
Potentials and Limits of Prague's Future in the Context of Long-Term Development

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Abstract: This article is mainly future oriented, i.e. concerned with the potentials and limits of Prague's future development, and with the most probable developmental trajectories of the city in the coming years. To make such an assessment more realistic, a considerable part of the study pays attention to the past changes in the position of Prague within the system of Central European capital cities. The study proves that the status, political power and economic role of Prague has been closely linked to societal changes and to the changing geopolitical contexts of the Czech community. The evaluation of the so-called endogenous potential of the city shows that the strongest developmental potentials are: cultural, geographic, economic and human potentials. The category of middle ranking potentials include general and municipal, political and infrastructural ones. The weakest potentials, or expressed in another way, the factors Prague's limiting future development are environmental and demographic.

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The aim of the following study** is, on the one hand, to analyse past changes in the position of Prague within the Central European and Czech urban system, and on the other, to find out how this position will be changed by the recent transformations of Central European societies, as well as by the possible integration of Prague into the European urban system. Although the paper is mainly future oriented, i.e. concerned with the potentials and limits of the city which define the possible future developmental trajectories of Prague, a part of this study, however, pays attention also to the past. This part is concerned with the long-term evolution of the Central European capital cities system – i.e. with the positions of Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, and Warsaw. Such a historical analysis enables a more reliable prediction of Prague's future functions and positions in the Central European and European urban system. To make the prediction of Prague's future more reliable, the paper starts with a review of the most probable changes in European urban futures as estimated by experts.

Until recently, most studies which analysed the consequences of the collapse of state socialism on cities paid attention mainly to the effects of these societal changes on individual large cities or on urban systems of individual Central European countries. There is a lack of comparative sociological studies on urban transformations in this region. Those few analyses which have applied comparative approaches, such as György

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Enyedi's [1992, 1996] studies, have used economic geography or regional science perspectives. Some other studies which have applied comparative methods use the 1990 or 1991 census data, as for example S. Conti [1994]. In other words they surveyed the situation of large Central European cities in the last phase of state socialism and were unable to see the important changes in urban systems as caused by the post-1989 developments. Still other studies – even though using for example explicitly comparative sociological models such as the stimulating books by Jürgen Friedrichs [1978, 1985] on the development of some Western and Eastern European cities – were concerned with the period before 1989 and with the similarities and differences between “capitalist” and “socialist” cities, and not with the effects of the return to market economy and political pluralism on urban systems in post-communist countries.

Our study compares five capital cities of Central Europe, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin and Warsaw, from a sociological perspective, using mainly morphological analysis approaches as defined recently by such authors as Jürgen Friedrichs [1981, 1995], Bernd Hamm [1982, 1996], Jiří Musil [1991], Zdravko Mlinar [1997] and others. Standard *comparative sociology* procedures are used as well. To the comparative and ecological approaches, which form the core of our methodology, are added two other instruments, which enable us to make some tentative predictions as to Prague's future, i.e. the concept of *potential* and the concept of limit. The concept of potential, “endogenous potential” or “developmental potential” has been used mainly by German, Austrian as well as Swiss regional scientists for describing endogenous developmental qualities or conditions of regions (see the studies by Ernst A. Brugger [1984], Rainer Thoss [1984], Hans Elsasser [1984] and others). The term hints at the latent, or even hidden developmental qualities of a region, which can be, however, mobilised and exploited by regional policies. In this study the concept was transferred to urban studies to enable us to see the cities observed here in a future oriented perspective.

1. Changing Patterns of the European Urban System

The following review tries to summarise the main recent as well as future changes in the interurban structure of Europe. The review is based primarily on studies written by Jürgen Friedrichs [1993], Peter Hall [1993], Martin Hampl [1996], Jiří Musil, Michal Illner [1994], Klaus R. Kunzmann [1996], W. F. Lever [1993], Ian Masser, Ove Svidén, Michael Wegener [1992], Martine Meijer [1993], Jiří Musil [1992], Saskia Sassen [1994] and Jan Van Weesep [1993].

