

## THE PROCESS OF SUBURBANISATION IN BABĪTE RURAL MUNICIPALITY AFTER THE YEAR 2000

### Suburbanizācijas procesi Babītes pagastā pēc 2000. gada

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**Abstract.** Since the year 2000 the population in rural territories surrounding Rīga has grown mainly at the expense of migration. These territories have been intensively built up over the past 20 years. As result - many new single-family-house villages have appeared in landscape areas or within the borders of already existing villages. One of the rural municipalities experiencing intensive suburbanisation in its territory after the year 2000 is Babīte parish (a rural municipality), where the population has increased considerably and building of new dwelling houses is rapidly growing, forming new residential districts and new villages. The goal of the present study is to characterise changes in housing in Babīte parish (rural municipality) since 2000 under the influence of suburbanisation. The analysis of the present situation proves that Babīte parish has become an attractive place of residence in suburban Rīga with developing housing and a growing population.

**Keywords:** *suburbanisation, Rīga area, Babīte parish, villages.*

### Introduction

Since the year 2000 in Latvia, many new single-family-house villages have appeared in the outskirts of large cities, close to highways, in landscape areas or within the borders of already existing villages (Grīne and Strautnieks 2012; Grīne and Strautnieks 2018). A typical example is to be found in the rural territories surrounding Rīga, the capital of Latvia. These territories have been intensively built up over the past 20 years. This can be explained not only by the favourable geographical situation, closeness to the main highways and good traffic links from these areas to the capital, but also by good access to public services and a visually attractive landscape. Since 2000 the population in the rural territories surrounding Rīga has grown mainly at the expense of migration – people have moved to the suburban rural territories to live but still work and access public services in town, thus favouring the growth of outskirt migration. Another type of suburbanisation observed in the area is when people (and also companies) move to suburbs where blocks of flats are being built. After the year 2000 the intensity of suburbanisation and migration to the suburban Rīga area has been regulated by housing construction, the housing market and the outreach of jobs (Bērziņš 2011).

One of the rural municipalities experiencing intensive suburbanisation in its territory since 2000 is Babīte parish (rural municipality; *pagasts*), where the population has increased considerably, and the building of new dwelling houses is rapidly growing, forming new residential districts and new villages.

The aim of the present study is to characterise changes in housing at Babīte parish (rural municipality) after the year 2000 under the influence of suburbanisation.

## Data and Methods

The principal sources of the present research are:

- published statistical data by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) about the number and age structure of the population in Babīte parish (rural municipality) and its villages in 2000, 2011, 2016-2018;
- analysis of the cartographical material – orthophotographs of 2013 and 2015, a topographic map (scale 1:10 000) by the Map browser of the University of Latvia (data source - Geospatial Information Agency of Latvia (LGIA));
- planning documents of the Babīte county - Development Programme of Babīte county for 2014-2020, Sustainable Development Strategy of Babīte county until 2030 and Spatial Planning of Babīte Parish of Rīga district from 2008 till 2020;
- public opinion poll results of 2018 (203 respondents), field survey results of 2017-2018. A population survey was undertaken to find out what kind of income levels the residents had gone to live in the Babīte parish and their connection with Rīga. The survey included questions about type of housing and year of construction, about residence (reasons for choosing a place to live, satisfaction with the place of residence, future plans for living), as well as questions about workplace, age, income, use of transport by respondents, goals and frequency of visits to Rīga.

## Principal Results and Discussion

Babīte parish with an area of 165.3 sq. km. is situated in the central part of Latvia, bordering with Rīga and the Town of Jūrmala. According to statistical data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB), in 2018 Babīte parish was inhabited by 8977 people, which is approx. 87% of the population of the Babīte county (*novads*), the density of population being 54.3 people per sq.km. The most part of the territory of Babīte parish is covered by agricultural land and forests, a lake and bogs.

The housing of Babīte parish is formed by historically established villages and a network of detached homesteads, as well as new detached houses and villages built during the previous 10 – 15 years. At present, Babīte parish comprises 17 villages mainly located not far from the principal highways and the Rīga city border. In some cases the merging of villages has been hindered by natural or artificial obstacles, for instance highway A5 between Piņķi and Beberi villages and highway A9 between Dzilnuciems and Skārduciems. In other cases the villages have merged together, so that it is difficult to spot the border between the villages, as is the case with Piņķi and Sēbruciems or Spilve and Mežāre. The expansion of villages takes place at the expense of agricultural lands. Some new villages have formed closed areas.

