



REPORT FORM FOR NETWORK ACTIVITIES

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Present appointment and employing institution

Russian and Slavonic Studies University of Sheffield

Role in activity

Series coordinator, organizer of second workshop
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2. Activity details

Type and title of activity

Situating Culture: series of three linked two-day interdisciplinary research workshops
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Location

Universities of Sheffield, Warwick, Manchester
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Date

From:	December 2009	To:	May 2010
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Brief Description of activities carried out (please include or attach a confirmed list of participants):

A series of **3 linked two-day research workshops** under the umbrella theme *Situating Culture* was held in 2009-10 at the universities of Sheffield, Warwick, and Manchester. It brought together academics, artistic producers and commentators who share an understanding of music, art, performance etcetera in (post-) socialist societies as a set of everyday cultural practices, with a focus on Eastern Europe complemented by specialists on other geographical regions. The series built on the success of the 2008 series of CEELBAS-funded workshops, *Doing Culture*. The three core organisers remained the same – Susan Reid (Sheffield), Hilary Pilkington (Warwick) and Rachel Platonov (Manchester) - but the responsibilities of PI rotated to Sheffield.

The *Situating Culture* series aimed to consolidate the networks formed in the first series, and to extend them in appropriate directions especially in terms of the inclusion of postgraduate and early career researchers. It also aimed to develop themes that emerged in the first series and which had generated widespread interest among participants; thus its intellectual agenda progressed from the umbrella theme of the first series, 'Doing Culture,' to 'Situating Culture'. The theme was also chosen for its potential to be developed in interdisciplinary ways that push the boundaries of research in the cultural study of Russia and Eastern Europe and build links between researchers working on different regions and in different institutions. By including scholars studying these questions in other geographical contexts it sought to raise the profile of

East European language based area studies, helping to redress the continued marginalization of our field.

Each workshop had a particular thematic focus related to the umbrella theme of *Situating Culture*

1. *Cultures of the Margins*, University of Warwick. Organiser: Prof Hilary Pilkington
2. *Home Culture*, University of Sheffield. Organiser: Dr Susan E Reid
3. *Deterritorialized Culture*, University of Manchester. Organiser: Dr Rachel Platonov.

Shared principles united all three workshops, to:

- include an historical and contemporary dimension;
- be comparative across the socialist/post socialist space;
- include among its speakers and participants both REES specialists and disciplinary specialists;
- include papers that are methodologically as well as theoretically and substantively focused;
- include among its speakers and participants both academics and practitioners (musicians, artists, museum curators, journalists etc), in order to promote opportunities for knowledge exchange;
- be open both to established academics as well as postgraduate and undergraduate students and interested non-academic participants.

The general, field-building aims and objectives included to:

- bring together three network partners (Warwick, Sheffield and Manchester) in the co-ordination of a series of workshops.
- bring together scholars from a number of disciplines to share and enrich our understanding of cultural phenomena and processes.
- share methodological expertise and experience.
- bring together scholars working across the socialist/post socialist space.
- bring disciplinary specialists not working on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe to REES events.

Intellectual rationale

'Situating Culture', as the overarching theme, reflects a central concern with the importance of place (both literal and metaphorical) to the ways in which cultural production and consumption are valued. This implies the importance of the discussion of power in theories of cultural production, exchange and consumption but in a more nuanced way than it appears both in models of 'globalization' as applied to contemporary phenomena; and in notions of imperial imposition/appropriation as applied to cultural relations between the Soviet 'Big Brother' and Central and Eastern Europe. It also implies the need for researchers to identify 'marginal' sites of cultural production and consumption and to understand them as key sites of investigation. The first workshop, for example, directly sought out 'cultures of the margins' in order to explore the relation between centres and margins; it focused on the spaces for agency to negotiate and overcome individuals' and groups' positioning on the 'margins', whether these be territorially, socially, culturally, politically, or institutionally designated. In its second workshop, the series 'homed' in on the home as a site whose cultural production has often been marginalized by institutions that have the power to assign value or 'centrality'. The final workshop raised the question of whether deterritorialized communication breaks down centre/margin hierarchies, as well as those between public and private and professional and amateur, by asking whether deterritorialized cultural production expands discursive space and opportunities for participation by subordinate(d) groups, or reinforces established hierarchies of dominance in new ways.

Workshop 1: Cultures of the Margins, University of Warwick, December 2009

The main aim of this workshop was to explore cultural practices and identities of the 'margins'. Running through the workshop was an ongoing conceptual discussion about what constituted 'margins' and 'marginality'. One of the achievements of the workshop in this respect was its extensive cross-disciplinarity (including sociologists, historians, geographers, language and literature and cultural studies specialists) which ensured that 'marginality' was discussed in a non-reductionist way. The workshop explored the spatial dimensions of marginality, but also in terms of its reflection in cultural production and its embedding in institutional (prisons, educational institutions, care homes) and broader social 'regimes' (of gender, sexuality, class, race/ethnicity).

