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Sarah Stapleton
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Connections With(in): Exploring the Intangibles of Public Transit in Prague

Stapleton, Sarah

Academic Director: Sarah Brock

Project Advisor: Alena Kotzmanova

Smith College, Massachusetts

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Animation of creative work available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T54B0mDJw4U&feature=youtu.be
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Abstract

This project explores the connection (physically and metaphorically) local users have to the public transit systems in Prague, recognizing and highlighting their gathered subjective experiences through a creative piece. The methods included a review of the history, planning, and development of the public transit systems (metro and tram) across time, as well the sociopolitical timeframe these occurred through. After rooting her knowledge within the relevant literature and history, the author asked six local users of public transit a series of 10 questions about their relationships, memories, stories, and feelings connected to traveling through the public transportation systems. These interviews and insights were then utilized to inspire the creative work, a 20 by 20ft 3D sculpture both physically and abstractly representing the transit systems in Prague. The final product was documented with an audio story and visual animation of the structure’s development.
Introduction

Consider the metaphor of a city as a live organism, the modes of public transportation sustaining its rhythmic pulse. “It’s not just a transport for bodies. It’s a system to transport systems (digestive, nervous, etc.), a series of tracks that transport ideas. It’s not the accessories of a city, lying on top of the skin, but the veins and arteries within the body” (Disabato, 2015). The public transportation systems in Prague carry almost 1.2 billion passengers annually (Jilek, 2006). Alike the veins and arteries running within our bodies as the infrastructure for internal travel, the public transit systems are the embedded pathways for travel within the city.

The metro system transports a 40% share of the total passengers traveling by public option and the tram systems account for another 30% (Jilek, 2006). The final portion responsible for public travel within the city falls into the categories of busses, ferries, and funiculars. However, to narrow this study’s focus, I chose to explore only connections with metro and tram lines as they are the largest hosts. My interest roots within the fact that, although there is much history of the development and implementation of reliable modes of public transportation across the city, both above and below, there is a disconnect in understanding the relationship between the user and the machine. How do passengers connect with and through these physical connections? Generally, how do the passengers feel about the systems? Do they have a favorite story or memory? Specific feelings or significant experiences? These subjective inquiries I found seldom discussed within the literature and deserving of more exploration.

Having been a foreigner in the city, relying on public transit for my everyday commute ‘to and from’ any engagements, I was curious to learn more about how local and regular users feel about its existence. Are they satisfied? Happy? How has it shaped their lives, their own day to day experiences? Does it create some connection among the population as a whole? Has
public transportation shaped the spirit of the city in some way?

These were the questions circling my mind. By having my own personal connections to the tram that took me home each night and to school each day (tram number 27), I wondered if others felt some intangible and special bond with the tracks that led them through their life as well. Each user of public transportation has their own personal history and relationship using or relying on it, but unlike the development of the system itself, these developments go unrecognized or under explored.

**Context & Literature Review**

My main focus of inquiry was around the Prague metro and tram systems. Although the plans and designs for an underground railway system were proposed back in 1898 by Ladislav Rott, it wasn’t until 1967 that the plans were adopted, and the construction began. Finally, in 1974 the first station and lines were complete and from there the development took off (Prague Public Transit Company, 2020). The metro now consists of three lines A, B, and C, colored red, green, and yellow respectively, with a fourth blue line (D), approved to be added in coming years. There are currently three transfer stations in the city center where two subway lines intersect: Můstek where lines A and B intersect, Muzeum where lines A and C intersect, and Florenc where lines B and C intersect (Prague Public Transit Company, 2020). These are the transfer points from one line to another. As indicated in “Prague Metro (Subway)” (2019) the three lines consist of about 65km of tracks which carry around 600 million passengers a year. These lines make stops at 61 different stations beneath the city, with new stations continuing to be built.

The metro system is currently only about 45 years old yet has become the main arteries of the city. The tramways on the other hand, were a much earlier development in Prague’s timeline,
operation beginning in 1875 powered by horses then moving to electric trams in 1891 (Boye, 2020). The tramways spread and weave across the surface of the city more comprehensively than the metro lines beneath it. They span over 140km of track with 600 stops or “stations” with a range of models and designs still in use (“Prague Metro (Subway)”, 2019). These tracks function as the veins that keep the city alive and running, all day and even through the night.

