

## **CENTRAL TRAIN STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND THEIR STRATEGIC POTENTIAL, REFLECTED IN STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS. CASE STUDY OF PRAGUE.**

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### **1. Introduction**

In my previous work I have explored the specific nature of central train station area development projects as projects of strategic potential (Čechová, 2014). Based on the findings, this paper first gives a brief overview of what a strategic urban project is, what its specifics when realized on a centrally located railway brownfield are and what kind of strategic potential these projects have. The following section presents these findings in the context of urban development of Prague in the past twenty five years with focus on three specific sites within Prague. The core part of this paper looks into the strategic documents, issued by the government of Prague, and explores how the documents reflect the previously identified levels of strategic potential of central train station area development projects in Prague. Its aim is to identify the attitude of the city representation towards the active policy of strategic urban projects and outline the chances that the strategic potential of these projects will actually be fulfilled. The methodological approach taken in this study is a mixed methodology based on existing literature research and qualitative content analysis of the strategic documents. This paper constitutes part of my dissertation thesis, which is dedicated to potential of central train station development projects.

### **2. Strategic urban project – theoretical framework**

There is an important recent phenomenon creating a base for the transformation of cities throughout urban Europe: The emerging autonomy of urban regions on the central state power. (Salet and Gualini, 2004). Within newly established global economic networks, it has been cities rather than states looking for new strategies to increase their competitiveness, most recently through smart, more sustainable and inclusive economy, as promoted by the EU (European Commission, 2012).

Strategic urban projects, or large-scale urban projects, are increasingly regarded as vehicle of urban transformation in metropolitan regions across Europe. There is apparent shift from master-planning to strategic planning, realized through (among other tools of operation) strategic urban projects (Carmona, 2008). According to Salet and Gualini (2007), large urban projects are strategic in their nature, because beside the impact of their own mass there is also an impact on symbolic level, since the projects also manifest "...the commitment of a local society to invest deliberately in a certain direction for the future" (2007, p.4). The authors succeed in framing the „strategic“ dimension of the projects, claiming that the “strategic devices (...) attempt to settle or stimulate certain joint courses in individual actions. (...) The strategic dimension lies in the transcendence of individual horizons in scope and time – i.e. in exceeding the reach of single actors, single-purpose behaviours,...“ (2007, p.3).

Numerous studies have attempted to often critically explain increasing expectations of strategic urban projects on the background of principles of neoliberal capitalism (Carmona, 2008, Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002, and Fainstein 2009). The essential difference from both the welfare-state in western Europe as well as socialist-state driven projects in the countries of central and eastern Europe is the new role of fundamental actors involved: local governments, producers, the knowledge-industry and community (Carmona, 2008) Especially high demands lie on local governments and their institutional framework, expected to foster collaboration between stakeholders rather than to hold a central control over the whole process. This paper explores this particular niche when focusing on the perspective of local governments through the research of strategic documents they issue.

### **3. Central train station area development projects**

#### **3.1. *Theoretical background***

As I argued in my previous research (Čechová, 2014), Central Train Station Area Development Project is a special kind of strategic urban project, defined by three distinct features:

- the location of the development site within the urban core of an European metropolis
- current and usually well-established node of public transportation
- railway station building as a unique typology

This classification is based on the work of Peters and Novy (2012), describing strategic integrated mega-projects of train station area development projects as “...projects that combine the (re)development of station facilities with significant urban development and transportation infrastructure investments, most notably national-level investments in new high-speed rail nodes and networks. They are strategic in nature in that they typically form part of wider planning initiatives at different policy levels and aim at triggering multidimensional changes far beyond the geographic confines of the projects themselves“ (2012, p.17).

Another important perspective offered Bertolini and Spit (1998) through the concept of “node and place,” combining the transport development perspective and the perspective of property development. According to their research, any significant transport node in the city should ideally be a significant place as well, and they demonstrate this principle on several case studies.

These two studies remain up-to-date the only comprehensive and systematic researches, dealing with specifics of train station area development projects and with their strategic dimension. Their scope is limited to selection of highly visible projects in the west European metropolises, which are generally well covered by partial case study researches (Wolff, 2012, Edwards, 2010). However, very little is known about the development of train station area development projects in central and eastern Europe.

#### **3.2. *Central train station area development projects, their strategic potential and key actors***

The strategic dimension, as defined by Salet and Gualini (2007) and indirectly, without calling it so, confirmed by Peters and Novy (2012) and Bertolini and Spit (1998), consists in the „transcendence of individual horizon in scope and time“ (Salet Gualini, 2007). Based on this finding, in the farther work

I refer to strategic potential as to unrealized ability that goes beyond horizon of single action and that is inherent in central train station area development project due to size, number, scale, cumulation, concentration and intensity of single aspects of the project. The inevitable interactions of single aspects might be in vain when unrecognised, or they might be faced actively: through the support of the beneficial mutual effects the synergies might evolve and the potential conflicts might be prevented.