While the theoretical discussion of the usefulness of the concept of 'margins' was productive, an equal achievement of the workshop was the presentation of papers in which these reflections were substantiated with rigorous empirical evidence. These data were extremely wide-ranging: from narratives of Soviet tourists, via in-depth interviews with women prisoners and ethnographies of asylum-seeker camps and orphanages to the cultural analysis of necrorealist art movements. This allowed workshop participants to both explore the power relations inherent in relations between 'centres' and 'margins' while also reminding them not to envisage 'margins' as necessarily 'subordinate', 'subcultural' or 'subversive' phenomena but as having also the potential to allow space for alternative cultural expression and challenges to hierarchy.

Particularly pleasing were the positive comments from participants in the workshop across the range of experience. Comments included, for example, 'Excellent because of interdisciplinarity; good combination of established and new scholars, good international participation' [from a senior UK scholar] and 'Very inspiring and productive environment' [from an East European PhD student in a UK institution]

Workshop 2: Home/ Culture, University of Sheffield, January 2010

The second workshop focused on the home - a site whose cultural production has often been marginalized by the institutions that assign value or 'centrality' - and asked whether this marginality also contains the potential to challenge norms and offer alternatives. Thus it explored the idea that home is a place within which hegemonic cultures, canons, and power relations may be reproduced, but which also has the potential to challenge those and produce alternative cultures and values.

The cultural production that takes place in the home was conceived broadly. Building on the discussions at the workshop on 'Whose Culture?: Exploring the Active Audience' in the 2008 series (Sheffield, May 2008) it included, for example, practices which are often considered under the heading of 'consumption', practices of appropriation (of media content, technologies, space, consumer goods, etc) accommodation, bricolage and diy.

The theme of home culture provided a frame within which a range of disciplines could fruitfully engage. A particular achievement of this workshop was the integration of research on Central and Eastern Europe with that on Britain and western Europe and also on Central Asia, which was mutually enriching. As one participant commented: 'Excellent seminar where meeting of disciplines and fields was very productive.' Another wrote: 'An exceptionally interesting and useful event - especially the informal though well-organized atmosphere - very productive discussion, and combination of scholars from different regions and at different points in their careers.'

Workshop 3: Deterritorialized Culture, University of Manchester, May 2010

This workshop explored cultural processes and practices in non-territorial and virtual spaces. Questions of how such spaces are defined—e.g. historically and in the Internet age, by producers and by consumers of culture, within institutional settings and outside them—formed starting points for discussion. Subsequent debate was underpinned by an interrogation of the extent to which deterritorialization expands discursive space and opportunities for participation in cultural processes, or instead reinforces traditional hierarchies of political power, social (or socioeconomic) dominance and cultural value.

Substantively, workshop papers addressed issues of deterritorialization through a range of lenses, both theoretical and empirical, historical and contemporary. Notions of deterritorialization were employed in analysing cultural phenomena and social behaviours both within and beyond Russia and Eastern Europe; but at the same time, deterritorialization itself was problematised,

and the extent to which deterritorialized culture exists outside the English-speaking world was subjected to serious scrutiny. The impact of technology on cultural deterritorialization was analysed critically; but clear continuities were also elucidated between long-standing cultural phenomena such as fan clubs, fanzines, pen pals, etc. and their Internet-based successors. Ultimately, the broad theme of deterritorialization provided a framework for productive intellectual exchange for scholars from a broad range of disciplines as well as non-academic contributors. As various participants commented, the workshop promoted 'a very fruitful exchange of ideas'; and it was 'a great workshop, superbly well run and organized, with great speakers/papers'.

3. Achievement of stated aims and objectives

Please summarise how the stated aims and objectives of the activities proposed have been achieved and how these have helped to further the aims and objectives of CEELBAS.

Each workshop was attended by 25-30 registered participants, local, national and international (from Germany, Netherlands, Canada, Finland, Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Slovenia and Russia). We encouraged some continuity between the proposed workshops and our previous series, and also among the proposed workshops themselves, in order to build dialogue and collaboration. Thus certain speakers were invited back: Adi Kuntsman, Sudha Rajagopalan, Anton Popov, and Yngvar Steinholt whose current visiting fellowship at Warwick (January-July 2010) is a direct outcome of the previous series *Doing Culture*. We strongly encouraged high levels of participation from postgraduate students within the constraints of funding. Students funded by ESRC or AHRC were also encouraged to use the financial tracks available to them to fund attendance at other workshops. The audience also included interested colleagues, members of the general public, and undergraduate students interested in undertaking postgraduate research.