Due to the successful use of horsecar trams and later electric trams within the history of the city, an underground railway was proposed with a similar hope. But, soon after the concept of the sub-surface tramway was finally accepted in the summer of 1967 and building began, “a substantial change in the concept came, as the government, under the influence of Soviet advisers, decided to build a true metro system instead of an underground tramway” (Kytka, 2020). Thus, during the first years, the construction continued while the whole project was conceptually transformed. Beyond that, the arranged contracts with western companies were changed to Russian contracts and the stations even adopted Moscow’s underground designs. These design influences can still be seen in the system today. As a man-made subterranean space, “the 'symbolic occupation of space and time' was to merge with the real, physical, lived occupation in a large, optimistic, socialist whole” (Gibas, 2013). Although the metro was primarily Russian built, 13 station names reflecting mostly communist ideology were changed to be politically neutral in 1990 to diminish remaining Soviet presence in Prague’s public spaces (Gibas, 2013). This removal and absence existing in Prague’s underground was studied and noted significant within the landscape (Gibas, 2013). This history needs to be recognized in understanding the moods and perceptions surround the public attitude and acceptance of the system.

The other notable historical reference in the literature was that of the 2002 flooding in
Prague. The metro system was severely damaged, and the flooding caused a partial collapse of the public transport system in Prague. To ease this disruption, replacement trams ran new routes and busses also made trips across the closed areas beneath them (Jilek, 2006). To recognize this natural disaster and significant disruption to life in the city, some of the stations hit hardest have added a row of gold plates across the wall to show the highest water level during the flood.

As the metro system was built in a turbulent sociopolitical climate, the feelings and emotions that may connect to it are important to recognize. It is also relevant to note how significant a phenomenon the technology was in itself at the time for the city’s population. Unlike the tramways, the metro involved innovation, a subterraneous world the city had never known, and a presence that would forever affect the culture and growth of the city, both for its inhabitants and international visitors. This history and context drove my understanding and conceptual framework for structuring my interview questions and further, creative work. By grounding my own knowledge in the development and existence of public transportation within the city across history, I was able to grasp the larger picture Prague’s transit options provide and how the public may have engaged.

**Methods**

*Inform, Perform, Reform, & Transform*

To better understand the public transportation systems and use in Prague, I began my project by absorbing all relevant literature regarding the development and implementation of public transit options across Prague's history. Through reading various articles, blogs, websites, and timelines I was able to gather the significant changes made and when, how the public may have perceived them, and then what to look out for within the comments by my interviewees. In doing this research prior to conducting or analyzing my participants responses, I was able to gather a fuller picture of the timeline and important memories or feelings that may be shared or
hinted toward around the subject.

Next I developed and condensed my question set. I tried to make the questions open ended and surrounding the participants own opinions so they could answer as simply or deeply as they wanted and there could be no wrong response. The final question set can be viewed in Appendix A. Due to our removed circumstances, and the life disruptions people may be facing, I decided to allow for additional flexibility gathering responses from participants. I provided the questions via email as to encourage participation on one’s own free time and as their schedule allowed during this pandemic. I also offered to collect insights via live interview online (Skype, Zoom, etc.) if that worked better within their schedule. By adding this flexibility and option of typed responses or scheduled audio interview, I believe I had a stronger response and willingness to participate. It’s important to note I only gathered responses from those that know me as their student, whereas if I had been physically present and under different circumstances I would have liked to inquire with strangers and a more randomized selection of volunteers. Nonetheless, I only asked residents of Prague to participate with a required age range between 35-75 to guarantee more historical grounding and cultural depth.

Six professors were willing to participate, four through written response, two preferring live interviews. After transcribing the audio from the live interviews, I distilled what I learned from all six respondents into five main sections. The first two sections were any responses related to trams versus metros. The third dedicated to stories, memories, or connections shared. My fourth section was designated to mentioned history or growth of the transit across time and related to the spirit of the city; here I included anything about transits role or function within the city an organism or in any non-physical or literal way. And the final section left for any information related to or comparing other places beyond Prague, involving any global or external
travel outside the city. I felt that visually coding the responses into these sections would allow me to understand the overlap present, as well, analyze the responses so I could draw some general conclusions from these areas. During this coding, I also made notes of overlapping comments and opinions, larger themes I noticed, or specific notes about history of the systems and specific political events remembered from the user’s perspective.

