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SATSDIFACTION

RIGA PLANNING REGION - PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

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Riga Planning Region

Riga, September 10, 2025
SATSDIFACTION 6th Learning Deep Dive

Riga Region & Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA) in Europe

Riga – the capital of Latvia

Inhabitants: City – 605 K

Metropolitan area – 1,1 million

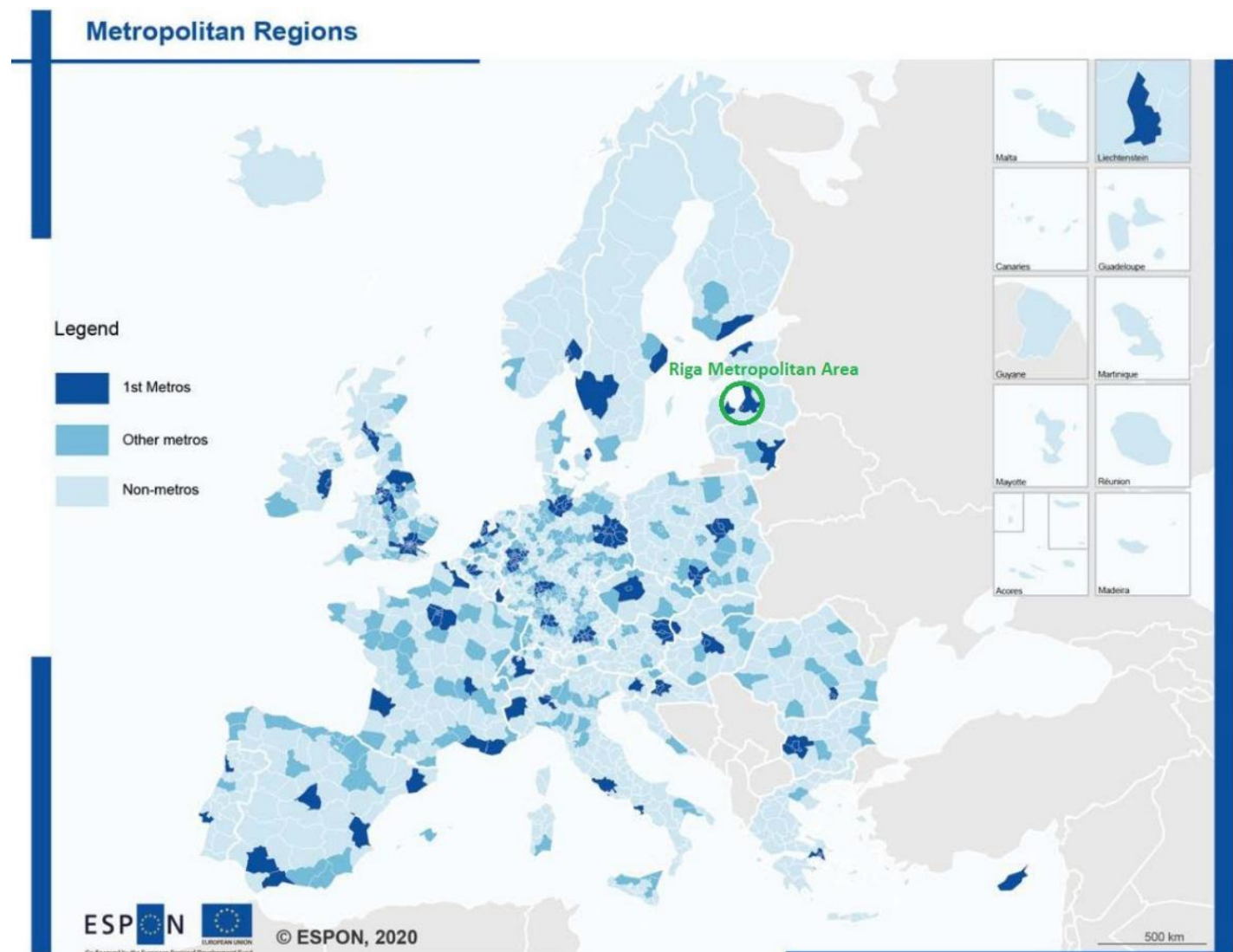
Territory: RMA ~ 6 145 km²

Economy: GDP per capita ~ 27 K Eur

RMA shapes a truly significant population concentration and **economic cooperation area**

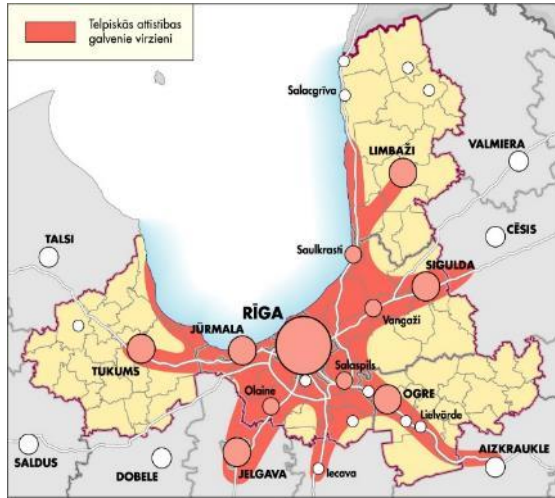
RMA holds **2/3 of Latvia's overall socio-economic activity** - GDP, industry, investments, education & science

Regional authority – **Riga Planning Region**



Defining the significance of the Riga metropolitan area (RMA)

2000



„Riga Region Development Strategy
2000-2020”

The first Riga Region strategy

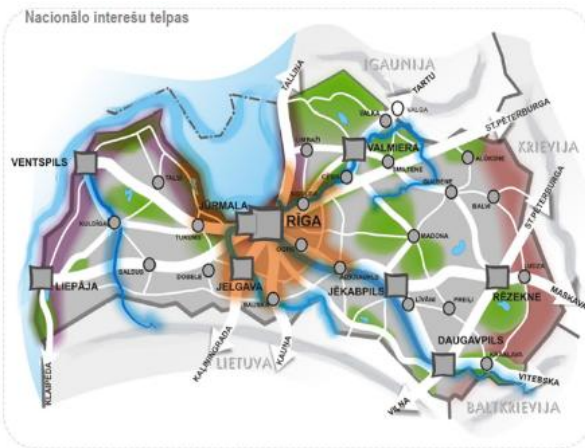
The Riga region was formed in 1996, through the cooperation of the cities of Riga and Jūrmala and the Riga district

The public organization “Riga Region Development Council” registered in 1998 by **voluntarily** joining 8 local governments of the Riga district