The predictions as to the future of Europe's urban system is here used as a frame of reference for our reflections on Prague's future. This means that it is necessary first to operationalise the summary of the predicted urban system changes into a number of concrete statements, and subsequently we shall compare the potentials of Prague with these concrete statements. This will allow a more dynamic and at the same time more realistic assessment of the developmental qualities of the city.

From the perspective of the above-mentioned urban experts, the main future changes in Europe's urban system can be summarised as follows:

- Large cities are becoming more and more *service centres*. This is due to the continuing processes of *tertiarisation* of European economies.
- The capital cities and some large cities are – in a growing measure – becoming decisive *nodes of international co-ordination activities* of trade and finance.

- A pronounced *hierarchy* of such command and co-ordination cities is being formed. Some of them have a global role, others a continental function or a European sub-regional role.
- The present and future changes of the European urban system are to a great extent influenced by the processes of spatial *specialisation, regionalisation and polarisation*. All of the mentioned processes can be observed to function on a continental, state and regional level. The processes of polarisation between European macro-regions will be intensified by the construction of high-speed railways.
- Due to the three above-mentioned processes, the *differences and inequalities* among large European cities and regions will continue to grow.
- European integration processes are already at present *changing the national urban systems* and they will continue to have such an impact in the future as well. Very often cities in the border regions are improving their economic positions, whereas other cities and regions – due to the processes of regional specialisation and differentiation – are becoming peripheral and are losing their status. At present, some European cities which were important in the past are becoming a part of the periphery and are losing contacts with the main growing European urban regions.
- The most difficult is the situation of old *industrial agglomerations* and of smaller cities in isolated or peripheral locations.
- It is generally expected that, in the future, capital and large cities of Central Europe will be *reintegrated* into the European urban system. The concrete, as well as the spatial forms of such a reintegration are as yet, however, not clear.
- The political and economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 can be seen as a factor strengthening the position of those western cities which before 1989 belonged to the *peripheral* parts of the European urban system, for example Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen, and Nuremberg. These cities can regain the role they performed before World War II.
- The European integration processes can enhance the *leading role of the capital cities of the largest European countries*, such as Berlin, and Paris.
- The strengthening of *market economy* systems in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will *stimulate the growth of their capitals and large cities* due to the fact that it is in these where there are the best conditions for the expansion of services, and also due to the fact that the most modern parts of industry are often concentrated in metropolitan areas of capital cities.
- The quantitative *population growth of European cities*, especially of large cities, *will be slow* in the near future. This is caused by the low natural growth rates of the population in most European countries and also by the restrictive measures leading to the curtailment of immigration from non-European countries.
- The growth of large cities will be stimulated in the future to a growing extent by the increasing role of *cities as culture centres*, such as tourist centres, and as places of international cultural and sporting events. A trend towards a growing *urban boosterism* can be already observed.
- In the future the large *cities will become more and more competitive*, they will compete not only in the sphere of economy, but also of culture, architecture, quality of environ-

ment. In Central Europe this trend will be strengthened by the integration of the countries from this region into the European Union.

- Large cities of the former socialist countries will be exposed to *growing competition* from nearby Western European cities in the near future. There will also be growing competition among the large cities of the former socialist countries. Some Western European cities near the borders of the former socialist states, will be exposed to a lesser extent to competition from their eastern neighbours. The whole urban system is thus moving into a phase – to use Robert E. Park's terminology – of symbiotic competition [cf. Park 1926]. Expressed in more historical terms, it is to some extent returning to the situation before World War I.

2. Prague's Position in the Central European and Czech Urban System – A Summary of Historical Trends

Prague, like other cities in Central and Eastern Europe, is marked by considerable historical variations in its position among European cities. In its previous history three periods can be distinguished in which we can speak about Prague's important position in Europe. The most important is the epoch of Charles IV and the era before the Hussite wars; the second is the Rudolfian era. The third is the period of the rapid expansion of the city, the development of the national movement and the restoration of the independent state; the period lasting approximately from 1860 until 1938. Although the population size is a very crude measure of the importance and position of the city, it cannot be entirely discounted.