My initial focus of the study was to be on solely metros and the cultural effect they had within the population across time, building connections, relationships, solidarity, etc. However, as I interviewed more users, it became apparent they all favored using trams as their preferred mode of public transportation. This was something I forecasted as a possibility while developing my interview questions. Considering this, I chose to keep the questions open to stories and reflections on both metros and trams when developing my questions, rather than solely metros as it was suggested I might narrow my project focus.

Transforming and absorbing the data during my creative process, I also linked my understanding of the responses to the metaphor that a city is similar to a body, public transit as the lifelines within the city alike the pathways in our bodies. The metro representing the arteries, the trams as the veins, and continuing I realized the memories, experiences, and emotions among the user’s function like the nerves. These nerves capture the spark, the feeling, the life we recognize and know all around us within a city. I used this metaphor to inform my creative process and decide how to incorporate the life and spark within my sculpture.

To represent the living city, I felt an animation and audio story would best reflect the dynamic energy and active presence the public transit brings. The animation allows the viewer to watch the transportation grow and develop within the city. And further, the colorful trees and gardening hoses showcase the layers of memory and connection that became intertwined as the
population used the systems. These can be seen in photos taken of the final sculpture available in Appendix B. The progressing growth and additional pathways throughout the animation were chosen to remind the viewer of the abstract quality surrounding the transit that is constantly growing and developing. By overlapping this live and moving animation with sound, I could involve more thoughts and responses from the users. I was able to obtain the audio recordings from four participants, two from audio recording the live interviews, and two recording participants reading their previously typed responses. I then clipped together some of the main takeaways and general understandings held by these participants to form some story. By including as many details gathered through my methods as possible, I attempted to artistically represent the public transit as it’s known by its passengers, through this arts-based research.

**Ethics & Bias**

Due to the physical circumstances of being removed from my initial project landscape, I was faced with additional limitations and biases. In addition, due to the constraints of only having three weeks for research and by primarily relying on secondary sources and interviews for data, there are limits to my understanding of a broader range of users, and therefore could only incorporate the thoughts from those I contacted within my work. Being unable to randomly select commuters or users of the public transit system, conduct face to face interviews where body language or physical cues might’ve been more detectable, or have the ability to visit or experience the mentioned locations (stops, stations, lines) firsthand for additional or follow-up detail, posed additional challenges. However, due to the circumstances, I did alter my mode of inquiry so that my interviews focused only on residents of the landscape, rather than tourists and visitors that may have had a more limited connection or understanding of its significance in the landscape.
I was limited in gathering responses only from those that know me as their student, whereas if I had been physically present and under different circumstances, I would have ideally questioned strangers and a more randomized selection of volunteers. Due to the fact that all of my participants are teachers in some way, and due to their intellectual nature, it must be noted that their responses may be biased or more thoughtful than the average user. Though the quality of responses I received gave me a fuller picture of how some connect with the public transit available, this may not be representative of the broader public and regular transit users.

Some participants shared opinions or ideas that were not supporting the ideas or beliefs of other interviewees. This meant that although their ideas were interesting and sometimes contradictory, there is no debate around them, nor can they invalidate opposing ideas or experiences. There is no right answer for what my participants chose to share or include, allowing all responses to be valid and significant, not because there is full agreement on anything, but rather a lack of discussion between users on the subject.

Though I made it an issue to be as unbiased as possible, my own values most likely came through in the interview question set and interpretation of the data. It must be recognized that my own subjective experiences and time using the public transit systems in Prague for six weeks are rooted within this project. My own connections with them inherently influenced the feelings evoked and stories I connected with most from the gathered responses. However, I have considered the ways in which I may not fully understand, relate to, or grasp many of the deeply complex experiences and emotions that participants may have with public transit in the place that they live. As an outsider I worked to grasp a more comprehensive understanding of the way residents connect with the landscape through the forms of transportation and engagement via my analysis, using both their responses and my own external research. My experiences and time in
the city, as a short-term foreigner, visitor, and explorer, did play a role in my creative process. However, I acknowledge and embrace this point of view and ground my work in the dialogues and data collected from the locals I interviewed. As I compared and coded the interviews to find common themes, I tried to involve and place significance evenly, and not rely on only that which I personally experienced, connected with, or best understood. Although this art piece is rooted in my own creativity and how I chose to express the data, I tried to allow the general themes of my findings to inspire my creative process and worked to identify my own bias or influence as often as possible.