Present day housing in the villages reflects the building types of the 1990s, as well as the manner of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can see detached single family houses, terraced houses and blocks of flats (Mieze 2018). Up to the year 1999 Babīte, Piņķi and Spilve villages were intensively built over. Since 2000 intensive

construction of new dwellings has been carried out in such villages as Lapsas, Sēbruciems, Vīkuļi, Dzilnuciems, Priežciems, Mežāre, Spilve (its new part) and Piņķi (Saliena). The financial crisis affected the intensity of construction works – the most active house building took place until 2008.

Today, new buildings cluster not only around the former residential centres and highways, but also a good way off the highways, as well as next to or even in the forests. Expansion of housing can be seen in such villages as Mežāres, Spilve, Brīvkalni, Sēbruciems, Vīkuļi, Priežciems, Lapsas and Piņķi. According to data (Babītes novada attīstības... 2012) in the year 2012 the largest villages by territories occupied were Piņķi (659 ha), Spilve (444 ha) and Trenči (378 ha). However, analysis of the cartographical material shows that in 2018 also Mežāres, with a territory of 379 ha belongs to the largest villages. By density of population today the largest villages are Babīte, Piņķi and Priežciems (Babītes novada attīstības... 2012). With the expansion of housing territories, also the population continues to grow in the villages and in the municipality at large (Figure 1).

After 2000 the population in Babīte parish continued growing. During the period between 2000 and 2018 it has grown by 38.5% (approx. 3 500 people) or, on average, by 200 people a year.

Between 2000 and 2018 the population has grown in all age groups (except in the age group between 15 and 24), and especially in the age group up to 6. It is worthy of note that in 2018, in every age group (except age groups between 15 to 24 and 55 to 64), the number of people exceeded 1000. Thus, in 2018, 16% of the population of Babīte parish were of the age group between 35 and 44 and 14% of the age group were between 45 and 54. From 25% to 34% is a comparatively large percentage of economically active population.

According to data of the CSB, the population in Babīte parish has grown mainly on account of migration. Between 2000 and 2018 some 48% of people (2674 individuals) have not changed their place of residence, 1744 have left the area (including emigrants to the EU) and 3817 individuals have newly arrived. The fact that twice as many people have arrived in the rural municipality than have left it has remained constant also between the years 2011 and 2018.

The data of the CSB reveals that in the period between 2000 and 2018 Babīte residents have migrated mainly to Rīga, Rīga suburbs (the Mārupe and Ķekava counties) and the Town of Jūrmala. A similar tendency appears in immigration – people have arrived in Babīte parish mainly from Rīga, the Town of Jūrmala, and the counties of Jelgava and Mārupe.

This is also confirmed by the survey data. The data from a public opinion poll shows that people arriving in Babīte parish are mainly townspeople from Rīga and Jūrmala. They have moved over mostly due to family reasons (approx. 36%), purchase of housing (approx. 31%) as well as in search of a more attractive environment (approx. 20%). Many of them had previously lived in multi-story apartment houses.

Besides, 90% of the respondents do not plan to change their place of residence in the nearest future. 10% of the respondents plan to move to Rīga or abroad.

