# PLACE-NAMES IN THE URBANONYMY OF RIGA – MARK OF IDENTITY

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**Abstract**

The article deals with the urbanonymy of the capital of Latvia – Riga (*Rīga*). The accent is on the street-names coined from toponyms: the motivation of the name, the changing of the name under the pressure of the ruling government, Latvians' efforts to conserve their national place-names in urbanonymy etc.

Almost 1/3 of all urbanonyms of Riga are coined from place names. Few of the hodonyms (30) are derived from the place names of neighbouring countries. Mostly urbanonyms are made from inhabited place-names, civil-parishes and hydronyms of different regions of Latvia. Starting with the end of the 19th century, the planning of the street-names of Riga was based on clear geographical orientation: street-names on the left bank of the River Daugava came from the place-names of Kurzeme and Zemgale – the traditional ethnographic southern and western regional parts of Latvia, urbanonyms in the eastern part of Riga were coined from toponyms from Latgale – the eastern part of Latvia, while urbanonyms in the northern part of Riga are connected with the place-names of Vidzeme – the northern part of Latvia.

During the years of the first and the second independence quite a few foreign place-names (of German and Russian origin) mentioned in urbanonymy were replaced by Latvian toponyms. Many of the street-names of Riga were subject to frequent renaming.

**Key words**: *onomastics*, *urbanonymy*, *street-names*, *identity*, *Latvia*

**Résumé**

Le présent article discute de l'urbanonymie de Riga, la capitale de Latvia. L'accent y est posé sur les noms de rues calqués sur des toponymes : la motivation du nom, le changement du nom sous la pression du gouvernement en place, les efforts des Litvians de préserver leurs noms nationaux de rues en urbanonymie, etc.

Presque 1/3 de tous les urbanonymes de Riga sont calqués sur des noms de sites. Quelques uns des hodonymes (30) sont dérivés de noms de sites se trouvant dans les pays voisins. Pour la plupart, les urbanonymes sont construits à partir des sites habités, de noms de paroisses et d'hydronymes sis dans diverses régions de Latvia. Dès la fin du XIXe siècle, le choix des noms de rues de Riga a été clairement fondé sur une orientation géographique. Les noms des rues sises sur la rive gauche de la rivière de Daugava ont été choisis dans les traditions ethnographiques des régions du Sud et de l'Ouest de Latvia, Kurzeme et Zemgale. Dans la partie Est de Riga, les urbanonymes ont été calqués sur des toponymes de

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Latgale, la partie est de Latvia. Au côté nord de Riga, les urbanonymes sont apparentés aux noms de sites Vidzeme – la partie nord de Larvia.

Pendant la première et seconde indépendance, beaucoup de noms de lieux d'origines étrangères (allemande et russe) ont été remplacés par des toponymes Latviens dans le schéma d'urbanonymie où on en faisait mention. Beaucoup de noms de rues de Riga ont été soumis à de fréquents changements.

**Mots-clés**: *onomastique, urbanonymie, noms de rues, identité, Latvia*

To start with a summarization, there are about 1577 streets in contemporary Riga – the capital of Latvia. The name of about 1/3 (or 587) of them are coined from place names, about 165 are coined from personal names, while the rest of them made from appellatives. This article is devoted to urbanonyms – mostly hodonyms or street-names – which were coined from different place-names and demonstrate the aspiration of Latvians to save their identity.

The concept of identity is very wide, polysemantic and rather ambiguous. From one point of view it includes individual identity, from another – collective identity, affiliation to some group, with which the individual identifies himself (Barnard & Spencer, 1998, 445). Many scholars have stressed the fact that individual identity is closely connected with collective identity (Refsing, 1998, 195). Belonging to one group – in this case belonging to one ethnic group – means having a feeling of common history. Memory is an important component of identity. Social memory takes its content from individual memory. History is a classical form of social memory. Memory and history as a cornerstone of collective identity keep people together. Groups try to stop the time in different ways. Toponyms (in this case – urbanonyms) are one of the ways that can be used to achieve this. So, the past is the network of the memory. However, the structure of this network and, to great extent, the content are determined by the present time. Social memory is a concept with the help of which many social facts can be explained (see Ķīlis, 1998: 22).

