



PRAGUE

CZECH REPUBLIC

KEY FEATURES OF THE CITY

Demographic Facts

- about 1.24 million people in the city
- nearly 2 million in the metropolitan area

Urban Figures

- Old Town, Lesser Town, New Town

Heritage

- Registered heritage: Historic Centre of Prague
- Inscription: World Heritage List
- Date of inscription: 1992

EXISTING GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

Development and Management Plans

- Programme for the Implementation of the Prague Strategic Plan 2009-2015
- Land-Use Plan

Responsible Authorities

- The Strategic Planning Department at the City Development Authority of Prague (ÚRM)
- Prague City Hall Departments
- Municipal Assembly of the City of Prague

Legislation for the protection and management

- Spatial Planning Act
- Act no. 183/2006 on Spatial Planning and Building Rules (Building Act)

MAIN ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Conflict between the attributes of contemporaneity and the legacy of the past
- Lack of housing
- Traffic and infrastructure

KEY ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE-BASED REGENERATION STRATEGIES

- Strengthening of the urban role at the interface between heritage and innovation
- Supporting housing construction and regeneration of the current housing stock
- Managing the transport system and environmental issues

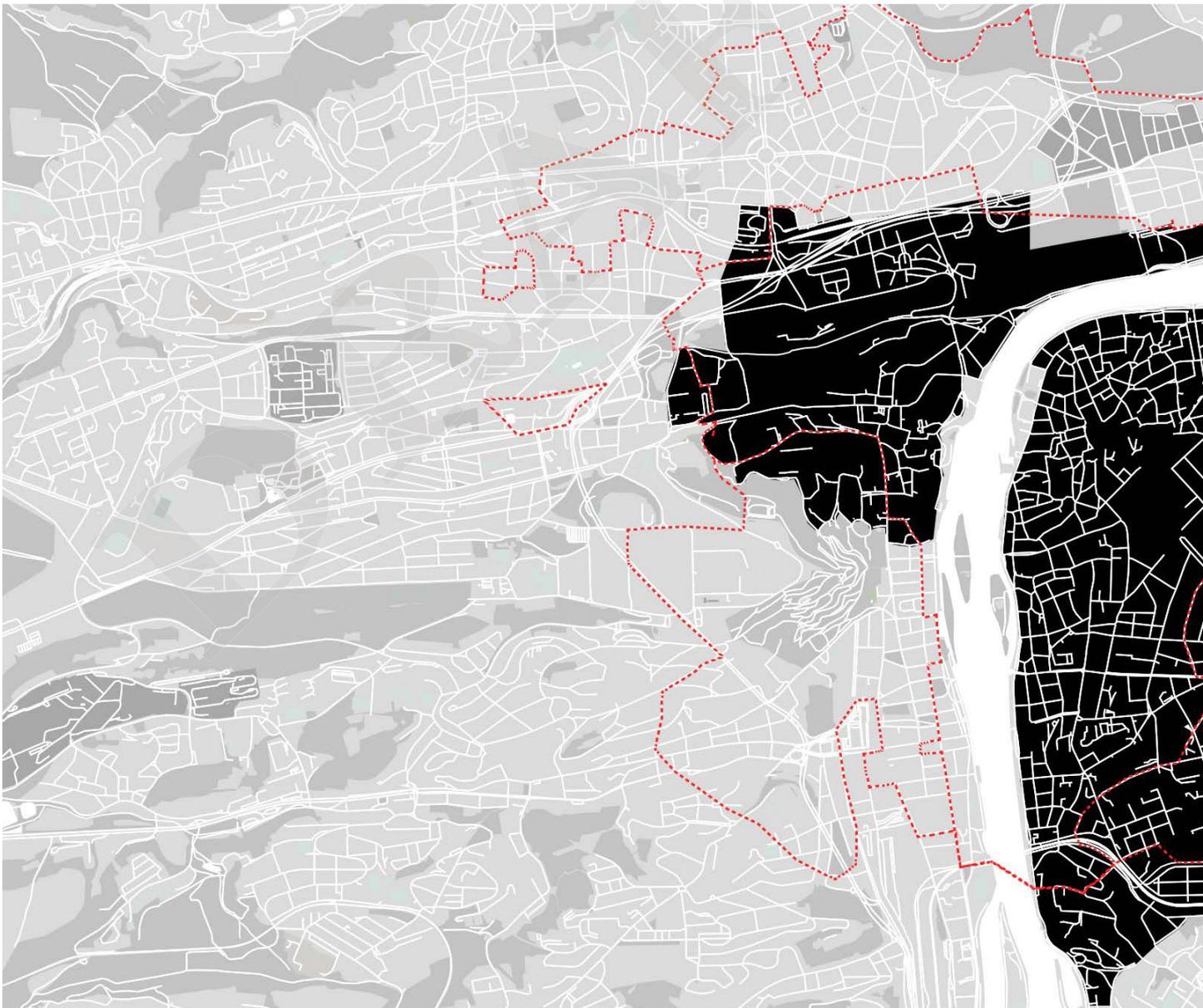
OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNT

