

20 YEARS OF LATVIA IN THE GLOBAL TOURISM SYSTEM: changes of spatial structures, cluster formation, significant destinations and their branding

Dr. Geogr. Maija Rozīte, Turība University

Dr. Oec. Aija van der Steina, Turība University

Dr. Geogr. Andris Klepers, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia

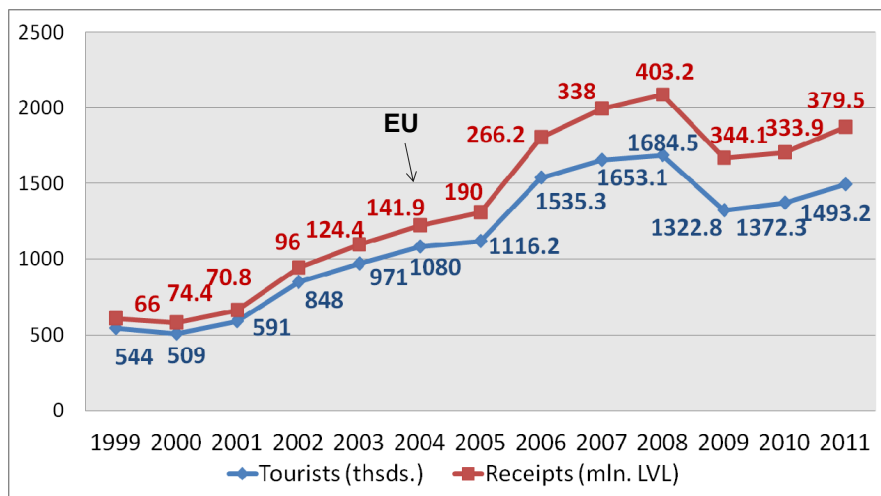
IGU Symposium *Transforming and Managing Destinations*, 22-25 August 2012, Trier

Introduction

Main changes:

- From Republic of Soviet Union → **to independent state** since 1991
- From internal tourism flows → **to international tourism flows** (collapse of iron curtain)
- From state monopoly → **to market economy**
- From tourism as activity → **to tourism as industry**

Inbound Tourism (1999 – 2011)



Source: CSB Latvia, 2000-2012

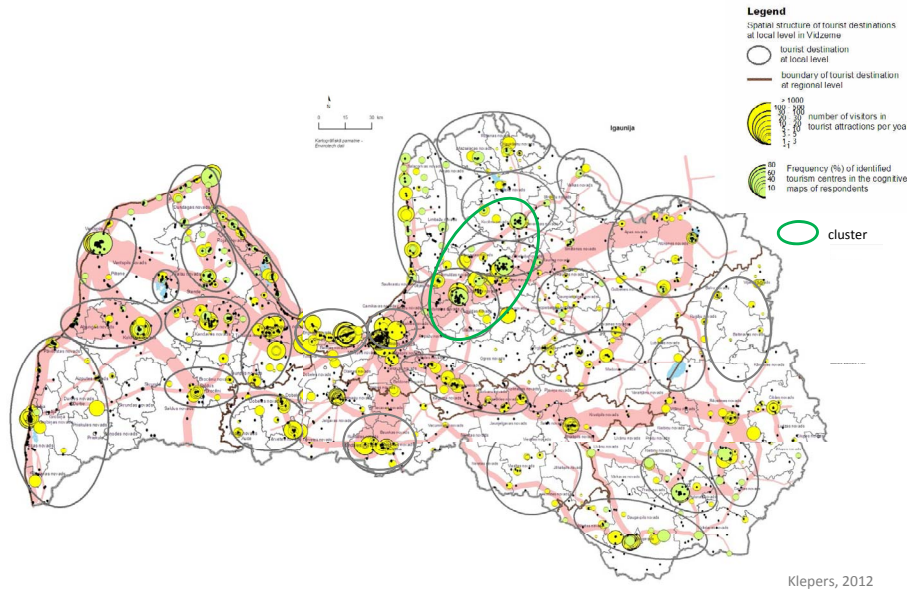
The aim and research methods of the study

Aim: To identify and map dynamics of Latvian tourism spatial system, with defining the key factors that have caused these changes and stressing the most important ones in future development

Research methods:

- Analysis of secondary data (tourism statistics)
- Semi structured interviews with tourism entrepreneurs (n=219)
- Visitor survey (n=938)
- Focus groups interviews
- Mental and cognitive mapping
- GIS and spatial analysis

