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# STUDIA ECOLOGIAE ET BIOETHICAE



21/4 (2023)

## The Influence of Military Logistics to the Environment of Military Areas: Social, Legal, and Ethical Aspects. Case Study from the Czech Republic

Wpływ logistyki wojskowej na środowisko obszarów wojskowych: Aspekty społeczne, prawne i etyczne. Studium przypadku Republiki Czeskiej

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Received: 02 Aug 2023; Revised: 06 Sep, 2023; Accepted: 12 Sep, 2023

**Abstract:** This article deals with the influence of military logistics on the environment in the districts of the Czech Republic. There were ten military districts on the territory of the Czech Republic, i.e., areas that served exclusively the needs of the defense of the state. Currently, six of them are abolished. Other military districts, on the other hand, are still active – these are the areas of *Boletice*, *Březina*, *Hradiště* and *Libavá*. Using the example of *Boletice*, this article shows the positive and negative effects on the environment and also considers some social and ethical questions from the perspective of the social aspect of ethics, in relation to social needs and environmentalism. In its discussion, this thesis also reflects on the need for social dialogue and environmental education of the population. Similar conditions as in *Boletice*, with preserved biodiversity and environment, also have other active districts. As a result, a number of protected areas and localities could be created within them. This work shows that, as a result of the past steps of the Czech policy, the districts are islands of biodiversity, and the negative effects of the training activities did not affect them to a greater extent, and that the civil workers of the districts and the residents who are adjacent to them, thanks to environmental education, have voluntarily adopted an ethical and social consensus and accepted some of the limitations that life in this place brings.

**Keywords:** military logistics, biodiversity, environment, environmental education, environmental ethics

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł podejmuje temat wpływu logistyki wojskowej na środowisko w Republice Czeskiej. Na terytorium Republiki Czeskiej istniało dziesięć okręgów wojskowych, czyli obszarów, które służyły wyłącznie potrzebom obronności państwa. Sześć z nich zostało zlikwidowanych, natomiast pozostałe okręgi wojskowe, czyli *Boletice*, *Březina*, *Hradiště* i *Libavá* są obecnie nadal aktywne. W artykule przedstawiono pozytywne i negatywne dla środowiska skutki działalności wojskowej prowadzonej na tych obszarach, na przykładzie *Boletic*, oraz omówiono wybrane kwestie społeczne i etyczne z perspektywy społecznego aspektu etyki, w odniesieniu do potrzeb społecznych i ekologii. Artykuł wskazuje również na potrzebę podjęcia dialogu społecznego oraz wprowadzenia edukacji ekologicznej społeczeństwa. Na terenie pozostałych okręgów wojskowych istnieją podobne warunki jak w *Boleticach*, charakteryzujące się różnorodnością biologiczną i dobrze zachowanym środowiskiem naturalnym, dzięki czemu w ich obrębie można by utworzyć szereg obszarów i miejscowości chronionych. Niniejszy artykuł pokazuje, że w wyniku dotychczasowej polityki Czech wobec omawianych okręgów, stały się one miejscami o wysokiej różnorodności biologicznej, nie dotkniętymi w większym stopniu negatywnymi skutkami szkoleniowych działań wojskowych, a także że pracownicy cywilni tych okręgów i sąsiadujący z nimi mieszkańcy, dzięki

edukacji ekologicznej, dobrowolnie przyjęli konsensus etyczny i społeczny oraz zaakceptowali część ograniczeń, jakie nie się ze sobą życie w tym miejscu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** logistyka wojskowa, różnorodność biologiczna, środowisko przyrodnicze, edukacja ekologiczna, etyka ekologiczna

## Introduction

There were ten military districts on the territory of the Czech Republic, i.e., areas that served exclusively the needs of the defense of the state. Currently, six of them are abolished (Brdy, Dobrávoda near Hartmanice, Mladá with training area Milovice, Panenská near Ústínad Labem, Prameny near Sokolov and Ralsko). Other military districts, on the other hand, are still active – these are the areas of Boletice, Březina, Hradiště and Libavá (Ženka et al. 2021).

Military districts are established by law. These are areas that are separate territorial units not included in municipalities but included in regions. A military district is a defined part of the state's territory intended for ensuring the defense of the state and training the armed forces. The Újezd forms a territorial administrative unit. State administration on the territory of the county is carried out by the county office within the scope of tasks stipulated by Act No. 222/1999 Coll., on ensuring the defense of the Czech Republic, as amended (Vrabec 2013).