Building-up the site of central train station area does not only mean there are more offices, residences and facilities close to the infrastructural node, it also means the urban pattern on the regional level is shifting, the society is sending a signal about its values and commitments, it also means new participatory partnerships are being established and the local environment is being enriched with new layers. On the other hand, the same under-pressure cumulation of effects causes massive gentrification and social division, conflicts of scale of the new and old constructions or poses a threat to public as well as private budgets.

In next section I identify crucial strategic potentials, coming out of the specifics of central train station area development projects and general features of strategic urban projects. The identification is based on case study research, conducted at the Faculty of Architecture, CTU (Fialová and Čechová, 2015). Farther on, the key players with capacity to recognize and fulfil the strategic potential on single levels are identified.

### 3.2.1. Strategic potential realized on the symbolical level

I identify three general ways, in which society manifests the will to invest in certain directions for the future:

- through the functions important on the city-scale such as objects for representation, culture or sports
- through architectural design which serves as a vehicle of place-marketing and image delivery, yet the image it delivers can still be quite diverse: from iconic cultural objects to super-modern corporate international architecture, symbolizing the connection to the global network of business, and hence competitiveness
- another way for example through conveying the image of sensitive reuse of the railway past and historical heritage or through sustainable development

The strategy of place-marketing is embraced by both, the public as well as private sector, yet each of them in a specific way. Typically, the public sector's action would rather target the objects of important functions with additional symbolism of iconic design, or an alternative way of representing the general values, while private sector would use a strategy of capitalization on an unique architectural design.

### 3.2.2. Strategic potential realized on the transport-functional level

On the transit-related level, there are two general ways to realize the strategic potential:

- through an efficient multi-modal node of transportation with convenient transfer between single modes and incorporation of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The node would combine infrastructure of global reach, typically connected with airport or other metropolises via high-speed rail, and with local flexibility
- through transferium constituting enormously commercially attractive location, incorporating besides the transit also additional functions, travel-related as well as unexpected ones (Klokočka, 2013).

In continental Europe, the construction and mostly also operation of various modes of public transportation is the responsibility of various institutions of public sector. On the other hand, the

reconstruction of the railway station with its constant flow of passengers is commercially attractive for private investors.

### 3.2.3. Strategic potential realized on the spatial-functional level

On the spatial-related level, there are two general ways to realize the strategic potential:

- through active policy of urban development  
giving chance to the city centre to regain a leading role within the urban region, chance to counter the sprawling residential areas or development of edge cities
- through realization of good quality environment  
according to the principles of good urban design, regarding scale, capacities, landmarks, spatial integration and materials, and contributing to the genius loci; enter the existing rich environment with a layer of contemporary architecture while creating a dialogue of past and present

The only types of real-estate development, generating significant profit, are large-footprint offices, shopping malls, high-end hotels and housing. Any development aiming at going beyond that calls for establishment of a direct partnership of private and public actors, or setting up clear development conditions. The development of partnerships as well as regulation establishment lays mainly in the hands of local government: the regulations concerning capacity, functions and spatial design, given by the local plan, but also housing policy and real-estate policy based on demographic predictions.

### 3.2.4. Strategic potential realized on the level of partnerships

- institutional partnerships and establishment of efficient platforms for collaboration of stakeholders  
ability to create functional partnerships and learn through the process of making the development project happen increases the institutional capacity and in a long-term period contributes to city's competitiveness; partnerships of public and private sector combine the advantages of stability of the former and flexibility of the latter and helps to finance innovative solutions
- participation of community and establishment of mutual trust  
apart from being a keystone of successful project, public involvement in decision-making process helps to build a mutual trust between community and public representation and as such builds the capacity to deliver complex projects in the future

### 3.2.5. Strategic potential realized through the prevention of conflicting situations

The most obvious dichotomy lies in the immediate proximity and intense contact of global and local, of mobile and immobile, of existing and new. The same effect of synergy might become a conflicting situation for different actors or even for the same actors in different roles. The anticipation and prevention of potential conflicts is a domain of public sector.

- symbolic expression misrepresenting local society
- unattractive symbolical expression
- railway stations becoming more of a shopping mall, loosing the sense of public space
- increasing social gap – gentrification, missing facilities for local inhabitants, character of public space
- conflict of old and new environment – tabula rasa, conflict of scales
- financial impact on public sector

## **4. Post-socialist Prague and the socio-political conditions of strategic urban projects**

After 1989, the whole society was going through major political and economical transformation and at

the same time through the process of internationalization and globalization. Regarding the urban development, new institutions, rules and key players came into being. The processes of democratization and decentralization of the decision-making processes, dissolution of the state and its monopolistic corporations' control over the land and housing sector, privatization and restitution, emergence of market-oriented actors and establishment of the new role of municipal governments in the development took shape.