2000 - **the first Riga Region Development Strategy** is approved

2006 - **Riga Planning Region** is established

2010



„LATVIA 2030”

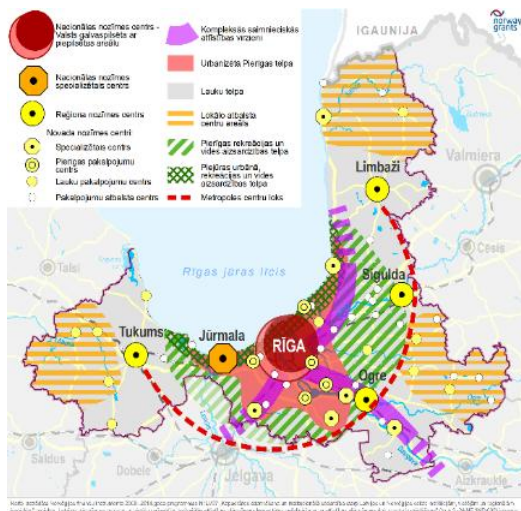
Riga metropolitan area in the state strategy

With the development and approval of Latvia's sustainable development strategy "Latvia 2030" in 2010, the **Riga metropolitan area is being defined as a space of national interest**

“Latvia 2030” is the hierarchically **highest long-term development planning document in Latvia**, which includes the development vision and spatial perspective of the Riga metropolitan area

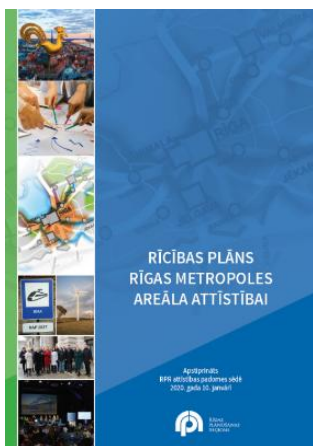
Formation and strengthening the idea of RMA cooperation

2015



„RPR Sustainable Development Strategy 2030”

2020



„RMA Development Action Plan”

Riga metropolitan area in the regional strategy

The **Riga Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2030** has been approved, which includes the development vision and spatial perspective of the Riga metropolitan area

Cooperation in the Riga metropolitan area is set as one of the basic elements of the strategy



Action plan for the development of the Riga metropolitan area

The aim is to achieve a **coordinated development of the RMA** by integrated approach and complex solutions to harmonize the interests of the state, the city of Riga, the municipalities within the Riga metropolitan area and the inhabitants

Creating a dialogue between metropolitan development stakeholders

Expanding local cooperation and national level actions

2021



Association of local governments “Rīgas Metropole”

Establishment of **Riga and Pierīga** Municipalities Association

The organization's goal is to promote mutual **cooperation between Riga and Pierīga municipalities**, promoting economic and social development

Consists of 9 municipalities

2023



Action planned by the Cabinet of Ministers

Declaration on the intended activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by prime minister Evika Siliņa on September 15, 2023

Statement - increase of Riga's competitiveness in Northern Europe by ensuring opportunities to invest in Riga's infrastructure and creating a **unified model for the development and governance of the Riga metropolis**

Actions for elaboration of a governance model

2023



Riga Metropolitan Area Forum

December 1, 2023, Riga, Spīķeri Concert Hall - event
"Competitiveness of the Riga Metropolitan Area in Modern Conditions"

Goal to strengthen cooperation initiatives within the Riga metropolitan area and begin developing solutions for **creating a metropolitan governance model**

The signing of the **Memorandum of Understanding – vol.2**

2023

-

2025



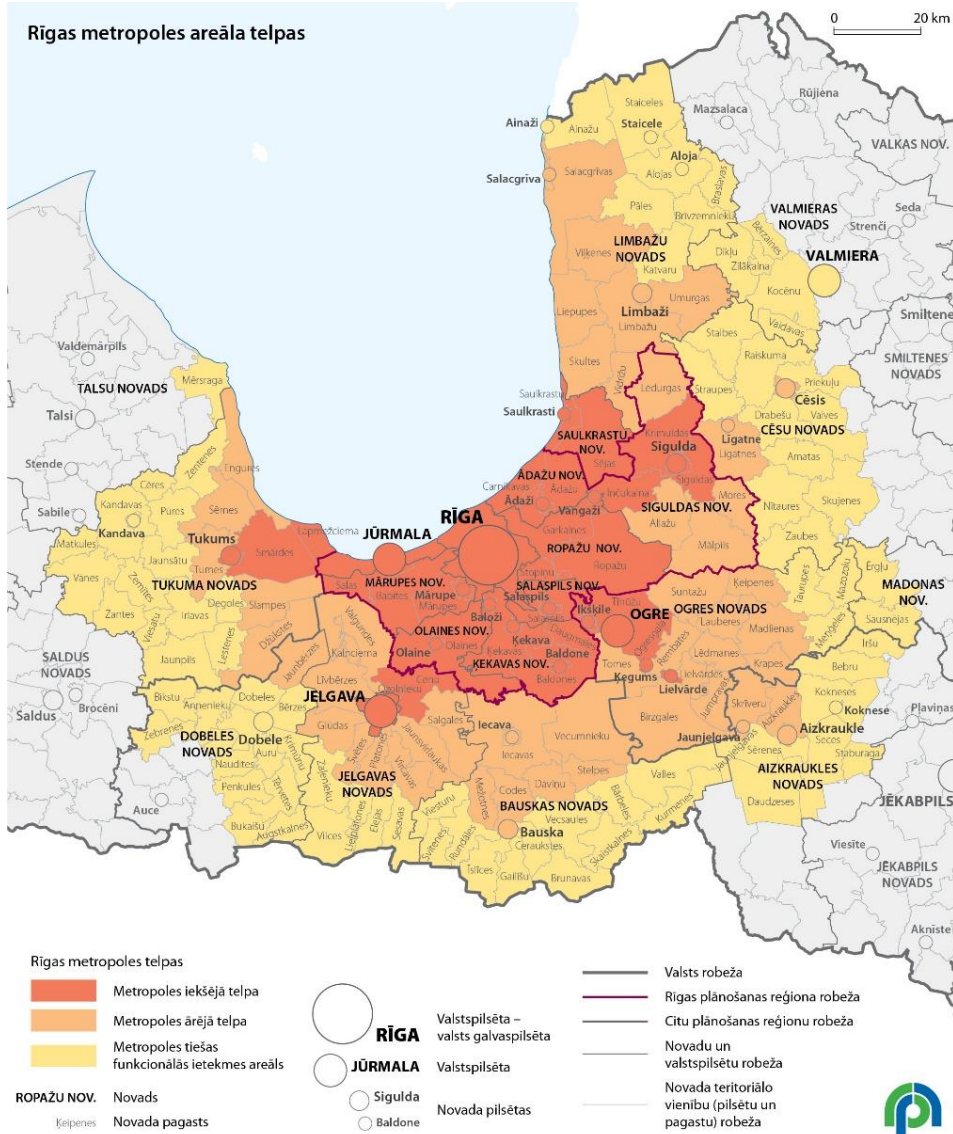
Working group on Riga metropolitan development issues

