities wore flashy clothes and hats, visited the theatre, shopped and listened to classical music. The period is treated as a common part of history, without explaining the deeper context of the times and the events taking place then. The exhibition does not refer to the phenomena that accompanied the establishment of an independent republic and does not open the topic of the Czech National Revival, nor does it say anything about T. G. Masaryk (the first President of Czechoslovakia), which is relatively atypical for a Czech museum. The issue of a possible Czechoslovak identity is not discussed here either. The topic of Slovaks is not treated at all, and no distinction is made between Czechs and Slovaks as potentially distinct national groups. The period is present in the exhibition rather as a self-evident part of history. There is no explanation of the deeper context of the given time and its events. The period is encountered in the exhibition through various themes and exhibits. A targeted conceptual narrative is not constructed here. Despite the incomplete narrative, the visitor can form an idea about the First Czechoslovak Republic and everyday life in those times. They can obtain information and form impressions here which can follow on from their preconceptions. Rather than breaking the stereotype of the ideal of the First Czechoslovak Republic, these stereotypes are replicated here.

Fashion, which is part of the narrative of the First Czechoslovak Republic, is also discussed in the context of the later Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, where the museum text points out that the textile industry in Silesia collapsed during the Second World War. In this way, the exhibition corresponds to the stereotype associated with the perception of the Protectorate as a time of decline in Czech history.²⁸ However, this is only one of the few references to the negatives associated with inter-national coexistence in a time of growing influence of nationalism.

²⁶ GELLNER, Ernest. *Nacionalismus*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2003.

²⁷ KOHÁK, Erazim. *Domov a dálava: Kulturní totožnost a obecné lidství v českém myšlení*. Praha: Filozofia, 2009, p. 197.

²⁸ More information in ŠUBRT & VINOPAL, Historické vědomí...

The so-called prism of communism is also part of Czech collective memory.²⁹ The establishment of the communist regime in February 1948 is perceived negatively by roughly a third of today's Czechs, who also consider the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968 as a negative event in Czech history.³⁰ The period of normalisation is not part of the museum's narrative and the exhibition does not focus on presenting it, although exhibits referring these times can be found in the exhibition. The most noticeable example is in the part of the exhibition presenting life in the 1960s. In the staged living room there are artificial carnations, already almost iconic in Czech society, a copy of the newspaper *Rudé Právo* (*Red Lam*) from 1969 with the headline "Documentary reportage from the August days of 1969".

The exhibition even lacks a narrative devoted to the establishment of the independent Czech Republic (1993), which is analytically interesting. The existence of the Czech Republic is assumed a priori in the exhibition, as if the Czech nation had always existed here and therefore there is no need to return to the events of the Czech Republic's establishment as an independent nation-state. This also supports the ethno-cultural concept of the nation, which the exhibition reconstructs by placing more emphasis on common culture, history and language, rather than territory, in the context of Czech national identity. At the same time, these phenomena show us that methodological nationalism is still a common part of the creation of museum exhibitions, or at least it is in this particular case. But it is not too surprising. Museums are national institutions that direct their research towards national history, national territory, its cultural heritage and collective memory. Dealing with how to present national identity in today's postmodern age is a difficult task, and for many museums this task remains a challenge. The Encyclopaedia of Silesia exhibition, or rather its curators, did not set themselves this goal. It will therefore be interesting to see what form this topic will one day take if it is added to the exhibition.

Czech–German relationships in the exhibition

The exhibition also constructs narratives concerning other national identities. The role of minority identities is always interesting in the context of the construction of national identity, since the presence of foreign nationalities in the nation-state plays a role in the construction of the image of the nation. Specifically, the exhibition pays attention to German and Polish identities, although the latter to a lesser extent. Exhibits connected to these two identities most often refer to important German or Polish figures, objects connected with theatre and other social phenomena (pottery, mining). German and Polish identity is intertwined with the identity of a Silesian – a person living in Silesia at a given time who is presented as a Silesian in the museum narrative, regardless of their ethnicity. Thus, the typical identity within a given

²⁹ ŠUBRT & VINOPAL, Historické vědomí...

³⁰ Institute of sociology. Czech Academy of Science. *Tisková zpráva Občané o osobnostech, obdobích a událostech česko-slovenské historie od vzniku ČSR po současnost – březen 2018*, accessed 2018, https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form-2content/documents/c2/a4607/f9/pd180509.pdf

territory – land identity³¹ – at a particular time is brought to the centre of attention. Here, land identity partially displaces national identity or merges with it in a specific way.

An important element of the exhibition is the way it tells the story of the past coexistence of these ethnic/national groups in Silesia. The region of Czech Silesia has been struggling with the multicultural nature of the population since the Middle Ages, when, in addition to the Czechs, there was a significant German and Polish population whose number increased due to economic migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³² It is therefore not surprising that the exhibition pays attention to these national minorities. It is rather surprising that the topic of Czech–German–Polish relations is not summarised in a specific accompanying text in the exhibition.

The exhibition presents a number of important German figures³³ who lived in the region of Silesia. However, it is important to note that many of them were born during the Austro-Hungarian era, and therefore to speak of their identity as having a German or other self-conscious national identity is misleading. Nationality, or rather ethnicity, at that time did not have the same categorising character as it does today. In the beginnings of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, their status affiliation was more important for people's identity. At the same time, social status was often connected with the language that the representatives of the given social groups spoke. Some of the personalities that the exhibition presents also came from Jewish families. This makes the effort to declare the national identities of the personalities in the exhibition more difficult. It is therefore difficult to retrospectively determine the nationality of the personalities presented in the exhibition. This is doubly true for the region of Opava and Těšín, which were the regions of Silesia that were nationally (ethnically) quite mixed and where regional (land) identities often prevailed over national ones even at the time of the national revival. In the area of western Silesia, as Kolář points out, there were more distinct nationalities; there, people with German roots generally considered themselves unequivocally German. But it was not like that everywhere.

The exhibition focuses on presenting the everyday life of the people who lived in this area not just side by side but together; they influenced each other culturally and their coexistence was in most cases without conflict, unproblematic, commonplace and enriching. This differs from the typical museum narrative presenting these relationships through moments of conflict, as is common in the stereotypical interpretation of Czech–German relations within Czech national discourse. I perceive this fact as important and evaluate it positively. In addition to its educational potential, a narrative conceived in this way also offers the opportunity for members of the German or Polish minority living in Silesia and, by extension, in the Czech Republic to identify with the exhibition and its national narrative.

³¹ The concept of land identity is linked to the Silesia province in a specific way. In the context of the Czech Republic, land identity was historically linked (or in the minds and the concept of identity of some residents it is still linked) to the historical political units of the Czech lands – i.e. to Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, which today form the Czech Republic. But historically these separate areas fell under the lands of the Czech Crown, as lands subordinate to the Czech king. Land identity in this case emphasises the historical continuity and the right to self-governance of these historical lands, rather than being concerned with the national dimension. Within the framework of the Silesian land identity (or we can also say province identity) we are talking about identity linked to the historical political whole of Silesia – that is, with an area that could have been inhabited by people of different nationalities at the time and yet shared the Silesian land identity.

³² KOLÁŘ, Ondřej & JANÁK, Dušan, et al. *Polská a...*, p. 5.

³³ We can mention names such as painter Adolf Zdrázila, psychiatrist Ignác Tiefenbach, architect Leopold Bauer and more.

It would be interesting if the exhibition treated this topic up to the present day. However, it does not deal with the current national or ethnic minorities living in Silesia, which is consistent with the fact that the exhibition narrative itself does not focus on presenting the present. However, the museum makes up for this by having previously staged several temporary exhibitions on the topic of national minorities living in Silesia. It is necessary to add to the narrative of Czech–German relationships that in 2021 a revision of some keywords of the exhibition took place. As part of this revision, the keyword War was completely updated. On the basis of archaeological research carried out by the museum staff, the Second World War, which was not previously represented in the previous iterations of the exhibition, was introduced under this keyword. Thus, one of the narratives of the exhibition has been significantly transformed but its development would have to be mapped out in a new study.

Religion as an important part of the museum narrative

Although the Czech Republic is one of the most atheistic countries in Europe today, religion has played a significant role in the national identity of Czechs.³⁴ Many Czech traditions and other cultural elements are linked to Christianity as the dominant religion. It can therefore be assumed that religion is still important to the Czechs, at least as part of their history. Perhaps that is why the religious theme is strong in the exhibition. Christianity, specifically the region's dominant Catholicism, appears throughout the exhibition and is mainly situated under the keyword Church. In addition to religious objects and sacred buildings, the exhibition also presents places of pilgrimage as an important part of local history. The number of pilgrimage sites in Czech lands increased during the nineteenth century, and Silesia was no exception. In this century, as the accompanying exhibition text points out, the rise of romanticism began to see the human heart behind the landscape motifs. The landscape became a place of spiritual consolation for man. Pilgrimage sites are examples of places of memory. According to Hroch, the most ancient layer of the place of memory includes mythological sacred places and, under certain circumstances, also religious places of pilgrimage.³⁵ Among the elements that construct the Czech national identity, places of pilgrimage thus have their inherent place in the exhibition.

The extent to which the theme is represented in the exhibition shows that Catholicism was of great importance to the region in the past. At the same time, it is worth noting that the Reformation and Protestantism are not themes within the museum's narrative, which makes it distinct from the dominant narrative of Czech national identity in which the narrative of Protestantism, the Reformation and the Hussites has been strong since the time of Palacký and was subsequently also significant during the First Czechoslovak Republic. Although the museum's narrative turns quite strongly to the time of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the

³⁴ More information on the religious beliefs of the Czechs in LAUDÁTOVÁ, Marie & VIDO, Roman. *Současná česká religiozita v generační perspektivě*. In: *Sociální Studia*, pp. 37–61, 2010.

³⁵ HROCH, Miroslav. *Národ jako kulturní konstrukt?* In: *Lidé města*, 2005, p. 11.

theme of the Hussite Nation³⁶ is not included. The fact that Catholicism was dominant – and held its position even in times when the Protestantism prevailed in many other places in Czech territory – is due to the circumstances of the region at the time. Kolář describes them in a research interview as follows:

Historically, there were also some effects of the Reformation in Opava region in history. There were quite intense riots and clashes between Catholics and Protestants in the time before the Battle of White Mountain. Then came the recatholisation and it can be said that the Catholic religion, especially in Opava and western Silesia, held its position here for quite a long time. Here, even the time of some national consciousness struggle in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was very much based on the Catholic background. And at a time when the age of majority Czech nationalism was already defining itself anticlerically against the so-called Austro-Catholicism, the Catholic Church still had a big role here during the First Czechoslovak Republic. The Czech nationalism or Czech patriotism here in the Opava and Bílovec region was very much tied to the Catholic Church. And the Catholic religion was also connected with identity in the Hlučín region. It was part of Prussia from 1742 to 1920, i.e. part of a majority Protestant country. So Catholicism was preserved there as such a distinctive part of the regional identity [...] basically as a counterbalance to the Prussian Protestantism and the Prussian threat. People clung to Catholicism as a proof of loyalty both to the Church and to the Austrian state. In doing so, they were also setting themselves against the Great German mindset from the local political scene.³⁷

Modernisation of Czech society as an important narrative of the exhibition

Unsurprisingly, the national question is also linked to the narrative referring to the modernisation of society. The transformation of traditional society and its transition into a modern one was triggered by industrialisation, which brought about a change in social structures that led to the emergence of nationalism and thus to a focus on national identities. The development of industrial society is reflected in the exhibition within a number of themes. These include coal mining, for which the region was known and which the exhibition focuses on both through exhibits (e.g., a miner's sledgehammer, a miner's hammer, a casting spoon, an ore cart from the nineteenth century, poems by P. Bezruč, etc.) and narratives shaped around them.

³⁶ As ŠUBRT & VINOPAL, *Historické vědomí...* pointed out the period of the Hussite Wars (15th century) and the personality of Jan Hus is an important part of the Czech national memory. This period is considered by some people to be a famous moment in Czech history, but from the point of view of other aspects, it is also perceived by the Czech public as a period with a negative meaning. It can thus be a relatively controversial period of Czech national memory. According to Hroch, Malečková and Kohák (cf. HROCH, Miroslav, & MALEČKOVÁ, Jitka. The construction of Czech national history. In: *Historein*, 1999, pp. 103–112; KOHÁK, Domov a...) Hussites as a part of the national past were constructed by Palacký, who with his four-volume work *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě* (*History of the Czech nation in Bohemia and Moravia*) significantly contributed to the construction of the Czech national identity, and who made it a monument to the great deeds of the ancestors. The Czech national revival highlighted Hussiteism as a time of national awareness and consolidation of the population, which symbolised the struggle of the population against an external enemy, the fight for freedom (see RAK, Jiří. *Bývalí Čechové... (české historické mýty a stereotypy)*. Jinočany: H & H, 1994).

³⁷ This and other passages from interview transcripts have been translated from Czech into English.

The extraction of a particular mineral resource is strongly linked to the national identity of a given country and its inhabitants, as it is linked to the geographical character of the landscape. It defines the ownership of a particular mineral resource, and thus influences the livelihoods of the local population and their overall way of life, including their living conditions (the level of poverty of a given location and the socio-economic status of individual inhabitants). In the Silesia region, not only coal but also shale, iron ore and stone were mined. In the nineteenth century, the Ostrava industrial agglomeration was established which, as the museum text in the exhibition points out, was the only one in the territory of the then Czech Republic. This event significantly influenced the shape of local life through the emergence of cheap workers' accommodation and subsequent workers' colonies near the factories (the workers' colonies are presented in the exhibition with large-format prints and museum texts), as well as impacting the environment through pollution, devastation of the landscape, and so on. Mining is not only a feature of a certain regions and countries but also a component of an area's collective identity and an element of people's collective memory. As Kolář mentions in a research interview:

When you say Silesia, a lot of people first of all think of mining, heavy industry and things related to it. [...] It's something that evokes a lot of nostalgia nowadays. Let's say it is a bit idealised.

Another important theme is the emergence of leisure time and the phenomenon of tourism, which is accentuated in the exhibition as a typical Czech and, in practice, German phenomenon (exhibits such as a twentieth-century hiking stick, a compass, and membership cards of the German tourist association). The boom of tourism and the establishment of tourist associations in our territory, including Silesia, occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century due to the shortening of working hours and the related development of leisure time, as well as the development of railway transport (also mentioned in the exhibition), which enabled the masses to travel relatively cheaply. In the twentieth century, tourism gradually became a popular activity and people from lower social classes began to spend their leisure time in nature and in the mountains.³⁸

The development of modern trade was also important. This is presented in the exhibition through a representation of a grocery store from the urban periphery at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition to household goods, the exhibition presents common groceries and sweets produced by the local brand Fiedor the store as well as goods imported from the colonies which customers were enticed to buy using metal advertising signs. Advertising posters depicting scenes from the tea colonies had a significant role in the presentation of foreign cultures and can continue to do so today as exhibits. They encourage visitors to consider that some raw materials are not produced by the nation states themselves and therefore need to be imported. They also create and communicate an image of other countries and the people who live there.

The exhibition also presents international metric conventions related to trade, which can also point to the distinctiveness of different national cultures that hold different metric systems. The need to unify the system of weights and measures was triggered by the development of industrial production and increasing international trade. As the accompanying text reminds

³⁸ POKORNÝ, Vojtěch & ŠOPÁK, Pavel (eds). *Paměť krajiny: České Slezsko 1750–1950*. Opava: Slezské zemské museum, 2020.

visitors, Austro-Hungarian Empire adopted the new system of weights and measures in 1875 on signing the International Metric Convention in Paris. The existing weights and measures were thus replaced by new ones, which were adopted by a number of other countries. The metric system can thus be a symbol not only of difference but also of gradual process of convergence.

Modern trade has been intrinsically linked to the development of the modern city, with this subcategory forming the thematic counterpart to the category of the Czech Village and its Traditions. In addition to rural buildings and folk costume, the exhibition also focuses on urban architecture and the clothing of city residents, which creates a contrast to the rural way of life. The theme of the modern city is also an important part of the construction of Czech identity. This was pointed out in a research interview by Denisa Hradilová, the curator of the exhibition's keyword City, who also thought about its national dimension when working on the project:

I chose hats from the mid-nineteenth century, not hats from the time of the first Czechoslovak Republic, of which we have more, but which already follow the international aesthetic line. The same hats were worn in England, for example. I chose hand-knitted gloves made of yarn, and gloves made of machine tulle, but with hand embroidery. Alongside this I have placed two Balkan style handbags, which are probably imports, as a point of interest. Evening dresses present an attempt to follow the latest trends in Silesian conditions. I think they are really beautiful and the fight between the official trend and the local rendition is magical. The national dimension lies in the understanding of uniqueness in all forms. Difference and uniqueness is part of the national image, but one cannot grasp it by looking at our two showcases in the Silesia Exhibition. One has to go to several museums across the country and only then will the national identity become apparent.

This category also includes the issue of how the scientific disciplines of medicine and psychiatry were constituted. Psychiatry and medicine are represented in the exhibition by the keyword Hospital and represented by important figures (psychiatrist Ignác Tiefenbach), events (the establishment of the first general public hospital in Opava) and exhibits related to this topic (e.g., weighing scale, a syringe, an anatomical model of a human being, etc.).

The exhibition and its relation to the present

The contemporary twenty-first century is only marginally represented in the exhibition and there is no narrative dealing with the present day. The only exception is the keyword Mining, where the accompanying text draws attention to the negative consequences of mining related to pollution and devastation of the landscape.

When thinking about the exhibition and considering the missing topic, we should not forget the fact that the exhibition is arranged as a glossary elaborating upon important keywords relating to Silesia of important keywords of Silesia, not as a narrative that aims to explain Czech history and its chronology or its present form. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the curators did not pay more attention to topics connected with the recent past and present. There are several reasons for this. According to Kolář, the exhibition focuses more on the presentation of everyday human life than on political events and milestones, which were more the focus of some earlier temporary exhibitions. According to him, the aim of the exhibition is

to offer visitors a place to relax and an insight into timeless phenomena, rather than to present difficult and controversial topics. On the one hand, this is understandable, especially given the museum has other places where difficult historical topics are dealt with (e.g., the Second World War Memorial in Hrabyně). On the other hand, certain controversial topics do appear in the exhibition, and it is questionable whether it is appropriate for (post)modern museums to avoid interpreting them. Examples of exhibits that potentially relate to controversial topics in a given exhibition include a patch with the letter N used to identify the German inhabitants of post-war Opava; the Ahnenpaß (“ancestor pass” documenting Aryan lineage) of Karl Schinzel; and the figure of Leopold Bauer, who was a Nazi sympathiser, which the exhibition does not mention at all. Regarding today’s presentation, there is another level of the problem, which was reflected by Kamila Poláková when she pointed out that the museum’s previous collection activities did not focus much on the present. This has started to change recently, and the issue of building collections related to the present is a current issue of museum policy. It is thus possible that even recent historical events and the present will be more involved in the exhibition in the future.