Parallel to that, post-socialist cities started to re-emerge on the international scene. After forty years of isolation from the western world there were foreign investors and developers, enterprises and their employees, students and tourists present in the everyday activities. Capitalising on the beauty of historical centre of Prague, tourism, congress industry and related business became soon one of the main economic activities and one of the most prominent signs of globalization taking place in the city. Rapid internationalization exposed the will of Prague to learn about urban development from the experience of cities abroad: foreign experts were engaged for the preparatory phase of strategic and planning documents, international conferences and design workshops were taking place.

New spatial patterns started to emerge as a result of rapid social, economic and political changes. According to Tosics (2005, p.64), the newly built shopping centres became one of the most visible signs of the market-oriented development of the post-socialist cities. Shopping centres were followed by office development in spatially limited zones – either in the very centre of the city or in the green-field areas in the so-called edge cities. The establishment of residential real-estate market took relatively long time, despite the great demand of early 1990s, and in general took form of suburban residential sprawl. The development of shopping malls, green-field offices and suburban residences considerably accelerated the city's reorientation towards individual transportation and raised the concerns about negative consequences of suburban sprawl.

In the first years of democracy, there was the highest pressure put on the historical city centre. After decades of socialism the historical centre of Prague was severely neglected, resembling ghettos, yet well preserved in its urban structure (Musil, 2005a). Its reconstruction went hand in hand with strong commercialization, reduction of residential function and increase of individual transportation. At the end of 1990s, the development in the city centre was virtually saturated, and the attention of developers has turned to traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century districts with their industrial and railway brownfields as well as to the edge cities. While green-field commercial and office development were relatively easier to develop, the central brownfields, including central train station area development sites, remain derelict with an exception of Anděl development in Smíchov.

During the socialist period, housing and construction policy was completely subordinated to a centralized, party-ruled, planned economic system. State interventions in housing and construction served as a tool to achieve political objectives, planning was attached to power and as such regarded as a source of regime legitimization. Post-socialist transformation brought about the need of new efficient and less direct planning tools, more of a framework-type regulations, limiting density or excluding specific effects. New planning system had to take into consideration the decreasing share of public finance and significantly increasing share of foreign direct investments, domestic entrepreneurs and private investors on the investments in the urban areas.

## **5. Central train station area development projects in Prague**

There are three central train station development areas in Prague, conforming to the distinct features defined in the previous sections: Masaryk Station, Smíchov Station and Holešovice-Bubny Station.

Each of them consists of a potentially important multi-modal transit hub with railway as a superior mode of transportation, and the transformation site of the size of tens of hectares, situated in the vicinity of the historic centre of Prague, within the buffer zone of the world heritage property. Due to the topography of Prague and railway's limitation concerning ascent and radius, these sites occupy rare plains within the Prague basin and they are surrounded by the traditional and increasingly popular mixed-use quarters (Figure 1).

For last ten to fifteen years, the developers have been seeking to abolish the building closure, an institutional mechanism restricting construction on the large development sites in Prague. Since two of them have recently succeeded and the third one is on the way, the process of development of these sites is open to transformation, which brings up the question: will their transformation reflect their strategic potential?