Mostly urbanonyms of Riga are made from toponyms of different regions of Latvia. Rather few of them (about 30) are derived from the place names of neighbouring countries – they are toponyms of the closest neighbours: street names coined from Estonian place-names (7 – *Pērnavas iela*[1], *Tallinas iela*, *Narvas iela*, *Vīlandes iela*, *Haapsalas ielas*, *Sāremas iela*, *Tērbatas iela* – the last one has preserved the ancient form *Derpt*: nowadays in Latvian the name *Tartu*, not *Tērbata* is used, but it can still be

[1] The structure of Latvian street-names: Gen. sg./Gen. pl. + nomenclature word *iela* 'street', *gatve* , *gāte* 'lane', *aleja* 'avenue' , *bulvāris* 'boulevard', *prospects* 'boulevard'.

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found in this hodonym), Lithuanian place-names (5 – *Viļņas iela, Klaipēdas iela, Šauļu iela, Palangas iela, Skodas iela*), German place-names (5 – *Rostokas iela, Štrālzundes iela, Hamburgas iela, Lībekas iela, Brēmenes iela* –street-names are mostly called by the names of Hanseatic cities), Polish place-names (3 – *Varšavas, Gdaņskas, Ščecinas iela*), Swedish place-names (2 – *Stokholmas iela, Visbijas iela*), Norwegian place-name (1 – *Bergenas iela* – as a Hanseatic city; hodonym used since 1911), Bulgarian place-name (1 – *Ruses iela* – during Soviet times it was the so-called commonwealth or twinned city of Riga), only one Belorussian place-name – *Grodņas iela*, and surprisingly only 3 Russian place-names (*Maskavas iela, Staraja Ruses iela*/ after an ancient city in the Novgorod region/ and *Ilmeņa iela*/ after the Lake Ilmenj in Russia. There were much more place-names of Russia included into the urbanonymy of Riga during the Soviet times, but the streets were renamed in the first years of independence of Latvia – after 1990. Such place-names denoting more distant places as *Kaukāza iela, Jeruzālemes iela* are also included, as well as the name of an ocean – *Atlantijas iela*. The only foreign country-name – *Iceland* – is mentioned in the recent name of the small public garden – *Islandes skvērs* (2011) – to remind of the first country that acknowledged the independence of Latvia.

The planning of street-names in Riga has been based on geographical orientation starting from the end of the 19th century:

- street-names on the left bank of the River Daugava (the southern part of Riga) were made from the place-names of Kurzeme and Zemgale – traditional ethnographical southern and western regional parts of Latvia: *Aizputes iela, Alsungas iela, Talsu iela, Liepājas iela, Rojas iela, Ventspils iela*;

- urbanonyms in the eastern part of Riga were coined from toponyms of the eastern part of Latvia – Latgale: *Aknīstes iela, Balvu iela, Dagdas iela, Daugavpils iela, Kārsavas iela, Krāslavas iela*;

- urbanonyms in the northern part of Riga since the 19th cent. Till nowadays have been connected with the place-names of the northern part of Latvia – Vidzeme: *Cēsu iela, Ādažu iela, Pabažu iela, Valkas iela, Limbažu iela, Krimuldas iela*.

The hodonyms of Riga mostly comprise names of well-known Latvian inhabited places or civil-parishes. Still, hydronyms from different parts of Latvia (about 42) are also mentioned quite often, for example: *Indrupes*[2] *iela, Rītupes iela, Ežupes iela, Irbupītes iela, Pērses iela* < the *River Pērse* < **propersa* ‘clearing’, *Dubnas iela* < the *River Dubna, Ventas iela* < the

[2] Latvian roots of hydronymyc nomeclature names included into hodonyms: *upe* ‘river’, *ezers* ‘lake’, *kalns* ‘hill’.