My main ethical consideration was for the privacy of the participants. I asked each person at the start of their involvement if any stories, experiences, or information they’ve shared may be included within my final work or paper to verify use and privacy of their identities, in case they wished to be anonymous. However, all participants agreed that their responses and direct names could be used, although their names were not included in the final creative work I designed. Another ethical consideration I kept in mind, as for the interviews conducted live via Skype, was if they were comfortable with me audio and/or video recording our dialogue for the record and ease of transcribing. I made sure to offer the option to jot down note of their responses during each question and then fill in any gaps following the completion of the interview, if they felt any discomfort or did not want the audio to be made public in some way, but both participants agreed that recordings may be taken and used in any way I decided.

**Presentation of Results / Analysis & Findings**

“*Connections With(in)*”

My creative work is rooted in the words and feelings I absorbed from my six participants. It began as a ridged structure representing to the closest scale and ratios possible, the angles and lines of the metro system in Prague’s underground. It was built with large silver Nordfab QF
ducting tubes, chosen for their size and visibility from above. This initial choice of material led me to consider how to incorporate the colors of the metro lines without permanently damaging or altering the tubes. I chose to use the key words, “5 words or phrases when you first think of public transit in Prague” from my participants responses. I used the three colors of the metro lines (red, yellow, green) to spell each of these words out along the corresponding tubes. These key words from the interviews also drove my ideas for the chaotic, colorful, significant, beautiful, and abstract representation of the tramways. From the participants responses I found that the metro system was not the life and driving preference behind shared experiences. I needed to find a way to not only include the life trams provide the city and its passengers, but their critical significance in my findings. My creative work needed to reflect that they were the primary focus and preferred! Through many discussions it was decided this needed to be known above and beyond this physical representation of the metro, literally.

A participant noted the order with which the metro lines were first built, beginning with the C line, so the tubes appear within my animation along a similar timeline to the metro’s original construction. Although my property did not flood like the 2002 flood, these metro tubes did withstand the elements, (snow and rainstorm) without collapsing or becoming compromised, alike the existing system. I used a row of clear containers filled with blue water to conceptually and visually represent the Prague river within the landscape. The more abstract components of the sculpture represent the tram lines and the life they give the city. The bright color and spontaneous integration within the animation represent the memories and stories shared, and the feelings they carry with them. By informing my creative process with the responses of local users, I was able to recognize and appreciate the rich importance tramways provide in the city. I developed the scale and structure of the metro system first but altered my original plans of
building a secondary sculpture representing the tramways when I realized the significance they played, especially in preference and comparison to the metro system. The responses forced me to think abstractly, as many of the feelings and connections with the tramways are intangible, when representing them in this large-scale sculpture. They zig-zag, crisscross, and weave around the city in less isolating and more enjoyable ways, according to the responses. So, the methods and design decided upon represent the abstract qualities rather than an accurate mapping of the tram lines.

**Over Time & History**

Through my interviews I was able to gather a range of subjective experiences connected to the transit systems, but more importantly across a varying span of decades. Each of the participants were between 35 and 75 years of age, which allowed for some unique historical perspectives. Dr. Tomáš Vrba reminded me,

> It’s good to have in mind the timespan, I’m over 70 and it means I was something like 6 years old when I probably for the first time rode a Prague tramway. But at [the] time in early 50’s it was just and only tramways produced...in early 1910-1920 and until 1970s. (Vrba, personal communication, May 2, 2020)

Dr. Barbara Day reminisced,

> When I first came to Prague, what is now called an “old tram” was then a “new tram” considered to be very sleek and streamlined, with doors that closed, and heated cars, whereas the “old tram” (now called a “historic tram”) was made of wood and open to the elements... (Day, personal communication, May 1, 2020)

These responses impacted my view of the tram system compared to metro and the timeline the population was able to connect with or use each. They reminded me of the “impossibility of
disentangling time from place and landscape” (Bender 2002), the always present need to recognize their cooperation and influence.