The exhibition without a narrator?

According to Poláková, the exhibition was not designed to have one narrator who would guide the visitor through a coherent first-person narrative. She noted that the connecting element of the exhibition could be the figure of a Silesian, but not one particular Silesian assigned to a particular century because the centuries and time periods are intertwined and mixed, both across the exhibition and within the keywords.

Even an exhibit itself can be a narrator of the story of its time, which the curators are naturally aware of. Hradilová pointed this out in the context of the exhibited textile collection. According to her, one of the narrators of the narrative of the keyword City is the Silesian manufacturer whose work is presented in the form of the exhibited dresses. The artefacts, in the form of dresses, point not only to themselves as elements of human labour but also to their owners and the very time of their lives. As Hradilová expressed it, “Textiles themselves are narrators of their time; they say more about people than it might seem at first sight.”

Despite the fact that the curators and other museum staff have different views on who is the narrator of the exhibition’s narrative, the analysis of the exhibition has reached a certain generalisation. The exhibition views the nation and its history through the lens of members of mainstream society and their everyday lives, rather than presenting the history and experiences of elites, such as national revivalists or political officials. An exception to this is the presentation of the lives of important figures of the region (mostly artists, scientists, architects or businessmen). However, in the context of the exhibition’s rhetoric, their lives are presented through their contribution to the region and everyday life in it – that is, as a natural part of it, not a specific singularity. Life in the region and its history are shown through the lens of the Czechs; with regard to the theme and aim of the exhibition, it is the lens of the Czechs living in the area of Bohemian Silesia. And it is the voice of the Silesian (and, more generally, the Czech) that narrates the exhibition’s story – a voice that does not guide the visitor through the exhibition as a continuously progressing plot, nor even appears as an explicitly present narrator. But this narrator is nevertheless implicitly present in the exhibition. It should be added that this narration tends to be produced from a male perspective, since it is more often men whose fates the exhibition presents.

In the context of the analysis of the exhibition, we must not forget the active role of the visitor, as Šopák emphasised in an interview. According to him, it is possible to perceive the narrator of the museum narrative to be the “present individual who accepts the past selectively, but with the adventure of knowledge that is revealed to him spontaneously.” In Šopák’s rendition, the narrator is the visitor himself, who (as constructivist theories of learning point out) is always an active actor participating in the process of constructing the meaning of the narrative of the exhibition he visits.

Final discussion

The research found that although the museum staff did not explicitly attempt to create a national narrative, such a narrative is present in the exhibition and speaks more-or-less clearly to museum visitors through the individual exhibits and exhibition situations. The research confirmed the hypothesis that Czech national identity can be constructed in a regional museum, given that the examined exhibition was significantly intertwined with national identity. It also confirmed the hypothesis that the notion of national identity constructed by the exhibition would largely correspond to the dominant social discourse. However, it also turned out that the exhibition was capable of breaking down some discursive stereotypes, as was the case, for example, with the topic of Czech–German relationships.

This fact emphasises the importance of museums and their activities not only in confirming reality but also in the construction and reconstruction of reality. Such endeavours should be based on scientific activity and research, and people should be able to access information about new discoveries and analyses of phenomena not only through scientific publications but also through the activities of museums, including exhibitions. In the context of the present research topic, it is worth paying deeper attention to visitors’ reactions to and interpretations of the exhibition, and the various ways they perceive the exhibition and its narrative. This topic is worthy of a separate study, for which the results of the present research could form a suitable background.

It could also be interesting and useful to examine the form the national narrative takes in other Czech museums and their exhibitions, including the National Museum. It should be mentioned that the National Museum was closed for reconstruction during most of my research period. Now, the opportunity for comparison is mainly offered by two exhibitions at the National Museum: the History exhibition and the History of the 20th century exhibition. The latter was under construction at the time of my research and subsequently opened in 2021. Unlike the Encyclopaedia of Silesia, this exhibition:

brings the history of the Czech lands between 1914 and 2004 closer to the visitors [...]. The History of the 20th century exhibition also provides an insight into the changes in Czech and Czechoslovak politics. It represents key figures, as well as fundamental decisions of power that influenced all sections of the population. The exhibition is chronologically divided with emphasis on the historical milestones of 1918, 1945 and 1948.³⁹

Apart from noticing the difference in the intention to present political history and events, it is interesting to observe how some of the exhibits have the same meanings and discursive

³⁹ National Museum Website. *The History of the 20th century*, accessed July 17th, 2023, <https://www.nm.cz/en/program/families-and-children/history-of-the-20th-century>

background in both exhibitions. It is worth mentioning the tourist stick with tourist stamps from the 1920s to 1930s which are also used to present the theme of the democratisation of leisure time in the Opava and Prague museums. With regard to famous national figures, both exhibitions feature B. Smetana and his opera *The Bartered Bride*. Similarly to the Opava exhibition, the Prague exhibition also includes a tableau showing a typical grocery store from the end of the First Czechoslovak Republic. There is a cash register, a measuring scale, food cans and branded Czech products. The exhibition also presents another typically Czech phenomenon, brewing, which is not represented in the *Encyclopaedia of Silesia*, although in Opava does have a historical tradition of brewing. Another tableau similar to one in Opava recreates modern living rooms from various years of the twentieth century, specifically from the 1920s and 1930s, as is the case with the stylised living rooms presented in the *Encyclopaedia of Silesia*.

Even just outlining the similarities of the two exhibitions terms of how they relate to Czech national identity, it is evident that future research could offer a number of interesting findings that would discuss not only the similarities of these two and other museums but also their possible differences and potential developments in current trends in museum exhibitions.

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Museum presentation and new trends in exhibition displays from a museological perspective using the example of selected European university museums and collections¹

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Museum presentation and new trends in exhibition displays from a museological perspective using the example of selected European university museums and collections

Against the background of museological theory, this paper questions new trends in current museum exhibition displays, focusing on universities as institutions of higher education and as preservers of cultural heritage. The first part of this paper provides an overview of university heritage, its scale and scope and the labels of heritagisation that can be linked to it. In the second part of the paper, select examples of university exhibitions are introduced – each of which dealing with a specific university heritage. These examples are all part of the Coimbra Group network of universities, which includes some of the oldest universities in Europe. The exhibitions are analysed in terms of their forms of presentation, the way in which they deal with objects as evidence for university history and the communication modes they use.

Keywords: museum presentation, museology, university museums, university collections on display

Introduction

From a museological point of view, permanent exhibitions are typically put on display for 10 to 15 years, at which point it comes time to review them. Fundamentally, they serve the purpose of presenting an overview of the respective museum collection by conveying to the visitors a narrative connected to the museum, the collection history or the collected objects. In this context, the museum objects are interpreted through presentation and thus play an important role in conveying a message. Moreover, museum exhibitions are – from a museological point of view – not only one of the primary tasks of a museum but also the supreme discipline of a museum as an institution, as a museum is the only institution that conveys messages via the original and authentic objects displayed in an interpretive museum presentation.²

In the autumn of 2014, I participated in the “Muzeo50 – International Museology Conference”³ that took place at the Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. For my

¹ The article is a result of the project: Ministry of Education, youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, AKTION Czech Republic – Austria 96p7 “Open Round Table of Museology II.”

² Waidacher, Friedrich. *Handbuch der Allgemeinen Museologie*. Vienna: Cologne, Weimar³, 1999.

³ For the website of Muzeo 50, see: <https://www.muni.cz/en/events-calendar/archive-45466549?lang=en> [28.12.2023].

contribution, I presented “Nouophors and other things. Theoretical models and (post-)museum exhibition display in the mirror of the theorem of museality”. At that time, a tendency towards visitor participation was becoming noticeable, at least for the studied museum presentations in Austria. In this regard, museums included a narrative aspect in their permanent exhibitions.

Almost ten years later, university museums are facing new questions: In which direction have museum displays developed since then? What do current museum displays look like? Do they reflect on theoretical models of museology? Accordingly, this paper focuses on forms and current museum presentation trends by addressing certain questions, namely how it is they deal with original and authentic museum objects and in which way are they reflected in exhibition displays. Moreover, it aims to answer in which way the objects are embedded into a narration of museum communication. What does the museum want to tell the visitors?

In the last decade, it has become obvious that university museums are attracting more public attention than before – especially the Humboldt Forum⁴ in Berlin, where university collections are also represented, became a topic of public debate. Moreover, the University of Göttingen opened its academic museum Forum Wissen⁵ as a platform for their university collections in 2022.

The example museum presentations selected for this contribution, which are also the focus of this investigation, are university museum presentations that were renewed in the last decade. Several study trips were undertaken in the context of the Coimbra Group network of universities⁶ to build the foundation for this study. Underlying these analyses is a theory founded in museology, one that links university museum communication to science communication, as this is also an outreach task of universities. The paper argues from the perspective that sustainably managing, preserving and communicating university heritage is of utmost importance to universities and their mission of academic research and teaching.

The example museum presentations are analysed through previous research conducted on museum presentations in which several aspects of interest for a museological analysis of museum presentations were established.⁷ Also of relevance is the content of the exhibition in the overall context of the museum in which the exhibited objects are presented. Moreover, the arrangement of the presented content and objects is also of interest. Elements of the exhibition design play an important role in communicating the message. How are the objects and contents arranged? Are they supplemented with accompanying materials like labels, graphics, figures, tablets or other multimedia systems that help visitors find the relevant information they are expecting? Finally, the guidance system and additional educational materials are relevant parts of any analysis of museum displays from a museological perspective and are therefore also considered.

Against this background, the paper first provides an overview of the theory of museology and the concept of museality in order to explain in which way museality influences museum

⁴ For the website of the Humboldt Forum, see: <https://www.humboldtforum.org/en/> [28.12.2023].

⁵ For the website of Forum Wissen, see: <https://www.forum-wissen.de/> [28.12.2023].

⁶ For the website of the Coimbra Group, Working Group Heritage, see: <https://www.coimbra-group.eu/working-group/heritage/> [28.12.2023]. Twice a year, the group is meeting at a home university of the one of its members.

⁷ BIEDERMANN, Bernadette. *Präsentationsformen - museologische Zugänge*. Am Beispiel des Kulturhistorischen und Kunstgewerbemuseums am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, 2009; BIEDERMANN, Bernadette. Theoretische Modelle und aktuelles museales Ausstellungswesen im Spiegel des Theorems der Musealität. In: *Museologica Brunesia*, Vol. 4, 2015, No. 2, pp. 33–41; BIEDERMANN, Bernadette. Vom Musentempel zur Eventwerkstätte. Am Beispiel „neuer“ musealer Präsentationen. In: *Curiositas. Jahrbuch für Museologie und museale Quellenkunde*, Vol. 16–17, 2018, pp. 5–44.

presentation. The selected example museum presentations are briefly introduced, and reference is given to the scope and scale of university heritage. While university heritage has been in the foreground lately, when compared to the heritage research done for universal museums, it was previously neglected; thus, it seems necessary that a reflection be made on the heritage for which universities – as institutions in the service of society – are responsible. Two university museums in Germany, one in Estonia and one in Portugal were selected as example museum presentations; of these, three were redesigned within the past decade. The first example museum presentation to be discussed is the redesign of the Uniseum – the permanent exhibition of the university museum of the University of Freiburg in Germany, which was finished in 2004⁸ and therefore the longest ago. The second university museum to be analysed is the University of Tartu Museum in Estonia⁹, followed by an analysis of the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK) in Bonn, Germany¹⁰. Finally, the Science Museum's Cabinet of Curiosities of the University of Coimbra in Portugal¹¹ is discussed. Each of these example museum presentations represents and highlights a specific aspect of museologically presented cultural heritage. The paper's conclusion summarises current trends in handling original and authentic objects in university museum displays by focusing on the stories that are told to the public based on object collections of universities.

The Theory of Museology

The discipline of general museology discusses the meaning of (historical) objects and cultural heritage for society in three dimensions: a historical, theoretical and practical dimension of museology. Thus, museology investigates the phenomenon of collecting, preserving, researching, and displaying objects as representations of a society's cultural values. In this context, museology determines the relationship between humans and their environment, wherein specific specimens and items are selected, researched, and displayed as expressions of museality.¹²

Consequently, objects serve as significant witnesses to events and circumstances and store memories of the past. These memories can then be made visible via musealisation, an academic and museological process of research. These events and circumstances must have high importance to a society and must thereby be intersubjectively verifiable to be addressed as museality.

As objects have meaning and relevance to a society, museology acts in an interdisciplinary and intersubjective way. This inter- and transdisciplinary approach looks at objects as sources from the perspective of museology as well as from the perspective of other object-centred

⁸ For the website of the Uniseum, University of Freiburg, Germany, see: <https://www.uniseum.uni-freiburg.de/de> [28.12.2023].

⁹ For the website of the University of Tartu Museum, Estonia, see: <https://muuseum.ut.ee/en/university-of-our-lives> [28.12.2023].

¹⁰ For the website of the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK) of the University of Bonn, Germany, see: <https://bonn.leibniz-lib.de/de/museum/dauerausstellungen> [28.12.2023].

¹¹ For the website of the Cabinet of Curiosities, Science Museum of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, see: <https://www.uc.pt/en/article?key=a-aecdff5827> [28.12.2023].

¹² Definition according to Zbyněk Z. Stránský and Friedrich Waidacher, see: BIEDERMANN, Bernadette. The Theory of Museology. Museology as it is – defined by two pioneers: Zbyněk Z. Stránský and Friedrich Waidacher. In: *Museologica Brunensia*, Vol. 5, 2016, No. 2, pp. 51–64. doi: 10.5817/MuB2016-2-6; Waidacher, Friedrich. Handbuch...

disciplines, such as art history, archaeology, cultural anthropology, musicology, geology, zoology and more.

From a museological point of view, objects are at the centre of interest in terms of museum presentation, as they are what visitors experience and experiencing the displays sets in motion an internal connection with the object.¹³ Thus, when designing and structuring museum exhibitions, it is important to keep in mind that information is what is ultimately being conveyed to the public; therefore, a focus on clear and correct facts and content is crucial. Moreover, the arrangement of objects in a space, the use of design mediums and forms of education and additional material are key factors. For collections that may be connected to problematic pasts or topics, international standards created by the professional museum community provide appropriate guidelines for museum exhibitions.¹⁴ They propose not to exhibit items which are unprovenanced and to respect the dignity of the communities of origin from which the objects were a part of, especially if the objects are considered sacred or are human remains.

University Museums and Collections in a European Context

The scope and scale of university heritage

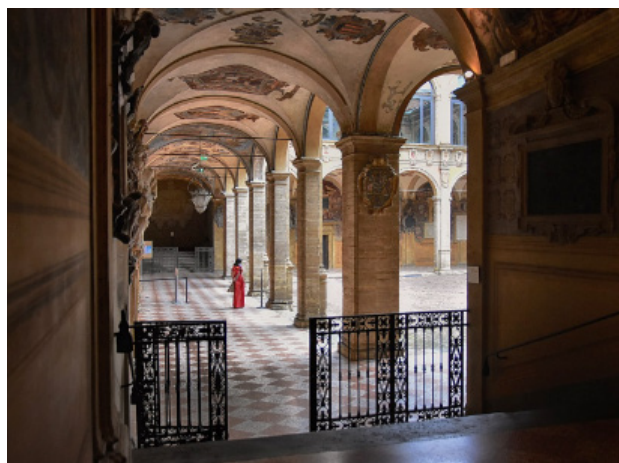


Fig. 1: *Courtyard of the University of Bologna, Italy.*
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University#/media/File:Archiginnasio_particolari_\(9\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University#/media/File:Archiginnasio_particolari_(9).jpg)
Photograph by Aneta Malinowska ART.

Since their development in the High Middle Ages, universities have become the European institution of higher education par excellence. The first universities were the University of Bologna, founded in 1088 (Fig. 1), and the University of Paris, founded in 1200. To this day, universities are the only institutions with the right to award academic degrees, deriving their power from the “universitas magistrorum et scholarium” – the community of teachers and scholars. The term “universitas” stands for the universality of academic teaching and research.¹⁵

University heritage is intrinsically linked to the history of sciences and

the history of universities, meaning that scientific objects were invented as a result and are evidence of scientific and academic research. University heritage is thus a material expression of ideas, scientific research and inventions. From a museological point of view, academia and its history are inscribed into objects, which therefore stand witness to scientific inventions and are the bearers of museality. An example for this is the ruby-rod laser on display in the

¹³ According to Zbyněk Z. Stránský and Friedrich Waidacher; there is a lack of state-of-the-art research applying museological theory to museum presentations in terms of analysing special use cases; for a theoretical approach see: Veronika Kolaříková, The museum exhibition in the context of dispositive analysis. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, Vol. 10, 2022, Is. 3, pp.5–31 doi: 10.46284/mkd.2022.10.3.1.

¹⁴ ICOM (ed.), Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM 2017.

¹⁵ KOCH, Hans-Albrecht. *Die Universität. Geschichte einer europäischen Institution*. Darmstadt, 2008; FISCH, Stefan. *Geschichte der europäischen Universität*. Von Bologna nach Bologna, Munich, 2015.

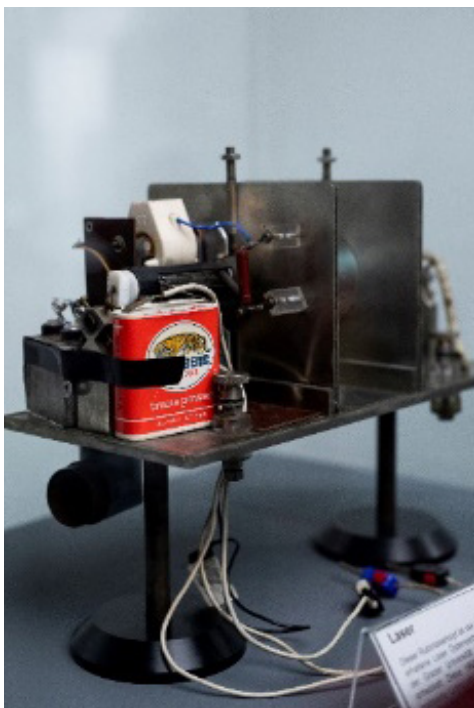


Fig. 2: *Laser by Prof. Franz Aussenegg, early 1960ies – the first laser in Austria.*
Photograph by University Museums,
University of Graz.



Fig. 3: *Hans Gross' crime scene suitcase, Hans Gross Museum of Criminology, University Museums, University of Graz.* Photograph by Marija Kanizaj.

