

SPATIAL (TERRITORIAL) PLAN OF RIGA PLANNING REGION

Part II **PERSPECTIVE**

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Structure of Spatial (Territorial) Planning

Part 1 Current Situation (Description of the Current Structure)

Appendix. Data for the Analysis of the Current Situation

Part 2 Perspective of the Spatial Development

Perspective (Perspective of the Spatial Development)

Part 3 Guidelines on Spatial Planning

Part 4 Review on the Development of the Spatial (Territorial) Planning of Riga Planning Region

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Introduction

The present document contains Part III of Riga Planning Region Spatial (Territorial) Plan (hereinafter – spatial plan) – Perspective of Riga Planning Region Spatial Development. It has been developed based on the analysis of the current situation.

Perspective of Riga Planning Region Spatial Development is the part determining Riga planning region area of spatial plan directions to be developed and methods to be used for 20 years. The perspective has been developed basing on Riga region development strategy, and determining the outlines of long-term spatial development, the set medium-term targets and tasks of Riga planning region development program have been evaluated. The perspective has been developed considering the development planning documents of the state, as well as the regions and local municipalities included in the region.

The target of spatial development perspective is to obtain cross sectional Riga planning region territorial employment vision for 20 year long period, evaluating the factor of sustainable development, providing tight functional links of the region with neighboring regions, the certain role of the region in Latvia and the possibility to develop to be an important center of the Baltic Sea region.

The development of the perspective has proceeded in four thematic directions characterizing the spatial structure and development processes of the region:

- the development of habitation, that is connected with inhabitants and housing, employment and work places, and services;
- rural development, including agricultural and forest territories, natural values, landscapes, areas for recreation and tourism;
- accessibility, transport and environment infrastructure;
- the functional structure of the region, revising internal and external functional links forming unity, populated areas with a certain development potential, problem issues and boundaries of the development, differentiated and total economic development.

During the development process of the perspective there were activities of project management, coordination and specialist workgroups, evaluating the descriptions/materials of analysis of current situation of the spatial plan in connection with the development of spatial development perspective, as well as the recommendations to the perspective of spatial development.

The implementation of the perspective is planned, forming the desirable (planned) structure of habitation, country, transport/accessibility and functionality, more wholesome employing the current human economic resources, basing upon the rural and urban cultural values, current habitation structure and transport infrastructure, corresponding to the set priorities and targets by Riga planning region strategy, as well as the activities stipulated in the region development program.

Along with the national level planning documents and municipality planning documents, the region spatial plan totally, as well as its part II - *Perspective* is the planning document of regional development. Observation of it in the national as well as the local level will stimulate the regional development in the country.

The spatial plan of Riga planning region takes the effect on the date of its approval in the Development Council of Riga Planning Region.

1. Recommendations and Conditions Consequent on the Binding Documents

Region spatial development perspective recommendations on Riga region area development are worked out:

- basing on Riga region development strategy 2025 and in accordance with Riga region development program for the period from 2005 till 2011;
- considering the most important principles and models of the area of Europe and the Baltic Sea developed in the period from the mid of 1990-ies till 2005 and recommended in the international documents;
- considering the separate, published recommendations developed in the process of Latvia National planning;
- employing development program and planning recommendations of other regions of Latvia and administrative regions of Riga region;
- evaluating the development program and planning recommendations of Riga region local municipalities.

(1) International Documents

European Spatial Development Perspective

The recommendation guideline document “*European Spatial Development Perspective*”¹ (ESDP) approved by European Commission highlights the following as the key principles of spatial development:

- *polycentric development* - ESDP the most important concept of spatial development that is directed to the achievement of territorial balance (cohesion), calculating that polycentric urban systems are more effective, sustainable and more useful for the achievement of European region economy and social balance, and proposes to employ that in forming local, regional, national, and transnational habitation system;
- *collaboration (partnership)* – necessity of rural and urban collaboration as a precondition maximally effective employment of current resources, mainly that of infrastructure – on all the levels – local, regional, across borders, transnational;
- *integration* – mutual integrated development of different infrastructure systems on local and national habitation system level, as well as on transnational level, when one region countries or municipalities are collaborating;
- *increase of accessibility* – basing mainly on the increase of transport role on all the levels, from the national one to transnational.

ESDP suggests drawing particular attention to the development of EU peripheral regions.

Detailing of ESDP approaches and development of more particular recommendations take place in the project of *ESPON*². Its first published report contains also recommendations for the development of future spatial structure, as well as the first outlines of the planned European polycentric structure. In the area of the Baltic Sea there are set the main areas of the development³. It includes also the area of Riga. To achieve this perspective status,

¹ ESDP, *European Spatial Development Perspective*, official publication of European Commission, 1999, pg.19.

² ESPON, *European Spatial Planning and Observatory Network*, Report I, 2004.

³ *Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGA)*.

it is necessary to remarkably increase the internationally important potential of Riga, to set strategically important targets of spatial development, and to reach them.⁴

Latvia as EU member state should follow the recommendations of ESDP.

Agenda Baltic 21

The most important document in introducing sustainability in The Baltic Sea State regional and environment policy is the agenda of the Baltic Sea region for 21st century (*Agenda Baltic 21*) that has been developed in accordance with the global *Agenda 21*⁵ and the summons included in the latter. *Baltic 21* contains indirect recommendations in the sphere of planning, where the main of them are as follows:

- promoting the economic and social development it is essential to provide protection and maintaining the nature environment and cultural heritage;
- in the process of planning involvement of the society, mutual partnership and subordination of subordination principles must be respected;
- competitiveness of each area of the region in EU and the world should be stimulated, at the same time promoting balance of social and economical conditions between more and less successful areas, as well as between the towns and country.

The demands of *Agenda Baltic 21* correspond to the demands of global *Agenda 21*, which has been acknowledged by Latvia as the member state of UNO.

Visions and Strategies around the Baltics (VASAB)

The project *Visions and Strategies around the Baltics (VASAB)* was started in 1992 as a supplement to *Agenda Baltic 21*, to outline planning guidelines supporting sustainable development of the environment. The project has developed as a constantly operating institution that has developed/initiated a list of its own projects, as well as projects⁶ implemented within the framework of *Interreg IIIB*. The development possibilities/principles of the Baltic Sea region are reviewed in *VASAB-2010 (1994) and VASAB-2010+ (2001)*. The main role of *VASAB* – connection of the Baltic Sea area mutually and with EU policy formulations, as well as searching for possibilities of developing projects corresponding to the common policy, e.g., through *Interreg* projects.

VASAB-2010 already before the publishing ESDP developed recommendations for the development of polycentric network of Baltic Sea area towns on the level of its highest framework, and indicated the necessity to strengthen urban – rural link. It is advised to develop a system that would correspond to the following criteria:

- it is competitive and could create added value, collaborating within the Baltic Sea region and European area;
- it could be able to provide spatial balance of the Baltic Sea region;
- it could be able to provide such a link between the towns and rural territories that would stimulate/support national economy and environment balance in the rural regions;
- it would offer and attractive environment to the inhabitants and investors.

⁴ It is calculated that Riga takes the 61st place among the 64 European functional town areas lagging behind Tallinn and Vilnius. ESPON Project - the interim report of the research No.1.1.1, 3.

⁵ Conclusion Document of United Nations Environment Development Conference in 1992.

⁶ Including projects - *VASAB 2010+*, *Matros* (maritime transport), *SuPortNet* (yacht harbor), *USON* (town systems and networking).

These recommendations suggest that Riga, Liepaja and Daugavpils are incorporated in the framework of Baltic region towns in the status of, respectively, European city, the Baltic Sea region town and center of across border importance.

VASAB-2010+ (2001) specifies the approaches of *VASAB-2010*. There are social, economic, environment and natural environment, as well as spatial structure issues analyzed. It is remarked that in the Baltic Sea region – the competitiveness of urban regions should be increased; the concentrating of the development in few urban centers should be eliminated; the transition of monocentric urban structures into decentralized ones should be stimulated, connecting the process with the development of strong public transport system; the urban sprawl should be eliminated/limited; the ability of towns to operate in the role of a development contributor in the rural areas should be sustained; the link between the priority direction actions/demands of nature and nature protection and development should be developed.

The developed *spatial development activity program* for the area of the Baltic Sea, advises six main directions for transnational collaboration – collaboration of urban regions; strategically important development areas for the Baltic Sea region (BSR) transnational integration; important transport links for BSR internal integration and for the integration in the rest of area of Europe; diversification and sustaining of rural areas; transnational development of the green network; integrated development of coastal areas and islands.

Baltic Palette

The project *Baltic Palette* (1999-2000) has been developed as the common cherished idea of the capitals located in the central part of the Baltic Sea region – Stockholm, Helsinki, Petersburg, Tallinn and Riga region collaboration network. An activity program has been developed that provides a common approach to the problem solution of infrastructure development, spatial planning, environment protection and economy development.

Within the framework of *Baltic Palette* network there has been a project “*Baltic Palette II*” developed (2004), in which *polycentric platform* one of the six subprojects is. It has the most direct connection with Riga region spatial planning. In the justification of Polycentrism idea it is stated that:

- the model of polycentric development improves/creates preconditions for the growth of enterprises, developing the conditions that decrease the business costs connected with transits (transport), information, contacts, marketing, trade, communication and distribution, as well as promoting specialization of the economy;
- the model of polycentric development supports/stimulates balanced development of the region, sustainable development of social and economic environment. Integrating the activities of multiple smaller centers, involving more extensive geographic area (territories), operating in the networks, it is possible to provide more effective social services, transport infrastructure, etc., at the same time providing sustainable employment of natural territories.

The project deals with polycentric development models of all the metropolitan regions involved in *Baltic Palette* network. Riga region has been considered in it as an example of a morphologically monocentric, with all kinds of monocentric links, but hierarchic subcentre structure that is to be developed in polycentrically structured region. The published model within the project has been developed transforming/supplementing the recommendations for Riga region planning.

The recommendation of *Baltic Palette II* on potential Riga region polycentric development has been used, developing the planning of Riga region.

(2) Documents of Latvia

Regional Policy Basic Formulations

Regional policy basic formulations define the main principles, targets, priorities and directions of actions of the state policy⁷.

The following *targets* have been set:

- 1) alignment of the development level of Latvia and its regions to the level of European countries;
- 2) rise of competitiveness of Latvia and its regions among the other regions of European Union;
- 3) provision of equal conditions of life, work and environment to the inhabitants of Latvia, to stimulate balanced development of the country territory, regions and their parts;
- 4) creation of equal preconditions for entrepreneurship in the whole territory of Latvia, to stimulate balanced development of the country territory, regions and their parts;
- 5) rise of international competitiveness of Riga.

It is stipulated that the consummation of the targets set in the basic formulations will take place, employing the financial means of the regional fund, state investments and budget means, the means of EU structural funds.

National Planning

The national planning is being now developed. Only the recommendations on agricultural territories of national importance have been published and have obtained the power of a binding document⁸. Fertile (the evaluation of soil quality is higher 50 grades), usually drained lands in not divided areas that exceed 50 ha, and polder lands have been differentiated as such.

HABITAT II

National Report of Latvia to UNO world conference on habitation areas *HABITAT II* (1996) sets *the development of balanced, polycentric populated area network, activating medium size towns and distinct rural areas connected with them, particularly promoting such activities that form a base for sustainable development of populated areas and territories* to be the target of the development of habitation of Latvia. Almost for 10 years there are no activities performed to realize the target set in the document approved by the government.

Planning of Regional Territories

Between the second level administrative units within Riga region the territorial planning has been developed for Riga and Tukums regions; it is being developed for Ogre region.

The future vision set in Ogre region territorial planning (2004) does not contain indications on intentions for the development of regional area. It is absent also in the interpretation of the vision. There are mentioned several structural elements and factors providing territorial development (technical and social infrastructure, quality of environment, growth of economy), and indicated preferable development indices, but among the indices there are

⁷ MRDM - Ministry of Regional Development and Municipalities, 2004. Approved by the order of Cabinet of Ministers (CM) No. 198 on 2004.02.04.

⁸ The binding part of national level territory planning "*Agricultural Territories of National Importance*", final formulation and corresponding CM regulations No.684 of 2003.09.12. "*Regulations on Agricultural Territories of National Importance*".

no such ones that even implicitly would testify to the area development activities to be performed.

The current employment of the territory is characterized descriptively, the perspective territory employment – according to the ways of employment, indicating the restrictions to each kind stipulated by the legislative and normative acts. The recommendations on the employment of the land are not connected with the spatial development of region territory as an entirety.

In the future vision defined in Riga region territorial plan (2001)⁹ the region development opportunities are formulated directly connecting them with its location in the geographic area in the structure of Riga region.