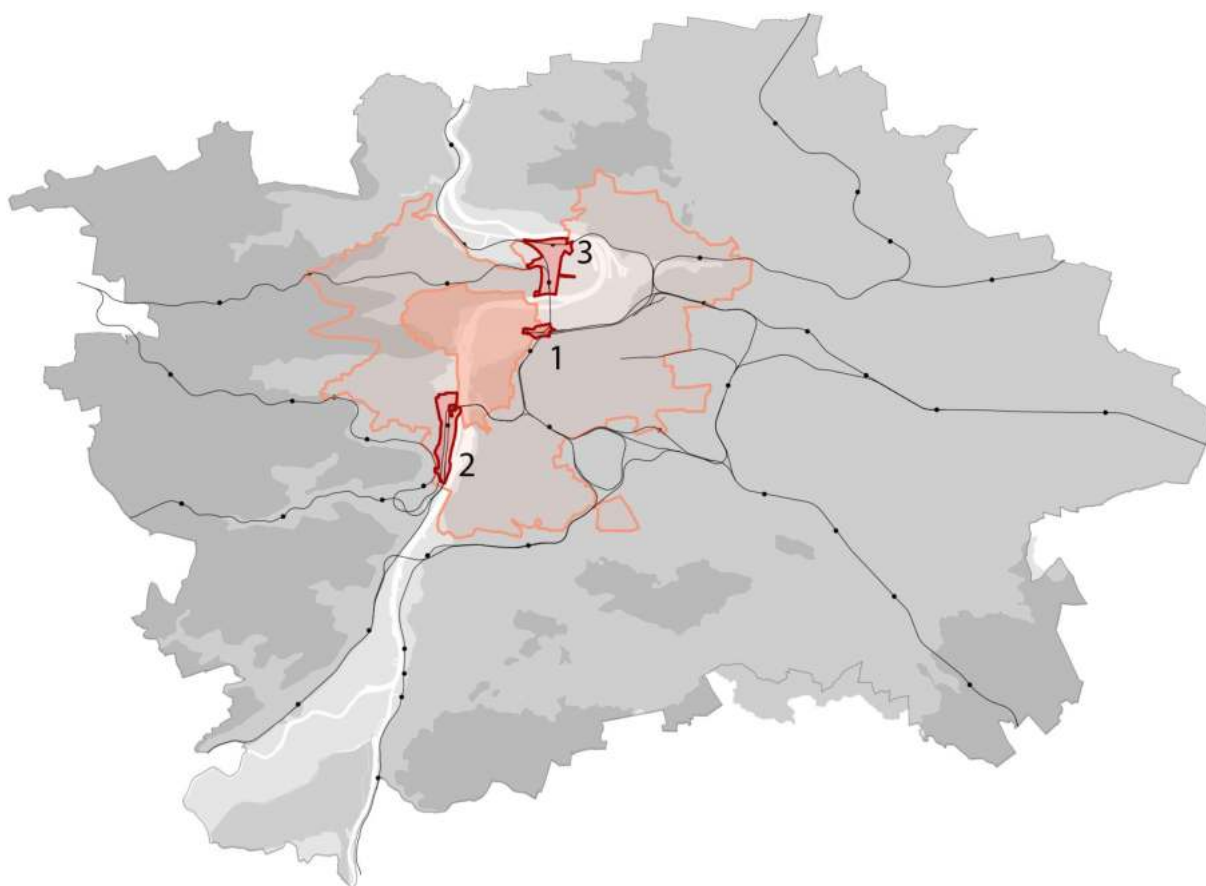


Figure 1: Central train station development areas in Prague – (1) Masaryk station, (2) Smíchov station and (3) Holešovice-Bubny station in relation to world heritage property zone of Prague, buffer zone of the historical city centre, railway network and overall topography. Source: Author

### 5.1. *Masaryk Station*

The first train station in Prague was opened in 1845 as a terminal for the railway connecting Prague with Vienna, the capital of the empire at the time. The terminal, nowadays called Masaryk Station, was built in a unique position: station building with platforms was within the city fortification, in the

immediate vicinity of important facilities such as post office and customs office, while the marshalling yard and facilities ground remained in the scarcely populated area outside the walls. Both parts were connected through six new gates constructed in the city walls. Soon there was another line constructed, connecting Masaryk station with North Bohemia and Dresden. This line crossed the Vltava river to Holešovice-Bubny on a 1 110 m long Negrelli's viaduct, a great achievement of engineering of mid-nineteenth century. The fortification was demolished thirty years later and the technical facilities of the railway operations were transferred over the river to Holešovice-Bubny, yet the three surrounding quarters – historical quarter “Nové město,” industrial-residential Karlín and residential Žižkov – have never been connected. By contrast, new barrier in the form of elevated highway crossing the twenty-hectares site from north to south in the trace of former fortification was constructed in 1970s.

There are two objects declared as state cultural heritage: The neo-renaissance building of the terminal, the only original one of the first generation of grand terminals in Prague, as well as the former railway workshop and locomotive shed are objects. While the station building serves its original purpose, the workshop and locomotive shed are intended to become the Railway museum of the National Technical Museum.

The location of the train station has certain limits and opportunities: It is situated right in the centre of the city, with major historical sights and various work opportunities within the walking distance. The station as such is a minor hub, but it is in the walking distance to the Main station Prague with the distant train connections and to Florenc, important metro lines crossing and bus terminal. The train station serves the regional transit, and it is currently considered to become a terminal for connections to Václav Havel Airport. Nevertheless, it's location only makes the transit suitable for two lines – northern and eastern – and impossible for the through transit, therefore in the long-term there is an option of transfer of railway operations from Masaryk station to a single railway node at the Main station Prague (Masaryk Station Development, undated).

The story of transformation started in 2004, when the association of Masaryk Station Development (MSD) was established in order to develop the land not necessarily needed for the railway operations. This association consists of Czech Railways (ČD), a public limited company, and Masaryk Station Investment (MSI), a joint-stock company of private investors, whose property shares have been changing since 2004. Since 2011 the majority owner of MSI as well as MSD is Penta investment group. The majority land-owner, ČD, is nevertheless legally bound to certain procedures, concerning the sale and development of the property.

In 2004, the building closure was declared on the Masaryk station, restricting construction on the site. The local plan change, allowing development, was finally approved in 2013, after several unsuccessful attempts based on various urban studies. The final study, as well as most of the previous ones, was worked out by the FNA studio. Due to the change of the local plan, the site does not have a status of large development area any more, and as such is developable in the parts dispensable for the railway operations. Due to unclear future of the railway transit and the character of urban study, a piecemeal development rather than an overall transformation is being realized. The transformation of the area already started with the construction of Florentinum, 50 000 sqm office complex completed in 2013, standing right opposite of the station and developed by the main investor of the property, the Penta investment group.