System of Local Tourism Destinations and Cluster Development



Key Factors Influencing Spatial Structure

1. External factors

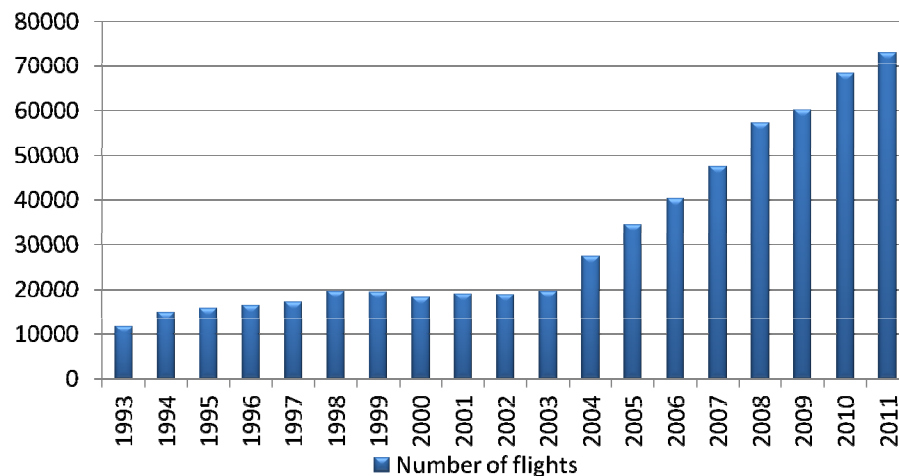
- Free accessibility
- Population mobility (migration, education, job, family, etc.)
- Accession into the EU (finance - SAPARD, recognition)
- Schengen treaty (no/less travel barriers)
- Transport development (low cost airlines, development of Riga Airport)

2. Internal factors

- Capital city Riga factor (UNESCO, re-emerging capital)
- Destination marketing and branding (national and local level)
- Development of entrepreneurial environment (regaining ownership, attraction of finances, alternative agriculture, etc.)
- Change in values and lifestyle of local inhabitants (deferred demand, development of local tourism)
- State administrative reforms (fragmentation)

Transport

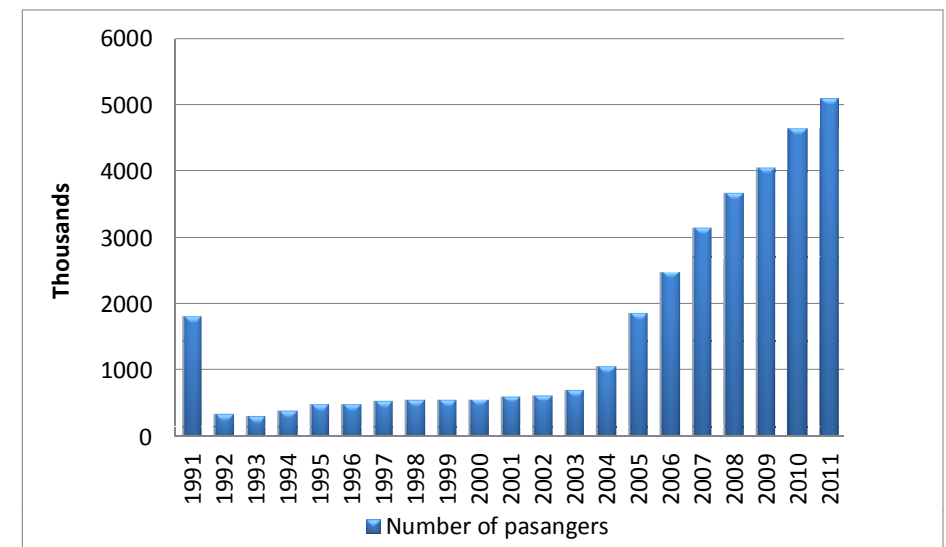
Number of Flights in Riga Airport (1993- 2011)



Source: Riga Airport data

Transport

Number of Passengers in Riga Airport (1993- 2011)