During Charles' reign Prague was among the ten largest cities in Europe. According to Chandler and Fox [1974] it had around the year 1400 some 95,000 dwellers and was the seventh largest on the continent (only Genoa, Granada, Venice, Bruges, Milan and Paris were more populous at the time). In the 18th and 19th centuries its position sank to around 35th before improving in the late 1930s when Prague was the 25th biggest city in Europe. After 1948 its importance again started to decline rapidly, especially with regard to its international position.

The development of Prague's position in the 19th and 20th centuries can be expressed schematically in the following table:

Table 1. The Development of Prague's Position in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Period	Dimensions of Prague's position		
	Population growth	Position within the state	International position
1860-1910	xxxx	xx ¹	x
1918-1938	xxx	xxx ²	xxx
1948-1989	x	xx ²	x
1989-1992	xx	xx ²	xx
after 1992	xx	xxx ³	xxx

Notes: The number of "x" expresses the rate of growth and the position status.

1) position within Austro-Hungarian Empire

2) position within Czechoslovakia

3) position within Czech Republic

The variation in Prague's international position has probably always been greater than the variation in its internal position. This can be seen from Table 1, and later from Table 2 on the growth of population in five Central European capitals.

3. The Period Before World War I

Any serious examination of the interaction between Prague and the neighbouring capitals in the Central Europe of the future should be based on a historical perspective. The starting point of a historical analysis should be the second half of the nineteenth century. Two paradoxically different events mark the start of this period: the emergence of a unified German Reich under Bismarck, and the emancipation of Hungary within the Habsburg monarchy, which was an important step towards the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹

The regional status and hierarchy of the five cities after 1870 is quite clear; Vienna and Berlin in very strong positions with a gradual rise in the status of Berlin, Budapest with a medium and rising status, and Prague and Warsaw in relatively low positions. Unlike the situation in countries where the capitals were not important industrial centres (e.g. Madrid, Rome, and to some extent Paris), the economic and industrial functions of all the cities referred to above were well-developed and quite strong. The Central European capitals, particularly Vienna, Budapest and Warsaw, were in their respective countries industrial islands where industrialisation processes had often started. Prague was different in this respect in that it was part of a larger industrialised area of central and northern Bohemia.

The socio-cultural roles of the capitals in question exhibit a different pattern. Vienna played an obviously dominant cultural role in the Empire as a whole, and its influence radiated to other parts of Europe as well. Though Berlin's position was less important at the beginning of this period, it improved rapidly alongside the growing economic and political power of the German Reich.

Budapest and Prague played a less significant socio-cultural role. Budapest was an ethnic centre for Hungarians, and Prague was not only the cultural centre for Czechs, but to some extent for Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes and Lusitz Serbs. The weakest position was

¹) Cf. the comparative historical study of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest in the period 1867-1918 edited by Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann [1996].

that of Warsaw, which not only suffered from the division of Poland into three parts but also was confronted with stiff competition from Krakow, another important Polish cultural centre.

The kind of division of labour that played a role between Glasgow and Edinburgh or Rome and Milan was virtually non-existent in the Czech region. Prague was a regional, cultural, industrial and political centre all in one. Brno and Ostrava, the two potential competitors, were predominantly industrial cities with a considerably weaker cultural influence than Prague.²

The interaction among the five cities at the start of the twentieth century mainly pertained to symbiotic economic competition and political rivalry based on growing nationalism. A great deal has been written about the economic competition between Vienna and Berlin and the political rivalry between Vienna and Prague [Banik-Schweitzer 1988].