Although similar activity is carried out in the area of the military districts as outside them, i.e., environmental protection laws apply here, the legislation is carried out by their own administration, and to a large extent the districts differ from other areas. The main purpose here is training focused on the defense of the state, which can have a greater impact on the environment and its protection. It is precisely the impact of logistics activities in the military area on the environment that is the subject of interest of this article, including from a socio-ethical point of view, which is one of the basic directions of ethics (Kantar 2022).

## 1. Methodology and original assumptions

This chapter contains 3 subchapters and it introduces the research methodology used and deals with the legislative framework of military districts (training centers) within the defense legislation of the Czech Republic, their organization and history.

### 1.1. Methodology

The study of relevant legal regulations, which is relatively fragmented and codified in several legal acts, used as a research method in this work, in order to compile and introduce the legislative framework – which is one of the basic research methods in the field of socio-legal sciences (Pennisi 2022). Furthermore, research, comparison and selection of professional monographs and a systematic review of professional scientific articles were published in the representative databases Web of Science, Web of Knowledge, Scopus and Open Access on the researched topic (Franco et al. 2020). Another method used was local research and personal interviews as well as relevant information and data collection (Vogl 2023). It should be stated that the thesis deals with the thematic research of the state of the environment (biotopes) in the military districts of the Czech Republic and not all the information published by us is normally published in a standard way, even if it is not protected, before publication. Contacts with local self-government bodies and military management of military districts were used to collect data. In addition to ascertaining the facts and collecting information directly in the field, the authors compiled a short questionnaire, the same for the military leadership of all the investigated military districts.

## 1.2. Defence of the state and military settlements - legal framework

State defense, as stipulated by Act No. 222/1999 Coll. *on ensuring the defense of the Czech Republic*, as amended, is a summary of measures developed to ensure sovereignty, territorial integrity, principles of democracy and the rule of law, protection of the lives of residents and their property from external attack. State defense includes construction of an effective state defense system, preparation and use of adequate forces and means, and participation in a collective defense system (Filip 2001). Section 30 of this Act states: "Military district is a defined part of the state's territory intended for ensuring the defense of the state and for the training of the armed forces. Each military settlement forms a territorial administrative unit. The method of registering real estate on the territory of the district and marking the boundaries of the district is determined by a special legal regulation. The county and county authorities are established, changed and abolished by a special law." § 31 of the same law reads as follows: "Property on the territory of the county, with the exception of imported property, may only be owned by the state. For reasons of public interest and economic use of the territory of the county, the ministry will decide, after discussion with the relevant ministries and other central administrative authorities, which legal entities will be established to conduct business activities in the territory of the county." The authors conducted a thorough research of professional legislation, which, due to the different degrees of legal force of individual legal acts, is codified in several legal collections, decrees and regulations. This method of research is also called static research, and the authors must conduct research, study, comparison and selection of relevant legal acts.

### 1.3. History and present of military districts

On the territory of the Czech Republic, there were ten military districts established

(and gradually abolished) since the 1950s. Currently, six of them abolished (Brdy, Dobrávoda near Hartmanice, Mladá with training area Milovice, Panenská near Ústínad Labem, Prameny near Sokolov and Ralsko). Other military districts, on the other hand, are still active – these are the areas of Boletice, Březina, Hradiště and Libavá (Václavíková 2017). Each of them serves a different, specific purpose and a different type of troops. However, they are all characterized by the same legal regime similar operating and management conditions, and environmental conditions (Vondra 2012).