Analyzing the current situation its separate elements are reviewed as the components of spatial structure, but their development tendencies are connected with the potential impact on the development of regional area. A particular attention has been paid to the development of habitation structure and transport. The work performed within the framework of project *Baltic Palette II* (see above) has been evaluated. Further developing it, the model of populated area hierarchy has been made:

- *“Riga – functions of metropolis – the administrative center of the state, area and region, economic center, the center of science, culture, education, tourism, sport, trade, exhibition and fair; habitation functions (not forcing out them from the centers); work places;*
- *Outskirts of Riga – area directly connected with Riga: Jurmala and Riga region rural territories, which have distinct connection with Riga. Functions of supplementing and relieving Riga and local development tasks. Providing unoccupied areas and sustainable maintenance (provision of natural resources for standard of life);*
- *Development centers of the outskirts of Riga – which are essential to perceive functions that demand certain concentration (Olaive, Balozi, Salaspils, Vangazi, Saulkrasti);*
- *Remaining development area of the region with multifunctional regional development centers (regional sub-centers of decentralized concentration) around Riga, not exceeding the distance of 60-100 km (Jurmala, Tukums, Ogre, Sigulda and other centers connected with agglomeration of Riga¹⁰ – Jelgava, and others);*
- *Local development centers – stipulated in the plans of the small rural territories: for local densely populated areas; for local sub-centers – other populated areas (clusters of farmsteads/households); farmsteads.”*

Considering the development of habitation structure, it has been indicated that it implies not only the development of centers, but also development of unified systems with their structural elements and functional ties. “Here, and essential importance is given to the transport. When the volume of traffic is increasing, the density of comfortable roads and the number of driveways to Riga should also increase. A network of highways should be developed, developing it from the current one that would have the local importance. In the service zone of duplicated roads it is expected to have increased urbanization. This problem should be solved by Riga region together with Riga and municipalities of other regions. The network of local roads should be developed.

Territories should be maintained (reserved) for the development of railway in perspective that is also an important factor developing the structure of habitation.

It should be assumed that the increase of the number of transport means and flow (in fact, - duplication) is one of the definite forecasts creating necessity to build new roads.

⁹ Riga region planning (till 2003) with amendments. Riga, 2001.

¹⁰ Implied - the current centres outside the region administrative borders of Riga.

Therefore, in the plans of the land employment the needed territories for road building should be provided, as well as further investigation territories as reservation for future period of time.

Regulations and other means should be created that could be sufficiently effective to eliminate large all-round solid building blocks in the outskirts of Riga, as well as at the same time to stimulate maintaining of mosaic landscape and could protect the green area of suburbs as sustainable system.

It is recommended to the municipalities of Riga region:

- „In the plans of the territories of Riga region local municipalities the habitation structure should be planned as an element of multi-center metropolitan region;
- in the development plans of the territories of the region and local municipalities to introduce mosaic habitation structure with maintaining green area section (nature base);
- on the regional level (together with Riga city) to plan the increase of the number of driveways to Riga;
- in the region to develop a network of highways separated from local roads;
- to reserve territories for the development of transport infrastructure (roads, railway) in perspective;
- to maintain rural habitation, rural environment and landscape for public recreation, tourism and for future generations;
- to stimulate the development of (social) infrastructure.”

Plans of Local Municipalities

From the regional local municipalities the plans of local municipalities have been developed and are valid – for 43% in Riga region, in Tukums region – for less than 20%, in Limbazi and Ogre region – for less than 10% municipalities¹¹. At the end of 2005 Riga city territorial plan has been approved. Amendments in Jurmala territorial plan are being developed.

In the plans of small rural territories the development of habitation and infrastructure has been discussed narrow, not evaluating all the elements of habitation and its ties with the habitation and infrastructure development perspectives of neighboring municipalities, regions and area.

Territorial plan of Riga city (2005) has been developed as an integral part of the long-term development strategy of Riga till 2025. In the “*Basic Formulations for Riga Territory Planning*”, developed within the framework of the strategy emphasizing the role of city territorial planning as the means of strategy implementation, there are the following formulations advanced:

- Riga should avoid acquiring new, not urbanized territories, instead giving preference to revitalization and development of degraded and other already urbanized, but ineffectively employed territories;
- Riga should strive to control its morphologic city (the city within its administrative borders + densely built outskirt territories) enlargement, increasing the offer of lands in the city possible to use for building, activating not used territories and employing area economy directed building methods, developing lands suitable for building near transport networks and railway stations, promoting the town internal development, increasing the quality life and habitation in the territory of the city, maintaining and improving the current eco-systems as much as possible.

¹¹ Review on the Development of Territory Planning in the Planning Regions, Regional and Local Municipalities in 2004. MRDM information. Latvijas Vestnesis, 2005.07.04.

The isolation from the issue solution of area needed for functioning of Riga and of that in large scale used for the needs of Riga/inhabitants of Riga expressed in these formulations and the approximately formulated principles of setting the permitted land employment have determined the direction of Riga city territory planning. In the plan the topics connected with the common interests of Riga and Riga region have not been sufficiently developed including the employment and possible development of regional territories vitally needed for Riga, in the process of its development the collaboration with the municipality of Riga region has not activated, which directly manages the development of city outskirts (outskirts of Riga) area, or the other municipalities of the region.

The Main Conclusions

In all the international documents the necessity of collaboration between the administrative formations located in the same geographic area is emphasized.

In the entire reviewed international documents and documents of Latvia similar basic principles of spatial development have been supported. The support to sustainable development and balance, and polycentric (multi-center) model of spatial structure has been set as priorities. The polycentric development recommendations presented in the international documents have been addressed to large-scale spatial structures, considering development of higher-level elements. The recommendations rendered in the documents of European Union are based mainly on the experience acquired in densely populated, urbanized territories.

The legal power of the international documents is limited – the member of presenting institutions (states, municipalities) may use them as guidelines, developing their own respective documents that concern the development of geographic and life area.

The documents of Latvia area addressed to different scale spatial structures, but most of the cases they refer to the development of relatively narrow scale structures. They have different legal force¹², They should be implemented in the territory (the state), and the population density of which is remarkably lower than in the West and Central Europe, and which has different experience of territorial planning and plan application policy and practice implemented in the rapid urbanization period after the World War II.

¹² For the national, regional and area territory planning – guidelines, for municipalities – legal and normative acts.

2. Approaches of Development Perspective

2.1. Importance and Possibilities of Spatial Planning

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is such a process of changes, in which satisfaction of current needs does not take place, decreasing/eliminating possibilities of future generations to satisfy their needs. Satisfaction of them is an approach and at the same time a demand, basing on which all the above policy documents of spatial development have been worked out (Chapter 1). Consummation of development sustainability requires balanced activities, setting targets and working in the region at the same time:

- providing high and stable growth of economy, sufficient number and variety of workplaces;
- decreasing social stratification and providing equal social opportunities to everybody;
- providing observation of environment protection demands;
- implementing the principle of economical use of natural resources, particularly the nonrenewable.

Implementation of the above targets is possible in case the policies of employment, social and technical infrastructure, habitation, environment protection, as well as investment attraction; the programs, strategies, etc. developed within the frameworks of them, are oriented to the promotion of sustainable development in substance, less considering the interests of the industry or satisfaction of just current needs, but more – development targets of the whole society in large context. The policies of regional development and spatial planning according to the definitions should balance and mutually connect the varied targets and demands of the society, but such balancing is fruitful, i.e., actually stimulates implementation of equalization and balanced development of the living space, in case the policies of the development of industrial and territorial units are based in the entirety of common values and basic principles, and intend to implement the same targets.

The spatial plan offers a framework, a spatial structure for the promotion of the development along sustainability road. It should be filled with content, implementing different development policies.

Identity of the Region and the Principle of Equalization

The brightest trait of the identity of Riga region in the scale of Latvia is its function and capacity of the capital of the region, in the main spheres of which – quantitatively as well as qualitatively remarkably exceeds the capacity of other regions of Latvia. On the international level the capacity of Riga and its region has been acknowledged to be adequate for promotion to the potential status of MEGA center in the variant I in European polycentric development recommendations¹³. Comparing to the centers acknowledged in the above recommendations to be “mature” European level metropolis, provision of Riga and ability to operate in the role of internationally important center is remarkably lower and, preparing/ undertaking such a role, Riga region should improve the quality and saturation of technical and social infrastructure (the offer should be enlarged).

The equalization of the region upwards would certainly raise the prestige of the country and is profitable for the development of the national economy, but if at the same time in the country there is no correspondingly rapid development of the other regions, the distance between the development indices of Riga and other regions of Latvia might increase.

¹³ See the notes on the page 5

Strengthening the brightest feature of Riga region identity – the ability to perform the function of an international metropolis, there might be a possibility to come into a conflict with the principle of equalization on the national scale. The possible conflict can be avoided reconciling the state policy and the regional policy of Riga region, directing the development of Riga region so that it would equally respect/give a return for the implementation of equalization principle on the international and national level.

Principle of Subsidiarity and Necessity of Collaboration

To arrange/improve physical space of essential, long-term recommendations, as well as the social structure, it is needed to involve various different partners – administrative institutions of different levels, private structures, different nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and unofficial unions of inhabitants, to stimulate the communication both – vertically, and horizontally. It requests to work develop the practice of collaboration, ability to trust, atmosphere of mutual benevolence, but also it requests ability from the lower levels to accept/comply with the decisions of higher levels, as well as the ability of higher levels to delegate to the lower levels problem solutions and decision taking in the matters that are included in their competence.

2.2. Sustainable Development Preconditions of the Region

Maintaining of Critical Mass and the Ability to Inherit

The opportunities of the development of territories/populated areas are determined by the existence/non-existence of number workforce available that has acquired certain skills, so called “critical mass”. In the situation when there is a limited availability of workforce, to balance the regional development the strategic task is to direct the resources to develop the territories/populated areas, whose primary amount of critical mass is sufficient, so that improving the infrastructure and attracting additional investments competitive centers develop that would be able to influence (stimulate) positively the development of surrounding territories.

The critical mass is characteristic not only to human resources but also to the physical structure of populated areas – building, the network of roads and streets, and technical infrastructure. The amount and quality of these elements determines the ability of the populated area to operate as the center, and the time that would be consumed to reach the needed competitiveness for a certain level.

Evaluating the critical mass in aspects, more favorable preconditions for sooner reaching the preferable result – balanced development of the region – would form enlarging the areas that already are creating new work places and products with higher added value, successfully attracting/uptake investments, and thus provide stability of the number of inhabitants. Usually, and Riga region is no exception, the preconditions of such kind have formed/are forming in the centers that have reached a certain level of development, particularly in those, which are connected with surrounding rural areas and less populated rural populated areas by sufficiently dense and quality road and communication network, and public transport. The above considerations bring forward inheritance as one of the factors promoting sustainable development.

Increase of Accessibility and Stability (Sustainability)

Good accessibility has been generally acknowledged to be essential in the dynamic development of any territory as a whole and its separate territories and for the improvement of the life standard of the inhabitants. The peripheral location of Latvia in European geographical area determines longer time consumption to reach Riga region from the

central part of Europe than from other European regions. But, comparing with other regions of Latvia, the international accessibility of Riga region is higher.

Introducing direct air traffic in the routes Riga – the capitals of European countries, the time consumption to reach Riga region from Brussels has equalized to the one for reaching the capitals of North-European countries. With other kinds of transport (railway, motor transport) it takes longer than to reach a North-European region situated in an equal distance¹⁴. The higher time consumption than from the centers of European central part regions determined by the distance exists for objective reasons and will remain also in the future. It is possible/advisable to decrease it, developing transport infrastructure corresponding to the modern potentialities.

The internal accessibility of the region is contrasting. When disperse habitation exists, 'bringing closer' the small rural areas to services and employment centers is one of the determinant issues of maintaining the kind of historical habitation. Not only the mutual, direct accessibility of larger centers, but also the accessibility of the different rural centers is significant to increase the development dynamism of rural territories. But, to have the region able to operate as an international center it is important to improve the mutual accessibility of the capital and larger centers.

Provision of mutual compatibility of different transport kinds, and communication and energy transmission lines, as well as their duplication and replacement possibilities are important to provide sustainability of accessibility.

Quality of Environment

The surrounding physical environment – the earth, waters, and air – is the value that provides the existence of any society. It is a resource with certain economic and social value, which is used as a fixed asset of production and work object, as well as a "locus standi" – place for location/situation of any building; and in the surroundings of towns it is used also for provision of public utilities abilities to operate, and for the recreation of inhabitants.

Now in Riga region two tendencies equally powerfully have become apparent – that of maintenance and protection of natural and human made historical environment, which is pronounced by the public opinion and representatives of separate administrative institutions; and that of active conversion of the current environment, which is implemented by private investors with the approval form municipality institutions, often not sufficiently evaluating the activity results and its impact in a broader scale.

To develop the region it is important to find a common denominator, to balance the interests/needs of environment maintaining/protection, and social and economic development.

Existence of Development Driving Forces

The physical elements of an area are also the driving forces of the spatial development, the main tasks of which are to serve as the base/grounds for balancing the location of the structural elements of economy. The driving forces should at the same time support the increase of the role of Riga region in the international level, balanced development of the regions of Latvia, and revival of Riga region distant rural areas. The development of town –

¹⁴ *Nordic Peripherality in Europe*. Klaus Spiekermann, Hallgeir Aalbu. Nordregio, Sweden, Stockholm, 2004.

rural areas, city – town partnership internally in the region supplements to the impact of reorganization of area physical elements.

An active development of town – rural areas, city – town partnership internally in the region supplements to the impact of reorganization of area physical elements. Partnership accelerates, refines the development/existence of ties/links, and increases their variety. It develops such mutual links between municipalities and other links between institutional, economic and social partners as home - work, home – places of service providers (central places); hierarchical between the central places (national – regional – region – local level centers); production between rural – urban or city – town enterprises; proposition/cultivation of rural areas for public needs of towns.