- From a monocentric to a polycentric structure of the city
- International integration



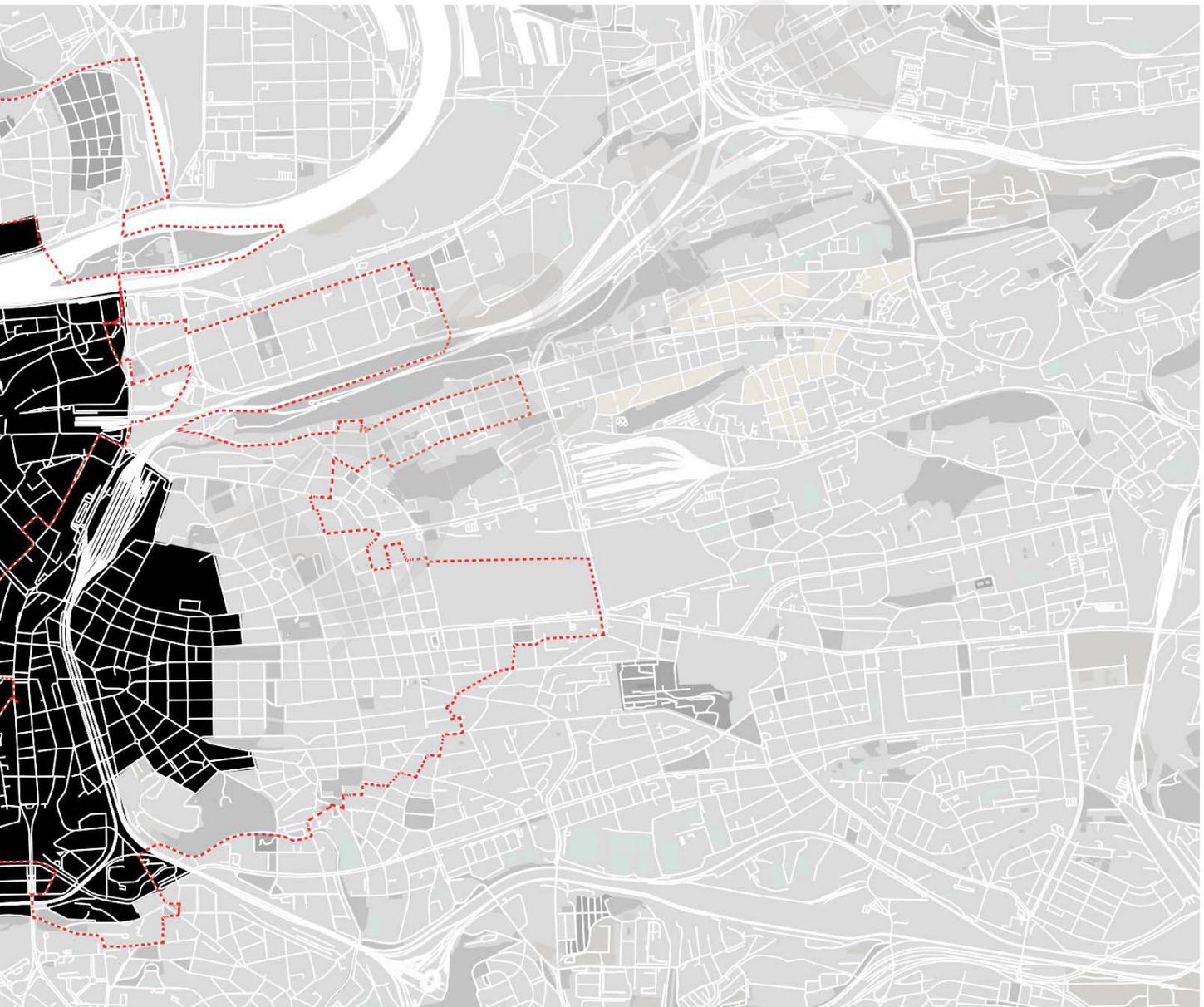
9.7 *Prague*

Situated on the River Vltava in central Bohemia, Prague is the capital city of the Czech Republic and has been the political, cultural, and economic core of the State during its 1.100-year existence. As a key focus of central Europe, Prague is a metropolis that is still developing and growing, and it entered into the 21st century under greatly differing conditions than under those which existed before. In the face of political, social and economic changes — which significantly influenced the urban spatial restructuring — the image of the city is undergoing profound transformations, though it has preserved its development structure until the present times. As an urban and architectural ensemble of outstanding quality — in terms of both individual monuments and townscape — Prague's historic centre is a paradigm of the process of continuous urban growth from the Middle Ages to the present day.



9.7.1 Key features of the city

The post-1989 overall process of growth — concentrating most of the new investments in the Capital City and its metropolitan region — has been accompanied by internal differentiation within Prague contrasting booming area with declining areas, also affecting the spatial structure of the city by virtue of many factors. Due to its strategic position, Prague holds a double potential role: on the one hand, it is positioned at the core of Europe with its unique cultural-historical heritage of international relevance; on the other hand the city traditionally stands as the hub for Czech nation, state administration, academia and culture. Despite these favorable characteristics, some weaknesses emerge as current high-risk features, above all concerning the integration into the European transport network and the poorly developed coordination of activities and co-operation between the public and private sectors for the promotion of the city's interests. However, the current ambiguous condition of the city — in which the urban planning policy is perceived as contradictory to the neo-liberal approach of the free, unregulated market (Sykora 2006) — may be read as an opportunity field for internal urban transformations.



Demographic facts

Prague is the largest city of the Czech Republic, fourteenth-largest city in the European Union, spanning an area of 496 square meters and housing a population of about 1.24 million citizens, while its larger urban zone is estimated to have nearly 2 million people.