## **5.2. Smíchov Station**

In Smíchov, rapidly developing industrial quarter at the southern left bank edge of the city, the second

railway station in Prague was constructed in 1862, serving as a terminal for western railway connecting Prague with Pilsen and further with Bavaria. In 1870s the importance of the station increased when two freight railway companies built their premises nearby and the original railway line was extended to what is nowadays the Prague main railway station. Over the following century the station has remained important point of traffic, serving regional as well as long-distance trains to the south-west of Prague, neighbouring to important bus station for local and long-distance buses Na Knížecí. According to plans, the original line to Pilsen is about to become one of the future high-speed railways of Prague.

Due to attractive location in the vicinity of the Prague city centre and already dilapidating industrial grounds, Smíchov was one of the first locations subjected to the interest of international developers in the early 1990s. Several urban design projects were worked out for Smíchov, nevertheless, the focal point of following urban transformation was at the former Tatra Smíchov plant in Anděl, an area north of the Smíchov station. At the turn of millennium, the construction of commercial and entertainment centre Nový Smíchov and building of the iconic office building Zlatý Anděl (Golden Angel) designed by architect Jean Nouvel represented a strong statement about the urban development in Prague. The development only concentrated around Anděl, while the south part of Smíchov, adjacent to the train station, has remained neglected, even more so in the contrast to the booming urbanity of Anděl.

A public-private partnership company Smíchov Station Development, similar to that of Masaryk station and connecting Czech Railways and a Sekyra Group development company was established in 2005 in order to jointly develop the site. Nevertheless, the construction on the site was restricted since 2002, when the building closure was declared. As was the case of Masaryk station, several urban design studies followed, but non of them succeeded in getting approval. Finally the Smíchov City project, designed by A69 architects served as a basis for the change of local plan and hence for the cancellation of the building closure in the mid-2014.

The current transformation site of the size of 106 hectares has been divided into two parts: easily developable rectangular area on the north of the site, adjacent to Anděl, and the southern part, squeezed on a narrow strip between Vltava river and city highway, overwhelmed with traffic. Whereas the urban design of the northern part has been a subject of an invited architectural competition in late 2014, in the southern part it seems to be hard to imagine its potential beyond its traffic use. In recent past a construction of multi-modal transit shed of city-logistics was considered for the Smíchov station.

### **5.3. Holešovice – Bubny Station**

Holešovice, the almost perfect geographical centre of Prague, marked by the meander of Vltava river, was cut by three different railway lines in the past 150 years. Two historical lines connecting Prague Masaryk station with Kladno and northern cities (Ústí nad Labem, Dresden and Berlin) and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century relocation forming the Holešovice Station at the very north of Holešovice meander. They created a no-man's land, separating two 19<sup>th</sup> century districts: traditionally industrial yet rapidly gentrifying Holešovice and traditional high-end residential quarter of Letná.

The vast railway yards with numerous railway sidings served as a technical background of the Masaryk station and related industry of Holešovice, including the city-wide facilities such as slaughterhouse, power plant and port. For decades, the railway station of Holešovice-Bubny was important due to great amount of commuting workers, nevertheless in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century affected by massive industry decline its importance has diminished. However, its potential for the future has been revived through the reconstruction plans of Kladno railway line and its prospective extension to

Václav Havel Airport, the only major airport in Europe not connected with the city centre via rail transport (CEDOP, 2011). This transformation would give the whole 78 hectares large transformation site a new perspective: The now-divided quarters of Holešovice and Letná would get a new common centre with mutual connections and the size and position of the new quarter within the city would allow for significant city-wide functions, while the existing multi-modal nodes of Vltavská and Holešovice station would get a significant upgrade through new railway and tram lines. Holešovice-Bubny has a chance to become the most attractive development location in Prague due to the vicinity of the city centre and direct connection to international airport.

The land of the transformation site is currently divided among tens of property owners. The former majority owner, state organization Railway Infrastructure Administration (SZDC), sold about 25 ha of developable land to private company Orco Property Development group in 2006. The new owner has been fighting to overcome two major complications: the building closure declared in 2000 and a cultural heritage status for the complex of railway station buildings, pronounced in 2004. Considering the latter, the administration revised the decision and despite the protests of public as well as professional organizations cancelled the heritage protection in 2008. As in previous case studies, a variety of urban design projects followed, aiming at change of the local plan, and hence abolition of the building closure. The last such project is an urban study designed by CMC architects in 2013, currently seeking approval.

Meanwhile Orco Property Developer established a joint-venture with commercial property company Unibail Rodamco in order to develop 3,7 hectares of their site as a shopping mall. Parallel to feasibility study of the rail connection to the airport, a non profit organization Memorial Shoah Prague currently transforms the railway station Bubny into a memorial, an exhibition and event place dedicated to tens of thousands of Jewish residents, transported from this station to concentration camps during the second world war (Památník Šoa Praha, 2015).