3. Preferable Spatial Development of the Region

3.1. Selected Strategy

3.1.1. Strategic Directions of the Development

The development strategy of Riga region determines that the favorable and not favorable development features of the region should be employed or limited in three major development directions. It is considered defining the future of spatial structure. The directions are as follows:

(1) Integrated Development and Competitiveness

Riga region is rapidly growing metropolis region with a large development potential, and it should obtain an international ability of impact. The success of Riga region in the competition between other European regions is determined by its ability to develop and implement the policy that provides sufficiently fast growth of competitiveness in the economy, basing on the increase of human capital and environment quality. The development of the region should be associated with

- dynamic and varied entrepreneurship in consolidated region area;
- service center network corresponding to the international level;
- development of educational and research centers, as well as development of perspective national economy industries of the region and directions of entrepreneurship, developing favorable entrepreneurship environment for knowledge, research and advanced technology based, and innovative production with high added value;
- quality communication and information technology, energy and environment infrastructure;
- development of international transport and communication and the involved infrastructure;
- safe, convenient and environment friendly and mutually connected regional public transport system;
- safe, convenient and fast accessibility, developing transport hubs integrated in the networks of Latvia and Europe.

(2) Sustainable Development

Riga region should develop as an internally powerful functional area with sustainable national economy and high quality life standard. The preconditions for such a development will be developed by its ability to become

- a region, where polycentric habitation with powerful small and medium town network is developed;
- a region with diverse rural economy and work places for rural inhabitants;
- a region, where the development of the national economy and employment of natural and cultural values is taking place respecting not only the interests of today, but also the ones of future generations.

(3) High Life Standard

An essential improvement of life standard and sustainable maintenance and development of healthy society in the region is generally supported by

- effective, mutually coordinated public transport system that is convenient and safe for inhabitants, and environment friendly for accessibility of rural territories, small/medium towns and Riga;
- educational centers, where there is high quality education available, possibility to raise the professional qualification, and modern communication infrastructure;
- revitalization of current habitation, development of quality habitation that the majority of inhabitants would be able to afford;
- cultivated and maintained regional unique rural and urban landscapes, the original and culturally rich locations of heritage value;
- attractive areas for recreation and tourism developed cultivating the current traditions and maintaining natural and cultural values.

3.1.2. Development Direction of Spatial Structure

The obstacles for more rapid development are as follows:

- lack of uniformity of region habitation structure and increased proportion of the capital in the role of the center of municipality local work places and services, as well as business and production partner;
- low ability of rural areas to increase the speed of economic and social development and incorporate in the model of dynamic development;
- Riga region as a periphery compared to the central part of Europe

Preferable development directions of spatial structure have been outlined in connection with the strategic development directions, basing upon the basic principles of spatial planning and preconditions of sustainable development.

To develop the spatial framework, that would relieve/stimulate the implementation of the set economic and social targets in the regional development strategy in possibly short period of time and involvement of possibly smaller amount of means, three priority structure development directions and driving forces have been advanced:

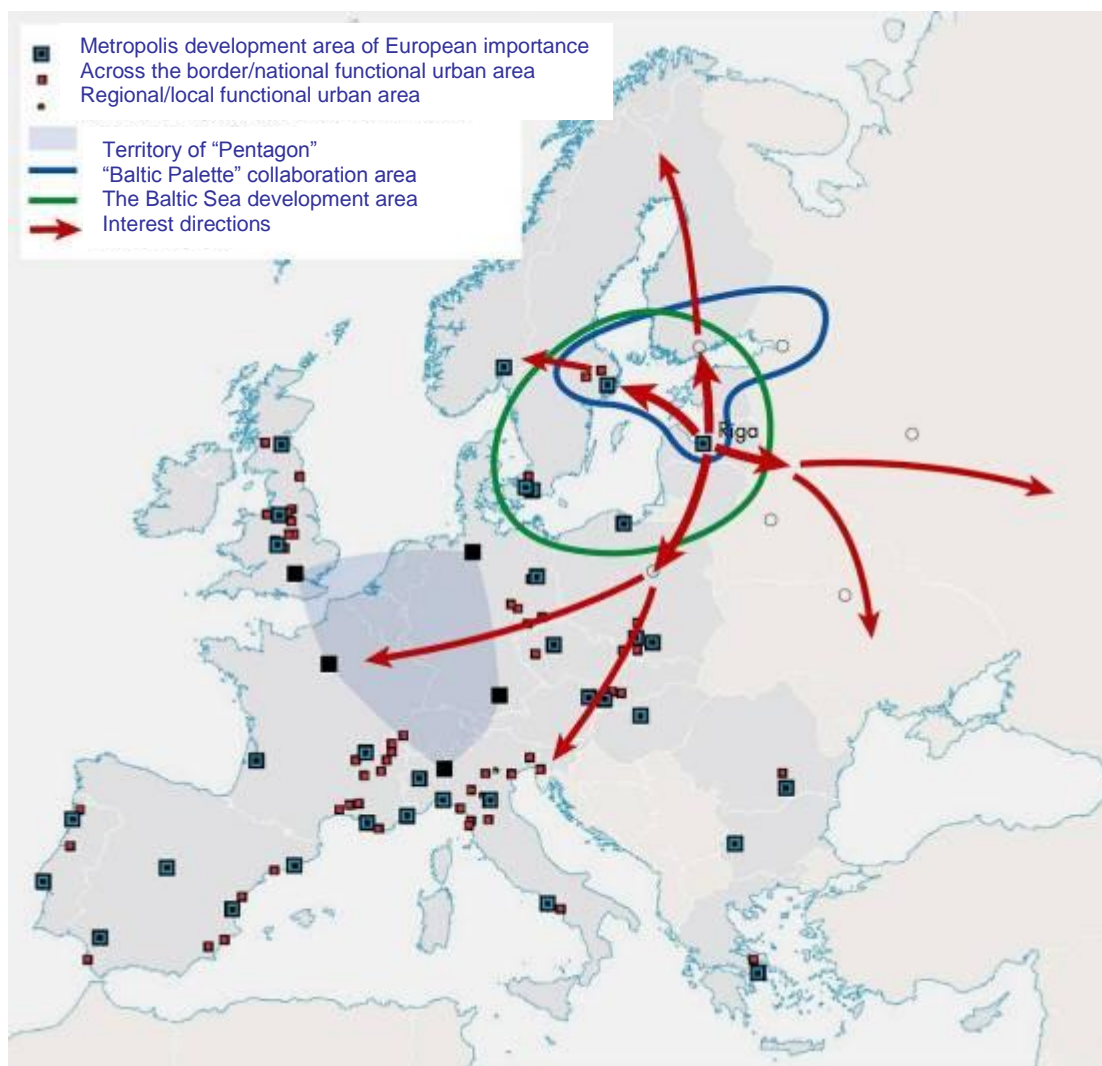
- consolidated and polycentric habitation system;
- high quality infrastructure and communication;
- dynamic rural areas and quality environment.

(1) Consolidated and Polycentric Habitation System

Its development target – to increase the ability of the region to compete with the other Baltic States and European regions in the role of *MEGA* center of international importance, to stimulate balanced development and development of other regions of Latvia.

More rapid growth of the region potential would be stimulated by the development of powerful functional urban area, in which, the dominating role of the center being maintained, every sub-center would obtain/acquire opportunity to dominate in the sphere of a particular industry and simultaneously with the vertical ties (links) with the main center the horizontal links with other sub-centers and surrounding rural areas will develop. The mutual links of the consolidated habitation system elements will be provided by differentiated infrastructure network of the national, regional and local importance that would in particular nodes connect with certain networks of international importance.

More rapid growth of the region potential will be stimulated by functionally *coordinated area of the outskirts of Riga*. Coordination/arrangement of the area of the capital means to create preconditions for rational and effective employment of the territory, balancing the interests of the capital and surrounding municipalities, as well as private and public sector, and the demands of different industries.



Picture 3.1. Riga region in the network of European metropolis regions

The ability of the capital outskirts area to perform the capital servicing functions will to great extent determine not only the quality of life environment and attractiveness from the point of view of the inhabitants in Riga city and in other populated areas, but also the possibilities to organize rationally the infrastructure of the capital and the region, as well as the infrastructure of the national and international importance.

The expected results of habitation system consolidation and polycentric development:

- More active involvement of the resources of Riga in the development of other towns of the region and rural areas as in the generators of additional added value;
- Development of preconditions for sustainable development of the capital and its surrounding populated areas, providing reservation of land areas for public needs (source of drinking water, transport, cross-over networks, an other technical needs, recreation, etc.), simultaneously obtaining possibility to regulate the pressure of urbanization on the surrounding environment.

(2) High Quality Infrastructure and Communication

The target of the development of infrastructure and the improvement of the quality of communication is: to increase the operation ability of providers and objects of human

resources, goods, energy, and information flow, to decrease the time and cost consumption needed to overcome the distances.

Development of spatial framework nowadays is most directly influenced by the transport and other infrastructure providing different kinds of links. The most significant precondition for the development of varied functional links within the region with other regions of Latvia and abroad is high level of accessibility of the populated areas, i.e., possibility for people, shipments, cargos, energy, etc. to migrate between the populated areas/distribution points consuming minimum of time and cost that corresponds to the paying capacity of the society. The region center accessibility of all the kinds should be improved in all the aspects – international, national, regional and local. At the same time, the risk should be minimized, providing each populated area with at least double-sided provision, thus creating a possibility to involve another source/supply line in a case of emergency. Improvement of international, national, regional and local accessibility of every kind should be set as a priority.

The forecasted result of the development of high quality infrastructure:

Entrepreneurship becoming active in the spheres of production and business increase of investments, and as a result of this process – increase of work places and their diversification in the populated areas of the region.

(3) Dynamic Rural Areas and Quality Environment

The target of the development of dynamic rural areas: to stimulate the equalization of rural and urban territories in the social and economic development, to maintain the economic activity and habitation of rural territories, particularly - more distant ones.

Presently, in the rural areas the economy is based on two industries – traditional agriculture (cultivation of grain, cattle-breeding) and forestry, in the coastline of the Riga Gulf fishing also. The paucity of work places and their scanty variety initiate irrational push-pull migration, spending more than 1,5 – 2 hours a day for trips to/from the work, and, as the result, - migration to the capital/its outskirt area.

Revival of rural areas should take place, maintaining traditional industries, directing them to the specialization and the development of new sub-industries, for example, vegetable growing, and floriculture. Processing of products should be stimulated, to add additional added value to the agricultural and forestry products, to enlarge and diversify the work place offer and stimulate the development of entrepreneurship. At the same time, new industries in the rural areas should be developed, first, tourism and improvement and maintenance of rural landscape.

The forecasted result of the development of dynamic rural areas:

increase of life standard in the rural areas of the region, and equalization of the development of the rural areas - towns.

3.2. Preferable Spatial Structure of the Region

3.2.1. Habitation System

3.2.1.1. Starting Position

The urban structure in the central part of Riga region is considerably more powerful than such structures anywhere else in Latvia.

The critical mass of the development potential concentrated in Riga several times exceeds the critical mass of other habitation centers located in the outskirts of Riga as well as territories of neighboring regions. The distance to the most important habitation centers of the region located in a semicircle around Riga – Tukums, Ogre, Sigulda, as well as Jelgava that is included in Zemgale region – does not exceed 0,5-1 hours drive. The density and variety of habitation and functional links in the area of the semicircle formed by the above towns are remarkably higher than anywhere else in the region. In this territory the process of agglomeration expressed itself at the end of 1970-ies¹⁵, it stopped in 1990-ies, but in 2000-ies it started with new strength. The process evidences that this is the first step towards the development of a functional region.

For the moment around Riga there has developed a push-pull migration area that is based on stable work – home ties¹⁶, where the movement from the habitation places in small towns to the work in the capital dominates. The process is characterized by not only one-sidedness of the contents of ties (home – work), but also by that of the direction (periphery – the center), and it included mainly the territories that are around the main transport arterial roads. The total critical mass of the territory included in the process is sufficient, and the location of the major part of the centers against the capital and against each other is favorable to develop uniform habitation system in the central part of the region.

In the North, West and East outskirts of the region the habitation centers are not well developed, the current potential of separate centers is too small to be able to give a remarkable impact on the economy of surrounding rural areas, as well as to increase/diversify the services for rural areas. But the distances between centers usually do not exceed 30-40 km or 0,5 hour driving distance, the ties of home–work services, work-home are developed.

3.2.1.2. Vision

The habitation of Riga region is operating as a unitary entirety, which thanks to the ability of its parts to mutually supplement each other and to stimulate the surrounding rural areas, not only according the number of population, but also according the fact, which in the economical and cultural activity/variety has reached the critical mass that is necessary to provide competitiveness on the level of a center of European importance and at the same time is able to provide high life standard in different environment.

Riga outskirt area is functionally arranged and visually attractive territory, in which the development takes place steady and rationally employing the land and other resources; in the interests of the total, sustainable future of the region the public needs are considered as a priority, thus, promoting the increase of the life standard.

¹⁵ Evaluation of Latvia Habitation Structure and Alternative Development Possibilities. Review. SIA “Tursons”, 2001.

¹⁶ Subproject of Riga development program “Definition of Riga Agglomeration Borders”. SIA “CTB”, 2004.

3.2.1.3. Development Perspective of Habitation System

Town Network of Support Framework

The region habitation backbone is a consolidated network of support framework towns. The framework is developed as a polycentric (multi-center) structure (Picture 3.2).

The consolidation of habitation takes place:

- when the centers differentiate according to their importance in the system of regional/national habitation, maintaining for the dominating center the role corresponding to its potential;
- when the centers specialize in the attraction of certain (chosen) production industries and servicing;
- developing the mutual links of urban centers and their links with rural areas.