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*River Venta*. The only two dehydronymic urbanonyms of the Old Riga are of special interest and have to be mentioned separately: *Rīdzenes iela* 'Street of Rīdzene' < *Rīdze // Rīdzene* – after a rivulet of the 17-19th cent. That no longer exists: the street has taken the place of a former river from which the name of the City Riga has probably originated; the street-name *Rīdzenes iela* is recorded in 1810 and clearly demonstrates the history of the city. Another dehydronymic hodonym of the Old Riga – *Daugavas gāte* 'Lane of Daugava'– a rather new name (1937), it is very short – only 70 m long street, situated near the Palace of Riga; there is even no numbering of the buildings in this street. The name of this street derived from the largest river of Latvia – *Daugava* – on the banks of which Riga has been built. Not only river-names, but also some lake-names are included in Riga's hodonyms: *Alauksta ezers*, *Baltezera iela*, *Ķīšezera iela*, *Gaiļezera iela*, *Linezera iela*, *Ineša iela* < the *Lake Inesis*. Rather few hill-names are also included: *Lapsukalna iela*, *Rubeņkalna iela*, *Avotkalnu iela*, *Smilškalnu iela*. Nowadays the naming of new streets is planned in the same way, preserving the same orientation: *Dzirnezera iela* (2007), situated in the northern part of Riga < lake-name *Dzirnezers* located in the northern part of Latvia, *Drujas iela* (2008) situated in the eastern part of Riga < left tributary-name of the River Daugava *Druja* located in the Eastern part of Latvia, *Elkšņu iela* (2008) in the eastern part of Riga > *Elkšņi* – an inhabited place in the eastern part of Latvia.

Such geographically-oriented planning was based on the history of the city: at the end of the 19th cent. People moving from the countryside to the capital often resettled in the suburbs closer to their native places and called the streets of the surroundings after the names of their native region. It helped to safeguard the identity of the region even in one large city. Nowadays, such planning continues the tradition and helps to orientate ourselves in the daily life of the city. Even the main suburbs of Riga are currently called by the names of the regions of Latvia: *Latgales priekšpilsēta*, *Vidzemes priekšpilsēta*, *Zemgales priekšpilsēta*, *Kurzemes priekšpilsēta*.

At the beginning of the 20th century some new trends of planning can be noticed: in Pārdaugava, on the left bank of the Daugava, there were concentrated streets named after Latvian place-names starting with a identical capital letter, for instance: with the capital letter *B*: *Basu iela*, *Bārbeles iela*, *Bikstu iela*, *Briņģu iela*, *Blīdenes iela*, *Bātas iela*, *Bruknas iela*, *Brucenes iela* (these all are hodonyms named after the names of Kurzeme or Zemgale; a comment has to be added to the last example – *Brucenes iela*: there is no such place-name known in Latvia except for two names of meadows, but the pattern of such derivation of toponyms exists).

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In the same suburb of the city of Riga there is a cluster of street-names in *D – Dauguļu iela, Drustu iela, Daibes iela, Dikļu iela,* some in *C – Codes iela, Cēres iela,* but perpendicular streets to those in *C* – in *K – Kabiles iela, Kalvenes iela, Kurmenes iela, Kursīšu iela, Kurmales iela*. This tradition was related to the above mentioned tradition of geographical orientation, but later it was not observed very strictly.

Speaking about the trends of planning and clusters of streets, one more group of hodonyms has to be mentioned. Up until 1915 and also after 1990 the names of Hanseatic cities were concentrated in the region of Mežaparks ('Forest park', a prestigious living area of Riga): *Visbijas prospekts, Dancigas iela, Štrālzundes iela, Hamburgas iela, Lībekas iela, Bergenas iela*. During the World War I – particularly in 1915 – the names of these streets were all changed into names coming from Russian place-names – quite often with the same capital letter:

*Visbijas prospekts* ('Boulevard of Visby') > *Volgas prospects* ('Boulevard of Volga'),

*Dancigas iela* ('Street of Danzig') > *Dņepras iela* ('Street of Dnepr'),

*Štrālzundes iela* ('Street of Strahlsund') > *Urālas iela* ('Ural Street'),

*Hamburgas iela* ('Street of Hamburg') > *Ladogas iela* ('Street of Ladoga'),

*Lībekas iela* ('Street of Lübeck') > *Oņegas iela* ('Street of Onega')

(Rīgas ielas, I, 54).

Today, even new street-names are coined according to the same tradition in Mežaparks: *Brēmenes iela* (named in 2007) < *Bremen* – old Hanseatic German city, *Briges iela* (2007) < Belgium port *Brugge*, *Vismāras iela* (2007) < *Wismar* and *Ķīles iela* (2007) < *Kiel* in Germany.

