

List of Appendices

Appendix no.1: Consent forms



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Appendix no. 2: Interview transcript – Jana Adamcová

[00:00:01.300] - Speaker 1

I have one question to start with to establish whether all respondents understand what we are actually talking about. So I would like to ask you to tell me what city branding means to you.

[00:00:19.370] - Speaker 2

For me, branding is always a reflection of a long-term vision, be it of an organisation or a city. That is, if everyone - at least at the level of the city leadership - agrees that we want Prague to be richer and more beautiful and have people actually want to live there and not flee, then branding is a way to actually communicate and support that vision. For me, branding is always underneath that level of actually having a vision of where the company should go.

[00:00:51.060] - Speaker 1

Great, great. Do you have any examples from abroad, cities where this branding works well?

[00:00:59.370] - Speaker 2

So as a general rule, the British have always been strong in branding, the cultivation has really been there. Otherwise, honestly from what I observe and when I observe the way that our sister organizations and their information centres are oriented or the way that souvenir shops look, it's quite a disaster. I would say that there's a lack of complexity and sophistication. But to say that I'm like looking at which country has what trends? I haven't really studied that. I take it more as a matter of practice.

[00:01:35.800] - Speaker 1

Okay, now we can get to Prague. How do you feel about Prague?

[00:01:40.020] - Speaker 2

We have actually described how I perceive Prague quite nicely in the new brand positioning of Prague in three pillars: bohemian, classy and multilayered. And I think that it's just a reflection of my discussions over several months with people from Prague, people that I know, people from different fields, whether they are journalists, tourism representatives like hoteliers, or also people from Prague who are, for example, branding specialists, or from the creative community. Actually, this position reflects the results of those discussions. It was clear to all of us that first of all, they are really quite a liberal, bohemian community, who live their own way and are extremely active in culture. We know that from comparison with other cities, we have extremely generous subsidies for culture and we have a hugely active community of people. Here, if you look around, everyone is involved in something.

So the way I perceive Prague is exactly reflected in the brand positioning, and bohemianism is one of the key things. In terms of the classiness and the multi-layeredness, we've created a bit of an algorithm there, especially in the context that we're comparing ourselves to Berlin and Vienna. Berlin is very liberal in terms of business, I would say, and also in terms of architecture, it's more modern, there are a lot of different districts and things like that. So the aspect of classiness is comparing us more to Vienna. Prague's architecture is really extremely beautiful.

In case of the multilayeredness, we really wanted to emphasize that Prague has always been a crossroads of business and artists and intellectuals and so on. And the advantage of that bohemian Prague is that it has allowed something to emerge from that multilayeredness - live and let live. Many different communities have been meeting here and living here in peace as it were. And even today you have a lot of subcultures, and nobody is here with a banner, or at

least the cops don't beat them up and they just live here peacefully. From just different subcultures like tattooers to pin-ups, to different metal groups - we have different subcultures here that are completely at peace here, functioning in a sophisticated way. So I want to say that the multilayeredness, the fact that Prague is the way it is, has allowed us to let these completely diverse elements live here and actually interact, whether they're cultural, religious, architectural or otherwise. So de facto I completely identify with that position of the Prague brand also because I've lived in Prague for a long time and that actually came out of a debate with people who love Prague as much as I do, so I guess we're consistent in that.

[00:04:49.080] - Speaker 1

Great. And do you think that Prague is perceived this way abroad?

[00:04:56.850] - Speaker 2

How Prague is perceived abroad is a difficult question. We don't have any research, the last time we did research on the State Department in several countries, it was in 2003 or 2004, I think, maybe I can still find it somewhere. And I think in general the country image has extreme inertia. What I remember was that as a post-communist country, the astronomical clock, beer, and sunflower fields which equal canola fields. Anyway, what we do know is that Prague of course has a better reputation than the Czech Republic. Prague is an extremely strong brand.

[00:06:03.210] - Speaker 1

Great. Do you think that Prague manages its reputation abroad sufficiently?

[00:06:08.730] - Speaker 2

Well, in terms of our company, I'm convinced of that. We have, I would say, some nice results. Now, we've been looking at the data recently and we're seeing an increase in tourist spending, which means that we're able to generate an image and an offer that's making people want to spend more money. At the same time, we've seen in the data that the more expensive restaurants are actually growing in revenue and traffic. So all indications prove that that image shifts towards that sophisticated city, better city, that we're hopefully slowly coming to fruition. But we are doing it really systematically from de facto 2020, 2021. And I believe in the extreme importance of that systematic work, always campaigning, systematic communication on the networks. Yeah, just really working systematically, which is what we're trying to do.

[00:07:11.040] - Speaker 1

Great. What problems did you encounter while trying to create the brand of Prague?

[00:07:16.430] - Speaker 2

That's an interesting question. I'll think about it for a while. Actually, paradoxically, I was expecting that maybe there would be some reaction to that brand positioning, but it was taken completely without any comments, so that's very interesting. Even now, our brand position is actually connected to the brand position in business tourism that we are developing now, or that we are discussing with the Congress Centre and the Prague Convention Bureau, because there it is just a matter of shifting certain accents, but the core stays just the same. So it's good that others obviously have no problem connecting and feel the same way.

I think that the biggest problems are always, and I think every person in my position would say this, are in the implementation. Because with such complex systems like the city and even our complex little system of Prague City Tourism, where you have monuments, information centres, websites, social media profiles, a tram, a tourist card, etc. There are so many applications, and I don't want to say it's a problem, but it's very demanding in terms of attention to detail. Maintaining the consistency of the brand, and not just the visual one, but really maintaining that as the application of that narrative in every detail. And I think that's the biggest challenge of how to actually maintain any system this complex.

Yeah, and I think most people in management positions that actually implement the brand just fixate on that logo, but that's a thousandth of the world to me. That's a common mistake that somebody thinks it's the logo and the typeface and the colour scheme when it's actually the whole world and the story that we're telling.

[00:09:31.320] - Speaker 1

That's great. I have already conducted several interviews and the respondents to this question mostly answered that they think the problem is the lack of political support and the lack of enforcement of the strategy. It's not that the strategies aren't there, but they're not being implemented. And at the same time financing. Is that something that you're facing as well?

[00:10:13.260] - Speaker 2

It depends on the level at which these people who say this are. Because at the level that I am, when you are running a city organization, you are the one who has to present the strategic vision to the politicians and you are the one who has to arrange the finances. I mean, we were in the same position. We actually presented our strategic vision to the city council with that concept. We convinced them that it was the right thing to do, but it wasn't even a matter of convincing them because we were already incorporating them into the development of the concept and the vision. And as for finance, well any company is funded, they usually just spend that finance wrong. I mean, when you have a very well-thought-out brand, even a small amount of finance just makes a huge difference. So I understand that somebody at the clerk level could say that, but certainly, somebody at the director level of some city organization couldn't say that because they would be lying. That's their problem - not being able to present a strategic vision to the political establishment and then move it forward in an executive manner. I'm probably being too harsh.

[00:11:19.110] - Speaker 1

It is true that the tourist segment has the advantage that Prague City Tourism actually exists. It is already an established entity and it means that it is already determined that the tourist segment is important for Prague. The other segments - attracting talent and attracting investment - are not here yet. This is followed by my other questions. You mentioned the consistency of the brand, so if we take into account not only the tourist Prague but the other two areas, do you think that this is communicated enough abroad, some effort to show Prague not only as a tourist destination but also many other things?

[00:11:59.600] - Speaker 2

And now you're talking specifically about that segment like investor attraction and business tourism and this?

[00:12:07.280] - Speaker 1

Also attracting talent. There is a global trend in city branding that shows that there should be a holistic approach to how the city is communicated, it should no longer be divided into target groups such as tourists, expats, and entrepreneurs, but actually, the city should communicate to everyone because whoever is a tourist at one moment can also be an entrepreneur at the next moment.

[00:12:33.260] - Speaker 2

That's a nice thing to say. The question is how it will be implemented, because of course, when we do a tourist presentation of Prague - I would rather think of it as brand-forming than touristic, frankly, because we don't even have a word about tourism in there. So is it the investor or the tourist that's going to see the ad online? We don't know that, of course. So in that, it's like a complex thing.

On the other hand, it's simple math. The impact is made by whoever has significant financial resources. I don't see an organization here, and I don't think it's CzechInvest either, that is investing any significant funds in attracting investment to Prague. Certainly, it's happening at the working level of those negotiations, that's fine. I think that if an organisation like CzechInvest, for example, said "now we're going to do a 30 million dollar campaign", I think we'll be the first ones to align ourselves on how they envision it. So following the money always works for me, because where there is money, there is logically an interest from a sector and then it makes sense to pursue that.

It seems to me that it is ineffective to deal with issues that are not de facto supported by that strong executive and finance because they do not have an impact. So why should we waste that energy, right? When I look around us, who actually systematically communicates Prague? It's us, then of course our sisters, but they are more or less on the territory of Prague to foreign countries. Well, for example, you have the Prague City Gallery, you have all these cultural institutions that present Prague as cultural by logic. Then Prague Convention Bureau, which actually has systematic activities, but there we are aligned perfectly. And I'm wondering where else is there a source of money that would somehow fundamentally present Prague.

[00:14:40.250] - Speaker 1

That's the problem, it's not.

[00:14:43.710] - Speaker 2

Well, the question is, who wants what? If Prague simply wants to attract investors, there is a CzechInvest regional office that does that. I guess it's just a question of having a conversation with the Ministry of Industry about whether it makes sense. It might be money, or I don't really see the problem. Usually, when there is a problem, like in our case, the sector comes forward. So for example hotels said "Do something, there's a covid, we need to get people back" and

there will be pressure, quite logically pressure from the business community - so let's get together to support the return of that sector. I don't feel any pressure from Czech investors here. Yeah, and if you don't actually have demand in terms of a sector, well, why would you as a public administration respond to that, right? It's also a bit about what does the community actually want?

[00:15:42.450] - Speaker 1

I can't really give you an answer to that, as a researcher I should be unbiased.

Who do you think should be the guarantor of something like unified communication in Prague? Do you think it should be the municipality, or some contributory organization or a city organization like Prague City Tourism? To create some kind of brand for Prague that would not only communicate the tourism sector but also the other areas (attracting talent and investment). Actually, there is another possibility from abroad, that it is done by a completely external company, the city orders it from a marketing agency, which creates the brand for them.

[00:16:29.820] - Speaker 2

Well, I'm wondering again about the reason why this would actually be a problem. For example, we had a meeting yesterday with the Study in Prague consortium, with whom I signed a memorandum a week ago, and we have a very clear connection, where they have some channels, and we have an agreement on who is going to do what. We've even arranged that as part of our campaign, which will be on the new website next year, that when we're running a full campaign and the focus is the biggest and there's like really millions of visits, that we can put a special Study in Prague banner on our homepage. It makes sense to me.

Here you have to also understand that Prague has so many institutions and so many actual entities involved, that the idea of effectively running the whole thing just from the City Hall is actually unrealistic in itself. I think that we have built the brand of Prague nicely. Well, whoever wants to join - look at Prague Convention Bureau, they did, and the brand is so universally well-established that they can add any other topic. That's not a problem.

The second thing is the brand of Prague as such, which I understand is now undergoing some kind of refresh, where I think there is a bit of a lack of care for the rest, except for the logo itself. Yeah, I think there's a lot that could be made of it, but I see it more as a communication

to the citizens and as a corporate communication of the city. But I don't really see that as a different demand here.

[00:18:07.350] - Speaker 1

So you mentioned Study in Prague yourself. There is a demand from students from abroad, and there is a demand for highly qualified employees as the overall global economy changes, as we move closer to digitalization and automation of processes, as there is a lack of educated people in Prague. And this is not just a problem of Prague or the Czech Republic, it is a problem of basically all countries. Every single country, every single big city is fighting for those talents to attract them, whether it's just some programmers, or filmmakers, or those AI and other new industries, so everybody wants to attract those smart, interesting people and Prague is not doing anything to communicate that outwards at the moment.

[00:18:55.020] - Speaker 2

And why do you think he's doing nothing? Because I mean, there's been an ESA BIC office for years, and prg.ai, and a lot of initiatives, and they have their own international network. So I don't think you can just say that Prague is doing nothing.

[00:19:21.200] - Speaker 1

I meant Prague as a city.

[00:19:23.480] - Speaker 2

Like a city hall?

[00:19:24.780] - Speaker 1

Yes, city hall.

[00:19:25.580] - Speaker 2

Well, why isn't it enough that the city hall is funding these initiatives?

[00:19:32.180] - Speaker 1

Basically, what I see from my research when I talk to these people, they all say that what would help them is a single umbrella brand that would cover all these activities. Because actually exactly as you say - Prague has a terribly fragmented ecosystem, there are many different

entities like universities, entrepreneurs and private companies, these - how to call it - semi-private things, each communicating something that is somehow let's say in the same line, but the communication is extremely fragmented. And in fact, they all told me that if there was a unified brand that would represent the fact that Prague is just a modern city that is open to innovation, there are interesting projects happening here, there are good tax conditions for entrepreneurs, these are all topics that Prague is currently ignoring and not communicating.

[00:20:25.420] - Speaker 2

Well, I don't know, we're quite far away from this topic and I'm thinking more like if there's such a demand, why isn't it systematically promoted?

[00:20:37.640] - Speaker 1

That's what I'm trying to find out.

[00:20:39.020] - Speaker 2

Because in the case of tourism, for example, the demand was there and it was systematically promoted and the city agreed without any problems. But I'm wondering if there is a group of people who say it's not systematic, if they actually know exactly what they want. I think if a bunch of investors came in here and said "Hey, we need to go to these better fairs and expos with a cool spot and something, come help us do this", I think everybody would want to have a conversation. But I think that it's also a little bit of incompetence and disorganization of the sector, which is a very common situation in the Czech Republic, see for example creative industries, which are all disorganized. So I think that the municipality is just one of the parts of the city, and if there is a community here that is convinced that we could do something better here in terms of communicating investments, well, then they have to come up with some kind of proposal and some kind of force to make it make sense because we are spending public money. I know I'm doing it because there's 100 billion a year in tourism spending here, so it pays for the city to put tens of millions a year into campaigns. So let them come in and say "Hey, we're losing something here, or there's potential here, here in an investment of something, let's make a presentation". And I think it really depends a little bit on the other side as well.

[00:22:07.640] - Speaker 1

That's great insight for sure. Okay. We've already discussed the issues. I'd like to ask you what you think are Prague's strengths, what is it that Prague should communicate abroad, and what should it build on?

[00:22:26.270] - Speaker 2

Even after yesterday's debate with Study in Prague, it is definitely the safety. Prague is just a safe and beautiful place. We have such an interesting factor in tourism, and that is that it is extremely concentrated. You can more or less just walk around here. Of course, it's perfect to get around the city with public transport. I think it's this vibrant, cultural city. We've been told by very many five-star hotel directors that tourists who come here for this idea that Prague is an open-air museum and that they're going to tour these sights and they're going to leave, they're so terribly sorry that when they see everything that's going on here, the Jazzdock and the Kunsthalle and others, so they're actually sorry that they didn't have more time. I think that even the extremely rich cultural offer and in general our free lifestyle and the cultural experience, I think there are several levels to that.

[00:23:29.340] - Speaker 1

Great. And the weaknesses of Prague?

[00:23:32.890] - Speaker 2

I think that actually when I take it to the quality of life in the city, the lack of ability of the city through regulation and even its own legislative activity to regulate tourism and the negative impacts in the centre. I think they could do a lot more in terms of really formalizing how to enforce the way the city is, whether it's like visually or in terms of who sells what and where, and who doesn't sell what. I think that's where I think there's maybe a weak political will, and I imagine it could be done, if it can be done in other cities in the world, why can't it be done here? The cultivation, I think that's the biggest weakness.

[00:24:30.480] - Speaker 1

Yeah, respondents have often mentioned to me that Prague is perceived as a city of cheap beer, entertainment and prostitution, and that hurts Prague's image a lot.

[00:24:48.670] - Speaker 2

The image of Prague is very accurately hurt by Wenceslas Square and Old Town Square, which would be quite easy to change. On the other hand, it is compensated by the real security in that city, because in those cities abroad, it's a complete disaster. In Rome you get robbed by the first taxi driver, in New York a friend walked across the bridge and came back with a shot-up backpack. So we can't even imagine what it's like outside. Again, I have to correct that, taking into consideration how we're often very self-deprecating, that we're actually in paradise here and we don't have any ghettos. Yeah, we don't have as many homeless people rolling around the ground as they have elsewhere. So in our experience, tourists who come here are actually shocked that they can walk through town at three in the morning.

So yeah, we need to see it in a little bit of context. I see this as a weakness, that we need to upgrade Prague and make people feel at ease in the city centre. But I wouldn't say it's worse than other cities. I think it's many times worse there, abroad. I was in Germany recently, I was probably shocked. I was, what was it, it was either Cologne or Dusseldorf, I think it was Cologne, and it was terrible. I was told not to go to certain areas that were more or less close to the city centre during the day, because of a lot of different gangs and things like that. That just doesn't exist here. So still, we need to be more aware of the context and of the fact that we're totally in paradise here, not many people realize that.

[00:26:30.480] - Speaker 1

I'm surprised it's like this in Cologne. If you'd said Chicago or something...

[00:26:30.590] - Speaker 2

Well, I was really, really bummed out.

And actually, we talked to Study in Prague about supporting the ambassadors of Prague, which is great. We can give these students an experience, for example, we'll open the tower outside opening hours and something like that. To gradually build a relationship here with ambassadors who love Prague, who have studied here and who will be CEOs of some companies in ten years. So those are the kinds of programs that we find meaningful. And consider that under socialism, when various students from developing countries actually studied here, now you have someone in Vietnam who speaks Czech and I don't know, in Yemen who speaks Czech. And I think that's a very strong and underestimated line, the care for that ambassador group.