## 2. Boletice military regions a local case study

Boletice Military District is located in the South Bohemian Region in the Český Krumlov district, where it occupies an area of 21,949 hectares. The northwestern edge of Újezd forms the border between the districts of Český Krumlov and Prachatice. The eastern edge of the county is only 5 kilometers from the main center of the region – Český Krumlov. Training facilities are located at 700-1000 meters above sea level, the highest peak in the area is Lysá – 1228 meters above sea level. The county office of the military county is located directly on its territory in the Boletice settlement unit. The military district itself is divided into eight cadastral territories: Arnoštov, Boletice, Jablonec, Maňávka, Ondřejov, Polná, Třebovice and Uhlíkov. The population is concentrated only in the settlements of Boletice, Polná a Šumava, Třebovice, Květusín and in the isolated areas of Otice and Křišťanov. According to statistical data, as of December 31, 2005, only 269 inhabitants lived in the military district. The population density is therefore 1.2 to 1.3 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. The very sparse settlement structure is quite unique within the wider region and the entire republic, but it suits the function of a military district (Pajer 2012). The uniqueness of the military district is the typical mountainous and wooded

terrain, a very good level of built logistics facilities for training troops and a newly built paratrooper and air force training base. The deployment of training facilities in the Boletice Military District enables the training of multiple units at the same time on all shooting ranges, which increases the capacity and effectiveness of unit training. Suitable terrain conditions enable high-quality training of units sent to foreign missions and special units (Pajer 2012).

Areas maintained by military equipment are primarily training grounds and impact areas. Deforestation is mainly maintained by military activities and tree cutting. Therefore, scattered groups of trees and shrubs or solitary trees grow here. Although these places seem inhospitable, they have become home to rare and protected species of organisms. Originally, almost the entire territory of Boletic was forested. A significant part of non-forest areas was maintained and further shaped thanks to military activity. Most of the wet meadows have been lying fallow for a long time. The Boletice Bird Area was declared for 5 species. Among them, the woodlark (*Lullula Arborea*) and especially the field warbler (*Crex Crex*) prefer non-forest environments. Some species of plants are also bound to forestlessness, e.g. (*Gentianella Bohemica*), which is protected as part of the proposed Polná locality of European importance (Řehouňková and Zámečník 2006) and (Dolista 2004b).

The forest areas of the Boletice military district have been maintained by planned management for centuries. A significant part of the territory belonged to the Schwarzenberg estate (Matuška 2013). The establishment of the Boletice Military District at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s was a defining moment for further development of local nature. At that time, most of the settlements disappeared and the forest began to return even to a number of places that had previously served agricultural purposes. All land is owned by the state today. Forest management here is handled by the Military Forests and Estates of the Czech Republic,

s.p. – Horní Planá division. Of course, the unique Boletic nature is not missing from the list of places protected by the Natura 2000 system (Boćkowskiet al. 2022).

By government decree, both a European significant locality (EVI) and a bird area were created here. Roughly two-thirds of the forest stands are located on the territory of the Šumava Protected Landscape Area. The forests of the Boletice Military District are quite diverse. Natural factors contribute to their variability (influence of habitat conditions), but human influence is also significant. Some stands are very well-preserved and have a natural species composition, in places they have even acquired a forest-like character in recent decades. In the past, however, man intervened in most stands by deliberately disrupting the species composition of woody plants, especially in favor of conifers. Depending on the degree of impact, some cultural stands may still be very valuable, but others have lost most of their ecological potential. Then there are clearings, including calamitous and areas of spontaneous invasions of pioneer trees (Řehouňková and Vydrová 2007).

According to local research, the forests of other counties also have a similar character and management, therefore, based on a local case study, these facts can also be applied to other counties, in accordance with the general logical-deductive method (Hunter 2002).

#### Protected territories of the military district (MD)

The training facilities at MD Boletice are *Třebovice* – Joint Shooting Range, *Jablonec* – Special Training Shooting Range, *Podvoří* – Combat Vehicle Shooting Range, *Otice* – Infantry Shooting Range, *Ondřejov* – Training Ground, *Kovařovice* and *Dolany* – Driving Training Grounds, *Loutka* – Water Training Ground, *Pražáčka* – Engineering Training Ground. Accommodation for training troops is also available: in the *Podvoří* locality, there are 2 buildings with a capacity of 166 people, a reconstructed Barracks (with a capacity of 78 people), and Log



Cabins with a capacity of 480 people (Pajer 2012).