During the period of the first independent Latvia (in the 1920s and 1930s) a fan-shaped group of streets was named after the place-names described in a famous Latvian epos *Lāčplēsis* (1881): *Aizkraukles iela, Lielvārdes iela, Burtnieku iela*. These all are place-names from the epic poem used in street-names. This "fan" also includes deanthroponymic hodonyms – personal-names borrowed from the same epos: *Laimdotas iela, Tālivalža iela, Pīkola iela,* etc. According to anthropologists (Ķīlis, 1998: 22), in order to save as much as possible of the national identity, it is necessary to use imagination, including the mythical prehistory, in this case the mythological epos reminding of the romantic past of the nation. Moreover, the golden age is an important foothold in case of identity crisis (social changes, migration, etc. – Ķīlis, 1998: 22).

What was the origin of the detoponymical street-names in Riga? As it usually occurs, detoponymical street names show the direction of the appropriate hodonym: *Jūrmalas gatve* – the street in the direction of the city

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of *Jūrmala*, *Maskavas iela* – in the direction of Moscow, *Carnikavas iela* – pointing towards the inhabited place of *Carnikava*, *Daugavgrīvas iela* – is known since 1868 as the road to the fortification of *Daugavgrīva*, etc. However, this it is not the only explanation of this type of hodonyms.

Several street-names in Riga are called after the name of the respective district of the city they are located in (without indicating the direction): *Purvciema iela* – street in the district of *Purvciems*, *Ķengaraga iela* – main street in the district of *Ķengarags*, *Mežciema iela* – the street in the district of *Mežciems*, *Berģu iela* – the street in the district of *Berģi* (Rīgas ielas, II, 62), *Sarkandaugavas iela* – the street in the district of *Sarkandaugava*, *Bieķensalas iela* – the street on the island of *Bieķensala* – one of the islands on the River Daugava (Rīgas ielas, II, 69), *Ķīpsalas iela* – the street on the island of *Ķīpsala*, etc.

Some foreign place-names mentioned in urbanonymy were replaced by Latvian toponyms during the first independence of Latvia, for example: the name of German origin *Marienburgas iela* (Germ. *Marienburger Str*.) 1910 was renamed *Alūksnes iela* in 1923 (Rīgas ielas, I, 136). *The f*ormer hodonym of Slavic origin *Porhovas iela* 'Street of Porhova' (named after a town in Russia) was changed in 1923 into *Dagdas iela* 'Street of Dagda' after *Dagda* – a town in the eastern part of Latvia. Similarly, *Suzdaļas iela* 1914 'Street of Suzdalj' (after the name of a Russian town) was changed into *Gaiziņa iela* in 1923, after the highest hill of Latvia – *Gaiziņš*; *Donas iela* (Germ. *Donsche Str*.), used since 1889, was renamed *Indrupes iela* 'Street of Indrupe' in 1923, after the river *Indrupe* in Latgale. There are numerous similar examples – mostly the changes were made in 1923. This tendency is still noticeable today: *Perekopa iela* ('*Street of Perekop*' – the place of the battles of Riflemen in Russia; a street built in Soviet times, in 1983) was renamed in 1991 with the detoponymic name *Praulienas iela*, after *Prauliena*, the inhabited place of the eastern part of Latvia.

On the other hand, during the so-called Soviet times many streets of Riga were named or renamed after well-known place-names of Russia or the Soviet Union (mainly associated with the battles):

*Latgales dārzs* ('Garden of Latgale', named after the Latvian eastern ethnographical region) 1937 > *Maskavas dārzs* ('Garden of Moscow') 1945;

*Jēzusbaznīcas iela* ('Street of Jesus Church') 1885, > was renamed *Bezdievju iela* ('Atheist Street'), in 1940, and later, in Soviet times > *Sevastopoles iela* ('Street of Sevastopol') 1950.