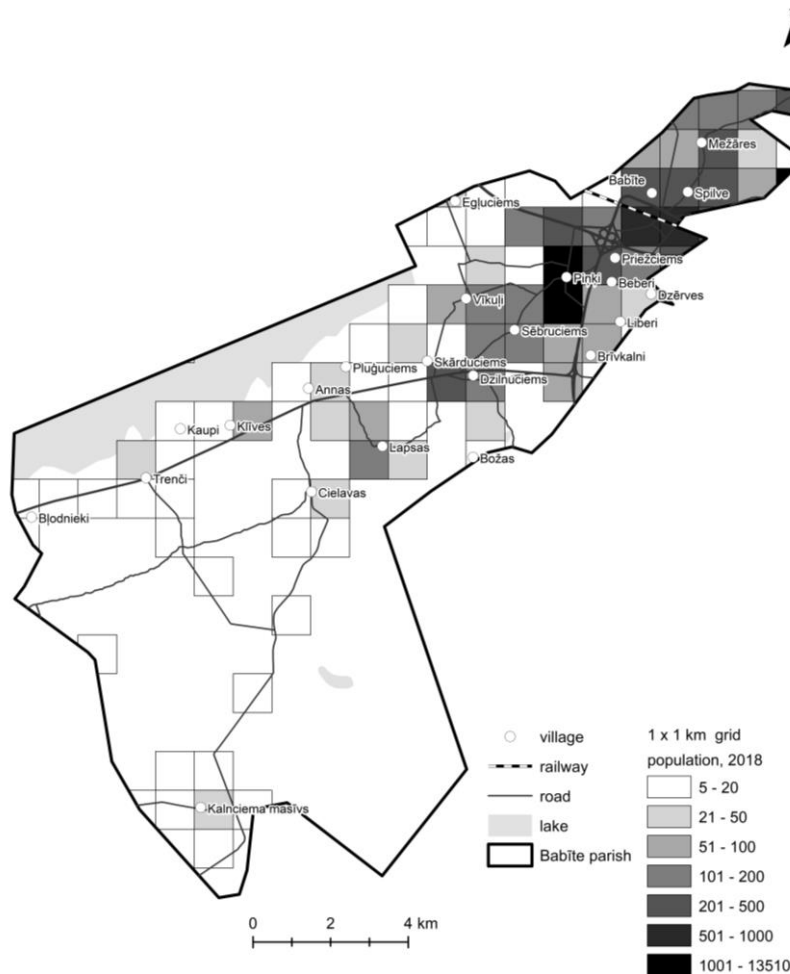


Figure 1. **Settlement of Babīte parish, 2018** (authors' figure based on Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia data)

The population has grown mainly in the village areas. More than 95% of people live in village areas. The proportion of village dwellers has grown from 95% in 2000 to 97% in 2018. According to statistical data the largest villages by population are Piņķi (3135 people), Babīte (1247 people) and Spilve (1114 people). There are villages, such as Liberi, Dzērves, Cielavas, where the number of population does not exceed 50 people. The greatest growth of population (by more than 400 people) between 2000 and 2018 has been registered in the villages of Mežāre, Spilve and Piņķi. The population has also grown in the villages of Priežciems and Sēbruciems by more than 200 people.

Today, out of all inhabitants in Babīte parish ~35% live in Piņķi village, ~14% - in Babīte village and ~12% in Spilve village. It is worthy of note that between 2000 and 2018 the population dropped considerably in Piņķi village (by ~14%) and in Babīte village (by ~6%). It follows that in other villages the number of population has grown, especially in the villages close to the border of Rīga, as, for example, in Mežāres (by ~8%) and Spilve (by ~5%). This is due to the intensive building of

detached single-family houses. Already by 2008 it was noted in the documents of spatial planning that Spilve and Mežāre villages are turning into the so-called Rīga “dormitory areas”, where people have moved their residences while keeping their jobs in Rīga. The new inhabitants are more linked with Rīga than with the village owing to closeness of the city and good traffic (Rīgas rajona Babītes ... 2007/2008). Resident polls also pointed out that choosing Babīte parish as a place of residence - buying a home or building a home - paid attention to the quality of the building, the infrastructure, the availability of schools and kindergartens, the availability of public transport, and the availability of utilities for land (Mieze 2018).

A public opinion poll showed that 95% of the respondents liked living in the parish. Such an assessment is related to good road infrastructure, good landscapes, accessibility of public transport, sense of security and proximity to Rīga. Some 85% of the respondents liked the tidy dwelling, 80% - its environment and 84% - the neighbours. The respondents who were only partly satisfied or dissatisfied with the environment and dwelling mostly lived in blocks of flats.

The most densely populated area of Babīte parish is its Northern and North Eastern part. It is the territory surrounding the centre of the parish, the Rīga border area and the area at the crossing of highways A5 and A10. According to statistical data it is the Eastern territories of Babīte parish, especially the area around the Piņķi, Beberi, Babīte, Mežāres and Spilve villages, which have become densely populated between 2000 and 2018 (Figure 1). This can be explained by the process of suburbanisation and development of villages owing to their favourable geographical position, road infrastructure and comparatively good public transport. Most of the respondents either working or studying in Rīga (78%) commute between the villages and Rīga. The commuters go to Rīga mostly on working days. They usually travel by their own cars (71%) and sometimes also by public transport (26%). The data from the public opinion poll shows that travelling to Rīga by public transport usually takes from 20 to 40 minutes, sometimes even up to 60 minutes. Travelling from villages close to the Rīga border to Rīga centre by one's own car takes up to 20-40 minutes, sometimes up to 50-60 minutes (as it is from the village of Lapsas). If the job location is either in Mārupe, Ķekava or Jūrmala the respondents mostly commute by their own cars. As the field survey data shows, there is an increasing migration to work and back (Mieze 2018).

As the answers to the public opinion poll showed, the respondents mostly go to Rīga not only because of jobs or studies, but also for shopping, entertainments and medical services. As to access to public services in the parish, the respondent evaluation varied – 36% of respondents were satisfied, 38% - were partly satisfied, but 26% - unsatisfied. Respondents also stressed that the lack of services in the rural municipality can be easily replaced with the amenities within Rīga. Therefore, as the answers of the public opinion poll showed, the respondents go to Rīga for shopping a few times in the week.