## 6. Planning documents

The essential document studied was the Strategic plan of Prague, updated version approved in 2008 (Hlavní město Praha, 2009) and its predecessors: First the preparation phase “Praha 2010” (EcoTerra, 1994a,b), concluding the collaboration of hundreds of experts and identifying the complex issues of early post-socialist city, followed by the second stage of preparation which resulted in 1996 under the title Praha budoucnosti – Cesta ke strategii (Útvar rozvoje hlavního města Prahy, 1996). This document was based on series of workshops and conducted by professional body in charge of strategic planning, newly established under the Department of City Development. The first Strategic plan of Prague was approved in 2000 (Hlavní město Praha, 2000) and updated in 2008. The latter included the Programme of implementation of the Strategic plan for 2009-2015 (Hlavní město Praha, 2009), which was also surveyed. Since 2013 the strategic plan has been thoroughly updated, the works still going on. The basic aim of the Strategic plan is to set a framework that enables all actors to achieve synergic effects and as such represents an agreement on middle- and long- term goals for the development of Prague (Institut plánování a rozvoje hlavního města Prahy, 2013). Another essential document, the local plan (Útvar rozvoje hlavního města Prahy, 1999), is among important tools serving to implement the strategic concept, as the Strategic plan states (Hlavní město Praha, 2009, p.10). Its main function is to set the development goals, determine land-use regulations, basic spatial regulations, delineate the technical and traffic infrastructure and publicly beneficial constructions (Institut plánování a rozvoje hlavního města Prahy, 2013). Its temporary predecessor, in 1994 approved Land-use plan of stabilized areas only depicted the land-use of the stabilized areas with indisputable current use, while other areas (such as the three inspected areas) were included in the white spots of the city, referring to future

solutions. Currently, new local plan under the title “Metropolitan plan” is being prepared. There has been additional documents under scrutiny, though in limited extent, such as the agenda of city council (Magistrát hlavního města Prahy, 2015) or The annual report of technical administration of communications (Technická správa komunikací hlavního města Prahy, 2014).

### 6.1. *Strategic plans*

Across the strategic plans, there are several issues that could be considered to be related to the problems of central train station area development projects, yet there is no comprehensive section focused on them.

Since the the preparation phase of the strategic plan (EcoTerra, 1994a,b) there has been a focus on the potential development of polycentric urban structure. In the following material the location of the potential alternative centres was specified: besides the peripheral housing estates, the crucial type of alternative centres was defined as an extension of historic city centre, namely in Smíchov, Holešovice and Karlín. These locations were not explicitly related to the train station areas but due to the transformation sites available in these locations, they were most likely meant to be (Útvar rozvoje hlavního města Prahy, 1996, p.V). The main argument for development of secondary centres at that time was the prevailing perspective of overloaded historic city centre through commercialization, tourism and individual traffic, whereas the importance of city centre extensions for the regeneration of affected quarters as well as its relation and potential synergy to redevelopment of railway lines was rather overlooked.

From the first Strategic plan on, the transformation of Anděl was mentioned as an example of how the city centre could expand. In the following update of Strategic plan however, the southern transformation site adjacent to the actual railway station Smíchov ceased to be considered for city-wide functions expansion (Hlavní město Praha, 2009, p.135), which is an odd fact given the acknowledged success of Anděl development.

The overall good will of the city representatives concerning the development of strategic urban projects is clearly stated in the first Strategic plan (Hlavní město Praha, 2000, p.76): The city will use its authority and public investments to give a direction to development of the above mentioned centres (Smíchov, Karlín, Holešovice and Pankrác). The city will actively support the realization of these projects, place the municipal and state institutions, headquarters of international institutions, banks and commercial headquarters, commercial functions, cultural, social and educational centres, suitable sport facilities and so on. The municipality will set up the phases and prioritize the development, regulate the limits of development in terms of capacity, based on market analysis and impact of construction on existing public services.

Another issue tackled by strategic plan was the formation of partnerships, whether among single bodies of public sector or among public and private actors. The city representation is aware of the necessity to launch the transformation of the sites in collaboration with private sector, since the public sector as such has withdrawn from the actual construction. In order to become a reliable partner, the city found necessary to create a real-estate property policy, prepare a stocktaking of the city's property and set the basic strategic directions of property management (Hlavní město Praha, 2009, pp.51-55). Whereas the strategy has not been worked out yet, city's property is continuously being sold out. As we saw on the examples of single central train station areas development projects, the strategic partnerships are formed among the Czech Railways company and private developers, without engagement of the local authorities.

Another key topic, declared in the strategic plans, is the development of public transportation, which is seen as a solution to negative side-effect of the individual transportation, such as alarming quality of air or frequent congestions. Despite the pressure on development of public transportation, at the same time the strategic documents insist on individual traffic regulation only when the ring roads are completed. According to Duchoňová (2014), the inability to prioritize the public transportation over the roads construction drains the financial resources from the public transportation. In addition, the effect of induced demand makes the public transportation uncompetitive.