It came through that tram stations held more significance and preference, possibly due to familiarity and how embedded in the city’s history they are. For instance, another historical period was noted from years during the first World War when there were special tram ambulances and tram funeral wagons running on the tracks. “Yes, so of course the presence of these type of cars was something what had to influence virtually everyone” (Vrba, personal communication, May 2, 2020). For residents who remember these times, recognizing how much has changed, urbanized, modernized, and developed since then provides a deep connection and abstract quality toward the current presence of tramways. Another respondent connected the political history to the attitudes that may be involved still today. As David Korecky states,

> I think some older generation had some little bit distant attitude to the metro. Because it was built in communist time...Czech transportation company and Czech politicians were pushed to use and order and buy soviet cars, the trains...many stations were named after some soviet cities or soviet soldiers and stuff like that so of course there were some negative attitudes to Soviet Union’s...so somehow it was connected to that. So maybe historically the relationship to it may be transformed later in more practical and not that emotional side. (Korecky, personal communication, May 3, 2020)

Recognizing the political climate the metro system was introduced through might hold more significance than those actively choose to consider today. This is showcased as Dr. Vrba, referring to the Soviet built stations, said,

> They would completely ignore what is on the top and they were naming their underground constructions according to their ideology. Fortunately, large part of that was
renamed after 1989, still it was a very big gap from real life on the street level and the underground system. On the other hand, we have to admit that the in spite of the fact that the soviets ordered Czech Communists to buy their wagons their metro wagons and their technologies, the system is good. And its operating smoothly, so there was a sort of paradox. Metro probably was the only useful thing these communist regimes succeeded to build in Prague, but they couldn’t avoid their tendency to occupy the public space by giving names. (Vrba, personal communication, May 2, 2020)

This big gap mentioned hints toward the findings of my next section. The disconnect of ideology and freedom among the population, may play a role in their current feelings toward the metro. This challenging history echoes beyond its initial timeframe. In this abstract and intangible way, the history of its development and who actually implemented it, effects the thoughts and feelings surrounding its current existence, even if that time in history has passed and there have been alterations to reclaim or at least remove the reminder of the past. Regarding use of public transportation generally, David Korecky mentions how “In the 90s everybody was happy with the freedom, and the individual freedom. So, the public transportation was little bit in the public opinion little bit pushed in background, everybody preferred using car.” He continued that there were many people who called those traveling by public transit a nickname, “they say you go by “socka”” and “it’s a name for people who are socially very down, you know if you don’t have enough money for car you must use public transport” (Korecky, personal communication, May 3, 2020). He later mentioned that with the changing times and increased education, especially with respects to climate change, use of this expression has become somewhat politically incorrect, people infrequently view using public transportation as a means for lower class anymore.
As a final note on the history of the metro, one participant recalled the floods as her memory of choice that held a lasting impression. Zuzana Lebedová recalled,

...when I first took the metro for the first time after the floods in 2002 when some of the parts of the metro were entirely under water...I think the experience of the flood sort of brought back my instincts and I always feel a little awkward when taking a metro since then. Thinking...it’s not okay that I’m here, underground in a vehicle I don’t operate, with hundreds of strangers. (Lebedová, personal communication, May 11, 2020)

This disruption in 2002, among the additional historical impacts, have not been forgotten by those using the metro system. Without specific inquiry, half of the participants also included reflections or information about the Occupation and its impacts, so it can be concluded that for some, a grander timeline of memories still linger accompanying use of the metro.

Preferences: Tram or Metro?

The responses for this question were overwhelmingly clear. Although many defended the metro being a fine mode of transport and having its own qualities, each participant chose trams as their preferred travel method, of the two. One stated “I prefer tram to metro because you can watch what is happening outside – metro is boring.” Then elaborating later saying, “I feel more solidarity with the people traveling there on trams and busses, the metro one feels somehow isolated in a funny way” (Day, personal communication, May 1, 2020). This was the common theme. Many participants defended their reasonings due to the daylight, option for activity, scenic views, space for observation, and better for reading books. For example, David Korecky states:

I like it, the life on the streets. So, I like to travel by tram and observe people walking, shopping, discussing the stuff like that. In metro of course I can observe people, but it’s
not that spontaneous, cause people are there and they just watch other people, or they know they are watched by other people. But in connections to life on the street, in connection with the sky, with the buildings, with other transportation, cars, people walking, its lively. It’s more free to observe. (Korecky, personal communication, May 3, 2020)

This option for observation he later connected with a greater benefit of public transportation as a whole. David Korecky noticed that through all his observation of people, feeling comfortable, and numerous experiences from strange, stressful, or even dangerous situations, on public transportation, he has never had a problem. He elaborated:

So somehow did the public transport teach [me] also how to behave in weird situations? Because you are part of some organism and you firstly you defend yourself, and on the other hand you play some role for the rest of situation... you don’t want something wrong happen to you, [or] to anybody. So, I think it’s a good school to use it in behaving in.... strange situations. (Korecky, personal communication, May 3, 2020)

I felt this was a significant contribution to understanding the larger cultural impact the atmosphere around and within public transportation provides and creates in a city. A shared space for learning, helping, or maybe just reading – but in an understood and purposeful public environment.