Even so, there are:

- Boletice, an important European location (20,348 ha)
- Polná (0.6404 ha) location of European significance
- Boletice Bird Area (23,565.22 ha)
- Šumava protected landscape area (1/2 of the military district)

Boletice and the state of their environment within our military districts is definitely not an exception, but it is a representative example of a characteristic sample that quite significantly illustrates the majority situation, as we can see in the following overview of protected places in other districts:

Hradiště military district:

- Specially protected territory of the Rock of Goblins national natural monument (8.5 ha)
- Specially protected area of the natural monument Cylinder (576 ha)
- Doupov mountains bird area (63116.72 ha)
- Hradiště (33,159.06 ha) location of European significance

Březina military district

- The botanically significant site of Buchtelka

Libavá military district

- Specially protected area of the Smolenská Luka nature reserve (10 ha)
- Bird area Libavá (32,723.82 ha)
- Libavá locality of European importance (10,773.88 ha) (Pajer 2012).

And the already abolished district of Brdy

- Hrachoviště (62,83 ha) location of European significance
- Ohrazenickýpotok (1,6229 ha) location of European significance
- Felbabka (11,3754 ha) location of European significance
- Octárna (15,0656 ha) location of European significance
- Lednypotok (1,6149 ha) location of European significance
- Padrskýpotok (45,1287 ha) location of European significance

- Mešenskýpotok (1,0379 ha) location of European significance

### 3. Study of sources, damages, and state of nature in Czech military districts

This chapter contains 3 sub-chapters that examine the origins, damage, and current state of the environment in contemporary Czech military districts.

#### 3.1. Optimization of the Army of the Czech Republic and the search for savings

The intention to effectively optimize the number and area of military settlements by 2015 was already presented by the Ministry of Defense in April 2011. On January 4, 2012, the government of the Czech Republic approved the procedure for this optimization. Areas and other immovable property required for carrying out and securing the training of the armed forces are under the management of the state organizational component of the Ministry of Defense pursuant to Act No. 219/2000 Coll., On the Property of the Czech Republic and its Appearance in Legal Relations, as amended, and are administered by the relevant Military Accommodation and Building Administration (VUSS).

Other areas serve mainly as protection and safety zones during training (especially shooting) and are under the management of the Military Forests and Estates of the Czech Republic (Šágová 2010). For the training of the armed forces, military training areas (VVP) and training facilities (VZ) are established on the territory of military districts. VVP and VZ consist of sets of shooting ranges, training grounds, tracks for tracked vehicles, accommodation facilities for training troops, a network of roads, and other military facilities, including water areas and land intended for the training of armed forces (Vondra 2012).

The main reason for the optimization is the reduction of the number of ACR soldiers (in 1993, the ACR had 115,000 soldiers on active duty, currently, as of September 20, 2022, the ACR only has 28,000 soldiers and

4,000 active reserve members). Considering the current and future needs of training troops, as well as the frequency of training and the number of units, it was necessary to reassess the existing number and scope of military camps and other training facilities (Ženka et al. 2021). Due to the reduction of the resource framework, it is necessary to operate and modernize only the necessary number of military bases and training facilities necessary to ensure training. An equally important reason was the extreme size of these territories, which exceeded the usual framework of similar areas of NATO countries. In the surrounding states, military districts account for around 0.5% of the state's area, while in our country it was 1.7%.

On the basis of a comprehensive assessment of the training issues of the AČR and the provision of joint training with NATO units, it was possible to single out residential formations and peripheral parts of the settlements, which were used sporadically for training, without limiting training in all settlements. With this measure, it was possible to solve almost all the fundamental problems associated with the existence of military districts. The implementation of the mentioned proposal resulted in the release of approx. 42,000 ha of the total area of 129,664 ha of military districts (Vondra 2012).

The conditions of the military districts of Boletice, Hradiště, and Libavá are fully suitable for the training of ACR units in all types of preparations, including joint exercises with the participation of all types of troops and for joint alliance exercises. Brdy Military District was primarily intended for artillery training, due to the size of the training areas, it did not allow for full-scale training of mechanized units. Due to the specific purpose of the Březina Military District (ensuring the training of basic and advanced training for professionals), it was necessary to preserve this district.

After evaluating the purpose and possibilities of individual military districts, especially

in terms of troop training and built infrastructure, their equipment, and also after evaluating the transfer of the nearest units to other military districts, it appeared to be the most appropriate to release the Military District of Brdy. By adjusting the borders and reducing the size of the military districts of Boletice, Březina, Hradiště, and Libavá, while preserving the current possibilities for training troops, the basic shortcomings of the districts were solved, among which was the disproportion of the real needs of the Czech Army in relation to the area of these territories, the effects of the economic crisis on the public budgets of the Czech Republic and, last but not least, the non-standard situation restricting the civil rights of the residents of the military districts (Vondra 2012).