The **key areas** in the context of RMA cooperation being defined -
COMPETITIVENESS, MOBILITY and QUALITY OF LIFE

Proposal for a governance framework and the initiation of the elaboration of **the Riga Metropolitan Area Law**

Diversity of opinions on the governance model and the next steps

Understanding of the territorial scale of Riga Region & RMA



Metropolitan spaces

Definition of metropolitan spaces in „Action plan for the development of the Riga metropolitan area” (approved **2020**)

Focus on **inner space** or „**core**” metropolitan area

Administrative borders vs. functional space

Characteristics	INNER space	OUTER space	IMPACT area
Territorial coverage (distance from Riga)	~50 km	~75 km	~100 km
Intensity of daily commuting (working population employed in Riga)	>50 %	30-50 %	>20 %
Changes in population numbers	growing	slightly negative trend	mainly negative trend
Public transport organisation	in the direction of Riga	in the direction of Riga and centres of regional significance	mainly in the direction of centres of regional significance
Reception of public and household services	mainly in Riga	in Riga and centres of regional significance	mainly in centres of regional significance
Accessibility and quality of services	relatively good, but there are problems of service scarcity in Pierīga (particularly in the fields of education and health)	limited, particularly outside regional centres	limited
Specific features	Low unemployment. A relatively high level of income with a tendency to grow. International tourism. Concentration of education and science	The role and potential of centres of regional significance significantly exceeds the development potential of surrounding areas	Relatively poorly developed public transport system and related infrastructure. Lower quality and poorer condition of local and regional roads

„RMA Development Action Plan”

Situation and tendencies - population change in RMA 2022-2024

Situation

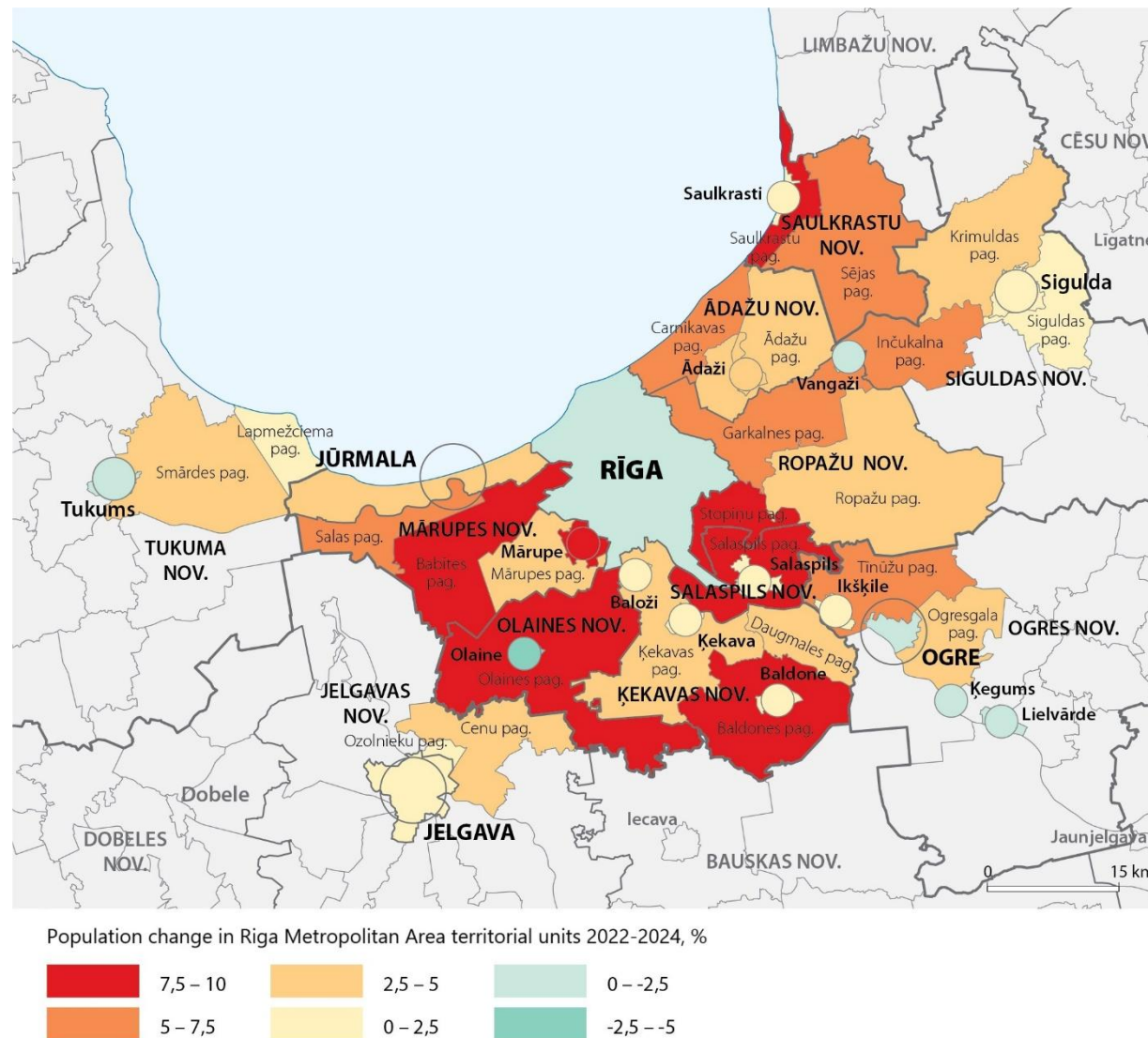
The number of inhabitants in the inner space or 'core' of the Riga metropolitan area in 2024 – **almost 1 million** (991 781)

Riga 605 273 inhabitants

Rest of the RMA 386 508

Share of RMA from total population of Latvia – **53 %**

Every year the total number of RMA inhabitants **increases by 0.5 %** or approximately 5,000 (i.e. the size of Ķekava city or Saulkrasti parish)