The most notable reasoning for preference of tram over metro in my opinion, was a remark that “trams actually unlike metro have some magic in it” (Vrba, personal communication, May 2, 2020), an inherently abstract and intangible quality. Dr. Vrba then carried on to say “I mean the old models I think you asked me about my personal memories, so when I was 4 or 5 years old, I stayed overnight at my grandparents...” and then proceeded to connect his larger
preference and opinion, to his subjective experiences and stories that evoked some magic for him. It is this connection, made through the memories and experiences within public transportation, that then influence one’s larger understanding and acceptance of it, positive or negative, and the role it plays in their life or within the city.

**Personal Connections: Memories and Stories**

What can be noted about the findings I chose to include here, is that they were all able to share, possibly with delight, something trivial or significant. Although I was not able to gather or make note of the typical body language cues that may have come across during a live face to face interview, each participant seemed to reflect or voluntarily share some personal memory or story easily. They were each able to think of one, if not multiple, significant or memorable instances related to their personal history with public transportation.

Obviously, memories involve the past, but I was surprised to notice the deep and rich involvement of the city’s history that was discussed in responses. As well, the collected responses held such diversity. For example they involved the increase of transit ticket prices, a story about Václav Morávek and the Occupation, leaving a baby in a store, sleeping on the escalator up from the metro, losing glasses and tracking them down, riding past a Soviet encampment, remembering times when there was no tramway end loop and the conductor would have to get out and walk to the other end of the tram to head back the same direction, and getting a nighttime tour of the city,

...late 60’s... maybe 3-4am and we were walking, it was snowing, and suddenly a tram was approaching...two young engineers and there asked smiling “where you wish to go?” and imagine you were in a tram and they gave us a sort of sight-seeing because it was not
a standard line. So, we were zigzagging the city and it was absolutely beautiful. (Vrba, personal communication, May 2, 2020)

People so easily attached their own personal history to their broader feelings of public transportation systems. “I love there are still old models from my childhood functioning. It’s so rich in emotions to ride it. I’ve spent my whole life in these old tram models” and “I like route 17 along the river and then 22 to Prague castle, because it’s beautiful and I was using it on daily basis when attending high school” (Hůlová, personal communication, May 4, 2020). I believe these memories connected to the transit system hold emotion, insight, opinion, and an abstract quality of magic within them worth recognizing.

**Spirit of the City & Solidarity**

A final area of note was the participants awareness of the public transit as adding some life or humanity to this city. “In Prague, the trams have always been a major atmosphere builder. I’ve always felt like they’ve been a true human element (as much as contradiction this may sound – them being machines) to the fast growing city” (Lebedová, personal communication, May 11, 2020). This recognition that the spirit of the city has been affected by the presence of public transportation options, and that it contributes to the usability and enjoyment of the growing city, is important. For instance, “you can be everywhere in couple of minutes without any trouble, which is good for the city. Because we’re not big city, but you can use all of the city you know whenever you want. Ya? For small city it’s good that it’s so connected” (Korecky, personal communication, May 3, 2020). Although here, David Korecky is talking about public transportations ability to offer physical means for connection within the city, I’ve gathered from the responses that this expands beyond the physical. For example, “It makes us to meet others face to face and cooperate and share the same space. It’s banal but human contact unmediated by
screen is more and more rare and thus more and more valuable” (Hůlová, personal communication, May 4, 2020). Many participants mentioned the involvement of books, rather than screens, that provided some pleasure in using public transportation. “One of biggest reasons why I love it – a special rare occasion for reading books. (It happens then sometimes that a miss the turn-off – and I don’t mind so much since I have extra time to continue reading)” (Hradilkova, personal communication, April 29, 2020). Highlighted within the responses was the presence of books and the time public transportation provides for reading as a delighted feature, still available and common, in public transportation today. The public transportation offers both a space to interact or choose not to, but either way be present and cooperating with the rest of the population in some way. Jana Hradilkova emphasized this best saying,

> It provides definitely a very special dimension of our life in space. I consider it as one of the highest qualities of our civilization. Since it has cultivated a kind of non-written consensus of respect to time, space, motion, individual space, share of a public space, respect, option to communicate in special times and situation, laboratory of moods... etc. It’s a synthesis of continuity, order, humanity and service as well as a special extra place for accidental small (or big) adventures. (Hradilkova, personal communication, April 29, 2020)

It brings the population together and for that, the insignificant or significant times shared deserve to be explored. Though the public transit has evolved over time, its history remains as a factor in the attitudes or moods surrounding its use. To me, these responses about public transportation’s unignorable and engrained presence in Prague have showcased the fascinating role it plays in a user’s understanding of the spirit of the city.