The respondents who work at the municipality travel to work either by bicycle (50%) or by public transport (38%). As to the quality of public transport services in Babīte parish, 58% of the respondents are satisfied, 24% are partly satisfied but 18% are dissatisfied. From the group of the respondents who travel to work by public transport 57% are satisfied with bus services, but from those who travel to work by their own cars ~52% find public transport services sufficient.

Most of the respondents who travel to Rīga either because of jobs or studies find their income higher than those working at the municipality. ~82% of the respondents working in Rīga earn above the average salary (i.e. 700 EUR), while only 38% of the respondents working at the municipality earn more than the average salary. The data of the opinion poll also testifies that ~53% of the respondents are dissatisfied with job opportunities being offered in Babīte parish, while 27% are only partly satisfied.

Taking into account the public opinion poll, briefly: the characteristics of the respondents from Babīte parish - a short distance to the center of Rīga, the infrastructure development, convenience, good ecological conditions, the availability of forest areas, homogeneous social environment and appropriate property prices (Mieze 2018).

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the present situation leads to the conclusion that Babīte parish has become an attractive living space in the Pierīga area - changes in the population are taking place, the number of inhabitants in the parish continues to increase. In Babīte parish there is a characteristic suburbanisation process - the construction of new houses near the Rīga city border, close to the main roads A5, A10, A9, Lake Babīte and forest areas. The construction of new houses is changing the landscape - new individual houses are appearing in the old villages, new villages are being formed. The construction is also related to the return of agricultural land in building territories. In Latvia, there is a tendency for residents to choose their place of residence on the outskirts of the city, as the main reasons are family, housing, work and nature. Babīte parish is one of those in which the number of inhabitants in the parish increases mostly at the expense of in-migration from the capital city. The proximity of Rīga, the road network and transport options make it easy to reach the city, thus ensuring the possibility of working and providing various services, on the other hand - providing better quality of life and environment - dwelling, nature, calm, recreation.

Babīte county spatial planning documents worked out 5 years ago envisaged further development of Babīte parish by promoting a balanced development of housing, density of population, transport, business, access to public services and attractive environment. The document also envisaged further growth of the population. Thus, Babīte parish of 2020 has been planned as a place of residence with properly organised infrastructure suitable for families, but after 2030 – as a fashionable place of residence in Suburban Rīga (Babītes novada ilgtspējīgas ... 2015).

### Kopsavilkums

Iedzīvotāju skaits lauku teritorijās ap Rīgu kopš 2000. gada palielinās galvenokārt migrācijas procesu rezultātā. Intensīva apbūve ir notikusi lauku teritorijās ap Rīgas pilsētu, kas saistās ne tikai ar izdevīgo ģeogrāfisko stāvokli, galveno autoceļu tuvumu, labo satiksmi, bet arī ar pakalpojumu pieejamību un sasniedzamību un ainaviski pievilcīgo dzīves telpu. Rezultātā veidojas jauni privātmāju ciemi, kā arī notiek jauno ciemu daļēja saplūšana ar vēsturiskajiem. Viens no pagastiem, kur kopš 2000. gada ir notikušas ievērojamas pārmaiņas apdzīvojumā – palielinājis iedzīvotāju skaits, notikusi strauja apbūve, ceļot jaunas dzīvojamās mājas, veidojot jaunus māju rajonus, jaunus ciemus, ir Babītes pagasts. Šīs pārmaiņas apdzīvojumā norāda uz intensīvu suburbanizācijas procesu šajā teritorijā. Pētījuma mērķis – raksturot pārmaiņas apdzīvojumā suburbanizācijas procesu ietekmē Babītes pagastā pēc 2000. gada.

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## DIVERSITY OF GENTRIFICATION IN THE INNER CITIES OF RĪGA AND PRAGUE – THE CASE OF ĀGENSKALNS AND HOLEŠOVICE

### Ģentifikācijas daudzveidība Rīgas un Prāgas iekšpilsētā – Āgenskalna un Hološovices piemērs

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**Abstract.** This paper analyses gentrification from two perspectives - cultural consumption and changes in population composition as observed in two inner-city neighbourhoods that are gentrifying, Āgenskalns in Rīga and Holešovice in Prague. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed - such as field study and observation, Census data analysis, interview, analysis of reviews on internet platforms, as well as the mapping of results. The study revealed that both neighbourhoods experienced an influx of young and educated residents. It was also concluded that both neighbourhoods experienced major changes in the