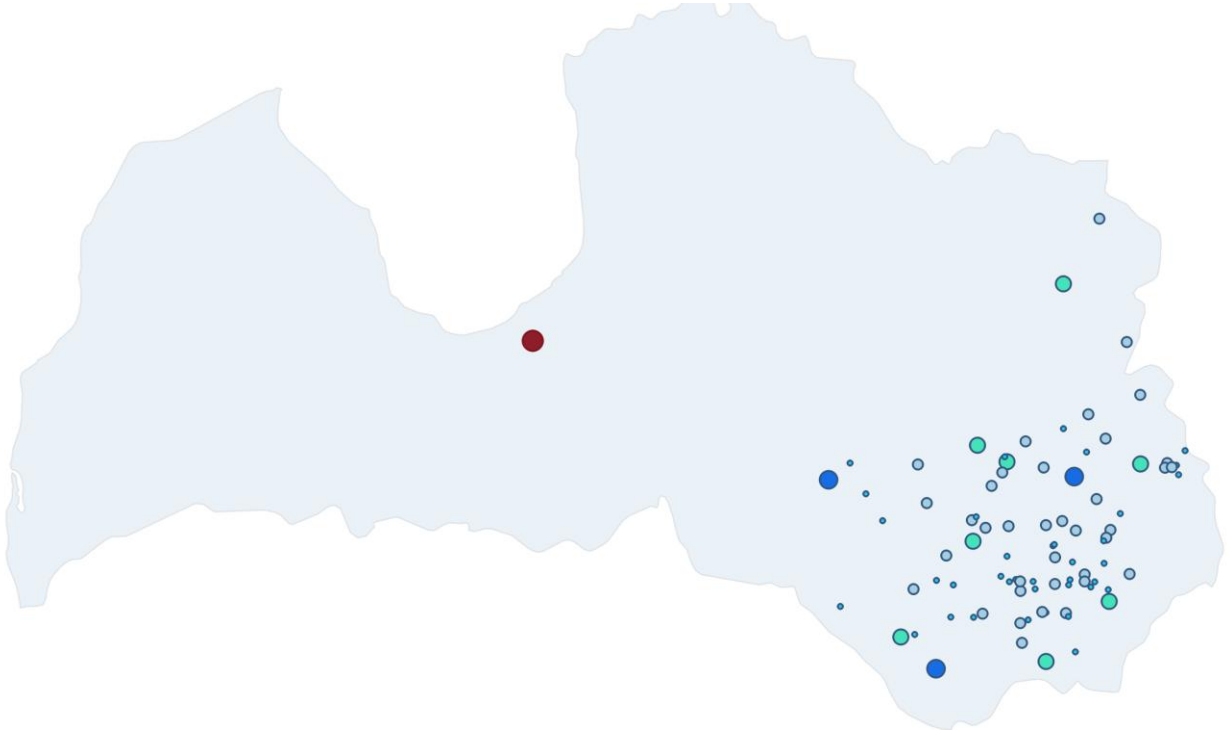
The Kaleidoscope of Latgalian Places: Transmedia Storytelling and GIS Approaches



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Presentation Outline

I. **Introduction to the Experiment: A GIS-Based Approach to Modelling Transmedia Storytelling behind the Formation of Places**