The issues of public traffic support and establishment of partnerships meet in the concept of multi-modality. Greater integration of single transportation systems has started in 1993 with establishment of Prague integrated transport (PID) and its manager ROPID in 1996 (ROPID, 2013). Since then, the railway traffic shows highest deficiency of integration from all modes of traffic. Both strategic plans declared necessity to increase the share of railway transportation on the overall volume of public traffic, to offer attractive headways in the regional transportation in the open mode (fares through the city, without terminals in the city centre), to integrate the high-speed trains or combined freight traffic. Despite no major interventions in the railway network have been achieved, the number of passengers slowly increases. In the absolute numbers, the overall railway passengers' volume is hardly comparable to tramway, whereas its actual capacity is multiple (Figure 2). Larger integration of railway is a prerequisite for the full use of strategic potential of the adjacent transformation sites.

**Počet cestujících za den na zastávkách Pražské integrované dopravy - centrum města**

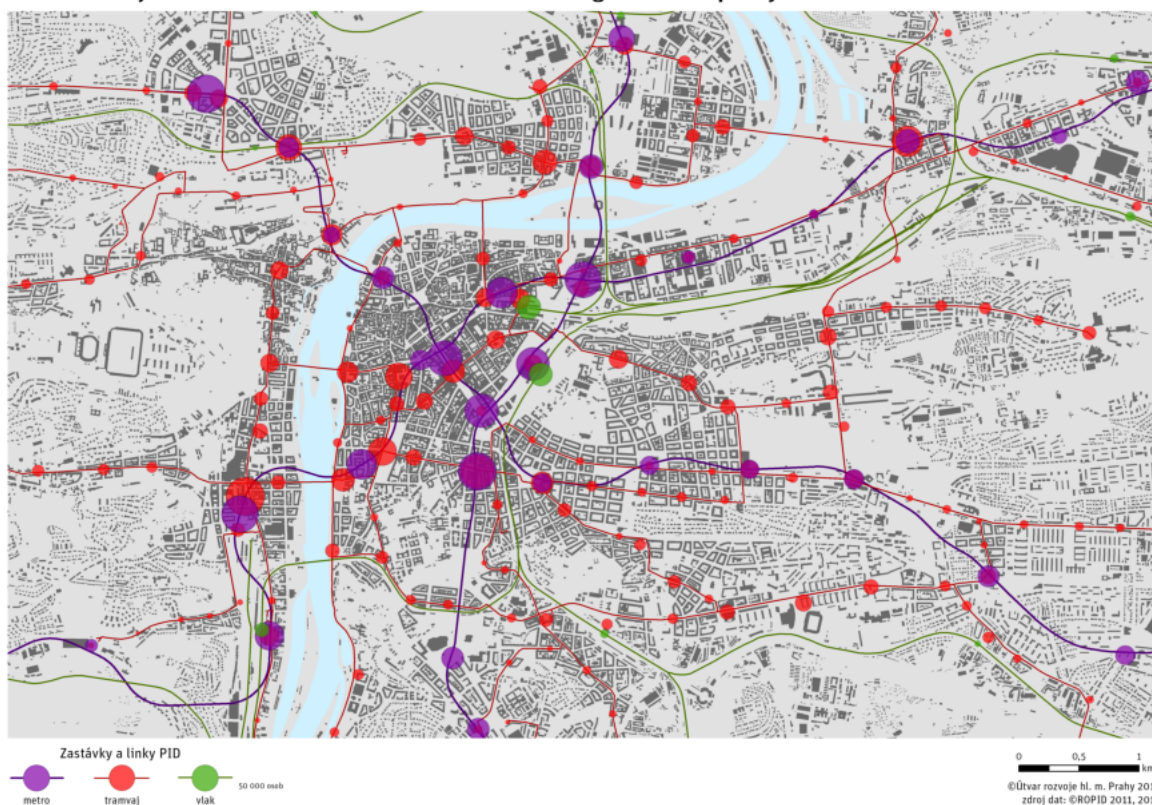


Figure 2: The number of passengers per day on single stations in the frame of Prague integrated transport: violet – metro, red – tramway, green – railway. [www.geoportalpraha.cz](http://www.geoportalpraha.cz)

Since the issue of railways is primarily in the agenda of Ministry of Transport, transmitted to the Railway Infrastructure Administration, state organization (SŽDC), greater integration of railways into the public transportation in Prague would require close collaboration of Prague with these organizations. The necessity of this collaboration is declared in a memorandum of future cooperation, signed by Prague mayor and the minister of transport and in a commitment of the Prague council to work out the metropolitan strategy of multi-modal mobility (Rada hlavního města Prahy, 2013), nevertheless, the latter has not been accomplished. In this case, it seems that Prague reached the limits of partnerships it is able to initiate.

