



RIGA

LATVIA

KEY FEATURES OF THE CITY

Demographic Facts

- around 700.000 inhabitants in the city
- 1.15 million people in the Riga region

Urban Figures

- the medieval core of the Old Town
- the 19th century grid and the Boulevard ring
- the historical suburban quarters and the Micro-districts

Heritage

- Registered heritage: Historic Centre of Riga
- Inscription: World Heritage List
- Date of inscription: 1997

EXISTING GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

Development and Management Plans

- Riga City Development Plan
- Long-term Development Strategy of Riga until 2025
- Comprehensive Plan of Riga City 2006-2018
- Land-use Map
- Construction Regulations of the Comprehensive Plan
- Masterplan for Riga new town centre in Tornakalns 2007

Responsible Authorities

- State Inspection for Heritage Protection
- Riga City Council
- Council for Preservation and Development of the Historic Centre of Riga
- Urban Institute
- Free Riga

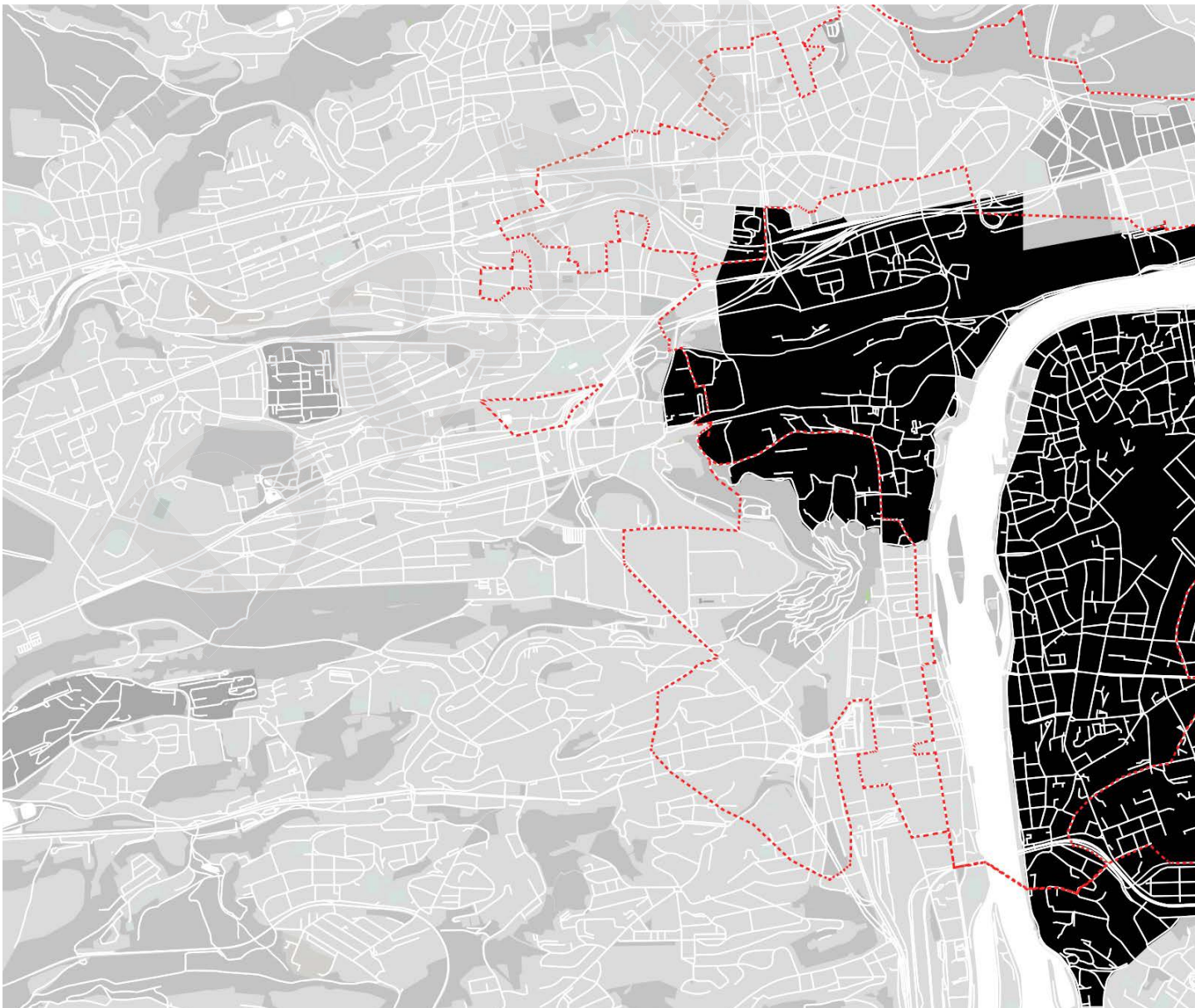
Legislation for the protection and management