### 3.2. Damage caused by military logistics

It is understandable that the very existence and activity of the counties have an influence on the environment in the territory of the counties. This is primarily a limitation of agricultural activity. However, it turned out to be positive over time. The operation of training grounds and logistics as such brings a negative influence. The first effect of land transport when clearing vegetation or its temporary removal with heavy equipment is soil, water and wind erosion.

Other risks can be pollution of surface and subsurface waters by dangerous or toxic substances, or temporary air pollution. According to Koželuh (2007), "episodic drives of combat equipment into continuous forest areas and driving through the forest outside the corridors of training routes caused" by "indiscipline of individuals in training troops" are also easily detectable (among other things on aerial photographs). Nevertheless, the current state of the environment in the counties is more than satisfactory. Due to the announcement of the Újezd and later the above-mentioned optimization, but also the previous reduction of the number of soldiers and the change of the direction of the Czech military from

Všelidový to professional nature, the nature of the Újezi could not only preserve, but also often develop into the extent that today we find extinct flora and fauna. Today there are considerable amounts of Újezd.

In addition, the very disturbance of the terrain explosions of ammunition provided favorable conditions for the occurrence and prosperity of endemic and protected species of flora and fauna, because the rugged terrain provides natural protection and the depressions also serve as natural reservoirs of water. As a result of the past steps undertaken within Czech economy, the Újezds are islands of biodiversity, and the negative effects of training activities have not had a major impact on them. Paradoxically, a situation arises where the positive development of the environment of the districts is on the one hand due to the inaccessibility of the military area and on the other hand the absence of logistics itself.

### 3.3. State of nature of military districts

The occurrence and number of categories of protected areas on the territory of military districts are very interesting, e.g., in the former military district of Ralsko, where the “mammoth” nature reserve “the Dokeska Region and the Kummer Mountains” and other specially protected areas were established. Of course, after 1989 the area was released for naturalistic conservation research, and many proposals for reserves and monuments, including a site of European significance and a bird area, sprang up. Proposed European significant localities and already announced large-scale bird areas such as the Doupovské Mountains (Hradiště), Českolipsko-Dokesképískovce and wetlands (Jestřebko-Dokesko) or Libavá and Boletice as part of the EC Natura 2000 system of protected areas essentially blend with areas historically used by the military (Černíková 2011).

The state of the landscape and nature in the military districts and some other territories designated for the defense of the state proves that the coexistence of military use

and nature protection is a real possibility. Here, one can agree with Pelc (2007) that this fact should be reflected in closer cooperation between the organizations of the Ministry of National Defense and the Environment and, in the future, in greater clarity of competencies. There is no room for winning and losing here, but for ensuring cooperative management of the territory, where the function of state defense and the function of protecting the natural environment can complement each other synergistically (Pelc 2007).

## 4. Discussion

The previous chapters introduced the legal framework of the issue, shed light on the development with a short historical overview, and through the conducted research, together with the literary research activity, described the current state of nature (biotopes) in the military districts of the Czech Republic. However, in addition to social, security and economic aspects, ethical aspects must also be taken into account. Here it is necessary to understand ethics, as a philosophical discipline, in the sense of W. Bruggen's definition, namely as a philosophy of morality. As a philosophical explanation and justification of a moral phenomenon (Bruggen 1994). Given that we will assess the relationships between “I and You” (Buber 1996), “I and They” and the relationship between man and the environment (“We and the environment”), the pro-social role of ethics will be relevant for these considerations, among other things. Every person realizes himself in social relations. Jarmara emphasizes the role of man as a social creature who must be interested in the community in which he not only lives but which he is also a full-fledged part of. It is based on contemporary modern political trends in the concept of society as a civil society, which is managed not only by elected representatives but also by civic associations and pressure groups (Jarmara 2004).