Urban figures

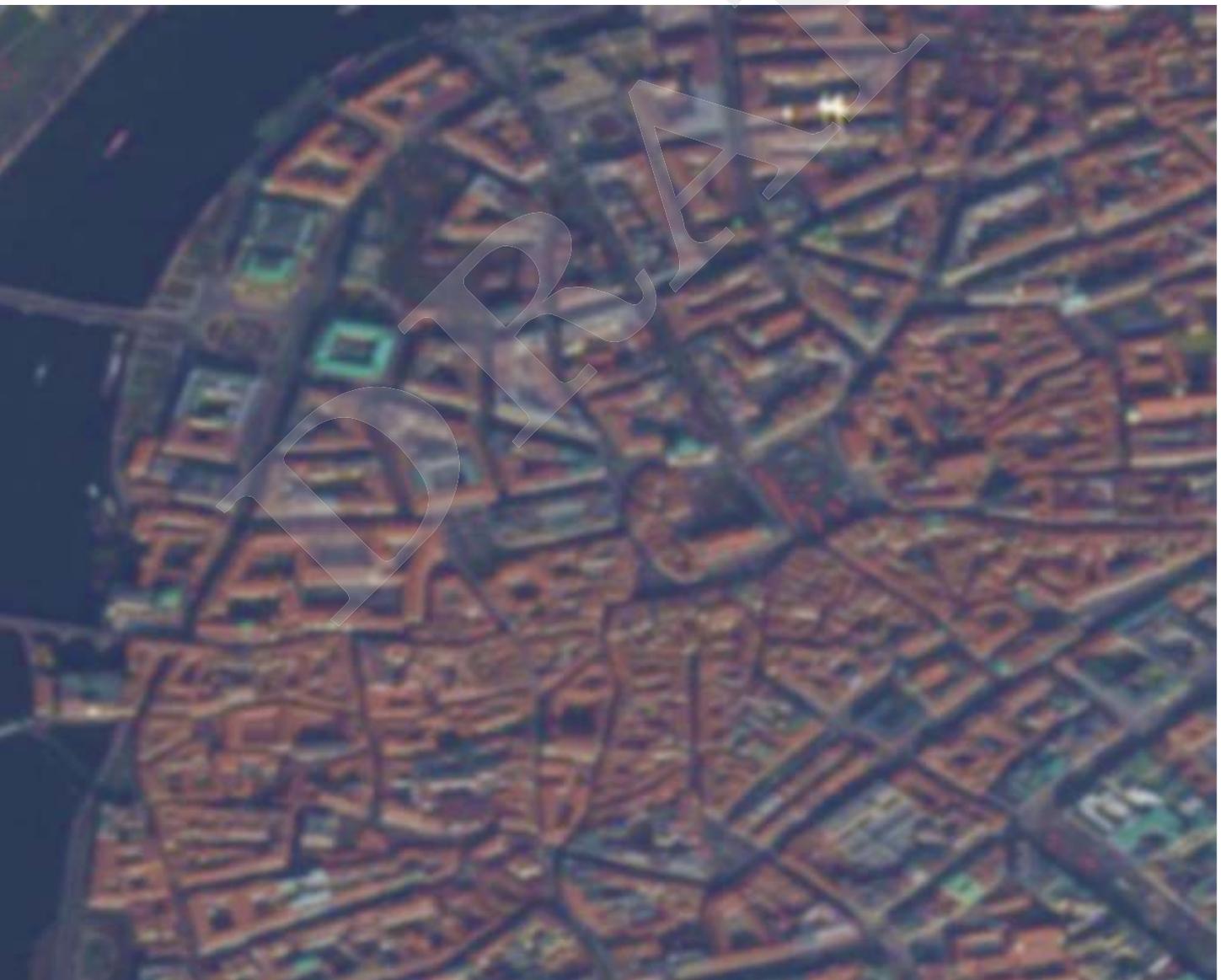
Prague metropolitan region consists of two parts – of the capital of Prague and surrounding parts of Central Bohemia region. The city setting on both banks of the Vltava River, its townscape of burger houses and palaces punctuated by towers, and its individual buildings represent some of the main urban characters of the historical centre of Prague. The historic core comprises three separate cities — the **Old Town** (Staré Město), the **Lesser Town** (Mala Strana) and the **New Town** (Nové Město) — and has undergone successive stages of growth which have respected the original grand-scale urban structure of the early Middle Ages. Enlarged with urban transformations and additions in the High Gothic period, the High Baroque period, the 19th century and the rising modernism of the 20th century, the urban structure has been mainly preserved in its overall configuration and spatial composition, saved from large-scale urban renewals or massive demolitions. In the medieval development of Christianity in central Europe, the role of Prague influenced its urban



evolution as a leading intellectual and cultural centre, primarily linked to the foundation of the University in the 14th century and the Hussite Movement in the 15th century, representing a fundamental transition to the European Reformation, together with the presence of prominent figures in art, science and politics.

Heritage

Since 1992, the “Historic Centre of Prague” has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, as a site comprising the Old Town, the Lesser Town, and the New Town, built between the 11th and 18th centuries. The Medieval urbanism embodied by the historic centre with its many magnificent monuments — such as Hradcany Castle, St Vitus Cathedral, Charles Bridge and numerous churches and palaces, built mostly in the 14th century under the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV” (UNESCO WHL) — represents one of the key criteria for the listing. An extension of the World Heritage Site "Historic Centre of Prague" with the important Monuments in its Vicinity has been proposed in 2001 as part of the UNESCO Tentative List. In 2015 also the “timeless, humanistic architecture of Jože Plečnik” in Prague has been added into the Tentative List.



9.7.2 Existing governance mechanisms

Prague is governed by the Prague City Council, with its members being elected by universal suffrage. The Council is led by the Executive, which is chaired by the elected Mayor. For administrative purpose, Prague is divided into 22 districts which possess individual district councils.

Development and management plans

The Prague Strategic Plan — formulated in 2001, then updated in 2008 and approved by the Prague Municipal Assembly under Resolution No. 22/42 — is a programming document that sets out the long-term development goals of the city and the principles for their implementation, constituting the major policy paper for the city, prepared with considerable support of the British Know How Fund.