University Museums of the University of Graz. This object is a prototype built by physicist Franz Aussenegg in the early 1960s and is today considered to be the first laser ever built in Austria. The then 25-year-old managed to build the laser based solely on his field research and knowledge without ever having seen one before.¹⁶

One example of such a scientific university collection is the criminological collection of the University Museums of the University of Graz. This collection was founded by Hans Gross (1847–1915), a coroner and professor for criminal law at the University of Graz. Due to his



Fig. 4: *History of Science Museum, University of Oxford, United Kingdom.*

https://www.hsm.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/styles/listing_landscape_image/public/mhs/images/media/museumofhistoricalscienceoxfordbyianwallman-237.jpg?itok=h0CUB35s

¹⁶ BIEDERMANN, Bernadette. University Collections as Representatives of Academic Research and Knowledge Transfer – Using the Example of the Ruby-Rod-Laser – an Object on Display in the University Museums Graz. In: *University Museums and Collections Journal*, Vol. 15, 2023, No. 1, pp. 26–15. doi: urn:nbn:at:at-ubg:3-18421.

inventing of innovative tools and methods for crime scene investigations, he is also known as the “father of criminology”. In 1895, the so-called “Kriminologische Sammlung” – his criminological collection of corpora delicti from the Graz criminal court – was founded as a teaching collection. In 1912, the Department of Criminology at the University of Graz was established, and the criminological collection was used to open the “Criminological Museum” (today the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology) (Fig. 3).

The scope of university heritage encompasses what we call the heritage of European universities. It involves both material heritage – which is the tangible cultural heritage, e.g. museums, archives, libraries, and cultural sites – as well as immaterial heritage, i.e. the intangible cultural heritage such as traditions, rites, ceremonies, and specific language and terminology connected to academic research and teaching. Due to their outstanding value for mankind, both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are included in the UNESCO World Heritage’s definition of heritage.¹⁷

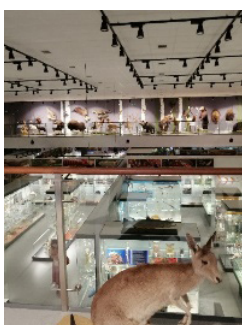


Fig. 5: *History of the Natural Sciences Education Centre, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland.*

Photograph by Bernadette Biedermann.

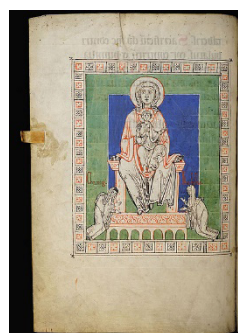


Fig. 6: *Manuscript, 12th century, Seckau Abbey, University Library, special collections, University of Graz.*

<https://ub.uni-graz.at/de/neuigkeiten/detail/article/aus-dem-leben-einer-handschrift/>



Fig. 7: *Vienna University Archive, University of Vienna.*

<https://bibliothek.univie.ac.at/archiv/en/>

¹⁷ For the UNESCO World Heritage website, see: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/> [28.12.2023]; UNESCO safeguards cultural heritage as it is defined by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme and the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Currently, efforts are also being made to promote and expand the UNESCO Global Geoparks initiative.

University museums and their collections are typically expressions of this material, tangible university heritage, for example, the exhibitions of university collections at the History of Science Museums of the University of Oxford (Fig. 4) and at the History of the Natural Sciences Education Centre of Jagellonian University in Krakow (Fig. 5). Moreover, university libraries preserve and store well-known scientific publications as well as manuscripts and rare book collections – as is exemplified by a manuscript kept at Seckau Abbey that dates back to the 12th century of (Fig. 6). Furthermore, university archives house the holdings of archival material (documents, correspondences, or written evidence) of key stakeholders such as deans, rectors, faculties, departments and university centres (Fig. 7). Demonstrative of this is the documentary material kept in the Vienna University Archive.

Moreover, the historic buildings that house a university's faculties, departments, centres, libraries and other administrative divisions are considered to be the built heritage of a university and are therefore part of the cultural university heritage. Such buildings are often listed as World Heritage Sites in and of themselves, irrespective of the university heritage they represent. An example of this is the built heritage of the University of Coimbra, which, as the UNESCO World Heritage Convention points out, is of “outstanding universal value” (Fig. 8). As this type of cultural heritage is often still in active use, for example, as tourist attractions, their



Fig. 8: Built heritage of the University of Coimbra, Portugal.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1387/>



Fig. 9: The renovated University Library at University of Graz reopened in 2019 and features a modern art intervention by the Austrian artist Anna Artaker. She adapted the motif, which was originally Renaissance copperplate print by French scholar Jean Du Breuil from 1642 under the title “*Perspectiva Practica*”, enlarging it nearly 200 times from the size of a textbook page to cover the 500m² bottom of the University Library roof.
<https://www.uni-graz.at/de/neuigkeiten/kunst-bau/>

preservation and conservation can require significantly more resources. This fact illustrates the obvious tension between preservation and exhibition in the sense of the public's use of cultural heritage. From a museological point of view, the preservation of cultural heritage is as equally important as the exhibition of cultural heritage; consequently, these two core museum tasks are always and intrinsically in tension. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss solutions that are acceptable for reaching both, often opposing, goals. Increasing the chance of an almost unlimited preservation period means storing cultural heritage under ideal climatic conditions, conditions which are almost always at least inconvenient if not outright hostile to public

exhibition. It is the task of museum experts and researchers to mitigate this tension and find innovative solutions and museological tools that are acceptable for both opposing endeavours.



Fig. 10: Logo of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

<https://searchvectorlogo.com/unesco-world-heritage-convention-logo-vector-svg/>



Fig. 11: Austrian logo variant for the distinctive marking of cultural property under the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Logo_of_the_Hague_Convention_in_Austria.png, image by Steindy.



Fig. 12: Article “University in Europe: how you know it is right for you”, Louise Tickle, *The Guardian* online, 8 May 2015.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/08/university-in-europe-how-to-know-if-its-right-for-you>



Fig. 13: Student bedroom, European Museum of Students (MEUS), University of Bologna, Italy.

<https://sma.unibo.it/en/the-university-museum-network/european-museum-of-students-meus/gallery>

The built heritage of a university also often includes art installations and art on campus. An example of this is the University Library of the University of Graz, which was remodelled in 2019 and now features art on built heritage (Fig. 9).

In Austria, built heritage is protected as cultural heritage at both the national and international level. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention defines “outstanding universal value” using ten criteria that built heritage must fulfil to earn the World Heritage label (Fig. 10)¹⁸, whereas the Monument Protection Act codifies monument and built heritage protection in Austria and labels it accordingly (Fig. 11).¹⁹

¹⁸ For the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, see: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/> [27.12.2023].

¹⁹ For the Federal Act on the Protection of Monuments Due to Their Historic, Artistic or Other Cultural Significance (Monument Protection Act, DMSG), originally passed in 1923, see: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Geltende-Fassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10009184> [27.12.2023].

The immaterial, intangible cultural heritage of universities encompasses methodologies and traditions related to teaching and learning, also known as the “academic knowledge” of the various disciplines. Part of the intangible cultural heritage of universities comes from university life itself, whether it be of researchers, students, or administrative staff (Fig. 12).

As immaterial or intangible cultural heritage is often linked to materialisations and thus expressed in objects that stand witness to intangible practices or rites, it is also possible to exhibit intangible university heritage. A great example of this is the reconstruction of a student’s bedroom at the European Museum of Students (MEUS) of the University of Bologna, Italy (Fig. 13), which clearly illustrates a student’s lifestyle.

Examples of rituals, traditions, and ceremonies that are related to universities include the awarding of academic degrees, such as doctorates, honorary ceremonies, and other festive activities. These are similarly linked to material expressions of cultural practises in the form of traditional clothing, jewellery (such as the necklace or rings traditionally worn by the dean or through various badges of honour) or university insignia.²⁰

As previously discussed, university heritage encompasses both the tangible and the intangible cultural heritage of universities and thus reflects the broad history of an institution as it operates in the service of academic research and teaching. From a museological perspective, university heritage stands witness not only to research and teaching traditions at the institutions, but also to the history of scientific disciplines, the history of science as a whole and the history of teaching specific scientific disciplines.

Furthermore, various cultural values are linked to university heritage – such as aesthetic, artistic, historical and monetary value as well as the value of remembrance – and must be proven by a scientific approach.²¹

Example museum presentations

The first example of forms of presentation at university museums is the Uniseum Freiburg, the university museum of the University of Freiburg, Germany. The Uniseum was founded in 2004 and exhibits the university heritage of the University of Freiburg dating back to its founding in 1457. The museum’s permanent exhibition is housed in the city centre at the “Old University” originally built by the Jesuits. Taking up approximately 1,000 square metres of exhibition space, it showcases the university’s own history as well as the history of the various academic disciplines, which are themselves subdivided into sections. The history of the university is told in chronological order, from the founding of the university in the 15th century all the way to the 20th century. Moreover, relevant objects are used to represent the separate histories of the humanities, natural sciences and medicine. Furthermore, it features

²⁰ For the insignia of the University of Graz, see: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:kfug.6> [28.12.2023].

²¹ For universities and their museums, see: PLAZA, Camila. Museums in Universities. Predicaments and Potentialities. In: *Museum International*, Vol. 74, 2022, No. 1-2, pp. 74–85; MURAVSKA, Svitlana and STASIUK, Ivan. University Heritage as an Instrument for the Development of the University Brand. In: *Museologica Brunensia*, Vol. 9, 2020, No. 2, pp. 2–9; SIMPSON, Andrew, FUKUNI, Akiko, and MINAMI, Hiroshi. University museums and collections as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition. In: *University Museums and Collections Journal*, Vol. 11, 2019, No. 1, pp. 9–12; KOZAK, Zenobia R. The Role of University Museums and Heritage in the 21st Century. In: *The Museum Review*, Vol. 1, 2016, No. 1; de MARET, Pierre. Exposing the Ivory Tower. In: *Opuscula Musealia*, Vol.15, 2006, pp. 77–83; BULOTAITTE, Nijole. University Heritage – An Institutional Tool for Branding and Marketing. In: *Higher Education on Europe*, Vol. XXVIII, 2003, No. 4, pp. 449–454.



Fig. 14: *Forms of presentation, permanent exhibition of the Uniseum Freiburg, University of Freiburg, Germany.*
https://db-service.toubiz.de/var/plain_site/storage/images/orte/freiburg/uniseum/freiburg_uniseum_copyright_siehe_bild/2776511-1-ger-DE/Freiburg_Uniseum_Copyright_siehe_Bild_front_large.jpg

a section resembling a historical cabinet of curiosities as well as sections dedicated to art and architecture, student life and the history of the university's built heritage.²²

The exhibitions present objects embedded in their various contexts as meaningful items that represent the history of the university as an institution of academic research and teaching and, at the same time, as witnesses to the scientific disciplines. Therefore, the objects are given additional context information by placing them in chronological or thematic order and arranging them with other objects. The exhibition uses furniture, such as antique cupboards, for the context and exhibition properties they create intrinsically as items and for storing and displaying the objects. The objects are presented in typical glass showcases along with labels that communicate further information. Visitors also have the opportunity to book a guided tour or use the audio guide to discover even more information. The forms of presentation of the Uniseum Freiburg show quite a common and widely used form of presenting cultural heritage, one characterised by the passive reception of information where visitors are invited to look, read and hear.

A more active integration of visitors can be found at the second example for presentation forms, the University of Tartu Museum in Estonia, which was opened in 2019. The permanent exhibition on the history of the University of Tartu Museums is called “The University of Our Lives” and “looks into the University of Tartu’s influence [o]n our lives”.²³ Therefore, the presentation is less a display of various university collections and more an insight into the spirit of the university with a greater focus on intangible cultural heritage. It invites visitors to actively

²² SPECK, Dieter. *Uniseum Freiburg. Ein Bildbegleitbuch*. Freiburg, 2007; See also the website of the Uniseum Freiburg: <https://www.uniseum.uni-freiburg.de/de> [28.12.2023].

²³ See the website of the University of Tartu Museum, permanent exhibition “The University of Our Lives”: <https://muuseum.ut.ee/en/university-of-our-lives> [28.12.2023].



Fig. 15: *Forms of presentation, permanent exhibition “The University of our Lives”, University of Tartu Museum, University of Tartu, Estonia.* <https://muuseum.ut.ee/en/university-of-our-lives>, photograph by Tartu Ülikooli muuseumi püsinäitus “Minu elu ülikool”, Angelina Pjatkovskaja.

engage with the exhibition, touching on themes such as the “wisdom of professors, colourful student life, or sad loneliness and endless love”.²⁴

Activities include, for example, a test of one’s knowledge regarding the organisation of students. Visitors can watch memories of Alumni, search for information in the museum database or take a book to read.

This active engagement of visitors is achieved with an exhibition design that makes visitors feel comfortable and cosy, allowing them to feel their own emotions connect to university life. Through this, the presentation invites participation by exploring specific experiences via exhibition arrangement, like interactive dioramas, or by allowing objects to be touched. In this way, the exhibition follows a narrative of engaging with university life by presenting the story of the University of Tartu (Fig. 15).

Other parts of the museum present the university collections in a well-known and established way in showcases. This form of presentation gives visitors the opportunity to explore an emotionally engaging museum experience by offering deeper insights into the scientific collections at their own pace and according to their own interests.



Fig. 16: *Forms of presentation, “Savannah - Changeful Paradise” at the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK), Bonn, Germany.* <https://bonn.leibniz-lib.de/de/museum/dauerausstellungen/savanne>

Another example of engaging visitors through museum presentation is the permanent exhibition of the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK) in Bonn, Germany. The museum is part of the Leibniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change (LIB) – a research museum of the Leibniz Association since its 2021 merger with the Centrum für Naturkunde (CeNak) in Hamburg, Germany. While the research museum houses many interesting permanent exhibitions, this paper focuses specifically on the exhibitions “Savannah” (opened in 2016) and “Rainforest” (opened in 2022) – a two-part exhibition split into both understory and canopy.

The permanent barrier-free exhibition “Savannah” is a large-scale diorama of a savannah landscape in the atrium of the museum building; it places taxidermic flora and fauna from

²⁴ See the website of the University of Tartu Museum, permanent exhibition “The University of Our Lives”: <https://muuseum.ut.ee/en/university-of-our-lives> [28.12.2023].

the African savannah in realistic contexts and situations that seem frozen in time. Visitors can gain insights into their lives by observing them through binoculars or by sitting down in the middle of the nearly 360° diorama. Visitors are only separated from the exhibition objects by a handrail, allowing them to feel as if they were part of the unfolding story.

The permanent exhibition “Rainforest” is split into two parts, an exhibition on the understory of the rainforest and one on the canopy. The exhibition, which is located on the 2nd floor and was opened in 2022, provides a completely different visitor experience. It allows visitors to study an extremely detailed diorama of the biosphere of a rainforest in Ghana behind floor-to-ceiling glass showcases. The displays are extremely detailed, showing the flora and fauna in a lifelike setting and placing visitors once again in a typical position of passively perceiving and looking at the objects. The history of the rainforest exhibition reveals that every piece on display, from every leaf to every twig, was handcrafted by the conservators and preparators of the museum²⁵ following an expedition to Ghana by the museum curators to study and collect plant material for reconstruction of the biosphere in the museum.²⁶

From a museological point of view, the use of showcases establishes a barrier between the visitor and the object; thus, a display without a glass case allows for direct and unobstructed perception of the objects and is always preferred. Needless to say, due to object conservation reasons, this is not always possible – a conflict that also touches on the aforementioned tension between preservation and exhibition. There is, of course, no doubt that the museum conservators and preparators did an excellent job in reconstructing the presented material; however, presenting reconstructed objects or replicas in a showcase highlights the importance of such objects, potentially leading to the false assumption that everything presented within a showcase simply must be original material. This is why it is especially important to be truthful in storytelling with the visitors and to inform them of why the museum intentionally wants to tell the story with replicas. Also, it should be mentioned that, in the context of current debates on decolonising European museums, the question arises whether these kinds of study expeditions for collecting items for museum educational purposes reinforce hegemonic tendencies by appropriating foreign nature.

The last case study of a current university museum exhibition to be discussed in this paper is the exhibition “Cabinet of Curiosities – An Interpretation” of the Science Museum of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, which was opened in 2022 within the already existing permanent museum presentation. It aims to present

“the mysteries of the world gathered in a Cabinet of Curiosities [...] with the purpose of recreating



Fig. 17: *Forms of presentation, Cabinet of Curiosities – An Interpretation, University of Coimbra, Portugal.*

<https://noticias.uc.pt/artigos/os-misterios-do-mundo-reunidos-num-gabinete-de-curiosidades/> [28.12.2023]. Photograph by Gabinete de Curiosidades Coimbra, Museu de Ciência da UC, Foto: MIR, 2022.

²⁵ For the making-of video of the Rainforest Exhibition at Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK), Bonn, see: <https://youtu.be/WGXrc8F1xdU> [28.12.2023].

²⁶ For the website of Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK), Construction of the Rainforest Exhibition, see: <https://bonn.leibniz-lib.de/de/forschung/projekte/entstehung-der-regenwald-ausstellung> [28.12.2023].

the feeling of what one might feel when entering an 18th century Cabinet of Curiosities”.²⁷ The exhibition includes objects from natural history, such as taxidermied animals, plants and flowers as well as anatomical items, that are stored and simultaneously exhibited in historical cupboards with glass doors that double as showcases. These showcases are backlit with various colours (Fig. 17). Various animal skeletons are also hanging from the ceiling of the exhibition space. The exhibition display presents around 5,000 items that are all part of the museum collections of the University of Coimbra.²⁸

As might have been the norm for cabinets of curiosities, which had their golden age across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, there are no labels or museum texts, as this would break the visitors’ experience of immersion. From a museological point of view, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in a museum exhibition story by prompting emotions that lead to a deeper interaction with a given topic is considered the ultimate goal of any exhibition.

Late-Renaissance cabinets of curiosities were expressions of the wealth and power of their owners as well as of a desire to compile an encyclopaedical understanding of the world. Early museum treaties provide insight into the ways in which cabinets of curiosities ordered objects by category and stored them in cupboards, often with coloured backdrops. One evidencing example for this is the 16th-century Habsburg cabinet of curiosities at Ambras Castle near Innsbruck, Austria. Against this background, two questions arise: Did the objects currently presented in the Cabinet of Curiosities at the University of Coimbra originate from this period of collecting, and were they originally stored in such a way? Moreover, it is important to question how visitors might interpret an exhibition where items of natural history are presented next to skulls and, quite possibly, African artworks.²⁹ Obviously, the individual objects are of special relevance to the long-lasting history of the institution as well as to the various scientific disciplines.³⁰ From a museological point of view, it is recommended to display objects in a way that makes it easy for visitors to recognise their function within an interpretative network. Compared to showcases, labels and texts are not the first choice to convey a message; a much more preferred means of conveying messages is through the design and layout of the museum presentation. Therefore, an immersive museum exhibition experience is an ideal opportunity for visitors to consider the content and meaning of the objects.