Development of consolidated urban system is not/can not become an end in itself, but it is done to stimulate:

- balanced development of region territory;
- increased quality of life environment in the regional towns and rural areas, particularly the possibilities of individuals to acquire higher qualification, develop the career staying in their native places;
- specialization of centers to perform certain roles;
- increase of the critical mass of separate strategically significant centers.

Uniting of urban centers does not signify their leveling, or denying the individuality of each place. On the contrary – this process should specially support the peculiarities of towns/villages, their strongest “trumps”, obtained knowledge and effective employment of environment qualities for the development of the particular populated area.

Development of such framework perfectly corresponds to the possibilities offered by the current situation, successively continues the proposals of Riga region planning and the project *Baltic Palette part II* “Polycentric Platform”, corresponds to the recommendations of Riga region development program, and develop/create preconditions to the involvement of the habitation of Riga region and Latvia in the international spatial development programs and projects.

The polycentric support framework of Riga region consolidated habitation system includes populated areas of different sizes and functions, which for the moment are consolidated by the connection/dependence on the main, much stronger center and common infrastructure, firstly the road network, that mainly serves to satisfy the demands of the main center.

The main unit of the polycentric framework is Riga, the roads that converge in Riga and are distributed in a semicircle around it outline the distribution of other junctions in the area: ring road, internal bow, and outer bow. The focal points of the framework – town – potential support framework centers – take the position in the intersections of radiuses and bows: at the closest to Riga – internal bow – centers with lower development potential, more oriented to servicing Riga, at the distal – outer bow – the centers with a higher potential, oriented to development of partnership in the interests of regional development, as well as activating the surrounding rural areas. In the composition of framework polycentric structure the typical features of the current structure are maintained and developed further – the existence of the main center and the area organizing and functional role of radial road network.

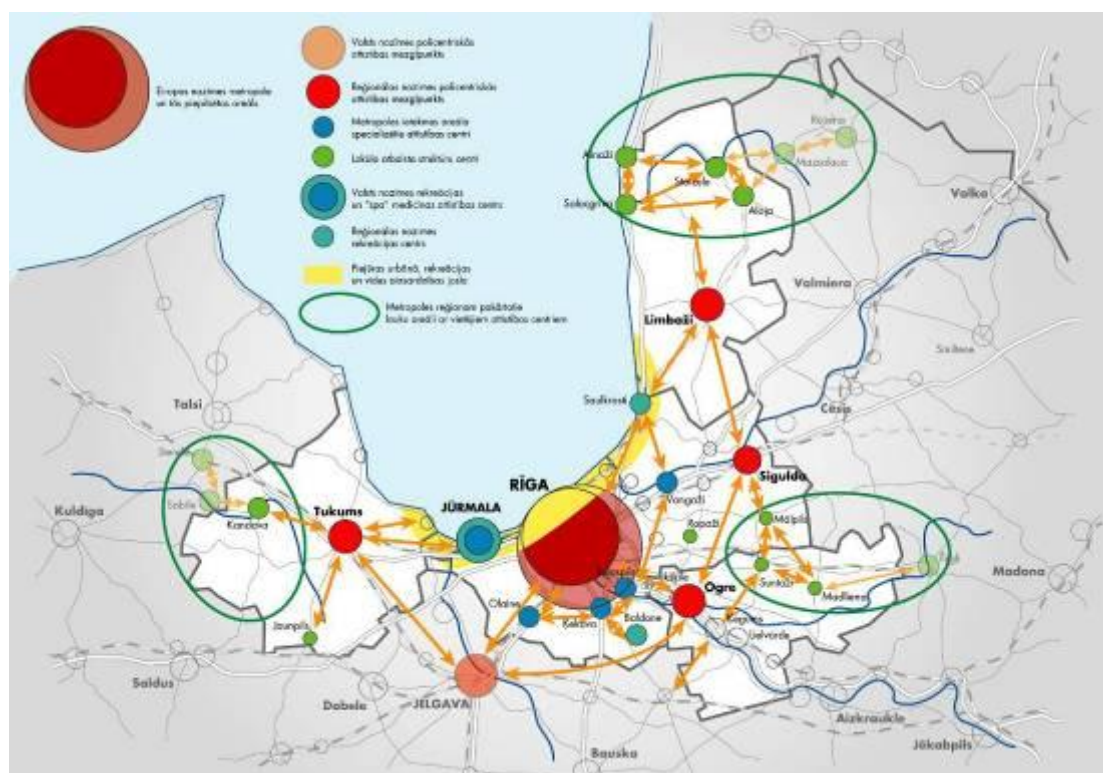


Table 3.2 Perspective Spatial Structure of Habitation

Developing semicircle roads, the areas between any two radial roads are divided in separate sectors of the circle. Each sector becomes more conveniently accessible, but the spatial organization of the central part of the region – better reviewed.

Developing a polycentric support framework, acquiring its separate parts/their surrounding areas is performed, considering the principles acknowledged in the practice to be promoting sustainability:

- in the places where there are built territories available, but there are not sufficiently employed areas, acquiring not built lands for building is limited;
- formation of consecutive building along the roads, merging populated areas that are divided by not built territories in a continuous building zone is not permitted;
- formation of “urban sprawl”¹⁷ building is not permitted;
- the bow-shaped road routes to be developed are formed, employing the existent road routes as much as possible. The other roads located inside the sectors are differentiated according to their importance in the new system, respectively forming their connection to the bows.

Development of Populated Areas

Evaluating the development possibilities of the populated areas, there is considered their preparedness within the framework of polycentric to perform certain responsibilities/to specialize in certain directions¹⁸. The stipulated levels of the centers correspond to the recommended ones in the project “Regulations on the Centers of the State Territory Habitation”¹⁹. The directions of specialization have been chosen in correspondence with the

¹⁷ English term

¹⁸ The evaluation is based on previously made research materials and statistical data.

¹⁹ MRDM, 2004.

approaches of the strategic documents of Latvia development, recommendations to Riga region planning and the resources being at the disposal of the centers. Recommendations on the importance of Riga region urban centers and possible specialization are compiled in the Table 1.

Support Framework Towns/Villages

Towns/cities of international importance

Riga – a metropolis of European importance

Towns of national importance

Jurmala – recreation and ‘spa’ medical center of state importance

Towns of regional importance

The regional importance has been assigned to the towns that now perform the functions of rural region centers and form the outer circle of the region. Their potential comparing to the population number, economical activity and variety, cultural activity variety, availability of services, remarkably exceeds the potential of other towns of the region²⁰, add to that, they are linked with the surrounding rural areas by geographically widely branched, sustainable and varied links²¹. Sigulda that is functioning as an additional center (unofficial) of Riga administrative region is equalized to three other towns that are functioning fully as region centers, basing to the fact that in the recent five years the town is rapidly developing. It indicates the ability to attract investors and inhabitants and remarkable resources of nature and historical environment as well as leisure activities and sports resources for the development of tourism.

Towns and villages of local importance

The chosen *towns of local importance* that form the internal semicircle in the region, originally to a great extent have grown as mono-functional populated areas, in the course of the development increasing the number of functions. In the role of the center of Riga region spatial framework they should further they should further improve the current/acquire new specialization, as well as develop and diversify the number of services for the surrounding area.

Local support structures

The direct impact area (tendency area) of regional importance urban centers of polycentric support framework does not stretch till the outer border of the region in all the places. In the distant N, E and W territories of the region located outside it local support structures are developed as elements of polycentric framework.

The local support structures are formed by several mutually consolidated functioning small towns/large rural centers that perform a part of activating functions that in the central part of the region are performed by the towns of regional importance. Between them there are some so important as: offer of work vacancies, availability of commerce and virtual services needed for active entrepreneurship and activities of civil society, provision of satisfactory accessibility. The current potential of each of these centers is not sufficient to perform activating functions. When several are uniting in a common system, their critical mass and performance ability is reaching/might reach the amount that is needed to implement projects that could impact the surrounding rural areas.

²⁰ Except Salaspils, where there are more inhabitants than in the centers of the regions, but where there are no regional level services available and there are no links developed with the surrounding rural areas.

²¹ Home – services, home – work, enterprise and the mutual ones of administrative institutions.

There are no alternatives for the performance of the development-driving role of consolidated local center system development, as the amount growth of some particular center potential (human resources and human capital, amount of entrepreneurship, capacity of administrative structure, etc.) that would correspond to the level of the regional importance center cannot be forecasted.

Other populated areas

The development of other habitation areas in the regional populated territories network (see Vol.1) in the role of the centers that influence a wider surrounding area is not forecasted.

Small towns and big rural villages

The smaller towns and larger rural villages located between the internal and external semicircle of the towns are operating as additional centers, which have territorially and functionally limited (their own, neighboring municipality, small number of functions) influence. The exception is Baldone, the recreation resources of which are sufficient to be able to develop as a recreation center of regional importance.

Homesteads

The existence of *homesteads* and current homestead groups is stimulated in the status of farmstead or household centers that at the same time serve as family habitation as well as can offer services to persons coming for recreation. Employment of homesteads as the second habitation of inhabitants of towns should be recognized. Thus, the traditional way of rural habitation is maintained that creates preconditions to even rural population density and improvement of the landscape characteristic to Latvia.

„Seasonal villages”

Possibilities of *seasonally populated areas* – summer cottages and gardener villages – to become habitation for all year round living should be evaluated considering each case individually. The “bottle neck” in such transition plans is the provision possibilities of not polluting, centralized environment infrastructure – water pipe, canalization, as well as possibilities of provision of street network.

„ Urban sprawl”

The development possibilities of *the group of private houses and multi-storey houses built in 1990-2000-ies* should also be evaluated considering each case individually, reviewing as a complex the impact of habitation to the implementation possibilities of prior territory employment and nature environment; the life standard offered/created there; the capacity and experience of the developers, as well as the available financial resources.

Table 1
Characteristics of Polycentric Support Framework Towns (Perspective)

Towns	Importance	Basic functions	Special role
<i>The core of the region</i>			
Riga	international	cross-point of links, business center, administration, service, education, science, the center of culture and sports, harbor, infrastructure node	gates, “Small Brussels” of Baltics
	national		the capital
	regional		the driving force of the development
Jurmala	international	services, recreation	the resort of the international and national importance, EKO tourism, the venue of conferences, seminars, etc.
	national		recreation area of national importance
<i>External circle</i>			
<i>Outer circle</i>			
Limbazi	regional	administration, business, service, education, production (processing of agricultural products, wood processing)	North local support structure base, tourism (transport), innovation center in wood processing
Sigulda	regional	administration, service, business, tourism, sports, research (farming and veterinary), ‘sleeping place’	tourism of international and national importance and sport center; the venue of conferences, seminars, etc.
Ogre	regional	administration, service, business, ‘sleeping place’, production (light industry)	East local support structure research and innovation center for the light industry, recreation area of regional importance
Tukums	regional	administration, service, business, production (processing of agricultural products, light industry), logistics	West local support structure base, transportation of international importance – cargo/additional, airport, multimodal transport net
<i>Internal circle</i>			
Saulkrasti	local	service, business, ‘sleeping place’	recreation area of regional importance,

Towns	Importance	Basic functions	Special role
			administration of the Riga Gulf coastline urban environment zone (management of protection activities)
Vangazi	local	production (building constructions), logistics, service, business, 'sleeping place'	innovation center for building industry, multimodal transport node
Salaspils	local	multimodal transit transport node, business, 'sleeping place', service	logistic service centers of national importance
Olaine	local	production (pharmacy industry), service, business, 'sleeping place'	innovation center for pharmacy industry
Sloka-Kauguri	local	service, business, 'sleeping place'	support center of administration of the coastline urban environment zone
North local support structure			
Ainazi	local	service, business, production, research	tourism (yacht harbor)
Aloja			processing of agricultural products
Salacgriva			tourism, small harbor, fishing, fish processing, fish cultivation (supplementation of natural resources in fish farms for food market); biosphere reservation and administration of protected areas, and research center
Staicele			center for light and food industry, tourism and recreation area
Mazsalaca			center for light and food industry, tourism un recreation area
East local support structure			
Madliena	local	administration, service, business, production (greenhouse crops)	Market research and marketing center of national importance for vegetable gardening, innovation center for growing vegetables
Suntazi	local	administration, service, business, production	center for light and food industry, agricultural

Towns	Importance	Basic functions	Special role
			services
Malpils	local	administration, service, business, production	center for light and food industry, agricultural services
Ergli	local		in accordance with Vidzeme regional planning
West local support structure			
Kandava	local	administration, service, business, production	tourism center – gates to Switzerland of Kurzeme and the Abava valley
Stabile			in accordance with Kurzeme regional planning
Stende			in accordance with Kurzeme regional planning

Development of Riga outskirts area

Riga outskirts area includes territories employed for different, in many cases contradictory targets and with different intensity. The area is in the form of a reversed Greek letter “omega” and bends/surrounds the administrative territory of Riga. The linear base part of the letter are located along the Riga Gulf coastline in the direction of S-W and N-E from the border of Riga, S-W including Jurmala city and the territory of Tukums region, even till Ragaciems (the coastline of Kurzeme), N-E – Riga region territory till Skulte (the coastline of Vidzeme). The semicircle of the upper part of the letter includes the territories between Riga border and its beltway. The outer spatial border of outskirts area is not be clearly determined – not in the coastline zone, nor in the both sides of the beltway, where it stretches in the area of Riga green belt environment protection and recreation. The territory of outskirts area is included in different municipalities²², which administrates the part of the area territory within its borders independently from each other.