[00:27:30.560] - Speaker 1

Is that you or Study in Prague?

[00:27:32.540] - Speaker 2

It is under Study in Prague. But we have agreed that they have a select group of alumni who are simply enthusiastic and want to support, so they might even present Prague at trade fairs and such. And we agreed that we would do special treatment for them maybe twice a year to get them committed and motivated.

[00:27:55.610] - Speaker 1

That's great! Just an off-topic interjection. But we at the Expat Centre - actually, the Expat Centre is under International Relations - we're also launching the ambassador program now. We've got two people on there now - one is a YouTuber Jen Dreams Prague, I don't know if you're familiar with her, and the other is actually a random gentleman who messaged us on Instagram, but he's the CEO of Valeo, which is a company that makes self-driving cars. So that's what we're working on now too.

Okay, let's finish this. What do you think, which cities are competition for Prague and on the other hand, which could be a benchmark?

[00:28:39.080] - Speaker 2

Vienna and Berlin are certainly competitors and benchmarks. We probably communicate the most with Barcelona and Amsterdam in terms of benchmarks. After all, Amsterdam is coming here, as we have a common interest in how to deal with overtourism and those negative impacts and how to actually develop it further. So I think that for us those two are the most collaborative, actually probably naturally they just have the most conversations with us.

[00:29:22.470] - Speaker 1

So cool! If you have nothing more to add to this thread overall, we can call it a day.

[00:29:23.670] - Speaker 2

I don't think so.

Appendix no. 3: Interview transcript – Jaromír Beránek

[00:00:12.400] - Speaker 1

What do you understand by city branding?

[00:00:32.410] - Speaker 2

I think of it as an extension of the concept of destination management in the narrower sense. But as I was able to perceive it from the discussion with you, it is a bit like a marketing brand in a positive sense and with the ambition to target not only tourists but the perception of the city abroad. We can talk about country branding, where we have historically been taught in marketing that the best country brand is Germany and Switzerland. When something is said to be Made in Germany, that's a concept in itself.

So we actually came up with that a few years ago - with the idea that we could use the Prague brand to support acceleration activities and startups that are being implemented in Prague. In the end, it never happened, but the idea was to create a stamp like 'accelerated' or 'powered in Prague' or something like that. Which, of course, the question here already suggests, requires first building some position and reputation in the domain of the area. And in today's contemporary context, I think it's grasping a comprehensive marketing communication to reach different groups according to predefined needs in order to promote reputation, investment, tourism and business activities and of course, the reputation of the city, which would not only be the destination but also the perception of the location as a place with a good name, even if no one in particular is currently going there or has any ambitions to go there.

[00:02:30.950] - Speaker 1

That's great. Do you have any examples of cities from abroad where these branding activities work?

[00:02:39.050] - Speaker 2

Actually, the question is whether or not it is purposeful. I can think of a lot of examples of that, like maybe the oldest one historically that we all have in our minds, they had T-shirts that said I heart New York, but there I think that was maybe back when they didn't even think about it that much and it was more part of the independent souvenirs. It caught on and it was used for years and then I feel like only retroactively did it make it into the city's graphic manuals.

And as far as the European environment is concerned, I see a lot of inspiration in Vienna in this respect. Firstly, because we have been in contact with them a lot, and secondly because they manage to write the Viennese logo into most of their communication and work with it for activities that are linked to the city but are not directly under the city hall, that is, city companies or utilities. I don't know to what extent it's been in educational organizations, for example, but probably not there. But I feel like it is a very comprehensive example of how the city can approach this.

Then, of course, there are some completely side things like Paris, which everyone remembers through the Eiffel Tower pendants, much less the logo. But maybe that's also one really interesting thing that would be worth analyzing more and exploring how the positive perception of the city is succeeding today, especially abroad, but in those bigger countries and countries, even in the domestic market, yes specifically if it's not the only big capital, which Paris is, in the context of France. But for example in Poland, I think it is, in Germany to some extent too, in America too, where there are more of these metropolitan regions that can compete with each other, but especially on the international field. It occurs to me that Paris or Barcelona, are very much green metropolises. That is the intended effect, perhaps joining in the adaptation of a climate strategy.

If I look at the rest of the world, it's more likely to be subconscious associations, you know, Sydney - the Opera House, you name a few cities around the world, so the perception of the city, is co-determined by an architectural landmark or a famous native. In the case of some football stars who come from smaller islands, or I don't know. Like Björk - Iceland, right? Just like if most people know next to nothing about Liverpool, everyone knows that's where the Beatles are from.

[00:05:37.760] - Speaker 1

Great, thank you. How do you perceive Prague?

[00:05:43.740] - Speaker 2

That's a very complex question, so I'm going to narrow it down to the area of city branding. I see Prague as an attractive city, as one of the top European tourist destinations, as a city that I

think is quite successful in sending the message that it is safe, that there is a relatively high quality of life, that there is accessible, reliable and fast public transport.

However, there is very little talk about Prague being an interesting destination for startups, for innovative activities, and that entrepreneurship would thrive here in a broader sense. Unfortunately, what I would also very much like to see happen, for example, is that Prague is perceived as an attractive destination for university studies. Or it's thriving in some regions, but probably not in the way that most of us would imagine in the sense that we would be able to compete with other world cities. I think that Prague has great reserves, especially in communication, that strategies have been created and exist to some extent, but it has not been approached comprehensively.

And what is a great pity is that we are not able, especially in the tourism sector, to define and enforce some clear rules, which then leads to a lot of chaos. Here again, the examples from Paris, Vienna, and from Barcelona, show that regulation of tourism is important. It needs to be said that market mechanisms are totally failing in this respect. And if we talk about some aspect of sustainability, I have to give credit to those people who say that the historic city centre is being depopulated at the expense of other activities. And I'm not saying that in all cases we should try to keep the city the same as it is, but it should reach some maximum level beyond which, when we get beyond that, the character of the city is lost and the services that are offered in that particular place are primarily oriented towards a different target group than the local residents.

[00:08:07.350] - Speaker 1

Do you think this is how Prague is perceived abroad - as you just described it?

[00:08:12.060] - Speaker 2

It's all how information gets to me - and it's more like snippets of information rather than some detailed output of interviews and analysis and stuff. I think that Prague is primarily perceived as a tourist destination, to some extent as an interesting historical city where there are a lot of cultural activities going on, and what I think is very closely related to that, it's probably perceived as an interesting location and place to live. However, not as many people would realistically consider living in Prague anymore, which I can back up here with some, for example, conversations with people from EUSPA, who especially in the early days had quite

a hard time in the GSA to entice foreign workers to come to Prague - unless someone had their own experience here and found out that life here can be better in many ways than in Brussels, for example, which has some advantages, but again a lot of disadvantages.

I think that the biggest limit for Prague is still at least the perceived low level of language skills, the relatively low multiculturalism of the environment, which has its downsides and disadvantages, and of course the inflexibility in terms of processes and the introduction of new things.

[00:09:48.390] - Speaker 1

Do you think that Prague manages its reputation abroad sufficiently?

[00:09:52.380] - Speaker 2

Absolutely not, otherwise, we wouldn't be having this conversation. I think that historically in the Czech Republic, it has been more of a habit to work with this trend on a national level and that other cities are not much better off. I always find it very frustrating when I get my hands on some of those books from Austria or Switzerland, where they promote individual regions -I tend to knock my forehead sometimes and wonder why on earth they promote certain regions. But the branding and the way it's executed strikes me as three levels more professional than anything I've ever witnessed in the case of the Czech Republic. Not to mention the fact that I feel that such full-scale campaigns, even if it was just in those neighbouring countries, would probably be made with a bigger impact, have been done relatively little in this country. But again, let's be honest, there's a big link here with how tourism revenues are then distributed and how those particular regions are then incentivised to promote those tourism activities. My overwhelming perception of this is that tourism is important for Prague, but financially rather disadvantageous.

[00:11:14.820] - Speaker 1

And what do you think are the reasons that Prague is not managing its reputation?

[00:11:24.930] - Speaker 2

It was not a priority for the political representatives because it does not bring political points.

There was not even a given necessity in terms of some external actors who should try to manage the city, such as high unemployment. If we look back to the years 2000, and 2001, how and why the South Moravian Innovation Centre was created in Brno, then it was directly related to increased unemployment and the fall of Foxconn, which was operating in Brno. And it was some kind of a counter-reaction to a sequence of events that in fact never happened in Prague. Here, since the revolution, maybe with some other drop in the mid-90s or 97, then more extremely, the economic level has always gone up. The level of services I think has also been more or less steadily going up, if we leave aside the covid period. This means that Prague has never actually found itself in the position of being forced by external circumstances to work more on itself.

When I compare and contrast this with other problems such as unaffordable housing, and congested traffic, every political representative has to somehow confront this, and answer the unpleasant questions of the voters, while in the tourism sector, it is like, well, we are suffering here mainly in the broader area of destination management and it is more like waiting to see who comes up with an idea. But it's not the issue that primarily decides the election.

[00:13:08.940] - Speaker 1

Do you think that should be the issue?

[00:13:12.840] - Speaker 2

I don't think it should be the number one issue, but it should be seen as a more important issue. And that's also because if we want to be perceived as a more attractive destination and we want to be competitive compared to the world, even though it's still true that Prague is doing better than average. That competitiveness is not just determined by the success of that one region, but the whole surrounding area, at least the metropolitan region, so we have to aim for that higher gear. And if we're talking about transforming the Czech economy as a whole, then somewhere the people who are going to be involved in that have to get better education and competencies to be able to do that. Of course, there are opportunities elsewhere, they can go abroad, but that still applies to a smaller number of people, and long-term living abroad is already an extremely small slice of the population. That said, we should build those competencies primarily at home, and actually that experience - being able to compare yourself with the world - is also important to be able to see yourself and your own problems from some perspective. Which I think also

limits a lot of people in that they think "Well, we don't really have such a bad life here" and then those ambitions are lower than they could be from my point of view, and that's a pity.

[00:14:46.920] - Speaker 1

What should be the goal of creating city branding?

[00:14:47.100] - Speaker 2

There will certainly be several of these goals again. I think the primary goal should be to support the long-term development strategy, mission and vision of the city. That is, to help anchor the positioning of the city both inward and outward. Now, I mean like inward into the country, not necessarily just outward, and in relation to that, the city should do activities that are consistent with that. That is, if we are talking about wanting to encourage attracting foreign talent, one of the defined goals should be to focus on supporting entrepreneurship, supporting better tertiary education, and perhaps building affordable housing for people who are staying (in Prague) for a shorter period of time and don't have such a good chance of finding accommodation on the open market. Yeah, that is, and let's rather say what are the overarching goals. For me, it's increasing competencies, skills and making Prague more attractive as a destination for foreign investment and helping to transform the local and national economy.

[00:16:15.080] - Speaker 1

And during your time at City Hall - during the period (2018-2022) did you create any activities or were you part of activities that in some way built, influenced and had something to do with the creation of the brand?

[00:16:37.190] - Speaker 2

Not systemically. We have been in contact - not just with me but also with a number of colleagues from Prague City Tourism - in connection with the presentation of Prague at some international events. I think that the most intensive communication took place (and the aim was to bring it to an end) in connection with Expo Dubai. For many different reasons and despite two independent attempts, Prague's participation did not happen in the end.

Otherwise, I was more trying to follow some of my own axes, but it wasn't part of some overarching coherent strategy, so in some narrow slice of the field. I interacted with people in

other cities, or some companies and universities, but the imprint of that is very short-lived and certainly not totally replicable.

[00:17:34.940] - Speaker 1

What problems do you think the effort to create such a brand encounters?

[00:17:43.900] - Speaker 2

The problems are twofold. Firstly, it is a lack of perception or lack of need, which can be addressed to some extent by education in those areas. And I think with globalization progressing and inspiration spreading between cities amongst each other, it's more a matter of time before the city would come to that point even at its slow pace anyway.

The second issue is, of course, the lack of political leadership. There has been no one to pick it up off the ground and take it up as an important political issue, which in turn may be related to the fact that there is perhaps relatively less interest in awareness on the part of the electorate. But these are very, very closely interconnected, even though it may not be some super expensive thing, and conversely, the benefits in the medium and longer term may be quite substantial.

Then again, we are faced with the limitation of the outlook here, that what doesn't get done in one term is always a second- or third-tier activity, except maybe in major structural works, where of course a lot of people in those political positions can boast that it is happening and not necessarily be there for the ribbon-cutting.

[00:19:10.070] - Speaker 1

How do you think the perception of city branding as an important part of a city's strategy could be shifted?

[00:19:15.740] - Speaker 2

A positive example from abroad. I think it is important to show how and where and why it works.

Trying to calculate some sort of financial value of the benefits the city would get from this.

Certainly to talk about it as something that is simply part of some good practice, perhaps resulting from recommendations of international organisations like the OECD.

And of course, it's relevant to talk to the universities to see if, for example, in those economics or developmental foreign policy fields where students may come into contact with this, is it given enough attention in the educational curriculum, if, like, even if I simplify it a lot, like financial planning or accounting for economists in those other fields, is it emphasized that this is something that needs to be addressed, that it's just an important topic or not.

And then, of course, with that financial return, there is some need to allocate the funds so that there is a clear commitment and a clear attribution of responsibility.

[00:20:43.340] - Speaker 1

You've set me up for another question - who do you think should be the guarantor of this project? Should it be the city or some city organization?

[00:20:49.100] - Speaker 2

It should definitely be the city, on a political level. However, the municipal organisation can implement it and in fact, most of the activities do not have to be done by the city under its own roof. But it should be communicated under the brand of the city, it should be approved at the political level, and the city should actively sign up for wanting something like this and not leave it to, say, partial activities of the private sector, which are also going on in some areas, but they can never be as comprehensive and interconnected as if the city tries to grasp it and do it well.

[00:21:28.760] - Speaker 1

Who should be part of the development of that strategy and be among the stakeholders?

[00:21:34.940] - Speaker 2

It will build on those goals that the city will expect from it. In the case of Prague, I think that apart from half to two-thirds of the council members who have at least a partial jurisdiction, it should be the majority of joint stock companies that are committed to some new technologies. They should be universities operating in Prague, even universities of artistic direction, because part of the city branding should be some quality graphic communication, design and perhaps

drawing attention to the related phenomena. We can't leave out representatives of the business sectors either. And then I would like to see some independent opposition from foreign cities that are perceived as leaders. And then I think that this topic is not so important for our own citizens, for our own public, but it is possible to do some kind of a survey among their citizens in the framework of these discussions with foreign partners to see if such a communication would be relevant for them - also with regard to cultural contexts because when you do international communication you always have to adapt the message to the local audience - and if it would work for them.

[00:23:10.950] - Speaker 1

How do you think Prague should be perceived abroad?

[00:23:33.600] - Speaker 2

Well, I think Prague should be perceived as a city that continues to build on its best historical traditions, a city that has ambitions to develop and a city that cuts itself off from some mafia practices. Simply so that, as in neither a hint, nor a skid, nor a speed bump, there is no flavour of the wild unregulated environment of Eastern Europe where mafia practices thrive. Well, and I've said everything else before - that means a city that is educated, a city that is innovative, a city that is good to live in, a city where you can rely on the functioning of public infrastructure and public services.

[00:24:19.660] - Speaker 1

What do you think are the strengths of Prague that it could highlight in its communication?

[00:24:28.410] - Speaker 2

I think that in general, it is probably true for the Czech Republic that we have the potential to offer a good price-performance ratio here. It occurred to me that it could be nicely compared to, say, Skoda, with some small extra value-added, focusing on details that help us differentiate ourselves from someone else. I think that in this respect Prague cannot be seen in isolation from the rest of the Czech Republic or the Central European region.

Our great advantage is our location in the middle of Europe, the geographical proximity of several other large metropolises, and to some extent the potential to be that international environment that we don't have here now. And, of course, there are also attractive tourist

destinations around Prague within an hour or two of the Czech Republic or neighbouring countries. And a strong manufacturing sector, and a long (tradition) in the technology sector. And a high proportion of the skilled and educated population. A reasonable level of services and willingness of the local population to a quality degree by a technological leader.

Over the last few days, there has been a very hilarious discussion about why you can't pay by card after the covid and the abolition of the EET, because of course the grey economy again among other things. But at the same time, it now comes in the middle of a contrast with how and what people actually want and how they naturally behave themselves. It's just one of many snippets, but the Czech banking industry is one of the most modern and innovative in Europe and so is something that can be replicated in other areas. I can very much imagine that if some barriers to entry are removed here, cycling will start to flourish significantly, especially with the inclusion of electric bikes around the city, if people are not afraid to ride in traffic. I can see us testing some of the brand-new technology here in the context of regular urban traffic as well, because people are naturally curious and one potential strength is, even here, given the low proportion of religious people in the population, we don't have some predefined behavioural pattern and we can actually behave in a good way, but also in a bad way, in the way that suits each of us.

[00:27:26.590] - Speaker 2

Do you think we have no moral principles?

[00:27:29.110] - Speaker 1

No, that's something else entirely. I think that if there is some social discussion going on and those moral principles are rubbing off over time and reflecting those current developments, then it's not like you're going to hear some just-so MP from Moravia giving a hate speech that's against marriage for all that's not supported by any argument other than "I just feel that way". I think that Czechs actually have the potential to work more with facts, with data-based information. Because if they've patiently explained these things, they're not as susceptible to manipulation as some other nations.

[00:28:16.610] - Speaker 1

Do you think it could actually be applied to the city branding like that?

[00:28:22.070] - Speaker 2

Well, clearly and unequivocally.

[00:28:23.930] - Speaker 1

And the support among politicians?