Museological review

From a museological perspective, the past decade’s museum presentations tend to draw visitor attention and attraction through interaction with the exhibition and through immersive museum presentations. Presenting museum objects in showcases with labels on the walls is becoming more and more old-fashioned, as the longest-standing example of a museum presentation shows. In this context, taking a museological approach to objects means considering the often multilayered history in which an object is embedded. The stories, to which objects are witness, are uncovered through the process of museum documentation. Based on the objects’ specific stories, the curatorial process of deciding which objects’ stories should

²⁷ For the website of the Cabinet of Curiosities of the University of Coimbra, see: <https://www.uc.pt/en/article?key=a-aecdff5827> [28.12.2023].

²⁸ For the website of NON SERIAL, see: <https://nonserial.com/en/cabinet-of-curiosities/> [28.12.2023].

²⁹ For a review of the Cabinet of Curiosities, University of Coimbra, see: <https://amusearte.hypotheses.org/9095> [28.12.2023].

³⁰ For National Geographic Portugal, see: https://www.nationalgeographic.pt/historia/um-gabinete-curiosidades-em-coimbra_3068 [28.12.2023].

be told within an exhibition result in an interpretive presentation. If objects are separated from their stories and contexts, the visitors will probably have no frame of reference from which to understand the object. This might lead to a misunderstanding of the original object meaning – a museological perspective strives to prevent this. Regarding the presentation of the Cameroon section in the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, art historian Bénédicte Savoy pointed out that by only telling object collection histories through transparency, which is the case for the Cameroon section when it was shortened to the colonial robbery of the objects by German colonial troops, objects are reduced to a mere tragic aspect of their history. According to her, this marks the “death of objects”³¹ and, moreover, leads to the “end of the museum”.³² As a further consequence, this questions the future ability of museums to preserve such contested collections³³ and also touches on the aforementioned tension between the preservation and exhibition of objects as well as the need for embedding objects in not just the context of their history and biography but in a wider networked context.

According to the international professional guidelines for museum work, it is absolutely essential that the ethical handling of a museum be considered. The Code of Ethics for Museums³⁴ and the current museum definition of the International Council of Museums³⁵ makes it very clear that this is not only key to the proper management and display of human remains but also to objects connected to a problematic or even contested past.

Conclusion

Museum presentations are the crowning discipline of an institution such as a museum that deals with historical objects of cultural value. In doing so, museums must consider principles of communication in order to effectively convey a message to visitors. It is thus necessary to strike a balance between content and design by not just telling the visitors correct and proven facts but also by actively avoiding any misinterpretations. An exhibition design must address both fact and fiction to correctly convey its message.

This is of particular importance for university museums as they are part of a university’s communication strategy – the 3rd core mission of universities in fact. As a result, university collections and museums are a way to raise social awareness of the meaning of university heritage. They strengthen scientific research and teaching and contribute to identity building by addressing future students and the interested public. Currently, however, forms of museum presentation are rarely studied with regard to university museums; therefore, a need for further research and analysis can be identified.

³¹ Interview with Bénédicte Savoy, in: Deutschlandfunk Kultur of 06 June 2022, min 55:50, see: <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/benedicte-savoy-restitution-kolonialismus-100.html> [28.12.2023].

³² Ibidem, min 56:05.

³³ Ibidem, min 58:00.

³⁴ International Council of Museums (ed.), Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM 2017.

³⁵ For International Council of Museums’ museum definition, see: <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/> [28.12.2023].

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Samuel Niedenthal and the Legacy of Zoology in the Seventeenth Century

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Samuel Niedenthal and the Legacy of Zoology in the Seventeenth Century

The aim of this study is to analyse the extensive collection of the zoological drawings by Samuel Niedenthal that has been preserved in Dresden. They were executed using various techniques and depict a variety of animal species. This article draws attention especially to studies of the local fauna. This legacy of Pomeranian zoology is unique and important given the destruction of the painter's artistic oeuvre, but also because it illustrates development of science in his time. Niedenthal's depictions of animals, birds and insects are the first such complete compendium created in in seventeenth-century Central Europe. The detailed and accurate pictures make it possible to identify species occurring in the area, representing the first records of them in Pomerania.

Keywords: Samuel Niedenthal, drawings collection, early modern zoology, animals, insects

Born most likely in Erfurt, Samuel Niedenthal has until recently remained an obscure individual.¹ In the very scarce and modest accounts of his life, one piece of information is

¹ CUNY Georg. Samuel Niedenthal, In: THIEME Ulrich, BECKER Felix (Hg.). *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* Berlin. Leipzig: Verlag von E. A. Seemann, 1931, Bd. 25, p. 460. DROST Willi. *Danziger Malerei. Vom Mittelalter bis zu Ende des Barocks*. Berlin, Leipzig, Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1938, p. 141; SCHWARZ [F?]. Samuel Niedenthal. In: KROLMANN Christian (Hg.) *Altpreußische Biographie*. Königsberg, Marburg a/Lahn: Historischen Kommission für ost- und westpreussische Landesforschung, Bd. 2, L. 2, 1943 p. 468, PAŁUBICKI Janusz. *Malarza Gdańscy. Malarze, szklarze, rysownicy i rytownicy w okresie nowożytnym w gdańskich materiałach archiwalnych*. [Danzig Painters], Vol. 2, Gdańsk: Muzeum Narodowe, 2009, pp. 559–563.

repeated: that he was a painter of animals and a portraitist active in Danzig (now Gdańsk).² So far, two of his assumed animalistic–narrative paintings have been reproduced.³ Some single prints he designed are known.⁴ Apart from two texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, his drawing activity remains almost entirely obscure. An extremely rich set of the artist's works, previously unknown to a broader public, has been preserved at the Dresden Kupferstich–Kabinett, and it is the main focus of the analysis in the present paper.⁵ Another significant set, previously in the Library of the University of Erlangen–Nürnberg, disappeared under unclear circumstances in the second half of the twentieth century. But the inventory of this “paper museum” still exists as part of the eighteenth century Museum Kleinanium.⁶

In the early twenty-first century, Brazilian researchers analysing his drawings of South American fauna drew attention to Niedenthal's works in Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden.⁷ Four years later, part of the artist's oeuvre was published by Jacek Tylicki.⁸ Thanks to the knowledge of the drawings preserved in Dresden, it was possible to attribute to Niedenthal a painting today known only from a pre-WW II photograph.⁹ In 2021, in a book on depicting nature in early modern Gdańsk, 28 of Niedenthal's illustrations were published.¹⁰

Niedenthal's biography

It remains unknown where the information on Niedenthal's birthplace and date come from. It used to be assumed that he arrived in Danzig ca 1635. It is, however, also likely that he came to the city slightly earlier. If we were to assume that he was born in 1620, he may have arrived in Danzig together with his family, although he could also have been born few years before that date. Having come to the city, Niedenthal became a disciple of Jacob Liskornet. There were

² HIRSCHING Friedrich Carl Gottlob. *Nachrichten von sehenswürdigen Gemälde...*, Erlangen: Palm, 1787, Bd. 2, p. 125. In Johann Karol Schultz's etching showing the interior of the Kämmerci, there is a painting visible showing a large water creature. SCHULTZ Johann Carl. *Danzig und seine Bauwerke*, II, 16. <https://polona.pl/item-view/da4efa8b-e945-4b56-b68e-fb0ee1e3fe94?page=123> [accessed: 21.01.24].

³ ‘Orpheus’ DROST, *Danziger...*, Tafel. 78 and ‘Animals Going to Noah's Ark’: https://research.rkd.nl/nl/zoeken?q=niedenthal&size=n_20_n&filters%5B0%5D%5Bfield%5D=db&filters%5B0%5D%5Bvalues%5D%5B0%5D=rkdimages&filters%5B0%5D%5Btype%5D=all [accessed: 21.01.24].

⁴ The portrait of the young Sybilla Schwarz from Danzig must have been created before 1638. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?q=niedenthal&p=1&ps=12&st=Objects&ii=0#/RP-P-1914-3727,0> [accessed: 21.01.24].

⁵ We would like to thank Dr Stephanie Buck, Director of the Kupferstich-Kabinett, for the opportunity to publish drawings from the collection of the Statliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden.

⁶ The inventory called *Musei Kleiniani Pars I–X* exists in Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen–Nürnberg (FAU), UER MS 2680 <http://digital.bib-bvb.de/collections/FAU/#/documents/DTL-1417> [accessed: 21.01.24]. Regarding this manuscript pars I and VII see: SOBECKA ANNA. Początki naukowych badań nad bursztynem w Gdańsku i kolekcja Jacoba Theodora Kleina (1685–1759) [The Beginnings of Scientific Research into Amber and the Collection of Jacob Theodor Klein (1685–1759)]. In: *Artium Quaestiones* 34, 2023, pp. 13–46 <https://doi.org/10.14746/aq.2023.34.1>

⁷ TEIXEIRA Dante Martines. *Coleção Niedenthal: animais et insectes*. (Brasil Holandês, ed. FERRÃO Cristina, SOARES Jose Paulo Monteiro). Petrópolis: Ed Index 2000, passim.

⁸ TYLICKI Jacek. *Rysunek gdański ostatniej ćwierci XVI i I połowy XVII wieku* [Danzig Drawing of the Last Quarter of the 16th Century and the First Half of the 17th Century], Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2005, pp. 216–236.

⁹ “Adam Giving Names to the Animals” SOBECKA Anna. Carl Borromäus Ruthart and Gdańsk Art. In: *Nature and Spirituality*. Carl Borromäus Ruthart (163–1703), Gdańsk: National Museum, 2019, pp. 21–24.

¹⁰ SOBECKA Anna. *Obrazowanie natury w nowożytnym Gdańsku. O kulturze kolekcjonerskiej miasta*. Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2021, s. 117–138.

two painters bearing the same first and family names. The elder is said to have been a painter of history, and representations of figures such as the Five Senses. The younger was known for his history and landscapes.¹¹ Willi Drost provides information that the younger of the Liskornets painted the Town Hall ceiling with ornamental and fruit motifs.¹² Having obtained a good certificate from his master, in 1637, Niedenthal made attempts to gain some financial support from the Danzig City Council in order to make an artistic trip. However, his application was to no avail.¹³ He made the trip despite failing to obtain financing; we know for sure that he visited Holland and possibly several German cities. In 1643, he was recorded in the book of the Painters' Guild in Danzig. A year later, Niedenthal married Maria née Deterss, the daughter of a sculptor and woodcarver. The couple had four children christened subsequently, in 1648, 1652, 1656 and 1663. In the mid-seventeenth century, Niedenthal was the head of the Guild and accepted masterpieces of several journeymen: Davitt Kluge, Peter Warburg, Andreas Stech and Christian Horn. Having joined the Guild as a portraitist, he most likely made his living by painting burghers' portraits and emblematic paintings, which is confirmed in the sources.¹⁴ However, it was animals that were his passion. He may have conducted field research and bred some species. Most frequently it is assumed that Niedenthal died before 1666, when his widow married the painter Christian Horn. Still, some researchers only give 1682 as the artist's death date.¹⁵ Preserved and dated works suggest that his artistic and scientific activity spans the period 1633–1665.

The legacy of Danzig zoology at the Kupferstich–Kabinett in Dresden

Constituting a precious historical source, Niedenthal's drawings preserved in Dresden are an exceptional example of the forgotten legacy of zoology. The volumes bearing catalogue numbers Ca 211, 215 and 224 cover, respectively, the world of animals, birds and insects and contain over 650 drawings,¹⁶ of which the vast majority should be associated with Niedenthal. Pasted into three folio format books, they were executed using various techniques (graphite stick, chalk, crayons, ink, watercolour, gouache, oil) on different paper types. It is impossible to analyse the bases of respective drawings, since they were pasted onto the sheets of the volumes. Some single drawings were cut out of the books, and bear separate catalogue numbers. As far as we know, the drawings have never been shown to the general public. Only five of Niedenthal's works are accessible on the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden website.¹⁷

Niedenthal's works from Dresden are of a varied character. They include some documentary drawings executed, most likely, in the field with information on sizes and colours; there are also studies of poses or compositions, as well as autonomous works. Some may have formed part of scientific cycles, others were meant to be displayed in collectors' *studioli*.

¹¹ CUNY Georg. Jacob Liskornet. In: THIEME, BECKER, Allgemeines Lexikon..., Bd. 23, 1929, p. 282.

¹² DROST, Danziger Malerei..., p. 147.

¹³ State Archive in Gdańsk – Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku – APGd., 300, C/ 613, pp. 17, 27.

¹⁴ APGd., 300, 12/84, p. 182, APGd., 300, 12/87, p. 146, APGd., 300, 12/88, p. 27.

¹⁵ CUNY, Samuel..., p. 460, JAŚNIEWICZ Aleksandra. *Portret w Gdańsku. Od schyłku średniowiecza do późnego baroku (1420–1700)* [Portrait in Danzig. From the Close Middle Ages to Late Baroque (1420–1700)], Gdańsk: National Museum 2018, p. 455.

¹⁶ Ca 211 contains 242 drawings; Ca 215 contains 366 and Ca 224 only 56. Of these 664 drawings, six have to be deducted, as they were cut out from volume Ca 211: 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 95. Three presentations kept separately and bearing catalogue numbers C 1978-313, C 1978-314 (earlier possibly as 76 and 77) and C 1982-106 have to be added.

¹⁷ <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Home/Index?page=1&q=niedenthal> [accessed 21.01.24]

Divided into three thematic groups, the discussed drawings constitute a compendium of zoology knowledge from the mid-seventeenth century of a unique character, both in terms of quantity and quality. What remains an open question is when and who grouped them in this particular manner.



Fig. 1: Samuel Niedenthal, *Deers - does*, SKD Ca 211: 19.

Thanks to the source ‘Quodlibet’, a manuscript by Georg Schröder, it is known that this happened in the 1660s at the latest,¹⁸ since on the first sheet, written most likely in 1665, the author records three books worthy in his opinion of the greatest attention:

“1. Von den Nitenthal ist ein Thierbuch gamalt drin vom Elephante alle Thier gemahlet sind bis an die Raptilia alß da seiend Corcodil Armodil
2. Das Vogelbuch fänget vom Adler an und geht bis an Nasselkönig
3. Das Insectenbuch fänget an von den schlangen scorpionen, raupen, Wespen, Käffern und geht bis auf die Fliegen.”

[1. From Nitenthal is an animal book painted in it from the elephant all animals are described up to the reptiles as there are crocodiles armadillo
2. The bird book begins from the eagle and goes to the [bird not identified]¹⁹
3. The insect book starts from snakes, scorpions, caterpillars, wasps, beetles and goes to flies.]

Thus, it is clear that the volumes were already considered complete, and that the drawings were regarded as Niedenthal’s works. The volumes include various studies executed in Danzig

¹⁸ Georgii Schröders Dantiscani in Patria Consulis Anno 1703 fato funci Quodlibet oder Tage Buch von Allerhand Anmerkungen, PAN Bibl. Gd. Ms 673, s. 3 a [In German].

¹⁹ Fide TYLICKI, Rysunek gdański... p. 224. These birds were identified by Teixeira, The “Thierbuch” as representatives of the hummingbirds (Trochilidae): the ruby-topaz hummingbird (*Chrysolampis mosquitus*) and the Antillean crested hummingbird (*Orthorhynchus cristatus*).



Fig. 2: Samuel Niedenthal, *Two headed lamb (Ovis aries)*, SKD Ca 211: 87.



Fig. 3: Samuel Niedenthal, *Wildcats (Felis sylvestris)*, SKD Ca 211: 111.

(written as Danzig) and its vicinity (Jäschkentaler Weg, Neu Schottland, Zoppot, Hela). A different character can be found in the copies of exotic fauna made by Niedenthal after works by other artists which he must have seen in Amsterdam, Berlin or Cologne;²⁰ these, however, shall not be further discussed in the present paper.²¹

The order of the works in respective volumes could suggest this was not decided settled upon by the author. However, it cannot be denied that this order has a certain consistency in terms of animal classification. A different judge-

²⁰ M. in *West Indianische Pferd...*, *Meerschwein...* *indiani canin*, *Wolffs* ... S.N Amsterdam Ao 1643, *Tamandua Babea* ... *Bibliodec. Kunst Kammer in Berlin oder Cöln zu sehn*, *Schal Igel*... SN f [emphasis by AS]. TEIXEIRA. Coleção Niedenthal, II. 49, 91, 154, 180, 185.

²¹ TEIXEIRA, Coleção Niedenthal, passim.



Fig. 4: Samuel Niedenthal, *Scorpaeniform fish*, SKD Ca 211: 228, 229



Fig. 5: Samuel Niedenthal, *The ringed seal (Pusa hispida)*, SKD Ca 211: 237



Fig. 6: Samuel Niedenthal, *Two white-tailed eagles (Haliaeetus albicilla)*, SKD Ca 215: 8

ment should be formulated concerning artistic questions and the character, as well as quality, of respective works. Let us begin with the Animal Book, Ca 211, containing 242 drawings. It begins with the presentation of mammals: red deer (Fig. 1) and horses, elephants, goats, sheep (Fig. 2), dogs, lions, cats (Fig. 3), giraffes, and so on. It ends with amphibians, fish (Fig. 4), seals (Fig. 5), crustaceans, and mollusc shells. On individual sheets of the book, a mixture of the following can be found (between 2 and 5 on a page): scientific drawings featuring extensive captions, anatomic studies, preparatory sketches for paintings, and independent miniatures painted on paper.

An analogical organising principle was used in the volume presenting birds (Ca 215), which contains 366 works. As already specified by Schröder, it begins with the presentation of native eagles (Fig. 6), then pheasants, peafowls and relatives (Phasianidae) (Fig. 7), woodpeckers (Picidae) and Old World orioles (Orioli-

dae) (Fig. 8), as well as ducks, geese, and swans (Anatidae) (Fig. 9). It ends with presentations of birds from 'West India', namely, specimens from the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Niedenthal's Dresden zoological collection is completed with the volume on insects. Bearing the catalogue number Ca 224, it contains merely 56 images, mainly showing caterpillars of butterflies and moths (Fig. 10) and images of adult butterflies (Fig. 11), as well as beetles (Coleoptera) (Fig. 12). A substantial number of them contain inscriptions.