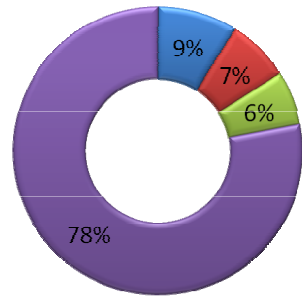


Source: CSB, 2012

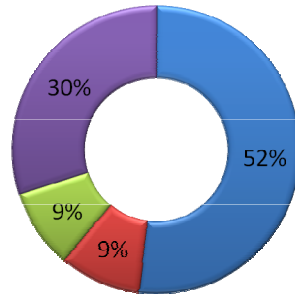
Transport

Travelers by Mode of Transport Used

1999



2011



■ Air ■ Sea ■ Railway ■ Road

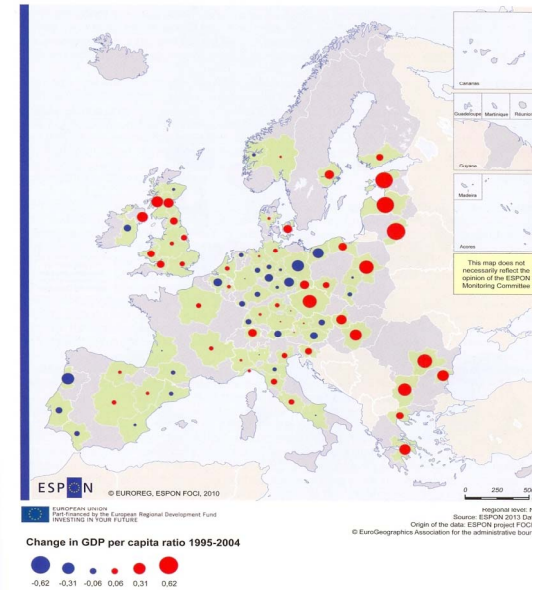
Source: CSB of Latvia, 2000; 2012

Riga

Significance of Riga

- Riga – Capital of Latvia
- Re-emerging capital
- International business
- UNESCO site
- Main tourism resources and investments
- Accessibility – International Transport

Map 2.5 Disparity in GDP levels between metropolises and hinterlands, 1995-2004



Riga

Accommodations

Year	Number of establishments		Number of beds		Number of visitors	
	Latvia	Riga	Latvia	Riga	Latvia	Riga
1995	209	32	18191	5133	340550	156933
1999	210	35 (16.7 %)	16733	4868 (29.1%)	462926	2 49044 (53.8 %)
2005	418	84 (20.1%)	24045	9212 (38.3 %)	1154657	663770 (57.5 %)
2011	641	115 (17.9%)	35745	13232 (37.0 %)	1584996	943671 (59.5 %)

Source: CSB of Latvia, 2000; 2012

Marketing

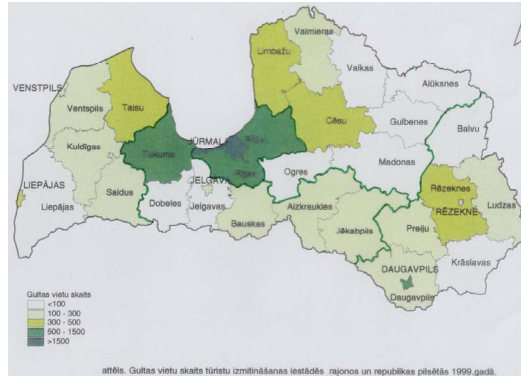
Destination Marketing and Branding

- Professional national marketing and branding abroad since 2003 (NTO – Latvian Tourism Development Agency under Ministry of Economics)
- First Marketing Strategy for Tourism Development of Latvia for the period 2006 – 2010
- Marketing of the Baltic states
- Strong branding and marketing of Riga
- Not successful first national tourism brand
- Marketing activities of regions and towns
- Local branding and marketing → new tourist destination (Case of *Ventspils*)