[00:28:29.340] - Speaker 1

So part of the problem is that we are obviously not yet very capable and we don't have the know-how or the processes to assign a financial value to any factors. We only work with finance as a number that comes out of accounting and not anymore with those positive and negative externalities that we can also assign value to these days. But just as generously, in quotation marks, we neglect and disregard them because it suits us or doesn't suit us.

[00:29:07.630] - Speaker 1

What do you see as Prague's weaknesses?

[00:29:16.680] - Speaker 2

I perceive the weaknesses of Prague as what has been discussed here for a long time - the unsatisfactory situation around housing availability, which I think applies to all people who want to spend more than one working day here or one free day when travelling somewhere else, because it naturally affects the availability of the service sector. I still see the relatively lower language skills of at least part of the population and the inflexibility of the political and bureaucratic decision-making processes as a weakness. This means that things still take an order of magnitude longer here than elsewhere. But this is not specific to Prague to such an extent, but rather at the national level, which is then secondary to Prague.

[00:30:10.440] - Speaker 1

And which European or world cities do you see as competition for Prague and on the other hand as a benchmark?

[00:30:20.040] - Speaker 2

The biggest competition is logically within our region. Of course, we will always compete with Vienna, to some extent with the East. Warsaw, for example, has taken off in some way in the

last years, but even Budapest and Berlin, the cities are already more culturally distant from us than Vienna and Munich.

And the benchmark on the other side, I would lean on Vienna - one of the many reasons is that it's the right way for us to go, with the Austrians, whether we want to admit it or not, we're just much more similar than we often think. Certainly culturally much closer than with people from eastern Slovakia.

I guess it would depend on how and what we compare. In general, the problem of the Czech environment is the lack of support for families with small children and the lack of support for women who don't just want to take care of their families but want to find part-time opportunities. Scandinavia can be a great benchmark for us here. That's why I don't want to bring it up at first because the cultural proximity is not so obvious at first glance.

Actually, I think we can often learn a lot from smaller cities than Prague. Not like two orders of magnitude, but a city that has 200-300 thousand inhabitants can be more accessible to us in many ways because you don't have as many decision-making levels, as many districts. Well yeah, I guess like that can be classified as undoubtedly one of the big disadvantages or weaknesses of Prague, the fragmentation of local government of 57 boroughs, even London doesn't have that many.

Appendix no. 4: Interview transcript – Lenka Kolářová

[00:00:04.510] - Speaker 1

The first two questions are to warm up. The first question is what do you understand by city branding, or branding Prague? The aim of this question is to understand if you, as a city representative, understand what city branding means.

[00:00:34.830] - Speaker 2

For me, city branding is the idea that is created in the minds of the target audience. Whether those target groups are tourists, which is the functional line for us, or talent, investors, or even European institutions. That city brand, in my opinion, should be blended from the political to the economic side of the city. So for me, that's what should be associated with the name of Prague or with the name of a particular city in the minds of the target group.

[00:01:21.660] - Speaker 1

Do you have any particular cities that you can say have good branding?

[00:01:26.880] - Speaker 2

I guess I'm not objective in this because my work makes me focus more closely on those cities and what they do. So I have a little bit deeper insight and it's hard to say if what I think is good is to choose that city for a particular target group or if maybe other people feel that way. But for me, great city brands are Barcelona, Copenhagen, and recently Helsinki has resonated a lot for me. But because I follow it quite closely, I can't tell you if, apart from the fact that their websites or information on it looks very good, they've managed to target it correctly and if it's translated into anything. So theoretically and after I did my research, those cities seem to me to have it set up well and they're doing good things. But it's a question of whether they're successful because I'm not the target audience. It's hard to say.

[00:03:03.720] - Speaker 1

How do you perceive Prague?

[00:03:09.780] - Speaker 2

To me, Prague is a terrible slob, if I do say so myself. Prague has become stuck or cemented in being the capital and somehow thinks it gets everything on a platter and doesn't have to do anything for it. By being the capital city, of course, the infrastructure is there, and the opportunities are numerous. And the city doesn't realise that it's not enough, and by staying in the same place it's losing out terribly in the competition. That is why I often give the example of Brno and call it the second-place syndrome. Because anyone who is not number one for some objective reason knows that they have to try to be successful, to attract talent, to attract European money, and they have to buckle down. And Prague hasn't done that because it thinks it doesn't have to. There really is, although I don't like it, a form of 'pragocentrism' where Prague thinks it's the navel of the world and having that capital label is all it needs. And that's a great pity.

The tourist line is a bit different because historically tourist marketing was more understandable and more comprehensible. That means it has a longer history and easier KPIs - it's easier to know that it's working because more tourists are coming. And that's another thing. Prague is

addressing the fact that it has an amazing historical background and a lot of other things to do here, but it's also losing out in the tourism industry because it's not engaging in new forms of tourism, like gastro tourism or cultural tourism. Prague is still dealing with the fact that some of these things are here, they are working, and that's it. So for me, Prague is actually a terribly sad example of not tapping into that potential, not working on itself, and there's a sort of a walking or lazy pace and nothing is going anywhere. There's a lack of vision here because Prague is just a capital city and that's enough for us.

[00:05:45] - Speaker 1

Why do you think that is?

[00:05:49] - Speaker 2

And that's a question I've been asking myself for a long time. One of those elements is a certain discontinuity in political leadership. Because when you compare yourself to a successful city and you find that, for example, in the position of mayors or the governors in the regions, they have been there for more than one term, that means that they've had more of a chance to set something up and continue to show some impact or that success. In our case, after those four years, when it's completely changed, ideally always the opposite spectrum replaces the political representation and says let's start completely differently, everything that was done wrong, just doesn't lead to working on something consistently.

Another opinion of mine, and this one is personal. What is missing here is a strategic vision of the city - in the sense of let's say what we are going to do, where Prague should be in 30 years. You mentioned the IPR strategic plan before. I agree that there are strategic plans and sub-documents. But by moving that strategic part under IPR, which means basically out of the city authority, even though it's paid for by the city, the city just doesn't listen to that. It's a huge shame that there's no universally accepted vision to work towards. There are great documents such as the Climate plan, or Circular economy strategy. There are a number of sub-documents in important areas, but there is no overarching, all-encompassing plan. I'll mention again the Brno one, which is Brno 2050 at the moment and it's a strategy that the city of Brno has developed in collaboration with universities and with the business sector and they have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. That to me is the main reason why the city of Prague is not able to move forward.

And this is reflected not only in local politics, which is dealt with rather in an ad hoc approach but certainly in foreign relations, which unfortunately require much more time and partial activities to be successful. And not only for the tourist sector, attracting talent, but also for getting European projects. Because if you don't have a clear mandate or guidance on what projects are interesting, and on what topics, you're absolutely lost. And this is also something that is extremely detrimental to us because we are not one of the ones that would benefit from EU structural funds. We always have only one operational programme and we are happy for it.

So for me, instability and lack of strategic vision are probably the two main problems why I think it can't be done.

[00:09:10.380] - Speaker 1

Have you run into any other problems?

[00:09:28.310] - Speaker 2

There was one thing, but I'm conflicted about it. It's financing because, at least from the beginning, the city brand is just an expensive affair - both in money and, of course, in human resources. But first and foremost, the finances. I'm not saying that you can't do a city brand in a low-cost version with some relatively functional activities, but if you start from scratch, at least the research costs an awful lot of money. And by the fact that the outcome has actually been elusive for quite a long time and I can't see people putting much stock in it, so by the fact that all these things have to be approved, especially the bigger ones, I see a big obstacle there in that nobody will approve you for larger sums up into the millions for something that isn't visible in the first place and isn't a priority. I see that as a big problem.

If I talk specifically about my journey within the municipality just with the topic of branding, we had the misfortune of starting to do it just before covid started. On the one hand, you can certainly say that there was more time to devote to it, but unfortunately on the other hand the financial resources were needed absolutely somewhere else and the moment the covid was relatively over and we felt that we could breathe and move on, the war in Ukraine started. That again requires attention and funding and focus elsewhere, and that is not entirely easy to fight. So that was my experience again.

And next, but I think this is the fault of Prague City Hall, is the insufficient or meaningless distribution of mandates of who should be involved. You know yourself, we've been struggling with cooperation with marketing a few times, but it's hard to say whether it's just some personal grudge or whether it's just a lack of explained structure. That's the question.

[00:12:03.420] - Speaker 1

Who do you think should be involved? Who should be the guarantor?

[00:12:10.640] - Speaker 2

This topic is at the intersection of foreign relations and marketing. And if I talk specifically about how it works at the Prague City Hall, the marketing department there is dedicated to purely local information and targets local recipients. So, logically, it would make sense to me that it would be dedicated to foreign relations.

Ideally, of course, there should be an organizational unit, be it external relations, for example, that will take care of all this, because it's not just about marketing as such, let's say B2C marketing in the sense of yes, there will be a road closure here, Prague will provide 15,000 CZK to the new citizens here. The marketing that we are unfortunately extremely lacking, apart from the city branding, is communication, let's say B2B or G2B. We are incredibly lacking in communication with other sectors, be it universities, professional associations or companies individually. These are other entities that the city should be working with. And the other criterion is that communication should be consistent and aligned, whether it's inward, outward, or at the level of just those partners. That's why I think ideally there should be a department, an institute, an association - I don't know what to call it - that would cover all of this, because the narrative, even if it then takes different forms, should be unified.

[00:14:01.330] - Speaker 1

Do you think it should stay within the city or should a specific organization be created to handle it? Or should it be an outside facilitator?

[00:14:10.690] - Speaker 2

Again, this is a terribly difficult question with different foreign experiences. I can't choose the right option because there are several examples from abroad and each one works. Some work better, some work worse. For me, the absolutely ideal example is an external entity, but with a

very close link to the city. This is for several reasons: in terms of greater flexibility, greater budget autonomy, and - we're not going to kid ourselves - in terms of greater credibility, because at least external partners from companies and in some cases universities don't want to work with the city at all because they have historically had some bad experiences with public administration. So the header of an external entity, even if it is an extended arm of the city, I think would also give more credibility to that entity.

At the same time, I feel that there should be a very close connection to the city because the city is the one that should provide that reality. After all, city branding is not just about putting up nice posters, having a nice microsite or a competition or Reels, but it has to be reflected in reality. That means if you attract talent, you have to have something to attract them to, and that's what the city will provide. So there should be a two-way, very intense communication where the city says what area it needs help in city branding, and whichever entity will help. Conversely, the external body, because it will have access to a huge amount of data, experience and examples of good practice, should bring that information back to the city. Ideally, this should be in the form of a spiral towards improving both institutions.

[00:16:40.180] - Speaker 1

You mentioned several problems. Can you imagine how these problems could be overcome? How to actually shift the perception of city branding as an important part of the city's strategy?

[00:17:01.300] - Speaker 2

I think the way to solve it would be some kind of political backup. Our culture is not ready for these things to happen from the bottom up and unfortunately, we are that hierarchical structure, meaning that the mandate or the impetus for change has to come from the top. That's not to say that some advice, good experience, and consultation can't come from below, but I think without a strong political mandate it's hard to make city branding a priority. And I say that also knowing that the moment the political mandate changes, it can change completely. But I think that in the situation when that political mandate lasts at least for a while, it's possible to show at least a few of those quick fixes or at least partial successes, and then it's harder to undo it, even if the direction changes completely. So I guess the political mandate would be the key for me. Like I said, finances are terribly important, but I can imagine a situation where you really start with very little and you start with a tool that doesn't require that much money but can somehow direct it. So that's the main solution for me personally.

[00:18:38.110] - Speaker 2

Who should be involved in the city branding?

[00:18:47.950] - Speaker 1

In the sense that I see city branding as a tool that should achieve some results - it's not just to check off that I have something - so I think that other stakeholders should be involved in city branding that can benefit from it in some way. Whether it's universities, companies or different associations. They should all have a say in some form because firstly it should help them, and secondly, I think they could then help us. And if they don't agree with the city branding, what it says or what it stands for, then nobody is going to help us.

One of the things I think city branding has to have to work is authenticity. I don't think we should be so confident that we're going to say we're going to come up with a city brand from the table here that suddenly companies are going to benefit from it all over the world and because of that, we're going to get Microsoft or AI research agencies here because we as officials wrote it at the table and we think that's going to save everything. This is just an area that requires tremendous collaboration, not just across government, but with the city as a whole.

[00:20:21.270] - Speaker 1

What should be the goal of creating this city brand?

[00:20:26.240] - Speaker 2

It matters a lot. There may be several goals. It could be that foreign students will want to study here, that we will get another European institution, that we will get investors, not from China, but from some countries we want, and that we will increase jobs in Prague. There may be several of these goals, but I think it is very important that the city rationally considers what these goals are and adjusts the city branding accordingly. It will certainly be nice to have a strong brand as such, but I think that if you start from scratch, you will never create a strong brand that encompasses all the goals and works as a one-size-fits-all.

Defining these goals should be one of the first activities you do. Why do you want to do this? Because although I'm a big believer in city branding, if you don't know why you're doing it, I don't think it's worth doing at all because it's never going to work. The passion for why you're

doing it and the fuel for why you're doing it won't be there to sustain it long-term. If I have a new narrative, a couple of posters here, and a Facebook page, first of all, that's a very simplistic vision of what city branding is and secondly, it's never going to work. So the goals of why I'm doing it are one of the first steps I think - to tell myself why I'm doing it or if I should be doing it at all. If I'm not able to define those goals, then don't do it at all. That's no shame, we're going to make the hall a super tourist destination and that's just the way it is.

[00:22:36.200] - Speaker 1

Have you developed any activities to create this city branding?

[00:22:50.240] - Speaker 2

In 2018, Prague commissioned an economic diplomacy strategy, which includes the first mention of working on a brand in the non-tourist segment. On the basis of this, an action plan was created that already mentioned the city brand and partial activities have already started to work on it. A strategy for the economic presentation of Prague abroad was created, on the basis of which several agencies were approached that were able to help in some way with the creation of a city brand abroad. However, due to the financial demands, covid, etc., all these activities stopped. Then at some point, a year later, let's say, the issue came up again. The aim was to innovate how Prague's foreign relations from the passive status quo and create something more strategic, more long-term. And the city brand gained more and more attention because it is something that should actually be a superstructure of all those activities. Now, after the change of political representation, everything has stopped again.

[00:24:34.560] - Speaker 1

Okay, let's take a little step back on the general perception of Prague. How do you think Prague is perceived abroad?

[00:24:48.600] - Speaker 1

I feel that Prague is lucky that it is still perceived relatively well abroad. Prague is much more visible than the Czech Republic as such, which is great on the one hand, but on the other hand, it is perceived very well in terms of alcohol tourism, and drug tourism, which are things that of course nobody wants to encourage. And what is rarely associated with Prague is the quality of universities and cultural activities - those aspects that we think would be nice to promote or that would be nice to associate with Prague. Those are not really in the narrative right now. It

is known that there are smart people in Prague or in the Czech Republic, even at the level of those European institutions and Brussels. That is definitely known. But those people are also largely unambitious and we are not doing much to promote ourselves in those European institutions.

So the position that we have is that Prague is great for a two-day trip for cheap beer, but it's not perceived as a knowledge hub, as a cultural centre of Europe, that's just missing. We're kind of a grey area and just one of the checklist items when someone is driving through Europe. Sure, it would be a shame to leave out Prague because there's Charles Bridge, Prague Castle, and still cheap beer, but there's not the depth. I see that as a huge shame.

[00:27:00.520] - Speaker 1

Great. I was going to ask you about Prague's strengths and weaknesses but I think you've pretty much covered it. Feel free to add anything you can think of. If not, one last question - which world cities are competitors for Prague?

[00:27:15.730] - Speaker 2

Maybe I'll add to the strengths, and we don't see much of this here and it's certainly not part of the current narrative, but the transport and safety are really the strengths that make us stand out and shoot us up to the top of the rankings compared to all the global cities, even European cities, which is very fortunate and probably just a remnant of some socialist decisions. We're still doing extremely well in this.

And which European institutions are competitors? And which have not yet overtaken us? It's interesting how the V4 capitals have historically been part of a larger whole, so they are all very similar. Some have gotten a bit more up to speed, whether it's Budapest or Warsaw, and despite all the national difficulties have managed to attract, for example, big investors and companies. And they are working on their image. So there I think it's a huge competition and at the same time, they are already several steps ahead. Historically, of course, Vienna is a competitor because in many aspects it is comparable and interchangeable.

If I want to talk about the benchmark, for me, what I would like to shift towards is mainly the Nordic cities, but also the Baltic republics in some cases. Helsinki, Stockholm, Tallinn. Those are the cities that I think are doing it well. And they are able to translate the benefits they get

from foreign investment and foreign companies into innovating themselves. And that to me is what ideally should work like that. So the fact that Tallinn is one of the most digitalized metropolises in Europe, if not the world, brings benefits for those external foreign entities that come there, as well as for its own citizens. And that's something for me is an example that it works. Copenhagen - a great, great thing.

And otherwise, competition is extremely difficult in this because even who decides how to move, where to move, and where to invest, in many cases, as much as we often don't think about it, is very subjective. So even if I think that Prague is losing its image, somebody can really appreciate the atmosphere that is here, even the cheap beer or the proximity to nature, and it works. So we shouldn't be ashamed of what we have and not try to suppress it, but instead, work with it consciously and balance it with what we think Prague has to offer and maybe it was hidden until now. It's hard to say more than that because the competition is really hard to measure. The competition is all over Europe and it can often surprise us that we can have competition from a region in southern Bohemia without even thinking about it because we might want to compare ourselves to Budapest, to Paris. Yet we may find, based on data and further investigation, that the competition is somewhere else entirely, and it is not the capital. This is because, perhaps, they are better able to get European funds there and, as a result, create better infrastructure and incentives.