Source: CSB data, territorial units after ATR

Tendencies

2022-2024 population changes in **Riga stabilizes**, 0,1 % decrease

The fastest growing RMA city is **Jūrmala +3%**

In the **remaining RMA cities** (except Mārupe +7.6 % and Ādaži +4.7 %), the population is actually **unchanged or even decreasing!**

In the **areas around the RMA cities** (Olaine, Salaspils, Stopiņi parishes +9 %) the growth is much faster – **forming local 'urban sprawl'**

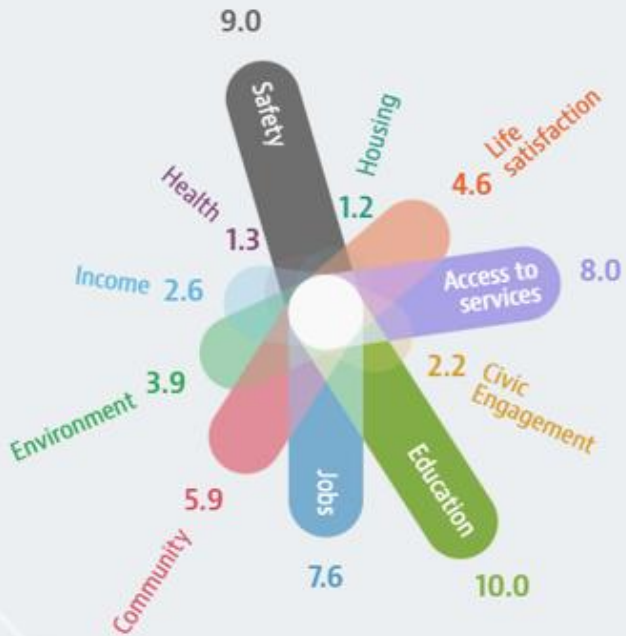
Quality of life indicators

Education, safety, jobs, access to services and community activity indicators in Riga and the surrounding area are generally at a sufficiently high level

Housing, health, income level and civic engagement indicators are at a relatively low or even critical level