Fig. 7: Samuel Niedenthal, *Two partridges on the table*, SKD Ca 215: 118



Fig. 8: Samuel Niedenthal, *Flying Great spotted woodpecker (Dendrocopos major)*, *Eurasian golden oriole (Oriolus oriolus)* and *short-toed tree creeper (Certhia brachydactyla)*, SKD Ca 215: 210, 211, 212

Some of Niedenthal's presentations are cut along the specimen's contour, even those with widespread wings (Ca 215, dwg 6), so it is difficult to judge what types of inscriptions they might have featured before. An assumption can be made that the original drawings constituted several series, and they may have been executed for various recipients. The majority of Niedenthal's inscriptions are in German, though some drawings also feature captions in Latin. The inspiration for these may have been found in the works by Frans Post (1612–1680) and other artists from the period of documentation of the fauna and flora of Dutch Brazil under the rule of Johan Maurits of Nassau (1604–1679).²² When copying specimens of Brazilian fauna, Niedenthal also copied the inscriptions. Examples of this include his images of the anteater (*Tamandua*)²³ or the tatupeba (six-banded armadillo, *Euphractus*) whose names Niedenthal translated into German.²⁴

The Animal Book

When analysing Niedenthal's legacy preserved in Dresden, we should, following Schröder, begin with the Animal Book 'Thierbuch'. There, we can find specimens from both Americas, already discussed by Brazilian researchers,²⁵ but also fantastical creatures such as griffin and unicorn, as well as a number of fauna specimens from Pomerania. The drawings are pasted onto blue pages, between two and four per page. Niedenthal executed works using various techniques and serving different purposes. He treated drawings both as zoological illustrations, helpful in the classification of the animal world, and preliminary sketches or collectors' drawings.

²² BRUYN DE Alexander. *Frans Post. Animals in Brazil*. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2016.

²³ Ibidem, p. 62; Two species are known: Southern tamandua *Tamandua tetradactyla* and Northern tamandua *Tamandua mexicana*.

²⁴ TEIXEIRA, Coleção Niedenthal, figs. 185, 186.

²⁵ Ibidem, passim.

The volume contains particularly numerous presentations of the Cervidae. Those of fallow deer, have already been reproduced in literature.²⁶ Niedenthal sketched definite poses of respective specimens, specifying, for example, the location in which the drawing was executed (e.g., Danzig (Fig. 1, dwg 19). Others feature a monogram and the date ‘SN, 1656’ (dwg 20). Based on similarities, the next ones can be confidently attributed to him – not only for the similarity of the animals’ poses, but also technical similarities (dwg 21).

Similarly to the majority of authors of zoological drawings, Niedenthal was also interested in Nature’s anomalies. This might explain his drawing of the two-headed lamb (Fig. 2; dwg 87). He also sketched deformed antlers or skulls. These images are often devoid of inscriptions. It is therefore difficult to ascertain the chronology of the creation of these works. It seems likely that the artist developed his own interests in parallel.

The earliest-dated drawing in the *Animal Book* is the presentation of a wild cat *Felis silvestris* (Fig. 3). Shown in a dynamic pose, this creeping wild animal is captioned ‘Wildkatze’, and monogrammed ‘SN’, with the accompanying date ‘Ao 1633’ (dwg 111).

This same sheet shows an image of a different character representing a Eurasian lynx²⁷ (*Lynx lynx*) captioned with the species name, with decorative letters in Latin (dwg 112). The animal is rendered in a static pose, executed with a precise line, using gouache applied with a thin brush. The last of the felines on this page is presented as striding in profile (dwg 113), while the only inscription, ‘21’, is possibly secondary.

The same volume also contains the image of a fish, most probably of the order Scorpaeniformes²⁸ (which covers sculpins, cottids and scorpionfish) (Fig. 4; dwg 229). In this case we are dealing with a drawing of intense colours executed on paper that has been primed dark-brown. On the same sheet is another similar presentation differing only in minor details (dwg 228), but much more monochromatic. This may mean that either the artist was dissatisfied with the first version and therefore made the second one, or that Niedenthal’s work was copied by his disciple.

Similar works as far as technique is concerned include the depictions of crayfish and crabs, in oil on primed paper. The Dresden volume does not contain preparatory drawings with inscriptions that could extend our knowledge of Niedenthal’s interest in these species. In the collection of the Forschungsbibliothek in Gotha, in one of the volumes forming the legacy of the Danzig Breyne family²⁹ can be found Chart A. 783. It includes a list of six Niedenthal’s sketches showing crabs which the artist made on the Zoppot beaches between 30 October 1653 and 17 June the following year. The note confirms that he also executed such presentations,

²⁶ SOBECKA, Carl Borromäus..., pp. 24–25.

²⁷ The drawing is labelled as presenting lynx; this is also confirmed by the presence of black tufts of hair on its ears, which are characteristic of the species. However, the tail is improperly presented as long and thin – lynx have short “bobbed” tails with a black tip.

²⁸ Scorpaeniformes is a diverse order of ray-finned fish, with over 1320 species known. The division of Scorpaeniformes into families is not settled; accounts range from 26 to 38 families (VAN DER LAAN Richard, ESCHMEYER William N. & FRICKE Ronald. Family-group names of Recent fishes. In: *Zootaxa* 3882 (2), 2014, pp. 001–230, doi:10.11646/zootaxa.3882.1.1. This classification is not settled, however, and some authorities classify these groupings largely within the order Perciformes (VAN DER LAAN Richard, FRICKE Ronald & ESCHMEYER William N.) *Eschmeyer’s Catalog of Fishes Classification*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.calacademy.org/scientists/catalog-of-fishes-classification/>

²⁹ SOBECKA Anna. Drawings by the Breyne sisters as an unknown part of the eighteenth-century collection of a Gdansk family of scholars. In: *Collections. Development, History, Lost Heritage*. Gdańsk: National Museum, 2020, pp. 259–273.

and that if they were in the possession of the Breyne family, Niedenthal may have made them for the known botanist Jacob Breyne (1635–1697) for whom he also made drawings of plants. The detailed quality of Niedenthal's explanations can be seen in another drawing preserved in the Forschungsbibliothek in Gotha showing a salmon. Although using gouache, the work is not of a painterly character but bears exceptionally precise inscriptions. The drawing of the salmon resembles a scientific illustration, providing precise dimensions and the place where the spawning male was caught (Danzig, 14 January 1661).

One of the latest dated drawings in the volume dedicated to animals is the presentation of the ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*)³⁰ (Fig. 5) captured on the Hela Peninsula on 2 January 1665. The sketch made by Niedenthal (signed 'S.N. fec.') with soft sticks precisely renders the colouring of this sea mammal. Thanks to the artist's inscription, we can also learn about the dimensions of the caught specimen. It seems that this could be the oldest official record of the species known so far. The ringed seal is a relatively small seal, rarely greater than 1.5 m in length. Its coat is dark with silver rings on the back and sides with a silver belly (precisely rendered by Niedenthal), hence its common name. The ringed seal is the smallest and most abundant member of the seal family, with a small head, a short cat-like snout, and a plump body. They live in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions and can be found in the Baltic Sea, the Bering Sea and Hudson Bay. Interestingly, today on the Hela Peninsula is a *Sealarium* – Marine Station of the University of Gdańsk conducting research into this species.

The Bird Book

Niedenthal also executed a number of excellent studies of various bird species, applying for the purpose all the techniques he had at his disposal. The folio book presenting them in the Dresden cabinet is titled 'Osieux'. As mentioned above, ornithology was of particular interest to the artist.

The Ca 215 volume opens with presentations of eagles and falcons shown in highly varied techniques (multicoloured sticks, gouache, watercolour, oil). Of particular interest are the sketches of eagles made *alla prima* by the artist in Neu Schottland (Ca 215 dwgs 7 and 8). Of two excellent drawings each showing a pair of white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*),³¹ the first, which is signed, was published by Tylicki.³² Equally interesting as far as drawing technique is concerned is the sketch showing fighting eagles (Fig. 6).³³ Niedenthal presents here a very dynamic scene. One of the birds with outstretched wings clearly dominates the other, lying on the right. The dates of these sketches were precisely rendered using a graphite stick on both drawings. The observation of the eagles took place on 22 February 1658. The works bear the following numbers N.2 and N.15 marking their order, which shows that there were more

³⁰ TYLICKI, Rysunek gdański..., p. 224, [X s 46] wrongly ascribed this picture as presenting harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*), but presented colouration.

³¹ Prior to the Linnaean revolution, the white-tailed eagle functioned in scientific nomenclature under the names 'Pygargus', 'Albicilla' and 'Hinnularia'. JOBLING James A. *The Helm dictionary of scientific bird names from Aalge to Zusii*. Christopher Helm, A&C Black Publishers Ltd, London 2010 – this name 'Adler Pygargi' was included in the description. Identification of this species is also evidenced by the unfeathered leg's tarsometatarsi.

³² TYLICKI, Rysunek gdański..., p. 90

³³ White-tailed eagles are territorial birds, but territorialism is not strongly marked – only a small area close to the nest (nest territory) is strictly defended. These birds do not show much aggression towards individuals of their own species, especially juveniles, intrusion into the territory of a strange male in adult robe provokes the territory owner to fight. MIZERA Tadeusz. Bielik. *Monografie Przyrodnicze* 4. Wydawnictwo Lubuskiego Klubu Przyrodników, Świebodzin 1999, pp. 1–195.

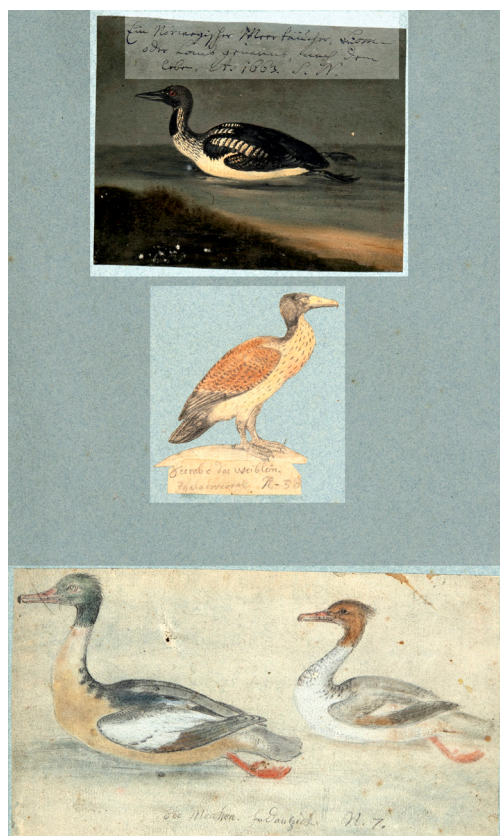


Fig. 9: Samuel Niedenthal, top: black-throated loon (*Gavia arctica*) ... 1663; middle 'Phalacrocorax' female - cormorant; bottom goosander (*Mergus merganser*), left, female right. SKD Ca 215: 265, 266, 267

sketches of this type. The artist may have executed some for a commission by certain scientists, while others stemmed from his obvious need to study birds' feathers and poses. It can be supposed that Niedenthal later used the eagles' different poses in paintings on canvas, so they played the role of preparatory sketches.

Meanwhile, there is an independent collector's miniature showing two killed partridge cocks (*Perdix perdix*) (Fig. 7; dwg 118). Both compositionally and thematically, the author refers to the Dutch painter Elias Vonck's still-lives. Showing dead birds was characteristic of Vonck's style, and he is known to have been active in Pomerania in the 1630s. Daniel Schultz, who specialised in animal painting, may have been his disciple.³⁴ It is hard to regard it a coincidence that two Danzig artists, Schultz and Niedenthal, begin to paint works similar to Vonck's compositions, particularly bearing in mind the fact that compositions of that type were extremely rare. This confirms the hypothesis that Vonck was active in Danzig for some time.

Niedenthal sketched birds not only at rest but also flying. This is clearly exemplified in the presentation of a great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) flying upwards (Fig. 8, top), executed in gouache and cut to the shape of the specimen with outstretched wings (dwg 210). The

same sheet also features an excellent 'portrait' of a Eurasian golden oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*) with beautiful feathers, probably male (Fig. 8, middle 'Oriola – Pica spec., Kirholt (?)') and below a coloured sketch of a short-toed treecreeper (*Certhia brachydactyla*) (Fig. 8 bottom) with an illegible caption 'Baum Kletter'.

In Ca 215, a substantial group of representations of water birds. From the inscriptions on these pictures we can discover where the author made his observations (for example, dwg 193 was made close to Lake Zaspas, which was filled in in the twentieth century). In one of the drawings (Fig. 9), which the artist recorded sketching 'In Dantzick', he presents various water birds: a black-throated loon (*Gavia arctica*) '1663'; in the middle a female cormorant (*Phalacrocorax*)³⁵; at the bottom a pair of goosanders (*Mergus merganser*) with the male to the left and female to the right (dwg 267).

³⁴ SOBECKA, *Obrazowanie natury...*, pp. 91–117.

³⁵ This drawing presents a bird noted as female, but it looks like it was an immature specimen (HUME Rob, STILL Robert, SWASH Andrew, HARROP Hugh. *Europe's Birds. An identification guide* Princeton University Press. Princeton 2021; SVENSSON Lars, MULLARNEY Killian, ZETTERSTRÖM Dan. *Collins bird guide. The Most Complete Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London 2022).

In the book of birds, apart from the native birds living in Eurasia, which dominate the pages in terms of number, Niedenthal also portrayed exotic birds, including numerous parrots (Psittaciformes). Let us draw attention to the drawings of a puffbird (after Frans Post)³⁶ and woodpeckers, defined by Niedenthal as ‘Westindische Blumen Specht’, which the artist drew ‘from nature thanks to the kindness of the abovementioned Jacob Breyne’ in 1665.³⁷ Once again the inscription confirms Niedenthal’s close relationship with the amateur scientist.

The Bird Book contains numerous presentations executed in oil and gouache on paper, most often primed brown, completed with captions in decorative handwriting: Ca 215, dwgs 56, 76, 129, 149, 151, 180, 181, 205, 211, 233 and 244. Some bear ordinals (Ca 215, dwgs 24, 25, 26, 164, 263); others feature the species and a number (Ca 215, dwgs 150 or 345). Others still feature the name and catalogue number or the catalogue number and a number, however, they do not coincide with the order given within the book. This great variety of means of elaborating respective specimens may suggest that Niedenthal was working on various cycles at roughly the same time.

The Bird Book also contains drawings executed and signed by other artists and amateurs. Two works which significantly differ in style are slightly earlier than Niedenthal’s drawings: one of them is by an unknown draughtsman (Ca 215, dwg 71) monogrammed CH on the ligature and dated 1633, while the other (dwg 204), although not signed, seem likely to have been executed by the same artist. Other drawings pasted into this book were authored by Maria Gouteris, who signed one work (Ca 215, dwg 130) and another is attributed to her (Ca 215, dwg 60); Christopher Gottwald, a doctor and amateur draughtsman (1636–1700) who monogrammed three bird presentations (Ca 215, dwgs 72, 319 and 329); and P. Wouwerman, whose signature is featured on a sketch (Ca 215, dwg 42). Moreover, there are other works (Ca 215, dwgs 46, 50, 51) which, owing to their different character – mainly their intense and bright colour range – do not seem to be Niedenthal’s works.

Niedenthal may have owned the works by the ‘CH’ monogrammer and Maria Gouteris among those he amassed in own collection in order to copy images of unavailable species. Whoever purchased the collection of Niedenthal’s drawings may have automatically become the owner of these. On the other hand, they may have been property of the scholarly collector.

As far as Gottwald is concerned, it is known that this extraordinary collector, who owned a unique collection of shells, also tried to draw and make etchings.³⁸ Most likely, Niedenthal was the teacher of that great enthusiast of science and art. If Gottwald was taught drawing by Niedenthal, he may have purchased a part of his teacher’s works after his death. In Gottwald’s plate H of *Theatrum Anatomicum*, among his surgical instruments we can also find brushes and painting pigments.³⁹ Thus, it is possible that he also bought Niedenthal’s drawings. If we this hypothesis is correct, it may have been Gottwald who arranged all the works kept in Dresden according to his own criteria. The owner of the discussed volumes must have been visited by Georg Schröder, or otherwise the latter would not have mentioned them on the first page of his ‘Quodlibet’.⁴⁰

³⁶ BRUYN, Frans Post..., p. 39

³⁷ TYLICKI, Rysunek gdański..., kat. [X s 45].

³⁸ SOBECKA, Obrazowanie natury..., pp. 252–268.

³⁹ <https://pbc.gda.pl/dlibra/publication/416/edition/2467/content> [accessed 12.02.23]

⁴⁰ See note 17.



Fig. 10: Samuel Niedenthal, top: eruciform larva of sawfly (Hymenoptera, Symphyta); middle: caterpillar of the pale tussock (*Calliteara pudibunda*; Lepidoptera: Erebiidae); bottom: caterpillar of owl moth Noctuidae (*Acronicta rumicis* or *Panthea coenobita*). SKD Ca 224: 7



Fig. 11: Samuel Niedenthal, Butterflies and others, SKD Ca 224: 18. From top left: the lime hawk-moth *Mimas tiliae* (family Sphingidae), the poplar admiral *Limenitis populi* (wings bottom coloration) (family Nymphalidae), Camberwell beauty *Nymphalis antiopa* (Nymphalidae), European peacock *Aglais io* (Nymphalidae); middle row: the poplar hawk-moth *Laothoe populi* (Sphingidae), the poplar admiral *Limenitis populi* (Nymphalidae); bottom: the goat moth *Cossus cossus* (family Cossidae); middle: European garden spider *Araneus diadematus* (Araneae: Araneidae), and below left female of the common hawker *Aeshna juncea* (Odonata: Aeshnidae), and two beetles in the bottom: the musk beetle *Aromia moschata* (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae) and the red-brown longhorn beetle *Stictolepura rubra* (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae).