- Law on Protection of Cultural Monuments
- Law on Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga



9.8 Riga

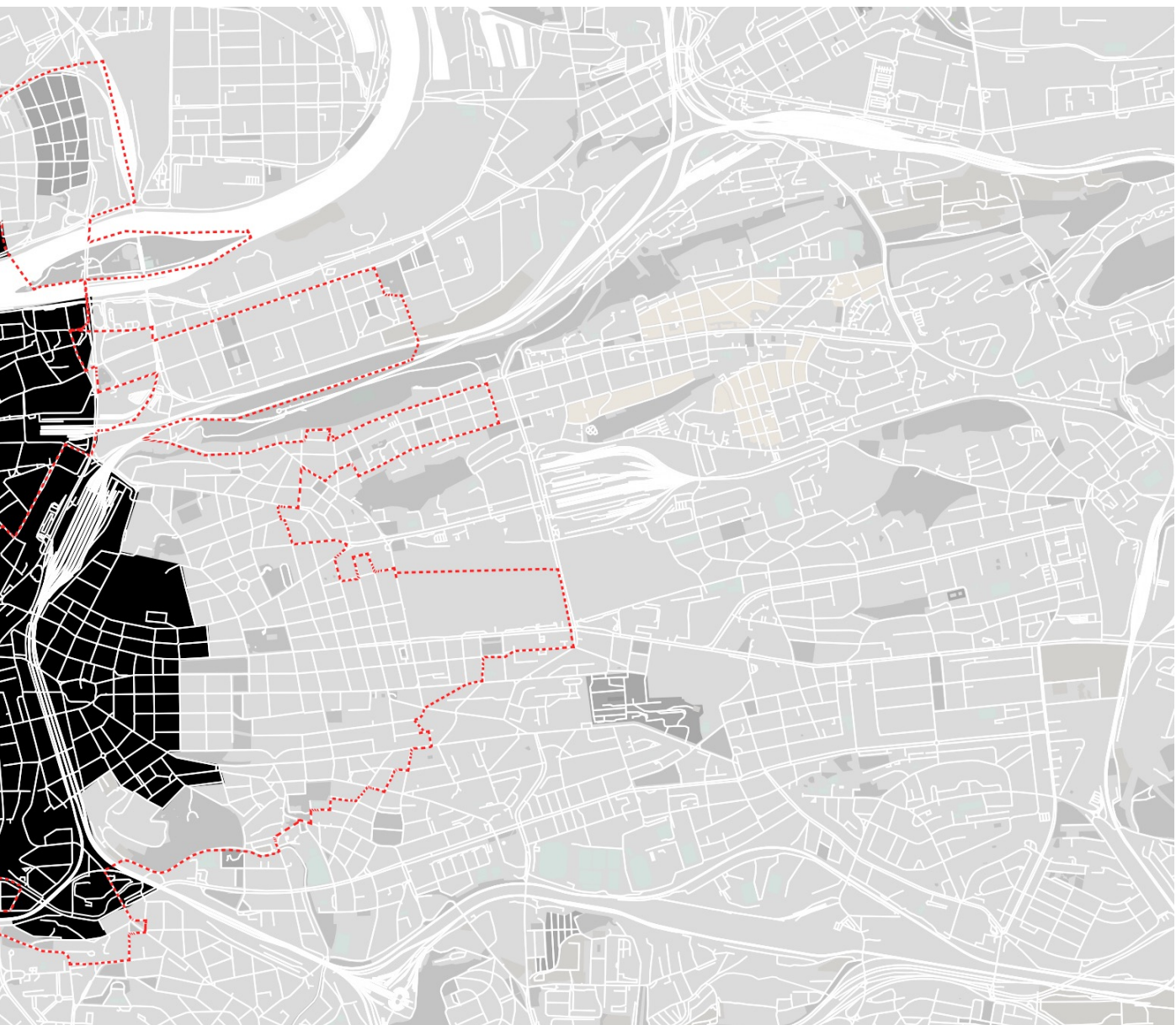
Riga is the capital and the largest city of Latvia, and simultaneously the country's fastest shrinking city. Located on the Eastern part of the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the river Daugava, the city occupies a strategic position at the intersection of trading and cultural routes and at the crossing point between the West and the East. Founded in 1201 as a port city and a former Hanseatic League member, the city preserves evidence of European influence on its historical development. In the last decade, Riga hosted many major events that affected the city's development and regeneration, such as the nomination as European Capital of Culture in 2014.