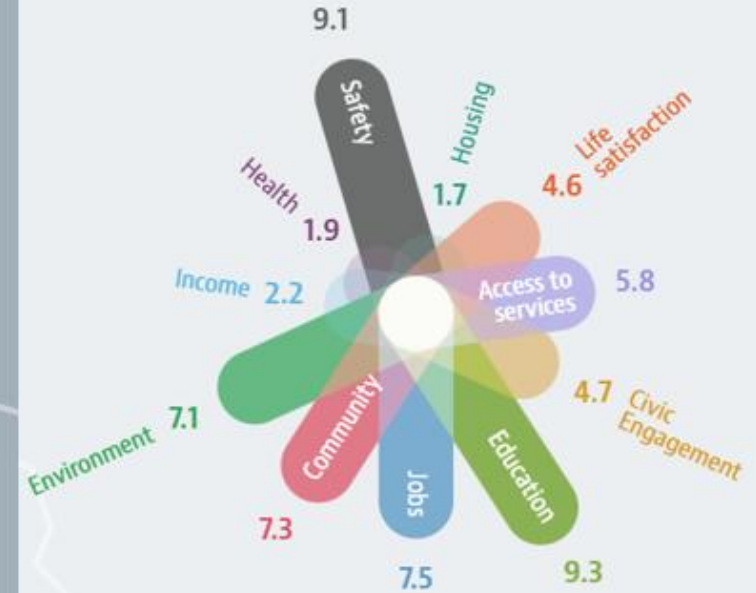
OECD countries / Latvia

Riga



OECD countries / Latvia

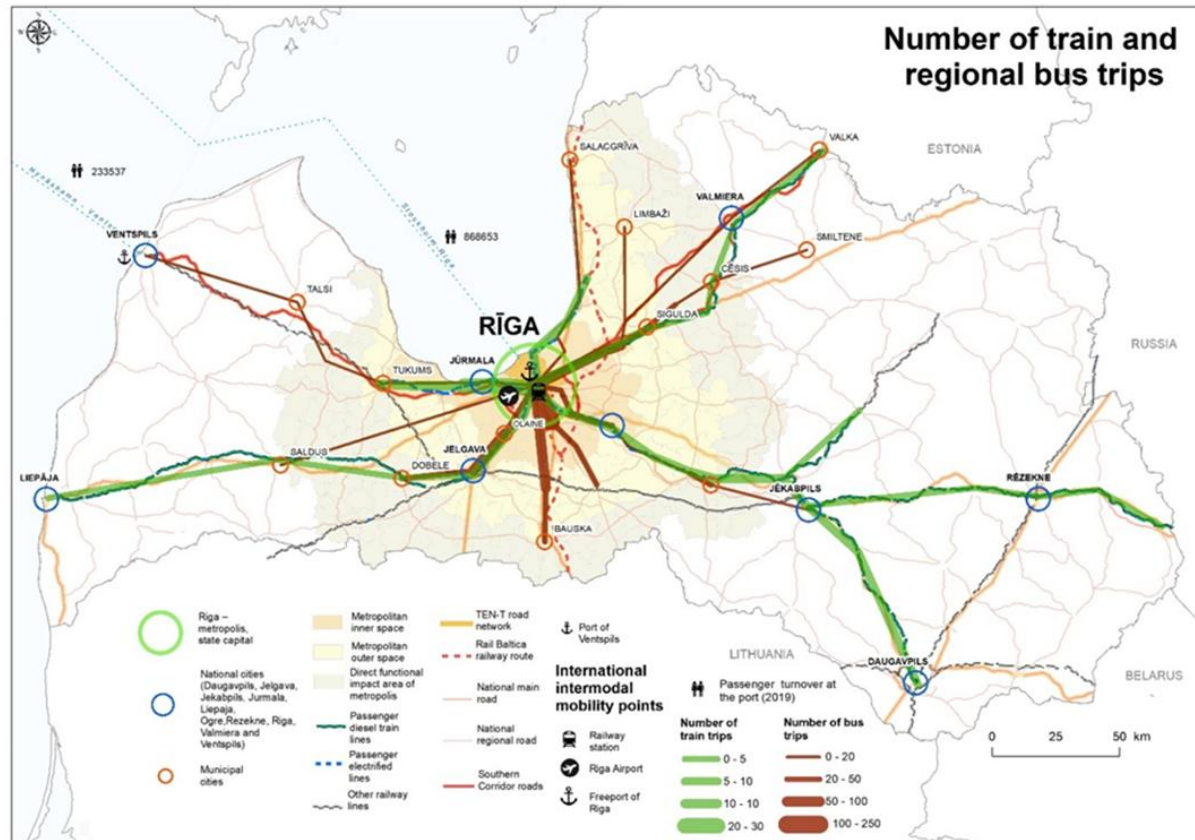
Pieriga



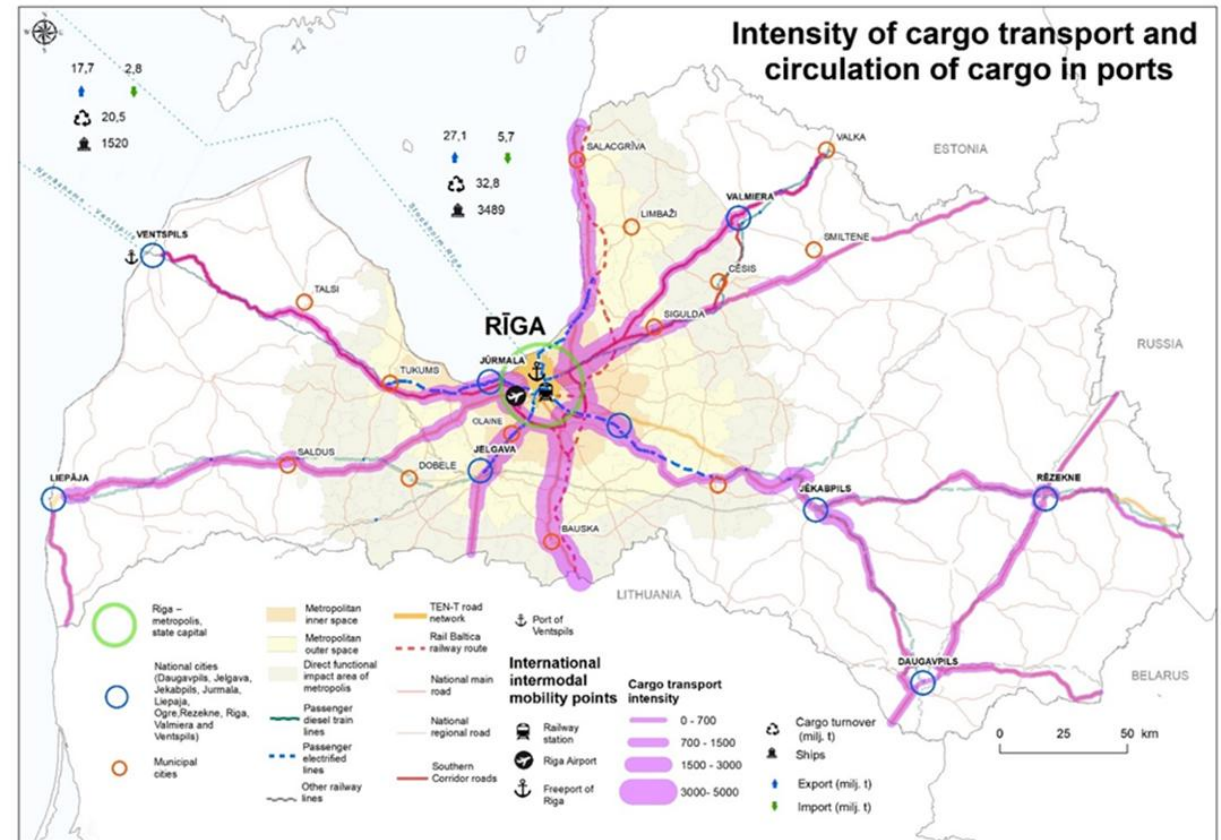
Source: OECD Regional Well-Being (accessed January 2025)

Center-oriented spatial structure of Latvia

Public transport – routes & trips



Cargo transport & logistics



Source: Baltic Loop (2021)

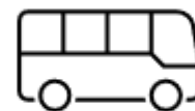
Mobility habits in Riga metropolitan area



Kājāmgājējs (iešana,
skriešana, skrituļošana u.c.)



Automašīna



Sabiedriskais
transports



Velosipēds u.c.
mikromobilitātes līdzekļi

RĪGA – RĪGA

38,48%

30,15%

27,68%

3,69%

PIERĪGA – PIERĪGA

42,09%

45,83%

7,54%

4,54%

**PIERĪGA – RĪGA;
RĪGA – PIERĪGA**

0,21%

74,57%

23,61%

1,61%

Source: CSB data on the mobility of Latvian residents –
calculation – project SUMBA+ (2021)

RMA Mobility Development Perspective (need for elaboration of SUMP)

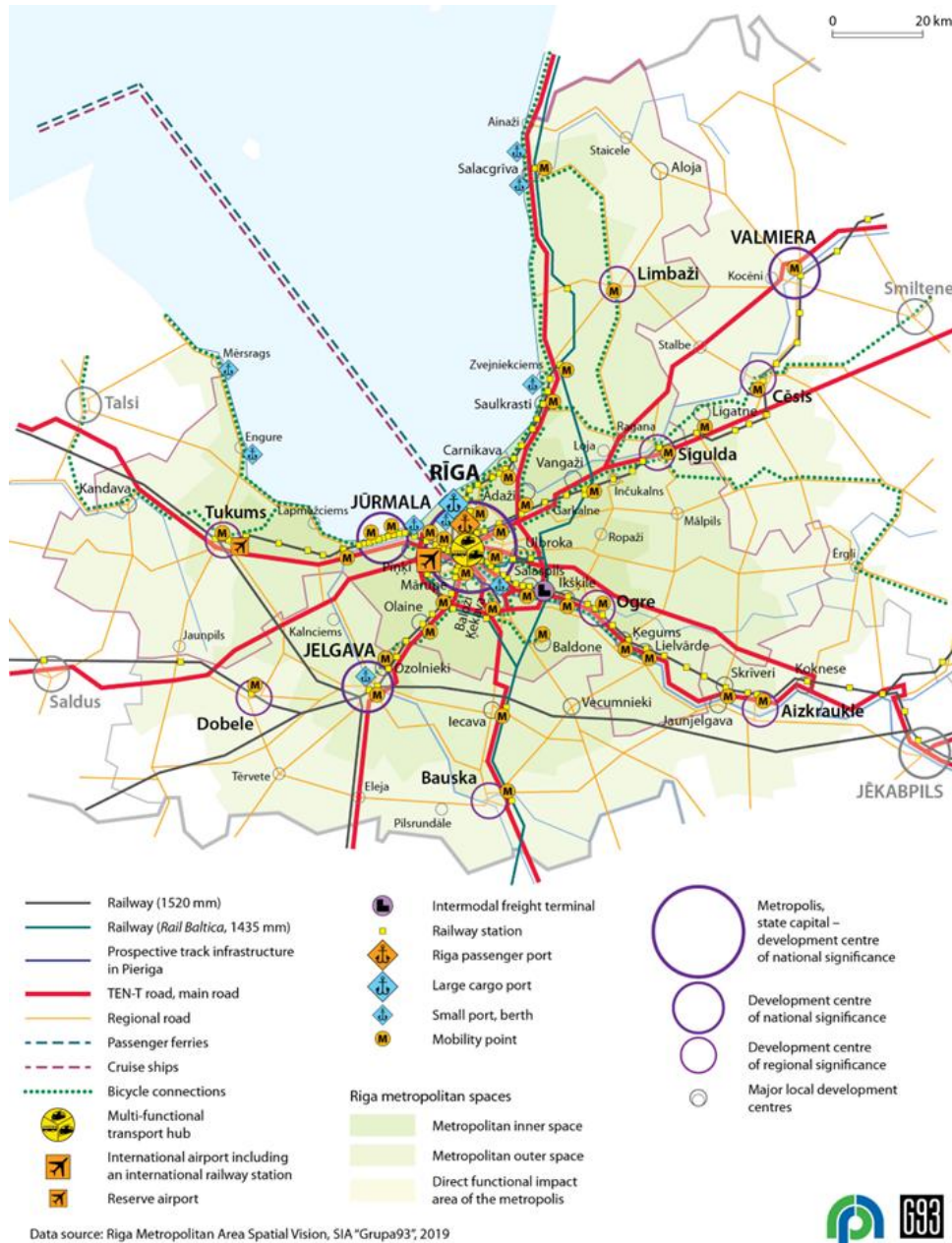
Spatial vision on the development of perspective transport system