II. **Theoretical Reflection on the Experiment through the Framework of Digital Epistemologies**

Transmedia Storytelling

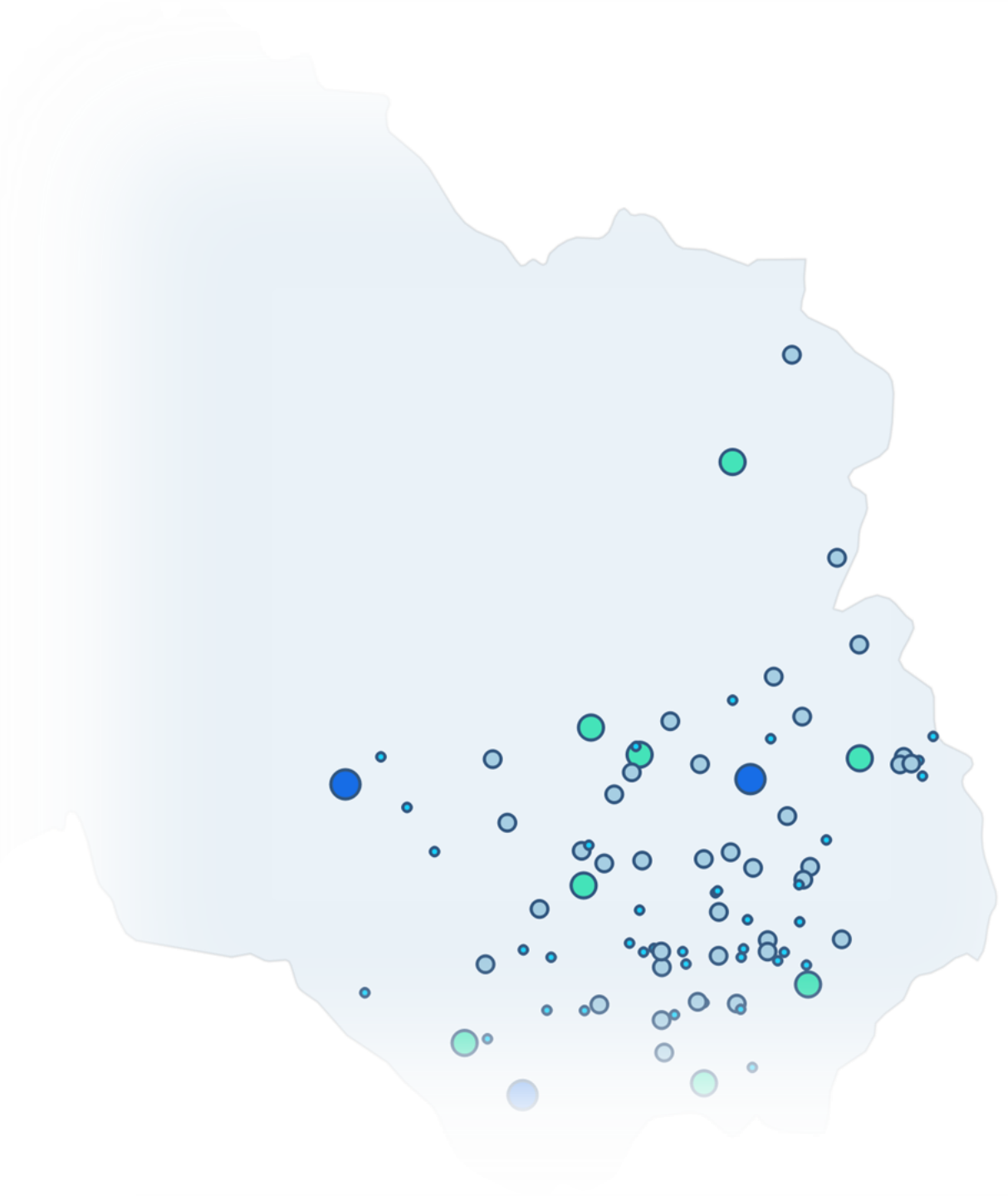
- **Cultural Semiotics Approach:** Snowballing Transmedia Storytelling (STMS) as **a dialogical and creative cultural process** shaping complex cultural constructs (Ojamaa & Torop 2014)
- In fiction: repetition and transformation around characters, stories, and storyworlds (Ryan 2013, 384), shaping intricate cultural symbols and universes
- Beyond fiction: similar dynamics **shape spaces into lived, experienced, and meaningful places** (Hancox 2021)

Mapping Snowballing Transmedia Storytelling

- GIS-based methods for juxtaposing diverse cultural data via shared geographical references
- Reveals STMS as a mechanism of cultural creativity, development, and continuity in place-making
- Equalizes different types of cultural data
- Amplifies and contextualizes diverse voices
- Aligns with deep mapping (Roberts 2016) and counter-mapping (Hunter 2020)

The Latgalian Case

- Distinct culture, collateral language (~165,000 speakers), and a complex, often traumatic history shaped by shifting political powers
- The volume of Latgalian-language texts is very small compared to larger European language communities
- Representation of Latgalian discourse on social media remains limited



Data Sources and Materials

01

The Corpus of Contemporary Latgalian Language (MuLaR): consisting of 90 interviews with contemporary Latgalian speakers at the time of this study.

02

Instagram data: manually collected through hashtags of toponyms identified in the MuLaR corpus.

03

A small experimental corpus of ten contemporary texts in Latgalian language: created across different semiotic media and genres.