The large cities were an integral part of the growing tendency toward nationalistic particularism, although surprisingly enough, this was also the period when the *Mitteleuropa* idea began to take root. However, the fragmentation processes continued, particularly in the political and cultural spheres. Due to the existing political and economic structures, most importantly the predominance of conservative feudal-aristocratic policies in the Central European states, national differences predominated. The technological changes and economic developments that were to lead to the integration of Europe were taking place at precisely the same time. The disparity between these two processes was tragic. The potential of this period prior to World War I was not exploited.

It should be noted, however, that social interaction among the large cities was confined to contacts among the economic, cultural and political elite groups there [see Urban 1988]. Personal contact in the fields of science or literature were, however, less intensive and frequently took place by way of letters. There was no mass tourism on the part of the middle and lower classes, who continued to spend their holidays in their own countries. Compared with today, there were few conferences where academics of various countries could meet and exchange ideas.

In short, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were characterized by a combination of fragmentation and co-operation. To a certain extent, this combination can be described as symbiotic competition.

4. The Period Between the Two World Wars

It has often been claimed, and rightly so, that World War I was one of the most disastrous events in European history, and that World War II was a continuation of the calamity. One of the consequences of the 1914-1918 war was the deepening of the pre-war fragmentation. Cultural and national differences were projected onto political and economic ones. Three old empires, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire all collapsed. Numerous new national states emerged.

If we examine the capitals of Central Europe, it is clear how they differed in the inter-war period. They were either part of the victorious or the defeated nations. Pre-war animosities were reinforced by this fact: Prague versus Vienna, Prague versus Budapest, Warsaw versus Moscow. Old markets crumbled, some nations and cities had to radically

²) In 1890, the population of Prague was 437,000, that of Brno was 146,000 and that of Ostrava 85,000.

redirect the focus of their markets and their general economic policies on foreign trade. Of course the war also destroyed the traditional commercial links among the five cities, which were slowly rebuilt in the subsequent period.

The cities of the victorious nations, mainly Prague, and to a lesser extent Warsaw as well, began to focus politically and culturally on their Western allies, and the Czechs stressed their liberal democratic orientation. For Prague, the models were France, the United States and Great Britain. Czech inter-war developments in the social sciences, literature and architecture were notable, and there is a great deal of documentation to support this. The history of Prague's avant-garde architecture in the Twenties and Thirties is one of the most interesting examples.

In the inter-war period, the five cities also exhibited considerable differences in their growth patterns. They might be classified into three categories:

1. The ones that grew fastest, Prague and Warsaw,
2. The ones that recovered slowly and grew rather slowly, Berlin and Budapest,
3. The one that stagnated and declined, Vienna.

The precarious inter-war equilibrium did not reduce the fragmentation of Central Europe and the pre-war symbiotic competition was weakened. Improved transportation and communication technology and economic internationalisation only served to make the basic inconsistency of the inter-war arrangements even more obvious. Multinationals were already in existence at the time. The interconnectedness of Western and Central European cities was continuously eroded by political rivalries based on narrow-minded national interests.

How were all these complex processes reflected in the concrete positions of the five capitals referred to above? In the late Thirties, Prague became a modern European metropolis. Its residents, however, were plagued by deep feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. Vienna struggled along from one crisis to the next, losing its population, particularly its intellectuals, its spirit, and its economic prosperity. Budapest slowly came back to life and in the late Thirties, exhibited a relative rise in its economic and cultural output. After a short gloomy post-war period, Berlin stabilised its economic power in the Twenties and became for a short period one of the most flourishing cultural centres in Europe. This came to an end, however, with Hitler's ascent to power and in the Thirties, Berlin changed into a capital preparing to reconquer lost positions of power. Warsaw slowly built up its position in the Polish macro-region, all the while competing closely with Cracow. Compared with the pre-war period, its status improved.

In order to explain some of the lesser known aspects of Prague's development, it is necessary to say a few words about it in the inter-war period. To a large extent, the energy of the population was concentrated towards building a state, as noted by Ferdinand Peroutka [1933-1936], the leading Czech journalist at the time. The unresolved problems of the German minority in Czechoslovakia also had a negative impact on life in Prague.