Internal accessibility

Regional cycling routes, roads, railways (including Rail Baltica regional stops), inner water transport and local air connections, Park & Ride locations

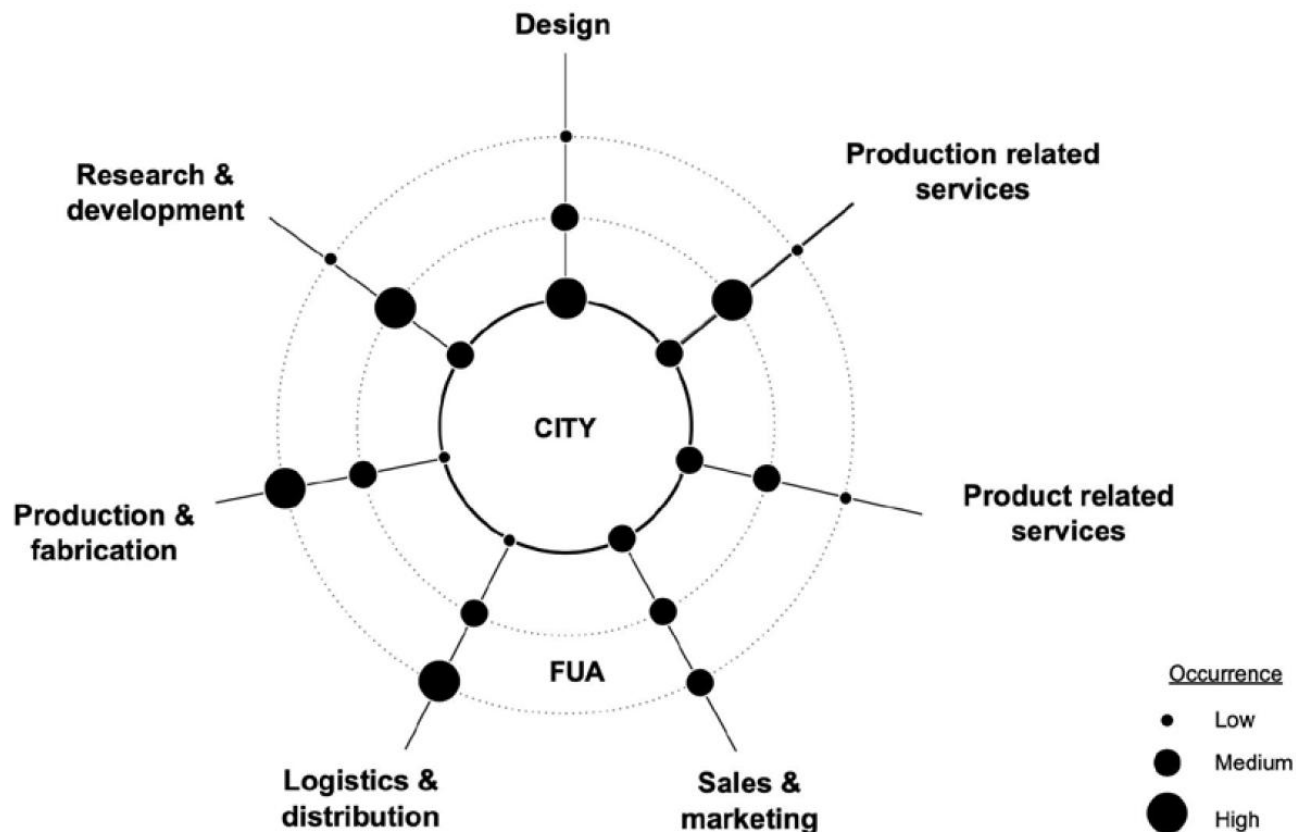
External accessibility

International cycling routes, international roads, railways (including Rail Baltica international stops), water transport and international air connections



Competitiveness & productivity

Spatiality of metropolitan economic functions



Source: ESPON MISTA (2020)

Riga case study

Strength

- A high level of manufacturing within the metro area (~10%)
- Municipalities in the agglomeration area with industrial heritage
- Wage differences within the metro area are not significantly different to those outside the metro area
- Ample amount of land for development if financing is available

Weaknesses

- Gap between the labour demand and supply with regard to skills and education
- High tendency for brain-drain with young professionals seeking more opportunity and higher incomes abroad
- Lack of cohesive metropolitan scale governance, what exists occurs on a voluntary basis
- Local municipalities mostly have counter interest in productive developments
- Challenging bureaucracy for businesses in the core city
- Land for development is in private hands
- Lack of good data to gain a better understanding of metropolitan scale economic activities