In the end, for me, as I said, when I look at the cities that are doing well, it's mostly about the fact that there's some political stability. And I feel like the quick turnover and always trying to do differently and ideally the opposite of your predecessors doesn't lead to anything good. Whether it's Vienna, Ljubljana, or other cities - just the fact that there is at least relative stability, and it doesn't have to be stability in one particular person, but at least in direction, is something that makes all the work terribly easy. Because whether it's transportation projects, big construction projects, or even that city branding, those are things that just take time and continuity and they can't work, that they start and then two years later they completely change priorities. And apart from the fact that it won't work practically, we will discredit ourselves terribly because we will be totally opaque and non-transparent. It is better not to do anything at all.

I was extremely surprised by Ljubljana, where the mayor has been mayor for 16 or 17 years, and he is personally behind those unconventional or often criticized projects. When they

decided to close the centre to traffic, he went around everybody, he was behind it personally and he did an awful lot because he was able to get them on his side. It's not that that official decides something from the table and then 3 years later there's someone else who says something different again, but by having that personal guarantee or that personal power there, you can see that those things work a little bit differently.

But I understand, Prague is an incredibly complex ecosystem, cooperation with municipal districts, plus as a region, it is terribly complex. But we're not alone in this. Other cities have it too, maybe not as fragmented, but they are not far from it. We can't just use the excuse that we have a hard time doing it, because of the partisanship in that city, that's not an excuse. It's about the fact that there's consistently no demand being created and no awareness being created that these things are needed.

[00:35:07.860] - Speaker 1

And who should make that demand?

[00:35:13.650] - Speaker 2

And that, I think, is that there should be a defined leader or owner of this issue from among the political entities who, of course, should have a team of people under him who are capable of making or finding out those arguments, those data. It should be his activity, his job. Like when Deputy Hřib goes around the boroughs, and the surrounding counties, and negotiates rail or rail transit. That is how a person who will deal with the strategic direction of the city not only inwards but also abroad should work. And I still think, unfortunately, based on the experience I have at the moment, that it has to be someone from the political leadership. I have a feeling now, maybe frustration, that from the bottom up it's just impossible. If you don't get at least some of the political leadership on your side, it's not going to work.

Appendix no. 5: Interview transcript – Ondřej Boháč

[00:00:05.010] - Speaker 1

Just to put that in context, this is for the period 2018-22, I am looking at the last electoral term and I want to analyse what activities have been going on, why the city branding is not working at the moment and what could be done to make it work. So, just to make it clear at the beginning

that it is clear what we are talking about, I would ask you to try to define what you think city branding means.

[00:00:28.440] - Speaker 2

Yeah, so I'm not an expert on it, but my impression of it is that it's a label we use to define how we perceive Prague. I don't mean a label like a physical label, but some kind of description of how we perceive Prague as city leaders and what emotion or impression should people who visit the city take away from it, how we would like them to see the city.

[00:00:56.760] - Speaker 1

Do you have examples from abroad that you think work?

[00:01:00.270] - Speaker 2

Well, it's tough. I've never really looked into it. But for example, a very famous brand, which came about very accidentally because I was talking to the local mayor about it, is 'Berlin is sexy!'. Actually, I think it worked quite well for a while. I think it captured what they wanted to give to the city and its appeal. And it worked.

[00:01:28.620] - Speaker 1

Great. How do you perceive Prague? How do you think it is communicated and what is its image?

[00:01:48.390] - Speaker 2

I think that there are too many players in Prague, too many institutions that have their own opinions about this, and those opinions are often not compatible. And that the fact that Prague is unnamed and it's failing to do so is evidence of how the city is run because there are too many players on the scene and they never agree. Some think of Prague as a city for exclusive tourists, others are actually happy with the way it is, that it's doing some business. And it's a question of what it brings to the city if we take the tourist part into consideration. The paradox of Prague is that really all the tourism is happening in one per cent of the area and sometimes it's a pity, but it is understandable because the amphitheatre of Prague is just so famous and unique. On the other hand, I think that the city actually lives a little bit from its essence and by inertia and that there's actually nothing happening here that could be well presented. But we

should try to attract people other than tourists, which I would be happy to see, a little bit different type of tourists here, but then you just have to see the city differently.

[00:03:19.250] - Speaker 1

Yeah, and why do you think Prague doesn't manage its reputation abroad enough?

[00:03:30.770] - Speaker 2

First of all, I think that Prague itself is terribly strong - it's Charles Bridge, the centre is terribly strong. It's terribly wrong to say that there's something else there. It's like a backdrop, it's actually a bit featureless, that's a pity, but the backdrop is actually terribly strong. It's what sells the city. It's that - everybody knows this, and they don't know if it's in Chechnya or in the Czech Republic, but everybody actually knows Prague and that it has this basic brand. I think it's awfully hard to turn this around or somehow move it somewhere else.

The second thing that is difficult and that is actually sad. First, there's the backdrop but then what's the content? Really, people come here, I think mostly, to get drunk for cheap and that's what just fills the city. It's terribly hard to turn that around, even though the city has gotten a terribly bad and crappy brand out of it, but it's hard to do anything about it in our state, the way public administration is run. We don't have the authority to do it because many different players and different districts are involved. Well actually it's not what Berlin has or what Paris has, who are able to actually say quite clearly in some pyramid "We want a change of direction", we can't do this. It's extremely over-stabilized and that's where these pubs and these different beer rounds thrive. It's a terribly profitable business for the people who are in it. I think the city, for example, has a completely lousy income from these pubs and so on and that's clearly a negative impact, that we have very little economic income. Even the economy of the city, if it's based on cheap booze, it does not have a very good future. It's just a bad turnaround. The people who are in the business are happy with it, and what it gives to the city is questionable, but they always have some ties to running the city and it's very difficult to change or realign it.

[00:05:42.100] - Speaker 1

I have a question here about what activities have been undertaken on your part to create an image of Prague. I think that we can make it specific to the strategic plan, where it is written, among other things, that it is necessary to make tourism a bit more marketable and not to attract them on quantity but rather on quality. At the same time, it emphasises attracting talent from

abroad, attracting investment and various other topics. What was this based on when you were preparing it and how do you think it is being implemented at the moment?

[00:06:20.300] - Speaker 2

It fails to deliver, that is for sure. That's sad. I don't think there is any city in Europe that doesn't want to be cultural or innovative. I don't think it's that complicated to come up with this, it's a kind of general strategy of all cities in the competition of those European cities. And this doesn't need to be invented in any special way. Moreover, Prague has a great advantage in that it is absolutely dominant within the country and does not have to compete.

[00:06:57.520] - Speaker 1

Do you think not even with Brno?

[00:06:58.780] - Speaker 2

I think Brno is doing things we don't care about. And it's unfair to Brno, I don't mean that in a bad way, but I think that if we could maybe do what they're good at, like innovation or life, if we could reorient things here a little bit and focus more on that, that we could pull those Brno activities down too because that magnet is very strong. Within the Czech Republic, it is unfair to compete with Prague, very. But even within those neighbouring countries or whatever - Vienna is specific, but otherwise Prague is really terribly dominant in its own right. You still have it that when you're in Munich and you put activities on TripAdvisor, what to do is go there for a day trip to Prague. You almost get that in Paris as an offer as well.

So I think that's actually not a hard thing to say, that it's supposed to be innovative, cultural, and attract talent. And then the other thing is how it's being implemented. We have an extremely strong starting position. It's just that we live from the essence and like I said at the beginning, we don't really have that need. These people are coming here even though we're stopping them. That means we don't have the need to retool and say "We need someone here, what do we need to do?"

[00:08:18.250] - Speaker 1

How do you think these problems could be fixed? What could you do about it, both to create that need and to start to implement these strategies, especially within that city and within the urban ecosystem?

[00:08:37.020] - Speaker 2

I don't think that's possible in the current era. It's very much about the setup of how the city is run and Prague has an extremely high number of politicians per population, so it's just a given. If you compare it to Bratislava, Matúš Vallo is able to significantly turn around the image of that city in one and a half terms because he has an awful lot of competence to do that and all the broad team that is under him, including city hall, are doing that for him. That momentum there, if there's somebody who has the idea and the energy, they also have the legislative tools and the competence to deliver that shift or change. And we don't have that. For us, just the whole situation is really extremely stable. We have public administration and city government set up for a time when there's a lot of money and there's no problem, we're comfortable and we're doing this kind of maintenance policy. But in general, our public administration is not set up for that change policy. And then what we're talking about rebranding, which is some kind of change, slow maybe - it's not a revolution, it's an evolution, but we can't do that. There are too many players, too many actors. We have really set up a system that is incapable of change, and the moment there is a flood, for example, or a crisis of any kind, suddenly we are very much operational. But that's because we turn off the normal rules. They stop applying and at that moment we are able to deliver. It's not about the incompetence of people or absence of ideas, it's just that the system in our country is so complicated that you just can't deliver that kind of result in one term or two terms. So it's better for every politician to keep it the same and make Wow Prague posters.

That we dislike what we have because we just don't have to do anything, the city is attractive, although I think it's slowly going downhill, but so far so good. And the other thing is that if somebody wanted to do it to be efficient, it's undeliverable in that system.

[00:11:11.490] - Speaker 1

And why is that?

[00:11:15.450] - Speaker 2

You have to convince such a large number of people who are your opponents that you have no chance of agreeing. Then in the end you end up wondering why do it if everyone is happy and doesn't like the change. You need a lot more energy to make that change than you do to function normally. And no one actually sees it as a problem.

Some people are bothered by it, and what is an even more extremely stabilizing element of this system is that tourism is concentrated in an awfully small area, and the people who used to live there don't live there anymore. That means that politicians aren't really confronted to any serious degree with the fact that there's some unmanageable environment and they can't put their kids to bed at night or do any shopping. Nobody lives there anymore. Central Prague has lost population, it has 30,000 residents today while in 1990, 100,000 people lived there. It's just a dead city, where they've made a kind of ghetto for tourists, so they don't bother anybody. And the rest of Prague doesn't go there much either. It's not good.

[00:12:28.810] - Speaker 1

How do you think that the perception of those needed changes as an important part of the city's development could be shifted?

[00:12:36.700] - Speaker 2

I think this is where you have to start with things that are attractive and visible to people. The Vltava Philharmonic project, for example, clearly has great potential in this regard if it can be implemented. And if we look at what the Elbphilharmonie project has done with Hamburg there, that can really be a significant magnet. In all seriousness, it's a full counterbalance to, say, Prague Castle or the historic Centre, which undoubtedly generates a completely different kind of visitor and a significant amount. It's not just the musical content per se, which is also significant, but it's the fact that it's a place that can then if it's good, generate significant traffic. It's going to show a new face of Prague that's modern, honours that historical tradition and naturally spreads that concentration into the city. We don't have that kind of thing here at all. We have the Dancing House, which I don't think we would allow today simply because of the conservationists, the environment, and some associations that would be against it.

[00:14:06.250] - Speaker 1

Who do you think should be the guarantor of the new city branding strategy?

[00:14:12.850] - Speaker 2

The mayor, definitely.

[00:14:16.000] - Speaker 1

Should it stay right in the city hall? Shouldn't it be done by a city organization?

[00:14:20.440] - Speaker 2

No, definitely the city. Basically, the “Berlin is sexy” thing, that was from the mayor at the time. But I think that's a absolutely significant political message, that's not professional. Whoever is running that city and wants to move it somewhere, that's definitely a mayor, that's not a bureaucrat or any institution. Of course, then it has some carriers, someone has to fulfil it, for example, Prague City Tourism, they can reinforce it. But again they do something like maintenance, but they are not supposed to deliver the change.

[00:14:58.380] - Speaker 1

Who would you include among the stakeholders who should determine what the city branding strategy should look like?

[00:15:04.220] - Speaker 2

We don't have a political culture here that takes a strategy and implements it, that's not the case. That is why we have an incredible number of strategic objectives that are all well thought out. But it's not that a politician would come here, because there are a lot of them right now, and they would take a strategy and start implementing that. Local elections in our country are always a festival of ideas because everybody feels that they have to profile themselves as to what is their issue, and why they should be taken seriously.

And in this situation, you can't really succeed with rebranding because at that point you're going to have like 57 opinions about what rebranding is and what Prague is. So, that's why you can't do it. And the strategy is exactly the same thing, we do strategies for different reasons, mostly because the European Union is pushing us to do it. To get subsidies, we have to have a strategic plan. That was the motivation for the city to approve it. It's terrible. And of course, it's used sometimes when I need to push an idea of mine and if I happen to find it in the strategy, I'll lean on it. If it's not there, I ignore it.

And then I think that this will happen at the point where the city might be in some serious financial trouble, that might happen, or some change might happen where suddenly the tourists don't come and they don't come back. Maybe there was a chance during the covid to turn this around, but it didn't happen. So it's back on again and we've got the world as it was before,

that's understandable. But I think that for us it's only moments like this, just like the flood of 2002, which just washed away Karlín and gave it a new face, or the covid, these sort of big moments, when the apparatus is ready for it, it has a chance to stick its foot in the door and turn around. But in the normal run that we pretend is now, it's not a topic and nobody cares. There are tourists here, and as for the politicians they've got enough to worry about when they're dealing with parking spaces.

[00:17:27.850] - Speaker 1

Just a quick interjection - I was already at the City Hall during the covid and at that time, unfortunately, it was perceived that it was just the marketing, so of course it was not a priority. We were trying to do that.

[00:17:38.200] - Speaker 2

But that's the moment that if somebody there realizes that it's not just the marketing and that now is the chance to do it and is a strong enough player, then it's possible.

[00:17:47.720] - Speaker 1

Well, nobody realized it, unfortunately.

[00:17:51.440] - Speaker 2

Well, the thing is, someone has to think ahead.

[00:17:57.260] - Speaker 1

Yeah, well. I shouldn't interfere anymore, I'd love to discuss it with you, but I don't have the space at the moment. I would also like to ask what you think should be the goal of building a new brand for Prague, where Prague is not just a tourist destination?

[00:18:16.760] - Speaker 2

I think Prague will always be a tourist destination. I think that the rebranding of Prague is actually very necessary, paradoxically, from the inside - towards tourists, as in not foreign tourists, but domestic tourists. And I see it as a big problem. If we compare it with, for example, the first republic, the fact that Prague is the capital of the young republic, so there was actually a completely different energy in this, actually as a common, that the state wanted to build its capital. Today it's not like that at all. Today it's more like "those people from Prague". So I

think that's where the rebranding is needed. Here, maybe the centrally controlled economy of communism left some deep scars in this too that haven't healed yet. And that's where I think the rebranding would actually be necessary. Because yes, the capital city, but also it would actually be nice to combat the pragocentrism, which should be some kind of theme for the brand of the city. I mean, are we presenting ourselves like this, is this how is Prague perceived outside? Well, if yes, we're doing something wrong.

And the second thing is of course what are the practical steps here, if the beer costs 200 CZK, tourism here would quickly change. It's primarily about the fact that the city should say that it is interested in other forms of tourism and it should have the competence to change that, that means closing some pubs and thinking of other things.

[00:20:05.360] - Speaker 1

What do you think are the strengths of Prague that it could build on?

[00:20:19.460] - Speaker 2

I think Prague is a completely unique environment. I think Prague is an environment that communication could build on. Right now it's running at twenty per cent but it has a much greater potential that is not concentrated around the city centre. And it's maybe appealing, for investors and for visitors, it's just that we would have to start showing the rest of that city in some realistic programs or projects and actually inviting those people in and pulling them in, showing the potential that's there, so that we can really attract a different group of people. There's a lot of room for cultivated convention tourism, which is actually happening a little bit today. I think there are other forms of tourism that we should be trying to promote in a targeted way. Prague, by its very nature, is always expected to be a cultural city, it has the heritage that it has, but I don't think that's what's being developed there, and it's about architecture and interventions in public space. There have to be big things, tall things and quality things. The city should become some kind of benchmark, like music or art. Metronome Festival. The next one should be like just having those A-list festivals.

[00:21:58.050] - Speaker 1

Okay. I was wondering if we could go back to what you said, that the city should be the guarantor of this, especially the political representation and specifically the mayor. Do you

think that they are aware of that need, that there is something here that Prague should profile itself differently than it is profiling itself now?

[00:22:20.720] - Speaker 2

I don't think so. Or even if they do realize it, I think it's a Category 268 problem. The situation as such is not a priority for them. I think in any interview, a politician will tell you that they would like to have other tourists here, but at the same time, for them, it's not in the day-to-day problems that they are installed with that they have to deal with necessarily. If it works somehow, don't touch it.

[00:22:51.000] - Speaker 1

And what do you think could be done to make them see this as a bigger problem?

[00:23:03.750] - Speaker 2

I don't think there is a general answer to that. It's just terribly individual. Every politician always has different perceptions, different values, different priorities. So if it's going to be shown to be a problem, you have to go down that road on an individual basis. There's no general view or approach to this. Rather, I think it has to be worth it to somebody. If someone takes this as their issue and starts convincing others that it's important, then it has a chance of success, it's just work.

I also think it's a pity that it's not discussed much in the public space here, because of how separate the two worlds are, the touristic, inner world and the lived, Prague world. There, the buffer zone is terribly narrow, and small.

[00:24:13.880] - Speaker 1

So would actually some public education theoretically help?

[00:24:20.310] - Speaker 2

I'm sure. But also the mentality is sometimes strange because for example one of those people who are moving around the centre is Janek Rubes and he makes videos about it and then there are actually people who are like "why is he doing that? why is he helping these tourists?" Because well, you're helping the tourists, but not the people who live here in this town. That's an interesting perspective too.

[00:24:49.200] - Speaker 1

Okay, last question. Who do you think are Prague's competitors - what European or world cities, and then on the other hand, who could be Prague's inspiration? As a benchmark?