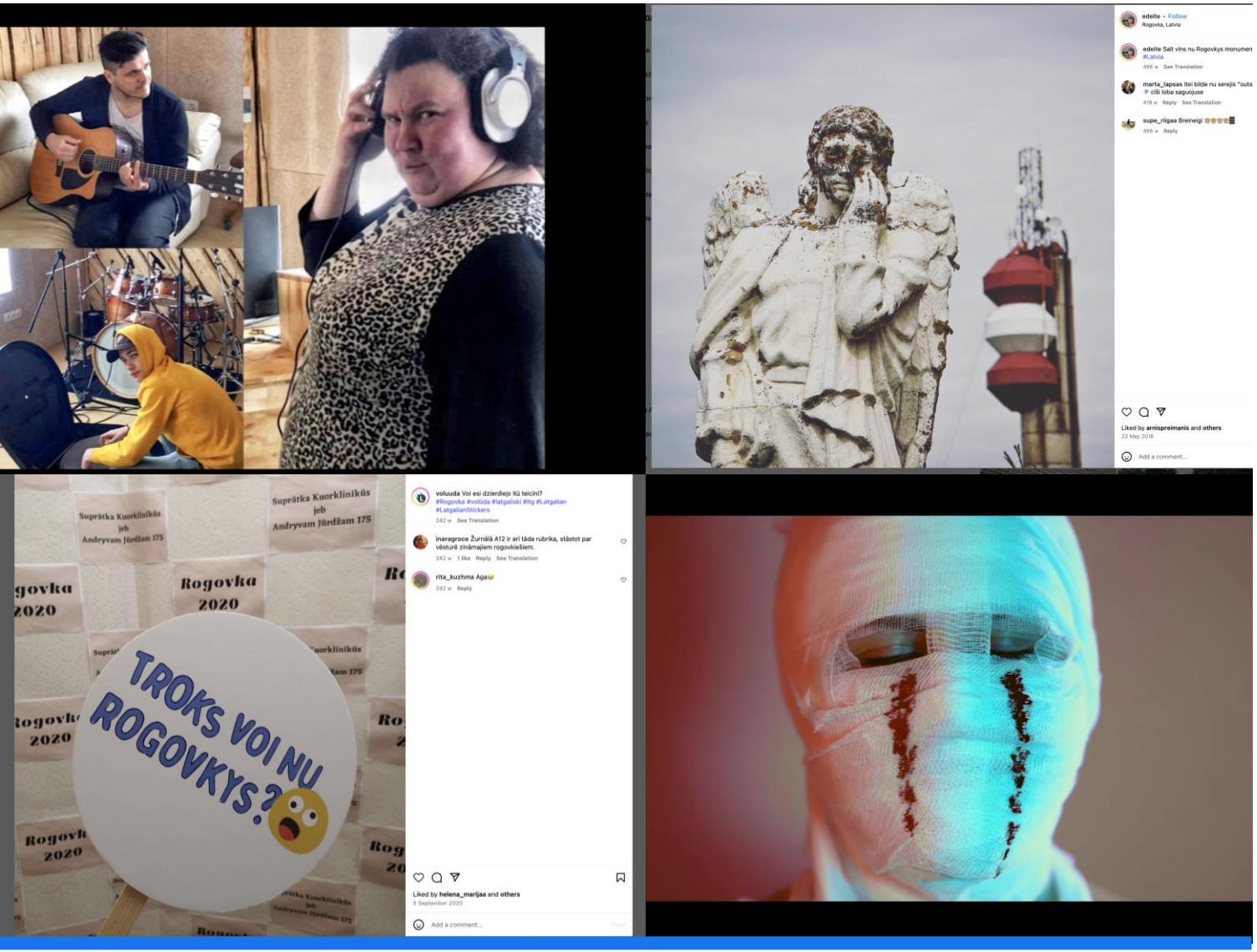
Methodological Design

Goal: Identify key geographical objects as narrative intersection points in Latgalian discourse

- **Step 1:** Extract most frequent toponyms of different settelments from the MuLaR corpus
- **Step 2:** Cross-check toponyms as Instagram hashtags and match with MuLaR references
- **Step 3:** Close-read 10 selected texts for shared geographical mentions

Result: 19 points identified where MuLaR, Instagram, and selected texts converge

1. "Piļsāta pi upis"
2. "Ar Reigas Morali..."
3. "Trešuo Zvaigzne"
4. "Vydsmuižys Annužys acim"
6. "Pa ceļam nūgiutuos dūmys i sajiutys"
7. "Dzīsmeite Rēzeknis nūvodam"
8. "Laiki. Cylvāki. Volūda"
9. "Dīnvyd Latgolys Stuosti"
10. Latgola.lv



Rogovka
(~ 226 inhabitants)

You don’t go to Rogovka with Riga’s morals, sister.

Rogovka has its own jokes, its own sickness, and its own cough. <…>

(Jurceņš 1999)

Digital Epistemologies (Ingvarsson, 2021)

- **From Interpretation to Invention:** Mapping as a material practice of knowledge production.
  Our approach makes STMS processes behind place formation visible and traceable.
  Stories discovered at the crossroads of cultural data emerge only through this method.
- **Principle of Pertinence and Poetics of Juxtapositions:** Some texts merge organically around shared cultural memory; others interact through complex, shifting dialogues; at times, narrative clashes reveal deeper meanings.
- **Digital Culture as a Lens:** STMS as an ontological feature of cultural dynamics. Digital epistemologies reveal its essence—fragmentation, contextual shifts, creative and unexpected dialogues, and collisions of diverse cultural codes.

In conclusion

Inclusive Framework

- Method to engage and empower underrepresented communities and small-scale discourses

Future Directions

- Expand to include multiple cultural traditions: Latvians, Russians, Jews, Poles
- Explore contested and intersecting narratives
- Create comparative *“Latgalian maps”* reflecting the region’s diversity

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