The territory urbanization has taken place in several steps and it is not simultaneously and with the same intensity affected all the territory.

In the period till the beginning of 21st century in the area of the city outskirts the urbanization pressure has affected mainly territories of three kinds:

- the coastline zone;
- the zones in both sides along radial roads;
- the territories pertaining to the building of Riga.

At the beginning of 2000-ies there has began a new urbanization process of the city outskirts area, when the pressure of urbanization distributes around the whole territory of outskirts area, planning/developing large number of urban sprawl buildings, including so called living villages²³ that are not mutually connected but spread in the whole territory of the city outskirts area.

The rapid and generally uncontrolled development of habitation and buildings of other kind in the area of Riga outskirts is contradicting the set target in the interests of the society – to provide high living standard in the whole territory of Riga region. The building of such kind:

- only in cases of exception building of valuable technical infrastructure and institutions of social services is provided/implemented, or the links with the respective networks functioning in the local municipalities;
- its location is not linked to public transport network, therefore the ability of inhabitants/ workers of production units is eliminated to choose/offer alternative transport kinds to private cars/ service bus;
- connection places of local roads to arterial roads are placed chaotically that would inconvenience the access to the villages/raise costs, performing reconstruction of arterial roads.

In the perspective the outskirt area develops as *the offerer of specific services* area, considering offering the location places for the activities needed for development of the state/the region/the capital that could be effectively performed only in the area of Riga outskirts, including satisfaction of the needs for energy, transport and communication, safe

²² Riga region rural areas of Carnikava, Adazi, Garkalne, Stopini, Salaspils, Kekava, Marupe, Sala and Babite, Lapmezciems rural region of Tukums region, Jurmala town.

²³ Investigation of habitation offer performed within the framework of this work indicates that at the beginning of 2005 in the real estate market in the outskirts of Riga approx. in 130 villages family houses have been offered. (see Appendix).

environment from ecological, sanitary and hygienic point of view, human physiological needs for air and water as well as territories for recreation.

In the area the possibility to provide vitally necessary functions for the metropolis as well as the region, providing the territories needed not only for the moment (currently), but also in the future perspective. Including territories for:

- construction of transport and energy transmission corridors;
- areas for ground water protection from the pollution vitally necessary for the metropolis;
- utilization of the waste;
- provision of nature (forests, country, waters) environment in sufficiently large, solid areas as the factor neutralizing the negative urban impact on the environment and ensuring possibilities of recreation;
- not built, maintained as “locus standi” currently not to be forecasted, but in the future – needed objects.

3.2.1.4. Actions

- The development of support framework centers should be directed attracting to strategically significant objects of these centers both the internal (human capital and human resources, as well as financing), and external (EU structural fund financing, and investments of other sources) resources.
- The choice of strategic objects for particular places takes place with the participation of municipalities and regional Development agency, considering the correspondence of the regional planning comparing the scale and activity direction of the object both - with the potential of the intended place, and with the promotional interests of the region consolidated habitation ability to collaborate. At the same time in the development of small enterprises, expansion and diversification of social and other service offer, unlimited free competition is stimulated.
- Decentralization of education and research institutions located in the capital should be stimulated.
- In the development of the physical structure of the support framework centers priority is given to the renewal of the territories having been already cultivated in the larger sense of this concept²⁴, limiting till now not built territory reclamation as much as possible.

3.2.2. Infrastructure and Accessibility

3.2.2.1. Starting Position

Riga region has a strategically important location in Latvia, in the region of the Baltic Sea, and in Europe. The region is connected with other countries with the main motor roads, railway, air traffic and sea routes, but the external accessibility for the moment does not correspond to the standards of European countries – in is not sufficiently rapid, convenient or safe.

²⁴ The renewal concept contains all the possible arrangement and management activities of the built-up environment, starting from authentic restoration till adjustment of the current buildings and other elements to new functions with fundamental transformation of buildings or even dismantling.

The internal accessibility of the region is weak. It is important to reach sustainable and balanced development of the region and to maintain the necessary “critical mass” in the centers. The critical condition of the motor roads, the low quality of motor roads and railway that does not permit high-speed traffic is a threat to the competitiveness of the region as the time spent on the way is even more than the distance is determining factor in the selection of the cargo and passenger transport routes.

There is a lack of high-speed, safe and convenient mutual links between the regional and other towns of Latvia planning regions, between the regional centers and Riga, between Riga and other metropolis in the region of the Baltic Sea and Europe. The quality (speed) of these links between the “gates”, transport junctions and with other international, national and regional centers will to a great extent determine successful development and competitiveness of Riga region.

There exists provision of communication and information infrastructure not corresponding to the development of Riga region for high-speed and convenient accessibility of the territory of Latvia and the international area. For the moment outside Riga and the largest towns of the region the information and communication infrastructure is not accessible to all the inhabitants.

The development of infrastructure and concentration of human resources is taking place in Riga, Riga outskirts and the largest towns, but in the suburbs of the region the development is remarkably lagging behind. The low quality of the infrastructure reduces the effectiveness of resource employment, thus reducing the amount of means that would be possible to invest in the development. The backwardness of the infrastructure and weak links with the development centers in the region delays attraction of investments and advanced economical development in the peripheries of the region.

The transport infrastructure of Riga region should be developed in connection with the planned polycentric development of habitation and distribution of work places.

3.2.2.2. Vision

In Riga region there is developed sustainable transport system that supports freedom of movement choice, health of the inhabitants, safety and life standard, stimulates competitive economy and balanced regional development, provides equal access to services and other activities to everybody, including for elderly people and people with special needs.

Riga region is E-W, N-S transport flow junction, one of the main European transport junctions, internationally conveniently and safely accessible (for passengers and cargos). The transport system of Riga region has incorporated in Trans-European transport network, connecting it with the East, in the “Silk Way” connecting Eurasia with Western Europe.

In the region there have been developed stable, quality public passenger transport freights. The undesirable changes in the spatial structure of the traffic have been eliminated – the passenger transportation with public transport increase. Thanks to the performed activities on the development of consolidated regional public transport system and consolidated administration there is provided quality and rapid internal accessibility of the region by public transport and, the mobility of the inhabitants have increased.

The accessibility by cars and by the railway (cargo and passenger transportation) has improved thanks to the strategic investments in the infrastructure of motor roads and railway and the development of effective, consolidated public transport system of the region. In the region there is a restored network of motor roads and railway.

In the region there is developed and quality information communication system that is accessible to everybody in the whole territory of the region.

3.2.2.3. Targets

Develop consolidated, sustainable transport system of the region:

- Strengthening the capacity of railway network and the quality of the infrastructure, increasing the cargo and passenger flow by railway, and the railway proportion in the total freights thus, providing that the railway as more environment friendly than other transport kinds maintains its leading position and advantages;

- Improving the infrastructure of roads, road safety, decreasing conflict situations between different transport kinds and passengers.

Improving international accessibility, so that Riga region becomes one of the main European transport junctions, internationally convenient, safe and rapidly accessible passenger and cargo shipment flow junction between East and West, North and South:

- integrating transport infrastructure of Riga region in Trans-European transport system;

- developing links in the East direction, thus providing fast and safe transport flow in the West-East direction;

- developing access roads to the international highways;

- improving the traffic with the Baltic Sea countries and neighboring countries of the region;

- stimulating access to EU intercontinental passenger transport;

- increasing the possibilities of direct and transit trips in the West and East directions, and developing small aviation;

- increasing the quality of the infrastructure and the service level at the harbors, supporting cargo turnover, ferry traffic and development of sailboat tourism.

Develop spatially balanced and equally accessible traffic and information communication network in the whole region, increasing the accessibility of rural territories:

- developing modern, mutually connected, consolidated regional public communication system with competitive prices, the backbone of which is the railway;

- strengthening links between Riga and the regional centers (Limbazi, Ogre, Tukums, Sigulda), regional centers and local centers, decreasing the length of the trip, improving the amenities and safety, and increasing the capacity of the main transport network – roads and railway to uptake the increasing transport and passenger flows;

- developing new motor road access roads to strengthen mutual links between the centers of regional importance and the accessibility of the small centers, stimulate economical development in weaker developed territories and decrease problems created by transport in Riga;

- providing rapid accessibility of small and peripheral rural development centers, respectively developing quality access roads to the regional and national transport network;

- providing availability of information communication and its high quality for all the inhabitants in the whole region territory to increase social and economical development possibilities.

In collaboration with other planning regions to strengthen the mutual links of Riga region transport system with the systems of other regions:

coordinating developing motor transport and railway links between the centers of Riga region and centers of other planning centers;
collectively maintaining the current system of Latvia railway, as well as stimulating development of new, advanced railway routes able to compete with the motor transport for balanced regional development and maintenance of “critical mass” in the rural areas.

Stimulating the development of energy infrastructure, satisfying the growing demand for electric energy and developing alternative ways of energy generation.

3.2.2.4. Development Perspective of Transport Structure

The accessibility of territory gives more equal economical development possibilities. After the accession of Latvia to the European Union, the transport system of Riga region has become a part of the transport system of European Union, and it should more hardly integrate in Trans-European transport network (*TEN-T – Trans-European Networks*), and in the region there preconditions should be created so that the region would become one of the main European transport junctions that is internationally convenient, rapidly and safely accessible.

Though to employ the strategic location of the region and transit development possibilities, involvement of the region in the international railway, air transport and motor transport networks should be strengthened in much larger scale not only in the direction to Europe, but also to Asia and the Far East, as well as it should more hardly integrate in the Baltic Sea transport network.

It is essential to the sustainable and balanced development of Riga region territory to maintain the “critical mass” in the rural areas. To achieve that the accessibility of rural areas and small towns should be improved, basing on effective, mutually coordinated public transport system that is fast, convenient, safe for inhabitants and environment friendly.

To provide high life standard in the towns of the region, there should be created balanced city transport development model – the accessibility of the places should be improved and forced need to move should be decreased, pedestrians and ecologically clean transport kind should be priority: cyclists and public transport.

Infrastructure and Accessibility of Motor Roads

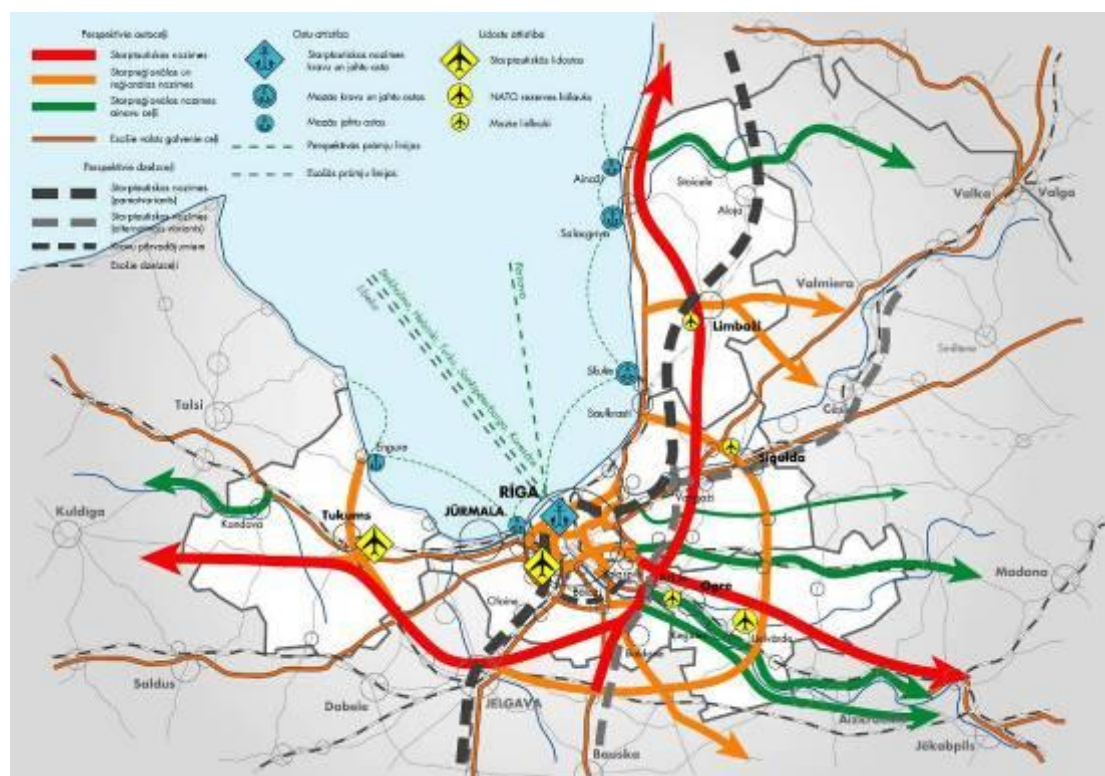
In the interests of Riga region development the motor road infrastructure and traffic safety should be immediately improved. An improved qualitative condition and capacity of motor roads between Riga and neighboring countries and towns of regional importance, between them and local rural development centers – convenience of driving, speed and safety would decrease the time on the road and would stimulate more balanced equalization (growth distribution) and life standard in the whole territory of the region.

In the development interests of Riga region as a sustainable polycentric (multi-centre) region, is to provide good accessibility and growth of all centers of regional importance (Limbazi, Tukums, Ogre, Sigulda). The most distant from Riga and the worst accessible of the regional importance towns is Limbazi that at the same time is the smallest of the towns of regional importance and the most poorly developed region centre of Riga regions. Thus, to achieve rapid growth of Limbazi and its surrounding territories, the improvement of accessibility of Limbazi should be given the greatest support.