The Insect Book

Niedenthal is also the author of a number of drawings of insects, both local and exotic. Placed in the Dresden volume Ca 224, they are less numerous than his presentations of animals or birds. Nonetheless, the sketches demonstrate Niedenthal's passion for entomological studies. However, a smaller range of dates recorded on the drawings from this album may point to the fact that entomology interested Niedenthal over a shorter period of time, namely in the late 1640s and the first half of the 1650s. To illustrate this interest, let us recall the presentations of a sawfly (Hymenoptera: Symphyta) eruciform larva and butterflies caterpillars (Fig. 10) dated 1654 (Ca 224, dwgs 7, 8). Niedenthal seems particularly fascinated by insect metamorphosis. One of his drawings (Fig. 11) shows several species of butterflies: from top left – lime hawk-moth *Mimas tiliae* (family Sphingidae), poplar admiral *Limenitis populi* (wings bottom coloration) (family Nymphalidae), Camberwell beauty *Nymphalis antiopa* (Nymphalidae), European peacock *Aglais io* (Nymphalidae); middle row: poplar hawk-moth *Laothoe populi* (Sphingidae), poplar admiral *Limenitis populi* (Nymphalidae); bottom – goat moth (*Cossus cossus*, family Cossidae); middle – European garden spider *Araneus diadematus* (Araneae: Araneidae); bottom left – female common hawker *Aeshna juncea* (Odonata: Aeshnidae); bottom – musk beetle *Aromia moschata* (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae) and red-brown longhorn beetle *Stictolepura rubra* (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae). This plate (Ca 224, dwg 18) demonstrates that the artist must have been familiar with Joris Hoefnagel's 'Archatypes' or Jan van Kassel's miniatures. At the end of the insect volume, Niedenthal dedicated several drawings to beetles (Fig. 12): spotted longhorn *Leptura* sp. (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae); unidentifiable jewel beetle (Buprestidae); melolonthine scarab beetle *Polyphylla fullo* (Scarabaeidae: Melolonthinae); and female European stag beetle *Lucanus*

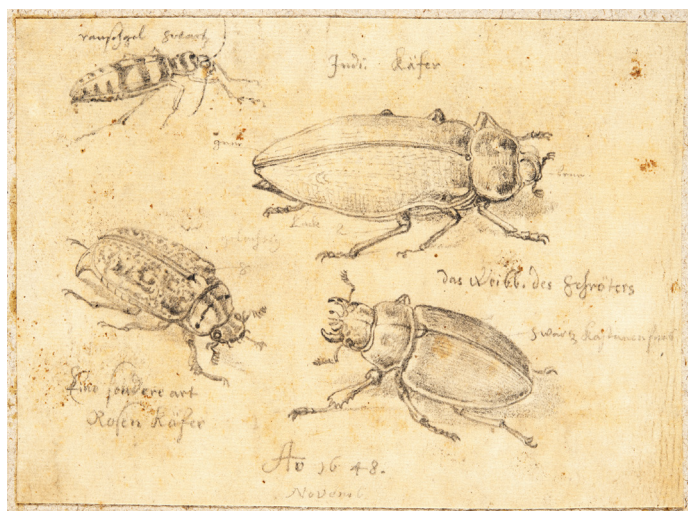


Fig. 12: Samuel Niedenthal, Beetles, SKD Ca 224: 48: *Leptura* sp. (Cerambycidae); Buprestidae; *Polyphylla fullo* (Scarabaeidae); female *Lucanus cervus* (Lucanidae).

cervus (Lucanidae). An interesting work from this volume is a mysterious self-portrait of the artist already discussed in literature.⁴¹ Dated 1651, the drawing, which has numerous inscriptions, is divided into three parts. The top one presents a spider defined by the inscription as *Tarantula Rutenica Crenita* (Ca 224, dwg 53),⁴² with a cross-section of a burrow and the seated artist. On the same sheet is an artistically rendered gouache presentation of the ventral side of a specimen of this spider (Ca 224, dwg 53). Refined to the minutest of detail and with subtle brushstrokes, the

piece actually constitutes a painterly miniature.

It seems very likely that a large group of Niedenthal's drawings from Dresden constitute completed works. They are mainly executed in oil or gouache, or with mixed techniques, rarely featuring any captions. Moreover, it seems that with time the scientific approach to the studied specimens began to dominate in the artist's works. Sketches from the 1660s feature detailed inscriptions.

The lost drawings from Erlangen

Regardless of who collected and systemised the Dresden collection of Niedenthal's works according to species, there existed a sizeable group of drawings by the artist used in the eighteenth century by Jacob Theodor Klein in his scientific work on birds. These were written about as late as the nineteenth century by Carl Th. von Siebold.⁴³ Indeed, in 1969, in Erlangen, where a substantial part of the Danzig naturalist's legacy was deposited, many of his drawings were incorporated into the *Musei Kleiniani Pars VII ... Aviarium Prussicum*.⁴⁴ They are currently regarded as lost. Originally containing 232 drawings of birds, by Siebold's times the volume had lost 54 drawings, while in 1912, Gengler enumerated merely 95 of them.⁴⁵ The drawings specialised in Prussian fauna may suggest that Niedenthal was particularly interested in regional animal species, focusing mainly on birds.

⁴¹ TYLICKI, Rysunek gdański..., kat. [X p. 17], JAŚNIEWICZ, Portret w Gdańsku..., pp. 95, 454–455.

⁴² The figure presents its ventral side. It seems to be a kind of wolf spider (Lycosidae), but probably not *Lycosa singoriensis*. The family Lycosidae is a large group with over 2400 species worldwide; in Europe it is represented by over 80 species (67 recorded in Poland).

⁴³ SIEBOLD Carl Theodor. Neue Beiträge zur Wirbelthier = Fauna Preussens, In: *Vaterländisches Archiv für Wissenschaft, Kunst, Industrie und Agrikultur oder Preussische Provinzial-Blätter*, 1842, Bd. 27, pp. 420–437. Siebold informed that the collection also contained works by: D. Schultz, Hoffmann, and Behm.

⁴⁴ GEUS Armin. Die Vogelbilder des Danziger Malers Samuel Niedenthal, In: *Festschrift für Claus Nissen zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden: Pressler, 1973, pp. 277–301 [In German].

⁴⁵ GENGLER Josef. Die Klein'schen Vogelbilder. In: *Journal of Ornithology*, 1912, Bd. 60, No. 4, pp. 570–591. SOBECKA, Początki badań..., p. 22.

Niedenthal's drawings from Erlangen, similarly to the Dresden collection, only some (29) of Niedenthal's drawings from Erlangen were signed. A substantially larger group of works have been attributed to the artist by analogy. Bearing in mind the fact that the Dresden book named 'Osieux' has the most pictures (366), and assuming that the majority of the presentations from Erlangen attributed to him were by him, it can be concluded that it was the drawings of birds that dominated Niedenthal's oeuvre.

Summary

Niedenthal's oeuvre is extremely rich and fascinating, due both to its focus on animal studies – which were still a novelty at that time – and to its affinity to science. Quite likely, his works were created as a result of his cooperation with Danzig naturalists. However, it goes without saying that Niedenthal himself displayed a scientific bias; this is also testified to by the detailed notes on some of his drawings.

The Dresden collection of Niedenthal's drawings essentially alters the picture of the artistic and scientific culture of Danzig in the mid-seventeenth century. This is also a big challenge for museology and art history. The discussed volumes still require detailed and interdisciplinary research. Furthermore, they call for systemising as well as precise, technologically grounded investigation, discussion of the techniques used, as well as for solving attribution and dating uncertainties. However, just a preliminary analysis of the Animal Book from Dresden contributes much to our knowledge of Niedenthal's oeuvre, his scientific determination, and the variety of techniques he used. It clearly demonstrates that animal subjects were already the focus of his interest at an early stage of his artistic activity. When travelling across Holland and the German states, he copied presentations by other artists, especially drawings of exotic animals.⁴⁶ Later, he focused on the local fauna and his works are characterised by a more analytical approach to the presented animals.

Niedenthal's three Dresden volumes are the first such complete zoological compendium created in this part of Europe. The artist may have intended to create a printed compendium, possibly in cooperation with a Danzig scientist. Regrettably, the plan was aborted due to the death of its creator/creators. Preserved in only one original copy, the drawings were never compiled. Kept in Dresden for hundreds of years they remained unknown, yet in comparison with, for example, illustrations for *Natural History* collected by Joannes Jonstonus (John Jonston, 1603–1675) they are far more specific and contain more examples of the local fauna.

In order to present exotic animals (elephants, giraffes, crocodiles, armadillos, monkeys, etc.) the painter active in Danzig, similarly to many others in his times, resorted to models created by other artists. What seems the most interesting, however, are his studies of the local fauna. Some of the species may have been presented and briefly described by him for the first time in the history of science. Therefore, not only does Niedenthal deserve the highest appreciation among artists but also the name of a scientist who, a hundred years before Linnaeus, had observed, systemised and described the specimens of the fauna in Pomerania.

⁴⁶ For example, copies after Zacharias Wagner – such as Ca 211, dwg 179, which is a copy of Wagner's Thierbuch [dwg 82]. Also, Ca 211, dwgs 49 and 180 are variants of Wagner's presentations. For more on Wagner, see: TEIXEIRA Dante Martínez (1997). *The "Thierbuch" e a "Autobiografia" de Zacharias Wagener. (Brasil Holandês, ed. FERRÃO Cristina, SOARES Jose Paulo Monteiro)*, Rio de Janeiro: Ed Index 1997. See also: BOESEMANN Marinus, WHITEHEAD, Peter James Palmer. *A portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil: Animals, plants and people by the artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publ., 1989, pp. 48–53.

Niedenthal's notes on the drawings, made meticulously from the 1650s, point to a growing zoological awareness. They may have been made at the instigation of Danzig-based scientific researchers into fauna, particularly coastal fauna. Some of Niedenthal's drawings were created before the Brazilian sketches by Frans Post and Georg Marcgraf published in the *Libri principis* and *Theatrum rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, which gives Niedenthal's works a special position in the history of European zoology. Even if he had to copy some of the exotic specimens, for example, from *Libri Picturati* (formerly in Berlin, now in Kraków), Niedenthal's works show a much higher artistic level than the copies deposited in St Petersburg.⁴⁷ But it was the study of local fauna that he was passionate about, and it is this part of Niedenthal's oeuvre that we have analysed and that is most valuable for the development of science.

To date, Niedenthal's drawings have not been exhibited. Stored in the engraving cabinet, they have been viewed by a few researchers, and only SKD staff have permanent access to them. The fact that collector (perhaps Gottwald) compiled these works in three volumes 350 years ago is certainly of historical value. However, some of the drawings are not in the best condition and need restoration work. The paint layer is wearing away and causing the details and inscriptions to be gradually obliterated. It would also be worthwhile to carry out research into paper. It is possible that watermarks would be revealed on some of the drawings, which could help to date those drawings that lack inscriptions. Digitalisation, in turn, would allow for their further study in various contexts – zoological and artistic – as well as their exhibition, for example, in their place of origin, Gdańsk. Niedenthal's drawings are therefore a unique example of artistic and zoological heritage.

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⁴⁷ BOESEMANN Marinus, HOLTHUIS Lipke, HOOGMOED Martinus & SMENK Chis. *Seventeenth century drawings of Brazilian animals in Leningrad*. Zoologische Verhandlungen 267, 1990, pp. 1–189.

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Preservation of cultural diversity and current tools of monument care

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Preservation of cultural diversity and current tools of monument care

This article deals with cultural sustainability, authenticity and one of its basic pillars: the preservation of diversity. It looks at constructions around the world and how they have adapted to local geophysical circumstances, both in the construction methods and materials used. It analyses how diversity has been endangered by globalisation in the territory of Slovakia and elsewhere. Subsequently, the article focuses on monument care and preservation in Slovakia and other countries, comparing the legal instruments used in different countries. The article proposes a system for the categorisation of objects built before 1947 in Slovakia. This is key to better understanding the topic of protection of heritage buildings for professionals and government agencies dealing with monument protection. The proposed categorisation could help significantly in systematising the protection of tangible cultural heritage and building culture in Slovakia.

Keywords: monument care, monument protection, monument law, cultural sustainability, traditional architecture, vernacular architecture, preservation of diversity, cultural diversity, authenticity, globalization, categorisation of monuments, national cultural monument

Cultural sustainability

Traditional architecture both in Slovakia and throughout the world was suppressed at the turn of the twentieth century by the advent of individualistic modernity, and traditional forms of construction began to be replaced by new constructions and technologies, among them buildings characterised by large-format glazed surfaces, steel and reinforced concrete. Due to technological development, traditional technologies became “archaisms” and traditional structures could no longer keep pace with the innovative parameters of modern buildings. However, in the current technological shift (compared to the period of the advent of modernity), it is possible, through sensitive restoration, to return traditional monuments to a state that meets today’s requirements. It is also possible to preserve historical values, which primarily include the value of authenticity, even when dealing with listed monuments. With the onset of

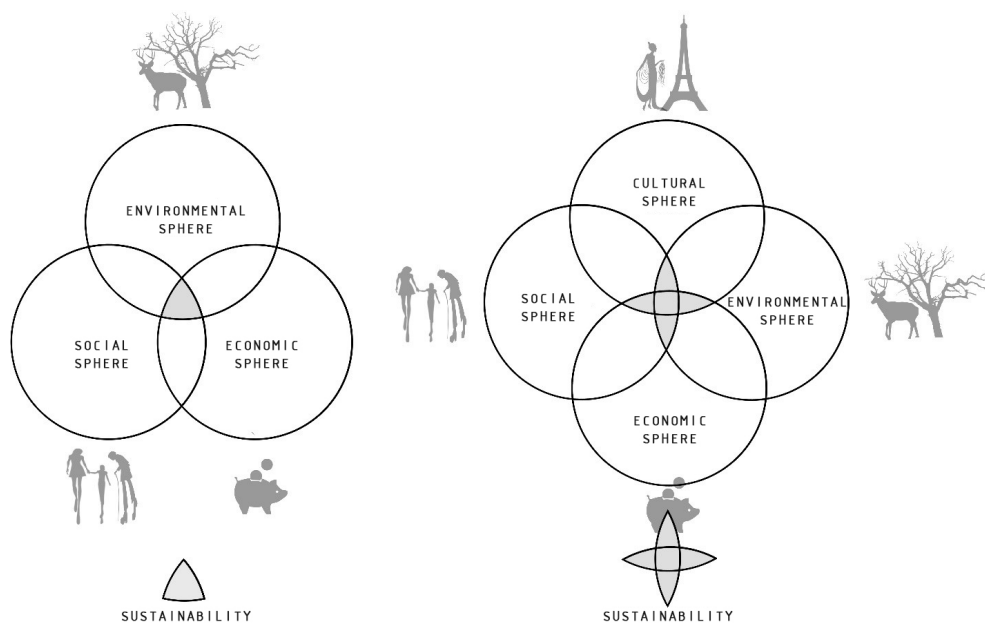


Fig. 1: *Left – Sustainability as the interweaving of three spheres: the environment, the social and the economic sphere. Right – Integrating the cultural sphere of culture into the philosophy of sustainability (source: E. Ruhigová, after P. Pagáčová, 2015.)*

cultural diversity in today’s society, the question of sustainability has begun to resonate more intensively. The issue of sustainability has come to the fore because of the lack of acceptance of the balance between the artificial and natural environment, stimulated by interventions (from reconstructions to demolitions) which ignore the context of the original environment in the pre-Soviet period. Modern architecture and construction replaced traditional forms that were primarily based on the harmony of “house and environment” and whose impact on the natural environment was less drastic. Sustainability is often referred to as the intersection of three spheres: the economic, the social and the environmental. These are also known as the three pillars of sustainability (Fig. 1).¹

Sustainability is about preserving continuity while at the same time finding a new path on which it is possible to question fundamental assumptions and continue only with those

¹ GREGOR, P. et al. *Restoration of monuments*. Bratislava: PERFEKT, a.s., 2008, p. 10. ISBN 97880-8046-405-9

which are relevant to today's context. To achieve this, sustainability actions must operate on both a quantitative and a qualitative level – i.e. large-scale buildings should not be lacking in quality. In recent years, sustainability in architecture has been characterised by concerns over energy efficiency and consideration for the environment, as a result of the need to reevaluate the relationship between humans and nature. But it is also necessary to consider attitudes towards culture. Sustainability in architecture will never be achieved as long as it covers only the quantitative side (for example a large number of buildings that are poorly constructed). This is an issue not only in the field of architecture but also in other areas concerned with sustainability. Architecture is a clear expression of the boundary between the world of ideas and physical reality, and it is as much an art as a technical field.²

Figure 1 shows the scheme of sustainability, enriched with the sphere of culture, which in this model is given an equal status with other three standard pillars of sustainability, as per the model developed in Petronela Pagáčová's thesis.³

Preservation of diversity as a basic pillar of the principles of authenticity

Cultural sustainability refers to the need to preserve the diversity of cultural manifestations – both in their social dimensions (local customs and conventions) and in terms of constructions (traditional structural details, ornaments on the facades).

Cultural sustainability is also closely connected with the concept of tradition. It represents a complex of certain cultural patterns, values, norms and patterns of behaviour that reduce the uncertainty of decision-making. It works against the loss of historical memory, cultural discontinuity and feelings of uprootedness, and at the same time fosters the acceptance of innovations.⁴

I believe that architecture is not a part of civilization, but of culture. Architecture arises and grows only against the background of history, tradition, climate and other natural factors. It has certain social, economic, legal and political limitations.⁵

This division of civilisation can draw attention to the fact that the global diversity in building styles is not primarily a result of human individualism but rather the local environmental conditions, such as climate and geomorphology, to which people had to adapt. These natural conditions and the lifestyles associated with them lead to the development of original and authentic design in different environments. Until the modern period, the geomorphological and climatic conditions of a given locality were the basic factors determining diverse architectural forms and the manner of construction. Specific cultures bound to the location were also formed, preserving their uniqueness until about the middle of the twentieth century, which brought industrialization and gradual automation of technology, greater mobility of people and easier access to information from more distant parts of the earth). As a result of globalisation, the naturally created, millennia-long diversity of construction manifestations begins to disappear from the middle of the twentieth century.

² PAGÁČOVÁ, P. *Aspects of sustainability in the restoration of heritage-protected structures*. Dissertation thesis. Bratislava: Faculty of Architecture STU. 2015, pp. 17.

³ Ibidem, p. 20.

⁴ HANUŠIN, J., HUBA, M., IRA, V., KLINEC, I., PODOBA, J., SZOLLOS, J. *Explanatory dictionary of sustainability terms*. Bratislava: STUŽ/SR, 2000, ISBN 80-968415-3-X, p.158.

⁵ TADAO, Ando. *Facing the crisis of architecture*, 1986, accessed February 2024, <https://www.archiweb.cz/news/tadao-ando-tvari-tvar-krizi-architekturstandards/386-the-nara-document-on-authenticity-1994>

The situation in Slovakia is very similar. The country's diverse geomorphology led to the formation of various types of architecture, especially evident in rural architecture, which has

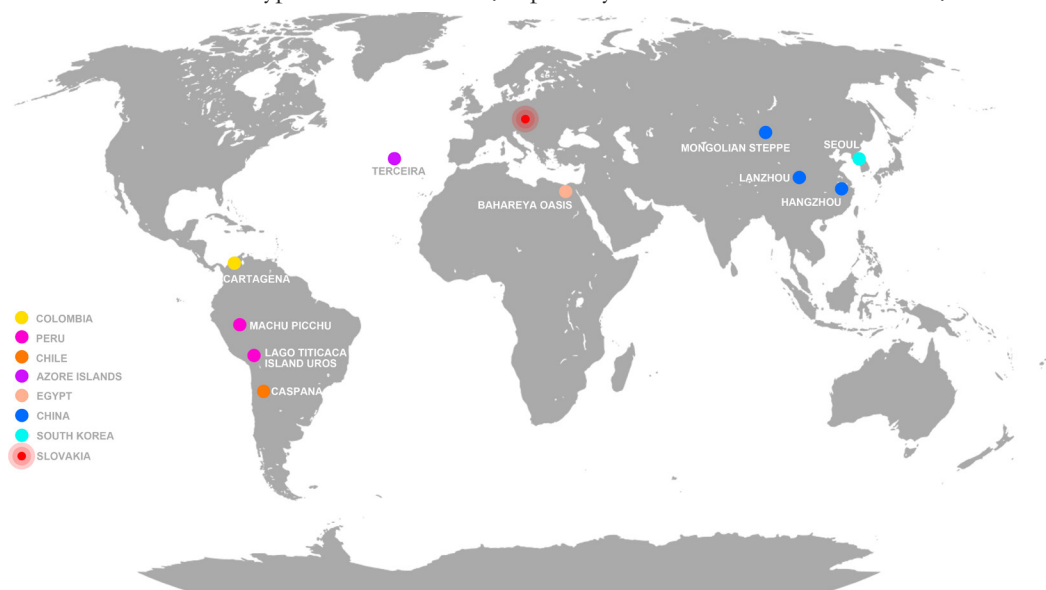


Fig. 2: Map showing selected locations of architectural interest (Source: E. Ruhigová)

Atacama, Chile – Caspana

- tropical climate zone
- natural environment: desert
- local materials used: clay, sand
- period: the oldest preserved building is the church of St Lucy, dating from 1641.

a primary relationship to the natural conditions. Unlike rural architecture, urban architecture tends to be affected by influences from other areas, so the direct relationship to the original environment less pronounced than in rural architecture. As a result of migration, architectural ideas are often imported from further afield. Due to globalization, professional architecture in individual areas is starting to take over general building procedures, which are no longer significantly linked to geomorphology and natural conditions.⁶

Endangered diversity in a global world

Traditional architectural forms in individual cultural contexts are not just determined by when the buildings were constructed (and hence by the materials and expertise available to those who built them). Architectural authenticity also arises from the natural conditions, such as geomorphology and climate, which are an integral part of the architectural design.