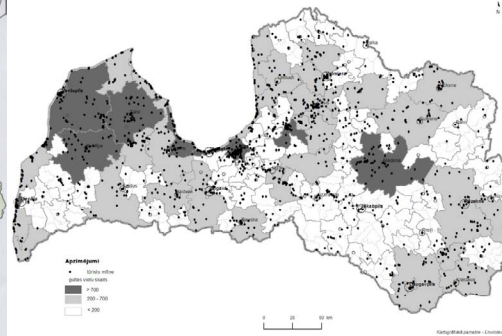
LIVE
RĪGA

The land that sings
Latvia

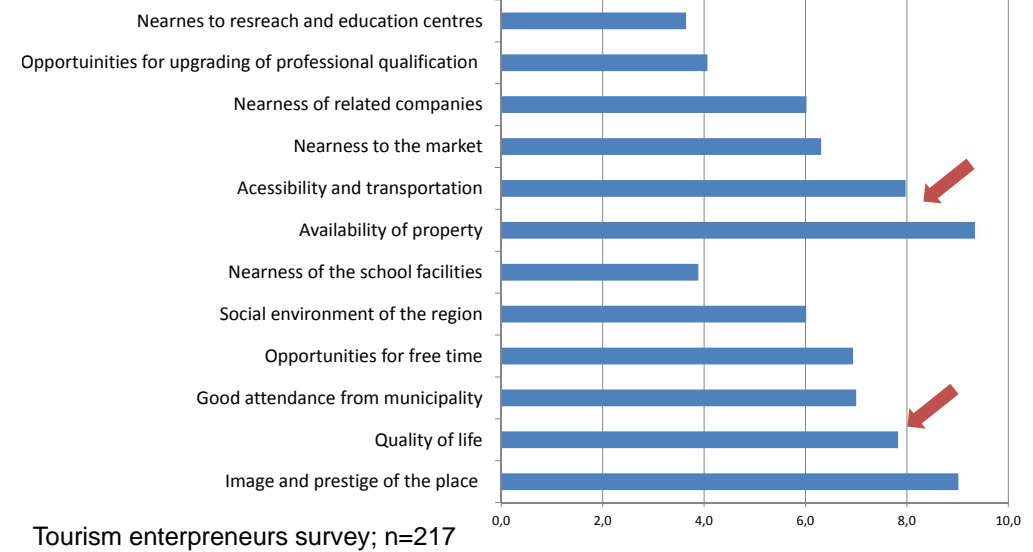
Latvia
BEST ENJOYED SLOWLY



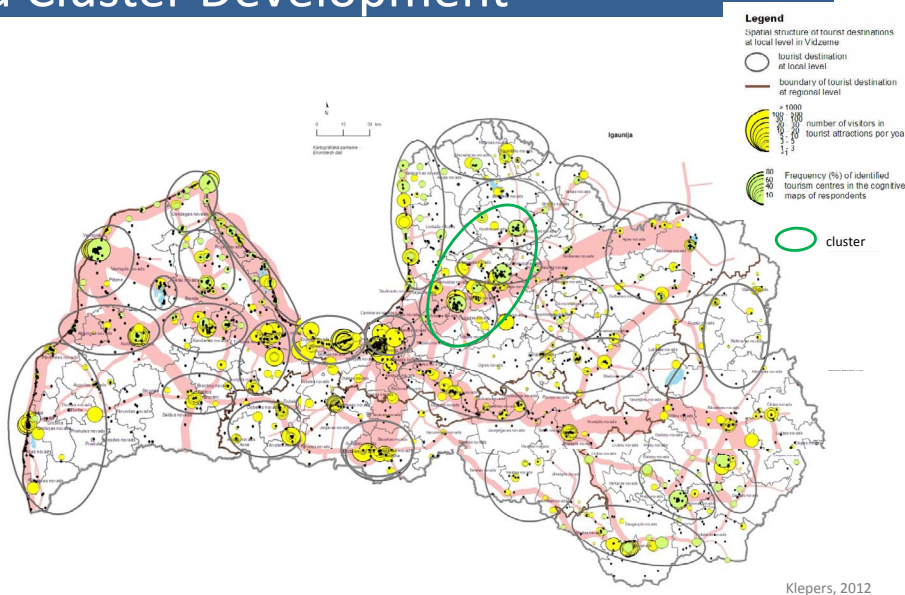
Source: Balcere, 2001



Source: Klepers, 2012



System of Local Tourism Destinations and Cluster Development



Future Development

- Expressed regionalism and importance of capital city → possible solution is cohesion and strong competition to Riga (second destination)
- Development of Riga's competitors depends on the ability to cooperate at various levels (local, regional, national, international) and different directions (developing products, promotion, branding etc.)
- National tourism policy –
 - Emphasis on regions (brand “Best enjoy slowly”)
 - Consistent development at the Latvian national level, e.g. “Riga +”
- Globalization process will promote the significance of Riga.
- The ambition of certain municipalities may create the development of new destinations
- Growing demand for sustainable and green tourism activities (rural tourism, ecotourism, cycling, etc.) and lifestyle (LOHAS) challenge for regions

Conclusions (1)

1. Socio political changes over the past 20 years have been the main factors for changes in the Latvian tourism spatial structure
2. Very concentrated spatial structure with few tourist centers in central areas during the Soviet period
3. Globalisation and international demand has increased Riga's hegemony
4. Market economy (regaining ownership, private business), EU financing developed rural tourism.

Conclusions (2)

5. Dispersion can be observed in tourism concentration and supply at the beginning of the 21st century but demand for Riga is still bigger. It is essential and desirable to increase demand for the regions
6. Various forms of spatial cooperation are starting to emerge forming first tourism clusters (GNP-Sigulda)
7. Cooperation of small local destinations and mutual competition of regional destinations and destination marketing is becoming the crucial factor for more dispersed spatial structure
8. The current marketing strategy and brand "Best Enjoy Slowly" is a successful solution for development of spatial structure

Thank you!