There is only one example demonstrating the origin of a detoponymic street-name in the centre of Riga and its changing during centuries: nowadays there is a street-name *Ēveles iela* < *Ēvele* – the name of the civil parish in the Valkas region of Latvia, however, earlier this street was called:

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*Jaunā mazā Mirušo iela* (Germ. *Neue kleine Todtenstr*) 1861, 'New Small Street of Dead' > *Mirušo iela* (Germ. *Todtenstr*) 1880, 'Dead Street' > *Torģeles iela* (Germ. *Torgelsche Str*.) 1903, after the horse farm *Tori* (the Latv. Estate name *Torģele*) in Estonia > *Ēveles iela* 1938 > *Eduarda Zandreitera iela* 1974 after the name of the Latvian revolutionist Eduards Zandreiters > *Ēveles iela* 1990 – a renewed contemporary detoponymic street-name. It is a typical case of frequent changing of urbanonyms under the pressure of the ruling ideology.

A lot of contemporary street-names of Riga taken from former estate names were shortened over time, with the omission of the component *muiža* 'estate': *Dammes iela* < *Dammesmuižas iela* 'Street of Dammes estate' (Rīgas ielas, II, 227). In Soviet times it was changed into *Serģeja Ļuļina iela* after the hero of the Red Army, *Abavas iela*, to the contemporary inhabitants of Riga, this name is associated only with the river *Abava*, but historically it was shortened from the estate-name < *Abavmuižas iela* (Germ. *Abaushöfsche* Str.) (Rīgas ielas, I, 62), *Allažu iela* < *Allažumuižas iela*, *Doles iela* < *Doles muižas iela*, *Bukaišu iela* < *Bukaišu muižas iela*, *Basu iela* 1923 < *Bases iela* 1920 < *Basses muižas iela* 1902, *Apes iela* < *Opes iela* 1923 < *Opesmuižas iela* 1910 (Rīgas ielas, I, 163). The nomenclature word *muiža* 'estate' was eliminated especially actively during the period between 1923 and 1938. Nowadays there are only two hodonyms in Riga – in the district of Pārdaugava – with the nomenclature denomination *muiža* still included in their structure: *Anniņmuižas bulvāris* 'Boulevard of the Estate Anniņmuiža' and *Anniņmuižas iela* 'Street of the Estate Anniņmuiža' (Rīgas ielas, I, 154-155).

Some of these shortened street-names can barely be even remotely connected with place-names, for example: *Buļļu iela* 1923 'Street of Bulls' < *Buļļumuižas iela* 1868 'Street of the Estate of Bulls'. In Soviet times it was renamed *Street of Valentina Tereskova* after the first woman cosmonaut of the USSR, (Rīgas ielas, II, 185). Nowadays, such a toponym as *Buļļi* 'Bulls' still exists in the vicinity of Riga. This is the case in which it is not always easy to recognise the detoponymic hodonym, which seems to be identical with the deappelative one. Other similar examples are the following: *Griezes iela* (Germ. *Grösensche* Str.) 'Street of Corncrake' in the Āģenskalns district, which actually comes from the name of the estate *Grieze // Griezes muiža* in Ezeres civil-parish (region of Saldus); *Griķu iela* 'Street of Buckwheat', located in the old part of Riga, called in 1934 after the name of the estate *Griķi // Griķu muiža* in Zaube (region of Cēsis) (Rīgas ielas, III, 127).

Some street-names which now are supposed to be detoponymic hodonyms have arisen as a result of a misunderstanding, for example:

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*Beverīnas iela* (‘Street of Beverīna’, after *Beverīne* – a historical place-name, mentioned as early as 1213, where Tālivaldis – one of the rulers of Latvians – lived), but initially recorded as *Bebru iela* (Germ. *Bewernsche* Str., Russ. *Bevernskaja* 1902) ‘Street of Beavers’ on the first map of Riga; since a street with such a name already existed in Riga, it was changed (in 1923) to one which sounds very close to the German or Russian version of the street – *Beverīnas iela*.

Another rather strange example of a name arisen on the basis of similarity is *Bramberģes iela*, named after the Latvian place-name *Bramberģe* – a manor in the historical region of Zemgale, although initially marked as *Brandenburgas iela* (Germ. *Branderburger* Str.), on the 1902 city plan and changed in 1923 to *Bramberģes iela*. Now it considered as detoponymic hodonym connected to Latvia (Rīgas ielas, II, 93).