**Conclusions**
Although there was some fluctuation in opinion and slight preferential difference, the majority of my participants felt similarly contented or satisfied with the public transportation options available within the city of Prague. Although, coming from my own personal experiences and use I would agree, these results are not representative of how the majority of users may feel. I also find it necessary to recognize that the highly intellectual participants involved, may make these findings even less generalizable to the greater public. Each of the respondents noted their ability to and comparison of travel beyond Prague and in visiting other cities. As they have experienced other forms of public transportation elsewhere, this may have influenced their feelings or responses regarding the public transit of Prague, whereas someone who has never left may feel differently.

One major takeaway, that is emphasized in the creative outcome, is the pleasure and joy experienced through trams. This take away is what led me to prioritizing their presence in my piece through the colorful, personal, chaotic, exciting, abundant, and added spontaneity. Trams add life within the city, unlike what the participants noted about the metro. Although statistically the metro may carry more people on an annual basis, running a faster and guaranteed route, the darkness and boredom that accompanies a journey by metro stood out within the responses. My creative work allowed me to process and enjoy exploring the responses shared. I was able to include these “first five words or descriptions” shared about the public transit in Prague in my final sculpture: assuredness, connection, extra time, observation, people, efficient, integrated, easy to use, clean, fast, on time, stinky, crowded, cheap, freedom, communication, spontaneous, possibilities, magic, rational, organized, reliable, net, cheap, convenient, and colourful. I believe these descriptive words encapsulate the role and significance it plays in the city; while its simultaneously exciting to know that other very different words, might be chosen by different
participants. It reminds me again that the experiences and feelings connected to the public transit systems are subjective and ever evolving.

Landscapes are created out of people’s understanding and engagement with the world around them. They are always in process of being shaped and reshaped. Being of the moment and in process, they are always temporal. They are not a record but a recording, and this recording is much more than a reflection of human agency and action; it is creative of them. (Bender, 2002)

There is something valuable within the mundane. Reflect on the time you’ve spent with yourself, your own body transporting you throughout your life, and then reflect on how many other vehicles have carried you too. The experiences and connections we share with the landscape and through a common space during our journey as individuals or a population, hold significance. Joy exuded as participants began reflecting and sharing their day to day memories and preferences, maybe some they had never even vocalized or considered, that have been unconsciously present and driving their travel choices. I enjoyed this project so much because of the willingness to share, to remember, and to connect, about something that connects us all. Travel preferences aside, beyond our bodies we rely on things to get us places, and the connections we build within and through those hold an abstract quality that deserves to be explored and recognized.
References:


Appendix A: Interview Question Set

Pre-Questions:
   a. May the responses from this interview be used and included within my final project?
   b. What is your name and occupation for the record?

Questions:
1. How frequently do you (normally) use some form of public transit? (# per day or week)
2. The first 5 words or descriptions you think of when you think of public transit in Prague!
3. Do you have a stronger connection with the metro or tram? Why?
   If Metro:                                    If Tram:
4. A, B, or C?                                 Any preference between the old and new trams models?

   Is there some reason for your preference, something about its route or character?
5. Please share a story about your favorite tram, metro station, or stop (or one you connect with most) and why.
6. Could you share one memory about your experience using public transit in Prague that has had a lasting impression on you? (such as catching the last metro, meeting people or some other memorable moment)
7. In your view, does the communal form of travel influence human connection(s) or solidarity among the population in some way? If so, please elaborate.
8. In your view, how has public transportation shaped the spirit of the city?
9. Anything you would like to add about the impact public transit has had in this city, or your relationship to it, throughout history?
10. Lastly, do you have experience with public transportation in other cities? If so, do you have any significant distinctions/observations regarding how your experience with the transit system in Prague has been similar or different from other places?
Appendix B: Creative Work – “Connections With(in)"

Figure 1. Final square image from animation.
Figure 2. Closeup image of sculptural detail.