[00:25:10.130] - Speaker 2

I don't think there's much competition for us. Vienna for example, because it's a city that's going elsewhere and we don't really have to compete with them. But on the other hand, paradoxically, there are cities like Warsaw, which are our competition, and I think they are very much ahead in that race, even though we have completely different entry conditions. I think the tough competition for us that also wins is Munich, which is actually a very similar city in a very similar region. And again, that competition doesn't really look good for us, but here in the immediate area, I think those are the main ones. Berlin is elsewhere, and Hamburg is elsewhere. If I'm going to take that central European space, I think it's Munich as well and I think it's Warsaw with both of those entities we're not putting it.

[00:26:05.300] - Speaker 1

And who else could we take inspiration from? If you were to prepare a benchmarking of Prague, what would be the cities you would put there?

[00:26:13.280] - Speaker 2

I think even in terms of that tourism and that downtown, the way they approach it, we're taking advantage of that, so definitely the two major cities where there are huge protected areas today and those are the big Rome, it's similar but there's still people living in Rome, it's concentrated everywhere. And then there's the city of Bruges in Belgium, which is very different, like very much forgotten, but it's got a huge protected area as well and it can actually sustain that life there as well and it's a great place and it's protected as well. Both of those cities are not afraid of some major inputs and sensitive treatment of that space. So those are the two European ones. I don't think there's much else that's worth it. I think we need to actually be moving in that cultural region of some sort when we're doing these considerations here, which for us is just those German-speaking countries plus a chunk of that Eastern Bloc. We are actually in that German area. Bohemia is actually the closest, I think, in mentality and everything to Bavaria. I think we actually have to look for something that's not going to be a completely alien species here that we're going to try to implement so that we then have to keep it as regionally.

[00:27:48.030] - Speaker 1

Great, I've exhausted my questions. If you can think of anything you haven't said that you want to say, now's the time to say it. And if you do, feel free to email me.

[00:28:34.800] - Speaker 2

I think Prague's problem is that it doesn't have a problem. It is also a problem that this kind of transition is for a long time or not very extreme, but in our country, because there are so many people, the political situation is actually very unstable. You have a mayor in Vienna, four terms in a row, and on top of that the powers that they have are much stronger, so they are going to deliver that change.

[00:29:30.210] - Speaker 1

That's just the problem with Prague, 4 years and then actually turning everything 180 degrees and starting over.

[00:29:37.770] - Speaker 2

If I were to run, I might have an election slogan of "Elect me again and maybe I'll do something"

[00:29:48.490] - Speaker 1

I must confess that I have only just read your strategy, the IPR strategy, and this is my third year at the City Hall. And I actually thought it was pretty cool.

[00:30:05.520] - Speaker 2

It is, but it's kind of like a wishlist.

[00:30:09.130] - Speaker 1

I was very, very pleasantly surprised that it was perfect. And then I realised that it's terribly sad that I, as a person who is interested in these things, only got into this after three years of working at the City Hall. And that it's not at all common for people to know it or to act on it.

[00:30:29.200] - Speaker 2

That's the mentality we have here. You can see it in the strategies. When you have spatial planning, which is like the prerogative of the city somewhere like Germany or Austria, the

spatial plan or the decision-making in that area is based on that strategic plan. When such a thing is discussed, very often they look at whether what we have agreed is compatible with that plan and if it is not so we change it. The thing is legally constructed anyway, so in order for them to defend it and for it to be valid, it has to be backed up, it has to be based on and it has to fulfil the strategy. When you have like a tool that you actually have to fulfil, then all of a sudden it makes sense, it's just the thing that comes out of it.

But for us, the strategic plan is really an optional add-on. And maybe the decision-making in that area is already like it's some level of government that doesn't really care what's going on in that city, you have a strategy, fine, so take the subsidies. This is actually the problem that even for that politician - he gets a working tool on the table, he uses that, like a zoning plan, and nobody tells him that it's contrary to the strategy, it can't be like that, right? It's a very systemic setup, kind of weird. Well, it's more of a public administration problem than a brand problem, but you can just see it in the brand. It just translates into everything you do in that city.

[00:31:54.130] - Speaker 1

And there is no enforcement of those strategies?

[00:32:01.830] - Speaker 2

That's right.

[00:32:04.780] - Speaker 1

Couldn't it be adjusted? Because it's a real shame.

[00:32:08.710] - Speaker 2

It could, but that's legislative stuff. The politician is going to start addressing that strategy the moment he has to, and he's going to have to the moment he's told if this doesn't comply with that strategic plan, then maybe it won't be valid, so he's going to start addressing it. But if somebody says to him "You don't have to address that, you've got a hundred other problems you need to address". And that's not going to happen on its own. The state has to say what it wants - do I want a strategy? Do I want to implement them? Or don't I want to? That's really a legislative thing primarily.

[00:32:48.100] - Speaker 1

So you are preparing both strategies and action plans for the city?

[00:32:52.150] - Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, well, too, but like, those are formalities. When we did the housing action plan, they were just upset - we discussed it with the boroughs and the biggest criticism was that they didn't have projects that they were already doing. But that's a plan, what's supposed to be there, not "we have to have what we have, we're going to get money from the city." If we're doing action plans so that it's a list of running projects so that nobody cares, then it's not an action plan.

[00:33:35.860] - Speaker 1

I have my own experience - we have created a foreign relations strategy, which actually is based on the strategic plan and about ten other documents, and we were told that it was too ambitious.

[00:33:47.650] - Speaker 2

That's perfect. That's what they often say, that it doesn't do what they want. They commission a professional strategy and then say "Well, but I think otherwise". So either fair enough - if you're the chosen one as a politician, then push for what you think, or request expert material. But you can't say "Rewrite it to say what I think as a professional". These are such cute situations here.

[00:34:12.220] - Speaker 1

Well, it's not simple stuff. I, when I do these interviews, it still ends on that slightly depressing note of how to change things. A lot of people, myself included, don't see that path at the moment.

[00:34:28.150] - Speaker 2

It's just that with us, it's really only possible to change things during a crisis when something just happens, and you're ready and you know what you want, then it's possible.

Appendix no. 6: Interview transcript – Petr Suška

Legáthová Lucia 0:02

So to put you in the picture - I'm doing my thesis on the branding of Prague from 2018 to 2022, yeah, so the last electoral term is the time we'll be talking about. And actually, to start off just to make it clear that we're actually all on the same page of what we're talking about, I would ask you to tell me what you understand by city branding, what does that mean to you?

Suška Petr 0:14

City branding is a process that involves a whole range of different activities that lead to communicating a particular destination or place or location and using different means, media, and interventions that bring out some unique attributes of that place. Of course, then in terms of successful city branding, I guess it depends on what metric you're measuring it by, but it's some sort of awareness of the place and association of that place with a message.

Legáthová Lucia 1:18

Great. Do you have any examples from abroad? Some city brands that you think work?

Suška Petr 1:23

Look, ironically, one of my engagements at IPR was like 10 years ago and we were looking at some benchmark who actually does city branding and does it well. And one that's also very typical is Bilbao, which through flagship architecture has transformed itself into a tourist destination with Michelin-star restaurants. A city that was industrial and rundown suddenly actually became terribly interesting. That's where the city branding exercise led to the revitalisation of that city's brand. I think he even calls it the Bilbao Effect.

Something similar was attempted in Glasgow. For me, it's I love New York and I Amsterdam, I think those are the two that you don't need to explain and everybody knows what they are.

Legáthová Lucia 2:51

Yeah great, thanks. Okay, and how do you perceive Prague?

Suška Petr 2:52

I actually think that Prague has a very strong brand. Only that the brand is Hradčany and the panorama with the Prague Castle. When you say Prague, you don't associate it with a modern and vibrant city. What we think we live, I think people from the outside who are not included in what we are, don't see it that way.

I think it's still history, Kafka, the Old Town, the Jewish Quarter, nice colourful houses, preserved architecture or lots of different architectural styles. But it's not a modern, dynamic, progressive city. I don't recall that, nor do a lot of people looking in from the outside.

Legáthová Lucia 4:03

Well, that's actually my question, does Prague have a brand that actively communicates abroad?

Suška Petr 4:09

Look, I only noticed Czech Tourism. I know there was the 'Land of stories' campaign and Prague was one of the destinations there. In general, I don't really have a fundamental awareness of the brand of Prague. I don't think Prague is actively communicating anything, it's just living off the history and the essence of the legacy of previous generations, but certainly not the present - as in what we're creating here, what's being created here.

Legáthová Lucia 5:11

Well, why do you think that is?

Suska Petr 5:18

I think firstly there is no consensus on what it is that we want to communicate. I think the dynamic political cycle and the different leadership changes obviously have an impact on that here. Now, obviously, what you're experiencing, I think, is a symptom of some sort of a larger inability of this city to hold one line of communication and to address that city brand in a comprehensive way. I don't think we have the skill set to pick a message and communicate it effectively.

I think the city's brand as far as tourism is concerned is being distorted by people coming here to drink and have cheap stag parties. That's gonna be awfully hard to change. And we're struggling with something that's self-inflicted, and institutionally we have no way of enforcing that cheap, disgusting tourism to actually be here at all.

There will be a number of factors: lack of coherence to strategies, lack of the existence of strategic materials that develop the branding in some way, and ineffective work with key stakeholders in this area. I just think what Terka is saying in her interviews is awfully cool but I think that's a perspective that the outside world doesn't perceive. Well, and I think it's going to be an awfully big challenge to change that image when you have this long tradition of being more or less Disneyland with cheap beer and pretty girls. That's awfully hard to change, it's going to take a lot of effort and a lot of money. I don't actually know if there's the courage, the will and the desire to change it.

Legáthová Lucia 8:28

How do you think we can put forward the perception of city branding, or reputation building, as an important part of a city's strategy?

Suška Petr 8:37

It has two levels. One is the perception of the city by people who actually live here, and the other is the perception of the city by people who want to come here, want to do business here, or are considering relocating. And those groups, of course, have a number of like subgroups and so on. Those two big groups I don't think are clearly addressed and I think it would be good to do an assessment of why the status quo has persisted for so long and what are some possible next steps or measures that could improve it.

Legáthová Lucia 9:28

What do you think should be the goals of creating a city brand?

Suška Petr 9:41

I don't think you write a concept and you're done. Yeah, I think it's a continuous work of a team to create a brand, to respond to various external factors that embed that brand in the broader context of the environment or system in which Prague operates.

Primarily, I think there needs to be some analysis done. Then as part of the analysis you need to pull stakeholders and maybe ambassadors in relation to who you want to work with. And in the design part, there should be a series of measures with roadmaps, with some goals and tools that tell you this is where we want to get to - and now I say Prague is a modern city for young

people who want to start a business or startup. Ideally the narrower the definition, the easier it is to target your end group. And I think the metrics should be: Number of people you reach; word of mouth - how many people they tell next - organic spread of what you're trying to communicate; then KPIs, which should be tied to economic output or economic indicators on what new people bring to the local economy and in what sectors; KPI of the strategies - to what extent are they being met, are they just being met on time, SMART goals; how does that performance evolve over time; how broad is the base of stakeholders they're working with?

Legáthová Lucia 12:27

When you talk about stakeholders - who should be involved and have a say in how the city brand looks like?

Suška Petr 12:36

That's already part of the analytical part. Classically some triple or quadruple helix. You need to work with the private sector, you need to have research organizations there. Prague has 14 universities, right? And it's not just purely universities, there are high schools that are here and are high quality, especially in technical fields. Then, of course, you have to involve a certain selection of public sector players, whether it's the city, city organizations, individual departments, or city companies. Lastly, the public that is organized in various non-profit groups.

Legáthová Lucia 13:30

So who should be the guarantor of this project? In your opinion, should it be the municipality or some municipal organization, or someone completely external?

Suška Petr 13:38

Hey, that's a good question. I think that Prague has conceptual workplaces that are dedicated to this and that there are city organizations like the OICT or IPR for this. I think they're maybe better suited to do that than the city hall itself, although the effort is actually good. If good quality strategic materials had a chance to actually be produced in that city hall, that would be ideal.

On the other hand, you need a lot of different specific skills and competencies, which I think city organizations either already have or are more dynamic in getting and they have a strong

market contact. So it should be in some tandem. I might really lean towards either a contributing city organization or a conceptual department that does the materials, whether it's Operator or IPR. And then have a close connection there to a department within City Hall, like a mirror team. Above that, there should be a steering board that holds the boundaries or the limits of how it should work, and below that, individual thematic teams that can deal in further detail with the tourism part, the business part, stakeholder engagement, economic indicators, and so on. And that team I think should be consisting of the city hall plus the contributing organization so that you have both perspectives there. That's how I would put it together. That's how we did it when we did the strategic plan. We had it at IPR, and I ran it, but realistically we had people like the mayor at the time, Hudecek, the planning people were there, so yeah.

Legáthová Lucia 16:02

During this past term (2018-22), were there any activities from your side to create an image of Prague?

Suška Petr 16:16

Historically, together with Petr Peřinka, who is now the director of Creative Prague, we did an analysis - a benchmark, where we said that this is a topic we should address. Even in the strategic plan, there was a section on city branding.

Legáthová Lucia 16:45

It is actually mentioned in the strategic plan, but I think that's where the problems are, which is that the strategic plans are not being implemented. I'm trying to point out that it's happening and find out why it's happening, why nobody's actually addressing it despite the fact that we have it in those strategies.

One last question: in the ideal world, how would Prague be perceived abroad in your opinion? What are its strengths that should be communicated?

Suška Petr 17:37

The basic rule of three. First of all, I think - and this was based on some of our like analysis, like I referred to the strategic plan - that there is a skilled workforce, a strong research environment, especially in technical fields, and the potential to work with universities and research institutes. Prague is a fiscally interesting place, a safe and free city, has democratic

values, a lot of international environment, geographically and strategically located city. You've got the capital base, you've got the investors, angel investors, you've got a lot of wealthy people, even in the younger generation there are people who are thinking more philanthropically as well.

Legáthová Lucia 19:03

Great, and any other weaknesses of Prague?

Suška Petr 19:11

I think that the institutional environment is terribly fragmented. There are 1000 ponds and nobody agrees on who owns what agenda. The reason for that is you're struggling on a limited budget. Further, the political cycle is terribly unstable, with more and more colourful coalitions that don't provide continuity and stability. The weakness is that there is still a lack of young people who are interested in what is happening in the public space, which is terribly important, the engaged society. And I don't think there's an understanding that there needs to be an investment in this and not a small one.

Legáthová Lucia 19:54

And how do you think these problems could be solved? You mentioned low awareness, low engagement, politically fragmented and somehow fragmented ecosystem.

Suška Petr 20:22

You'd have to have an environment where anything can be consolidated. But the nature of both the politics and the people who run businesses or somehow operate here is such that you can hardly actually do the defragmentation, you just can't do it. Because that information asymmetry - the fact that we don't know who does what - exists intentionally. Because that information symmetry allows this fragmented system to exist where everybody has a little pond instead of one big pond. That environment doesn't reflect the power of all the different actors that are in it. On the contrary, it's tearing itself apart masochistically, and I don't think you can fix that.

I think that, of course, people should go to the polls, we need to raise awareness through different engagements like interacting and working with different target groups who are interested, online and offline. Reaching out to young people, raising awareness about the status

quo. Not just being purely reactive, but also really just having a conceptual plan, a process or a blueprint of how I want to change, transform and develop that brand, and those communities and also engage them. And that's really long-term work that has to come from multiple stakeholders wanting to come together and share the fruits of working together. It's very hard, especially in Prague, to agree on that.

Legáthová Lucia 22:56

Do you think this is specific to Prague?

Suška Petr 22:59

It's specific to post-socialist countries. Not only Prague but really post-socialist countries. There are examples, for example, Litomyšl, where you have more or less one mayor for a long time, or just 2-3 mayors, no more, who maintain some kind of line and build on the work of their predecessors. That is not the case here. In general, if you look at the West, the cities are more consolidated. London has about 31 boroughs and it's a city of 9 million people, we've got 57, there's a million and a half of us, it's just nonsense. I think that's a nice thing to see about it, that instead of having one representative system, we have lots of little kingdoms here rather than one big republic. That's kind of my philosophical answer. Anywhere you look where you have a more consolidated system with larger local government units, it works better. When you have streamlined decision-making processes, paradoxically it's easier to adapt legislation to changing conditions.

Legáthová Lucia 24:49

Which cities do you think Prague should be inspired by?

Suska Petr 24:55

But I think the benchmark, even for the cultural basis and so, is the German-speaking system, which is Munich, Vienna, and Berlin, if you look at the cities that Prague resembles in some way, whether it's history or approach to urban development work.

Then, of course, there are interesting cities that are doing inspiring things, for me like Copenhagen or Dublin. Copenhagen in working with the private sector - in the way they've transformed a city that 20 years ago was just terribly grey, nobody rode a bike. Now it's the bike city of the world, completely clean, with new architecture and a lot of dynamism. Helsinki

is interesting in the way they are working with the local communities and the startup environment - they have a whole campus there, which gives legitimacy to the city. In the UK, it's Manchester, for example, in the way they work with structural funds and make it conditional on private sector match funding and so on.

Legáthová Lucia 26:35

Super thank you. Can you think of anything else you'd like to say? I have already exhausted my questions.

Suška Petr 26:41

I guess it's okay, it's more like if you think of something, feel free to get in touch.

Appendix no. 7: Interview transcript – Roman Muška

Transcript, July 19, 2023

Legáthová Lucia 1:28

Okay, let's get started. My first question is more to establish that baseline and to make sure that all the interviewees understand what we are talking about, so I would ask you to tell me what city branding means to you.

Roman Muska 1:47

That's quite an interesting question right at the beginning and I have to say that I confronted my colleagues who work in marketing and PR with that question. And we partly disagreed on how we looked at it. Because if we don't look at it, for example, just through the lens of what we do, and how we would perceive city branding from our perspective, I think that city branding can be anything more or less evokes when you say Prague, whoever you are, because actually, even in the communication of our, for example, narrow scope, we have many personas that we target.