Programme for the Implementation of the Prague Strategic Plan 2009-2015.

The implementation programme develops the Prague Strategic Plan — formulated in 2001 — into a proposal for the key tasks for carrying out the plan in 2009–2015. The Strategic Plan thus provides a vision of the spatial planning, since the master plan for Prague — although guiding the development of the city — “does not determine what will be built, but rather what can be built” (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2008: 2). The basic strategic aim in spatial planning of Prague is the transition towards a polycentric city. According to this goal, some of the guiding principles of the spatial planning policy relate to the regulation of land and building uses as well as of the proportion between green and built-up areas. Furthermore, specific guidelines concern the requirements for new constructions in terms of architectonic standards, large construction projects implementation, use of public spaces, also addressing the role of public consultation. The Strategic Plan has become the basis for the Regional Operational Programme, based on which Prague will strive to gain support of its projects from the European Union funds.

Land-Use Plan (ÚPn). On September 9, 1999 the Municipal Assembly of the City of Prague approved the Land-Use Plan in its resolution and the Plan then became effective on January 1, 2000. The Land-Use Plan relates to the functionality of Prague’s territory, particularly focusing on traffic and transportation sectors and including their assessment and a comprehensive overview of the current status and future development of the environment.

In addition to the Land-Use Plan of the city there are six other land-use planning documents in progress, related to three main aspects: the development and new building projects in the territory of the westernmost part of Prague; current issues of construction projects and functionality of districts and subdistricts in the historical centre; the necessary reconstruction of housing schemes at a regulatory plan level.

Responsible authorities

For what concerns the main actors involved in urban renewal actions, the city government plays a key role in the formulation of the policies, co-working with the private sector and consulting commercial enterprises, professional associations and citizens.

The implementation programme has been prepared by the **Strategic Planning Department** at the **City Development Authority of Prague (ÚRM)**, in co-operation with **Prague City Hall** departments and other partners. The City Development Authority also drafted the Land-Use Plan of the city, subject to a consent of the **Municipal Assembly of the**

City of Prague, which undergone comments of state administration authorities concerned, municipal districts, citizens, and organizations, as well.

Legislation for the protection and management

Spatial Planning Act. On the legal basis of the Spatial Planning Act, the City Development Authority of Prague is responsible of the Strategic Plan for Prague, aimed at “the change-over from a monocentric to a polycentric city, and particularly at alleviating “the demand for city centre and make more balanced use of all its territory” (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2008: 2)

Building Act. Under Act no. 183/2006 on Spatial Planning and Building Rules, the Ministry for Regional Development defines of spatial planning regulations and permission proceeding. Within its scope of application, self-governing regional offices and Magistrate of the Capital City of Prague exercise control on the activity and unlawful decisions by the administrative bodies in the field of spatial planning.

9.7.3 Main issues to be addressed

Although the rediscovery of Prague by tourist waves and investment trends — also by both Eastern and Western dynamic young groups — together with the good rating of the city, low level of unemployment, above-average wages, higher household incomes, higher standard of living constitute some of the main features of the city’s current condition, it should be also taken into account that there are still fundamental issues to be addressed.

Conflict between the attributes of contemporaneity and the legacy of the past. The dualism between the needs of modern life — in terms of today’s intensive use — on the one hand, and the tangible and intangible legacy of the past, on the other hand, represents one of the major issues faced by the city. The threats of irreversible changes of the ancient urban and architectural structure often lead to interpret Prague’s cultural and historical heritage as an obstacle, rather than a fundamental potentiality for the city’s regeneration. This aspect gains even more importance when considering the city’s centre, where the material and spiritual values of the past should become an investment for Prague’s development.

Lack of housing. The insufficiently functioning housing market and the distorted rental market are long-term problems for the city. The real lack of housing – particularly of reasonably priced rental accommodation – is further compounded by an increase in the number of households, the growth in the number of long-term residents, the inefficient use of flats and the use of flats for other purposes. Optimum use of the city’s housing stock is prevented mainly by its lack of availability due to the maintenance of regulated rent and to previous leases that were concluded for indefinite periods of time.

Traffic and infrastructure. As a matter of facts, Prague keeps suffering more and more from rapidly growing car traffic, obsolete infrastructure, street crime, rigid and still relatively inefficient administration. The city does not always effectively manage its assets and lacks finance for main infrastructural projects. The historical core of Prague resists commercial pressure and the rush of tourists and cars.