As mentioned above, there are a wide variety of architectural styles globally due to the wide variation in natural conditions. Below I discuss a few specific locations marked in Figure 2. These specific locations and sites of architectural interest were chosen because, with the exception of Egypt, they are all places I was able to conduct field research. This involved visiting the location and observing the constructions from the exterior and, in the vast majority,

⁶ GREGOROVÁ, J., PAGÁČOVÁ, P. Ecological aspects of monument preservation – potentials or limits? In: *TER-RA SPECTRA STU*. Planning Studies: Central European Journal of Spatial and Landscape Planning, STU, Vol. 5, 2013, No. 2, STU Bratislava, SPECTRA Centre of Excellence EU, Bratislava 2013, ISSN 1338-0370, pp.17–25.

the interior. I also spoke with the owners of the houses or other local residents, and gathered the necessary facts.⁷

One of the characteristic inhabited places of the Atacama Desert is Caspana, a village located in a valley carved by the river with the same name. The original architecture consists of low single-story white houses made of clay and sand with flat roofs. Their location follows the edges of the “residential” ridge, which protects the dwellings from the weather conditions associated with desert storms. Colour in the Atacama dwellings can only be seen in some architectural elements, such as windows, doors, frames and furniture, while the walls are left uncoated, as they would soon be devastated by strong winds and sand.

As for technical facilities, heating, air conditioning and sewage are not found in traditional buildings. Interior comfort is provided through characteristic elements that respond to the hot climate and large temperature difference between day and night – massive walls, light roofs, small openings and many shading elements.⁸

Peru – Titicaca

- cold and dry climate
- natural environment: lake
- local materials used: tortora reeds
- period: tribe arrived 1700 BCE

The Uros islands are located at 3810 meters above sea level and are still home to the ancient Uros tribe. In the past, the Uros traded with the Aymara tribe on land, which is one of the reasons the islands are not firmly anchored to the bottom but function as floats on the lake. They were created by alternating layers of a local reed known as tortora with layers of clay. In order to preserve them, however, it is necessary to replenish the layers, as reeds rot much faster when in contact with water, especially during the rainy season. The islands are still inhabited by the original inhabitants, who continuously repair their homes with new layers of local reeds using traditional methods.

To this day, no infrastructure has been established in the dwellings. The houses are also very small so that on cold nights the residents literally heat themselves with the heat of their own bodies; the thick layer of reeds that forms the perimeter walls has excellent thermal insulation properties.

Peru – Machu Picchu

- tundra climate
- natural environment: primeval forest
- local materials used: stone
- period: created 1460 – 1470

The classic Inca style of using specially worked stone masonry in large formats is has been preserved and is clearly legible. This ancient construction technique is unique due to

⁷ RUHIGOVÁ E. *Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions in the field of technical equipment of buildings at heritage-protected objects*. Dissertation thesis. Bratislava: Faculty of Architecture STU. 2020, p. 186.

⁸ Ibidem, pp 21–22.

the extreme precision in joining individual rocks without the help of mortar or metal tools and draft animals. The architecture had to adapt to the local geomorphology, as it is built on very steep rocky ground. Individual houses were constructed on terraces and each house had terraced fields.

In terms of infrastructure, not much has been preserved, but the construction of a drainage system that is still functioning today is also remarkable, which was able (and still can) withstand even the biggest and most intense rains in these mountains. The entire residence is literally interwoven with stone drainage channels which drain houses, yards, and individual cascading terraces.⁹

Colombia – Cartagena

- tropical climate
- natural environment: Caribbean coast
- local materials used: wood, mud brick
- period: creation in 1533

The Caribbean port of Cartagena on the northern coast of Colombia is full of Spanish colonial architecture. Its entire centre, which has never been captured by outside invaders, has been preserved to the greatest extent possible and it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, thanks to its perfect defence system and strategic location.

However, what makes this city liveable and pleasant even in the local tropical climate are the extremely narrow streets, which are almost completely covered with balconies creating pleasant shade and space for functioning even during the hottest parts of the day. Since the city is located in a tropical climate zone, heating was not necessary in the past and internal comfort was achieved by maximum shading of window and door openings.

Azores Islands

- mild, warm climate
- natural environment: hills of volcanic origin
- local materials used: stone, wood
- period: around 1500

The vernacular architecture of this area can be described as belonging to a “seismic architectural culture” which developed from the need to withstand frequent small and larger earthquakes by creating shock-resistant structures.

Among the main additional reinforcing elements are steel or wooden connecting rods (tensile), massive stone blocks placed around the perimeter of the masonry directly on the ground and massive stone bevelled walls supporting the perimeter masonry. In this location, traditional houses often feature reinforced corners, reinforcement of window and door openings around their entire perimeter, transverse arches between neighbouring houses and pombalino walls. These are part of the interior, dividing the space; their dense, ventilated cage-like construction creates an internal structure that mainly serves to cushion the perimeter walls.

⁹ RUHIGOVÁ E. 2020. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., pp. 22–23.

The houses use a medieval form of heating, where smoke and combustion gases are directed out the building via a chimney, rather than allowed to remain in the room. Located on the façade of the house, the chimney also has a secondary function of strengthening the structure.¹⁰

Egypt – Bahariya

- desert climate
- natural conditions: desert
- local materials used: compacted clay

Traditional settlements in Bahariya are organised to clearly divide public, semi-public and private spaces. The social context here traditionally required the segregation of private life from participation in the economic and religious life of the community.

The dwellings adapt to the harsh conditions of the desert environment by being compact, so that the surfaces of the heat-exchange envelope exposed to direct sunlight are minimised. Narrow, often covered streets provide shade from sunlight and ensure vertical ventilation with a natural chimney effect, which is also realised “in the cross”, that is, through the buildings.¹¹

China – Mongolian steppe

- steppe climate
- natural environment: grass steppe
- local materials used: bamboo, animal skins

China’s topography, broadly speaking, encompasses areas from subarctic to tropical climates, where numerous vernacular architectural forms have developed to respond to the regional climate with great effectiveness.

China has a distinct continental monsoon climate. Traditional Chinese country houses were heated in the cold months by brick kang stoves, which doubled up as beds.

The Mongolian steppe in North China was considerably influenced by the Mongols, who lived in yurts made of diagonally laid bamboo rods and completely covered with animal skins. In the upper part of the yurt is a circular opening which is used to expel smoke from the central hearth, used for food preparation as well as lighting and heating the interior. The shape of the yurt was also inspired by other dwellings, such as stone buildings with a circular floor plan. The type of heating in buildings was solved in the same way.¹²

South Korea – around Seoul

- monsoon climate
- natural environment: hills
- local materials used: bamboo, hand-moulded dried bricks, clay

The traditional architecture of South Korea is characterised by a roof made of clay tiles and inner courtyards, which together with the garden are placed as a whole on a raised platform of rammed earth. The roofs were designed to be steep to enable drainage during the monsoon

¹⁰ CORREIA M., CARLOS G. *Local seismic culture in Portugal*. ARGUMENTUM, 2015, Edições, p. 339, ISBN 978-972-8479-88-6

¹¹ RUHIGOVÁ E. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., pp. 23–24.

¹² Ibidem, p. 24.

and rigid to withstand large amounts of snow in winter. Their height also allows good air flow in the interior in the warmer, humid months. In ancient times, the wooden roof beams were covered with a layer of clay to ensure thermal insulation during cold winters and hot summers.



Fig. 3: A: Caspana – Atacama (Chile), B: Lake Titicaca (Peru), C: Machu Picchu (Peru), D: traditional homestead – Puno (Peru), E: Cartagena (Colombia), F: Terceira (Azores), G: Bahariya – Bawiti (Egypt), H: Mongolian steppe (China), I: Lanzhou (China), J: Hangzhou (China), K: Seoul (South Korea), L: Podbiel (Slovakia). (Source: A-F, H-L: E. Ruhigová, G: Mohamed Hakem)

Although the concavity of the roofs also served aesthetic purposes, the gentle curvature and raised eaves let the sun into the interior in the winter and, thanks to their large overhang, also provide shade in the summer. Another distinctive architectural–structural element of Korean traditional architecture is the hot air heating system, ondol.¹³

¹³ RUHIGOVÁ E. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., p. 24.

Slovakia

- mild climate
- natural environment: from lowlands to rocky mountains
- local materials used: wood, stone, clay

Slovakia is located in a mild climate zone. The street-style construction that prevails in the vast majority of the country is characterised by placing houses perpendicular to the street, such that the gable end faces the line of the street. In mountainous terrain, traditional buildings are adapted more to the morphology of the terrain and have thus “disintegrated” into a more relaxed form. In a relatively small area, the type of construction differs mainly in the materials used and the shape of the roofs in response to the climatic conditions of the given location. Slovak folk architecture is characterised by an extraordinary expressive colour, the result of the demanding development of the past millennium.

Slovakia’s moderate inland climate is associated with the need to heat residential buildings. Among the materials used are wood, stone and brick. In general, rural buildings use wood in various ways, while urban architecture traditionally involved masonry. In the cities, the technology for building fireplaces and stoves was imported from neighbouring countries in the Middle Ages.¹⁴

From the examples described above and shown in Figure 3, it can be seen that different types of houses are found in different geomorphological conditions, built using different materials and technologies. The form and design of houses are influenced by the materials used, be it clay, stone, reed, brick, bamboo, animal skins, or wood.

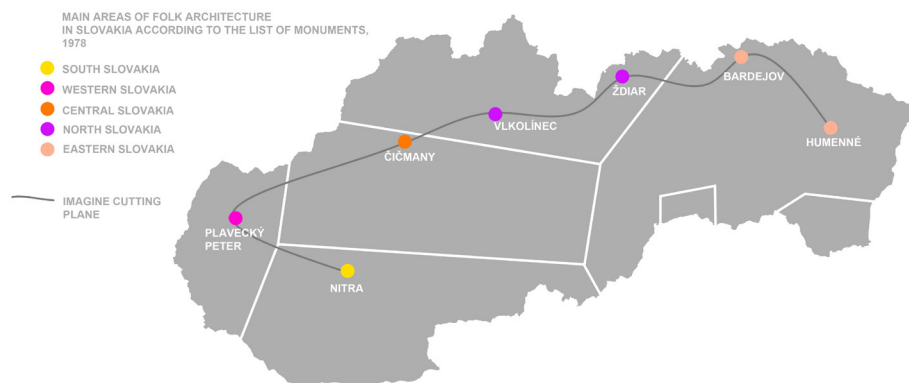


Fig. 4: *Schematic representation of studied locations within Slovakia* (Source: E. Ruhigová)

The form and materials also depend on the climatic conditions in which the object was located. Depending on whether the climate is hot, cold, humid, dry, or wet, interiors need to be heated or cooled. Older efforts to optimise conditions inside include constructing thick walls keep heat in and out, cooling the interior with ventilation, utilising body heat in small insulated interiors, and building a fireplace and hearth or other “primitive” heating systems (often implemented in brick houses). Heating systems were mainly developed in countries with mild, cold climates.¹⁵

¹⁴ RUHIGOVÁ E. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., pp. 25–27.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 27.



Fig. 5: *An imaginary section of Slovakia illustrating the forms of local folk buildings. From the left: Danube lowland, Small Carpathians, Strážovské vrchy, Veľká Fatra, High Tatras, Ondavská vrchovina and Viborlat*
(Source: E. Ruhigová)

Diversity in today's Slovakia

With a relatively small territory compared to other countries, individual traditional buildings in Slovakia are no longer distinguished according to their entire form but by the execution of individual elements. Individual buildings are adapted to the local climatic conditions, as well as to the construction materials available. Diverse designs, as well as a number of original elements, are present thanks to Slovakia's location within Europe, where in the past it was a meeting point of various ethnic groups.

Slovakia's diverse and highly fragmented landscape, with significant differences in altitude, precipitation, temperature, soil, flora and fauna created the basic prerequisites for the diversity of forms of folk architecture that are still preserved today.

These conditions influenced the material–technical basis of folk building culture. We can divide folk buildings on this territory into two basic groups: clay (brick) and wooden buildings. In both groups, the most available resources and raw materials were used, namely, clay with various admixtures, stone and, later, mud bricks in one group and wood in the other.¹⁶

In an imaginary section across Slovakia (Fig. 4), it can be seen that houses constructed of wood were mainly located in the northern regions of Slovakia, i.e. near mountains and hillocks. Clay houses, on the other hand, were located in lowland areas, where types of clay suitable for the conditions of building houses were available. It is the same with the slope of the roofs, where in the mountainous areas the construction reached significantly greater slopes (due to the need for drainage of intense rains and snow) than in the lowlands (Fig. 5).

In cities, the relationship to the natural environment began to disappear with use of a small area defined by castle fortifications and the acceptance of new cultural impulses caused by migration. Due to the requirements of higher quality construction, brick and stone were mainly used. The shaping and position of houses gradually changed from solitary constructions in the early Middle Ages to more compact dwellings, the earlier ones being deeper, later ones connected longitudinally (also, to prevent fires, fire shields were built between neighbouring houses). The gradient of the roof significantly influenced the development of heating systems in addition to the effective drainage of rainwater.¹⁷

¹⁶ DVORÁKOVÁ, V. *Ľudová architektúra*. Bratislava: Dajama, 2008. ISBN 978-80-89226-25-2, p. 6.

¹⁷ ŠKABRADA J. *Vernacular buildings: the architecture of the Czech countryside*. 1st ed. Argo. 1999, pp.77–86. ISBN 80-7203-082-5



Fig. 6: Pictorial illustration of the current “cult of globalisation” and its impact on the traditional way of life, habits and mentality for Amsterdam, Gdansk, Berlin, Madrid, London and Paris (Source: E. Ruhigová)



Fig. 7: Visual illustration of the current “cult of globalisation” and its impact on the original character of the development for Amsterdam, Gdansk, Berlin, Madrid, London and Paris (Source: E. Ruhigová)

The problem of loss of cultural diversity through globalisation

Currently, the global trend is the “cult of globalisation”, which arose mainly due to the availability and ease of media transmission of information from one end of the world to the other with extreme speed. We can consider the period of modernity – programmatically suppressing traditional ways of building and applying new technical and technological procedures – as the first manifestation of globalism. It goes without saying that this advances the development of civilisation by leaps and bounds, but its impact on preserving the authenticity and the original character of the environment where intensification is taking place remains questionable (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). New building technologies, typification, climate change and global capital have caused the requirements of the new era to be met in a similar way all over the world, especially in cities, where the mentioned problems (and the methods of solving them) are applied to a greater extent than in the countryside. Cities, as hubs of culture, use not only natural resources for construction but also the latest achievements of construction, related to artistic styles or innovative technical solutions. In the past, infrastructure such as sewage systems and running water was more prevalent more in cities than in the countryside. Today, infrastructure is absent only in the most backward rural areas, although the overall development of infrastructure tends

to be higher in cities than in the majority of the countryside.¹⁸ However, modern people tend to find it difficult to give up modern comforts and return to past lifestyles without built-in sewage and water supplies.

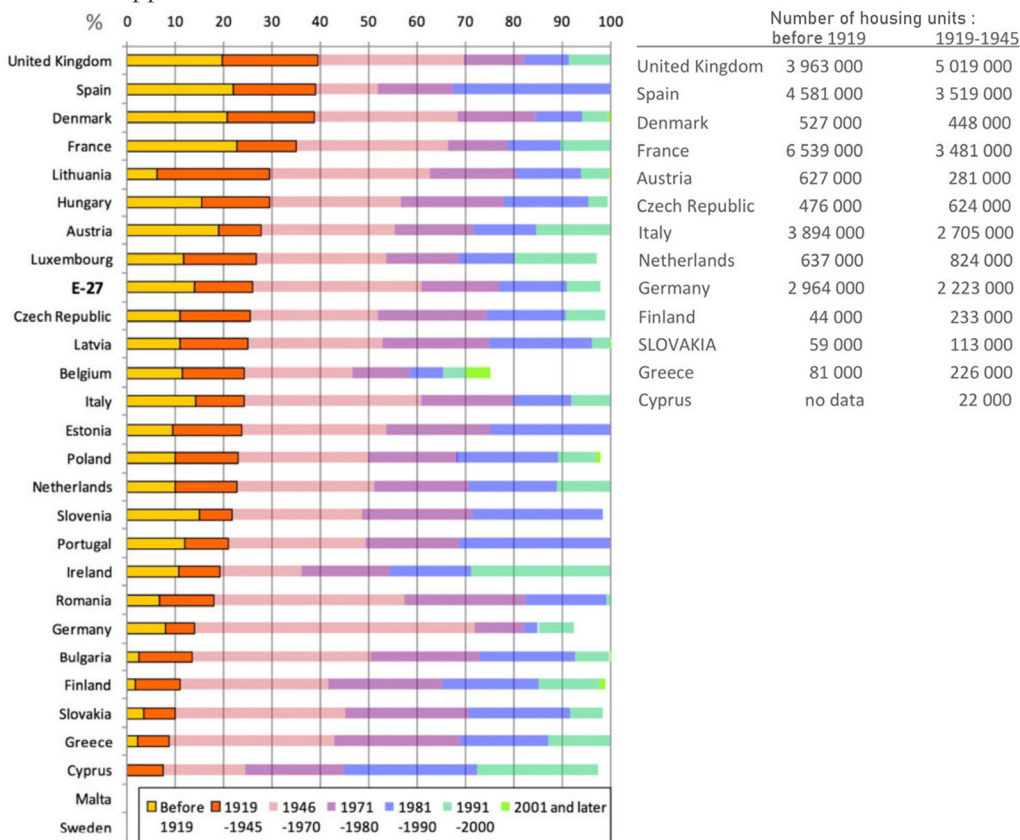


Fig. 8: Graph showing the age of housing units within EU countries in 2001, arranged by construction period (Source: Alexandra Troi, Institute for Renewable Energy, EURAC research, Bolzano/Italy)¹⁹

The dimension of monument care

Globalisation, by intensifying the way of life, leads to demands for more and more new buildings to meet society's requirements, thus the pressure to replace traditional-style buildings is growing. For this reason, a system of monument care was created in Slovakia which identifies locations or buildings that represent the basis of the country's cultural roots, and the degree of preservation of these buildings is directly related to the degree of preservation of the nation's cultural identity. Each culture/country has developed its own system of rules for monuments and buildings, defining how their restoration must be approached. In a broader sense, monument care has become a tool of cultural sustainability. Each system takes into

¹⁸ GREGOROVÁ, J. et al. *Presentation of architectural heritage II*. PERFEKT, a.s., Bratislava 2008, pp. 9–15. ISBN 978-80-8046-394-6

¹⁹ Troi, Alexandra: Historic buildings and city centres – the potential impact of conservation compatible energy refurbishment on climate protection and living conditions, 2001, accessed February 2023
<https://www.eurac.edu/en/institutes-centers/institute-for-renewable-energy>

account the preservation of authenticity by defining the extent to which new interventions are permitted.