Compared with the other Central European capitals, Prague nonetheless retained certain important liberal features: it functioned much as Vienna does today, as a refuge for political emigrants,³ and as a place where the Jewish students refused in Budapest,

³) After World War I, Prague sheltered Russian and Ukrainian political refugees and after 1933 it served the same purpose for German and Austrian anti-fascist refugees.

Poland and Austria could register at the university. Finally, Prague was to remain the one and only democratic capital in Central Europe almost until the outbreak of World War II.

5. The Years of Divided Europe

Compared with the situation after 1918, the years after World War II introduced a number of radically new patterns to the relations among the five cities. Europe was soon divided into two blocks, and two of the cities in question were divided as well. This time the war caused extensive damage to most of the cities. Warsaw was almost completely destroyed, as was Berlin to a large extent, and certain parts of Budapest and Vienna. The only city to escape almost intact was Prague. The events of this war had much more of an effect on the civilian populations than those of World War One, and led to far greater social changes and disruption.

The division of Europe not only meant a political separation, it also gave rise to differing regional processes. In the socialist countries, the capitals and their growth were more strictly checked by the State than in the liberal democracies. In fact, anti-urban policies were even introduced. Due to this check, Prague, for example, currently has approximately the same population as it did in 1940 (1,114,000 in 1940 and 1,214,000 in 1990).

Although history did repeat itself in a way – putting Prague and Warsaw once again on the side of the victors and Berlin, Vienna and Budapest on the side of the defeated – this fact was soon to lose whatever significance it might have had.

The five cities became the capitals of nations that had undergone considerable changes. The most radical change had taken place in Germany, where part of Berlin became the capital of only one part of the divided country. Warsaw was suddenly near the eastern border of Poland, since the entire country had been shifted westward. Prague ceased to be the capital of Slovakia and Ruthenia. If we discount the war period, the fewest changes of this kind were observed in Hungary and Austria.

In those parts of the macro-region that were allotted by the Yalta Conference to the Soviet Union's sphere of power, the most striking changes occurred in the socio-political and economic systems. These changes played a decisive role in determining the status of the capitals. Soviet-style central planning suppressed the growth of large cities, especially of capitals. Strict checks were enforced in Prague and Warsaw and to a lesser degree in Budapest as well. The consequence of these policies was obvious, as all these cities lost their position in the hierarchy of European cities. Particularly in the Fifties and Sixties, macro-regional policies were combined with the economic autarkic policies to eliminate the traditionally intensive multilateral interaction among Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin and Warsaw. It was replaced by bilateral linkages to Moscow.

The situation slowly improved in the late Sixties. There was more and more contact among scientists, artists and writers from Prague, Warsaw, Budapest and East Berlin, and tourism expanded as well. In comparison with what was happening at the time in the West, however, this interaction was still negligible.

According to Enyedi [1992], the most dramatic changes pertained to the position of Berlin. The Soviet section of the city became the capital of the German Democratic Republic. East Berlin was to control an industrialised and developed country, albeit a small one. West Berlin remained an enclave without any direct attraction zone. It however ex-

hibited remarkable cultural development, to a certain extent affecting Vienna and Budapest.

For a long time not only Prague but Warsaw as well as was cut off from Vienna and there was less contact than at any other time in the history of Central Europe. Vienna completely forfeited its position as leading metropolis of the area. This separation of Vienna from its international hinterland in the first few decades after World War II was one of the most striking phenomena in the region.

Although it had a better starting position than Vienna, Prague declined during this period into a provincial city. It never made any effort to become a junction between East and West, a gate-way from Western Europe to the USSR or the Balkans. In the new context, its position resembled that of the pre-1918 period. Soviet strategic considerations undoubtedly played a role in this connection. Prague was the westernmost capital, a city inside a region, Bohemia, which was slowly but surely losing its industrial and cultural significance. This trend was finally to come to an end in the Eighties.