Threats

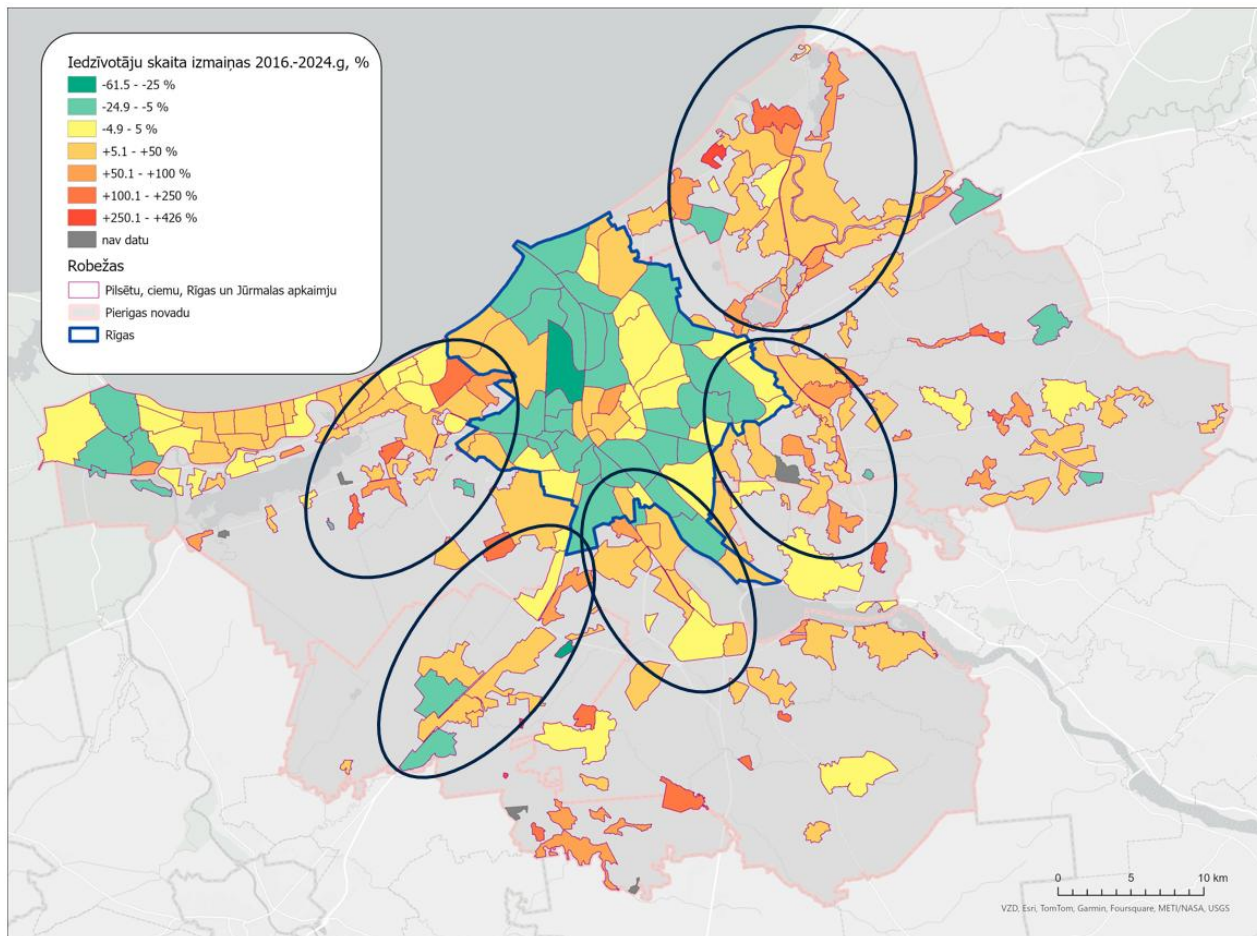
- Limited national & EU funding
- Uncoordinated development of business activities in the metropolitan area is causing negative externalities (pollution, noise, traffic)
- Lack of suitable utilities and infrastructure to ensure that the site is functional

Opportunities

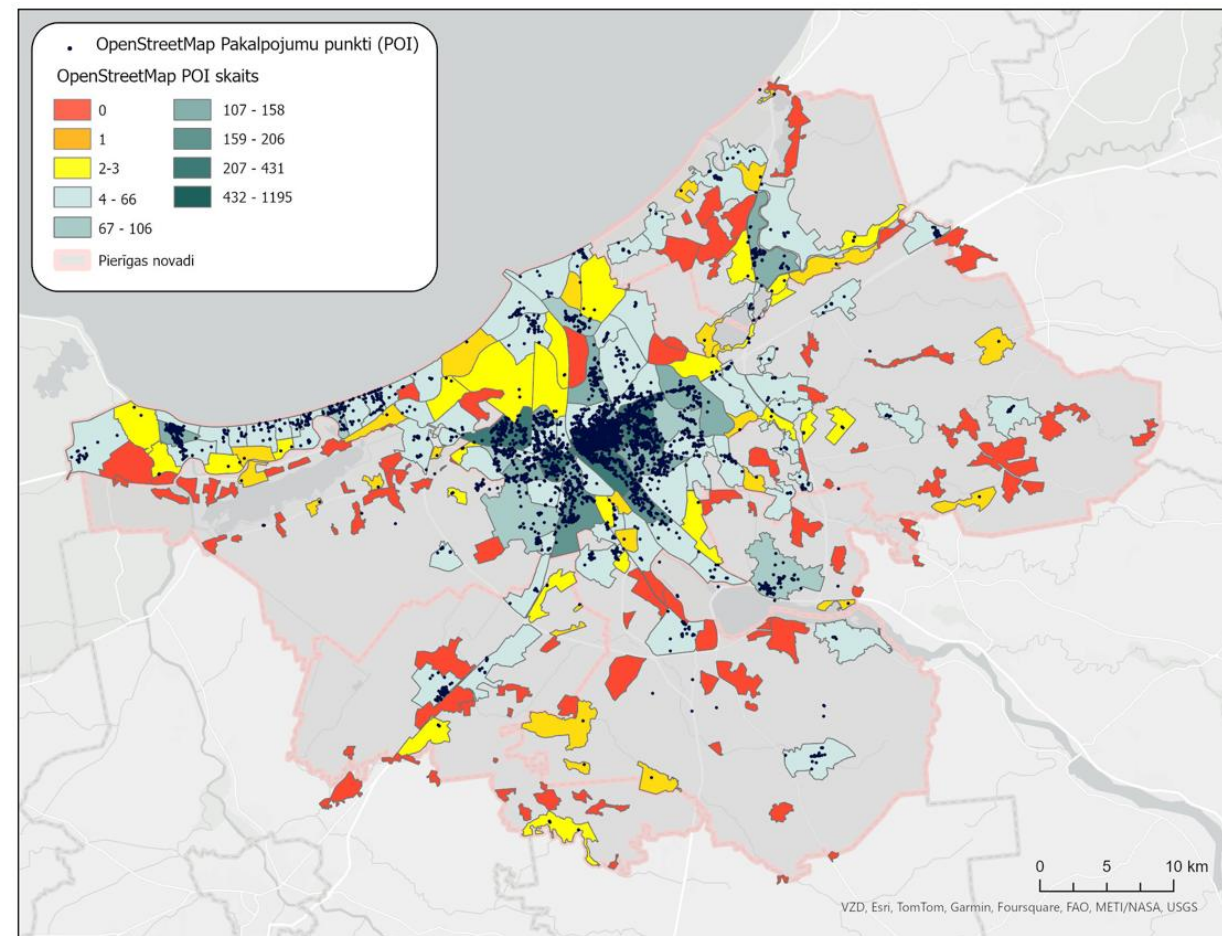
- A large amount of brownfield land, with little development pressure for housing
- Relatively flat topography allowing plenty of options
- Plans for metropolitan collaboration and the positive political ecosystem
- New Rail Baltica lines
- High potentials in logistics