9.8.1 Key features of the city

Demographic facts

Riga is the largest city of the Baltic states, with around 700.000 inhabitants, an administrative area of 304.05 km², and a density of about 2400 inhabitants/km². Though Riga is home to one third of Latvia's population, the city has been witnessing an ongoing process of depopulation — started in the early '90s — and forecasting a reduction by 24% in the population number by 2030, so to be included in the list of 250 fastest shrinking continental cities. As the counterpart of the considerable decrease within the city, the Riga region — an agglomeration of 1.15 million people — is the only territory in the country where the number of population has increased in the last few years. It is quite clear that there is a strong correlation between decreasing population in Riga city and increasing number of residents in the neighboring municipalities, as the population number in the region is quite stable and the birth and mortality rates are essentially the same. It should be thus taken into account that the - among many reasons - this ongoing phenomenon of urban sprawl is mainly due to a lack of appropriate choice for housing inside the city borders, with a substantially small size of



housing (the average floor-space per 1 inhabitant in Riga is about 23 m²). This aspect results to affect deeply urban issues and regeneration policies in terms of necessity for renewal of the existing housing stock and development of new building areas. Another key datum is the highly remarkable share of the natural areas: more than 45% of the city is covered by water systems, dunes, forests and meadows.

Urban figures

The spatial structure of the city can be described as highly mono-centric, with patterns of a polycentric development that reflect the 800 years of its history. The alternating legacies left behind by many different rulers (Swedish, Russian, Polish, German and ultimately Latvian) inscribe the landscape with a variety of narratives, so that — in the effort to synthesize the complex resulting city structure — it is possible to identify three main different urban landscapes, and each of these parts is characterized by peculiar relationship of buildings and public open spaces, namely:



- the Old Town, consisting in the relatively well-preserved medieval core;
- the 19th century grid and the Boulevard ring, as the rectangular network of streets and wooden architecture and the semi-circle of boulevards with a green belt on both sides of the City Canal;
- the historical suburban quarters and the Micro-districts, as the districts surrounding the boulevards with dense built-up areas.

Furthermore, three additional typologies can be also identified in the actual structure of built-up areas in Riga: the industrial belt with the railway ring, the commercial buildings along the arterial roads, the Freeport.

As a result, starting from the main city core — the historical centre located on the right bank of the Daugava — the development of the built-up areas takes the form of a series of rings stretching towards the periphery, so as following a phenomenon whose origins date back to the beginning of the XXth century, when the former historical suburbs, grown outside the railways ring, were incorporated in the widening system, up to include the massive layer of the residential neighborhoods belonging to the Soviet era.