In this third period, Vienna was the only capital to become a major international transport centre in the region. Its airport served as a gate-way to Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and the Balkans. And Vienna became an important centre in the sphere of international politics (United Nations). It also took over Prague's pre-war role as a transit place for political refugees. In his book *Porträt Europas*, Salvador de Madariaga rightly noted that Vienna was the hidden capital of Europe, since it was where East met West. If we examine Berlin in this period, we see that it lost its traditional position. Even the financial injections from the FRG could not stop its long-term decline from its macro-regional position.

6. Interim Summary for the 20th Century

How to summarise the changes in the Central European systems of capital cities during the 20th century? Despite the shortcomings of the procedure which uses data on the size of population in measuring the general power position of cities,⁴ it has nevertheless been applied here since data on population are relatively the most reliable and comparable.

In the course of the 20th century, as a consequence of great political changes, and the termination and division of states, and also as a consequence of divergent economic development, the rank size of Central European capitals has markedly changed, as is apparent from the following comparison.⁵

⁴) For discussion on the different criteria measuring the size and, indirectly, the power position of cities see the study on regional and settlement structure of the Czech Republic [Hámpel, Gardavský, Kühnl 1987].

⁵) The table on changes in the rank order of capital cities in Central Europe between 1910 and 1991 and the comments on the changes are based on a study by Musil and Illner [1994] published in a book on the development and administration of Prague.

Table 2. Rank order of Central European capitals according to the size of population in 1910 and 1991

Rank of cities in	Prague	Vienna	Budapest	Warsaw	Berlin
1910	5	2	3	4	1
1991	5	4	2	3	1

While in 1910 the smallest capital, Prague, accounted for 8% of the combined population of these capitals, and the largest, Berlin, accounted for 45% of this total, by 1990 these values changed to 13% and 32%, respectively. This whole sample of the capitals became more *homogeneous*, while the total population number of these cities increased only a little. In 1910 altogether 8.4 million inhabitants lived in them, while in 1991 the figure was 9.6 million.

To a certain extent it can be said that the more uniform position of Central European metropolises measured by population also corresponds with more uniform political and cultural (but less economic) position and importance. Vienna and Berlin were in both world wars capitals of states which lost. Germany was, moreover, divided after the Second World War, as was Austria for a short time. It can be said to a certain extent that in the competition of cities in this field, at least with regard to the quantitative and demographic characteristics, Warsaw, Budapest and also Prague were strengthened. Future development will probably change this trend. The growth of Berlin's importance must be reckoned with alongside Vienna in its potential for performing an important co-ordination and gateway function, which has been higher than most experts estimated. The newest data show that "for multinational corporations, Vienna remains the gateway to Central and Eastern Europe".⁶

It is necessary to note that the picture of the Central European urban system would change if added to these five capitals were Munich, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Dresden and perhaps also Wrocław. We would find that Munich is today more populous than Prague and it may soon attain Vienna's size. On the other hand, we would observe the decline of such cities as Leipzig and Dresden.

A broader comparison which included cities similar in their size and importance to Prague in the late 1930s, such as Milan, Turin and Barcelona, would show that Prague grew substantially slower and its importance in the European context started to decline rapidly, especially after the Second World War.

7. The Assessment of Prague's Present Developmental Potentials

The potentials here are understood as: (1) internal preconditions and qualities which can contribute to future innovative urban development, (2) external conditions of Prague's development which are determined by its position in relation to other European and Central European cities, i.e. Prague's chance *vis-à-vis* those cities with which it competes.

A series of these external conditions determining Prague's position can be partly derived from the previous section of this study which attempted to place Prague in the hierarchy of Central European capital cities.

⁶) See the article in *International Herald Tribune*, March 14, 1997: "Rush to Vienna continues unabated."