A major benefit of these series of workshops is that they have brought young international scholars into the CEELBAS orbit as exemplified below by Steinholt (Norway) and Gololobov's (Russian Federation) involvement in the forthcoming event; Matonoha's (Czech Republic) Marie Curie application to Sheffield; and Kurg's (Estonia) guest editorship of the British journal *Home Culture* themed issue. In addition the workshops have contributed to the aim of developing the pool of future researchers in the East European language-based area studies, encouraging recent graduates and final year undergraduates to pursue research in this area. Employment of a recent Slavic Studies graduate interested in pursuing postgraduate research (Molly Vellacott) as the series administrator allowed her to network widely in the field and gain a clearer picture of the field of studies into which she might insert herself. The inclusion of final year undergraduates considering postgraduate study also The informality and non- hierarchical atmosphere of these workshops provided ideal conditions for this mentoring and field-building work. One undergraduate participant described the *Deterritorialized Culture* workshop (Manchester) as 'enlightening'. Another wrote of the *Home Culture* workshop (Sheffield):

'As an undergraduate taking my first steps into the world post-graduate research, the workshop was an incredibly useful place to gain a broader perspective on research being undertaken in home culture. The multi-disciplinary nature of the event allowed me to question and evaluate the validity and effectiveness of different methods of research, which has led me to question the fundamentals of my future research methodology. I also gained some useful contacts during the conference, one of which I have already used in formulating my MA research proposal.'

The workshops have, above all, had an important intellectual impact, stimulating ideas, forming now interdisciplinary and cross-regional connections, shaping new research questions and forming new collaborations, and also raising the profile of East European language-based area studies among scholars working on less marginalized (especially Anglophone) regions. Participants commented that the workshops provided an 'Excellent chance to convert ideas into collaborative research'. (Workshop 1)

The workshops additionally succeeded in achieving the following general aims and objectives of the series.

- To bring together three network partners (Warwick, Sheffield and Manchester) in the co-ordination of a series of workshops.
- To bring together scholars from a number of disciplines to share and enrich our understanding of cultural phenomena and processes.
- To bring together scholars working on the history and the contemporary culture of the region.
- To share methodological expertise and experience.
- To bring together scholars working across the socialist/post socialist space.
- To bring disciplinary specialists not working on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe to REES events.
- Broaden and deepen the network established from 'Doing Culture'.
- Provide a forum in which substantive collaborations on publications and/or grant applications can develop.
- More actively promote the participation in the workshops of postgraduate students and early career researchers including those in disciplinary departments. In this way we hope to contribute to the nurturing and integration of future researchers into the REES area.
- Promote knowledge exchange and user involvement by integrating practitioners and other non-academic participants into the research network.

4. Outcomes

Please indicate the outcomes and 'value for money' of activities carried out.

The workshops have a number of outcomes, in the form of publications; of networks, collaborations and grant applications; and also less immediately quantifiable intellectual gains and research stimulation, and development of the pool of CEELBAS researchers and inclusion of young international scholars in the CEELBAS orbit. By including scholars studying these questions in other geographical contexts it raised the profile of East European language based area studies, helping to redress the continued marginalization of our field.

- *Home Cultures*: by agreement with the editor of this refereed journal, Victor Buchli, five papers have been submitted for review to form a themed issue guest edited by one of the workshop participants Andres Kurg (Tallinn, Estonia).
- Provisional agreement from *Laboratorium* (editor Mischa Gabowitsch) to publish articles based on the workshop papers as a section of a special issue, subject to normal review processes.
- Kate Pahl (Education, Sheffield): collaborative grant project on museum education with Andres Kurg, Tallinn.
- Postdoctoral application to Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships scheme (FP7 2010) scheme by Jan Matonoha, Prague (workshops 2 and 3), Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies, University of Sheffield.
- Hilary Pilkington, Ivan Gololobov and Yngvar Steinholt: 'Rottenbeat: Academic and musical dialogue with new Russian punk,' workshop and impact event, London-Warwick-Manchester 2011, funded by CEELBAS network grant. This develops out of both series of workshops, exemplifying the continued international collaboration arising from these events and the benefit of drawing young international scholars into the CEELBAS orbit. The thematic workshop will draw on the well-established network of scholars interested in these issues from the 'Doing Culture' and 'Situating Culture' series of workshops while engaging also a broader range of non-academic professionals such as music producers, journalists, cultural critics etc. and thus converting research into 'impact' and raising the public profile of East European culture.

5. Breakdown of total costs for workshops (please attach evidence of expenditure)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Key speakers (Travel, accommodation and subsistence)	
Travel & Subsistence – UK	£6903.28
Travel & Subsistence – Overseas	£309.37
Air Travel – Overseas	£2391.96
Postgraduate participation	
Room/equipment hire	
Conference and meetings	£1370
Cleaning Services	£47
Administration costs	
Non-contracted support	£1810.41
Printing and publicity (including conference packs)	
Other (please specify)	
Other Expenses – Catering & Hospitality	£1666.62
Total expenditure	£14,498.64
Total contribution invoiced to CEELBAS	£14,498.64

7. Dissemination and further research

Please give details of dissemination of the outcomes of the workshop/project and any further research planned.

Special issues of *Laboratorium, Home Cultures*.
Grant applications for future research collaborations.
Impact event.

Please see Outcomes above for details.

8. Signature and date

Applicant's signature

Date:

Institutional authorisation (if required)

Position:
Date:

Institutional CEELBAS Network Primary Contact

Date:

This form must be accompanied by an invoice from the applicant's institution, supported by receipts or other evidence of the expenditure incurred.

Please send the completed form to: CEELBAS Administrator, SSEES, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT and by email to: ceelbas-network@ssees.ucl.ac.uk.