Heritage

Riga's historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, listed in 1997 by virtue of its Art Nouveau/Jugendstil architecture and 19th century wooden architecture. The total area of this listed historical centre of Riga is 439 hectares – that is slightly less than 1,5% of the actual area of Riga.

The old town of Riga — which still constitutes the core of the city, surrounded by a wall with towers extended across almost all of the area between the two rivers — preserves its historical street pattern mainly intact with a present shape already got during the 14th to 16th centuries and many buildings surviving. However, the city has a well-established tradition of rebuilding districts and restoring buildings.

The urban fabric of its medieval centre preserved some traces of the city's prosperous past related to the from the trade with central and eastern Europe mainly during the 13th–15th centuries, though most of the earliest buildings were destroyed by fire or war. The expansion of the city due to the industrial development- during the XIXth century, when the suburbs surrounding the medieval town were laid out - affected the heritage character of the city by adding first neoclassical and then Jugendstil buildings, which constitute — both for their quantity and quality — one of the main reasons for the recognition of the city's outstanding universal value.

8.8.2 *Existing governance mechanisms*

Development and management plans

In the beginning of the year 2006 the new **Riga City Development Plan** went into force. It consists of a set of several documents that should be used as a basis for Riga city development in 12 years. The spatial development ideas of the city derive from the general **Long-term Development Strategy of Riga until 2025**, defining the city vision, strategic goals and 14 basic concepts of spatial planning of Riga that formed the ideological ground for the **Comprehensive Plan of Riga City 2006-2018**. The Comprehensive Plan foresees to guide the development of the spatial structure on its historical basis, in the same time providing new development possibilities for the city. Eight main types of different areas are the basis of the perspective spatial structure, primarily centered on the Old Town of Riga (1) surrounded by the territory of the historical centre. The development of these territories is thus subjected to specific regulations in order to protect values of the cultural and historical heritage, by maintaining the variety of functions inside the historical centre and at the same time putting the main emphasis on the representative, cultural, tourism and housing functions. As the counterpart of the historical core, the second type of urban area defined by the Plan is the new centre of Riga (2) and its development on the bank of the river Daugava on the opposite side to Old Riga. Further focuses are: the new development areas around the historical centre of Riga inside of the railway ring in the territory of former port or industrial territories (3); the new development areas outside the railway ring (4); the local centres of other residential neighborhoods (5), whose development is also guided by the **Land-use Map** and the **Construction Regulations of the Comprehensive Plan of Riga City**; the system of highways and arterial roads of the city (6); other building territories (7); and the joint spatial structure of nature and greenery areas (8).

In 2007, the **Masterplan for Riga new town centre in Tornakalns** was drawn up following an international competition.

Responsible authorities

Riga is divided into six administrative districts. The management system is based on the institutional collaboration between state and local municipality institutions. The responsible institutions that are stable in the long term are the **State Inspection for Heritage Protection** and the **Riga City Council** with its respective institutions (City Development Department of Riga, Riga City Construction Board and Riga City Architect's Office with its Collegium).

In order to ensure broader regular involvement of all interested parties and a more holistic approach towards the preservation, protection and development matters of the Historic Centre of Riga, the **Council for Preservation and Development of the Historic Centre of Riga** was established in 2003.

Additionally, Riga's **Urban Institute** together with its **Free Riga** network contribute and act in support of integrated projects for urban regeneration, wasteland reclamation, and rehabilitate derelict spaces, old buildings and factories for cultural and social use.

Legislation for the protection and management

The preservation of the Historic Centre of Riga is ensured by a strong system of legal acts: seven international conventions on heritage protection, which the Republic of Latvia has joined, the **Law on Protection of Cultural Monuments**, the **Law on Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga**, 23 other laws, 27 Cabinet regulations and orders, and the Plan for Preservation and Development of the Historic Centre of Riga and its protection zone (adopted in 2006 by the Riga City Council) including binding regulations (by-laws) specific for this territory.