9.7.4 Key aspects of the culture-based regeneration strategies

In the framework of the Strategic Plan for Prague, some key-goals can be identified in terms of strategic direction for regeneration processes based on culture. Within the 8 goals described by the plan — also including the city’s role in a “new Europe”, competitiveness, the involvement of people, infrastructure, safety and security, administration and management — some specific strategic areas directly relate to the dynamic between heritage and culture: people in Prague, the environment, spatial planning. As a result, three main topic areas — containing a system of mutually linked strategic directions, aims and policies — can be identified.

Strengthening of the urban role at the interface between heritage and innovation. The aim of balancing the protection of Prague’s historical heritage and appropriate urban development finds some strategic direction in the new planning guidelines — including:

- **the fostering of the city’s image as a cultural and historical phenomenon**, as the presentation and promotion of the heritage fund of the city’s core and its diversity is a key strategy not only in terms of city branding, but also as a proper commitment for the historic centre listed as World Heritage. A fundamental support for the promotion of such values is the raising of public awareness and education in heritage protection;
- **the focus on urban development that respects the historical and cultural heritage**, through the improvement in the conditions and use of heritage buildings, the increasing of tourist interest in heritage also outside of the historic core, the fostering of the legal structure for the protection of the heritage site, the raising of awareness and education concerning preservation;
- **the renovation and transformation of buildings of heritage value**, for example through the ‘Renovation of Heritage Sites’ grant programme is a concrete action aimed at involving in the renewal plan also the neglected buildings located outside the historic centre of Prague;
- **the implementation of the management plan of the historical centre of Prague** and the preparation of further plans for the protection of Prague’s heritage sites and zones, as well as the specification and drafting of an updated study for the heritage site with regulation plans for selected areas, and the setting up of an executive body overseeing the historic centre (i.e. a Steering Committee).

Supporting housing construction and regeneration of the current housing stock

Under the overall purpose of strengthening the cities traditional standing as a centre of education and humanities, the development of housing — in terms of renewal, improvement and effective expansion of the existing residential unites stock, as well as promotion of housing market and easy access to housing — represents a fundamental goal for the city’s vitality, economy and overall attraction.

Managing the transport system and environmental issues, as a reliable transport friendly to municipal environment — as well as an expedient and sustainable management of energy, water supply and other resources — represents a further fundamental goal for the city’s vitality, economy and overall attraction.

9.7.5 Outcomes and lessons learnt

The transition **from a monocentric to a polycentric structure of the city** represents one of Prague's strategic priorities and a fundamental lesson in terms of the number of programmes that have been designed for this purpose. The objective of these programmes — whose implementation has already begun in some cases — is focused on the reduction of the burden of current city centre, to more evenly utilize the overall city area.

The issues and problems related to the monocentric structure which has long been a key character of Prague — and also of many other European cities — primarily highlights the importance of transportation aspects. As a matter of facts, the outcome of Prague's past development has been, among other things, a monocentric structure of the city, characterized by high concentration of all activities in Prague's historical core, and by the ring of mainly housing estates without possibilities of employment at its outskirts. On the other hand, the exceptionally valuable historical core of the city — the main tourist attraction of the city — actually fulfills all functionalities of a city centre, where the majority of the available jobs are concentrated, together with the majority of the department stores, cultural institutions and universities. As a result, an enormous pressure of investors challenges this territory and plots available for construction are rare.

Another key outcome of Prague's regeneration strategies deals with the **international integration** of the city. The Czech Republic concentrates its efforts on the full integration into the present international structures (particularly the EU, NATO and others). According to this purpose, the maximum free movement of people, capital, labour, goods and information can be made available by integrating the city and the State also as a cultural asset — Prague, as the political, economic, administrative and social centre of the Czech Republic, has an important role in the process of integration of the state into the present international structures.

8.7.6 Perspectives for the future

A contribution to meeting the strategic priority of Prague's integration into a broader international framework might be the programme "Attractive Address Prague", which represents one of the key perspectives for the city's future. The fostering of the city's image abroad also focus on the co-operation and coordination of developmental plans with those of major cities of Central Europe, calling into play the active role of regeneration processes for contemporary Prague.