In our case, personal civil rights collide, such as the right to free movement and



the needs of society with the delineation of the space needed for the training and logistics of the army, where the free movement of citizens is logically limited and, in some places, even prohibited. That is, it is allowed only for a specified purpose and with a special permit. This social need and the function of the army – the defense element of the state – must be perceived as a public good. In the ethical context, two basic ethical principles to which high values are traditionally attributed collide here – civil liberty, represented in this case by the right to free movement and residence, and social need – a public good that locally limits the right to free movement. In our European area, with its democratic and liberal concept of civil liberties, this issue is quite sensitive. The collective and personal experience of the civil society of the contemporary Czech Republic, gained during the 41 years of the socialist (communist) regime, also has its share in this (Hulická and Hulická 1971).

At this time, basic human rights as we understand and know them today were largely curtailed in favor of a centrally controlled socialist society where ideology was elevated to a fundamental social principle (McGregor 1991). Aristotle, the sophist and classical Greek philosopher who is considered the founder of ethics, already works with both ethical levels – individual and social. On an individual level, he considers the fulfillment of human existence to be the development of man's rational dianoetic powers. On the social level, life is for the good of the whole community (Aristotle 2012).

In the context of the above, it can be stated that in a democratic society, we are looking for a consensus between individual rights and personal ethics and the needs of society (public good) and public ethics (Dolista 2004a). Here it is necessary to realize that, just as in public law, the rights of an individual can only be limited to the minimum possible extent and that under clearly defined rules. It is necessary to realize that ethics

must not be determined by the state or social customs – the moral habits of the majority. “Ethics is not derived from the state: ethical authority is not derived from the power of the state to lay down the law and enforce its observance. Ethics precedes the state, it is the only source and the last judge of its legitimacy” (Bauman 2004).

Citizens who stay in military districts and work as civil workers or live near them have accepted the above-specified consensus completely voluntarily. They accepted some restrictions and at the same time gained the added value of peace, social security and a clean environment – which can be characterized as non-production (also non-market) functions of the forest (Prknová 2007).

It must also be stated that this consensus would not have been possible without the pro-active approach of state administration bodies and local self-government, in the form of environmental awareness and education of the population (Vieira 2022). This form of enlightenment basically has two aspects. The first is communication between state administration bodies and local self-government with citizens, in both directions. It aims to inform the public so that citizens and civic associations are part of the community of these areas and the authorities receive back suggestions and feedback, which is a way for citizens to participate in the management of public affairs. The second aspect is the direct environmental education of the population, which is one of the important tools of environmental protection. Information and environmental education can then act synergistically and contribute to a high-quality way of life and work in military districts, or in their surroundings, and help to maintain biodiversity and the environment in the context of sustainable development.

## Conclusion

The territory of the current Boletice Military District developed quite similarly to its current surrounding territory until the political decisions that were made in connection with

the Second World War. Their consequence was essentially the removal of man from the territory, which enabled the development of natural landscape, essentially without any cultivation activities undertaken by man. The current nature of the territory is considered to be preserved in the state of the 1950s.

The territory is closed and in recent years there have been processes of its opening to the surrounding territory. The consequence of such development is the minimization of resources available to the territory for its revitalization, with the exception of natural resources. The social capital of the population here is very low and the cultural and economic capitals related to it are negligible. It means that the people living in the territory cannot be the actors of its eventual revitalization in the sociological sense, but external support is needed. According to Novotná and Matějková (2010), this is primarily represented by members of the Army of the Czech Republic who operate in the territory, and for these purposes, the released capital can help the territory.

Similar conditions with preserved biodiversity and the environment are also found in other, both abolished and active districts. As a result, a number of protected areas and localities could be created within them. As a result of the past steps of the Czech economy, the Újezds are islands of biodiversity, and the negative effects of training activities have not had a major impact on them. Paradoxically, a situation arises where the positive development of the environment of the districts is due, on the one hand, to the inaccessibility of the military area and, on the other hand, to the absence of logistics itself. It can also be stated that citizens who work in military districts and live in their immediate vicinity have voluntarily adopted an ethical-social consensus and accepted some of the limitations that life in this place brings. This also requires high-quality communication between state administration bodies and local self-government and environmental education of the population.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, J.L., L.R., A.H.C.; Research, J.L., L.R.; Methodology, J.L., L.R.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, J.L., L.R., A.H.C.; Writing – Review & Editing, J.L., L.R., A.H.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Acknowledgment:** This work was created with the institutional support of the Institute for Humanities in Medicine, 1<sup>st</sup> Faculty of Medicine, Charles University Prague.

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