Also, to stimulate polycentric (multi-centre) development of Riga region, the mutual accessibility of regional centers should be improved – there should be developed bow-shaped links of the region populated areas. The planning intends to develop new bow-shaped motor road of inter-regional importance from Engure to Saulkrasti using the current motor roads as the basis (Engure – Tukums – Jelgava – Iecava – Kegums – Suntazi – Malpils – Sigulda – Saulkrasti), mutually connecting the centers of Riga centers, as well as connecting them with the centers of Zemgale region - Jelgava and Iecava.

A bow-shaped motor road in many cases will eliminate the transport crossing Riga and creating problems on the access roads to Riga. It will connect the radial main motor roads of the country, and will serve as an access road to the motor roads of international importance and will stimulate the development of rural territories.

Supporting the recommendation stated in the documents of Kurzeme development planning documents to develop new Kurzeme motor road from Liepaja and Ventspils via Kuldīga to Riga, Riga region planning proposes to connect Kurzeme motor road near Tukums with Riga region bow-shaped motor road and to develop new, strong East – West highway (corridor) of international importance that would cross the Daugava at Tinūzi connect with the motor road in the direction to the East that is vitally important to the development of Riga region – high speed motor road Riga – Moscow, further continuing direction to the North as *Via Baltica* transit road, diving it from *Via Baltica Turistica*.



Picture 3.3. Perspective transport infrastructure

The benefits from development of new motor roads are as follows:

- possibility for the transit, not crossing Riga more rapidly to get from the East of Latvia to the West, from the North to the South, thus relieving Riga access roads and reduced traffic jams;
- provided good mutual accessibility of regional and local centers;

- rural areas close to Riga with insufficient development level are open to the development – development of new centers is forecasted: new-Malpils, new-Suntazi, new-Vecumnieki, etc.;
- in the junctions and along then new entrepreneurship development centers would develop;
- ecologically sensitive and environment risk territories in the coastline area of the Riga Gulf are relieved from transit.

To stimulate accessibility and polycentric (multi-centre) development in a larger area Riga region planning supports the recommendations of Vidzeme and Latgale planning regions: to strengthen links between Riga and Vidzeme planning region centers (Limbazi – Valmiera, Limbazi – Cesis), reconstruction of the road in the route Riga – Vecumnieki – Nereta – Aknikste – Daugavpils, as one of the main motor roads in the direction of East - West, remarkably decreasing time needed to reach Daugavpils, relieving the current Daugavpils motor road and stimulating the development of Selija.

To maintain the quality of habitation and natural environment and to stimulate the development of tourism, the regional planning recommends new type of roads – landscape roads. In the perspective, when high-speed motor roads would develop, intending them only for the local transport with its special development conditions – with quality coating and providing the movement safety, but maintaining their attractiveness, arranging the road landscape, etc. The following roads are intended for their development into landscape roads:

- the motor roads Riga – Ergli – Madona and Riga - Malpils – Nitaure – Vecpiebalga, connecting Riga with Vidzeme tourism area;
- the motor roads along the right side of the Daugava (Riga – Daugavpils) and its left side (Riga – Jaunjelgava – Jekabpils), relieving them from transit and developing them as the Daugavas tourism area;
- the North chord Ainazi – Staicele – Mazsalaca, stimulating development of tourism in the borderland;
- the motor road Kandava - Kuldiga.

To achieve balanced regional development of the territory, the peripheral and local rural development has the determinant role (Staicele, Aloja, Jaunpils, etc.). The speed to access them is essential. They should be connected with the state main and regional motor roads with respectively quality local roads. Gravel covering should be replaced with asphalt, dangerous sectors of the road and bridges should be reconstructed and renewed.

Railway Infrastructure

Railway services are one of the future most perspective kinds of land transport from the safety as well as ecological point of view. To reach competitive development of Riga region it is vitally important to incorporate in European, the Baltic Sea countries and Eastern railway network, providing cargo and passenger flow from West Europe to the East and North.

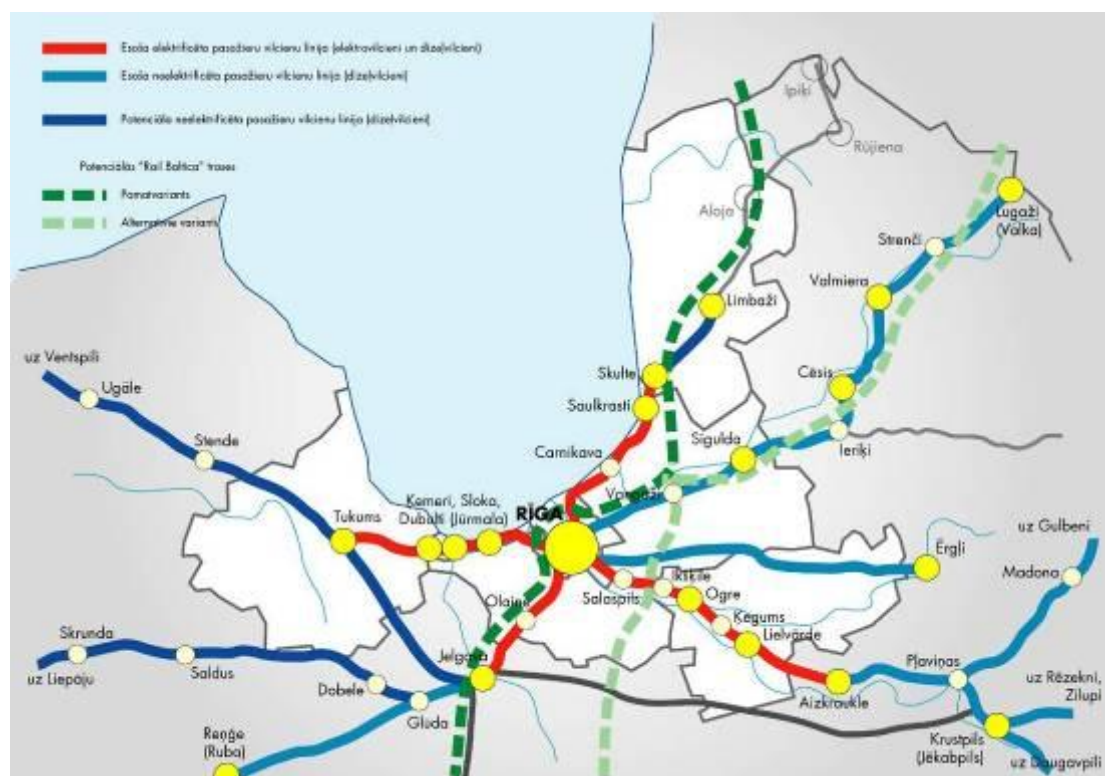
To international accessibility of the region *Baltica Rail* is the priority project (cargos, passengers) from Berlin till Tallinn. The regional planning supports its route via Riga in the direction to Limbazi with crossing the border of Estonia at Moisakuula. As an alternative the direction of railway route by Riga with crossing of the Daugava by Riga HPS or in its surrounding area is considered.

The by-pass of *Baltica Rail* railway around Riga or its entrance point in Riga will be determined during the prior research project realization, which is planned to be performed

in 2007. In the development of the latter it is recommended to consider the possibility of *Baltica Rail* line route via Riga stated in the development plan of Riga – entrance in Riga from the side of Riga airport with crossing of the Daugava by the North bridge and the possible passenger station near Riga airport or in the place of the current cargo station. In any case in the connection of *Baltica Rail* it is recommended to find a solution for the railway access road to Riga airport.

Considering the environment friendly transport development policy in Europe, *Rail Baltica* possibilities – integration in European high-speed railway transport network and marked differentiated development tendencies in Latvia, Riga region, in collaboration with other planning regions should demand maintaining of the railway network of Latvia, improvement of its infrastructure (capacity, speed, safety) to new quality to stimulate the passengers to incline to choose railway, as well as development of new (the old ones) railway routes.

In the development interests of Riga region it is to maintain the branched railway network outgoing from Riga for cargo and passenger transportation, not permitting further degradation of railway system. In the region such transport development policy should be supported that would increase passenger transportation in the short-distance, and in the intercity railway routes, as well as such that would increase the proportion of cargos transported by the railway.



Picture 3.4 Perspective local passenger railway network, possible „Rail Baltica“ routes

In the interests of the total planning regions, the plan of Riga region supports recommendations of other regions for the development of railway system: the recommendation of Kurzeme planning region to make an investigation on renewal of passenger transportation in the routes Riga – Liepāja, Riga – Ventspils, the recommendation of Vidzeme region on the development of railway route Riga – Lugazi – Tartu.

To maintain the residents of rural areas, eliminate migration to more accessible centers and abroad, to advance the development of the weakly developed inter-arterial, peripheral territories of both regions (Keipene, Taurupe, Mazozoli, Ergli, etc.) and accessibility of Vidzeme tourism area, the common, vitally important development issue for Riga and Vidzeme regions is maintaining and reconstruction of the railway route Riga – Ergli.

To improve transportation and eliminate remarkable risks Riga region planning supports the development of Riga railway bypass route, excluding transportation of dangerous cargos via Riga.

For Riga region sustainable polycentric development and rational employment of resources it is planned that short-distance railway would serve as Riga region regional transport backbone and it would be employed/developed as the internal transport of Riga. The planning provides for reconstruction and development of the branched short-distance all-electric railway network, stimulating accessibility of regional centers (Tukums, Ogre, Olaine, Saulkrasti) and other populated areas along the railway, as well as providing for the development of new habitation along the railway. The improvement of the current route infrastructure and rolling stock should be supported as the priority issue, and consequently the issue on the renewal possibilities of the railway route Skulte – Limbazi should be advanced.

The planning intends to employ the railway route Riga - Tukums via Jurmala only for passenger transportation as it follows via recreation and „spa“ medical development centre of international/the state importance (resort city) and Kemeru National Park, as well as other ecologically sensitive territories.

Harbors and Their Infrastructure

Riga harbor and regional small harbors are remarkable resource and regional development. In after years increasing East - West transport flows are anticipated and at the same time – an increasing competition between the harbors of the Baltic Sea. The harbors that will be able to offer high quality services for a competitive price will develop successfully.

In this situation it is important for Riga harbor to stipulate its direction of the development. The planning of Riga region provides that Riga harbor in accordance with the harbor development strategy stipulated in Riga development plan has worked out the long-term strategy and program of the development. Riga harbor continues to develop as multi-functional (bulk, general and poured) cargo processing harbor as well as it becomes an advanced passenger transportation centre in the region. The capacity and turnover (cargos, passengers) in Riga harbor has grown. In Riga harbor the investments in logistics activities are stimulated. According to the chosen strategy the connection of Riga harbor with the national roads and railway network has been developed, new access roads have been arranged.

The priority in the common interests of Latvia and the region is to stimulate that Riga harbor in an increased speed would develop as the Baltic Sea scale passenger port with high quality infrastructure, considering the forecasted tourism development. High quality ferry traffic would be provided in diverse international routes and there would be regular incoming the Baltic Sea large cruise boats (metropolis) of tourism routes, bringing to Riga the tourists not only from Europe, but also from America and East Asia.

Also, the planning provides that in the region the capacity and turnover of successfully working small cargo harbors - Salacgriva, Skulte - are stimulated (and territories for the development are reserved).

Thanks to the location of the region on the coasts of the Riga Gulf and at the water system of Riga outskirts, there are large possibilities for the development of sailing tourism. For the needs of sailing tourism it should be stimulated that in all the small harbors of the region (Ainazi, Salacgriva, Skulte, Engure, and Lielupe harbors), there is developed an advanced infrastructure corresponding to the sailing harbors, including the access roads, so that they would form a consolidated harbor network with the current and new sailing harbors on the Baltic Sea coast, as well as in Riga, providing acceptable distances between the neighboring harbors. To stimulate sailing tourism development, as a priority there should be support provided to eliminate the Lielupe becoming shallow and to provide yacht movement possibilities on the internal water ways – from the Daugava to the Lielupe on the Bullupe, from the Daugava to the Kisezers.

The advantages of the regional “blue waters” in Riga region should be employed – renewed and enlarged small boat traffic in the waters of Riga outskirts, as well as opened new routes of small high-speed ferries that connect Riga, Jurmala and other tourism centers on the coast of the Baltic Sea and the island, would stimulate the development of the region.

Airports and Their Infrastructure

Air transport has an important role in reaching good intercontinental accessibility of Riga region. The planning provides that the international airport “Riga” employing its geographical location should develop the international shipments in the West, and East directions, increasing the direct and transit flight possibilities.

An essential factor of the development is the good accessibility of Riga airport from the towns of regional importance, small towns and distant rural areas. Herewith in the nearest future the issues on the airport incorporation in the international and regional public transport system should be solved. Also, it should conveniently and rapidly be reached from the centre of Riga by a high-speed tram.

Performing territorial planning of Riga city, Marupe and Babite rural area the following issues should be considered:

the increased noise level discomfort zone in the surrounding territories of the international airport “Riga” current runway and the plan of building the second runway. It means that it is necessary to limit the building in the territories surrounding the area of the current planned runway increased noise discomfort zones.

In the interests of Riga region development Tukums transport network development plays an important role, including the development of Tukums airport as the airport providing cargo freights near the East-West motor road. The planning provides that there should be reserved possibilities for the airport to develop as a passenger airport.