If I translate that into a brand or a product, if I think of Prague as a product, it actually has a lot of target audiences. And to come up with one brand can mean something a little bit different for everyone. For me, that brand is whatever that name or that brand evokes for you, and it can be a claim, an experience that you already have from the past, or a visual.

Legáthová Lucia 3:15

Great thanks. Can you think of any other cities, world or European, where you say to yourself that yeah they have done the branding well?

Roman Muska 3:28

I've been thinking about it and I can't quite say that I can single out one that has the brand done in an extremely exceptional way. I generally like Scandinavian destinations, I like what the Faroe Islands do, or what Iceland does. Those are interesting things because they are taken with a grain of salt, in a funny way, and it's what comes to mind when you say that particular destination. Then there are destinations that from my point of view are pushing it very hard, which can be Dubai, Singapore and so on, where I get a little bit lost actually in what they want to communicate. Brand Dubai to me is an artificial destination that has a lot of money and can afford anything. On the one hand, it's a tourist destination, on the other hand, there's some research development and there's a lot of pushback there from what I know. But now the question is whether the communication is so strong that even a person who goes there to a holiday destination will pick it up. Now I'm getting back to what I'm struggling with - what is the brand of Dubai? I don't know, it's kind of my internal struggle, maybe Flydubai or Emirates comes to mind as brand Dubai but the question is whether this is brand Dubai.

And I don't know if I'm answering if you're satisfied with my answers.

Legáthová Lucia 5:14

So far I am very satisfied, thank you. I actually can't respond to you very much because actually as a researcher I should be unbiased

Roman Muska 5:29

It's clear to me. Then we'll talk then off the record maybe sometimes.

Legáthová Lucia 5:32

Exactly, great, good. I guess we can move on home to Prague now. How do you see Prague in this context?

Roman Muska 5:48

If I look from the outside at what the brand of Prague is, I think that Prague still has the UNESCO brand of a historical city, attractive to tourists. Even though we are trying to move away from that, that's how I see it. A destination that's worth visiting at least once in your lifetime, I don't think it's a destination that that person would purposely want to visit repeatedly without actually being in Prague, yeah, so that it's something that would entice them to come here. So that's the brand of Prague for me at the moment: beautiful UNESCO historical destination, Charles Bridge, Prague Castle, maybe the Astronomical Clock, those are the things that come to mind when I look at it from the outside.

Legáthová Lucia 6:44

Right, right, so that's how you actually think Prague is perceived abroad?

Roman Muška 7:04

That's my view yeah and I think that the Prague brand is better perceived in certain markets, it's bigger and stronger than the Czech Republic brand, even now with some rebranding to Czechia. There I think the Czech Republic is going to suffer a little bit and it's going to take time to get into the consciousness because in many markets we are still Czechoslovakia, and we will be for a while.

But it's definitely a capital and a historic city. I don't think there's all we've been able to do for Prague so far.

Legáthová Lucia 7:40

Do you think that besides the tourist brand, Prague communicates something else abroad?

Roman Muska 7:53

We're trying to do that, but I don't know about the city, and then that's probably for the next questions. As I said, the target groups are different, and even the separate sub-brands are different. There's some communication within tourism, which is what Prague City Tourism does. There's separate business communication for the MICE segment, which is what we are and we should be doing. Then there is something that Prague should probably communicate through someone else or it could fall under us, that is research and development and those other things that we can follow up on. And now the question is whether or not somebody is doing it.

Then maybe there's something else that I've, that I haven't named right now because there's a lot of those targets that you need to communicate to.

Legáthová Lucia 8:55

Sure. So what activities do you do within the Prague Convention Bureau?

Roman Muska 9:01

Within the Prague Convention Bureau, we try to communicate Prague as a suitable destination for congresses and conferences, either in general without specific targeting of the subject or the theme of the conference. Things related to the infrastructure, the kind of general things that we know all competing destinations try to communicate about how one gets to the destination, what the conference infrastructure is like, political situation, security situation and so on. That's kind of the basics of how to even get on the map and in the crosshairs of potential organizers. Then there are topics that are very popular lately, which is for example sustainability. It is definitely making its way into our industry or into tourism in general, maybe into some other communication channels through which Prague communicates. It should communicate itself as a suitable destination, which is probably also important for people if they want to live here, for expats and so on. As well as information such as that it's safe here, it's at a reasonable price level and so on, which is important not only for tourists but also for organisers. Those are the things that we communicate and then the way we communicate them is already wrapped up in the claims and the activities that we do.

And then there is the second part, if we focus on some specific fields in which Prague wants to develop. This is something we have not done historically and we prepared it in the strategy we prepared 2 years ago. Nowadays, when we look at other destinations, those other destinations are also following a similar style and also trying to develop those specific sectors. We see AI coming up in a lot of destinations today and a lot of other (topics), but of course, it's tied to the expertise that that particular destination has to offer, and that's where the connectivity comes in.

Legáthová Lucia 11:34

Sure, great thank you. Did you run into any problems trying to communicate what you just described?

Roman Muska 11:47

Maybe in the sense that we are just one voice and there is a lack of coordination here. We need someone to amplify that communication in the whole communication mix. If Prague wants to create a brand, Prague should be the leader from my point of view. You mentioned that these things exist somewhere, they are written on paper, they are just not implemented. There is a lack of leadership from Prague, there is a lack of that, and the people who should then implement a strategy should sit down together, distribute the tasks and just start implementing it and lead it in practice. I think that's terribly important to connect. We are trying to do our own part, but if the activities are not coming from the actors who are supposed to be implementing it, and it is not coming from the head that came up with it, from the headquarters, then it is probably not going to work at all, and the coordination is not going to work either. So that's what I'm missing here, the cooperation and coordination that is being driven by the city.

Legáthová Lucia 13:21

So in your opinion, it could be the city, the municipality, that should be the guarantor of a brand?

Roman Muška 13:29

Certainly, because it is the brand of Prague and Prague should decide what that brand will be, what style it wants to present itself to a certain target group, how it wants to develop which products, whether and how it wants to develop tourism or the congress industry, which we can perceive as part of tourism or we can look at it in a completely different way. As you know, the convention industry stands somewhere in the middle, it helps the development of certain areas and sectors, the supply of know-how, the export of our know-how to the other side, and of course, it has positive effects on tourism.

Legáthová Lucia 14:16

How do you think this topic could be brought to the forefront within the city hall? How to make it part of the city's future development strategy?

Roman Muska 14:30

You need to have a suitable partner who will be interested in this issue, which is always a politician for a given four-year term. But even though they are in charge of the issue, if they are not interested in it, they will not even surround himself with advisors worthy of the subject

and will not push the issue. And I think the topic of that brand is not about one person, it's about a group of people who should be working together because again there is overlap into the various portfolios of politicians at the city. I can't tell if this is the kind of thing that can be pushed from the position of, say, the mayor of the capital, who would take it into their own hands and say yes, we want this and if it could be pushed in some way?

Legáthová Lucia 15:38

I think this is the problem that the city is having. That this topic is not important enough for political representation, it's not a priority for them. Actually, my research period for that thesis was the last electoral term, when the main event was covid, during which it was logically put on the back burner. How do you think that it could be shown to politicians in a way that would actually interest them and - as you say - make them take it on board?

Roman Muska 16:13

The topic must be attractive to politicians, and it will be attractive if it adds to their credibility. They need to gain credit with the voter base, let's face it, so the topic must not be shaky or controversial for the voter base and it must bring something to those people. I can't say how much what we're talking about can bring something to the local people who live in Prague. That's difficult, but this is about making a good life for those people. As far as tourism is concerned, we know very well that many people do not realise the benefits of tourism and rather see the negative effects. I think that Prague City Tourism has tried to respond well to this with its Prague First strategy, which is certainly smart. But then I don't know if there is a theme of bringing more expats from abroad and having more research centres here and so on. But I think most people who live in Prague are not interested in that at all. If you compare it to how big tourism is, and everybody can imagine anything under tourism - at least everybody goes on holiday somewhere. In the end, tourism, even at the national level, gets so little interest from those politicians and the relevant minister that I think we don't have much of a chance. It's sad to say it like that, but I don't see it being positive in the near term.

Legáthová Lucia 18:22

Yeah, well, that's an opinion too, and unfortunately, you're not the only one with that sentiment. Well, who do you think are the main actors that should be involved in branding?

Roman Muška 18:41

Well, I think that there should be if we look at us and I'm speaking for us here - Prague Convention Bureau, which in this case is not part of the city infrastructure, which makes our role a bit more difficult. There is definitely a tourism board that should be there, Prague City Tourism. If we talk about research and development, there are some other city institutions, whether it's the Prague Innovation Institute and so on. There should be universities or research institutes, the Academy of Sciences and so on. I think that important chambers of commerce could have a say in it. And if we are talking about experts and the like, then perhaps the larger, stronger associations that are linked to industry: the Union of Industry and Transport, trade, tourism and the like. I think those are the kind of key players that should be invited. I don't want to say all of them at once, but maybe in some smaller circles, they should discuss this.

Legáthová Lucia 19:40

Great, that was a textbook definition of stakeholders, so great. Okay and what do you see as Prague's strengths? What should it communicate?

Roman Muska 20:14

I don't want to go into full detail, but I think Prague is still a good place to live. Certainly, in terms of quality of life, we may not be as high in the rankings as some other destinations like Vienna (if we are still comparing ourselves to the closest competitor, which is a competitor for us in our segment as well), but we are very high as well. So the quality of living, which is then intertwined with the price level, which is of course higher than in the regions, but still, compared to those living standards and to other big cities, it's relatively good to live here. Security and a stable political situation. There are destinations to the east of us where it's worse. So I think we have a bit of stability in the political situation now. And then it's sub-par things, because everybody has different priorities, and that comes under the quality of life. Whether you look at the opportunities, whether it's cultural activities, sports activities and so on. Well, then it's something that from my point of view should probably be communicated more, which is the quality levels of universities, research institutions and so on. But again, it's to a certain target group.

Legáthová Lucia 22:08

Yeah great. The next question is actually the second to last one. What are the weaknesses of Prague that you perceive?

Roman Muska 22:10

I don't want to look at just our segment, because we have defined within our segment the strengths and weaknesses that we have here. But with the weaknesses, it's harder. I see the fragmentation that we have here to be able to communicate that. There's disjointedness, fragmentation, political struggles, and power struggles. Prague is not talking to the national level because Prague is still a little bit somewhere else. Cooperation in certain segments does not work at all. Then there are some infrastructural deficiencies and so on, but I guess I don't think that's the main thing but there are things that, for example, from the point of view of tourism, do not work as they should. We don't have the same level of flight connections yet. The visa policy in some cases just doesn't work. These are such partial things that are not ideal.

Legáthová Lucia 24:13

Super. The last question I have. Which cities do you see as competition for Prague? You already mentioned Vienna, but which others do you have, or which cities could be an inspiration or a benchmark for Prague to get to?

Roman Muška 24:29

And we are talking about competition within what? It's very difficult, I'm trying to get away from what we do because I could talk a lot about what we do and what competition we have. There we have it clearly defined, strengths, weaknesses, some of that benchmarking and so on. But when you look at it from the point of view of the brand of that destination, it's terribly difficult because it's about who you want to communicate that brand to. But okay, Vienna definitely plays a role, because it is visible both in the segment of what we do and in the segment of leisure, and in the segment of attractiveness for foreign investment or for people who want to live there, for those experts, I think Vienna is very high. It's also a city that's comparable and big let's say, so I would probably see Vienna as the main one.

Of the other destinations that we could compare I don't know, I don't think I have a typical one. It's either the smaller destinations that I like what they do and how they present themselves and have strong brands, whether it's if we look at the national level, it's Slovenia, which does a nice job, or Ljubljana itself. It's also the smaller cities, for example in Austria, which is a bit lacking here in the Czech Republic, for the smaller cities to make themselves known as strongly as some of the cities in Austria, for example, make themselves known. I don't think I will compare Germany because it is a very big market. But then there are cities that maybe have tried, have

had interesting campaigns, but their reputation is sometimes a bit worse. That could be Amsterdam and Barcelona, who were very successful in tourism, but then they saw the negative impact here and so on, so then they stopped campaigning and did anti-campaigns. So I guess completely in terms of the sustainability of our tourism there, the brand is not ideal. Well, tough questions.

Legáthová Lucia 26:56

Come on, I didn't make it easy for you, but great, I've actually exhausted all the ones I had. So now there's still room for you if you want to add something that you haven't mentioned yet.

Roman Muška 27:07

I'll probably go back to the city brand. There I think the definition of that brand, as I said, is terribly difficult for me and I think it should be something that the name will actually evoke. It's not a logo, it's not visual. Maybe at some stage it can be a claim, and that claim, if it can be sort of written into all those target audiences and activities, then it makes sense to me and that brand will be that claim. Or it could really be the brand, and if it's supposed to be a unified brand, that's terribly difficult for me because each of those audiences will perceive that brand differently. I'd be happy if I could be part of some of those discussions because it's a terribly interesting topic for me as well and I'd like to look at it through a broader lens and not just the lens of what we're doing. Because there's just some brand we're trying to build, we're using some techniques and claims, but now the question is what's right, who's how successful or not successful? If we just look at the competing destinations that we have in our industry, which includes not only Vienna, but cities like Paris, Barcelona, and Madrid, but non-European cities like Singapore, Hong Kong and so on. So everybody is approaching it a little bit differently and I can't say that any of those destinations have a strong brand or a strong claim, even though they have interesting campaigns, but those things kind of differentiate them and the communication is not really unified.

Legáthová Lucia 29:17

Well, that's what I think Prague lacks, to have something that would cover the different channels of communication or the different directions where it goes. Basically Prague at the moment, at least for me anyway, doesn't have an identity. It lives only from its history, from its past, but nobody knows exactly what Prague is now. For tourists, it's just a place where they come to get drunk and go party here, but that is not really Prague. And a lot of people realise

that when they come here, but that's something that we tried to do within the City Hall as well, which didn't work, but just to create something that would cover those different lines, whether it's the tourist sector, or the MICE sector, attracting talent, investment and so on.

Roman Muška 30:05

This one makes a lot of sense to me, of course. The question is, if we start communicating the city a bit differently, can we prevent groups from coming here for alcohol tourism? Yeah, one thing - and I think it's very important to say this about the brand - whatever the brand is, it can't just be about the brand or the claim, it has to be about us living up to it. Because if you look at that brand, you have some expectations and you more or less have to have those expectations met. Otherwise, the brand is just unbelievable, it's wrong. So if we say we want to present ourselves as a cultural destination that's going to have a lot of cultural activities, that's going to have a new opera house, we have to make it that way, we have to make it happen, and we really have to have something to offer. We have to have that product that lives up to what we're saying, lives up to the brand. That's what it's all about. And if it can stop a certain group of people from coming here? Probably not completely. What could stop it from happening there is that suddenly the whole airline industry is going to move somewhere else and there won't be £10 tickets. And if I put the cheapest ticket at £150, maybe they won't fly here anymore. The other things that are tied into it - if these people don't come here then the quote-unquote smog, the cannabis shops and so on, will disappear from the city centre. But without that, it's just not going to go away, and we can try as hard as we want, but the city has no chance of doing anything about it in my opinion.

Legáthová Lucia 32:05

Well, of course, especially if there is a demand for such things, there is no reason for it to disappear.

Roman Muska 32:15

Exactly. There must not be a demand. We have to prevent the demand from being there. We can try to change the proportions by attracting people who are going to go for something else. We can start to support other types of events, cultural, sporting and so on, which is a very good thing. Then we have to let it be known that Prague is a city that supports a lot of sporting events, and there are a lot of sporting events going on here, which is probably never going to happen because the infrastructure is not there for it, but it could be anything. Yeah, there's going to be

another opera house here, so we're probably still not going to be that famous anyway - or maybe we just are, we're going to be one of those famous destinations that have famous opera houses and people are going to start coming here more and it's going to push Prague further up. But it's about delivering on that promise within the trend that we're setting, so I think that's key, that we don't make something up here and then we don't deliver on it. And that's where cooperation and collaboration are much more important to start delivering on it. It's not just about marketing the city and the promotion, it's about making work what we preach.

Legáthová Lucia 33:25

Definitely. But on the other hand, I think that Prague already has a lot to offer, just exactly, it's not communicated. Yeah, we just have great universities, research institutions, we have really great startups and various other initiatives that are working here, just like you said like prg.ai or in the space industry or something. But nobody associates that with Prague at the moment.

I was also interviewing Tereza Hrušková, who just told me that the other day she just met some Dutch tourists in the centre. They were just young guys, from good schools, intelligent, educated. When she asked them why they came here, they said it was for the cheap beer and the pretty girls and so on. And when she asked them why they didn't just go to some culture or something, they were totally surprised that why would they go to Prague for culture? They said that for culture they would just go to Rome, London, and so on, but what would that do in Prague? Hey, so that's just that, well.

Roman Muška 34:47

And now the question is whether, and this is even worse, what you said, if in fact this target group of young people, if they also have the culture in their sights and they go somewhere else for that, well, that's wrong. If it's people who would only go for that particular interest, then that's not someone we want to attract here and we're targeting other groups. But if they can then be a potential consumer of culture, that's wrong.

Legáthová Lucia 35:28

Well, exactly. Well, and as you were saying that it's hard to target different groups, so actually the biggest trend that's actually happening now in the last year or so in city branding is a more holistic approach to branding. It's just that the division into individual target groups is being abolished a little bit and cities are starting to realize that the person who is just a tourist at one

moment, let's say, in a few days he can be an investor, or he's a student who started studying here and then I attract 10 more people because he tells his family that Prague is great and he moves here. So you, when you're communicating to an audience, you're actually communicating to multiple audiences, so that's what makes it all the more challenging at the moment to craft that message in a way that's authentic to Prague and at the same time that communicates what you want. And I think what we need to communicate is just that Prague is more than a tourist destination and more than just Charles Bridge or the castle, that there are more things going on here but people have to learn to connect with Prague somehow. So that's how I see it.