The assessment of the “force” of the individual parameters of the potential is conducted as based upon international rating studies on cities, and upon information from a great number of statistical analyses and studies on European cities, as well as upon the knowledge of European capital cities acquired during visits to them. Prague is compared in terms of quality with especially cities of similar size and function. Obviously, such assessments cannot avoid a considerable degree of subjectivity. To diminish as much as possible this subjective element in evaluating Prague’s potential, the author presented his assessment to different groups of Czech and American students. The correlations between his scores and those of the students were rather high. Similar “subjective” methods are used also in rating studies on cities performed by some international organisations.

When estimating Prague’s potential it was *disaggregated* into the nine following categories:

1. Geographic potential as expressed by locational parameters
2. Demographic potential
3. Economic potential expressed by number and structure of economic activities
4. General political potential measured by the presence of internal and international organisations and institutions
5. Potential of the urban infrastructure, technical as well as social and cultural
6. Social or human potential as expressed by the skills of the population, readiness for contacts, by “cultural capital”, and by communication abilities
7. Cultural potential as expressed by the cultural traditions, variety of cultural activities, and architectural quality of the city
8. Municipal political potential as measured by the stability of municipal political bodies, local initiatives, and co-ordination between central government and the municipality
9. Environmental potential as expressed by the quality of the dwelling stock, recreational facilities, psychical characteristics of environment, internal transport network, and public transport.

The following table presents the “force”, or intensity of the individual categories of the potential and the intensity of the individual parameters. A five point scale was used, the lowest value of the parameter is expressed by one character (+), the highest by five (+++++). One should again stress that the procedure is based on qualitative assessments derived from much information of heterogeneous quality. To arrive at more reliable results for the same parameter, some assessments were based on more than one source of information.

Table 3. Structure of Prague's present developmental potentials

Parameters of the potential	Force of the individual parameters
1. <i>Geographic parameters</i>	
1.1 Broader geographic location in terms of the possibility to be integrated with Western Europe	++++
1.2 Location in regard to main international traffic routes	++
2. <i>Demographic potential</i>	
2.1 Natural growth potential	+
2.2 Attractiveness for immigrants	+++
3. <i>Economic activities and their structure</i>	
3.1 Presence of one or more strong domestic industrial and financial groups	++++
3.2 Presence of one or more strong foreign industrial and financial groups	+
3.3 Sufficiently diversified industrial structure with a possible development of innovative high-technology	+++
4. <i>Internal and international political functions</i>	
4.1 Political position in the Czech Republic	++++
4.2 International political position, presence of seats of international political organisations	+
5. <i>Urban infrastructure</i>	
5.1 First-class telecommunication network permitting easy contacts with the external world by the quick dissemination of information inside the country	+
5.2 Presence of important universities, research institutes and professional schools with theoretical orientation	+++
5.3 Presence of technological services and applied research (sale of know-how) with strong human capital	++++
5.4 Access to financial resources, especially to commercial credits, available also to small- and medium-sized companies	++
5.5 Diversified network of services for business companies (marketing, managerial consultation, legal consultancy)	++
6. <i>Social, i.e. human, potential of the city</i>	
6.1 Advanced urban society with skills necessary for the functioning of the metropolis (transition from the secondary economic structure to the tertiary, advanced structure of private business, and entrepreneurial spirit)	+
6.2 Readiness of the population for contacts with the world (fluency in foreign languages, social and commercial skills, technological skill)	+++
6.3 Mental disposition of the population with elements of cosmopolitan spirit, including tolerance towards foreigners and immigrants, towards national, ethnical, intellectual, and religious plurality, the spirit of "open society"	++
6.4 Dynamic cultural capital, i.e. dynamic, non-conservative temperament of the people	+++
6.5 Informal mechanisms for information exchange inside the metropolitan area, i.e. an advanced culture of conferences, international exhibitions, informal meetings in clubs, cultural centres, etc.	++