To stimulate development of tourism and to provide the demand for recreation possibilities, in Riga region development of small aviation with respective infrastructure should be supported providing that the current small airports are developed and new ones are formed – the number of airfields for sports and recreation are increasing and, consequently, - the development possibilities of the tourism. Close to the above airfields as well as close to Lielvarde airfield territories should be reserved for the development of respective infrastructure.

Bikeway Infrastructure

The planning provides that in the region there is developed mutually connected national and regional level cycling network with the support infrastructure connected with European Union Euro Velo 10, 11 cycling routes and un Riga and Jurmala cycling tracks. The region is crossed by several cycling tourism routes of the national and regional importance coordinated with other planning regions, as well as infrastructure is developed to have the possibility to use bicycle as the transport means.

3.2.2.5. Development Perspective of Public Transportation

To provide consolidated work place and habitation market, environment and life standard, equal access to the services and other activities to the inhabitants of the region in the whole territory, development of public transport able to compete with the private transport should be achieved (alternative to the private one), providing high quality and rapid internal accessibility by the public transport.

In Riga region the public transport system should be developed together with the development of habitation, when the public transport stimulates the development of the desirable spatial structure, providing that to provision of high quality public passenger transportation would request remarkable investments.

To solve coordination between different transport and transportation kinds and quality public passenger transport would be provided, the planning to develop Riga region public transport network agency, which would perform all the planning and monitoring of all kinds of transport creating consolidated public transport system of Riga and the rest of the part of the region.

The multi-centre spatial structure of Riga region that should be prospectively developed, where economical activities are concentrated in towns and the urban enlargement on the rural area account is limited, is suitable for railway communication. The regional planning provides that the short-distance railway serves as the backbone of Riga region passenger transport, employing it intensively also as internal transport of Riga.

Passenger transportation by railway in the routes with high passenger flow intensity has been set as the priority. Quality, rapid and convenient passenger transportation by railway replaces motor transport (buses, micro-buses) passenger transportation in the railway routes. But the motor transport serves as passenger transporter to the railway network.

There is developed mutual coordinated network of railway and express buses, which satisfies the demands of inhabitant and tourists movement needs, providing quality public transport services in the whole territory of the region..

As the result of such passenger transportation network changes, in the public transport environment more employing environment friendly transport means - railway, the plan provides decrease of traffic jams in Riga and Riga outskirts, increase of mobility⁷ and improvement of environment quality.

In the common interests of the planning regions is to solve mutual connection of regional public transport systems.

3.2.2.6. Information Communication Infrastructure and Availability

To increase the possibilities of social and economical development, and decrease migration, electronic communication service quality and availability should be provided (quality telephone connection, radio and TV, Internet) in the whole territory of the region and to all the inhabitant levels, particular attention paying to the periphery of the region.

3.2.2.7. Actions

- In accordance with the stipulations of Topical Strategy of European Union City Environment to develop sustainable transport plan of Riga metropolis area performing the development in the closest connection with the habitation planning.
- In collaboration with the national level and Zemgale region to perform development investigations of the new motor roads stipulated in the planning.
- In collaboration with Ministry of Transport and Communication to develop an investigation on road junctions and the necessity for cross-over, and to set the priorities.
- In collaboration with other planning regions of Latvia to stimulate solution detection for the renewal of Latvia railway structure, and its sooner incorporation in the Baltic Sea states and European railway network.
- To define the priorities of the region for arrangement of the state 2nd level (rural) roads. To perform lobbying to provide sustainable progressively growing financing for the 2nd level (rural) roads in accordance with the priorities of the region.
- Mutually making agreement, to develop Riga planning region public transport route network agency.
- To perform lobbying to provide sustainable state order with the corresponding budget for passenger transportation by railway.
- To take part in the development of common strategy of development for the largest harbors in Latvia.
- To support improvements of the infrastructures of sailing harbors, wharfs and the development of common sailing harbor network.
- To perform activities to eliminate the Lielupe becoming shallow.
- To develop cycling network of the region.

3.2.3. Rural (Open) Area

3.2.3.1. Start Position

In Riga region there are diverse rural (open) areas/territories with a different development level. The situation in the regions close to the capital, on the coastline and in the rural territories more distant from Riga – in the suburbs of Limbazi, Ogre and Tukums region remarkably differ. In the outskirts of Riga economical growth and rapid urbanization processes are observed, in the suburbs of rural territories there is economical stagnation, which is accompanied by unemployment, decrease of population density, population aging and radical social stratification.

Restructuring process of agriculture continues. Larger agricultural lands are not cultivated. Overgrowing of fields, spontaneous development of areas with bushes and woods decrease biological diversity and mosaic-kind attractiveness of Latvia rural landscapes. On the other hand, the tourism develops. The demand for lands and areas for building in the outskirts of Riga grows, and the market value of the land increases. The conflicts and

disputes about the land employment in the outskirts of Riga, in the coastline areas of the Riga Gulf, along water basins become more and more sharp.

3.2.3.2. Vision of Rural Structure

The rural territories of Riga region are *economically and socially vital, with an attractive life environment*, rural inhabitants, holidaymakers and tourists.

In the rural area the *human resources* are maintained. Rural inhabitants see their meaning of life in the countryside, the migration from the countryside to Riga/outskirts of Riga is eliminated, the number of inhabitants (citizens) in the second homes (country, vacation time) has increased.

The town/city – countryside partnership relations are strengthened. The human resource and service flow between the towns and rural areas has increased. The rural territories are connected with sustainable local development centers that provide services and make connection with the regional centers, and further - with Riga. The rural inhabitants are provided with diverse employment possibilities, maintaining the necessary “critical mass” in the development centers.

The rural territories have developed, *diversifying economical activities and rationally employing the current resources*. Additionally and connected with such traditional sectors as agriculture, forestry and fishing, there are developed services, innovative small and medium entrepreneurship, crafts, tourism and services connected with them. There is developed cooperation.

All the *populated areas are rapidly and conveniently accessed* by the public transport.

The *identity, originality and attractiveness* of Riga region rural areas are maintained. *Natural and cultural values*: cultural heritage, cultural landscape, particularly protected nature territories, waters, coastline, etc., are rationally employed and respectively managed.

3.2.3.3. Targets

To maintain human resources in the rural areas:

- diversifying rural economy and employment possibilities;
- developing carrier possibilities for rural inhabitants.

To provide rural habitation and life standard:

- strengthening rural municipalities and their diversity, so that maintaining the specific identity of the territory would help to lessen the migration to the city/towns;
- strengthening cultural life, maintaining the local originality;
- maintaining and developing services in the rural centers, providing life standard.

To develop and rationally employ the current infrastructure:

- planning new development in the places with existent infrastructure.

To employ rationally natural resources and cultural heritage,

- retaining, maintaining and employing cultural landscape, cultural and natural heritage (incl. particularly protected areas) for recreation and sustainable tourism development;
- re-cultivating the degraded cultural landscapes.

To maintain and improve environment quality,
employing the quality of natural environment as a valuable resource, which should be managed and employed in a sustainable way.

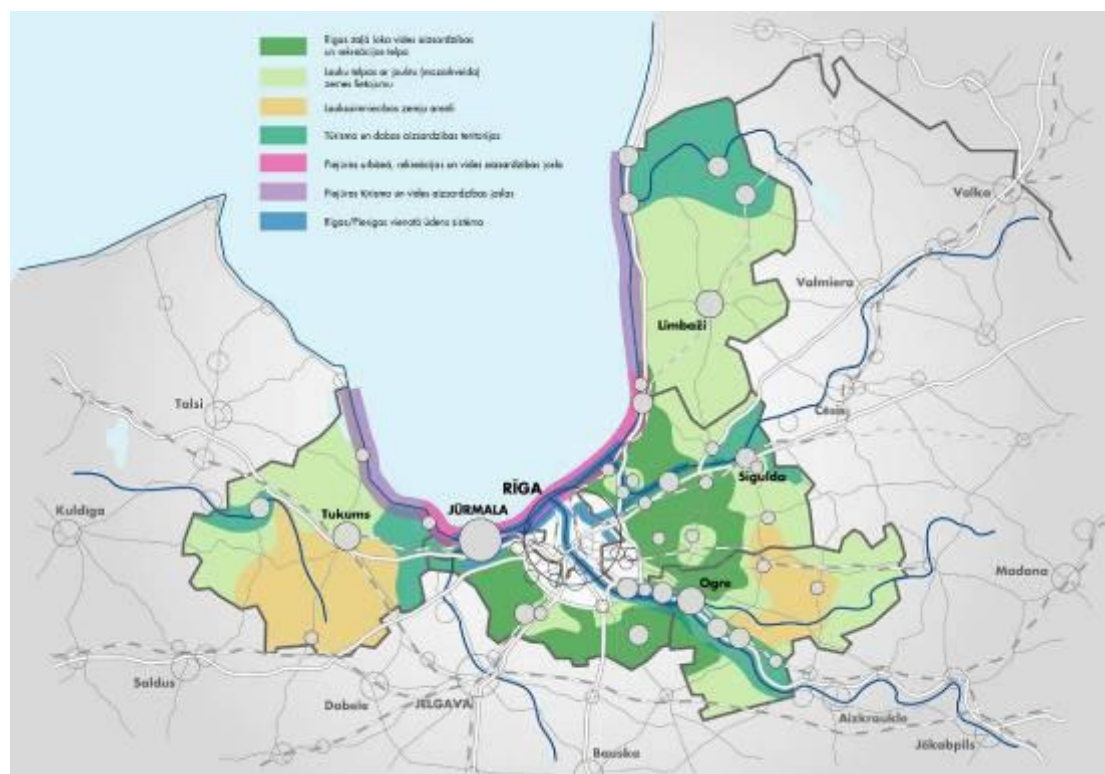
3.2.3.4. Development Perspective of Rural (Open) Areas

In the planning of Riga region there are extracted rural areas functionally and spatially most important areas for the regional development. Defining of these diverse rural (open) areas are based on the development resources, character of territories and in perspective the most optimum economical activity. In the number of these areas the planning includes also the open areas in Riga, Jurmala and Saulkrasti towns.

In the framework of rural (open) area planning the stipulated functions will be the priority, but the rest – subordinated so that the subordinated would not conflict and would not create danger to the implementation of priority functions.

The rural (open) area in Riga spatial planning is divided in the areas:

- Agricultural land areas;
- Rural areas with mixed mosaic-kind employment of land and diverse economical activities;
- Recreation/tourism and nature environment protection areas that are divided in several sub-areas:
 - Tourism and nature protection territories,
 - Riga green circle environment protection and recreation area,
 - The coastline of the Riga Gulf – coastal with coastline tourism and nature protection zone, and coastline urban, recreation and environment protection zone,
 - Common water system of Riga/outskirts of Riga,
 - Riparian areas of rivers



Picture 3.5. Perspective spatial structure of the rural (open) area

Sub-areas (e.g. coastline tourism and environment protection zone, and tourism and nature protection territories (North Vidzeme)) in some places overlap that confirms the varied development possibilities of these areas.

In the cartographic material of Riga region planning the borderland territory is marked, but not separated as an area. It is on the border and its development potentially is closely connected with Parnu region. In this borderland territory a close collaboration should be stimulated. In collaboration with Estonian Parnu region, maintaining of natural values and tourism and its infrastructure development should be stimulated, possibly developing consolidated nature protection and tourism development area.

Considering Riga region urban character and the planned development (although the forests take a remarkable area of Riga region territory), certain areas/territories with the priority of forest economical employment are not defined in Riga region planning.

Areas of Agricultural Lands

Riga region, considering the impact of the capital and the resources for agricultural activities, is not an agricultural region in the national context. Though, in the region certain territories could be singled out, where there is a potential for competitive agriculture.

One of them includes the South and East territories of Tukums region, the other is located in the South-East part of Ogre region. The following areas are singled out in Riga region planning as agricultural territories of regional importance:

- The South-East part of Tukums region, including the territories from Tukums to Zante, Jaunpils and Slampe;
- The South-East part of Ogre region from Malpils (including Ledmane, Krape, Madliena) to the Daugava.

In these agricultural areas, which are characterized by relatively high fertility of the soil, the largest agricultural large solid areas and the lowest proportion of lands not employed for agriculture of the total are of agricultural lands; agriculture has been set as the priority. There should be maintained and stimulated specialized, highly productive and competitive development of agriculture, if necessary, providing additional support. Activities of large and medium rural farm-stead and agricultural enterprises that employ the advanced technologies should be stimulated, as well as support should be provided to small rural farm-stead for varying their activities. There is expected a strong transition to cultivating biomass, - rape. In accordance with European Union demands constant pasturelands should be maintained.

The rural inhabitants should be provided with varied employment possibilities, they should be appropriate for the rural area and its scale, and conformable with agriculture. Small and medium activities are admitted in the respect to forestry, tourism, etc.

Large development of dynamic economic activities that are not connected with agriculture is not admitted. Large scale activities, development/investments in other economic sectors, where it is possible, should be directed to other, alternative territories. Also, transformation of agricultural lands to other kinds of land employment is not admitted, particularly forestation in larger areas (any forestation proposal should be carefully evaluated within the framework of municipality territory planning).

The rural centers should be strengthened. There (in Jaunpils, Malpils, Suntazi, etc.) should be activities developed connected with agricultural sector (food processing), activities supporting agricultural sector, quality services and production with a high added value.

Agricultural science should be stimulated (Pure), supporting selection and research work and development of gardening.