Settlement management and housing development strategy

Formation of urban conglomerates

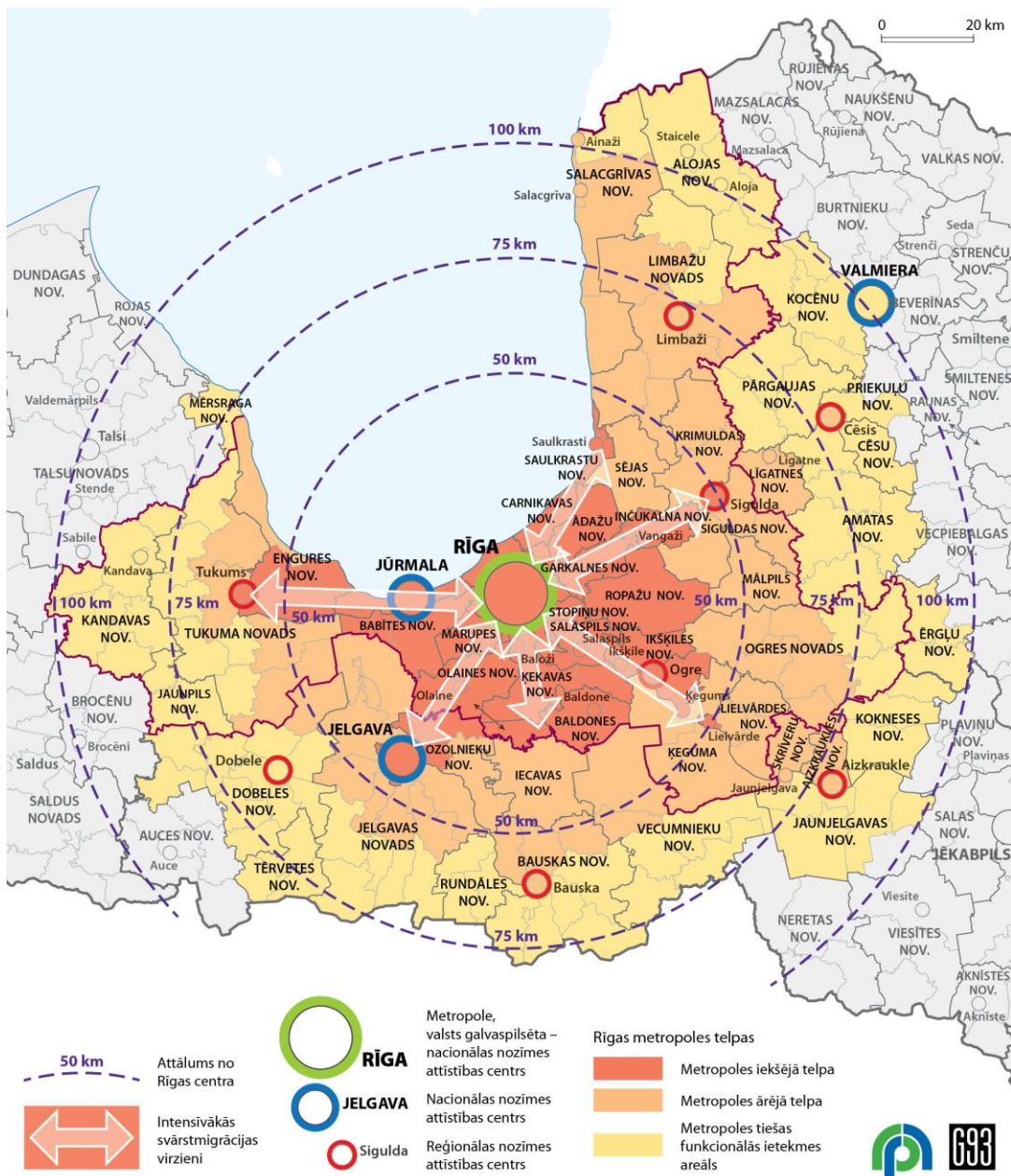


Availability of activities and services



Source: «Meklējot alternatīvas urbānas izplešanās procesam: Rīgas metro piemērs.

Šavraka I., Lukstiņa G., Ločmanis A., Cimdiņš R. Latvijas Universitātes 83.starptautiskā zinātniskā konference (2025)



Development monitoring perspective & Regional scale data needs

Transport and mobility

Competitiveness and economic development

Housing and quality of living environment

Regional scale data needs for monitoring of spatial processes

Transport and mobility

Mobility on the scale of Riga metropolitan area (RMA) - main directions of transport flows

Daily commuting of residents - public and private transport

Freight transport and transit flows, logistics centres

Location and types of transport nodes (mobility points) (regional, local, etc.)

Mobility service points (gas stations, electric charging points, etc.)

Competitiveness and economic development

Business development - **location of economic activities** (NACE 2.1. ver)

Development of **industrial areas**, places for the formation of business clusters

Main tourist magnets on the scale of Riga metropolitan area (RMA), monitoring of **tourist flows**

Energy resource locations (power plants, cogeneration, solar and wind energy)

Housing and quality of living environment

Urban sprawl processes, formation of new settlements

Housing - location by type (multi-storey buildings, private buildings, etc.)

Location of **public services** (educational, cultural, sports, etc. infrastructure)

Availability of **household services** (shops, entertainment places, leisure time locations etc.)

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Thank you!
Paldies!

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