Changes of street-names based on their similarity can be noticed in the next example: *Bērzaunes iela* named after *Bērzaune* – a civil-parish name in the Madonas district in Latvia, though initially called *Bērzu iela* (Germ. *Birkenstr*.) ‘Birch-tree Street’ 1881; since two such street names were recorded in Riga, one of them was changed to *Bērzones iela* in 1902 (cf. *Bērzone* – an inhabited place name in Latvia, in the Jēkabpils district), though later – in 1923 – it was renamed once more with a very similar, but different detoponymic name – *Bērzaunes iela* (Rīgas ielas, II, 64).

From today’s point of view, sometimes there are also misunderstanding when a hodonym clearly seems to be a detoponymyc, without actually being one, for example: *Dreiliņu iela* – initially associated by everybody with the inhabited place *Dreiliņi* near Riga, although historical documents testify that the street, located in Āģenskalns, was named after the burgomaster Melchior von Dreiling (1623-1682), and the estate of *Dreiliņu muiža*, built later. Still – *Dreiliņi* –, the inhabited place close to Riga may also be of a deanthroponymic origin.

Sometimes one has to wonder why one detoponymical hodonym is changed with another street-name, also of detoponymical origin, for example: *Briges iela* < *Brige* – port in Belgium, Hanseatic city (Germ. *Brügge/r/str*.) 1902, during the WWI was renamed *Rionas iela* (Russ. *Rionsskaja ulica*) 1915 – after the river *Rion* in Georgia; later, during the years of the first independence in 1923, it was renamed *Amatas iela* after the river *Amata* in Latvia (but it was easy to mistake it for another already existing street-name – *Amatu iela* ‘Street of Trades/Professions’), so in 1961 it was renamed once more *Gatartas iela* (cf. *Gatarta* – a former estate in the district of Cēsis) (Rīgas ielas, III, 97); recently (in 2007) it regained the first name – *Briges iela*.

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To avoid any confusions, the name *Ilmeņa iela* 'Street of Ilmenj', located near the Baltic Sea, was created: initially it was *Smilšu iela* 'Sand Street' 1924, which was changed into *Viļņu iela* 'Wave Street' 1930. As it was very difficult not to mix it with another already existing street-name – *Viļņas iela* 'Street of Vilnius', named after the capital of Lithuania *Vilnius*, in 1986 it was decided to change it into *Ilmeņa iela* (similar sounding) after the lake in Russia Latv. *Ilmenis* (Rīgas ielas, III, 178).

The name *Indrupes iela* 'Street of Indrupe' of the street in the eastern part of Riga has very interesting origin. Initially it was *Leišu iela* (Germ. *Litauer/Littuausche Str*.) 'Lithuanian Street' 1889 – as a cluster of ehnonymic hodonyms – alongside with *Igauņu iela* 'Estonian Street', *Līvu iela* 'Livonian Street' and *Latviešu iela* 'Latvian Street'. In 1923, the Committee of Streets came to the conclusion that "the name of the whole nation is not suitable for such a small street", and consequently changed it into the detoponymic *Indrupes iela*, after the river name *Indrupe//Indra* – the left tributary of the River Daugava (Rīgas ielas, III, 189).

To briefly conclude, we can say that:

- the detoponymic urbanonyms make a large percentage of all the hodonyms of Riga – even 37 %;
- most of these urbanonyms – almost 95 % – are coined from Latvian toponyms. In addition, they very clearly are located in the plan of the city: the eastern part of the city included Latgalian toponyms/and toponyms from Russia, the southern and western part – toponyms from Kurzeme and Zemgale/and Lithuania, while the northen part – toponyms from Vidzeme and Estonia;
- a rather large number of the detoponymical hodomys are used nowadays in shortened form (usually the nomenclature word *muiža* 'estate' is omitted);
- some of the street-names are not what they seem;
- some of the mentioned urbanonyms have arisen as misunderstandings;
- a pair of hodonyms (as *Rīdzenes iela*, *Tērbatas iela*) have preserved the old, no longer existing names;
- many of the street-names of Riga were subject to frequent renaming – one detoponymical hodonym was changed into another, one commemorating name into another, depending on the current ideology;
- today, in Riga there is a clear tendency to coin hodonyms from the names of smaller local topo-objects, even homestead names (*Biksēres iela*, *Dzirnezera iela*).