In the rural territories there homesteads should be maintained, in small towns, villages improvement of infrastructure should be provided.

The services in the rural areas should be supported (communication, finance, trade, social services – children care, public transport). In their development the rural centers (in collaboration networks) have the decisive role to provide corresponding life standard in the rural areas. There should be improved the rural centre accessibility by public transport, availability of communication, information and IT.

Rural Territories with Mixed Diverse (Mosaic-Kind) Land Employment and Different Economic Activity

The main areas of rural territories with mixed diverse (mosaic-kind) land employment:

- The North part area of the region (Limbazi region territory to Aloja);
- The middle part area of the region (the North-West part of Ogre region and a part of Riga region territory);
- The West part area of the region (the North-West part of Tukums region).

In these rural territories with mixed, diverse (mosaic-kind) land employment, in many of which there are weak economic development and the largest proportion of not employed agricultural lands (AL) of the total AL – the diversification in all the branches is the priority, depending on the character of the place, diversification of the employment, arrangement of landscape and land rational managements maintaining the value of cultural heritage environment, and reducing the area of not employed agricultural AL.

Diversification of employment should be stimulated, to maintain the necessary “critical mass” of the inhabitants. In appropriate places development of biological, unconventional agriculture and small/medium enterprises should be supported. The transition of agriculture into multi-functional agriculture should be supported: rural-tourism, agro tourism, and development of recreation possibilities, development of the landscape, seed-plots/gardening centers, and tele-work possibilities. The small (self-providing) rural farmsteads should be supported as the ones maintaining the traditional countryside landscape.

Besides the agriculture, sustainable forestry, tourism, local services, and other kinds of activity in the rural farm-stead. There should be development stimulated, that is based on the employment of natural resources, such as forestry and eco-tourism, and innovative development of small and medium enterprises.

The innovation support centers should be developed, collaboration between innovation centers and food producers – centers of excellence, e.g., local rural food, characteristic kitchen that, in its turn, stimulates the attraction of tourists. Common activities should be stimulated so that the local, original products would obtain access to the markets.

The small rural farm-stead need to diversify their activities. Small and medium activities should be stimulated, unconventional biologic agriculture, crafts, etc. The local traditions should be employed and developed.

Large scale activities and investments should be attracted to the local rural development centers, thus, obtaining the development.

The agricultural land losing process should be stopped, as in the result of not cultivating the rural economic development is weakened. Not only losing of income has a remarkable impact on the rural economic development, but as these territories are at the same time the resource of rural/eco – tourism, then the loses are caused by losing tourism opportunities. In accordance with European Union demands constant pasturelands should be maintained. Less valuable AL are suggested to employ for the needs of fishing, hunting and active tourism.

Actions should be taken to protect cultural heritage, to maintain its mosaic-kind character. Landscape protection opens also new employment possibilities.

Forestation of not used agricultural lands should not be supported. Forestation of agricultural lands in larger areas can be admitted only in accordance with the local municipality territorial planning, in the process of its development carefully considering the proposal and discussing if the forestation would not harm the landscape and biological diversity.

The passive attitude towards life should be eliminated, supporting public organizations, developing civic local society and stimulating cultural activities.

The current home-stead should be maintained, the infrastructure in the villages should be developed. Convenient and rapid accessibility of rural centers, and the availability of information and IT should be improved.

Tourism/Recreation and Nature Environment Protection Areas

In Riga region a remarkable tourism development potential is observed that is basing on the nature, including particularly protected areas, and cultural values. Basing upon these resources and employing the rich cultural environment and landscape a possibility should be obtained to develop varied, sustainable tourism industry that would create multiplicative effect, stimulating the development of other connected industries, such as agriculture, food production, processing and services, thus providing new work places and maintaining “critical mass” in the countryside.

The tourism development should provide tourism and recreation area connection with the road network of the national and regional importance and with the junctions of public transport. It is in the interests of regional development to develop a landscape step by step, (with quality covering) tourism roads: Riga – Ergli across the Kangari, the roads to Piebalga via Nitaure, roads along the Salaca and both banks of the Daugava, the road to Kuldiga via Kandava from Ventspils motor road turn, providing the inhabitants with convenient, rapid accessibility and road landscapes attractive to tourists and pleasant feelings driving along these roads, as well as fast reaching the destination.

It is essential to the development of tourism that Riga region tourism and recreation territories are crossed and mutually connected by the tourism development corridors: VIA Baltica; VIA Hanseatica, Euro velo 10 and 11, as well as the cycling tourism tracks of the national and regional level that should be developed.

In the tourism/recreation and nature environment protection areas it is not permitted to reduce not cultivated nature resources providing tourism development (the sea coastline, riparian lands of the rivers, lake margins) on the account of individual building.

Forest transformation for building is not permitted.

Tourism and Nature Protection Territories

In the region several main nature and cultural heritage tourism development and nature protection areas can be singled out:

- North Vidzeme on the both banks of the Salaca to the border of Estonia;
- The part of the Gauja National Park that is included in the region;
- The part of Kemeru National Park territory that is included in the region;
- The Abava riparian lands and its surrounding territories;
- The Daugava riparian lands and its surrounding territories.

In these territories sustainable tourism development in accordance with the employment conditions of particularly protected nature territories is the priority. Other dynamic economic activities that may cause harm to the development of tourism or the nature, and large scale tourism activities that do not correspond to the selected tourism profile, should not be permitted.

Tourism development in the borderland with Estonia should be developed in closer collaboration between the municipalities of Latvia and Estonia.

In these territories high value tourism infrastructure should be developed, tourism product should be developed in accordance with the resources and the identity of the territory. Common marketing services should be performed.

Riga Green Circle Environment Protection and Recreation Territory

Riga green forest, marsh and not built-up rural territory circle has a remarkable ecological function in providing quality environment in Riga city (air, microclimate, and other). It performs a recreation function for the inhabitants of Riga. For the moment it is not fully employed and gives large development possibilities (the Christmas battle field during WWI in Tīrelpurvs – tourism possibilities, development of Baldone and its surrounding area for recreation, Baldone resort resources – mineral waters and medical mud employment at the place, etc.).

To provide environment quality and recreation possibilities it is necessary to maintain Riga green forest, marsh and not built-up rural territory circle as a uniform nature complex connecting it with the radial green rays (open, not built-up areas) following from Riga that serve as recreation areas for the inhabitants of Riga and Riga outskirts (cycling, walking, jogging, skiing, etc.), as well as for the inhabitants of Riga to reach larger green circle recreation territories.

In the territory of Riga green circle environment protection and recreation dynamic activities that would cause harm to the environment and reduces recreation possibility development are not provided; transformation of forest lands into habitation and production areas should not be permitted, as well as transformation of agricultural lands into habitation or production areas should not be permitted without well-founded necessity.

Considering the principles of sustainable development, in the green circle development of new spread habitation villages („meadow villages”, „forest villages”) outside towns and current villages, as well as separately located production buildings should not be permitted. For the moment a possibility should be used to support the development of newly build habitation villages into sustainable populated areas with a corresponding engineering and social infrastructure, services and work places.

Activities should be projected not to permit merging of populated areas; particularly the open area and green transitional zones should be maintained in the main development directions (Riga – Jurmala, Riga – Ogre, Riga – Jelgava).

As large Riga green circle environment protection and recreation territories are owned by Riga city (they are managed by Riga forest agency), Riga city should define a corresponding employment policy for these territories to provide environment quality in Riga, to develop the base for regional ecological network, to maintain biological diversity of forests and that the forests would be correspondingly facilitated recreation territories for passive and active recreation of the inhabitants of the region, as well as for the tourism.

Coastline of the Riga Gulf

The coastline of the Riga Gulf is a national treasure that should be employed in the interests of the whole society. The coastline territories should be developed basing on the cultural heritage and the excellent natural values and resources – sandy beaches, pinewoods and dunes, the sea air, water, Balneological resources – medical mud and mineral waters, as well as recreation and tourism territory with small objects corresponding to the scale of the landscape (not exceeding the tops of pine trees) and infrastructure, following the demands of environment protection and considering the environment risks – erosion of the sea coast, flooding of the low territories, etc. and providing quality life conditions to the local inhabitants and holidaymakers. In the coastline a particular attention should be paid to the local identity and the quality of the environment.

The coastline of the Riga Gulf within the framework of the region can be divided into two different areas according to their character and the level of urbanization: Coastline urban, recreation and environment protection zone, and coastline recreation and environment protection zone.

In the both of these territories the priority is sustainable development of the coastline, balancing the development interests of environment protection, social, economic and cultural environment. There are differences in the stipulated priority functions and conditions for the development.

Coastline Tourism and Environment Protection Zone

Coastline zone of tourism and environment protection and recreation includes the following territories along the Riga Gulf:

- from Skulte to Ainazi;
- from Ragaciems to Mersrags.

In these territories the tourism and economical activities should be stimulated that is environment friendly and supports development of tourism: coastal fishing, crafts, services and tele-work.

In the coastline area scattered development should be avoided – in the coastline zone building of new summer houses and living houses should be provided in the current villages, following the demands of the Law on Protective Zones. Development of new villages outside the towns and villages should not be permitted. Priority – development of building for the needs of tourism and recreation – small recreation complexes, camping, facilitated beaches with the necessary infrastructure, parking lots, considering environment protection demands.

Dynamic economic activities that may cause harm to the environment and large scale recreation and tourism activities that do not correspond to the scale are not allowed.

Coastline protection actions should be performed only when they are needed for maintaining the infrastructure important to the society.

Movement with the private cars should be limited, employing transport means more environment friendly.

Coastline Urban, Recreation and Environment Protection Zone

Coastline urban, recreation and environment protection zone along the Riga Gulf incorporates the territory from Ragaciems to Skulte, including the territories of Riga, Jurmala and Saulkrasti cities.

In this territory the highest priority is given to recreation possibilities for the inhabitants of Riga city, the second – tourism, balancing environment protection, recreation and tourism development interests and other economic activities. The transition/mutual change of towns, villages and nature territories should be maintained, facilitating coastline nature territories for the needs of recreation, providing there the necessary infrastructure.

Considering the environmental risks (flooding danger, coastline erosion processes, coast washing down, etc.) in the coastline zone, a remarkable increase of population density should not be allowed. The character and the identity of Jurmala and Saulkrasti, and the current villages should be maintained and developed. Transformation of the coastline populated areas (gardens, summer house villages) into the constantly inhabited villages/“sleeping areas” of Riga.

Within the borders of Riga city, following the demands of environment protection and considering the risks, recreation possibilities for the inhabitants of Riga should be developed – new seacoast Riga. In this territory development of new habitation building should not be supported.

Such economic activities should be stimulated that are environment friendly, provides possibilities for recreation and supports the development of local and international tourism.

Riga / Riga Outskirts Consolidated Recreation Water Basins

It is very important to employ the valuable water resources for the recreation needs of the inhabitants of Riga/Riga outskirts, as well as for the development of tourism. Also, it is important to open Riga / Riga outskirts mutually consolidated water system, to make it accessible, including :

- Three large rivers (the Daugava, the Gauja, the Lielupe) and their banks;
- Riga/Riga outskirts large lagoon lakes (Kisezers, Juglas ezers (the Jugla lake), the Small and Big Baltezers, Babites ezers (the Babite lake), etc.) and their shores;
- The connecting canals of the large rivers and lakes (Riga canal, the canal of Baltezers, Varkalu canal and rivers (Bullupe, and others);

and to connect these water system recreation possibilities on and at the water with the coastline of the Riga Gulf (passenger boat traffic, yachts, sailing boats, etc.).

The potential of Riga/Riga outskirt water basin should be incorporated in the development of tourism – the one of Riga, Jurmala „water excursions” getting to know the cities from the water side.

River Valleys

The value and development resource of Riga region are the three large rivers crossing its territory: the Daugava, the Lielupe and the Gauja and medium ones – the Salaca, the Ogre and the Abava, and the landscape of their valleys, other small rivers, creeks and brooks. Ecological functions of the rivers are important; they are the base for the nature structure – the ecological network of the region, mutually connecting the nature elements.

The rivers and the territories of their banks have the recreation function – they should serve for the recreation of the society and the development of tourism development. In the region it is the priority issue how to “open” the Daugava in Riga at full its flow through Riga city, except only the production territories; how to provide access to Dole island and its employment for recreation, as well as how not to permit building to “fence” the Daugava at Riga to Lielvarde. In perspective the issue on Riga HEPS water basin employment for recreation needs should be solved.

Development of solid building along the rivers should not be permitted. The society should be able to access the river banks and movement possibilities along them should be provided (recreation paths, tourism routes, cycling roads, etc.).

In the river valleys activities that constitute harm to the ecological functions of the rivers and their valleys should be prohibited. Particular attention should be paid to the salmon rivers.

New territory segmentation in the river valleys outside villages, fencing larger private territories along the rivers and building in riparian lands of the river should not be permitted.

3.2.3.5. Actions:

- To develop the development strategy and program of Riga region tourism.
- To plan territories and support to building of good quality ** and *** hotels and guest houses, youth hostels, motels, camping and trailer stands.
- To develop Riga region ecological network.
- To develop protection plan to Riga region landscapes.
- To develop strategy for the development of agro – industry centers and innovative centers.
- To develop long-term strategy and program for the protection of coastlines territories of towns and villages endangered by the sea erosion, attracting financial resources of EU funds.
- To develop recommendations of the region for the strategy of the integrated development management of Latvia coastline. To take part in the development of it.