7.	<i>Cultural potential</i>	
7.1	Presence of the cultural and intellectual traditions, the presence of a cultural image of the city	++++
7.2	Offer of cultural and intellectual activities for domestic and foreign visitors	++++
7.3	Quality of the city itself, its architecture and aesthetic attractiveness	+++++
8.	<i>Political conditions and municipal administration</i>	
8.1	Stability of the political structure, prospects of pluralistic democracy	+++
8.2	Presence and stability of the legal state	++
8.3	Good municipal administration ensuring smooth functioning of the city	++
8.4	Local policy initiatives fostering innovations	++
8.5	Good co-ordination between the central government and municipal administration (understanding or at least the neutrality of the centre towards the city)	+++
9.	<i>Quality of environment and housing</i>	
9.1	Quality and diversity of dwelling stock	++
9.2	Accessibility of cultural and recreational facilities	+++
9.3	Recreational facilities in the city surroundings and its attractiveness in terms of nature and landscape	++++
9.4	Quality of the physical characteristics of environment (air, water, soil)	+
9.5	Security in the city	++
9.6	Quality of the internal transport network	++
9.7	Quality of public transport	+++

To make the results of our estimates better understandable and more synoptic, the *average scores* have been calculated for each of the main eight categories of potentials. Here are the results of the rating, starting with the highest, i.e. best, values, and ending with the lowest values.

Table 4. The Potentials of Prague

Category of potential	Scores
1. Cultural potential	4.3
2. Geographic, i.e. locational	3.0
3. Economic	2.7
4. Social and human	2.6
5. General political	2.5
6. Infrastructural	2.4
7. Municipal political	2.4
8. Environmental	2.4
9. Demographic	2.0

The picture is not surprising. Prague's assets are based on culture, to a large extent on the beauty of the city, on her location, in a lesser degree on its industrial skills and traditions and on the human capital of the city. To the less attractive aspects of Prague belong the political institutions, their activities and behaviour, and the environmental and infrastructural qualities of the city.

8. Prague and the Changing European Order

All cities are part of an interurban network and the future of all of them depends on the wider political, economic and cultural context, as well as on the changes in the general

patterns of the urban system itself. The end of Europe's division into two blocks after 1989, started to change the position of Prague and of other capital cities of former socialist states. A realistic assessment of their future potential and position must be now based on the confrontation of the existing qualities of these cities with geopolitical changes (membership in European Union, NATO, etc.), and the long-term trends in the European urban system, as described in the first part of this study.

The chances of the reintegration of Prague into the European urban system are quite high. Prague is quickly de-industrialising and becoming a typical service centre. The chances of it becoming a high level command and co-ordination city, such as Brussels, Frankfurt, and Milan are, however, rather small. Prague will remain a regional centre serving mainly the Czech Republic with *some* gateway functions for Central and Eastern Europe. These functions will be primarily performed – as empirical data already show – by Vienna, Berlin and to a lesser degree by Budapest. Prague is not, however, facing decline due to peripherisation. The reintegration of the city into European urban networks is, and will be, stimulated by the continuous improvement of Prague's accessibility (the enlargement of the airport, by the construction of high speed railways and motorways).

The growth of Prague's role in the European urban system is, and will be in the future, stimulated by the market economy. This has been proved by many data on the Czech economy – now already eight years after 1989. One cannot expect, however, a considerable and quantitative growth in the size of the city, in fact one can predict only a relatively modest population growth in the whole of the Prague metropolitan region, a growth based predominantly on suburbanisation.

In many respects Prague has started to compete with other capital and large cities in the region, especially with Budapest, Vienna, Berlin and Munich. The real trump card of Prague in this competition and in this building up of a new position, is undoubtedly the cultural potential of the city. Prague is already now the main centre of urban tourism in Central Europe and it is becoming a preferred convention, congress and conference centre. The chance to become one of the important cultural centres of Europe undoubtedly exists. The crucial impulse for this must be the activities of Prague intellectuals, artists and professionals, and their endeavours to engender creative thinking and ingenious artistic works.

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