Roman Muska 36:47

I agree with this, that's true, and it's also about fulfilling the promise that we make. So if we get that convention delegate coming here, he might as well be a future investor and he might as well be a tourist who comes here afterwards with his family. This is usually the case because once they come here and find out during the convention that they don't have as much time to explore as they've imagined, and they like it here, they'll come back afterwards and come back for a longer period of time with family. So yes, it's true, that a person is not a consumer of that one given product, but they can come back and squeeze into the other ones, I agree with that. I just then have the problem of that initial unified communication there and making that brand and message interesting. That's getting beyond that, that's then also the follow-up to the claim, which has been a terribly long discussion at the national level. There was Country for the Future and Land of Stories, which then disappeared somewhere. Of course, we liked Country for the Future better than Land of Stories, for example, from our point of view. On the other hand, it's not a claim that's applicable cross-sectorally and cross-segmentally. Land of Stories is more applicable if you think about it well in communications campaigns.

Legáthová Lucia 38:10

Yeah, well, that was it. That's what I think is a nice example of those unified, overarching communication, that umbrella brand, under which you then know exactly how to tailor the message just to your sector or whatever it needs to be. For me, Country for the future doesn't quite fit with what the Czech Republic is.

Roman Muska 38:12

Well, it's not, it's not.

Legáthová Lucia 38:31

So I wasn't a big fan of it. And from what information I have, apparently there's a new branding committee now, because someone finally acknowledged that Country for the future is not working. But apparently, they're just figuring out what the new logo is going to look like, and whether it's going to be a square or circle or whatever. So we're back to where we were again.

Roman Muska 38:43

That's exactly what I was going to say, we are where we were. Now we've made Czech Republic Czechia and it's costing us quite a bit of money to change all that. And I think it's going to last for a while. Well, it's not an ideal brand at all, unfortunately.

So we try to communicate Prague, and there are more of those claims, of course, but our main one is Prague InSpires, which was a thing that was terrific, like, interestingly invented still here, like, historically, especially with the hundred towers of Prague.

Legáthová Lucia 39:26

This is an absolutely brilliant claim in my opinion.

Roman Muska 39:29

I find it too, and it's not my work, but I love using it today after all these years and I would hate to get rid of it. It's still that inspiring or inspirational Prague that can be tied to absolutely anything. I still like that because there are inspiring people, inspiring places, it's everything. And we can look to the history, we can look to the present, we can look to the future.

Another we have is Connecting, which was also one of those communication claims and is certainly also a very good - it symbolises crossroads of paths that were here historically for a long time and you can connect all the other things. The inspiring one unfortunately got pushed aside as over the years all the other destinations started to be inspiring as well.

Legáthová Lucia 40:44

Oh yeah, well, there are a lot of buzzwords now, they are all innovative, they are all modern, resilient now aren't they?

Roman Muška 40:52

And everybody today is also sustainable.

Legáthová Lucia 40:54

Exactly. It actually goes back to what you said before, that the brand has to be authentic to the place because if it's just a marketing sticker, it won't work.

Roman Muška 41:09

Exactly like that.

Legáthová Lucia 41:10

Yeah.

Legáthová Lucia stopped the transcription

Appendix no. 8: Interview transcript – Tereza Hrušková

Speaker1: [00:00:00] What do you understand by city branding?

Speaker2: [00:00:22] Reputation management, actually controlling how that city of yours is reported or perceived abroad or in some international context.

Speaker1: [00:00:40] Do you have examples of cities from abroad that have a good brand?

Speaker2: [00:00:45] My favourite is Barcelona, but New York is definitely a strong brand, it's kind of the classics, the Nordic cities, Copenhagen, Helsinki.

Speaker1: [00:00:54] How do you perceive Prague?

Speaker2: [00:01:03] I think Prague has a strong historical brand, which is due to the fact - and this is also the popular saying - that Prague has a stronger brand than the Czech Republic because Prague lasted 1000 years and the Czech Republic (is) a relatively young entity. But I think that (Prague) definitely in the notion of city branding as we understand it - as reputation management - I think it doesn't work, and the tourist (brand) doesn't work either. And the

reasons why that's the case, I guess we'll discuss later, but I don't think Prague has a functional city brand at this point.

Speaker1: [00:01:43] Can we get straight to the reasons why that is?

Speaker2: [00:01:52] I think the stakeholders that are out there don't fully understand the opportunities that come from this. That we're suffering a little bit and - I don't know, this might be interesting to look at from that Eastern European (perspective) or post-communist perspective - to what extent is that due to the fact that we actually take local government as something that's supposed to be taking care of local tax collection, business licensing, housing policy, non-residential leasing, and city governance in terms of transportation and city businesses. But that actually the city itself doesn't really do anything beyond that. City branding is very much about that, that superstructure on top of all those activities, and that it can help a lot in a very subtle way. If I had to compare it to something, it seems to me like when a person who has a slight health problem starts taking some vitamins - the city branding is those vitamins, where it's actually something that can take a longer time, but it can actually restore that person's health without having to take prescription drugs afterwards.

Speaker1: [00:03:22] What problems do you think the effort to brand Prague is encountering?

Speaker2: [00:03:33] I think a lot of it in Prague is the lack of focus of who should be doing it. It's also due to the fact that there's not the personnel capacity to do it here. I think primarily it's because there's really no telling who's supposed to do it. If it's supposed to be done by Prague City Tourism - but why should it be done by just a tourism entity when it's also about promoting entrepreneurship and attracting talented people? And I think that these are things that nobody has actually thought of addressing yet.

Speaker1: [00:04:12] Speaking of which - who do you think should be the guarantor? The city, a city organization, or someone completely outside?

Speaker2: [00:04:21] We've covered this a lot and there are different models. When we were thinking about it, it seemed to us that because of how fragmented the city ecosystem is, how many city organizations we have, whether they're contributory or stock or some other; it would make the most sense to anchor it at the city hall, right in that centre, to condition it on those

other entities wanting to work together because collaboration is key in this. Of course, it has problematic elements in that we don't have the ability to offer competitive salaries there, it's not an easy environment in terms of how it works. A joint stock company would probably be optimal, but if we want a solution that is applicable in the shortest possible time scale, I think the joint stock company is completely unrealistic.

Speaker1: [00:05:43] Why?

Speaker2: [00:05:43] I think that it combines so many agendas that it would end up being probably similar to the Prague Innovation Institute, which is still struggling a lot, whether it's defining their scope, funding agendas, and generally setting up those agencies, and they've been around for five or six years now. So I think that would be a much slower solution. I'm not saying I think it would probably be better in terms of ease of operation.

Or to use some other, already existing joint stock company, such as Prague City Tourism, which would have to be significantly expanded. And again (there is) the question of what this would do to the company as such.

Speaker1: [00:06:39] Now we're talking about the 2018-2022 timeframe. Have you and your department done any work to create this brand for Prague?

Speaker2: [00:06:51] Yes, a lot of work, to the point where it was considered by some to be too progressive and coercive. But I think that there was a lot of that motivated by the fact that we saw an example abroad that it was really possible and we were able to put that team together so that there were people who knew how to do it, had the desire to do it and saw the problems and were able to connect very well with that urban ecosystem and soak up different stimuli.

So these activities developed quite clearly. We did create a strategy in which that was embedded as one of the main things that would be developed in that next five-year period and a process was proposed for how to develop that. But the elections came and suddenly it stopped being a topic again, and the perception of foreign relations returned to its original context, that is, sending politicians on trips abroad and the accompanying service, especially the language support, whether translations or interpreting. The more progressive things ceased to be wanted.

And although it was presented several times as being one of the topics and as being something that the political representation would want, the actual instructions were the opposite.

Speaker1: [00:08:50]

So if we go back to the problems, why Prague doesn't have the brand yet? Firstly, it is not grasped within the city and secondly there is a lack of political support, is that right?

Speaker2: [00:08:56] I think the problem in general is that there is no mandate. There's not a mandate created for both the entity that would solve it and there's not the political support created to give a mandate for that solution. I think that actually, the politicians know what we mean, but it's still very abstract to them. One of (our) plans was to create a seminar or a conference where we would introduce the topic of city branding to local politicians. We were going to invite foreign experts to explain how it is solved in their cities and what the cities get out of it. But we weren't given the opportunity to do that.

Speaker1: [00:09:53] How do you think these problems could be solved?

Speaker1: [00:09:58] Changing the political culture in the Czech Republic. I think what would help is to create a platform that would draw attention to this in the long term, not just on the scale of Prague, but in terms of other cities as well. Paradoxically, I think that if there was a network of experts - whether it's based at a university, for example, or an NGO - that would actually sort of point this out and draw attention to this, it would draw attention to how much we're missing the train. And now it's not just about the cities, it's actually about national branding and that it's not just a problem of Prague, but actually as a country as a whole. So I think that the awareness could help a lot. And communication with some more enlightened politicians, maybe at local levels.

What works terribly well, probably not only in the Czech environment but especially in the Czech environment, is actually envy. And the moment when some smaller cities - typically for Prague that would be Brno or Olomouc or Ostrava - if they would come up with city branding, suddenly it would start working here very quickly. We know these examples from abroad, whether it's the example of Porto in Portugal or some smaller cities that started later than us, so I think this could work quite well.

Speaker1: [00:11:30] What do you think should be the goal of branding Prague?

Speaker2: [00:11:36] I think that Prague has a lot of subtle problems, but - and I'll use the medical analogy again - that it doesn't have cancer, but it has high blood pressure, diabetes, just a lot of subtle things that don't kill you right away, but in the long run they make your life very uncomfortable and they can potentially kill you, but over a longer period of time.

And I think that city branding can help to a large extent to address a lot of the ills that are here now. Whether it's - what a lot of people see as an economic success, but it's not an economic success - that we have negative unemployment. There's a shortage of skilled labour in the labour market here that we're not able to effectively attract from abroad. For Prague 1, the negative aspects of mass tourism, which is not of high quality, and everyone turns a blind eye to it. And the fact that Prague 1 has four times fewer inhabitants than it had in the early 1990s, it has a lot of vacant apartments and Airbnb and all these things, that's just one of the other problems. If we take that into account that we're talking about the capital, Prague 1 is actually the cradle of our Czech mentality, there are a lot of institutions here, we have Prague Castle, the president, and we let it be looted by drunken young teenagers who don't bring any added value to the city.

The moment we're not able to control that reputation, we're not able to work with that, like “Hey, don't come to Prague, because we're not a cheap funnel, but we have a lot of other things here. You better come and see our new collection at the National Gallery or something, because Prague is this cultural centre”. So, or really start to forcefully push out this group of these tourists here by effectively luring that wealthier clientele. Logically, the market will deal with it then, it will want those who pay more, it won't want those who trash their hotel rooms and spend nothing.

Then I think there are a lot of aspects like attracting foreign investment and working with European structural funds and international organisations and so on. That's where I also think we're actually still kind of the pretty girl from the east, where it's good to have us but not really let us do much of anything because those people haven't built up trust in us. You can work on that just as well with the city branding.

But of course, like a lot of these things, it's not just the city branding that will solve it. There you need really very good cooperation with the state, with local government and with all the actors involved. But I think that the city brand is a marketing tool that can show the will of the city to change something. That's where I think it can be important.

Speaker1: [00:15:04] Who should be involved in this process?

Speaker2: [00:15:09] Well, the list for Prague would be ultra broad. Typically, it's all the actors that are involved in how the city works and looks. Starting with educational institutions, whether it's colleges, or art schools; major cultural institutions like galleries, theatres, festivals; municipal corporations; contributing organizations; hobby societies. The city is really extremely fragmented; we also need to work with the districts, of which there are fifty-seven. At the macro level, the state ones, I think there is good coordination with both the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Speaker1: [00:16:20] What are the strengths of Prague that should appear in that communication?

Speaker2: [00:16:26] The question is what the goal should be. If the goal is to cure some ills so that we can live here better and make this city work better, then I think we need to highlight what's already working well.

For me, it's the fact that Prague is a small and big city at the same time, that it's very well connected, that you don't need a car, but can get everywhere either on foot or by public transport. It's well suited for families with children, the educational opportunities, whether it's in terms of leisure activities, where we have an incredible network of primary art schools, which doesn't actually cost anything. If a child wants to learn to play the piano or the guitar, they can and it's not a big burden on the family. Same with sports. Higher education, which is free and is high quality. These are all benefits that I think few other European cities can offer.

At the same time its affordability, of course, is becoming more of a housing issue. It's probably not going to be solved overnight, but I still think it's not as much of a crisis as in other big European cities. Lots of green space. I don't think Prague is xenophobic, I think people here

can tolerate each other very well - the level of tolerance is maybe too high. I think there are good opportunities here and it's a good city to live in.

Speaker1: [00:18:46] Do you think this is how Prague is really perceived abroad?

Speaker2: [00:18:55] Now I have a very vivid experience of talking to young Dutch people. They came here as tourists, they all studied at good universities and they were not fools. And they just came to Prague for the cheap alcohol, for the parties and for the easy girls. Prostitution is an incredible draw and this is what they expect. And the moment one tries to offer them an alternative in the form of art or leisure, they say they'd rather go to London or something and have no reason to go to Prague. I think that's the problem with the branding, that we're not able to tell people that Prague can be at least as good as London in some things, and they just don't know and can't imagine it. That's why they seek out what they know about and what they can imagine.

Speaker1: [00:20:39] Since you mentioned London, what other European or world cities do you think are competitors or benchmarks for Prague? Who can Prague compare itself to and what should it be aiming for?

Speaker2: [00:20:42] I would love it to be compared to Barcelona or Vienna or Berlin. But I think it's more like we're not really there or we're not going to be there. What we can compare ourselves to now are Polish cities like Warsaw, Krakow. It's not even Amsterdam - for all the similarities we have, just in terms of the tourist negatives, I think they can handle it much better. I think we are really on the level of Polish cities, maybe Bratislava and Budapest, so deeply locked in those of our V4.

Appendix no. 9: Interview transcript – Zdeněk Hřib

[00:00:00.240] - Speaker 1

To begin with, what does the term city branding mean to you?

[00:00:10.020] - Speaker 2

Well, it should be primarily, in my opinion, about the city trying to act together, consolidated, with all of its components, and secondly, trying to communicate a unified message externally. Which, of course, doesn't quite work here for a variety of reasons.

[00:00:37.830] - Speaker 1

We'll get to that. About the city branding. Do you have any examples abroad that have caught your eye that you think have been successful?

[00:00:45.250] - Speaker 2

Yeah, so of course, when you have that contact with that foreign country, you can see how they work in other cities. I mean, a nice example of that unification I think is in Vienna. You can see that in the branding, they have a unified logo and they attach city companies to it. I think Porto, for example, works very similarly like that. Those examples are quite definitely there.

We have this logo that is very specific and is not quite easily made for combination in this style. That's still kind of a tough one. But I think you can find those examples here in Europe, at least for sure.

[00:01:39.960] - Speaker 1

Great. Now we can get back to Prague. How do you feel about the situation in Prague?

[00:01:46.890] - Speaker 2

Well, the situation in Prague is problematic, because we are extremely fragmented as a local government, so a lot of these things are actually done by the municipal companies, and unfortunately in some cases maybe people don't even know that the companies actually belong to Prague. For example, the OICT, or the Technologies of the City of Prague (TSK), I think when you see the logo you don't realise that it's a municipal company. It's just that all those companies have completely different logos. With TSK there was some attempt to make their logo at least a little bit visually closer to the city's logo, but I don't know, it seems to me that it's still kind of halfway there. So that's the first problem, the extreme fragmentation. The companies are under the jurisdiction of different council members, which means that the agreement is very difficult because they take pride in their identity. Yeah, take the Institute of Planning and Development, they just have their own visual identity, they do it their way. The ZOO, they have like their own logo too. They also do a lot of marketing on their own. Those

are the kinds of things where there are some historical practices in place that are probably going to be quite challenging.

[00:03:19.200] - Speaker 1

How would you describe the brand of Prague? What do you think Prague is trying to communicate?

[00:03:26.730] - Speaker 2

Well, that's a fair question. What is the Prague brand? Because first of all, we have the Najbrt logo, it's a little square of pra pra pra pra. And then we have the emblem, that's the lions, the flags and the coat of arms with the hand with the sword in the gate. If you look at the way that the cities around us, such as the V4 cities - if you look at Budapest, they don't really have that duality in their logos. They just have one logo and that contains the emblem. So there you can see that they don't have this extra duality.

And the second thing is, what are we actually saying to the world that we are? Because Prague is very well known abroad. I dare say it's better known than the Czech Republic as such. And of course, we are known here because of the cheap alcohol and the nice architecture. And then, I think, because of the music, let's say. But I don't think people associate us much with the things we want to communicate, innovation and so on. So that's, that's the problem.

[00:05:05.790] - Speaker 1

Why is that? Why don't people associate these things with us?

[00:05:09.270] - Speaker 2

Is this again due to some history and, in the case of alcohol, probably the excise tax settings, and with lousy government regulation of Airbnb. And then the overall decadence of the post-war development, it's very complicated, with the overall setup of the mentality of the society that the public administration can't really be trusted, and for that reason, it's best not to give it any powers. So because of that, actually, the historic centre looks the way it looks. That's why we just have these Thai massages and such in the historic streets. Yeah, that's a very complicated question. What message are we sending now and why are we sending it? Part of the reason is that Prague doesn't actually have enough power to handle its own affairs because it just doesn't have it embedded in the law.

[00:06:24.700] - Speaker 1

And do you think Prague is trying to manage its reputation abroad in some way? Exactly - cheap alcohol, women, entertainment...