## **6.2. Land-use plans**

The first temporary land-use plan of stabilized areas from 1994 indicated “white spots” on the sites of yet unclear land-use. The first local plan, approved five years later, classified stabilized areas, development and transformation areas and un-development areas. In the local plan, the prevailing poly-functional use (residence, mixed-use, production or services) or mono-functional use (public facilities, technical facilities, mining, water surfaces, landscape and agricultural land) is ordered by delimitation of the land-use zones. Within the development and transformation areas, the spatial regulation is represented by the code of land-use. This code limits the maximum capacity of the new development through the maximum of build-up areas and minimum of green-land areas. The local plan also limits the height of new buildings through the delimitation of a zone in the proximity of Prague heritage zone, where the prohibition of high-rise construction is declared. Both Smíchov and Masaryk station, as well as the southern tip of the Holešovice-Bubny station, are within this zone, whereas most of the Holešovice-Bubny area is in the zone, requiring detail inspection of a prospective high-rise building in relation to various vistas. More detail spatial regulation is a question of urban studies or other detail planning material. The local plan also introduced the concept of large development areas, where the building closure was declared until a more detailed planning documents will be worked out. This arrangement aimed for maintaining the city’s control over these important sites, nevertheless there has never been a mechanism within the local plan, that would encourage the local authorities to actively shape this control.

In the proclamations contained in the strategic plans, there is clearly an intention to give the transformation sites a symbolical meaning through an important function. Nevertheless the local plan only shows preference in positioning of specific functions by indication of special complexes within the poly-functional land-use zones. In the past experience from discussions about new national library or a new concert hall, an important building with an effect on the scale of the whole city can fetch up virtually anywhere, without any relation to the transformation sites.

As in the case of strategic plans, the systematic approach to transformation and development sites is missing. In these terms a change is expected based on the updated spatial-analytical materials (IPR Praha, 2014), where the transformation and development sites are classified according to their potential to be developed. This material should serve as data for farther work on the strategic and local plans.

## **6.3. Capacity of strategic documents to reflect strategic potential of central train station areas**

What is the capacity of strategic plan and local plan to fulfil the strategic potential of the Prague’s central train station area development projects on single levels?

### **6.3.1. Symbolical**

The values indicated by the strategic plan are too little specific and not related to single development

projects. The strategic plan declares the will to place important buildings on the development sites, and the local plan opens-up the opportunity for local authorities to do so, but in reality, the missing capacity to build partnerships and initiate activity prevents it from happening.

#### 6.3.2. Transport-functional

There is a good will declared to support public transport and multi-modality, yet the follow-up phases lack behind, since no strategic partnerships with the presence of local authorities have been formed. In the local plan the development sites are divided between single owners along the line of transportation land-use and other land-use and developed piecemeal, which prevents the integrated multi-modal node – a transferium - from being developed.

#### 6.3.3. Spatial-functional level

The strategic plan defines locations, where the development should happen and a will to play an active role in the development, but in reality, the city's role is passive. Good quality of urban design is a question for single urban design studies, which have not been reviewed in this paper.

#### 6.3.4. Partnerships

The strategic plan promises establishment of partnerships, leading to realization of the development projects, yet it failed to establish the property management policy as well as engage in any of the partnerships formed on the basis of strategic urban projects.

#### 6.3.5. Conflicting situations

The strategic plan acknowledges a social conflict in the city centre, but it does not anticipate the future conflicts in the large development areas.

### **Conclusion**

On one hand, the local authority clearly declares the will to become an active leader of urban transformation. Most of the strategic potentials of the central train station area development projects identified in this paper are at least partly reflected in single goals set up by the strategic plan or in the tools incorporated in the local plan.

Yet, there is a wide gap between the long-declared goals and the actual deeds. In the strategic documents there is a general lack of concentrated systematic focus on the issue of strategic urban projects and their development potential for the city. The chance to actively enter the process of realization partially ceased to exist when the central train station areas were removed from the poll of large development areas and the building closure was cancelled.

There is an implementation problem, and exploration of its roots lies beyond the scope of this paper. Possible explanation could lie in the process in which the strategic documents are worked out and approved: There is no general consensus on the goals stated in the strategic plans, and hence there is no will to work-out implementation strategy, to follow up and regularly revise the results. Another contextual explanations could be offered by related literature: Duchoňová (2014) in her analysis of transport-related strategic documents in Prague identifies strong implementation deficiency based on conflicting criteria and contradicting instructions. Horák (2014) explained that the unstable and institutionally incoherent environment of early post-socialist Prague prevented the city representatives from taking strategic long-term decisions about important issues of urban development, and how this institutional environment made the patterns of behaviour deeply rooted. Tosics (2005) and Musil (2005b) described the general reluctance of the new Czech democracy to any state control mechanisms, including spatial planning and regulations, and the existence of the negative liberty

concept, that allowed to conceive the democratic system as a freedom from the state control and its implications, rather than a freedom to fulfil its potential.

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