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Nevertheless, there are several street-names coined from toponyms that have undergone no change along the centuries. Examples of such detoponymic hodomys which have survived until present times without changing from the 19th century include: *Biķernieku iela* ('Street of Biķernieki' – 1893), *Grobiņas iela* ('Street of Grobiņa' – 1887), *Ķemeru iela* ('Street of Ķemeri' – 1898), *Ogres iela* ('Street of Ogre' – 1889), *Rucavas iela* ('Street of Rucava' – 1897), *Šauļu iela* ('Street of Šauļi' – 1889), *Tukuma iela* ('Street of Tukums' – 1880/1883), *Ventspils iela* ('Street of Ventspils' – 1884), *Vircavas iela* ('Street of Vircava' – 1889). They all are more or less neutral (not ideological, not commemorative) and are not located in the centre of Riga.

One of such "surviving" examples is of special interest – *Abrenes iela* 'Street of Abrene'– which got its name during the first independence of Latvia (in 1938) and is situated in the very centre, near the railway station. Surprisingly, it was not changed during the Soviet occupation time (cf. *Abrene* – a town and the region that was cut from Latvia and added to Russia in 1944 – now called Pytalovo district). This example is very important to Latvians to the commemoration of their history and the maintenance of identity.

Street names that make up the so-called linguistic landscape are very closely related to the local people's identity. They can be even called a part of their identity, and at the same time they also make up this identity. Identity can be considered as something flexible rather than fix and as something that people do rather than what they are (cf. Omoniyi & White, 2006, Taylor & Spencer, 2004, Aldrin, 2011).

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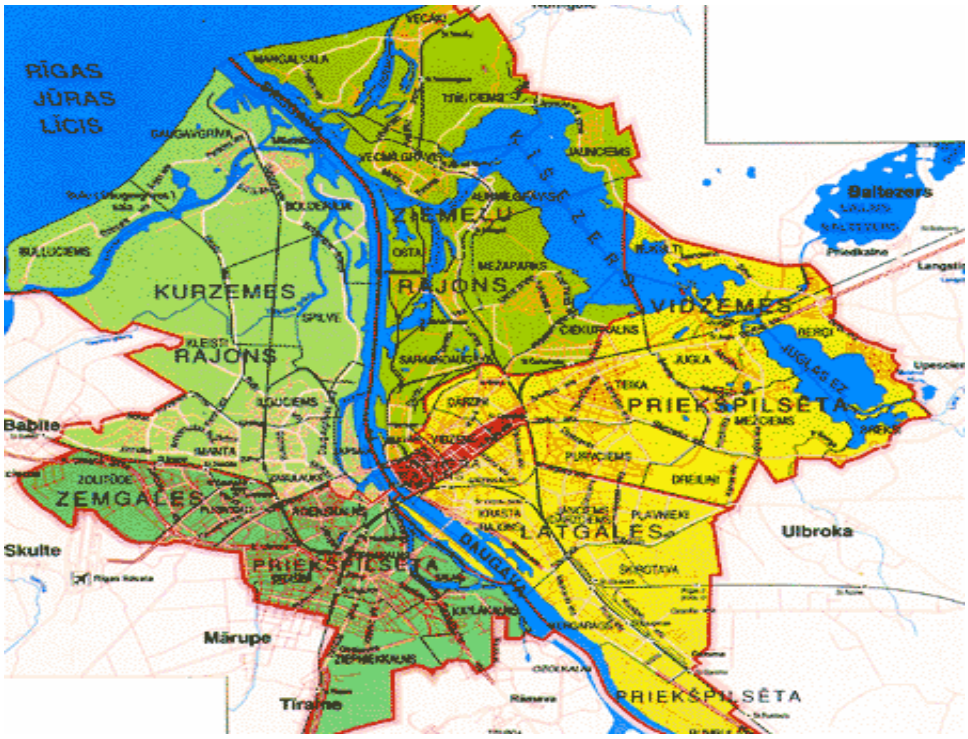
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Plan of the city of Rīga.

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Ethnographical regions of Latvia (Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, Latgale) which correspond to the general planning of street-names of Rīga.



*Lielvārdes iela* < *Lielvārde* – *a* place-name from the epic poem "Lāčplēsis"



*Gaiziņa iela* < hill-name *Gaiziņš* (former *Suzdaļas iela* < a Russian toponym *Suzdalj*)

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