[00:06:32.190] - Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, we're trying. For example, we have started the Vltava Philharmonic project, where we are building on something that has already been laid here. We have the Prague Spring Festival here, and I, when I was in Taiwan in 2005 as a student, when I said Prague, a guy who was selling pencils in a stationery shop, not even in the capital, he said "Yeah, that's great". That's a thing to build on for sure. The Vltava Philharmonic Orchestra, trying to attract a different type of tourist than the ones that come around the pubs here. Of course, we would need to have a lot more tools in the state administration to solve these problems but unfortunately, the state is totally incompetent and doesn't like to let go of those powers.

[00:07:46.420] - Speaker 1

During your term of office, the city has developed several strategies that address this topic, such as the Prague Strategic Plan or the RIS Innovation Strategy. These strategies say that Prague should promote itself abroad not only as a tourist destination but also as a great place to live, to attract talent or scientists, entrepreneurs and so on. Do you think that these strategies are actually being implemented?

[00:08:16.690] - Speaker 2

Prague's strategic plan was approved before me. The problem is actually that it to some extent substitutes for a political statement about the direction of the city. That's why I think, and I have it up there, but it's not really being worked with. One, because it's obviously becoming obsolete in terms of technology - it says something about wifi in the subway, which we know is already a dead end, or in the streetcars or something like that.

However, we've approved that strategy for inbound tourism. We were planning to have a strategy approved for the foreign policy of Prague, but it just didn't get processed because of the end of the term. So we'll see what happens with that now, it's not under me anymore.

I think the general perception here is that we're trying to attract a slightly different kind of tourist. There was an effort to attract more foreign congresses here and it was disrupted by covid but maybe we managed to attract those nephrologists. But again, thanks to covid, there could have been two dates, now there will be only one, hopefully. So it's kind of complicated.

[00:10:10.810] - Speaker 1

And in terms of attracting talent, foreign workers, students?

[00:10:15.130] - Speaker 2

Well, that was good. That's the RIS, right? There's a big problem in the cost of housing, which is a problem that obviously hinders any attraction of talent from abroad. It's also the complete inability of the state to facilitate any of those processes for non-EU foreigners to come here to do anything. It's just a major challenge to process a foreign worker. But ok, we're in the EU, so at least it might be easy to attract people from the EU. But I think the big limitation there is the cost of living. And because otherwise, I would venture to say that Prague is not a bad city to live in, there it is on my desk, the number one place to live in the Czech Republic. With generally a lot of cultural activities here, I guess, enough greenery in the immediate surroundings, the possibility to go somewhere, I think as a city it's definitely not bad.

[00:11:29.290] - Speaker 1

Well, these strengths that you just described, do you think they are communicated sufficiently to those target groups abroad?

[00:11:36.310] - Speaker 2

I'm sure they're not being communicated. Well, as I say, there's a lack of a strategy here on how to accommodate that communication abroad. As I say, it's been prepared, but it hasn't been approved yet. That's the first thing. And then of course it's about the fact that the city would have to invest in that somehow. It would have to be somehow embedded here and connected to other activities that the city does. It's unfortunately not clear at this point anymore. Why? Wasn't there a political agreement? Well, there's no consensus on what our intent was here, but unfortunately, there were a lot of other smart people who had different opinions.

[00:12:27.460] - Speaker 1

So actually some political fragmentation of the system?

[00:12:30.490] - Speaker 2

You could say that.

[00:12:30.760] - Speaker 1

And the subject isn't exactly priority?

[00:12:35.650] - Speaker 2

Well, that's the other thing, of course. We've had two global crises here now. So the second thing is now the financial emergency is starting to come back and it's like quite complicated. There you have to imagine something specific under it, which in terms of this topic here as attracting talent from abroad and investing in innovation, is quite complicated because the benefit comes delayed. Well, then it's a problem to explain to the coalition partners what it's actually good for.

[00:13:23.540] - Speaker 1

Did you try to do that or did you not open this topic?

[00:13:27.490] - Speaker 2

Few people could accuse me of not being active enough in foreign policy. It's just that always at times when there was going to be some significant fructification of those issues, there was always something that had to be dealt with urgently and it was a higher priority - see covid, that made foreign travel impossible for a while. Then and then the Ukrainian crisis and especially the economic pressure associated with it. Yeah, there were a lot of plans - there was a plan here to polish up the emblem, the little bit with the lions, which if you look at it closely you start to see some problems there, that just somebody probably worked on it on Friday afternoon apparently. Well, so we wanted to smooth that out somehow. But investing, at this time, in improvements like the emblem of Prague is just actually very difficult to justify politically, it's very, very, very complicated.

[00:14:47.730] - Speaker 1

Just a quick interjection - it's happening now. I was part of the working group on the marketing for the new visual identity.

[00:14:47.830] - Speaker 2

Yeah? Well, that's good.

[00:14:47.890] - Speaker 1

Great. Who do you think should be the guarantor of these activities? Should it be the city, a city organization, or someone outside?

[00:15:06.980] - Speaker 2

The city should manage it somehow and the city should actually impose its visual identity on the companies, but that is very, very complicated because of the political fragmentation. It's very, very, very complicated.

[00:15:24.650] - Speaker 1

And now we're talking about reputation management, rather than the visual identity, the message we're sending abroad and so who in the city should be in charge of that?

[00:15:35.240] - Speaker 2

Who should be in charge of the visuals?

[00:15:38.990] - Speaker 1

Not the visual aspect, but rather exactly the relationships and overall management of the city's reputation abroad.

[00:15:46.550] - Speaker 2

Well, good question. Well, ideally, I guess, the Foreign Affairs Councillor, right? That should probably be the person in charge.

[00:16:00.440] - Speaker 1

You mean the mayor at the moment.

[00:16:02.130] - Speaker 2

It was also the mayor in the last term, and in the term before I don't know who it was. But I think that I, for example, when I met with representatives of other cities, in some cases there was a position, where they had a separate Deputy Mayor or Councillor or something, depending

on what system was there, with the responsibility of the foreign affairs. So it's not quite a rule abroad that the mayor necessarily has to do it. Although, I remember that in the 2018 coalition negotiations, there was a sentence that said that foreign affairs clearly have to be done by the mayor, nobody else can do it. That follows from the nature of the job, which was in 2018. So I think the view here is that it's intensely connected.

[00:17:06.700] - Speaker 1

Who would you then identify as the main stakeholders? Who should actually be involved in the creation of the brand and the narrative of what Prague is?

[00:17:16.790] - Speaker 2

Well, I guess there's more than one. Prague City Tourism, which is the organization responsible for tourism here in Prague, should definitely play a role. The problem is that then it should be much more. We have a media and marketing department here, which should probably be involved in this as well, even though they do the campaigns for the local audiences, they should probably do it for the foreign ones as well. Then there should be some kind of linking. Actually, with the innovations, those are currently in the PRI (Project Management) department, which is a bit of an unfortunate name. So there are probably more stakeholders then. And then there are some representatives of the individual institutions that have some foreign contacts, which is for example the ZOO, which by definition has quite a lot of contacts with foreign countries, but at the moment it is more on its own track. Of course, ZOOs abroad are often municipal, so this is actually a method of municipal diplomacy. I mean, the Taiwanese pangolin, of course, is about the fact that the zoo there is also municipal.

[00:19:03.610] - Speaker 1

You mentioned that the ZOO is managing its brand on its own. I think that's how you could define the whole Prague ecosystem, that everybody is going their own way. Why do you think that is?

[00:19:12.540] - Speaker 2

Well, in the absence of that, there was no unifying element from the beginning, so that's the first thing.

[00:19:20.820] - Speaker 1

Well, how would that be solved?

[00:19:26.220] - Speaker 2

Well, it would have to be solved by the city hall taking a stronger hand. Of course, as I mentioned, it would require a bit of investment, and I'm not sure now is the time for someone to take it on as their own, as it would undoubtedly mean that it would require hiring some people, for example. And we're at a time where, again, civil servants are the public enemy, right, that's kind of the note that ODS is playing. So then it's a problem to explain to people why the City hall is increasing headcount.

[00:20:26.410] - Speaker 1

And how do you think the perception of the branding issue could be shifted towards the important parts of the city?

[00:20:37.880] - Speaker 2

Do you mean explain to the people in the city why it's important? I daresay that one of the reasons why communicating in some synchronous way might be supported by this as a need, i.e. hiring people. I mean, that was some idea back at the end of that last term. There is some sort of job portal "We work for Prague", it doesn't matter if it would be done by OICT or the IT department, but there would be some kind of unified portal for that. But that would require I guess unifying that identity a little bit so that if you're going to work for Prague Services or Prague Services Administration, you don't actually care when you're going to do a similar position there. Anyway, I don't think this is going any further than that. And at the same time, that's an area that probably is a little bit more of a concern, the city companies, because generally the way the job market works here.

[00:22:18.070] - Speaker 1

And if we take a step back - we're talking about reputation management, city branding, so how do we make that an important part of the strategy? Actually, it's already part of the strategy, but even you said it's not a high enough priority.

[00:22:36.460] - Speaker 2

So it would have to have some sort of added value and those people would have to understand what that added value is. Which I would say is closely related to attracting some talent and that

support here. It's just that we'd have to say again, like what good is it going to do, other than making them feel good about it? Because that's getting into how the tax budget is set up. Even if we could get the whole Google headquarters here, the city wouldn't get an extra penny out of it. That's the fundamental problem. We just don't finance cities based on how they're going to boost the economy in that particular city, but based on that headcount of people who are permanent residents. This is the problem because then there's nothing actually forcing them to support innovation at all. Realistically for me, it would actually be best if they invested in innovation in Brno and the money they make there gets redistributed based on headcount anyway. So they'll have the costs, I'll have the revenue, and I'm just happy and didn't have to lift a finger for it. So that's what the current system is currently incentivising those local governments to do, and those local governments, of course, logically behave accordingly. The system is set up perversely, which is just simply another facet of the incompetence of that state.

[00:24:10.720] - Speaker 1

And is this specific to the Czech Republic?

[00:24:12.400] - Speaker 2

I think it is. I think that every country that doesn't have a completely demented civil service, somehow figured out that they need to set up the system in an incentive way. For example, we talked to Brussels about the possibility of organizing the Tour de France. So, of course, they had a calculated business case - that they invest this money here, that many people will come, they will spend that amount of money, there will be such a tax for this, and the city will get this amount into the budget. So the amount A, the investment, is less than the amount B, which is going to come out of it in the end, and therefore the city is going to make a profit on it, and I'm pouring money into it based on that. That's not what's going on here. You can't do the math because this all fits, except you don't get anything here because here you would have to increase the population in the city, which of course with events like this doesn't happen. I mean, the system is actually desperately dysfunctional in terms of just setting up those basic incentive processes, so of course it can never work.

[00:25:37.370] - Speaker 1

Okay.. So if we take the ideal state, what do you think Prague should communicate and how should it be perceived abroad?

[00:25:50.880] - Speaker 2

So we're getting into the level of how we would like to be perceived abroad, well, we're getting into some subjective wishes. So I would of course like us to be seen as some kind of country really - Country for the Future, that's it, ha! Of course, we're not like that in any way. Country for no future. And of course, Prague would be perceived as the capital of the country for the future. That would be very nice, but that's a marketing wish that some marketer has materialized but that is completely out of touch with reality. This country is definitely not for the young.

[00:26:49.430] - Speaker 1

What do you think are Prague's strengths?

[00:26:52.940] - Speaker 2

I think there's always something going on here. A Land of Stories, but not just in the sense that there's really a lot of cultural activity here, that you're really not bored. It's due to the fact that Prague is pouring money into making the city move in this respect, which is definitely a positive thing. Then, of course, it depends on your target audience. Let's take Erasmus - when you come here, it probably hits you that you don't pay school fees. So I dare say those are like other interesting benefits. Cheap alcohol? So that's the question of whether that's, whether that's really a strength or what it is. Compared to other metropolises we have cheap public transport, significantly. In Vienna, it is with great glory one euro per day, here we're under half of that. So I think the advantages are quite definitely there.

[00:28:20.060] - Speaker 1

Yeah, right, I'm asking because I'm going to make some recommendations for Prague. So actually what do you think Prague could communicate, what is something that we can be proud of?

[00:28:31.940] - Speaker 2

We can be proud of the history, which is the problem. We'd like to be proud of what's to come. But if you walk around here, a lot of the houses here were built around the time of the First Republic, for example. Well, before that, of course. When you look at it, the development sort of died down after the second world war, then the housing crisis was dealt with with the housing estates, and some other residential areas. There were a few houses built that survived, by then.

But realistically, if you look at what makes up the centre now, the ministry buildings and that, that's the first republic period. And that was probably a time when there was an idea of uniting the society, to prove that we can function without those Habsburgs and that the republic made sense. So on that basis, I dare say we can be proud of the past. Somehow now Ukraine is showing the Russian military that they are not invincible. But if we dig into history, the first ones to show that to Russia were the Czechoslovakian legionnaires, who were very adept at dominating those key points in Russia. And that was actually the army of a non-existent state. So we can be proud of that past, but the question is whether that's what to expect in the future. Well, I don't quite see it there right now. Honestly, no.

[00:30:51.670] - Speaker 1

All right, this one's depressing, huh? Well, then, what are Prague's weaknesses?

[00:30:58.780] - Speaker 2

Very expensive housing, primarily, is certainly a fundamental problem that has the ability to completely suffocate the city and prevent development in the future.

[00:31:11.210] - Speaker 1

Do you think that even compared to other European capitals?

[00:31:14.460] - Speaker 2

I think the moment you compare income versus expenses versus housing, I dare say it is a problem. We can obviously talk about whether we own housing or rent housing, but it's just based on the 16 salaries or whatever it was, I don't know how it's updated now, but in some rankings Prague probably leads.

[00:31:43.620] - Speaker 1

In Brno, it is said to be worse.

[00:31:46.060] - Speaker 2

Brno is even worse. Now it's back to the current debate on student dorm prices. I was looking at it now because I found out that I was paying 460 crowns a month for a college dorm in 2000. And since I've been looking into that, Seznam správy here did an inflation calculator since 1993, so there I found that those prices have roughly doubled since then. So theoretically, now

a student should pay for that four-bedroom with the extremely ugly furniture that was there then, but in the Jednota dormitory on Opletalova Street which is in the city centre, a short walk from the train station and Wenceslas Square. So they should pay, let's say, 900, which is definitely not the case. I looked at the dormitories and canteens here, and I found that it's 126 crowns per day. Yeah, that's what I've got here, the Jednota dormitory here, a four-bed dormitory, the same one I was in, 126 crowns a night. So if I take a hundred and twenty-six times thirty, that's 3,780 crowns, which is definitely more than double. That's more than eight times. I mean, it's like the discussions here are just completely absurd. And the income of students has definitely not gone up 8 times. They've just now eliminated the student tax credits as well. So I think that's one of the fundamental problems - the affordability of decent housing. And now what else is the problem here? What would I say is the problem? The heat in the city! Well, I guess we need to green up more of that area, but again that development of the city is hampered by the preservationists who like abundantly chime in on things they don't understand, present their private opinions and push into these administrative decisions, which is the problem.

[00:35:00.070] - Speaker 1

So you said that at the moment Prague is not a place for the future. We live from the historical glory, but you don't see much of the future. Why?

[00:35:11.940] - Speaker 2

That's what I'm saying. The problem is the perversion of the very basic system starting with the elementary motivation of why local governments should do anything at all.

[00:35:24.750] - Speaker 1

But in Brno, it works somehow, the innovation ecosystem is more developed there.

[00:35:29.700] - Speaker 2

But there's nothing motivating them to do it, it just kind of happened to be there. They do it because they enjoy it, but they don't get anything out of it and they won't. That's just really their intrinsic motivation, which of course has some limits.

[00:35:51.370] - Speaker 1

And you don't think it would work that way in Prague?

[00:35:58.260] - Speaker 2

That's just stupid. The system is supposed to be set up differently in principle.

[00:36:11.070] - Speaker 1

Okay, I have one last question. Which cities, worldwide or European, I'll leave it up to you, do you think are Prague's competitors and which ones could inspire it?

[00:36:29.070] - Speaker 2

Well, there's something in every city we could take inspiration from, I guess. There's a lot of talk about Vienna. If I were to leave the immediate circle of countries from which we can get some raisins, it's the closest ones, it's the V4, de facto, and Vienna. So with all of them, I actually did some formalisation of cooperation in the last term. Vienna has a separate treaty and the V4 one was the Pact of Free Cities. Then there is Dresden, so there was at least intensive contact with their mayor, and then Munich, the capital of Bavaria, was also important. But if I were to look further, I think Copenhagen could serve as an interesting example. In some ways maybe Stockholm, which is quite similar to us in terms of transport, I think they don't have an outer ring road and they are not quite on a flat surface, so you could say that there is some inspiration to be taken from those transport solutions. I think that Denmark works well in the long term with their high quality of life. But we can take inspiration from further as well, for example, in London they have the No Emission Zone, in terms of transport. If we talk about transport, in Barcelona they do interesting things in transport too, but there it comes from the fact that they have this regular square grid. That's somewhat difficult to transfer.

[00:38:24.920] - Speaker 1

And the competition?

[00:38:28.640] - Speaker 2

Yeah, I guess it's complicated. To be honest, I've never really thought about it. Who do we like as much as the competition? Someone thought we'd rather go to Stuttgart or Prague. On what basis did you choose it in the end? I don't know.

[00:39:03.140] - Speaker 1

Okay, I won't bother you. Great, that's it. If you have anything else you want to add, now's the time.

[00:39:07.490] - Speaker 2

I'm still thinking that wages might be a factor. But of course, wages versus costs, which is probably even higher in those absolute numbers somewhere else. So expensive housing is primarily relative to those incomes.

[00:39:32.150] - Speaker 1

So great, thank you again for your time and for your replies!