This system affects, among other things, the degree of preservation of traditional buildings. In general, the traditional building techniques were used in Western cultures until about the middle of the twentieth century.

If we take into account all Slovakia's built heritage by construction period, then traditional buildings built before 1947 become a separate group of buildings, a relatively large proportion of which are declared monuments. These are objects built in a traditional way, from traditional materials (brick, stone, or wood). The graph shown in Figure 8 shows that in terms of residential buildings built before 1947 (which in Slovakia can be considered cultural monuments), there are significantly fewer of them have been preserved in Slovakia compared to other EU countries. This is the reason monument care is set much more strictly in Slovakia than in other countries.

The historical-cultural aspect in the issue of sustainability, and therefore also monument care, is comparable to the need to solve the issues of ecology and environmentalism, as the protection of cultural heritage is undoubtedly in the interest of the whole society. Cultural heritage documents society's overall development, whether in science, technology or art. Europe, with its cultural diversity and enormous dispersion of cultural features, represents a unique concentration of monuments, and setting up a system and rules for their preservation has a supra-regional significance for civilisation. The cultural identity of individual countries is different and therefore the individual models of monument protection also differ (in contrast to ecological or technical parameters, which are quantifiable and therefore their limits can be determined relatively more precisely and unambiguously). Therefore, a system for the protection of monuments has been determined worldwide which has a transnational (world, continental), national and regional dimension.

When comparing the cultural identity of European countries with other countries of the world, it becomes clear that Europe shows similar characteristics in terms of types of construction production. A significant difference is particularly noticeable in the degree of preservation of traditional buildings in relation to the total construction production in individual countries. It is therefore understandable that the types of monument care may not be the same. Among other things, they can also differ in the degree of directivity in the protection of the original. There is a visible difference in approach to monument protection in countries that have preserved a large number of monuments. These countries tend to use a differentiated system of protection to define the types of traditional buildings that are protected as monuments, even though the values of individual countries regarding their monuments differ. Thanks to this, it is possible to introduce new interventions to certain types of monuments which change their original character to a certain extent. Countries that have a small monument base tend to have not adopted a differentiated system of monument protection, possibly out of fear that their relatively small number of traditional monuments could be further diminished by insensitive interventions.

Instead, such countries often increase the degree of systematisation of protection in order to avoid loss of originality as much as possible. Slovakia is one of these countries with a small monument base where a differentiated protection system has not been applied. Proposed restorations of monuments in such countries are strictly monitored in accordance with the established legislation.²⁰

²⁰ RUHIGOVÁ E. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., pp. 31–34.

Monument care abroad compared to Slovakia

As already mentioned, countries of the European Union vary in terms of the quality and number of preserved historical objects (Fig. 9). Despite the current global trends, requirements for the optimisation of energy consumption and the overall standard of use of protected heritage buildings, countries with a low (or minimal) degree of preservation of historically valuable structures and a related lower degree of cultural identity must set their system of heritage protection far more strictly. By way of comparison, the following text lists some examples of countries that apply a differentiated system of monument care, thanks to the presence of a large number of preserved monuments.

England and Scotland

Great Britain built its identity as a world empire thanks to a strong relationship with the products (buildings, art, cultural products) of its ancestors.²¹

England, together with Scotland, has one of the largest number of historical monuments in Europe. English Heritage, which takes care of the overall monument protection in the country, has defined a clearly differentiated and strict system of protection.²² Buildings are divided into three categories:

- Grade I (in Scotland, Category A) - buildings of exceptional special interest;
- Grade II* (in Scotland, Category B) - particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
- Grade II (grade II, in Scotland category C) – buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.²³

In the framework of monument protection in the field of urban planning, the so-called “Conservation Areas” – protected areas that are declared for the important architectural and historical values of a set of several objects. Their goal is the monument protection of the characteristic historical territory as a whole.²⁴

Spain

Spain, like England, has a large base of historical objects. However, it is currently facing the problem that dozens of state-protected ancient monuments are in an alarming state of disrepair and becoming ruins. Reasons include rural depopulation and a significant increase in vandalism. The government therefore decided to set up a social system supporting incomers to live in settlements at risk of dying out due to their aging population.

The Ministry of Culture divides its responsibility for national cultural heritage between two bodies. The General Administration of the Protection of Historical Heritage is responsible

²¹ GREGOROVÁ, J. et al. *Presentation of architectural heritage*. Bratislava: Slovak Technical University in Bratislava, 2003, p. 140. ISBN 80-227-1837-8

²² PAGÁČOVÁ P. *Aspects of sustainability in the restoration of heritage-protected structures*. Dissertation thesis. Bratislava: Faculty of Architecture STU. 2015, pp. 17.

²³ DEPARTMENT FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA & SPORT: Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings, 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5beef3c9e5274a2b0b4267e0/Revised_Principles_of_Selection_2018.pdf.

²⁴ HISTORIC ENGLAND: What Is a Conservation Area?, accessed February 2024, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/conservation-areas/>

for applying regulations on the protection of historical heritage, and the General Institute of Cultural Heritage of Spain develops and implements conservation strategies.

The protection of cultural heritage is governed by Act No. 16/1985 on Spanish cultural heritage, although the autonomous regions have drawn up their own legislation (which greatly complicates the implementation of heritage protection in the country). The powers of the central and regional governments are allocated in such a way that the central government deals primarily with protected property belonging to the state and manages public bodies and delegated authorities, and the autonomous regional governments focus on privately, locally and regionally owned historical objects and sites within their autonomous area.

The Autonomous Communities have established additional levels of protection under their own laws and, as far as intangible heritage is concerned, they have introduced their own special categories – a differentiated system of protection – which, however, is not the same for all Spanish sites.²⁵

France

France has a very rich, diverse and valuable cultural heritage which plays an important economic role in the country and contributes significantly to the uniqueness of French culture. The protection and value enhancement of French cultural heritage is central to the tasks of the Ministry of Culture and is based on detailed scientific research.

The Cultural Heritage Act replaced the earlier Cultural Property Act on 19 October 2012 in order to capture the wider legislative framework. This legislative transition led to many changes.²⁶ One of the dominant ones is the introduction of the categorisation of historical monuments into the following groups:

- Historical objects
- Historical or archaeological sites classified before 1978 as national cultural monuments (interiors are protected)
 - Historical or archaeological sites classified after 1978 as national cultural monuments (interiors are not protected)
- Historic or natural districts
- Archaeological sites
- Works of art
- Cinematographic, audiovisual, photographic, radio and television works

The protection of cultural heritage is based on regulations that have been in place since the nineteenth century in all areas of heritage (archives, libraries, museums, archaeology, historical monuments). In 2008, following incidents of theft in cathedrals and museums and recurrent intrusions, the penal code was amended in order to strengthen powers to prevent theft and malicious acts committed against a protected cultural property.²⁷

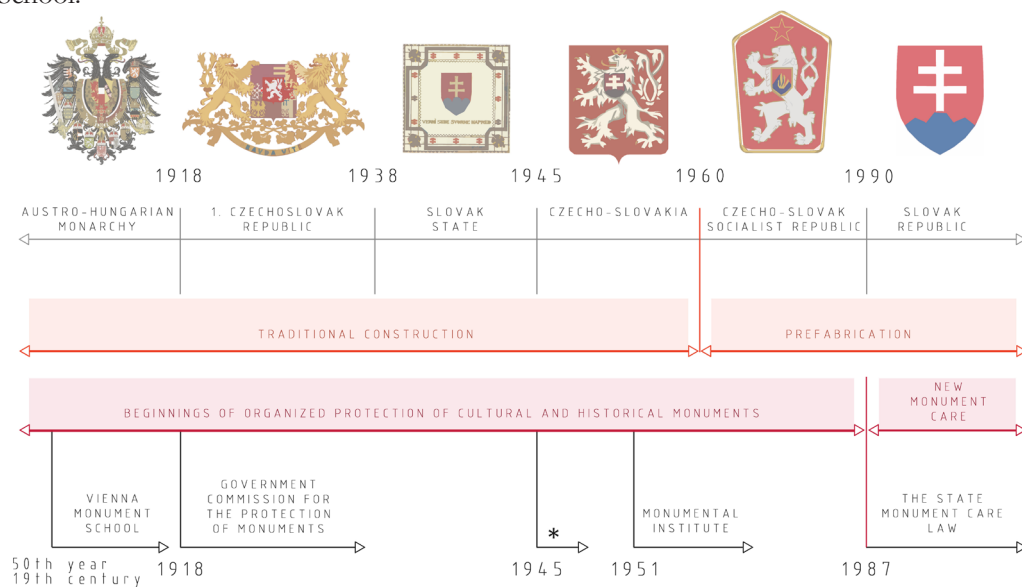
²⁵ COUNCIL OF EUROPE. 2024. National Policy Report. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/herein-system/spain>

²⁶ Gouvernement du Québec: Cultural heritage act, 2023, <https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/document/lc/P-9.002/20161209?langCont=en>

²⁷ Ministry of Culture of France: A little history, 2023 <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en/Thematic/Monuments-Sites/Historical-monuments-heritage-sites/A-little-history>

The genesis of the development of monument protection in today's Slovakia

The beginnings of the organised protection of monuments in Slovakia date back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when they were directly linked to the authorities concerned with the protection of monuments of the then Austro-Hungary. For decades, the Monarchy influenced the development of practically all of Central Europe, the so-called Vienna Memorial School.²⁸



* REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF MONUMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND NATIONAL EDUCATION

Fig. 9: *Development of monument protection in today's Slovakia.* (Source: E. Ruhigová)

The first truly Slovak monument authority, created after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic and the consolidation of Czechoslovakian state power, was the Government Commissariat for the Protection of Monuments in Slovakia, renamed in 1923 to the State Department for the Protection of Monuments in Slovakia (State Department). It was established in October 1919 by Regulation No. 155/1919, which was issued by the minister with full power for the administration of Slovakia Vavro Šrobár.²⁹

The creation of the report on the protection of monuments of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in 1945 is connected with the creation of Czechoslovakia, which was already replaced in 1951 by the Monuments Institute, which continued even during the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. At that time, regional (and also district) national committees were responsible for monument care. Among the most important actions of the Monuments Institute (which was later named the Slovak Monuments Institute [1951–1958]) was the establishment of an inventory of monuments in 1954. Just before the Slovak Republic was established (in 1993) came the Act on State Monument Care of 1987 and the associated

²⁸ Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic: Protection of the monument fund, accessed February 2024, <https://www.culture.gov.sk/posobnost-ministerstva/kulturne-dedicstvo/ochrana-pamiatkoveho-fondu/>

²⁹ Profile of Slovak culture: Preservation of monuments in the past (1850 – 2002), accessed February 2023, <http://profil.kulturny.sk/sk/ochrana-pamiatok-v-minulosti-1850-%E2%80%93-2002/>

creation of methodology the so-called new monument care by the National Council of the Slovak Republic / Slovenská národná rada. Here, for the first time, differentiation was made between types of protected heritage, including national cultural monuments (NCMs), monument reserves, monument zones and protection zones. The legislation also defined how national cultural monuments could be used, how to conduct archaeological research, and so on (Fig. 9).³⁰

In this context, it is important to note that while the law within the Czechoslovak Republic also applied to Slovakia, Slovakia had the protection of classification as a national cultural monument or a cultural monument. However, following the independence of the Slovak Republic, the ratio of monuments to the total construction production deteriorated significantly. Following independence, the differentiated system of monument care disappeared and the only category used is now NCM.

Current tools of monument care in Slovakia

The monument fund in Slovakia can be perceived from the point of view protection at a transnational, national and regional level. The transnational (world and continental) level is based on the principles of protection that were uniformly established for all cultural countries of the world. The national (state) level has its own monument care system which can be considered partially differentiated and applies to the entire territory of Slovakia. At the regional level, the monument protection system is a matter for individual regions or settlements, and is binding for the respective communities.

Transnational level

The main world conventions and recommendations on the protection of monuments also have an impact on monument care within Slovakia. Among the most famous of them are UNESCO and ICOMOS, which have clearly defined intervention principles. These include, for example, the condition of reversibility of all interventions, the effort to preserve all original imperfections and deficiencies as long as they do not conflict with safety, and that all new materials must be compatible with the original materials. Another of the supra-regional conventions is, for example, the Athens and Venice Charter. Dating from 1964, it outlines the need to preserve the authenticity of architectural works, which is also related only using modern technologies if the traditional ones are insufficient.³¹ In 1994, the Nara Document on Authenticity was published; conceived in a similar spirit to the Venice Charter, it expands on the concept by strengthening the relationship between cultural heritage and the interest of the world in its preservation in relation to authenticity.³²

In connection with the problem of emerging globalisation, reconstructive procedures are being used in the restoration of defunct monuments, leading to a debate about the extent to which traditional building procedures should be used if the object is to meet the current

³⁰ Monument office of the Slovak Republic: Monument authorities 1919 – 1951, accessed February 2024, <https://www.pamiatky.sk/pamiatkove-organy-1919-1951>

³¹ ICOMOS: International charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites, The Venice Charter 1964, accessed February 2024, https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/venice_e.pdf

³² ICOMOS: The NARA document on authenticity, 1994, accessed February 2024, <https://www.icomos.org/en/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/386-the-nara-document-on-authenticity-1994>

requirements for use. The great loss of monuments over the last 50 years is the reason behind the ever-greater insistence on preserving the original essence of the monument. For heritage objects the most sensitive methods are sought to preserve authenticity, even at the cost of finding exceptions or atypical solutions to the standard technical approach.³³

National level

When it comes to new interventions in heritage buildings, the optimal approach is a differentiated system of monument protection which divides monuments into groups to which different exceptions or compromises apply, taking into account the technical standards of that country.

In Slovakia, for the reasons mentioned earlier, there is a relatively well-developed system of monument protection which is differentiated in the urbanistic dimension. However, in the architectural dimension, all monuments are classified in the same category, which significantly limits the possibility of creating a system of acceptable compromises.

At the national level, the Methodological Guidelines apply. Their main function is to specify how experts should undertake the restoration process. The Guidelines are an addition to the Monuments Act.

In the urban planning dimension, a differentiated system is ensured by the categorisation of heritage sites in the Principles of the Protection of Monumental Areas. These territories are differentiated according to the degree of preservation of historical values into monument reservations, monument zones and protection zones. The principles divide heritage sites into eight basic groups, one of which is national cultural monuments.

In accordance with the methodological guidelines of the monument office of the Slovak Republic for research documentation of urban–historical research and the draft Principles of the Protection and Restoration of Monumental Protected Areas, the following categories of objects are defined:

1. national cultural monuments (to which special sections of the Monuments Act apply)
2. properties selected for declaration as NCMs
3. properties with historical value
4. properties which respect the historical values of the territory
5. properties that do not respect the historical values of the territory
6. monuments that are registered in certain lists (they are registered at local governments and municipalities) and they are to a certain extent under monument protection, but they do not fall under the monument law.
7. other non-heritage buildings located within a monument area
8. national cultural monuments which are to be abolished the possibility of monument care.³⁴

There are methodological guidelines created for the preparation of research (for example, Guidelines of the Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic for processing documentation of monumental architectural–historical research). In the case of architectural objects, which are covered by special sections of the Monuments Act, there is still no differentiated system of

³³ RUHIGOVÁ E. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., p. 40.

³⁴ PAGÁČOVÁ P. Aspects of sustainability..., pp. 21-23.

protection, there is only one category – national cultural monument (NCM).

At the national level, monument care is also defined by the Declaration of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (approved February 28, 2001) and Act of the Slovak Republic No. 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund, which was supplemented by Act 208/2009 Coll.³⁵

Regional level

In the event that within the region (or municipality) there is a request for the protection of a building that does not have enough historical value to classify as an NCM, it is possible to initiate such an object of the relevant municipality to be included in the monument category. This category is also included in the Principles for the Protection of Monumental Areas, through which its protection can also be controlled by state authorities.³⁶

A possible proposal for the categorisation of objects built before 1947

Any attempt to define groups of buildings in which new interventions would be possible under certain conditions would need to focus on the possibilities for different degrees protection when it comes to new interventions. In Slovakia, however, until now, for the reasons mentioned above, a differentiated system of protection has not been developed at the architectural level.

If, in the future, there is a need to differentiate buildings, it would be appropriate to start with categorising them, in line with the Principles of Monument Care, according to the following assumptions:

1. NCMs and real estate selected as NCMs are of the highest value and it is necessary to preserve their authenticity both inside and externally.
2. The exterior of properties which represent the historical values of a territory have a high historical value. Authenticity must be preserved externally, but the historical value of the interior may be lower, opening up the possibility of partial modifications.
3. There are two types of buildings in this category: 1) buildings with historical value (but not at all under historical protection); 2) monuments that are registered in specific lists (by local governments and municipalities) and are, to a certain extent, under monument protection, but do not fall under the monument law. These buildings may be partially modified but it depends on the type of building.
4. Properties that do not represent the historical values of the territory or for which is proposed to cancel monument care. The reason for cancelling monument care is often that its value as an original construction has already been disrupted or destroyed. New interventions in such buildings have no limit, but they can be adjusted. In the case of a protected area, it would be appropriate to require that any new interventions do not have a negative impact on its surroundings.

³⁵ Act of the NR SR no. 49/2002 Coll. Act on the Protection of the Monumental Fund as amended by Act No. 479/2005 Coll.

³⁶ RUHIGOVÁ E. Contribution to the solution of non-invasive interventions ..., p. 186.

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